

Special on a Sad Day

Reactions

My little article on 7-7 got a lot of reaction from various people, some positive (I gotta say that I agree with your point on the seeping and I hope that ALL the deaths stop soon) to an extremely brutal exchange with a co-worker of mine over the views I presented and my take on the Iraq situation. While I don't agree with all the stances taken, I have to say I appreciated them all. Here are a few responses that moved me and I wanted to share with y'all.

Helen Spiral

People, mostly my friends outside Britain, keep asking me what I think about the bombings in London on the seventh of July. My response is mostly to wonder why I should think about them at all?

OK, I'm technically a Londoner. I was born in Greater London. I've lived my whole life in London. My brother lives in the heart of the East End. These facts have history attached to them. My current housemate, my parents and other older family members, lived through the second world war: the blitz in central London, the battle of Britain over Greater London, the doodlebugs. We all lived through the IRA bombings. I personally spent at least one evening in a pub, with my theology discussion group, sitting directly on top of an IRA bomb which was later discovered by the police. We already know that the terrorists can't beat us.

I have sympathy for the families and friends of those people who died last Thursday and I feel for those people who were injured. I know they're getting the best medical treatment which has ever been available and it's free, for everyone, because we share our NHS. But the four bombs were only small bombs. They could have all been made

and carried by one person. London has repeatedly lived through far worse. Boudicca murdered everyone and burned the city to the ground. The great fire of London, the worst man-made disaster in the city's history, was caused by a defective bakery oven.

So Osama had a hissy fit because he lives in a cave in the middle of nowhere while our caves are centrally located with trains, escalators, and chocolate machines. He chose his lonely cave and 3,000,000 of us will go on choosing to use our tubes each day.

Our mayor Ken Livingstone spoke truly when he said, "... you will see that people from the rest of Britain, people from around the world, will arrive in London to become Londoners and to fulfil their dreams and achieve their potential."

Londoners responded calmly to unfolding events and dealt with the public transport disruptions with standard British stoicism. At 2pm, three hours after the bombs went off, Auntie Beeb interrupted rolling news coverage to broadcast the scheduled daytime repeat of one of Britain's favourite long-running soap operas The Archers. If the terrorists think they inspired actual terror then they should think again because we're British and we don't do panic.

So there were four bombs on public transport. Does that mean I'm going to stop travelling on trains or buses? No. Did I stop going to the pub after I sat on an IRA bomb? No. Will we dismantle the democracy which we inherited from the pagan Anglo-Saxon immigrants who washed up in Kent a millenia and a half ago? No. The bombing was inevitable. The only surprise was that it didn't happen sooner.

On the seventh of July one of my friends suggested that anyone

who wants to scare us will have to resort to an army of zombies or a Vogon constructor fleet because nothing else is going to have any effect. The “terrorists” are so powerless they’ve never even managed to dent our sense of humour.



I thought that
jslayeruk's lj icon said it
all,
Helen
Sent to multiple recipients.
Permission to quote and
reproduce this

M Lloyd

Chris, just a note. I talked to Mary in London. She's fine. She works about a block from King's Cross, but she was on late shift.

You so seldom talk politics, we all know why, but I was glad you said something. I can't abide your trust in this government, but I can tell that you're moved by the loss of life. You don't write one of these issues every time a car bomb blows up a market in Bahgdad, though. Those losses are just as valid, but I understand that you identify with and even worry about the Londoners. I wish more people were willing to do a memorial issue to each loss of life, but I knwo that we all identify with one group or another and that will cause us to take longer pauses.

What was the argument you gave back in the day? The Pet Dog vs. The Deer Hit by the Car. I still don't agree, every deer that gets hit deserves as much mourning as the family dog that gets run over, but I also see why you'd think that could drive a person crazy. I'm the bleeding heart, I know, but I still feel those losses too. You do too, but you protect yourself by shunting it. I can understand that. You were the one who always said you were a coward and a hypocrit, but I'd never accuse you of not caring for Life, regardless of whose it is, even if you don't write it up.

I just wish we'd get the fuck out of Iraq, because at least then we could claim that we are not barbarians too.

M

Lloyd Penney

Thanks to the miracles of word processing, I can now warn you that your newest issue has struck a chord...

Special on a Sad Day...I've been home during the day time, so I've been watching the various news channels as they chronicle the terrorist bombings of London. The Canadian channels I watched covered the events in London as they were happening, with the odd comment about how the Canadian and American governments might react to this. The American channels I watched covered the American government reaction, as if the actual event in London was a mere sidebar story. I stuck with the Canadian channels because I wanted to see the British reaction. Eventually, when the coverage started to repeat, I brought up the BBC website on the Net, and saw some images there, and listened to Radio FiveLive as they broadcast a live press conference on what was happening, and what was known at the time.

9/11 was horrific. Thousands died, and everyone was wounded. The American media, in its near-deification of America and its government, has turned much of the reaction to 9/11 into melodrama and soap opera. A tragedy has been turned into a parody in the name of ratings and profits. The British government reaction has been to say we will not give in, and the British public is going about its daily routine the day after this happened. There is the difference in scope, the difference in fatalities, the difference in damage, but somehow, I don't think the British will turn this event into a movie-of-the-week. I believe the British government and police services will find those responsible for this long before the Bush regime flushes out Osama bin Laden and the rest of Al-Qaida.

You're right, American culture seeps in everywhere. It is advertised and promoted

until it becomes the way of life for many people outside of America, and for that, there is sometimes resentment. Here's an example...I won't shop at a Wal-Mart. When the chain first came to Canada, it purchased an existing chain of stores, and converted them all to Wal-Marts. Then, out came the red, white and blue stars and stripes bunting, and wasn't it great to shop at Wal-Mart? Well, no, not if you're going to take away something that was ours, and paint it your own colours, and then try to sell us garbage. American business has purchased a lot of foreign businesses and Americanized them, to the chagrin of those foreign nationals. Look at the reaction of Manchester United fans to the purchase of the soccer team by American businessman Malcolm Glazer. Glazer has no idea about soccer, but he had already bought out all other shareholders in hostile fashion, and plans to privatize the team. The fans expect he'll suck the team dry of its treasury and future profits, and he's doing just that. Manchester United may be just a sports team, but for a lot of Brits, it is a cultural icon, and those fans hate that particular American for the sacrilegious stunts he's pulling.

American business has money, prestige, and selling power. The best known brand names around the world are American, and American culture is promoted by those American businesses everywhere. Aaron Burr, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin...as a Canadian, why should I know those names? I shouldn't, but I do. The pervasiveness of American culture is also one factor in why American citizens remain largely ignorant about the rest of the world.

Many people in the world fight to make sure their own home-grown cultural icons aren't ploughed under by American icons. In high school, I took Canadian history courses because other history courses were largely American or Americanized through the textbooks used. One teacher I had in high school used

the term "propaganda" to describe the American bias in our textbooks. Do these people resent having America in their faces all the time? You bet they do. Are some of these people angry enough to strike out at anything that might represent America? You bet they might. 9/11 is an example of how some of them have. The train bombings in Madrid and the subway bombings of London are examples of how governments sympathetic to America will suffer.

The questions that were never asked after 9/11 was, "Why? Why would you do this to us? What did we do to deserve this?" If answers were as sought after as revenge, we'd already know the answers to these questions. A select group of people who call themselves Muslims hate America because of its pervasive culture, and the American cultural belief that if it isn't American, it's not good enough/bad/lacking/against God. For those extremists who have their own cultural icons and preferences, wouldn't you hate someone who takes your entire background and life, and denigrates it out of hand? The mess this world has encountered since 9/11 is a battle of Muslim extremists in the Middle East fighting against Jewish extremists in Israel and Christian extremists in America and the White House.

I am not anti-American. I am anti-American government on this issue. It has been far too easy for the Bush regime to fall into totalitarian and fascist acts as a reaction (or overreaction) to 9/11. Bush has taken away basic human liberties in order to make the American government make the public believe it is safe. The greatest crime is the prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The Bush regime has used weasel words and nebulous terms to hold people without due process of law, something held in such high esteem by most democratic nations. The decisions of the Bush government have been based on desire for power and money, need for oil, the perceived need to control enemy and ally alike, to evade law to do as it wishes, and to elevate its already highly elevated status in the world. I can't help

but feel that at the heart of all this abuse of human rights is a very much afraid nation, afraid that it can't live up to the high standards it puts others up to, afraid of what others will do. The heart of a bully is usually full of fear, and America has become the world's bully. The American government is now doing the kind of things it used to criticize East Germany and the Soviet Bloc for doing during the Cold War.

I do not mean to preach and lecture. I am trying my best to parcel up what I've been feeling about what's happened since 9/11 turned our worlds upside down. I hope I haven't offended you; that's the last thing I want to do. Robbie Burns, the Scottish poet, said that it would be a wondrous gift to see ourselves as others see us. I find it a shame that such a country as America, which has symbolized the best in us all for so long, now symbolizes some of the worst, because of one government's reaction to these horrific acts. I suspect that's why Colin Powell left politics; I am sure that if he were to write a book, he could truly express his feeling for what he had to do as a member of the Bush cabinet. I had thought of how the Bush regime could have better reacted to all this, and I am one of millions who have second-guessed that regime. However, what is done is done, and we all have to live with it.

I hope the next government will try its best to repair what Bush and his cronies have done, and make America worthy of admiration again. I have many American friends, and some of them are embarrassed, hurt and angry at what their government has done. They fear to speak up, afraid of being labeled as traitors and sympathizers simply because they dare to disagree with what's been done. Even free speech has been damaged. Some of them have apologized for their government, and I tell them don't apologize for something your government has done. The best way to fix the damage is to elect a better government. This is Bush's last term, to the relief of many, and perhaps a Democratic

government will bring back some ease in world relations, and an end to this nightmare.

I am not sure there's any more I can say here...how's that for a rant? Again, I apologize if I have offended; this is just my take on this madness. Maybe this is why there's not many political articles in fanzines; the local, if printed, would take over the whole zine. I can't believe I'm on page 4 of this loc. You sure pressed the right key there.

And now, I guess I'm done. I've spent my afternoon writing this, and no regrets at all. This is the key of fanzine fandom, communications with each other on all topics, including science fiction, if we feel like it. Thank you for writing what you have, and I look forward to the next few issues.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Manny Sanford

It's been a while. Sad Day, It was. I'm in Cork right now, watching TV in my hotel room, drunk from visiting a distillery with a bunch of Londoners. We're all a little shaken. The odd thing is, none of them were angry, they've been through it all before, but the two other Americans in the group were livid. We are very different in our responses to distress, us and the Brits. We throw ourselves into terror and officially respond with force, like the guy on the beach who had sand kicked in his face and comes back to knock out the sand-kicker. That only works on the back of comic books. I know where you stand (How long was that fight we had back in 2003? Is it actually over yet?) but I have to say that I agree with you: The Life is Sacred, no matter whose life it is.

Special on a Sad Day was written by Christopher J. Garcia. this issue was all by those noted. I want to thank everyone for taking the time to write in.