

# THE 51ST REASON

## → PAUL KRASSNER

Robert Sterling, editor of *The Konformist* (an online publication) was sitting around and thinking one day when he remembered a *Spy* magazine cover story in 1992 titled “1001 Reasons Not to Vote for George Bush.”

“Hey,” he said to himself, “somebody should do that for his piece-of-shit son.”

Then he realized that *he* could be that somebody.

But instead of 1001 reasons not to vote for George W., Sterling and Feral House publisher Adam Parfrey settled on 50, because: It would fit in less pages, making it more economical; it would be the best “all killer, no filler” collection; and 50 is a good number, as in the book *50 Ways to Save the Planet*.

Finding 50 reasons was the easy part. Too easy, in fact. The real problem was too much information rather than too little. Sterling’s plan was to give a catchy title for each reason, then get in and get out as quickly and as painlessly as possible. He sourced over 600 books and articles, so there was a great deal of research involved.

“It turns out,” he told me, “that showing what a creepy bastard Bush is takes more work than you’d think.”

When I was an adolescent searching for the meaning of life—at least for my own life—I attended a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism. There was a speaker there who looked like Tarzan at the age of 72, and he proclaimed the 11th Commandment: “Thou shalt not take thyself too god-damned seriously.” So now I find myself following his numerical lead by proposing the 51st reason not to vote for George Bush.

It isn’t because he has been raping the environment and is now telling us to go to Mars, attempting to divert public attention from his not having an exit strategy from Iraq by announcing that he *does* have an exit strategy from Earth. No, the 51st

reason not to vote for Bush is because he's Hitler. Former President Bush may have said, "Read my lips," but George W. is saying, "Read *Mein Kampf*."

In December 2000, the newly appointed "president" declared, "If this were a dictatorship, it'd be a heck of a lot easier, just so long as *I'm* the dictator," and now it feels like his wish is coming true. But this is not about Republicans and Democrats. It's about a fascist takeover. And I don't use that term loosely. It was Hitler's ally, Benito Mussolini, who said, "Fascism should be more properly called corporatism, since it is the merger of state and corporate power."

It was Joseph Goebbels, Reichminister of Propaganda, who wrote in his diaries that it was impossible to use advertising and manipulation of the news to turn all Germans into Nazis, but that he could set the parameters of conventional wisdom and alter the language, thus altering the rationality of the population. By presenting the war as necessary to Germany's survival and prosperity, and insisting that Hitler's regime was necessary to the successful prosecution of war, he could win over the vast majority of German citizens, with few dissenters, fearful of the state's police power.

And it was Holocaust orchestrator Hermann Goering who said, "Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders, that is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in every country."

An individual whose family members were victimized by Hitler writes: "Why, now, when I hear George W. Bush's speeches, do I think of Hitler? Why have I drawn a parallel between the Nazis and the present administration? Just one small reason—the phrase 'Never forget.' Never let this happen again. It is better to question our government—because it really can happen again—than to ignore the possibility. So far, I've seen nothing to eliminate the possibility that Bush is on the same course as Hitler. And I've seen far too many analogies to dismiss the possibility:

"The propaganda. The lies. The rhetoric. The nationalism. The flag waving. The pretext of 'preventive war.' The flouting of international law and international standards of justice. The disappearances of 'undesirable' aliens. The threats against protesters. The invasion of a non-threatening sovereign nation. The occupation of a hostile country. The promises of prosperity and security. The spy-

ing on ordinary citizens. The incitement to spy on one's neighbors—and report them to the government. The arrogant triumphant pride in military conquest. The honoring of soldiers. The tributes to 'fallen warriors.' The diversion of money to the military. The demonization of government-appointed 'enemies.' The establishment of 'Homeland Security.' The dehumanization of 'foreigners.' The total lack of interest in the victims of government policy. The incarceration of the poor and mentally ill. The growing prosperity of military ventures. The illusion of 'goodness' and primacy. The new *einsatzgruppen* forces—assassination teams. Closed extralegal internment camps. The militarization of domestic police. Media blackout of non-approved issues. Blacklisting of protesters, including the no-fly lists and photographing dissenters at rallies.

"There isn't much doubt in my mind—anyone who compares the history of Hitler's rise to power and the progression of recent events in the United States cannot avoid the parallels. It's incontrovertible."

George W. Bush has served as the official cheerleader for his time-warped advisers, insane with power, reeking with arrogance, and severely in need of compassion transplants. It's acceptable, of course, for right-wing radio talk-show hosts to refer to "Hitlery" Clinton, and for Rush Limbaugh to speak of "feminazis," and for the *New York Post* to describe Howard Dean as a follower of Goebbels. However, Bush and his administration have been treated with much deserved irreverence by some of the country's top comedians.

Mort Sahl: "Bush is the first president who likes to hang around with his father's friends."

Jon Stewart: "If the events of September 11th have proven anything, it's that the terrorists can attack us, but they can't take away what makes us Americans—our freedoms, our liberty, our civil rights. No, only Attorney General John Ashcroft can do that."

Margaret Cho: "George Bush is not Hitler. He would be, if he fucking applied himself."

Bill Maher [*referring to Arnold Schwarzenegger's gubernatorial campaign*]: "Finally, a candidate who can explain the Bush administration's positions on civil liberties in the original German."

Jay Leno: "The United States is putting together a Constitution now for Iraq. Why don't we just give them ours? It's served us well for 200 years, and we don't appear to be using it any more. So what the hell?"

Harry Shearer [*referring to Bush's crusade to stamp out global terrorism*]: "It's like the war on drugs. It's a totally metaphorical war in which some people get killed. I expect the Partnership for a Terrorist Free America to start soon."

Actually, the War on Drugs—that is, the war on *some* people who use *some* drugs—has resulted in a larger number of African Americans being imprisoned than Jews incarcerated by the Nazi regime during its first several years.

According to the Drug Policy Alliance, "A little-known provision buried with the omnibus federal spending bill that the U.S. House of Representatives approved [on December 8, 2003] would take away federal grants from local and state transportation authorities that allow citizens to run advertising on buses, trains or subways in support of reforming our nation's drug laws. If enacted, the provision could effectively silence community groups around the country that are using advertising to educate Americans about medical marijuana and other drug policy reforms. Meanwhile, this same bill gives the White House \$145 million in taxpayer money to run anti-marijuana ads [in 2004]."

And if you've seen that insidious propaganda in the guise of public service announcements, you've seen fascism in action. But, in the interest of presenting a fair and balanced introduction to this book, allow me to quote Dennis Miller:

"People say I've slid to the right. Well, can you blame me? One of the biggest malfeasances of the left right now is the mislabeling of Hitler. Quit saying Bush is Hitler. Hitler is Hitler. That's the quintessential evil in the history of the universe, and we're throwing it around on MoveOn.org to win a contest. That's grotesque to me."

It had only been two entries out of 1500 in the MoveOn political ad competition that made the Hitler/Bush comparison, but never mind sacrificing perspective for the sake of agenda. I mean, if Tony Blair was George Bush's lap dog, then Dennis Miller is his poodle. And yet, paradoxically enough, I am now convinced that Miller is correct. There *is* a difference between Hitler and Bush. Hitler was elected.

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Paul Krassner edited *The Realist* (1958–2001) and is the author of *Murder At the Conspiracy Convention and Other American Absurdities*, with an introduction by George Carlin.