

Canadian journalist Rich Jones interviews Dr. Norberto Keppe
On SEPT. 16, 2001
About the terror attacks on the USA

RICH: We've just witnessed a terrorist attack on the U.S.¾unprecedented in my lifetime anyway. I think it's important to try to find some meaning in this, something that makes sense. You've been watching this very closely I know. What are your initial thoughts about the situation?

DR. KEPPE: Society has to be seen through the eyes of sociopathology. Hum an society has the same problems in terms of its pathology that individual human beings do. What does it mean when you see a person who is a terrorist, who creates severe problems for society? They are mentally sick psychotics acting in the larger field of society.

So if we see society as a body, a big body ... it has the same problems that a person has. The mentally ill try to attack and destroy the social body. Society is pathological, just like a human being. So we need to find ways of developing socio-therapy, therapy for society. In that way, society with stop spawning terrorists -- sick people that try to destroy it.

RICH: What do you mean by *pathological*?

DR. KEPPE: Pathological means sick. But we don't just see this sickness only in those who have been given a psychiatric diagnosis¾schizophrenics, manic-depressives --that sort of thing. Criminals, delinquents, and terrorists are pathological as well. They are people who are socially sick, who present a danger to society. They have the same sickness that someone in a psychiatric hospital has. So, we need to see that the mentally ill are not the only ones who can become dangerous -- criminals are also sick. They should be treated. It doesn't work just to build prisons, or mental hospitals. Prisons only make a person's sickness worse. And so can a psychiatric hospital. The more of these a country has, the worse it is for the country. Because if a country has a lot of criminals, it means that it has a very sick structure underneath. This is a symptom of the sickness of that society. And this structure creates an enormous group of pathological people who are very sick, as is the society from which they come.

RICH: How do we begin to treat society, to make it less sick?

DR. KEPPE: Society needs to modify its fundamental structure because peace comes from social justice. Any society, whether capitalist or socialist, that doesn't offer all individuals the possibility of living equally and reasonably in economic and social terms, will cause people to rebel against its structure, and the more delinquent ones to attack it. So the only way to treat a sick society is to structure it so everyone suffers less injustice, so that all people have the same rights. Modern societies don't

have the democracy they say they have. Not all people have the same chance to develop, are at the same level¼the same social level, the same economic level.

RICH: So you're talking about the society not giving equal rights to everyone. Does this mean that people who are very disturbed can sometimes rise to levels of power?

DR. KEPPE: Yes. The problem in society is that certain people in power have imposed their will to create a type of society that is unjust. For example, economically ... some people who have economic power, who have economic influence, want everything to favor their interests. They are sick and have created a bad social environment that people want to revolt against. So these sick people get together with other people in power, and this creates a pathological situation. It is actually socio-pathological.

My work for years has been to create a new scientifically-based social therapy. What I mean by this is to find a way to stop these very sick from creating problems for the rest of society. I see it in this way ... at the bottom you've got delinquents and at the top you have the socially sick and between these two extremes there is this arc. So there are two types of pathology that society should be conscious about.

RICH: It's very easy right now to focus the attention "out there". America is looking at "the war on terrorism". All these countries are joining in a fight against terrorism. As if the problem is in some organization, or a few evil people somewhere. Is this attitude a dangerous one?

DR. KEPPE: It's very dangerous to everybody, because even an attack that apparently comes from outside has a psychological mirror in the nation that was attacked. And if a nation experiences terrorism, it brings awareness that they have problems¼often the same problems that they are seeing in the others that they wish to retaliate against. The nation *must* begin to see that they have the same problems as those they are fighting against.

In fact, I have noticed that the more a nation is evolved, economically, technologically, the more terrorism it has. Modern society has created an extremely unjust economic situation in the world, which has caused very strong reactions. After all, economic injustice is a form of terrorism.

RICH: What are some of the tendencies then in human beings ... if the external terrorism is a reflection of internal terrorism, that is terrorism that's happening inside human beings, which gets reflected out ... what are some of the tendencies of human beings that we need to be aware of and careful of in this situation?

DR. KEPPE: Well, when we notice terrorism outside ourselves, we need to see that in a certain way, that terrorism also exists inside as well, in this case, inside the nation that sees the terrorism only outside itself. So we cannot say that certain nations are dangerous and others not. Terrorism is not a special problem of any particular nation. It's a universal problem, a world-wide problem. So if a nation sees terrorism coming only from outside, and is not from inside itself as well, it is actually in more danger than the nation that is willing to look at its own internal terrorism and take care of it in a more careful way.

So it is very dangerous to see the problem on the outside only. This raises the question of psychological projection, which is a process where the person sees his own problems in the other person. So a nation that only sees problems outside itself, becomes a very dangerous nation to itself, because it doesn't see the problems it has inside its own borders.

RICH: What do you mean by internal terrorism? How does it manifest in our world? How does it show up in our daily lives?

DR. KEPPE: Well, this terror or terrorism shows people how terrified they are of their own internal terrorism. Psychologically speaking, if an individual has self-destructive tendencies, it is very dangerous for him to only think in terms of being a victim of external terrorism, of external destruction. He forgets to see that he also has this tendency, that he has self-destructive attitudes. So it is very important for him to have consciousness of his own pathology, so he can then protect himself.

In the larger social sense, it is very important for a nation like America to begin to get conscious of the need to see the internal problems so they can protect themselves. Back in the '80s, I wrote a book about how to prevent the decay of American society (The Decay of the American People and Of Society, Proton Publishing 1986) and this book showed that if a country does not perceive its own pathology, its own social pathology, it will destroy itself¼as the Roman empire did, as the British empire did, as the French empire did, as the Russian empire, the Soviet Union did. Each country will destroy itself when it doesn't have consciousness of the problems, the dangers that it creates against its own existence.

RICH: Can you talk a bit more about this process of psychological projection? Why do we do this, project outside?

DR. KEPPE: The process of projection is the central point of an individual's sickness the sickness of society as well. It's a process that happens when someone who refuses to see his own problems begins to see the problem outside of himself. The same thing happens on a societal level. When a country doesn't see the problems it has¾it will begin to see those problems in

other countries. This becomes a source of tension between nations because instead of taking care of its own problems a country starts to believe that it has to destroy someone else to get rid of its problems^{3/4} problems that are not “out there,” but are actually inside itself.

This is very important to see: paranoia is created because human beings do not see the problems in themselves, and they create enormous difficulties, until they become delusional. The same thing will happen to a larger nation ... it will have delusions and bad relationships with other nations, unless it begins to have consciousness.

RICH: But how does projection apply when there's an obvious attack? How can we look at projection when America has obviously been attacked. Somebody's attacked the country. Is there not an enemy out there?

DR. KEPPE: In this case, we need to talk about the question of maturity. We should assume for example that the most advanced nation should be more mature, more evolved, more developed than the underdeveloped nations. But of course, an underdeveloped nation is sicker, and it tends to attack the more advanced nations.

We can look at this in a smaller way ... in a developed society, there are individuals who are sick. But just because these sick people attack others, it doesn't mean that they should be attacked themselves, or killed, or put in prison, or in mental hospitals. What that society has to do is help the sick people become conscious, or conscientized.

Likewise, the most important role of the more advanced society is to demonstrate a better society to the underdeveloped nations, so they understand, so they develop more culture, have more information. They should do this so that the most sick and underdeveloped nations can rise to the same level as the most developed ones.

Now, back to maturity. If a sick person attacks another, but the person he attacks is mature, the victim can handle the attack. This happens in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy all the time, where a sick individual will attack the analyst. It is the analyst's obligation, of course, to calm down the person, to bring him consciousness so that he can see that this is his own problem. So in the case of nations, a more advanced nation, if it is attacked by another it must work to make the other aware of their evil. Because if the more advanced nation attacks in response, it will lower itself to the same level, reduce itself to the same level of sickness as the attacking nation. So if a country declares war on another nation, it shows that the nation is very sick. Only a nation or a person that is very sick will attack another.

RICH: So I would guess you think that creating a war on terrorism is a bad idea ...

DR. KEPPE: Yes, because a war terrifies the whole world. When an individual terrorist or a group of terrorists attack a big country, when they attack society, society can defend itself because it is much, much bigger than the terrorist. But if a big society, like the first-world, starts a war, this is a greater terrorism. It puts the country that is waging the war on the same level as the lowly terrorist.

RICH: So, how should America handle the situation, as a mature nation?

DR. KEPPE: First it has to have consciousness, a lot of consciousness, because when a problem appears the country has to accept the awareness of that problem. It is not the problem itself that causes evil to the country. What causes difficulty is that the country tries to attack the consciousness of the problem that is showing up.

For example, if a mentally ill or neurotic person has some kind of difficulty, the first step in treating it is to accept awareness of the problem and not try to hide the problem by attacking others. In the case of terrorism in the United States, Americans must try to become fully aware of why these terror attacks occurred. What happened there? Was the attack only from another country, or group, or were the attackers linked to groups inside the US? Because if Americans, or any other country that has been attacked, do not learn to see terrorism as an internal problem as well, then the country will not be able to deal with any type of problem that might arise. It's not the problem of the terrorism itself that causes a nation's downfall, rather, it's not knowing how to deal with it. Or dealing with it through war. Because once you start a war, even bigger problems are created.

RICH: So what are the larger issues of society and human nature that we need to address? What do we need to become conscious of in order for us to deal with this situation?

DR. KEPPE: Through my discoveries in psychopathology, and social pathology, I have discovered that all people are sick. Nobody is a sane person. So what does this mean? It means that humanity doesn't have consciousness of its sickness. And not only individual sicknesses, physical or mental illness^¾but also social sicknesses that have turned society into something quite different. There is very big economic inequality between nations: white, asian or African, and society must begin to become aware of this problem. Not to solve it at first, but to start to become conscious of the problem so they can know how to deal with it maturely, to live with it until they figure out a way to solve it.

When person has a problem, he shouldn't just try to eliminate it. For example, if someone had a stomach ulcer and they had their stomach removed it wouldn't solve a thing. Similarly, a society shouldn't try to remove people and problems through war, terrorism, etc. To solve any problem, society must first begin to perceive the problems that exist so they can learn to live with them and little by little, a solution can be found.

By simply attacking the problem, they cover it up and the problem will become even worse. That's why the last century had two world wars. And if there is a third one, especially if it is an atomic one, it will be the end of humanity. Because here is the paradox: the more humanity develops, the more consciousness it has, the more problems it sees. And it must be careful not to repress this knowledge, because that will only cause more destruction. Society today has so much repression of its problems^{3/4}so many prisons and mental hospitals. There are lots of ways to eliminate criminals, sick people. But it is the society itself that is very sick. If a society has lots of sick people, it is because it is a sick society. So society has to perceive its degree of sickness in order for people to have a better life.

RICH: What would you like to say to America now, one thing that could help them in this terrible situation, what would it be?

DR. KEPPE: When I went to America in 1984, my intention was to help the American people. I think the American people suffer more than others. They are also very prone to attack others with war. But we all know that at the end of the day, the ones who are going to die are the people themselves, not the ones in power. So we went to the United States to help the people. But very sick people who were in key positions did not accept our work because our work challenged them.

So this illustrates the pathology of power. It is important to talk about this, because, in general, the average person is very peaceful. And they understood the work I did there. So solving the problems in a country means solving the problems created by the powerful groups and individuals who are very bad for the country. So I want to say that the American people are peaceful. They just want to live a normal life, like anybody^{3/4}South Americans, Africans, Asians, Europeans The thing that is stopping them from having a better life, a better world, a world where this World Trade Center problem does not repeat itself, are those in power who are interested in things that are outside of the interests of the people. They actually want to dominate the people, to have power, yet the average citizen has no idea that this is the fundamental problem affecting every nation on earth.

RICH: And yet, 80%, 90% of Americans say, we should go to war ...

DR. KEPPE: Because people are very much dominated by what you might call media consciousness, social consciousness. And the media influence people in such a way that their thoughts and desires are distorted. Like in Vietnam, in all the wars that Germany waged, that England waged^¾what happened was that the media, the communication power, persuaded people that it's very good to overcome problems through war. Although this backfired in Vietnam, because once lots of people started to die, there was resistance to the war^¾people began to see that this was not good for us.

So it's very important for people to see that if they are coerced into going to war, many of them are going to die, and no problem will be solved. Because any war brings a lot of underdevelopment and destruction. You don't get to good by going through evil. And any war is an evil to society. Any war that the world has, like the ones in the last century, retards the civilization of the whole world. Through war, nothing can be solved. Much to the contrary in fact. War will bring lots of other problems to the people, and the underlying issues^¾like the unjust social situation^¾will remain in the dark.

It is very important to become aware of problems that exist. And try to solve everything through diplomacy, through conversation, through agreements. So I would like to say that the person who wages war, a powerful person that wants war, doesn't have good intentions. He has to see, and we all have to see, what is behind that. If a person wants a war to solve a problem, no matter what it is, that person is either being directed and controlled by ill intentioned people, or he doesn't have enough maturity, because no one in the world should even THINK about making a war. Bill Clinton set a good example, because he always tried to solve things through dialogue. And we had a pretty peaceful period because of his attitude.

So what I'm saying is that no mature individual will try to solve a problem through war, or through a fight. There is a Chinese saying, that when you see two people talking, two people arguing, notice the one who loses his cool and attacks. This is the one who has lost his reason. So if a country declares war on another because of terrorism, it is because it puts itself on the same plane, on the same level as the attacker. An inferior level. A level with no reason. And nothing justifies a war.