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A Plan to Save Communism in the Soviet Union

115 • MIKHAIL GORBACHEV, PERESTROIKA

In the 1970s and early 1980s, the Soviet Union was viewed as one of the world's two superpowers, with an enormous army, a huge industrial establishment, a record of impressive technological achievement, and a seemingly unshakable authoritarian government. In reality, industrial output and agricultural production were stagnating, the people's morale was plummeting, and the fossilized bureaucracy was mired in old policies and theories that no longer worked. Against this background Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the Communist Party in March 1985 and began the task of rejuvenating Soviet communism by introducing policies based on *glasnost*, or openness, and *perestroika*, or restructuring.

Gorbachev, who was 54 years old when he took power, was born of peasant parents and had studied law and agricultural economics. After filling a variety of positions in the Communist Party, he became a member of the politburo in 1979. In 1987, he published a book, *Perestroika*, from which the following excerpt is taken. In it, he describes his goals for Soviet communism. He fell from power in 1991, with his reforms having led not to communism's reform but to its demise and not to the Soviet Union's revival but to its collapse.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What developments in the Soviet Union led Gorbachev to the conclusion that Soviet society and government were in need of reform?
2. In Gorbachev's analysis, what caused Soviet society to "lose its momentum"?
3. In Gorbachev's view, how will the "individual" in Soviet society be affected by his reforms?
4. To what extent is perestroika democratic?
5. What similarities and differences do you see between Gorbachev's statements about perestroika and Deng's comments about the needs of China (source 114)?

Russia, where a great Revolution took place seventy years ago, is an ancient country with a unique history filled with searchings, accomplishments, and tragic events. It has given the world many discoveries and outstanding personalities.

However, the Soviet Union is a young state without analogues in history or in the modern world. Over the past seven decades—a short span in the history of human civilization—our country has traveled a path equal to centuries. One of the mightiest powers in the world rose up to replace

Source: From *Perestroika* by Mikhail Gorbachev, pp. 18–19, 21–25, 30–36. Copyright © 1987 by Mikhail Gorbachev. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

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the backward semi-colonial and semi-feudal Russian Empire. . . .

At some stage—this became particularly clear in the latter half of the seventies—something happened that was at first sight inexplicable. The country began to lose momentum. Economic failures became more frequent. Difficulties began to accumulate and deteriorate, and unresolved problems to multiply. Elements of what we call stagnation and other phenomena alien to socialism began to appear in the life of society. A kind of “braking mechanism” affecting social and economic development formed. And all this happened at a time when scientific and technological revolution opened up new prospects for economic and social progress. . . .

Analyzing the situation, we first discovered a slowing economic growth. In the last fifteen years the national income growth rates had declined by more than a half and by the beginning of the eighties had fallen to a level close to economic stagnation. A country that was once quickly closing on the world’s advanced nations began to lose one position after another. . . .

. . . We spent, in fact we are still spending, far more on raw materials, energy, and other resources per unit of output than other developed nations. Our country’s wealth in terms of natural and manpower resources has spoilt, one may even say corrupted, us. . . .

The presentation of a “problem-free” reality backfired: a breach had formed between word and deed, which bred public passivity and disbelief in the slogans being proclaimed. It was only natural that this situation resulted in a credibility gap: everything that was proclaimed from the rostrums and printed in newspapers and textbooks was put in question. Decay began in public morals; the great feeling of solidarity with each other that was forged during the heroic times of the Revolution, the first five-year plans, the Great Patriotic War,¹

and postwar rehabilitation was weakening; alcoholism, drug addiction, and crime were growing; and the penetration of the stereotypes of mass culture alien to us, which bred vulgarity and low tastes and brought about ideological barrenness, increased.

. . . [M]ass distribution of awards, titles, and bonuses often replaced genuine concern for the people, for their living and working conditions, for a favorable social atmosphere. An atmosphere emerged of “everything goes,” and fewer and fewer demands were made on discipline and responsibility. Attempts were made to cover it all up with pompous campaigns and undertakings and celebrations of numerous anniversaries centrally and locally. The world of day-to-day realities and the world of feigned prosperity were diverging more and more. . . .

By saying all this I want to make the reader understand that the energy for revolutionary change has been accumulating amid our people and in the Party for some time. And the ideas of perestroika have been prompted not just by pragmatic interests and considerations but also by our troubled conscience, by the indomitable commitment to ideals which we inherited from the Revolution and as a result of a theoretical quest which gave us a better knowledge of society and reinforced our determination to go ahead.

Today our main job is to lift the individual spiritually, respecting his inner world and giving him moral strength. We are seeking to make the whole intellectual potential of society and all the potentialities of culture work to mold a socially active person, spiritually rich, just, and conscientious. An individual must know and feel that his contribution is needed, that his dignity is not being infringed upon, that he is being treated with trust and respect. When an individual sees all this, he is capable of accomplishing much.

¹World War II.

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Of course, perestroika somehow affects everybody; it jolts many out of their customary state of calm and satisfaction at the existing way of life. Here I think it is appropriate to draw your attention to one specific feature of socialism. I have in mind the high degree of social protection in our society. On the one hand, it is, doubtless, a benefit and a major achievement of ours. On the other, it makes some people spongers.

There is virtually no unemployment. The state has assumed concern for ensuring employment. Even a person dismissed for laziness or a breach of labor discipline must be given another job. Also, wage-leveling has become a regular feature of our everyday life: even if a person is a bad worker, he gets enough to live fairly comfortably. The children of an outright parasite will not be left to the mercy of fate. We have enormous sums of money concentrated in the social funds from which people receive financial assistance. The same funds provide subsidies for the upkeep of kindergartens, orphanages, Young Pioneer³ houses, and other institutions related to children's creativity and sport. Health care is free, and so is education. People are protected from the vicissitudes of life, and we are proud of this.

But we also see that dishonest people try to exploit these advantages of socialism; they know only their rights, but they do not want to know their duties: they work poorly, shirk, and drink hard. There are quite a few people who have adapted the existing laws and practices to their own selfish interests. They give little to society, but nevertheless managed to get from it all that is possible. . . .

The policy of restructuring puts everything in its place. We are fully restoring the principle of socialism. "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work," and we seek to affirm social justice for all, equal rights for all, one law

for all, one kind of discipline for all, and high responsibilities for each. Perestroika raises the level of social responsibility and expectation. . . .

It is essential to learn to adjust policy in keeping with the way it is received by the masses, and to ensure feedback, absorbing the ideas, opinions, and advice coming from the people. The masses suggest a lot of useful and interesting things which are not always clearly perceived "from the top." . . .

The Plenary Meeting encouraged extensive efforts to strengthen the democratic basis of Soviet society, to develop self-government and extend glasnost, that is openness, in the entire management network. We see now how stimulating that impulse was for the nation. Democratic changes have been taking place at every work collective, at every state and public organization, and within the Party. More glasnost, genuine control from "below," and greater initiative and enterprise at work are now part and parcel of our life. . . .

Perestroika means overcoming the stagnation process, breaking down the braking mechanism, creating a dependable and effective mechanism for the acceleration of social and economic progress and giving it greater dynamism.

Perestroika means mass initiative. It is the comprehensive development of democracy, socialist self-government, encouragement of initiative and creative endeavor, improved order and discipline, more glasnost, criticism, and self-criticism in all spheres of our society. It is utmost respect for the individual and consideration for personal dignity.

Perestroika is the all-round intensification of the Soviet economy, the revival and development of the principles of democratic centralism in running the national economy, the universal introduction of economic methods, the renunciation of management by injunction and by administrative methods, and the overall encouragement of innovation and socialist enterprise.

³A youth organization sponsored by the Soviet regime.

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Perestroika means a resolute shift to scientific methods, an ability to provide a solid scientific basis for every new initiative. It means the combination of the achievements of the scientific and technological revolution with a planned economy.

Perestroika means priority development of the social sphere aimed at ever better satisfaction of the Soviet people's requirements for good living and working conditions, for good rest and recreation, education, and health care. It means unceasing concern for cultural and spiritual wealth, for the culture of every individual and society as a whole.

Perestroika means the elimination from society of the distortions of socialist ethics, the consistent implementation of the principles of social justice. It means the unity of words and deeds, rights and

duties. It is the elevation of honest, highly-qualified labor, the overcoming of leveling tendencies in pay and consumerism.

I stress once again: perestroika is not some kind of illumination or revelation. To restructure our life means to understand the objective necessity for renovation and acceleration. And that necessity emerged in the heart of our society. The essence of perestroika lies in the fact that it *unites socialism with democracy* and revives the Leninist concept of socialist construction both in theory and in practice. Such is the essence of perestroika, which accounts for its genuine revolutionary spirit and its all-embracing scope.

The goal is worth the effort. And we are sure that our effort will be a worthy contribution to humanity's social progress.

Terrorism in a Global Age

On the morning of September 11, 2001, four U.S. commercial airliners—two from Logan Airport in Boston, one from Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C., and one from Newark International Airport in New Jersey—were hijacked shortly after departure by members of al-Qaeda, a terrorist organization founded in the 1980s by Osama bin Laden. One of the four jets was commandeered by passengers and crashed in a field in southwestern Pennsylvania with no survivors, but the other three found their targets. One was flown to Washington, D.C., where it crashed into the Pentagon, the symbol of U.S. military might; the other two were flown to New York City, where they smashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center, a symbol of U.S. capitalism. The twin towers were destroyed, more than 3,000 people were killed, and fighting terrorism became the priority of governments around the world.

Terrorism as a political weapon has a long history. Many histories of the subject begin with the first century C.E., when Roman authorities financed dissidents and malcontents to murder enemies in subject territories or neighboring states, and members of a small Jewish sect assassinated officials and prominent individuals in and around Jerusalem to bring about the end of Roman rule in Palestine. Terrorism's history includes the Persian religious sect, the Assassins, who used murder to end the rule of the Seljuk Turks in Southwest Asia; Catholics who sought to undermine England's Protestant government by plotting to blow up the houses of

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Parliament in 1605; and European anarchists and radical socialists who assassinated some 50 prominent politicians and heads of state from the late 1800s through the early 1900s. The assassination of Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz-Ferdinand in July 1914 by a member of the Serbian sect called "Union or Death" led directly to the outbreak of World War I one month later.

After subsiding during and after World War I, terrorism revived after World War II. Beginning in the late 1940s, terrorist acts have taken place in every part of the world and have been carried out by groups espousing many different causes: radical Zionists in post-World War II Palestine; anticolonialists in Africa and Asia; left-wing radicals in Europe; Arabs bent on the destruction of Israel; abortion foes in the United States; religious extremists in India, Northern Ireland, Indonesia, and Africa; enemies of apartheid in South Africa; and Chechen separatists in Russia, to name but a few. They also include obscure religious sects such as Aum Shinrikyo, whose members killed 12 and injured thousands when they released sarin gas in the Tokyo subway system in 1995; alienated individuals such as Theodore Kaczynski, the American opponent of technology whose letter bombs killed 3 and injured 23 before his arrest in 1997; and self-proclaimed patriots like Timothy McVeigh, who sought to strike a blow against the "tyranny" of the U.S. government in 1995, when his truck bomb destroyed the federal building in Oklahoma City and killed 168.

In recent decades, terrorism has been identified especially with the Middle East, whose peoples are both victims of terrorism and a major source of recruitment, organizational effort, and financing for terrorist activities around the world. Terrorist bombings, hijackings, kidnappings, and assassinations related to political and religious conflict in the region took more than 1,000 lives from the 1970s through the 1990s, but it was the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, that caused a seismic shift in world politics and made the prevention of terrorism the twenty-first century's first great challenge. The two sources in this section seek to provide insight into the beliefs and values of those who were responsible for that attack.

The Worldview of Osama bin Laden

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Osama bin Laden, the founder of al-Qaeda, was born in 1957 in Saudi Arabia, the son of a billionaire owner of a construction company and a cultured Syrian woman who was his tenth or eleventh wife. Young bin Laden led a privileged existence of private schooling, Scandinavian vacations, and English lessons in Oxford. At 17, he enrolled as a civil engineering student at King Abdul Aziz University in Jidda, Saudi Arabia, where he became interested in Islamic theology and forged

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friendships with Islamic radicals. In 1980, he went to the Pakistani–Afghan border to aid Afghan holy warriors, or mujahedeen, who were fighting Soviet troops who had invaded Afghanistan in late 1979 to prop up the pro-Soviet regime. Using his inheritance (perhaps as much as \$300 million), he organized an office to provide support and weapons for the thousands of Muslim volunteers; from the mid-1980s onward, he joined the fighting. Out of these contacts and activities, al-Qaeda (meaning “the base” in Arabic) took shape under bin Laden’s guidance.

On his return to Saudi Arabia, bin Laden became an outspoken critic of the Saudi regime for its corruption, secularism, and acceptance of the U.S. military presence during and after the first Persian Gulf War. In 1991, he fled to Sudan, where he extended and expanded al-Qaeda to include as many as several thousand agents who worked in cells ranging from the Philippines to the United States. Between 1992 and 1995, al-Qaeda was linked to attacks on U.S. troops in Yemen and Somalia, the bombing of an American-operated Saudi National Guard training center in Riyadh, and unsuccessful plots to assassinate Pope John Paul II, U.S. president Clinton, and Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. Under U.S. pressure, Sudan expelled bin Laden in 1996, forcing al-Qaeda to relocate its base to Afghanistan, which was coming under the control of the radical Islamic group known as the Taliban. Between 1996 and 2000, al-Qaeda was responsible for more acts of terrorism, including the car bombing of an apartment building in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, that killed 19 U.S. soldiers; the simultaneous bombings of U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya that killed 234 and injured several thousand; and the attack on the USS *Cole* in Aden, Yemen, that killed 17 U.S. sailors and wounded 39. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States invaded Afghanistan, ended Taliban rule, and smashed al-Qaeda headquarters and training camps. Bin Laden eluded capture, however, presumably moving to the mountainous region straddling the Pakistani–Afghan border.

Bin Laden has published little and as leader of a secret terrorist organization has given few interviews or public speeches. One exception is the speech he delivered to his followers in Afghanistan in August 1996 in which he “declared war” on the United States. Printed in Arabic-language newspapers and audiotaped for worldwide distribution, bin Laden’s speech describes his motives and priorities.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How does bin Laden perceive the Muslims’ place in the world? Who are their main enemies?
2. Why does bin Laden oppose the existing government of Saudi Arabia?
3. What are the goals of the “Zionist-Crusaders alliance,” according to bin Laden?
4. What lessons can be learned, according to bin Laden, by the U.S. response to terrorist attacks and military setbacks in Beirut, Aden, and Somalia?
5. Why is bin Laden convinced that Muslims will triumph in their struggle with the United States?
6. What do you perceive as bin Laden’s ultimate political and religious goals?

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It should not be hidden from you that the community of Islam has suffered from aggression, iniquity and injustice imposed on them by the Zionist-Crusaders alliance and their collaborators. . . . Their blood was spilled in Palestine and Iraq. The horrifying pictures of the massacre of Qana¹ in Lebanon are still fresh in our memory. Massacres in Tajikistan, Burma, Kashmir, Assam, the Philippines, Fatani, Oga-din, Somalia, Eritrea, Chechnya and in Bosnia-Herzegovina² took place, massacres that send shivers in the body and shake the conscience. All of this and the world watched and listened, and not only didn't respond to these atrocities, but also with a conspiracy between the USA and its allies and under the cover of the iniquitous United Nations the dispossessed people were even prevented from obtaining arms to defend themselves.

The people of Islam awakened and realized that they are the main target for the aggression of the Zionist-Crusaders alliance. All false claims and propaganda about "Human Rights" were hammered down and exposed by the massacres that took place against the Muslims in every part of the world. . . .

Today we work to lift the iniquity that had been imposed on the Umma [the Muslim community] by the Zionist-Crusaders alliance, particularly after they have occupied the blessed land of Jerusalem . . . and the land of the two Holy Places.³ . . . We wish to study the means by which we could return the situation [in Saudi Arabia] to

its normal path and to return to the people their own rights, particularly after the large damages and the great aggression on the life and the religion of the people. . . .

Injustice [in Saudi Arabia] had affected the people in industry and agriculture. It affected the people of the rural and urban areas. And almost everybody complains about something. The situation at the land of the two Holy Places became like a huge volcano at the verge of eruption that would destroy the Kuffar [non-believers] and the corruption and its sources. . . . People are fully concerned about their everyday living; everybody talks about the deterioration of the economy, inflation, ever increasing debts and jails full of prisoners.

Through its course of actions the regime has torn off its legitimacy:

(1) Suspension of the Islamic Sharia law and exchanging it with man-made civil law. . . .

(2) The inability of the regime to protect the country and allowing the enemy of the Umma, the American crusader forces, to occupy the land for the longest of years. . . . As a result of the policy imposed on the country, especially in the oil industry where production is restricted or expanded and prices are fixed to suit the American economy, ignoring the economy of the country. Expensive deals were imposed on the country to purchase arms. People are asking what then is the justification for the very existence of the regime?

But to our deepest regret the regime refused to listen to the people. . . .

Source: "Declaration of Jihad Against Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Mosques," from <http://azzam.com/html/articlesdeclaration.htm>.

¹In April 1996, the Israelis launched a two-week bombardment of territory in southern Lebanon against the terrorist group Hezbollah. On April 18, 100 civilians were killed when the Israelis shelled the battalion headquarters of a UN peacekeeping force where some 800 Lebanese had taken refuge. The Israelis blamed "technical and procedural errors," an explanation questioned by an official UN report.

²This is a rather wide-ranging list. The massacres in Assam, a province of northeastern India, were carried out by an Assam separatist group in 1990 and claimed several dozen victims, not all of whom were Muslims. Attacks on Burmese (Myanmar) Muslims in the early 1990s were carried out by Buddhists.

³Mecca, the birthplace of Muhammad and the site of the Kabah, Islam's holiest shrine, and Medina, the city to which Muhammad and his followers fled in 622 C.E. Both are in Saudi Arabia.

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The regime is fully responsible for what has been incurred by the country and the nation; however, the occupying American enemy is the principal and the main cause of the situation. Therefore efforts should be concentrated on destroying, fighting and killing the enemy until, by the Grace of Allah, it is completely defeated. . . .

...

It is incredible that our country is the world's largest buyer of arms from the USA and the area's biggest commercial partner of the Americans who are assisting their Zionist brothers in occupying Palestine and in evicting and killing the Muslims there, by providing arms, men and financial support. To deny these occupiers . . . the enormous revenues from their trade with our country is a very important help for our Jihad against them. . . .

We expect the women of the land of the two Holy Places and other countries to carry out their role in boycotting the American goods. If economic boycott is intertwined with the military operations of the Mujahedeen [holy warriors], then defeating the enemy will be even nearer, by the Permission of Allah. . . .

...

A few days ago the news agencies had reported that the Defense Secretary⁴ of the Crusading Americans had said that "the explosions at Riyadh and Al Khobar⁵ had taught him one lesson: that is, not to withdraw when attacked by coward terrorists."

We say to the Defense Secretary that his talk can induce a grieving mother to laughter! . . .

Where was this false courage of yours when the explosion in Beirut took place in 1983? You were turned into scattered bits and pieces at that time; 241 marine soldiers were killed.⁶ And where was this courage of yours when two explosions made you leave Aden in less than twenty-four hours?⁷ But your most disgraceful case was in Somalia;⁸ where you moved an international force, including twenty-eight thousand American soldiers. . . . However, when tens of your soldiers were killed in minor battles and one American pilot was dragged in the streets of Mogadishu you left the area carrying disappointment, humiliation, defeat and your dead with you. Clinton appeared in front of the whole world threatening and promising revenge, but these threats were merely a preparation for withdrawal. You have been disgraced by Allah and you withdrew; the extent of your impotence and weaknesses became very clear. . . .

Since the sons of the land of the two Holy Places feel and strongly believe that fighting against the nonbelievers in every part of the world is absolutely essential; then they would be even more enthusiastic, more powerful and larger in number upon fighting on their own land, the place of their births . . . They know that the Muslims of the world will assist and help them to victory. I say to you William [Perry] that these youths love death as you love life. They inherit dignity, pride, courage, generosity, truthfulness and sacrifice from father to father. They are most . . . steadfast at war. They inherit these values from their ancestors. . . .

⁴William Perry, secretary of defense between 1994 and 1997.

⁵In November 1995, a car bomb at a Saudi National Guard training center in Riyadh killed 5 Americans; the bombing of Khobar Towers, a U.S. Air Force housing complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killed 19 Americans.

⁶President Reagan ordered the withdrawal of Marine peacekeepers after a bomb killed 241 Marines and Navy seamen in October 1983 in Beirut.

⁷The Pentagon withdrew 100 army personnel after the U.S. embassy in Aden was bombed in 1993.

⁸President Clinton ordered the withdrawal of U.S. peacekeepers from Somalia by March 1994 after a clash with Somali warlords in Mogadishu in October 1993 resulted in the deaths of 18 Army Rangers.

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These youths believe in what has been told by Allah and His messenger about the greatness of the reward for the Mujahedeen martyrs. . . .

Those youths know that their reward in fighting you, the USA, is double their reward in fighting someone else. They have no intention except to enter paradise by killing you. . . .

In the heat of battle they do not care, and cure the insanity of the enemy by their "insane" courage. Terrorizing you, while you are carrying arms on our land, is a legitimate and morally required duty. It is a legitimate right well known to all humans and other creatures. Your example and our example is like a snake which entered into a house of a man and got killed by him. The coward is the man who lets you walk, while carrying arms, freely on his land and provides you with peace and security.

Those youths are different from your soldiers. Your problem will be how to convince your troops to fight, while our problem will be how to restrain our youths to wait for their turn in fighting. . . .

The youths hold you responsible for all of the killings and evictions of the Muslims and the violation of the sanctities, carried out by your Zionist brothers in Lebanon; you openly supplied them with arms and finance. More than 600,000 Iraqi children have died due to lack of food and medicine and as a result of the unjustifiable aggression imposed on Iraq and its nation.⁹

The children of Iraq are our children. You, the USA, together with the Saudi regime are responsible for the shedding of the blood of these innocent children. . . .

It is a duty now on every tribe on the Arab Peninsula to fight in the cause of Allah and to cleanse the land from those occupiers. Allah knows that their blood is permitted to be spilled and their wealth is a booty to those who kill them. . . . Our youths know that the humiliation suffered by the Muslims as a result of the occupation of their Holy Places cannot be removed except by explosions and Jihad.

⁹The alleged victims of economic sanctions imposed on Iraq after the first Persian Gulf War (1991).

The Final Step Toward Martyrdom

117 • MOHAMMED ATTA, THE LAST NIGHT

Mohammed Atta was born in a Cairo suburb on September 1, 1968, and died on September 11, 2001, when he flew a hijacked American Airlines passenger jet into one of the towers of the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan. The son of a lawyer, Atta graduated with a degree in architecture from Cairo University. He then moved to Hamburg, Germany, where he was a student at the Technical University. Devoted to Islam, he made a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1995, and on his return to Hamburg began an Islamic prayer group. At some point, he was recruited by al-Qaeda, and by the late 1990s, his Hamburg apartment was a meeting place for the Hamburg cell. Late in 1999, it is likely that he met Osama bin Laden at al-Qaeda's base in Afghanistan. In June 2000, Atta entered the United States and attended a flight school in Venice, Florida. In 2001, he briefly visited Germany and Spain and then returned to Florida, where he took additional flying lessons. On the morning of September 11, he and another conspirator drove from their motel in South Portland, Maine, to Portland International Airport, flew to Boston, and boarded American Airlines Flight 11.

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It was later discovered that Atta had left behind a bag containing airline uniforms, flight manuals, and a four-page document in Arabic, copies of which were also found in the effects of two of the other terrorists. The document is a list of instructions for the terrorists to review on the night of September 10. Excerpts from these instructions follow.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. According to Atta, how should the participants prepare themselves for what lies ahead of them?
2. Is Atta totally confident about the success of the mission? What might go wrong, and what can be done to prevent failure?
3. What rewards can the participants expect from their anticipated martyrdom?
4. What feelings does Atta express about the victims of their actions?
5. On the basis of this document, what conclusions can be drawn about Atta's and, by extension, the other participants' motives?

1. Make an oath to die and renew your intentions. Shave excess hair from the body and wear cologne. Shower.¹

2. Make sure you know all aspects of the plan well, and expect the response, or a reaction, from the enemy.

3. Read al-Tawba and Anfal² and reflect on their meanings and remember all of the things that God has promised for the martyrs.

4. Remind your soul to listen and obey and remember that you will face decisive situations that might prevent you from 100 percent obedience, so tame your soul, purify it, convince it, make it understand, and incite it.

5. Pray during the night and be persistent in asking God to give you victory, control and conquest, and that he may make your task easier and not expose us.

6. Remember God frequently, and the best way to do it is to read the Holy Quran. . . .

7. Purify your soul from all unclean things. Completely forget something called "this world."

Source: The original letter was translated by Capital Communications Group, Inc., Washington, D.C. Reprinted with permission.

¹These are ritual acts of self-purification to prepare oneself for martyrdom and salvation.

The time for play is over and the serious time is upon us. How much time have we wasted in our lives? Shouldn't we take advantage of these last hours to offer good deeds and obedience?

8. You should feel complete tranquility, because the time between you and your marriage [in heaven] is very short [soon to come]. Afterward begins the happy life, where God is satisfied with you, and eternal bliss "in the company of the prophets, the companions, the martyrs and the good people, who are all good company." . . .

9. Keep in mind that, if you fall into hardship, how will you act and how will you remain steadfast and remember that you will return to God and remember that anything that happens to you could never be avoided, and what did not happen to you could never have happened to you. . . .

10. Remember the words of Almighty God [lines from the Quran]: . . . "How many small groups beat big groups by the will of God." And his words: "If God gives you victory, no one can beat you. And if he betrays you, who can give you

²The ninth and eighth chapters (surahs) of the Quran, sometimes referred to as the "war chapters," they describe the need for holy war against Islam's persecutors.