

INSIDE: WHY THEY WANT TO KILL THE MOTOR INDUSTRY ● TALES FROM THE PLANET BIZARRE ● A LESSON IN DRUG ENFORCEMENT ● & MORE

The^{ColdType}READER

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The **ColdType** READER



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Hit me baby, one more time

From Britney to Barney, any music can drive you mad if it's played enough. And unlike with physical torture, you can't mentally prepare yourself, writes **Andy Worthington**

There's an ambiguous undercurrent to the catchy pop smash that introduced a pig-tailed Britney Spears to the world in 1999 – so much so that Jive Records changed the song's title to "... Baby One More Time" after executives feared that it would be perceived as condoning domestic violence.

It's a safe bet, however, that neither Britney nor songwriter Max Martin ever anticipated that this undercurrent would be picked up on by US military personnel, when they were ordered to keep prisoners awake by blasting earsplitting music at them – for days, weeks or even months on end – at prisons in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay.

The message, as released Guantánamo prisoner Ruhai Ahmed explained, was less significant than the relentless, inescapable noise. Describing how he experienced music torture on many occasions, Ahmed said, "I can bear being beaten up, it's not a problem. Once you accept that you're going to go into the interrogation room and be beaten up, it's fine. You can prepare yourself mentally. But when you're being psychologically tortured, you can't." He added, however, that "from the end of 2003 they introduced the music, and it became even worse. Before that, you could try and focus on something else. It makes you feel like you are going mad. You lose the plot, and

it's very scary to think that you might go crazy because of all the music, because of the loud noise, and because after a while you don't hear the lyrics at all, all you hear is heavy banging."

Despite this, the soldiers, who were largely left to their own devices when choosing what to play, frequently selected songs with blunt messages – "Fuck Your God" by Deicide, for example, which is actually an anti-Christian rant, but one whose title would presumably cause consternation to believers in any religion – even though, for prisoners not used to Western rock and rap music, the music itself was enough to cause them serious distress. When CIA operatives spoke to ABC News in November 2005, as part of a groundbreaking report into the use of waterboarding and other torture techniques on "high-value detainees" held in secret prisons, they reported that, when prisoners were forced to listen to Eminem's Slim Shady album, "The music was so foreign to them it made them frantic." And in May 2003, when the story broke that music was being used by US psyops teams in Iraq, Sgt. Mark Hadsell, whose favored songs were said to be "Bodies" by Drowning Pool and "Enter the Sandman" by Metallica, told *Newsweek*, "These people haven't heard heavy metal. They can't take it."

Depending on people's musical tastes, responses to reports that music has been

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used to torture prisoners often produces flippant comments along the lines of, “If I had to listen to David Gray’s ‘Babylon’/the theme tune from Barney (the purple dinosaur)/Christina Aguilera, I’d be crying ‘torture’ too.” But the truth, sadly, is far darker, as Hadsell explained after noting that prisoners in Iraq had a problem with heavy metal music.

“If you play it for 24 hours,” Hadsell said, “your brain and body functions start to slide, your train of thought slows down, and your will is broken. That’s when we come in and talk to them.”

Hadsell, like senior figures in the administration, was blithely unconcerned that “breaking” prisoners, rather than finding ways of encouraging them to cooperate, was not the best way to secure information that was in any way reliable, but the psyops teams were not alone. In September 2003, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the US military commander in Iraq, approved the use of music as part of a package of measures for use on captured prisoners “to create fear, disorient ... and prolong capture shock,” and as is spelled out in an explosive new report by the Senate Armed Services Committee into the torture and abuse of prisoners in US custody, the use of music is an essential part of the reverse engineering of techniques, known as survival, evasion, resistance, escape (SERE), which are taught in US military schools to train personnel to resist interrogation. The report explains:

“During the resistance phase of SERE training, US military personnel are exposed to physical and psychological pressures ... designed to simulate conditions to which they might be subject if taken prisoner by enemies that did not abide by the Geneva Conventions. As one ... instructor explained, SERE training is “based on illegal exploitation (under the rules listed in the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War) of prisoners over the last 50 years.” The techniques used in SERE school, based, in part, on Chinese Communist techniques used dur-

ing the Korean War to elicit false confessions, include stripping detainees of their clothing, placing them in stress positions, putting hoods over their heads, disrupting their sleep, treating them like animals, subjecting them to loud music and flashing lights, and exposing them to extreme temperatures. It can also include face and body slaps, and until recently, for some who attended the Navy’s SERE school, it included waterboarding.

The Senate Committee’s report, which lays the blame for the implementation of these policies on senior officials, including President George W. Bush, former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Dick Cheney’s former legal counsel (and now chief of staff) David Addington, and former Pentagon General Counsel William J. Haynes II, makes it clear not only that the use of music is part of a package of illegal techniques, but also that at least part of its rationale, according to the Chinese authorities who implemented it, was that it secured false confessions, rather than the “actionable intelligence” that the US administration was seeking.

The experiences of Binyam Mohamed and Donald Vance

In case any doubt remains as to the pernicious effects of music torture, consider the comments by Binyam Mohamed, a British resident still held in Guantánamo, who was tortured in Morocco for 18 months on behalf of the CIA, and was then tortured for four months in the CIA’s “Dark Prison” in Kabul, and Donald Vance, a US military contractor in Iraq, who was subjected to music torture for 76 days in 2006.

Speaking to his lawyer, Clive Stafford Smith, the director of the legal action charity Reprieve, Mohamed, like Ruhul Ahmed, explained how psychological torture was worse than the physical torture he endured in Morocco, where the CIA’s proxy torturers regularly cut his penis with a razor blade.

“Imagine you are given a choice,” he said. “Lose your sight or lose your mind.”

In Morocco, music formed only a small part of Mohamed's torture. Toward the end of his 18-month ordeal, he recalled that his captors "cuffed me and put ear-phones on my head. They played hip hop and rock music, very loud. I remember they played Meatloaf and Aerosmith over and over. I hated that. They also played 2Pac's, "All Eyez On Me," all night and all day. ... A couple of days later, they did the same thing. Same music. I could not take the headphones off, as I was cuffed. I had to sleep with the music on and even pray with it."

At the Dark Prison, however, which was otherwise a plausible re-creation of a medieval dungeon, in which prisoners were held in complete darkness and were often chained to the walls by their wrists, the use of music was relentless. As Mohamed explained: "It was pitch black, and no lights on in the rooms for most of the time ... They hung me up for two days. My legs had swollen. My wrists and hands had gone numb. ... There was loud music, Slim Shady and Dr. Dre for 20 days. I heard this nonstop, over and over. I memorized the music, all of it, when they changed the sounds to horrible ghost laughter and Halloween sounds. It got really spooky in this black hole. ... Interrogation was right from the start, and went on until the day I left there. The CIA worked on people, including me, day and night. Plenty lost their minds. I could hear people knocking their heads against the walls and the doors, screaming their heads off. ... Throughout my time, I had all kinds of music and irritating sounds, mentally disturbing. I call it brainwashing.

Vance's story demonstrates not only that the practice of using music as torture was being used as recently as 2006, but also that it was used on Americans. When his story broke in December 2006, the *New York Times* reported that he "wound up as a whistle-blower, passing information to the FBI about suspicious activities at the Iraqi security firm where he worked, in-

cluding what he said was possible illegal weapons trading," but that "when American soldiers raided the company at his urging, Mr. Vance and another American who worked there were detained as suspects by the military, which was unaware that Mr. Vance was an informer."

Vance, who was held at Camp Cropper in Baghdad, explained that he was routinely subjected to sleep deprivation, taken for interrogation in the middle of the night and held in a cell that was permanently lit with fluorescent lights. He added, "At most hours, heavy metal or country music blared in the corridor." Speaking to the Associated Press, he said that the use of music as torture "can make innocent men go mad," and added more about the use of music during his imprisonment, stating that he was "locked in an overcooled 9-foot-by-9-foot cell that had a speaker with a metal grate over it. Two large speakers stood in the hallway outside." The music, he said, "was almost constant, mostly hard rock. There was a lot of Nine Inch Nails, including 'March of the Pigs.' I couldn't tell you how many times I heard Queen's 'We Will Rock You.'" He said the experience "sort of removes you from you. You can no longer formulate your own thoughts when you're in an environment like that."

After his release, Vance said he planned to sue Rumsfeld on the basis that his constitutional rights had been violated, and he noted, "Saddam Hussein had more legal counsel than I ever had." He added that he had written a letter to the camp's commander "stating that the same democratic ideals we are trying to instill in the fledgling democratic country of Iraq, from simple due process to the Magna Carta, we are absolutely, positively refusing to follow ourselves."

Musicians take action

In December, Reprieve launched a new initiative, Zero dB (Against Music Torture), aimed at encouraging musicians to take a stand against the use of their music as

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torture instruments. This is not the first time that musicians have been encouraged to speak out. In June, Clive Stafford Smith raised the issue in the *Guardian* newspaper, and when, in an accompanying article, the *Guardian* noted that David Gray’s song “Babylon” had become associated with the torture debate after Haj Ali, the hooded man in the notorious Abu Ghraib photographs, told of being stripped, handcuffed and forced to listen to a looped sample of the song, at a volume so high he feared that his head would burst, Gray openly condemned the practice. “The moral niceties of whether they’re using my song or not are totally irrelevant,” he said. “We are thinking below the level of the people we’re supposed to oppose, and it goes against our entire history and everything we claim to represent. It’s disgusting, really. Anything that draws attention to the scale of the horror and how low we’ve sunk is a good thing.”

In a subsequent interview with the BBC, Gray complained that the only part of the torture music story that got noticed was its “novelty aspect” – which he compared to Guantánamo[’s] Greatest Hits – and then delivered another powerful indictment of the misappropriation of his and other artists’ music:

“What we’re talking about here is people in a darkened room, physically inhibited by handcuffs, bags over their heads and music blaring at them for 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” he said. “That is torture. That is nothing but torture. It doesn’t matter what the music is – it could be Tchaikovsky’s finest or it could be Barney the Dinosaur. It really doesn’t matter, it’s going to drive you completely nuts. No-one wants to even think about it or discuss the fact that we’ve gone above and beyond all legal process and we’re torturing people.”

Not every musician shared Gray’s revulsion. Bob Singleton, who wrote the theme tune to Barney, which has been used extensively in the War on Terror, acknowledged in an op-ed for the *Los Angeles Times* in July

that “if you blare the music loud enough for long enough, I guess it can become unbearable,” but refused to accept either that songwriters can legitimately have any say about how their music is used, or that there were any circumstances under which playing music relentlessly at prisoners could be considered torture.

“It’s absolutely ludicrous,” he wrote. “A song that was designed to make little children feel safe and loved was somehow going to threaten the mental state of adults and drive them to the emotional breaking point?”

“The idea that repeating a song will drive someone over the brink of emotional stability, or cause them to act counter to their own nature, makes music into something like voodoo, which it is not.”

Singleton was not the only artist to misunderstand how the use of music could indeed constitute torture – especially when used as part of a package of techniques designed to break prisoners.

Steve Asheim, Deicide’s drummer, said: “These guys are not a bunch of high school kids. They are warriors, and they’re trained to resist torture. They’re expecting to be burned with torches and beaten and have their bones broken. If I was a prisoner at Guantánamo Bay and they blasted a load of music at me, I’d be like, ‘Is this all you got? Come on.’ I certainly don’t believe in torturing people, but I don’t believe that playing loud music is torture either.”

Enthusiastic support

Furthermore, other musicians have been positively enthusiastic about the use of their music. Stevie Benton of Drowning Pool, which has played to US troops in Iraq, told *Spin* magazine, “People assume we should be offended that somebody in the military thinks our song is annoying enough that played over and over it can psychologically break someone down. I take it as an honor to think that perhaps our song could be used to quell another 9/11 attack or something like that.”

Fortunately, for those who understand that using music as part of a system of torture techniques is no laughing matter, the Zero dB initiative provides the most noticeable attempt to date to call a halt to its continued use. Christopher Cerf, who wrote the music for Sesame Street, was horrified to learn that the show's theme tune had been used in interrogations. "I wouldn't want my music to be a party to that," he said.

Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine has been particularly outspoken in denouncing the use of music for torture. In 2006, he said to *Spin* magazine: "The fact that our music has been co-opted in this barbaric way is really disgusting. If you're at all familiar with ideological teachings of the band and its support for human rights, that's really hard to stand." On last year's world tour, Rage Against the Machine regularly turned up on stage wearing hoods and orange jumpsuits, and during a recent concert in San Francisco, Morello proposed taking revenge on President Bush: "I suggest that they level Guantánamo Bay, but they keep one small cell, and they put Bush in there ... and they blast some Rage Against the Machine."

And on Dec. 11, just after the Zero dB initiative was announced, Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails posted the following message on his blog:

"It's difficult for me to imagine anything more profoundly insulting, demeaning and enraging than discovering music you've put your heart and soul into creating has been used for purposes of torture. If there are any legal options that can be realistically taken they will be aggressively pursued, with any potential monetary gains donated to human rights charities. Thank GOD this country has appeared to side with reason, and we can put the Bush administration's reign of power, greed, lawlessness and madness behind us."

Even James Hetfield of Metallica, who has generally been portrayed as a defender of the US military's use of his band's mu-

sic, has expressed reservations. In a radio interview in November 2004, he said that he was "proud" that the military had used his music (even though they "hadn't asked his permission or paid him royalties"). "For me, the lyrics are a form of expression, a freedom to express my insanity," he explained, adding, "If the Iraqis aren't used to freedom, then I'm glad to be part of their exposure." Hetfield laughed off claims that music could be used for torture, saying, "We've been punishing our parents, our wives, our loved ones with this music forever. Why should the Iraqis be any different?"

Relentless

However, he also acknowledged the reason that the military was using his music: "It's the relentlessness of the music. It's completely relentless. If I listened to a death metal band for 12 hours in a row, I'd go insane, too. I'd tell you anything you wanted to know."

While these musicians have at least spoken out, others – including Eminem, AC/DC, Aerosmith, the Bee Gees, Christina Aguilera, Prince and the Red Hot Chili Peppers – remain silent about the use of their work.

Britney Spears' views are also unknown, but if her comments to CNN in September 2003 are anything to go by, it's unlikely that she would find fault with it. When Tucker Carlson said to her, "A lot of entertainers have come out against the war in Iraq. Have you?" Britney replied, "Honestly, I think we should just trust our president in every decision he makes and should just support that, you know, and be faithful in what happens." Perhaps she should speak to Pamela Anderson, who recently posted a simple message to Barack Obama on her blog: "Please Shut down Guantánamo Bay – figure it out – make amends/stop torture – it's time for peaceful solutions." **CT**

Andy Worthington is a writer and historian and author of The Guantánamo Files.

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Detering torture through the law

Convicting government officials for condoning torture is not vengeance, say **Coleen Rowley & Ray McGovern**. The key goal is deterrence, the most important goal of the criminal justice system

With virtually no opposition, the president was allowed to declare the country in a “war on terror” and consider himself above the law

First, let’s kill all the lawyers” may have made sense in that Shakespearean scene, but there is a far simpler solution to the legal ambiguities regarding what to do now about the torture approved by President George W. Bush. We suggest this variant: First, let’s have the lawyers review their notes from Criminal Justice 101.

The professor whom Coleen Rowley had for that course at the University of Iowa was the consummate curmudgeon. He kept repeating himself. It is now clear why. The old fellow hammered home the basic purposes of the criminal justice system and the various kinds and degrees of criminal intent. For Rowley, 24 years as a FBI special agent and attorney helped make it all real. Eight years of the Bush/Cheney administration have served to make the matter of criminal intent the first essay question on the final exam for Criminal Justice 101, so to speak. But obfuscation (much of it deliberate) reigns; worst of all, it impedes the important task of seeking accountability for those responsible for torture.

Criminal intent comes in essentially three kinds: No one needs much help understanding the “deliberate-premeditated-cold blooded” first-degree intent, because that’s the stuff of the movies – the perfect murder scheme or elaborate plot to pull off the heist of the century. “Second-degree in-

tent” is also easy to grasp. It is the usual label for what prompts people to commit unplanned crimes in the heat of passion, for example.

It was to that third type of guilty intent – “recklessness” – that the old law professor devoted most emphasis, using his favorite “Russian Roulette” hypothetical to distinguish it from the first two types and from mere negligence. His words still ring: “One cannot simply put a gun on a table knowing there is a bullet in the cylinder, spin the cylinder, point it at a person, pull the trigger and then say (when it goes off), ‘It’s not my fault, because I was hoping it would spin to one of the empty chambers.’”

The evidence on the Bush administration’s torture decisions, which is becoming more abundant and damning as the weeks go by, rules out second-degree intent; ie, unplanned crimes in the heat of passion. These decisions were much more deliberate. As the saying goes, after 9/11 “everything changed.” With virtually no opposition, the president was allowed to declare the country in a “war on terror” and consider himself above the law.

Indeed, after his address to the nation on the very evening of 9/11, Bush assembled his top aides in the White House bunker and set a lawless path from the start. One of the aides present, Richard Clarke, has written in his memoir, *Against All Enemies*

mies, that the president insisted: “[W]e are at war...Nothing else matters...Any barriers in your way, they’re gone...I don’t care what the international lawyers say, we are going to kick some ass.”

A bipartisan report released on Dec. 15, Senate Armed Services Committee Inquiry Into the Treatment of Detainees in US Custody, highlights in its “First Conclusion” the fact that on Feb. 7, 2002 the president issued a written determination that the Geneva protections for POWs did not apply to al-Qaeda or Taliban detainees; and that following that determination, techniques like water boarding were authorized for use in interrogation. The US Supreme Court ruled in June 2006 that such detainees could not be exempted from the protections of Geneva, despite efforts to “redefine the law to create the appearance of legality” for aggressive techniques, as the recent Senate report puts it.

Administration apologists, from Rush Limbaugh to Attorney General Michael Mukasey claim that none of those who approved or conducted torture had guilty intent, but were only trying to protect national security. (That’s right – the same Mukasey who professes not to know whether water boarding is torture.)

Mukasey’s sophistry calls to mind the disingenuous argument of other administration lawyers that one could apply harsh interrogation techniques to a detainee, as long as your intent is not to inflict pain but rather to obtain information. Not to mention the pithy hint provided by a CIA attorney: “If the detainee dies, you’re doing it wrong.”

Add to this mix the remarkable guidance of Justice Department counsel, Jay Bybee (now a federal judge), quoted in the Senate report: “Violent acts aren’t necessarily torture; if you do torture, you probably have a defense; and even if you don’t have a defense, the torture law doesn’t apply if you act under the color of presidential authority.”

Clearly, the so-called “rotten apples” sat

atop the proverbial barrel, as the Senate report demonstrates time and time again. If you’d like still more proof of premeditation and you missed Vice President Dick Cheney on ABC TV bragging about his role in facilitating water boarding, please read the transcript.

Cheney’s was the familiar above-the-law attitude, a reprise on his contemptuous “So?” – in this case meaning, “So what are you going to do about it?” With Cheney admitting to his key role in water boarding, Mukasey is no doubt relieved that during his confirmation hearing he obeyed White House instructions to stonewall all attempts to get him to concede what the whole world knows – that water boarding is torture. Indeed, the law is not in question. Water boarding was wrong during the Spanish Inquisition and during the Spanish-American war in the Philippines. It was illegal during WW-II. Americans as well as Japanese have been convicted and severely punished for it.

For those, who despite the above prefer to give President Bush the benefit of the doubt regarding first-degree intent, should know that the third type of guilty intent, recklessness, also applies – in spades.

For example, Cheney’s lawyer, David Addington, and then-White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales dissed the hapless former Gen. Colin Powell, who as secretary of state wrote to the White House in January 2002:

“A determination that Geneva does not apply could undermine US military culture which emphasizes maintaining the highest standards of conduct in combat, and could introduce an element of uncertainty in the status of adversaries.”

A pity Powell did not have the courage of his convictions, for he now has reason to be concerned about an eventual conviction of a different kind. Beneath the circumlocution quoted above is his clear appreciation that, if he did not fight against what was clearly in the cards, torture was likely to sully the Army and the nation to both of

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Barack Obama must order an abrupt halt to torture, as he has promised – and preferably on January 20, right after he is sworn in as president

Coleen Rowley, a FBI special agent for almost 24 years, came to national attention in June 2002, when she testified before Congress about serious lapses before 9/11 that helped account for the failure to prevent the attacks.

Ray McGovern, a CIA analyst for 27 years, now works with Tell the Word, the publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. Both are members of the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)

which he owed so much.

“Could introduce an element of uncertainty in the status of adversaries,” writes Powell. Could introduce, say, reckless Russian roulette. In his interview with ABC, Cheney put the old law professor’s hypothetical smoking gun right out there on the table. A widespread lack of understanding regarding the purposes served by the criminal justice system – and the penal system – is a major obstacle to even entertaining the thought of prosecuting administration officials for torture. All too many pundits are claiming that the country should simply move on and just close the book on this painful chapter – and that to do otherwise would simply be to try to extract vengeance.

But it is not about vengeance. The key goal here is deterrence – the final and most important goal of our criminal justice and penal systems in such circumstances.

At this point, the emphasis needs to be on establishing the facts – not punishment. Priority must be given to determining how our country ended up torturing people. Just as Cheney has termed water boarding a “no brainer,” it is equally a “no brainer” that we must focus now on his self-admitted role, as well as the revelations in the Senate report and other evidence that has come to light. An independent prosecutor like Patrick Fitzgerald would not need a lot of time to establish the facts.

Our country’s values and the immorality of torture are important considerations. And the law, of course, is also key – or should be.

Seldom have we seen it more cynically twisted and abused. But here is something else that must be thrust into public consciousness – the reality that, TV hero Jack Bauer’s mythical exploits aside, torture never can be counted upon to yield reliable information.

THAT is the quintessential “no brainer.” For, as the head of US Army intelligence, Lt. Gen. John Kimmons, asserted on September 6, 2006: “No good intelligence is going

to come from abusive practices. I think history tells us that. I think the empirical evidence of the last five years, hard years, tells us that.”

Let us have no backsliding. Barack Obama must order an abrupt halt to torture, as he has promised – and preferably on January 20, right after he is sworn in as president. A timely report from an independent prosecutor would surely be helpful in buttressing and justifying that order.

Before the Senate Armed Services Committee released a summary of its report on Dec. 11, and before Cheney threw down the gauntlet four days later, what seemed to make the most sense was the more gradual approach proposed by the lawyer/writer, Scott Horton (see December issue of *Harp-er’s*). Horton calls for the appointment of a commission peopled by men and women of unimpeachable integrity, in order to “provide a comprehensive narrative, setting out in detail how US torture policy came to be formed and identifying the key actors and the decisions they made.” An excellent approach. And this, of course, is where the penal factors and deterrence would come very much to the fore.

It is important to point out that the independent prosecutor and the commission approaches are in no way mutually exclusive. If both can be done expeditiously, both should be approved. What Horton may not have anticipated is that, in releasing the shatteringly candid results of their Senate committee’s two-year investigation, Senators Carl Levin and John McCain have named names, jump-starting – and hopefully shortening – deeper investigation.

It may be a hopeful sign of the times that on Dec. 18, even the editors of the *New York Times* lifted their heads out of the sand long enough to endorse the importance of doing what is necessary to deter crimes like torture: “Unless the nation and its leaders know precisely what went wrong in the last seven years, it will be impossible to fix it and make sure those terrible mistakes are not repeated.” **CT**

Through Cheyney's looking glass

The Vice President is like a character from Charles Dickens,
writes **John S. Hatch**

"Let the jury consider their verdict," the King said, for about the twentieth time that day.

"No, no!" said the Queen. "Sentence first – verdict afterwards!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Alice loudly. "The idea of having the sentence first!"

"Hold your tongue!" said the Queen, turning purple.

"I won't!" said Alice.

"Off with her head!" the Queen shouted at the top of her voice.

Aside from writing the above delightful lines, Lewis Carroll was a master at constructing sorites, or parasylllogisms, that is, logical arguments with several premises. Very difficult to solve, but even more so to create. He was a genius, and used his knowledge of logic to exploit its opposite, with immortal results

As a gifted writer of nonsense fiction and verse, perhaps Carroll would have found some slight admiration for Vice President Dick Cheney, if not for his eloquence, at least for his effrontery of logic. Of course Carroll's own effrontery was constructive and loving, so maybe not.

"We don't torture," said Sneer, sneering. "Stuff and nonsense!" said Alice. "Of course you do. It's as plain as a rose by any other name. And it stinks." "I swear on my Bybee,"

said Sneer, holding his breath and turning very Cabernet Sauvignon colored. Alice feared he might have a heart attack, although she didn't hope for one. Preposterously, she dreamed of longevity in a jail cell. She tried to think of at least one impossible thing a day, and sometimes two. His cell walls wouldn't be smeared in blood and feces, and its floor wouldn't be littered with broken teeth. But he'd be in it. Maybe Halliburton built the place, so he might be electrocuted when he took a weekly shower. There would be Tasers, and pepper spray, and dogs, and constant terror. He would pray for death. Enough! Punches. Rotten food. No medical attention. Beastly company. Screams in the night. Despair.

Jay Bybee (now a judge on the appeals court, ninth circuit), with the help of John Yoo (comfortably tenured law professor at Berkeley) was commissioned by Sneer to come up with the following logic-defying conclusion:

"Unless the amount of pain administered to a detainee during an interrogation results in injury such as death, organ failure, or serious impairment of body functioning, then it's not torture."

Oh. Pardon me.

Well, what about Mr. Frosty? He was a 'ghost detainee' by the name of Manadel al-Jamadi, an invisible prisoner of the CIA

"Unless the amount of pain administered to a detainee during an interrogation results in injury such as death, organ failure, or serious impairment of body functioning, then it's not torture"

At the morgue, his body was dropped several times. Then it was stored unrefrigerated. A bucket containing his internal organs was left on a tarmac in the hot sun for hours

in November 2003, in Iraq at Abu Ghraib prison, Saddam's (then Bush's) notorious torture jail in Baghdad. Already with six broken ribs, he was shackled from behind his back to window bars above his head. Imagine that, please. The horror. He hadn't done anything. It would be quite hard to breathe.

Aside from the broken ribs, he was pretty banged up, with damage to his left eye and facial cuts. A sandbag had been placed over his head and face. After he died, his body was covered in ice, and Sneer's proud defenders of freedom and democracy had trophy photos of themselves taken with him, thumbs up. Is he a candidate? Of course no charges were filed. After all, it was the CIA who did it.

Or what about General Monsoush? Unfortunately, he doesn't have a cute nickname, ('Mr. Monny'?) but he turned himself in after his four sons were kidnapped and imprisoned by the brave freedom lovers. After being beaten with sledge hammer handles (the slouches only broke five ribs, but made up for it in contusions and bruising), he was allowed to see his youngest son, Mohammed, who was fifteen. The General wept.

The democracy people then told the General that Mohammed would be executed (well, with a name like that!) They took Mohammed out of his father's view and fired a gun. Probably the General wept some more. They said they would kill his other sons. Then they stuffed him into a sleeping bag head first, broken ribs and all, and sat upon him. He died. But at least there were consequences, for once. The low-ranking officer, Lt. Col. Jameel who emphatically didn't murder him (the military claimed death by natural causes) received a reprimand and a small fine. Justice is so sweet! Does the General qualify? He certainly suffered serious impairment of body functioning. It sort of stopped, permanently.

No? Well what about Nagam Sadoon Hatab? With such a funny name you just

know something bad had to happen. He was an Iraqi scooped in June 2003 (the military admits that 70-90% of Afghans and Iraqis arrested are innocent, so the real figure is probably 95-98%).

He was brought to a holding camp close to Nasiriyah. He was savagely karate kicked while handcuffed and hooded. Is that terror or what? Terrific? He became ill. Medical staff, or whatever concluded that he might be faking. He was dragged by the neck outside and left in the hot sun (130° or so). It's called sun punishment. He died. (The democracy-spreaders beat imprisoned people for begging for water.)

At the morgue, his body was dropped several times. Then it was stored unrefrigerated. A bucket containing his internal organs was left on a tarmac in the hot sun for hours. Body parts ended up in Washington and Germany, while the hyoid bone, which would have proved strangulation, disappeared. A magic trick. A common ruse is to forego autopsy, dismiss results if done by outside pathologists, fail to interview witnesses, lose evidence or falsify evidence, flat out lie, or simply refuse to investigate in the first place.

Get rid of whistleblowers, no matter how high ranking. Might Nagam be considered? Was that sufficient organ failure? Should he have done more for democracy?

But enough. Abdul Jaleel. Mohammed Munim Izmerly. Dilar Dababa. Hundreds or thousands of others. Bagram. Camp Cropper. Abu Ghraib. Guantanamo. The Brick Factory. Camp Bucca. The Salt Pit. Whitehorse. Navy ships. A hundred or a thousand others. Tasers. Sledgehammer handles. Phosphoric acid. Deprivations. Feigned executions. Fists. Karate kicks. Knives. Dogs. Stress positions. Dragged by the throat. On a rope. Dragged by the penis on a rope. Being urinated upon. Rape. Sodomy. Sodomy of children. A hundred or a thousand others. Enough!

Navy Seals, Blackwater mercenaries, Military Intelligence, OGA (CIA), random military thugs, and a hundred or a thou-

sand others. Enough!

Sneer has had a lot of power, and has used it with a maliciousness that has never before been seen in a Vice President. But even he doesn't have the power to alter the meaning of words, or to change reality. A bipartisan Armed Services Committee has found 17-0 that the Bush/Cheney torture policy was established at the highest level of the sick and sadistic Bush Administration even before the convoluted logic of the Bybee/Yoo Torture Memo was conjured by those Mad Hatters.

Now Sneer is admitting that he set the Dark Age rack wheels in motion. Even bragging about it. He's proud of waterboarding, which was uncontestedly considered torture during the Spanish Inquisition, when Americans did it in the Philippines, and when Japanese soldiers were rightfully convicted under the Geneva Conventions of having done it to Americans during WWII. Sometimes the Geneva Conventions come in handy. Sometimes not. Same

with the Constitution, apparently. Piece of paper. Indeed. 180 countries recently voted to consider food for children a human right. The sole dissenter? That's right.

A pardon by Bush or a passive pardon by President-elect Obama (by pretending nothing happened) will mean that although Cheshire Cheney might fade away, his evil sneer will remain to cast a pall over the future as well as the past.

Torture is the most vile behavior to which human beings can stoop. Nothing is lower, not even murder. That Bush/Cheney would even torture children speaks to the vile and sadistic nature of that insane bully Administration, which has not only disgraced itself, but also diminished all of mankind, perhaps for centuries.

And the fools all claim to be Christians.

And fools believed them.

It must not be allowed to stand. **CT**

John S. Hatch is a Vancouver writer and film maker.

Now Sneer is admitting that he set the Dark Age rack wheels in motion. Even bragging about it

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Tasers are an outrage we must resist

Britain is following the US lead in its move towards a culture of assault by electricity, writes **Johan Hari**

The electricity made him spasm; as he fell to the ground, he felt his teeth scatter on the tarmac and his bowels open

Daniel Sylvester can't forget the night the police fired 50,000 volts of electricity into his skull. The 46-year-old grandfather owns his own security business, and he was recently walking down the street when a police van screeched up to him.

He didn't know what they wanted, but obeyed when they told him to approach slowly. "I then had this incredible jolt of pain on the back of my head," he explains. The electricity made him spasm; as he fell to the ground, he felt his teeth scatter on the tarmac and his bowels open.

"Then they shot me again in the head. I can't describe the pain." (Another victim says it is "like someone reached into my body to rip my muscles apart with a fork.") The police then saw he was not the person they were looking for, said he was free to go, and drove off.

This did not happen in Egypt or Saudi Arabia or any other country notorious for using electro-shock weapons. It happened in north London and, if the Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, has her way, it will be coming soon to a street near you. In Britain there are 3,000 police officers trained to use Tasers as part of specialised armed response units, but Smith has fired a jolt forward.

She wants there to be 30,000 Taser-carrying officers, authorised to use them

against unarmed citizens, including children. These "stun-guns" fire small metal darts into your skin, and through the trailing wires run an agonising electric current through your body.

Smith is right to say that the police face a growing threat of violence, and these heroic frontline officers must have the means to defend themselves. She's also right to argue it better to use a Taser than to use a gun. But the police can already swiftly call out armed response teams, equipped with Tasers and firearms. If we move beyond this to a widespread culture of assault by electricity, it will only endanger the police – and the rest of us.

Smith wants Tasers to be distributed well beyond the ranks of specially trained firearms officers, but Tasers can kill. Amnesty International has just published a report showing that, since 2001, 334 people have died in the US during or just after Taser-ing.

Jarrel Gray was a partially deaf 20-year-old black man involved in an argument in the street in Frederick County, Maryland, when the police approached him and ordered him to lie on the ground. He didn't hear them – so they Tasered him. As he lay paralysed on the ground, they told him to show his hands. He couldn't obey. They Tasered him again. Jarrel died in hospital two hours later.

Ryan Rich was a 33-year-old medical doctor who had an epileptic seizure while driving his car on a Nevada highway. He crashed into the side of the road. The police smashed a window to get into the car and Ryan woke up, startled. The police officer reacted by Taser-ing him repeatedly. Only when they were handcuffing him did they notice he was turning blue. He was dead before he got to hospital. The coroner noted dryly that the Taser “probably contributed” to his death. Taser International’s brochures claim their weapons have “no after-effects.”

There may, in fact, be even more deaths than are recorded. Taser International has responded to medical examiners saying their weapons kill not by changing their weapons, but by suing the medical examiners.

After the chief medical examiner of Summit Country, Ohio, ruled that Taser-ing caused the death of three young men, they sued her, and she was forced to remove the conclusions from her reports. The president of the National Association of Medical Examiners says Taser International’s behaviour is “dangerously close to intimidation”.

Corporate propaganda

Yet Smith appears still to be taking the corporate propaganda of Taser International – which dominates the international stun-gun market – at face value. The company is startlingly glib when its spiel begins to crumble. A recent scientific study conducted by biomedical engineers for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation found that nine per cent of the guns give a far larger electric shock than advertised.

Some sent a 58 per cent higher voltage through the victim’s body. Steve Tuttle, the vice-president of Taser, responded: “Regardless of whether or not the anomaly is accurate, it has no bearing on safety.”

The UK Defence Scientific Advisory Council has warned there is research suggesting that Tasers could cause “a serious cardiac event” when fired at children. But

still Smith won’t compromise.

Everyday on-the-beat policing does not happen in the tightly controlled scenarios imagined by the Home Office. It is messy and scrappy and carried out at high speed by people who are frightened and coursing with adrenaline: some 90 per cent of Tasered people in the US are unarmed. Matthew Fogg, who led a SWAT team in the US, warns that Tasers create a culture where “if I don’t like you, I can torture you”.

If we slip into that policing culture, mistrust and violence against police officers can only increase. That’s why so many senior police are highly sceptical about Smith’s plans, from the former head of the Flying Squad, John O’Connor, to the former head of the West Midlands Police, Barry Mason.

Far from lowering violence, Tasers seem to lower the threshold by which the police resort to violence – and criminals respond by lowering theirs. In the US, a 16-year-old schoolboy was Tasered by cops in a playground for “using profanity”; a dementia-riddled man in his eighties was shocked for urinating in the park; 50,000 volts were fired at a 17-year-old boy who had fallen off an overpass and broken his back.

The Metropolitan Police have said they won’t participate in Smith’s Taser roll-out because they know it’ll be particularly disastrous for relations with black and Asian communities. In the US, only 18 per cent of Tasered people are white. Imagine if the boys in Brixton and Moss Side weren’t just being stopped-and-searched – which creates enough grievance – but apprehended in this way. How many Taser attacks would have to make it onto YouTube before we have riots?

Daniel Sylvester still has nightmares about what happened to him. If we don’t stop Jacqui Smith, many more British people will be joining him – and we will all be in for a shock. **CT**

Johan Hari is a columnist with the London Independent, in which this article first appeared. j.hari@independent.co.uk

The Metropolitan Police have said they won’t participate in Smith’s Taser roll-out because they know it’ll be particularly disastrous for relations with black and Asian communities

License to steal

Tears for the rich; contempt for the poor. **Danny Schechter** on the \$50 billion con that rocked Wall Street

Many of these larger-than-life gangsters were anti-social outlaws robbing banks and the like. Now the banks are robbing us

Every era has its bad guy, its high profile criminal who flames into public view through media circuses and tabloid headlines. In the 1930's, there was Al Capone brought down by the taxman. In the 40's, Willie Sutton was a big bad guy who once said he robbed banks because "that's where the money is." In the 1950's the Mafia seized our attention, while here in New York we had George Metetsky, the mad bomber. In the 60's . . . well you know the saying: if you can remember that era, you weren't there. . . .

Many of these larger than life gangsters were anti-social outlaws robbing banks and the like. Now the banks are robbing us. Until he is outdone, we now have a new poster boy for Wall Street excess and larceny: the bland personage of Bernard Madoff, the consummate Wall Street insider, philanthropist and pillar of the financial community. He has now been credited in this credit crisis for the biggest theft in history.

Madoff seems to have won the gold medal for absconding with the most gold – to the tune of \$50 billion and counting. It was all, he admitted, a Ponzi scheme. He was a reverse Robin Hood: he took from the rich and enriched himself in a life style festooned with many houses, boats and stays at \$5000 a night hotels.

The notice

Go to The Madoff.com site today and there is this notice that thousands of investors are reading while holding back tears and outrage.

On December 15, 2008, the Honorable Louis L. Stanton, a Federal Judge in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, appointed Irving Picard as Trustee for the liquidation of Bernard L. Madoff Investments Securities LLC ("BMIS") pursuant to the Securities Investor Protection Act ("SIPA") as set forth in the attached order.

Mr. Picard supersedes Lee S. Richards, the previously appointed Receiver for BMIS and all claims by customers of BMIS will be processed by Mr. Picard as SIPA Trustee. Customers and claimants should refer to the website of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation for information about the processing of claims.

Mr. Richards continues to serve as Receiver for Madoff Securities International Ltd. pursuant to the attached order. The Trustee Irving Picard has engaged Lazard Frères & Co. LLC to assist in the sale of the trading operations of Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities LLC.

Should you have further questions, please contact the Trustee at the following number: 888-727-8695.

In short: Good Luck at Getting Any Of Your Money Back.

Whistleblower rebuffed

Of course this dry legalistic language doesn't tell the whole story, the story of the failure of the Regulators to act, or about the submission to the SEC on November 7 2005 of a 19 page detailed document charging that "The World's Largest Hedge Fund Is a Fraud."

It was written by financial expert Harry Markopolos and sent to the Securities and Exchange Commission with a request for deep confidentiality. He exposed the man now being called "made-off." The title of his report: "The World's Biggest Hedge Fund is a Fraud." It projected scenarios including this one:

"(Very Likely) in bold, "Madoff Securities is the World's largest Ponzi Scheme" He believed that "this would be another black eye for the brokerage industry."

Bingo!

Victims we can relate to

That black eye punch was never thrown. Instead, it was three years before Madoff went down. He continued to operate his con game, defrauding customers worldwide. At the same time, the investors he ripped off later became "sympathetic victims" in our media – like Steven Spielberg – as opposed to subprime home borrowers who were often demonized as schemers and told they were naïve and should have known better. A CNBC "documentary" showcased a parade of wealthy Madoff victims.

Bernie was a high flyer, a part of a clubby and incestuous elite world of golf clubs, resorts, and philanthropy with tax benefits. He was a leader of the Wall Street world, at one point the Chairman of NASDAQ. Universities invited him to lecture on how markets work. He was admired, considered a role model, a genius. His firm handled 10% of all Stock Exchange trades.

His niece married an SEC regulator. Mary Schapiro, Barack Obama's pick to

lead the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), previously appointed one of his sons to a regulatory body that oversees American securities firms. Madoff himself said he had often visited the SEC where he complained of over regulation.

Bernie was in until he was out!

Soon he was wearing an electronic bracelet and under house arrest, a further sign of privileged treatment, by the way. Imagine what secrets he could spill. Already the *New York Times* is reporting that this theft problem went much deeper with all the Wall Street firms posting phony profit reports and then giving themselves juicy bonuses. A financial blogger wrote that the *Times* was still obscuring the story because the practice constitutes nothing less than looting, a word they never use.

Unfortunately, Madoff was not unique, not alone, but he was shrewder than the people who trusted him to make earn a good return. One financial analyst said that some of his investors assumed he was doing something illegal – perhaps insider trading – which is why they wanted him to manage their money. They thought they would make more money that way without taking normal risks.

Subprime speculators targeted low and middle-income people. Madoff marketed to the wealthy. Editor Steven Pearlstein of the *Washington Post* explained that he specialized in "funds of funds" hedge funds:

"These are hedge funds that raise money from pension funds, university endowments and wealthy individuals and, for a fee of 1.5 percent a year, invest it in other hedge funds, which charge even higher fees. In return for paying double fees, these middlemen claim to offer investors access to the best hedge funds, which can be choosy about whose money they accept. They also offer the peace of mind that goes with knowing that the funds have been thoroughly checked out.

"Now it turns out that some of these funds of funds had parked billions of dollars of their clients' money with Madoff

Bernie was a high flyer, a part of a clubby and incestuous elite world of golf clubs, resorts, and philanthropy with tax benefits. He was a leader of the Wall Street world, at one point the Chairman of NASDAQ

CASH WARS

“Accounting firms and rating agencies are too easily compromised by the fact that they are chosen and paid by the management of the companies whose books they are auditing and securities they are rating. There are simply too many built-in conflicts of interest.”

without asking how he could so consistently produce returns in up market or down, or demanding to know why his books were audited by a three-person firm that nobody ever heard of operating out of a broom closet on Long Island.

“It doesn’t take a PhD in finance to see the pattern here: Accounting firms and rating agencies are too easily compromised by the fact that they are chosen and paid by the management of the companies whose books they are auditing and securities they are rating. There are simply too many built-in conflicts of interest.”

And Madoff took advantage of them. As a result he had a license to steal, and steal he did.

“Disintermediated” investors

James Hedges IV of LJH Global Investments, says those that went with Madoff chose faith over evidence. “You’ve got people who were disintermediated [i.e., didn’t have a professional representative], or unsophisticated, or went in through a personal relationship. That’s what a con man is – a confidence man is somebody that engenders a relationship and then subsequently lures somebody into doing something that they shouldn’t do.”

In the aftermath, the small gesture speaks volumes. A friend was staking out Madoff’s former offices for a major news organization. No one would talk to her including investors who could be seen

through the window on their cellphones moaning about losses. They looked grim. Some were wiped out. When they left the building, some hid their faces, perhaps in shame, like criminals photographed on “perp walks.”

A philanthropy expert said the consequences will be “Catastrophic.” An Israeli newspaper said many Jewish organizations will be hurt, some irreparably.

The anthropologist Lionel Tiger writes in *Forbes* about how incidents like this undermine all respect for the business world: “The invisible hand lurches between clenched fist and begging palm, and the new Greenwich Mean Time is in Connecticut. Suddenly, the only thing taken for granted is a government grant.”

You could never make this up even though Wall Street history is replete with earlier versions of this Sultan of Sleaze. Around the world, it is not just the super-crook Bernie Madoff who is seen as the guilty party but the whole American system of free market finance. There will be a reckoning. **CT**

News Dissector Danny Schechter is making a film based on his book PLUNDER: Investigating our Economic Calamity and the Subprime Scandal (Cosimo Books at Amazon.com.) Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org
Watch the trailer at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jj1kjsZgog>

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Tales from the Planet Bizarre, Episode 473

David Michael Green couldn't believe his eyes – or the unchallenged lies – when George W. Bush was interviewed by a top TV journalist

I'm sorry, but there are moments when I just feel like a total alien who stumbled onto some planet full of bizarre life forms. They call this place America, and it sure is weird. And, lemme tell ya, I know what I'm talking about here. I've visited some pretty weird places in this part of the universe.

Try this on for size as an example. You might think that a president who is widely known for lying, who leads a party also known for the same, who is at the end of his term and virtually without any punitive power worth speaking of, and who is widely despised at home and abroad – you might think such a president would get a serious grilling when sitting down with the American media for an exit interview. And, even if that might seem like a giant leap for some, perhaps you'd at least be surprised if such an individual was allowed to continue to tell revisionist historical lies without being called to account in the slightest for doing so.

Yeah, well, different galaxy, I guess. On Planet America it seems a lot more like it's still 2002, and a frightened, compliant press is still learning how to embarrass itself by becoming a tool of a massively deceitful White House. Now that it's 2009, they've got it down to a science. Only today they don't even have the pathetic and shamefully flimsy excuse they did back then, in

the wake of the 9/11 scare.

So here's what happens when one of America's most prominent journalists – Charles Gibson – sits down to interview George W. Bush. Bush, of course, isn't doing the interview because he can't think of what else to do with himself anymore (although if you ask him what comes next after January 20, that's pretty much exactly what it looks like). He isn't just killing time, waiting for Cheney to dream up some other target for the administration's predatory instincts. He's got an agenda, which is why he's been granting a plethora of (safe) interviews lately. And that agenda is to write the first draft of history. Just as Jackie did her Camelot rap, successfully constructing the frame through which the Kennedy administration would long be seen, so a ham-fisted Burt and Ernie – er, sorry, George and Laura – are running around trying to rehabilitate, for the sake of history, the worst presidency ever.

According to the *Washington Post*, this is the implementation of a strategy put together at a White House meeting two months ago, where it was decided that administration officials should reiterate key talking points in their speeches and interviews. According to a memo obtained by the *q*, those include pointing out that the president “‘kept the American people safe’ after the September 11 terrorist attacks, lift-

Just as Jackie did her Camelot rap, successfully constructing the frame through which the Kennedy administration would long be seen, so a ham-fisted Burt and Ernie – er, sorry, George and Laura – are running around trying to rehabilitate, for the sake of history, the worst presidency ever

OUR SERVILE MEDIA

You can murder in cold blood as many hundreds of thousands of Iraqis as you need to to get your rocks off, and that's fine. But if you actually do get your rocks off – literally, the old-fashioned way – you're considered obscene

ed the economy after 2001 through tax cuts, curbed AIDS in Africa and maintained ‘the honor and the dignity of his office’”. That’s a cute list, isn’t it? In a certain nausea-inducing way. I don’t even know where to get started with that, and it’s probably better for all of us if I don’t. One thing I do have to say, though. Just as in our movie rating system, what passes as the standard for honor and dignity in the White House is so very America. You can murder in cold blood as many hundreds of thousands of Iraqis as you need to to get your rocks off, and that’s fine. But if you actually do get your rocks off – literally, the old-fashioned way – you’re considered obscene. Go figure, eh? As I said, it’s a wacky little planet.

Of course, George W. Bush trying to save his legacy is not, in and of itself, so outlandish. A politician who doesn’t spin is like a conservative who doesn’t lie. It does happen. It has actually been observed in nature. Just not that often. The outlandish part is, first, the magnitude of the tales being told and sold. And, second, that a still obscenely compliant media allows these to be promulgated, without challenge, completely disregarding any notion of fulfilling a public service mandate to actually inform the people, let alone to hold the country’s leaders accountable. What a concept, eh – a critical media and governmental accountability? I guess all that hardball stuff is only for Democrats.

Anyhow, here’s a good example, for starters:

GIBSON: *What were you most unprepared for?*

BUSH: *Well, I think I was unprepared for war. In other words, I didn’t campaign and say, “Please vote for me, I’ll be able to handle an attack.” In other words, I didn’t anticipate war. Presidents – one of the things about the modern presidency is that the unexpected will happen.*

Leaving aside for the moment the question of whatever really happened on 9/11,

the very best case scenario one might make is not that this president was unprepared for war, but rather that he was unprepared for defense. That’s unforgivable, and had he been a Democrat who also ignored five-alarm warning bells prior to 9/11, and who spent the entire month prior on vacation after being warned about the danger, he would indeed never have been forgiven, least of all by Messrs. Bush, Cheney and Rove. And then, of course, there’s the impression that Bush’s response to this question leaves, suggesting that the principal war of his administration – the one in Iraq – was somehow thrust upon him. A real interviewer would never have just let this statement go. This was the ultimate war of choice, conducted for the ultimate of disingenuous reasons.

Here’s another:

GIBSON: *Given the fact that you did start campaigning for change, said you were going to change the ways of Washington, do you feel you did in any way? Or did 9/11 really stand in the way of doing it?*

BUSH: *No, you know – actually, 9/11 unified the country, and that was a moment where Washington decided to work together. I think one of the big disappointments of the presidency has been the fact that the tone in Washington got worse, not better. ... there were moments of bipartisanship. But the tone was rough. And I was obviously partially responsible because I was the President, although I tried hard not to call people names and bring the office down during my presidency.*

Again, this is remarkably disingenuous, all the more so because it feigns humility and quasi-responsibility. Bush may not have called his opponents names, but he sure as hell marginalized them as rarely ever before in history, and he sure as hell polarized the country. If you weren’t with the president, then you were with the terrorists. If you didn’t agree to his invasion of a country that had not a thing to do with 9/11 nor

any other justification for attack, then you couldn't be trusted with America's national security. Let's not kid ourselves here, people. There's no Democratic equivalent to Karl Rove. There's no liberal guy called The Hammer, as Tom DeLay was for the GOP. No Democrat ever ran an ad morphing the face of a triple-amputee Republican Vietnam vet into that of Osama bin Laden. True, damn few Republicans – the folks who are so keen on maintaining American security, remember – actually made it over to the jungles of Southeast Asia forty years ago, but that ain't why ads like those used against Max Cleland in 2002 were never used against the right. It's a matter of integrity, and there was rarely an occasion when the Bush administration showed any of it. Moreover, Charles Gibson knows that.

The greatest crime

But the greatest crime of the Bush administration, of course, was always Iraq, and it is here that the abomination-in-chief lies the most egregiously and the most shamefully. And it is here where he is given the greatest free pass by the media:

GIBSON: *You've always said there's no do-overs as President. If you had one?*

BUSH: *I don't know – the biggest regret of all the presidency has to have been the intelligence failure in Iraq. A lot of people put their reputations on the line and said the weapons of mass destruction is a reason to remove Saddam Hussein. It wasn't just people in my administration; a lot of members in Congress, prior to my arrival in Washington D.C., during the debate on Iraq, a lot of leaders of nations around the world were all looking at the same intelligence. And, you know, that's not a do-over, but I wish the intelligence had been different, I guess.*

GIBSON: *If the intelligence had been right, would there have been an Iraq war?*

BUSH: *Yes, because Saddam Hussein was unwilling to let the inspectors go in to determine whether or not the U.N. resolutions were being upheld. In other words, if he*

had had weapons of mass destruction, would there have been a war? Absolutely.

GIBSON: *No, if you had known he didn't.*

BUSH: *Oh, I see what you're saying. You know, that's an interesting question. That is a do-over that I can't do. It's hard for me to speculate.*

This astonishing little dialogue packs more deceit, and more permission to engage in deceit, into one passage than any 'blivet' (ten pounds of bullshit in a five pound bag) I've ever seen. Or a thousand blivets. Stacked in a manure warehouse. In the Republic of Crap. On the planet Turd. What an amazing string of lies. And all of it unanswered.

It starts with the intelligence "failure", which was no failure at all. Is this 2009 or am I stuck in some sort of time warp here? With all that has been revealed about the lies that were lied, the omissions omitted, and the exaggerations exaggerated, do we still live in a country where the president can continue to tell this tall tale yet again? Is it really possible that a journalist would let such an absurd claim go unchallenged still to this day? Can we really continue to allow this rogue president to surround himself in exonerating complicity, pretending that everyone had the same intelligence reports that he did? And, even more ridiculously, that they all concurred that war was the preferred option at that point? Is that why the Bush administration couldn't get even half the votes it needed at the United Nations for a war resolution? Even after beating Security Council member-states over the head with skyscraper-sized sticks? Even after offering them more carrots than in all of Bunny Heaven?

It gets worse. To claim that Saddam was unwilling to let the weapons inspectors in is just a sickening and complete inversion of the truth, a full 180 degrees. The inspectors were, of course, absolutely in Iraq. Indeed, not only were they there, they were

But the greatest crime of the Bush administration, of course, was always Iraq, and it is here that the abomination-in-chief lies the most egregiously and the most shamefully. And it is here where he is given the greatest free pass by the media

OUR SERVILE MEDIA

And where, exactly was Charles Gibson, so-called 'journalist', throughout all this? Is this really what it means to be at the top of this profession? That you allow those whom you're supposed to be keeping watch over for the benefit of an entire country (not to mention the rest of the world) to say anything – including absolutely the worst self-serving rubbish – without challenge?

begging the United States government to tell them where the WMD could be found, an obvious thing to do given that the Bush administration was running around telling the world that it not only knew for sure there were WMD, but even knew where the weapons were located. This is the most massive lie.

And, of course, it comes with other cool benefits as well. If you're already lying in claiming that the inspectors were refused entry, you no longer have to overtly lie about how they left. If they were never there, they could never have been forced to leave in order to avoid being obliterated by Bush's bomber squadrons. Nor, if they had never been there carrying out most of their inspections, could they ever have begged for just a few more weeks to finish their work. Doesn't it all just fit together nicely?

Top of his profession?

And where, exactly was Charles Gibson, so-called 'journalist', throughout all this? Is this really what it means to be at the top of this profession? That you allow those whom you're supposed to be keeping watch over for the benefit of an entire country (not to mention the rest of the world) to say anything – including absolutely the worst self-serving rubbish – without challenge? Why not just sign on to the GOP payroll and get it over with? Or perhaps he already has.

Then there's Bush telling us that, gosh, he really can't "speculate" on whether or not there would have been an invasion had there been no WMD. That's just classic. As if the decision wasn't his. As if they didn't build nearly their entire case on the WMD threat. As if Saddam just absolutely had to go, but Mubarak and Musharraf and Abdullah didn't even get a good talking to about democracy. As if Saddam's depredations were enough to justify an American invasion, even though we had previously covered for him at his worst, and even as we say almost nothing while Darfur melts down into a genocidal ocean of blood.

Then, on top of all these lies, are the

frustratingly silent ones that no one ever mentions, and never really did (and, excuse me for my petulance, but shouldn't journalists be doing this?). Like this one: Suppose the Bush people had been right in their lies about WMD, after all – so what? Dozens of countries have them, including now North Korea, and the Bush administration never seems to have a problem with that, except when it does. Whatever happened to deterrence, the little dynamic that kept the Soviet Union and the United States from unleashing their tens of thousands of nuclear weapons against each other for over four decades? When did that stop mattering? Does anyone seriously imagine that a nuclear Saddam would have attacked the United States? Knowing that he and his country would instantly have been atomized in response? And, speaking of inconvenient questions, what were we doing invading a country that had never attacked nor even threatened this country?

Somebody please awaken me from this nightmare! Really, I don't mind a politician acting like a politician. I suppose this is a sad fact in its own right, but truth be told, my expectations there are not huge.

But what's up with an American media, itself drenched in blood up to its earlobes, still offering this guy a free pass, and a global megaphone? Hey, Charlie Gibson – do you really earn enough to bury all that shame? Me, I wouldn't have thought there was that much money anywhere on the planet.

As for that good ol' boy, America's first cracker president, it seems he has managed to figure out a couple of things, after all. Talking about his parents, who have no doubt been in agony for eight years now (how would you like to have produced Caligula?), he offered up this slightly too accurate assessment of their feelings as he leaves the White House:

BUSH: *And so, no doubt they're going to be relieved to have their boy out of the lime-light. And I bet a lot of our friends will be relieved, too.*

Ya got that one right, pal, albeit for all the wrong reasons. Which is no doubt what also produced the following exchange:

GIBSON: *And final question, just to finish the sentence: I will leave the presidency with a feeling of?*

BUSH: *I will leave the presidency with my head held high.*

Maybe this is the kind of nonsense Gibson had in mind when he asked, “Is the president too much in a bubble?” To which Bush responded: “I mean, believe me you understand what’s going on in the world.” This idea about how the President doesn’t understand this, that, or the other, just simply is not the case. I mean, there’s a lot of information that comes through the White

House.

Yeah, no doubt Cheney’s there every morning to provide the president with “information” about how well it’s all going. No doubt that makes it easy to leave the White House with your head held high, even after you’ve wrecked everything in sight.

That, plus a fawning press that would never dream of being so rude as to interrupt your fantasy with the cognitive dissonance provoked by a tough question or two.

Lordy, lord. Take me back to my home planet, please.

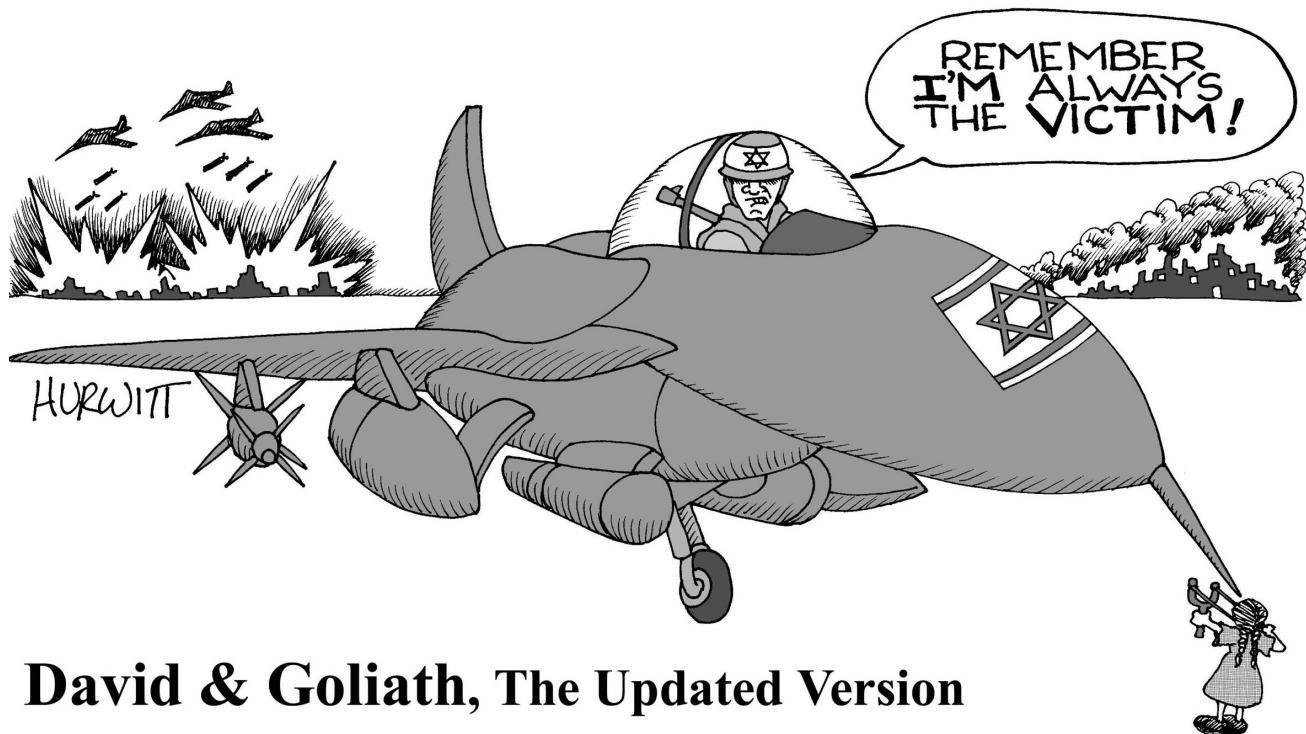
This one’s way too messed up!

David Michael Green is a professor of political science at Hofstra University in New York. More of his work can be found at his website, www.progressiveantidote.net

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HURWITT’S EYE

Mark Hurwitz



David & Goliath, The Updated Version

Beware of Obama's Groundhog Day

Barak Obama's historic victory is being tainted by appointments that contradict his election mantra of change, writes **John Pilger**

There is more continuity in Obama's appointment of officials who will deal with the economic piracy that brought down Wall Street and impoverished millions. As in Bill Murray's nightmare, they are the same officials who caused it

One of the cleverest films I have seen is *Groundhog Day*, in which Bill Murray plays a TV weatherman who finds himself stuck in time. At first he deludes himself that the same day and the same people and the same circumstances offer new opportunities. Finally, his naivety and false hope desert him and he realises the truth of his predicament and escapes. Is this a parable for the age of Obama?

Having campaigned with "Change you can believe in", President-elect Barack Obama has named his A-team. They include Hillary Clinton, who voted to attack Iraq without reading the intelligence assessment and has since threatened to "totally obliterate" Iran on behalf of a foreign power, Israel. During his primary campaign, Obama referred repeatedly to Clinton's lies about her political record. When he appointed her secretary of state, he called her "my dear friend".

Obama's slogan is now "continuity". His secretary of defence will be Robert Gates, who serves the lawless, blood-soaked Bush regime as secretary of defence, which means secretary of war (America last had to defend itself when the British invaded in 1812). Gates wants no date set for an Iraq withdrawal and "well north of 20,000" troops to be sent to Afghanistan. He also wants America to build a completely new nuclear arsenal, including "tactical" nuclear weapons that blur the distinction with

conventional weapons.

Another product of "continuity" is Obama's first choice for CIA chief, John Brennan, who shares responsibility for the systematic kidnapping and torturing of people, known as "extraordinary rendition". Obama has assigned Madeleine Albright to report on how to "strengthen US leadership in responding to genocide". Albright, as secretary of state, was largely responsible for the siege of Iraq in the 1990s, described by the UN's Denis Halliday as genocide.

There is more continuity in Obama's appointment of officials who will deal with the economic piracy that brought down Wall Street and impoverished millions. As in Bill Murray's nightmare, they are the same officials who caused it. For example, Lawrence Summers will run the National Economic Council. As treasury secretary, according to the *New York Times*, he "championed the law that deregulated derivatives, the... instruments – aka toxic assets – that have spread financial losses [and] refused to heed critics who warned of dangers to come".

There is logic here. Contrary to myth, Obama's campaign was funded largely by rapacious capital, such as Citigroup and others responsible for the sub-prime mortgage scandal, whose victims were mostly African Americans and other poor people.

Is this a grand betrayal? Obama has never hidden his record as a man of a system

described by Martin Luther King as “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today”. Obama’s dalliance as a soft critic of the disaster in Iraq was in line with most Establishment opinion that it was “dumb”. His fans include the war criminals Tony Blair, who has “hailed” his appointments, and Henry Kissinger, who describes the appointment of Hillary Clinton as “outstanding”. One of John McCain’s principal advisers, Max Boot, who is on the Republican Party’s far right, said: “I am “gobsmacked by these appointments. [They] could just as easily have come from a President McCain.”

Obama’s victory is historic, not only because he will be the first black president, but because he tapped in to a great popular movement among America’s minorities and the young outside the Democratic Party. In 2006 Latinos, the country’s largest minority, took America by surprise when they poured into the cities to protest against George W Bush’s draconian immigration laws. They chanted: “Si, se puede!” (“Yes we can!”), a slogan Obama later claimed as his own. His secretary for homeland security is Janet Napolitano who, as governor of Arizona, made her name by stoking hostility against Latino immigrants. She has militarised her state’s border with Mexico and supported the building of a hideous wall, similar to the one dividing occupied Palestine.

On election eve, reported Gallup, most Obama supporters were “engaged” but “deeply pessimistic about the country’s future direction”. My guess is that many people knew what was coming, but hoped for the best. In exploiting this hope, Obama has all but neutered the anti-war movement that is historically allied to the Democrats. After all, who can argue with the

symbol of the first black president in this country of slavery, regardless of whether he is a warmonger? As Noam Chomsky has pointed out, Obama is a “brand” like none other, having won the highest advertising campaign accolade and attracted unprecedented sums of money. The brand will sell for a while. He will close Guantanamo Bay, whose inmates represent less than one per cent of America’s 27,000 “ghost prisoners”. He will continue to make stirring, platitudinous speeches, but the tears will dry as people understand that President Obama is the latest manager of an ideological machine that transcends electoral power. Asked what his supporters would do when reality intruded, Stephen Walt, an Obama adviser, said: “They have nowhere else to go.”

Not yet. If there is a happy ending to the Groundhog Day of repeated wars and plunder, it may well be found in the very mass movement whose enthusiasts registered voters and knocked on doors and brought Obama to power. Will they now be satisfied as spectators to the cynicism of “continuity”?

In less than three months, millions of angry Americans have been politicised by the spectacle of billions of dollars of hand-outs to Wall Street as they struggle to save their jobs and homes. It’s as if seeds have begun to sprout beneath the political snow. And history, like *Groundhog Day*, can repeat itself. Few predicted the epoch-making events of the 1960s and the speed with which they happened. As a beneficiary of that time, Obama should know that when the blinkers are removed, anything is possible. **CT**

John Pilger’s latest book, Freedom Next Time, is now available in paperback.

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READ THE BEST OF TOM ENGELHARDT

<http://coldtype.net/tom.html>

The Paranoia Squad

A British police unit is demonising peaceful protesters to help it stay in business, says **George Monbiot**

The act, parliament was told, was meant to protect women from stalkers. But as soon as it came onto the statute books, it was used to stop peaceful protest

When you hear the term “domestic extremist”, whom do you picture? How about someone like Dr Peter Harbour? He’s a retired physicist and university lecturer, who worked on the nuclear fusion reactor run by European governments at Culham in Oxfordshire, England. He’s 70 next year. He has never been tried or convicted of an offence, except the odd speeding ticket. He has never failed a security check. Not the sort of person you had in mind? Then you don’t work for the police.

Dr Harbour was one of the people who campaigned to save a local beauty spot – Thrupp Lake – between the Oxfordshire villages of Radley and Abingdon. They used to walk and swim and picnic there, and watch otters and kingfishers. RWE npower, which owns Didcot power station, wanted to empty the lake and fill it with pulverised fly ash¹.

The villagers marched, demonstrated and sent in letters and petitions. Some people tried to stop the company from cutting down trees by standing in the way. Their campaign was entirely peaceful. But RWE npower discovered that it was legally empowered to shut the protests down.

Using the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, it obtained an injunction against the villagers and anyone else who might

protest. This forbids them from “coming to, remaining on, trespassing or conducting any demonstrations or protesting or other activities” on land near the lake². If anyone breaks this injunction they could spend five years in prison.

The act, Britain’s parliament was told, was meant to protect women from stalkers. But as soon as it came onto the statute books, it was used to stop peaceful protest. To obtain an injunction, a company needs to show only that someone feels “alarmed or distressed” by the protesters, a requirement so vague that it can mean almost anything. Was this an accident of sloppy drafting? No. Timothy Lawson-Cruttenenden, the solicitor who specialises in using this law against protesters, boasts that his company “assisted in the drafting of the ... Protection from Harassment Act 1997³. In 2005 parliament was duped again, when a new clause, undebated in either chamber, was slipped into the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act⁴. It peeps up the 1997 act, which can now be used to ban protest of any kind.

Mr Lawson-Cruttenenden, who represented RWE npower, brags that the purpose of obtaining injunctions under the act is “the criminalisation of civil disobedience”⁵. One of the advantages of this approach is that very low standards of proof are required: “hearsay evidence ... is admissible in civil

courts". The injunctions he obtains criminalise all further activity, even though, as he admits, "any allegations made remain untested and unproven."⁶

Last week, stung by bad publicity, npower backed down. The villagers had just started to celebrate when they made a shocking discovery: they now feature on an official list of domestic extremists.

The National Extremism Tactical Co-ordination Unit (NETCU) is the police team coordinating the fight against extremists. To illustrate the threats it confronts, the NECTU site carries images of the people marching with banners, of peace campaigners standing outside a military base and of the Rebel Clown Army (whose members dress up as clowns to show that they have peaceful intentions). It publishes press releases about Greenpeace and the climate camp at Kingsnorth⁷. All this, the site suggests, is domestic extremism.

NETCU publishes a manual for officers policing protests. To help them identify dangerous elements, it directs them to a list of "High Court Injunctions that relate to domestic extremism campaigns", published on NECTU's website⁸. On the first page is the injunction obtained by npower against the Radley villagers, which names Peter Harbour and others. Dr Harbour wrote to the head of NETCU, Steve Pearl, to ask for his name to be removed from the site. Mr Pearl refused. So Dr Harbour remains a domestic extremist.

It was this Paranoia Squad which briefed the *Observer* recently about "eco-terrorists". The article maintained that "a lone maverick eco-extremist may attempt a terrorist attack aimed at killing large numbers of Britons."⁹ The only evidence it put forward was that someone in Earth First! had stated that the world is overpopulated. This, it claimed, meant that the movement might attempt a campaign of mass annihilation. The same could be said about the United Nations, the Optimum Population Trust and anyone else who has expressed concern about population levels.

The *Observer* withdrew the article after NETCU failed to provide any justification for its claims¹⁰. NETCU now tells me that the report "wasn't an accurate reflection of our views"¹¹. But the article contained a clue as to why the police might wish to spread such stories. "The rise of eco-extremism coincides with the fall of the animal rights activist movement. Police said the animal rights movement was in disarray" and that "its critical mass of hardcore extremists was sufficiently depleted to have halted its effectiveness."¹² If, as the police maintain, animal rights extremism is no longer dangerous, it is hard for NETCU to justify its existence: unless it can demonstrate that domestic extremism exists elsewhere. A better headline for the article might have been "Keep funding us, say police, or civilisation collapses."

NETCU claims that domestic extremism "is most often associated with single-issue protests, such as animal rights, anti-war, anti-globalisation and anti-GM crops."¹³ With the exception of animal rights protests, these campaigns in the UK have been overwhelmingly peaceful. As the writer and activist Merrick Godhaven points out, the groups whose tactics come closest to those of violent animal rights activists are anti-abortion campaigns¹⁴. The UK Life League, for example, has published the names and addresses of people involved in abortion and family planning^{15,16}. Two of its members have been convicted of sending pictures of mutilated fetuses to doctors and pharmacies¹⁷. Anti-abortionists in the US have murdered doctors, nurses and receptionists. Yet there is no mention of the UK Life League or anti-abortion campaigning on the NETCU site. This looks to me like partisan policing.

Just as the misleading claims of the security services were used to launch an illegal and unnecessary war against Iraq, NETCU's exaggerations will be used to justify the heavy-handed treatment of peaceful protesters. In both cases police and spies are distracted from dealing with genuine

As the writer and activist Merrick Godhaven points out, the groups whose tactics come closest to those of violent animal rights activists are anti-abortion campaigns . . . Yet there is no mention of the UK Life League or anti-abortion campaigning on the NETCU site. This looks to me like partisan policing.

CRIMINALISING DISSENT

Police and spies are distracted from dealing with genuine threats of terrorism and violence

threats of terrorism and violence.

For how much longer will the government permit the police forces to drum up business like this? And at what point do we decide that this country is beginning to look like a police state? **CT**

George Monbiot's latest book is Bring On The Acocalypse, Essays on Self-Destruction.

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Why they want to kill the motor industry

Mikael I. Niman tells why the Republicans will sacrifice the US auto industry in their bid to kill off the labor unions

Let me begin by reminding readers that I have no love for the Big Three automakers. These are the people who purposefully bought and killed mass transit systems in the 1940s, engineered planned obsolescence in the 1950s and 1960s, and knowingly sold deadly cars in the 1970s when their number-crunchers figured it was cheaper to pay a few wrongful death settlements than to issue a safety recall. These were the folks who faced down catastrophic climate change in the 1980s and 1990s with a plethora of SUVs. And no, I don't buy into the Nuremberg defense that they were "just filling orders." GM manufactured not only Hummers but the demand for Hummer as well, spending millions targeting the Viagra crowd with a hard sell for instant manhood packaged in steel.

People bought their Excursions and Commanders because the Big Three wrapped them in an aura of power and privilege, using sophisticated ad campaigns to transform the reviled suburban assault vehicle of the 1970s into the sexy, hip, new-school SUV of the 1990s. Then, long after the writing was on the wall, they bet the house on their perpetual popularity. In 2007, as hybrids and mini-cars gained traction in the market, Chrysler killed their last small car, the Neon, leaving them with no fuel-efficient products when gas prices

soared a year later.

Many of our environmental and social problems, ranging from our asphalt-choked cities, our dysfunctional mass transit systems, peak oil, and resource wars, to smog and suburban sprawl, can be laid near the doorstep of these three mega-corporations. So of course I didn't respond when GM sent me an email last month asking me to call my congressional reps and voice my support for the auto industry.

But then came the Republicans. I never liked the auto industry, but suddenly the Republicans, the party of corporate subsidies and tax breaks, the folks who just gave amounts of money we can't comprehend to a corporations like AIG, whose actual business we can't quite figure out, suddenly has found mega-corporations it doesn't like. Something stinks here.

The issue is not the Big Three. Bought-and-paid-for Republicans from the White House down to the stinky bathrooms of the Capitol have always stepped up to whore for the auto industry when it came to combating safety regulations and environmental safeguards like fuel mileage standards. But suddenly that romance is over. The industry that mobilized to arm the Allied powers (and the Nazis too) during the Second World War, America's last industrial powerhouse, an industry vital to our national defense, can go to hell. I

In 2007, as hybrids and mini-cars gained traction in the market, Chrysler killed their last small car, the Neon, leaving them with no fuel-efficient products when gas prices soared a year later

WAR ON WORKERS

To hear the corporate right noise machine on Fox News and talk radio, auto workers comprise some sort of shadow government with magical powers to tax working schmucks toiling away honestly at Wal-Marts and Starbucks, in order to support their undeserved status as hangers-on in America's doomed middle class

mean, what the fuck, I'm cool with it – but I never would have expected such radicalism from the party of Ronald Reagan and the Bushes.

The Republican Party's problem is not with the corporations, it's with their workers and what auto workers in America have come to represent. Ultimately, their problem is with the workers' union, the UAW, American labor's last man standing.

To hear the corporate right noise machine on Fox News and talk radio, auto workers comprise some sort of shadow government with magical powers to tax working schmucks toiling away honestly at Wal-Marts and Starbucks, in order to support their undeserved status as hangers-on in America's doomed middle class. How dare they militantly defend their living wages and healthcare during the dark, dank Reagan, Clinton, and Bush eras. Who do they think they are?

How bullied we as a nation have become. There was a time when auto workers, like other American workers, enjoyed a sojourn in the middle class, with all the social and economic security that entailed. Gains achieved by unionized auto workers trickled throughout the economy, creating the most thriving middle class the world had ever seen. The unionized auto industry pushed up wages in surrounding locales. You didn't have to work at Wal-Mart for eight dollars an hour back when GM was hiring.

Then came free trade and the race to the bottom. One by one, unionized, living-wage-paying industries fell to duty-free foreign competition. The playing field was anything but level. As the cost of providing healthcare to employees skyrocketed in the US, with greedy healthcare corporations selling life-or-death treatments in an unregulated and often monopolized market, foreign manufacturers in industrial countries enjoyed a government-sponsored reprieve from such costs thanks to universal healthcare systems – which are in place in every developed nation except this one.

Manufacturers in repressive third world countries enjoyed even greater competitive advantages by paying starvation wages in sweatshop conditions.

During this dark period, the UAW hung in there, protecting what became the last major bastion of middle class industrial jobs. This is what I mean by the “last man standing.” Rather than look to the UAW and the auto workers as sources of inspiration during the dark times ushered in by Reagan, beaten-down American workers, struggling to survive on multiple McJobs, instead regarded higher-paid UAW workers with jealousy. Led by false prophets like Rush Limbaugh, their anger was misdirected at their fellow workers who were faring better than them, rather than at their employers, who were stealing their poorly compensated labor.

Now let's look at the UAW. They were often at the cutting edge of the labor, civil rights, and peace movements. They co-sponsored the 1963 March on Washington at a time when much of America lived under apartheid-like racial segregation. They bailed Martin Luther King, Jr. out of jail, forced segregated factories to end their racist hiring policies, and, in the heyday of the auto industry, became one of the main paths for poor, economically discriminated against blacks to migrate into the middle class. During the Vietnam war, the UAW broke ranks with most of the American labor movement, and opposed the war that was claiming the lives of young auto workers, rather than acquiesce to military spending that was “good for business.” In the 1970s, the UAW unsuccessfully campaigned for higher fuel efficiency, hoping to save both their industry and the environment.

The UAW in many ways stood as the political antithesis to the reactionary Republican agenda ushered in by the so-called “Reagan Revolution.” This is why the bail-out-silly Republicans today are so eager to risk sinking what's left of the country's industrial economy just to execute a sloppy

hit against the UAW. The auto industry is collateral damage. National security is collateral damage, as we turn to Toyota and Mercedes to mechanize our future military. The three million mostly non-union jobs associated with the auto industry could be collateral damage. This is how bad the Republican party wants to destroy the union that may have delivered Ohio and Michigan to Barack Obama. This is how bad they want to punish those Rust Belt blue states that cost them the White House. This is what this fight is all about – both old and recent vendettas.

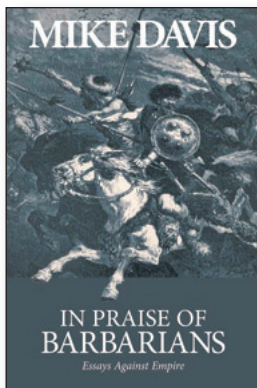
Much of what we're now hearing in the corporate media about the UAW is simply not accurate. UAW members average, for example, about \$28 per hour in wages – not the \$70 bandied about in the media. This figure is competitive with the \$24 or so that foreign auto companies pay their American workers. That \$70 figure supposedly includes \$42 per hour in benefits. This

would amount to \$87,000 per year per worker. It's simply not accurate.

The UAW also led the way in forcing employers to cover the costs of the social safety net that is now bankrupting many American counties and states. Laid-off UAW workers receive most of their salary, paid for by the company and not the state. Small government conservatives should like this – though it seems that the meaner-spirited among them would just as soon see unemployed folks living on the streets selling apples. The problem with this arrangement isn't that UAW workers won it; as with many of the union's other accomplishments, it's that no other industry followed suit, leaving auto workers standing alone, scorned by Rush's Dittoheads and targeted by Republicans.

Dr. Michael I. Niman, a regular contributor to ColdType, is a professor of journalism and media studies at Buffalo State College, NY.

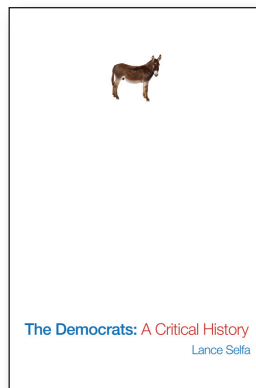
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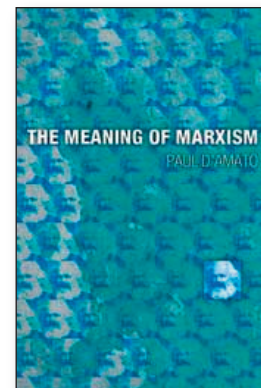
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Why I'm a Socialist

If the American left doesn't follow Europe's lead in uniting against avaricious corporations, it may soon be faced by a regime of totalitarianism capitalism, writes **Chris Hedges**

The free market and globalization, promised as the route to worldwide prosperity, have been exposed as a con game. But this does not mean our corporate masters will disappear. Totalitarianism, as George Orwell pointed out, is not so much an age of faith as an age of schizophrenia.

The corporate forces that are looting the Treasury and have plunged us into a depression will not be contained by the two main political parties. The Democratic and Republican parties have become little more than squalid clubs of privilege and wealth, whores to money and corporate interests, hostage to a massive arms industry, and so adept at deception and self-delusion they no longer know truth from lies. We will either find our way out of this mess by embracing an uncompromising democratic socialism – one that will insist on massive government relief and work programs, the nationalization of electricity and gas companies, a universal, not-for-profit government health care program, the outlawing of hedge funds, a radical reduction of our bloated military budget and an end to imperial wars – or we will continue to be fleeced and impoverished by our bankrupt elite and shackled and chained by our surveillance state.

The free market and globalization, promised as the route to worldwide prosperity, have been exposed as a con game. But this does not mean our corporate masters will disappear. Totalitarianism, as George Orwell pointed out, is not so much an age of faith as an age of schizophrenia. “A society becomes totalitarian when its structure becomes flagrantly artificial,” Orwell wrote, “that is when its ruling class has lost its function

but succeeds in clinging to power by force or fraud.” Force and fraud are all they have left. They will use both.

There is a political shift in Europe toward an open confrontation with the corporate state. Germany has seen a surge of support for Die Linke (The Left), a political grouping formed 18 months ago. It is co-led by the veteran socialist “Red” Oskar Lafontaine, who has built his career on attacking big business. Two-thirds of Germans in public opinion polls say they agree with all or some of Die Linke's platform. The Socialist Party of the Netherlands is on the verge of overtaking the Labor Party as the main opposition party on the left. Greece, beset with street protests and violence by disaffected youths, has seen the rapid rise of the Coalition of the Radical Left. In Spain and Norway socialists are in power. Resurgence is not universal, especially in France and Britain, but the shifts toward socialism are significant.

Corporations have intruded into every facet of life. We eat corporate food. We buy corporate clothes. We drive corporate cars. We buy our vehicular fuel and our heating oil from corporations. We borrow from corporate banks. We invest our retirement savings with corporations. We are entertained, informed and branded by corporations. We work for corporations. The creation of a mercenary army, the privatization of public utilities and our disgusting for-profit health

care system are all legacies of the corporate state. These corporations have no loyalty to America or the American worker. They are not tied to nation states. They are vampires.

“By now the [commercial] revolution has deprived the mass of consumers of any independent access to the staples of life: clothing, shelter, food, even water,” Wendell Berry wrote in *The Unsettling of America*. “Air remains the only necessity that the average user can still get for himself, and the revolution had imposed a heavy tax on that by way of pollution. Commercial conquest is far more thorough and final than military defeat.” The corporation is designed to make money without regard to human life, the social good or impact on the environment. Corporate laws impose a legal duty on corporate executives to make as much money as possible for shareholders, although many have moved on to fleece shareholders as well. In the 2003 documentary film *The Corporation*, the management guru Peter Drucker says: “If you find an executive who wants to take on social responsibilities, fire him. Fast.”

A corporation that attempts to engage in social responsibility, that tries to pay workers a decent wage with benefits, that invests its profits to protect the environment and limit pollution, that gives consumers fair deals, can be sued by shareholders. Robert Monks, the investment manager, says in the film: “The corporation is an externalizing machine, in the same way that a shark is a killing machine. There isn’t any question of malevolence or of will. The enterprise has within it, and the shark has within it, those characteristics that enable it to do that for which it was designed.” Ray Anderson, the CEO of Interface Corp., the world’s largest commercial carpet manufacturer, calls the corporation a “present day instrument of destruction” because of its compulsion to “externalize any cost that an unwary or uncaring public will allow it to externalize.”

“The notion that we can take and take and take and take, waste and waste, without consequences, is driving the biosphere to destruction,” Anderson says.

In short, the film, based on Joel Bakan’s book, *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*, asserts that the corporation exhibits many of the traits found in people clinically defined as psychopaths.

Psychologist Dr. Robert Hare lists in the film psychopathic traits and ties them to the behavior of corporations:

- * callous unconcern for the feelings for others;
- * incapacity to maintain enduring relationships;
- * reckless disregard for the safety of others;
- * deceitfulness: repeated lying and conning others for profit;
- * incapacity to experience guilt;
- * failure to conform to social norms with respect to lawful behavior.

And yet, under the American legal system, corporations have the same legal rights as individuals. They give hundreds of millions of dollars to political candidates, fund the army of some 35,000 lobbyists in Washington and thousands more in state capitals to write corporate-friendly legislation, drain taxpayer funds and abolish government oversight. They saturate the airwaves, the Internet, newsprint and magazines with advertisements promoting their brands as the friendly face of the corporation. They have high-priced legal teams, millions of employees, skilled public relations firms and thousands of elected officials to ward off public intrusions into their affairs or halt messy lawsuits. They hold a near monopoly on all electronic and printed sources of information. A few media giants – AOL-Time Warner, General Electric, Viacom, Disney and Rupert Murdoch’s NewsGroup – control nearly everything we read, see and hear.

“Private capital tends to become concentrated in [a] few hands, partly because of competition among the capitalists, and partly because technological development and the increasing division of labor encourage the formation of larger units of production at the expense of the smaller ones,” Albert Einstein wrote in 1949 in the *Monthly Review*

A corporation that attempts to engage in social responsibility, that tries to pay workers a decent wage with benefits, that invests its profits to protect the environment and limit pollution, that gives consumers fair deals, can be sued by shareholders

LOOKING FOR ALTERNATIVES

Labor and left-wing activists, especially university students and well-heeled liberals, have failed to unite. This division, which is often based on social rather than economic differences, has long stymied concerted action against ruling elites. It has fractured the American left and rendered it impotent

in explaining why he was a socialist. “The result of these developments is an oligarchy of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organized political society. This is true since the members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists who, for all practical purposes, separate the electorate from the legislature. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population. Moreover, under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information (press, radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights.”

Labor and left-wing activists, especially university students and well-heeled liberals, have failed to unite. This division, which is often based on social rather than economic differences, has long stymied concerted action against ruling elites. It has fractured the American left and rendered it impotent.

“Large sections of the middle class are being gradually proletarianized; but the important point is that they do not, at any rate not in the first generation, adopt a proletarian outlook,” Orwell wrote in 1937 during the last economic depression. “Here I am, for instance, with a bourgeois upbringing and a working-class income. Which class do I belong to? Economically I belong to the working class, but it is almost impossible for me to think of myself as anything but a member of the bourgeoisie. And supposing I had to take sides, whom should I side with, the upper class which is trying to squeeze me out of existence, or the working class whose manners are not my manners? It is probable that I, personally, in any important issue, would side with the working class. But what about the tens or hundreds of thousands of others who are in approximately the same

position? And what about that far larger class, running into millions this time – the office-workers and black-coated employees of all kinds – whose traditions are less definite middle class but who would certainly not thank you if you called them proletarians? All of these people have the same interests and the same enemies as the working class. All are being robbed and bullied by the same system. Yet how many of them realize it? When the pinch came nearly all of them would side with their oppressors and against those who ought to be their allies. It is quite easy to imagine a working class crushed down to the worst depths of poverty and still remaining bitterly anti-working-class in sentiment; this being, of course, a ready-made Fascist party.”

Coalitions of environmental, anti-nuclear, anti-capitalist, sustainable-agriculture and anti-globalization forces have coalesced in Europe to form and support socialist parties. This has yet to happen in the US. The left never rallied in significant numbers behind Cynthia McKinney or Ralph Nader. In picking the lesser of two evils, it threw its lot in with a Democratic Party that backs our imperial wars, empowers the national security state and does the bidding of corporations.

If Barack Obama does not end the flagrant theft of taxpayer funds by corporate slugs and the disgraceful abandonment of our working class, especially as foreclosures and unemployment mount, many in the country will turn in desperation to the far right embodied by groups such as Christian radicals. The failure by the left to offer a democratic socialist alternative will mean there will be, in the eyes of many embittered and struggling working- and middle-class Americans, no alternative but a perverted Christian fascism. The inability to articulate a viable socialism has been our gravest mistake. It will ensure, if this does not soon change, a ruthless totalitarian capitalism. **CT**

Chris Hedges's latest book, with Laila Al-Arian, is Collateral Damage: America's war Against Iraqi Civilians.

The PU-litzer Prizes for 2008

Jeff Cohen and Norman Solomon announce their
17th annual media awards

Now in their seventeenth year, the PU-litzer Prizes recognize some of the nation's stinkiest media performances. As the judges for these annual awards, we do our best to identify the most deserving recipients of this unwelcome plaudit.

HOT FOR OBAMA PRIZE – MSNBC's Chris Matthews

This award sparked fierce competition, but the cinch came on the day Obama swept the Potomac Primary in February – when Chris Matthews spoke of “the feeling most people get when they hear Barack Obama's speech. My, I felt this thrill going up my leg. I mean, I don't have that too often.”

BEYOND PARODY PRIZE – Fox News

In August, a FoxNews.com teaser for the “O'Reilly Factor” program said: “Obama bombarded by personal attacks. Are they legit? Ann Coulter comments.”

UPSIDE DOWN “ELITIST” AWARD – New York Times columnist David Brooks

For months, high-paid Beltway journalists competed with each other in advising candidate Obama on how to mingle with working class folks.

Ubiquitous pundit Brooks won the prize for his wisdom on reaching “less edu-

cated people, downscale people,” offered on MSNBC in June: “Obama's problem is he doesn't seem like the kind of guy who could go into an Applebee's salad bar and people think he fits in naturally there. And so he's had to change to try to be more like that Applebee's guy.” It would indeed be hard for Obama to fit in naturally at an Applebee's salad bar. Applebee's restaurants don't have salad bars.

GUTTER BALL PUNDITRY AWARD – Chris Matthews of MSNBC's “Hardball”

In program after program during the spring, Matthews repeatedly questioned whether Obama could connect with “regular” voters — “regular” meaning voters who are white or “who actually do know how to bowl.” He once said of Obama: “This gets very ethnic, but the fact that he's good at basketball doesn't surprise anybody. But the fact that he's that terrible at bowling does make you wonder.”

STRAIGHT SKINNY PRIZE – Wall Street Journal reporter Amy Chozick

In August, the *Journal's* Chozick went beyond the standard elitist charge to offer yet another reason that average voters might be wary of Obama. Below the headline “Too Fit to Be President?” she wrote of Obama: “Despite his visits to waffle hous-

“Obama's problem is he doesn't seem like the kind of guy who could go into an Applebee's salad bar and people think he fits in naturally there. And so he's had to change to try to be more like that Applebee's guy”

FAME AT LAST!

es, ice-cream parlors and greasy-spoon diners around the country, his slim physique might have some Americans wondering whether he is truly like them.” Chozick asked: “In a nation in which 66 percent of the voting-age population is overweight and 32 percent is obese, could Sen. Obama’s skinniness be a liability?” To support her argument, she quoted Hillary Clinton supporters. One said: “He needs to put some meat on his bones.” Another, prodded by Chozick, wrote on a Yahoo bulletin board: “I won’t vote for any beanpole guy.”

“OUR CENTER-RIGHT NATION” AWARD – *Newsweek* editor Jon Meacham

With Democrats in the process of winning big in 2008 as they had in 2006, a media chorus erupted warning Democratic politicians away from their promises of change. Behind the warnings was the repeated claim that America is essentially a conservative country. In an election-eve *Newsweek* cover story with the sub-headline “America remains a center-right nation – a fact that a President Obama would forget at his peril,” Meacham argued that the liberalism of even repeatedly re-elected FDR offended voters. And the editor claimed that a leftward trend in election results and issues polling means little – as would Obama’s victory after months of charges that he stood for radical change. Evidence seemed to lose out to journalists’ fears that campaign promises might actually be kept.

BAILOUT BLUSTER AWARD – Pundit David Brooks

On Sept. 30, just after the House defeated the \$700 billion Wall Street bailout measure, Brooks’ column in the *New York Times* denounced the balking House members for their failure to heed “the collected expertise of the Treasury and Fed.” But a week later, after the House approved a bailout – and with the credit crunch unabated and stock market still plunging – Brooks wrote: “At these moments, central bankers and

Treasury officials leap in to try to make the traders feel better. Officials pretend they’re coming up with policy responses, but much of what they do is political theater.” Now he tells us.

“STATUS QUO CENTRISTS CAN’T BE IDEOLOGUES” AWARD – Too many to name

In late November, corporate media outlets began to credit Barack Obama with making supposedly non-ideological Cabinet picks. The *New York Times* front page reported that his choices “suggest that Mr. Obama is planning to govern from the center-right of his party, surrounding himself with pragmatists rather than ideologues.” Conservative *Times* columnist David Brooks praised the picks as “not ideological” and the economic nominees as “moderate and thoughtful Democrats.” *USA Today* reported that Obama’s selections had “records that display more pragmatism than ideology.” In mediaspeak, if you thought invading Iraq and signing the NAFTA trade pact were good ideas, you’re a pragmatist. If not, you’re an ideologue.

“WHO WOULD HAVE PREDICTED?” AWARD – *New York Times*

The *Times* op-ed page marked the fifth anniversary of the Iraq invasion in March by choosing “nine experts on military and foreign affairs” to write on “the one aspect of the war that most surprised them or that they wish they had considered in the pre-war debate.” None of the experts selected had opposed the invasion.

That kind of exclusion made possible a bizarre claim by *Times* correspondent John Burns in the same day’s paper: “Only the most prescient could have guessed ... that the toll would include tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians killed, as well as nearly 4,000 American troops; or that America’s financial costs by some recent estimates, would rise above \$650 billion by 2008.” Those who’d warned of such disastrous results were not only prescient, but were routinely

“Only the most prescient could have guessed ... that the toll would include tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians killed, as well as nearly 4,000 American troops; or that America’s financial costs by some recent estimates, would rise above \$650 billion by 2008”

“The United States and its predominant economic, political and military power in the world have been the single greatest force for stability in the world”

excluded from mainstream coverage.

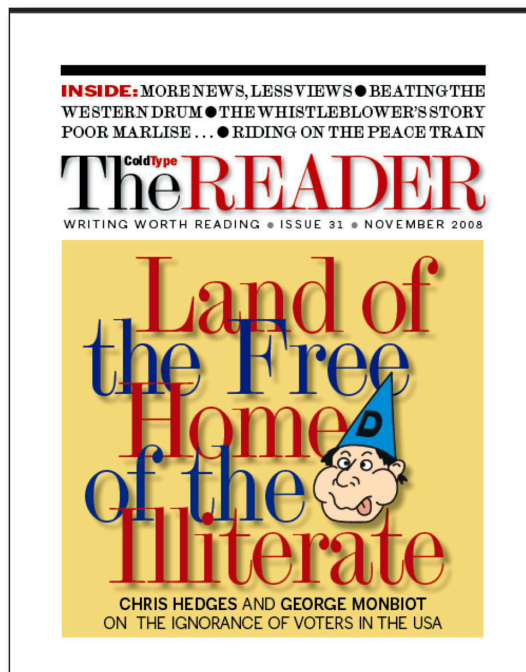
IMPERIALLY EMBEDDED PRIZE – John Burns, New York Times

Described as “the longest-serving foreign correspondent in *New York Times* history,” Burns seemed less a skeptical reporter than a channeler of Henry Kissinger when he offered his world view to PBS’s Charlie Rose in April: “The United States and its predominant economic, political and military power in the world have been the single greatest force for stability in the world, such as it is now, certainly since the Second

World War. If the outcome in Iraq were to destroy the credibility of American power, to destroy America’s willingness to use its power in the world to achieve good, to fight back against totalitarianism, authoritarianism, gross human rights abuses, it would be a very dark day.” **CT**

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America's other glorious war

William Blum on the twisted web of lies and deceit, death and disaster that have resulted from the Pentagon's attempts to create "lasting stability" in Afghanistan

It is remarkable, and scary, to read the US military writing about how it goes around the world bringing "stability" to (often ungrateful) people

The Pentagon pushes hard for a large increase in troops for Afghanistan. Barack Obama has been calling for the same since well before the November election. Listen to the drumbeats telling us that the security of the United States and the Free World necessitates increased action in this place called Afghanistan. As urgent as Iraq 2003, it is. Why? What is there about this backward, reactionary, woman-hating, failed state that warrants hundreds of deaths of American and NATO soldiers? That justifies tens of thousands of Afghan deaths since the first US bombing attacks in October 2001?

In early December, reports the *Washington Post*, "standing at Kandahar Air Field in Afghanistan, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said the United States is making a 'sustained commitment' to that country, one that will last 'some protracted period of time.'" The story goes on to discuss \$300 million in construction projects at this one base to house additional American forces, erecting guard stations and towers and perimeter fencing around the barracks area, putting in vehicle inspection areas, administration offices, cold-storage warehouse, a new power plant, electrical and water distribution systems, communications lines, housing for 1,500 personnel who sustain the systems, maintenance shops, ware-

houses¹ ... America's wealth bleeds out endlessly.

Back in April Maj. Gen. David Rodriguez, commander of the US Army's 82nd Airborne Division, when asked how long it would take to create "lasting stability" in Afghanistan, replied: "In some way, shape or form ... I think it's a generation."² "Stability", it should be noted, is a code word used regularly by the United States since at least the 1950s to mean that the regime in power is willing and able to behave the way Washington would like it to behave. It is remarkable, and scary, to read the US military writing about how it goes around the world bringing "stability" to (often ungrateful) people. This past October the Army published a manual called "Stability Operations".³ It discusses numerous American interventions all over the world since the 1890s, one example after another of bringing "stability" to benighted peoples. One can picture the young American service members reading it, or having it fed to them in lectures, full of pride to be a member of such an altruistic fighting force.

For those members of the US military in Afghanistan the most enlightening lesson they could receive is that their government's plans for that land of sadness have little or nothing to do with the welfare of the Afghan people. In the late 1970s through much of the 1980s, the country

had a government that was relatively progressive, with full rights for women; even a Pentagon report of the time testified to the actuality of women's rights in the country.⁴ And what happened to that government? The United States was instrumental in overthrowing it. It was replaced by the Taliban.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, US oil companies have been vying with Russia, Iran and other energy interests for the massive, untapped oil and natural gas reserves in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. The building and protection of oil and gas pipelines in Afghanistan, to continue farther to Pakistan, India, and elsewhere, has been a key objective of US policy since before the 2001 American invasion and occupation of the country, although the subsequent turmoil there has presented serious obstacles to such plans. A planned Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline has strong support from Washington because, among other reasons, the US is eager to block a competing pipeline that would bring gas to Pakistan and India from Iran.⁵ But security for such projects is daunting, and that's where the US and NATO forces come in to play.

In the late 1990s, the American oil company, Unocal, met with Taliban officials in Texas to discuss the pipelines.⁶ Zalmay Khalilzad, later chosen to be the US ambassador to Afghanistan, worked for Unocal⁷; Hamid Karzai, later chosen by Washington to be the Afghan president, also reportedly worked for Unocal, although the company denies this. Unocal's talks with the Taliban, conducted with the full knowledge of the Clinton administration, and undeterred by the extreme repression of Taliban society, continued as late as 2000 or 2001.

As for NATO, it has no reason to be fighting in Afghanistan. Indeed, NATO has no legitimate reason for existence at all. Their biggest fear is that "failure" in Afghanistan would make this thought more present in the world's mind. If NATO hadn't begun to intervene outside of Europe it would have

highlighted its uselessness and lack of mission. "Out of area or out of business" it was said.

In June, the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives published a report saying Taliban and insurgent activity against the US-NATO presence in Kandahar province puts the feasibility of the pipeline project in doubt. The report says southern regions in Afghanistan, including Kandahar, would have to be cleared of insurgent activity and land mines in two years to meet construction and investment schedules.

"Nobody is going to start putting pipe in the ground unless they are satisfied that there is some reasonable insurance that the workers for the pipeline are going to be safe," said Howard Brown, the Canadian representative for the Asian Development Bank, the major funding agency for the pipeline.⁸

If Americans were asked what they think their country is doing in Afghanistan, their answers would likely be one variation or another of "fighting terrorism", with some kind of connection to 9-11. But what does that mean? Of the tens of thousands of Afghans killed by American/NATO bombs over the course of seven years, how many can it be said had any kind of linkage to any kind of anti-American terrorist act, other than in Afghanistan itself during this period? Not one, as far as we know. The so-called "terrorist training camps" in Afghanistan were set up largely by the Taliban to provide fighters for their civil conflict with the Northern Alliance (minimally less religious fanatics and misogynists than the Taliban, but represented in the present Afghan government). As everyone knows, none of the alleged 9-11 hijackers was an Afghan; 15 of the 19 were from Saudi Arabia; and most of the planning for the attacks appears to have been carried out in Germany and the United States. So, of course, bomb Afghanistan. And keep bombing Afghanistan. And bomb Pakistan. Especially wedding parties (at least six so far).

The building and protection of oil and gas pipelines in Afghanistan, to continue farther to Pakistan, India, and elsewhere, has been a key objective of US policy since before the 2001 American invasion and occupation of the country, although the subsequent turmoil there has presented serious obstacles to such plans

Israel has created its worst enemies – they helped create Hamas as a counterweight to Fatah in Palestine, and their occupation of Lebanon created Hezbollah. The current terrible bombings can be expected to keep the process going

Israel and Palestine, again, forever

Nothing changes. Including what I have to say on the matter. To prove my point, I'm repeating part of what I wrote in this report in July 2006 ...

There are times when I think this tired old world has gone on a few years too long. What's happening in the Middle East is so depressing. Most discussions of the everlasting Israel-Palestine conflict are variations on the child's eternal defense for misbehavior – "He started it!" Within two minutes of discussing/arguing the latest manifestation of the conflict the participants are back to 1967, then 1948, then biblical times. Instead of getting entangled in who started the current mess, I'd prefer to express what I see as two essential underlying facts of life which remain from one conflict to the next:

1) Israel's existence is not at stake and hasn't been so for decades, if it ever was, regardless of the many de rigueur militant statements by Middle East leaders over the years. If Israel would learn to deal with its neighbors in a non-expansionist, non-military, humane, and respectful manner, engage in full prisoner exchanges, and sincerely strive for a viable two-state (if not one-state) solution, even those who are opposed to the idea of a state based on a particular religion could accept the state of Israel, and the question of its right to exist would scarcely arise in people's minds. But as it is, Israel still uses the issue as a justification for its behavior, as Jews all over the world use the Holocaust and conflating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism.

2) In a conflict between a thousand-pound gorilla and a mouse, it's the gorilla who has to make concessions in order for the two sides to progress to the next level. What can the Palestinians offer in the way of concession? Israel would reply to that question: "No violent attacks of any kind." But that would leave the status quo ante bellum – a life of unmitigated misery for the occupied, captive Palestinian people,

confined to the world's largest open air concentration camp.

It is a wanton act of collective punishment that is depriving the Palestinians of food, electricity, water, money, access to the outside world ... and sleep. Israel has been sending jets flying over Gaza at night triggering sonic booms, traumatizing children. "I want nobody to sleep at night in Gaza," declared Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert⁹, words suitable for Israel's tombstone.

Israel has created its worst enemies – they helped create Hamas as a counterweight to Fatah in Palestine, and their occupation of Lebanon created Hezbollah. The current terrible bombings can be expected to keep the process going. Since its very beginning, Israel has been almost continually engaged in fighting wars and taking other people's lands. Did not any better way ever occur to the idealistic Zionist pioneers?

The question that may never go away:

Who really is Barack Obama?

In his autobiography, *Dreams From My Fathers*, Barack Obama writes of taking a job at some point after graduating from Columbia University in 1983. He describes his employer as "a consulting house to multinational corporations" in New York City, and his functions as a "research assistant" and "financial writer".

The odd part of Obama's story is that he doesn't mention the name of his employer. However, a *New York Times* story of 2007 identifies the company as Business International Corporation.¹⁰ Equally odd is that the *Times* did not remind its readers that the newspaper itself had disclosed in 1977 that Business International had provided cover for four CIA employees in various countries between 1955 and 1960.¹¹

The British journal, *Lobster Magazine* – which, despite its incongruous name, is a venerable international publication on intelligence matters – has reported that Busi-

ness International was active in the 1980s promoting the candidacy of Washington-favored candidates in Australia and Fiji.¹² In 1987, the CIA overthrew the Fiji government after but one month in office because of its policy of maintaining the island as a nuclear-free zone, meaning that American nuclear-powered or nuclear-weapons-carrying ships could not make port calls.¹³ After the Fiji coup, the candidate supported by Business International, who was much more amenable to Washington's nuclear desires, was reinstated to power – R.S.K. Mara was Prime Minister or President of Fiji from 1970 to 2000, except for the one-month break in 1987.

In his book, not only doesn't Obama mention his employer's name; he fails to say when he worked there, or why he left. There may well be no significance to these omissions, but inasmuch as Business International has a long association with the world of intelligence, covert actions, and attempts to penetrate the radical left – including Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)¹⁴ – it's valid to wonder if the inscrutable Mr. Obama is concealing something about his own association with this world.

**On socialist Cuba's 50th anniversary,
January 1, 2009: Notes on the beginning
of its unforgivable revolution**

The existence of a revolutionary socialist government with growing ties to the Soviet Union only 90 miles away, insisted the United States government, was a situation which no self-respecting superpower should tolerate, and in 1961 it undertook an invasion of Cuba.

But less than 50 miles from the Soviet Union sat Pakistan, a close ally of the United States, a member since 1955 of the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), the US-created anti-communist alliance. On the very border of the Soviet Union was Iran, an even closer ally of the United States, with its relentless electronic listening posts, aerial surveillance, and infil-

tration into Russian territory by American agents. And alongside Iran, also bordering the Soviet Union, was Turkey, a member of the Russians' mortal enemy, NATO, since 1951. In 1962 during the "Cuban Missile Crisis", Washington, seemingly in a state of near-panic, informed the world that the Russians were installing "offensive" missiles in Cuba. The US promptly instituted a "quarantine" of the island – a powerful show of naval and marine forces in the Caribbean would stop and search all vessels heading towards Cuba; any found to contain military cargo would be forced back.

The United States, however, had missiles and bomber bases already in place in Turkey and other missiles in Western Europe pointed toward the Soviet Union. Russian leader Nikita Khrushchev later wrote: "The Americans had surrounded our country with military bases and threatened us with nuclear weapons, and now they would learn just what it feels like to have enemy missiles pointing at you; we'd be doing nothing more than giving them a little of their own medicine. ... After all, the United States had no moral or legal quarrel with us. We hadn't given the Cubans anything more than the Americans were giving to their allies. We had the same rights and opportunities as the Americans. Our conduct in the international arena was governed by the same rules and limits as the Americans."¹⁵

Lest anyone misunderstand, as Khrushchev apparently did, the rules under which Washington was operating, *Time* magazine was quick to explain. "On the part of the Communists," the magazine declared, "this equating [referring to Khrushchev's offer to mutually remove missiles and bombers from Cuba and Turkey] had obvious tactical motives. On the part of neutralists and pacifists [who welcomed Khrushchev's offer] it betrayed intellectual and moral confusion." The confusion lay, it seems, in not seeing clearly who were the good guys and who were the bad guys, for "The pur-

After the Fiji coup, the candidate supported by Business International, who was much more amenable to Washington's nuclear desires, was reinstated to power – R.S.K. Mara was Prime Minister or President of Fiji from 1970 to 2000, except for the one-month break in 1987.

ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

In the American lexicon, in addition to good and bad bases and missiles, there are good and bad revolutions. The American and French Revolutions were good. The Cuban Revolution is bad. It must be bad because so many people have left Cuba as a result of it

pose of the US bases [in Turkey] was not to blackmail Russia but to strengthen the defense system of NATO, which had been created as a safeguard against Russian aggression. As a member of NATO, Turkey welcomed the bases as a contribution to her own defense.” Cuba, which had been invaded only the year before, could have, it seems, no such concern. *Time* continued its sermon, which undoubtedly spoke for most Americans: “Beyond these differences between the two cases, there is an enormous moral difference between US and Russian objectives ... To equate US and Russian bases is in effect to equate US and Russian purposes ... The US bases, such as those in Turkey, have helped keep the peace since World War II, while the Russian bases in Cuba threatened to upset the peace. The Russian bases were intended to further conquest and domination, while US bases were erected to preserve freedom. The difference should have been obvious to all.”¹⁶

Equally obvious was the right of the United States to maintain a military base on Cuban soil – Guantanamo Naval Base by name, a vestige of colonialism staring down the throats of the Cuban people, which the US, to this day, refuses to vacate despite the vehement protest of the Castro government. In the American lexicon, in addition to good and bad bases and missiles, there are good and bad revolutions. The American and French Revolutions were good. The Cuban Revolution is bad. It must be bad because so many people have left Cuba as a result of it.

But at least 100,000 people left the British colonies in America during and after the American Revolution. These Tories could not abide by the political and social changes, both actual and feared, particularly that change which attends all revolutions worthy of the name – Those looked down upon as inferiors no longer know their place. (Or as the US Secretary of State put it after the Russian Revolution: The Bolsheviks sought “to make the ignorant and incapable mass of humanity dominant in the earth.”¹⁷)

The Tories fled to Nova Scotia and Britain carrying tales of the godless, dissolute, barbaric American revolutionaries. Those who remained and refused to take an oath of allegiance to the new state governments were denied virtually all civil liberties. Many were jailed, murdered, or forced into exile. After the American Civil War, thousands more fled to South America and other points, again disturbed by the social upheaval. How much more is such an exodus to be expected following the Cuban Revolution? – a true social revolution, giving rise to changes much more profound than anything in the American experience. How many more would have left the United States if 90 miles away lay the world’s wealthiest nation welcoming their residence and promising all manner of benefits and rewards? **CT**

Notes

- [1] Washington Post, December 25, 2008
- [2] Reuters, April 29, 2008
- [3] <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/Repository/FM307/FM3-07.pdf>
- [4] US Department of the Army, “Afghanistan, A Country Study” (1986), pp.121, 128, 130, 134, 136, 223, 232-3
- [5] Globe & Mail (Toronto), June 19, 2008
- [6] BBC News, December 4, 1997, “Taleban [sic] in Texas for talks on gas pipeline”
- [7] Washington Post, November 23, 2001
- [8] UPI, July 17, 2008
- [9] Associated Press, July 3, 2006
- [10] New York Times, October 30, 2007
- [11] New York Times, Dec 27, 1977, p.40
- [12] Lobster Magazine, #14, Nov 1987
- [13] Wlm Blum, “Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower”, pp.199-200
- [14] Carl Oglesby, “Ravens in the Storm: A Personal History of the 1960s Antiwar Movement” (2008), passim
- [15] “Khrushchev Remembers” (1971) pp.494, 496.
- [16] Time magazine, November 2, 1962
- [17] Cited by William Appleman Williams, “American Intervention in Russia: 1917-20”, in David Horowitz, ed., “Containment and

Obama going easy on Bush? Say it ain't so

Comedian **Lee Camp** looks at a crazy judicial system

* **Bill Clinton** lies about having an affair. **Result:** *he's brought to trial and nearly kicked out of office.*

* **Richard Nixon** conspires to cover up a break-in at the Democratic National Headquarters. **Result:** *he's forced to resign just before he would have been booted from the presidency.*

* **George W. Bush** invades a sovereign country while lying to the American people and the United Nations. He breaks the Geneva Conventions, illegally wiretaps American citizens, and commits treason by allowing or encouraging the outing of a CIA agent (among other extra curricular activities). **Result:** *nothing more than shitty approval ratings.*

However, if Bush had invaded a female (with her consent) instead of a country, he would've at least lost his job. Right, Gov. Spitzer? If Bush had stolen a \$1 candy bar from a convenience store rather than extorting Iraq out of billions of dollars of oil, he might have been sentenced to 16 years in jail as Kenneth Payne was in Texas. Let that be a lesson to Mr. Payne: if you want to avoid serving hard time, shoot for the billions in oil, not the Butterfinger.

* After having a few drinks, **Dick Cheney** shoots a man, Harry Whittington, in the face nearly killing him. **Result:** *the victim gives a press conference on the steps of the*

hospital apologizing for causing his would-be killer so much grief. Cheney will live out the rest of his life in a mansion in an undisclosed location swimming through a pool of gold coins.

* **Plaxico Burress** shoots himself in the leg. **Result:** *he is charged with criminal possession of a firearm. He will likely spend time in jail.*

The difference between these two incidents seems to be that unlike Harry Whittington, Plaxico Burress was shot by a black man.

* **George W. Bush** is an accomplice to the murder of hundreds of thousands of innocent people (at least). In fact, he gave the order that started the killing. **Result** *(if Barack Obama stops any prosecution of Bush): the former president will live out his days on a ranch in the middle of Texas where he will hopefully finally finish reading the US Constitution. He has told friends that he found the first half very intriguing.*

* In Texas a man named **Kenneth Foster** drives a car with his friend. His friend gets out the car, gets in a fight, and kills a man. **Result:** *as an accomplice to murder, Foster is scheduled to be put to death. The governor commutes his death sentence just hours before, and Foster will instead spend the rest of his life behind bars*

The lesson here is if you're going to be

If Bush had stolen a \$1 candy bar from a convenience store rather than extorting Iraq out of billions of dollars of oil, he might have been sentenced to 16 years in jail as Kenneth Payne was in Texas

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

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an accomplice to a crime, better it be international war crimes. Perpetrators of war crimes are generally rewarded rather than punished.

* **Martha Stewart** is convicted for lying to federal prosecutors about insider trading and stock sales. **Result:** she spends five months in prison.

* During the 2000 presidential election **Dick Cheney** retires from Halliburton with a severance package worth \$36 million and declares he will cut financial ties with his former company. Between then and 2004 he receives about \$200,000 from them every year. Over the course of the occupation in Iraq, Halliburton receives many no-bid contracts worth billions of dollars. **Result:** Cheney's stock options in Halliburton increase by around 3,000%.

* Without any weapons or threats, **Ricky Kiser** of Virginia goes to a pharmacy and hands the clerk a note demanding methadone, to which he is addicted. **Result:** a judge sentences him to 120 years in prison.

If only Ricky Kiser had been helplessly addicted to money as Vice President Cheney, he might be a free man right now.

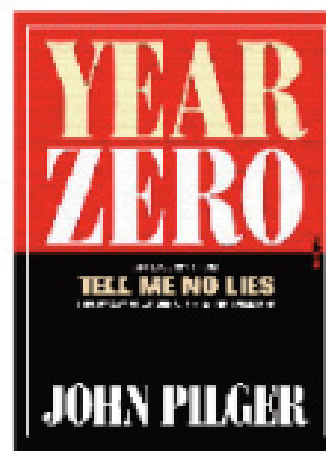
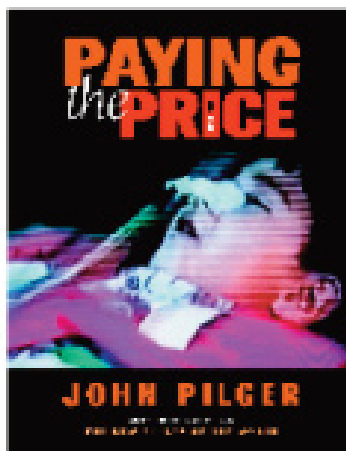
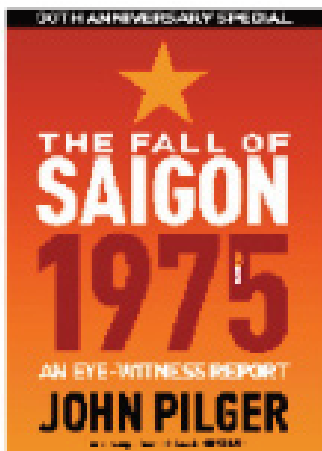
* The **Bush administration** permits the use of dogs in interrogation and torture of suspected terrorists. This is a violation of the Geneva Conventions. **Result:** none except that Bush's Scottish terrier Barney occasionally gives him the stink eye.

* **Michael Vick** gets convicted of helping to run a dog fighting ring. **Result:** he's sentenced to 23 months in federal prison.

So if you use dogs to harm dogs, you're sentenced to jail time. If you use dogs to harm humans, you receive no repercussions except a moderate grilling on *Meet The Press*. **CT**

Stand-up comic **Lee Camp** was called one of the best New Faces at the Montreal Comedy Festival; he ran for president on Comedy Central's "Fresh Debate '08"; and he's done comedic commentary on E! Network, SpikeTV, MTV, and ABC's "Good Morning America." Camp also went live on Fox News and called the network a "parade of propaganda and a festival of ignorance." See and read more of his routine at www.LeeCamp.net
This article was originally published at HuffingtonPost.com

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A lesson in drug enforcement

We cut cigarette smoking in half and didn't have to arrest half a million Americans to do it. The same approach might work with drugs use, says **Paul Armentano**

According to a new report released by the Centers for Disease Control, fewer Americans are smoking cigarettes than at any time in modern history. The number of US adults who smoke has dropped below 20 percent for the first time on record, Reuters reported. This is less than half the percentage (42 percent) of Americans who smoked cigarettes during the 1960s.

Imagine that; in the past 40 years tens of millions of Americans have voluntarily quit smoking tobacco, a legal, yet highly addictive intoxicant. Millions of others have refused to initiate the habit. And they've all made this decision without ever once being threatened with criminal prosecution and arrest, imprisonment, probation, and drug testing.

By contrast, during this same period of time, state and local police have arrested some 20 million Americans for pot law violations – primarily for violations no greater than simple possession. And yet marijuana use among the public has skyrocketed from an annual rate of 0.6 million new users in 1965 to some 2.5 annual new users today.

There's a lesson to be learned here, of course. Tobacco, though harmful to health, is a legally regulated commodity. Sellers are licensed and held accountable by federal and state laws. Users are restricted by age. Advertising and access is limited by state and federal governments. And health

warnings regarding the drug's use are based upon credible science.

By contrast, marijuana remains an unregulated black market commodity. Sellers are typically criminal entrepreneurs who, for the most part, operate undetected from law enforcement and are free to sell their product to any person of any person. Unlike tobacco, marijuana's packaging carries no warning label, and government 'education' campaign's regarding pot's use are based almost explicitly upon hyperbole, propaganda, and laughable stereotypes.

Is it any wonder why use of one drug is going down at the same time that use of the other is rising?

If federal lawmakers truly wished to address marijuana use, they would take a page from their successful campaign to reduce the use of cigarettes. This would include taxing and regulating cannabis with the drug's sale and use restricted to specific markets and consumers. While such an alternative may not entirely eliminate the black market demand for pot, it would certainly be preferable to today's blanket, though thoroughly ineffective, expensive and impotent criminal prohibition. **CT**

Paul Armentano is the Deputy Director of NORML and the NORML Foundation in Washington, DC. He may be contact by e-mail at: paul@norml.org.

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