
INSIDE: HOW TO FIX A WAR GAME ● DEMOCRACY
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THE SHAME OF LEBANON:

**THE ANATOMY OF
A MASSACRE**

BY ROBERT FISK

CHAOS IN PALESTINE:

**WORSE THAN
APARTHEID**

BY CHRIS HEDGES



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THE ANATOMY OF A MASSACRE

BY ROBERT FISK

In antiquity, Pliny wrote of the cliffs of Bayada. The chalk runs down to the Mediterranean in an almost Dover-like cascade of white rock, and the view from the top – just below the little Lebanese village of Chama'a – is breathtaking. To the south lies the United Nations headquarters and the Israeli frontier, to the north the city of Tyre, its long promontory, built by Alexander the Great, lunging out into the green-blue sea. A winding, poorly-made road runs down to the shore below Chama'a and for some reason – perhaps because he had caught sight of the Israeli warship off the coast – 58-year-old Ali Kemal Abdullah took a right turn above the Mediterranean on the morning of 15 July. In the open-topped pick-up behind him, Ali had packed 27 Lebanese refugees, most of them children. Twenty-three of them were to die within the next 15 minutes.

The tragedy of these poor young people and of their desperate attempts to survive their repeated machine-gunning from the air is as well-known in Lebanon as it is already forgotten

abroad. War crimes are easy to talk about when they have been committed in Rwanda or Bosnia; less so in Lebanon, especially when the Israelis are involved. But all the evidence suggests that what happened on this blissfully lovely coastline two and a half months ago was a crime against humanity, one that is impossible to justify on any military grounds since the dead and wounded were fleeing their homes on the express orders of the Israelis themselves.

Mohamed Abdullah understands the reality of that terrible morning because his 52-year-old wife Zahra, his sons Hadi, aged six, and 15-year-old Wissam, and his daughters, Marwa, aged 10, and 13-year old Myrna, were in the pick-up. Zahra was to die. So was Hadi and the beautiful little girl Myrna whose photograph – with immensely intelligent, appealing eyes – now haunts the streets of Marwahin. Wissam, a vein in his leg cut open by an Israeli missile as he vainly tried to save Myrna's life, sits next to his father as he talks to me outside their Beirut house,

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SHAME OF LEBANON

Just down the hill from Marwahin, on Israeli territory, stands a tall radio transmission tower and on the morning of 15 July, the Israelis used loudspeakers on the tower to order the villagers to flee their homes

its walls drenched in black cloth.

“From the day of the attack until now, lots of delegations have come to see us,” Mohamed says. “They all talk and it is all for nothing. My problem is with a huge nation. Can the international community get me my rights? I am a weak person, unprotected. I am a 53-year-old man and I’ve been working as a soldier for 29 years, day and night, to be productive and to support a family that can serve society and that can be a force for good in this country. I was able to build a home in my village for my wife and children – with no help from anyone – and I did this in 2000, 23 years after I was driven out of Marwahin and I finished our new home this year.” And here Mohamed Abdullah stops speaking and cries.

MARWAHIN is one of a string of villages opposite the Israeli border and, unlike many others further north, is inhabited by Sunni Muslim Lebanese, followers of the assassinated former prime minister Rafiq Hariri rather than the Shiite-dominated Hizbollah militia, which is supported and supplied by Syria and Iran. Most Sunnis blame Syria for Hariri’s murder on 14 February last year.

While no friends of Israel, the Sunni community in Lebanon – especially the few thousand Sunnis of Marwahin who are so close to the frontier that they can see the red roofs of the nearest Jewish settlement – are no threat to Israel. For generations, they have intermarried – which is why most of the people in this tragedy hold the family name of al-Abdullah or Ghanem – and,

had their parents been born a few hundred metres further south, they would – like the Sunni Muslim Palestinians who lived there until 1948 – have fled to the refugee camps of Lebanon when Israel was created.

Mohamed recalls with immense tiredness how his wife took his children south from Beirut to their family home in Marwahin on 9 July this year. The date is important because just three days later, Hizbollah members would cross the Israeli border, capture two Israeli soldiers and kill three others – five more were to die in a minefield later the same day – and Israel would respond with 34 days of air-strikes and bombardments that killed more than 1,000 Lebanese civilians. Hizbollah missiles would kill fewer than 200 Israelis, most of them soldiers.

Just down the hill from Marwahin, on Israeli territory, stands a tall radio transmission tower and on the morning of 15 July, the Israelis used loudspeakers on the tower to order the villagers to flee their homes. Survivors describe how they visited two nearby UN posts to appeal for protection, one manned by four members of the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organisation – set up after the 1948 war with Israel – and the other by Ghanaian soldiers of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the same army which, much expanded with French, Italian, Turkish and Chinese troops, is now supposed to police the latest ceasefire in southern Lebanon. Both the UNTSO men and the Ghanaians read the rule-book at the villagers of Marwahin. Ever since the Israelis attacked

the UNIFIL barracks at Qana in 1996, slaughtering 106 Lebanese refugees – again, most of them children – the UN has been under orders not to allow civilians into their bases. The UN, it seems, can talk mightily of the need to protect the innocent, but will do precious little to shield them in southern Lebanon.

Mohamed's four children had travelled south with their mother to buy furniture for their newly-built home; their father and his six other children in Beirut were to join them the following week.

“When the Israeli soldiers were taken, the airport closed down and all the roads became dangerous,” Mohamed says. “But the mobile phones still worked and I had constant conversations with my wife. I asked her what was happening in the village. She said the Israelis were bombing in the fields around the village but not in the village itself. She had no car and anyway it was too dangerous to travel on the roads. On 13 and 14 July, we spoke six or seven times. She was asking about those of our children who were with me. You see, she had heard that Beirut had been bombed so we were worried about each other.”

MOHAMED'S calvary began when he turned to the Arabia television station on the morning of the 15th. “I heard that the people of Marwahin had been ordered by the Israelis to leave their homes within two hours. I tried to call my wife and children but I couldn't get through. Then after half an hour, Zahra called me to say she was in the neigh-

bouring village of Um Mtut and that people had gone to the UN to seek help and been turned away.”

Mohamed insists – though other villagers do not agree with this – that while the UN were turning the civilians away, a van drove into Marwahin containing missiles. The driver was a member of Hizbollah, he says, and its registration number was 171364 (Lebanese registrations have no letters). If this is true, it clearly created a “crisis” – to use Mohamed al-Abdullah's word – in the village. Certainly, once the ceasefire came into place 32 days later, there was a damaged van beside the equally damaged village mosque with a missile standing next to it. Human rights investigators are unclear of the date of the van's arrival but seem certain that it was attacked by the Israelis – probably by an air-fired rocket – after Marwahin was evacuated.

In her last conversation with her husband, Zahra told Mohamed that the four children were having breakfast in a neighbour's house in Um Mtut. “I told her to stay with these people,” Mohamed recalls. “I said that if all the civilians were together, they would be protected. My brother-in-law, Ali Kemal al-Abdullah, had a small pick-up and they could travel in this.” First to leave Marwahin was a car driven by Ahmed Kassem who took his children with him and promised to telephone from Tyre if he reached the city safely. He called a couple of hours later to say the road was OK and that he had reached Tyre. “That's when Ali put his children and my children and his own grandchildren in the pick-up. There

“She said the Israelis were bombing in the fields around the village but not in the village itself. She had no car and anyway it was too dangerous to travel on the roads”

SHAME OF LEBANON

Two small girls –Fatmi and Zainab Ghanem –were blasted into such small body parts that they were buried together in the same grave after the war was over

were 27 people, almost 20 of them children.”

Ali Kemal drove north from Marwahin, away from the Israeli border, then west towards the sea. He must have seen the Israeli warship and the Israeli naval crew certainly saw Ali’s pick-up. The Israelis had been firing at all vehicles on the roads of southern Lebanon for three days – they hit dozens of civilian cars as well as ambulances and never once explained their actions except to claim that they were shooting at “terrorists”. At a corner of the road, where it descends to the sea, Ali Kemal suddenly realised his vehicle was overheating and he pulled to a halt. This was a dangerous place to break down. For seven minutes, he tried to restart the pick-up.

ACCORDING to Mohamed’s son Wissam, Ali – whose elderly mother Sabaha was sitting beside him in the front – turned to the children with the words: “Get out, all you children get out and the Israelis will realise we are civilians.” The first two or three children had managed to climb out the back when the Israeli warship fired a shell that exploded in the cab of the pick-up, killing Ali and Sabaha instantly. “I had almost been able to jump from the vehicle – my mother had told me to jump before the ship hit us,” Wissam says. “But the pressure of the explosion blew me out when I had only one leg over the railing and I was wounded. There was blood everywhere.”

Within a few seconds, Wissam says, an Israeli Apache helicopter arrived

over the vehicle, very low and hovering just above the children. “I saw Myrna still in the pick-up and she was crying and pleading for help. I went to get her and that’s when the helicopter hit us. Its missile hit the back of the vehicle where all the children were and I couldn’t hear anything because the blast had damaged my ears. Then the helicopter fired a rocket into the car behind the pick-up. But the pilot must have seen what he was doing. He could see we were mostly children. The pick-up didn’t have a roof. All the children were crammed in the back and clearly visible.”

Wissam talks slowly but without tears as he describes what happened next. “I lost sight of Myrna. I just couldn’t see her any more for the dust flying around. Then the helicopter came back and started firing its guns at the children, at any of them who moved. I ran away behind a tel [a small hill] and lay there and pretended to be dead because I knew the pilot would kill me if I moved. Some of the children were in bits.”

Wissam is correct about the mutilations. Hadi was burned to death in Zahra’s arms. She died clutching his body to her. Two small girls – Fatmi and Zainab Ghanem – were blasted into such small body parts that they were buried together in the same grave after the war was over. Other children lay wounded by the initial shell burst and rocket explosions as the helicopter attacked them again. Only four survived, Wissam and his sister Marwa among them, hearing the sound of bullets as they “played dead” amid the corpses.

His father Mohamed heard on the radio that a pick-up had been attacked by the Israelis at Bayada, perhaps 10km from Marwahin. “When I heard that the driver was Ali Kemal al-Abdullah, I knew – I knew – that my children were on that truck,” he says, “because my brother-in-law would not have left them behind. He would have taken them with him. I had another brother in Tyre and I called him. He had heard the same news and was waiting at the hospital. He said it was too dangerous to travel from Beirut to Tyre. He said that my family were only wounded. I said that if they were only wounded, I wanted to speak to them. I spoke to Marwa. She said Wissam was in the operating theatre. I asked to speak to the others. My brother just said: ‘Later.’”

No one who has travelled the roads of southern Lebanon under Israeli air attack can underestimate the dangers. But Mohamed and his nephew Khalil decided to make the run to Tyre in the afternoon. “We just drove fast, all the way,” Mohamed remembers. “I got to the Hiram hospital and I found Ali, my brother, waiting for me. I saw Marwa and I asked about her mother and Hadi and Myrna and she said: ‘I saw them in the pick-up, sleeping. When the ship hit us, I was blown out of the vehicle. Afterwards, I saw Mummy and my brother sleeping.’” Marwa told Mohamed that she had run from the pick-up with her 19-year-old cousin Zeinab.

When Mohamed drove to the city hospital in Tyre in search of Zahra, Hadi and Myrna, his brother refused to travel with him. “At this point, I knew

there was something wrong. So I went to the hospital on my own and I found my wife and children in the fridge. It was a horrible shock. To this day, I feel like I am dreaming. And I cannot believe what happened. No one came to ask me about Marwa or Wissam who lost a vein in his leg. It seems no one knows that this house has martyrs.”

BEFORE the ceasefire in southern Lebanon, Mohamed was called to say that the medical authorities in Tyre wished to bury the dead of Marwahin temporarily in a mass grave. He attended their burial and returned to his much-battered village on 15 August – just over a month after his wife and two children were killed and in time for their final interment on 24 August. He found his house partially destroyed in the Israeli bombardment along with the van and its Hizbollah rockets. “Every day is worse than the one before for me,” Mohamed says.

And he blames the world. The UN for giving no protection to his family, Hizbollah’s “vanity” in starting a war with a more powerful enemy and the Israelis for destroying the life of his family. “Is Israel in a state of war with children? We need an answer, a response to this question. We ask for a trial for this Israeli pilot who killed the children. He is a war criminal because he killed innocents for no reason. And what has happened? The south has been destroyed. The people were massacred. The Israelis were back on the soil of my land. I could see them when we buried Zahra and Hadi and Myrna. How can I lose my children and then

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SHAME OF LEBANON

"If all these children were Israeli and the Hizbollah had killed them all with a helicopter – the US president would travel to the cemetery each year for a memorial service and there would be war crimes trials and the world would denounce this crime"

see the Israelis here? We are ignored by the government and treated with neglect by the media and the political parties – including the Hizbollah – who were the cause of what happened."

Almost all the "martyr" pictures of the dead of Marwahin contain a ghostly photograph of Rafiq Hariri, the mightiest Sunni Muslim of them all, who was assassinated last year. The martyrs of Marwahin have become identified with a man who sought peace rather than war with Israel. But at the graveyard on the edge of the tobacco-growing village, there is no end to mourning. I found two old women sitting beside the graves, weeping and beating themselves and pulling at their hair. One of them was Ali Kemal's wife.

Adel Abdullah took me round the graves. His sister-in-law Mariam lies in one of them, her body still containing the unborn child she was carrying when she died. So are her five children, Ali, 14, Hamad, 12, Hussein, 10, Hassan, eight, and two-year-old Lama.

"This is Myrna," Adel says, patting his hand gently on the concrete surface of the little girl's still unadorned grave. "This is Zahra, her mother, whom we put just behind her. And here is Hadi." The villagers have written their first names in Arabic in the concrete. "There is Naame Ghanem and her two children. And this is the grave of both Fatmi and Zeinab because we could not tell which bits of them belonged together. That is why the 23 dead of Marwahin have only 22 graves."

On the dirt road to the cemetery on the windy little hill above the village, there still lies a face mask worn by the

young men carrying the decomposing bodies to their final grave. And just to the left of the dead, clearly visible to the Israeli settlers in their homes across the border, the villagers have left the remains of Ali Kemal Abdullah's Daihatsu pick-up. It is punctured by a hundred shrapnel holes, bent and distorted and burned. The children in this vehicle had no chance, killed outright or smashed to pieces as they lay wounded afterwards.

"If it is right that these people should be martyred in this way, well fine," Adel says to me. "If not, why did this crime take place? Why can't a country – a single country, your country – say that Israel was responsible for a war crime? But no, you are silent." A woman, watching Adel's anger, was more eloquent. "The problem," she said, "is that these poor people belonged to a country called Lebanon and our lives are worth nothing to anyone else. If this had happened in Israel – if all these children were Israeli and the Hizbollah had killed them all with a helicopter – the US president would travel to the cemetery each year for a memorial service and there would be war crimes trials and the world would denounce this crime. But no president is going to come to Marwahin. There will be no trials."

MOHAMED AL-ABDULLAH weeps beside his wounded son in Beirut. "I consider this to have been a useless war and with these atrocious massacres it is innocent civilians who paid the price. Those who died are resting but we who are living are paying a price every day.

That price is paid by the living who suffer. Why should I pay the price of something I didn't choose? I will say just one thing to you. God have mercy on Rafiq Hariri, a man of education and reconstruction. In God's name, I hope his children walk in his path. My wife loved Sheikh Rafiq so much. In this house, my wife's whole life changed after his assassination. Before, Zahra was not interested in politics but from the day his car was bombed, she listened to the news every day. Before bed, she wanted to hear any news. And she said to me once, 'I hope I don't die, so I will know who killed Rafiq Hariri.'

A UN investigation is still underway into Hariri's murder. An Israeli investigation is to start into the disastrous performance of its army during the war. The Hizbollah still claims it won a "divine victory" in July and August last year. UNIFIL, which turned the refugees of Marwahin away on 15 July, stated that when they were removing the children's bodies, their soldiers came under fire.

Human Rights Watch is still investigating the killings of civilians at Marwahin and other locations and wrote of them before the war ended. "The Israeli military," it said in its initial report, "did not follow its orders [to civilians] to

evacuate with the creation of safe passage routes, and on a daily basis Israeli warplanes and helicopters struck civilians in cars who were trying to flee, many with white flags out the windows, a widely accepted sign of civilian status ... On some days, Israeli war planes hit dozens of civilian cars, showing a clear pattern of failing to distinguish between civilian and military objects."

International law makes it clear that it is forbidden in any circumstances to carry out direct attacks against civilians and that to do so is a war crime. Human Rights Watch states that "war crimes" include "making the civilian population or individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities the object of attack".

Lama Abdullah was the youngest victim of the Marwahin 23. Ali Kemal's wife Sabaha was in her eighties. At least six of the children were between the ages of one and 10. The Israeli helicopter pilot's name is, of course, unknown. **CT**

Robert Fisk is the award-winning Middle East correspondent for London newspaper, The Independent. His latest book The Great War For Civilisation, is now available in paperback

"On some days, Israeli war planes hit dozens of civilian cars, showing a clear pattern of failing to distinguish between civilian and military objects"

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GAZA: WORSE THAN APARTHEID

BY CHRIS HEDGES

It is a sad commentary on the gutlessness of the U.S. press and the timidity of the Democratic opposition that most Americans are not aware of the catastrophic humanitarian crisis they bear so much responsibility in creating

Israel has spent the last five months unleashing missiles, attack helicopters and jet fighters over the densely packed concrete hovels in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli army has made numerous deadly incursions, and some 500 people, nearly all civilians, have been killed and 1,600 more wounded. Israel has rounded up hundreds of Palestinians, destroyed Gaza's infrastructure, including its electrical power system and key roads and bridges, carried out huge land confiscations, demolished homes and plunged families into a crisis that has caused widespread poverty and malnutrition.

Civil society itself – and this appears to be part of the Israeli plan – is unraveling. Hamas and Fatah factions battle in the streets, despite a tenuous cease-fire, threatening civil war. And the governing Palestinian movement, Hamas, has said it will boycott early elections called by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, done with the blessing of the West in a bid to toss Hamas out of power. (Remember that Hamas, despite its repugnant politics,

was democratically elected.) In recent days armed groups loyal to Abbas have seized Hamas-run ministries in what looks like a coup.

The stark reality of Gaza, however, has failed to penetrate the consciousness of most Americans, who, when they notice the Israeli and Palestinian conflict, prefer to debate the merits of the word “apartheid” in former President Jimmy Carter’s new book, “Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid.”

It is a sad commentary on the gutlessness of the U.S. press and the timidity of the Democratic opposition that most Americans are not aware of the catastrophic humanitarian crisis they bear so much responsibility in creating. Palestinians are not only dying, their olive trees uprooted, their farmland and homes destroyed and their aquifers taken away from them, but on many days they can't move because of Israeli “closures” that make basic tasks, like buying food and going to the hospital, nearly impossible. These Palestinians, after decades of repression, cannot return to land from which they

were expelled. The 140-plus U.N. votes to censure Israel and two Security Council resolutions – both vetoed by the United States – are blithely ignored. Is it any wonder that the Palestinians, gasping for air, rebel as the walls close in around them, as their children go hungry and as the Israelis turn up the violence?

Palestinians in Gaza live encased in a squalid, overcrowded ghetto, surrounded by the Israeli military and a massive electric fence, unable to leave or enter the strip and under daily assault. The word “apartheid,” given the wanton violence employed against the Palestinians, is tepid. This is more than apartheid.

THE concerted Israeli attempts to orchestrate a breakdown in law and order, to foster chaos and rampant deprivation, are on public display in the streets of Gaza City, where Palestinians walk past the rubble of the Palestinian Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Economy, the office of the Palestinian prime minister and a number of educational institutions that have been bombed by Israeli jets. The electricity generation plant, providing 45 percent of the electricity of the Gaza Strip, has been wiped out, and even the primitive electricity networks and transmitters that remain have been repeatedly bombed. Six bridges linking Gaza City with the central Gaza Strip have been blown up and main arteries cratered into obliteration. And the West Bank is rapidly descending into a crisis of Gaza proportions. The juxta-

position of what is happening in Gaza and what is being debated on the U.S. airwaves about a book that is little more than a basic primer on the conflict reinforces the impression most outside our gates have of Americans living in a distorted, bizarre reality of our own creation.

What do Israel and Washington believe they will gain by turning Gaza and the West Bank into a miniature version of Iraq? How do they think people who are desperate, deprived of hope, dignity and a way to make a living, under attack from one of the most technologically advanced armies on the planet, will respond? Do they believe that creating a Hobbesian nightmare for the Palestinians will blunt terrorism, curb suicide attacks and foster peace? Do they not see that the rest of the Middle East watches the slaughter in horror and rage – its angry, disenfranchised young men and women determined to overcome feelings of impotence and humiliation, even at the cost of their own lives?

And perhaps they do see and understand all this. Israel and Washington probably do get the recruiting value of this repression for Islamic militants. But these Israeli attacks, despite the rage and violence they breed against Israelis and against us, also create conditions so intolerable that Palestinians can no longer reside on their land. More than 160,000 civil servants have not received full salaries for almost nine months. These government employees support families that number more than a million Palestinians. And a United Nations report states that more than two-thirds

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CHAOS IN PALESTINE

The question is not whether Israel practices apartheid. Apartheid is a fond dream for most Palestinians. The awful question is rather will Israel be able to unleash a policy so draconian and cruel that it will obliterate a community that has lived on this land for centuries

of Palestinians are now living below the poverty line. The unemployment rate is more than 50 percent. The Palestinian Foreign Ministry says 10,000 Palestinians have emigrated in the last four months and almost 50,000 others have applied to leave.

Israel, with no restraints from Washington, despite the Iraq Study Group report recommendations that the peace process be resurrected, has been given the moral license by the Bush administration to carry out what is euphemistically in Israel called “transfer” and what in other parts of the world is called ethnic cleansing. Faced with a demographic time bomb, knowing that by 2020 Jews will make up only 40 to 46 percent of the overall population of Israel, the architects of transfer, who once held the equivalent status in Israeli society of the Ku Klux Klan, have wormed their way into positions of power in the Israeli government.

Washington and Israel, I suspect, know the cost of this repression. But it is beginning to appear as though they accept it – as the price for ridding themselves of the Palestinians.

ISRAELI Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has installed in his Cabinet a politician who openly calls for the expulsion of the some 1.3 million Israeli Arabs who live inside Israel. Avigdor Lieberman’s “Israel Is Our Home” Party, part of Olmert’s governing coalition, proposes involuntary transfer in a region populated mostly by Arab citizens of Israel, shifting those people to a future Palestinian state that would include Gaza, parts of the West Bank and a small slice

of northern Israel. All Israeli Arabs who continued to reside in the territory of transfer would automatically lose their Israeli citizenship unless they took a loyalty oath to the state and its Jewish symbols. The inclusion of Lieberman, the David Duke of Israel, into the Cabinet is an indication to most Palestinians that the worst is yet to come.

The debate over Jimmy Carter’s book, one that dishes up a fair number of Israeli myths about itself and states a reality that is acknowledged even by most Israelis, misses the point. The question is not whether Israel practices apartheid. Apartheid is a fond dream for most Palestinians. The awful question is rather will Israel be able to unleash a policy so draconian and cruel that it will obliterate a community that has lived on this land for centuries. There are other, far more loaded words for what is happening to the Palestinians. One shudders to repeat them. But unchecked, unstopped, the current wave of violence and abuse meted out to the Palestinians will echo down the corridors of history as one of the greatest moral and tactical blunders of the early part of this century, one that will boomerang on Israel and on us, bringing to our own doorsteps the evil we have allowed to be delivered to the narrow alleys and refugee camps in Gaza. When it was only apartheid, we had some hope. **CT**

Chris Hedges, the former Middle East Bureau chief for The New York Times, is a senior fellow at The Nation Institute. This article originally appeared at www.truthdig.com

HOW TO FIX A WAR GAME

BY TOM ENGELHARDT

This is an old tale. Long forgotten. But like all good political bedtime stories, it's well worth telling again.

Once upon a time, there was a retired general named Paul Van Riper. In 1966, as a young Marine officer and American advisor in Vietnam, he was wounded in action; he later became the first president of the Marine Corps University, retired from the Corps as a Lieutenant General, and then took up the task of leading the enemy side in Pentagon war games.

Over the years, Van Riper had developed into a free-wheeling military thinker, given to quoting Von Clausewitz and Sun-tzu, and dubious about the ability of the latest technology to conquer all in its path. If you wanted to wage war, he thought, it might at least be reasonable to study war seriously (if not go to war yourself) rather than just fall in love with military power. It seemed to him that you took a risk any time you dismissed your enemy as without resources (or a prayer) against your awesome power and imagined your

campaign to come as a sure-fire “cake-walk.” As he pointed out, “Many enemies are not frightened by that overwhelming force. They put their minds to the problem and think through: how can I adapt and avoid that overwhelming force and yet do damage against the United States?”

As a result, Van Riper took the task of simulated enemy commander quite seriously. He also had a few issues with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's much vaunted “military transformation,” his desire to create a sleek, high-tech, agile military that would drive everything before it. He thought the Rumsfeld program added up to just so many “shallow,” “fundamentally flawed” slogans. (“There's very little intellectual content to what they say... ‘Information dominance,’ ‘network-centric warfare,’ ‘focused logistics’ – you could fill a book with all of these slogans.”)

In July 2002, he got the chance to test that proposition. At the cost of a quarter-billion dollars, the Pentagon launched the most elaborate war games in

“Many enemies are not frightened by that overwhelming force. They put their minds to the problem and think through: how can I adapt and avoid that overwhelming force and yet do damage against the United States?”

RULES? WHAT RULES?

After three or four days, with the Blue Team in obvious disarray, the game was halted and the rules rescripted. In a quiet protest, Van Riper stepped down as enemy commander

its history, immodestly entitled “Millennium Challenge 02.” These involved all four services in “17 simulation locations and nine live-force training sites.” Officially a war against a fictional country in the Persian Gulf region – but obviously Iraq – it was specifically scripted to prove the efficacy of the Rumsfeld-style invasion that the Bush administration had already decided to launch.

Lt. Gen. Van Riper commanded the “Red Team” – the Iraqis of this simulation – against the “Blue Team,” U.S. forces; and, unfortunately for Rumsfeld, he promptly stepped out of the script. Knowing that sometimes the only effective response to high-tech warfare was the lowest tech warfare imaginable, he employed some of the very techniques the Iraqi insurgency would begin to use all-too-successfully a year or two later.

Such simple devices as, according to the *Army Times*, using “motorcycle messengers to transmit orders, negating Blue’s high-tech eavesdropping capabilities,” and “issuing attack orders via the morning call to prayer broadcast from the minarets of his country’s mosques.” In the process, Van Riper trumped the techies.

“At one point in the game,” as Fred Kaplan of *Slate* wrote in March 2003, “when Blue’s fleet entered the Persian Gulf, he sank some of the ships with suicide-bombers in speed boats. (At that point, the managers stopped the game, ‘refloated’ the Blue fleet, and resumed play.)” After three or four days, with the Blue Team in obvious disarray, the game was halted and the rules rescripted. In a quiet protest, Van Riper stepped down as enemy commander.

Millennium Challenge 02 was subsequently written up as a vindication of Rumsfeld’s “military transformation.” On that basis – with no one paying more mind to Van Riper (who, this April, called openly for Rumsfeld’s resignation) than to Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki when, in February 2003, he pointed out that hundreds of thousands of troops would be needed to occupy Iraq, the “transformational” invasion was launched – with all the predictably catastrophic results now so widely known.

The Millennium Challenge 02 war games were already underway when, late that July, Sir Richard Dearlove, head of MI6 (the British equivalent of the CIA), returned to London from high-level meetings in Washington to report to Prime Minister Tony Blair and his top officials. In a secret meeting, he told them that the decision for war in Iraq had already been made by the Bush administration and that now, in a memorable phrase, “the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy.”

On May 1st, 2005, notes from this meeting, dubbed “the Downing Street Memo,” were leaked to the *London Sunday Times*. Thanks to that memo and other documents, it’s now commonly accepted that the Bush administration “fixed” the intelligence around their war of choice. But Lt. Gen. Van Riper’s forgotten story should remind us that they also “fixed” the war they were planning to fight.

BETWEEN then and now, when it came to Iraq, there wasn’t much that wasn’t “fixed” in a similar manner. Only recently, James A. Baker’s Iraq Study

Group report described the way levels of violence in Iraq were grossly underreported by U.S. intelligence officials – in one case, only 93 “attacks or significant acts of violence” being officially recorded on a day when the number was well above 1,000. As the report politely summed up this particular fix-it-up methodology, “Good policy is difficult to make when information is systematically collected in a way that minimizes its discrepancy with policy goals.”

But here’s the thing: The Iraq Study Group, too – like every other mainstream gathering of advisors, officials, or pundits – “fixed” the intelligence. Think of the ISG as the clean-up-crew version of the Blue Team of Millennium Challenge 02. Before they even began, Bush family consigliere Baker and cohorts ensured that, while the ISG would be filled with notable movers and shakers from previous administrations, no one on it, nor any expert “team” advising it would represent the point of view that a majority of Americans have by now come to support – actual withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Iraq on a set timeline.

You would not, for instance, find retired Lt. Gen. William E. Odom, the former Director of the National Security Agency, who has openly called for the U.S. to “cut and run” from Iraq, on the panel. Despite the report’s harsh descriptions of the last three years of failed policy and some perfectly sane negotiation suggestions, it dismissed the idea of such a withdrawal out of hand – because such a dismissal was simply built into the group’s very make up.

It turns out, of course, that when you control both sides of a war game or the

range of opinion on a panel, you are assured of the results you’re going to get. The problem comes when you only control one side of a situation; and when, as American commanders learned in the early days of the Korean War and again in Vietnam, whether due to racism or imperial blindness, you also discount and disrespect your enemies.

Unfortunately for the Bush administration, it turned out that, while you could fix the war games and the intelligence, you couldn’t be assured of fixing reality itself, which has a tendency to remain obdurately, passionately, irascibly unconquerable. Yes, you could ignore reality for a while. (The President, when being told a few hard Iraqi truths in 2004 by Col. Derek Harvey, the Defense Intelligence Agency’s senior intelligence officer for Iraq, reportedly turned to his aides and asked, “Is this guy a Democrat?”) But you couldn’t do it forever, not when the Lt. Gen. Van Rippers of Iraq refused to step aside and you weren’t capable of removing them; not when you couldn’t even figure out, most of the time, who they were. It was then that the fixers first found themselves in a genuine fix, from which none of Washington’s movers and shakers have yet been willing to extract themselves. **CT**

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WITHDRAWAL? IN YOUR DREAMS

BY MICHAEL SCHWARTZ

The ISG report is not an "exit strategy;" it is a new plan for achieving the Bush administration's imperial goals in the Middle East

The report of James A. Baker's Iraq Study Group has already become a benchmark for Iraq policy, dominating the print and electronic media for several days after its release, and generating excited commentary by all manner of leadership types from Washington to London to Baghdad. Even if most of the commentary continues to be negative, we can nevertheless look forward to highly publicized policy changes in the near future that rely for their justification on this report, or on one of the several others recently released, or on those currently being prepared by the Pentagon, the White House, and the National Security Council.

This is not, however, good news for those of us who want the U.S. to end its war of conquest in Iraq. Quite the contrary: The ISG report is not an "exit strategy;" it is a new plan for achieving the Bush administration's imperial goals in the Middle East.

The ISG report stands out among the present flurry of re-evaluations as the sole evaluation of the war by a group

not beholden to the President; as the only report containing an unadorned negative evaluation of the current situation (vividly captured in the oft-quoted phrase "dire and deteriorating"); and as the only public document with unremitting criticism of the Bush administration's conduct of the war.

This negativity brings into focus the severely constrained nature of the debate now underway in Washington – most importantly, the fact that U.S. withdrawal from Iraq (immediate or otherwise) is simply not going to be part of the discussion. Besides explicitly stating that withdrawal is a terrible idea – "our leaving would make [the situation] worse" – the Baker report is built around the idea that the United States will remain in Iraq for a very long time.

To put it bluntly, the ISG is not calling on the Bush administration to abandon its goal of creating a client regime that was supposed to be the key to establishing the U.S. as the dominant power in the Middle East. Quite the contrary. As its report states: "We agree with the goal of U.S. policy in Iraq." If you ignore

the text sprinkled with sugar-coated words like “representative government,” the report essentially demands that the Iraqi government pursue policies shaped to serve “America’s interest and values in the years ahead.”

Don’t be fooled by this often quoted passage from the Report: “By the first quarter of 2008, subject to unexpected developments in the security situation on the ground, all combat brigades not necessary for force protection could be out of Iraq.” The ebullient interpretations of this statement by the media have been misleading in three ways:

First, the combat brigades mentioned in this passage represent far less than half of all the troops in Iraq. The military police, the air force, the troops that move the equipment, those assigned to the Green Zone, the soldiers that order, store, and move supplies, medical personnel, intelligence personnel, and so on, are not combat personnel; and they add up to considerably more than 70,000 of the approximately 140,000 troops in Iraq at the moment. They will all have to stay – as well as actual combat forces to protect them and to protect the new American advisors who are going to flood into the Iraqi army – because the Iraqi army has none of these units and isn’t going to develop them for several years, if ever.

Second, the ISG wants those “withdrawn” American troops “redeployed,” either inside or outside Iraq. In all likelihood, this will mean that at least some of them will be stationed in the five permanent bases inside Iraq that the Bush administration has already spent billions constructing, and which are small

American towns, replete with fast food restaurants, bus lines, and recreation facilities. There is no other place to put these redeployed troops in the region, except bases in Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, none of which are really suited to, or perhaps eager to, host a large influx of American troops (guaranteed to be locally unpopular and a magnet for terrorist attacks).

Third, it’s important not to ignore those two modest passages: “subject to unexpected developments in the security situation on the ground” and “not necessary for force protection.” In other words, if the Iraqi troops meant to replace the redeployed American ones are failures, then some or all of the troops might never be redeployed. In addition, even if Iraqi troops did perform well, Americans might still be deemed necessary to protect the remaining (non-combat) troops from attack by insurgents and other forces. Given that American troops have not been able to subdue the Sunni rebellion, which is still on a growth curve, it is highly unlikely that their Iraqi substitutes will do any better. In other words, even if the “withdrawal” parts of the Baker report were accepted by the President, which looks increasingly unlikely, its plan has more holes and qualifications than Swiss cheese.

Put another way, no proposal at present on the table in Washington is likely to result in significant reductions even in the portion of American troops defined as “combat brigades.” That is why this statement says that the combat troops “could be out of Iraq,” not “will be out of Iraq” in the first quarter of 2008.

So, the ISG report contemplates –

No proposal at present on the table in Washington is likely to result in significant reductions even in the portion of American troops defined as “combat brigades”

EXIT STRATEGIES

Most Americans initially believed that the U.S. went into Iraq to shut down Saddam Hussein's WMD programs and/or simply to topple a dangerous dictator (or even a dictator somehow connected to the 9/11 attacks). Of course, had that really been the case, the Bush administration should have withdrawn almost immediately

best case scenario — “a considerable military presence in the region, with our still significant [at least 70,000 strong] force in Iraq, and with our powerful air, ground, and naval deployments in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar...” Given a less-than-optimum scenario, the American presence in Iraq would assumedly remain much higher, perhaps even approaching current levels. As if this isn't bad news enough, the report is laced with qualifiers indicating that the ISG members fear their new strategy might not work, that “there is no magic formula to solve the problems of Iraq” — a theme that will certainly be picked up as the right-wing of the Republican Party and angry neocons continue to blast at the report.

Why was the Iraq Study Group so reluctant to advocate the withdrawal of American troops and the abandonment of the Bush administration's goal of pacifying Iraq? The likely explanation is: Its all-establishment membership (and the teams of experts that gave it advice) understood that withdrawing from Iraq would be an imperially momentous decision. It would, in fact, mean the abandonment of over two decades of American foreign policy in the Middle East. To grasp this, it's helpful to compare the way most Americans look at the war in Iraq to the way those in power view it.

Most Americans initially believed that the U.S. went into Iraq to shut down Saddam Hussein's WMD programs and/or simply to topple a dangerous dictator (or even a dictator somehow connected to the 9/11 attacks). Of course, had that really been the case,

the Bush administration should have withdrawn almost immediately. Even today, it could, at least theoretically, withdraw and declare victory the day after Saddam Hussein is executed, since the WMDs and the 9/11 connection were evanescent. In this scenario, the dismal post-invasion military failure would represent nothing but the defeat of Bush's personal crusade — articulated only after the Hussein regime was toppled — to bring American-style democracy to a benighted land.

Because of this, most people, whether supporters or opponents of the war, expect each new round of policy debates to at least consider the option of withdrawal; and many hold out the hope that Bush will finally decide to give up his democratization pipe dream. Even if Bush is incapable of reading the handwriting on the Iraqi wall, this analysis encourages us to hope that outside advisers like the ISG will be “pragmatic” enough to bring the message home to him, before the war severely undermines our country economically and in terms of how people around the world think about us.

However, a more realistic look at the original goals of the invasion makes clear why withdrawal cannot be so easily embraced by anyone loyal to the grandiose foreign policy goals adopted by the U.S. right after the fall of the Soviet Union. The real goals of the war in Iraq add up to an extreme version of this larger vision of a “unipolar world” orbiting around the United States.

The invasion of 2003 reflected the Bush administration's ambition to establish Iraq as the hub of American im-

perial dominance in the oil heartlands of the planet. Unsurprisingly, then, the U.S. military entered Iraq with plans already in hand to construct and settle into at least four massive military bases that would become nerve centers for our military presence in the “arc of instability” extending from Central Asia all the way into Africa – an “arc” that just happened to contain the bulk of the world’s exportable oil.

The original plan included wresting control of Iraqi oil from Saddam’s hostile Baathist government and delivering it into the hands of the large oil companies through the privatization of new oil fields and various other special agreements. It was hoped that privatized Iraqi oil might then break OPEC’s hold on the global oil spigot. In the Iraq of the Bush administration’s dreams, the U.S. would be the key player in determining both the amount of oil pumped and the favored destinations for it. (This ambition was implicitly seconded by the Baker Commission when it recommended that the U.S. “should assist Iraqi leaders to reorganize the national oil industry as a commercial enterprise”)

All of this, of course, was contingent upon establishing an Iraqi government that would be a junior partner in American Middle Eastern policy; that, under the rule of an Ahmed Chalabi or Iyad Allawi, would, for instance, be guaranteed to support administration campaigns against Iran and Syria. Bush administration officials have repeatedly underscored this urge, even in the present circumstances, by attempting, however ineffectively, to limit the ties of the present Shia-dominated Iraqi govern-

ment to Iran.

Withdrawal from Iraq would signal the ruin of all these hopes. Without a powerful American presence, permanent bases would not be welcomed by any regime that might emerge from the current cauldron in Baghdad; every faction except the Kurds is adamantly against them. U.S. oil ambitions would prove similarly unviable. Though J. Paul Bremer, John Negroponte and Zalmay Khalilzad, our three ambassador-vice-roys in Baghdad, have all pushed through legislation mandating the privatization of oil (even embedding this policy in the new constitution), only a handful of top Iraqi politicians have actually embraced the idea. The religious leaders who control the Sunni militias oppose it, as do the Sadrists, who are now the dominant faction in the Shia areas. The current Iraqi government is already making economic treaties with Iran and even sought to sign a military alliance with that country that the Americans aborted.

Still staying the course

Added to all this, from Lebanon to Pakistan, the administration’s political agenda for the “arc of instability” is now visibly in a state of collapse. This agenda, of course, predated Bush, going back to the moment in 1991 when the Soviet Union simply evaporated, leaving an impoverished Russia and a set of wobbly independent states in its place. While the elder George Bush and Bill Clinton did not embrace the use of the military as the primary instrument of foreign policy, they fully supported the goal of American preeminence in the

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EXIT STRATEGIES

Of course, if the Bush administration were somehow to succeed in stabilizing a compliant client regime, such a regime would surely request that American troops remain in their "temporary" bases on a more-or-less permanent basis, since its survival would depend on them

Middle East and worked very hard to achieve it – through the isolation of Iran, sanctions against Iraq, various unpublicized military actions against Saddam's forces, and a ratcheting upward of permanent basing policies throughout the Gulf region and Central Asia.

This is the context for the peculiar stance taken by the Iraq Study Group towards the administration's disaster in Iraq. Coverage has focused on the way the report labeled the situation as "grave and deteriorating" and its call for negotiations with the previously pariah states of Iran and Syria. In itself, the negotiation proposal is perfectly reasonable and has the side effect of lessening the possibility that the Bush administration will launch an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities in the near future.

But no one should imagine that the "new" military strategy proposed by Baker and his colleagues includes dismissing the original goals of the war. In their letter of transmittal, ISG co-chairs James Baker and Lee Hamilton declared: "All options have not been exhausted. We believe it is still possible to pursue different policies that can give Iraq an opportunity for a better future, combat terrorism, stabilize a critical region of the world and protect America's credibility, interests and values."

This statement, couched in typical Washington-speak, reiterates those original ambitious goals and commits the ISG to a continuing effort to achieve them. The corpus of the report does nothing to dispel that assertion. Its military strategy calls for a (certainly quixotic) effort to use Iraqi troops to bring about the military victory Ameri-

can troops have failed for three years to achieve. The diplomatic initiatives call for a (certainly quixotic) effort to enlist the aid of Syria and Iran, as well as Saudi Arabia and other neighbors, in defeating the insurgency. And the centerpiece of the economic initiatives seeks to accelerate the process of privatizing oil, the clearest sign of all that Baker and Hamilton – like Bush and his circle – remain committed to the grand scheme of maintaining the United States as the dominant force in the region.

Even as the group called on the President to declare that the U.S. "does not seek permanent military bases in Iraq" once the country is secure, it hedged this intention by pointing out that we "could consider" temporary bases, "if the Iraqi government were to request it." Of course, if the Bush administration were to succeed in stabilizing a compliant client regime, such a regime would surely request that American troops remain in their "temporary" bases on a more-or-less permanent basis, since its survival would depend on them.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the ISG report is its embrace of the Bush administration's imperial attitude toward the Iraqi government. Although the report repeatedly calls for American "respect" for Iraqi "sovereignty" (an implicit criticism of the last three years of Iraq policy), it also offers a series of what are essentially non-negotiable demands that would take an already weak and less-than-sovereign government and strip it of control over anything that makes governments into governments.

As a start, the "Iraqi" military would be flooded with 10,000-20,000 new

American “advisors,” ensuring that it would continue to be an American-controlled military, even if a desperately poor and recalcitrant one, into the distant future. In addition, the ISG offered a detailed program for how oil should be extracted (and the profits distributed) as well as specific prescriptions for handling a number of pressing problems, including fiscal policy, militias, the city of Kirkuk, sectarianism, de-Baathification, and a host of other issues that normally would be decisions for an Iraqi government, not an American advisory panel in Washington. It is hardly surprising, then, that Iraqi leaders almost immediately began complaining that the report, for all its bows to “respect,” completely lacked it.

Most striking is the report’s twenty-first (of seventy-nine) recommendations, aimed at describing what the United States should do if the Iraqis fail to satisfactorily fulfill the many tasks that the ISG has set for them. “If the Iraqi government does not make substantial progress toward the achievement of milestones on national reconciliation, security, and governance, the United States should reduce its political, military, or economic support for the Iraqi government.”

This could be interpreted as a threat that the United States will withdraw – and the mainstream media has chosen to interpret it just that way. But why then did Baker and his colleagues not word this statement differently? (“... the United States should reduce, and ultimately withdraw, its forces from Iraq.”) The phrase “reduce its political, military, or economic support for the

Iraqi government” is probably better interpreted literally: that if that government fails to satisfy ISG demands, the U.S. should transfer its “political, military, or economic support” to a new leadership within Iraq that it feels would be more capable of making “substantial progress toward” the milestones it has set. In other words, this passage is more likely a threat of a coup d’état than a withdrawal strategy – a threat that the façade of democracy would be stripped away and a “strong man” (or a government of “national salvation”) installed, one that the Bush administration or the ISG believes could bring the Sunni rebellion to heel.

Here is the unfortunate thing. Evidently, the “grave and deteriorating” situation in Iraq has not yet deteriorated enough to convince even establishment American policymakers, who have been on the outside these last years, to follow the lead of the public (as reflected in the latest opinion polls) and abandon their soaring ambitions of Middle East domination. If they haven’t done so, imagine where George W. Bush and Dick Cheney are in policy terms. So far, it seems everyone of power or influence in Washington remains committed to “staying the course.” **CT**

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It is hardly surprising, then, that Iraqi leaders almost immediately began complaining that the report, for all its bows to “respect,” completely lacked it

TAKE THIS WAR AND SHOVE IT

BY RON JACOBS

In other words, a regime that appears to be barely holding on to its power is being supported with unabashed US military power – to the tune of approximately 180 million dollars per day

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”

– President Dwight D. Eisenhower
April 16, 1953

Talk about stepping into the abyss. George Bush and his Pentagon allies are considering increasing the number of troops in Iraq by 40,000. The idea is supported by some members of Congress, although John McCain is the only one so far to express his support publicly. This is despite the fact that over 60% of US residents want the troops out of there sooner rather than later. Not only does the Bush position represent another blow to the idea that the people of the US run the country, it is a blatant kick in the voters’ face.

Yet, as long as Congress continues to give the White House and Pentagon whatever monies they want to fight the war, any other legislative actions mean less than zero. In a reversal of Bush’s

domestic initiatives like the No Child Left Behind act – an act which demanded individual states to follow certain mandates from the federal government without providing any funding, Congress provides unlimited funding of the war effort without asking for any guidelines, much less requiring any show of success.

It’s not like this is unusual. Certain funding requests rarely get a careful examination in Congress. Two of the most obvious ones both concern the Middle East. One is the constant funding that Tel Aviv gets no matter what they do or how they do it. The other is the budgeting that concerns those countries that contain big oil’s profit source. Sometimes the money for the latter is to prop up a regime friendly to Washington’s interests and sometimes it’s used to destroy a regime with different ideas. In Iraq, the former is taken to its historical extreme.

In other words, a regime that appears to be barely holding on to its power is being supported with unabashed US military power – to the

tune of approximately 180 million dollars per day. This is only the financial cost, of course. Human costs are immeasurable, but here are some raw numbers regarding them: over the course of the war, US troops have died on the average of more than two per day; somewhere around a half million Iraqis have died (probably more rather than less), over 20,000 US troops have been wounded, along with unknown numbers of Iraqis.

Despite these statistics, the war continues. In fact, as noted above, it may very well escalate. The Democrats squeak a lot about their frustration with the war and say they will do things differently, yet very few have made any genuine indication that they will refuse to fund the war.

Instead, a good number have signed on to the suggestions of the essentially irrelevant Iraq Study Group, whose report suggested a continuation of the war by renaming the mission of the troops on the ground and eventually withdrawing the combat troops – a move that a Washington Post report said would leave 75% of the troops in country.

In addition, not a single Democratic Senator voted against the appointment of CIA man and war apologist Robert Gates as Secretary of Defense.

NOW, I don't know about you, but that sounds like more business as usual. The Democratic Congress' first test will come soon after they are seated. It will come in the shape of a \$100 billion request for continuing the Iraq war. Other than a few noises from the left

wing of the party – mostly from Congressman Kucinich of Ohio – there has been no indication that this request will not be granted.

Indeed, a cursory reading of newspaper reports regarding the request leads me to believe that the only problem the Democrats have with the administration's war funding request is the manner in which he requests them. Instead of the emergency requests Messrs. Bush and Cheney tend to prefer, the Democrats want the war funding requests to be included in the annual budget.

Recently, antiwar vet Mike Ferner, speaking for the groups Voices for Creative Nonviolence and Veterans For Peace, announced their call to antiwar protesters around the country to occupy the hometown offices of Representatives and Senators who have voted money for the war.

These actions will take place in February, since Congress convenes in late January and the aforementioned funding request will be one of the first pieces of legislation on its agenda. This is a good idea. Indeed, I say let's go even further. Let's take up the call for the mass march on the Pentagon scheduled for March 17th and stage a sit-down protest there. Take over the lawn and refuse to leave.

Sure, the upcoming antiwar marches on January 27th and March 17th are important, but, if all indications are correct, manifestations such as these have so far only succeeded in getting our elected officials to say they oppose the war, but not to do anything concrete about it. It's up to us to make them

Instead of the emergency requests Messrs. Bush and Cheney tend to prefer, the Democrats want the war funding requests to be included in the annual budget

OUT OF IRAQ

If we recall the protests in Seattle in 1999 against the WTO, we will remember how effective they were in raising the level of awareness and opposition to the aims of global capitalism

stick to their words. Sitting in their offices until they answer our questions or call the police is a logical next step. So is the idea of a massive sit-in on the Pentagon lawn.

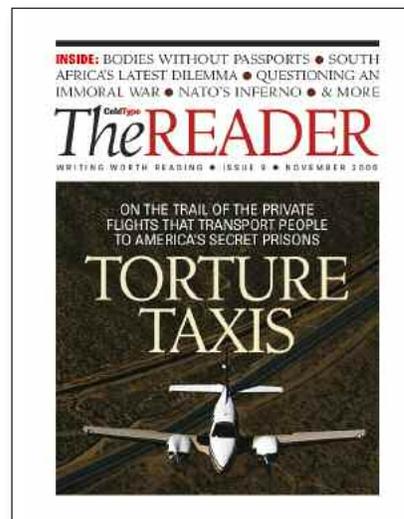
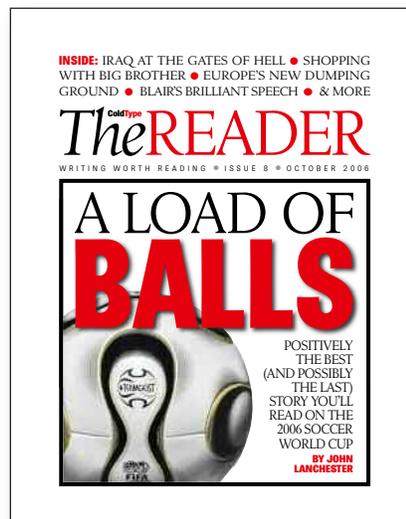
It's called heightening the contradictions. The United States could use some of that. Think about it.

If these ideas don't work for you and your people, perhaps another one will, or a combination of other ones. If we recall the protests in Seattle in 1999 against the WTO, we will remember how effective they were in raising the level of awareness and opposition to the aims of global capitalism. We will also remember how effectively the

protests were organized. Everything was done on a local level.

Sure, the actual protests took place in Seattle (and several other places in the following years), but if we are to believe the polls, there are enough US residents opposed to the war that we can sit in on the Pentagon lawn AND take local actions. It's in our interest to stop this war now. We have to make it in Congress's interest, too. **CT**

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THE END OF CHILE'S BUTCHER

BY TONY KARON

General Augusto Pinochet died on December 10, shamed as a butcher and human rights abuser – even an international terrorist, given the CIA's finding of his complicity in the 1976 Washington, D.C. car bombing that killed Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffit – and yet, as a free man. Some will argue that this was justice denied for the thousands killed and tortured by his regime. But only if justice is measured as retribution.

Long before the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, September 11 was a black day for Chileans. It was on that day, in 1973, that years of subversion directed by Henry Kissinger and the CIA came to fruition, with a coup led by Pinochet that overthrew the democratically elected Marxist government of Salvador Allende. The U.S. and Chile's right-wing military and conservative elements in Chilean society the country's Opus Dei-dominated Catholic Church hated the values represented by Allende's government, and warned that

he was plunging the country into chaos (not that the CIA wasn't actively spreading that chaos as part of an explicit campaign based on Henry Kissinger's memorable statement that "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist because of the irresponsibility of its own people.") But regardless of his ideology, Allende wasn't killing people, or torturing them, or summarily arresting them. They were free to organize and express their opposition.

But they couldn't win in democratic elections, so they made a coup. And what followed, in the name of "saving Chile from communism" (supposedly an authoritarian system of human rights abuses) was a wave of savage repression that included rounding up left-wing activists in the national stadium, where many were tortured to death – none more famously than the gentle musician Victor Jara, whose hands were broken by Pinochet's goons and was then told to play his guitar, during four days of torture before he was machine gunned.

Regardless of his ideology, Allende wasn't killing people, or torturing them, or summarily arresting them. They were free to organize and express their opposition

DEATH OF A DICTATOR

Back then, I believed that Pinochet deserved to die, to avenge all those whose lives he destroyed for no reason other than that their views were deemed unacceptable to his own

Pinochet's savagery was conveniently overlooked by such pals as Reagan and Thatcher, simply because those he was brutalizing were people of the left – never mind that they were the non-violent democrats who believed in the will of the people, expressed through the ballot box, and the rule of law, while Pinochet represented the vile stench of the torturer's exertions.

BACK in the 80s, as I was coming of age politically in South Africa, the example of Chile immediately explained why it was that the Reagan Administration backed the apartheid regime – because Chile showed that the U.S. cared nothing about democracy abroad, and would actively support vicious tyrants who declared themselves anti-communist. Even Zaire's deranged kleptocrat and mass murderer Mobutu Sese Seko, for example, was an honored guest in Reagan's White House. As the Clash (who also memorialized Victor Jara on 'Sandinista') sang on a different track, "If Adolf Hitler, were here today, they'd send a limousine anyway..."

Back then, I believed that Pinochet deserved to die, to avenge all those whose lives he destroyed for no reason other than that their views were deemed unacceptable to his own, a blend of Prussian Military authoritarianism, Catholic crypto-fascism and the economics of free enterprise fundamentalist Milton Friedman.

But we all grow up

The South African experience taught me that once the leaders of a violent authoritarian regime are stripped of

their power, they are forced to confront their own criminality in the eyes of a society that has moved on, repudiating them – and more importantly, simply moving on to build a better society that, in itself, shows the moral bankruptcy of those that unleashed violence on the people in the name of progress and security.

P.W. Botha, another third world thug admired by Lady Thatcher, died a couple of months ago, too, stripped of his power, a cantankerous old fool who had destroyed tens of thousands of lives, but had faced no retribution from his victims. Instead, they had simply moved on, repudiating him by building a new society that had no need for torture chambers.

Botha spent his last years living in the dustbin of history, and so did Pinochet. Once he was forced to allow the Chilean people to vote for their own leaders, he was summarily rejected. And he had to endure the fact that the society in which he had killed so many to "protect" from communism had, in fact, chosen to return to power the very people he had locked up and tortured. And in the West, in whose defense he had ostensibly committed his atrocities, he was now treated as a criminal, freed from the ignominy of extradition to Spain after 18 months under house arrest only on humanitarian grounds.

Today, Chile is ruled by a former detainee and torture victim, but the society Michele Bachelet is helping develop has no need to turn Pinochet's own methods on him. They even allowed him a military funeral, but not a state

one. After all, he was legitimately head of the military (having been appointed by the legally elected President he later killed); he was never legitimately a head of state.

In its humane handling of Pinochet, in fact, the government of his victims proved its superiority. Sure, his victims would have liked to see him face a judge and answer to each and every charge – Pinochet, while still ruling as the head of the military, created for himself a bogus amnesty. They pursued him to his death, but only via the law. It is Pinochet's victims who will be memorialized with honor as the old man's bones are interred. And all Chileans know, whether or not they admit it, that they have created a better society by getting rid of him.

And since his arrest and extradition trial in Britain in 1998, he has had to confront the reality that even in the West, he is deemed a criminal – his release, remember, was on compassionate grounds. This from a piece I wrote for Britannica.com following his release:

Abuse is made all the more traumatic when its victims are denied the right to remember, and post-Pinochet Chilean society had—until the general's arrest—imposed a cruel amnesia on those who had suffered at the hands of the dictatorship. A trial is a cathartic moment for people on whom silence has been imposed; it's an affirmation, a bearing of witness to their pain and suffering, a moment that allows a healing process to begin. Confronting their tormentor,

now stripped of both the power to hurt them and of the palliatives of political rationalization, and recalling the horrors he perpetrated in all their painful detail can be of immeasurable psychological benefit to those burdened by trauma. Pinochet's victims won't get to confront him in court, although there's been an unprecedented bearing of witness—mostly through the media, both Chilean and international—since his arrest.

No matter what crimes he may be guilty of, Pinochet is unlikely ever to see the inside of a prison cell. But justice—imperfect at the best of times—may well have been served precisely by denying the general the exoneration by the West he so desperately craved. In Pinochet's mind, every head that had ever been cracked by his goons, every torture-riddled corpse tossed into the Pacific Ocean, every child stolen from its doomed leftist parents and handed over to a childless military couple, all of his junta's crimes against the people of Chile had been committed in defense of Western values—ugly but necessary measures to defend democracy and freedom from totalitarian communism.

This involved some twisted logic from a man who'd overthrown a leftist government that had meticulously upheld the constitution of Latin America's oldest democracy, while the general himself turned it into toilet paper—but then the ability to rationalize is an essential skill for those who commit crimes against human-

In its humane handling of Pinochet, in fact, the government of his victims proved its superiority. Sure, his victims would have liked to see him face a judge and answer to each and every charge – Pinochet, while still ruling as the head of the military, created for himself a bogus amnesty

DEATH OF A DICTATOR

Stripped of their dignity and acceptability in polite society, the torturers of the past are subject to a justice more profound, perhaps, than any prison could offer, because prisons inevitably cast the prisoner, in his own mind, as a victim.

ity. Torturers go home at the end of their day to wives and families; they have to create a structure of meaning that sanctions unconscionably sadistic behavior toward their foes and then allows them, only hours later, to read their children a bedtime story. And that leaves them vulnerable to a justice more subtle, yet every bit as harsh, as that dispensed by courts.

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was not a court of law, and it had no power to punish individuals no matter how heinous the crimes to which they were admitting. And yet there are numerous tales of torturers and assassins breaking down in its sessions or after, being overwhelmed by the weight of their own confession. They are left depressed and anxious, unable to function socially now that their own children knew what they

had once done. Stripped of their dignity and acceptability in polite society, the torturers of the past are subject to a justice more profound, perhaps, than any prison could offer, because prisons inevitably cast the prisoner, in his own mind, as a victim.

After 15 months as a prisoner awaiting trial in England, Pinochet's spirit and body are in decline. The arrogant generalissimo will return home diminished and humiliated, shunned by the West as a criminal, the abuses of his regime exposed. And that may be a punishment more profound than any prison term: General Pinochet has been sentenced to live with himself. **CT**

Tony Karon is a senior editor at TIME.com. This was first published at his personal web site – tonykaron.com

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PINOCHET'S BLOODBATH

BY DAVID EDWARDS

It is a feature of the bureaucratic mindset that trivial details are subject to meticulous attention, while issues relating to personal and moral responsibility are dismissed as non-existent. Thus correspondent Bridget Kendall's pinpoint pronunciation as she described the death of Chilean tyrant Augusto Pinochet – pronounced “Peenochet” by the BBC reporter. Kendall got the name right, but everything that mattered was swallowed up by what media academic Richard Keeble calls “the apparatus of silence”. (http://www.medialens.org/weblog/richard_keeble.php)

“Peenochet's” rise to power was discussed, as were his crimes, as were the failed attempts to hold him accountable. But of the power behind the throne, the nation that birthed this monster, there was not a word. (‘Chile's general dies’: <http://search.bbc.co.uk/cgi-bin/search/results.pl?q=pinochet+and+kendall&scope=all&edition=d&tab=all&recipe=all>)

Kendall concluded her piece thus: “To the very end judgements on Aug-

usto Pinochet remained keenly divided.”

That can be said of a mass murderer like Pinochet, a Western ally, but not of official enemies like Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden.

I wrote to Kendall on December 10 noting that she had made no mention of the American role in the September 1973 coup that overthrew Chile's democratically elected president, Salvador Allende. We asked if, for example, she was aware that an early, October 1970 plot to unseat Allende, was made “using CIA ‘sub-machine guns and ammo’”, and was the direct result of a request for action from the chairman of PepsiCo, according to Greg Palast in the Observer.

I received no reply. I re-sent the email on December 11 and again received no response.

Readers may be puzzled by mention of the words ‘Nixon’ and ‘PepsiCo’ in the context of Pinochet's bloodbath – a media database search showed that not one UK national newspaper has connected these words to this story since

“Peenochet's” rise to power was discussed, as were his crimes, as were the failed attempts to hold him accountable. But of the power behind the throne, the nation that birthed this monster, there was not a word

WHOSE COUP?

Quite what the CIA had spent millions on was left to the reader's imagination. Perhaps opposition politicians were funded. Perhaps propaganda messages were ruthlessly posted around Santiago. Who knows?

Pinochet's death.

Before we explore the links, let's consider what the press has had to say on US involvement in Chile.

A Guardian obituary read: "The coup, in which CIA destabilisation played a part..." (Malcolm Coad, 'Augusto Pinochet,' The Guardian, December 11, 2006; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/story/0,,1968953,00.html>)

And that was that! Space is always a problem for the media. Presumably, there was not space for more detail in this 3,049-word piece.

A BBC online obituary was fractionally bolder: "It became known later that the CIA had spent millions to destabilise the Allende government." (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/americas/472707.stm>)

That, again, was that. Quite what the CIA had spent millions on was left to the reader's imagination. Perhaps opposition politicians were funded. Perhaps propaganda messages were ruthlessly posted around Santiago. Who knows?

On reading the above, a friend joked that it represented a reversal of Spike Milligan's book title: 'Adolf Hitler: My Part In His Downfall,' with the press desperate to downplay Western involvement in Allende's fall.

Rupert Cornwell in the Independent edged slightly closer to forbidden facts: "Yes, the turmoil in Chile before the coup of September 1973 was shamefully fomented by the United States. But there is no evidence that Washington directly ordered the coup." (Rupert Cornwell, 'The general willing to kill his people to win the battle against com-

munist,' The Independent, December 11, 2006; <http://news.independent.co.uk/world/americas/article2064694.ece>)

Again, vague hints sufficed. Note, also, the irrelevant apologetic for US actions – "there is no evidence that Washington directly ordered the coup". But there is evidence that Washington moved heaven and earth to make the coup happen. The hard facts and direct quotes making this all too clear – available to us and anyone else with an internet connection – were nowhere in sight.

Jonathan Kandell in the New York Times trotted safely with the media herd: "General Pinochet initially led a four-man junta in the 1973 military coup that brought him to power, with the support of the United States government..." (Kandell, 'Augusto Pinochet – Dictator Who Ruled by Terror in Chile, Dies at 91,' New York Times, December 11, 2006)

And that, also, was that in this 2,600-word piece. A theme is emerging, is it not?

The Daily Telegraph had many pieces saying little on the subject, referring in one 1,200-word report to "the CIA-backed military coup in 1973". (Neil Tweedie, 'Pinochet, the friend of Britain who ruled his country by fear,' Daily Telegraph, December 11, 2006)

The Telegraph's 2,300-word obituary had only this to say of US involvement: "Inevitably, such a government [Allende's] did not appeal to the Americans. Richard Helms, the director of the CIA, sought means to 'make the (Chilean) economy scream', while the

Nixon administration cut off all aid and credits. Such measures exacerbated inflation in Chile, and intensified class conflicts.” (Daily Telegraph, ‘Obituary of General Augusto Pinochet,’ December 11, 2006)

Economic strangulation was the more passive element of what was a highly pro-active US campaign to destroy democracy in Chile.

The Telegraph described Pinochet as: “not only an extraordinarily successful dictator; he was also one of the very few to surrender power at the behest of the electorate.” (Ibid)

The Daily Mail noted merely that the junta “had secret CIA backing”. (Patrick Marnham and Richard Pendlebury, ‘Death of a friendly dictator,’ Daily Mail, December 11, 2006)

The Mail asked of Pinochet: “So will history judge him as a brute or a pragmatic economic and political strongman, who rescued Chile from Marxist orchestrated disaster?”

This of a man who, as the same journalists wrote, “modelled himself on Stalin in the Thirties”.

Writing in the Daily Mirror, Christopher Hitchens managed one veiled reference to US involvement, noting that Henry Kissinger had been “anxious to protect the criminal he helped usurp power”. (Hitchens, ‘Thatcher’s tyrant,’ Mirror, December 11, 2006)

There was nothing more. A remarkable performance from the author of *The Trial Of Henry Kissinger*, which included many of the details of the US role in Chile. Hitchens only other article on the subject since Pinochet’s death appears to have been in Slate maga-

zine (‘Augusto Pinochet – 1915-2006,’ December 11, 2006; <http://www.slate.com/id/2155242/>). Hitchens made no mention at all of US involvement in the coup.

A Guardian news story noted: “When Pinochet seized power in 1973, he knew he would be enjoying the strong support of the United States. The secretary of state and national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, was an admirer.” (Jonathan Franklin, Rory Carroll and Duncan Campbell, ‘Glee and grief as man who “brought Spanish inquisition to Chile” dies at 91,’ The Guardian, December 11, 2006)

The Guardian omitted to mention that the CIA initially reported difficulty finding officers willing to participate in a coup thanks to what it described as “the apolitical, constitutional-oriented inertia of the Chilean military”. (Quoted, William Blum, *Killing Hope*, Common Courage Press, 1995, p.210 – the chapter on Allende’s overthrow from Blum’s book is also republished at <http://coldtype.net/archives.html>) The United States did not merely support Pinochet, they worked energetically to create him.

The Times wrote: “... the coup was launched on September 1, 1973, with the support of the US which had played an active role in supporting the anti-Allende opposition”. (‘General Augusto Pinochet, November 25, 1915 – December 10, 2006,’ The Times, December 11, 2006)

The theme, then? The US “backed”, “supported”, “fomented” and “assisted” the coup, and cut off aid. But the active, central role played by the United States

The Guardian omitted to mention that the CIA initially reported difficulty finding officers willing to participate in a coup thanks to what it described as “the apolitical, constitutional-oriented inertia of the Chilean military”

WHOSE COUP?

After Allende had narrowly failed to win the 1958 elections, the United States worked hard to avert future risks. Prior to the 1964 elections, a vast CIA campaign was mounted to subvert Chilean democracy. Eduardo Frei's Christian Democratic Party was selected, with the CIA underwriting more than half the party's campaign costs

is simply not described.

We found a single article, in the Independent, that gave more than fleeting attention to US subversion of Chilean democracy. Hugh O'Shaughnessy wrote: "the Chilean right, Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger and US companies such as ITT [International Telephone and Telegraph] sought to prevent Allende's assuming the presidency to which he had been freely and fairly elected.

"A US military attaché was later to confess that he carried down from Washington a large sum in dollar banknotes to buy the assassination of General René Schneider... [who] was resisting calls from the Chilean right and the US for an immediate coup against Allende."

O'Shaughnessy added: "By then, within Chile and in the United States, the enemies of the President's unstable coalition of six parties of the left and centre-left had shown their continuing desire to topple the head of state." (Hugh O'Shaughnessy, 'General Augusto Pinochet,' The Independent, December 11, 2006)

But this also only hints at the true scale of US subversion. The vast political sabotage of Chilean democracy and the fierce US determination to destroy Allende's regime militarily were both buried out of sight by the Independent, as was the general trend in Latin America (and the Third World more generally) of which these horrors form one tiny part.

A media database search showed that the words 'Pinochet' and 'CIA' have been mentioned in seven articles in the

UK national press since Pinochet's death.

Not acceptable to the United States

Peter Kornbluh is director of the National Security Archive's Chile Documentation Project at George Washington University. In an October 1998 article, Kornbluh described how the CIA "laid the ground work for the coup d'état" in Chile. (Kornbluh, 'The Chile Coup – The U.S. Hand,' iF magazine, October 25, 1998; http://www.third-worldtraveler.com/Terrorism/Chile%20Coup_USHand.html)

After Allende had narrowly failed to win the 1958 elections, the United States worked hard to avert future risks. Prior to the 1964 elections, a vast CIA campaign was mounted to subvert Chilean democracy. Eduardo Frei's Christian Democratic Party was selected, with the CIA underwriting more than half the party's campaign costs. The agency's electoral operation cost \$20 million – far more per voter than was spent by Johnson and Goldwater combined in the same year in the US presidential elections. A senate committee later gave an insight into one small segment of the onslaught: "The propaganda campaign was enormous. During the first week of intensive propaganda activity, a CIA-funded propaganda group produced twenty radio spots per day in Santiago and on 44 provincial stations; twelve-minute news broadcasts five times daily on three Santiago stations and 24 provisional outlets, and much paid press advertising. By the end of June, the group produced 24 daily newscasts in

Santiago and the provinces, 26 weekly 'commentary' programs, and distributed 3,000 posters daily." (Quoted, William Blum, *Killing Hope*, Common Courage Press, 1995, p.207)

These efforts were supported by 'red scare' campaigns, funding of strikes, funding of right-wing organisations committing acts of violence, promotion of grassroots programmes, speaking tours and propaganda stories placed in Western media, and numerous other examples of flak and subversion.

Despite all of this, Allende won the September 4, 1970 election. The US response was clear. CIA director Richard Helms informed his senior covert action staff that "President Nixon had decided that an Allende regime in Chile was not acceptable to the United States." Helms added:

"The President asked the Agency to prevent Allende from coming to power or to unseat him."

Helms's handwritten notes of the meeting with Nixon reveal the mindset: "One in 10 chance perhaps, but save Chile!... not concerned with risks involved... \$10,000,000 available, more if necessary... make the economy scream..." (Quoted, *ibid*, p.209)

Helms reported two parallel strategies for destroying Allende. As discussed, the "soft line" was (in Nixon's words) to "make the economy scream." The "hardline" was to aim for a military coup.

Ambassador Korry was given the job of implementing the "soft line." He described his task: "not a nut or bolt will be allowed to reach Chile under Allende. Once Allende comes to power

we shall do all within our power to condemn Chile and the Chileans to utmost deprivation and poverty, a policy designed for a long time to come to accelerate the hard features of a Communist society in Chile". (Quoted, Chomsky, *Year 501 – The Conquest Continues*, South End Press, 1993, p.36)

Noam Chomsky comments: "Even if the hard line did not succeed in introducing fascist killers to exterminate the virus, the vision of 'utmost deprivation' would suffice to keep the rot from spreading, and ultimately demoralize the patient itself. And crucially, it would provide ample grist for the mill of the cultural managers, who can produce cries of anguish at 'the hard features of a Communist society,' pouring scorn on those 'apologists' who describe what is happening." (Footnote 15; <http://www.understandingpower.com/chap1.htm>)

On October 16, a secret cable from CIA headquarters to the CIA station chief in Santiago, read:

"It is firm and continuing policy that Allende be overthrown by a coup... prior to October 24. But efforts in this regard will continue vigorously beyond this date. We are to continue to generate maximum pressure toward this end utilizing every appropriate resource. It is imperative that these actions be implemented clandestinely and securely so that the USG [U.S. government] and American hand be well hidden." (Quoted, Kornbluh, *op. cit*)

Despite initial difficulties in recruiting officers within the Chilean army, supporters for the "hard line" were eventually found and an initial, botched coup attempt was made in October

Ambassador Korry was given the job of implementing the "soft line." He described his task: "not a nut or bolt will be allowed to reach Chile under Allende"

WHOSE COUP?

Hours later, Nixon called in CIA chief Richard Helms and, according to Helms's handwritten notes, ordered the CIA to prevent Allende's inauguration on November 3

1970. The attack began with the assassination of the commander-in-chief of the Chilean army, Rene Schneider, who had insisted that constitutional processes be followed. The assassination backfired, however, serving to consolidate traditional army support for constitutional solutions.

In a vanishingly rare mainstream article on the subject, the Observer's Greg Palast reported that the failed October 1970 plot, using CIA "sub-machine guns and ammo", was "the direct result of a plea for action a month earlier by Donald Kendall, chairman of PepsiCo, in two telephone calls to the company's former lawyer, President Richard Nixon". (Palast, 'Marxist threat to cola sales? Pepsi demands a US coup. Goodbye Allende. Hello Pinochet,' The Observer, November 8, 1998; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Columnists/Column/0,,305870,00.html>)

Palast described how Kendall had arranged for the owner of PepsiCo's Chilean bottling operation to meet Kissinger on September 15. Hours later, Nixon called in CIA chief Richard Helms and, according to Helms's handwritten notes, ordered the CIA to prevent Allende's inauguration on November 3.

Meanwhile, an ITT board member, ex-CIA director John McCone, pledged Kissinger \$1 million in support of CIA action to prevent Allende from taking office. In addition, Anaconda Copper and other multinationals offered \$500,000 to buy influence with Chilean congressmen to reject confirmation of Allende's victory.

Having failed to prevent both Allende's election victory and his inauguration, the CIA continued pursuing both its "soft" and "hard" lines. As CIA director William Colby later put it, the campaign was a "prototype laboratory experiment to test the techniques of heavy financial investment in an effort to discredit and bring down a government". (Quoted, Mark Curtis, *The Ambiguities of Power*, Zed Books, 1995, p.129)

A 1970 ITT memorandum stated: "A more realistic hope among those who want to block Allende is that a swiftly-deteriorating economy will touch off a wave of violence leading to a military coup." (Quoted, Blum, *op. cit.*, p.211)

While almost all economic aid was cut off in its attempt to inflict "utmost deprivation" on the Chilean people, the United States increased its military assistance to Chile in 1972 and 1973, and trained Chilean military personnel in the US and Panama. The focus was on strengthening ties in pursuit of a "hard line" solution.

The rationale for overthrowing Allende was outlined in a CIA report dated November 12, 1970: "Dr. Salvador Allende became the first democratically-elected Marxist head of state in the history of Latin America – despite the opposition of the U.S. Government. As a result, U.S. prestige and interests are being affected materially at a time when the U.S. can ill afford problems in an area that has been traditionally accepted as the U.S. 'backyard'." (Quoted, Kornbluh, *op. cit.*)

The US was concerned, Kissinger's aides recall, because "Allende was a liv-

ing example of democratic social reform in Latin America.” (Quoted, Curtis, p.130) Kissinger stated that the “contagious example” of Chile would “infect” not only Latin America but also Southern Europe. (Ibid)

Chomsky comments on Allende: “He was basically a social democrat, very much of the European type. He was calling for minor redistribution of wealth, to help the poor. (Chile was a very inegalitarian society.) Allende was a doctor, and one of the things he did was to institute a free milk program for half a million very poor, malnourished children. He called for nationalization of major industries like copper mining, and for a policy of international independence – meaning that Chile wouldn’t simply subordinate itself to the US, but would take more of an independent path.” (‘Secrets, Lies and Democracy – Interview with Noam Chomsky,’ by David Barsamian; http://www.third-worldtraveler.com/Chomsky/SecretsLies_Chile_Chom.html)

A SECOND, failed coup attempt was made on June 29, 1973. This is the BBC’s version of events: “Political strife, rocketing inflation and general economic chaos resulted in an abortive military coup in June 1973.” (‘Obituary: Augusto Pinochet,’ December 10, 2006; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/472707.stm>)

As discussed above, the BBC noted merely that the CIA had made efforts “to destabilise the Allende government”.

Ultimately, the superpower’s economic sabotage, and political and mil-

itary subversion, was successful. On September 11, 1973, Chile’s military seized control of strategic sites throughout the country and cornered Allende in his presidential offices, where he apparently committed suicide.

The CIA’s Santiago station had earlier described the operational intelligence it had collected: “arrest lists, key civilian installations and personnel that need protection, key government installations which need to be taken over, and government contingency plans which would be used in case of a military uprising”. (Quoted, Blum, op. cit, p.213) US officials later denied that this information had been passed on to the junta, although the rapid arrests of key targets immediately after the coup suggest otherwise, William Blum notes.

Nixon officials were delighted by the turn of events. A situation report from the US military in Valparaiso declared: “Chile’s coup d’etat was close to perfect.” The report characterised it as Chile’s “day of destiny” and “Our D-Day.” (Kornbluh, op. cit)

In a telephone conversation taped shortly after the coup and made public after Nixon’s death, Kissinger is heard to laugh: “The press is bleeding because a pro-Communist government has been overthrown.” Nixon responded: “Our hand doesn’t show on this one, though.” (Washington Bullets: ‘Pinochet And Kissinger,’ http://www.tompaine.com/articles/2006/12/12/washington_bullets_pinochet_and_kissinger.php)

Kissinger immediately authorised the CIA to “assist the junta in gaining a more positive image, both at home and

Nixon officials were delighted by the turn of events. A situation report from the US military in Valparaiso declared: “Chile’s coup d’etat was close to perfect”

WHOSE COUP?

Only 19 days after Allende's death, a secret briefing paper prepared for Kissinger – entitled "Chilean Executions" – put the "total dead" from the coup at 1,500. The paper reported that the junta had summarily executed 320 individuals – three times more than publicly acknowledged. After three months, 11,000 people had been killed

abroad," according to subsequently released documents. (Kornbluh, op. cit)

As part of these efforts, the CIA helped the junta write a "white book" justifying the coup. Kornbluh writes: "The CIA financed advisors who helped the military prepare a new economic plan for the country. The CIA paid for military spokesmen to travel around the world to promote the new regime. And, the CIA used its own media assets to cast the junta in a positive light."

The Nixon administration also supported Pinochet by opening the floodgates on economic aid. Three weeks after the coup, the US government authorised \$24 million in commodity credits to buy wheat and \$24 million more for feed corn, and planned the transfer of two destroyers to the Chilean navy.

Ultimately, the coup plotters were rewarded with a 558 per cent increase in US economic aid and a 1,079 per cent increase in US and multinational credits. (Rai, Chomsky's Politics, Verso, 1995, p.67)

ONLY 19 days after Allende's death, a secret briefing paper prepared for Kissinger – entitled "Chilean Executions" – put the "total dead" from the coup at 1,500. The paper reported that the junta had summarily executed 320 individuals – three times more than publicly acknowledged. After three months, 11,000 people had been killed. Between 1994-1997 a further 2,400 people disappeared. According to the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR): "... the single-minded ferocity of the coup and the subsequent

deliberate use of torture, 'disappearances' and murder had at that time no parallel in the history of Chile or Latin America, a continent with a long experience of dictatorship and military brutality". (Quoted, Curtis, op. cit, p.130)

CIIR described how the Pinochet regime instigated a "policy of permanent terror." (Ibid, p.131)

When Kissinger was told of initial reports of massacres following the coup he responded: "I think we should understand our policy – that however unpleasant they act, the [military] government is better for us than Allende was." (Kornbluh, 'The Pinochet File,' <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB110/index.htm>)

This is the Guardian's version of these events: "Pinochet quickly became undisputed leader of the four-man junta – declaring himself president in 1974 – and set about the task of stamping out opposition. The ferocity and surgical precision of that repression repulsed the world and made Chile an international pariah for nearly two decades." ('Repression,' The Guardian, December 11, 2006)

On December 11, I wrote to the Guardian's Isabel Hilton regarding her article that day, 'A dictator dismantled.' (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/chile/story/0,,1969317,00.html>):

Dear Isabel

I was interested to read your article, 'A dictator dismantled,' on Comment Is Free. You write of Pinochet: "The dictatorship he installed was not the bloodiest in Latin America. It was shocking because it happened in a country

proud of its democratic traditions.”

Surely the real shock value lies in the fact that the United States organised the coup... [We cited Greg Palast's article]...

That's pretty shocking, isn't it? And there's much more besides, of course. But not a word in your article even hinted at it. Why not?

Best wishes
David Edwards

Hilton responded on December 16.

Dear David Edwards

There is never room to say everything in a rather short article and I have written about the US role many times. Is it surprising or shocking that the US played a central role? Hardly. The US had played that role in coups all over the sub continent for some time, (for me the worst was the one against Arbenz – worse for its long term effect) their role in Chile was not surprising for anyone who followed Latin American events, and the shock factor had long since worn off.

best
Isabel Hilton

I replied on December 17:

Dear Isabel

Many thanks for your reply. You write: “Is it surprising or shocking that the US played a central role? Hardly. The US had played that role in coups all over the sub continent for some time...”

Yes, you know that, but do your readers? In fact journalists generally

refer to the US role in Pinochet's coup in vague terms (as in current reporting) – the details and motives are rarely discussed. As for the wider US pattern of forcibly subordinating people to profit, this is essentially a taboo subject for the media.

A media database search shows that in the last ten years you have mentioned the words ‘Pinochet’ and the ‘CIA’ in three articles. Obviously this covers a period when you were writing about Pinochet's detention in Britain. You have made no mention at all of PepsiCo or ITT in connection with the 1973 coup. Unfortunately, your references to US involvement have been superficial and have buried the wider pattern discussed above.

Sincerely
David Edwards

Why does any of this matter?

Is the suppression of this evidence of the US role in Chile's bloodbath an irrelevant one-off? If the media normally do a fearlessly honest job, it would be absurd to make too much of these particular omissions, would it not? The media track record is visible enough, readers can find any number of comparable examples in these and many other earlier alerts:

- http://www.medialens.org/alerts/06/061113_hanging_saddam_hussein.php
- http://www.medialens.org/alerts/04/040610_Reagan_Visions_1.HTM
- http://www.medialens.org/alerts/04/040615_Reagan_Visions_2.HTM
- <http://www.medialens.org/alerts/04>

Is the suppression of this evidence of the US role in Chile's bloodbath an irrelevant one-off? If the media normally do a fearlessly honest job, it would be absurd to make too much of these particular omissions, would it not?

WHOSE COUP?

This suppression of the historical pattern enables contemporary politicians like George Bush and Tony Blair to deceive the public when they claim to be pursuing 'democracy' in Iraq, 'freedom' in Iran, and a 'just settlement' in Palestine

/040706_Covering_Mr_President.HTM
http://www.medialens.org/alerts/02/020601_east_timor.html

A stunningly consistent pattern emerges. The elite corporate media always passes over Western responsibility for mass killing in the Third World. The standard motives at work – the subordination of human rights to corporate profit – are buried even deeper. Deepest of all lies the systematic pattern traced over decades right across the Third World revealing the utter ruthlessness of Western priorities.

But why is this so crucially important? The answer is because this suppression of the historical pattern enables contemporary politicians like George Bush and Tony Blair to deceive the public when they claim to be pursuing 'democracy' in Iraq, 'freedom' in Iran, and a 'just settlement' in Palestine. It means that we in the West are simply unable to understand what

Hugo Chavez represents for the people of Venezuela, what Evo Morales represents for the people of Bolivia – what it is these nations know they have to fear and what they are desperately trying to resist.

Forever presented a picture of Britain and America as civilised and humane, how can the public imagine that human beings are systematically subordinated to profit by their own governments? And how can anyone hope to prevent further atrocities until this basic truth is widely understood and acted upon? **CT**

David Edwards is co-editor, with David Cromwell, of the London-based media watchdog, Medialens. (www.medialens.org). The Media Lens book 'Guardians of Power: The Myth Of The Liberal Media' by David Edwards and David Cromwell (Pluto Books, London) was published last year.



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THE US GETS A NEW MONSTER

BY WILLIAM BLUM

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is a man seemingly custom-made for the White House in its endless quest for enemies with whom to scare Congress, the American people, and the world, in order to justify the unseemly behavior of the empire. The Iranian president has declared that he wants to “wipe Israel off the map”. He’s said that “the Holocaust is a myth”. He recently held a conference in Iran for “Holocaust deniers”. And his government passed a new law requiring Jews to wear a yellow insignia, à la the Nazis. On top of all that, he’s aiming to build nuclear bombs, one of which would surely be aimed at Israel. What right-thinking person would not be scared by such a man?

However, as with all such designer monsters made bigger than life during the Cold War and since by Washington, the truth about Ahmadinejad is a bit more complicated. According to people who know Farsi, the Iranian leader has never said anything about “wiping Israel off the map”. In his October 29,

2005 speech, when he reportedly first made the remark, the word “map” does not even appear. According to the translation of Juan Cole, American professor of Modern Middle East and South Asian History, Ahmadinejad said that “the regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time.” His remark, said Cole, “does not imply military action or killing anyone at all,” which presumably is what would make the remark threatening.^[1] Readers are advised that the next time they come across such an Ahmadinejad citation to note whether a complete sentence is being quoted, and not just “wipe Israel off the map”.

At the conference in Teheran (“Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision”), the Iranian president said: “The Zionist regime will be wiped out soon, the same way the Soviet Union was, and humanity will achieve freedom.”^[2] Obviously, the man is not calling for any kind of violent attack upon Israel, for the dissolution of the Soviet Union did not occur through force or violence.

As for the Holocaust myth, I have

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He also wonders about the accuracy of the number of Jews – six million – killed in the Holocaust, as have many other people of all political stripes, including Holocaust survivors such as author Primo Levi

yet to read or hear words from Ahmadinejad's mouth saying simply and clearly and unequivocally that he thinks that the Holocaust never happened. He has commented about the peculiarity of a Holocaust which took place in Europe resulting in a state for the Jews in the Middle East instead of in Europe. And he argues that Israel and the United States have exploited the memory of the Holocaust for their own imperialist purposes. He also wonders about the accuracy of the number of Jews – six million – killed in the Holocaust, as have many other people of all political stripes, including Holocaust survivors such as author Primo Levi. (The much publicized World War One atrocities which turned out to be false made the public very skeptical of the Holocaust claims for a long time.)

The conference gave a platform to various points of view, including six members of Jews United Against Zionism, at least two of whom were rabbis. One was Ahron Cohen, from London, who declared: "There is no doubt what so ever, that during World War II there developed a terrible and catastrophic policy and action of genocide perpetrated by Nazi Germany against the Jewish People." He also said that "the Zionists make a great issue of the Holocaust in order to further their illegitimate philosophy and aims," indicating as well that the figure of six million Jewish victims is debatable. The other rabbi was Moshe David Weiss, who told the delegates: "We don't want to deny the killing of Jews in World War II, but Zionists have given much higher figures for how many people were

killed. They have used the Holocaust as a device to justify their oppression." His group rejects the creation of Israel on the grounds that it violates Jewish religious law in that a Jewish state can't exist until the return of the Messiah.^[3]

Clearly, the conference – which the White House called "an affront to the entire civilized world"^[4] – was not set up to be simply a forum for people to deny that the Holocaust, to any significant degree, literally never took place at all. I think it's safe to say that very few of the attendees held this position, which is so untenable.

As to the yellow star story of this past May – that was a complete fabrication by a prominent Iranian-American neo-conservative, Amir Taheri. There are as well other egregious examples of Ahmadinejad's policies and words being twisted out of shape in the Western media, making him look like a danger to all that's holy and decent. Political science professor Virginia Tilley has written a good account of this. "Why is Mr. Ahmadinejad being so systematically misquoted and demonized?" Tilley asks. "Need we ask? If the world believes that Iran is preparing to attack Israel, then the US or Israel can claim justification in attacking Iran first. On that agenda, the disinformation campaign about Mr. Ahmadinejad's statements has been bonded at the hip to a second set of lies: promoting Iran's (nonexistent) nuclear weapon programme."^[5]

Ahmadinejad, however, is partly to blame for this "disinformation". I heard him in an interview while he was at the UN in September being asked directly

about “the map” and the reality of the Holocaust, and he refused to give explicit answers of “yes” or “no”, which I interpret as his prideful refusal to accede to the wishes of what he regarded as a hostile Western interviewer asking hostile questions. In an interview with the German news magazine, *Der Spiegel* (May 31 2006), Ahmadinejad states: “We don’t want to confirm or deny the Holocaust.” The Iranian president is also in the habit of prefacing certain remarks with “Even if the Holocaust happened ...”, a rhetorical device we all use in argument and discussion.

It may already be too late. The conventional wisdom about what Ahmadinejad has said and meant may already be set in marble. Ban I Moon, at a news conference on December 14, after being sworn in as the new secretary-general of the United Nations, was asked by an Israeli reporter whether the United Nations was going to address the issue of Holocaust deniers. Ban replied: “Denying historical facts, especially on such an important subject as the Holocaust is just not acceptable. Nor is it acceptable to call for the elimination of any state or people.”^[6] Let’s hope that this is not very indicative of the independence of mind that we can expect from the new secretary-general. Myths die so hard.

Time magazine has just foregone its usual selection of “Person of the Year” and instead chosen “You”, the Internet user. Managing editor Richard Stengel said that if it came down to one individual it probably would have been Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, but that “It just felt to me a little off selecting

him.”^[7] In previous years Time’s “Person of the Year” has included Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler.

No one ever thinks they’re guilty of anything. They’re all just good ol’ patriots

General Augusto Pinochet, who escaped earthly justice on December 10, was detained in London in 1999 awaiting a ruling by a British court on whether he would be extradited to Spain on a Spanish judge’s warrant to face charges of crimes against humanity committed during his rule in Chile from 1973 to 1990. “I tell you how I feel,” he told a London journalist at the time. “I would like to be remembered as a man who served his country, who served Chile throughout his entire life on this earth. And what he did was always done thinking about the welfare of Chile.”^[8]

P.W. Botha, former president of South Africa died November 1. He was a man who had vigorously defended the apartheid system, which led to the jailing of tens of thousands of people. He never repented or apologized for his actions, and resisted attempts to make him appear before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. At one point he declared: “I am not going to repent. I am not going to ask for forgiveness. What I did, I did for my country.”^[9]

As Pol Pot lay on his death bed in 1997, he was interviewed by a journalist, who later wrote: “Asked whether he wants to apologize for the suffering he caused, he looks genuinely confused, has the interpreter repeat the question,

“Denying historical facts, especially on such an important subject as the Holocaust is just not acceptable. Nor is it acceptable to call for the elimination of any state or people”

When it comes to sentencing, let me tell you, people, and pardon my language, the United States is one hell of a tough mother fucker

and answers ‘No’. ... ‘I want you to know that everything I did, I did for my country.’^[10]

“In these three decades I have been actuated solely by love and loyalty to my people in all my thoughts, acts, and life.” Adolf Hitler, “Last Will and Testament”, written in his bunker in his final hours, April 29, 1945.

Fast Forward now to 2036 ... George W. Bush lies dying, Fox News Channel is in the room recording his last words ... “I know that people think the whole thing ... that thing in Iraq ... was a bad thing, and they hold it against me ... I appreciate their view ... I can understand how they feel ... But y’know, I did it for America, and the American people, and their freedom ... The more you love freedom, the more likely it is you’ll be attacked ... Saddam was a real threat ... I still think he had weapons of mass destruction ... and someday we’ll find ‘em ... someday we’ll say mission accomplished! ... that will really be a turning point! ... So I’m prepared to meet my maker and whatever he has in mind for me ... in fact I say Bring it on!”

William Shirer, in his monumental work “The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich”, comments that Hitler’s Last Will and Testament “confirm that the man who had ruled over Germany with an iron hand for more than twelve years, and over most of Europe for four, had learned nothing from his experience.”^[11]

Shirer tells us of another happening concerning Hitler’s bunker, on April 12. When news of the death of President Franklin Roosevelt reached Nazi Prop-

aganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, he phoned Hitler in the bunker. “My Fuehrer,” Goebbels said. “I congratulate you! Roosevelt is dead! ... It is the turning point.”^[12]

The United States of Punishment

2.2 million imprisoned ... “We’re Number One! USA! USA! USA!” ... 7 million – one in every 32 American adults – either behind bars, on probation, or on parole ... When it comes to sentencing, let me tell you, people, and pardon my language, the United States is one hell of a tough mother fucker ... beginning with mandatory minimum sentences ... there are tens of thousands of young men rotting their lives away in American prisons for simple possession of a drug, for their own use, for their own pleasure, to enjoy with a friend, no victims involved.

Do you think a person should be in prison if he hasn’t hurt anyone? Either physically, financially, or in some other real and serious manner?

Jose Antonio Lopez, a legal permanent resident with a family and business in South Dakota, was deported back to Mexico a while ago because of a cocaine charge – Sale? No. Use? No. Possession? No. ... He told someone where they could buy some.^[13]

Another man was sentenced to 55 years in prison for three marijuana deals because he was in possession of a gun each time, which he did not use or brandish. Possession of a firearm in a drug transaction requires a much stiffer prison sentence.

Four former attorneys-general and

145 former prosecutors and judges wrote in support of a lighter sentence for this man. The presiding judge himself called the sentence “unjust, cruel and irrational”, but said the law left him no choice.^[14]

On December 1, a court in the Netherlands convicted four Dutch Muslims of plotting terrorist attacks against political leaders and government buildings. The heaviest sentence for any of them was eight years.^[15] On December 13, a priest was convicted of taking part in Rwanda’s 1994 genocide by ordering militiamen to set fire to a church and then bulldoze it while 2,000 people seeking safety were huddled inside. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda sentenced him to 15 years in prison.^[16] Considerably lighter sentences than in the United States are generally a common phenomenon in much of the world. In the US, the mere mention of the word “terrorist” in a courtroom will likely bring down 30, 40, 50 years, life in prison, on the defendant’s head, even for only thinking and talking of an action, an Orwellian “thoughtcrime”, with nothing concrete done to further the plan.

Colombian drug traffickers, British Muslims, and others accused of “terrorist” offenses strenuously fight extradition to the United States for fear of Uncle Sam’s merciless fist. They’re the lucky ones amongst Washington’s foreign targets; they’re not kidnapped off the street and flown shackled and blindfolded to secret dungeons in shadowy corners of the world to be tortured.

For those who think that no punish-

ment is too severe, too cruel, in the War on Terrorism against the Bad Guys, it must be asked what they think of the case of the Cuban Five. These are five Cubans who were engaged in the United States in the 1990s trying to uncover information about anti-Castro terrorists based in Miami, some of whom shortly before had been carrying out a series of bombing attacks in Havana hotels and may have been plotting new attacks. The Five infiltrated Cuban-American organizations based in Miami to monitor their actions, and they informed the Cuban government of their findings. The Cuban government then passed on some of the information to the FBI. And what happened next? The FBI arrested the five Cubans.

The Cubans were held in solitary confinement for 17 months; eventually they were tried, and in 2001 convicted on a variety of charges thrown together by the government for the occasion, including murder (sic!) and conspiracy to commit espionage (probably the first case in American judicial history of alleged espionage without a single page from a single secret document). They were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 15 years to life. But the federal government’s lust for punishment was still not satisfied. They have made it extremely difficult for their Cuban prisoners to receive family visits. Two of them have not seen their wives and children since their arrest in 1998; the other three have had only scarcely better luck.^[17]

Yet another glorious chapter in the War on Terrorism.

In the US, the mere mention of the word “terrorist” in a courtroom will likely bring down 30, 40, 50 years, life in prison, on the defendant’s head, even for only thinking and talking of an action, an Orwellian “thoughtcrime”, with nothing concrete done to further the plan

The day after the coup, a Pentagon source, while denying US involvement, declared: "We're kinda delighted ... All of a sudden our ships couldn't go to Fiji, and now all of a sudden they can"

The making of official history

It was just a passing remark in an Associated Press story about the recent overthrow of the Fiji government. "It was the nation's fourth coup in 19 years," the article noted, the first being the 1987 coup. "The takeover, like the previous three coups, has its roots in the ethnic divide between the descendants of ancient Melanesian warrior tribes and those of Indian laborers brought by former colonial power Britain to work in sugar plantations."^[18] That's how "official history" is created and passed on, all the more effective because it's unconscious, unknowing, voluntary, and done by "objective" journalists.

In 1987, Fiji Prime Minister Timoci Bavrada made Washington officials unhappy by identifying himself with the non-aligned movement (always a risk for a country during the Cold War), and even more so by taking office with a pledge to reinstate Fiji as a nuclear free zone, meaning that nuclear-powered or nuclear-weapons-carrying ships could not make port calls. When Bavrada's predecessor, R.S.K. Mara, instituted the same policy in 1982, he was put under intense American pressure to drop it. Said the US ambassador to Fiji that year, William Bodde, Jr., "a nuclear free zone would be unacceptable to the US, given our strategic needs ... the US must do everything possible to counter this movement." The following year, Mara dropped the policy.

Two weeks after Bavrada took office, American UN Ambassador Vernon Walters visited the island. The former Deputy Director of the CIA had a long

and infamous history of showing up shortly before, during, or shortly after CIA destabilization operations. Walters met with Bavrada, ostensibly to discuss UN matters. He also met with Lt. Col. Sitiveni Rabuka, third-in-command of the Army. Two weeks later, Rabuka led a military coup which ousted Bavrada.

The day after the coup, a Pentagon source, while denying US involvement, declared: "We're kinda delighted ... All of a sudden our ships couldn't go to Fiji, and now all of a sudden they can."

These happenings, and others concerning the 1987 Fiji coup which I recount elsewhere^[19], are of the type that the mainstream media typically ignore or, if obliged to deal with them, would have us believe are no more than coincidences.

The anonymous author of the Associated Press story can be forgiven for not knowing of the American fingerprints all over the Fiji coup. The story has probably not appeared in any media except those on the left; if by chance a mainstream editor came across such a story he would likely dismiss it as a "conspiracy theory". Well, you can call people like me "conspiracy theorists" if you call everyone else "coincidence theorists".

There are of course implausible conspiracy theories, but that is an altogether different matter.

Some things to look forward to in 2007

JANUARY: Insurgents in Iraq explode a nuclear bomb, totally destroying all of Iraq and everyone in it. Bush declares: "There will be no change in our policy

of bringing freedom and democracy to the people of Iraq. We will not cut and run.”

MARCH: To add to the ban of liquids and jells aboard aircraft, solids are now banned. But gasses are still allowed.

JUNE: Halliburton is awarded a 300 million dollar no-bid contract to investigate contractor fraud in Iraq.

SEPTEMBER: New York City policemen run down, then shoot, mace, stab, beat up, and hang a Muslim resident of Brooklyn after thinking that he might be a suspected terrorist who fit the Terrorist Profile, was alleged to be on the Master Terrorist Watch List, and appeared to be carrying what they imagined, or think they imagined, might be a concealed bomb, or something of that nature.

NOVEMBER: George W. announces that he will ask Congress to give embryos the vote.

DECEMBER: Gasses are now banned aboard aircraft. The only permitted forms of matter are now ionized atoms, electrons, neutrinos, quarks, and dark matter. (The last being what Dick Cheney is completely composed of, he is allowed aboard any airplane.) **CT**

NOTES

- [1] AlterNet, www.alternet.org/, May 5, 2006
- [2] Associated Press, December 12, 2006
- [3] nkusa.org/activities/Speeches/2006Iran-ACohen.cfm (Cohen’s talk); Telegraph.co.uk, article by Alex Spillius, December 13, 2006; Associated Press, December 12, 2006

- [4] Associated Press, December 12, 2006
- [5] counterpunch.org/tilley08282006.html
- [6] Washington Post, December 15, 2006, p.27
- [7] Associated Press, December 16, 2006
- [8] Sunday Telegraph (London), July 18, 1999
- [9] Democracy Now (Pacifica Network), November 1, 2006
- [10] Nate Thayer, in Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong), October 30, 1997, pages 15 and 20
- [11] paperback edition, p.1459
- [12] Ibid., p.1441
- [13] Washington Post, December 6, 2006, p.3
- [14] Bulletin News Network, Inc., The White House Bulletin, December 4, 2006
- [15] Associated Press, December 1, 2006
- [16] Associated Press, December 13, 2006
- [17] For the details of the case see my essay, “Cuban political prisoners ... in the United States”, members.aol.com/bblum6/polpris.htm
- [18] Associated Press, December 6, 2006
- [19] William Blum, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower*, pages 199-200

CT

William Blum is the author of: Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2; Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower; West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir; Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire. His Anti-Empire Reports and excerpts from his books may be read at www.killinghope.org

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WHAT'S FOR DINNER? PET FOOD

BY JIMMY MOYANA

Not only is pet food popular among poor families, but pigskin and discarded fat from beef also sell well in the country's teeming working class suburbs

While Kenyans took offence at the offer of dog food for hungry children last year, Zimbabweans are queuing up at meat suppliers and abattoirs to buy pet food. They crave any kind of meat, and quality products are now far beyond the means of ordinary people.

Not only is pet food popular among poor families, but pigskin and discarded fat from beef also sell well in the country's teeming working class suburbs. Kenyan officials dismissed as "culturally insulting" the offer of powdered dog food to feed starving children made by the founder of a dog biscuit company in New Zealand.

The offer might have received a warmer welcome from poor Zimbabweans, who had been forced to adopt a vegetarian diet before they discovered packaged pet food.

Beef and pork now cost between 4,000 and 6,000 Zimbabwean dollars (16 to 24 US dollars) a kilogram in the supermarkets. A family of six which would have consumed 12 kilos of meat

a month in the days before Zimbabwe's economic implosion began would now need to spend 72,000 Zimbabwean dollars (288 US dollars).

Eighty per cent of the population is unemployed and the majority of people in work earn less than 20,000 Zimbabwean dollars a month. People buy pet food even though the packaging clearly states that it is not for human consumption. A 500-gram packet of branded pet food costs around 1,250 Zimbabwean dollars – five US dollars – and a kilo of "meat sawdust" which contains meat gristle and bone and is sold as dog meat by abattoirs costs 1,200 Zimbabwean dollars.

Those who cannot afford pet food have to be content with flavouring boiled rape leaves with animal fat cut from beef or pork.

Dignity is a luxury few can afford these days in a country which until seven years ago was the breadbasket of southern Africa. At Colcom Foods in Harare's Willowvale area, there are long queues at the department where pet food is sold.

I asked some of the people waiting what they were planning to buy. One woman from the densely populated Mbare suburb, one of the poorest residential areas in Harare, said softly, “Pet food. What else?”

Upon further probing, the woman, who asked not to be named as she felt ashamed, said the pet food was for her family. “Pet food is food and it is perfectly edible by human beings,” she said. “What can I do when I cannot afford to buy meat? Have you ever tasted it? It’s like minced meat and is very tasty. We boil it or fry it and mix it with vegetables. We go through a 500-gram packet of pet food in three to four days. We eat the whole packet all at once if we want to give ourselves a treat.”

This woman is a widow with three children, who sells bananas at Mbare Musika, the biggest vegetable market in Harare. On a lucky day she makes 600 Zimbabwean dollars, enough to buy two loaves of bread.

“I feel so humiliated. I never dreamt in all my life that I would queue up to buy dog meat. I feel worthless – and what is dignity in Zimbabwe? We have all been reduced to nothing, to worthless human beings,” she said. “At least when I cook the dog food or meat shavings, if I am lucky to get them at our nearby butchery, I can taste meat. It gives the vegetables a different flavour and I get the protein that has been lacking in my diet.”

She is not alone in her humiliation. Harare resident Patrick Kaseke told IWPR he felt it was important to provide a “balanced diet” to his family.

In what people now regard as the

golden past – just seven years ago but seemingly a lifetime away – most people, even the poor, ate well. Now the most important thing is to ensure that the family has something eat.

“Tell me what is better: eating boiled covo [a spinach-like leaf] or rape every single day, or eating meat shavings or dog meat on some days and covo or rape on other days?” asked Patrick. “At my house we call the pet food ‘minced meat’ because I don’t want my children growing up knowing that they had been reduced to the level of a dog. It kills their spirit. To us pet food is a relish we look forward to. It gives us the feeling of the old days when we had chicken and rice at Christmas.”

One worker at a slaughterhouse close to the city centre said there was now such a high demand for sawdust, pigskin and fat that they had to put some aside for their own families.

“It is meat,” he said. “Sawdust is the remnants when slicing meat. So there is really nothing wrong in eating it. They are cheap products but taste just like minced meat. You must try them.”

Both consumers and their government are paying little heed to the long-term implications of a poor diet – particularly among children.

As the government grapples with the huge economic challenges facing the country, nutrition is not on the agenda. **CT**

Jimmy Moyana is a pseudonym for a reporter for International War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) in Harare. This article originally appeared on the IWPR web site – www.iwpr.net

“To us pet food is a relish we look forward to. It gives us the feeling of the old days when we had chicken and rice at Christmas”

END TIMES FOR THE COALITION

BY BILL BERKOWITZ

In late November, however, Hunter stepped down as president-elect, saying that he had wanted the organization to focus on issues other than abortion and same-sex marriage (such as poverty and environmental protection), but Coalition leaders did not

On September 19, 2005, Jason Christy, the head of Christy Media and the publisher and editor-in-chief of *The Church Report*, a national news and business journal for pastors and Christian leaders, was named executive director of the Christian Coalition by the organization's president, Roberta Combs. "I am honored and humbled to be chosen by the Christian Coalition's Board of Directors for this key position," Christy said. "It is crucial at this time in our nation for people of faith to engage the culture, and to realize that at the grassroots level they can make a difference."

Less than a month later, Christy changed his mind, deciding not to take the position. According to *Word News*, Christy intimated that it would be difficult to work with the Christian Coalition and continue running his various businesses.

Less than a year later, the Coalition's board voted to name Joel Hunter president of the organization. Hunter was/is the senior pastor of the nonde-

nominal Longwood, Florida-based Northland Church, also known as Northland A Church Distributed, and a founder of both the Christian Citizen and the Alliance for the Distributed Church. In late November, however, Hunter stepped down as president-elect (he was to have assumed office on January 1), saying that he had wanted the organization to focus on issues other than abortion and same-sex marriage (such as poverty and environmental protection), but Coalition leaders did not. "I think the board just got scared," said Hunter, the author of *Right Wing, Wrong Bird: Why the Tactics of the Religious Right Won't Fly With Most Conservative Christians*.

The withdrawal of the media-savvy Christy and the forward-looking Hunter — albeit for different reasons — is surely indicative of a once mighty organization going south. However, like Spain's Fascist dictator, Generalísimo Francisco Franco, who was kept alive so that his death would coincide with the anniversary of the death of another

well-known fascist leader 39 years earlier, the Christian Coalition's demise is taking a dreadfully long time to play itself out. While Reports of Franco's death made it into the popular culture – it became a recurring item during the satiric Weekend Update segment on the then-new “Saturday Night Live” program – the death of the Christian Coalition probably won't get the same comedic treatment.

IT SHOULD be noted that in its day, the Christian Coalition became the heir and-then-some to the Rev. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition (CC) set the gold standard for Christian conservative grassroots organizing efforts, fundraising ability and lobbying efforts well into the 1990s.

At its peak, one of the organization's claims to fame was its highly partisan Voter Guides. In 2000, it distributed over 70 million voter guides in churches all across America, including over 5 million in Spanish (approximately 2 million of which were distributed in Florida alone). In the 2004 election cycle, the group claimed that it distributed around 30 million voter guides, but this time in targeted states and congressional districts, choosing instead to focus its efforts on areas that were more politically competitive.

“The once-mighty Christian Coalition founded 17 years ago by the Rev. Pat Robertson as the political fundraising and lobbying engine of the Christian right, is more than \$2 million in debt, beset by creditors' lawsuits and struggling to hold on to some of its

state chapters,” the Washington Post reported in April of this year. “In March, one of its most effective chapters, the Christian Coalition of Iowa, cut ties with the national organization and reincorporated itself as the Iowa Christian Alliance, saying it “found it impossible to continue to carry a name that in any way associated us with this national organization.”

Stephen L. Scheffler, president of the Iowa affiliate since 2000, said that “The credibility is just not there like it once was. The budget has shrunk from \$26 million to \$1 million. There's a trail of debt ... We believe, our board believes, any Christian organization has an obligation to pay its debts in a timely fashion.”

In reality, the organization hasn't been the same since Ralph Reed, the organization's baby-faced point man who garnered serious face time on television pushing the organization's agenda, and Robertson, the founder and chief operating officer left the Coalition.

“After the founders left, the Christian Coalition never fully recovered,” James L. Guth, an expert on politics and religion at Furman University in South Carolina, told the Washington Post's Alan Cooperman and Thomas B. Edsall in April 2006. “The dependence on Robertson and Reed was really disastrous.”

Reed resigned as the CC's executive director in 1997, leaving to head up his own political consulting firm (Century Strategies), become head of Georgia's Republican Party, and to set the stage for launching his own political career.

At its peak, one of the organization's claims to fame was its highly partisan Voter Guides. In 2000, it distributed over 70 million voter guides in churches all across America, including over 5 million in Spanish

CHRISTIAN COALITION

"My position is, unless we are caring as much for the vulnerable outside the womb as inside the womb, we're not carrying out the full message of Jesus"

Earlier this year, unable to slide out from under reports of his close connection to GOP uber-lobbyist, the now-imprisoned Jack Abramoff, Reed was defeated in his bid to become the GOP's candidate for lieutenant governor.

Robertson left in 2001 after a CNN interview in which he defended China's one-child policy, a position that horrified fellow Christian conservatives. Robertson's China comment, according to the Washington Post, "was among the most damaging in a series of remarks that have hurt Robertson's standing among evangelical Christians -- and may have hurt the Christian Coalition as well."

"The Christian Coalition was already on life support. Robertson's remarks probably mean its demise," said former Christian Coalition lobbyist Marshall Wittmann, who before he was recently hired to be the communications director and spokesman for Senator Joe Lieberman (I-CT), was a senior fellow at the Progressive Policy Institute, a think tank affiliated with the Democratic Leadership Council and partially funded by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation.

ROBERTA COMBS, who coordinated Robertson's South Carolina campaign during his run to head the GOP presidential ticket in 1988, replaced him as head of the Christian Coalition five years ago. Claiming that the organization was in horrendous financial straits, Coombs cleaned house and made enemies.

"I had to let a lot of staff go, and they

all got upset with me because they were close to Ralph [Reed]. Of course they said bad things about me. But we got a lot of that [debt] paid down over time," Combs told the Washington Post.

While she may have succeeded in cleaning house and making enemies, one thing she didn't do was straighten out the organization's financials, according to the Washington Post: "IRS records show that the Christian Coalition's red ink has remounted. Its debts exceeded its assets by \$983,000 in 2001, \$1.3 million in 2002, \$2 million in 2003 and \$2.28 million at the end of 2004, the most recent year for which it has filed a nonprofit tax return."

"Lawsuits for unpaid bills have multiplied. The Christian Coalition's longtime law firm -- Huff, Poole & Mahoney PC of Virginia Beach -- says it is owed \$69,729. Global Direct, a fundraising firm in Oklahoma, is suing for \$87,000 in expenses. Reese & Sons Inc., a moving company in District Heights, is trying to recover \$1,890 for packing up furniture when the Christian Coalition closed its Washington office in 2002."

The resignation of Joel Hunter precludes any chance that the Christian Coalition might emerge as a new and forward-looking organization.

"My position is, unless we are caring as much for the vulnerable outside the womb as inside the womb, we're not carrying out the full message of Jesus," Hunter said in a late-November telephone interview with the Washington Post.

"They [Christian Coalition leaders] began to think this might threaten their

base or evaporate some of their support, and they said they just couldn't go there." Although concerned about the organization's precarious financials, his resignation did not stem from that factor: "I got a look at who they owed money to. It's sobering. But with the right leadership and the capability of rebuilding a grass-roots organization, it's not insurmountable. My church budget is \$15 million a year ... It's not too intimidating for me to think I could have raised that kind of money."

According to the newspaper, Roberta Combs, chairman of the coalition's four-member board, "said that Hunter "is still a good friend" but that they agreed during a November 21 conference call that "it would be best for everyone if he did not become president."

Combs pointed out that the organization has "been wanting to broaden our agenda for some time. But there's a way to do that. We wanted to survey our supporters first and make sure they're on board on new issues. Joel saw it differently – he just wanted to go

out and do it."

Interestingly enough, when Time magazine ran a cover story earlier this year headlined "The 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America," not one Christian Coalition spokesperson was amongst them. With Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family, Tony Perkins' Family Research Council, and the Southern Baptist Convention having eclipsed the Coalition in lobbying effectiveness since even before Pat Robertson's leaving the organization, Hunter's ideas represented an opportunity for a new beginning.

With Hunter's resignation, it appears that Christian Coalition leaders have soundly rejected changing the way it has been doing business. The organization's long slide from its glory days to relative obscurity will no doubt continue. **CT**

Bill Berkowitz is a longtime observer of the conservative movement, documenting the strategies, players, institutions, victories and defeats of the American Right

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DEMOCRACY TAKES A BEATING

BY DANNY SCHECHTER

They bemoan the fact that there was more spin and opinionizing than reporting along with less investigative reporting. And then they do it all over again

After every election, there are post-mortems and then, after that, come the studies to confirm the presence of many institutional and deep seated flaws in our ritualized electoral-democracy.

Annually, journalists acknowledge their own limits and mistakes. The honest ones admit a uniformity of outlook in which the horse race is over-covered and the issues undercovered.

They concede that there was a focus on polls without explaining their limits adequately or how polls in turn are affected by the volume and slant of media coverage. There are criticisms of how negative ads and entertainment values infiltrated election coverage, what Time magazine calls “electotainment.”

They bemoan the fact that there was more spin and opinionizing than reporting along with less investigative reporting.

And then they do it all over again.

It happened again this year, as if the media industry and the press corps never learns from its own mistakes and

is doomed to repeat them. Why? Phil Troustine former political editor of the San Jose Mercury News, told the magazine Nieman Reports, “too many reporters are cynics, not just skeptics. This leads to the sense that they are hard-bitten realists when they are simplistic and often biased.”

They also work for corporate media outlets who design the coverage and assign the journalists. Mostly, they are not free or independent agents.

A 2006 survey by the Committee of Concerned Journalists of their own members revealed that many journalists think the news media failed voters by not adequately covering this past year’s campaigns.

“Only 3% give the press an A grade, while another 27% give the news media a B. At the same time, 42% give the coverage a C and 27% say D or F.

“The poll surveyed 499 CCJ members between October 8 and October 15th. The Committee is a national consortium of journalists and journalism educators in various media.”

The Mediaocracy blog, inspired by a

book I wrote of the same name asks: “What are the particular concerns these journalists have? By large majorities they feel the news media has become sidetracked by trivial issues, has been too reactive and has focused too much on the inside baseball that doesn’t really matter to voters, according to the survey.

“In other words, most of the campaign reporting does not deliver what journalists think the public wants or needs. This is in line with other general surveys of reporters regarding the current state of their profession. A Pew Research Center report in 2000 showed that less than 40% of journalists surveyed said the media was fulfilling its public responsibilities.”

The latest study

The Project on Excellence in Journalism has just assessed this past year’s election after extensive on day research:

“On Nov. 7, a team of researchers from the Project for Excellence in Journalism monitored the coverage of 32 news outlets – 18 web sites, six blogs, four broadcast networks, three cable channels, and NPR as the results rolled in and Congress changed hands. This report, ‘Election Night 2006’: An Evening in the Life of the American Media,” breaks down that performance by media platform and contains an evaluation of each individual outlet.”

What did they find?

“1. The two most valuable things the news media offers on these fast-moving election nights now is a quick summary of key results for those wanting the headlines and deep veins of data

that users can mine on their own. That may explain why TV web sites fared well.

“2. In contrast, rich narrative story telling and snap punditry, the long suit of the morning newspaper and the TV telecast, may be less valuable – at least as the numbers are rolling in on the first night.

“3. Most news organizations are still finding their way in this new multimedia environment. Often they are trying to do too many things and lack the resources and flexibility to adjust to the speed of the news. They need to make clearer choices.

“4. The Exit Poll may be more important today, not less, since users are probing that information directly, functioning as their own editors – going state by state, looking for demographic information, late deciders, and more. This is not just the purview of experts and academicians anymore.”

“5. When the system works, voting occurs without widespread problems and the media establishment isn’t faltering-citizen sentinels, bloggers, and other observers, while potentially important watchdogs, have a more restricted role.”

Sorry to disagree. The system is NOT working well. On November 26, three weeks AFTER the election, the NY Times discovered that voting machines in Florida swallowed 18,000 votes and worried that without a verified paper trail, results would be compromised. Their editorial was titled “Déjà vu” in Florida.” The Times seemed shocked in concluding that electronic voting “could end up under-

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mining democracy"

COULD?

Now I am the one who is shocked. How is it that so many of our mainstream media outlets IGNORED this problem, and did not demand that it be fixed BEFORE the election. For years now, an election integrity movement has been crusading on this issue but they have been brushed aside, and are rarely in the news. There is no shortage of information on the subject.

Burying the lead

Years ago, Jim Naureckas of FAIR wrote: "In journalism, it's called 'burying the lead.' A story starts off with what everyone already knows, while the real news – the most surprising, significant or never-been-told-before information – gets pushed down where people are less likely to see it ..."

Why? What accounts for media organizations looking away and covering elections the same way each year as if they are following routines?

Says Naureckas: "Many journalists are instinctively protective of the legitimacy of the institutions they cover." He then adds, "but the job of a journalist is not to promote but to question. The theory behind the First Amendment is that the system will be strengthened by an unflinching look at the system's flaws."

Too many journalists fail to separate the election outcomes from the self-interested financial interests that influence them or the way incumbents manipulate the system to their advantage.

Elections are often determined by

what's called the "Air War" – TV commercials, many negative attacks ads that do more misrepresenting than presenting, more selling than telling. The cost of these political ads on television, the third highest source of ad revenues for the industry, has more than quadrupled since 1982.

Today, commercial media has gone AWOL on this most obvious responsibility. "Pre-election news coverage of the candidates has in many cases all but disappeared," says Paul Taylor, chairman of the Alliance for Better Campaigns – a MediaChannel Affiliate that advocates free airtime for candidates. "What little candidate coverage that remains is devoted to incumbents, by a margin of nearly five to one, over challengers."

In a study of media coverage, Media Channel affiliate Norman Lear Center revealed that the amount of election-centered discourse provided by the typical local station during the height of the 2000 presidential primary season was just 39 seconds a night – far short of the five-minute standard advocated by a 1998 presidential advisory commission headed by then Vice President Al Gore.

Another MediaChannel affiliate, the Center for Media and Public Affairs, found that the total minutes of coverage of the 2002 midterm election on the national network news programs had declined by 78 percent over the coverage those networks devoted to the 1998 midterm election.

Political devolution

All of this got worse in 2006. The media

is failing us along with the political system it allegedly covers. There is a devolution underway, not reform and change.

Years ago in a book called “Hail to the Thief” on the outcome of the 2000 election, I wrote: “The media no longer, if it ever did, stand apart from politics as a neutral – much less objective – watchdog operating outside the political system to strengthen democracy. In an age of corporate mergers and unprecedented media concentration, the media have in effect, merged with politics and now function as a key component of a system that Norman Mailer sees, with a whiff of the Mafia theory of Organization, as a “family.”

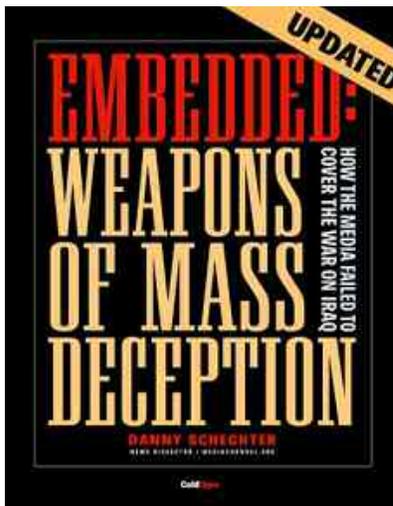
“The American political body has evolved,” he wrote in an essay in his

1998 anthology *The Time of Our Time*. “into a highly controlled and powerfully manipulated democracy overseen by a new species of aristocracy formed at the junction of four Royal Families – the ten thousand dollar suits of the mega-corporations, the titans of the media, the high ogres of Congress and the upper lords of the White House.”

In 2006, years after all the hand-wringing over the fiasco in Florida, and the debacle in Ohio, I see no reason to revise this judgment. **CT**

“The media is no longer, if it ever did stand apart from politics as a neutral – much less objective – watchdog operating outside the political system to strengthen democracy”

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