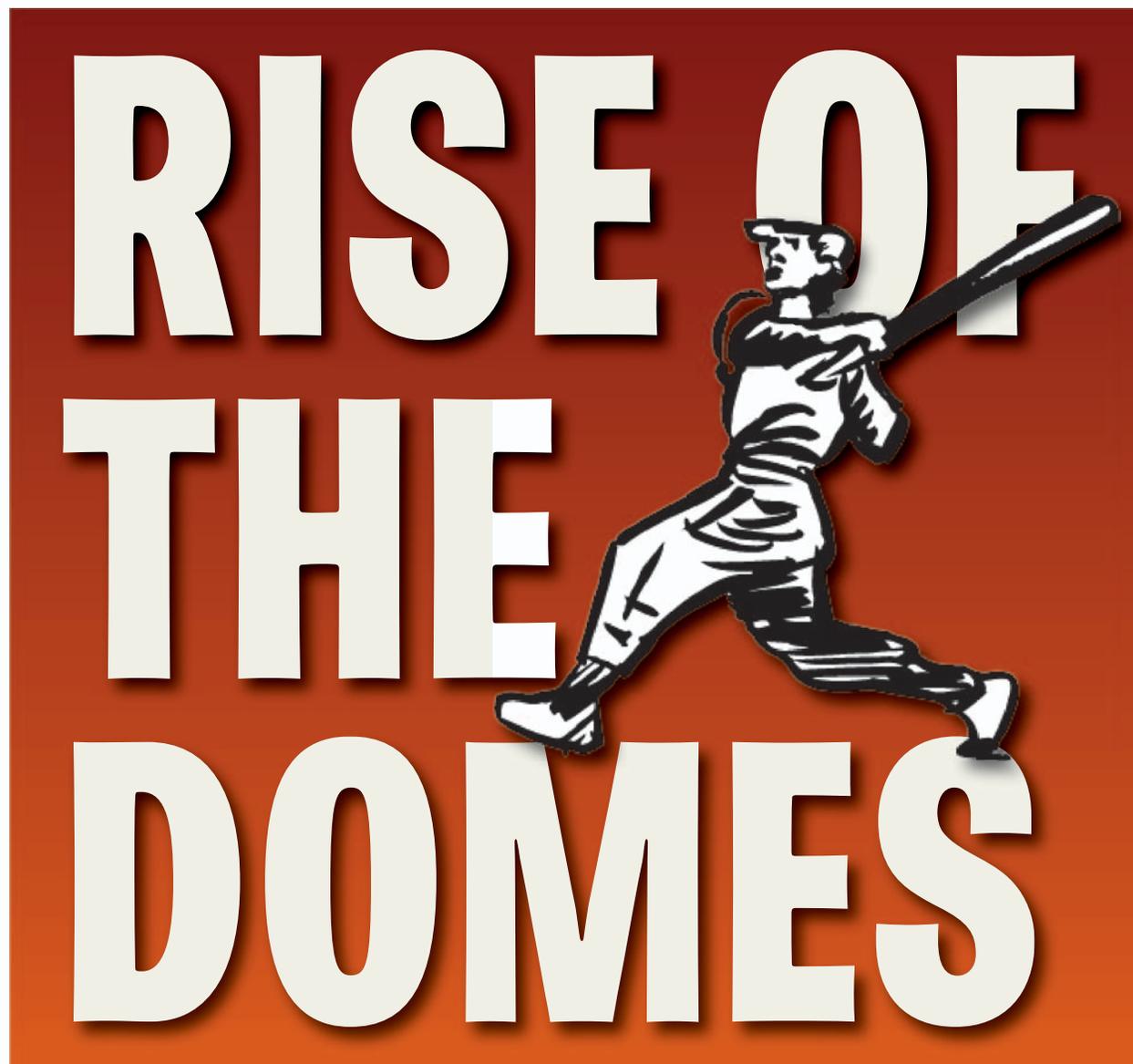

INSIDE: THE LIFE AND CRIMES OF THE CIA ● HE'S NO MARTIN LUTHER KING ● A FREE PRESS OR MINISTRY OF TRUTH? ● DROWNING IN A TIDE OF ECO-JUNK

The ^{ColdType} **READER**

WRITING WORTH READING ● ISSUE 17 ● AUGUST 2007



👉 **DAVE ZIRIN ON THE SCANDAL OF SPORTS STADIUM FUNDING**

ColdType *The* **READER**

ISSUE 17 | AUGUST 2007

3. A FREE PRESS OR MINISTRY OF TRUTH?

By Paul Craig Roberts

6. TRUTH SLIPS DOWN THE MEMORY HOLE

By John Pilger

10. COVER STORY – RISE OF THE DOMES

By Dave Zirin

13. THE MIDDLE EAST: A TRAP FOR FOOLS

By Uri Avnery

17. PALESTINE AT THE CROSSROADS

By Ronnie Kasrils

20. DROWNING IN A TIDE OF ECO-JUNK

By George Monbiot

23. WHY THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE IS SO SCARY

By Jean Pfaelzer

26. OPERATING ON MICHAEL MOORE

By James Clay Fuller

30. NEOCONS, DEMOCONS, THEOCONS, EXCONS & FUTURE CONS

By William Blum

37. JOHN PERKINS: JERK, CONMAN, SHILL

By Greg Palast

40. A LESSON FOR THOSE UPPITY GIRLS

By Linda McQuaig

42. THE LIFE AND CRIMES OF THE CIA

By Chalmers Johnson

52. WHEN WILL YOU TEACH THIS LAD ENGLISH?

By Hussein al-Alak

54. HE'S NO MARTIN LUTHER KING

By Ray McGovern

58. NO WONDER THE BLOGGERS ARE WINNING

By Robert Fisk

61. WE'RE LEAVING IRAQ (SORT OF)

By Norman Solomon

64. RECRUITING TRENCH LIBERALS AND LEFT-NECKS

By Joe Bageant

66. SLOW MARCH TO A POLICE STATE

The Big Picture

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A FREE PRESS OR MINISTRY OF TRUTH?

BY PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS

In his novel 1984, George Orwell portrayed a future time in which the explanations of recent events and earlier history are continually changed to meet Big Brother's latest purpose. Previous explanations disappear down "the memory hole."

Sound familiar? Any American who pays attention can observe the identical phenomenon occurring in the US today.

Think about the Bush Regime's changing explanations for the failed US occupation of Iraq. Shortly after Bush's May 2003 announcement of "mission accomplished," the mission revealed itself to be very much unaccomplished. Americans were told that the cause of the snafu was a small Sunni insurgency of two or three thousand at the most inspired by "die-hard Baath party remnants." Remember the propagandistic deck of cards identifying the most wanted down to the less wanted? Americans were assured that once Saddam Hussein and his relatives and henchmen were rounded up, our troops would be pelted with the promised flowers instead of roadside bombs.

When the roundups, trials, and executions failed to fix the problem, the "die-hard" explanation disappeared. A new explanation, with no continuity to the old, took its place.

The new explanation was that Syria was allowing foreigners to cross its border into Iraq to commit jihad against the American troops. This explanation lasted until it became all too clear, despite the propaganda, that the "foreign fighters" were remarkably well accepted by, and concealed within, the Iraqi communities that were suffering all the collateral damage of the conflict.

When it came time for the US to create an Iraqi government, it was evident that it would be one dominated by Shi'ites. Then, for a limited time, it was permissible to recognize that the insurgency was popularly based in the Sunnis.

As the insurgency evolved into what the Iraq Study Group described as a Sunni-Shi'ite civil war with US troops unclear on which side they stood, the Bush Regime and the captive media began blaming Al Qaeda for the escalat-

Americans were assured that once Saddam Hussein and his relatives and henchmen were rounded up, our troops would be pelted with the promised flowers instead of roadside bombs

Cheney, Israel, and the neocons, the rulers of the new Oceania, plan to attack Iran, and so the insurgency in Iraq is now being blamed on Iran

ing violence. Americans were assured by the Ministry of Truth that there wasn't a civil war, just outsiders stirring up conflict. This enabled Big Brother to deny that there was a civil war and to revive fear of terrorist attacks in the US and UK, the new Oceania.

The Al Qaeda explanation was soon discarded into the memory hole. The explanation implied that Oceania's invasion of Iraq had greatly expanded the ranks and strength of Al Qaeda, thus contradicting big Brother's claim that his war in Iraq was making Oceanians safe by stamping out terrorism. The Al Qaeda explanation had to depart for another reason as well. Cheney, Israel, and the neocons, the rulers of the new Oceania, plan to attack Iran, and so the insurgency in Iraq is now being blamed on Iran.

Down the memory hole

The Ministry of Truth has accommodated the latest explanation, just as it did all others before, without remarking on the funeral of the previous explanation. All of a sudden, a new explanation appears and is repeated until it, too, goes down the memory hole.

The American and British media work the same way as the Ministry of Truth in Oceania. A day arrives when the "truth" no longer serves the empire or hegemonic power or center of moral purpose in the world, or for short, the regime. When that day arrives, a new explanation appears and is repeated until it, too, is discarded down the memory hole.

In recent weeks Americans have been fed a series of reports from official

sources that Iran is arming both Iraqi insurgents and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Experts, both within the government and without, who have been made more attentive by the Bush Regime's false charges of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, have disputed the news reports.

But the reports keep on coming. As I write, the latest story is that the US military "discovered a field of rocket launchers near a US army base south of Baghdad armed with 34 Iranian-made missiles." Can you imagine? The insurgents went to the trouble of lugging powerful missiles within striking distance of a US base and just left them there unfired to be discovered by the Americans.

To further serve Cheney's plan to attack Iran, the media report states: "Earlier this month, US commanders stepped up the charges [against Iran], claiming that senior leaders of Iran's special forces and of the Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah militia have trained Iraqi fighters and provided other support." [US finds Iranian rockets aimed at Iraq base, Agence France Presse, July 14, 2007]

Notice that none of the explanations fed to Americans over the years have ever mentioned, even as a faint possibility, that the US invasion and occupation of Iraq might be the cause of the violence in Iraq.

Allegedly, the US is a free and open country with a free press and a government accountable to the people. Yet, the information fed to the American people is as thoroughly false as that fed to the citizens of Oceania by Big

Brother through the Ministry of Truth in Orwell's famous novel.

In Orwell's novel, despite the totalitarian power of the government, nothing happens to people as long as they accept the government's intrusive monitoring of their lives and do not become interested in truth or facts. In such a world, truth and individuality pass out of human consciousness and become unimportant. Citizens survive by accepting Big Brother's ever-changing reality.

This is what the mainstream media in the US and UK are enabling the new Oceania to accomplish. It is pointless to complain about a few Judith Millers here and there at the New York Times, or the obvious warmongers at the

Weekly Standard, Fox "News," and Wall Street Journal editorial page. The entire corporate media is behaving as a Ministry of Truth. **CT**

The entire corporate media is behaving as a Ministry of Truth

*Paul Craig Roberts was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in the Reagan Administration. He is the author of **Supply-Side Revolution: An Insider's Account of Policymaking in Washington**; **Alienation and the Soviet Economy** and **Meltdown: Inside the Soviet Economy**; and is the co-author with Lawrence M. Stratton of **The Tyranny of Good Intentions: How Prosecutors and Bureaucrats Are Trampling the Constitution in the Name of Justice**.*

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TRUTH SLIPS DOWN THE MEMORY HOLE

BY JOHN PILGER

While Alan Johnston was being held, I was asked by the BBC World Service if I would say a few words of support for him. I readily agreed, and suggested I also mention the thousands of Palestinians abducted and held hostage. The answer was a polite no

One of the leaders of demonstrations in Gaza calling for the release of the BBC reporter Alan Johnston was a Palestinian news cameraman, Imad Ghanem. On 5 July, he was shot by Israeli soldiers as he filmed them invading Gaza. A Reuters video shows bullets hitting his body as he lay on the ground. An ambulance trying to reach him was also attacked. The Israelis described him as a “legitimate target”. The International Federation of Journalists called the shooting “a vicious and brutal example of deliberate targeting of a journalist”. At the age of 21, he has had both legs amputated.

Dr David Halpin, a British trauma surgeon who works with Palestinian children, emailed the BBC’s Middle East editor, Jeremy Bowen. “The BBC should report the alleged details about the shooting,” he wrote. “It should honour Alan [Johnston] as a journalist by reporting the facts, uncomfortable as they might be to Israel.”

He received no reply.

The atrocity was reported in two sentences on the BBC online. Along

with 11 Palestinian civilians killed by the Israelis on the same day, Alan Johnston’s now legless champion slipped into what George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* called the memory hole. (It was Winston Smith’s job at the Ministry of Truth to make disappear all facts embarrassing to Big Brother.)

While Alan Johnston was being held, I was asked by the BBC World Service if I would say a few words of support for him. I readily agreed, and suggested I also mention the thousands of Palestinians abducted and held hostage. The answer was a polite no; and all the other hostages remained in the memory hole. Or, as Harold Pinter wrote of such unmentionables: “It never happened. Nothing ever happened... It didn’t matter. It was of no interest.”

The media wailing over the BBC’s royal photo-shoot fiasco and assorted misdemeanours provide the perfect straw man. They complement a self-serving BBC internal inquiry into news bias, which dutifully supplied the right-wing Daily Mail with hoary grist that the corporation is a left-wing plot. Such shenanigans would be funny were it

not for the true story behind the facade of elite propaganda that presents humanity as useful or expendable, worthy or unworthy, and the Middle East as the Anglo-American crime that never happened, didn't matter, was of no interest.

The other day, I turned on the BBC's Radio 4 and heard a cut-glass voice announce a programme about Iraqi interpreters working for "the British coalition forces" and warning that "listeners might find certain descriptions of violence disturbing". Not a word referred to those of "us" directly and ultimately responsible for the violence. The programme was called Face the Facts. Is satire that dead? Not yet. The Murdoch columnist David Aaronovitch, a warmonger, is to interview Blair in the BBC's "major retrospective" of the sociopath's rule.

Orwell's lexicon of opposites

Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four lexicon of opposites pervades almost everything we see, hear and read now. The invaders and destroyers are "the British coalition forces", surely as benign as that British institution, St John Ambulance, who are "bringing democracy" to Iraq. BBC television describes Israel as having "two hostile Palestinian entities on its borders", neatly inverting the truth that Israel is actually inside Palestinian borders. A study by Glasgow University says that young British viewers of TV news believe Israelis illegally colonising Palestinian land are Palestinians: the victims are the invaders.

"The great crimes against most of humanity", wrote the American cul-

tural critic James Petras, "are justified by a corrosive debasement of language and thought... [that] have fabricated a linguistic world of terror, of demons and saviours, of axes of good and evil, of euphemisms" designed to disguise a state terror that is "a gross perversion" of democracy, liberation, reform, justice. In his reinauguration speech, George Bush mentioned all these words, whose meaning, for him, is the dictionary opposite.

It is 80 years since Edward Bernays, the father of public relations, predicted a pervasive "invisible government" of corporate spin, suppression and silence as the true ruling power in the United States. That is true today on both sides of the Atlantic. How else could America and Britain go on such a spree of death and mayhem on the basis of stupendous lies about non-existent weapons of mass destruction, even a "mushroom cloud over New York"? When the BBC radio reporter Andrew Gilligan reported the truth, he was pilloried and sacked along with the BBC's director general, while Blair, the proven liar, was protected by the liberal wing of the media and given a standing ovation in parliament.

The same is happening again over Iran, distracted, it is hoped, by spin that the new Foreign Secretary David Miliband is a "sceptic" about the crime in Iraq when, in fact, he has been an accomplice, and by unctuous Kennedy-quoting Foreign Office propaganda about Miliband's "new world order".

"What do you think of Iran's complicity in attacks on British soldiers in Basra?" Miliband was asked by the Fi-

BBC television describes Israel as having "two hostile Palestinian entities on its borders", neatly inverting the truth that Israel is actually inside Palestinian borders

The bloodbath of the First World War and the Cold War might never have happened without their unpaid (and paid) propagandists. Today's invisible government is no less served, especially by those who censor by omission

nancial Times.

Miliband: "Well, I think that any evidence of Iranian engagement there is to be deplored. I think that we need regional players to be supporting stability, not fomenting discord, never mind death..."

FT: "Just to be clear, there is evidence?"

Miliband: "Well no, I chose my words carefully..."

The coming war on Iran, including the possibility of a nuclear attack, has already begun as a war by journalism. Count the number of times "nuclear weapons programme" and "nuclear threat" are spoken and written, yet neither exists, says the International Atomic Energy Agency. On 21 June, the New York Times went further and advertised an "urgent" poll, headed: "Should we bomb Iran?" The questions beneath referred to Iran being "a greater threat than Saddam Hussein" and asked: "Who should undertake military action against Iran first...?" The choice was "US. Israel. Neither country".

So tick your favourite bombers.

The last British war to be fought without censorship and "embedded" journalists was the Crimea a century and a half ago. The bloodbath of the First World War and the Cold War might never have happened without their unpaid (and paid) propagandists. Today's invisible government is no less served, especially by those who censor by omission. The craven liberal campaign against the first real hope for the poor of Venezuela is a striking example.

However, there are major differences.

Official disinformation now is often aimed at a critical public intelligence, a growing awareness in spite of the media. This "threat" from a public often held in contempt has been met by the insidious transfer of much of journalism to public relations.

Some years ago, PR Week estimated that the amount of "PR-generated material" in the media is "50 per cent in a broadsheet newspaper in every section apart from sport. In the local press and the mid-market and tabloid nationals, the figure would undoubtedly be higher. Music and fashion journalists and PRs work hand in hand in the editorial process... PRs provide fodder, but the clever high-powered ones do a lot of the journalists' thinking for them."

This is known today as "perception management". The most powerful are not the Max Cliffords but huge corporations such as Hill & Knowlton, which "sold" the slaughter known as the first Gulf war, and the Sawyer Miller Group, which sold hated, pro-Washington regimes in Colombia and Bolivia and whose operatives included Mark Malloch Brown, the new Foreign Office minister, currently being spun as anti-Washington.

Hiding the truth

Hundreds of millions of dollars go to corporations spinning the carnage in Iraq as a sectarian war and covering up the truth: that an atrocious invasion is pinned down by a successful resistance while the oil is looted.

The other major difference today is the abdication of cultural forces that once provided dissent outside journal-

ism. Their silence has been devastating. “For almost the first time in two centuries,” wrote the literary and cultural critic Terry Eagleton, “there is no eminent British poet, playwright or novelist prepared to question the foundations of the western way of life.” The lone, honourable exception is Harold Pinter. Eagleton listed writers and playwrights who once promised dissent and satire and instead became rich celebrities, ending the legacy of Shelley and Blake, Carlyle and Ruskin, Morris and Wilde, Wells and Shaw.

He singled out Martin Amis, a writer given tombstones of column inches in which to air his pretensions, along with his attacks on Muslims. The following is from a recent article by Amis:

Tony strolled over [to me] and said, “What have you been up to today?” “I’ve been feeling protective of my prime minister, since you ask.” For some reason our acquaintanceship, at least on my part, is becoming mildly but deplorably flirtatious.

What these elite, embedded voices share is their participation in an essen-

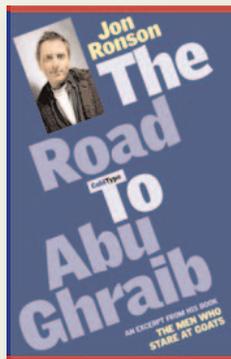
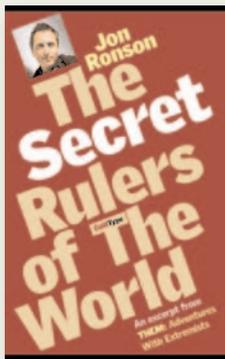
tially class war, the long war of the rich against the poor. That they play their part in a broadcasting studio or in the clubbable pages of the review sections and that they think of themselves as liberals or conservatives is neither here nor there. They belong to the same crusade, waging the same battle for their enduring privilege.

In *The Serpent*, Marc Karlin’s dream-like film about Rupert Murdoch, the narrator describes how easily Murdochism came to dominate the media and coerce the industry’s liberal elite. There are clips from a keynote address that Murdoch gave at the Edinburgh Television Festival. The camera pans across the audience of TV executives, who listen in respectful silence as Murdoch flagellates them for suppressing the true voice of the people. They then applaud him. “This is the silence of the democrats,” says the voice-over, “and the Dark Prince could bath in their silence.”

CT

*John Pilger’s latest book, **Freedom Next Time**, has just been published in paperback. This article was first published in the New Statesman*

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RISE OF THE DOMES

BY DAVE ZIRIN

Reports from both the right-wing Cato Institute and the more centrist Brookings Institution dismiss stadium funding as an utter financial flop, yet the domes keep coming

"You can't throw money at the problem."

As a former public school teacher in Washington, I heard that cliché from countless bureaucrats. It was code for "Stop whining about ancient textbooks and prehistoric classroom materials, because there is no money."

Imagine my shock when the city announced it would be spending more than \$500 million on a new baseball stadium. Clearly when it comes to the needs of billionaire sports owners, there always seems to be money available to be thrown.

This is hardly a D.C. story. The building of sports stadiums has become the substitute for anything resembling an urban policy in this country. The stadiums are presented as a microwave-instant solution to the problems of crumbling schools, urban decay and suburban flight.

Stadiums are sporting shrines to the dogma of trickle-down economics. In the past 10 years, more than \$16 billion of the public's money has been spent for

stadium construction and upkeep from coast to coast. Though some cities are beginning to resist paying the full tab, any kind of subsidy is a fool's investment, ending up being little more than monuments to corporate greed: \$500 million welfare hotels for America's billionaires built with funds that could have been spent more wisely on just about anything else.

The era of big government may be over, but it has been replaced by the Rise of the Domes. Reports from both the right-wing Cato Institute and the more centrist Brookings Institution dismiss stadium funding as an utter financial flop, yet the domes keep coming.

Our stadiums, funded on our dime, become the political province of those owners who paid nary a penny for the privilege. In many stadiums, they have started "faith days at the park" where evangelical Christian organizations set up booths and Christian rock gets blared over the loudspeakers. No separation of church and state, even when the state is footing the bill.

Then there is the force-feeding of political dogma. No freedom from that,

either. On the orders of George Steinbrenner, the New York Yankees now string up chains along the seats to keep people standing and secured – and not going to the concessions or bathroom – for the seventh-inning singing of “God Bless America.”

As Neil DeMause, co-author of the book *Field of Schemes* said to me, “The history of the stadium game is the story of how, by slowly refining their blackmail skills, sports owners learned how to turn their industry from one based on selling tickets to one based on extracting public subsidies. It’s been a bit like watching a four-year-old learn how to manipulate his parents into buying him the new toy that he saw on TV; the question now is how long it takes our elected officials to learn to say ‘no.’ ”

Stadiums first, people last

But our elected officials have been more like the children, as sports owners tousle their hair and set the budget agendas for municipalities around the country with a simple credo: stadiums first and people last.

In August 2005, we saw the extreme results of these kinds of priorities. After Hurricane Katrina flattened the Gulf Coast, the Louisiana Superdome, the largest domed structure in the Western Hemisphere, morphed into a homeless shelter from hell, inhabited yet uninhabitable for an estimated 30,000 of New Orleans’ poorest residents.

It took Hurricane Katrina for them to actually see the inside of the Superdome, a stadium whose ticket prices make entry restrictive. At the time of the hurricane, game tickets cost \$90,

season seats went for \$1,300, and luxury boxes for eight home games ran more than \$100,000 a year. But the Katrina refugees’ tickets were courtesy of the federal and local government’s malignant neglect.

It was only fitting, because these 30,000 people helped pay for the stadium in the first place. The Superdome was built entirely on the public dime in 1975, as a part of efforts to create a “New New Orleans” business district. City officials decided that building the largest domed stadium on the planet was in everyone’s best interest. Instead, it set off a 30-year path toward destruction for the Big Easy: a path that has seen money for the stadium but not for levees; money for the stadium but not for shelter; money for the stadium but not for an all-too-predictable disaster.

The tragedy of Katrina then became farce when the Superdome’s inhabitants were finally moved: not to government housing, public shelters or even another location in the area, but to the Houston Astrodome. Ladies and gentlemen, we had the March of Domes.

I spoke to former Major League Baseball All-Star and *Ball Four* author Jim Bouton about the publicly financed “doming of America,” and this is what he said: “It’s such a misapplication of the public’s money. ... You’ve got towns turning out streetlights, they’re closing firehouses, they’re cutting back on school supplies, they’re having classrooms in stairwells, and we’ve got a nation full of kids who don’t have any health insurance. I mean, it’s disgraceful. The limited things that our government does for the people with the peo-

“On the orders of George Steinbrenner, the New York Yankees now string up chains along the seats to keep people standing and secured – and not going to the concessions or bathroom – for the seventh-inning singing of “God Bless America”

COVER STORY

The question is whether we are going finally to stand up and impose our priorities onto them, instead of continually taking it on the chin

ple's money, to spend even a dime or a penny of it on ballparks is just a crime.

"It's going to be seen historically as an awful folly, and it's starting to be seen that way now, but historically that will go down as one of the real crimes of American government, national and local, to allow the funneling of people's money directly into the pockets of a handful of very wealthy individuals who could build these stadiums on their own if it made financial sense. If they don't make financial sense, then they shouldn't be building them."

Bouton went on to say,

"If I was a team owner today, asking for public money, I'd be ashamed of myself. Ashamed of myself. But we've gone beyond shame. There's no such thing as shame anymore. People aren't embarrassed to take – to do these awful things."

Bouton is absolutely correct. When it

comes to fleeing our cities, some of the richest people in this country have shown a complete absence of shame. The question is whether we are going finally to stand up and impose our priorities onto them, instead of continually taking it on the chin.

Polls show consistent majorities don't want public funds spent on stadiums. That means the silent majority of sports fans oppose the stadium glut as well.

We sports fans need to make ourselves heard. We may love baseball. We may love football. We may bleed our team's colors on game day. But that doesn't mean we should have to pay a billionaire millions of dollars for the privilege to watch. **CT**

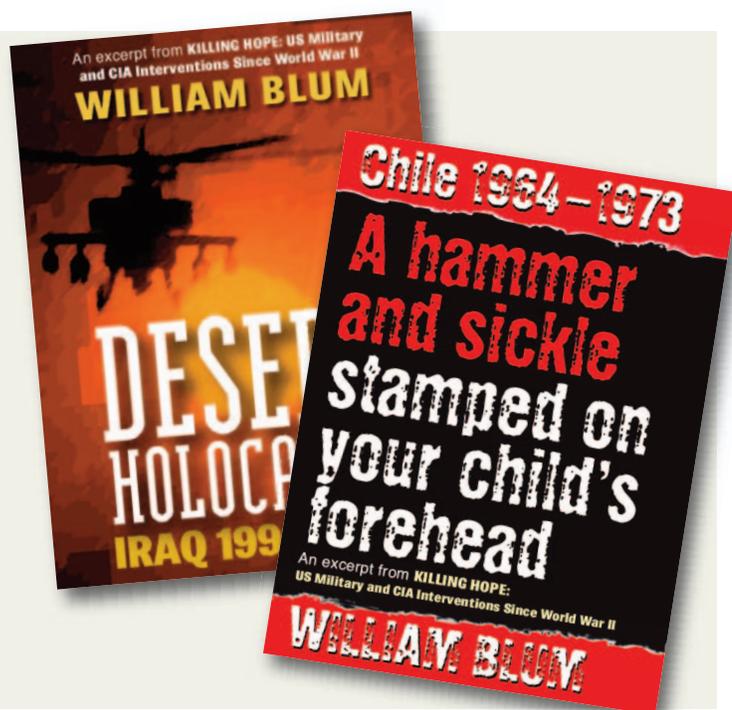
*Dave Zirin is the author of the new book **Welcome to the Terrordome: The Pain, Politics and Promise of Sports***

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THE MIDDLE EAST: A TRAP FOR FOOLS

BY URI AVNERY

In a classical American western, the difference is as glaring as the mid-day sun in Colorado: there are Good Guys and Bad Guys. The good ones are the settlers, who are making the prairie bloom. The bad ones are the Indians, who are blood-thirsty savages. The ultimate hero is the cowboy, tough, humane, with a big revolver or two, ready to defend himself at all times.

George Bush, who grew up on this myth, sticks to it even now, when he is the leader of the world's only superpower. Recently he presented the world with an up-to-date western.

In this western – or, rather, middle eastern – there are also Good Guys and Bad Guys. The good ones are the “moderates”, who are the allies of the US in the Middle East – Israel, Mahmoud Abbas and the pro-American Arab regimes. The bad ones are Hamas, Hizbullah, Iran, Syria and al-Qaeda.

It is a simple script. So simple, indeed, that an 8-year-old can understand it. The conclusions are also simple: the good guys have to be

supported, the bad guys have to bite the dust. At the end, the hero – George himself – will ride off into the sunset on his noble steed, while the music reaches a crescendo.

The classical western, of course, does not show us the heroic pioneers stealing the land from the Indians. Or the United States Cavalry attacking the camps of the Indians, burning down the tents and killing their inhabitants, men, women and children. How the US government, after signing formal treaties with the Indian nations, breaks them one after another. And how it drives the remnants into desolate regions, long before the term “ethnic cleansing” was first used.

Denial runs through the classical western like a purple thread, as it does through this speech of Bush's. This finds its main expression in a simple fact: the occupation is hardly mentioned at all.

In the Palestinian community, for example, there is a struggle between the “moderates” and the “extremists”. The extremists are killers. Why are they killers? There is no why. They are killers

The classical western, of course, does not show us the heroic pioneers stealing the land from the Indians

GOOD GUYS?

In many classical westerns there appears a crook selling a patent medicine to heal all ills: headaches and hemorrhoids, tuberculosis and syphilis. George Bush has his own patent medicine, which appears in the speech again and again

because they are killers. It's in their nature. They were just born that way. The moderates are moderates because they are moderates. Some people are just born good.

So the whole problem is a Palestinian problem. They must decide. They must choose between moderates and extremists. If they choose the moderates, they will get everything they can imagine: colorful glass beads and gallons of whisky. If they choose the extremists, their end will be bitter.

The Jewish Israelis do not have to choose between good and bad. Why? Simply because there are no Bad Guys among them. They are just good. They must help the good Palestinians. "Release" the Palestinian tax moneys and give them to "Prime Minister (Salem) Fayad". Not to the Palestinian government, but to one specific named person, the darling of Bush.

What else is required from the Israelis? They must understand that their "future lies in developing areas like the Negev and Galilee – not in continuing occupation of the West Bank". (That's the only time the occupation is mentioned at all.) They should remove unauthorized outposts and end settlement expansion. Also, they may "find other practical ways to reduce their footprint (in the West Bank) without reducing their security". Meaning: the occupation can continue, but it would be nice if we take some steps to make it less visible.

A long time ago, the United States viewed all settlements as illegal. When the Israeli government continued to expand them, James Baker, the Secretary

of State under Bush the father, imposed financial sanctions upon Israel. Bush the son at first demanded that all settlements established after January 2001 should be dismantled. Later he withdrew all opposition to the settlement blocs ("centers of population"). In the "Road Map" he decreed that Israel must immediately freeze the enlargement of the settlements. Now he is satisfied with a sanctimonious request to "remove unauthorized outposts" (with no article) – that's to say, some of those put up without the official authorization of the Israeli government itself. All this without "or else" or any mention of sanctions.

In the last few years, only one such outpost, Amona, has been dismantled, and this week Ehud Olmert decided to pardon all the fanatics accused of attacking the police during that event. The Israeli government knows that Bush is only paying lip service, and does not take him seriously.

In many classical westerns there appears a crook selling a patent medicine to heal all ills: headaches and hemorrhoids, tuberculosis and syphilis. George Bush has his own patent medicine, which appears in the speech again and again. It will heal all diseases and ensure the final victory of the Sons of Light over the Sons of Darkness.

The label on the bottle says "Building Palestinian Institutions".

How come we didn't think of this until now? Why did we go chasing off after all kinds of solutions, and did not find this one, so simple, lying in front of us for all to see?

It is an egg of Columbus, with a whiff

of Alexander the Great's sword cutting the Gordian knot. The Palestinians have no institutions. The two good people, "President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayad...are striving to build the institutions of a modern democracy." This means: "security services...ministries that deliver services without corruption...steps that unleash the natural enterprise of the Palestinian people...the rule of law..."

All this under occupation, behind roadblocks, walls and fences, while the main roads are barred to Palestinians, while the West Bank is chopped into pieces and cut off from the rest of the world. By the way, in this matter Bush has another patent medicine: all Palestinian exports will in future go through Jordan and Egypt, not Israel.

Sent his poodle

In order to realize the vision of "building Palestinian institutions", Bush is sending along his poodle. According to Bush, the sole task of Tony Blair is indeed this: "to coordinate international efforts to help the Palestinians establish the institutions of a strong and lasting free society." (Like which example? Egypt? Saudi Arabia? Jordan? Pakistan? Morocco? Or perhaps even Iraq?)

Let's hope no one is rude enough to mention the fact that the Palestinians held democratic elections for their Parliament, not so long ago, under the strict supervision of ex-President Jimmy Carter. As far as Bush is concerned, that just did not happen, since the majority of the people voted for Hamas. Therefore, Bush mentions only the elections held before that, when Mahmoud Ab-

bas was elected president, practically without opposition. Everything else has been wiped off the slate.

So this is the up-to-date vision: "democratic Palestinian institutions" will be in place, free of corruption (as in the US and Israel), and "capable security forces" will be functioning, and Hamas will be eliminated, and the armed factions will be dismantled, and all attacks on Israel will be stopped, and the security of Israel ensured, and the incitement against Israel ended, and everybody will recognize Israel's right to exist as "a Jewish state and a homeland for the Jewish people", and all the agreements that were signed in the past will be accepted – then "we can soon begin serious negotiations towards the creation of a Palestinian state." Wow!

What a wonderful sentence! "Soon" – without a timetable. "Serious negotiations" – without fixing a date for their conclusion. "A Palestinian state" (again, without the definite article, which Bush seems to detest) – without specific borders. But a hint is given: "mutually agreed borders reflecting previous lines and current realities, and mutually agreed adjustments." Meaning: the settlement blocs and much else will be annexed by Israel.

It seems as if the speech writers, after finishing the product, noticed that it was pitifully devoid of content. Nothing new, nothing that could cause a self-respecting newspaper to give it a headline.

I imagine the media advisor saying: "Mister President, we must add something that will look new." Thus the "international meeting" was born.

According to Bush, the sole task of Tony Blair is indeed this: "to coordinate international efforts to help the Palestinians establish the institutions of a strong and lasting free society"

GOOD GUYS?

We, the small group of Israelis who raised the banner of the "two-state solution" more than fifty years ago, now have to endure George Bush turning it into a rag to cover his nakedness

Uri Avnery is an Irgun veteran turned Israeli peace activist

"So I will call together an international meeting this fall of representatives from nations that support a two-state solution, reject violence, recognize Israel's right to exist, and commit to all previous agreements between the parties. The key participants in this meeting will be the Israelis, the Palestinians, and their neighbors in the region. Secretary Rice will chair the meeting."

Wonderful. A meeting which has no date yet, but has a season of the year. And for which no location has yet been fixed. And no list of participants. And no planned conclusions, except the general statement: "She (Condoleezza) and her counterparts will review the progress that has been made towards building Palestinian institutions. They will look for innovative and effective ways to support further reform. And they will provide diplomatic support for the parties in their bilateral discussions and negotiations, so that we can move forward on a successful path to a Palestinian state." The meeting will not review the progress made towards the removal of the outposts, for example.

It is not by accident that Bush omitted to identify the governments he intends to invite. Clearly, he will try to fulfill one of the most cherished dreams of Olmert: to meet publicly with a top representative of Saudi Arabia. For Olmert this would be an immense achievement: an official meeting with the most important Arab country which has no peace agreement with Israel. A meeting for which he will not have to pay any price. A free lunch.

It is dubious whether this wish will be fulfilled. The Saudis are very cau-

tious. They do not want to quarrel with any party in the Region – not with Syria (which will not be invited, though it is a "neighbor" of the Israelis and the Palestinians) and not with Hamas. Unlike Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, Saudi Arabia cannot be bribed with money. It has enough of its own.

The final objective is a "Palestinian state", the "two-state solution". That is a far-far-off aim. Not for nothing is it called a "political horizon", since a horizon, as is well-known, recedes in the distance as one tries to approach it.

In his poem "If", Rudyard Kipling describes all the tests an Englishman has to endure in order to be considered a "man". One of them is: "If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken / Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools..."

We, the small group of Israelis who raised the banner of the "two-state solution" more than fifty years ago, now have to endure George Bush turning it into a rag to cover his nakedness. In his mouth, it is an empty, deceitful and mendacious slogan. Only a fool will fall into this trap.

As Chaim Weizmann, the prominent Zionist leader and first president of Israel, once said: "No state is given to a people on a silver platter." The Palestinians, too, will not get their state without struggle, not as baksheesh from Bush nor as a "gesture" from Olmert. Nations achieve their freedom by political or military struggle. Every struggle, violent or non-violent, is a matter of power. And power means first of all: Unity. **CT**

PALESTINE AT THE CROSSROADS

BY RONNIE KASRILS

The outbreak of fratricidal violence between armed factions of Hamas and Fatah in the Gaza Strip in June, 2007, which has spelt the end of the short-lived Government of National Unity, was not unexpected. The rivalry between these factions degenerated into spasmodic clashes following the victory of Hamas in the Legislative Elections of January 2006. Hamas won 74 seats and Fatah 45 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council. This effectively created two rival centres of power with Fatah's candidate, Mahmoud Abbas, having been elected President of the Palestine Authority in 2005.

Many believed the election defeat in 2006 was a vote against the perceived corruption of Fatah leaders and officials. Many Palestinians, however, voted for Hamas because of its greater militancy in refusing to bow to Israeli coercion.

USA and Israeli reaction following these results, aimed to isolate the Hamas-led Government, and create conditions for failure. Palestinian customs revenue was withheld by Israel

while the EU and USA implemented punitive financial and economic measures. Israel continued military incursions into the Gaza and West Bank killing civilians, demolishing homes, arresting activists and 43 Hamas members of the legislative council, including ten ministers, the deputy prime minister and parliamentary speaker.

The Palestinian people, suffering under 40 years of Israeli military occupation and deteriorating humanitarian conditions were collectively punished for exercising their democratic vote.

It has been widely reported that the USA, Israel and Egypt have supplied factions of Fatah with arms and money in order to topple Hamas. The results are now clear for everyone to see. This constitutes a most serious setback when unity of all patriotic forces is so indispensable. Palestine's destiny is at the cross-roads.

The main responsibility for this disaster lies with the USA, EU and obviously Israel. Instead of fostering division and disunity they should have been following President Mbeki's advice of 'ending all measures intended to isolate the

The Palestinian people, suffering under 40 years of Israeli military occupation and deteriorating humanitarian conditions were collectively punished for exercising their democratic vote

APARTHEID STATES

It sounds all too familiar as a vision the colonisers had in South Africa and elsewhere; giving rise to racism, apartheid and a total onslaught on those who stand in the way, whether blacks or Arabs or American red Indians

Palestine Authority,' release funds, reduce misery, and 'create a climate conducive to peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.'

He likened the factional violence to South Africa's 'black on black' violence well known pre-1994, and linked to old order apartheid security elements. This brings to mind that awful aim of Israel's General Eytan and his 'drugged cockroaches in a corked bottle' phraseology which spelt out Israel's war of attrition – the objective of which has been to pit Palestinian inmate against inmate in sealed Bantustan-style prisons.

Understanding the cause

To understand these developments we need to consider the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This stems from the aims of the Zionist project from its founding in 1897 – its belief in a perpetual anti-Semitism that requires that Jewish people around the world (a faith group) should have an exclusive ethnic national home of their own. They evoked the biblical narrative to proclaim Palestine as the promised land reserved exclusively for God's 'chosen people' and their civilizing mission. It sounds all too familiar as a vision the colonisers had in South Africa and elsewhere; giving rise to racism, apartheid and a total onslaught on those who stand in the way, whether blacks or Arabs or American red Indians. Many Jews do not agree with this Zionist world view, and declare that being anti-Zionism and critical of Israel does not equate with anti-semitism.

Far from being a land without people, as Zionist propaganda falsely proclaimed, to attract and justify colonial settlement, the fact was that an indigenous people lived there, developed agriculture and towns since the Canaanite Kingdom 5,500 years ago as illustrated in the Biblical narrative, archeological findings and scientific research. They mixed, intermarried, many converted to Christianity and subsequently to Islam with the arrival of Arabs in the 7th Century. Most Jews had been expelled by the Romans but looked to Jerusalem, as did the other faith groups, as a spiritual but not a geographic home.

At the time of the 1947 UN Partition Plan, designed without consulting the Palestinians, the Zionists initially accepted the 56% of Mandate Palestine on offer. From such a springboard they launched a vicious campaign of massacres, terror and ethnic cleansing in which 750,000 of 1,250,000 Palestinians in 1948 were summarily dispossessed of their land and expelled. By 1949, Israel had expanded its land grab to 78% of historic Palestine.

This made way for the establishment of an exclusivist Jewish frontier state – indeed a racist supremacist state. During the 1967 War, Israel finally gained control though military occupation of the remaining 22% of what was historic Palestine and seized the Golan Heights from Syria. The Sinai Peninsula was also occupied but returned to Egypt following the 1973 October war.

Those Palestinians who managed to remain within Israel's 1948 borders live as discriminated citizens in a virtual

apartheid-type existence. So impressed was Dr. Verwoerd, that he stated admirably in 1961: 'The Jews took Israel from the Arabs after the Arabs had lived there for a thousand years. Israel like South Africa is an apartheid state.'

Israel succeeds in ignoring various United Nations resolutions such as withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders, Right of Return of the refugees, and cessation of its illegal settlement project because it functions under the umbrella of American protection and acts as its imperialist base in the oil-rich Middle East. It has gained added impetus in its aggression (eg. last year's Lebanon invasion), for its role in the 'frontline of the Global War on Terror'. The USA continues to provide billions of dollars in economic and military aid.

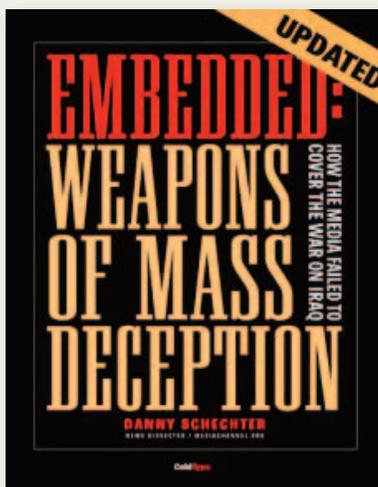
It is imperative that all progressive forces need to deepen their solidarity with the Palestinians in their hour of need and particularly in this fortieth year of Israeli occupation and almost sixtieth year of the 1948 ethnic cleans-

ing. The world must unite against all remaining forms of occupation, colonialism and apartheid.

We must continuously encourage the Palestinians to unite in order to obtain an independent and sovereign state free of the clutches and influence of others. The strategy of divide-and-rule must be defeated. It is worth while to be reminded of the emphasis another people placed on unity in these words of Ho Chi Minh: 'Victory comes from the unity of the people; the greater the unity the greater the victory.' We South Africans concur. **CT**

*Ronnie Kasrils is South Africa's Minister of Intelligence. Hee is the author of **Armed and dabgerous**, the story of the clandestine cloak-and-dagger side of the South African liberation struggle. This essay was published in Umsebenzi, the magazine of the South African Communist party. (A longer version was published in the ANC's theoretical journal Umrabulo – at <http://www.anc.org.za>)*

The world must unite against all remaining forms of occupation, colonialism and apartheid



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DROWNING IN A TIDE OF ECO-JUNK

BY GEORGE MONBIOT

Our primary political struggle must be to prevent the break-up of the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets. The only question now worth asking about climate change is how

It wasn't meant to happen like this. The climate scientists told us that our winters would become wetter and our summers drier. So I can't claim that recent flooding in England were caused by climate change, or are even consistent with the models. But, like the ghost of Christmas yet to come, they offer us a glimpse of the possible winter world we'll inhabit if we don't sort ourselves out.

With rising sea levels and more winter rain (and remember that when the trees are dormant and the soils saturated there are fewer places for the rain to go) all it will take is a freshwater flood to coincide with a high spring tide and we have a formula for full-blown disaster. We have now seen how localised floods can wipe out essential services and overwhelm emergency workers. But July's events don't even register beside some of the predictions now circulating in learned journals⁽¹⁾. Our primary political struggle must be to prevent the break-up of the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets. The only question now worth asking about

climate change is how.

Dozens of new books appear to provide an answer: we can save the world by embracing "better, greener lifestyles". For example, the Guardian published an extract of the new book by Sheherazade Goldsmith, who is married to the very rich environmentalist Zac, in which she teaches us "to live within nature's limits"⁽²⁾. It's easy: just make your own bread, butter, cheese, jam, chutneys and pickles, keep a milking cow, a few pigs, goats, geese, ducks, chickens, beehives, gardens and orchards. Well, what are you waiting for?

Her book also contains plenty of useful advice, and she comes across as modest, sincere and well-informed. But of lobbying for political change, there is not a word: you can save the planet in your own kitchen – if you have endless time and plenty of land. When I was reading it on the train, another passenger asked me if he could take a look. He flicked through it for a moment then summed up the problem in seven words. "This is for people who don't work."

None of this would matter, if the Guardian hadn't put her photo on the masthead last week, with the promise that she could teach us to go green. The media's obsession with beauty, wealth and fame blights every issue it touches, but none more so than green politics. There is an inherent conflict between the aspirational lifestyle journalism which makes readers feel better about themselves and sells country kitchens and the central demand of environmentalism: that we should consume less. "None of these changes represents a sacrifice", Sheherazade tells us. "Being more conscientious isn't about giving up things." But it is: if, like her, you own more than one home when others have none.

Uncomfortable as this is for both the media and its advertisers, giving things up is an essential component of going green. A section on ethical shopping in Goldsmith's book advises us to buy organic, buy seasonal, buy local, buy sustainable, buy recycled. But it says nothing about buying less.

Parallel markets

Green consumerism is becoming a pox on the planet. If it merely swapped the damaging goods we buy for less damaging ones, I would champion it. But two parallel markets are developing: one for unethical products and one for ethical products, and the expansion of the second does little to hinder the growth of the first. I am now drowning in a tide of ecojunk. Over the past six months, our coatpegs have become clogged with organic cotton bags, which – filled with packets of ginseng

tea and jojoba oil bath salts – are now the obligatory gift at every environmental event. I have several lifetimes' supply of ballpoint pens made with recycled paper and about half a dozen miniature solar chargers for gadgets I don't possess.

Last week the Telegraph told its readers not to abandon the fight to save the planet. "There is still hope, and the middle classes, with their composters and eco-gadgets, will be leading the way."⁽³⁾ It made some helpful suggestions, such as a "hydrogen-powered model racing car", which, for £74.99, comes with a solar panel, an electrolyser and a fuel cell⁽⁴⁾. God knows what rare metals and energy-intensive processes were used to manufacture it. In the name of environmental consciousness, we have simply created new opportunities for surplus capital.

Ethical shopping is in danger of becoming another signifier of social status. I have met people who have bought solar panels and mini-wind turbines before they have insulated their lofts: partly because they love gadgets, but partly, I suspect, because everyone can then see how conscientious (and how rich) they are. We are often told that buying such products encourages us to think more widely about environmental challenges, but it is just as likely to be depoliticising. Green consumerism is another form of atomisation – a substitute for collective action. No political challenge can be met by shopping.

The middle classes rebrand their lives, congratulate themselves on going green, and carry on buying and flying as much as ever before. It is easy to picture

I have met people who have bought solar panels and mini-wind turbines before they have insulated their lofts: partly because they love gadgets, but partly, I suspect, because everyone can then see how conscientious (and how rich) they are

ETHICAL SHOPPING

Against the shiny new world of organic aspirations you are forced to raise drab and boringly equitable restraints: carbon rationing, contraction and convergence, tougher building regulations, coach lanes on motorways

a situation in which the whole world religiously buys green products, and its carbon emissions continue to soar.

It is true, as the green consumerists argue, that most people find aspirational green living more attractive than dour puritanism. But it can also be alienating. I have met plenty of farm labourers and tenants who are desperate to start a small farm of their own, but have been excluded by what they call “horsiculture”: small parcels of agricultural land being bought up for pony paddocks and hobby farms. In places like Surrey and the New Forest, farmland is now fetching up to £30,000 an acre as city bonuses are used to buy organic lifestyles⁽⁵⁾. When the new owners dress up as milkmaids then tell the excluded how to make butter, they run the risk of turning environmentalism into the whim of the elite.

Party pooper

Challenge the new green consumerism and you become a prig and a party pooper, the spectre at the feast, the ghost of Christmas yet to come. Against the shiny new world of organic aspirations you are forced to raise drab and boringly equitable restraints: carbon rationing, contraction and convergence, tougher building regulations, coach lanes on motorways. No colour supplement will carry an article about that. No rock star could live comfortably within his carbon ration.

But such measures, and the long hard political battle required to bring them about, are, unfortunately, required to prevent the catastrophe these floods

predict, rather than merely to play at being green. Only when they have been applied does green consumerism become a substitute for current spending rather than a supplement to it. They are harder to sell, not least because they cannot be bought from mail order catalogues.

Hard political choices will have to be made, and the economic elite and its spending habits must be challenged, rather than groomed and flattered. The multi-millionaires who have embraced the green agenda might suddenly discover another urgent cause. **CT**

*George Monbiot has been awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Essex and an honorary fellowship by Cardiff University. The paperback edition of his latest book, **Heat**, has recently been published.*

NOTES:

1. Eg James Hansen et al, 2007. Climate Change and Trace Gases. Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society – A. Vol 365, pp 1925-1954. doi: 10.1098/rsta.2007.2052. http://pubs.giss.nasa.gov/docs/2007/2007_Hansen_etal_2.pdf

2. Sheherazade Goldsmith (Editor in chief), 2007. A Slice of Organic Life. Doring Kindersley, London.

3. Sarah Lonsdale, 19th July 2007. Take the online test to find out your footprint. Daily Telegraph.

4. See <http://shop.tangogroup.net/PDF/H-Racer%20002.pdf>

5. See <http://www.lawsonfairbank.co.uk/pony-paddocks.asp>

WHY THE ANTI-IMMIGRATION DEBATE IS SCARY

BY JEAN PFAELZER

When we think of ethnic cleansing, we think Darfur, Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia. Maybe it's time we started thinking Fortuna, California; Hazleton, Pennsylvania; Cherokee, Georgia; and Whitewater, Wisconsin.

Once, 1.5 million Native American Indians lived here; by 1900 250,000 had survived the roundups, slaughter, and wars of extermination.

Between the Gold Rush and the turn of the 20th century, in town after town, Chinese miners and merchants, lumberjacks and field workers, prostitutes and merchants' wives, were gathered up at gunpoint in more than 200 towns. The first Chinese Americans were forced onto steam ships, marched out of town, or driven out, sometimes along the railroad tracks they had built.

In Tacoma, Washington, at 9am on November 3, 1885, the mayor ordered all the steam whistles at the foundries to blow, to notify vigilantes to begin the rout of the town's Chinatowns. By mid-afternoon Tacoma's Chinese were forced from town on a nine mile trek in the mud and rain, never to return.

In Eureka, California, the rout of 1885 took less than a night, as the Chinese packed whatever belongings they could. The Chinese, many of whom had lived in Eureka for 20 years, were held under gunpoint at a warehouse on the docks, loaded onto two steam ships and sent to San Francisco.

In the mountain town of Truckee, it took ten weeks to starve out the Chinese, when the editor of the local newspaper shamed merchants, timber barons, and women who ran boarding-houses, ordering the town to neither buy from, rent to, hire, or honor wood cutting contracts with early Chinese Americans. When most of the Chinese had left, the "anti-Coolie" League and the vigilante committees (like the "601"—six feet under, zero trial, one bullet) circled the white part of town with fire wagons, invited the ladies to watch, and burned Chinatown to the ground. Two Chinese men died, refusing to leave their homes.

During the Great Depression, two million Mexicans and Mexican Americans were deported under Herbert Hoover's Mexican Reparation cam-

When most of the Chinese had left, the "anti-Coolie" League and the vigilante committees (like the "601" — six feet under, zero trial, one bullet) circled the white part of town with fire wagons, invited the ladies to watch, and burned Chinatown to the ground

ETHNIC CLEANSING

Evicted from their housing, American citizens, legal immigrants, and illegal immigrants are in flight from frightened landlords who have become the storm police

paign. Sixty percent of the deportees were children, born in America. The rest were mostly US citizens who had lived on this land for generations.

A new purge

Now, from Fortuna, California, to Trenton, New Jersey, immigration officials are sweeping through towns without warrants, seizing Latinos from homes and factories, leaving children abandoned at schools and day care centers.

And now, too, a simple housing code, traveling the Internet, is purging thousands of Latinos, suddenly homeless and on the run. More than 80 towns have enacted the canned language of “The Illegal Immigration Relief Act” and banned any landlord from renting to an undocumented worker.

Evicted from their housing, American citizens, legal immigrants, and illegal immigrants are in flight from frightened landlords who have become the storm police.

In Hazelton, PA, landlords face arrest or fines of \$250 per day. In Riverside, NJ, the fines grow to \$1,000 per day. In Cherokee, GA, even after an eviction, landlords must prove that their former tenants have left the county before they can again collect rents.

In just one year this housing code has spread from historic Sandwich on Cape Cod, (whose web site invites you to “experience life the way it used to be”), south to Riverside, NJ, Landis, NC, and Beaufort, SC, to Avon Park, FL, Cherokee, GA, and Valley Park, MO. The code travels to Farmer’s Branch, Texas, up through Carpentersville, IL, Bloomington, MN, and Arcadia WI,

where 140 Latinos once lived in a little town of 2,300 people. Then it jumps westward to Escondido, California.

As civil rights groups try to enjoy the codes, others spring up. Only the federal government can deport people, but small towns can drive them out of town.

In July, as soft wild dogwoods bloomed along the East Coast, I read a Christmas story, a tale of Christmas just past. It was called the Ordinance 2006-18.

‘Twas the week before Christmas 2006 when Hazleton banned Santa Claus. Santa was about to climb down the chimney without a green card. Although his biology has always been a bit unclear, Santa was an “alien” of the illegal sort who employed thousands of alien elves – “unfair foreign competition” to American toymakers.

Making a list and checking it twice? For the feds: “identity data provided by the property owner.” Data provided by a landlord? Based on what kind of verification?

And why?

Hazleton’s mayor told *Sixty Minutes* about a 70% rise in violent crime since Latinos came to town in 2001 (the correct number is 20 of 8,500 crimes). Farmers Branch, Texas, said the code would prevent terrorist attacks by purging its Latinos. One third of towns that passed the code are in unemployed areas of Pennsylvania – railroad towns that once sold anthracite coal, steel tubes, and carpets. Now they export Latinos.

These gentlemen prefer blondes. The mayor wants Hazleton to remain 94.7%

white. Last month, in front of a burning cross, the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party, recently defunct, announced to ABC Evening News that since they began assaulting, torching, and “bleaching” Latinos, membership has risen 40%.

“Pack your bags...It’s over, go home,” shouted local Minutemen after Escondido’s city council voted 3-2 for the Hazleton code. With nearly half the town born outside the US, anyone who looked or sounded “foreign” stood to be evicted. In Altoona, which is 99.9 % white, a city councilman declared “We just want to stay ahead of the curve.”

The local U.S. Attorneys (those that still have their jobs), the Department of Homeland Security, and Attorney General Gonzales are not stopping the unconstitutional enforcement of this unconstitutional code.

But immigrant rights groups are trying to stop the spread of this internet virus. They took Hazelton to federal court, arguing that the code violates immigrants’ rights to due process, fair housing codes and legal leases. The judge temporarily stopped the town which awaits a final ruling. Sixty eight percent of the voters in Farmer’s Branch voted to support its code in May, but in June the Mexican American Legal Defense fund managed to get that vote overturned. Another break may be protections in the Hate Crimes Bill, passed by the House, moving through the Senate but facing a presidential veto.

Still, as Hazelton’s mayor bragged, the code endures, even though his

struggling town faces \$2 million in fines and legal costs

Yet across small town America, landlords face empty apartments and vacant trailer parks. Businesses are shutting down. One-third of Riverside’s immigrant population has moved away. Twenty-five percent of undocumented population has children who are US citizens, but unable to fend for themselves, these kids are losing their constitutional right to live here. This code, perhaps deliberately, violates what children promise: permanence, stability, and future generations.

Latinos often say, “mi casa es su casa.” By contrast, this code says “leave.” **CT**

*Ms. Pfaelzer is professor of English and American Studies at the University of Delaware, and director of the University Honors Writing Fellowship Program. Her new book is , **Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans.***

This article originally appeared on the website of George Mason University’s History News Network – <http://HNN.us>

Update: *The Hazleton law was struck down by US District Judge James Munley, on July 26. “Federal law prohibits Hazleton from enforcing any of the provisions of its ordinances,” said the judge in his 206-page opinion.*

In response, Hazleton Mayor Lou Barletta said the city would likely appeal the decision.

In Altoona, which is 99.9 % white, a city councilman declared “We just want to stay ahead of the curve”

OPERATING ON MICHAEL MOORE

BY JAMES CLAY FULLER

Perhaps they think he should have paraphrased their idiocies to make them look less foolish, rather than letting them speak for themselves

The reviews of Michael Moore's movie "Sicko" have been fascinating, the editorial and op-ed commentaries on the film even more so.

Apparently there is a rule in corporate journalism that every mention of Moore and his films, or Moore without his films, must contain at least two snide observations about his biases, his ever so naughty attacks on rich and powerful but somehow – in the eyes of the corporate journalists – defenseless people such as the chairman of General Motors, and, if you can slide it in, Moore's physical appearance.

Four snide comments, two or three misrepresentations and an outright lie or two about Moore or the films is better, I gather.

The "Sicko" reviews and commentary are running pretty much true to form, but, interestingly enough, after all the snideness is done, every writer I've come across has had to admit that it is a good film, and that, sonofagun, the United States health care "system" truly is a bloody awful mess, pretty much as Moore says.

Of course, I haven't read the comments in the insurance and pharmaceutical industries publications, though if I run across one I might. The level of unintentional humor should be high.

Speaking of humor: "Sicko" is full of laughs. They're mostly the kind that burst from you when confronted by a lie so outrageous and obvious that the absurdity is overwhelming, but they're real laughs. They get little or no mention in most of the reviews and op-ed pieces I've seen.

Moore knew we'd laugh at the obvious self-serving absurdities of the super rich guys, and I guess that's one of the ways his biases show in the eyes of the corporate press commentators. Perhaps they think he should have paraphrased their idiocies to make them look less foolish, rather than letting them speak for themselves.

A July 5 op-ed piece in the New York Times by Philip M. Boffey is quite representative of the 10 or 12 I've read. He calls the new film "unashamedly one-sided, superficial, overstated and occasionally suspect in its details," before admitting, in the same sentence, that on

the “big picture” of the failure of our health care system “Mr. Moore is right.”

Boffey, who writes editorials on health care for the Times, does not elucidate on his claims that the case Moore builds against our health care “providers” is overstated or “suspect in its details.”

I’ll give him this, however. “Sicko” is one sided. Moore doesn’t spend any time defending our broken down health care system, which leaves 45 million Americans without health insurance, which is ranked 37th among nations in quality of care and which overcharges us – often to the point of bankruptcy – and makes deliberate decisions to deny health care to individuals; and, as Moore clearly demonstrates, allows people to die needlessly for the sake of protecting overblown profits.

Oops. Was that one-sided, too?

As someone who spent about 45 years in newsrooms, I very strongly suspect Boffey is somebody who is too close to some of his sources. But again I digress.

He says it is “hard to know how true” are the stories Moore puts on film – stories such as that of a young woman who was retroactively denied health care insurance because of a minor yeast infection that was cured years before she applied for and got the insurance that was taken away when she needed it.

Well, I’ll tell him. There is not the slightest reason to doubt any of the individual stories Moore has used in the film.

First, the director is too smart to use a phony story, and risk getting caught,

when there are, as he says, countless such stories. When he put out a request on his web site for personal stories of being screwed by health insurers, Moore was inundated. Within days, he had more than 20,000 such stories.

Second, I can recount four or five such tales from the years I was the primary caregiver for my aged mother, and another dozen from among my acquaintances. This moment, I am deeply concerned about a friend who is in despair because of the years-long battle he has had to wage with his health insurer in order to get care he must have to live, and the debt that has piled up as a result.

Anyone who hasn’t experienced such a situation, or doesn’t at least know someone who has had to fight for his or her life in such a way, must live in another country.

Both sides of the story?

My favorite criticism of Moore, however, is one employed by at least half the commentaries I’ve read: That the director didn’t give the insurance and pharmaceutical industries time in his film to tell their side of the story.

That, folks, is grandly absurd.

Moore is laying out facts. The industries that profit so hugely from our illnesses spend hundreds of millions of dollars on advertising, public relations and lobbying to “tell their side of the story.” One month’s expenditure by the insurance industry for those activities substantially exceeds the cost of making “Sicko.” And Moore doesn’t own a single member of Congress; they’ve bought dozens. (The insurance indus-

This moment, I am deeply concerned about a friend who is in despair because of the years-long battle he has had to wage with his health insurer in order to get the care he must have to live, and the debt that has piled up as a result

Benn notes, as other good people often do, that "if we have the money to kill (in war), we've got the money to help people"

try's almost \$400,000 in contributions to Hillary Clinton's campaign purse alone would have covered a substantial portion of the cost of making the film.)

Let them tell their lies on their own dime.

Boffey, like almost all of the others whose "Sicko" commentaries I've read, also complains that Moore is to unfailingly kind to the health care systems of other countries. (The film has episodes shot in England, Canada, France, Italy and Cuba.)

Months'-long waits

What makes Boffey and one or two of the others most annoyed is that Moore doesn't mention "the months-long waits to see specialists in Canada and Britain..."

Well, actually, it does come up in the Canadian interviews, and the Canadians snort in disbelief when the claim is made, though they admit that there sometimes is a wait of a few weeks to see a specialist for an elective or entirely non-threatening treatment or condition.

And the critics fail to note that under our system of money-vacuuming HMOs and profit-building insurance companies, the waits to see specialists in this country often are every bit as long, and longer, than those the defenders of our system claim are the rule in other countries.

The very large network of clinics through which I get my health care and which has close ties to the HMO that provides my health coverage, has made a deliberate decision to limit the number of specialists of several types in its

network in order to maximize its non-profits. (Some specialties, such as cardiology are big revenue producers and so not tightly limited.) When I've complained about long waits to see a specialist, several people within the organization, including four doctors, have confirmed my suspicion on that issue.

Because of a couple of chronic conditions – not life threatening, at least for now, though they have that potential – I must occasionally see specialists in three different areas of medicine. The last two times I had such a need, it took three to four months from the time I placed the first call seeking an appointment until I actually got into the doc's offices. In another case, it was almost five months.

I am not alone in that, despite all the phony denials the HMOs and clinics might produce. Give me 24 hours and I assure you I can provide the names of at least 20 others who have had the same experience. (And it could be 100 others or more if I put the word out on the 'net.)

All of the pieces I've read about "Sicko," have what I find to be a glaring omission. Not one mentions the comments by Tony Benn, a former member of Britain's Parliament. Yet Benn's statements probably are the most profound element of the film.

He notes, as other good people often do, that "if we have the money to kill (in war), we've got the money to help people."

But, more importantly, Benn tells Moore, that all of Europe and many other places have good health care systems while the United States lacks such

a basic service because in Europe and elsewhere, “the politicians are afraid of the people” when the people get angry and demand some action. In the United States, he observes, “the people are afraid of those in power” because they fear losing their jobs, fear being cut off from health care or other services if they speak up and make demands.

“How do you control people?” Benn asks, and he answers: “Through fear and debt.”

His point is that in the United States we have a great overabundance of both.

Having ignored Benn’s succinct analysis, some of the writers, and especially Boffey, state as fact that Americans would reject out of hand any attempt to create a government-run universal health care system.

They produce no facts to support the claim, so apparently they just “know” it.

If someone conducted a poll today, asking a section of Americans if they want “socialized medicine,” the results might seem to support the claim of Boffey and others.

But if the gutless Democrats went out and explained, clearly and often, how a government-run single payer system actually works, and what it really costs, and what the people of Canada, France, Britain, Germany and other countries really think of their health care systems, the ignorance-rooted suspicion could be reversed in a matter of months. And I believe that is

true even assuming the inevitable all-out ad and PR campaign by the insurance and pharmaceutical industries to protect their enormous profits.

(Does it occur to anyone that the profits they suck from our system, while we struggle for and often are refused decent health care, are truly enormous if the industries are willing and able to spend hundreds of millions of dollars a year to protect those profits?)

Every American I know is fed up with our present health care mess, and more and more are deeply angry.

Go see “Sicko.” It’s a marvelous film, it’s full of laughs and, yes, it will give an edge to your anger. Then do something useful with that anger. Members of Congress and state legislatures are just a phone call, a letter or an email away.

And don’t be conned by the less-than-half measures proposed by the present gaggle of corporation-serving presidential candidates. **CT**

James Clay Fuller, is a sort-of retired journalist who has worked in newspapers and magazines for more than 45 years. His day job for 30 years was at the Minneapolis StarTribune, where he was a business and economics reporter, features writer, and sometime music critic. He was nominated for Pulitzer Prizes in 1977 and 1992, and was the instigator and senior editor on a project that was nominated for a Pulitzer in 1997. His web site is jamesclayfuller.com

If someone conducted a poll today, asking a section of Americans if they want “socialized medicine,” the results might seem to support the claim of Boffey and others

NECONS, DEMCONS, THEOCONS, EXCONS AND FUTURE CONS

BY WILLIAM BLUM

Think of why you are opposed to the war. Is it not largely because of all the unspeakable suffering brought down upon the heads and souls of the poor people of Iraq by the American military? Hillary Clinton couldn't care less about that, literally

Who do you think said this on June 20? a) Rudy Giuliani; b) Hillary Clinton; c) Mitt Romney; or d) Barack Obama?

“The American military has done its job. Look what they accomplished. They got rid of Saddam Hussein. They gave the Iraqis a chance for free and fair elections. They gave the Iraqi government the chance to begin to demonstrate that it understood its responsibilities to make the hard political decisions necessary to give the people of Iraq a better future.

“So the American military has succeeded. It is the Iraqi government which has failed to make the tough decisions which are important for their own people.”^[1]

Right, it was the woman who wants to be president because ... because she wants to be president ... because she thinks it would be nice to be president ... no other reason, no burning cause, no heartfelt desire for basic change in American society or to make a better world ... she just thinks it would be

nice, even great, to be president. And keep the American Empire in business, its routine generating of horror and misery being no problem; she wouldn't want to be known as the president that hastened the decline of the empire.

And she spoke the above words at the “Take Back America” conference; she was speaking to liberals, committed liberal Democrats.

She didn't have to cater to them with any flag-waving pro-war rhetoric; they wanted to hear anti-war rhetoric (and she of course gave them a bit of that as well out of the other side of her mouth), so we can assume that this is how she really feels, if indeed the woman feels anything.

Think of why you are opposed to the war. Is it not largely because of all the unspeakable suffering brought down upon the heads and souls of the poor people of Iraq by the American military? Hillary Clinton couldn't care less about that, literally. She thinks the American military has “succeeded”. Has she ever unequivocally labeled the war “illegal” or “immoral”? I used to

think that Tony Blair was a member of the right wing or conservative wing of the British Labour Party. I finally realized one day that that was an incorrect description of his ideology. Blair is a conservative, a bloody Tory. How he wound up in the Labour Party is a matter I haven't studied.

Hillary Clinton, however, I've long known is a conservative; going back to at least the 1980s, when, while the wife of the Arkansas governor, she strongly supported the death squad torturers known as the Contras, who were the empire's proxy army in Nicaragua.^[2]

Now we hear from America's venerable conservative magazine, William Buckley's "National Review", an editorial by Bruce Bartlett, policy adviser to President Ronald Reagan; treasury official under President George H.W. Bush; a fellow at two of the leading conservative think-tanks, the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute; you get the picture.

Bartlett tells his readers that it's almost certain that the Democrats will win the White House in 2008. So what to do? Support the most conservative Democrat. He writes: "To right-wingers willing to look beneath what probably sounds to them like the same identical views of the Democratic candidates, it is pretty clear that Hillary Clinton is the most conservative."^[3]

We also hear from America's premier magazine for the corporate wealthy, "Fortune", whose recent cover features a picture of Clinton and the headline: "Business Loves Hillary".^[4]

Do those in love with the idea of a woman president care about such

things? Have they never heard of Margaret Thatcher, who tried her best to cripple the UK's marvelous National Health Service, amongst a hundred other reactionary policies?

Most of Clinton's supporters would love to see the end of the Iraqi daily horror and so they presumably will also ignore Ted Koppel, the newsman of impeccable establishment credentials, who reported recently that he was told by someone who had held a senior position at the Pentagon and occasionally briefs Hillary Clinton on Gulf area matters, that she expects US troops to still be in Iraq at the end of her first term and even at the end of her second term.^[5]

The eternal struggle between the good guys and the bad guys

The United States and its wholly owned subsidiary, NATO, regularly drop bombs on Afghanistan which kill varying amounts of terrorists (or "terrorists", also known as civilians, also known as women and children). They do this rather often, against people utterly defenseless against aerial attack. In the first half of this year, US/NATO forces killed more people than the Taliban and others opposed to the Western occupation did.^[6] This was immediately followed by a reported 133 additional bombing victims in the first week of July.^[7]

US/NATO spokespersons tell us that these unfortunate accidents happen because the enemy is deliberately putting civilians in harm's way to provoke a backlash against the foreign forces. We are told at times that the enemy had lo-

US/NATO spokespersons tell us that these unfortunate accidents happen because the enemy is deliberately putting civilians in harm's way to provoke a backlash against the foreign forces

Why are the Western forces building installations and/or concentrating troops near civilian areas, deliberately putting civilians in harm's way?

cated themselves in the same building as the victims, using them as “human shields”.^[8] Therefore, it would seem, the enemy somehow knows in advance that a particular building is about to be bombed and they rush a bunch of civilians to the spot before the bombs begin to fall. Or it's a place where civilians normally live and, finding out that the building is about to be bombed, the enemy rushes a group of their own people to the place so they can die with the civilians. Or, what appears to be much more likely, the enemy doesn't know of the bombing in advance, but then the civilians would have to always be there; i.e., they live there; they may even be the wives and children of the enemy. Is there no limit to the evil cleverness and the clever evilness of this foe?

Western officials also tell us that the enemy deliberately attacks from civilian areas, even hoping to draw fire to drive a wedge between average Afghans and international troops.^[9]

Presumably the insurgents are attacking nearby Western military installations or troop concentrations. This raises the question: Why are the Western forces building installations and/or concentrating troops near civilian areas, deliberately putting civilians in harm's way?

US/NATO military leaders argue that any comparison of casualties caused by Western forces and by the Taliban is fundamentally unfair because there is a clear moral distinction to be made between accidental deaths resulting from combat operations and deliberate killings of innocents by militants. “No [Western] soldier ever wakes

up in the morning with the intention of harming any Afghan citizen,” said Maj. John Thomas, a spokesman for the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force. “If that does inadvertently happen, it is deeply, deeply regretted.”^[10]

Is that not comforting language? Can any right-thinking, sensitive person fail to see who the good guys are?

During its many bombings from Vietnam to Iraq, Washington has repeatedly told the world that the resulting civilian deaths were accidental and very much “regretted”.

But if you go out and drop powerful bombs over a populated area, and then learn that there have been a number of “unintended” casualties, and then the next day drop more bombs and learn again that there were “unintended” casualties, and then the next day you bomb again ... at what point do you lose the right to say that the deaths were “unintended”?

During the US/NATO 78-day bombing of Serbia in 1999, which killed many civilians, a Belgrade office building – which housed political parties, TV and radio stations, 100 private companies, and more – was bombed. But before the missiles were fired into this building, NATO planners spelled out the risks: “Casualty Estimate 50-100 Government/Party employees. Unintended Civ Casualty Est: 250 – Apts in expected blast radius.”^[11]

The planners were saying that about 250 civilians living in nearby apartment buildings might be killed in the bombing, in addition to 50 to 100 government and political party employees, likewise innocent of any crime calling for execu-

tion. So what do we have here? We have grown men telling each other: We'll do A, and we think that B may well be the result. But even if B does in fact result, we're saying beforehand – as we'll insist afterward – that it was unintended.

It was actually worse than this. As I've detailed elsewhere, the main purpose of the Serbian bombings – admitted to by NATO officials – was to make life so difficult for the public that support of the government of Slobodan Milosevic would be undermined.^[12] This, in fact, is the classic definition of “terrorism”, as used by the FBI and the United Nations: The use or threat of violence against a civilian population to induce the government to change certain policies.

Another example of how “the enemy” can't be trusted to act as nice as god-fearing regular Americans ... “Defense officials said they believe at least 22 – and possibly as many as 50 – former Guantánamo detainees have returned to the battlefield to fight against the United States and its allies.”^[13] The Defense Department has at times used the possibility of this happening as an argument against releasing detainees or closing Guantánamo.

But is it imaginable, not to mention likely, that after three, four or five years in the hell on earth known as Guantánamo, even detainees not disposed to terrorist violence – and many of them were picked up for reasons having nothing to do with terrorist violence – left with a deep-seated hatred of their jailors and a desire for revenge?

Don't believe anything until it's been officially denied.

Those of you who've been reading my musings over the years know that the bombing of PanAm flight 103 in December 1988 over Lockerbie, Scotland, which took the lives of 270 people, has been a major interest of mine. When *The Black Book of The American Empire* is written someday there should be a mention of Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi, a Libyan who has spent the last six years in prison convicted of the Lockerbie bombing. I and many others, including a number in establishment legal positions, have been arguing for years that the evidence against Megrahi is very thin and unpersuasive. Now a court in Scotland has agreed and has ordered a new appeal for Megrahi. I and other so-called “conspiracy theorists” have been vindicated, although Megrahi is not yet free.

Briefly, the key international political facts are these: For well over a year after the bombing, the US and the UK insisted that Iran, Syria, and a Palestinian group had been behind the bombing, which was widely regarded as an act of revenge for the US shooting down an Iranian passenger plane over the Persian Gulf in July 1988, killing 290 people. (An act the US calls an accident, but which came about because of deliberate American intrusion into the Iran-Iraq war on the side of Iraq.)

Then the buildup to the US invasion of Iraq came along in 1990 (how quickly do nations change from allies to enemies on the empire's chessboard) and the support of Iran and Syria was desired for the operation. Suddenly, in Oc-

When The Black Book of The American Empire is written someday there should be a mention of Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi, a Libyan who has spent the last six years in prison charged with the Lockerbie bombing

When it comes to anything associated with the War on Terrorism, the UK and the US are not particularly noted for logic or justice. So what might be the reason they're doing, or allowing, "the right thing" for a change?

tober 1990, the US declared that it was Libya – the Arab state least supportive of the US build-up to the Gulf War and the sanctions imposed against Iraq – that was behind the bombing after all. Megrahi and another Libyan were fingered.^[14]

The Scottish Court's recent ruling, as logical and justified as it is, is still a great surprise. When it comes to anything associated with the War on Terrorism, the UK and the US are not particularly noted for logic or justice. So what might be the reason they're doing, or allowing, "the right thing" for a change? Could it be that Iran will now be charged with being the instigator and paymaster for the crime and that this will be used to hammer them into submission concerning nuclear power and weapons? Or justify an American attack?

But then of course the United States would have to explain why it falsely accused Libya and allowed, and pushed for, an innocent man to be sent to prison for life. A very interesting dilemma. It would be great entertainment to hear George W. Bush trying to explain that one. (Cheney would just refuse to discuss the matter, saying it's "classified". Or tell the questioner to go fuck himself.) The dilemma is further heightened by the fact that it was the administration of George Bush Senior which made the accusation against Libya. His secretary of defense at the time was a gentleman named Richard B. Cheney.

A marriage made in heaven

Former White House counsel Harriet

Miers once called George W. Bush the most brilliant man she has ever known.^[15] She's now no longer alone in her bizarre little padded cell. On June 10, during the president's visit to Albania – arguably the most backward country in all of Europe, today as well as when it was a Soviet satellite – the joyous townspeople of Fushe Kruje yelled "Bushie! Bushie!" and Albania's prime minister gushed over the "greatest and most distinguished guest we have ever had in all times."

This was reported by Washington Post columnist Eugene Robinson, and prompted a letter from a reader, which said in part: "Regarding Eugene Robinson's June 12 op-ed ... It was inevitable that somebody would sneer at the Albanian reception of President Bush ... [Robinson] patronizingly writing of 'a wonderful reverse-Borat moment'. ... U.S. support for Albania following the collapse of communism explains Albanian gratitude to the United States."^[16]

Ah yes, the wonderful collapse of communism and the even more wonderful birth of democracy, freedom, capitalism, and widespread poverty and deprivation in the former Soviet dominion.

What actually happened is that the first election in "Free Albania", in March 1991, resulted in an overwhelming endorsement of the Communists. And what did the United States then do? Of course, it proceeded to undertake a campaign to overthrow this very same elected government. The previous year in neighboring Bulgaria, another former Soviet satellite, the communists also won the election. And the United

States overthrew them as well.^[17]

These were the first of the non-violent overthrows of governments of the former Soviet Union and its satellites directed and financed by the United States.^[18]

"The one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it." Oscar Wilde

Some international stories never come to an end, relegated to the history books and stamped finis. They keep popping up in the news of the day, each time igniting controversy and confusion anew. The dropping of atomic bombs on Japan in World War 2 is a prime example.

On June 30, the Japanese Defense Minister, Fumio Kyuma, declared in a speech: "I understand that the bombing ended the war, and I think that it couldn't be helped."^[19]

Kyuma's remark offended survivors of the bombings in Japan who believe the use of atomic weapons was excessive, and he soon had to resign. At the same time, it has undoubtedly pleased many American nationalists who insist that the United States had no choice but to use the bomb, and who resent the stigma the world has long attached to the US for being the first to employ such a dreadful weapon of mass destruction.

Kyuma was correct about one thing. The bombings did end the war. But that's only because the United States wanted the war to end that way, partly so they could see how well the bomb worked, but principally to put the Soviet Union on notice that after the war, if the Russkis put up too much resist-

ance to American imperialistic ambitions, this was a sample of what they could expect.

Kyuma could just as correctly have said: "I understand that if the United States had accepted Japan's peace overtures the war could have ended without the use of the atomic bomb." As opposed to the American nationalists' version of history, this version is well documented and established.^[20]

Correction

The first item of the last edition of this report included a couple of examples of stereotypical cold war anti-communist thinking. I did not realize it at the time but the examples are derived in large part from an excellent book by Michael Parenti, "The Anti-Communist Impulse", published in 1969, which should have been credited. **CT**

NOTES

- [1] Speaking at the "Take Back America" conference, organized by the Campaign for America's Future, June 20, 2007, Washington, DC; this excerpt can be heard at democracynow.org – June 21.
- [2] Roger Morris, former member of the National Security Council, "Partners in Power" (1996), p.415
- [3] National Review Online, May 1, 2007
- [4] Fortune magazine, July 9, 2007
- [5] National Public Radio, "All Things Considered", June 11, 2007
- [6] Los Angeles Times, July 6, 2007
- [7] Washington Post, July 8, 2007, p.16
- [8] Los Angeles Times, July 6, 2007
- [9] Chicago Tribune, July 8, 2007, article by Kim Barker
- [10] Los Angeles Times, July 6, 2007

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ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

[11] Washington Post, April 22, 1999, p.18

[12] William Blum, *Rogue State*, p.103-4

[13] Washington Post, June 22, 2007, p.3

[14] For an account of the case written in 2001, see:

[http://members.aol.com/bblum6/panam.](http://members.aol.com/bblum6/panam.htm)

[htm](http://members.aol.com/bblum6/panam.htm). For a slightly updated account written in 2004, see: William Blum, *Freeing the World to Death*, chapter 10

[15] Copley News Service, October 10, 2005

[16] Washington Post, June 16, 2007, letter from Andrew Apostolou

[17] <http://members.aol.com/bblum6/bulgaria.htm>

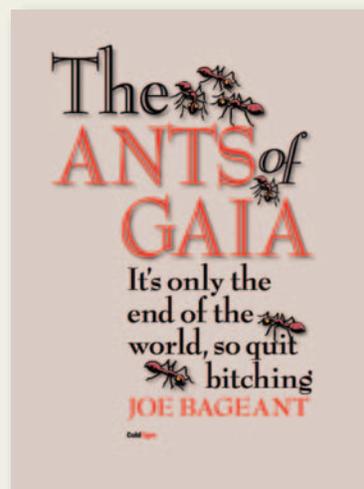
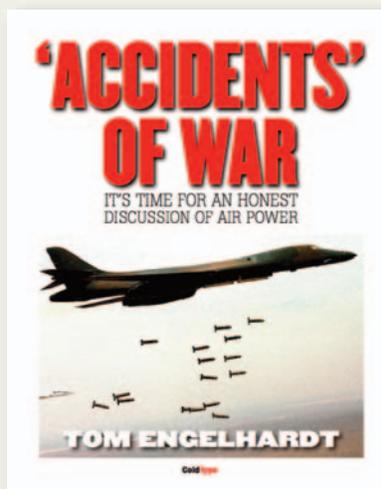
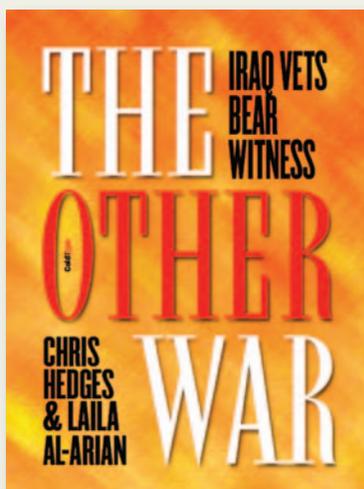
[18] For further discussion of this, see *Freeing the World to Death*, p.166-71

[19] Associated Press, July 2, 2007

[20] <http://members.aol.com/essays6/abomb.htm>

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; and Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire

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JOHN PERKINS: JERK, CONMAN, SHILL

BY GREG PALAST

I remember John Perkins. He was a real jerk. A gold-plated, super-slick lying little asshole shill for corporate gangsters; a snake-oil salesman with a movie-star grin, shiny loafers, a crooked calculator and a tooled leather briefcase full of high-blown bullshit.

This was two decades ago. The early 1980s. I wore sandals, uncombed hair down to my cheap collar and carried a busted ring-binder filled with honest calculations and sincere analysis. It was Economic Hit Man Perkins vs. Economic Long-Hair Palast. I didn't stand a chance. The EHM was about to put a political bullet hole through me wider than a silver dollar.

Hit Men have "clients." Perkins' was a giant power company, Public Service of New Hampshire. PSNH was trying to sell New England lobstermen and potato farmers on the idea that they desperately needed a multi-billion dollar nuclear plant. The fact that this bloated atomic water kettle, called "Seabrook," would produce enough electricity for everyone in the Granite State to smelt iron didn't matter. That

the beast could add a surcharge to electric bills equal to home mortgages was simply smiled over by Perkins and his team of economic con artists.

To steal millions, you need a top team of armed robbers. But to steal billions, you need PhD's with color charts and economic projections made of fairy dust and eye of newt. Perkins had it all — including a magical thing called a computer-generated spreadsheet (this was well before Excel).

I was an expert witness for some consumer groups, trying to explain to state officials that Perkins' numbers were bogus as a bubble-gum bagel and his financial projections were from some New Hampshire on another planet.

But this was the key point: Perkins slept in a suite at the Omni. I had truck-rumble insomnia at the motel off exit 68. He glared and grinned and glad-handed. I tried to keep my eyes open.

Here's how it ended. The local Joes jumped head-first into the Perkins fantasy and bought his client's power plant boondoggle. Within a couple years, the

That the beast could add a surcharge to electric bills equal to home mortgages was simply smiled over by Perkins and his team of economic con artists

CHANGING SIDES

In New England, the pain imposed by the clients of the economic hit men were financial; but, as Perkins wants us never to forget, in much of the planet, the slick sales pitch of the economic hit man is enforced by squads of hit men with less subtle weaponry

local electric companies had all gone bankrupt, the state treasury was drained, electric bills went from lowest to highest in the nation causing factories to close and dump, I figure, about 11,000 jobs.

Perkins' clients walked away with barrelfuls of billions.

And Dr. Perkins pocketed plenty for his mortal soul.

But, as in every moral tale, Perkins, the modern Dr. Faust, found redemption in confession.

And we're lucky he did. Because, in Perkins', "Confessions of an Economic Hit Man," and his latest, the just-released "Secret History of the American Empire," we find out what makes these guys tick. By "these guys" I mean the vultures who suck up development aide, the sharks who use the World Bank as their enforcers, the corporate marauders, power pirates and hedge fund hogs with their snouts in the economic trough.

In "Secret History," Perkins, from the inside, gives the details of the weird moral emptiness and pitilessness of men who waylay the riches of the planet from the people to whom it rightly belongs.

In New England, the pain imposed by the clients of the economic hit men were financial; but, as Perkins wants us never to forget, in much of the planet, the slick sales pitch of the economic hit man is enforced by squads of hit men with less subtle weaponry. Perkins writes:

"Three men toting AK-47s stood at attention outside. They saluted as we drove past. One of the three opened

the front door opposite the driver. Leather Jacket and I climbed in. He spoke into a walkie talkie. Tinted windows made it impossible to see inside."

In lines heavy with Hemingway, Perkins takes us to Indonesia, Bolivia, even tiny Diego Garcia and other victim-states where doctorate-armed "consultants" put an academic gloss on militarized plunder.

In the story of the guys with the AKs, Perkins is on assignment in Guatemala for an outfit called SWEC, a Bechtel twin trying to foist another mad power plant horror show on the natives of Guatemala. (About the same time, I convinced the state of New York to bring racketeering charges against SWEC and its partners in a massive power plant building fraud. SWEC and co-defendants settled the civil charges for a payment of nearly half a billion dollars.)

Unlike the yokels of New Hampshire who fell for the smooth Perkins line, the Guatemalans were no pushovers. Skeptical locals, suspicious indigenous shamans and a couple of improbably courageous politicians simply wouldn't roll over to the corporate conquistadores.

The resisters, we are led to presume, will be dealt with accordingly. As Perkins explains it, if his pie-charts don't make the sale, the little men in his darkened car know a little explosive wired to an ignition could be persuasive.

However, by time he got to Central America on the corporate assignment, Perkins was already ill at heart with the SWECs of this world. Ultimately,

he refused to back their destructive scheme.

Perkins had switched sides – and, in *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* gets his soul back from Satan only a little soiled. In *Secret History*, the personal confession turns into an illuminating, world-spanning jeremiad. From Latin America to Africa to the Middle East, Perkins leaps from his own story to the widespread caused by the greed armies sent marching from the boardrooms of New York and London.

Today, Perkins is my confrere and colleague. He wears his hair longish and I wear mine . . . well, I've stopped wearing hair altogether.

And in his writings today, Perkins' heart goes out to the Third World tar-

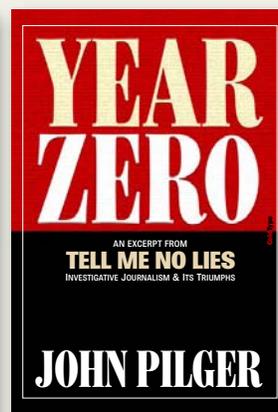
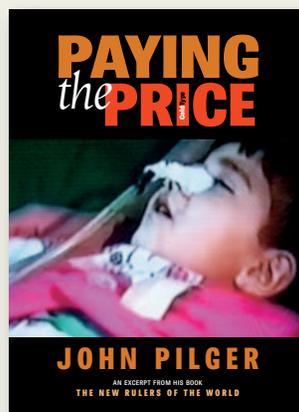
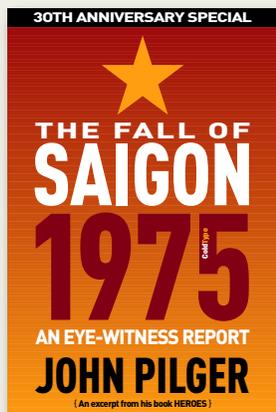
gets of this new empire ruled by shock troops and spread sheets. His empathy extends to those in the occupied territory known as the USA. Because, says Perkins, when the wretchedly ripped-off of the Earth rise in rebellion, the lash of the backlash is felt by the children of the lobstermen of New Hampshire, shivering under Humvees in Falluja, and never the EHM's clients' fortunate sons, frolicking in their Ferraris. **CT**

Today, Perkins is my confrere and colleague. He wears his hair longish and I wear mine . . . well, I've stopped wearing hair altogether

*Greg Palast is the author of **Armed Madhouse: From Baghdad to New Orleans – Sordid Secrets and Strange Tales of a White House Gone Wild.***

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A LESSON FOR THOSE UPPITY GIRLS

BY LINDA McQUAIG

Black also once described me in an article as a “not very bright, leftist reporter” – for which a number of people urged me to sue him for libel

Listening to Conrad Black being interviewed by Peter Gzowski on the radio a number of years ago, I was surprised to hear Black suggest that I be “horsewhipped.”

I knew he was angry about two lengthy articles I’d written about some of his business dealings, and I wouldn’t have been surprised to hear him attack me, even urge that I be fired. But horsewhipped?

Of course, it was all part of Black’s larger-than-life persona that included a high sense of self-drama that was always colourful in its excessiveness.

Black also once described me in an article as a “not very bright, leftist reporter” – for which a number of people urged me to sue him for libel. This was an intriguing idea, especially given Black’s own penchant for slapping intimidating lawsuits on journalists who took an interest in investigating some of his questionable business practices.

But there was the problem of proving his attack had damaged me. In truth, it’s hard to imagine where my career as an anti-establishment author would be today without such colourful

swats from Canada’s most flagrant and widely-detested business tycoon.

But if Conrad Black has been good for my career, his impact elsewhere has been less benign. He used his ample resources to create the National Post, a newspaper that helped him push the mainstream debate in Canada considerably to the right.

Black relentlessly used the Post as a platform for himself and a host of like-minded commentators to ridicule the Canadian taste for equality and strong public programs, to denigrate what amounted to the Canadian way of doing things.

Black liked to present the Post as an irreverent, scrappy upstart of a newspaper that shook up the staid Canadian media scene and challenged the establishment with its “take-no-prisoners” approach. The only problem with that image was that, far from challenging the establishment, the Post was – and is – the establishment.

It may well have been a scrappy upstart, but from the beginning it was an attack-dog fighting on behalf of Canada’s financial elite – who have never

been shy about defending their own interests. Could anyone seriously argue that, before the Post came along, we had heard insufficiently from business on the subject of the need for tax cuts, free trade or deficit reduction?

Of course, before Black started the Post, the message of the financial elite had been championed relentlessly for decades by the Globe and Mail. What the Post added was a sassy new look to the staid corporate message. It offered the same old thunderous voice of Big Business, but now cranked up to deafening levels, with even less attempt at “balance,” and with considerably more zing, including shots of celebrities in low-cut dresses. Its pages sparkled with a new brand of ultra-right journalism: neoconservatism with cleavage.

Targeting the powerless

If the Post had a target, it was never the establishment, but rather the powerless. I recall how the Post, under Black, came out guns blazing against a court decision favouring a group of secretaries, file clerks and librarians who had waged a lengthy battle against the federal government for failing to follow its own pay equity laws. The Post fearlessly called for a total repeal of pay equity laws, to prevent this sort of fairness from ever intruding into the Canadian workplace again. That’ll show those uppity girls.

So much was Black part of the Canadian establishment that he managed to escape legal problems here for years, and would have likely escaped them entirely, had the U.S. authorities not eventually caught up with him.

It’s perhaps relevant to mention here that the articles I wrote (along with fellow journalist Ian Austen) that so angered Black were about attempts by one of his companies, Norcen Energy, to take over Cleveland-based Hanna Mining in 1982, and about the failure of Canadian authorities to prosecute Black over the case.

Hanna had fought back against Black’s takeover bid, and won a U.S. court injunction and a tough court ruling that Norcen had violated U.S. securities laws by failing to disclose its takeover intention.

In Canada, Black got a much softer ride at the hands of authorities.

Black was investigated here in connection with the same takeover bid for possible violations of our securities laws. Two staff investigators of the Ontario Securities Commission recommended the commission lay a total of 26 securities charges against Black, Norcen and president Edward Battle.

But the decision whether to lay the charges was in the hands of the commission’s eight-member board, who were all well-connected members of the Canadian financial elite. In the end, they decided not to prosecute one of their own. Having been cleared by the establishment, Black went on bankroll a newspaper that loudly trumpeted the rights of the affluent, while posing as a scrappy upstart taking on the establishment. **CT**

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*Linda McQuaig’s new book is **Holding The Bully’s Coat: Canada and the US Empire**. A shorter version of this essay was published in the Toronto Star.*

THE LIFE AND CRIMES OF THE CIA

BY CHALMERS JOHNSON

*This essay is a review of **Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA** by Tim Weiner (Doubleday, 702 pp., \$27.95)*

The American people may not know it but they have some severe problems with one of their official governmental entities, the Central Intelligence Agency. Because of the almost total secrecy surrounding its activities and the lack of cost accounting on how it spends the money covertly appropriated for it within the defense budget, it is impossible for citizens to know what the CIA's approximately 17,000 employees do with, or for, their share of the yearly \$44 billion-\$48 billion or more spent on "intelligence." This inability to account for anything at the CIA is, however, only one problem with the Agency and hardly the most serious one either.

There are currently at least two criminal trials underway in Italy and Germany against several dozen CIA officials for felonies committed in those countries, including kidnapping people with a legal right to be in Germany and Italy, illegally transporting them to countries such as Egypt and Jordan for torture, and causing them to "disappear" into secret foreign or CIA-run prisons outside the U.S. without any

form of due process of law.

The possibility that CIA funds are simply being ripped off by insiders is also acute. The CIA's former number three official, its executive director and chief procurement officer, Kyle "Dusty" Foggo, is now under federal indictment in San Diego for corruptly funneling contracts for water, air services, and armored vehicles to a lifelong friend and defense contractor, Brent Wilkes, who was unqualified to perform the services being sought. In return, Wilkes treated Foggo to thousands of dollars' worth of vacation trips and dinners, and promised him a top job at his company when he retired from the CIA.

Thirty years ago, in a futile attempt to provide some check on endemic misbehavior by the CIA, the administration of Gerald Ford created the President's Intelligence Oversight Board. It was to be a civilian watchdog over the Agency. A 1981 executive order by President Ronald Reagan made the board permanent and gave it the mission of identifying CIA violations of the law (while keeping them secret in order not to endanger national security). Through five

previous administrations, members of the board – all civilians not employed by the government – actively reported on and investigated some of the CIA's most secret operations that seemed to breach legal limits.

However, on July 15, 2007, John Solomon of the Washington Post reported that, for the first five-and-a-half years of the Bush administration, the Intelligence Oversight Board did nothing – no investigations, no reports, no questioning of CIA officials. It evidently found no reason to inquire into the interrogation methods Agency operatives employed at secret prisons or the transfer of captives to countries that use torture, or domestic wiretapping not warranted by a federal court.

Who were the members of this non-oversight board of see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil monkeys? The board now in place is led by former Bush economic adviser Stephen Friedman. It includes Don Evans, a former commerce secretary and friend of the President, former Admiral David Jeremiah, and lawyer Arthur B. Culvahouse. The only thing they accomplished was to express their contempt for a legal order by a president of the United States.

Corrupt and undemocratic practices by the CIA have prevailed since it was created in 1947. However, as citizens we have now, for the first time, been given a striking range of critical information necessary to understand how this situation came about and why it has been so impossible to remedy. We have a long, richly documented history of the CIA from its post-World War II origins to its failure to supply even the most el-

ementary information about Iraq before the 2003 invasion of that country.

Declassified CIA records

Tim Weiner's book, *Legacy of Ashes*, is important for many reasons, but certainly one is that it brings back from the dead the possibility that journalism can actually help citizens perform elementary oversight on our government. Until Weiner's magnificent effort, I would have agreed with Seymour Hersh that, in the current crisis of American governance and foreign policy, the failure of the press has been almost complete. Our journalists have generally not even tried to penetrate the layers of secrecy that the executive branch throws up to ward off scrutiny of its often illegal and incompetent activities. This is the first book I've read in a long time that documents its very important assertions in a way that goes well beyond asking readers merely to trust the reporter.

Weiner, a New York Times correspondent, has been working on *Legacy of Ashes* for 20 years. He has read over 50,000 government documents, mostly from the CIA, the White House, and the State Department. He was instrumental in causing the CIA Records Search Technology (CREST) program of the National Archives to declassify many of them, particularly in 2005 and 2006. He has read more than 2,000 oral histories of American intelligence officers, soldiers, and diplomats and has himself conducted more than 300 on-the-record interviews with current and past CIA officers, including ten former directors of central intelligence. Truly exceptional among authors of books on

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the CIA, he makes the following claim: “This book is on the record – no anonymous sources, no blind quotations, no hearsay.”

Weiner's history contains 154 pages of end-notes keyed to comments in the text. (Numbered notes and standard scholarly citations would have been preferable, as well as an annotated bibliography providing information on where documents could be found; but what he has done is still light-years ahead of competing works.) These notes contain extensive verbatim quotations from documents, interviews, and oral histories. Weiner also observes: “The CIA has reneged on pledges made by three consecutive directors of central intelligence – [Robert] Gates, [James] Woolsey, and [John] Deutch – to declassify records on nine major covert actions: France and Italy in the 1940s and 1950s; North Korea in the 1950s; Iran in 1953; Indonesia in 1958; Tibet in the 1950s and 1960s; and the Congo, the Dominican Republic, and Laos in the 1960s.” He is nonetheless able to supply key details on each of these operations from unofficial, but fully identified, sources.

In May 2003, after a lengthy delay, the government finally released the documents on President Dwight D. Eisenhower's engineered regime change in Guatemala in 1954; most of the records from the 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco in which a CIA-created exile army of Cubans went to their deaths or to prison in a hapless invasion of that island have been released; and the reports on the CIA's 1953 overthrow of Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mossadeq were leaked. Weiner's efforts

and his resulting book are monuments to serious historical research in our allegedly “open society.” Still, he warns,

“While I was gathering and obtaining declassification authorization for some of the CIA records used in this book at the National Archives, the agency [the CIA] was engaged in a secret effort to reclassify many of those same records, dating back to the 1940s, flouting the law and breaking its word. Nevertheless, the work of historians, archivists, and journalists has created a foundation of documents on which a book can be built.”

Surprise attacks

As an idea, if not an actual entity, the Central Intelligence Agency came into being as a result of December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor. It functionally came to an end, as Weiner makes clear, on September 11, 2001, when operatives of al-Qaeda flew hijacked airliners into the World Trade towers in Manhattan and the Pentagon in Washington, DC. Both assaults were successful surprise attacks.

The Central Intelligence Agency itself was created during the Truman administration in order to prevent future surprise attacks like Pearl Harbor by uncovering planning for them and so forewarning against them. On September 11th, 2001, the CIA was revealed to be a failure precisely because it had been unable to discover the al-Qaeda plot and sound the alarm against a surprise attack that would prove almost as devastating as Pearl Harbor. After 9/11, the Agency, having largely discredited

itself, went into a steep decline and finished the job. Weiner concludes: “Under [CIA Director George Tenet's] leadership, the agency produced the worst body of work in its long history: a special national intelligence estimate titled ‘Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction.’” It is axiomatic that, as political leaders lose faith in an intelligence agency and quit listening to it, its functional life is over, even if the people working there continue to report to their offices.

In December 1941, there was sufficient intelligence on Japanese activities for the U.S. to have been much better prepared for a surprise attack. Naval Intelligence had cracked Japanese diplomatic and military codes; radar stations and patrol flights had been authorized (but not fully deployed); and strategic knowledge of Japanese past behaviors and capabilities (if not of intentions) was adequate. The FBI had even observed the Japanese consul-general in Honolulu burning records in his backyard but reported this information only to Director J. Edgar Hoover, who did not pass it on.

Lacking was a central office to collate, analyze, and put in suitable form for presentation to the president all U.S. government information on an important issue. In 1941, there were plenty of signals about what was coming, but the U.S. government lacked the organization and expertise to distinguish true signals from the background “noise” of day-to-day communications. In the 1950s, Roberta Wohlstetter, a strategist for the Air Force's think tank, the RAND Corporation, wrote a secret

study that documented the coordination and communications failings leading up to Pearl Harbor. (Entitled *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*, it was declassified and published by Stanford University Press in 1962.)

The legacy of the OSS

The National Security Act of 1947 created the CIA with emphasis on the word “central” in its title. The Agency was supposed to become the unifying organization that would distill and write up all available intelligence, and offer it to political leaders in a manageable form. The Act gave the CIA five functions, four of them dealing with the collection, coordination, and dissemination of intelligence from open sources as well as espionage. It was the fifth function – lodged in a vaguely worded passage that allowed the CIA to “perform such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct” – that turned the CIA into the personal, secret, unaccountable army of the president.

From the very beginning, the Agency failed to do what President Truman expected of it, turning at once to “cloak-and-dagger” projects that were clearly beyond its mandate and only imperfectly integrated into any grand strategy of the U.S. government. Weiner stresses that the true author of the CIA's clandestine functions was George Kennan, the senior State Department authority on the Soviet Union and creator of the idea of “containing” the spread of communism rather than going to war with (“rolling back”) the USSR.

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LAWLESS AGENCY

They also passionately believed that they were people with a self-appointed mission of world-shaking importance and that, as a result, they were beyond the normal legal restraints placed on government officials

Kennan had been alarmed by the ease with which the Soviets were setting up satellites in Eastern Europe and he wanted to “fight fire with fire.” Others joined with him to promote this agenda, above all the veterans of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a unit that, under General William J. “Wild Bill” Donovan during World War II, had sent saboteurs behind enemy lines, disseminated disinformation and propaganda to mislead Axis forces, and tried to recruit resistance fighters in occupied countries.

On September 20, 1945, Truman had abolished the OSS – a bureaucratic victory for the Pentagon, the State Department, and the FBI, all of which considered the OSS an upstart organization that impinged on their respective jurisdictions. Many of the early leaders of the CIA were OSS veterans and devoted themselves to consolidating and entrenching their new vehicle for influence in Washington. They also passionately believed that they were people with a self-appointed mission of world-shaking importance and that, as a result, they were beyond the normal legal restraints placed on government officials.

From its inception the CIA has labored under two contradictory conceptions of what it was supposed to be doing, and no president ever succeeded in correcting or resolving this situation. Espionage and intelligence analysis seek to know the world as it is; covert action seeks to change the world, whether it understands it or not. The best CIA exemplar of the intelligence-collecting function was Richard Helms, director of

central intelligence (DCI) from 1966 to 1973 (who died in 2002). The great protagonist of cloak-and-dagger work was Frank Wisner, the CIA's director of operations from 1948 until the late 1950s when he went insane and, in 1965, committed suicide. Wisner never had any patience for espionage.

Weiner quotes William Colby, a future DCI (1973-1976), on this subject. The separation of the scholars of the research and analysis division from the spies of the clandestine service created two cultures within the intelligence profession, he said, “separate, unequal, and contemptuous of each other.” That critique remained true throughout the CIA's first 60 years.

By 1964, the CIA's clandestine service was consuming close to two-thirds of its budget and 90% of the director's time. The Agency gathered under one roof Wall Street brokers, Ivy League professors, soldiers of fortune, ad men, newsmen, stunt men, second-story men, and con men. They never learned to work together – the ultimate result being a series of failures in both intelligence and covert operations. In January 1961, on leaving office after two terms, President Eisenhower had already grasped the situation fully. “Nothing has changed since Pearl Harbor,” he told his director of central intelligence, Allen Dulles. “I leave a legacy of ashes to my successor.” Weiner, of course, draws his title from Eisenhower's metaphor. It would only get worse in the years to come.

The historical record is unequivocal. The United States is ham-handed and brutal in conceiving and executing dan-

destine operations, and it is simply no good at espionage; its operatives never have enough linguistic and cultural knowledge of target countries to recruit spies effectively. The CIA also appears to be one of the most easily penetrated espionage organizations on the planet. From the beginning, it repeatedly lost its assets to double agents.

Typically, in the early 1950s, the Agency dropped millions of dollars worth of gold bars, arms, two-way radios, and agents into Poland to support what its top officials believed was a powerful Polish underground movement against the Soviets. In fact, Soviet agents had wiped out the movement years before, turned key people in it into double agents, and played the CIA for suckers. As Weiner comments, not only had five years of planning, various agents, and millions of dollars “gone down the drain,” but the “unkindest cut might have been [the Agency's] discovery that the Poles had sent a chunk of the CIA's money to the Communist Party of Italy.” [pp. 67-68]

The story would prove unending. On February 21, 1994, the Agency finally discovered and arrested Aldrich Ames, the CIA's chief of counterintelligence for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, who had been spying for the USSR for seven years and had sent innumerable U.S. agents before KGB firing squads. Weiner comments, “The Ames case revealed an institutional carelessness that bordered on criminal negligence.” [p. 451]

The search for technological means

Over the years, in order to compensate

for these serious inadequacies, the CIA turned increasingly to signals intelligence and other technological means of spying like U-2 reconnaissance aircraft and satellites. In 1952, the top leaders of the CIA created the National Security Agency – an eavesdropping and cryptological unit – to overcome the Agency's abject failure to place any spies in North Korea during the Korean War. The Agency debacle at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba led a frustrated Pentagon to create its own Defense Intelligence Agency as a check on the military amateurism of the CIA's clandestine service officers.

Still, technological means, whether satellite spying or electronic eavesdropping, will seldom reveal intentions – and that is the *raison d'être* of intelligence estimates. As Haviland Smith, who ran operations against the USSR in the 1960s and 1970s, lamented, “The only thing missing is – we don't have anything on Soviet intentions. And I don't know how you get that. And that's the charter of the clandestine service [emphasis in original, pp. 360-61].”

The actual intelligence collected was just as problematic. On the most important annual intelligence estimate throughout the Cold War – that of the Soviet order of battle – the CIA invariably overstated its size and menace. Then, to add insult to injury, under George H. W. Bush's tenure as DCI (1976-77), the agency tore itself apart over ill-informed right-wing claims that it was actually underestimating Soviet military forces. The result was the appointment of “Team B” during the Ford presidency, led by Polish exiles and neo-

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conservative fanatics. It was tasked to “correct” the work of the Office of National Estimates.

“After the Cold War was over,” writes Weiner, “the agency put Team B's findings to the test. Every one of them was wrong.” [p. 352] But the problem was not simply one of the CIA succumbing to political pressure. It was also structural: “[F]or thirteen years, from Nixon's era to the dying days of the Cold War, every estimate of Soviet strategic nuclear forces overstated [emphasis in original] the rate at which Moscow was modernizing its weaponry.” [p. 297]

From 1967 to 1973, I served as an outside consultant to the Office of National Estimates, one of about a dozen specialists brought in to try to overcome the myopia and bureaucratism involved in the writing of these national intelligence estimates. I recall agonized debates over how the mechanical highlighting of worst-case analyses of Soviet weapons was helping to promote the arms race. Some senior intelligence analysts tried to resist the pressures of the Air Force and the military-industrial complex. Nonetheless, the late John Huizenga, an erudite intelligence analyst who headed the Office of National Estimates from 1971 until the wholesale purge of the Agency by DCI James Schlesinger in 1973, bluntly said to the CIA's historians:

“In retrospect.... I really do not believe that an intelligence organization in this government is able to deliver an honest analytical product without facing the risk of political contention. . . . I think that intelligence has had relatively little impact on the policies that

we've made over the years. Relatively none. . . . Ideally, what had been supposed was that . . . serious intelligence analysis could.... assist the policy side to reexamine premises, render policymaking more sophisticated, closer to the reality of the world. Those were the large ambitions which I think were never realized.” [p. 353]

On the clandestine side, the human costs were much higher. The CIA's incessant, almost always misguided, attempts to determine how other people should govern themselves; its secret support for fascists (e.g., Greece under George Papadopoulos), militarists (e.g., Chile under Gen. Augusto Pinochet), and murderers (e.g., the Congo under Joseph Mobutu); its uncritical support of death squads (El Salvador) and religious fanatics (Muslim fundamentalists in Afghanistan) – all these and more activities combined to pepper the world with blowback movements against the United States.

Nothing has done more to undercut the reputation of the United States than the CIA's “clandestine” (only in terms of the American people) murders of the presidents of South Vietnam and the Congo, its ravishing of the governments of Iran, Indonesia (three times), South Korea (twice), all of the Indochinese states, virtually every government in Latin America, and Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The deaths from these armed assaults run into the millions. After 9/11, President Bush asked “Why do they hate us?” From Iran (1953) to Iraq (2003), the better question would be, “Who does not?”

The Cash Nexus

There is a major exception to this portrait of long-term Agency incompetence. “One weapon the CIA used with surpassing skill,” Weiner writes, “was cold cash. The agency excelled at buying the services of foreign politicians.” [p. 116] It started with the Italian elections of April 1948. The CIA did not yet have a secure source of clandestine money and had to raise it secretly from Wall Street operators, rich Italian-Americans, and others.

“The millions were delivered to Italian politicians and the priests of Catholic Action, a political arm of the Vatican. Suitcases filled with cash changed hands in the four-star Hassler Hotel. . . . Italy's Christian Democrats won by a comfortable margin and formed a government that excluded communists. A long romance between the [Christian Democratic] party and the agency began. The CIA's practice of purchasing elections and politicians with bags of cash was repeated in Italy – and in many other countries – for the next twenty-five years.” [p. 27]

The CIA ultimately spent at least \$65 million on Italy's politicians – including “every Christian Democrat who ever won a national election in Italy.” [p. 298] As the Marshall Plan to reconstruct Europe got up to speed in the late 1940s, the CIA secretly skimmed the money it needed from Marshall Plan accounts. After the Plan ended, secret funds buried in the annual Defense appropriation bill continued to finance the CIA's operations.

After Italy, the CIA moved on to Japan, paying to bring Nobusuke Kishi

to power as Japan's prime minister (in office 1957-1960), the country's World War II minister of munitions. It ultimately used its financial muscle to entrench the (conservative) Liberal Democratic Party in power and to turn Japan into a single-party state, which it remains to this day. The cynicism with which the CIA continued to subsidize “democratic” elections in Western Europe, Latin America, and East Asia, starting in the late 1950s, led to disillusionment with the United States and a distinct blunting of the idealism with which it had waged the early Cold War.

Another major use for its money was a campaign to bankroll alternatives in Western Europe to Soviet-influenced newspapers and books. Attempting to influence the attitudes of students and intellectuals, the CIA sponsored literary magazines in Germany (Der Monat) and Britain (Encounter), promoted abstract expressionism in art as a radical alternative to the Soviet Union's socialist realism, and secretly funded the publication and distribution of over two and a half million books and periodicals. Weiner treats these activities rather cursorily. He should have consulted Frances Stonor Saunders' indispensable *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*.

Hiding incompetence

Despite all this, the CIA was protected from criticism by its impenetrable secrecy and by the tireless propaganda efforts of such leaders as Allen W. Dulles, director of the Agency under President Eisenhower, and Richard Bissell, chief of the clandestine service after

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Perhaps the most comical of all CIA clandestine activities – unfortunately all too typical of its covert operations over the last 60 years – was the spying it did in 1994 on the newly appointed American ambassador to Guatemala, Marilyn McAfee

Wisner. Even when the CIA seemed to fail at everything it undertook, writes Weiner, “The ability to represent failure as success was becoming a CIA tradition.” [p. 58]

After the Chinese intervention in the Korean War, the CIA dropped 212 foreign agents into Manchuria. Within a matter of days, 101 had been killed and the other 111 captured – but this information was effectively suppressed. The CIA's station chief in Seoul, Albert R. Haney, an incompetent army colonel and intelligence fabricator, never suspected that the hundreds of agents he claimed to have working for him all reported to North Korean control officers.

Haney survived his incredible performance in the Korean War because, at the end of his tour in November 1952, he helped to arrange for the transportation of a grievously wounded Marine lieutenant back to the United States. That Marine turned out to be the son of Allen Dulles, who repaid his debt of gratitude by putting Haney in charge of the covert operation that – despite a largely bungled, badly directed secret campaign – did succeed in overthrowing the Guatemalan government of President Jacobo Arbenz in 1954. The CIA's handiwork in Guatemala ultimately led to the deaths of 200,000 civilians during the 40 years of bloodshed and civil war that followed the sabotage of an elected government for the sake of the United Fruit Company.

Weiner has made innumerable contributions to many hidden issues of postwar foreign policy, some of them still on-going. For example, during the debate over America's invasion of Iraq

after 2003, one of the constant laments was that the CIA did not have access to a single agent inside Saddam Hussein's inner circle. That was not true. Ironically, the intelligence service of France – a country U.S. politicians publicly lambasted for its failure to support us – had cultivated Naji Sabri, Iraq's foreign minister. Sabri told the French agency, and through it the American government, that Saddam Hussein did not have an active nuclear or biological weapons program, but the CIA ignored him. Weiner comments ruefully, “The CIA had almost no ability to analyze accurately what little intelligence it had.” [pp. 666-67, n. 487]

Perhaps the most comical of all CIA clandestine activities – unfortunately all too typical of its covert operations over the last 60 years – was the spying it did in 1994 on the newly appointed American ambassador to Guatemala, Marilyn McAfee, who sought to promote policies of human rights and justice in that country. Loyal to the murderous Guatemalan intelligence service, the CIA had bugged her bedroom and picked up sounds that led their agents to conclude that the ambassador was having a lesbian love affair with her secretary, Carol Murphy. The CIA station chief “recorded her cooing endearments to Murphy.” The agency spread the word in Washington that the liberal ambassador was a lesbian without realizing that “Murphy” was also the name of her two-year-old black standard poodle. The bug in her bedroom had recorded her petting her dog. She was actually a married woman from a conservative family. [p. 459]

Back in August 1945, General William Donovan, the head of the OSS, said to President Truman, “Prior to the present war, the United States had no foreign intelligence service. It never has had and does not now have a coordinated intelligence system.” Weiner adds, “Tragically, it still does not have one.” I agree with his assessment, but based on his truly analysis of the Central Intelligence Agency in *Legacy of Ashes*, I do not think that this is a tragedy. Given his evidence, it is hard to believe that the United States would not have been better off if it had left intelligence collection and analysis to the State Department and had assigned infrequent covert actions to the Pentagon.

I believe that this is where we stand today: The CIA has failed badly, and it would be an important step toward a restoration of the checks and balances within our political system simply to abolish it. Some observers argue that this would be an inadequate remedy because what the government now ostentatiously calls the “intelligence community” – complete with its own website – is composed of 16 discrete and competitive intelligence organizations ready to step into the CIA's shoes. This, however, is a misunderstanding. Most of the members of the so-called intelligence community are bureaucratic appendages of well-established departments or belong to extremely technical units whose functions have nothing at all to do with either espionage or cloak-and-dagger adventures.

The sixteen entities include the intelligence organizations of each military service – the Air Force, Army, Coast

Guard, Marine Corps, Navy, and the Defense Intelligence Agency – and reflect inter-service rivalries more than national needs or interests; the departments of Energy, Homeland Security, State, Treasury, and Drug Enforcement Administration, as well as the FBI and the National Security Agency; and the units devoted to satellites and reconnaissance (National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, National Reconnaissance Office). The only one of these units that could conceivably compete with the CIA is the one that I recommend to replace it – namely, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR). Interestingly enough, it had by far the best record of any U.S. intelligence entity in analyzing Iraq under Saddam Hussein and estimating what was likely to happen if we pursued the Bush administration's misconceived scheme of invading his country. Its work was, of course, largely ignored by the Bush-Cheney White House.

Weiner does not cover every single aspect of the record of the CIA, but his book is one of the best possible places for a serious citizen to begin to understand the depths to which our government has sunk. It also brings home the lesson that an incompetent or unscrupulous intelligence agency can be as great a threat to national security as not having one at all. **CT**

*Chalmers Johnson's latest book is **Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic** (Metropolitan Books, 2007). It is the third volume of his *Blowback Trilogy*, which includes **Blowback** and **The Sorrows of Empire**.*

The CIA has failed badly, and it would be an important step toward a restoration of the checks and balances within our political system simply to abolish it

WHEN WILL YOU TEACH THIS LAD ENGLISH?

BY HUSSEIN AL-ALAK

Some historians have also claimed that Eastern troops for the Roman Empire, also lived and settled around the North East of England, where certain areas are believed to have once been called "Arabia"

The recent terror attacks on London and Glasgow, by an alleged Al-Qaida-linked group of medical workers, has led many to question the causes behind the attack but has also raised questions in relation to the issues of migrant integration within the United Kingdom.

The attack has been condemned but the question that has been missed by many, is in relation to the historical origins, which many Arab "subjects" actually come from.

Charlotte Higgins, the arts correspondent for London's Guardian newspaper reported last year that a Roman document dated from around AD400 and called the Notitia Dignitatum, described how a unit of Iraqis (from ancient Mesopotamia) were said to have patrolled the English northern area of what is now called South Shields.

Higgins explained that "While British soldiers battle it out in Iraq, spare a thought for this: troops from Iraq once occupied Britain." Some historians have also claimed that Eastern troops for the Roman Empire, also lived and settled around the North East of

England, where certain areas are believed to have once been called "Arabia".

The BBC reported in June that during the first world war, "In 1916 the Military Cross was awarded to a captain in the Royal Welch Fusiliers for "conspicuous gallantry during a raid on the enemy's trenches". The citation noted that he had braved "rifle and bomb fire" and that "owing to his courage and determination, all the killed and wounded were brought in".

The "captain" and "hero" in question was the celebrated poet and author Siegfried Sassoon, whose words are central to English literature and whose real life experience, within the trenches of France, was immortalised in the "factional" novel "The Regeneration Trilogy" by author Pat Barker.

It is often forgotten that Siegfried Sassoon's family were Sephardic Jews, who had flourished originally within Iraq and his grandfather was the first of his family to have arrived in England in 1858 and had come to the country as a result of the cotton trade.

In his 2004 paper "The Arab Popula-

tion in the UK,” Dr Ismail al-Jalili explained that about 500,000 Arabs are now resident in the UK and that “In the 19th century, Yemeni seamen called Lascars sailed with British ships and many stayed to work in the docks and related industries, or the burgeoning rail network.

“London’s East End, Tyneside, Liverpool and Cardiff became centres of small Arab communities. By 1948 there were nearly a thousand Arabs in Tyneside, some marrying local women, thus giving birth to the “British-Arab” identity that many native-born British-Arabs, especially those of mixed ancestry, are now establishing.”

The paper also explained “the traditional trading skills of Syrians and Lebanese brought them to ‘Cottonopolis’ – Manchester.”

Albert Hourani, the Arab historian and author of “A History of the Arab Peoples,” was born in Manchester in 1915. His book, published in 1991, has been described by Harvard University Press as being “the definitive story of Arab civilization,” which became upon publication “an instant classic.”

It has been said on the online encyclopedia “Wikipedia” that “Hourani trained more academic historians of the modern Middle East than any other university historian of his generation. Today his students can be found on the faculties of Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Yale, Columbia, MIT, Hebrew University and the University of Haifa, among others.”

In the early 1900’s, my own relatives lived and worked around coal mining in the North East of England, one part of

the family based around the Ashington Colliery, which was opened in 1867 and closed in 1986.

According to the Durham Mining Museum, the Ashington Colliery employed an estimated 2343 “under ground” workers in 1902, with the number rising to 3997 in 1914. The number then rose again in 1921 to 4076.

Like many other trades, the mines were a central feature to many communities across the northern parts of the United Kingdom, where entire generations of men would virtually be born and raised within a mining community and would later follow their fathers, uncles, brothers etc back down into the pits. My great-grandfather died of pneumoconiosis in the 1920’s, when my grandmother was still a child, which was caused by the inhalation of coal dust as a result of being down the mines.

I remember in the early 1990’s at my grandmother’s funeral in Manchester, her elderly brother and my great uncle, who later died in the year 2000, patting me on the head and asking my mother “when will you teach this lad English?”

Protesting that I already speak English, my relatives from the North East of England began to laugh as my mother explained, that according to my uncle, who was born and bred in Newcastle, “you will only be Englishman when you speak like a Geordie”. **CT**

Hussein Al-alak is a British born Iraqi writer whose articles have been published by The Morning Star, Palestine Chronicle, The UN Observer and the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq.

In the early 1900’s, my own relatives lived and worked around coal mining in the North East of England, one part of the family based around Ashington Colliery, which was opened in 1867 and closed in 1986

HE'S NO MARTIN LUTHER KING

BY RAY McGOVERN

As we began our discussion with Conyers, it was as though he thought we were "born yesterday," as Harry Truman would put it

What do Rep. John Conyers (D, Michigan), chair of the House Committee on the Judiciary, and President George W. Bush have in common? They both think they can dis Cindy Sheehan and count on gossip columnists like the Washington Post's Dana Milbank to trivialize an historic moment.

I'll give this to President Bush. He makes no pretence when he disses. He would not meet with Sheehan to define for her the "noble cause" for which her son Casey died or tell her why he had said it was "worth it."

Conyers, on the other hand, was dripping with pretence as he met with Sheehan, Rev. Lennox Yearwood, and me in July in his office in the Rayburn building. I have seldom been so disappointed with someone I had previously held in high esteem. And before leaving, I told him so. Throwing salt in our wounds, he had us, and some fifty others in his anteroom arrested and taken out of action as the Capitol Police "processed" us for the next six hours.

As we began our discussion with Conyers, it was as though he thought we were "born yesterday," as Harry Truman would put it. With feigned enthusiasm he began, Let's hold a Town Hall meeting in Detroit so we can talk about impeachment. Get out my schedule; let's see, we need to hear from everyone about this.

Been there, done that, I reminded the congressman. On May 29, 2007 Col. Ann Wright and I were among those who flew to Detroit for a highly advertised Town Hall meeting on impeachment, because we were assured that John Conyers would be there.

That Town Hall/panel discussion was arranged by the Michigan chapter of the National Lawyers Guild less than two weeks after the Detroit City Council passed a resolution, cosponsored by Conyers' wife Monica Conyerscalling for the impeachment of Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney. We had hoped that Monica's clear vision and courage might be contagious.

I had to remind the congressman that he did not show up for the Town

Hall, preferring to put in a cameo appearance and quickly leave a half-hour before it began.

Apparently, that incident was of such little consequence to the congressman that he had completely forgotten about it and was about to try to resort to the same subterfuge. And that was less than two months ago. Small wonder, then, that he has apparently forgotten the oath he took, much longer ago, to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States from all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Selective Alzheimer's? I don't know. What was clear was that he had forgotten a whole lot. I pointed to James Madison's role in crafting a Constitution that mentions impeachment no fewer than six times. (And for those, like John Conyers, who may have forgotten, Madison had this to say at the constitutional convention, "A President is impeachable if he attempts to subvert the Constitution.") I mentioned my career as a CIA analyst, said there is abundant proof, much of it documentary, that Bush and Cheney had deliberately deceived Congress into approving a war of aggression, and asked what could be more subversive of the Constitution.

The congressman's reply: Madison did not say Conyers has to impeach every one. Why, if I had to impeach everyone for high crimes and misdemeanors, that's all my committee would have time to do. I remember from Rhetoric 101 the name of that device: *reductio ad absurdum*.

How about just Bush and Cheney? we suggested.

Conyers protested that he would

need 218 votes in the House and complained that the votes are not there. His priorities showed through in his loud lament that if he fell short of the 218 votes, the Republicans and FOX News would have a field day.

Frightened by FOX

There was no getting through to Conyers, who seemed astonished at the direct questions we were posing. While reflecting on this later, a dictum of my father, also a prominent lawyer began to ring in my ears; to wit: "When you reach the age of 'statutory senility,' you do everyone a favor if you retire." He followed his own advice when he retired as Chancellor of the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York, long before senility – statutory, or otherwise – set in for him.

Septuagenarian Conyers and, for that matter, 80 year-old Senator John Warner (R-Virginia) who also seems to have forgotten his sworn duty to uphold the Constitution would do well to ponder my father's dictum. (As for the "distinguished" senior senator from Commonwealth of Virginia, you may recall that, as head of the Senate Armed Services Committee, he caved in to White House pressure to let the Pentagon investigate itself regarding the abuses at Abu Graib and elsewhere – letting lower ranking soldiers take the hit for doing what then-defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld had made clear he wanted done. At that low point, surely groaning could be heard from James Madison's resting place in Montpelier at the disdain in which successor Virginians – however "distinguished"

I mentioned my career as a CIA analyst, said there is abundant proof, much of it documentary, that Bush and Cheney had deliberately deceived Congress into approving a war of aggression, and asked what could be more subversive of the Constitution

MEETING CONYERS

You're no Martin Luther King, I found myself wanting to say. Instead, I quoted a portion of Dr. King's famous address at Riverside Church almost 40 years ago

– hold his beloved Constitution. Sorry, but I am a Virginian. And I feel this keenly. *O Tempora, O Mores!*)

Attempted trading on King

Toward the end of our meeting with Conyers, he showed uncommon chutzpah in referring to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. That was too much for me. You're no Martin Luther King, I found myself wanting to say. Instead, I quoted a portion of Dr. King's famous address at Riverside Church almost 40 years ago:

"We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak.... there is such a thing as being too late.... Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected with lost opportunity.... Over the bleached bones of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: 'Too late.'"

I used that quote in a letter I left with Conyers' aides, in which I tried to express why my colleagues in Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity feel it is URGENT to find some way to apply the Constitution to restrain a runaway Executive.

Here is the text of that letter:

July 23, 2007

A Note to Congressman John Conyers: On Impeachment and the Edmund Pettus Bridge

Dear John,

We each have our favored crime for which President Bush and Vice President Cheney should be impeached. Many of us

have several.

But the real challenge is to look AHEAD. What are Bush/Cheney likely to do in the coming months if the impeachment process does NOT begin?

One often hears, Oh, they will do what they want anyway, impeachment process or not. Not true. If we the people and our representatives in Congress choose the course given us by our Founders and impeachment proceedings begin, important swaths of our body politic AND military will be less likely to follow illegal orders from the White House. These important constituencies will become sensitized to the peril into which this administration has brought us and to the extra-constitutional orders they may be asked to carry out.

NEW ELEMENT: Even the Scaif-owned newspapers have begun to question Bush's MENTAL STABILITY.

What could be more important at this juncture?

We Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) have been applying all of our analytical techniques to assess the Bush/Cheney administration. We have helped to establish the long record of abuses and usurpations of the past. What about the future?

Iraq is going to hell in a hand basket. A Tet-type incident becomes more and more likely. The Green Zone is being hit by mortar fire more frequently than before. It may be just a matter of time before the Resistance gets lucky and lobs a shell onto our spanking new \$600-million embassy, killing a bunch of Americans in the process.

What then? Will Cheney tell the president the US military has found Iranian

markings on the shell fragments and we need to retaliate...and, actually, while we're at it, let's implement Plan A and hit all Iranian nuclear-related facilities. With Congress voting resolution after resolution against Iran, how would the president react to such a suggestion from Cheney?

Many of us intelligence analysts have found utility in relying, in part, on short studies applying psychoanalysis to develop profiles of foreign leaders. (This marriage of psychoanalysis and intelligence work actually goes back to the early 1940s, when the OSS commissioned such studies on Hitler.) We called them "at-a-distance personality assessments."

Three years ago Justin Frank, M.D., a psychiatrist here in Washington, wrote a book "Bush on the Couch" in which he provided keen insights into the president's mode of thinking – or not thinking.

Eager to use every tool at our disposal, VIPS recently asked Dr. Frank to update his observations, with a view to forecasting, to the extent possible, how Bush is likely to react to the building pressures of the coming weeks and months. We will issue, perhaps as early as this week, Dr. Frank's latest analysis, fortified by our own input. But we already have his preliminary analysis; there is no other word for it: Scary.

In a quick note to us this morning [July 23], Dr. Frank noted we are "dealing with a potentially cornered man [who] could lash out, and it is possible that the best way would be to bomb Iran.... Whatever the root causes of Bush's pathology, we have a dangerous man running things...grandiose and unchecked."

Some snippets from the Memorandum

that Dr. Frank is drafting for issuance under VIPS auspices:

George W. Bush is without conscience...and destructive, willfully so. He has always liked to break things...most shocking is the way he is breaking our armed forces.

He doesn't care about others, is indifferent to their suffering...He is almost constitutionally missing the ability to sympathize or empathize...More indifferent to reality than out of touch with it, he makes up whatever story he wants.

Ultimately, he is psychologically unstable...His goal is to destroy things [and he can do that] without experiencing anxiety or a sense of responsibility. An equally important goal is to protect himself from shame, from being wrong, from being found small and weak.

So what do we do?

At a similarly critical juncture, Dr. King was typically direct: "We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak... there is such a thing as being too late.... Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected with lost opportunity.... Over the bleached bones of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: 'Too late.'"

There is today another Edmund Pettus Bridge to cross, John. And it has fallen to you to lead us across.

With respect,

Ray McGovern

CT

Ray McGovern was a CIA analyst from the administration of John F. Kennedy to that of George H. E. Bush.

An earlier version of this article appeared on Consortiumnews.com

Dr. Frank noted we are "dealing with a potentially cornered man [who] could lash out, and it is possible that the best way would be to bomb Iran . . . Whatever the root causes of Bush's pathology, we have a dangerous man running things . . . grandiose and unchecked"

NO WONDER THE BLOGGERS ARE WINNING

BY ROBERT FISK

Arax's genocide report was killed on the orders of managing editor Douglas Frantz because the reporter had a "position on the issue" and "a conflict of interest"

I despise the internet. It's irresponsible and, often, a net of hate. And I don't have time for Blogopops. But here's a tale of two gutless newspapers which explains why more and more people are Googling rather than turning pages.

First the Los Angeles Times. Last year, reporter Mark Arax was assigned a routine story on the 1915 genocide of one and a half million Armenians by the Ottoman Turkish authorities. Arax's report focused on divisions within the local Jewish community over whether to call the genocide a genocide.

It's an old argument. The Turks insist – against all the facts and documents and eyewitness accounts, and against history – that the Armenians were victims of a civil war. The Israeli government and its new, Nobel prize-winning president, Shimon Peres – anxious to keep cosy relations with modern Turkey – have preferred to adopt Istanbul's mendacious version of events. However, many Jews, both inside and outside Israel, have bravely insisted that they do constitute a genocide, indeed

the very precursor to the later Nazi Holocaust of six million Jews.

But Arax's genocide report was killed on the orders of managing editor Douglas Frantz because the reporter had a "position on the issue" and "a conflict of interest".

Readers will already have guessed that Arax is an Armenian-American. His sin, it seems, was that way back in 2005, he and five other writers wrote a formal memo to LA Times editors reminding them that the paper's style rules meant that the Armenian genocide was to be called just that – not "alleged genocide". Frantz, however, described the old memo as a "petition" and apparently accused Arax of landing the assignment by dealing with a Washington editor who was also an Armenian.

The story was reassigned to Washington reporter Rich Simon, who concentrated on Turkey's attempt to block Congress from recognising the Armenian slaughter – and whose story ran under the headline "Genocide Resolution Still Far From Certain".

LA Times executives then went all coy, declining interviews, although Frantz admitted in a blog (of course) that he had “put a hold” on Arax’s story because of concerns that the reporter “had expressed personal views about the topic in a public (sic) manner...”. Ho ho.

Truth can be dangerous for the LA Times. Even more so, it seems, when the managing editor himself – Frantz, no less – once worked for The New York Times, where he referred to the Armenian massacres as, yes, an “alleged” genocide. Frantz, it turns out, joined the LA Times as its Istanbul correspondent.

Well, Arax has since left the LA Times after a settlement which forestalled a lawsuit against the paper for defamation and discrimination. His employers heaped praise upon his work while Frantz has just left the paper to become Middle East correspondent of the Wall Street Journal based in – of course, you guessed it – Istanbul.

“Snitched on class enemies”

But now let’s go north of the border, to the Toronto Globe and Mail, which assigned columnist Jan Wong to investigate a college murder in Montreal last September. Wong is not a greatly loved reporter. A third-generation Canadian, she moved to China during Mao’s “cultural revolution” and, in her own words, “snitched on class enemies and did my best to be a good little Maoist.”

She later wrote a “Lunch With” series for the Globe in which she acted all sympathetic to interviewee guests to catch them out. “When they relax,

that’s when their guard is down,” she told a college newspaper. “It’s a trick, but it’s legit.” Yuk!

Wong’s take on the Montreal Dawson College shooting, however, was more serious. She compared the killer to a half-Algerian Muslim who murdered 14 women in another Montreal college shooting in 1989 and to a Russian immigrant who killed four university colleagues in Montreal in 1992. “In all three cases,” she wrote, “the perpetrator was not ‘pure laine’, the argot for a ‘pure’ francophone. Elsewhere, to talk of racial purity is repugnant. Not in Quebec.”

Painfully true, I’m afraid. Parisians, who speak real French, would never use such an expression – pure laine translates literally as “pure wool” but means “authentic” – but some Montrealers do. Wong, however, had touched a red hot electric wire in “multicultural” Canada. Prime Minister Stephen Harper complained. “Grossly irresponsible,” said the man who enthusiastically continued the policy of sending Canadian troops on their suicidal mission to Afghanistan.

The French-Canadian newspaper Le Devoir – can you imagine a British paper selling a single copy if it called itself “Duty”? – published a cartoon of Wong with exaggerated Chinese slanted eyes. Definitely not pure laine for Le Devoir. The hate mail was even more to the point. Some contained excrement.

But then the Globe and Mail ran for cover. Its editor-in-chief, Edward Greenspon, wrote a cowardly column in which he claimed that the offending paragraphs “should have been re-

She compared the killer to a half-Algerian Muslim who murdered 14 women in another Montreal college shooting in 1989 and to a Russian immigrant who killed four university colleagues in Montreal in 1992

GUTLESS MEDIA

Some time ago, I discovered that the paper had reprinted an article of mine from *The Independent* about the Armenian genocide. But they had tampered with it, altering my word "genocide" to read "tragedy"

moved" from her story. "We regret that we allowed these words to get into a reported (sic) article," he sniffled. There had been a breakdown in what he hilariously called "the editorial quality control process".

Now I happen to know a bit about the Globe's "quality control process". Some time ago, I discovered that the paper had reprinted an article of mine from *The Independent* about the Armenian genocide. But they had tampered with it, altering my word "genocide" to read "tragedy".

The *Independent's* subscribers promise to make no changes to our reports. But when our syndication folk contacted the Globe, they discovered

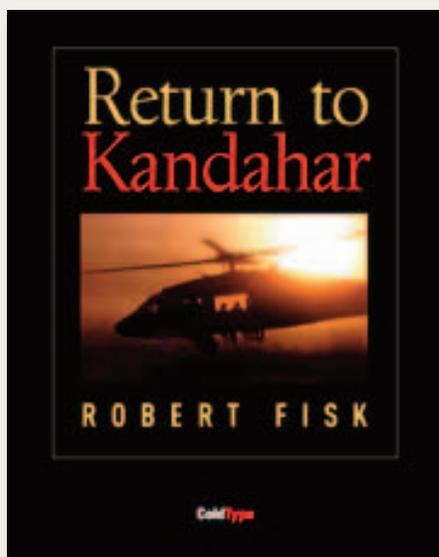
that the Canadian paper had simply stolen the article. They were made to pay a penalty fee. But as for the censorship of the word "genocide", a female executive explained to *The Independent* that nothing could be done because the editor responsible had "since left the Globe and Mail".

It's the same old story, isn't it? Censor then whinge, then cut and run. No wonder the bloggers are winning. **CT**

*Robert Fisk's latest book is **The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East**.*

*This article was originally published in London's *Independent* newspaper*

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ROBERT FISK

RETURN TO KANDAHAR

To mark the anniversary of the Sept 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon and US-led 'war on terror,' Robert Fisk, Middle East correspondent of London's *Independent* returned to Afghanistan where he wrote scathing essays on a bombing offensive to rid the country of its Taliban rulers and Bin Laden's al-Qa'ida leaders.

Download your FREE copy at

<http://www.coldtype.net/archives.html>

WE'RE LEAVING IRAQ (SORT OF)

BY NORMAN SOLOMON

In mid-July, a media advisory from “The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer” announced a new series of interviews on the PBS show that will address “what Iraq might look like when the U.S. military leaves.”

A few days later, Time magazine published a cover story titled “Iraq: What will happen when we leave.”

But it turns out, what will happen when we leave is that we won't leave.

Urging a course of action that's now supported by “the best strategic minds in both parties,” the Time story calls for “an orderly withdrawal of about half the 160,000 troops currently in Iraq by the middle of 2008.” And: “A force of 50,000 to 100,000 troops would dig in for a longer stay to protect America's most vital interests...”

On Iraq policy, in Washington, the differences between Republicans and Democrats – and between the media's war boosters and opponents – are often significant. Yet they're apt to mask the emergence of a general formula that could gain wide support from the political and media establishment.

The formula's details and timelines

are up for grabs. But there's not a single “major” candidate for president willing to call for withdrawal of all U.S. forces – not just “combat” troops – from Iraq, or willing to call for a complete halt to U.S. bombing of that country.

Those candidates know that powerful elites in this country just don't want to give up the leverage of an ongoing U.S. military presence in Iraq, with its enormous reserves of oil and geopolitical value. It's a good bet that American media and political powerhouses would fix the wagon of any presidential campaign that truly advocated an end to the U.S. war in – and on – Iraq.

The disconnect between public opinion and elite opinion has led to reverse perceptions of a crisis of democracy. As war continues, some are appalled at the absence of democracy while others are frightened by the potential of it. From the grassroots, the scarcity of democracy is transparent and outrageous. For elites, unleashed democracy could jeopardize the priorities of the military-industrial-media complex.

Converging powerful forces in Wash-

It's a good bet that American media and political powerhouses would fix the wagon of any presidential campaign that truly advocated an end to the U.S. war in – and on – Iraq

NO WAY HOME

Squadrons of attack planes have been added to the in-country fleet. The air reconnaissance arm has almost doubled since last year. The powerful B1-B bomber has been recalled to action over Iraq"

ington – eager to at least superficially bridge the gap between grassroots and elite priorities – are likely to come up with a game plan for withdrawing from Iraq without withdrawing from Iraq.

Scratch the surface of current media scenarios for a U.S. pullout from Iraq, and you're left with little more than speculation – fueled by giant dollops of political manipulation. In fact, strategic leaks and un-attributed claims about U.S. plans for withdrawal have emerged periodically to release some steam from domestic antiwar pressures.

Nearly three years ago – with discontent over the war threatening to undermine President Bush's prospects for a second term – the White House ally Robert Novak floated a rosy scenario in his nationally syndicated column that appeared on Sept. 20, 2004. "Inside the Bush administration policy-making apparatus, there is strong feeling that U.S. troops must leave Iraq next year," he wrote. "This determination is not predicated on success in implanting Iraqi democracy and internal stability. Rather, the officials are saying: Ready or not, here we go."

Novak's column went on to tell readers: "Well-placed sources in the administration are confident Bush's decision will be to get out." Those well-placed sources were, of course, unnamed. And for good measure, Novak followed up a month before the November 2004 election with a piece that recycled the gist of his Sept. 20 column and chortled: "Nobody from the administration has officially rejected my column."

This is all relevant history today as news media are spinning out umpteen

scenarios for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. The game involves dangling illusionary references to "withdrawal" in front of the public.

But realities on the ground – and in the air – are quite different. A recent news dispatch from an air base in Iraq, by Charles J. Hanley of the Associated Press, provided a rare look at the high-tech escalation underway. "Away from the headlines and debate over the 'surge' in U.S. ground troops," AP reported on July 14, "the Air Force has quietly built up its hardware inside Iraq, sharply stepped up bombing and laid a foundation for a sustained air campaign in support of American and Iraqi forces."

In contrast to the spun speculation so popular with U.S. media outlets like Time and the PBS "NewsHour," the AP article cited key information: "Squadrons of attack planes have been added to the in-country fleet. The air reconnaissance arm has almost doubled since last year. The powerful B1-B bomber has been recalled to action over Iraq."

This kind of development fits a historic pattern – one that had horrific consequences during the war in Vietnam and, unless stopped, will persist for many years to come in Iraq.

Assessing the distant mirror of the Vietnam War, the narration of the new documentary "War Made Easy" (based on my book of the same name) spells out a classic White House maneuver: "Even when calls for withdrawal have eventually become too loud to ignore, officials have put forward strategies for ending war that have had the effect of prolonging it – in some cases, as with

the Nixon administration's strategy of Vietnamization, actually escalating war in the name of ending it."

Between mid-1969 and mid-1972, American troop levels dropped sharply in Vietnam – while the deadly ferocity of American bombing spiked upward.

The presence of large numbers of U.S. troops in Iraq during the next years is a likelihood fogged up by fanciful media stories asserting – without tangible evidence – that American troops will “pull out” and the U.S. military will “leave” Iraq. The spin routinely glides past such matters as the hugely militarized U.S. embassy in Baghdad, the numerous permanent-mode U.S. bases in Iraq, and the vast array of private-and-often-paramilitary contractors at work there courtesy of U.S. taxpayers. And there's the rarely mentioned prize of massive oil reserves that top officials in Washington keep their eyes on.

The matter of U.S. bases in Iraq is a prime example of how events on Capitol Hill have scant effects on war machinery in the context of out-of-control presidential power. “The House voted overwhelmingly on Wednesday to bar permanent United States military bases in Iraq,” the New York Times reported on July 26. But the war makers in the nation's capital still hold the whip that keeps lashing the dogs of war.

As the insightful analyst Phyllis Benis points out: “The bill states an important principle opposing the ‘establishment’ of new bases in Iraq and ‘not to exercise United States control of the oil resources of Iraq.’ But it is limited in several ways. It prohibits only those bases which are acknowledged to be

for the purpose of permanently stationing U.S. troops in Iraq; therefore any base constructed for temporarily stationing troops, or rotating troops, or anything less than an officially permanent deployment, would still be accepted. Further, the bill says nothing about the need to decommission the existing U.S. bases already built in Iraq; it only prohibits ‘establishing’ military installations, implying only new ones would be prohibited.”

Despite all the talk about how members of Congress have been turning against the war, few are clearly advocating a genuine end to U.S. military intervention in Iraq. Media outlets will keep telling us that the U.S. government is developing serious plans to “leave” Iraq. But we would be foolish to believe those tall tales. The antiwar movement has an enormous amount of grassroots work to do – changing the political terrain of the United States from the bottom up – before the calculus of political opportunism in Washington determines that it would be more expedient to end the U.S. occupation of Iraq than to keep it going under one guise or another. **CT**

*The new documentary film **War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death** is based on Norman Solomon's book of the same title. Grassroots activists have begun to use the DVD as an antiwar organizing tool. For information about the full-length movie, narrated by Sean Penn and produced by the Media Education Foundation, go to: www.WarMadeEasyTheMovie.org*

Media outlets will keep telling us that the U.S. government is developing serious plans to “leave” Iraq. But we would be foolish to believe those tall tales

RECRUITING TRENCH LIBERALS AND LEFT-NECKS

BY JOE BAGEANT

When the "Unfair Practices in Credit Cards Act" passes the Senate he will not know that the raising of his minimum payment had nothing to do with some well meaning but totally out of touch Democrats, who've never lived on \$8.50 an hour

Despite what Internet liberals may think, most real working class Americans, and I mean the people who tune up your Prius or press your dry cleaning, haven't given a flying fuck about the Iraq war for the last couple of years now. Not until recently, when it became pretty clear we are losing it – losing being the worst possible thing in a society force fed on sports and the winner-loser mentality which created the uniquely American contemptuous epithet, “a loser.”

But now as my friend Buddy, who at middle age has been reduced to bagging groceries and “shagging carts” in the parking lot at one of the local Food Lion supermarkets says, “If we ain't losing, we seem to been over there entirely too long to be winnin'. That's for shore.”

Buddy the bagboy hasn't the slightest notion of how national politics in any way affects his life. And so when the “Unfair Practices in Credit Cards Act” passes the Senate he will not know that the raising of his minimum payment had nothing to do with some

well meaning but totally out of touch Democrats, who've never lived on \$8.50 an hour. The paternalistic attempt of the bill's sponsors surely would protect future credit card racket victims.

But Buddy and millions like him will be screwed the day it goes into effect by the new higher minimum payments, and he starts getting calls from people with an Indian accent regarding all three of his plastic cards. Sometimes Democrats can be as thankful as any Republican that most working folks don't examine politics too closely.

Meanwhile the Republicans, like the Biblical King Balthazar and his court magicians, are watching in terror the writing on the wall by the mystic hand: “You're finished guys. Too many Haliburton and Diebold concubines hath drank from the golden cup.” Thus the Democratic Party leadership headquartered at the Westchester Country Club will claim credit for many victories in the next elections, most of which will be handed them by the blowback of the worst presidency in history.

But that still leaves a lot of pissed off

ordinary and uninformed Americans to placate on the wreckage of our domestic front. So the party of Roosevelt begins to dimly understand that now is the opportunity to re-associate itself with populism. The problem is that Democratic Party “leadership” has no notion of what populism means. First they ignored real working class people, then they forgot they existed.

But being Democrats, they do understand poverty. And so they offer us the poorest of the real White House contenders, the second generation Harvard law graduate Barack Obama, who survived on a meager \$950,000.00 in reported income last year. Or John Edwards, who charges \$55,000 to give a speech on poverty. Not that either of them couldn't do a better job than President Sparky by simply sitting on their asses a couple of terms and not making matters any worse.

Neglected working people

Buddy voted twice for a president who has perhaps crippled America permanently. Yet it is not a case of working folks like Buddy crippling America, but the American system crippling working people through neglect. The working class of so-called Heartland America gets a very poor education. They operate with a sixth grade grasp of history and politics and zero understanding of the economy. They have been told all their lives that America is absolutely the only free and prosperous place to live and that it is the product of divine providence. .

Like it or not, the Democratic Party needs Buddy. Standing together, with a

percentage point or two from guys like him, we cannot be beaten, assuming an honest election. But first we must care about the guy with the plumber's butt rotating our tires and the single mom driving the forklift on the night shift at the big box store warehouse. Once we do that, we will understand that most red state voters are not our adversaries, but merely among millions of Americans coarsened over the last couple of generations by toil, ignorance and debt and misled by the worst elements in American politics.

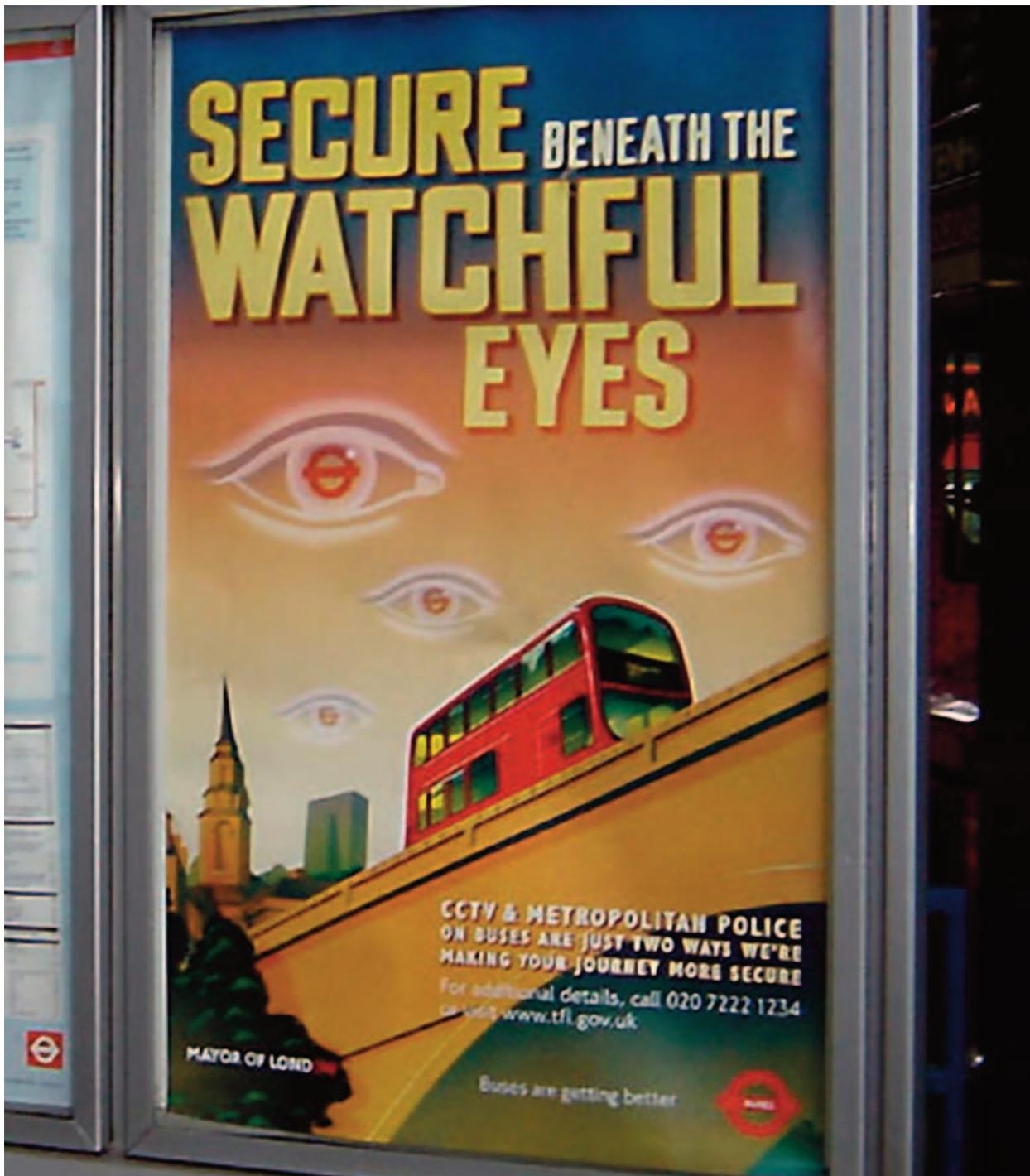
The time is waaaaay overdue to create a force of “trench liberals,” or in the case of my own people, “leftnecks” – gun owning progressives who change their motor own oil – persuasive populist grassroots organizers. It'll be hard and they won't be pretty people. Real trench liberals and leftnecks must come from the working neighborhoods and be folks who already know the people they attempt to persuade – they are the most apt to be populists. Such people do exist; I've got hundreds of their emails to prove it. Meanwhile for liberalism, political ignorance, like virgin soil, may be the best ground to till. I made a special trip to the Food Lion today to get a few more opinions from Buddy to close this story (good old elliptical story shape, right?) Sure enough, there he was shagging carts. After a couple of minutes of small talk, I edged over to the topic of where to start fixing America's broken political system.

“Well,” Buddy answers, “First we've got to do something about that Rosie O'Donnell.”

Sigh ... It's gonna be a long haul. **CT**

It is not a case of working folks like Buddy crippling America, but the American system crippling working people through neglect

THE BIG PICTURE



SLOW MARCH TO A POLICE STATE?: A poster outside a London subway station informs travellers that Big Brother is their new best friend. Britain has more CCTV cameras spying on/looking after (delete whichever you feel least comfortable with) its people than any other country in the world.

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