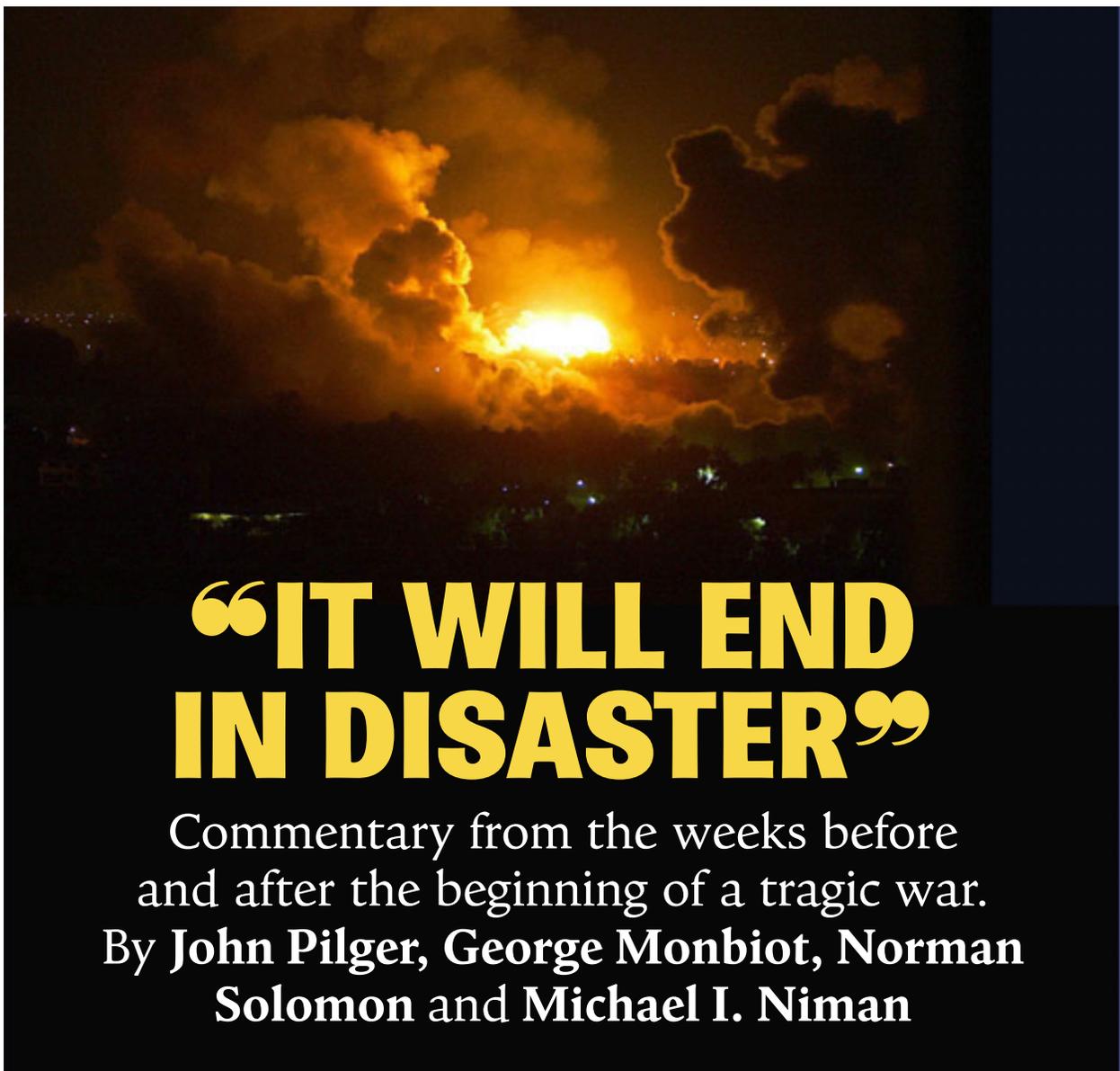


EXTRA

The ^{ColdType} **READER**

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**“IT WILL END
IN DISASTER”**

Commentary from the weeks before
and after the beginning of a tragic war.
By John Pilger, George Monbiot, Norman
Solomon and Michael I. Niman

A 50-PAGE COLDTYPE SPECIAL

Introduction

On March 19, the disastrous war on Iraq launched by George W. Bush and Tony Blair supposedly to remove Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, had its fifth anniversary. The case for war had been exposed as a lie even before the war began – the weapons did not exist – but Bush's ever-changing rationales for the invasion continue, the most ludicrous of the assertions being that the invasion was an act of mercy, to bring freedom to the Iraqi people.

In this retrospective, ColdType reprints the wise words of four of our eminent weekly columnists written during the final days before the start of the vicious 'Shock and Awe' offensive and the first weeks after.

They – and many people in the rest of the world – saw through the lies of Bush and Blair as they embarked on one of the most brutal acts of military aggression seen since Hitler's army began its march through Europe more than 60 years ago.

The title for this collection is taken from a particularly prescient essay by George Monbiot a few days after the invasion (see page 39)

Tony Sutton

Editor

NOTE: Readers who wish to read more columns by our columnists during the first year of the war on Iraq will find them at the following urls:

JOHN PILGER: www.coldtype.net/pilger.html

GEORGE MONBIOT: www.coldtype.net/London.html

NORMAN SOLOMON: www.coldtype.net/mediabeat.html

MICHAEL I. NIMAN: www.coldtype.net/Grip.html

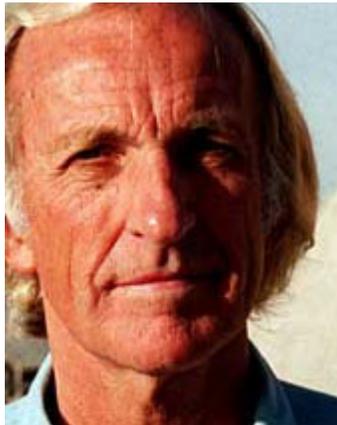
In addition, a 210-page e-book collection of their columns for 2003 is also available at:

www.coldtype.net/Assets/pdfs/CT.best.html

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING FROM AROUND THE WORLD
www.coldtype.net

The Writers



John Pilger



George Monbiot



Norman Solomon



Michael I. Niman

JOHN PILGER, who has twice been Britain's Journalist of the Year, writes for newspapers around the world and for *New Statesman* magazine. His latest book is **Freedom Next Time** (Random House UK). The columns reproduced here were first appeared in the *London Daily Mirror*

GEORGE MONBIOT'S latest book is **Heat: How To Stop The Planet From Burning**. His new book, **Bring On The Apocalypse**, is published this month. These columns were first published in *The Guardian*

NORMAN SOLOMON is the author of 13 books, including **Made Love Got War**, **War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death** and, with Reese Erlich, **Target Iraq: What the News Media Didn't Tell You**. A nationally syndicated columnist on media and politics, he is a recipient of the George Orwell Award, which honors distinguished contributions to honesty and clarity in public language.

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GEORGE MONBIOT

A wilful blindness

March 11, 2003

The war in Afghanistan has plainly brought certain benefits to that country: thousands of girls have gone to school for the first time, for example, and in some parts of the country women have been able to go back to work. While more than 3,000 civilians were killed by the bombing, while much of the country is still controlled by predatory warlords, while most of the promised assistance has not materialised, while torture is widespread and women are still beaten in the streets, it would be wrong to minimise gains that have flowed from the defeat of the Taliban. But, and I realise that it might sound callous to say it, this does not mean that the Afghan war was a good thing.

What almost all those who supported that war and are now calling for a new one have forgotten is that there are two sides to every conflict, and therefore two sets of outcomes to every victory. The Afghan regime changed, but so, in subtler ways, did the government of the US. It was empowered not only by its demonstration of military superiority but also by the widespread support it enjoyed. It has used the licence it was granted in Afghanistan as a licence to take its war wherever it wants.

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Those of us who oppose the impending conquest of Iraq must recognise that there's a possibility that, if it goes according to plan, it could improve the lives of many Iraqi people. But to pretend that this battle begins and ends in Iraq requires a wilful denial of the context in which it occurs

ing conquest of Iraq must recognise that there's a possibility that, if it goes according to plan, it could improve the lives of many Iraqi people. But to pretend that this battle begins and ends in Iraq requires a wilful denial of the context in which it occurs. That context is a blunt attempt by the superpower to reshape the world to suit itself.

In this week's *Observer*, David Aaronovitch suggested that, before September 11, the Bush administration was "relatively indifferent to the nature of the regimes in the Middle East". Only after America was attacked was it forced to start taking an interest in the rest of the world.

If Aaronovitch believes this, he would be well-advised to examine the website of the Project for the New American Century, the pressure group established by, among others, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Jeb Bush, Paul Wolfowitz, Lewis Libby, Elliott Abrams and Zalmay Khalilzad, all of whom (except the president's brother) are now senior officials in the US government.

Its statement of principles, signed by those men on June 3 1997, asserts that the key challenge for the US is "to shape a new century favourable to American principles and interests". This requires "a military that is strong and ready to meet

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both present and future challenges; a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad; and national leadership that accepts the United States' global responsibilities".

On January 26 1998, these men wrote to President Clinton, urging him "to enunciate a new strategy", namely "the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power". If Clinton failed to act, "the safety of American troops in the region, of our friends and allies like Israel and the moderate Arab states, and a significant portion of the world's supply of oil will all be put at hazard". They acknowledged that this doctrine would be opposed, but "American policy cannot continue to be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council".

Last year, the Glasgow *Sunday Herald* obtained a copy of a confidential report produced by the Project in September 2000, which suggested that blatting Saddam was the beginning, not the end of its strategy. "While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein." The wider strategic aim, it insisted, was "maintaining global US pre-eminence".

Another document obtained by the *Herald*, written by Paul Wolfowitz and Lewis Libby, called upon the US to "discourage advanced industrial nations from challenging our leadership or even aspiring to a larger regional or global role".

On taking power, the Bush administration was careful not to alarm its allies. The new president spoke only of the need "to project our strength with purpose and with humility" and "to find new ways to keep the peace". From his first week in office,

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however, he began to engage not so much in nation-building as in planet-building.

The ostensible purpose of Bush's missile defence programme is to shoot down incoming nuclear missiles. The real purpose is to provide a justification for the extraordinarily ambitious plans – contained in a Pentagon document entitled Vision for 2020 – to turn space into a new theatre of war, developing orbiting weapons systems that can instantly destroy any target anywhere on Earth. By creating the impression that his programme is merely defensive, Bush could justify a terrifying new means of acquiring what he calls "full spectrum dominance" over planetary security.

Immediately after the attack on New York, the US government began establishing "forward bases" in Asia. As the assistant secretary of state, Elizabeth Jones, noted: "When the Afghan conflict is over we will not leave Central Asia. We have long-term plans and interests in this region." The US now has bases in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikistan and Georgia. Their presence has, in effect, destroyed the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation which Russia and China had established in an attempt to develop a regional alternative to US power.

In January, the US moved into Djibouti, ostensibly to widen its war against terror, while accidentally gaining strategic control over the Bab al-Mandab – one of the world's two most important oil shipping lanes. It already controls the other one, the straits of Hormuz. Two weeks ago, under the same pretext, it sent 3,000 soldiers to the Philippines. Last year it began negotiations to establish a military base in Sao Tome and Principe, from which it can, if it chooses, dominate West Africa's principal

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oilfields. By pure good fortune, the US government now exercises strategic control over almost all the world's major oil producing regions and oil transport corridors.

It has also used its national tragedy as an excuse for developing new nuclear and biological weapons, while ripping up the global treaties designed to contain them. All this is as the project prescribed. Among other policies, it has called for the development of a new generation of biological agents, which will attack people with particular genetic characteristics.

Why do the supporters of this war find it so hard to see what is happening? Why

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do the conservatives who go berserk when the European Union tries to change the content of our chocolate bars look the other way when the US seeks to reduce us to a vassal state? Why do the liberal interventionists who fear that Saddam Hussein might one day deploy a weapon of mass destruction refuse to see that George Bush is threatening to do just this against an ever-growing number of states? Is it because they cannot face the scale of the threat, and the scale of the resistance necessary to confront it? Is it because these brave troopers cannot look the real terror in the eye? **CT**

JOHN PILGER

This is the cost of Blair's 'moral' war

March 13, 2003

The Blair Government has known, almost from the day it came to office in 1997, that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction were almost certainly destroyed following the Gulf War. Of all the pro-war propaganda of Blair and Bush, and their current threats giving Saddam Hussein yet another deadline to disarm, what may be their biggest lie is exposed by this revelation.

Two weeks ago, a transcript of a United Nations debriefing of Iraqi general Hussein Kamel was obtained by the American magazine, *Newsweek*, and by Cambridge University analyst, Glen Rangwala (who last month revealed that Blair's "intelligence dossier" on Iraq was lifted, word for word, from an American student's thesis).

General Kamel was the West's "star witness" in its case against Saddam Hussein. He was no ordinary defector. A son-in-law of the Iraqi dictator, he had immense power in Iraq; and when he defected, he took with him crates of secret documents on Iraq's weapons programme.

These secrets have been repeatedly cited by George W Bush and his officials as "evidence" that Iraq still has large quantities of deadly weapons of mass destruction, and that only war can disarm it. Bush, his officials and leading American commentators, have frequently lauded General Kamel as the most reliable source of information on

General Kamel says

categorically: "I ordered destruction of all chemical weapons.

All weapons – biological, chemical, missile, nuclear – were destroyed."

All that remains, he says, are the blueprints, computer disks and microfiches

Iraq's weapons. The Blair government has echoed this.

In 1995, General Kamel was debriefed by senior officials of the United Nations inspections team, then known as UNSCOM, and by the International Atomic Energy Agency. The complete transcript, now disclosed for the first time, contradicts almost everything Bush and Blair have said about the threat of Iraqi weapons.

For example, General Kamel says categorically: "I ordered destruction of all chemical weapons. All weapons – biological, chemical, missile, nuclear – were destroyed." All that remains, he says, are the blueprints, computer disks and microfiches.

Newsweek says that the CIA and Britain's MI6 were told this; and Blair and Bush must have been told the truth. In other words, it is likely that Iraq has been substantially disarmed for at least eight years.

With General Kamel now out of the way (he was killed when he returned to Iraq in 1996), his "evidence" was selectively made public by Washington and London. In his dramatic presentation to the UN Security Council on February 5, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said that the truth about Iraq's nerve gas weapons "only came out after inspectors collected documentation as a result of the defection of Hussein Kamel, Saddam Hussein's late son in law".

What Powell neglected to mention was

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that his star witness had told them all the weapons had been destroyed.

General Kamel's sensational admission has been corroborated by the former chief UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter who says that when he left Iraq in 1998, disarmament was "90 to 95 per cent".

A United Nations verifying panel set up by the Security Council, confirmed that "the bulk of Iraq's proscribed weapons programmes has been eliminated". This has seldom been reported.

Of course, none of these facts will deter the American and British security agencies from inventing and planting "evidence" of "Saddam's secret weapons" once Anglo-American forces take over Baghdad.

When America and Britain crush Iraq, a new phase of their black propaganda will emerge – for which the British public ought to be prepared. This new range of deceptions will be designed to justify attacking a sovereign state and killing innocent people: a crime under international law, with or without a second UN resolution.

Black propaganda of this kind has a long history. My own experience of it was the American invasion of Vietnam. In 1964, the US State Department published a White Paper with pages of "conclusive proof" of North Vietnam's preparations to invade the south. This "proof" stemmed from the "discovery" of a stockpile of weapons found floating in a junk off the coast of South Vietnam. The White Paper, which provided a quasi-legal justification for the American invasion, was known as a "master illusion". The whole episode was fake, a set-up.

Master illusion was the CIA's term for master lie. In 1982, I interviewed Ralph McGehee, a senior CIA officer who documented the planting of the fake evidence. He told me: "The CIA loaded up a junk, a

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North Vietnamese junk, with communist weapons ... They floated this junk off the coast of Central Vietnam. Then they shot it up and made it look like a fire fight had taken place. They then brought in the American press and the international press and said, 'Here's the evidence that the North Vietnamese are invading South Vietnam.' Based on this 'evidence', the US Marines went in, and the American air force began regular bombing of North Vietnam."

As a result of this fakery, which included the elaborate fiction that an American destroyer had been attacked by a North Vietnamese gunboat, the United States dispatched its greatest ever land army to Vietnam, and dropped the greatest tonnage of bombs in the history of warfare, and forced millions of people to abandon their homes, and used chemical weapons that profoundly damaged the environment and human genes, leaving a once beautiful land petrified.

At least two million people were killed, and many more were maimed and otherwise ruined. Now replace "Vietnam" with "Iraq" in this story of lies; and you have the essentials of the same justification for another great criminal act.

Watch how the propaganda unfolds once the bombing is over and the Americans are running Baghdad and their spin machine. There will be the "discovery of Saddam's secret arsenal," probably in the basement of one his palaces. This will be accompanied by the "discovery" of gruesome evidence of Saddam's oppression. This will not come as news to the many dedicated anti-war campaigners, who for years tried to stop the American and British governments from supplying Saddam with the tools of his oppression.

They include many Iraqis exiled in

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Britain, such as Khalid Sahi, who was tortured by the regime and opposes an attack that "will bring nothing but more bloodshed, more misery"; and the anti-war Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn, who has protested about the Iraqi dictator for more than twenty years and demanded that the British government prosecute British companies that sustained the Iraqi torturers.

Two years ago, Peter Hain, then a Foreign Office minister, blocked a parliamentary request to publish the full list of British companies that had illegally traded with Saddam Hussein. The reason why became clear last week when the *Guardian* newspaper disclosed that the Blair government had secretly paid out more than £33 million in taxpayers' money to British companies claiming non-payment on the weapons they sold Saddam Hussein in the 1980s. The total loss to the taxpayer on sales to Iraq now exceeds £1billion. Add this to the £3.5billion that Gordon Brown has "put aside" for an attack on Iraq. Add this to the £1billion that the bombing of Iraq has already cost – the rarely reported bombing by British and American aircraft in the so-called "no fly zones", which now cover most of Iraqi airspace and were set up, according to Blair, to "protect Iraq's minorities". Who believes this now?

This week, the Ministry of Defence said: "We never target civilians [in the no-fly zones] ... there's no evidence of civilian casualties."

The lie of this statement would be breathtaking were it not routine.

In northern Kurdish Iraq, I interviewed members of one family who had lost their grandfather, their father and four brothers and sisters when a "coalition" aircraft (British or American) dive-bombed them and the sheep they were tending. It was

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open desert, a moonscape with not a sign of other life, let alone a military installation. Amid the carcasses of blasted sheep were pieces of clothing and a single shoe.

The attack was investigated and verified by the chief United Nations representative in Iraq at the time, Hans Von Sponeck, who drove there especially from Baghdad. His findings are listed among dozens of similar attacks – on shepherds, farmers, fishermen – in a document prepared by the United Nations Security Section. At a windswept cemetery near the town of Mosul, I caught sight of the shepherd's widow as she grieved for her husband and four children. "I want to see the pilot who did this," she shouted.

Last week, "coalition" aircraft killed another six people in the southern city of Basra. Nothing unusual there. When I was last in Basra, an American missile killed six children when it "mistakenly" hit Al Jumohria, a very poor section of Basra's residential area.

I walked down the street where the missile had struck in the early hours; it had followed the line of houses, destroying one after the other. I met the father of two sisters, aged eight and 10, who were photographed by a local weddings photographer, Nabil al-Jerani, shortly after the attack. Their bodies were unlike the other four children, who were blown to bits, their limbs and flesh in the overhead wires.

These two little girls were left intact. In Nabil's photographs, they are in their night-dresses, one with a bow in her hair, their bodies perfectly engraved in the rubble of their homes, where they had been bombed to death, murdered, in their beds.

When Blair speaks about the "moral case" for sending hundreds of missiles against this nation of so many children, as

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well as new types of cluster bombs and bunker bombs and microwave bombs, and shells tipped with pure uranium, a form of nuclear weapon, the images of the two sisters provide an eloquent commentary on the Prime Minister's Christian "morality".

And when pictures of exhausted Iraqis greeting their "liberation" are flashed around the world, remember the faces that will be missing in the crowds – not only those of the children bombed and disposed of as "collateral damage", but more than a million faces declared expendable by the American-driven and British-backed economic embargo.

Remember the vaccines, cancer-treatment equipment, pain-killers, plasma bags, food treatment equipment and much else denied over fourteen years: \$5.4 billion worth as of last July, to be precise, blocked by the US government, backed by the Blair government.

Remember the words of President Clinton's then representative at the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, when she was asked if the price of 500,000 Iraqi children was a price worth paying for the embargo. "We think the price is worth it," she said.

And when you next hear Bush or Blair or Straw or Hoon talk about "the tyrant who gassed his own people", remember those American officials and British ministers who competed with each other to excuse and effectively reward Saddam Hussein for gassing 5,000 Kurds in the town of Halabja.

Barely one month after the atrocity in 1988, Tony Newton, Margaret Thatcher's Trade Secretary, flew to Baghdad to offer Saddam £340million of taxpayers' money in export credits. Three months later, the smil-

Remember, too, Blair's long silence. There is no record of Blair saying anything worthwhile about Saddam's "excesses" (as his crimes used to be known by British ministers when he was "one of us") until after September 11, 2001

ing Newton was back, this time to celebrate with Saddam the joyous news that Iraq was now Britain's third-largest market for machine tools, from which a range of Iraqi weapons was forged – some of them used against British troops in the Gulf War.

Newton was followed by Assistant US Secretary of State John Kelly who flew to Baghdad to tell Saddam that "you are a source for moderation in the region, and the United States wants to broaden her relationship with Iraq".

When the "liberation" of Baghdad is on the front page, remember the warmongering newspapers whose editorials defended Saddam Hussein throughout the 1980s by promoting the lie that his use of chemical weapons against Iran was purely defensive.

Remember, too, Blair's long silence. There is no record of Blair saying anything worthwhile about Saddam's "excesses" (as his crimes used to be known by British ministers when he was "one of us") until after September 11, 2001 when the Americans, frustrated at having failed to catch Osama bin Laden, declared the Iraqi dictator their number one enemy.

Like a discredited East European autocrat, attended only by his court of supplicants and propagandists, Blair has few left to deceive. He even claimed the other day that "no Iraqis marched" in the great demonstration of February 15. In fact, as many as 7,000 Iraqis and Kurds marched. Iraqi families stood on the roadside holding up home-made placards: "Thank you for supporting my people."

None, it can be assumed, has any time for Saddam Hussein; but none want their country strangled, attacked, poisoned and occupied by another variety of dictator. **CT**

MICHAEL I. NIMAN

Creepy 'FReepers' target activists

March 13, 2003

The Cayuga Coalition for Peace meeting had just got under way at an Auburn, New York church earlier this month when a tall, stocky, dour, middle-aged man quietly entered the building. Refusing to join the meeting at a large table in the center of the room, he instead settled into a chair off to the side, took out a pad, and began scribbling notes. Coalition members would later learn he was labeling them as "commy#1", "commy#2" and so on, recording everything they said and did. They found his notes on the web.

Auburn is a small post-industrial city nestled in the heart of New York's Finger Lakes region. It is home to New York's oldest continually operating prison, a maximum security facility that has anchored the city's economy since 1816. A Wal-Mart now thrives just east of a downtown littered with empty buildings. There are a few well paying industrial and prison jobs left in town, but most new jobs are in the low wage service sector. Like many upstate New York cities, Auburn now seems mired in an air of depression.

Beneath the surface, however, lies a colorful history. Auburn once served as a major station on the underground railroad, and was home to Harriet Tubman. In the late 1700s, General Sullivan's army swept through the area in a genocidal wave, wip-

It should also come as no surprise that this peace movement would wind up in the crosshairs of a new pro-war movement intent on frightening, harassing and disrupting grassroots anti-war activism

ing out entire Cayuga villages. In the 1800s, the region hosted a plethora of utopian communities. In the early 1900s, the women's suffrage movement took root in neighboring Seneca Falls. America's largest Women's Peace encampment was there in the 1980s across the road from a now defunct Army base. Given its history of genocide, war, peace, promise, dreams and disappointment, it should come as no surprise that this decaying backwater would now host a thriving and growing peace movement – one that recently brought an anti-war resolution to the city government and the county legislature.

And it should also come as no surprise that this peace movement would wind up in the crosshairs of a new pro-war movement intent on frightening, harassing and disrupting grassroots anti-war activism.

The stalker eavesdropping on the Cayuga Coalition for Peace turned out to be a postal worker from nearby Port Byron. Within moments he managed to adequately disrupt the coalition's meeting, making himself the center of attention as a mix of angry and frightened attendees debated about how to handle the interloper. Lost was any discussion of the impending war and the upcoming votes on the pending anti-war resolutions.

With the minister asking him to leave the church, the mailman opted to use an

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old antiwar protest tactic, committing civil disobedience by refusing to move. He later described the coalition members and minister as “godless heathens,” who by opposing the war had declared “treason,” thus forfeiting all of their property rights. The minister called the police and the meeting ended in chaos – reconvening later in a private home.

The mailman turned out to be part of a national movement associated with the Fresno, California based “Free Republic” organization. Free Republic, with chapters scattered around the United States, operates primarily as a clearinghouse for individuals involved in protests and direct action against the anti-war, feminist, gay rights, pro-choice and environmental movements. They call these actions, “FReeps,” and their targets, “America-hating leftist weasels.”

The vast majority of actions in their current campaign, “Operation Infinite FReep,” are peaceful protests by citizens exercising their constitutional rights – usually in the form of small counter-demonstrations at peace rallies. In this sense, the organization and its FReepers represent a rather benign part of this nation’s political tapestry. Americans have a right to protest, no matter how repugnant their particular cause.

The Port Byron mailman, however, represents the dark dirty underbelly of the FReeping movement – a movement dedicated not to the free expression of ideas, but to harassing others who are trying to exercise their constitutional rights. These are the creepy FReepers, and they might be coming to a church basement near you.

After leaving the Auburn meeting, the FReeper rushed home to post a report of his escapades on the Free Republic site. His post was detailed, with various quotes at-

To the FReepers, anyone opposed to George W. Bush’s policies, whether they are Democrats, Conservatives, Greens or Republicans, is a “commie”

tributed to characters such as “Mr. Peace Minister,” “commy [sic] woman #5,” and a police officer he identified as his “1st cousin,” who thought he was “acting strange.”

The post kicked off a lively on-line discussion, with FReepers from around the US chiming in to congratulate their new comrade on a successful FReep, and to offer ideas for future actions against the Auburn activists, such as using a hidden tape recorder instead of a note pad, and bringing reinforcements before encountering the “godless [church] commies” again.

The obsessive use of the term, “commie,” and various related misspellings, is about as accurate as the term “godless,” which FReepers repeatedly use to describe clergy and church-based activists who disagree with their views. To the FReepers, anyone opposed to George W. Bush’s policies, whether they are Democrats, Conservatives, Greens or Republicans, is a “commie.” Hence, the word takes on a new meaning – having nothing to do with Karl Marx or any related economic theory. It represents, instead, a rather Neanderthal political theory, probably inspired by Bush’s “you are either with us or with the terrorists” line. In this case, the Auburn FReeper writes, “Let everyone in our nation stand and be counted. American or communists. No gray areas, no compromise.” Such is the depth of political discourse in the “Free Republic.”

The blanket use of labels and identifiers such as “commy # 3” to identify human beings serves another purpose – one more ominous than the simple debasing of political discourse. It strips people of their humanity, reducing them to faceless objects or infidels, thus making it easier to dismiss their ideas and to allow violence to be committed

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against them. This is an aspect of the same murderous fundamentalism that fueled the terrorist attacks against our nation.

In this light, much of what the Auburn FReeper and his comrades wrote in the hours and days after the Cayuga Peace Coalition meeting is quite disturbing. Egged on by fellow FReepers, the Auburn FReeper posted a late night statement reading, "It is time for confrontation. Treason cannot go unchallenged." Confusing the Cayuga peace activists for the mostly Saudi 9-11 hijackers, he wrote, "They fired the first shot. We will fire the last." Six minutes later he felt compelled to add another post, writing, "Read my previous. I am serious not a nut [sic]."

Whether he is seriously not a nut, or not a serious nut, or whatever he is trying to say, once thing is certain – the Auburn FReeper is not an anomaly in the Free Republic organization. The website is moderated, yet his posts remain on line. And with the exception of one conservative constitutionalist who he dismissed as a "commy" [sic], none of his correspondents challenged his hate-filled and possibly homicidal bile.

Another thread targeted the Women in Black – the international movement of silent women's protests against war and human rights violations. There, amidst a plethora of misogynist comments, such as, "Those women disgust me," and "I hate their hairy legs," were a few strategies for confronting the non-violent vigils, such as attacking them with giant red, white and blue painted rubber penises. In another thread, a poster suggested riling Kent State anti-war demonstrators with signs reading, "The national guard needs to improve its marksmanship." In yet another thread, a FReeper posted a bizarre poem, writing that "twisted Lib'ral[sic] must be smacked," while terming ex-President Bill

They're careful not to alienate potential support among non-Arab minorities while using anti-Arab hysteria to whip up frenzied opposition to an amorphous movement of "commies"

Clinton and sidekick Al Gore as "Commie-Pinko sons of bitches" and "treas'nous [sic] wretches" who would, "Feel my wrath." FReeper commentary such as this is normal fare while high school students are detained for wearing "Stop Bush" shirts.

Moderators at Free Republic seem to be defining a carefully crafted political discourse. Anti-black racism is more or less a taboo, as are anti-Jewish remarks, but the site is awash in anti-Arab commentary, such as the boast of a flag vendor who refused to sell American flags to Arab-American children, instead chiding them not to "grow up to be suicide bombers."

While the individual FReepers may not be a sophisticated bunch, the Free Republic moderators seem quite adept at what they do. They're careful not to alienate potential support among non-Arab minorities while using anti-Arab hysteria to whip up frenzied opposition to an amorphous movement of "commies." It's the precision of the FReeping message that is particularly alarming, as the organization seems to be coalescing a movement of brown shirts, much like Manuel Noriega's "Dignity Battalions," to whip George Bush's opposition into line – in the same way El Salvador and Guatemala's death squads effectively stifled popular political opposition in those countries for years. Threats of violence among FReepers are also not a problem – as long as they serve to keep the riff raff in line. Hence, it shouldn't come as any surprise that peace activists featured on the FReeping site have later been the victims of death threats.

The Auburn FReeper is not a lone anti-social stalker, but part of a growing national movement – one that hopes to threaten and stifle the political discourse that is a democracy's life blood. **CT**

NORMAN SOLOMON

Conventional wisdom: Obedience

March 14, 2003

As the possibility of a U.S. invasion turns into the reality of massive carnage, the war on Iraq cannot avoid confronting Americans with a tacit expectation that rarely gets media scrutiny. In a word: obedience. When a country – particularly “a democracy” – goes to war, the passive consent of the governed lubricates the machinery of slaughter. Silence is a key form of cooperation, but the war-making system does not insist on quietude or agreement. Mere passivity or self-restraint will suffice to keep the missiles flying, the bombs exploding and the faraway people dying.

On the home front, beliefs are of scant importance. Antiwar sentiment is necessary but insufficient to halt a war. Much more is needed than expressions of dissent that stay within the customary bounds.

Daily media speculation about the starting date for all-out war on Iraq has contributed to widespread passivity – a kind of spectator relationship to military actions being implemented in our names.

We can't just blame the media conglomerates and Washington spinners for the prevailing stupor. After decades of desensitizing propaganda, we routinely crave the insulation that news outlets offer. We tell ourselves that our personal lives are difficult enough without getting too upset about world events.

A pathetic case in point is Sen. John Kerry, the Massachusetts Democrat who voted for the congressional war resolution last October while trying to pass himself off as a critic of President Bush's enthusiasm for war

The conventional wisdom of American political life has made it predictable that editorial writers and politicians cannot resist accommodating themselves to expediency by the time the first missiles reach Baghdad. Conformist behavior – in contrast to authentic conscience – is notably plastic.

A pathetic case in point is Sen. John Kerry, the Massachusetts Democrat who voted for the congressional war resolution last October while trying to pass himself off as a critic of President Bush's enthusiasm for war. While campaigning in Iowa recently for his party's presidential nomination, Kerry told a *New York Times* reporter: “When the war begins, if the war begins, I support the troops and I support the United States of America winning as rapidly as possible. When the troops are in the field and fighting – if they're in the field and fighting – remembering what it's like to be those troops, I think they need a unified America that is prepared to win.”

Prepared to win. Such a phrase rolls off an oily tongue with ease. As a consequence, of course, many blameless people must die.

Howard Dean, a former governor of Vermont, is supposedly an antiwar candidate for the Democratic presidential slot. On the campaign trail in Iowa, he “stopped short when asked what he would say if there was a war,” according to the *Times*.

“You know, I don't know the answer to

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that yet," Dean said. "Certainly I'm going to support American kids that are sent over there. Obviously, I'm going to wish everybody well. You know, you root for your country."

You root for your country. No matter how horrific its actions.

Billions of buds on countless flowers and trees will wondrously open across the United States during the next weeks. Meanwhile, the Pentagon's firepower will destroy uncounted human beings in Iraq during what will be, to put it mildly, a war of aggression.

Judgments at Nuremberg and precepts of international law forbid launching aggressive war – an apt description of what the U.S. government has in store for Iraqi people this spring.

"We must make clear to the Germans that the wrong for which their fallen lead-

More than 300 law professors in the United States signed a statement pointing out that "the international rule of law is not a soft luxury to be discarded whenever leaders find it convenient or popular to resort to savage violence."

ers are on trial is not that they lost the war, but that they started it," said Supreme Court Justice Robert L. Jackson, a U.S. representative to the International Conference on Military Trials at the close of World War II. He added that "no grievances or policies will justify resort to aggressive war. It is utterly renounced and condemned as an instrument of policy."

Last November, more than 300 law professors in the United States signed a statement pointing out that "the international rule of law is not a soft luxury to be discarded whenever leaders find it convenient or popular to resort to savage violence."

The deadening lockstep of obedience is easier to fault in other societies. Close to home, as the adrenaline of unfathomable violence pulses through the televisions of America, the siren of deference to authority may seem irresistible. But it isn't. **GT**

GEORGE MONBIOT

Left behind to starve

March 18, 2003

There is surely no more obvious symptom of the corruption of western politics than the disproportion between the money available for sustaining life and the money available for terminating it. We could, I think, expect that, if they were asked to vote on the matter, most of the citizens of the rich world would demand that their governments spend as much on humanitarian aid as they spend on developing new means of killing people. But the military-industrial complex is a beast which becomes both fiercer and hungrier the more it is fed.

As the US prepares to spend some \$12bn a month on bombing the Iraqis, it has so far offered only \$65m to provide them with food, water, sanitation, shelter and treatment for the injuries they are likely to receive. A confidential UN contingency plan for Iraq, which was leaked in January, suggests that the war could expose around one million children to "risk of death from malnutrition". It warns that "the collapse of essential services in Iraq could lead to a humanitarian emergency of proportions well beyond the capacity of UN agencies and other aid organisations". Around 60% of the population is entirely dependent on the oil for food programme, administered by the Iraqi government. This scheme was suspended by the UN yesterday, leaving the Iraqis reliant on foreign aid. The money

A confidential UN contingency plan for Iraq, which was leaked in January, suggests that the war could expose around one million children to "risk of death from malnutrition"

pledged so far is enough to sustain them for less than a fortnight.

It is hard to believe, however, that the US government will leave them to starve once it has captured their country. For the weeks or months during which Iraq dominates the news, the US will be obliged to defend them from the most immediate impacts of the institutional collapse its war will cause. Afterwards, like the people of Afghanistan, the Iraqis will be first forgotten by the media and then deserted by those who promised to support them.

But even before the first troops cross the border, the impending war has caused a global humanitarian crisis. As donor countries set aside their aid budgets to save both themselves and the US from embarrassment under the camera lights in Baghdad, they have all but ceased to provide money to other nations. The world, as a result, could soon be confronted by a humanitarian funding crisis graver than any since the end of the second world war.

Every year, in November, the UN agencies which deal with disasters launch what they call a "consolidated appeal" for each of the countries suffering a "complex emergency". They expect to receive the money they request by May of the following year. The payments and promises they have extracted so far chart the collapse of international concern for the people of almost

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every nation except Iraq.

In Eritrea, for example, the drought is so severe that the water table has fallen by 10 metres. Most of the nation's crops have failed and grain prices have doubled. Seventy per cent of its 3.3 million people are now classified as vulnerable to famine. The UN has asked the rich countries for \$163m to help them. It has received \$4m, or 2.5% of the money it requested.

Burundi, where almost one-sixth of the inhabitants have been forced out of their homes by conflict and natural disasters, and which is now officially listed as the third poorest nation on earth, has received 3% of its UN request. Liberia, where rebels have rendered much of the western part of the country uninhabitable, forcing some 500,000 people out of their homes, has been given 1.2%; Sierra Leone, where lassa fever is now rampaging through the refugee camps, has received 1%; and Guinea, which has recently taken 82,000 refugees from Cote d'Ivoire, 0.4%. Somalia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo have each received less than 6%.

Much of the money for these invisible countries has come from donor nations with relatively small economies, such as Sweden, Norway, Canada and Ireland. "The state of Africa," Tony Blair told his party conference in October 2001, "is a scar on the conscience of the world, but if the world focused on it, we could heal it." Well, let it now be a scar on the conscience of Tony Blair.

As a result of this unprecedented failure by the rich nations to cough up, the people of the forgotten countries will, very soon, begin to starve to death. The UN has warned that "a break in supplies" to Eritrea "is now inevitable". The World Food Programme has started feeding fewer people

"The state of Africa," Tony Blair told his party conference in October 2001, "is a scar on the conscience of the world, but if the world focused on it, we could heal it." Well, let it now be a scar on the conscience of Tony Blair

there, but will run out of food within two months. In Burundi it can, it says, continue feeding people "for another four weeks". Beans will run out in Liberia this month; cereals in May. One hundred thousand refugees in Guinea could find themselves without food by August. Yet neither of the two governments which are about to launch a "humanitarian war" appear to be concerned by the impending humanitarian catastrophes in the world's poorest nations.

The aid crisis is now so serious that it is restricting disaster relief even in nations which are considered by the major powers to be geopolitically important. The UN agencies have so far received just 2.9% of their request for Palestine, and 8.4% of the money they need in Afghanistan.

The latter figure is, in light of the repeated promises made by the nations prosecuting the war there, extraordinary. "To the Afghan people we make this commitment," Blair pledged during the same speech in October 2001. "The conflict will not be the end. We will not walk away, as the outside world has done so many times before." Three months later, the UN estimated that Afghanistan would need at least \$10bn for reconstruction over the following five years. The US, which had just spent \$4.5bn on bombing the country, offered \$300m for the first year and refused to make any commitment for subsequent years. This year, George Bush "forgot" to produce an aid budget for Afghanistan, until he was forced to provide another \$300m by Congress.

The Afghan government, which has an annual budget of just \$460m – or around half of what the US still spends every month on chasing the remnants of al-Qaida through the mountains – is effectively bankrupt. At the beginning of this

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month the Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, flew to Washington to beg George Bush for more money. He was given \$50m, \$35m of which the US insists is spent on the construction of a five-star hotel in Kabul. Karzai, in other words, has discovered what the people of Iraq will soon find out: generosity dries up when you are yesterday's news.

If, somehow, you are still suffering from the delusion that this war is to be fought for the sake of the Iraqi people, I would invite you to consider the record of the prosecuting nations. We may believe that George Bush and Tony Blair have the interests of foreigners at heart only when they spend more on feeding them than they spend on killing them. **GT**

JOHN PILGER

How you can protest

March 20, 2003

When Bush and Blair begin their illegal and immoral attack on a country that offers us no threat, we all have a choice. We can wring our hands and say there is nothing we can do in the face of such powerful piracy – or we can reclaim the democracy that has been so corrupted by an elected dictatorship (in Bush’s case, unelected).

There is only one responsible way to achieve the second goal. The polite term is civil disobedience. The street term is rebellion.

In 1946, Justice Robert Jackson, the chief prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials of the Nazi leadership, said that the “very essence” of international justice “is that individuals have international duties which transcend national obligations of obedience imposed by the state”.

The British government is about to commit a great criminal act. That is not rhetoric – it is true. Every tenet of international law makes that clear, not least the United Nations Charter itself. Indeed, the judges at Nuremberg were quite clear about what they considered the gravest of all war crimes: that of an unprovoked invasion of a sovereign territory.

In the face of this impending crime, the “international duty which transcend national obligations of obedience” now be-

Rebellion against a government committing a crime in your name is now of vital importance. Silence and inaction will only embolden Blair, this man who has taken this country to war unnecessarily five times in his six years in office

longs to you, the millions of people who have understood the nature of the crime. Now, you have both the right and the duty to act.

Rebellion against a government committing a crime in your name is now of vital importance. Silence and inaction will only embolden Blair, this man who has taken this country to war unnecessarily five times in his six years in office. Remember his remark that North Korea, a nuclear power, is “next”.

On the day of the attack on Iraq, leave what you are doing if you can. Leave your home, work, college, school. Join a demonstration. If you are unsure where to go, contact the Stop the War Coalition on 07951 235915. The website is www.stopwar.org.uk

Or get in touch with Globalise Resistance, which is organising mass walkouts and street blockades in the cities. Phone them on 020 7053 2071. Their website is www.resist.org.uk. Amnesty International is another source: 020 7814 6200. Their website is www.amnesty.org.uk

There will be non-violent protests by Reclaim the Bases, which is organising gate blockades and peace vigils at military bases. Contact 07887 585721. Their website is www.reclaimthebases.org.uk

Be encouraged that the revolt is already under way. In January, Scottish train drivers refused to move munitions. In Italy, people

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have been blocking dozens of trains carrying American military personnel and weapons, and dockers have refused to load arms shipments. US military bases have been blockaded in Germany, and thousands at Shannon in Ireland have made it difficult for the US military to refuel its planes on their way to Iraq.

Propaganda is a weapon almost as lethal as any bomb. For months, "weapons of mass destruction" has been a phoney news issue. As former chief UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter has said constantly, Iraq is "90-95 per cent" disarmed. The current head of the weapons inspection team, Hans Blix, has all but called Blair and Bush knaves and liars. When asked what secret arsenals there were in Iraq, one of his inspectors said: "Zilch".

And yet we have been forced to participate in this charade: to debate and analyse its specious agenda. BBC current affairs programmes, on radio and television, have consistently promoted the government's warmongering as legitimate by channelling and echoing its ever-changing deceptions.

A memorandum leaked last week, written by Richard Sambrook, a senior BBC executive, warns programme makers against broadcasting too much dissent and "attracting some of the more extreme anti-war views (even though) there is no question there is a majority public view which is against unilateral US action."

That he regards principled objection to the killing of innocent people as "extreme" while saying nothing about the murderous willingness of Blair and his apologists reflects the distortion of intellect and morality that pervades so much of BBC current affairs.

When a maverick BBC documentary dared to investigate Israel's weapons of

Had the great broadcasting institutions and the great newspapers, on both sides of the Atlantic, not channelled and echoed the lies and the false agendas, but relentlessly exposed them, the Bush gang, I believe, would not have been able to go ahead with this outrage. Neither would Blair

mass destruction and the use of gas by the Israelis, thus showing the hypocrisy of Bush and Blair, it was dropped from a prime slot on BBC2 at the last moment and put out at 11.20 pm – when most people were asleep.

In the United States, where a recent survey found that 75 per cent of current affairs interviews were with either current or former government or military officials, censorship is more entrenched. However, when the attack begins, watch how politicians and former military brass and assorted "experts" fill the small screen in this country.

Propaganda may well have made the difference between war and peace, and life and death for untold numbers of Iraqi men, woman and children. Had the great broadcasting institutions and the great newspapers, on both sides of the Atlantic, not channelled and echoed the lies and the false agendas, but relentlessly exposed them, the Bush gang, I believe, would not have been able to go ahead with this outrage. Neither would Blair.

For this reason, journalists and broadcasters now have a special duty to rebel. Wherever they are, they should follow their conscience, not the demands of a propaganda machine, however subtle and seductive, and materially rewarding.

They might compare their comfortable lives with those of journalists in dangerous countries, like Turkey, an American satellite, which, like Britain, has a population overwhelmingly hostile to an attack on its neighbour, Iraq.

Many Turkish journalists have done their job fearlessly and exposed the mendacious nature of what George Orwell called "official truth". Some have gone to prison and others have been murdered by the state; but their courageous actions have provided millions of their compatriots with

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the truth. Unlike in Britain, for example, a great many Turks are aware of the deaths and suffering of Iraqis caused by the American and British led embargo.

Winston Churchill, when he was colonial secretary, said: "I do not understand this squeamishness about the use of gas. I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes." Nothing has changed. That was 80 years ago. He was referring to Kurds and Iraqis.

When the Bush/Blair attack begins, the insidious equivalent of Churchill's poison gas will be used by the Americans and almost certainly by the British.

This is depleted uranium, a sinister component of tank shells and airborne missiles. In truth, it is a form of nuclear warfare, and all the evidence suggests that its use in the Gulf War in 1991 has caused an epidemic of cancer in southern Iraq: what the doctors there call "the Hiroshima effect", especially among children.

America and Britain have denied Iraq

"Who will have the courage to describe the effects of depleted uranium, a true weapon of mass destruction, a crime against humanity, as part of the 'liberation' that will be the headlined propaganda?"

equipment with which to clean up its contaminated battlefields, and towns and villages, which are about to be poisoned all over again, just as they have denied cancer treatment equipment and drugs, just as this week they caused the United Nations to dismantle an efficient Iraqi food distribution system.

As the dissident reporter Robert Fisk asked recently: "Who will have the courage to describe the effects of depleted uranium, a true weapon of mass destruction, a crime against humanity, as part of the 'liberation' that will be the headlined propaganda?"

By refusing to echo state lies, and by recognising and rebelling against censorship by omission, no British journalist risks jail, or worse, as in Turkey.

Instead, they begin to restore honour to their craft and, along with millions of their readers, listeners and viewers, the very best of people, reclaim democracy from its powerful thieves. **CT**

NORMAN SOLOMON

Casualties of war: First truth, then conscience

March 20, 2003

The national media echo chamber is not receptive to conscience. On television, the voices are usually loud and facile. People often seem to be shouting. In contrast, the human conscience is close to a whisper. Easily unheard. Now, the biggest media outlets are in a frenzy. The networks are at war. Every cable news channel has enlisted. At the bottom of FM radio dials, NPR has been morphing into National Pentagon Radio.

With American tax dollars financing the war on Iraq, the urgent need for us to get in touch with our consciences has never been more acute. The rationales for this war have been thoroughly shredded. (To see how the sordid deceptions and outright lies from the Bush team have been demolished by my colleagues at the Institute for Public Accuracy, take a look at the www.accuracy.org website.) The propaganda edifice of the war rests on a foundation no more substantial than voluminous hot air.

"Anyone who has the power to make you believe absurdities has the power to make you commit injustices," Voltaire wrote in 1767. The quotation is sometimes rendered with different wording: "As long as people believe in absurdities they will continue to commit atrocities."

Either way, a quarter of a millennium later, Voltaire's statement is all too relevant

Conscience is smaller than a single pixel, and much less visible.

You can't see it on a TV screen.

Or hear it.

Or smell it.

Or taste it.

You can only feel it

to this moment. The Bush administration is proud to turn urban areas of Iraq into hell – defying most of the U.N. Security Council and violating the U.N. Charter – all with the righteous claim that the United States is enforcing U.N. Security Council resolutions.

As the apt cliché says, truth is the first casualty of war. But another early casualty is conscience.

Rarely explored in news media, the capacity for conscience is what makes us human. Out of all the differences between people and other animals, Darwin wrote, "the moral sense of conscience is by far the most important."

Voltaire contended that "the safest course is to do nothing against one's conscience" and added: "With this secret, we can enjoy life and have no fear of death." Franz Kafka was alluding to a similar truth when he wrote: "You can hold back from the suffering of the world, you have free permission to do so and it is in accordance with your nature, but perhaps this very holding back is the one suffering that you could have avoided."

Conscience is smaller than a single pixel, and much less visible. You can't see it on a TV screen. Or hear it. Or smell it. Or taste it. You can only feel it.

That's not a marketable sensation. The huge news outlets have swung behind

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slaughter in Iraq, and the dissent propelled by conscience is not deemed to be very newsworthy. The mass media are filled with bright lights and sizzle, with high production values and degraded human values, boosting the war effort while the U.S. government implements a massive crime against humanity.

In May 1952, the playwright Lillian Hellman wrote in a letter to the House Un-American Activities Committee: "I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions."

In 2003, this year's media fashions are increasingly adorning the conformist models of pseudo-patriotism. For many Americans, the gap between what they believe and what's on their TV sets is the distance between their truer selves and their fearful passivity.

For many Americans, the gap between what they believe and what's on their TV sets is the distance between their truer selves and their fearful passivity

In the domestic media siege being maintained by top-notch spinners and shrewd political advisers at the White House, conscience is in the cross hairs. They aim to intimidate, stampede and suppress the many millions of Americans who recognize the deranged and murderous character of the war makers in Washington.

Half a century ago, Albert Einstein urged: "Never do anything against conscience even if the state demands it." Today, one way or another, the mass media are going along with the Bush administration's demands that we not challenge the U.S. military actions now taking uncounted lives in Iraq.

Conscience is not on the military's radar screen, and it's not on our TV screen. But media messages do not define the limits and possibilities of conscience. We do. **CT**

MICHAEL I. NIMAN

Spinning a war and an editor's myth

March 20, 2003

Buffalo News editor Margaret Sullivan is at it again – with another shameless round of self-adoration and praise for her paper. Columns in the mainstream press, such as her Sunday, March 9th piece, entitled, “A healthy debate, and solid information, as war comes ever closer,” are usually designed to directly counter some unspoken truth or reality. In this case, the reality that it attacks head-on is that this has been a bad month for the *News*, which has been censured for its professional transgressions in two national publications.

The more noteworthy criticism came from the prestigious *Columbia Journalism Review*, a non-partisan industry watchdog. They slammed the *News* “for roaming too far from the journalistic range.” Their complaint centered around a book written by the *News*’ managing editor, Stephen Bell, and “sponsored by” the pro-Pataki Business Council of New York State Inc. The book, entitled, *Upstate New York: Corridor to Progress*, counters what the *Columbia Journalism Review* describes as “the grim economic realities of Upstate New York – the shut-down businesses, the lost jobs, the exodus of talent, the disappearing services,” with a rosy-colored fantasy of a coming economic boom. The Business Council’s president described Bell’s book as a “love letter.”

The problem is that Bell was wearing two hats. In one role, he was a pro-Pataki propagandist. In another, he managed a staff of reporters covering the governor's reelection campaign

Observers see the purpose of Bell’s book as being pretty transparent – to help Governor Pataki’s reelection campaign, which at the time Bell wrote the book, was not a certain victory. The problem is that Bell was wearing two hats. In one role, he was a pro-Pataki propagandist. In another, he managed a staff of reporters covering the governor’s reelection campaign as well as a host of economic realities countered by his book – and he did this without revealing the conflict of interest to the *News*’ readership.

In summation, *Columbia Journalism Review* quotes local professor and on-line journalist, Bruce Jackson, editor of the *Buffalo Report*, who broke the story, writing, “When his bosses at the *News* okayed this extracurricular employment, did they ... ask how he could make nice for the big business lobbying organization and at the same time objectively oversee reporters who are examining the region’s most recalcitrant economic, political, and ecological problems?”

The other attack against the *News* is in a piece I wrote for the Washington, D.C. based *Humanist* magazine. In that article, entitled, “What Bush didn’t want you to know about Iraq,” which was adapted from one of my earlier columns for Buffalo’s alternative newsweekly *ArtVoice* (1/9/03), I took *News* editor Margaret Sul-

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livan to task for a previous “audacious display of self-praise.” In that instance, she wrote, “Reporters are expected to get both sides of every situation and to keep their opinions out of their news stories.” I went on to explain how her paper was outright ignoring – as in not giving any coverage whatsoever – to war related stories. I didn’t intend for this criticism of the *News* to go national, since I thought there’d be little interest outside of Buffalo for this part of my story. Hence, I suggested pulling The *Buffalo News* reference from my piece. The editors at the *Humanist*, however, thought it was an important example of how the media in general is failing us. Hence, we left the reference in the national story.

This brings us to the current situation. Sullivan is once again touting the public’s right to know what is going on, and her paper’s role in informing us, as we go off to war. She writes: “As the United States continues to move toward war against Iraq, the *News*’ foremost job is to inform our readers fully and let them come to their own conclusions.” In reality, however, people relying exclusively on the *Buffalo News* will never know what’s going on – as the *News* won’t be fully informing us. Instead, Sullivan’s *Buffalo News* continues to engineer opinion by selectively withholding stories – in contradiction of their stated goals.

Regarding her paper’s news coverage of the Iraq situation, Sullivan writes, “Our most important goal is to report the news, and provide factual information, without expressing a point of view.” She goes on to point out that, “One of the many efforts we’re making toward that end appears in today’s paper, as a special two page report,” which includes, “a timeline that traces the situation back over many decades...”

She writes:
“As the United States continues to move toward war against Iraq, the News’ foremost job is to inform our readers fully and let them come to their own conclusions.”
In reality, however, people relying exclusively on the Buffalo News will never know what’s going on

This was to be Sullivan’s crown jewel of unbiased and comprehensive reportage – but instead it reads like one of George W. Bush’s coloring books. It follows Saddam Hussein’s life as if the recent history of Iraq was this man’s biography. What is omitted from this timeline are key pieces of the Iraq-USA-UK puzzle, such as these:

1920 – British take control of Iraq in wake of World War One and declare the Iraqi province of Kuwait as a separate Colonial Administrative Zone.

1932 – Britain declares Iraq independent, but keeps control of oil-rich Kuwait until 1961, when it becomes an “independent” protectorate.

1960 – CIA launched failed attempt to assassinate Iraq’s leader, Brig. General Abdul Karim Kassem.

1963 – Ba’ath party succeeds in killing Kassem and seizing power in a coup. They would later lose power themselves for a short while before retaking and solidifying their control over the country.

1972 – President Nixon meets with the Shah of Iran. The Shah asks the US to arm a Kurdish rebellion in Iraq in order to distract Iraq from its border dispute with Iran.

1973 – The OPEC oil cartel succeeds in controlling the price of oil and increasing its political power over the West. Iraq is a major OPEC player.

1975 – Shah decides to cozy up with Iraq in order to increase Iran’s influence within OPEC. Toward this end, he asks the US to cut all aid to the Iraqi Kurds, who are then promptly attacked and massacred by Iraq. 200,000 refugees flee Iraq. The US refuses to admit any Kurdish refugees.

1980 – Iran-Iraq war begins. US supplies both sides. 1.5 million people die.

1983 – US Secretary of State George Shultz becomes aware of Iraq’s daily use of

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chemical weapons against Iran.

1983 – President Reagan orders subordinates to do “whatever is necessary” to make sure Iraq does not lose war.

1983 – Donald Rumsfeld meets with Saddam Hussein in Baghdad to offer support.

1984 – US fails to condemn Iraq for use of chemical and biological weapons. 1985-

1989 – US supplies Iraq with chemical and biological weapons components.

1988 – Iran-Iraq war ends. Iraq turns its weapons on Iraqi-Kurdish population, slaughtering Kurds with US-supplied chemical weapons.

1989 – CIA asks Kuwaiti officials to provoke Iraq into attacking. Kuwait continues to pump oil from disputed oilfield on Iraqi border.

1990 – Cold war ends. Members of congress demand “peace dividend” in form of cuts to military budget and increases in spending on domestic social programs. President Bush Sr. resists military cuts while his popularity sinks from the highs he enjoyed immediately after the Panama invasion.

1990 (July 25) – US Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, tells Saddam Hussein, “We have no opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts like your border dispute with Kuwait,” in effect giving Iraq a green light to invade Kuwait.

1990 (July 27) – President Bush Sr. opposes sanctions against Iraq for massacring Kurds.

1990 (July 31) – John Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State repeats Glaspie’s assertion that the US has no opinion on border disputes.

1990 (August 2) – Iraq invades Kuwait (this one actually is in *the News*’ timeline).

1990-1991 – US drops 177,000 pounds of bombs on Kuwait and Iraq, in what histo-

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We’ll see the
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rian William Blum calls, “The most concentrated aerial assault in the history of the world.” US uses depleted uranium (atomic) weaponry and cluster bombs against Iraqi troops.

1998 – UN orders weapons inspectors out of Iraq after President Clinton threatens to bomb that country.

This information alone does not tell the whole story of Iraqi-US-UK relations. But that’s my point. Neither does the partial list of info-bits provided by the *News*. It’s only when you combine the two lists that we begin to get a picture of what is going on. The point, here, is that Sullivan is still not living up to her responsibility as an editor – yet she’s wasting a lot of valuable newsprint creating the myth that she is.

In her piece, she boasts about Jerry Zremski’s role in covering the coming war. Readers of my *ArtBeat* column might recognize his name. He’s the writer who undercounted antiwar demonstrators by a factor of ten. He’s now being “embedded... with US Army forces” who will be entering Iraq. “Embedded” reporters train and bond with their subjects. They are under the complete control of the US military. The reports they produce will be as scripted as a Bush press conference. Their main function is to produce a weird sort of entertainment as the war unfolds, distracting us with the drama of a military unit. We’ll see the rockets take off, but we’ll never see them land.

Reporters who have entered Iraq on their own have already had their lives threatened by US military commanders, with Pentagon officials recently telling European journalists that US forces will lock on their satellite-uplink signals and fire upon them. When veteran BBC war correspondent Kate Adie questioned a Pentagon official about the deadly consequences, he

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replied, "Who cares ... they've been warned." Of course, the *News's* Jerry Zremski will face no such problems as he files his official stories with the help of the Pentagon. But by playing by these rules, he ceases to be a journalist and the *News* ceases to be a newspaper. They're just, as media critic David Barsamian puts it, "stenographers to power."

The real problem is that the American corporate media now constitutes the most powerful anti-democratic (small "d") force on the planet – with the *Buffalo News* entrenched in the middle of this posse. Warren Buffet, the owner of the *News*, is the second richest person on the planet as of

The real problem is that the American corporate media now constitutes the most powerful anti-democratic (small "d") force on the planet

today. His money is invested in the oil/energy sector, weapons, fast food, entertainment and so on – basically all the industries the *News* often gives too easy of a ride. Some reporters, such as Jerry Zremski, relish their kiss-assive roles. Many others, however, don't – they're just playing by a set of rules they had nothing to do with establishing.

It's our job as media consumers to demand better – and if the *Buffalo News* won't provide that balanced coverage, we must find it elsewhere. Our responsibility as citizens of a democratic society demands nothing less from us.

Stay informed!

CT

GEORGE MONBIOT

One rule for them . . .

March 25, 2003

Suddenly, the government of the United States has discovered the virtues of international law. It may be waging an illegal war against a sovereign state; it may be seeking to destroy every treaty which impedes its attempts to run the world, but when five of its captured soldiers were paraded in front of the Iraqi television cameras on Sunday, Donald Rumsfeld, the US defence secretary, immediately complained that "it is against the Geneva convention to show photographs of prisoners of war in a manner that is humiliating for them".

He is, of course, quite right. Article 13 of the third convention, concerning the treatment of prisoners, insists that they "must at all times be protected... against insults and public curiosity". This may number among the less heinous of the possible infringements of the laws of war, but the conventions, ratified by Iraq in 1956, are non-negotiable. If you break them, you should expect to be prosecuted for war crimes.

This being so, Rumsfeld had better watch his back. For this enthusiastic convert to the cause of legal warfare is, as head of the defence department, responsible for a series of crimes sufficient, were he ever to be tried, to put him away for the rest of his natural life.

His prison camp in Guantanamo Bay, in Cuba, where 641 men (nine of whom are

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British citizens) are held, breaches no fewer than 15 articles of the third convention. The US government broke the first of these (article 13) as soon as the prisoners arrived, by displaying them, just as the Iraqis have done, on television. In this case, however, they were not encouraged to address the cameras. They were kneeling on the ground, hands tied behind their backs, wearing blacked-out goggles and earphones. In breach of article 18, they had been stripped of their own clothes and deprived of their possessions.

They were then interned in a penitentiary (against article 22), where they were denied proper mess facilities (26), canteens (28), religious premises (34), opportunities for physical exercise (38), access to the text of the convention (41), freedom to write to their families (70 and 71) and parcels of food and books (72).

They were not "released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities" (118), because, the US authorities say, their interrogation might, one day, reveal interesting information about al-Qaida. Article 17 rules that captives are obliged to give only their name, rank, number and date of birth. No "coercion may be inflicted on prisoners of war to secure from them information of any kind whatever". In the hope of breaking them, however, the authorities have confined them to solitary

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cells and subjected them to what is now known as “torture lite”: sleep deprivation and constant exposure to bright light. Unsurprisingly, several of the prisoners have sought to kill themselves, by smashing their heads against the walls or trying to slash their wrists with plastic cutlery.

The US government claims that these men are not subject to the Geneva conventions, as they are not “prisoners of war”, but “unlawful combatants”. The same claim could be made, with rather more justice, by the Iraqis holding the US soldiers who illegally invaded their country. But this redefinition is itself a breach of article 4 of the third convention, under which people detained as suspected members of a militia (the Taliban) or a volunteer corps (al-Qaida) must be regarded as prisoners of war.

Even if there is doubt about how such people should be classified, article 5 insists that they “shall enjoy the protection of the present convention until such time as their status has been determined by a competent tribunal”. But when, earlier this month, lawyers representing 16 of them demanded a court hearing, the US court of appeals ruled that as Guantanamo Bay is not sovereign US territory, the men have no constitutional rights. Many of these prisoners appear to have been working in Afghanistan as teachers, engineers or aid workers. If the US government either tried or released them, its embarrassing lack of evidence would be brought to light.

You would hesitate to describe these prisoners as lucky, unless you knew what had happened to some of the other men captured by the Americans and their allies in Afghanistan. On November 21 2001, around 8,000 Taliban soldiers and Pashtun civilians surrendered at Konduz to the

The US special forces running the prison watched the bodies being unloaded. They instructed Dostum’s men to “get rid of them before satellite pictures can be taken”

Northern Alliance commander, General Abdul Rashid Dostum. Many of them have never been seen again.

As Jamie Doran’s film *Afghan Massacre: Convoy of Death* records, some hundreds, possibly thousands, of them were loaded into container lorries at Qala-i-Zeini, near the town of Mazar-i-Sharif, on November 26 and 27. The doors were sealed and the lorries were left to stand in the sun for several days. At length, they departed for Sheberghan prison, 80 miles away. The prisoners, many of whom were dying of thirst and asphyxiation, started banging on the sides of the trucks. Dostum’s men stopped the convoy and machine-gunned the containers. When they arrived at Sheberghan, most of the captives were dead.

The US special forces running the prison watched the bodies being unloaded. They instructed Dostum’s men to “get rid of them before satellite pictures can be taken”. Doran interviewed a Northern Alliance soldier guarding the prison. “I was a witness when an American soldier broke one prisoner’s neck. The Americans did whatever they wanted. We had no power to stop them.” Another soldier alleged: “They took the prisoners outside and beat them up, and then returned them to the prison. But sometimes they were never returned, and they disappeared.”

Many of the survivors were loaded back in the containers with the corpses, then driven to a place in the desert called Dashti-Leili. In the presence of up to 40 US special forces, the living and the dead were dumped into ditches. Anyone who moved was shot. The German newspaper *Die Zeit* investigated the claims and concluded that: “No one doubted that the Americans had taken part. Even at higher levels there are no doubts on this issue.” The US group

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Physicians for Human Rights visited the places identified by Doran's witnesses and found they "all... contained human remains consistent with their designation as possible grave sites".

It should not be necessary to point out that hospitality of this kind also contravenes the third Geneva convention, which prohibits "violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture", as well as extra-judicial execution. Donald Rumsfeld's department, assisted by a pliant media, has done all it can to sup-

press Jamie Doran's film, while General Dostum has begun to assassinate his witnesses.

It is not hard, therefore, to see why the US government fought first to prevent the establishment of the international criminal court, and then to ensure that its own citizens are not subject to its jurisdiction. The five soldiers dragged in front of the cameras yesterday should thank their lucky stars that they are prisoners not of the American forces fighting for civilisation, but of the "barbaric and inhuman" Iraqis. **CT**

JOHN PILGER

Six days of shame

March 26, 2003

Today is a day of shame for the British military as it declares the Iraqi city of Basra, with a stricken population of a million men, women and children, a "military target". You will not read or hear those words on the BBC or elsewhere in the establishment media that claims to speak for Britain. But they are true. With Basra, shame is now our signature, forged by Blair and Bush.

Having destroyed Basra's water and power supplies, and cut off food distribution, and having failed to crack its human defences, they are now preparing to lay siege to Iraq's second city which, reflecting the nation as a whole, is more than 40 per cent children.

What an ignominious moment in British history. Here is an impoverished third world country under attack by a superpower, the United States, which has unimaginable wealth and the world's most destructive weapons, and its "coalition" accomplice, Britain, which boasts one of the world's best "professional" armies: an army with every hi-tech weapon in its arsenal and which we are called upon to "support" in its execution of an illegal and immoral war.

Believing their own propaganda, the British and American military brass have been stunned by the Iraqi resistance. They have tried to belittle the militia defending Basra with lurid stories that its fighters are

Believing their own propaganda, the British and American military brass have been stunned by the Iraqi resistance. They have tried to belittle the militia defending Basra with lurid stories that its fighters are "terrorists"

"terrorists".

Last night the Ministry of Defence in Qatar was suggesting that "there might just be an uprising against the regime" in Basra. Even if this is true, in no way does it excuse the British assault on a civilian city. The truth is that the Iraqis, with no air power, are fighting like lions to defend not a tyrant, but their homeland.

It is a truth the overwhelming majority of decent Britons will admire; indeed, the historical comparison Tony Blair and his propagandists fear above all is that of the British defending themselves against invasion. That happened 60 years ago; now "we" are the rapacious invaders, sent by a prime minister whose deceptions are now his reputation.

Yesterday, Blair said that 400,000 Iraqi children had died in the last five years from malnutrition and related causes. He claimed that "huge stockpiles of humanitarian aid" and clean water awaited them in neighbouring Kuwait if only the Iraqi regime would allow safe passage.

In fact, voluminous evidence, including that published by the United Nations Children's Fund, makes clear that the main reason these children have died is an enduring siege, a 12-year embargo driven by America and backed by Britain. As of last July, \$5.4 billion worth of humanitarian supplies, approved by the UN and paid for by the Iraqi

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government, were blocked by Washington, with the Blair government's approval.

And now Blair's troops are firing their Milan wire-guided missiles in order to "soften up" Basra: a city of "1,000 children under five at grave risk", says the UN. I have walked through the crooked streets of Basra, along a street blown to pieces by an American missile. The casualties were children, of course, because children are everywhere. I held a handkerchief over my face as I stood in the swirling dust of a school playground with a teacher and several hundred malnourished youngsters.

The dust, Dr Jawad Al-Ali told me, carried "the seeds of our death". In the children's wards of Basra's main hospital, deaths from a range of hitherto unseen cancers are common; and specialists like Dr Al-Ali have little doubt that up to half the population of southern Iraq will die from cancers linked to the use of a weapon of mass destruction deployed by the Americans and the British in 1991 uranium tipped shells and missiles.

Images of bandaged and traumatised children in hospital wards are appearing on British television; but these are the acceptable faces of war. You do not see the result of a RAF Tornado's cluster bombing. You are not being shown children scalped by shrapnel, with little legs reduced to bloody pieces of string.

The reason given is reminiscent of the BBC's refusal almost 40 years ago to show Peter Watkins' remarkable film, *The War Game*, which graphically showed what would happen to human beings during a nuclear attack on Britain. In 1981, Sir Ian Trethowan, director-general of the BBC, said he feared for the effect on "the elderly" and on people of "limited mental intelligence".

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Certainly, the unseen television images from Iraq are devastating and which I, having seen similar sights, find difficult to look at. But that is beside the point. They are the truth. Iraqi parents have to look at their mutilated children, so why shouldn't those of us, in whose name they were slaughtered, see what they see? Why shouldn't we share their shock and pain? Why shouldn't we see the true nature of this criminal invasion? Other wars were sanitised by the suppression of their visual horrors, allowing them to be repeated.

Remember it is not those who oppose this war who need to justify themselves, regardless of Blair's vainglorious calls to "support our troops". The peoples of South Africa and Indonesia and Czechoslovakia overthrew their dictatorships without the Royal Marines and the American Seventh Cavalry. In 1932, having been bombed and invaded, Iraqis threw out their British colonial rulers. In 1958, they got rid of the Hashemite monarchy and declared a republic. Indeed, Iraqis are a people who have shown they can overthrow dictators against the odds. So why have they not been able to throw out Saddam Hussein? Because the United States and Britain armed him and propped him up while it suited them, making sure that, when they grew tired of him, they alone would be the alternative to his rule and the profiteers of his nation's resources. Imperialism has always functioned like that.

The "new Iraq", as Blair likes to call it, will have many models, such as Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua, all of them American conquests and American ruled until Washington allowed a vicious dictatorship to take over. Saddam Hussein only came to power in Iraq after the Americans had helped install his Ba'ath Party in

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1979. "That was my favourite coup," said the CIA officer in charge.

Keep in mind the cynicism behind these truths when you next hear Blair's impassioned insincerity; and when you glimpse, if you can, the "unacceptable" images of children killed and mangled and starved in your

name, and in the cause of what the prime minister calls "our simple patriotism" – the kind of patriotism, wrote Tolstoy, "that is nothing else but a means of obtaining for the rulers their ambitions and covetous desires, and for the ruled the abdication of human dignity, reason and conscience." **CT**

NORMAN SOLOMON

Obsessed with tactics and technology

March 27, 2003

Two months ago, when I wandered through a large market near the center of Baghdad, the day seemed like any other and no other. A vibrant pulse of humanity throbbed in the shops and on the streets. Meanwhile, a fuse was burning; lit in Washington, it would explode here. Now, with American troops near Baghdad, the media fixations are largely tactical. "A week of airstrikes, including the most concentrated precision hits in U.S. military history, has left tons of rubble and deep craters at hundreds of government buildings and military facilities around Iraq but has yielded little sign of a weakening in the regime's will to resist," the *Washington Post* reported on March 26.

Shrewd tactics and superlative technology were supposed to do the grisly trick. But military difficulties have set off warning bells inside the U.S. media echo chamber. In contrast, humanitarian calamities are often rendered as PR problems, whether the subject is the cut-off of water in Basra or the missiles that kill non-combatants in Baghdad: The main concern is apt to be that extensive suffering and death among civilians would make the "coalition of the willing" look bad.

But, despite the public-relations efforts on behalf of this invasion, the military forces of Washington and London remain a

When U.S. missiles exploded at Iraqi government broadcast facilities six days after the war began, it was a move to silence a regime that had been gaining ground in the propaganda struggle

coalition for the killing of Iraqi people who get in the way of the righteous juggernaut. Despite the prevalent media fixations, the great moral questions about this war have not been settled – on the contrary, they intensify with each passing day – no matter what gets onto TV screens and front pages.

When U.S. missiles exploded at Iraqi government broadcast facilities six days after the war began, it was a move to silence a regime that had been gaining ground in the propaganda struggle. Throughout the months of faux "diplomacy" and the first days of invading Iraq, the governments led by George W. Bush and Tony Blair had managed to do the nearly impossible – make themselves look even more mendacious than the bloody dictator Saddam Hussein.

On the home front, most U.S. news outlets are worshiping the nation's high-tech arsenal. It was routine the other day when the *Washington Post* printed a large color diagram under the headline "A Rugged Bird." Unrelated to ornithology, the diagram annotated key features of the AH-64 Apache – not a bird but a helicopter that excels as a killing machine.

We're supposed to adore the Pentagon's prowess; the deadlier the better. Transfixed with tactical maneuvers and overall strategies inside Iraq, media outlets rarely mention that this entire war by the U.S. govern-

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ment and its British accomplice is a flagrant violation of international law. Only days before the United States launched the attack, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan said that the invasion – lacking a new Security Council resolution to authorize it – would violate the U.N. Charter.

In the capital city of the world's only superpower, the *Post* is cheering the slaughter. "Ultimately the monument that matters will be victory and a sustained commitment to a rebuilt Iraq," the newspaper concluded. Its assessment came in an editorial that mentioned the pain – but not the anger – of family members grieving the loss of Kendall D. Waters-Bey, a Marine from Baltimore who died soon after the war began.

The *Post*'s editorial quoted the bereaved father as saying that "the word Sorrow, cannot fill my pain." But the editorial did not include a word of the response from the dead man's oldest sister, Michelle Waters, who faulted the U.S. government for starting the war and said: "It's all for nothing. That war could have been prevented. Now, we're out of a brother. Bush is not out of a brother. We are."

The *Baltimore Sun* reported that Michelle Waters spoke those words "in the living room of the family home, tears run-

The editorial did not include a word of the response from the dead man's oldest sister, Michelle Waters, who faulted the U.S. government for starting the war and said: "It's all for nothing. That war could have been prevented. Now, we're out of a brother. Bush is not out of a brother. We are"

ning down her cheeks."

A week into this war, CNN's White House correspondent John King was in sync with many other journalists as he noted criticisms of the administration's "war strategy." The media anxiety level has been rising, but the voiced concerns are overwhelmingly about tactics. A military triumph may not be so easy after all.

Today, I took another look at quotations that I'd jotted at meetings with Iraqi officials during visits to Baghdad last fall and winter. (The quotes are included in *Target Iraq: What the News Media Didn't Tell You*, a book I co-authored with foreign correspondent Reese Erlich.)

In mid-September, the elderly speaker of Iraq's national assembly, Saadoun Hammadi, told our delegation of Americans: "The U.S. administration is now speaking war. We are not going to turn the other cheek. We are going to fight. Not only our armed forces will fight. Our people will fight."

Three months later, at a Dec. 14 meeting, Iraq's deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz said: "Hundreds of thousands of people are going to die, including Americans – because if they want to take over oil in Iraq, they have to fight for it, not by missiles and by airplanes ... they have to bring troops and

MICHAEL I. NIMAN

Unembed your mind

March 27, 2003

"Naturally the common people don't want war... But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them that they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country." – Nazi Reich Marshall Herman Goering at his Nuremberg War Crimes Trial

It's not a good day when I feel compelled to start my article by quoting Adolf Hitler's deputy – but it's imperative at times like this not to let the lessons of history escape us. And there are many, as history is littered with the fetid carcasses of failed empires and the demented dreams that fueled them.

One thing, however, is certain: if history has taught us anything, it tells us that any society that seeks to build a global empire is doomed to painful obscurity. I can go on ad nauseam about this point, but I won't. The crew now controlling the White House planned this war back in the late 90s under the guise of The Project for The New Amer-

We know this isn't about weapons – though no doubt we'll see pictures of banned weapons paraded before willing TV cameras before the next week is out, with their actual source forever destined to be a point of contention

ican Century – they're executing it right on schedule (www.newamericancentury.org).

It's not about failed weapons inspections. The inspections failed this time for the very same reason they failed in 1998 – because the UN withdrew inspectors in advance of US bombing raids in Iraq. And today, as in 1998, another group of inspectors is coming public with accusations that the US is fabricating a threat they claim doesn't exist. The latest such whistleblower is weapons inspector and MIT professor, Joern Siljeholm, who charged the Bush administration with misleading the world community. But this is old news. We know this isn't about weapons – though no doubt we'll see pictures of banned weapons paraded before willing TV cameras before the next week is out, with their actual source forever destined to be a point of contention.

The real threat is that there might not be any weapons of mass destruction – that the UN will give Iraq a clean bill of health. If this were to happen, the regime of sanctions that has crippled Iraq for the past 12 years would be over. And at least economically, a peaceful Iraq would once again become a world player and a powerful force within the OPEC oil cartel. Perhaps even a despotic lunatic like Saddam Hussein could have realized that in the 21st century, economic weapons – weapons of mass cor-

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ruption – could be more powerful than weapons of mass destruction. This was the real threat. Not a dictator with a stash of bombs, but a dictator with free reign over the world's energy market.

The current war is also not a war of "good versus evil." At least not in the sense the Bush junta would like us to think. The Geneva based World Council of Churches, representing Christian denominations from 100 countries around the world, called the war "immoral, illegal and ill-advised." The Pope warned that the warriors would have to answer to God for their sins. The leaders of George W. Bush's own Methodist church have used strong language to condemn their parishioner's war moves, while pleading with Bush not to do what he just did, accusing him of demonstrating an "unprecedented disregard for democratic ideals." They went on to argue that he had presented "an astonishing lack of evidence justifying such a pre-emptive attack."

Despite near universal condemnation from religious leaders, Bush says he takes his commands from God. Son of Sam claimed to take his orders from his neighbor's dog. One scenario is just as likely as the other. For Bush to blame this war on "God" is nothing short of blasphemy – taking the Lord's name in vain.

Having launched the war for the American Century, Bush has taken "time out" at Camp David. There's no time out, however, for the nearly 300,000 American troops stuck fighting in this war. The ones I spoke with weren't too excited about going. This is not what they signed up for. They're a professional fighting force of idealistic Americans who signed up to defend our country if need be – not to be hijacked to fight a "war without end" for a "New American Century" or any other radical

The TV networks, however, call it "Operation Iraqi Freedom," having adopted the Bush administration's Orwellian lingo. We'll free these Iraqis (and their oil) from themselves, even if it kills them

political vision of conquest. As patriotic Americans we must support our friends, relatives and neighbors serving in the military and demand their safe return home.

There's also no time out for Iraq's civilian population, living through a hell that we simply cannot imagine. One thousand missiles just rained down on a city the size of Chicago in a one-day period. Western reporters (the real ones – not the embedded counterfeits) on the scene in Baghdad report shock wave after shock wave blowing out their windows and slamming their doors. They report how residents are drugging their children to sleep while they themselves stay up night after night. They report a scene that is anything but "liberating." The TV networks, however, call it "Operation Iraqi Freedom," having adopted the Bush administration's Orwellian lingo. We'll free these Iraqis (and their oil) from themselves, even if it kills them.

The images of a burning Baghdad aren't alien to New Yorkers who suffered the trauma of September 11th, 2001. They know the choking clouds of toxic smoke and dust that comes from fires and collapsing buildings. And they're being forced to relive their horror as they see innocent civilians like themselves suffer through a similar nightmare. Only this time there's an added horror – these deaths are on our hands. This is what it means to be a citizen in a democracy – we are the ones who are ultimately responsible for the actions of our government. And we can't hide behind rhetoric dismissing the 2000 election as a "coup," because such a coup is only possible with an apathetic electorate, the majority of whom didn't vote and didn't protest the theft of the election. Today, people are taking to the streets to exercise their legal right

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to protest – but it's too little too late. We're now seen globally as a rogue state – a pariah nation.

The challenge now is to stay informed. This means forget about CNN and all the other cheerleaders with their embedded "reporters." Once they agree to the terms associated with the carrot of becoming embedded and cared for by the US military and their censors, these people cease to be reporters. Their so-called reportage offers no more news than any other "reality" TV show. British journalist, Robert Fisk, warned how, "once the invasion starts, they [embedded reporters] will lose their freedom to write what they want." Fisk, a real journalist ducking flying debris in Baghdad, predicted that once hostilities began, we'd see the embedded crowd, "playing toy soldiers, dressing themselves up in military costumes for their nightly theatrical performances on television." And, of course, we have, with ABC Nightline's Ted Koppel leading the pack, looking like a foolish old man in a silly army costume, reporting about not much of anything, as bombs fall by the thousand.

And don't believe the polls that say we're all behind this bloodshed. If this car-

And next time you see a picture of an embedded reporter, ask yourself why are we only embedding reporters with invading troops? Why are no reporters embedded with Iraqi families huddling in their Baghdad basements?

nage was truly popular, we wouldn't need to be told how popular it is. The key thing to remember about polls is that without seeing the raw data behind them, they are worthless. Who are you asking? What are you asking them? And in what context are you asking the questions? Rephrasing a question to read, say, "Do you support this illegal war and the ensuing bombardment of Iraqi cities, even though weapons inspectors say Iraq poses no threat to the US and most religious leaders say it is a sinful war of aggression?" would produce quite a different set of results.

And next time you see a picture of an embedded reporter, ask yourself why are we only embedding reporters with invading troops? Why are no reporters embedded with Iraqi families huddling in their Baghdad basements? Why are no reporters embedded with the suffering families of 9-11 victims who have to relive their horror all over again – once again feeling powerless to stop a holocaust of violence? Where's the real story? Why are we being told how to think instead of being told what's really going on. **CT**

GEORGE MONBIOT

It will end in disaster

By George Monbiot, April 1, 2003

So far, the liberators have succeeded only in freeing the souls of the Iraqis from their bodies. Saddam Hussein's troops have proved less inclined to surrender than they had anticipated, and the civilians less prepared to revolt. But while no one can now ignore the immediate problems this illegal war has met, we are beginning, too, to understand what should have been obvious all along: that, however this conflict is resolved, the outcome

It seems to me that there are three possible results of the war with Iraq. The first, which is now beginning to look unlikely, is that Saddam Hussein is swiftly dispatched, his generals and ministers abandon their posts and the people who had been cowed by his militias and his secret police rise up and greet the invaders with their long-awaited blessing of flowers and rice. The troops are welcomed into Baghdad, and start preparing for what the US administration claims will be a transfer of power to a democratic government.

For a few weeks, this will look like victory. Then several things are likely to happen. The first is that, elated by its reception in Baghdad, the American government decides, as Donald Rumsfeld hinted again last week, to visit its perpetual war upon another nation: Syria, Iran, Yemen, Somalia, North Korea or anywhere else whose con-

The coalition might also soon discover why Saddam Hussein became such an abhorrent dictator. Iraq is a colonial artefact, forced together by the British from three Ottoman provinces, whose people have wildly different religious and ethnic loyalties. It is arguable that this absurd construction can be sustained only by brute force

quest may be calculated to enhance the stature of the president and the scope of his empire. It is almost as if Bush and his advisers are determined to meet the nemesis which their hubris invites.

Our next discovery is likely to be, as John Gray pointed out some months ago, that the choice of regimes in the Middle East is not a choice between secular dictatorship and secular democracy, but between secular dictatorship and Islamic democracy. What the people of the Middle East want and what the US government says they want appear to be rather different things, and the tension between the two objectives will be a source of instability and conflict until western governments permit those people to make their own choices unmolested. That is unlikely to happen until the oil runs out. The Iraqis may celebrate their independence by embracing a long-suppressed fundamentalism, and the United States may respond by seeking to crush it.

The coalition might also soon discover why Saddam Hussein became such an abhorrent dictator. Iraq is a colonial artefact, forced together by the British from three Ottoman provinces, whose people have wildly different religious and ethnic loyalties. It is arguable that this absurd construction can be sustained only by brute force.

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A US-backed administration seeking to keep this nation of warring factions intact may rapidly encounter Saddam's problem, and, in so doing, rediscover his solution. Perhaps we should not be surprised to see that George Bush's government was, until recently, planning merely to replace the two most senior officials in each of Saddam's ministries, leaving the rest of his government undisturbed.

The alternative would be to permit Iraq to fall apart. While fragmentation may, in the long run, be the only feasible future for its people, it is impossible, in the short term, to see how this could happen without bloodshed, as every faction seeks to carve out its domain. Whether the US tries to oversee this partition or flees from it as the British did from India, its victory in these circumstances is likely to sour very quickly.

The second possible outcome of this war is that the US kills Saddam and destroys the bulk of his army, but has to govern Iraq as a hostile occupying force. Saddam Hussein, whose psychological warfare appears to be rather more advanced than that of the Americans, may have ensured that this is now the most likely result.

The coalition forces cannot win without taking Baghdad, and Saddam is seeking to ensure that they cannot take Baghdad without killing thousands of civilians. His soldiers will shelter in homes, schools and hospitals. In trying to destroy them, the American and British troops may blow away the last possibility of winning the hearts and minds of the residents. Saddam's deployment of suicide bombers has already obliged the coalition forces to deal brutally with innocent civilians.

The comparisons with Palestine will not be lost on the Iraqis, or on anyone in the Middle East. The United States, like Israel,

The comparisons with Palestine will not be lost on the Iraqis, or on anyone in the Middle East. The United States, like Israel, will discover that occupation is bloody and, ultimately, unsustainable.

will discover that occupation is bloody and, ultimately, unsustainable. Its troops will be harassed by snipers and suicide bombers, and its response to them will alienate even the people who were grateful for the overthrow of Saddam. We can expect the US, in these circumstances, hurriedly to proclaim victory, install a feeble and doomed Iraqi government, and pull out before the whole place crashes down around it. What happens after that, to Iraq and the rest of the Middle East, is anyone's guess, but I think we can anticipate that it won't be pleasant.

The third possibility is that the coalition forces fail swiftly to kill or capture Saddam Hussein or to win a decisive victory in Iraq. While still unlikely, this is now an outcome which cannot be entirely dismissed. Saddam may be too smart to wait in his bunker for a bomb big enough to reach him, but might, like King Alfred, slip into the civilian population, occasionally throwing off his disguise and appearing among his troops, to keep the flame of liberation burning.

If this happens, then the US will have transformed him from the hated oppressor into the romantic, almost mythological hero of Arab and Muslim resistance, the Salah al-Din of his dreams. He will be seen as the man who could do to the United States what the mujahideen of Afghanistan did to the Soviet Union: drawing it so far into an unwinnable war that its economy and its popular support collapse. The longer he survives, the more the population - not just of Iraq, but of all Muslim countries - will turn towards him, and the less likely a western victory becomes.

The US will almost certainly then have engineered the improbable chimera it claims to be chasing: the marriage of Saddam's well-armed secular brutality and al-Qaida's global insurrection. Even if, having

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held out for many weeks or months, Saddam Hussein is found and killed, his spirit may continue to inspire a revolt throughout the Muslim world, against the Americans, the British and, of course, Israel. Pakistan's unpopular leader, Pervez Musharraf, would then find himself in serious trouble. If, as seems likely in these circumstances, he is overthrown in an Islamic revolt, then a fundamentalist regime, deeply hostile to the

west, would possess real nuclear weapons, primed and ready to fire.

I hope I've missed something here, and will be proved spectacularly wrong, but it seems to me that the American and British governments have dragged us into a mess from which we might not emerge for many years. They have unlocked the spirit of war, and it could be unwilling to return to its casket until it has traversed the world. **CT**

JOHN PILGER

The war for truth

April 5, 2003

We had a great day," said Sgt Eric Schrupf of the US Marines last Saturday. "We killed a lot of people." He added: "We dropped a few civilians, but what do you do?" He said there were women standing near an Iraqi soldier, and one of them fell when he and other Marines opened fire. "I'm sorry," said Sgt Schrupf, "but the chick was in the way".

For me, what is remarkable about this story is that I heard almost the same words 36 years ago when a US Marine sergeant told me he had killed a pregnant woman and a child because they had "got in the way". That was in Vietnam, another country invaded by the US military machine, which left up to two million people dead and many more maimed and otherwise ruined. President Reagan called this "a noble cause". The other day, President Bush called the invasion of Iraq, another unprovoked and piratical act, "a noble cause".

In the years since Vietnam, the Americans have invaded and caused, directly and through stooges, great suffering in many other countries, but none tells us more about the current war than their enduring atrocity in Vietnam, known as the first "media war".

Like their attack on Iraq, their invasion of Vietnam was accompanied by a racist contempt for the people. The Vietnamese were

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"gooks" and "slits" who would never fight, who would be crushed within weeks. As in Iraq today, the uncensored evidence of America's killing was not shown on TV but covered up. General Colin Powell, Bush's "liberal" Secretary of State, was promoted swiftly because he was given the job of covering up the infamous My Lai massacre. In the end, the Vietnamese defied the Hollywood script and expelled their invader, but at great cost. The Iraqis, up against two western air forces and a Disneyworld of weapons of mass destruction, are unlikely to share the same honour. And yet they, too, are not keeping to the script; and their extraordinary resistance against such overwhelming odds has required intensified propaganda in Washington and London: aimed not at them, but at us.

Unlike in Vietnam, this propaganda, lying that is both crude and subtle, is now dispensed globally and marketed and controlled like a new niche product. Richard Gaisford, an "embedded" BBC reporter, said recently: "We have to check each story we have with (the military). And the captain, who's our media liaison officer, will check with the colonel, and they will check with Brigade headquarters as well."

David Miller, a media analyst at Stirling University, calls it "public relations genius". It works like this. Once the official "line" is agreed and manufactured at the Coalition

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Press Information Centre in Kuwait and the \$1million press centre in Qatar, it is submitted to the White House, to what is known as the Office of Global Communications. It is then polished for British consumption by Blair's staff of propagandists in Downing Street.

Truth, above all, is redundant. There is only "good" news or no news. For example, the arrival in Iraq of the British ship Sir Galahad with a miserable few hundred tons of humanitarian aid was a "good" story given wide coverage. What was missing was the truth that the Blair government continues to back Washington's deliberate denial of \$5.4billion worth of humanitarian aid, including baby milk and medical supplies. This is "aid" which Iraq has paid for (from oil receipts) and the UN Security Council has approved.

What was also missing from such a moving tale of Britain-to-the-rescue was that, under pressure from Bush and Blair, the United Nations has been forced to close down its food distribution system in Iraq, which barely prevented famine in the pre-war period.

Blair's lies about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and its alleged links with al-Qaeda have been exposed and rejected by the majority of the British people. He has since played his "conviction" card. Perhaps his last propaganda refuge is a call to support "our boys".

On September 3, 1967, the *Sunday Mirror* published a dispatch of mine from Vietnam under the front page headline: "How can Britain approve a war like this?" Today's *Mirror* asks the same question of the invasion of Iraq. The difference is that, unlike Blair, Prime Minister Harold Wilson denied an American president the use of

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British troops for his "coalition". A poll in yesterday's *Mirror* said that "78 per cent insist British forces must not be brought home until the war is over." Polls themselves can make propaganda, with the question predetermining the answer. What if the question asked had been: "Do you support British forces being in Iraq given the absence of any 'liberation' and the rising number of civilian casualties?"

I doubt whether it would have been anywhere near 78 per cent. There is undoubtedly a traditional reserve of support for "the troops", no matter the dirty work they are sent to carry out. Blair's manipulation of this should not be allowed to succeed. British troops may be better trained than the Americans; but this does not alter the fact that they are part of, indeed essential to, a criminal invasion of a country offering us no threat.

Trained in media manipulation ("public relations"), British military spokesmen lie as frequently as the Americans; if anything, their nonsense about "uprisings" is too specious by half. The truth they don't tell is that the British siege of Basra is strangling the civilian population, causing great suffering to innocent, men, women and children in their homeland.

Imagine if Iraqi troops were doing the same to Coventry, a city of comparable size. Imagine the outrage: the popular resistance, regardless of who was in power in London. If we cannot imagine that, then we have fallen victim to a big lie that reverses right and wrong. If we cannot put ourselves in Iraqis' shoes, in the shoes of the grieving family of the woman who was gunned down by Sgt Schrupf, "the chick who got in the way", then we have cause indeed to worry.

GT

NORMAN SOLOMON

A lethal way to 'dispatch' the news

April 10, 2003

In times of war, journalists can serve as vital witnesses for the people of the world. So it's especially sinister when governments take aim at reporters and photographers. A few weeks ago, when I was talking with a CNN cameraman, he recalled an overseas stint to cover events in the West Bank. Anger was evident in his voice: "The Israelis were shooting at us."

When military forces are assaulting civilians, commanders often try to prevent media from telling true stories with pictures and words. Governments that maim and kill civilians are routinely eager to stop journalists from getting too close to the action. Those who persist are vulnerable to retribution.

For a long time now, the U.S. government has been hostile toward the Al-Jazeera television network. Widely watched in the Arab world, Al-Jazeera's coverage of the war on Iraq has been in sharp contrast to the coverage on American television. As *Time* magazine observed: "On U.S. TV it means press conferences with soldiers who have hand and foot injuries and interviews with POWs' families, but little blood. On Arab and Muslim TV it means dead bodies and mourning."

Back in 2001, with the United States at war in Afghanistan, the Pentagon bombed AlJazeera's bureau in Kabul. This year, during the lead-up to the war in Iraq, Al-

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Jazeera repeatedly informed the U.S. military of the exact coordinates of the network's office in downtown Baghdad.

On April 8, a U.S. missile hit that Al-Jazeera office, taking the life of Tareq Ayub, a 34-year-old Jordanian journalist. A coincidence? Accident? I don't think so.

The same day, a U.S. tank fired a shell at the Palestine Hotel, where most foreign journalists have been based lately in Baghdad. The assault killed Taras Protsyuk of the Reuters news agency and Jose Couso of the Spanish network Telecinco.

Explanations from the Pentagon have not been credible. "U.S. Central Command first said troops came under fire from the (hotel) lobby, while the field commander said whatever fire had been headed toward his troops was wiped out with a single tank round into the upper floors of the hotel," the AFX news agency reported. "But after a journalist questioned why the tank shot the upper floors when fire had come from the lobby, Central Command issued a revised statement saying there had been 'significant enemy fire.'"

However, the journalists who were eyewitnesses flatly contradicted that claim, saying no weapons fire had emanated from the hotel. "There was no shooting at all," said French TV cameraman Herve De Ploeg. "Then I saw the turret turning in our direction and the carriage lifting. It

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faced the target." He insisted: "It was not a case of instinctive firing."

The U.S. government's response has been to scold journalists for trying to do their jobs. "We continue to warn news organizations about the dangers," said the Pentagon's Victoria Clarke, who added: "We've had conversations over the last couple of days, news organizations eager to get their people unilaterally into Baghdad. We are saying it is not a safe place, you should not be there."

The key word in Clarke's statement was "unilaterally" – as opposed to "embedded" with U.S. troops. Decoding the Pentagon's message to journalists isn't too difficult: If you don't play by our rules, you're much more likely to find yourself on a stretcher – or dead. I certainly wouldn't argue with the father of the journalist killed by the U.S. missile that hit the Al-Jazeera office in

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Baghdad. "My son is a martyr who was killed as a result of America's so-called civilization in an attack on press freedom," said Naeem Ayub. He added: "They are attacking journalists to hide the truth."

Civil libertarians in the United States worry aloud that government pressures and corporate dominance can have a "chilling effect" on freedom of the press. We should not forget that it can also be chilling for journalists to see their colleagues killed as part of a governmental pattern.

The day after Tareq Ayub died, Al-Jazeera moved to evacuate its employees. "I believe that none of them is safe anymore, whether in Baghdad or the rest of Iraq," said editor-in-chief Ibrahim Hilal, "even those who are with American troops." No doubt the media spinners in Washington look forward to the departure of AlJazeera's journalists from liberated Iraq. **CT**

MICHAEL I. NIMAN

Please tell me again: What is the war about?

April 10, 2003

If we're to believe the official rhetoric formally put forth by George W. Bush, Colin Powell, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and all, the US is now mired down in a bloody invasion of Iraq because that country has weapons of mass destruction – and because we have the right to take them away. Forget about the fact that there was no indication of Iraq posing a threat to the United States. And forget about the fact that such an invasion violates international law. And that such a “preemptive strike” threatens to destabilize the entire world, with the race now on in places like Korea to preempt preemptive strikes. Forget reality and forget common sense.

Let's just go with what we have. The US went to war ostensibly to rid Iraq, a nation of 24 million people now often simply referred to in the American press as “Saddam Hussein,” of weapons of mass destruction.

Despite a host of false reports about weapons of mass destruction finds – all prominently reported in shouting headlines, only to be quietly retracted days later – there have been no weapons of mass destruction used in Iraqi attacks and no credible discoveries of such weapons. British Home Secretary David Blunkett went as far as to admit late last week that there in fact might not be any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq – but he was still looking forward to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's

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government nonetheless, weapons of mass destruction or not.

On March 17th, when George W. Bush in effect declared war on Iraq, giving Iraq's government 48 hours to flee their country, he mentioned “disarming” Iraq 11 times – using the UN mandate for Iraq to disarm as his rationale for threatening war, apparently in violation of international law and the will of the UN. Once the bombing actually began, however, finding and destroying Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction became priorities number two and number three on Donald Rumsfeld's list of eight war objectives. Removing Saddam Hussein from power became Bush's primary objective.

According to a Reuters report, by day 10 of the war, finding and destroying Iraqi weapons of mass destruction had slipped to fourth and fifth places on a list released by Pentagon spokesperson Victoria Clarke. Ridding Iraq of “terrorists” and “collecting intelligence on terrorist operations” became priorities number two and number three. Of course the only terrorist group discovered in Iraq, Ansar al-Islam, was operating out of the US/British controlled northern autonomous area – where they could have been routed at any time by US forces – but that's another story.

For George W. Bush the rhetoric has become even simpler. Gone are his endless references to Iraqi weapons of mass destruction

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– weapons that American representatives from two successive waves of UN inspection teams claim never existed in the first place. In place of this rhetoric, Bush now speaks of “freeing the Iraqi people.” The transcendence in dogma, especially over such a short period of time, is frighteningly Orwellian – with the now discredited supposed rationale for this three week old war all but forgotten. It no longer matters why we’re fighting – we’re at war, and hence, we have no time for such trivial questions. Of course outside of the fog of American media, no one else seems to be forgetting anything.

Yes, the rationale for the American invasion was to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. And no, there is no credible evidence that Iraq had them. But there are weapons of mass destruction being deployed in this battlefield – by American troops. Once again there is evidence that US troops are using radioactive depleted uranium (DU) weapons in Iraq – weapons that have been classified by the UN as illegal weapons of mass destruction.

Former US Army Colonel and ex-director of the Pentagon’s depleted uranium project, Doug Rokke, in an interview with the Scottish *Sunday Herald*, classified the American use of DU weapons as a “war crime.” Rokke argued that American “double standards are repellent,” since “This war was about Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction – yet we are using weapons of mass destruction ourselves.”

The *Sunday Herald* quotes a UN report issued in 2002, stating that the use of DU weapons violates laws and agreements protecting civilian populations in wartime. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of the United Nations, the Genocide Convention, the Convention Against Torture, the Geneva Con-

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ventions of 1948, the Conventional Weapons Convention of 1980 and the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 against the use of “poison or poisoned” weapons.

According to official Pentagon sources, the US left 320 metric tons of radioactive DU on the battlefields in Kuwait and Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War. This radioactive waste spread through the environment will eventually cause, according to the British Atomic Energy Authority, approximately 500,000 deaths. DU contamination is also, according to the UN, the most likely cause of the 1,000% rise in cancer and 400-600% rise in birth defects in Iraq since the first Gulf War. Veterans’ rights activists in the US also believe DU is linked to the mysterious epidemic of birth defects and illnesses plaguing more than half of the children of Gulf War veterans born since the 1991 war.

Because of these horrific statistics, veterans groups, human rights organizations and peace activists around the world have joined together to condemn the use of DU weaponry, which is used to pierce the armor of tanks. Evidence of DU weapons use in the current war comes from a recent “friendly fire” incident which saw British troops hit by a DU armed shell fired from an American A-10 “tankbuster” plane. Regarding that incident, British forces in the field told the media that the American pilot was a cowboy, recklessly shooting his DU weapons irresponsibly at anything moving below.

War is hell – and this one certainly is no exception with reports from the battlefield – a host of heavily populated Iraqi cities – getting uglier. According to the Pentagon, “precision-guided” bombs have an accuracy rate of around 90%, or conversely, a failure rate of around 10%. Given that the US has so far launched 8,000 such bombs and missiles against Iraq, this translates to approximately

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800 weapons veering off target. The resulting civilian carnage has been horrific, with over 1,000 deaths reported as of Monday (a counter displayed at <http://mediastudy.com> displays the current count and links to an incident database explaining each death).

Civilians are also dying as a result of misdirected cluster bombs dropped by US and British forces. These bombs disburse small yellow bomblets which are the same color as the food packs currently being distributed to Iraqi civilians. British Defense Secretary Geoff Hoon dismissed such deaths, declaring that the mothers of Iraqi children killed by these bombs will "one day" thank Britain for dropping them.

Iraqi civilians are also being killed by artillery and rockets fired by frightened US forces pinned down in firefights. In one highly reported incident, a US fighter, after accidentally killing an Iraqi woman, declared to the media: "I'm sorry, but the chick got in the way." Mark Franchetti, an embedded reporter writing for the *Times* of London, put faces on some of the dead, describing "a little girl, no older than five and dressed in a pretty orange and gold dress," who "lay dead in a ditch next to the body of a man who may have been her father. Half of his head was missing." Nearby, Franchetti reports, "in a battered old Volga [automobile], peppered with ammunition holes, an Iraqi woman – perhaps the girl's mother – was dead, slumped in the back seat. A US Abrams tank nicknamed Ghetto Fabulous drove past the bodies."

Franchetti cites one US Marine Lieutenant, in tears, lamenting the girl's death. But he also quotes another Marine at the scene by name, who tells him, "The Iraqis are sick people and we are the chemotherapy." That Marine went on to explain, "I am starting to hate this country. Wait till I get a

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hold of a friggin' [I suspect this is a sanitized British translation of "fuckin'"] Iraqi. No I won't get a hold of one. I'll just kill him."

Franchetti, however, puts this apparent barbarism into a sad context, writing: "Only a few days earlier these had still been the bright-eyed small town boys with whom I crossed the border at the start of the operation." It was the insanity and horror of ground combat that was the "turning point," for these Marines. Franchetti described how they "lost all of their assumptions about the war and became jittery aggressors who talked of waiting to 'nuke' the place." "Before last week," he added, "few had even seen a dead body. Now their faces had changed."

This was the point of Franchetti's article – not to demonize the Marines blasting away with their machine guns at civilian cars – but to empathize with their pain and confusion as they're thrust into chaos. This is the other death – the one that is seldom reported – the death of the human spirit that goes along with killing. Two weeks ago these Marines were told that they would be greeted as liberators by surrendering troops. Despite an endless deluge of Associated Press images supporting this delusion, such as one that ran last Sunday showing an Iraqi man gifting flowers to an American soldier at a checkpoint, American forces were met with another reality. They were attacked from all sides, seemingly by everything that moved – and they shot back. And they kept shooting. And shooting. And calling in air strikes. And they are now drowning in a pool of blood.

They are Americans, 95% of whom hail from poor and working class backgrounds. They are both victims of an economic draft, and idealists who wanted to serve their country, only to find themselves in a military

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that has been hijacked to fight for a deranged and unobtainable vision of empire. Like the civilian bodies littering Iraq's roads and cities, these Americans are also victims of war – they will never be the same. The Bush administration, while hiding behind its "support our troops" rhetoric, is cutting their veterans' benefits at home while sending them deeper and deeper into harms way in Iraq – in a war for what?

Perhaps this question is best answered by former CIA Director James Woolsey, who declared on April 3rd, that the US is currently fighting World War Four [presumably the cold war was number three] – which he declared "will last considerably longer than either World War One or Two..." He named Iraq's neighbors Syria and Iran as potential future targets, and issued a threat to American allies in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, stating: "We want you nervous. We want you to realize now, for the fourth time in a hundred years, this country and its allies are on the march and that we are on the side of those whom you – the Mubarak's [Egyptian President], the Saudi Royal Family – most fear: We're on the side of your own people."

Of course protests throughout the Arab world demonstrate that the destabilizing factor in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Jordan, Yemen and other countries with close ties to the US, is precisely those close ties to the US. This is the revolution that pro-American Arab leaders now fear – not a mythical groundswell of support for what most of the Islamic world now sees as a "crusade" or religious war against Islam.

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was this poor use of language that united many of Saddam Hussein's Iraqi enemies – people who once welcomed the US into Iraq in 1991 – against the US invasion. Cultures don't forget wars of genocide. And that's what the original Crusades were.

And this is how many people in the Middle East view what Woolsey calls World War Four. They've taken George W. Bush at his word. It's a holy war. A crusade. Of course having fundamentalist groups such as In Touch Ministries distributing pamphlets like "A Christian's Duty in Time of War" to US troops in Iraq doesn't help dispel this image. The pamphlet urges soldiers to fill out a form pledging to pray every day for George W. Bush, and "Pray that the president and his advisors will recognize their divine appointment..."

Evangelical Christian groups are now poised to enter Iraq, a country that is 98% Muslim, ostensibly to carry out humanitarian aid. Prominent among them is Reverend Franklin Graham's organization, Samaritan's Purse. Graham, the son of legendary evangelist Billy Graham, was a participant in George W. Bush's inaugural ceremony, offering a prayer for the new president. He also, during a televised NBC interview, dismissed Islam as "a very evil and wicked religion." He went on to declare that "The God of Islam is not the God of the Christian faith." And now he's entering Iraq on the tail of what will only be perceived as the Crusader's sword. Don't expect this war to end anytime soon. But also don't give up. It's imperative for people to speak up now, lest the Bush administration send US forces to kill and be killed across the region. Stopping this supposed war without end is not only a matter of supporting American values, justice and the rule of law – it's also a matter of supporting the troops. **CT**

**WRITING WORTH
READING FROM
AROUND THE WORLD**

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