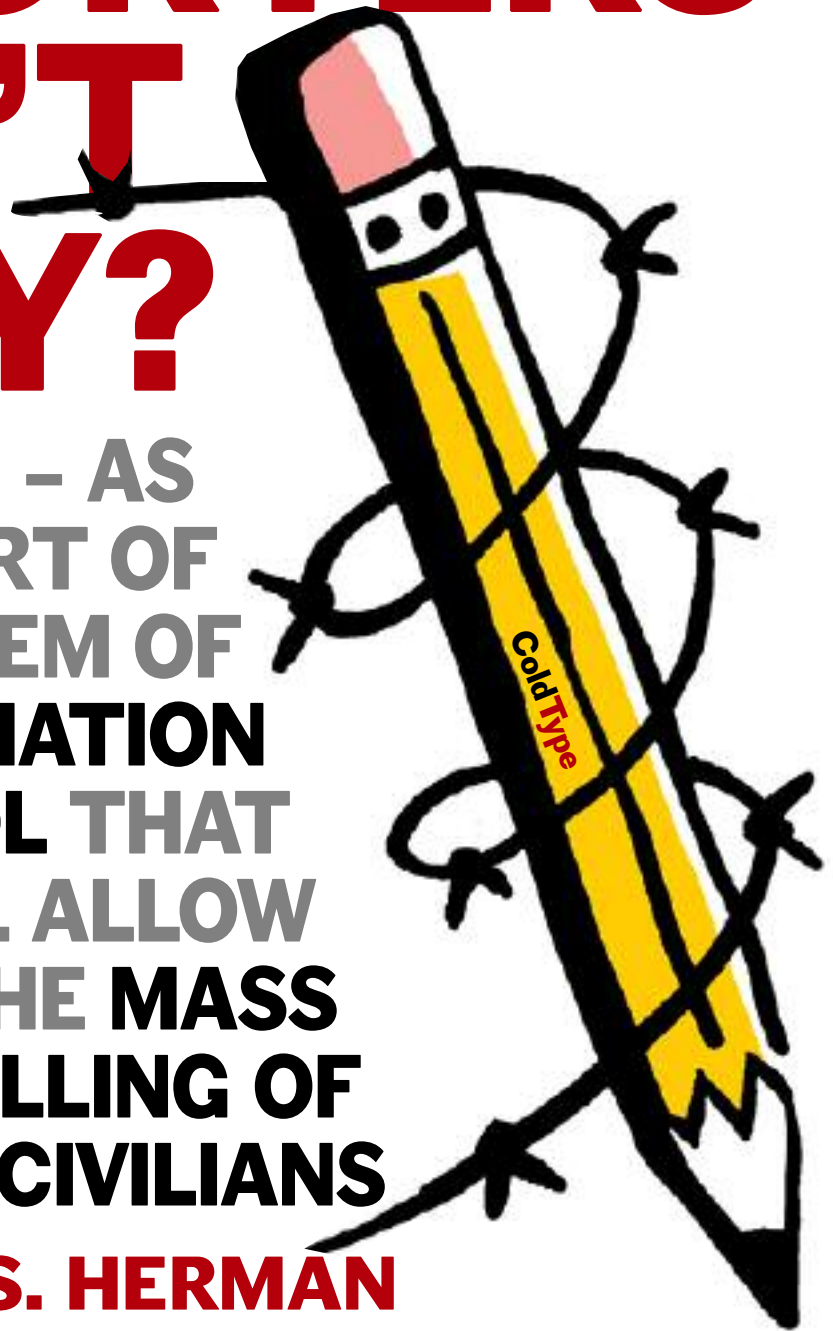


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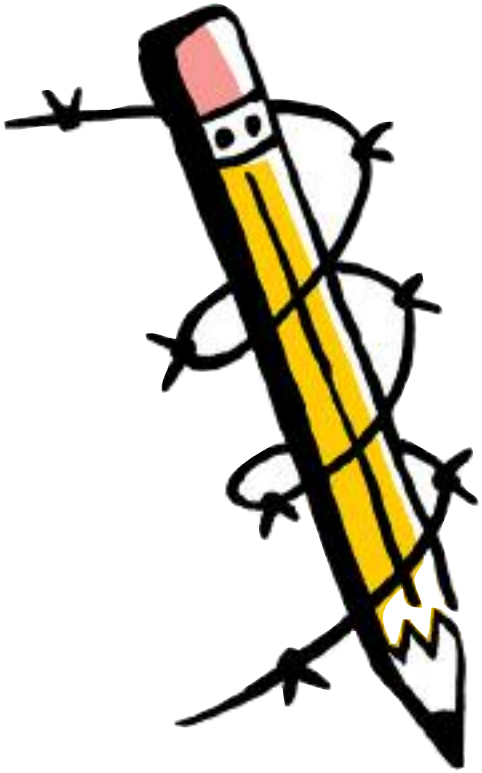
EDWARD S. HERMAN is Professor Emeritus of Finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and has written extensively on economics, political economy and the media. Among his books are *Corporate Control*, *Corporate Power*, *The Real Terror Network*, *Triumph of the Market*, and *Manufacturing Consent* (with Noam Chomsky). He has a regular *Fog Watch* column in *Z Magazine*, in which this essay was first published.

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IT HAS long been a problem for the U.S. imperial establishment that using their ever-improving arsenal of death in projecting power, from Vietnam to Iraq, kills large numbers of target state civilians, in violation of widely accepted norms of morality, international law, and in contradiction of the regular claims of good intentions toward the civilian victims supposedly being “liberated” (from Communism or rule by a bad man). Even worse, it can upset people at home, who don’t like to know about, let alone see, the mangled bodies of bombed civilians, or even a GI using a lighter to burn down the home of a Vietnamese peasant family (as in a famous Vietnam war photo). The home population may be struck by the incompatibility of these deaths and destructive acts with the alleged benevolent war aims, with the result that support for the military venture may fade and even be transformed into a political opposition.

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The imperial establishment has worked hard to prevent this obstruction to their war-making power. Its leaders have no concern whatsoever over target country civilian casualties, and may even regard them as useful, except for the problem of public relations. This is a leadership and establishment that was able to positively exult over the Indonesian army and paramilitary slaughter of a million or more civilians in 1965-66, and the even greater mass killing of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese civilians by U.S. forces and U.S. proxies from the time of Ngo Dinh Diem, the U.S. puppet leader of South Vietnam from 1954 to 1963, to the U.S. exit in 1975, was of absolutely no concern to a string of U.S. administrations – Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon.

It was only the killings in Cambodia by Pol Pot from 1975-78 that elicited great humanistic indignation from U.S. leaders and mainstream media. The mass killing of East Timorese by the Indonesian military from 1975, in the same time frame as the Pol Pot killings, was, like that of the Vietnamese, of no concern to U.S. leaders or the mainstream media, and produced neither publicity nor indignation. These victims were “unworthy,” or “unpeople” in Mark Curtis’s usage, the criterion shunting civilians into these classes being that these were OUR or a client state’s victims. (A main theme of Curtis’s valuable new book *Unpeople: Britain’s Secret Human Rights Abuses* [Vintage: 2004] is that the British establishment’s concern over civilian victims, except those of enemy states, has long been nonexistent. “In the thousands of government files I have looked through for this and other books. I have barely seen reference to human rights at all. Where such concerns are invoked, they are only for public relations purposes” [p. 3]).

Full-Spectrum Domination: Including Media Choices of News and Frames

A first principle of controlling information in the interest of “freedom” – to kill civilians without impediment – is that the war-makers must dominate the frames and factual evidence used by the media. This has become easier as the media have become more commercial, concentrated and dependent on the government for favors (e.g., rights to merge, rights to spectrum allocations, tax and labor policies, protection abroad, information access) and as the growing rightwing echo chamber has served as an enthusiastic conduit and enforcer of government propaganda. The government has also become more efficient at feeding the media suitable information, providing experts for TV commentary, embedding and coopting journalists, keeping reporters away from inconvenient scenes and sources, and bullying them and their bosses into silence on matters that put state policy in an unfavorable light (helped by the rightwing enforcers).

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In fact, information policy has become openly recognized as a weapon of war and is included among the elements of the U.S. official strategy of “full spectrum dominance,” which U.S. military experts Jim Winters and John Giffin have indicated means both “building up and protecting friendly media and degrading information received by your adversary” (quoted in David Miller, “Information Dominance: The Philosophy of Total Propaganda Control,” Jan. 2004, <http://www.coldtype.net>). Friendly media may be subsidized and given privileged access to information, and some friendly media may even be created by the state (e.g., the Iraq Media Network, paid for by the Pentagon). Media deemed hostile may be “degraded” by harassment and even cruise missile attacks. This policy is hardly new, but reached a new peak in planning, resort to violence, and extensive usage in the invasion-occupation of Iraq.

A problem for the mind control managers is the brazenness with which the United States has projected power since the fall of the Soviet Union, with three major wars of aggression, even more aggressive support for Israel’s ultra-ethnic cleansing, and an openly publicized plan for global domination by force and threat of force. This has contributed to the growth of more alert dissident communities, helped along by the Internet and the rise of alternative media, of which Al Jazeera is the most important (on Iraq, it reaches far more people than CNN). Mind control works best at home, with its reliable mainstream media cooperation, but the U.S. managers are working hard to extend its influence globally.

In frame domination a regular feature of government assaults on foreign targets is demonization of target country leaders, who, like Manuel Noriega and Saddam Hussein, were often allies treated gently by the media prior to their fall from grace (i.e., failure to take orders, not human rights abuses). This permits a steady focus on the abuses of the target country leadership rather than on the real reasons for the attack and the pains inflicted on target country civilians. It is also easier to use extreme force because the civilian population can be declared “willing executioners” who put the demon into power and/or have failed to remove him. This argument is used even against civilian populations allegedly ruled by a “dictator” against whom civilians may have limited power of removal. It goes almost without saying that the U.S., Indonesian and Israeli populations are never declared “willing executioners” although at least in the U.S. and Israeli cases the populations do have the power to remove murderous regimes.

The Fraud of Allegedly Minimizing Civilian Casualties

Another part of the official arsenal is to claim a sincere effort to minimize civilian casualties, helped by “precision bombing” and “surgical strikes” aimed solely at military targets.

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There is absolutely no reason to believe these claims as regards either intent or result, as in each recent U.S. war of aggression – Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq – there is evidence that non-military sites have been regularly targeted, that bombing raids often hit strictly civilian sites because of poor or no evidence of military relevance, and that sites are regularly attacked where civilian casualties are highly probable even if there is a valid military target (in violation of international law). It is a huge fraud that hundreds of bombing attacks on sites where civilians are sure to be killed, even where they are not specifically targeted, does not constitute a “deliberate” killing of civilians (for a good legal and substantive discussion, see Michael Mandel, *How America Gets Away With Murder* [Pluto: 2004], pp. 46-56).

In Yugoslavia, the United States, under NATO cover, openly extended targets to civilian sites like power stations, factories producing only consumer goods, farms, and even hospitals, museums, churches and monasteries, with the clear and sometimes acknowledged aim of making civilians suffer to force an early surrender. In Afghanistan bombing raids were often carried out against civilian sites based on unverified rumor, and pilots regularly bombed in response to a flash that might have been the firing of a weapon (the wedding party at Krakak; the killing of four Canadian soldiers), and pilots shot at and killed numerous unidentified individuals in flight, and even a tall man with a beard who might have been Bin Laden, along with five other peasants (for examples, see my ‘Tragic Errors’ As An Integral Component of Policy,” *Z Magazine*, Sept. 2002.). Targets included nine mosques (with at least 120 civilians killed) and three hospitals – the latter a regular U.S. target in Vietnam as well. Afghanistan was a “free fire zone,” to use the parlance of the genocidal U.S. operations in Vietnam.

Fallujah has also been a free fire zone, both in the April assault and that in November, with few if any restraints on targeting. As in Afghanistan, targets have included hospitals, mosques, power facilities, ambulances, and fleeing civilians – young, old, male and female. In Fallujah the phrase for the “liberal rules of engagement” is “weapons free,” and reporter Kevin Sites, who spent some days with the marines in Fallujah, says that “Weapons free means the marines can shoot whatever they see – it’s all considered hostile.”

There are of course regular official efforts to deny civilian casualties, and lying about them is standard operating procedure, often brazen lying to the point of laughability (some samples are provided in “Tragic Errors’ As An Integral Component of Policy”). But when denial is impossible and the lies are exposed too authoritatively, there are regrets, assurances that the “tragic errors” and “collateral damage” were all sad mistakes and certainly not deliberate, and if enough publicity attaches to the sad mistake there are announcements that an

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“investigation” is underway. We rarely hear the results of these investigations, and sometimes there is evidence that they never took place. Thus, after British ITN journalist Terry Lloyd was killed by U.S. marines in Iraq, Colin Powell promised an investigation, but some time later when ITN investigators spoke with the marines involved, the investigators were told that the marines had never been questioned in any investigation (see Tim Gopsill, “Target the Media,” in David Miller, ed., *Tell me lies* [Pluto: 2004], pp. 253-4). There are never any costs attached to these tragic errors and collateral damage – to the attackers – unless we include the building up of a huge reservoir of hate based on de facto murders for which there is no legal remedy in the present world order. It was acknowledged during the war against Yugoslavia that the turn to the bombing of civilian sites was for the purpose of inflicting pain on civilians, and it has occasionally been admitted as regards both Afghanistan and Iraq that killing civilians has its merits – because the civilians were sometimes suspected of supporting the Taliban or Iraqi resistance, and because killing civilians and its threat would instill fear and help render the population quiescent as well as less willing to help insurgents. In Iraq, a “senior Bush administration official” is quoted in the *New York Times* saying that the bombing of Fallujah was helpful in that it would push the “citizenry” of Fallujah to deny sanctuary and assistance to the insurgents, adding “that’s a good thing.” A “Pentagon official” was also quoted as saying: “If there are civilians dying in connection with these attacks, and with the destruction, the locals at some point have to make a decision. Do they want to harbor the insurgents and suffer the consequences that come with that?”

Attacking civilians directly or with assured collateral damage is a war crime, as “The Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and accordingly shall direct their operations only against military objectives” (Protocol 1, Article 48 of the Geneva Conventions, 1977 supplement). Attacking hospitals and deliberately depriving civilians of access to medicines and doctors are war crimes. Deliberately depriving civilian populations of food and water is a war crime. Shooting anybody that walks into the street or tries to cross a river seeking refuge is a war crime. The “wanton destruction” of a city is a war crime. These are all features of the U.S. assaults on Fallujah, so that U.S. authorities and their Iraqi puppet (“Saddam without a moustache”) are violating these articles on a continuing and large scale.

Avoiding Body Counts of Civilians Killed

Another weapon in the public relations arsenal of the death-machine managers is nega-

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tive: don't count bodies. The political and racist double standard here is staggering. In Kosovo, after the 78-day bombing war, the Clinton administration allocated \$25 million to the Tribunal for a search for bodies, and of course the body searches in Bosnia have been going at it for years; whereas in the aftermath of the Indonesian massacres of East Timorese in the run-up to the 1999 East Timorese vote for independence, the justice-loving Western powers were uninterested in body-counts, and so were the mass media.

U.S. body counts are known in detail and reported, whereas Vietnamese, Afghan and Iraqi civilian tolls are not, at least from official and mainstream media sources. During the 1991 Persian Gulf war Colin Powell stated that "Body counts don't interest me," and during the current aggression-occupation General Tommy Franks has acknowledged: "We don't count bodies." He meant Iraqi civilian bodies. The number of U.S. personnel missing in action or prisoners of war in Vietnam was constantly harped upon in the U.S. mainstream, but the number of Vietnamese missing in action and a count of the vast civilian toll in Vietnam were of no interest, and as Noam Chomsky has pointed out that civilian toll in Indochina is not even known within the range of millions (and estimates run up to four million). In Iraq today, the media reported at one point that 38 GIs had been killed in the November U.S. assault on Fallujah, but no figures are given for the Iraqi civilians killed – unworthy victims, or unpeople, by rule of political-racist bias, but serving the function of protecting the U.S. onslaught from adverse information.

Preventing Others From Counting Civilian Bodies

Equally important, and a complement of the official policy of not counting bodies, is preventing others from counting bodies (or reporting such counts). This involves buying up, intimidating, or destroying the media, journalists, and even hospitals and doctors in hospitals, who might testify to civilian casualties. Actions along these lines have been carried out on a large scale.

Most recently, the media reported that among the first actions of the U.S. forces in Fallujah was to bomb out of existence a clinic and take over the main General Hospital. One of the stated purposes of the takeover was to "shut down what officers said was a propaganda weapon for the militants: Fallujah General Hospital, with its stream of reports of civilian casualties" (Eric Schmitt, "A Goal is Met. What's Next?," NYT, Nov. 15, 2004). "Propaganda" is used here in the Orwellian sense of information that does not serve OUR propaganda needs. There is no suggestion in this article, or elsewhere in the paper or mainstream media, that this one of "several accomplishments" by U.S. forces in Fallujah was

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immoral and a straightforward violation of international law (see further, David Peterson, ZNet Blogs, Nov. 8, 2004; <http://blog.zmagazine.org/index.php/weblog/entry/iraq5/>).

In Afghanistan, the Pentagon bought exclusive rights to all photos made by Denver-base Space Imaging, the only commercial operator collecting high resolution images by satellite, thereby preventing possible public access to satellite photos of some of the several hundred villages bombed by the U.S. Air Force.

In another notorious case, a soldier even threatened to shoot Doug Struck, a Washington Post reporter who was trying to visit a just-bombed site in Afghanistan. The Pentagon didn't want anybody looking at the results of those bombings.

The Pentagon's and other official U.S. attacks on media entities that might disclose inconvenient information has been extensive. In Afghanistan, the Pentagon went after all known indigenous radio stations, and some that didn't exist any more, displaying their imperfect information sources: On October 8, 2001, naval ships fired four cruise missiles at an unused radio mast east of downtown Kabul. The radio station, which hadn't been in operation for a decade, was hit by three missiles, but a fourth went astray and completely destroyed a United Nation's-funded de-mining agency, Afghan Technical Consultants (ATC), instantly killing four Afghan night watchmen and injuring two other UN staff persons and two other Afghans (a case described in Marc Herold's forthcoming *Afghan Bodies Don't Lie: Faces of 'Collateral Damage'*).

It is well-known that Colin Powell pressed officials of Qatar to crack down on Al Jazeera, and Al Jazeera (and the web site Arabia.com) were subjected to major hacker attacks that caused brief Al Jazeera web site closures and intermittent interruptions throughout the war. The level of the most serious attack suggested government involvement (Faisal Bondi, "Al Jazeera's War," in David Miller, ed., *Tell me lies* [Pluto: 2004], pp. 248-9). The U.S.-chosen Allawi government of Iraq raided and closed down Al Jazeera's office in Baghdad. One condition insisted on by the United States in the April negotiations for a truce fire in Fallujah was that Al Jazeera agree to move its cameras and personnel out of the city, where that broadcaster had been able to transmit hostile "propaganda" (i.e., photos of and interviews with civilian victims; pictures of ambulances under fire, etc).

The United States bombed and destroyed the main broadcasting station in Belgrade during the 1999 bombing war (while killing 16 people); it bombed all of the regional radio stations of Radio Shuriat in Afghanistan, and it bombed the Al Jazeera broadcasting facilities in Kabul. Shortly after the start of the Iraq invasion, on March 25, 2003, U.S. forces bombed the Iraqi TV station. On April 8, the day after their entry into Baghdad, U.S. forces attacked

Al Jazeera's broadcasting facilities there, despite the fact that Al Jazeera officials had told the U.S. military the precise coordinates of their offices in the hope that this would make it more difficult for them to make another "tragic error." This anti-media warfare was hardly noticed by the U.S. mainstream media.

Intimidating and Killing Reporters

The U.S. bombing of the Al Jazeera station in Kabul in 2001 was explained by U.S. officials as a result of detection of a satellite uplink indicating an interview with a Taliban member, and U.S. officials have gone farther, stating publicly that any uplink from enemy territory if detected by U.S. planes could be the basis for an attack, without differentiation between journalism and enemy communications (see Gopsill, "Target the Media," pp. 251-3). This threat to bomb even "friendly" journalists and stations would be a strong deterrent to placing them in enemy territory, and the threat helped induce CBS, NBC, ABC and Fox to pull out of Baghdad before the March 2003 invasion. Gopsill notes that "This exodus was pleasing to the Pentagon," causing the U.S. public to be "ignorant of what their forces were doing to the city."

The policy of encouraging the embedding of journalists, complemented by warnings, threats and occasional attacks on "unilaterals," had a similar affect of diminishing the likelihood of reporting outside U.S. military control. Unilateral journalist Terry Lloyd, traveling with several others in a vehicle with huge markings of TV, was shot and killed by U.S. marines, but a Marine general in charge of public relations had warned that "having independent journalists wandering the battlefield is fraught with lots of problems." Unilaterals were consequently sparse, leaving the reporting to the "embeds" and Arab media. Faisal Bodi points out that "From the outset of the war the news followed two tracks: the 'Embed' line laid by Centcom, and the independent line by news providers like Al Jazeera who had the courage to locate hacks in the war zone." ("Al Jazeera's War," in Miller, Tell me lies, p. 245). The Embed line was not concerned with civilian casualties.

On April 8, 2003, U.S. forces not only bombed the Al Jazeera facilities in Baghdad, they also attacked Abu Dhabi TV facilities located there. On the same day a tank shelled the media facilities and personnel at the Palestine Hotel, killing two journalists and seriously injuring three others. The assault on the hotel is interesting in part because once again U.S. officials engaged in serial lying in "explaining" the attacks – the numerous media personnel in the Hotel, and their video shots, uniformly contradict the official claims of shooting or

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other action or threat from the Hotel; all of them agree with Robert Fisk's statement that the U.S. response was "a straightforward lie."

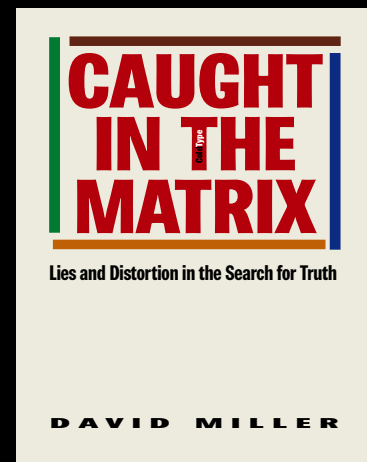
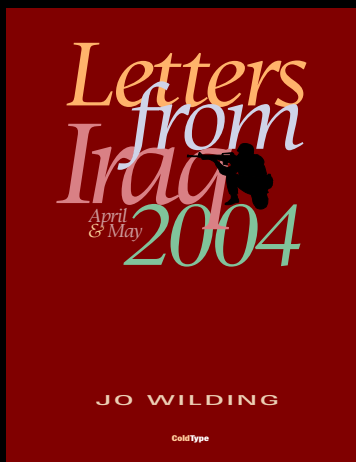
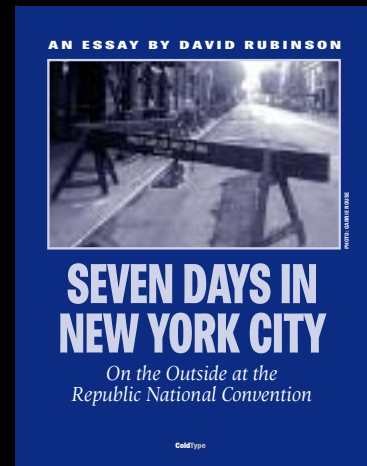
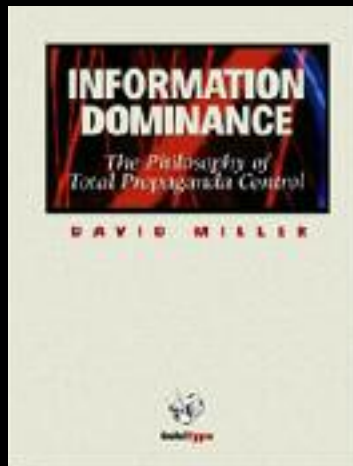
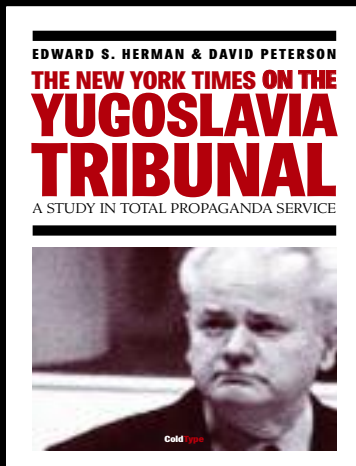
The day after this attack on the journalists in the Palestine Hotel, the U.S. invaders, using an armoured personnel carrier, pulled down the statue of Saddam Hussein right outside the hotel, passing it off as an Iraqi celebration of the victory. The journalists from the hotel filmed this charade, and as Tim Gopsill says, reported it "as the coalition's greatest moment of triumph. Such magnanimity on the part of people who had just been shot at is remarkable."

Concluding Note

This "magnanimity" flows from structure and internalized bias that causes the media to perform miracles of apologetics for state policy. They can report with great indignation false stories of Saddam's alleged removal of babies from incubators in Kuwait, but the destruction of a clinic and seizure of the main hospital in Fallujah, cutting off of the water supply to this and two other cities, leveling Fallujah with advanced weaponry, and Madeleine Albright's remark that killing 500,000 Iraqi children through the "sanctions of mass destruction" was "worth it," are treated at best with brevity and with no detectable indignation. What the U.S. military is doing to Iraqi civilians is largely unreported in the U.S. media, and documentary evidence collected by outsiders is kept out of sight. A tape of U.S. soldiers badly mistreating Iraqi civilians caught by Swedish journalist Urban Hamid was not saleable here: Hamid says "It's obvious that the mainstream media exercise some kind of self-censorship in which people know this is a hot potato and don't touch it because you are going to get burned" (Quoted in Michael Massing, "Iraq, the Press, and the Election": <http://alter-net.org/mediaculture/20569/>)

In short, the mainstream media are "willing collaborators" in imperial policies that involve the mass killing of civilians—their leaders and many of their journalists are spiritual "Embeds" who hardly need coercion and threats to see their government's view of things, but they and their associates are also under pressure from the media leaders, the government, and the private enforcers to stay away from such "controversial" matters as the killing of unworthy victims or unpeople. The media serve as an arm of the state, and do a better job of state propaganda than systems of explicit government control and crude propaganda. This is state propaganda voluntarily provided, though from parties with symbiotic connections to the state and deriving substantial benefits from this relationship.

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