

July 7, 2003

# YOU APOLOGIZE. NO, YOU APOLOGIZE

**T**he BBC must apologize” insisted Jack Straw this morning to a group of reporters outside Number 10 Downing Street as the British Foreign Secretary responded to a Parliamentary Committee hearing exonerating the government of “sexing up” a dossier rationalizing war on Iraq. Straw blasted the Beeb for saying that Tony Blair’s spin doctor, Alistair Cambell, had inserted the false assertion that the Iraqi’s could launch chemical weapons in 45 minutes. It was a masterful performance that drew attention away from the other finding by the Committee: All the facts on the alleged threat posed by Iraq are not yet in. Bashing the media seems to be the tactic du jour.

Curiously, the BBC, usually balanced to a fault, did not have an immediate response from, of all places, the BBC itself.

The BBC website reports: “Claims about Iraq’s weapons were given too much weight by the government, MPs have ruled – but they have cleared media chief Alastair Campbell of “sexing up, intelligence.” The all-party foreign affairs committee says a suggestion that Iraq could deploy chemical and biological weapons within 45 minutes should not have been given such prominence by the government.”

“The BBC’s News chief Richard Sambrook is referenced here. He says “BBC stood behind the credibility of the source whose concerns prompted the original story.” This does not appear to be a direct response to Straw.”

## **US DIPLOMAT CHALLENGES WAR LIE**

**I**N America today, it is not the media challenging the government – it’s a former diplomat who says he warned the Bush Administration about phony claims that uranium from an African country was sent to Iraq. He told them it wasn’t true BEFORE the U.S. government trotted it out as a justification for the war. Joseph Wilson told his story in The New York Times and again on NBC’s Meet the Press and again this morning on CNN.

He diplomatically concluded: “Did the Bush administration manipulate intelligence about Saddam Hussein’s weapons programs to justify an invasion of Iraq? Based on my experience with the administration in the months leading up to the war, I have little choice but to conclude that some of the intelligence related to Iraq’s nuclear weapons program was twisted to exaggerate the Iraqi threat.”

<http://www.NYtimes.com/2003/07/06/opinion/06WILS.html?pagewanted=all&>

The word from Baghdad today is that three more GI’s were slain in the capital of Iraq. The New York Times says the attacks come “amid growing signs of guerrilla resistance to U.S. forces.”

Over the weekend a wannabe foreign correspondent, 24-year-old Richard Wild was killed in Baghdad. According to The Guardian: “Wild had been chatting with U.S. military policemen guard-

ing the museum minutes before his death. He was wearing a white shirt and khaki trousers and was not carrying his video camera.

“Wild was the first journalist to die since US forces entered Baghdad in April, sparking a growing wave of guerrilla resistance. A tall man with close-cropped hair, Wild was a former British soldier who still looked the part, according to Michael Burke, an independent British TV producer who knew him. ‘He wanted to do war reporting. He didn’t want to sit in the studio,’ Burke said.”

### **RED CROSS SAYS LAWS ARE BEING VIOLATED**

**THE** Red Cross has accused Tony Blair and George Bush of violating the Geneva Convention on prisoners, saying that they are not being informed about prisoners. Says a Red Cross official: “It is an obligation of the occupying power to notify us of any arrests but that’s not happening. We are not receiving anything like full information on prisoners of war. There is no proper notification. No organization. There is not the will to resolve this issue.”

### **DISSECTOR DIGRESSION**

**THE** POW issue has been of special interest to me ever since I played the role of the “Geneva Man” in the play *Stalag 17* – about conditions in Nazi POW camps. I was 10 years old at the time. It’s funny what we remember.

And how we free associate! Tom Engelehardt, who edits the always provocative *TomDispatch.com* speaks of this in his just published and most engrossing novel, *The Last Days of Publishing* (University of Massachusetts Press). He writes: “The mind is nothing if not an editing

machine. It constantly elides, discards, buries and reshapes automatically following the path of the story one wants to hear or tell. So much must be subsumed in recreating the contours of a life.” (Want a good summer read, read this book.)

### **YES, SURE, OF COURSE, WE WANT OIL – POLES**

**SOME** countries are more upfront about their goals in Iraq than others. Poland sent some troops as part of the “coalition of the willing,” and is clear about being even more interested in becoming part of the “coalition of the drilling.” The wires report:

“The Polish Foreign Minister, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, said his country had never disguised the fact that it sought direct access to the oilfields. He was speaking as a group of Polish firms signed a deal with a subsidiary of US Vice President Dick Cheney’s former company, Haliburton.

“‘We have never hidden our desire for Polish oil companies to finally have access to sources of commodities,’ Mr Cimoszewicz told the Polish PAP news agency. Access to the oilfields ‘is our ultimate objective,’ he added.”

### **UNCOVERED: THE COVERT DIMENSION OF POLITICS**

**AS** the debate over what we knew and what we forgot during the March to War in Iraq goes on, as members of Congress ask for a probe and members of a Parliamentary Committee actually carry one out, we are reminded about the uses and abuses of intelligence. There is a long and Byzantine covert connection here that rarely gets the media focus it deserves.

Everyone who knows the game of modern pol-

itics also knows that there is often a deeper dimension, a hidden world of interlocking directorates, ideological agendas and financial interests. In this world of “deep politics,” tradecraft is deployed to cook intelligence findings, to shape the “product” to meet the political requirements of those in power. There are behind-the-scenes conflicts deep in initialed agencies like the CIA and DIA, FBI, ONI, NSA and their British counterparts, as well as the usual, known conflicts between them. This warfare is legendary, as is the effort to bypass it. Hence, Secretary Rumsfeld set up his own intelligence agency. Reportedly the intelligence was cooked in the Pentagon’s Office of Special Plans, led by neo-con Abram Shulsky. Vice President Cheney has been reported to be making unusual personal visits to the CIA, to make certain the agency’s findings are in line with the Administration’s commitments: ie. launching a war.

### IGNORED VOICES

**MANY** concerns about these trends were written up and commented upon in passing, Perhaps you remember Robert Baer, a former CIA officer who said, “Cooking the intelligence is a tried and true way to get your will in Washington.”

OR Stephen C. Pellitiere, former CIA political analyst on Iraq, who debunked the story about Iraq gassing the Kurds story in The New York Times. He asked, “why are we picking on Iraq on human rights grounds, particularly when there are so many other repressive regimes Washington supports?”

OR former CIA analyst Ray McGovern who said his colleagues are “holding their noses” because of the way intelligence had been “cooked to a recipe and the recipe is high policy.”

OR the letter of John Brady Kiesling, the diplomat who quit his post in Athens last February saying “We have not seen such systematic distortion of intelligence, systematic manipulation of American opinion since the war in Vietnam.”

### WHY WERE THESE WARNINGS NOTED BUT IGNORED?

**WHY** is it that so many warnings like this, so many dissents, so many leaks, went reported but were rarely followed up? It was if they were flushed down a memory hole. How can we explain the stance of so many media outlets who knew how fishy Administration claims were? The media recycled and repeated them all the same and did so endlessly – as if there were no serious doubts about the WMD’s, the nerve gasses or the Iraq-Al Qaeda connection that deserved constant disclaiming.

More in-depth analysis is needed of the deception by government, who are always masters at it and can be relied on to lie. And also, we need to analyze the media itself. Over the weekend I fell upon a copy of a small, densely-printed and fully footnoted journal, published in England called LOBSTER, (You can read some of it and more about it at [www.lobster-magazine.co.uk](http://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk).) It offers articles by researchers who would be dismissed as “conspiracy theorists” by what the Brits call “the chattering classes.”

I couldn’t make sense of all the references, since I don’t follow the details and entrails of New Labour and its policies. It was about “sexed up” government documents riddled with citations, about bogus documents, purloined findings and manufactured “dodgy dossiers” used by the Blair government to sell the war. (How many times did

we hear war boosters say they only wished George W had been as knowledgeable, smooth and persuasive as the man war critics in Blimey nicknamed Bush's "poodle?")

### **SPEAKING WITH FORKED TONGUE**

**NOW** we know how deep the lie. Clare Short, one of the ministers who quit Blair's cabinet, labeled it "honorable deception." One article in Lobster refers to Blair as a product of the British class system: "Despite his image as a modernizer of both British politics and social attitudes, Tony Blair is a typical product of it," writes John Burnes. "As a politician, he depends on the skills of an advocate, rhetoric and persuasion, rather than analysis, upon charm rather than intellectual power or subtlety."

What Lobster reminds us of is that many of the experts so frequently interviewed on television and quoted in the press had unexamined interests and relationships with groups who wanted to steer U.S. policy. Their associations, connections and paymasters are rarely disclosed. The way PR is used to plant messages, how guests of this ilk are booked on TV shows, is also buried and rarely explored. So much for media transparency and accountability!

### **THE CASE OF DAVID KAY**

**I CITED** one egregious example the other day. This was yet another soft-ball interview with David Kay on CNN. He was identified as a former UN weapons inspector who now works for the U.S. government. Correspondent David Enzor was given access to Kay via a secure link to the CIA building. It was the first time I'd ever seen CIA TV. Afterwards, CNN anchor Lou Dobbs asked

Enzor if Kay wasn't one of those inspectors who originally doubted the existence of WMDs, clearly confusing Kay with the outspoken Scott Ritter, Enzor was honest and, rare for a TV reporter, said he just didn't know.

Both of them should have known who Kay is and where he stands. He has been on the air a zillion times. Didn't Enzor do any prep work for the interview? It was as if his background and interests do not matter. But they do. Kay is not some disinterested expert, he was the Secretary General of the Uranium Institute, now known as the World Nuclear Association. His boss told the New York Press this week that he had demanded a promotion and when it wasn't forthcoming turned on him.

### **BLIX: KAY IS A BASTARD**

**THAT** boss was chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix, who says: "There are some bastards like David Kay that I can't tolerate." (Blix's background as a booster of nuclear power was also rarely probed). Before his current assignment, Kay was a Corporate Senior Vice President of a privately-owned military-contactor called Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) That company is currently heavily involved in Iraq in managing prospects for a future government, electronic spying and operating a propaganda radio station in Umm Qasr. Apparently the Bush Administration is privatizing so-called nation-building by assigning the task of creating a new government in Iraq to this shadowy outfit. (Any investigative reporters out there willing to look into this?)

In short, Kay is hardly a neutral "expert." Yet, he had been a consultant for NBC News and has been appointed by CIA director George Tenet to

head the 1300-member Iraq Survey group looking for the missing weapons. This spook, media consultant and military contractor continues to appear regularly on TV without being fully identified, proving that media coverage is tilted, infiltrated and contaminated. (For more on Kay see <http://exmphora.blogspot.com/>)

### SAFARI TIME

**TIRED** of Iraq? President Bush may be. He is off to five countries in Africa, where skepticism about his intentions were reflected on the front page of South Africa's Mail and Guardian: Its question of the day: "Is Bush here to plunder or provide?"

The story: "George Bush arrives in Africa today with no treaties to shred, no enemies to warn, no troops to congratulate. Instead, the warrior president brings promises of billions of dollars and a series of initiatives to relieve the continent's suffering."

The president told Charlie Cobb of AllAfrica.com and three other Africa specialists yesterday that "We come as a nation that believes in the future of Africa. We've got great relations with leaders and countries on the continent of Africa which will not only enable people to realize their dreams, but also make the world more safe,"

Notes Cobb: "But Bush brushed off reports suggesting that support for the United States has nosedived in Africa following the war with Iraq. Told that in Nigeria one recent survey by the Pew Research Centre found that 44 percent of the population trusts Osama Bin Laden to "do the right thing in world affairs," Bush responded: "If I conducted our foreign policy based upon polls and focus groups, we would be stumbling all over ourselves. That's not the way I do things. I base our foreign policy upon deep-seated principles."

"'Obviously,' President Bush said, 'there needs to be an education program in Africa because there has been "a kind of an attachment, between the words "America" and "war".'

### "HECK"

"They are going to find out the words 'freedom' and 'America' are synonymous . . . If there's a constant effort to describe America as a non-caring country, then people are going to have a bad attitude about us. I think people, when they know the facts, will say, "Well, this is a great country."

"Asked to respond to the accusation that U.S. oil interests drive Washington's Africa policy, Bush was even more dismissive: 'That's one of the most amazing conspiracies I've heard. Heck, no one has ever made that connection,' he said, going on to outline the varying engagement his administration had pursued with African countries. 'We've been talking about Africa since I was sworn-in as President,' he said."

<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200307040009.html>

### US TROOPS IN LIBERIA

**A U.S.** military-accompanied humanitarian-assessment team arrives in Monrovia, Liberia today. as that country's despotic warlord leader announces he is leaving and will accept refuge in Nigeria. Undernews reports:

"A Washington insider familiar with Liberia revealed that a major reason for Bush to go into Liberia is oil. Liberia's flag flies on most of the world's supertankers. 'Look, the United States is about ready to start moving massive supplies of Iraqi oil on supertankers. With Liberia, the major flag of convenience for those tankers in a state of upheaval, Bush has to go in with troops. Forget

human rights, that's not the issue, the Liberian International Ship and Corporate Registry must have a stable government to nurture it," the insider said.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/mad-sen07042003.html>

### **FREE PRESS: CALL CONGRESS TO STOP THE FCC**

**BOB** McChesney and John Nichols of Free Press write: "As you know, a month ago the FCC dramatically relaxed media ownership regulations, suffocating the cornerstone of American democracy: a free, fair, and open public debate.

"Because one million Americans raised their voices against the FCC decision, the Senate Com-

merce Committee recently sent a bill to the Senate floor for a vote that would roll back many of the rules. Today the challenge is to get that bill to the floor of the Senate and House for a vote.

"Take 3 Minutes to Stop Media Monopoly: Phone It In.

"Call your Congressional representatives and demand that they support the rollback. One phone call from a constituent is more effective than scores of email petitions.

"Go to [www.mediareform.net/stopthefcc](http://www.mediareform.net/stopthefcc) and follow the easy steps or read on for more information.

"Roll Back the FCC" legislation now has 38 supporters in the Senate (out of 100). We need 51 for passage."

