

INSIDE: IRAQ AT THE GATES OF HELL ● SHOPPING WITH BIG BROTHER ● EUROPE'S NEW DUMPING GROUND ● BLAIR'S BRILLIANT SPEECH ● & MORE

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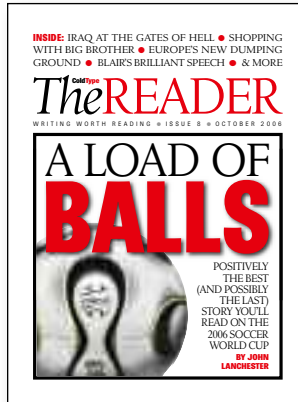
A LOAD OF **BALLS**



POSITIVELY
THE BEST
(AND POSSIBLY
THE LAST)
STORY YOU'LL
READ ON THE
2006 SOCCER
WORLD CUP

**BY JOHN
LANCHESTER**

ColdType **The** READER



ISSUE 8 | OCTOBER 2006

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WRITING WORTH READING FROM AROUND THE WORLD

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English author and football – soccer to our North American readers – fan John Lanchester kept a diary while watching the 2006 World Cup™ finals in Germany, during which he pondered many things, including the new balls introduced for the event and a goalkeeper with one testicle

A LOAD OF BALLS: MY WORLD CUP DIARY

8 JUNE. Time for predictions. The entrails say that history seems to be the best guide to performance in World Cups. In the last six Cups, going back to 1982, 11 out of 12 slots in the final have been contested by just four teams: Brazil, Argentina, Germany and Italy. In fact, there has never been a final without one of these four teams.

Why? It is interesting and odd that history should be such a powerful predictor. It's been a better predictor than things like form, which you'd have thought would be much more useful. So, anyway, the entrails say that it will be one of the Big Four that wins – most likely Brazil, the only team to have won outside their own hemisphere, and whose players are much more used to European football than was once the case. Also, Brazilians I know say this is the best team since 1970.

If you leave out the host countries, and make an exception for the great Dutch side of the 1970s, the last surprising team to make the final were the Czechoslovaks in Chile in 1962. According to a simulation run of Fifa's official game, as played on an Xbox 360, the

Czechs will get their revenge this time by winning the tournament. The simulation has Italy and Portugal knocked out in the group stages, and England knocked out by Germany in the round of 16. It has nothing to say about Rooney's metatarsal, and nor do the entrails.

9 June. On the subject of predictions, one of the safer ones concerns today's opening game. This traditionally features the winners and, equally traditionally, they struggle. People remember France losing to Senegal last time, and Argentina losing to Cameroon in 1990; but Brazil had a hard time beating Scotland 2-1 in 1998, Germany only squeaked 1-0 past Bolivia in 1994, Italy drew with Bulgaria in 1986 and Argentina (again) lost to Belgium in 1982. So that would have been a safe non-entrail-based prediction for today, that Brazil would have a hard time in the opening game. Except they aren't playing in the opening game. Instead it's the host country, Germany.

Why? Well, there's a widely held view that Fifa are useless tinkering

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COVER STORY

Ever since I heard about it I haven't been able to get out of my head the fact that the Côte d'Ivoire goalkeeper, Tizié, lost a testicle after an on-pitch collision a year ago

dimwits who can be relied on to cock everything up, including wanting people to refer to this tournament as the FIFA World Cup Germany™. (Even the Olympics, which are about as debased by commercialism as it would be possible to imagine, don't call themselves the Olympics™.) So that would explain why they were tinkering with this tradition: just because they could. This would also explain why FIFA have brought in a new ball, just in time for the FIFA World Cup Germany™. England goalkeeper Paul Robinson shelled out £420 on new balls just before the tournament to get some early practice in, and reports that it swerves more than the familiar ball and will be harder for goalkeepers. That doesn't mean it's easier for outfield players, and especially for dead-ball experts. Newer tends to mean lighter, and lighter often means harder to control. (About the only spectacular free kick in the last World Cup, which also featured a new ball, was the one Ronaldinho stuck past Seaman to knock England out in the quarter-final.) So the players spend hundreds of hours practising with the old ball – and then suddenly find themselves playing with a new one, on the biggest occasion of their lives, to the detriment of pretty much anybody who takes any interest.

Why? For money, obviously – so they can sell shitloads of the new ball. They could still sell shitloads if they brought it in a few months before, of course, but that would take away the last minute pointless tinkering aspect. So, again, why? I have looked into the question and it turns out that if FIFA be-

gins a World Cup™ without making these apparently pointless changes it will cause a rupture in the fundamental space-time continuum which will cause Satan to assume control of the universe and preside over a dominion of pure evil for 1,000,000,000 millennia.

10 June. One never likes to join in a chorus, but there's something truly odd about the effect Eriksson's half-time talks seem to have on England. Not every time, but more often than not, and especially in crucial games when they have a half-time lead, they go in fired up and come out seeming drained, enervated, and with less of a clue about how they should be playing than they had ten minutes before. It's as if they go into the changing room whistling 'The Dambusters March' and come out humming whale music. I know it's possible for a coach to pump a team up too much – but this is going too far the other way. You have to wonder what goes on in there. Yoga? Aromatherapy? Tibetan chanting?

Notwithstanding all that, today's was about the best possible result, especially when combined with Sweden's draw with Trinidad and Tobago. The points we needed, plus a bit of a kick up the bum and reality check.

11 June. Ever since I heard about it I haven't been able to get out of my head the fact that the Côte d'Ivoire goalkeeper, Tizié, lost a testicle after an on-pitch collision a year ago. At the time he was playing for his club Espérance; a name that must at moments have had an ironic edge to it. Tizié was in intensive

care for two days and they didn't think he would live, but he was back playing for the national team a few months later. I'm aware that it's possible to make bad-taste jokes about goalies and goolies, but for me it's a reminder of how much physical courage the players have, repeatedly going into collisions any one of which could have a determining effect on the rest of their lives.

Let's take a moment, though, to imagine what it would have been like if, instead of breaking his metatarsal, Rooney had (God forbid) lost a testicle and an anxious nation was waiting to see if he would recover in time for the World Cup. The papers, hard enough to take during the World Cup under normal circumstances, would have gone beyond the darkest reveries of Karl Kraus. Imagine the editorials. Imagine the diagrams. The Sun would have had a daily feature called 'Nadwatch'.

12 June. I was slightly surprised to learn that Australia is richer than Japan, in terms of GDP per capita. The reason I was looking it up was because something's been on my mind. As of this morning, eight games had been played. That means the World Cup was one-eighth over (boo! waah!). Guess how often a poorer country had beaten a richer one. Answer: once. Poland 0 Ecuador 2. And after the ninth game the trend has continued, since, as I say, Australia is richer than Japan.

Why would a country's being rich confer an advantage for the national football team? Perhaps because the richest countries will tend to attract the best players to its leagues, and that will

in turn raise the standards for indigent players in the leagues, and therefore the national side. Or something. Do I look like Steven Levitt?

Now, it's obvious that the richest country doesn't always win. Brazil, for instance, is 22nd out of the 32 competitors in terms of GDP. But Brazil is the most populous country in the World Cup. (I'm leaving out the USA from these calculations, on the grounds that it is too big and rich and indifferent to football to count.) So we could propose the following hypothesis: the richest team will win, except when the most populous country wins. It'll be interesting to see how many exceptions there are to this: how many times a poorer, smaller country will win. Not too many is my guess.

13 June. I sat down to watch South Korea v. Togo wanting Togo to win – and that rather selflessly, too, since it would have disproved yesterday's Footy-nomics hypothesis. As I was watching the less-than-gripping first half, with Togo a goal ahead, I picked up *The Thinking Fan's Guide to the World Cup* (I have a copy because I have an essay in it), began reading Binyavanga Wainaina's piece about Togo, and found myself changing my mind.^[1] I have to admit I knew absolutely fuck-all about Togo and didn't know that the former dictator's son Faure Gnassingbé ran the country and his brother Rock ran the football association. There were democracy protests in Togo last year. But Faure 'had good fortune on his side: amid all the unrest his younger brother delivered the best gift his family has ever re-

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COVER STORY

Nobody says that Ronaldo is on the sauce. In fact, he cheekily said that the president of Brazil was on the sauce, when Lula had the temerity to ask the national team's coach: 'Is Ronaldo fat?'

ceived: qualification for the World Cup'.

Musing on this, I found that I wasn't wanting Togo to win any more. Just as well, too, since Jean-Paul Abalo gave away a free kick from which the Koreans scored, and was sent off in the process. Togo went on to lose 2-1. So if it's bad news for the Gnassingbé family that's a good thing, right? Leaving 5.4 million Togolese, citizens of one of the poorest countries in the World Cup, the only one of the 32 currently getting poorer every year, even more depressed than they were when they woke up this morning. Football has questionable links with nationalisms and governments everywhere on earth, so surely it's a type of cant to think that the Togolese aren't quite miserable enough to deserve a cheering World Cup run. And yet anything that's good news for the Gnassingbés . . .

Hmmph. Better to keep it simple. I think I'll stick to a clear-cut view of who I want to win for the rest of the tournament.

14 June. By and large, fans feel a certain affection for fat players. There's something humanising about the extra poundage; it makes a player look more like one of us, perhaps because it hints at what we would look like if we were out there on the pitch, our team's shirt proudly stretched over our stomachs. Steve McMahon and Jan Molby were two noticeably porky players whose podginess helped win a place in fans' hearts. I remember Molby used to be greeted by affectionate chants of 'Sumo' – at least, until he was done for drunk driving, when the chant was replaced

by the song 'He's fat, he's round, his car is in the pound, Jan Molby, Jan Molby.'

The drink/fatness link was no coincidence. Back when I used to write match reports, if a player looked – to use a favourite euphemism of the milieu – 'chunky', your working hypothesis was that they were hitting the bottle. That was on the Occam's razor principle that booze was the likeliest place for them to be getting the extra calories. The point being that for a professional athlete in training for an aerobically intensive sport, it takes a phenomenal calorie intake to put on weight. Either they're eating cake after training all day every day, or they're on the sauce.

Nobody says that Ronaldo is on the sauce. In fact, he cheekily said that the president of Brazil was on the sauce, when Lula had the temerity to ask the national team's coach: 'Is Ronaldo fat?' ('It's as much a lie that I am fat as it must be that he drinks a lot,' was Ronaldo's not totally unambiguous response.) Ronaldo says that his own chunkiness is down to the fact that he has been off training with an injury for a couple of months. This may be so; but the truth is he if anything looks a bit thinner than he has done playing for Real Madrid in the last couple of seasons. I think he's a bit porky for no other reason than that he likes his pies. I also think there is something noble about a professional athlete's managing to put on weight like that, and that we should celebrate Ronaldo's heroic, principled, against-all-odds fatness.

The trouble is that he looks so glum. His head appears to be elsewhere. It's

that, I think, which Brazilians mind, much more than the weight issue. We fans love a fattie. A distracted, depressed, half-hearted fattie, not so much.

15 June. So the Germans are the first team to go through. I'm glad, for several reasons involving general Germanophilia and the fact that some of the interest leeches out of the World Cup if the host team are knocked out too early.

Also, I'm pleased for Jürgen Klinsmann. At least I think I am. He is a likeable man but there is something odd about his affect; hard to put your finger on but it's there. I remember a couple of things. He was something of a hate figure to England fans when he arrived at Tottenham in 1994, owing to his egregious diving in the 1990 World Cup, so when he scored his first goal he celebrated by doing an elaborate swan-dive. Lots of people thought that showed he was a good sport. It made me think, though, of that category of person who is so eager to show they get the joke that it makes you wonder if, deep down, they ever actually get any jokes at all. And then when he gave a press conference to announce he was leaving Tottenham, he held it at the Comedy Club. Geddit? Because Germans don't have a sense of humour, so he holds a press conference at the Comedy Club, yok yok . . . Even hacks, keener than anyone to show they've got the joke too, felt that was a bit odd.

Still, you have to give him credit for living in California. How about that for working from home? When national

stereotypes are contradicted, nobody knows what to say. If he were French or from a Latin country the papers would be full of stuff about his being detached, laid-back, shruggy. As it is, they reach for the received-opinion file – which doesn't have anything in it about the not at all rare phenomenon of the New Age German – and draw a blank.

But the long-distance thing is a hoot. I think this trend should be encouraged. After the World Cup, when Steve McClaren takes over the England manager's job, it is essential that he moves to Antarctica. Deal with that, paparazzi scum!

20 June. For Europeans, the last World Cup was a little weird from the time-zone point of view. We're used to watching games from the Americas in our evening, but it felt peculiar to be watching games from Korea and Japan before, during, or instead of breakfast. The more demanding nail-biters could end up utterly drained and knackered for the rest of the day – and for most of us, it feels odd to have had your most intense experience of the 24 hours over by nine in the morning. By contrast I thought this World Cup, with games at 3, 5 and 8 p.m., was going to be perfect. Especially the 8 p.m. game. What's not to like?

But there is a worm in the bud, and it's to do with supper. The issue is when to eat. Last night I tried eating before the game. That worked OK (thanks to the microwave). Except as I dragged myself to bed at about 11.30 I suddenly realised that, because I'd had dinner an hour and a half before I usually do, I

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COVER STORY

The excitement became too much to handle, and the commentator, cracking under the strain, came right out with the n-word. He just said it. With just five lousy minutes to go . . . It's so easy to dream of what might have been. But there's no point. He just had to use the bad word

had a bad case of the munchies. Fridge inspection. Yoghurt? No. Pizza? Don't be stupid. Keen's cheddar? Perfect. Then I went upstairs and read Emmanuel Carrère's biography of Philip K. Dick for half an hour or so.^[†] Then I tried to sleep.

There are quite a large number of books about how to get a good night's sleep, and good 'sleep hygiene' in general, and not a single one of them recommends a combination of late-night cheese-eating and reading about Philip K. Dick. Carrère's book is emphatic about Dick's belief, which throughout his life was intermittent but overpowering, that the world as we see it is an illusion. He had visions of ultimate evil lurking just behind the surface of things, and most of his books play with the idea of being trapped in an illusion or simulation.

So anyway, as I was lying there sweating out cheese and half-awake, I suddenly thought: Dick would have said that the England team have been replaced by robots. That's why they're playing so badly. They're not in fact the England team at all, but physically identical cyborg replicas, who've been programmed to adopt a style of play based on the long-ball game prevalent in the English leagues about ten years ago. That's why great players like Lampard and Gerrard suddenly look like they've been drafted in from Howard Wilkinson's Sheffield Wednesday. And the accompanying thought: where are the real England team? Who's keeping them hostage? Will they escape? Will they turn up in time?

That's definitely the last time I eat

cheese at bedtime.

27 June. They did brilliantly well. The last African team had got to the 85th minute of their last game before it happened. Ghana were 2-0 down against Brazil. They'd fought hard against temptation . . . and then suddenly it was all too much. I felt for them, I really did. To have come so very, very close. But perhaps it was too much to expect. In any case, it was not to be. The irony was that it wasn't Brazil's third goal that caused it to happen, but the replay. The Ghana defenders pushed up, the Brazilian midfield advanced, the pass was slipped through to Ze Roberto. As he prepared to slip the ball past the goalie, Richard Kingson, the excitement became too much to handle, and the commentator, cracking under the strain, came right out with the n-word. He just said it. With just five lousy minutes to go . . . It's so easy to dream of what might have been. But there's no point. He just had to use the bad word. The Ghanaians were – I can hardly bear to write it – 'naive'. Specifically, they were guilty of 'naive defending'.

I can't have been the only person listening who let out a low moan of Nooooooooo. When Eurosport (I think it was) broadcast the African Cup of Nations they had, instead of a swear box, a 'naive' box, in which everybody who used the n-word had to drop a fiver. If memory serves they had a naive-free tournament. The message seemed to have caught on, and Tunisia, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Ghana had played all their matches thus far without the n-word being flourished once. I caught

one use of ‘silky’ – another word which, in a football context, means ‘black’ – but no ‘naive’, until last night. We came so close.

30 June. There was something particularly disappointing about the brawl at the end of the Germany v. Argentina game. I’m not talking about the girly flailing that passed for a fight – a classic example of the ‘handbags at ten paces’ style of on-pitch confrontation. No, the problem was the way the TV played it down so unforgivably. Where were the slow-motion replays, the we-name-the-guilty-men close-ups and freeze-frames? When a fight breaks out in a rugby match they show it about a dozen times; it’s tacitly accepted that though these things are regrettable, they do happen, and if they’re going to happen, we might as well enjoy them when they do. (Basically, it’s the argument advanced by Thomas DeQuincey in ‘On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts’.) Football used to take a similar approach. When Frank Rijkaard spat at Rudi Völler in 1990, we were showed the flying lump of gob in slow motion from about ten different angles. But this time, we get a lot of shouting and pushing and at least one man down, and the whole thing is briskly glossed over and wrapped up as if it were the murder of Lavrenti Beria.

I smell Fifa at work. The idiots think this kind of thing is bad for the brand. They think what people want to see is every single player coming on the pitch hand in hand with a five-year-old. We fans can just about stomach that, but we’re much happier with a mass brawl

that we can all cluck and shake our heads over.

1 July. I can’t remember exactly where it is but there’s a great moment somewhere in Beckett where someone launches their boot ‘among’ someone else’s testicles. Christopher Ricks used to cite this as an example of Beckett’s brilliant use of dead-seeming language. Wayne Rooney probably isn’t much of a Beckettian (or a Ricksian, come to that) but he certainly knows how to put his boot among an opponent’s goalies.

Footynomics: Portugal v. England was only the second example of a smaller, poorer country beating a richer, more populous one. But it was on penalties, so I’m arguing that it doesn’t count.

Note that in one sense England’s penalties were better than Portugal’s. Two out of four of theirs missed the goal altogether; all four of England’s were on target. Normally that would be enough to win you a shoot-out. But Ricardo guessed the right way to move every time, even on the penalty Hargreaves scored and (if memory serves) on the one Carragher put in and then had to retake. So perhaps ‘guessed’ is the wrong verb. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a keeper move the right way on five consecutive penalties.

3 July. If you spend some time out of the country, or reading other countries’ sports pages, what you notice when you come back to reading ours is that English sports writing is compulsively moralistic. Everything is seen as a moral

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COVER STORY

It was a lesson in just how much disappointment it's possible to cause simply by not being someone else

issue. Victory is a triumph of character and will; defeat is a failing of character and will. This theme is always present in the way people talk about sport, but no one stresses it as remorselessly as we do. Look at the New York Times or L'Equipe and you will occasionally encounter the idea that one team beat another because they were, you know, better. The main reason one football team beats another is because they are better at football.

At least, that's what I usually think. But the England team's performance in this World Cup has been a severe test of my view. It's hard not to see their failure as in some sense a failure of character. Richard Williams is very firm-spoken on this point in today's Guardian. He says that the reason Hargreaves – who was born in Canada and moved to Germany at 16 – was England's best player is because he's never lived in England.

I find the idea that they're a bit spoilt hard to dismiss. They look and act spoilt. But they don't look as if they're not trying, and there was nothing fake about how upset they seemed to be on going out.

I know – let's blame the Swede!

5 July. The function of a World Cup is to produce a masterpiece. Without it, a tournament can have drama and excitement and passion and all those other good things, but it lacks the ingredient which keeps it in the memory for years afterwards. It needs a Brazil v. Italy in 1982, a Brazil v. France in 1986, a West Germany v. Netherlands in 1988 (actually that was European Champi-

onship; same point, though).

Last night we got our masterpiece and . . . I missed it. I'd gone out for dinner and taped the game. I still haven't watched it yet.

On the other hand, I did once stand beside Alessandro del Piero, who scored Italy's second goal last night, at a hotel check-in. This was ten years ago. I'd gone to Turin, invited by the Slow Food foundation. The flight got in at night and we went straight to the hotel. It seemed oddly lively – there was a crowd outside, the lobby was full of men in suits hanging about, it took an age to get registered at the front desk, the bloke getting the attention of both receptionists looked oddly familiar, a bit like Alessandro del . . . the penny dropped. Juventus were staying at the same hotel, on the night before a home game.

There were a remarkable number of hangers-on attached to Juventus – agents, journalists, advisers, middlemen of one sort or another. They all seemed to spend all their time in the lobby, waiting for whoever or whatever it was they were waiting for. The area where they did this was directly opposite the lifts, so every time you went down in the lift, as the doors opened, you would see a little surge of expectation as the doors opened, followed by brutal disappointment, mirrored on every face, as they realised it was only some civilian. It was a lesson in just how much disappointment it's possible to cause simply by not being someone else.

6 July. So it's to be France v. Italy. They

say that the most important components of drama are conflict and subtext. This should have plenty of both.

Caught up with both sets of semi-finals. They helped me to crystallise my feeling about this World Cup, which is that it's been great from most points of view; except in relation to everything to do with England, all of which has been big pants. So it's been a roaring success and a massive downer at the same time. Take the way Italy played in extra time, for example. I've never seen an Italian team so committed to attack. Why? Because they obviously didn't fancy a penalty shoot-out. Fabulissimo. But why couldn't England do something similar against Portugal?

Oh well. I've been saying for some time that football was taking on too much importance in England and that something needed to happen to get the game back in perspective. Perhaps this

will be it. I had thought the likeliest thing would be Chelsea winning so many titles so easily that it would put everyone off. I remember making these arguments to a friend and saying that I was a Chelsea supporter now, on Maoist grounds. He said: 'I think that's more Pol Pot-ist.'

Footnotes

* Abacus, 416 pp., £9.99, May, 0 349 11986 4.

† Bloomsbury, 336 pp., £8.99, May, 0 7475 7971 7.

John Lanchester is the author of three novels: The Debt to Pleasure, Mr Phillips and Fragrant Harbour. His memoir Family Romance is due from Faber in the spring. He is a contributing editor at the London Review of Books (www.lrb.co.uk), in which this diary originally appeared.

CT

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QUESTIONING WAR

President George W. Bush has spent much time recently telling anyone who cares to listen of the progress being made in his war against terror in Iraq. Tom Engelhardt looks at the latest information, then asks and finds answers to 21 questions that help determine the truth behind the presidential rhetoric

BUSH'S IRAQ AT THE GATES OF HELL

So what exactly does "victory" in George Bush's Iraq look like 1,288 days after the invasion of that country began with a "shock-and-awe" attack on downtown Baghdad?

Recently, in one of many speeches melding his Global War on Terror and his war in Iraq, George W. Bush said, "Victory in Iraq will be difficult and it will require more sacrifice. The fighting there can be as fierce as it was at Omaha Beach or Guadalcanal. And victory is as important as it was in those earlier battles. Victory in Iraq will result in a democracy that is a friend of America and an ally in the war on terror. Victory in Iraq will be a crushing defeat for our enemies, who have staked so much on the battle there. Victory in Iraq will honor the sacrifice of the brave Americans who have given their lives. And victory in Iraq would be a powerful triumph in the ideological struggle of the 21st century."

Over three years after the 2003 invasion, it's not unreasonable to speak of George Bush's Iraq. The President himself likes to refer to that country as the "central front [or theater] in our fight against terrorism" and a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), part of which was recently leaked to the press and part then released by the Presi-

dent, confirms that Iraq is now indeed just that – a literal motor for the creation of terrorism. As the document puts it, "The Iraq conflict has become the 'cause célèbre' for jihadists, breeding a deep resentment of US involvement in the Muslim world, and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement." A study by a British Ministry of Defense think tank seconds this point, describing Iraq as "a recruiting sergeant for extremists across the Muslim world"

So what exactly does "victory" in George Bush's Iraq look like 1,288 days after the invasion of that country began with a "shock-and-awe" attack on downtown Baghdad? A surprising amount of information related to this has appeared in the press in recent weeks, but in purely scattershot form. Here, it's all brought together in 21 questions (and answers) that add up to a grim but realistic snapshot of Bush's Iraq. The attempt to reclaim the capital, dipped in a sea of blood in recent months – or the "battle of Baghdad," as the administration likes to term it – is now the center of adminis-

tration military strategy and operations. So let's start with this question:

How many freelance militias are there in Baghdad?

The answer is "23" according to a "senior [U.S.] military official" in Baghdad – so write Richard A. Opiel, Jr. and Hosham Hussein in the New York Times; but, according to National Public Radio, the answer is "at least 23." Antonio Castaneda of the Associated Press says there are 23 "known" militias. However you figure it, that's a staggering number of militias, mainly Shiite but some Sunni, for one large city.

How many civilians are dying in the Iraqi capital, due to those militias, numerous (often government-linked) death squads, the Sunni insurgency, and al-Qaeda-in-Mesopotamia-style terrorism?

5,106 people in July and August, according to a recently released United Nations report. The previous, still staggering but significantly lower figure of 3,391 offered for those months relied on body counts only from the city morgue. The UN report also includes deaths at the city's overtaxed hospitals. With the Bush administration bringing thousands of extra U.S. and Iraqi soldiers into the capital in August, death tolls went down somewhat for a few weeks, but began rising again towards month's end. August figures on civilian wounded – 4,309 – rose 14% over July's figures and, by late September, suicide bombings were at their

highest level since the invasion.

How many Iraqis are being tortured in Baghdad at present?

Precise numbers are obviously in short supply on this one, but large numbers of bodies are found in and around the capital every single day, a result of the roiling civil war already underway there. These bodies, as Opiel of the Times describes them, commonly display a variety of signs of torture including: "gouged-out eyeballs... wounds ... in the head and genitals, broken bones of legs and hands, electric and cigarette burns... acid-induced injuries and burns caused by chemical substances, missing skin... missing teeth and wounds caused by power drills or nails." The UN's chief anti-torture expert, Manfred Nowak, believes that torture in Iraq is now not only "totally out of hand," but "worse" than under Saddam Hussein.

How many Iraqi civilians are being killed countrywide?

The UN Report offers figures on this: 1,493 dead, over and above the dead of Baghdad. However, these figures are surely undercounts. Opiel points out, for instance, that officials in al-Anbar Province, the heartland of the Sunni insurgency "and one of the deadliest regions in Iraq, reported no deaths in July." Meanwhile, in Diyala Province, northeast of Baghdad, deaths not only seem to be on the rise, but higher than previously estimated. The intrepid British journalist Patrick Cockburn recently visited the province. It's not a place, he comments parenthetically,

The UN's chief anti-torture expert, Manfred Nowak, believes that torture in Iraq is now not only "totally out of hand," but "worse" than under Saddam Hussein

QUESTIONING WAR

Even at the death counts in the UN report, we're talking about close to 40,000 Iraqi deaths a year. We have no way of knowing how much higher the real figure is

“to make a mistake in map reading.” (Enter the wrong area or neighborhood and you're dead.) Diyala, he reports, is now largely under the control of Sunni insurgents who are “close to establishing a ‘Taliban republic’ in the region.” On casualties, he writes: “Going by the accounts of police and government officials in the province, the death toll outside Baghdad may be far higher than previously reported.” The head of Diyala's Provincial Council (who has so far escaped two assassination attempts) told Cockburn that he believed “on average, 100 people are being killed in Diyala every week.” (“Many of those who die disappear forever, thrown into the Diyala River or buried in date palm groves and fruit orchards.”) Even at the death counts in the UN report, we're talking about close to 40,000 Iraqi deaths a year. We have no way of knowing how much higher the real figure is.

How many American and Iraqi troops and police are now trying to regain control of the capital and suppress the raging violence there?

15,000 U.S. troops, 9,000 Iraqi army soldiers, 12,000 Iraqi national police and 22,000 local police, according to the commander of U.S. forces in Baghdad, Maj. Gen. James Thurman – and yet the mayhem in that city has barely been checked at all.

How many Iraqi soldiers are missing from the American campaign in Baghdad?

Six Iraqi battalions or 3,000 troops,

again according to General Thurman, who requested them from the Iraqi government. These turn out to be Shiite troops from other provinces who have refused orders to be transferred from their home areas to Baghdad. In the capital itself, American troops are reported to be deeply dissatisfied with their Iraqi allies. (“Some U.S. soldiers say the Iraqis serving alongside them are among the worst they've ever seen – seeming more loyal to militias than the government.”)

How many Sunni Arabs support the insurgency?

75% of them, according to a Pentagon survey. In 2003, when the Pentagon first began surveying Iraqi public opinion, 14% of Sunnis supported the insurgency (then just beginning) against American occupation.

How many Iraqis want the United States to withdraw its forces from their country?

Except in the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq, strong majorities of Iraqis across the country, Shiite and Sunni, want an immediate U.S. withdrawal, according to a U.S. State Department survey “based on 1,870 face-to-face interviews conducted from late June to early July.” In Baghdad, nearly 75% of residents polled claimed that they would “feel safer” after a U.S. withdrawal, and 65% favored an immediate withdrawal of U.S. and other foreign forces. A recent Program on International Policy Attitudes or PIPA poll found 71% of all Iraqis favor the withdrawal of all foreign troops on a year's

timetable. (Polling for Americans is a dangerous business in Iraq. As one anonymous pollster put it to the Washington Post, “If someone out there believes the client is the U.S. government, the persons doing the polling could get killed.”)

How many Iraqis think the Bush administration will withdraw at some point?

According to the PIPA poll, 77% of Iraqis are convinced that the United States is intent on keeping permanent bases in their country. As if confirming such fears, Jalal Talabani, the Kurdish president of the U.S.-backed Iraqi government ensconced in the capital's well-fortified Green Zone, called for Iraqis to keep two such permanent bases, possibly in the Kurdish areas of the country. He was roundly criticized by other politicians for this.

How many terrorists are being killed in Iraq (and elsewhere) in the President's Global War on Terror?

Less than are being generated by the war in Iraq, according to the just leaked National Intelligence Estimate. As Karen De Young of the Washington Post has written: “The war in Iraq has become a primary recruitment vehicle for violent Islamic extremists, motivating a new generation of potential terrorists around the world whose numbers may be increasing faster than the United States and its allies can reduce the threat, U.S. intelligence analysts have concluded.” It's worth remembering, as retired Lt. Gen. William Odom,

former director of the National Security Agency, told a group of House Democrats this week, that Al Qaeda recruiting efforts actually declined in 2002, only spiking after the invasion of Iraq. Carl Conetta of the Project for Defense Alternatives sums the situation up this way: “The rate of terrorism fatalities for the 59 month period following 11 September 2001 is 250% that of the 44.5 month period preceding and including the 9/11 attacks.”

How many Islamic extremist websites have sprung up on the Internet to aid such acts of terror?

5,000, according to the same NIE.

How many Iraqis are estimated to have fled their homes this year, due to the low-level civil war and the ethnic cleansing of neighborhoods?

300,000, according to journalist Patrick Cockburn.

How much of Bush's Iraq can now be covered by Western journalists?

Approximately 2%, according to New York Times journalist Dexter Filkins, now back from Baghdad on a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University. Filkins claims that “98 percent of Iraq, and even most of Baghdad, has now become ‘off-limits’ for Western journalists.” There are, he says, many situations in Iraq “even too dangerous for Iraqi reporters to report on.” (Such journalists, working for Western news outlets, “live in constant fear of their

As if confirming such fears, Jalal Talabani, the Kurdish president of the U.S.-backed Iraqi government ensconced in the capital's well-fortified Green Zone, called for Iraqis to keep two such permanent bases, possibly in the Kurdish areas of the country

QUESTIONING WAR

In all 80, journalists and 28 media support workers have died since the invasion of 2003. Compare these figures to journalistic deaths in other American wars: World War II (68), Korea (17), Vietnam (71)

association with the newspaper being exposed, which could cost them their lives. ‘Most of the Iraqis who work for us don’t even tell their families that they work for us,’ said Filkins.”)

How many journalists and “media support workers” have died in Iraq this year?

20 journalists and 6 media support workers. The first to die in 2006 was Mahmoud Za’al, a thirty-five year old correspondent for Baghdad TV, covering an assault by Sunni insurgents on two U.S.-held buildings in Ramadi, capital of al-Anbar Province on January 25. He was reportedly first wounded in both legs and then, according to eyewitnesses, killed in a U.S. air strike. (The U.S. denied launching an air strike in Ramadi that day.) The most recent death was Ahmed Riyadh al-Karbouli, also of Baghdad TV, also in Ramadi, who was assassinated by insurgents on September 18. The latest death of a “media support worker” occurred on August 27: “A guard employed by the state-run daily newspaper Al-Sabah was killed when an explosive-packed car detonated in the building’s garage.” In all 80, journalists and 28 media support workers have died since the invasion of 2003. Compare these figures to journalistic deaths in other American wars: World War II (68), Korea (17), Vietnam (71).

How many U.S. troops are in Iraq?

Approximately 147,000, according to General John Abizaid, head of U.S. Central Command, significantly more than were in-country just after Bagh-

dad was taken in April 2003 when the occupation began. Abizaid does not expect these figures to fall before “next spring” (which is the equivalent of “forever” in Bush administration parlance). He does not rule out sending in even more troops. “If it’s necessary to do that because the military situation on the ground requires that, we’ll do it.” Finding those troops is another matter entirely.

How is the Pentagon keeping troop strength up in Iraq?

4,000 troops from the 1st Brigade of the 1st Armored Division, operating near Ramadi and nearing the end of their year-long tours of duty, have just been informed that they will be held in Iraq at least six more weeks. This is not an isolated incident, according to Robert Burns of the Associated Press. Units are also being sent to Iraq ahead of schedule. Army policy has been to give soldiers two years at home between combat tours. This year alone, the time between tours has shrunk from 18 to 14 months. “In the case of the 3rd Infantry,” writes Burns, “it appears at least one brigade will get only about 12 months because it is heading for Iraq to replace the extended brigade of the 1st Armored.” And this may increasingly prove the norm. According to Senior Rand Corporation analyst Lynn Davis, main author of “Stretched Thin,” a report on Army deployments, “soldiers in today’s armored, mechanized and Stryker brigades, which are most in demand, can expect to be away from home for ‘a little over 45 percent of their career.’”

QUESTIONING WAR

The Army has also maintained its strength in through a heavy reliance on the Army Reserves and the National Guard as well as on involuntary deployments of the Individual Ready Reserve. Thom Shanker and Michael R. Gordon of the New York Times recently reported that the Pentagon was once again considering activating substantial numbers of Reserves and the National Guard for duty in Iraq. This, despite, as reporter Jim Lobe has written, “previous Bush administration pledges to limit overseas deployments for the Guard.” (Such an unpopular decision will surely not be announced before the mid-term elections.)

As of now, write Shanker and Gordon, “so many [U.S. troops] are deployed or only recently returned from combat duty that only two or three combat brigades – perhaps 7,000 to 10,000 troops – are fully ready to respond in case of unexpected crises, according to a senior Army general.”

How many active duty Army troops have been deployed in Iraq?

Approximately 400,000 troops out of an active-duty force of 504,000 have already served one tour of duty in Iraq, according to Peter Spiegel of the Los Angeles Times. More than one-third of them have been deployed twice.

How is Iraq affecting the Army's equipment?

By the spring of 2005, the Army had already “rotated 40% of its equipment through Iraq and Afghanistan.” Marine Corps mid-2005 estimates were

that 40% percent of its ground equipment and 20% of its air assets were being used to support current operations,” according to analyst Carl Conetta in “Fighting on Borrowed Time.” In the harsh climate of Iraq, the wear and tear on equipment has been enormous. Conetta estimates that whenever the Iraq and Afghan wars end, the post-war repair bill for Army and Marine equipment will be in the range of \$25-40 billion.

How many extra dollars does a desperately overstretched Army claim to need in the coming Defense budget, mainly because of wear and tear in Iraq?

\$25 billion above budget limits set by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld this year; over \$40 billion above last year's budget. The amount the Army claims it now needs simply to tread water represents a 41% increase over its current share of the Pentagon budget. As a “protest,” Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker chose not even to submit a required budget to Rumsfeld in August. The general, according to the LA Times' Spiegel, “has told congressional appropriators that he will need \$17.1 billion next year for repairs, nearly double this year's appropriation – and more than quadruple the cost two years ago.” This is vivid evidence of the literal wear-and-tear the ongoing war (and civil war) in Iraq is causing.

How is Iraqi reconstruction going?

Over three years after the invasion, the

The amount the Army claims it now needs simply to tread water represents a 41% increase over its current share of the Pentagon budget

QUESTIONING WAR

At the beginning of September, Iraq's oil minister spoke hopefully of raising the country's oil output to 3 million barrels a day by year's end

national electricity grid can only deliver electricity to the capital, on average, one out of every four hours (and that's evidently on a good day). At the beginning of September, Iraq's oil minister spoke hopefully of raising the country's oil output to 3 million barrels a day by year's end. That optimistic goal would just bring oil production back to where it was more or less at the moment the Bush administration, planning to pay for the occupation of Iraq with that country's "sea" of oil, invaded. According to a Pentagon study, "Measuring security and stability in Iraq," released in August, inflation in that country now stands at 52.5%. (Damien Cave of the New York Times suggests that it's closer to 70%, with fuel and electricity up 270% from the previous year); the same Pentagon study estimates that "about 25.9% of Iraqi children examined were stunted in their physical growth" due to chronic malnutrition which is on the rise across Iraq.

How many speeches has George W. Bush made in the last month extolling his War on Terror and its Iraqi "central front"?

Six so far, not including press conferences, comments made while greeting foreign leaders, and the like: to the American Legion National Convention on August 31, in a radio address to the American people on September 2, in a speech on his Global War on Terror to the Military Officers Association on September 5, in a speech on "progress" in the Global War on Terror before the Georgia Public Policy Foundation on September 7, in a TV address to the

nation memorializing September 11, and in a speech to the UN on September 19.

The count of American war dead in Iraq has passed 2,700. The Iraqi dead are literally uncountable. Iraq is the tragedy of our times, an event that has brought out, and will continue to bring out, the worst in us all. It is carnage incarnate. Every time the President mentions "victory", the word "loss" should come to our minds. A few more victories like this one and the world will be an unimaginable place.

Back in 2004, the head of the Arab League, Amr Mussa, warned, "The gates of hell are open in Iraq." Then it was just an image. Remarkably enough, it has taken barely two more years for us to arrive at those gates on which, it is said, is inscribed the phrase, "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here." **CT**

[Note to readers: Among the many sites I found helpful in compiling this piece, I particularly want to recommend (as I so often do) Juan Cole's Informed Comment, Antiwar.com, and the War in Context. All three do invaluable work.]

Tom Engelhardt, who runs the Nation Institute's Tomdispatch.com ("a regular antidote to the mainstream media"), is the co-founder of the American Empire Project and the author of The End of Victory Culture, a history of American triumphalism in the Cold War, The Last Days of Publishing, a novel, and in the fall, Mission Unaccomplished (Nation Books), the first collection of Tomdispatch interviews.

Katherine Albrecht and Liz McIntyre delve into the near-future where Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chips may be attached to clothing, commercial goods, prescription medication and ID cards without our knowledge, allowing corporations and government snoopers to track our every move

GOING SHOPPING WITH BIG BROTHER

Imagine a world of no more privacy. Where your every purchase is monitored and recorded in a database, and your every belonging is numbered. Where someone many states away or perhaps in another country has a record of everything you have ever bought, of everything you have ever owned, of every item of clothing in your closet – every pair of shoes. What’s more, these items can even be tracked remotely.

Once your every possession is recorded in a database and can be tracked, you can also be tracked and monitored remotely through the things you wear, carry and interact with every day.

We may be standing on the brink of that terrifying world if global corporations and government agencies have

their way. It’s the world that Wal-Mart, Target, Gillette, Procter & Gamble, Kraft, IBM, and even the United States Postal Service want to usher in within the next ten years.

It’s the world of radio frequency identification.

Radio frequency identification, RFID for short, is a technology that uses tiny computer chips – some smaller than a grain of sand – to track items at distance. If the master planners have their way, every object – from shoes to cars – will carry one of these tiny computer chips that can be used to spy on you without your knowledge or consent. We’ve nicknamed these tiny devices “spychips” because of their surveillance potential.

If you’ve been staying in touch with the news about RFID, you may al-

Once your every possession is recorded in a database and can be tracked, you can also be tracked and monitored remotely through the things you wear, carry and interact with every day



SPYCHIPS:
How Major Corporations and Government Plan to Track Your Every Purchase and Watch Your Every Move
 Katherine Albrecht & Liz McIntyre
Plume, paperback
\$15

BOOK EXCERPT

In a future world laced with RFID spychips, cards in your wallet could "squeal" on you as you enter malls, retail outlets, and grocery stores, announcing your presence and value to businesses

ready know who we are and something of the public battles we have fought to try to keep this technology off consumer products and out of our homes. In case you don't know who we are and why we can make such claims with conviction, an introduction is in order.

We are Katherine Albrecht, founder and director of CASPIAN (Consumers Against Supermarket Privacy Invasion and Numbering), and Liz McIntyre, the organization's communications director. CASPIAN is a grass-roots organization that has been tackling consumer privacy issues since 1999.

In this book, we'll give you a ring-side seat to some of the battles we've fought with companies like Benetton, Gillette, and retail giant Tesco. You'll see why Advertising Age says our presence has been felt from Berlin to Bentonville (corporate home of Wal-Mart), and you'll also learn how we uncovered plans by companies to track consumers around stores, use RFID to spam consumers with personalized advertising, and even monitor what people do in their own homes.

We're also suburban moms who've taken on some of the largest corporations in the world because we care about the future our children will inherit if this dangerous technology is unopposed. We believe consumers should know what's in store so we can work together to protect our privacy and civil liberties before it's too late.

We know that a Big Brother vision

of the future sounds farfetched. We didn't believe it ourselves until we saw with our own eyes and heard with our own ears companies detailing their mind-boggling plans. We assure you that this seemingly impossible future is on the drawing board, and we promise that by the time you finish this book, you will be convinced, too.

For nearly three years, we have devoted ourselves fulltime to combing every article, reading every white paper, pursuing every insider tip, and scanning through thousands of patent documents to piece together a picture of this planned RFID future. We've attended trade shows, sat in on top level meetings, and had long talks with the people implementing these plans.

What we learned will shock you.

In a future world laced with RFID spychips, cards in your wallet could "squeal" on you as you enter malls, retail outlets, and grocery stores, announcing your presence and value to businesses. Reader devices hidden in the doors, walls, displays, and floors could frisk the RFID chips in your clothes and other items on your person to determine your age, sex, and preferences. Since spychip information travels through clothing, they could even get a peek at the color and size of your underwear.

We're not joking. A major worldwide clothing manufacturer named Benetton has already tried to embed RFID chips into women's undergarments. And they would have gotten away with it, too, had it not been for

an international outcry when we exposed their plan. Details of the “I’d Rather Go Naked” campaign come later in the book.

While consumers might be able to avoid spychipped clothing brands for now, they could be forced to wear RFID-enabled work clothes to earn a living. Already uniform companies like AmeriPride and Cintas are embedding RFID tracking tags into their clothes that can withstand high temperature commercial washings.

Don’t have to wear a chipped uniform to work? Your RFID-enabled employee badge could do the spying instead. One day, these devices could tell management who you’re chatting with at the water cooler and how long you’ve spent in the restroom – even whether or not you’ve washed your hands. There’s already a product called iHygiene that can monitor the handwashing habits of RFID-tagged employees during bathroom visits.

Our next generation of workers could be conditioned to obediently accept this degrading surveillance through forced early exposure. Some schools are already requiring students to wear spychipped identification badges around their necks to keep closer tabs on their daily activities. If Johnny is one-minute late for math class, the system knows. It’s always watching.

Retailers are thrilled at the idea of being able to price products according to your purchase history and value to the store. RFID will allow them to assess your worth as you pick up products and flash you a corresponding

customer-specific price. Prime customers might pay three dollars for a staple like peanut butter while “bargain shoppers” or the economically challenged could be charged twice as much. The goal is to encourage the loyalty of shoppers who contribute to the profit margins while discouraging those who don’t. After all, stores justify, why have unprofitable customers cluttering the store and breathing their air?

RFID chips embedded in passbooks and ATM cards will identify and profile customers as they enter bank lobbies, beaming bank balances to employees who will snicker at the customer with a mere thirty-seven dollars in the bank while offering white glove treatment to the high-rollers.

RFID could also be used to infringe upon civil liberties. The technology could give government officials the ability to electronically frisk citizens without their knowledge and set up invisible checkpoints on roads and in pedestrian zones to monitor their movements.

While RFID proponents claim they would never use RFID to track people, we will prove they are not only considering it, they’ve done it. The United States government has already controlled people with RFID-laced bracelets – and not just criminals. And now they’re planning to embed spychips in U.S. passports so citizens can be tracked as they move about airport terminals and cross international borders.

Hitting the open road will no

RFID chips embedded in passbooks and ATM cards will identify and profile customers as they enter bank lobbies, beaming bank balances to employees

BOOK EXCERPT

RFID spychips in your shoes and car tires will make it possible for strangers to track you as you walk and drive through public and private spaces, betraying your habits and the deepest secrets even your own mother has no right knowing

longer be the “get away from it all” experience many of us crave. You may already be under surveillance, courtesy of your RFID-enabled highway toll transponder. Some highways, like those in the Houston area, have set up readers that probe the tag’s information every few miles. But that’s child’s play compared to what they’ve got planned. The Federal Highway Administration is joining with states and vehicle manufacturers to promote “intelligent vehicles” that can be monitored and tracked through built-in RFID devices (Minority Report-style).

RFID spychips in your shoes and car tires will make it possible for strangers to track you as you walk and drive through public and private spaces, betraying your habits and the deepest secrets even your own mother has no right knowing. Pair RFID devices with global positioning (GPS) technology, and you could literally be pinpointed on the globe in real time, creating a borderless tracking system that already has law enforcement, governments, stalkers, and voyeurs salivating.

There will be no more secret love letters in the RFID world, either – not if the U.S. Postal Service has its way. They would like to embed every postage stamp with an RFID chip that would enable point-to-point tracking. Even more disturbingly, RFID could remove the anonymity of cash. Already, the European Union has discussed chipping Euro banknotes, and the Bank of Japan is contemplating a similar program for

high-value currency. Your every purchase could be under the microscope.

So could your trash. In the RFID world, garbage will become a snoop’s and criminal’s best friend. Today, it’s a dirty job sifting through diapers and table scraps to get at tell-tale signs of a household’s market value, habits, and purchases. In the RFID world, scanning trash could be as simple as driving down the street with a car-mounted reader on trash day.

How about the “smart” house? Researchers have developed prototype “homes of the future” to showcase RFID-enabled household gadgets like refrigerators that know what’s in them (and can tattletale to marketers), medicine cabinets that talk (to your doctor, government, and HMO), and floors that keep track of where you are at each moment. The potential is staggering. Your insurance company could remotely monitor your food consumption and set rates accordingly, health officials could track the prescription drugs you’re taking, and attorneys could subpoena your home activity records for use against you in court.

Home RFID networks will allow family members to remotely track you during your “golden years,” or times of incompetence, real or otherwise. Doors can remain bolted to keep you from wandering, toilets can monitor your bowel habits and transmit data to distant physicians, and databases can sense your state of mind. It’s all under development and headed your way.

But chipping inanimate objects is

just the start. The endpoint is a form of RFID that can be injected into flesh. Pets and livestock are already being chipped, and there are those who believe humans should be next. Incredibly, bars have begun implanting their patrons with glass-encapsulated RFID tags that can be used to pay for drinks. This application startles many Christians who have likened payment applications of RFID to biblical predictions about the Mark of the Beast, a number the book of Revelation says will be needed to buy or sell in the “end times.”

While some of these applications are slated for our future, others are already here, right now – and they’re spreading. Wal-Mart has mandated that its top one hundred suppliers affix RFID tags to crates and pallets being shipped to selected warehouses. Analysts estimate this one initiative alone has already driven close to \$250 million worth of investment in the technology.

Other retailers such as Albertsons, Target, and Best Buy have followed suit with mandates of their own. According to one industry analyst, there are now sixty thousand companies operating under RFID mandates and scrambling to get with the spychip program as quickly as possible.

Adding fuel to the fire, the Department of Defense is also requiring suppliers to use RFID. In fact, government cheerleaders can’t fall over themselves fast enough to support the technology. The Department of Homeland Security is testing the use of RFID in visas, and the Social Secu-

rity Administration is using spychips to track citizen files. Not to be outdone, the Food and Drug Administration wants RFID on all prescription drugs, and the makers of Oxycontin and Viagra have already begun to comply. The FDA has also approved the use of subcutaneous RFID implants for managing patient medical records – the same implants being used to track bar patrons.

You may have already brought a spychip home with you. If you own a toll transponder or a Mobil Speedpass, you’re interacting with RFID every time you use it. And if you bought Procter & Gamble’s Lipfinity lipstick at a Wal-Mart in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, between March and June of 2003, you could have brought home a live RFID chip in the product packaging – and unknowingly starred in a video, too!

P&G is not the only company that’s tested spychips on unwitting consumers. Gillette was also caught tagging packages of Mach3 razor blades with some of the 500 million (that’s half a billion!) RFID chips it put on order in early 2003. There’s also evidence to suggest that other everyday products like Pantene Shampoo, Purina Dog Chow, and Huggies baby wipes may have been tagged with RFID chips and sold to unsuspecting consumers.

Why would anyone want to keep such close track on everyday objects? The answer is simple. Businesses want the technology to give them complete visibility of their products at all times. Having this real-time

Gillette was also caught tagging packages of Mach3 razor blades with some of the 500 million (that’s half a billion!) RFID chips it put on order in early 2003

BOOK EXCERPT

The seamy details we've discovered make the spychipped future look more like the ending scene of a gut-wrenching Outer Limits episode

knowledge would allow them to keep products on store shelves and know precisely what's in their warehouses. They also believe it could help them fight theft and counterfeiting. Theoretically, it could even eliminate the checkstand, since doorways could scan your purchases automatically when you leave the store and charge them to an RFID-based account.

While some of these goals may sound appealing, the problem is what happens when spychipped products leave the store with us – and find their way into other areas of our lives.

We've read every pro-RFID argument the industry can make, and we'll be the first to admit the technology could make things more convenient. RFID-enabled refrigerators really could keep track of containers of food, warn about expired milk, and generate weekly shopping lists. High-tech

washing machines really could automatically choose appropriate water temperatures based on instructions encoded in RFID-enabled clothing labels. RFID really could help families recover lost pets – and stolen possessions, too.

But when we look at that future, we don't see a twenty-first century Mayberry minus a few entry-level cashiering jobs. The seamy details we've discovered make the spychipped future look more like the ending scene of a gut-wrenching Outer Limits episode. The RFID vision that technology companies are selling looks too good to be true – and it is.

Buckle up, readers. We're going to take you on a high-speed, high-tech tour of the past, present, and future of RFID, with plenty of stops along the way at the dirty little secrets they don't want you to know. **CT**



READ JOHN PILGER

Download all of his political essays and columns, all in pdf format, at

www.coldtype.net/columns.html

Britain's prime minister Tony Blair recently addressed his final Labour Party Conference, receiving glowing ovations from the country's mainstream media. David Edwards, co-editor of London's Medialens, looks at the contrast between the deferential treatment of Blair and the reality of his record as prime minister

TONY BLAIR'S BRILLIANT SPEECH

Odd things happen when corporate journalists, selected for obedience and conformity, are exposed to powerful leaders speaking at grand meetings. Consider this October 3, 2002 Guardian editorial:

"In an intimate, almost conversational tone, speaking only from notes, Bill Clinton delivered the speech of a true political master... If one were reviewing it, five stars would not be enough... What a speech. What a pro. And what a loss to the leadership of America and the world." (Leader, 'What a pro – Clinton shows what a loss he is to the US,' The Guardian, October 3, 2002)

Intriguingly, media responses of this kind appear to have little to do with the actual content of the leader's speech but everything to do with the emotional impact of the performance on the authoritarian character structure of journalists who, as psychologist Erich Fromm noted, often possess "a deep-seated respect and longing for established authority". (Fromm, 'Character and The Social Process,' An Appen-

dix to Fear of Freedom, Routledge, 1942)

On ITN's September 26 late news, political editor Tom Bradby repeatedly declared the "brilliance" of Blair's last speech to the Labour party conference: "It is hard to argue that in this setting, upon this stage, Tony Blair is a political superstar". (Bradby, ITN, 22:30 News)

The title of Bradby's earlier report on the 18:30 news had been 'What Have We Done?' suggesting that Labour party members were surely now regretting Blair's departure. To read what Blair said is to understand that Bradby cannot have been referring to the substance of the speech, which was mostly banal and dishonest. (See: http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,1881512,00.html)

Instead, he was responding to Blair's 'charisma', his stagecraft and showmanship.

I wrote to Bradby on September 26:

Dear Tom

Your laser-like focus on Blair's talents as a "performer" on this evening's 6:30 news was outrageous. You managed to

Intriguingly, media responses of this kind appear to have little to do with the actual content of the leader's speech but everything to do with the emotional impact of the performance on the authoritarian character structure of journalists

THE SERVILE MEDIA

But Blair did not lose trust on this scale simply because he made "a mistake". He lost it because he lied and manipulated, and is complicit in the supreme war crime – the launching of a war of aggression

mention the word 'Iraq' once – half as many times as Blair himself. I wonder what the relatives of the 200,000-300,000 Iraqis killed as a result of Blair's war crimes would make of your reporting. Doesn't their suffering, and the lies and crimes that lead to it, merit even a mention? Is it enough to refer obliquely to "the trust issue"?

*Best wishes
David Edwards*

Bradby replied the same day:

David,
I think Blair made a huge mistake over Iraq, which has effectively finished him in office and will be endlessly discussed when he finally leaves.

We have talked about that hundreds of times before and will no doubt do so many times again.

There are many days when that will be the subject of our laser-like focus. In fact, I mentioned at the end in my live that, brilliant performer though he may be, he has lost the trust of the British people.

However, by any standards – even if you hate the man and disagree with everything he says – his performance today was brilliant. And that's what I reflected.

*Best wishes,
Tom*

I responded on the same day:

Thanks, Tom.

Something doesn't add up: "Blair made a huge mistake over Iraq, which has effectively finished him in office," and as a result "he has lost the trust of the British people".

But Blair did not lose trust on this scale simply because he made "a mistake". He lost it because he lied and manipulated, and is complicit in the supreme war crime – the launching of a war of aggression. And yet you call it "a mistake".

How can Blair's performance be considered "brilliant" when he made just a couple of passing, mendacious references to the utter catastrophe in Iraq? He said, for example, of al Qaeda:

"It killed nearly 3,000 people including over 60 British on the streets of New York before war in Afghanistan or Iraq was even thought of."

But not before the devastating 1991 war on Iraq and subsequent genocidal sanctions were thought of. Was this "brilliant"?

When hundreds of thousands of people lie dead, surely truthfulness and morality are more important than stylistic panache in judging the merits of a political speech.

*Best wishes
David*

Channel 4's Jon Snow was similarly swept up in the euphoria of Blair's performance:

"He reserved a small portion of his words to attack David Cameron and the Tories who he seems to regard as perfectly defeatable and a much smaller portion for the Liberal Democrats.

"It was very carefully stage managed but it did the trick, he was a leader for his time, in a time when Britain needed exactly such leadership." (Snow-mail, September 26, 1999)

Recall that this was 'professional'

and ‘objective’ news reporting – journalists like Snow endlessly claim not to reveal their subjective opinions.

BBC Newsnight’s Jeremy Paxman was also overcome with emotion:

“Blair’s speech was, for my money, the most impressive conference speech in years. In a performance brimming with confidence, flashes of humour and underlain by a clear political analysis (whether you agreed with it or not) he said goodbye to Labour delegates here in Manchester.” (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/5382748.stm>)

Again, one might wonder how a speech that failed to address the staggering catastrophes of Iraq and Afghanistan with even a scintilla of honesty could be deemed “impressive”, as opposed to mendacious, cynical and absurd.

On the Newsnight programme, the New Statesman’s political editor, Martin Bright, described how Blair’s analysis of “radical Islam” had been “very hard, very tough, and very convincing”.

And yet this is the core of what Blair had to say on the matter:

“This terrorism isn’t our fault. We didn’t cause it.

It’s not the consequence of foreign policy.

It’s an attack on our way of life.

It’s global.

It has an ideology.

It killed nearly 3,000 people including over 60 British on the streets of New York before war in Afghanistan or Iraq was even thought of.”

On the same day as Blair’s speech, a leaked US intelligence report reflecting

a consensus of 16 intelligence agencies found:

“The Iraq jihad is shaping a new generation of terrorist leaders and operatives; perceived jihadist success [in Iraq] would inspire more fighters to continue the struggle elsewhere. The Iraq conflict has become the ‘cause celebre’ for jihadists, breeding a deep resentment of US involvement in the Muslim world. If this trend continues, threats to US interests at home and abroad will become more diverse, leading to increasing attacks worldwide.” (Suzanne Goldenberg, ‘Intelligence report blow to Bush’s war on terror,’ *The Guardian*, September 27, 2006)

Blair’s observation that the September 11 attacks preceded wars in Afghanistan and Iraq employed the standard misdirection. As Blair well knows, al Qaeda has cited the 1991 war on Iraq and subsequent genocidal sanctions, which both preceded September 11, 2001, as a key, motivating grievance.

I wrote to the BBC’s political editor Nick Robinson on September 27:

Dear Nick

You write of Blair:

“He could have made his forced exit a painful one – he could have attacked his critics – snubbed Gordon Brown – angrily defended his wife – lectured his party on the way forward. That he did none of those things will be a source of huge relief to many in this party.”

(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/nick-robinson/2006/09/26/index.html>)

And you write of New Labour:

“This morning was New Labour’s ‘Diana moment’. For years the media

As Blair well knows, al Qaeda has cited the 1991 war on Iraq and subsequent genocidal sanctions, which both preceded September 11, 2001, as a key, motivating grievance

THE SERVILE MEDIA

Why are you allowing yourself to be consumed whole by this charade of political journalism where everything that is said is trivial, and where everything that matters is ignored as irrelevant?

have reported stories of splits and rancour in New Labour's household just as they once did in the Royal household (for Tony and Gordon read Charles and Diana)."

What is the point of this kind of trivial commentary? You write as if you were reviewing the characters performing in some kind of soap opera. The lead author of the Lancet report estimated earlier this year that some 200,000-300,000 civilians lie dead in Iraq because Blair committed the supreme war crime – the launching of a war of aggression. He had a couple of mundane, mendacious comments to make about it in his speech. Wasn't that worthy of your focus?

Why are you allowing yourself to be consumed whole by this charade of political journalism where everything that is said is trivial, and where everything that matters is ignored as irrelevant?

Best wishes

David Edwards

Nick Robinson replied on the same day:

Read the blog to see why I think that Blair/Brown matters. Who is PM is not trivial.

Furthermore, there's no choice between that and Iraq – we cover both. My blog is not the sum of what I report for the BBC. It's a diary style addition to all the other reporting we do. (Robinson, email to Media Lens)

I also replied on the same day:

Thanks, Nick. I didn't suggest for a moment that Blair/Brown, or who is PM, doesn't matter. On the contrary, I

made it clear that I consider it a matter of great importance that Blair, a major war criminal, is PM. My question was how you can justify focusing on such trivial aspects of such an important individual who is responsible for such vast crimes. Would it have been acceptable for an Iraqi journalist in the 1980s to talk of Saddam's 'Diana moment'? Moral equivalence isn't the issue – the issue is the scale of crimes for which the subjects of journalistic analysis are responsible. Saddam is responsible for major atrocities, but so is Blair. Your journalism acts to "normalise the unthinkable". One can only wonder what Blair would have to do before journalists stopped treating him as just another politician.

Best wishes

David

I also wrote to BBC world affairs editor John Simpson on September 26:

Dear John

Hope you're well. In reviewing his foreign policy on tonight's news at ten you said that Blair "perhaps oversold" the war on Iraq. Do you really believe that the most serious problem with Blair's actions was that he exaggerated the merits of the war? Wasn't the real problem that he lied and mislead the public? Hasn't he in fact committed the supreme war crime – the launching of a war of aggression?"

I have received no reply.

CT

David Edwards is co-editor, with David Cromwell, of the London-based media watchdog, Medialens. (www.medialens.org)

War, famine, poverty and Aids have played havoc in Africa over the past decades. Now another scourge has surfaced – the illegal dumping of toxic waste by unscrupulous European manufacturers is killing thousands of innocent people. Fred Bridgland tells the story of the Probo Koala, one of the vessels involved

EUROPE'S NEW DUMPING GROUND

The war-torn African state of Somalia could hardly have expected to be affected by the tsunami that struck off the Indonesian island of Sumatra on Boxing Day 2004, killing some 290,000 people.

But that tsunami wave powered 4,000 miles westwards across the Indian Ocean to sweep over Somalia's pristine beaches, and killed nearly 300 people.

The tsunami, however, also uncovered a hidden and altogether more serious problem for Somalis: along more than 400 miles of shoreline, the turbo-charged wave churned up reinforced containers of hazardous toxic waste that European companies had been dumping a short distance offshore for more than a decade, taking advantage of the fact that there was not even a pretend authority in the African "failed state".

The force of the tsunami broke open containers holding radioactive nuclear waste, lead, cadmium, mercury, flame retardants, hospital waste and cocktails of other deadly residues of Europe's industrial processes.

As the contaminants spread across the land and in the air, the United Nations said that an unknown number of people died from breathing in toxic dust and fumes. Subsequent cancer clusters have also been linked to Europe's special gift to the country, delivered by that tsunami.

Rumours had long circulated about European companies, mainly from Italy and Switzerland, taking advantage of the chaos in Somalia to strike immoral deals with local warlords to dump toxic waste. The arrangements, involving countless millions of pounds, inevitably financed the Somali war, offering a powerful incentive to ignore environmental concerns and carry on dumping the waste.

According to the French environment protection group Robin des Bois ("Robin Hood of the Forest"), it costs between €300-€500 (US\$380-\$625) to treat a cubic metre of hazardous waste in Europe, while in Africa it is between six and 15 times cheaper because usually there is no real treatment process and no proper storage.

A report by the United Nations En-

The force of the tsunami broke open some of the containers which held radioactive nuclear waste, lead, cadmium, mercury, flame retardants, hospital waste and cocktails of other deadly residues of Europe's industrial processes

AFRICAN AGONY

"We talk of globalisation, of the global village, but here in Africa we are under the impression of being that village's septic tank"

vironment Programme (UNEP) said the release of the deadly substances, resembling the devastation of chemical warfare, will cause serious long-term effects on human health – and there is no chance of a successful clean-up because of the violence and political instability currently plaguing Somalia.

The UNEP report said: "The health problems include acute respiratory infections, dry heavy coughing and mouth bleeding, abdominal haemorrhages, unusual skin chemical reactions and sudden death after inhaling toxic materials."

It took a tsunami to reveal one of the many secret dumping sites in Africa of European industries' deadly dregs.

But in recent weeks the voyage of the rust-streaked Probo Koala, a Korean-built, Greek-owned, Panama-flagged, Dutch-chartered 50,000-tonne tanker, has thrown yet more light on a trade that goaded one of Africa's most distinguished ecologists, Senegal's Haidar al-Ali, to observe: "We talk of globalisation, of the global village, but here in Africa we are under the impression of being that village's septic tank."

It is not yet clear where the Probo Koala's voyage began, although the seas off Gibraltar are believed to be a gathering place for "garbage cowboys"; where ships with unwanted poisonous cargoes transfer them to other vessels specialising in the illegal dispersal of waste in Third World states.

The scandal of the Probo Koala came to light in September, two weeks after the tanker unloaded its cargo of black sludge in Abidjan, Ivory Coast's capital, after being turned away from Amster-

dam and several African ports. The poisonous sludge, spread on waste ground and in the sea and fresh water lagoons that festoon Abidjan, led to the deaths of at least eight people, including four children, while more than 80,000 others sought medical treatment for nosebleeds, diarrhoea, nausea, eye irritation and breathing difficulties.

When news broke of the first casualties, thousands of Abidjanis packed their belongings onto donkey carts and buses and moved into the surrounding rainforest. Many have fled that refuge in the past few months, trying to escape the violence of the West African country's ethnic civil war between northerners and southerners.

The Ivorian and Somali tragedies are instructive: they represent what happens to Europeans' trash more commonly than environmentally-aware citizens might like to think. When ever-stricter European environmental laws mean increasing costs of clearing up and disposing of our waste, criminal middle-men step in and offer low-cost solutions in Africa.

The Dutch authorities refused to accept the ship's 530 tonnes of a highly toxic mixture of oil residue and caustic soda – and they failed to stop the ship sailing elsewhere. We also know that the Estonian government arrested the ship at the end of September after the Greenpeace vessel Arctic Sunrise blockaded the Probo Koala in the port of Paldiski, where the Tallinn government had refused to accept its bilge contents.

In Amsterdam three months ago, the Probo Koala attempted to unload a cargo of a sticky black liquid described

by the tanker's owners as "waste water" used to clean its crude oil tanks. But residents living near the Dutch city's port complained when a sharp stench, described as being like a cross between rotten eggs and blocked drains, drifted across their suburb.

A waste disposal company took a sample from the Probo Koala's "waste water" – it proved to be a highly lethal cocktail of petroleum, caustic soda and other agents that had accumulated in the ship's lower tank after multiple cleanings.

The port authorities reclassified the tank contents as toxic waste and then instructed the ship's captain to take the waste to a special facility and dispose of it, at a cost of £150,000. The Probo Koala's captain angrily refused and sailed for Estonia to pick up petroleum products destined for Nigeria.

Meanwhile, an off-the-shelf company called Tommy was quickly formed between two French commodity traders and executives of a waste disposal company in war-torn Ivory Coast. After the Probo Koala's arrival in Abidjan on its return trip from Nigeria, trucks hired by Tommy dumped the ship's lower tank cargo around the city under cover of darkness. Fumes given off by the waste then led to deaths and widespread illness.

This story is a common one. All down the West African coast, European- and North American-hired ships unload containers filled with old computers, noxious slops and used medical equipment. Scrap merchants, corrupt politicians and underpaid civil servants take charge of this rubbish and, for pay-

ment, dump them in landfill sites and off the coastline.

Back in 1988, some 134 states adopted the Basel Convention, drawn up in the Swiss city, which set out to control the export of most forms of hazardous waste from industrialised states to developing countries – although the US, Canada and Australia have refused to ratify the treaty.

"Now, despite the treaty, there is more evidence of death and disease from waste trade than ever before," said Jim Puckett, an expert in hazardous waste trade with the Seattle-based Basel Action Network. "Unfortunately, if it's easy to poison the poor for profit, unscrupulous operators and businesses will do it."

The Probo Koala is believed to have violated at least two other post-Basel conventions on hazardous waste, as well as the Basel Convention itself.

Andreas Bernstoff, a German expert on the toxic waste trade and a former Greenpeace International activist, has identified more than 80 sites in Africa where the rich world's dangerous trash has been dumped.

But Bernstoff said the global trade in hazardous chemicals is now less of a problem than the rapidly growing amounts of electronic waste and wreckage from computers and ships.

Old computers and cellphones are often not declared as waste, but are shipped abroad as material for repair or recycling, according to bills of lading. But when they arrive they are simply dumped. Electronic waste is mainly exported to West Africa and Asia. "Some 85% of the electronic parts that come

After the Probo Koala's arrival in Abidjan on its return trip from Nigeria, trucks hired by Tommy dumped the ship's lower tank cargo around the city under cover of darkness

AFRICAN AGONY

Two French commodity traders have been arrested in connection with the dumping of the Probo Koala cargo after arriving recently in the Ivory Coast on what they described as "a humanitarian mission"

out of Western Europe or North America land on a garbage dump in Nigeria, where they are burned," said Bernstorff.

Some 500 containers of electronic junk arrive each month in the Nigerian port of Lagos. The waste, containing such carcinogenic elements as lead, cadmium and mercury, are then burned by contractors on dumps around the city. Experts such as Bernstorff say this practice will create long-term health time-bombs, leading to epidemics of "first world" diseases such as cancer in third world countries.

In "trash for cash" schemes elsewhere, bales of plastic waste collected under Germany's widely praised Green Dot recycling programme end up in giant pits in the Egyptian desert.

The government of Benin, Nigeria's neighbour, was paid \$2million a year, and given enhanced development aid from its former colonial master to accept France's hazardous waste, including radioactive materials.

And the German magazine *Der Spiegel* is investigating the burial of nuclear waste on the Equatorial Guinea island of Annobon.

There is almost nothing that Europe will not try to dump beyond its shores and nowhere where it will refuse to dispose of it. The Dutch, for example, had a huge problem with pig manure, poisoned by the copper products put into feed to expand the water content, and hence the weight, when packaged and sold to consumers, of bacon and pork chops. When environmentalists objected to the noxious dung being dumped in the country's marshes, the govern-

ment did a multi-million pound deal with Saudi Arabia to bury Dutch waste in the desert. However, when the Muslim Saudis discovered the waste was mainly pig droppings, they cancelled the contract.

However, some progress is being made. Two French commodity traders have been arrested in connection with the dumping of the Probo Koala cargo after arriving recently in the Ivory Coast on what they described as "a humanitarian mission". Several Ivorian businessmen connected with the new Tommy company have also been arrested. In Estonia, the Probo Koala and its captain are under arrest on suspicion of trying to land another toxic cargo in the Baltic state.

In November, the Basel Convention countries meet in Kenya, with calls for the treaty to be more strictly enforced in the wake of Abidjan.

"It is shocking that toxic waste from Europe reached the Ivory Coast, causing so much human suffering and damage to the environment," said European Union environment commissioner Stavros Dimas from Estonia last week.

"The case is a clear violation of European and international law with deadly results. But I fear that the Probo Koala incident is only the tip of the iceberg." **CT**

Veteran Africa correspondent Fred Bridgland wears several hats. Among them he is the Africa correspondent for Scotland's Sunday Herald. He also edits the Africa Report of the London-based Institute for War and Peace Reporting [IWPR]— <http://www.iwpr.net>

Danny Schechter, the Media Dissector, draws an uneasy comparison between the tactics of the brutal Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and those of the present Republican government of the United States. His conclusion: the neo-Cons who control America have borrowed too many of the vices of their old enemies

FOLLOWING IN JOSEPH STALIN'S FOOTSTEPS

Think of it this way. You are a former cold warrior who spent your youth studying every aspect of the old Soviet Union. Even though you hated their policies publicly, you began privately, first grudgingly and then, with time, enthusiastically, to admire and ape the way they operated.

They were so organized and adept at imposing their agenda with top-down control. They were, in words used at the time, ‘masters of deception’ and pursued secretive strategies of infiltrating ideologues and mole-like operatives – known as apparatchiks – into government agencies and military organs.

Their KGB danced circles around our CIA and when their often-innocent “suspects” were interrogated, they were tortured with no restraints. The KGB made sure of that. Now the CIA does our dirty work and the President is crusading to lift any and all restraints from their extreme electrode units.

They killed their anti-communist “enemies” outright after convicting

them in kangaroo courts. We just detain ours indefinitely while demonizing them as terrorists beyond the protection of the law.

Their Party imposed “message control” and ran media with carrots and sticks.

Our Republican Guard uses perception management techniques to achieve the same results.

They marveled at how controlled everything was. And so they built a machine just like the one they “hated” even as the old order of the CCCP went down the tubes of history.

They invaded Afghanistan. We invaded Afghanistan. They wiretapped. We wiretapped. They had secret police. We have secret police in the form of contractors and companies like Blackwater.

They used propaganda. We made ours better. They had a party line. We have a party line. Theirs was blatant; ours is less visible.

They were said to want to conquer the world. Now, most of the world says that about us. In the old days, today’s neo-cons denounced Commu-

They used propaganda. We made ours better. They had a party line. We have a party line. Theirs was blatant; ours is less visible

LESSONS LEARNED

Which brings us to our modern day Busheviks, today's Bolshevik wannabes with a more sophisticated rap and deadly impact. Some are former leftists turned rightists who are now as comfortable in defending torture and abuse as the agencies they used to denounce

nist plans for world domination. Now they have their own.

In the same way that cops often make the best criminals, with many people believing that some of those who joined the police would have just as comfortably signed up with the mafia (and some did both) – many of the professional anti-communists were just as authoritarian and dogmatic in their instincts.

Back then, there were studies of “authoritarian personalities.” Among their alleged traits:

1. They travel in tight circles of like-minded people.
2. Their thinking is more likely based on what authorities have told them rather than on their own critical judgment, which results in their beliefs being filled with inconsistencies.
3. They harbor numerous double standards and hypocrisies.
4. They see the world as a dangerous place, with society teetering on the brink of self-destruction from evil and violence, and when their fear conflates with their self-righteousness, they appoint themselves guardians of public morality, or God's Designated Hitters.
5. They think of themselves as far more moral and upstanding than others...“

A Description of Stalinists? Perhaps. But Former Nixon lawyer John W. Dean uses these very categorizations to describe today's “conservatives” in his book, “Conservatives Without Conscience’.

Which brings us to our modern day Busheviks, today's Bolshevik wan-

nabes with a more sophisticated rap and deadlier impact. Some are former leftists turned rightists who are now as comfortable in defending torture and abuse as the agencies they used to denounce. What went around is back again under a different name.

Just as the Neo-Nazis are back as newly elected respectable members of governments in Eastern Germany, abandoning the skinhead look for suits and ties and softer rhetoric, our neo-Cons have moved from left to hard right wrapped in burkas made of the American flag.

They have borrowed the techniques of their old enemies as Cheryl Seal wrote back in 2001:

“Joseph Stalin was successful in seizing and retaining power primarily because he was able to stack the Politburo with politicians as extreme as himself and to dictate their actions and their votes on every issue. Party dissenters were harassed mercilessly by the Politburo members who remained blindly loyal to Stalin. With a block of supporters who did not think for themselves, Stalin was able to completely reverse Russia's policy on a number of key issues, right across the board. For example, in 1936, he completely reversed the liberal communist doctrines pertaining to family, divorce, and abortion. He made divorce difficult, made abortion illegal, and stressed “family values” [do we see a ‘dictator pattern’ here?].

Stalin's propagandists used a three-point strategy to convince the Russian people that things in Stalin's policy that were in fact extremely bad for

LESSONS LEARNED

the country (including the systematic round up and extermination of all “enemies of the state”) were in fact “good.”

Point One: Create arguments that show the negative thing is actually NOT bad, but is actually good. [Present day example: convincing people that greenhouse gases will give us lush green plants, not fry the planet].

Point Two: Show how the negative thing is actually not true. [Present-day example: Global warming does not exist].

Point Three: Show that the negative thing is actually being caused by “enemies of the state” – most likely liberals. [Present-day example: We can’t sign Kyoto because it is really a plot to ruin our economy].”

And so the parallels continue to surface – never exact but certainly suggestive – as recently as last month when we learned that unelected professional “cadre” of the hard right – not merely members of the GOP – enjoyed unique access to the White House as AP reports:

“Republican activists Grover Norquist and Ralph Reed landed more than 100 meetings inside the Bush White House, according to documents released Wednesday that provide the first official accounting of the access and influence the two presidential allies have enjoyed.”

Finally, ponder the words of Nikita Khrushchev who first exposed the crimes of Stalin back in 1956:

“Everyone can err, but Stalin considered that he never erred, that he was always right. He never acknowledged to anyone that he made any mistake, large or small, despite the fact that he made not a few mistakes in the matter of theory and in his practical activity.”

Who today will take off their shoes to bang on a table at the UN about the crimes of our Busheviks? **CT**

“News Dissector” Danny Schechter blogs at mediachannel.org. Info on his latest film at IndebtweTrust.com. Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org

“Everyone can err, but Stalin considered that he never erred, that he was always right. He never acknowledged to anyone that he made any mistake, large or small, despite the fact that he made not a few mistakes in the matter of theory and in his practical activity”

ARE YOU A JOE BAGEANT FAN?

Download and read his political and humorous essays, all in pdf format, at

www.coldtype.net/joe.html

I PROTEST

Is there a way for Americans to show their outrage over the ruthless behaviour of the leaders of their government? **William A. Cook** believes there is – he’s withdrawing his recognition of the government, and offers some highly visible ways of showing dissent that others who share his view may wish to follow

MY DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

As a citizen of these United States for 70 years, I refuse to be ruled by a tyrant who imposes despotic, autocratic control on the citizens of these United States through a series of clandestine actions that usurp the rights of the people

“If there’s any comparison between the compassion and decency of the American people and the terrorist tactics of extremists, it’s flawed logic ... It’s unacceptable to think that there’s any kind of comparison between the behavior of the United States of America and the action of Islamic extremists who kill innocent women and children to achieve an objective.”
(President George W. Bush, Sept. 15, 2006 report by AP’s Terence Hunt)

Citizens of the United States of America bear an awesome responsibility to maintain control of their government’s behavior since that government derives its powers from the consent granted it by the citizens. When the government ceases to act in accord with the dictates of the respective consciences of its citizens as determined by its foundational documents – the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights – , when it violates the established principles that give this nation legitimacy before the nations of the

world through mutually accepted agreements, charters, and conventions, when it abrogates the inalienable rights granted the citizens by the Creator, when it declares unequivocally that the citizens cannot dissent with an action or actions taken by the government, then it is the right and the duty of the citizen to “alter or abolish” that government.

For the past five years, the present government of the United States, including the Executive branch, the Congress and the Senate, has committed a “long train of abuses and usurpations pursuing invariably the same object (that) evinces a design to reduce them (the citizens) under absolute despotism.” As a citizen of these United States for 70 years, I refuse to be ruled by a tyrant who imposes despotic, autocratic control on the citizens of these United States through a series of clandestine actions that usurp the rights of the people.

I refuse to accept as my government actions by the current administration and its obsequious servants, the Republican Congress and the Re-

publican Senate, that include

- * spying on its citizens without their knowledge or consent, an action contrary to existing law;

- * elimination of personal privacy through the Patriot Act, an action that presumes culpability, not innocence until proven guilty;

- * preemptive invasion of other nations determined by the unilateral judgment of an all powerful executive that eviscerates the power of the peoples' representatives;

- * acts of extrajudicial execution and the abandonment of rule by law thereby making the President, in effect, judge, jury and executioner;

- * acts of torture and the unilateral infliction of "acceptable" torture techniques thus casting America before the world as an amoral nation beholden to no international agreement and placing at risk the soldiers who defend it;

- * imposition of illegal actions of war instituted through an orchestrated control of lies communicated to the citizenry thereby negating their democratic right to know that they might vote in accord with their conscience;

- * levying an incredible tax burden on the citizens to pay for the consequences of these lies that will cost them and their children dearly for decades to come while corporations reap a windfall of profit from closed bids and corruption;

- * infliction of a forced military occupation on a nation against the desires of its people and enabling that occupation to use illegal weapons of

war contrary to the Geneva Conventions thus implicating its citizens in acts against humanity;

- * development of diverse nuclear weaponry in direct violation of the UN Charter even as it decries other nations for attempting to acquire their own nuclear weaponry;

- * acceptance, indeed, complete complicity and support of the barbaric and genocidal actions of the state of Israel against the people of Palestine, and most recently, and most deplorably, the abandonment of all pretense to the behavior of a civilized nation through its almost unanimous acceptance of a resolution written by the American Israeli Political Action Committee to endorse the Israeli state's wanton destruction of the state of Lebanon.

These are not the actions of a democratic state; these are the actions of an autocratic state, an amoral state, an arrogant state that rules by force and acts more ruthlessly than the "extremists who kill innocent women and children to achieve an objective," negating by its actions the unthinkable comparison the President decried.

For six years I have tracked the deception of this government as it surreptitiously acted to acquire more and more power by instilling in the American people the fear necessary to propel the autocrat to absolute power. Fear suppresses individual inquiry even as it enables control of the people, ostensibly to provide protection for them. Fear creates victims, especially in the minds of those who have

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I PROTEST

Each day that passes casts more gloom over this nation as hundreds more die and thousands more are maimed, and all for a lie and all in our name

not been violated. It is the unknown, what might be that metastasizes into the mental slave, the compliant citizen who marches to the drum of those who would control a society. It is the instrument of tyrants and dictators.

This government hobbles its citizens by using fear to manipulate their belief in end time prophecy, by implanting fear of imminent threat from “Islamofacist” fanatics, and by immersing the people in a false sense of “victimhood” that links them with the state of Israel as the only “friend” in the mid-east suffering from the same terrorist scourge. It is time to dispel this fear that enslaves. It is time to declare that this government no longer serves the people, that, indeed, it surpasses in its behavior “the action of Islamic extremists who kill innocent women and children to achieve an objective.” It is not the “compassion and decency of the American people” that is in question; it is the absence of “compassion and decency” in this administration that is at fault.

It is time to withdraw recognition of it as the government of these United States.

How can a citizen withdraw recognition, one might ask? I would answer simply that no person with a conscience could recognize the validity of this government that commits the actions listed above, each more heinous than the last, the worst being its near universal acceptance of the genocide perpetrated by Israel on the Palestinians, actions that are inclusive enough to incorporate almost all the others. If

every person of conscience gave sign of their aversion to the behavior of this government by wearing a black armband or posting a black flag or ribbon on the door or window ledge or by flying our flag upside down, the numbers who distrust this government would be manifest for the nation and the world to see and we would not have to wait till election time to cast our conscience on the screen.

I tell you this, each day that passes casts more gloom over this nation as hundreds more die and thousands more are maimed, and all for a lie and all in our name. Appealing to our representatives accomplishes nothing; they are but lackeys to the administration and to the primary lobbying groups that determine for them America’s foreign policy, AIPAC and the lobbies for the military/industrial complex. We can no longer wait for the ballot box to determine our future; it may not be our conscience that is voted to office. Should we not act to declare this government unjust and hence unfit to be our government, then we will be no better than those who dictate and inflict these atrocities on the innocent. I will not have my conscience held hostage by an elite few who rule without a conscience. The honest citizen carries no weapons against his brothers and sisters; the honest citizen marches forward in tune with reason and common sense not fear and ignorance.

Think how many Lebanese died, how many were maimed, how many went homeless, how many die now

after the cease fire because Israel left its calling card in the form of miniature mines for children to play with, how much destruction and wanton devastation this government inflicted in our name while our representatives waited for AIPAC to pen the resolution that gave license to such slaughter. If any justice came from this invasion it was this: the world was witness to the savagery and barbarism of Israel that ruthlessly devastated another people out of sheer anger turned to vengeance, a behavior that it has inflicted at will on the Palestinians behind locked gates and its Wall of Infamy.

Think now of the holocaust being inflicted on the people of Gaza, the reign of fire that comes with missiles launched into crowded civilian neighborhoods randomly killing mothers and children, a reign of terror that has lasted over three months as the Israelis lock the gates to prevent access to medical care, food, employment, and business, a reign of terror that starves the children, denies the people electricity and water, a reign of terror that is calculated, vicious, and inhumane. But it is done behind the Wall, out of sight of our conscience, locked out of public view by the Israeli IOF and its government that has closed access to Gaza by air, sea, or road. Americans cannot complain because our representatives have capitulated to an Israeli government gone mad, driven by racism as it surreptitiously rampages through schools, refugee camps, factories and homes killing, demolishing, executing at will a pop-

ulation that is cornered, starved, and near total death; yet America supports this mayhem justifying it as “self-defense.” How does an illegal occupying force operating on stolen land defend what they do not own and call it self-defense? What non-sense guides this crippled republic that our representatives would defend such dementia?

Where does one turn for guidance out of this morass? Will our Christian leaders proclaim the teachings of Jesus from the steeples of their churches? Will they condemn the government for its ruthlessness? Will they march in the streets to demand change? Will they echo Tolstoy’s astute observation, “to kill is incompatible with man’s uprightness... (for) A Christian, whose doctrine enjoins upon him humility, non-resistance to evil, love to all (even to the most malicious), cannot ... join a class of men whose business it is to kill their fellow-men.” (Writings on Civil-Disobedience and Non-Violence). Oh, there are those who cry in the wilderness, congregations that have divested themselves of the atrocities inflicted by Israel and they are to be praised even as they are ignored by our representatives. There are the Christian Arabs in Bethlehem who weep each day as they see their flock decimated and their brothers and sisters murdered, maimed, and humiliated as that malicious Wall surrounds the birth place of their God and our representatives turn their backs. And there are voices for peace, millions of voices that decry the wanton brutali-

Think now of the holocaust being inflicted on the people of Gaza, the reign of fire that comes with missiles launched into crowded civilian neighborhoods randomly killing mothers and children

I PROTEST

But the horror of America today rests not just in the dementia of its leaders but in the distorted madness of its evangelical fanatics who have cloaked themselves in the armament of prophecy declaring themselves God's voice on earth as they propel their sheep to wage endless war against God's creatures

ty of this regime, Christian and Jew and Muslim, men and women who know they are drenched in the blood of the innocent because this despotic "President" has determined how they must think and how they must behave and our representatives kneel on bended knee before his throne.

But the horror of America today rests not just in the dementia of its leaders but in the distorted madness of its evangelical fanatics who have cloaked themselves in the armament of prophecy declaring themselves God's voice on earth as they propel their sheep to wage endless war against God's creatures. Men who follow not in the footsteps of the humble and peaceful Jesus but in the footsteps of prior fools and idiots that ran rampant in other days and times inflicting mayhem and death on the innocent. These fanatics do not know the teachings of Jesus; they read from a gospel of fear that has metamorphosed Jesus into a General who wields a bloody and fiery sword, stomping over the hills and valleys of the earth wreaking havoc and death, thus does the God of light and peace, of brotherly love, become the new Satan to whom these TV evangelists pay homage.

They are men of war who stand behind their pulpits in glistening cathedrals of gold and glass while they send the children of their congregations to slaughter. These men are criminals not Christians. They do not understand the bells of penitence for sin; the only bells they ring intone the opening of the Stock Market or the

cash register.

Pastors like John Hagee, Pat Robertson, Franklin Graham, Benny Hinn, and all the others who crowd the Cathedral of Television lead their respective laity into battle each day, marching at their head, holding aloft their missiles of fire and brimstone, tearing incendiary passages from the Old Testament and Book of Revelation that pour like acid from their mouths and flame forth against perceived disbelievers and infidels. Their exhortations on behalf of their malicious God pits dementia against the teachings of Jesus, pits vengeance against brotherhood, pits fear against love, and power against compassion.

Have we transformed a nation respectful of all, protective of the rights of all, assertive of the inherent rights that give personal authority to our conscience, into a nation that denies these values in order to inflict our will on all peoples of the mid-east? Has this nation granted to its President and Congress absolute authority to determine what we as a citizenry must obey if we are to be Americans? Have we returned to the days of McCarthy, days of fear and loathing, forcing on all the demented ideology of a few?

Have we willingly accepted their lies that brought forth the invasion against the Iraqi people, the subterfuge that perpetuates the genocide of the Palestinians, the fear they use to compel loss of individual rights? Have we handed to this administration the one force that gives us power in this nation, our right to dissent?

Liberty is not liberty if it is defined for you; freedom is but a word if it does not give you peace of mind; and conscience does not exist if you do not exercise it.

I would assert that as long as the compassion and decency of the American people are defined by this administration, we are a nation without compassion and without decency and as long as this administration directs the behavior of this nation, any comparison to Islamic extremists who

“kill innocent women and children” pales in comparison with the hundreds and thousands this administration has slaughtered in our name in Palestine and Iraq and Lebanon. There is but one response and that is to deny it my consent. **CT**

William Cook is a professor of English at the University of La Verne in southern California and author of Tracking Deception: Bush's Mideast Policy He can be reached at: cookb@ulv.edu

Conscience does not exist if you do not exercise it



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BOOK EXCERPT

*There is no technofix to the disastrous impact of air travel on the environment, argues British activist and political commentator **George Monbiot** in this excerpt from his new book **Heat**. The only solution to the problem, he says, is to ground most of the airplanes flying today*

THE FLIGHT PATH TO GLOBAL MELTDOWN

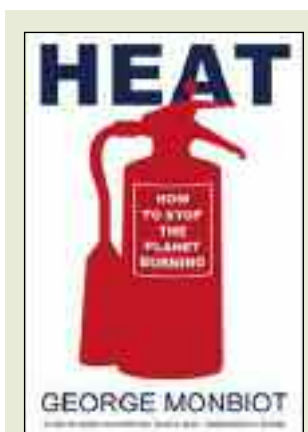
While it is easy for us to pour scorn on the drivers of sports utility vehicles, whose politics generally differ from ours, it is rather harder to contemplate a world in which our own freedoms are curtailed, especially the freedoms that shaped us

Our moral dissonance about flying reminds me of something a Buddhist once told me: “It doesn’t matter what you do, as long as you do it with love.” I am sure he knew as well as I do that our state of mind makes no difference to either exploited people or the environment. Thinking like ethical people makes not a damn of difference unless we also behave like ethical people. When it comes to flying, there seems to be no connection between intention and action.

This is partly because the people who are most concerned about the inhabitants of other countries are often those who have travelled widely. Much of the global justice movement consists of people – like me – whose politics were forged by their experiences abroad. While it is easy for us to pour scorn

on the drivers of sports utility vehicles, whose politics generally differ from ours, it is rather harder to contemplate a world in which our own freedoms are curtailed, especially the freedoms that shaped us.

More painfully, in some cases our freedoms have become obligations. When you form relationships with people from other nations, you accumulate what I call “love miles”: the distance you must travel to visit friends and partners and relatives on the other side of the planet. If your sister-in-law is getting married in Buenos Aires, it is both immoral to travel there, because of climate change, and immoral not to, because of the offence it causes. In that decision we find two valid moral codes in irreconcilable antagonism. Who could be surprised to discover that “ethical” people are in denial



HEAT:

How To Stop The Planet Burning

George Monbiot

Allen Lane

£17.99

about the impacts of flying?

There are two reasons why flying dwarfs any other environmental impact a single person can exert. The first is the distance it permits us to cover. According to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, the carbon emissions per passenger mile “for a fully loaded cruising airliner are comparable to a passenger car carrying three or four people”.

In other words, they are about half those, per person, of a car containing the average loading of 1.56 people. But while the mean distance travelled by car in the UK is 9,200 miles per year, in a plane we can beat that in one day. On a return flight from London to New York, every passenger produces roughly 1.2 tonnes of carbon dioxide: the very quantity we will each be entitled to emit in a year once the necessary cut in emissions has been made.

The second reason is that the climate impact of aeroplanes is not confined to the carbon they produce. They release several different kinds of gases and particles. Some of them cool the planet, others warm it. In the upper tropo-sphere, where most large planes fly, hot, wet air from the jet engine exhaust mixes with cold air. As the moisture condenses, it can form “contrails”, which in turn appear to give rise to cirrus clouds – those high wispy formations of ice crystals sometimes known as “horsetails”.

While they reflect some of the sun’s heat back into the space, they also trap heat in the atmosphere, especially at night; the heat trapping seems to be the stronger effect. The overall im-

pact, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, is a warming effect 2.7 times that of the carbon dioxide alone.

Aviation has been growing faster than any other source of greenhouse gases. Between 1990 and 2004, the number of people using airports in the UK rose by 120%, and the energy the planes consumed increased by 79%. Their carbon dioxide emissions almost doubled in that period – from 20.1 to 39.5m tonnes, or 5.5% of all the emissions this country produces. Unless something is done to stop this growth, flying will soon overwhelm all the cuts we manage to make elsewhere. But the measures the government proposes are useless.

The transport department suggests that the aviation industry should “pay the external costs its activities impose on society at large”. This is an interesting proposal, but unfortunately the department does not explain how it could be arranged. Should a steward be sacrificed every time someone in Ethiopia dies of hunger? As Bangladesh goes under water, will the government demand the drowning of a commensurate number of airline executives? The idea is strangely attractive. But the only suggestion it makes is that aviation fuel might be taxed.

Unlike most environmentalists, who have also called for this measure, the government knows perfectly well that fuel tax cannot be imposed on international flights. It is prohibited under international law by article 24 of the 1944 Chicago Convention, which has been set in stone by 4,000 bilater-

As Bangladesh goes under water, will the government demand the drowning of a commensurate number of airline executives? The idea is strangely attractive

BOOK EXCERPT

The people who are most vulnerable to climate change are the poorest inhabitants of the poorest nations, the great majority of whom will never board an aeroplane

al treaties – making it almost impossible to unpick. Now the government proposes that aviation be incorporated into the European Emissions Trading Scheme. If flights continue to grow, it will break the system.

The one certain means of preventing more flights is the one thing the British government refuses to do: limit the capacity of our airports. It employs the “predict and provide” approach that has proved so disastrous when applied to road transport: as you increase the provision of space in order to meet the predicted demand, the demand rises to fill it, ensuring that you need to create more space in order to accommodate your new projections. The House of Commons environmental audit committee calculates that the extra capacity the government proposes means “the equivalent of another Heathrow every five years”.

The Department for Transport, along with the airline industry, claims that expanding airport capacity is “socially inclusive”, in that it enables poorer people to fly. But a Mori poll commissioned by the Freedom to Fly Coalition, a lobby group founded by the aviation industry, found that 75% of those who use budget airlines are in social classes A, B and C. The people who are most vulnerable to climate change are the poorest inhabitants of the poorest nations, the great majority of whom will never board an aeroplane.

So what is to be done? There are two means by which the growth in flights could be reconciled to the need

to cut carbon emissions. The first is a massive increase in the fuel efficiency of aircraft; the other is a new fuel.

As far as aircraft engines are concerned, major new efficiencies in the next 20 years or so are a pipedream. The Royal Commission reports that “the basic gas turbine design emerged in 1947. It has been the dominant form of aircraft engine for some 50 years and there is no serious suggestion that this will change in the foreseeable future.” It is hard to see how it could be made much more efficient than it is already.

The choice of low carbon fuels for aeroplanes is similar to the choice of low carbon fuels for cars. According to a paper by researchers at Imperial College, London, it is technically possible to fly planes whose normal fuel (kerosene) is mixed with about 5% biodiesel. But biodiesel, as I have shown elsewhere, is likely to cause more global warming than it prevents.

Ethanol, the same paper suggests, would be useless: it is insufficiently dense and, in aeroplanes, extremely dangerous. This appears to leave only hydrogen. Jets could use hydrogen today, if instead of carrying passengers and freight they carried nothing but fuel – it contains four times less energy by volume than kerosene. But if this problem could be overcome, the researchers suggest, the total climate impacts of planes fuelled by the gas “would be much lower than from kerosene”.

Unfortunately, when hydrogen burns, it creates water. A hydrogen plane will produce 2.6 times as much

water vapour as a plane running on kerosene. This, they admit, would be a major problem if hydrogen planes flew as high as ordinary craft. But if the aircraft flew below 10,000 metres (33,000ft), where contrails are less likely to form, the impact would be negligible.

What they have forgotten is that because hydrogen requires a far bigger fuel tank than kerosene, the structure (or “airframe”) of the plane would need to be much larger. This means it would be subject to more drag.

The Royal Commission points out that “the combination of larger drag and lower weight would require flight at higher altitudes” than planes fuelled by kerosene. In fact, hydrogen planes, if they are ever used, are most likely to be deployed as supersonic jets in the stratosphere. If so, their impact on the climate would be around 13 times that of a normal aircraft running on kerosene.

And that, I’m afraid, is that. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change discovered, “There would not appear to be any practical alternatives to kerosene-based fuels for commercial jet aircraft for the next several decades.” There is, in other words, no technofix.

The growth in aviation and the need to address climate change cannot be reconciled. In common with all other sectors, aviation’s contribution to global warming must be reduced in the UK by some 87% if we are to avoid a 2C rise in global temperatures. Given that the likely possible efficiencies are small and tend to counteract each

other, an 87% cut in emissions requires not only that growth stops, but that most of the aeroplanes flying today be grounded. I realise that this is not a popular message, but it is hard to see how a different conclusion could be extracted from the available evidence.

This means the end of distant foreign holidays, unless you are prepared to take a long time getting there. It means that business meetings must take place over the internet or by means of video conferences. It means that transcontinental journeys must be made by train or coach.

It means that journeys around the world must be reserved for visiting the people you love, and that they will require both slow travel and the saving up of carbon rations. It means the end of shopping trips to New York, parties in Ibiza, second homes in Tuscany and, most painfully for me, political meetings in Porto Alegre – unless you believe that these activities are worth the sacrifice of the biosphere and the lives of the poor.

But I urge you to remember that these privations affect only a tiny proportion of the world’s people. The reason they seem so harsh is that this tiny proportion almost certainly includes you. **CT**

This is an edited excerpt from Heat, by George Monbiot, published in Britain by Allen Lane. Monbiot has also launched a new website – turnuptheheat.org – exposing the false environmental claims made by corporations and celebrities.

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THE ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

*George W. Bush claims that his War on Terror has made the United States much safer, writes **William Blum** who points out that the reality is different. He also clears up some Cold War myths about the Berlin Wall and has a few points to make about elections and democracy in Cuba*

TERROR, MADMEN AND THE TRUTH

Thanks to the War on Terror – particularly the bombing, invasion, occupation, and torture of Afghanistan and Iraq – numerous new anti-American terrorists have been created since that historic day

“President Bush said the United States is still under the threat of attack and will continue to be right up until Election Day.” – Jay Leno

Hand-in-hand with his threat warnings, Bush keeps telling us how his War on Terror has made us so much safer, bragging that there hasn't been a terrorist attack in the United States in the five years since the one of September 11, 2001. Marvelous. There wasn't a terrorist attack in the United States in the five years before that day either.

But thanks to the War on Terror – particularly the bombing, invasion, occupation, and torture of Afghanistan and Iraq – numerous new anti-American terrorists have been created since that historic day. The latest confirmation of this, if any more were needed, is the recently leaked National Intelligence Estimate conclusion that “the American invasion and occupation of Iraq has helped spawn a new generation of Islamic radicalism and ... the overall terrorist threat has

grown since the Sept. 11 attacks.”^[1]

Since the first strike on Afghanistan in October 2001 there have been literally scores of terrorist attacks against American institutions and individuals in the Middle East, South Asia and the Pacific, more than a dozen in Pakistan alone: military, diplomatic, civilian, Christian, and other targets associated with the United States, including the October 2002 bombings of two nightclubs in Bali, Indonesia, which killed more than 200 people, almost all of them Americans and citizens of their Australian and British war allies; the following year brought the heavy bombing of the US-managed Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia, the site of diplomatic receptions and 4th of July celebrations held by the American Embassy; and other horrendous attacks on US war allies in recent years in Madrid, London, and elsewhere.

A US State Department report of 2004 on worldwide terrorist attacks – “Patterns of Global Terrorism” – showed that the year 2003 had more “significant terrorist incidents” than at any time since the department be-

gan issuing statistics in 1985, even though the figures did not include attacks on US troops by insurgents in Iraq, which the Bush administration explicitly labels as “terrorist”.^[2] When their report for 2004 showed an even higher number of incidents, the State Department announced that it was going to stop publishing the annual statistics.^[3]

It is extremely difficult and threatening for US and UK officials to accept the correlation between their foreign policies and the rise of terrorists. A spokesman for the Blair government recently declared: “Al-Qaida started killing innocent civilians in the 90s. It killed Muslim civilians even before 9/11, and the attacks on New York and Washington killed over 3,000 people before Iraq. To imply al-Qaida is driven by an honest disagreement over foreign policy is a mistake.”^[4] Vice President Dick Cheney, on more than one occasion, has also pointed out that terrorists were attacking American targets even before 9-11.

The “reasoning” behind such thinking is odd; it’s as if these esteemed gentlemen believe that there was no Western foreign policy in the Mideast before September 11, 2001. But of course, even in modern times, there were decades of awful abuse, including the US overthrow of the Iranian government in 1953, multiple bombings of Libya and Iraq, sinking an Iranian ship and shooting down an Iranian passenger plane, habitual support of Israel against the Palestinian people, and much more.^[5]

It can’t be emphasized too often or too strongly that terrorism is a political act, it is making a political statement, a statement that can often be summed up in a single word: “retaliation”; terrorism is what people with bombs but no air force have to resort to. The Bush and Blair administrations cannot admit to the correlation of terrorism with their policies, but those opposed to their wars should never allow them to avoid the issue. Here are some of the latest examples of this retaliation phenomenon:

From a New York Times report on the UK group arrested for allegedly planning to blow up multiple planes headed to the US: “‘As you bomb, you will be bombed; as you kill, you will be killed,’ said one of the men on a ‘martyrdom’ videotape” ... “One of the suspects said on his martyrdom video that the ‘war against Muslims’ in Iraq and Afghanistan had motivated him to act.” ... “The man said he was seeking revenge for the foreign policy of the United States, and ‘their accomplices, the U.K. and the Jews’.”^[6]

From a review of the new book, “The Inside Story of the 9/11 Commission” by its chairmen, Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton: “In looking into the background of the hijackers, the staff found that religious orthodoxy was not a common denominator since some of the members ‘reportedly even consumed alcohol and abused drugs.’ Others engaged in casual sex. Instead, hatred of American foreign policy in the Middle East seemed to be the key factor.” ... “I believe they feel a sense of outrage against the United States,”

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THE ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

During the 1950s, American coldwarriors in West Germany instituted a crude campaign of sabotage and subversion against East Germany designed to throw that country's economic and administrative machinery out of gear

said Supervisory Special Agent James Fitzgerald. "They identify with the Palestinian problem, they identify with people who oppose repressive regimes and I believe they tend to focus their anger on the United States." ... "Lee [Hamilton] felt that there had to be an acknowledgment that a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was vital to America's long-term relationship with the Islamic world, and that the presence of American forces in the Middle East was a major motivating factor in Al Qaeda's actions."^[7]

But the War on Terrorism paints terrorists as only irrational madmen or those who loathe freedom, democracy and Western culture, or doing what they do just for the pure, America-hating thrill of it, and so the US and the UK continue to look for military solutions. Writer David Rees predicted a few years ago: "Remember when the United States had a drug problem and then we declared a War on Drugs, and now you can't buy drugs anymore? The War on Terrorism will be just like that."^[8]

Cold War myths

It's become a commonplace for critics of the wall being built by the United States along the Mexican border to equate it to the Berlin Wall. The same highly negative comparison is evoked in speaking about the Israeli wall being built alongside and through Palestine. Just as the Holocaust is the standard against which acts of mass murder and atrocities are conventionally compared, the Berlin Wall is the stan-

dard for judging the erection of a physical barrier which restricts freedom of travel for large numbers of people. The Wall is also employed by conservatives as a symbol of the wickedness and the failure of communism. But what was the Berlin Wall actually about?

During the 1950s, American coldwarriors in West Germany instituted a crude campaign of sabotage and subversion against East Germany designed to throw that country's economic and administrative machinery out of gear. The CIA and other US intelligence and military services recruited, equipped, trained and financed German activist groups and individuals, of West and East, to carry out actions which ran the spectrum from juvenile delinquency to terrorism; anything to make life difficult for the East German people and weaken their support of the government; anything to make the commies look bad. It was a remarkable undertaking. The United States and its agents used explosives, arson, short circuiting, and other methods to damage power stations, shipyards, canals, docks, public buildings, gas stations, public transportation, bridges, etc; they derailed freight trains, seriously injuring workers; burned 12 cars of a freight train and destroyed air pressure hoses of others; used acids to damage vital factory machinery; put sand in the turbine of a factory, bringing it to a standstill; set fire to a tile-producing factory; promoted work slow-downs in factories; killed 7,000 cows of a cooperative dairy through poisoning;

added soap to powdered milk destined for East German schools; were in possession, when arrested, of a large quantity of the poison cantharidin with which it was planned to produce poisoned cigarettes to kill leading East Germans; set off stink bombs to disrupt political meetings; attempted to disrupt the World Youth Festival in East Berlin by sending out forged invitations, false promises of free bed and board, false notices of cancellations, etc.; carried out attacks on participants with explosives, fire-bombs, and tire-puncturing equipment; forged and distributed large quantities of food ration cards to cause confusion, shortages and resentment; sent out forged tax notices and other government directives and documents to foster disorganization and inefficiency within industry and unions ... all this and much more.

Throughout the 1950s, the East Germans and the Soviet Union repeatedly lodged complaints with the Soviets' erstwhile allies in the West and with the United Nations about specific sabotage and espionage activities and called for the closure of the offices in West Germany they claimed were responsible, and for which they provided names and addresses. Their complaints fell on deaf ears. Inevitably, the East Germans began to tighten up entry into the country from the West.

At the same time, the West was bedeviling the East with a vigorous campaign of recruiting East German professionals and skilled workers, who had been educated at the ex-

pense of the Communist government. This eventually led to a serious labor and production crisis in the East.^[9]

By August of 1961, the East Germans had had enough. They began the building of their infamous wall. This was not erected to keep their citizens from "truth" or "freedom" – before the wall many Easterners had commuted to the West for jobs each day and then returned to the East in the evening. But in the Cold War atmosphere every possible means of scoring propaganda points was exploited by both sides and thus was born the legend of the Evil Commie Wall.

"Appeasement" is another Cold War myth dredged up recently by the Bush administration in its desperate attempt to find an argument for the Iraq war that more than 30% of the American population will swallow. There's been more than one occasion of our old friend Rumsfeld labeling as "fascists" anti-American terrorists and those who resist American occupations, and calling Democrats and others not in love with the war "appeasers";^[10] you know, like Britain allowing the Nazis to devour the Czechs in the hope that Hitler would leave the West alone. The appeasement analogy has long been a favorite of American politicians when it suited their purpose; Eisenhower and Johnson both personally used it, to name but two.

But what happened in 1938 in Munich wasn't so much "appeasement" as it was "collusion". One of Adolf's qualities that appealed so much to

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THE ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

Given that so many basic decisions that affect Americans' lives are not made in legislatures but in corporate boardrooms, does he know for a fact that Cubans have any less say over such decisions than Americans do?

the West was his fervent anti-communism. Britain, the United States and other Western governments were counting on the Nazis to turn eastward and put an end once and for all to the Bolshevik menace to God, family and capitalism.^[11]

If to Donald Rumsfeld opposing the war in Iraq is the moral equivalent of appeasing Hitler, to Condoleezza Rice it's the moral equivalent of tolerating slavery in 19th century America. Here she is at her desperate best: "I'm sure that there are people who thought that it was a mistake to fight the Civil War to its end and to insist that the emancipation of slaves would hold. I'm sure that there were people who said ... why don't we get out of this now, take a peace with the South, but leave the South with slaves."^[12]

Let freedom and cash registers ring

US Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez has proposed that Cubans hold an internationally monitored referendum to decide whether they want to be ruled by dictators or live in a democracy.^[13]

So what do you think Carlos M. Gutierrez – formerly a corporate CEO and now a man who goes around the world promoting corporate investment and trade – means by “a democracy”? Can he imagine a “democratic” society not dominated by corporations which turn everything into a commodity? Is Gutierrez really concerned about the Cuban people having a say over the decisions that affect their lives? Given that so many

basic decisions that affect Americans' lives are not made in legislatures but in corporate boardrooms, does he know for a fact that Cubans have any less say over such decisions than Americans do?

The usual American definition of democracy has to do in major part with elections. But even if we accept this simple, and simplistic, definition, the fact remains that, contrary to what Gutierrez, and most Americans assume, Cuba holds elections on a regular basis.

The elections, which observe universal suffrage and a secret ballot, are for seats in the Municipal Assemblies, the Provincial Assemblies, and the National Assembly. There is direct nomination of candidates by the citizenry, not by the Communist Party, which does not get involved in any stage of the electoral process. All candidates have the same public exposure, which is the publication and posting of a biography listing their qualities and history, in very accessible and commonly visited places in the community. There is one deputy in the Municipal Assembly for each 20,000 of population. Candidates must receive over 50% of the vote to be elected, if not in the first round then in a run-off. The 609 members of the National Assembly elect the 31 members of the Council of State. The President of the Council of State is the Head of State and Head of Government. Fidel Castro is repeatedly chosen for this position, purportedly because of his sterling qualities.

I don't know enough detail about

the actual workings of the Cuban electoral system to point out the flaws and shortcomings of the above, which most likely exist in practice. But can it be more deadening to the intellect, the spirit, and one's idealism than the American electoral system? From the splashy staged nominating conventions to the interminable boring and insulting campaigns to the increasingly questionable voting and counting processes, all to select one or the other corporate representative ... are the Cubans ready for this?

If they were to institute any kind of electoral system in which those candidates with the most money to spend had an advantage, what would keep the CIA from pouring in money-without-end to get their people into office?

This is what we're up against

I recently heard a California farmer interviewed on National Public Radio about the very worrisome e-coli outbreak in spinach. At one point he said that "The United States has the safest agricultural products in the world."^[4]

Hmmm. I wondered how one measured such a thing and whether the guy had actually made a global study of this and could cite any statistics or credible sources. It reminded me of several radio interviews I've had in which I was being very critical of US foreign policy (no surprise there) leading to someone calling in and asking me if I could name a better country. My standard reply has been: "Better in what respect?"

"In any respect," is the standard re-

ply from the caller.

"Well," I say, "what about health care? There are many countries that provide health care to a much larger percentage of their citizens than the United States does and at much cheaper cost, sometimes even for free, like in Cuba. And it's the same with university education."

This is effectively the end of any such conversation.

What condition, I wonder, would have to exist in the US for such people to relinquish their childhood love affair with that magical place called "America"? I have on occasion asked people who reject virtually any criticism of US foreign policy: "What would the United States have to do in its foreign policy to lose your support? What, for you, would be too much?" I've yet to get an answer to that question. I suspect it's because the person is afraid that whatever they say I'll point out that we've already done it.

Author Michael Lewis has observed: "One of the qualities that distinguish Americans from other people is their naive suspicion that any foreigner with half a brain would rather be one of them. ... The most zealous Japanese patriot doesn't for a minute think that other peoples actually want to be Japanese. Ditto the French."

But don't despair, gang. As I've mentioned before, my (very) rough guess is that the people I speak about here constitute no more than 15 percent of the population. I suggest that we concentrate on the rest, who are reachable, and in the past three years

There are many countries that provide health care to a much larger percentage of their citizens than the United States does and at much cheaper cost, sometimes even for free, like in Cuba. And it's the same with university education

THE ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

But don't despair, gang. As I've mentioned before, my (very) rough guess is that the people I speak about here constitute no more than 15 percent of the population

countless of them have indeed been reached.

Discovered at last! A difference between the Democrats and the Republicans on foreign policy

This just in! Republican leaders in the House have proposed legislation that will require that anti-war protestors be sterilized. Democrats are refusing to roll over and play dead. House minority leader Nancy Pelosi – who recently called Hugo Chavez a “thug” for his UN speech – insists her party will support the measure only if a right of appeal is included. **CT**

NOTES

[1] New York Times, September 24, 2006, the wording is a Times paraphrase

[2] Washington Post, June 23, 2004 and June 28, p.19

[3] “Bush Administration Eliminating 19-year-old International Terrorism Report”, Knight Ridder Newspapers, April 15, 2005

[4] The Guardian (London), August 12, 2006

[5] For more information see Blum's essay at: <http://members.aol.com/superogue/terintro.htm>

[6] New York Times, August 28, 2006, p.1

[7] Review by James Bamford, New York Times, August 20, 2006, p.15

[8] David Rees, “Get Your War On”, (Soft Skull Press), p.2

[9] For further details, see William Blum, “Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2”, chapter 8

[10] “Rumsfeld says threat to U.S. is from ‘a new type of fascism’”, Associated Press, August 29, 2006

[11] See, for example, Christopher Hitchens, “Chamberlain: Collusion, not appeasement”, Monthly Review (January 1995), a review of Clement Leibovitz, “The Chamberlain-Hitler Deal” (1993)

[12] Interview, Essence magazine, October 2006 issue, p.187

[13] Associated Press, September 15, 2006

[14] NPR, Day-to-Day, September 18, 2006, 12:10 PM

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

READ GEORGE MONBIOT

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Noam Chomsky's book, *Hegemony or Survival?* soared to the top of the best-sellers' list after Venezuela's President **Hugo Chavez** recommended it during a recent speech – in which he called President Bush the devil – to the General Assembly of the United Nations. Here is the speech in full

THE PRESIDENT GOES TO NEW YORK

Translation by Dawn Gable.

Madame President, Excellencies, Heads of State, Heads of Governments, and high ranking government representatives from around the world. A very good day to you all.

First of all, with much respect, I would like to invite all of those, who have not had a chance, to read this book that we have read: Noam Chomsky, one of the most prestigious intellectuals of America and the world. One of Chomsky's most recent works: "Hegemony or Survival? America's Quest for Global Dominance". An excellent piece to help us understand what happened in the world during the 20th century, what is going on now and the greatest threat looming over our planet: the hegemonic pretension of US Imperialism that puts at risk the very survival of the human species. We continue to warn about this danger and call on the people of the US and the world to halt this threat that is like the sword of Damocles.

I intended to read a chapter, but for the sake of time, I will leave it as a recommendation. It's a fast read. It's really good, Madame President, surely you are familiar with it. It is published in English, German, Russian, and Arabic (applause). Look, I think our brothers and sisters of the United States should be the first citizens to read this book because the threat is in their own house. The Devil is in their home. The Devil, the Devil himself is in their home.

The Devil came here yesterday (laughter and applause). Yesterday the Devil was here, in this very place. This table from where I speak still smells like sulfur. Yesterday, ladies and gentlemen, in this same hall the President of the United States, who I call "The Devil," came here talking as if he owned the world. It would take a psychiatrist to analyze the US president's speech from yesterday.

As the spokesperson for Imperialism he came to give us his recipes for maintaining the current scheme of domination, exploitation and pillage of the world's people. It would make

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SPEECH

Yes, they call us extremists, we who demand complete freedom in the world, equality among peoples and respect for national sovereignty. We are rising up against the Empire, against the model of domination

a good Alfred Hitchcock movie. I could even suggest a title: “The Devil’s Recipe.” That is to say, US Imperialism, and here Chomsky says it with profound and crystalline clarity, is making desperate efforts to consolidate its hegemonic system of domination. We cannot allow this to occur, we cannot permit them to install a world dictatorship, to consolidate a world dictatorship.

The speech of the tyrannical president of the world was full of cynicism, full of hypocrisy. It is this imperial hypocrisy with which he attempts to control everything. They want to impose upon us the democratic model they devised, the false democracy of elites. And moreover, a very original democratic model imposed with explosions, bombings, invasions, and cannon shot. That’s some democracy! One would have to review the thesis of Aristotle and of the first Greeks who spoke of democracy to see what kind of model of democracy is imposed by marines, invasions, aggressions and bombs.

The US president said the following yesterday in this same hall, I quote: “everywhere you turn, you hear extremists who tell you that you can escape your misery and regain your dignity through violence and terror and martyrdom.” Wherever he looks he sees extremists. I am sure he sees you, brother, with your skin color, and thinks you are an extremist. With his color, the dignified President of Bolivia Evo Morales, who was here yesterday, is an extremist. The imperialists see extremists all around. No,

its not that we are extremists. What is happening is that the world is waking up and people everywhere are rising up. I have the impression, Mr. Imperialist dictator, that you will live the rest of your days as if in a nightmare, because no matter where you look we will be rising up against US imperialism. Yes, they call us extremists, we who demand complete freedom in the world, equality among peoples and respect for national sovereignty. We are rising up against the Empire, against the model of domination.

Later, the president said, “Today I’d like to speak directly to the people across the broader Middle East: My country desires peace.” That is certain. If we walk the streets of the Bronx, if we walk through the streets of New York, Washington, San Diego, California, any city, San Antonio, San Francisco and we ask the people on the street: the people of the US want peace. The difference is that the government of this country, of the US, does not want peace; it wants to impose its model of exploitation and plundering and its hegemony upon us under threat of war. That is the little difference.

The people want peace and, what is happening in Iraq? And what happened in Lebanon and Palestine? And what has happened over the last 100 years in Latin America and the world and now the threats against Venezuela, new threats against Iran? He spoke to the people of Lebanon, “Many of you have seen your homes and communities caught in crossfire.” What cynicism! What capacity to bla-

tantly lie before the world! The bombs in Beirut launched with milimetric precision are “crossfire”? I think that the president is thinking of those western movies where they shoot from the hip and someone ends up caught in the middle.

Imperialist fire! Fascist fire! Murderous fire! Genocidal fire against the innocent people of Palestine and Lebanon by the Empire and Israel. That is the truth. Now they say that they are upset to see homes destroyed.

In the end, the US president came to speak to the people, and also to say, “I brought some documents Madame President.” This morning I was watching some of the speeches while updating mine. He spoke to the people of Afghanistan, to the people of Lebanon, to the people of Iran. One has to wonder, when listening to the US president speak to those people: what would those people say to him? If those people could talk to him, what would they say?

I think I have an idea because I know the souls of the majority of those people, the people of the South, the downtrodden peoples would say: Yankee imperialist go home! That would be the shout that would echo around the world, if these people of the world could speak with only one voice to the US Empire.

Therefore, Madame President, colleagues, and friends, last year we came to this same hall, as we have for the past eight years, and we said something that today is completely confirmed. I believe that almost no

one in this room would stand up to defend the system of the United Nations. Let’s admit with honesty, the UN system that emerged after WWII has collapsed, shattered, it doesn’t work. Well, ok. To come here and give speeches, and visit with one another once a year, yes, it works for that. And to make long documents and reflect and listen to good speeches like Evo’s yesterday, and Lula’s, yes, for that it works. And many speeches, like the one we just heard by the president of Sri Lanka and of the president of Chile.

But we have converted this Assembly into a mere deliberative organ with no kind of power to impact in the slightest way the terrible reality the world is experiencing. Therefore we again propose here today, September 20, [2006] to re-found the United Nations. Last year Madame President, we made four modest proposals that we feel are in urgent need of being adopted by the Heads of State, Heads of Government, ambassadors and representatives. And we discussed these proposals.

First: expansion. Yesterday Lula said the same, the Security Council, its permanent as well as its non-permanent seats, must open up to new members from developed, underdeveloped and Third World countries. That’s the first priority.

Second: the application of effective methods of addressing and resolving world conflicts. Transparent methods of debate and of making decisions.

Third: the immediate suppression

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SPEECH

They are afraid of the truth. The empire is afraid of the truth and of independent voices. They accuse us of being extremists. They are the extremists

of the anti-democratic veto mechanism, the veto power over Security Council decisions, seems fundamental to us and is being called for by all. Here is a recent example, the immoral veto by the US government that freely allowed Israeli forces to destroy Lebanon, in front of us all, by blocking a resolution in the UN Security Council.

Fourth: as we always say, it is necessary to strengthen the role, the powers of the general secretary of the United Nations. Yesterday we heard the speech of the general secretary, who is nearing the end of his term. He recalled that in these ten years the world has become more complicated and that the serious problems of the world, the hunger, poverty, violence, and violation of human rights have been aggravated, this is a terrible consequence of the collapse of the UN system and of US imperialist pretensions.

Madame President, recognizing our status as members, Venezuela decided several years ago to wage this battle within the UN with our voice, our modest reflections. We are an independent voice, representing dignity and the search for peace, the formulation of an international system to denounce persecution and hegemonic aggression against people worldwide. In this way

Venezuela has presented its name. The homeland of Bolívar has presented its name as a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. Of course you all know that

the US government has begun an open attack, an immoral global attack in an attempt to block Venezuela from being freely elected to occupy the open seat on the Security Council. They are afraid of the truth. The empire is afraid of the truth and of independent voices. They accuse us of being extremists. They are the extremists.

I want to thank all countries that have announced your support for Venezuela, even when the vote is secret and it is not necessary for anyone to reveal their vote. But I think that the open aggression of the US Empire has reinforced the support of many countries, which in turn morally strengthened Venezuela, our people, our government.

Our brothers and sisters of MERCOSUR, for example, as a block, have announced their support for Venezuela. We are now a full member of MERCOSUR along with Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay. Many other countries of Latin America, such as Bolivia and all the CARICOM nations have pledged their support to Venezuela. The entire Arab League has announced its support for Venezuela.

I thank the Arab world, our brothers of the Arab world and of the Caribbean. The African Union, nearly all of the African Union countries have pledged their support for Venezuela and other countries like Russia, China and many others across the globe. I thank you all deeply in the name of Venezuela, in the name of our people and in the name of truth,

because Venezuela, upon occupying a seat on the Security Council will not only bring to it the voice of Venezuela, but also the voice of the Third World, the voice of the peoples of the planet. There we will defend dignity and truth.

Despite all this Madame President, I think there are reasons to be optimistic. Hopelessly optimistic, as a poet would say, because beyond the threats, bombs, wars, aggressions, preventative wars, and the destruction of entire peoples, one can see that a new era is dawning. Like Silvio Rodríguez sings, “the era is giving birth to a heart.” Alternative tendencies, alternative thoughts, and youth with distinct ideas are emerging. In barely a decade it has been demonstrated that the End of History theory was totally false.

The establishment of the American Empire, the American peace, the establishment of the capitalist, neoliberal model that generates misery and poverty – all totally false. The thesis is totally false and has been dumped. Now the future of the world must be defined. There is a new dawning on this planet that can be seen everywhere: in Latin America, Asia, Africa, Europe, Oceania. I want to highlight that vision of optimism to fortify our conscience and our will to fight to save the world and construct a new world, a better world.

Venezuela has joined this struggle and for this we are threatened. The US has already planned, financed and launched a coup in Venezuela. And the US continues to support coup

plotters in Venezuela. And they continue supporting terrorism against Venezuela. President Michel Bachellet recalled a few days ago... pardon, I mean a few minutes ago... the terrible murder of the former Chilean Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier. I would only add the following: the guilty parties are free. Those responsible for that deed, in which a US citizen was also killed, are North Americans of the CIA. Terrorists of the CIA.

In addition, we here in this room must remember that in a few days it will be the 30th anniversary of that murder and of the horrible terrorist attack that blew up a Cubana de Aviación airplane in mid-flight killing 73 innocent people. And where is the worst terrorist of this continent, who admitted to being the intellectual author of the airplane sabotage? He was in prison in Venezuela for some years, but he escaped with the complicity of CIA officials and the Venezuelan government of that time. Now he is here living in the US, protected by the government even though he was convicted and he confessed. The US government has a double standard and protects terrorism. These reflections are to demonstrate that Venezuela is committed to the fight against terrorism, against violence and works together with all people who struggle for peace and for a just world.

I spoke of the Cuban airplane. Luis Posada Carriles is the name of that terrorist. He is protected here just like the corrupt fugitives who escaped Venezuela. A group of terrorists who planted bombs in embassies of vari-

The US government has a double standard and protects terrorism. These reflections are to demonstrate that Venezuela is committed to the fight against terrorism, against violence and works together with all people who struggle for peace and for a just world

S P E E C H

They were going to execute me, but God reached out his hand, along with a group of good soldiers, and the people who took to the streets. It's a miracle that I'm here

ous countries, murdered innocent people during the coup and kidnapped this humble servant. They were going to execute me, but God reached out his hand, along with a group of good soldiers, and the people who took to the streets. It's a miracle that I'm here. The leaders of that coup and those terrorist acts are here, protected by the US government. I accuse the US government of protecting terrorism and of giving a completely cynical speech.

Speaking of Cuba, we went happily to Havana. We were there several days. During the G-15 Summit and the NAM Summit the dawning of a new era was evident with an historic resolution and final document. Don't worry. I am not going to read it all. But here is a collection of resolutions made in open discussion with transparency. With more than 50 Heads of State, Havana was the capital of the South for a week.

We have re-launched the Non-Aligned Movement. And if there is anything I could ask of you all, my brothers and sisters, it is to please lend your support to the strengthening of the NAM, which is so important to the emergence of a new era, to preventing hegemony and imperialism. Also, you all know that we have designated Fidel Castro as President of the NAM for the next three years and we are sure that compañero President Fidel Castro will fulfill the post with much efficiency. Those who wanted Fidel to die, well, they remain

frustrated because Fidel is already back in his olive green uniform and is now not only the President of Cuba but also the President of NAM.

Madam President, dear colleagues, presidents, a very strong movement of the South emerged there in Havana. We are men and women of the South. We are bearers of these documents, these ideas, opinions, and reflections. I have already closed my folder and the book that I brought with me. Don't forget it. I really recommend it. With much humility we try to contribute ideas for the salvation of the planet, to save it from the threat of imperialism, and god willing soon. Early in this century, god willing, so that we ourselves can see and experience with our children and grandchildren a peaceful world, under the fundamental principles of the UN, renewed and relocated.

I believe that the UN must be located in another country, in a city of the South. We have proposed this from Venezuela. You all know that my medical personnel had to stay locked up in the airplane. The Chief of my security is locked on the plane. They would not let them come to the UN. Another abuse and outrage Madame President that we request to be registered personally to the sulfurous Devil. But God is with us.

A warm embrace and may God bless us all. Good day. **CT**

Hugo Chavez is the president of Venezuela.



THE SMILING REAPER: An activist wears a Tony Blair mask as hundreds of people take part in a die-in in sympathy with victims of the Iraq war at a demonstration in Manchester on September 23, 2006, before Blair's final address as Prime Minister to Britain's Labour Party Conference. PHOTO: GAVIN SEARLE, GREATER MANCHESTER COALITION TO STOP THE WAR

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