

# CovertAction Quarterly

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# CAQ

20th  
Anniversary  
Issue

## The War Against Cuba

Twenty Years of  
*CovertAction*:  
Philip Agee and  
Ramsey Clark

Diana Johnstone  
on Yugoslavia:  
"Privatizing"  
the Left

Ron Ridenhour:  
A Remembrance

**Assata Shakur:**  
**A Revolutionary Life**





This is the twentieth anniversary issue of *CovertAction* magazine. The covert action, on which we focused at the time of our founding in 1978, flourished in the 1980s, but became somewhat less central to U.S. foreign policy in the 1990s. It is now, we believe, once again in the ascendancy. Readers will notice a change in emphasis, as we look, both from the perspective of history and with an eye to current events, at the more clandestine side of world politics.

The United States has been able, with relative ease, to replace the late lamented Soviet menace with the new and improved Muslim fundamentalist menace, largely because it spent 20 years creating, nurturing, arming, and—most significantly—funding that menace. The money that flowed into anti-Soviet opposition coffers in Afghanistan and elsewhere is now paying for the hit teams that blow up U.S. embassies. This after those funds helped to construct the secret bases where the terrorists trained, to provide them with massive amounts of sophisticated armaments, and to finance the CIA experts who supervised that training with those weapons. The former CIA station chief in Kabul, Milton Bearden, recently described the U.S. role in Afghanistan as “pretty much tangential to what everybody else was doing.” This is an astonishingly modest reference to the five to six billion taxpayer dollars that the U.S. lavished on the *mujahedin*.

The U.S. response to having its hand bitten by those it has been feeding was to drop \$100 million worth of missiles and bombs on people who had done nothing. Killing innocent villagers, destroying hospitals, old age homes, and now pharmaceutical plants and candy factories, is becoming an American tradition. It's been called “preemptive retaliation”; if the villagers had lived, after all, they might have grown up to be terrorists.

From Indochina to Grenada, from Panama to Iraq, from Libya to the Sudan, this seems to be what American presidents do best whenever they have been mortified, whether in the court of public opinion or the federal district court in Arkansas. Attempts to kill Manuel Noriega, Muammar Qaddafi, and now the Scarlet Pimpernel of the fundamentalists, that elusive multimillionaire, Osama bin Laden, seem to kill and maim everyone but their targets.

And regarding attempts to kill, one of the more alarming aftereffects of the embassy bombings and the transmogrification of all the world's anti-Americanism into the person of bin Laden is the renewed call for an end to the U.S. government's self-imposed “ban” on assassinations. Up until now, the ban has been regularly circumvented by the application of tortuous Talmudic reasoning. The government can, it is asserted, use “lethal” force in a military, or covert paramilitary operation, even though, to be sure, individuals will be killed in such an operation. That's not an assassination, say CIA officers, military spokespeople, and diplomats. Between the two there is “all the difference in the world.” But this is a shameless mendacity. When the “military operational target” is, for example, the home in which Col. Qaddafi lives, and your intelligence objective is to find out what nights he stays home and eats in, what would you call dropping a laser-guided bomb on his house that night?

The issue is not academic. “Lethal” presidential orders and findings, authorizing covert operations that may well involve deaths, have always been allowed, and Mr. bin Laden has apparently been the subject of one since President Clinton signed it in 1996. “Such a finding,” the *New York Times* recently reported, “would permit Mr. bin Laden's inadvertent death in a military operation against his network.” Inadvertent?

In another part of the world, the West has been busy funding, albeit so far at sub-Afghan levels, the next flock from which some chickens may come home to roost. The conflicts in the Balkans—the subject of several articles in this issue—are incredibly contrived, and one of the vehicles of choice has become non-governmental organizations, NGOs. There is so much money flowing that it is not difficult to find compliant NGOs. And most of that money is as “governmental” as it can be. The Orwellian National Endowment for Democracy, funded by the U.S. taxpayers, is deeply involved in the Balkans, particularly of late in the Kosovo province of Yugoslavia. The Summer 1998 NED journal, *Democracy*, bore this headline on its front page: “Kosovo—World's Largest NGO?”

This anniversary, therefore, is not so much a celebration as a rededication to our founding principles.

**CovertAction Quarterly:** Issue Number 65, Fall 1998. Chris Agee, Philip Agee, William Blum, Malaya R. Drew, Anne Gallivan, Bill Montross, Dolores Neuman, Ellen Ray, William Schaap, Michele Stoddard, Louis Wolf. Cover, designed by Michael John Carley, composed of two photographs: President Fidel Castro and Pope John Paul II (AP/Wide World Photos) and Assata Shakur (Bill Schaap).

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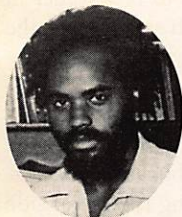
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The Intelligence Identities Protection Act would serve as an official secrets act to eliminate investigative journalism about covert operations.



# COVERTACTION QUARTERLY

## TURNING TWENTY, LOOKING BACK

BY PHILIP AGEE

Havana, Cuba, July 1998

This was an exciting city 20 years ago this month, as more than ten thousand young people from around the globe gathered for the Eleventh World Festival of Youth and Students. It coincided with Cuba's annual celebration of the 26th of July, the date in 1953 when Fidel Castro led a guerrilla assault on the Moncada military barracks in Santiago that sparked the movement to overthrow the U.S.-and-Mafia-supported military dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. Havana's Carnival season was also in full swing with night parades along the seafront *Malecón*—a seemingly endless procession of floats and *comparsas*, all with the color, dancing, music and rhythm that only flows from Cuban veins.

A group of us had just launched this magazine in Washington, D.C. as the *CovertAction Information Bulletin*, and all six of us were here for the Festival. We had conceived the idea of a new magazine some six months earlier in Ja-

maica where we met to plan additional efforts to expose the CIA's destabilization campaign against the social democratic government of Michael Manley.

With the first issue in hand, we met with Festival delegates from many countries, urging them to join us in a world-wide campaign to expose the CIA, not only what it does, but also the people who do its work. We gave speeches describing Agency operations and how to identify their undercover personnel, and we testified at the International Tribunal Against Imperialism, the Festival's main political event which focused on the CIA's war against Cuba. In addition, we distributed copies of the just-published *Dirty Work: the CIA in Western Europe* that Louis Wolf and I edited and that contained an appendix of names and career information on more than 700 undercover staffers of the CIA and other intelligence agencies.

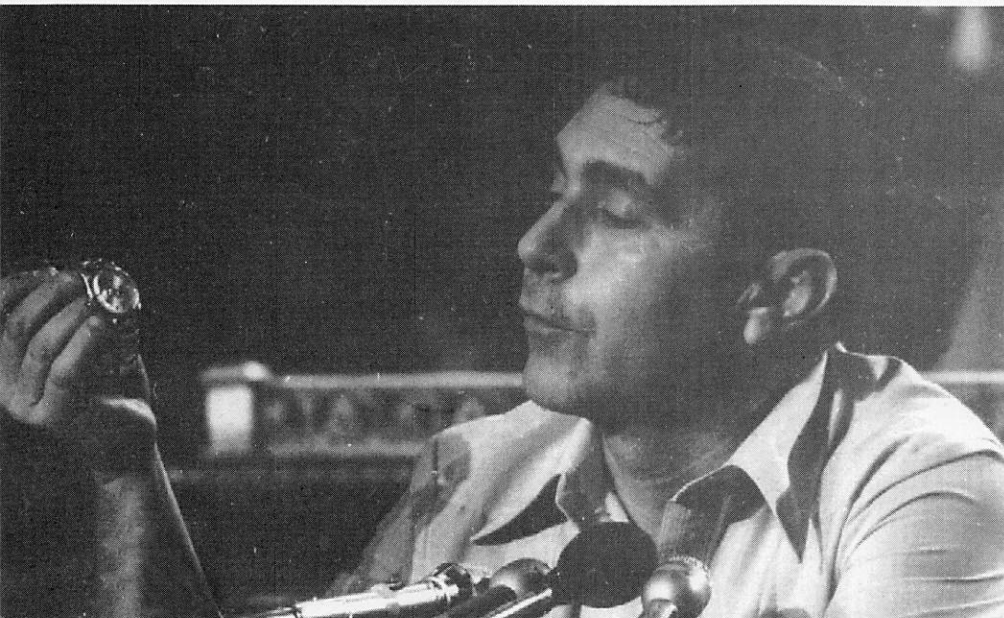
Our decision to launch the magazine had come after a staff breakup at *CounterSpy*, an earlier publication dedicated to exposing the CIA, with which several of us had collaborated. That breakup, due to personal and political differences, had taught a lesson. The work we did required not only people who shared a fundamental political outlook, but also people who could work together with mutual respect.

As all *CovertAction Quarterly* readers must know by now, this magazine has recently gone through staff changes due mainly to personal differences. Unfortunately some readers and people considered friends of *CovertAction*, unaware of the office working situation, seem to have fallen victim to the negative campaign launched mainly by the former editor. In my opinion, as I have written elsewhere, the changes should have been made several years ago. But they're done now, and I for one continue to hold the magazine, its publishers and remaining staff, and especially its writers, in utmost respect. No reader should doubt that this magazine will continue to be a leader in investigative journalism, with emphasis on the national security complex, and as well-prepared as ever.

We launched *CovertAction* twenty years ago in the belief that the world, not just the United States, needed a publication dedicated to exposing and analyzing the secret side of U.S. foreign policy. The secret side, after all, was the real policy, as opposed to false or misleading diplomatic pronouncements. We wanted to continue the chain of revelations that had started in 1974 with the publication of *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, by Victor Marchetti and John Marks, followed shortly by my book, *Inside the Company: CIA Diary*, both of which were best sellers that brought new political awakening to the generations of the '60s and '70s. At the same time other shocking revelations sent the architects of covert operations reeling: the CIA's hand behind the 1973 Chilean military coup and unspeakable repression that followed; the Phoenix murder program in Vietnam run by the Agency; and its illegal domestic operations against the anti-war movement.

These revelations forced President Ford to name the Rockefeller Commission to investigate, largely a cover-up it turned out, but both the Senate and the House conducted investigations throughout 1975. Their reports contained a huge amount of information on U.S. covert activities around the world, including assassination plots against foreign political leaders, and were followed by still other revealing books by former CIA officers. By 1978, when we launched this magazine, the world knew all too well that every President since Harry Truman had used the CIA to subvert and destroy progressive movements and unwanted governments all around the world no matter how small or weak.

Philip Agee worked for the CIA from 1957 to 1968, when he resigned and, in 1974, published *Inside the Company: CIA Diary* (London: Penguin Books, 1974), the first detailed account of day-to-day activities inside the clandestine services of the CIA. In 1978, he was one of the founders of *CovertAction Information Bulletin*. He lives in Hamburg, Germany, and continues to lecture around the world on intelligence activities and current affairs.



Among those who testified at the Youth Festival Tribunal was Nicolás Sirgado Ros, a Cuban double agent who worked with the CIA for ten years. Sirgado passed three lie detector tests administered by the Agency. He holds up a gold watch he received from his CIA case officer along with a commendation from Henry Kissinger for his services to "democracy."

Prensa Latina



We wanted to keep this public awareness going, and we wanted to keep up the exposures knowing full well that despite all the revelations, covert activities abroad were not going to end. They were a product of the domestic system. They were needed for the stability of the power structure at home because every progressive and left movement, however far away, was a threat—particularly those that came to power, or threatened to come to power. The threat was real because, as in Cuba, a different model arose, a model that favored human social rights—education, health care, work and dignity—over the rights to unfettered use of private property, to unlimited wealth at the expense of others, and to the right to spend five seconds every few years to cast a vote in elections that offered little real choice.

## SOLIDARITY

CovertAction was also founded as a solidarity magazine, even though we all knew that in assisting others to defeat secret American intervention, we were forwarding our own interests in seeking to weaken the power structure within the United States. Time and again the leaders of that power structure called us anti-Americans and traitors, and we knew why, because we were chipping away at a house divided, a house that by its exclusionary nature was inherently unstable, a house held together by the baling wire of militarism and foreign enemies. And we were focusing on weakening the secret political police whose job was to smash every left movement that offered alternative political, economic and social systems.

As we expected, the CIA and its friends accused us again and again of helping the Soviets when we in fact were opposing the use of criminal methods by our own government. Things were black and white then—remember “love it or leave it!”?

Nothing so infuriated the CIA as our practice of identifying undercover personnel overseas, as if those people had some sacred right to anonymity as they went about their dirty work of subverting governments and political movements, training and financing secret police, and corrupting trade unions and the information media. It happened that their cover mechanisms were poorly devised with the result that the vast majority of them, usually assigned under thin cover in U.S. embassies, could easily be separated from other embassy employees—using documents published by the Department of State and the embassies themselves.

And so we had a “naming names” column from the beginning, and did they and their friends in Congress and the press ever squeal. We were endangering the lives of good, patriotic Americans working to protect the national security. We were inviting another assassination, as occurred in Athens in 1975 when the CIA chief was murdered, blame for which

they falsely placed on *CounterSpy* magazine and me. We were fingering our fellow countrymen, brave people fighting the cold war in the back alleys of far-off hostile lands.

In 1979 Admiral Stansfield Turner, then CIA Director, confirmed the success of CovertAction’s “naming names” campaign: “The professional effectiveness of officers so compromised is substantially and sometimes irreparably damaged.... Some officers must be removed from their assignments.... Replacement of officers thus compromised is difficult and, in some cases, impossible.”

By then the movement had already started in Congress to criminalize publishing the names of undercover intelligence personnel even if the identifications were made through research of public records. They would eventually have their way with passage of the Intelligence Identities Protection Act in 1982. As for free speech and the First Amendment, former CIA Deputy Director Ray Cline, a supporter of the legislation, spoke for this movement when he said: “After all, the First Amendment is only an amendment.”

During those early years we continued to develop political contacts, parallel to the magazine, through new solidarity programs with progressive movements designed to detect and thwart the inevitable CIA destabilization programs. And there was reason to be optimistic. The Cuban revolution had survived twenty years of U.S. hostility and constant CIA attacks, while the Shah of Iran and Somoza in Nicaragua had both been overthrown. We spared no efforts in Cuba. In Jamaica, we pointed out in great detail the CIA’s intervention to influence the 1980 election against Michael Manley and the Peoples National Party. We continued earlier work with the New Jewel Movement, led by Maurice Bishop, that had recently taken power and begun a revolutionary process in Grenada. We also worked at length with the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, knowing that there too the CIA would surely organize counter-revolution. And not least, we worked with national liberation movements in Africa.

## THE REAGAN-BUSH YEARS

By the time the 1980 elections brought the Reagan-Bush team to office eleven issues of CovertAction had appeared and the magazine had grown to 40 to 50 pages in length. A review of those first issues shows content far beyond the revelation of CIA personnel around the world. Each issue was packed with articles describing specific CIA activities targeted on trade unions, the media, academia and foreign diplomats. Articles featured destabilization operations as in Jamaica, official protection of Cuban-exile terrorists and mind-control development. CovertAction also published highly classified documents that occasionally came

into our hands. Identification of CIA officers may have caused the most controversy, but in content the magazine was unique in its continuing exposes of covert operations.

During those first years we gave little importance to the preparations being made to install a decidedly right-wing agenda in Washington. Even when Ronald Reagan and former CIA Director George Bush took over in 1981, adopting the Heritage Foundation program, not one of us imagined that “covert” operations would become so brazen and public under the new CIA Director, William Casey, as the CIA flaunted its paramilitary capabilities. Yet, one need only reflect on the 1980s programs in Central America, Afghanistan, and Poland to understand the determination of the “New Right” to impose their foreign programs on the world as well as at home. With Helms-Burton, it’s still going on.

No one can deny their success. Within a decade the world had changed as no one could have imagined. This magazine chronicled those years, never failing to focus on the covert, dirty, illegal and shameful use of power.

As the wars in Afghanistan and Central America ended, and the Soviet Bloc disappeared, the attention of many concerned Americans turned away from U.S. crimes abroad to pressing domestic issues such as the far right, racial and gender discrimination, discrimination against gays and lesbians, the AIDS crisis, welfare cuts, the rising costs of health care and education, the environment, and increasing concentration of wealth and income. This magazine, now *CovertAction Quarterly*, addressed some of these issues while continuing to cover foreign affairs such as the use of the “war against drugs” as a cover for traditional counterinsurgency and low-intensity warfare operations in Colombia and Mexico.

CovertAction Quarterly begins its twenty-first year this month in a world far different from the one in 1978 when we gathered here in Havana. The only check on U.S. imperial power now is popular resistance that in sufficient strength can raise costs to unacceptable levels. As in 1978, the need still exists in 1998 for a journal dedicated to encouraging and assisting this resistance. CovertAction Quarterly aspired to that role in 1978, and it continues to do so twenty years later.

The *New York Times* reported only last month that the CIA has a new program to increase recruitments of case officers for running expanded overseas clandestine operations. This year, according to the report, the Agency will try to enlist more than five times the number they hired in 1995, and next year even more. It is true, as the *Times* reported, that these people will be trying to discover the secrets of other governments, international criminal bands, and terrorists. But they will also be subverting popular and left political





The headquarters for the Youth Festival at the Hotel Havana Libre, where an exhibition, "CIA: Subversion and Crimes," illustrated the CIA's war against Cuba.

Bill Schaap

movements while supporting local forces of political repression. These efforts we seek to expose.

We sought from the beginning to follow the long American tradition of resistance and activism, from Walt Whitman to Eugene Debs, Emma Goldman and "Big Bill" Haywood, to Victor Reuther, A.J. Muste, George Seldes, and

David Dellinger. And in so doing, the intellectual giants of our time have written for this magazine: Edward Herman, Noam Chomsky, and William Kunstler among many others. We will stay in this tradition as the century turns. One of our highest priorities right now must be to contribute to the growing movement in the U.S. to remove the cruel and absurd block-

ade against Cuba. I see the effects here every day, and they are not pretty. Positive though piecemeal removal may be, as in exempting food and medicine, the only acceptable solution is a complete end to the embargo and a full normalization of relations. Sooner or later this will come, and this magazine is one more effort dedicated to making it sooner. ■

## PRIVILEGE OF EMPIRE

by Mumia Abu-Jamal

The bombing of a reputed nerve gas factory in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum, and "terrorist camp" in the mountainous reaches of Afghanistan marked what Clinton administration officials putatively called a "preemptive strike" to stop planned bombings of U.S. government facilities abroad.

By so doing, the U.S. government spit in the face of international law, by its violation of the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the Sudan and Afghanistan.

The principles of international law (commonly known as "the law of nations") hold that all nations have a right to their territorial integrity, and for one nation to violate the borders of another is a violation of that nation's national sovereignty. It was this principle that provided the legal fig leaf to justify the 1991 mega-bombing of Iraq to punish them for violating Kuwait's sovereignty and borders.

But nations are bound by international law, not empires.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, there is only one real superpower left in the world, and superpowers make their own rules. Who's to stop them?

In an age of the American Empire the entire world is open to U.S. exploitation and usage, for her, not their interests.

As in 1986 Libya, or 1983 Grenada (when U.S. forces bombed and invaded, respectively) nothing quite cures the political ailments of an embattled presidential administration like "the rocket's red glare," or "the bombs bursting in air," of limited warfare, preferably against a brown or black nation.

In the nauseous throes of l'affaire Lewinsky, the prospect of bombing African and Afghan sites must've seemed attractive indeed. (Arab

wags have dubbed the cruise missiles "Monica bombs.")

A prominent American doctor and TV correspondent, as well as the prestigious *London Times*, have disputed U.S. claims that the Sudanese pharmaceutical bombsite was in fact manufacturing a nerve gas precursor chemical.

The initial justification for the bombings of the Sudan and Afghanistan, that this was a "preemptive strike," also raises questions.

One doesn't have to venture into the dusty mountains of Afghanistan to find "terrorists."

The most deadly attack on Americans in recent history occurred neither in Kenya, nor in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania. The bloodiest terrorist attack occurred on April 19, 1995, in Oklahoma, where a federal building was virtually vaporized by U.S. terrorists, and 169 American men, women, and babies were killed.

Needless to say, the terrorists who struck Oklahoma didn't merit a "preemptive strike" (nor much of a post-bombing strike, it seems).

There are terrorist camps in the U.S., right now, that have no fear of an air strike.

They train in small arms and explosives where only Americans are potential targets (primarily Americans of color).

They are white-supremacist-oriented groups and militias, to which the U.S. government responds, not with a bomb, but with a wink.

**Mumia Abu-Jamal** is a journalist and activist on death row in Pennsylvania. His status as an unjustly convicted political prisoner has attracted worldwide attention. This article was written on August 25, 1998. Copyright © 1998 by Mumia Abu-Jamal; all rights reserved.



# THE CORRUPTION OF COVERT ACTIONS

BY RAMSEY CLARK

Nothing is more destructive of democracy or peace and freedom through the rule of law than secret criminal acts by government. The fact, or appearance, of covert action by government agents or their surrogates rots the core of love and respect that is the foundation of any free democratic society. Every true citizen of any nation wants to be able to love her country and still love justice. Corrupt covert actions make this impossible. They are the principal source of the possibility that a contemporary American poet would conceive of the lines penned by William Meridith more than three decades ago:

*Language includes some noises which,  
first heard,  
Cleave us between belief and disbelief.  
The word America is such a word.*

Despite common knowledge that the U.S. government is engaged continually in dangerous covert actions, some that can alter the futures of whole societies, most people cling desperately to the faith that their government is different and better than others, that it would engage in criminal, or ignoble, acts only under the greatest provocation, or direst necessity, and then only for a greater good. They do not want information that suggests otherwise and question the patriotism of anyone who raises unwanted questions.

Among thousands of known examples of wrongful covert actions by the U.S. government, several will suffice to show how difficult the task and rare it is that truth is learned in time. For 200 years, the U.S. has coveted and abused Cuba. Jefferson spoke of plucking the Cuban apple from the Spanish tree. The Ostend Manifesto of 1854, intending to provide room for the expansion of slavery, which was confined by the Great American desert and the new Free States, remained secret for 75 years, though it was signed by the U.S. Secretary of State, William Marcy of New York, for whom the State's highest mountain is named; our Minister to England, James Buchanan, who would be elected president within two years; and the U.S. ministers to Spain and France.

**Ramsey Clark** was United States Attorney General during the Johnson administration. He is an international lawyer and human rights advocate, based in New York City, and a prolific author.

The Manifesto first warned Spain that "the Union can never enjoy repose, nor possess reliable security, as long as Cuba is not embraced within its boundaries." The U.S. then offered Spain money for Cuba with the threat that if it refused, "then, by every law, human and divine, we shall be justified in wresting it from Spain...." With the effort to force Spain to relinquish Cuba secret, a major chance for peaceful resolution of the irreconcilable conflict between the slave states and free states was lost. His role at Ostend earned southern support for Buchanan in the 1856 election and took the country down the wrong road. We will never know how many manifestos like that at Ostend have secretly threatened and coerced foreign concessions, or led to war.

In Vietnam 30 years ago, with all of Charlie Company, including dozens of robust young American soldiers who shot and killed helpless Vietnamese women and children and many other U.S. military personnel witnesses to, or aware of, the slaughter at My Lai, few would imagine the murderous event could be kept secret. Yet few would deny the U.S. intended to do so. The tragedy barely came to light through the courage and perseverance of several men. Ron Ridenhour broke the story after personal inquiry with letters to the Congress. The hero of My Lai, Hugh Thompson, who ended the massacre by placing himself between the U.S. troops and surviving Vietnamese and ordering his helicopter machine gunner to aim at the American soldiers and shoot if they tried to continue, was removed from Vietnam, separated from the service, and threatened with prosecution supported by Congressmen Mendel Rivers and Edward Hebert. Lt. William Calley alone was convicted, confined to base for a while, and still enjoys government support. Only by the sacrifice and heroism of an unusual handful did the story become known, and even then there has never been an acknowledgment of wrongdoing by the U.S. The medal begrudgingly given Thompson in 1998 was for non-combat service. And My Lai is viewed as an aberration, an ambiguous aberration.



My Lai

Ronald Haeberle / Life Magazine © 1969 Time Inc.

When Salvadoran soldiers of the elite Atlacatl Battalion, which trained in the U.S., massacred Salvadoran villagers at El Mozote, shooting even infants lying on wooden floors at point blank range, the U.S. government was able to cover up any public disclosure, even though top reporters from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and a TV team from CBS knew the story. It was a dozen years later before the massacre at El Mozote was confirmed, and years too late to affect U.S. plans for El Salvador, or the careers of those responsible for yet another U.S.-condoned, and -inspired, massacre.

Just to list a few of the alleged assassinations conducted or planned by U.S. agents exposes the crisis in confidence covert actions have created for our country. Allende, Lumumba, Diem, Bhutto, with many questioning whether President Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., should be included, and U.S. planning for the assassination of Fidel Castro part of our public record, while air and missile attacks directed at Qaddafi of Libya and Saddam Hussein of Iraq missed their targets. Still, a former presidential aide, George Stephanopoulos, the Huck Finn of recent White House staffers, calls for the assassination of Saddam Hussein in a full-page editorial in *Newsweek*, and there is no significant public or official reaction.



CIA Director Richard Helms pleaded guilty to perjury for false testimony he gave before the U.S. Senate on the CIA's role in the overthrow of President Allende. He was fined, but his two-year prison sentence was suspended. But the American public is unaware of it, and Chile has never been the same. U.S. support for the overthrow of Allende was the essential element in that tragedy. For years, Patrice Lumumba's son would ask me whenever we met, first in Beirut, or later in Geneva, if the U.S. killed his father. I finally gave him a copy of former CIA officer John Stockwell's *In Search of Enemies*, which tells the story. Justice William O. Douglas wrote in later years that the U.S. killed Diem, painfully adding, "And Jack was responsible." Bhutto was removed from power in Pakistan by force on the 5th of July, after the usual party on the 4th at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, with U.S. approval, if not more, by General Zia al-Haq. Bhutto was falsely accused and brutalized for months during proceedings that corrupted the judiciary of Pakistan before being murdered, then hanged. That Bhutto had run for president of the student body at U.C. Berkeley and helped arrange the opportunity for Nixon to visit China did not help him when he defied the U.S.

So we should not be surprised that patriotic Americans wonder whether, or even charge that, the U.S. government assassinated President John F. Kennedy and our greatest moral leader, Martin Luther King, Jr.

We have been told time and again of the "Deadly Deceits" of our government, occasionally by career CIA officers like Ralph McGehee, by FBI agents, crime lab scientists, and city detectives like Frank Serpico. Major studies on the lawless violence of COINTELPRO, the Life and Death of National Security Study Memorandum 200, the police murders of Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, are a part of the lore of our lawless government.

And still the People want to Believe.

Our covert government's past is modest prologue to its new powers of concealment, deception, and deadly secret violent actions. Too often the government is supported by a controlled, or willingly duped, mass media, by collaborating or infiltrated international governmental organizations, and by key officials in vast transnational corporations.

The new evil empires, terrorism, Islam, barely surviving socialist and would-be socialist states, economic competitors, uncooperative leaders of defenseless nations, and most of all the masses of impoverished people, over-

whelmingly people of color, are the inspiration for new campaigns by the U.S. government to search and Tomahawk (alas poor Tecumseh), to shoot first and ask questions later, to exploit, to demonize and destroy.

The CIA is rapidly expanding its manpower for covert operations against these newfound enemies. The National Security apparatus, with major new overseas involvement by the FBI, is creating an enormous new anti-ter-

## Our covert government's past is modest prologue to its new powers of concealment, deception, and deadly secret violent actions.

rorism industry exceeding in growth rate all other government activities.

U.S. covert actions and coverups are carried out against our own citizens within the U.S. with impunity. Paul Brodeur, in his recent memoir, describes the murderous FBI assault on the Mt. Carmel Church near Waco, Texas, in 1993, which killed 76 people, including 50 women and children. Writing of the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team, he says:

The tear gas, which had been supplied by the military, turned out to be highly inflammable and probably caused the tragic conflagration that incinerated most of the compound's inhabitants, including some twenty innocent children.

Attorney General Janet Reno defended the decision to attack the compound on the grounds that children there were being abused—an allegation that subsequently proved to be false—and that the hostage-rescue team was exhausted after a thirty-one-day siege. Apparently, neither she nor anyone else thought to suggest that another hostage-rescue team be brought in to relieve it. Whitewash investigations conducted by the Justice Department concluded that although errors were made, there was no way to avoid an armed confrontation with the Branch Davidians, and the whole affair was swept under the rug. Subsequently, it came to light that for days before the final assault, FBI agents had undertaken to unnerve the cultists and keep them awake at night by illuminating the compound in the flare of floodlights, by sending helicopters to hover overhead, and by playing music at full volume on loudspeakers. Ironically, few people in the nation's liberal establishment questioned the Bureau's con-

duct in the Waco holocaust—no doubt out of desire to avoid embarrassing the already beleaguered young Clinton administration—so the outrage was left to fester in the paranoid fantasies of government-hating, gun-loving paramilitarists and psychopaths, until it emerged as a cause célèbre two years later in the wake of the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

The U.S. is not nearly so concerned that its acts be kept secret from their intended victims as it is that the American people not know of them. The Cambodians knew they were being bombed. So did the Libyans. The long suffering Iraqis know every secret the U.S. government conceals from the American people and every lie it tells them. Except for surprise attacks, it is primarily from the American people that the U.S. government must keep the true nature and real purpose of so many of its domestic and foreign acts secret while it manufactures fear and falsehood to manipulate the American public. The reasons for and effects of government covert acts and cultivated fear, with the hatred it creates, must remain secret for the U.S. to be able to send missiles against unknown people, deprive whole nations of food and medicine, and arrest, detain, and deport legal residents from the U.S. on secret allegations, without creating domestic outrage.

As never before, it is imperative that the American people care about and know what their government is doing in their name. That we be demanding of government, skeptical, critical, even a little paranoid, because not to suspect the unthinkable has been made a dangerous naiveté by a government that does unthinkable things and believes it knows best. We must challenge controlling power in America that seeks to pacify the people by bread and circuses and relies on violence, deception, and secrecy to advance its grand plans for the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few.

For 20 years, Ellen Ray, Bill Schaap, Lou Wolf, and Philip Agee, with the help of very few others, have struggled against all odds to alert our people to the perils of covert action. They started their lonely, courageous, dangerous struggle in what many want to think was the aftermath of the worst of times, but now we can clearly see the worst is yet to be. The American people owe an enormous debt of gratitude to these valiant few.

The role of *CovertAction Quarterly* is more important than ever. Those who love America should support and defend its efforts, against the most powerful and secretive forces, to find the truth that can prevent our self-destruction and may yet set us free. ■





AP / Wide World Photos

German mercenary Friedrich Adolf, from Frankfurt (foreground), leads a Bosnian Government sniper unit against Bosnian Serbs in Sarajevo, April 1993.

## SEEING YUGOSLAVIA THROUGH A DARK GLASS: POLITICS, MEDIA AND THE IDEOLOGY OF GLOBALIZATION

by Diana Johnstone

**Y**ears of experience in and out of both mainstream and alternative media have made me aware of the power of the dominant ideology to impose certain interpretations on international news. During the Cold War, most world news for American consumption had to be framed as part of the Soviet-U.S. contest. Since then, a new ideological bias frames the news. The way the violent fragmentation of Yugoslavia has been reported is the most stunning example.

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I must admit that it took me some time to figure this out, even though I had a long-standing interest in and some knowledge of Yugoslavia. I spent time there as a student in 1953, living in a Belgrade dormitory and learning the language. In 1984, in a piece for *In These Times*,<sup>1</sup> I warned that extreme decentralization, conflicting economic interests between the richer and poorer regions, austerity policies imposed by the IMF, and the decline of universal ideals were threatening Yugoslavia with "re-Balkanization" in the wake of Tito's death and desanctification. "Local ethnic interests are reasserting themselves," I wrote. "The danger is that these rival local interests

may become involved in the rivalries of outside powers. This is how the Balkans in the past were a powder keg of world war." Writing this took no special clairvoyance. The danger of Yugoslavia's disintegration was quite obvious to all serious observers well before Slobodan Milošević arrived on the scene.

As the country was torn apart in the early nineties, I was unable to keep up with all that was happening. In those years, my job as press officer for the Greens in the European Parliament left me no time to investigate the situation myself. Aware that there were serious flaws in the way media and politicians were reacting, I wrote an article warning against combating "nationalism" by taking sides for one nationalism against another, and against judging a complex situation by analogy with total-

1. "The Creeping Trend to Re-Balkanization," *In These Times*, Oct. 3-9, 1994, p. 9.



ly different times and places.<sup>2</sup> "Every nationalism stimulates others," I noted. "Historical analogies should be drawn with caution and never allowed to obscure the facts." However, there was no stopping the tendency to judge the Balkans, about which most people knew virtually nothing, by analogy with Hitler Germany, about which people at least imagined they knew a lot, and which enabled analysis to be rapidly abandoned in favor of moral certitude and righteous indignation.

However, it was only later, when I was able to devote considerable time to my own research, that I realized the extent of the deception—which is in large part self-deception.

I mention all this to stress that I understand the immense difficulty of gaining a clear view of the complex situation in the Balkans. The history of the region and the interplay of internal political conflicts and external influences would be hard to grasp even without propaganda distortions. Nobody can be blamed for being confused. Moreover, by now, many people have invested so much emotion in a one-sided view of the situation that they are scarcely able to consider alternative interpretations.

It is not necessarily because particular journalists or media are "alternative" that they

2. "We Are All Serbo-Croats," *In These Times*, May 3, 1993, p. 14.

are free from the dominant interpretation and the dominant world view. In fact, in the case of the Yugoslav tragedy, the irony is that "alternative" or "left" activists and writers have frequently taken the lead in likening the Serbs, the people who most wanted to continue to live in multi-cultural Yugoslavia, to Nazi racists, and in calling for military intervention on behalf of ethnically defined secessionist movements<sup>3</sup>—all supposedly in the name of "multi-cultural Bosnia," a country which, unlike Yugoslavia, would have to be built from scratch by outsiders.

## THE SERBS AND YUGOSLAVIA

Like other Christian peoples in the Ottoman Empire, the Serbs were heavily taxed and denied ownership of property or political power reserved for Muslims. In the early years of the nineteenth century, Serb farmers led a revolt that spread to Greece. The century-long struggle put an end to the Ottoman Empire.

The Habsburg monarchy found it natural that when one empire receded, another should advance, and sought to gain control over the lands lost to the Ottoman Turks. Although

3. "Ethnically defined" because, despite the argument accepted by the international community that it was the Republics that could invoke the right to secede, all the political arguments surrounding recognition of independent Slovenia and Croatia dwelt on the right of Slovenes and Croats as such to self-determination.

Serbs had rallied to the Habsburgs in earlier wars against the Turks, Serbia soon appeared to Vienna as the main obstacle to its own expansion into the Balkans. By the end of the nineteenth century, Vienna was seeking to fragment the Serb-inhabited lands to prevent what it named "Greater Serbia," taking control of Bosnia-Herzegovina and fostering the birth of Albanian nationalism (as converts to Islam, Albanian feudal chieftains enjoyed privileges under the Ottoman Empire and combated the Christian liberation movements).

Probably because they had been deprived of full citizens' rights under the Ottoman Turks, and because their own society of farmers and traders was relatively egalitarian, Serb political leaders throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were extremely receptive to the progressive ideals of the French Revolution. While all the other liberated Balkan nations imported German princelings as their new kings, the Serbs promoted their own pig farmers into a dynasty, one of whose members translated John Stuart Mill's "On Liberty" into Serbian during his student days. Nowhere in the Balkans did Western progressive ideas exercise such attraction as in Serbia, no doubt due to the historic circumstances of the country's emergence from four hundred years of subjugation.

Meanwhile, intellectuals in Croatia, a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire increasingly rankling under subordination to the Hungarian nobility, initiated the Yugoslav movement for cultural, and eventually political, unification of the South Slav peoples, notably the Serbs and Croats, separated by history and religion (the Serbs having been converted to Christianity by the Greek Orthodox Church and the Croats by the Roman Catholic Church) but united by language. The idea of a "Southslavia" was largely inspired by the national unification of neighboring Italy, occurring around the same time.

In 1914, the Austro-Hungarian Empire seized the pretext of the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand to declare war and crush Serbia once and for all. When Austria-Hungary lost the world war it had thus initiated, leaders in Slovenia and Croatia chose to unite with Serbia in a single kingdom. This decision enabled both Slovenia and Croatia to go from the losing to the winning side in World War I, thereby avoiding war reparations and enlarging their territory, notably on the Adriatic coast, at the expense of Italy. The joint Kingdom was renamed "Yugoslavia" in 1929. The conflicts between Croats and Serbs that plagued what is called "the first Yugoslavia" were described by Rebecca West in her celebrated book, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, first published in 1941.

In April 1941, Serb patriots in Belgrade led a revolt against an accord reached between the



The arrest of the student, Princip, immediately after his assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austro-Hungary, the pretext for the outbreak of WWI.



Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Nazi Germany. This led to Nazi bombing of Belgrade, a German invasion, creation of an independent fascist state of Croatia (including Bosnia-Herzegovina), and attachment of much of the Serbian province of Kosovo to Albania, then a

puppet of Mussolini's Italy. The Croatian Ustaše undertook a policy of genocide against Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies within the territory of their "Greater Croatia," while the Germans raised SS divisions among the Muslims of Bosnia and Albania.

In Serbia itself, the German occupants announced that one hundred Serbian hostages would be executed for each German killed by resistance fighters. The threat was carried out. As a result, the royalist Serbian resistance (the first guerrilla resistance to Nazi occupation in



Serbian businessmen picked up indiscriminately by the Nazis and hanged from nearby trees in the village of Panchievo in April 1941. The notice (inset) warns that ten Serbs will be hanged for every German soldier killed or wounded. By the end of that year, the Germans were hanging 100 Serbs for every German soldier killed.



Europe) led by Draža Mihailović adopted a policy of holding off attacks on the Germans in expectation of an Allied invasion. The Partisans, led by Croatian communist Josip Broz Tito, adopted a more active strategy of armed resistance, which made considerable gains in the predominantly Serb border regions of Croatia and Bosnia and won support from Churchill for its effectiveness. A civil war developed between Mihailović's "Chetniks" and Tito's Partisans—which was also a civil war between Serbs, since Serbs were the most numerous among the Partisans. These divisions between Serbs—torn between Serbian and Yugoslav identity—have never been healed and help explain the deep confusion among Serbs during the breakup of Yugoslavia.

After World War II, the new Communist Yugoslavia tried to build "brotherhood and unity" on the myth that all the peoples had contributed equally to liberation from fascism. Mihailović was executed, and school children in post-war Yugoslavia learned more about the "fascist" nature of his Serbian nationalist Chetniks than they did about Albanian and Bosnian Muslims who had volunteered for the SS, or even about the killing of Serbs in the Jasenovac death camp run by Ustashe in Western Bosnia.

After the 1948 break with Moscow, the Yugoslav communist leadership emphasized its difference from the Soviet bloc by adopting a policy of "self-management," supposed to lead by fairly rapid stages to the "withering away of the State." Tito repeatedly revised the Constitution to strengthen local authorities, while retaining final decision-making power for himself. When he died in 1980, he thus left behind a hopelessly complicated system that could not work without his arbitration.<sup>4</sup> Serbia in particular was unable to enact vitally necessary reforms because its territory had been divided up, with two "autonomous provinces," Voivodina and Kosovo, able to veto measures taken by Serbia, while Serbia could not intervene in their affairs.

In the 1980s, the rise in interest rates and unfavorable world trade conditions dramatically increased the foreign debt Yugoslavia (like many "third world" countries) had been encouraged to run up thanks to its standing in the West as a socialist country not belonging to the Soviet bloc. The IMF arrived with its familiar austerity measures, which could only be taken by a central government. The leaders of the richer Republics—Slovenia and Croatia—did not want to pay for the poorer ones. Moreover, in all former socialist countries, the big political question is privatization of State and social property, and local communist leaders in Slovenia and Croatia could expect to get a



Imperial War Museum, London

**Stana Tomashevich, center, after her election as chair of the Partisans' Second Anti-Fascist Youth Congress, May 22, 1944. She was one of a delegation of 103 that set out for the Congress from Montenegro, Sandjak, and Herzegovina. The trip took 36 days and only 54 got through the Italian and Ustashe lines.**

greater share for themselves within the context of division of Yugoslavia into separate little states.<sup>5</sup>

At that stage, a gradual, negotiated dismantling of Yugoslavia into smaller States was not impossible. It would have entailed reaching agreement on division of assets and liabilities, and numerous adjustments to take into account conflicting interests. If pursued openly, however, it might have encountered popular opposition—after all, very many people, perhaps a majority, enjoyed being citizens of a large country with an enviable international reputation. What would have been the result of a national referendum on the question of preservation of Yugoslavia?

None was ever held. The first multiparty elections in postwar Yugoslavia were held in 1990, not nationwide in all of Yugoslavia, but separately by each Republic—a method which in itself reinforced separatist power elites. Sure of the active sympathy of Germany, Austria, and the Vatican, leaders in Slovenia and Croatia prepared the *fait accompli* of unilateral, unnegotiated secession, proclaimed in 1991. Such secession was illegal, under

Yugoslav and international law, and was certain to precipitate civil war. The key role of German (and Vatican) support was to provide rapid international recognition of the new independent Republics, in order to transform Yugoslavia into an "aggressor" on its own territory.<sup>6</sup>

## POLITICAL MOTIVES

The political motives that launched the anti-Serb propaganda campaign are obvious enough. Claiming that it was impossible to stay in Yugoslavia because the Serbs were so

6. Recognition of the internal administrative borders between the Republics as "inviolable" international borders was in effect a legal trick, contrary to international law, which turned the Yugoslav army into an "aggressor" within the boundaries its soldiers had sworn to defend, and which transformed the Serbs within Croatia and Bosnia, who opposed secession from their country, Yugoslavia, into secessionists. This recognition flagrantly violated the principles of the 1975 Final Act (known as the Helsinki Accords) of the Conference on, now Organization for, Security and Cooperation in Europe, notably the territorial integrity of States and nonintervention in internal affairs. Truncated Yugoslavia was thereupon expelled from the OSCE in 1992, sparing its other members from having to hear Belgrade's point of view. Indeed, the sanctions against Yugoslavia covered culture and sports, thus eliminating for several crucial years any opportunity for Serbian Yugoslavs to take part in international forums and events where the one-sided view of "the Serbs" presented by their adversaries might have been challenged.

4. See Svetozar Stojanovic, "The Destruction of Yugoslavia," *Fordham International Law Journal*, Volume 19, Number 2, Dec. 1995, pp. 341-3.

5. For an excellent and detailed account of the economic and constitutional factors leading to the breakup of Yugoslavia, see Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995).



oppressive was the pretext for the nationalist leaders in Slovenia and Croatia to set up their own little statelets which, thanks to early and strong German support, could “jump the queue” and get into the richmen’s European club ahead of the rest of Yugoslavia.

The terrible paradox is that very many people, in the sincere desire to oppose racism and aggression, have in fact contributed to demonizing an entire people, the Serbs, thereby legitimizing both ethnic separatism and the new role of NATO as occupying power in the Balkans on behalf of a theoretical “international community.”

Already in the 1980s, Croatian and ethnic Albanian separatist lobbies had stepped up their efforts to win support abroad, notably in Germany and the United States,<sup>7</sup> by claiming to be oppressed by Serbs, citing “evidence” that, insofar as it had any basis in truth, referred to the 1920-1941 Yugoslav kingdom, not to the very different post-World War II Yugoslavia.

The current campaign to demonize the Serbs began in July 1991 with a virulent barrage of articles in the German media, led by the influential conservative newspaper, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ). In almost daily columns, FAZ editor Johann Georg Reismüller justified the freshly, and illegally, declared “independence” of Slovenia and Croatia by describing “the Yugo-Serbs” as essentially Oriental “militarist Bolsheviks” who have “no place in the European Community.” Nineteen months after German reunification, and for the first time since Hitler’s defeat in 1945, German media resounded with condemnation of an entire ethnic group reminiscent of the pre-war propaganda against the Jews.<sup>8</sup>

This German propaganda binge was the signal that times had changed seriously. Only a few years earlier, a seemingly broad German peace movement had stressed the need to put

an end to “enemy stereotypes” (*Feindbilder*). Yet the sudden ferocious emergence of the enemy stereotype of “the Serbs” did not shock liberal or left Germans, who were soon repeating it themselves. It might seem that the German peace movement had completed its historic mission once its contribution to altering the image of Germany had led Gorbachev to endorse reunification. The least one can say is that the previous efforts at reconciliation with peoples who suffered from Nazi invasion stopped short when it came to the Serbs.

In the Bundestag, German Green leader Joschka Fischer pressed for disavowal of “pacifism” in order to “combat Auschwitz,” thereby equating Serbs with Nazis. In a heady mood of self-righteous indignation, German politicians across the board joined in using Germany’s past guilt as a reason, not for restraint, as had been the logic up until reunification, but on the contrary, for “bearing their share of the military burden.” In the name of human rights, the Federal Republic of Germany abolished its ban on military operations outside the NATO defensive area. Germany could once again be a “normal” military power—thanks to the “Serb threat.”

The near unanimity was all the more surprising in that the “enemy stereotype” of the Serb had been dredged up from the most belligerent German nationalism of the past. “*Serbien muss sterben*” (a play on the word *sterben*, to die), meaning “Serbia must die” was a famous popular war cry of World War I.<sup>9</sup>

9. The slogan was immortalized in the 1919 play by Austrian playwright Karl Kraus, “*Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*.”

Serbs had been singled out for slaughter during the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia. One would have thought that the younger generation of Germans, seemingly so sensitive to the victims of Germany’s aggressive past, would have at least urged caution. Very few did.

On the contrary, what occurred in Germany was a strange sort of mass transfer of Nazi identity, and guilt, to the Serbs. In the case of the Germans, this can be seen as a comforting psychological projection which served to give Germans a fresh and welcome sense of innocence in the face of the new “criminal” people, the Serbs. But the hate campaign against Serbs, started in Germany, did not stop there. Elsewhere, the willingness to single out one of the Yugoslav peoples as the villain calls for other explanations.

## MEDIA MOMENTUM

From the start, foreign reporters were better treated in Zagreb and in Ljubljana, whose secessionist leaders understood the prime importance of media images in gaining international support, than in Belgrade. The Albanian secessionists in Kosovo or “Kosovars,”<sup>10</sup> the

10. Albanians in Albania and in Yugoslavia call themselves “Shqiptare” but recently have objected to being called that by others. “Albanians” is an old and accepted term. Especially when addressing international audiences in the context of the separatist cause, Kosovo Albanians prefer to call themselves “Kosovars,” which has political implications. Logically, the term should apply to all inhabitants of the province of Kosovo, regardless of ethnic identity, but by appropriating it for themselves alone, the Albanian “Kosovars” imply that Serbs and other non-Albanians are intruders. This is similar to the Muslim party’s appropriation of the term “Bosniak,” which implies that the Muslim population of Bosnia-Herzegovina is more indigenous than the Serbs



AP / Wide World Photos

Serbian soldiers unearthing bodies from a mass grave near the Bosnian town of Zvornik. The AP caption reads, “Bosnian Serb authorities unearthed 23 bodies from *what they said* was a mass grave of massacred Serbs.” [Emphasis added.]

7. In Washington, the campaign on behalf of Albanian separatists in Kosovo was spearheaded by Representative Joe DioGuardi of New York, who after losing his congressional seat in 1988 has continued his lobbying for the cause. An early and influential convert to the cause was Senator Robert Dole. In Germany, the project for the political unification of all Croatian nationalists, both communist and Ustashe, with the aim of seceding and establishing “Greater Croatia,” was followed closely and sympathetically by the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND), West Germany’s CIA, which hoped to gain its own sphere of influence on the Adriatic from the breakup of Yugoslavia. The nationalist unification, which eventually brought former communist general Franjo Tudjman to power in Zagreb with the support of the Ustashe diaspora, got seriously under way after Tito’s death in 1980, during the years when Bonn’s current foreign minister, Klaus Kinkel, was heading the BND. See Erich Schmidt-Eenboom, *Der Schattenkrieger: Klaus Kinkel und der BND* (Düsseldorf: ECON Verlag, 1995).

8. This point is developed by Wolfgang Pohrt, “Entscheidung in Jugoslawien,” in Wolfgang Schneider, ed., *Bei Andruck Mord: Die deutsche Propaganda und der Balkankrieg* (Hamburg: Konkret, 1997). A sort of climax was reached with the July 8, 1991, cover of the influential weekly *Der Spiegel*, depicting Yugoslavia as a “prison of peoples” with the title “Serb Terror.”



Croatian secessionists and the Bosnian Muslims hired an American public relations firm, Ruder Finn, to advance their causes by demonizing the Serbs.<sup>11</sup> Ruder Finn deliberately targeted certain publics, notably the American Jewish community, with a campaign likening Serbs to Nazis. Feminists were also clearly targeted by the Croatian nationalist campaign directed out of Zagreb to brand Serbs as rapists.<sup>12</sup>

The Yugoslav story was complicated; anti-Serb stories had the advantage of being simple and available, and they provided an easy-to-use moral compass by designating the bad guys.

As the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina got under way in mid-1992, American journalists who repeated unconfirmed stories of Serbian atrocities could count on getting published, with a chance of a Pulitzer Prize. Indeed, the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for

and Croats, which makes no sense, since the Bosnian Muslims are simply Serbs and Croats who converted to Islam after the Ottoman conquest.

11. The role of the Washington public relations firm, Ruder Finn, is by now well-known, but seems to have raised few doubts as to the accuracy of the anti-Serb propaganda it successfully diffused. See especially: Jacques Merlino, *Les Vérités yougoslaves ne sont pas toutes bonnes à dire*, (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993); and Peter Brock, "Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press," *Foreign Policy*, #93, Winter 1993-94.

12. No one denies that many rapes occurred during the civil wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, or that rape is a serious violation of human rights. So is war, for that matter. From the start, however, inquiry into rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina focused exclusively on accusations that Serbs were raping Muslim women as part of a deliberate strategy. The most inflated figures, freely extrapolated by multiplying the number of known cases by large factors, were readily accepted by the media and international organizations. No interest was shown in detailed and documented reports of rapes of Serbian women by Muslims or Croats.

The late Nora Beloff, former chief political correspondent of the *London Observer*, described her own search for verification of the rape charges in a letter to *The Daily Telegraph* (January 19, 1993). The British Foreign Office conceded that the rape figures being bandied about were totally uncorroborated, and referred her to the Danish government, then chairing the European Union. Copenhagen agreed that the reports were unsubstantiated, but kept repeating them. Both said that the EU had taken up the "rape atrocity" issue at its December 1992 Edinburgh summit exclusively on the basis of a German initiative. In turn, Fran Wild, in charge of the Bosnian Desk in the German Foreign Ministry, told Ms. Beloff that the material on Serb rapes came partly from the Izetbegović government and partly from the Catholic charity Caritas in Croatia. No effort had been made to seek corroboration from more impartial sources.

Despite the absence of solid and comprehensive information, a cottage industry has since developed around the theme. See: Norma von Ragenfeld-Feldman, "The Victimization of Women: Rape and the Reporting of Rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992-1993," *Dialogue* (Paris), No. 21, March 1997; and Diana Johnstone, "Selective Justice in The Hague," *The Nation*, Sept. 22, 1997, pp 16-21.

international reporting was shared between the two authors of the most sensational "Serb atrocity stories" of the year: Roy Gutman of *Newsday* and John Burns of the *New York Times*. In both cases, the prize-winning articles

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were based on hearsay evidence of dubious credibility. Gutman's articles, mostly based on accounts by Muslim refugees in the Croatian capital, Zagreb, were collected in a book rather misleadingly entitled *A Witness to Genocide*, although in fact he had been a "witness" to nothing of the sort. His allegations that Serbs were running "death camps" were picked up by Ruder Finn and widely diffused, notably to Jewish organizations. Burns's story was no more than an interview with a mentally deranged prisoner in a Sarajevo jail, who confessed to crimes some of which have been since proved never to have been committed.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, there was no market for stories by a journalist who discovered that reported Serbian "rape camps" did not exist (German TV reporter Martin Lettmayer),<sup>14</sup> or who included information about Muslim or Croat crimes against Serbs (Belgian journalist Georges Berghézan for one).<sup>15</sup> It became increasingly impossible to challenge the dominant interpretation in major media. Editors naturally prefer to keep the story simple: one villain, and as much blood as possible. Moreover, after the German government forced the early recognition of Slovenian and Croatian independence, other Western powers lined up opportunistically with the anti-Serb position. The United States soon moved aggressively into the game by picking its own client state—Muslim Bosnia—out of the ruins.

Foreign news has always been much easier to distort than domestic news. Television coverage simply makes the distortion more

convincing. TV crews sent into strange places about which they know next to nothing, send back images of violence that give millions of viewers the impression that "everybody knows what is happening." Such an impression is worse than plain ignorance.

Today, worldwide media such as CNN openly put pressure on governments to respond to the "public opinion" which the media themselves create. Christiane Amanpour tells the U.S. and the European Union what they should be doing in Bosnia; to what extent this is coordinated with U.S. agencies is hard to tell. Indeed, the whole question of which tail wags the dog is wide open. Do media manipulate government, does government manipulate media, or are influential networks manipulating both?

Many officials of Western governments complain openly or privately of being forced into unwise policy decisions by "the pressure of public opinion," meaning the media. A particularly interesting testimony in this regard is that of Otto von Habsburg, the extremely active and influential octogenarian heir to the defunct Austro-Hungarian Empire, today a member of the European Parliament from Bavaria, who has taken a great and one might say paternal interest in the cause of Croatian independence. "If Germany recognized Slovenia and Croatia so rapidly," Habsburg told the Bonn correspondent of the French daily *Figaro*,<sup>16</sup> "even against the will of [then German foreign minister] Hans-Dietrich Genscher who did not want to take that step, it's because the Bonn government was subjected to an almost irresistible pressure of public opinion. In this regard, the German press rendered a very great service, in particular the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and Carl Gustav Ströhm, that great German journalist who works for *Die Welt*."

Still, the virtually universal acceptance of a one-sided view of Yugoslavia's collapse cannot be attributed solely to political designs or to sensationalist manipulation of the news by major media. It also owes a great deal to the ideological uniformity prevailing among educated liberals who have become the consensual moral conscience in Northwestern Euro-American society since the end of the Cold War.

### DOWN WITH THE STATE

This ideology is the expression in moralistic terms of the dominant project for reshaping the world since the United States emerged as sole superpower after the defeat of communism and collapse of the Soviet Union. United States foreign policy for over a century has been dictated by a single overriding concern: to open world markets to American capital

13. See Peter Brock, *op.cit.*, n. 11. See also, Diana Johnstone, *ibid.* *A Witness to Genocide* by Roy Gutman was published by Macmillan in 1993.

14. Martin Lettmayer, "Da wurde einfach geglaubt, ohne nachzufragen," in *Serbien muss sterben: Wahrheit und Lüge im jugoslawischen Bürgerkrieg*, Klaus Bittermann, ed. (Berlin: Tiamat, 1994).

15. Interview with Georges Berghézan, Oct. 22, 1997.

16. Jean-Paul Picaper, *Otto de Habsbourg: Mémoires d'Europe* (Paris: Criterion, 1994), pp. 209-210.



and American enterprise. Today this project is triumphant as "economic globalization." Throughout the world, government policies are judged, approved or condemned decisively, not by their populations but by "the markets," meaning the financial markets. Foreign investors, not domestic voters, decide policy. The International Monetary Fund and other such agencies are there to help governments adjust their policies and their societies to market imperatives.

The shift of decision-making power away from elected governments, which is an essential aspect of this particular "economic globalization," is being accompanied by an ideological assault on the nation-state as a political community exercising sovereignty over a defined territory. For all its shortcomings, the nation-state is still the political level most apt to protect citizens' welfare and the environment from the destructive expansion of global markets. Dismissing the nation-state as an anachronism, or condemning it as a mere expression of "nationalist" exclusivism, overlooks and undermines its long-standing legitimacy as the focal point of democratic development, in which citizens can organize to define and defend their interests.

The irony is that many well-intentioned idealists are unwittingly helping to advance this project by eagerly promoting its moralistic cover: a theoretical global democracy that should replace attempts to strengthen democracy at the supposedly obsolete nation-state level.

Within the United States, the link between anti-nation-state ideology and economic globalization is blurred by the double standard of U.S. leaders who do not hesitate to invoke the supremacy of U.S. "national interest" over the very international institutions they promote in order to advance economic globalization. This makes it seem that such international institutions are a serious obstacle to U.S. global power rather than its expression. However, the United States has the overall military and political power to design and control key international institutions (e.g., the IMF, the World Trade Organization, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia), as well as to undermine those it dislikes (UNESCO when it was attempting to promote liberation of media from essentially American control) or to flout international law with impunity (notably in its Central American "back yard"). Given the present relationship of forces, weakening less powerful nation-states cannot strengthen international democracy, but simply tighten the grip of transnational capital and the criminal networks that flourish in an environment of lawless acquisition.

There is no real contradiction between asserting the primacy of U.S. interests and blasting the nation-state barriers that might allow

some organized defense of the interests of other peoples. But impressed by the apparent contradiction, some American liberals are comforted in their belief that nationalism is the number one enemy of mankind, whereas anything that goes against it is progressive.

Indeed, an important asset of the anti-nation-state ideology is its powerful appeal to many liberals and progressives whose internationalism has been disoriented by the collapse of any discernable socialist alternative to capitalism and by the disarray of liberation struggles in the South of the planet.

In the absence of any clear analysis of the contemporary world, the nation-state is readily identified as the cause of war, oppression, and violations of human rights. In short, the only existing context for institutionalized democracy is demonized as the mere expression of a negative, exclusive ideology, "nationalism." This contemporary libertarian view overlooks both the persistence of war in the absence of strong States and the historic function of the nation-state as framework for the social pact embodied in democratic forms of legislative decision-making.

Condemnation of the nation-state in a structuralist rather than historical perspective produces mechanical judgments. What is smaller than the nation-state, or what transcends the nation-state, must be better. On the smaller scale, "identities" of all kinds, or "regions," generally undefined, are automatically considered more promising by much of the current generation. On the larger scale, the hope for democracy is being transferred to the European Union, or to international NGOs, or to theoretical institutions such as the proposed International Criminal Court. In the enthusiasm for an envisaged global utopia, certain crucial questions are being neglected, notably: Who will pay for all this? How? Who will enforce which decisions? Until such practical matters are cleared up, brave new institutions such as the ICC risk being no more than further instruments of selective intervention against weaker countries. But the illusion persists that structures of international democracy can be built over the heads of States that are not themselves genuinely supportive of such democracy.

The simplistic interpretation of the Yugoslav crisis as Serbian "aggression" against peaceful multi-cultural Europe, is virtually unassailable, because it is not only credible according to this ideology but seems to confirm it.

It was this ideology that made it possible for the Croatian, Slovenian, and Albanian secessionists and their supporters in Germany and the United States in particular to portray the Yugoslav conflict as the struggle of "oppressed little nations" to free themselves from aggressive Serbian nationalism. In fact, those



AP / Wide World Photos

**August 1944: Marshal Tito (right), commander of the Partisans, at the cave where he lived and worked, with his deputy, Edvard Kardelj.**

"little nations" were by no means oppressed in Yugoslavia. Nowhere in the world were and are the cultural rights of national minorities so extensively developed as in Yugoslavia (including the small Yugoslavia made up of Serbia and Montenegro). Politically, not only was Tito himself a Croat and his chief associate, Edvard Kardelj, a Slovene, but a "national key" quota system was rigorously applied to all top posts in the Federal Administration and Armed Forces. The famous "self-management socialism" gave effective control over economic





**Above: Croatian Prime Minister Mandic and Foreign Minister Peric visit their protector, Adolf Hitler, in Berlin, 1944. Right: Smiling Ustashe storm troopers displaying a severed head in Bosnia, 1942.**



**Federal Committee for Information, Belgrade**

enterprises to Slovenians in Slovenia, Croatians in Croatia, and ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. The economic gap between the parts of Yugoslavia which had previously belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, that is, Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia's northern province of Voivodina, on the one hand, and the parts whose development had been retarded by Ottoman rule (central Serbia, the Serbian province of Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia) continued to widen throughout both the first and second Yugoslavia. The secession movement in Slovenia was a typical "secession of the rich from the poor" (comparable to Umberto Bossi's attempt to detach rich Northern Italy from the rest of the country, in order to avoid paying taxes for the poor South). In Croatia, this motivation was combined with a comeback of Ustashe elements which had gone into exile after World War II.

The nationalist pretext of "oppression" was favored by the economic troubles of the 1980s, which led leaders in each Republic to blame the others, and to overlook the benefits of the larger Federal market for all the Republics. The first and most virulent nationalist movements arose in Croatia and Kosovo, where separatism had been favored by Axis occupation of the Balkans in World War II. It was only in the 1980s that a much milder

Serbian nationalist reaction to economic troubles provided the opportunity for all the others to pinpoint the universal scapegoat: Serbian nationalism. Western public opinion, knowing little of Yugoslavia and thinking in terms of analogies with more familiar situations, readily sympathized with Slovenian and Croatian demands for independence. In reality, international law interprets "self-determination" as the right to secede and form an independent State only in certain (mostly colonial) circumstances, none of which applied to Slovenia and Croatia.<sup>17</sup>

All these facts were ignored by international media. Appeals to the dominant anti-State ideology led to frivolous acceptance in the West of the very grave act of accepting the unnegotiated breakup of an existing nation, Yugoslavia, by interpreting ethnic secession as a proper form of "self-determination," which it is not. There is no parallel in recent diplomatic annals for such an irresponsible

17. See: Barbara Delcourt & Olivier Corten, *Ex-Yugoslavie: Droit International, Politique et Idéologies* (Brussels: Editions Bruylant, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1997). The authors, specialists in international law at the Free University of Brussels, point out that there was no basis under international law for the secession of the Yugoslav Republics. The principle of "self-determination" was totally inapplicable in those cases.

act, and as a precedent it can only promise endless bloody conflict around the world.

## THE NEW WORLD ORDER

In fact, the breakup of Yugoslavia has served to discredit and further weaken the United Nations, while providing a new role for an expanding NATO. Rather than strengthening international order, it has helped shift the balance of power within the international order toward the dominant nation-states, the United



States and Germany. If somebody had announced in 1989 that, well, the Berlin Wall has come down, now Germany can unite and send military forces back into Yugoslavia—and what is more in order to enforce a partition of the country along similar lines to those it imposed when it occupied the country in 1941—well, quite a number of people might have raised objections. However, that is what has happened, and many of the very people who might have been expected to object most strongly to what amounts to the most significant act of historical revisionism since World War II have provided the ideological cover and excuse.

Perhaps dazed by the end of the Cold War, much of what remains of the left in the early nineties abandoned its critical scrutiny of the geostrategic *Realpolitik* underlying great power policies in general and U.S. policy in particular and seemed to believe that the world henceforth was determined by purely moral considerations.

This has much to do with the privatization of “the left” in the past twenty years or so. The United States has led the way in this trend. Mass movements aimed at overall political action have declined, while single-issue movements have managed to continue. The single-issue movements in turn engender non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which, because of the requirements of fund-raising, need to adapt their causes to the mood of the times, in other words, to the dominant ideology, to the media. Massive fund-raising is easiest for victims, using appeals to sentiment rather than to reason. Greenpeace has found that it can raise money more easily for baby seals than for combatting the development of nuclear weapons. This fact of life steers NGO activity in certain directions, away from political analysis toward sentiment. On another level, the NGOs offer idealistic internationalists a rare opportunity to intervene all around the world in matters of human rights and human welfare.

And herein lies a new danger. Just as the “civilizing mission” of bringing Christianity to the heathen provided a justifying pretext for the imperialist conquest of Asia and Africa in the past, today the protection of “human rights” may be the cloak for a new type of imperialist military intervention worldwide.

Certainly, human rights are an essential concern of the left. Moreover, many individuals committed to worthy causes have turned to NGOs as the only available alternative to the decline of mass movements—a decline over which they have no control. Even a small NGO addressing a problem is no doubt better than nothing at all. The point is that great vigilance is needed, in this as in all other endeavors, to avoid letting good intentions be manipulated to serve quite contrary purposes.

In a world now dedicated to brutal economic rivalry, where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, human rights abuses can only increase. From this vast array of man’s inhumanity to man, Western media and governments are unquestionably more concerned about human rights abuses that obstruct the penetration of transnational capitalism, to which they are organically linked, than about,

**Greenpeace has found that it can raise money more easily for baby seals than for combatting the development of nuclear weapons. This fact of life steers NGO activity in certain directions, away from political analysis toward sentiment.**

say, the rights of Russian miners who have not been paid for a year. Media and government selectivity not only encourages humanitarian NGOs to follow their lead in focusing on certain countries and certain types of abuses, the case-by-case approach also distracts from active criticism of global economic structures that favor the basic human rights abuse of a world split between staggering wealth and dire poverty.

Cuba is not the only country whose “human rights” may be the object of extraordinary concern by governments trying to replace local rulers with more compliant defenders of transnational interests. Such a motivation can by no means be ruled out in the case of the campaign against Serbia.<sup>18</sup> In such situations, humanitarian NGOs risk being cast in the role of the missionaries of the past—sincere, devoted people who need to be “protected,” this time by NATO military forces. The Somali expedition provided a rough rehearsal (truly scandalous if examined closely) for this scenario. On a much larger scale, first Bosnia, then Kosovo, provide a vast experimental terrain for cooperation between NGOs and NATO.

18. The matter is complex and far from transparent, but there are some grounds to believe that both the Western hostility to and Serbian voters’ support for Slobodan Milošević and his ruling Serbian Socialist Party, are due to the fact that his government has been slow to privatize “social property” using the same drastic methods of “shock treatment” applied in other former socialist countries.

There is urgent need to take care to preserve genuine and legitimate efforts on behalf of human rights from manipulation in the service of other political ends. This is indeed a delicate challenge.

## **NGOs and NATO, Hand in Hand**

In former Yugoslavia, and especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Western NGOs have found a justifying role for themselves alongside NATO. They gain funding and prestige from the situation. Local employees of Western NGOs gain political and financial advantages over other local people, and “democracy” is not the people’s choice but whatever meets with approval of outside donors. This breeds arrogance among the outside benefactors, and cynicism among local people, who have the choice between opposing the outsiders or seeking to manipulate them. It is an unhealthy situation, and some of the most self-critical are aware of the dangers.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the most effectively arrogant NGO in regard to former Yugoslavia is the Vienna office of Human Rights Watch/Helsinki. On September 18, 1997, that organization issued a long statement announcing in advance that the Serbian elections to be held three days later “will be

19. From his experience in Zagreb, British sociologist Paul Stubbs has written critically about “Humanitarian Organizations and the Myth of Civil Society” (*ArkZin*, no. 55, Zagreb, January 1996):

“Particularly problematic is the assertion that NGOs are ‘non-political’ or ‘neutral’ and, hence, more progressive than governments which have vested interests and a political ‘axe to grind.’ ... This ‘myth of neutrality’ might, in fact, hide the interests of a ‘globalized new professional middle class’ eager to assert its hegemony in the aid and social welfare market place. ... The creation of a ‘globalised new professional middle class’ who, regardless of their country of origin, tend to speak a common language and share common assumptions, seems to be a key product of the ‘aid industry.’ In fact, professional power is reproduced through claims to progressive alliance with social movements and the civil society whereas, in fact, the shift toward NGOs is part of a new residualism in social welfare which, under the auspices of financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, challenges the idea that states can meet the welfare needs of all. ... A small number of Croatian psycho-socially oriented NGOs have attained a level of funding, and a degree of influence, which is far in excess of their level of service, number of beneficiaries, quality of staff, and so on, and places them in marked contrast to those providing services in the governmental sector. One Croatian NGO, linked to a U.S. partner organization, has, for example, received a grant from USAID for over 2 million U.S. dollars to develop a training program in trauma work. The organization, the bulk of whose work ... is undertaken by psychology and social work students, now has prime office space in Zagreb, large numbers of computers and other technical equipment, and is able to pay its staff more than double that which they would obtain in the state sector.”



neither free nor fair." This astonishing intervention was followed by a long list of measures that Serbia and Yugoslavia must carry out "or else," and that the international community must take to discipline Serbia and Yugoslavia. These demands indicated an extremely broad interpretation of obligatory standards of "human rights" as applied to Serbia, although not, obviously, to everybody else, since they included new media laws drafted "in full consultation with the independent media in Yugoslavia" as well as permission meanwhile to all "unlicensed but currently operating radio and television stations to broadcast without interference."<sup>20</sup>

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki concluded by calling on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to "deny Yugoslavia readmission to the OSCE until there are concrete improvements in the country's human rights record, including respect for freedom of the press, independence of the judiciary, and minority rights, as well as cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia."

As for the demand to "respect freedom of the press," one may wonder what measures would satisfy HRW, in light of the fact that press freedom already exists in Serbia to an extent well beyond that in many other countries not being served with such an ultimatum. There exist in Serbia quite a range of media devoted to attacking the government, not only in Serbo-Croatian but also in Albanian. As of June 1998, there were 2,319 print publications and 101 radio and television stations in Yugoslavia, over twice the number that existed in 1992. Belgrade alone has 14 daily newspapers. Six state-supported national dailies have a joint circulation of 180,000, compared to around 350,000 for seven leading opposition dailies.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, the judiciary in Serbia is certainly no less independent than in Croatia or Muslim Bosnia, and almost certainly much more so. As for "minority rights," it would be hard to find a country anywhere in the world

where they are better protected in both theory and practice than in Yugoslavia.<sup>22</sup>

For those who remember history, the Human Rights Watch/Helsinki ultimatum instantly brings to mind the ultimatum issued by Vienna to Belgrade after the Sarajevo assassination in 1914 as a pretext for the Austrian invasion which touched off World War I. The Serbian government gave in to all but one of the Habsburg demands, but was invaded anyway.<sup>23</sup>

The hostility of this new Vienna power, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, toward Serbia, is evident in all its statements, and in those of its executive director, Aaron Rhodes. In a March 18, 1998, column for the *International Herald Tribune*, he wrote that Albanians in Kosovo "have lived for years under conditions similar to those suffered by Jews in Nazi-controlled parts of Europe just before World War II. They have been ghettoized. They are not free, but politically disenfranchised and deprived of basic civil liberties."

The comparison could hardly be more incendiary, but the specific facts to back it up are absent. They are necessarily absent, since the accusation is totally false. Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo have never been "politically disenfranchised," and even Western diplomats have at times urged them to use their right to vote in order to deprive Milošević of his electoral majority. But nationalist leaders have called for a boycott of Serbian elections since 1981—well before Milošević came on the scene—and ethnic Albanians who dare take part in legal po-

22. Serbia is constitutionally defined as the nation of all its citizens, and not "of the Serbs" (in contrast to constitutional provisions of Croatia and Macedonia, for instance). In addition, the 1992 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Macedonia) as well as the Serbian Constitution guarantee extensive rights to national minorities, notably the right to education in their own mother tongue, the right to information media in their own language, and the right to use their own language in proceedings before a tribunal or other authority. These rights are not merely formal, but are effectively respected, as is shown by, for instance, the satisfaction of the 400,000-strong Hungarian minority and the large number of newspapers published by national minorities in Albanian, Hungarian, and other languages. Romani (Gypsies) are by all accounts better treated in Yugoslavia than elsewhere in the Balkans. Serbia has a large Muslim population of varied nationalities, including refugees from Bosnia and a native Serb population of converts to Islam in Southeastern Kosovo, known as Goranci, whose religious rights are fully respected, and who have no desire to leave Serbia.

23. After obtaining support from Berlin and the Vatican for war against Serbia, Vienna on July 23, 1914, delivered a 48-hour ultimatum to Belgrade containing a list of ten demands, of which the Serbian government accepted all but one: participation of Austrian officials in suppressing anti-Austrian movements on Serbian territory. This refusal was the official reason for Austria's declaration of war on July 28, 1914, which began World War I. See Ralph Hartmann, *Die ehrlichen Mahler* (Berlin: Dietz, 1998), pp. 31-33. Hartmann, who was East German ambassador to Yugoslavia from 1982 to 1988, sees German policy toward Yugoslavia as a relentless revenge against the Serbs for the events of 1914 which led to the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

litical life are subject to intimidation and even murder by nationalist Albanian gunmen.<sup>24</sup>

In order to gain international support, inflammatory terms such as "ghetto" and "apartheid" are used by the very Albanian nationalist leaders who have created the separation between populations by leading their community to boycott all institutions of the Serbian State in order to create a de facto secession. Not only elections and schools, but even the public health service has been boycotted, to the detriment of the health of Kosovo Albanians, especially the children.<sup>25</sup>

24. The March 24, 1998 report of the International Crisis Group entitled "Kosovo Spring" notes that: "In many spheres of life, including politics, education and health-care, the boycott by Kosovars of the Yugoslav state is almost total." In particular, "Kosovars refuse to participate in Serbian or Yugoslav political life. The leading Yugoslav political parties all have offices in Kosovo and claim some Kosovar members, but essentially they are 'Serb-only' institutions. In 1997 several Kosovars accused of collaborating with the enemy [i.e., the Serbian State] were attacked, including Chamijl Gasi, head of the Socialist Party of Serbia in Glagovac, and a deputy in the Yugoslav Assembly's House of Citizens, who was shot and wounded in November. The lack of interest of Serb political parties in wooing Kosovars is understandable. Kosovars have systematically boycotted the Yugoslav and Serbian elections since 1981, considering them events in a foreign country."

The ICG, while scarcely pro-Serb in its conclusions, nevertheless provides information neglected by mainstream media. This is perhaps because the ICG addresses its findings to high-level decision-makers who need to be in possession of a certain number of facts, rather than to the general public.

Gasi was not the only target of Albanian attacks on fellow Albanians in the Glagovac municipal district, situated in the Drenica region which the "Kosovo Liberation Army" (UCK) tried to control in early 1998. Others included forester Mujo Sejdi, 52, killed by machine-gun fire near his home on January 12, 1998; postman Mustafa Kurtaj, 26, killed on his way to work by a group firing automatic rifles; factory guard Rusdi Ldrovci, ambushed and killed with automatic weapons apparently after refusing to turn over his official arm to the UCK; among others. On April 10, 1998, men wearing camouflage uniforms and insignia of the Army of Albania fired automatic weapons at a passenger car carrying four ethnic Albanian officials of the Socialist Party of Serbia including Gugna Adem, President of the Suva Reka Municipal Board, who was gravely injured; and Ibko Vait, member of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and President of the SPS district board in the city of Prizren. Numerous such attacks have been reported by the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug, but Western media have shown scant interest in the fate of ethnic Albanians willing to live with Serbs in a multi-ethnic Serbia.

25. In March 1990, during a regular official vaccination program, rumors were spread that Serb health workers had poisoned over 7,000 Albanian children by injecting them with nerve gas. There was never any proof of this, no child was ever shown to suffer from anything more serious than mass hysteria. This was the signal for a boycott of the Serbian public health system. Ethnic Albanian doctors and other health workers left the official institutions to set up a parallel system, so vastly inferior that preventable childhood diseases reached epidemic proportions. In September 1996, WHO and UNICEF undertook to assist the main Kosovar parallel health system, named "Mother Theresa" after the world's most famous ethnic Albanian, a native of Macedonia, in vaccinating 300,000 children against polio. The worldwide publicity campaign around this large-scale immunization program failed to point out that the same service had long been available to those children from the official health service of Serbia, systematically boycotted by Albanian parents. Currently, the parallel Kosovar system employs 239 gen-

20. At the time, some 400 radio and television stations had been operating in Yugoslavia with temporary licenses or none at all. The vast majority are in Serbia, a country of less than ten million inhabitants on a small territory of only 54,872 square miles.

21. Figures from "State Media Circulation Slips," on page 3 of the June 8, 1998, issue of *The Belgrade Times*, an English-language weekly. There is no doubt that press diversity in Serbia has profited from the extremely acrimonious contest between government-backed media (which are not as bad or as uniform as alleged) and opposition media seeking foreign backing. Without this ongoing battle, the government would almost certainly have managed to reduce press pluralism considerably, but it is also fair to point out that the champions of independent media need to keep exaggerating the perils of their situation in order to attract ongoing financial backing from the West, notably from the European Union and the Soros Foundation. Private foreign capital is also present: The relatively mass circulation tabloid *Blic* is German-owned.



Human Rights Watch's blanket condemnation of a government which, like it or not, was elected, in a country whose existence is threatened by foreign-backed secessionist movements, contrasts sharply with the traditional approach of the senior international human rights organization, Amnesty International.

What can be considered the traditional Amnesty International approach consists broadly in trying to encourage governments to enact and abide by humanitarian legal standards. It does this by calling attention to particular cases of injustice. It asks precise questions that can be answered precisely. It tries to be fair. It is no doubt significant that Amnesty International is a grassroots organization, which operates under the mandate of its contributing members, and whose rules preclude domination by any large donor.

In the case of Yugoslavia, the Human Rights Watch/Helsinki approach differs fundamentally from that of Amnesty International in that it clearly aims not at calling attention to specific abuses that might be corrected, but at totally condemning the targeted State. By the excessive nature of its accusations, it does not ally with reformist forces in the targeted country so much as it undermines them. Its lack of balance, its rejection of any effort at remaining neutral between conflicting parties, encourages disintegrative polarization rather than reconciliation and mutual understanding. For example, in its reports on Kosovo, Amnesty International considers reports of abuses from all sides and tries to weigh their credibility, which is difficult but necessary, since the exaggeration of human rights abuses against themselves is

eral practitioners and 140 specialists, compared to around 2,000 physicians employed by the Serbian public health system there. Serbs point out that many ethnic Albanians are sensible enough to turn to the government health system when they are seriously ill. According to official figures, 64% of the official Serbian system's health workers and 80% of its patients in Kosovo are ethnic Albanians.

It is characteristic of the current age of privatization that the "international community" is ready to ignore a functioning government service and even contribute to a politically inspired effort to bypass and ultimately destroy it. But then, Kosovo Albanian separatists, aware of the taste of the times, like to speak of Kosovo itself as a "non-governmental organization."

These facts are contained in the "Kosovo Spring" report of the International Crisis Group.



**Captured Krajina Serbs guarded by Croatian soldiers in the Serbian Krajina region near Knin during Croat offensive in August 1995.**

Archive Photos / Reuters

regularly employed by Albanian nationalists in Kosovo as a means to win international support for their secessionist cause.<sup>26</sup> Human Rights Watch, in contrast, by uncritically endorsing the most extreme anti-Serb reports and ignoring Serbian sources, helps confirm ethnic Albanians in their worst fantasies, while encouraging them to demand international intervention on their behalf rather than seek compromise and reconciliation with their Serbian neighbors. HRW therefore contributes, deliberately or inadvertently, to a deepening cycle of violence that eventually may justify, or require, outside intervention.

This is an approach which, like its partner, economic globalization, breaks down the defenses and authority of weaker States. It does not help to enforce democratic institutions at the national level. The only democracy it recognizes is that of the "international community," which is summoned to act according to the recommendations of Human Rights Watch.

26. The ICG "Kosovo Spring" report noted that the two main Kosovar human rights groups, Keshelli and the Helsinki Committee, closely linked to nationalist separatist leaders, "provide statistical data on 'total' human rights violations, but their accounting system is misleading. For instance, of the 2,263 overall cases of 'human rights violations' in the period from July to September 1997, they cite three murders, three 'discriminations based on language...' and 149 'routine checkings.' By collating minor and major offences under the same heading, the statistics fail to give a fair representation of the situation. Kosovars further lose credibility by exaggerating repression when speaking to foreign visitors."

This "international community," the IC, is in reality no democracy. Its decisions are formally taken at NATO meetings. The IC is not even a "community"; the initials could more accurately stand for "imperialist condominium," a joint exercise of domination by the former imperialist powers, torn apart and weakened by two World Wars, now brought together under U.S. domination with NATO as their military arm. Certainly there are frictions between the members of this condominium, but so long as their rivalries can be played out within the IC, the price will be paid by smaller and weaker countries.

Media attention to conflicts in Yugoslavia is sporadic, dictated by Great Power interests, lobbies, and the institutional ambitions of "non-governmental organizations"—often linked to powerful governments—whose competition with each other for financial support provides motivation for exaggerating the abuses they specialize in denouncing.

Yugoslavia, a country once known for its independent approach to socialism and international relations, economically and politically by far the most liberal country in Eastern Central Europe, has already been torn apart by Western support to secessionist movements. What is left is being further reduced to an ungovernable chaos by a continuation of the same process. The emerging result is not a charming bouquet of independent little ethnic democracies, but rather a new type of joint colonial rule by the IC, enforced by NATO. ■



# IMPERIALISM AND NGOS IN LATIN AMERICA

BY JAMES PETRAS

In the 1970s, during the height of the Latin American military dictatorships, a number of what were termed "non-governmental organizations" (NGOs) became active in denouncing human rights violations and providing support to the victims. NGOs also sponsored humanitarian programs, which permitted families to survive the economic shock treatments administered by dictatorships rushing to adopt neoliberal economic policies. These activities created an image of NGOs as being part of the "progressive camp" among the left and liberals. Early on, however, the limits of NGOs were evident. Attacking human rights violations, they rarely denounced the regimes' links to the U.S. and European patrons who advised and financed them. They also sidestepped the connection between those violations, the imposition of brutal neoliberal economic policies, and the new turn in the imperialist system.

As opposition to these policies grew in the early 1980s in the form of large-scale discontent and the spread of social movements to oppose them, the U.S. and European governments and the World Bank began to promote a parallel strategy "from below," funding "grassroots" organizations that professed an "anti-statist" ideology. There is a direct relation between collective challenges to the neoliberal model and the burgeoning effort to subvert them by sponsoring alternative forms of action through some NGOs whose financial dependence in turn limits their sphere of criticism and action. (See box at right.)

In the 1990s, these organizations now number in the thousands and receive close to four billion dollars worldwide.

The basic point of convergence between the NGOs and organizations like the World Bank is their common opposition to "statism." NGO ideologues counterpose "state" power to "local" power. State power, they argue, is autonomous, arbitrary, and develops interests different from and opposed to those of the citizens, while local power is closer and more responsive to the people. This counterposition of state and local power justifies the role of NGOs as brokers between local organizations,

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**Free market economics: A woman begging outside Santiago, Chile, stock market.**

Some of the most effective of the early NGOs were established after 1973 in Chile to counter the effects of the Pinochet regime by maintaining soup kitchens and an array of poverty programs. Their transformation in the 1980s clearly illustrates the trajectory of many NGOs. NGOs increased rapidly in those years as did the magnitude of popular struggles to oppose the dictatorship. By this time nearly all of some 200 NGOs, far from critiquing the policies which had resulted in a 47 percent poverty rate and the links between them and the U.S. and the World Bank, confined themselves to abstract calls for "democracy" and "development with equity." Following a plebiscite organized in the face of political upheaval, an alliance of Christian Democrats and

Socialists came to power and social movements were actively marginalized. NGOs turned toward collaboration and outright approval of free market policies. NGO professionals became government ministers; one of the best known, Sur Profesionales, even providing information on the "propensity for violence" in the shantytowns. Two of its chief researchers, as ministers, administered policies that created the most lopsided income inequalities in recent Chilean history. The strategy of co-optation of local leaders and exclusion of community assemblies was not lost on the remaining activists: "The NGOs told us that because democracy has arrived there is no need to continue the soup kitchens." This, despite the fact that poverty has only increased.

neoliberal foreign donors, and local free-market regimes, while it severs the link between local struggles and political movements at the national and international level.

Emphasis on the "local" allows neoliberals to dominate macro-socioeconomic policies to divert state resources toward subsidies for export capitalists and financial institutions, and to transfer lucrative state properties to the private rich. The NGOs criticize the state from a "left" perspective in defense of civil society

while the right does so in the name of the market.

As neoliberal regimes devastate communities by inundating the countries with cheap imports, extracting external debt payment, abolishing labor legislation, and creating a growing mass of low-paid and unemployed workers, the NGOs are funded to provide "self-help" projects, "popular education," and job training. NGOs are usually not part of trade union resistance, struggles of public

Barbara Jamison / Impact Visuals



school teachers, protests and strikes against budget cuts and low wages, or the collapse of social services. On the contrary, NGOs emphasize projects, not movements. They shift popular attention away from the national budget toward self-exploitation of the people in order to secure resources while employing the language of “popular power,” “gender equality,” “sustainable development,” and “bottom-up leadership.”

This language is linked to a framework of collaboration with donors and government agencies that subjects practical political activity to the imperatives of fund-raising and non-confrontational politics. In the context of reduced social budgets, the transfer of state funds to subsidize the bad debts of private banks and loans to exporters, the ideology of independent self-help means that in addition to paying taxes to the state and getting nothing in return, working people have to resort to “self-exploitation” and compete with each other to obtain essential services, a double burden for the poor.

The NGO ideology of “private voluntaristic activity” undermines the sense of the “public,” relieving government of its obligation to provide for the well-being of its citizens. Against this notion of the public responsibility of the state, the NGOs foster the neoliberal idea of private responsibility for social problems. While the rich form vast financial empires from privatization, the “post-Marxist” middle class professionals of the NGOs get comparatively small sums to finance offices, transportation and

small-scale economic activity.

The reality is that nongovernmental organizations are not nongovernmental. They receive funds from overseas government agencies and foundations or work as subcontractors of local regimes. This creates ranks of con-

The “apolitical” posture of NGOs at the national level reinforces electoral processes encouraged by neoliberal parties and the mass media. Incorporating the poor into the economy through “private voluntary action,” NGOs

Sean Sprague / Impact Visuals



**“Poverty Alleviation Program”: A social worker on a “consciousness raising” visit to a rural working woman at home near Sucre, Bolivia.**

In Bolivia in 1985, the government launched its New Economic Policy, freezing wages while inflation raged at 15,000 percent, annulling price controls, food and fuel subsidies, firing state employees, and cutting health and education programs. These policies, dictated by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, provoked general strikes and violent confrontations which in turn were met with massive quantities of aid from Western governments for “poverty alleviation programs.” Only 15 to 20 percent of this aid ever

reached the poor while the rest went to administrative costs. Absolute poverty remained unchanged. Nevertheless, the poverty programs strengthened the regime at a critical time and weakened opposition to structural adjustment policies, absorbing many of Bolivia’s former leftists. These, as consultants, conducted seminars on “civil society” and “globalization,” while the country’s mineral resources were subjected to unregulated pillage and the populace overrun with epidemics and generalized misery.

tingent professionals who consume most of the funds provided, while it undermines fixed contracts. In place of the long-term comprehensive programs that only the welfare state can furnish, limited and temporary services to narrow groups of communities are provided. In the name of “empowerment,” the focus is on purely local initiatives, fragmenting poor communities into sectoral groupings that are unable to look upward and outward for the sources of and solutions to their poverty.

create a political world where the appearance of solidarity and social action cloaks a conservative conformity. (See box above.) Neoliberalism remains unchallenged while the NGOs search for niches in the interstices of power.

NGOs as the “community face” of neoliberalism have another function as well. Many former leaders of social movements, trade unions, and women’s organizations, and even guerrilla fighters have been absorbed and co-opted by NGOs. They are attracted by the idea





J.R. Ripper / Impact Visuals

**Guarani mother and child at Jaguapire village in Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, where the indigenous people are losing their lands to farmers. Conditions are so miserable that more than 100 villagers each year commit suicide.**

that this might give them access to levers of power to assist their communities or by the tempting offers of higher pay, mobility, prestige, and relative security from repression. Turning attention away from claims on state resources, they publish success stories of micro-enterprises which affect only a small fraction of the total poor and succeed only by excluding others from the same market. Projects are designed and evaluated based on the guidelines of imperial centers and their institutions. They are then "sold" to communities and administered by the new viceroys who supervise the projects' conformity with the goals and values of the donors. (See box above.)

NGOs foster a new type of cultural and economic colonialism and dependency, competing among themselves to capture the victims and sustain the subsidies they receive from overseas banking institutions. Where there are "successes," these are heavily dependent on continued outside support, but have well-publicized propaganda value. They foster the illusion that neoliberalism is a popular phenomenon, while demonstrating the worthlessness of the NGO for more funds.

After several decades of NGO activity,

these professionals have "de-politicized" and "de-radicalized" whole areas of social life and, where they have become firmly established, radical social movements have declined. The managers of NGOs are, nonetheless, fundamental political actors whose projects have no significant economic impact in terms of raising incomes, but who have a significant impact in diverting people from the class struggle into collaboration with their oppressors. (See box at right.)

There exist, it needs to be said, a small minority of NGOs which attempt to develop an alternative strategy that is supportive of anti-imperialist and class politics. They do not receive funds from the World Bank, or European or U.S. agencies. They promote efforts to link local power to state power and local projects to national sociopolitical movements: occupying large landed estates, defending public property and national ownership against multinationals. These few NGOs recognize the importance of politics and believe that local organizations must fight at the national level and that national leaders must be accountable to local activists for democracy to exist.

It is these NGOs that merit our support. ■

That NGOs are clearly understood to be other than what they claim to be was evident at a 1996 conference I attended organized by Brazil's Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST), which has over 5000 organizers and several hundred thousand activists who have engaged in hundreds of land occupations. A demand by a Dutch NGO official to participate because he had \$300,000 for community development prompted MST members to reject his proposal on the grounds that they designed their own projects.

At a meeting between MST women and rural-based feminist NGOs, the MST women avowed a class-struggle perspective grounded in the direct action of land occupations. Despite some common ground, they saw the NGO professionals as divisive careerists unwilling to challenge the elites who oppressed all peasants. They nevertheless distinguished between NGOs that contribute to the movement and missionary-type outfits that operate to fragment and isolate it.

I encountered the patronizing attitudes of NGOs toward peasant movements when working with the Democratic Peasant Alliance (ADC) in El Salvador, which represents 26 peasant and worker organizations. In a joint effort to develop and fund a peasant-directed research and training center, we visited a private Canadian agency, CRS SOGEMA, subcontracted by the Canadian government to administer \$25 million in aid to the country. In response to the people's proposal for peasant-based participatory research, their local NGO representative drew a human figure on paper and proceeded to identify the head with "the NGOs—they think, write and prepare programs," while the hands and feet were "the peasants [who] provide data and implement the projects."

Later, at the formal meeting, it resulted that SOGEMA had already earmarked the money for the National Foundation for Development (FUNDE), a consulting firm of upwardly mobile professionals. ADC leaders were enraged as SOGEMA's director urged their attendance at FUNDE seminars because it would be "empowering," leading one peasant leader to remark, "That study will never be read by any peasant, nor will it be at all relevant to our struggle for land. It will be about 'modernization' and how to swindle the peasants out of their land and turn it into commercial farms or tourist areas."



# RUSSIAN "REFORM" IS THE PROBLEM, NOT THE SOLUTION

by Edward S. Herman

One of the remarkable myths of the West is that "reform" in Russia has been a success, even if qualified, and that serious failure has only struck Russia with the ongoing financial implosion. This myth allows President Clinton to advise Boris Yeltsin to avoid a return to "failed economic policies," referring not to the disastrous policies of the Yeltsin years but to those of the prior era (which were characterized by reduced growth rates, but no major absolute declines). A second myth is that reform has been approved by the Russian people in a genuine, even if imperfect, democratic process. Both myths result from the fact that western elites have enthusiastically backed the rapid dismantlement of socialist institutions in Russia, so that seriously adverse economic and social consequences, which would have been featured as demonstrating a dismal failure had they occurred in Castro's Cuba, have been largely ignored by the mainstream media. With the current collapse, the search is on for scapegoats that will deflect attention from the impact of the reforms themselves.

Indeed, "reform" in Russia—the rapid privatization of the economy and open door to foreign trade, investment, and finance—has been accompanied by a historically unique peacetime economic and social collapse, which has beggared a large majority of the population and reduced Russia to the status of a Third World country. Between 1990 and 1998 Russian GDP fell by some 50 percent, industrial production and capital investment declined by 90 percent, and the Russian economy shrank to approximately the size of the Netherlands. The incomes of 75 percent of the population have been pushed down to subsistence levels or below, and male life expectancy has fallen below that of Indonesia and the Philippines. Over 60 percent of consumer goods are imported, and Russia's main, almost exclusive, exports are oil and gas.

Despite this deindustrialization and economic decline, a small elite, including a substantial criminal element, has prospered mightily, based on trading, financial dealing, and smuggling, rather than any productive activity. A large fraction of elite gains have been based on privileged access to government contracts, licenses, and national property, and Goldman Sachs banker Andrew Ipkenanz admitted, recently and belatedly, that "Russian elites have plundered the country's capital and funneled most of the proceeds offshore." As in other Third World countries, boutiques and restaurants catering to the tiny elite (and foreigners) have blossomed, along with homelessness, beggary, crime, prostitution, and mass immiseration. The prosperity of the urban elite has fooled some foreigners, with reporters finding a "mystery" in the spectacular rise in suicide, infant mortality, and death rates.<sup>1</sup>

Reform in Russia has been a catastrophic failure because neither political conditions nor economic institutions existed that would have permitted a successful rapid transition to full-blown capitalism. The political elite, from Yeltsin on down, were old Communist apparatchiks who, while rejecting Soviet socialism, were by no means democrats, and many were cynical opportunists on the make. Under their rule, there has been a gigantic looting of public assets, the rapid emergence

of a financial and corporate oligarchy, no concern whatever for the deteriorating condition of the mass of ordinary citizens, and no attempt to pace the transition to a market economy in accord with the demands of equity, efficiency, or national development needs. This has been a corrupt revolution from above.<sup>2</sup>

The Russian economy was crippled by the breakoff of the other constituents of the Soviet Union, which was an integrated system. It also had a large military production component, and an inefficient industrial system highly vulnerable to foreign competition. To make the shift to a market economy Russian industry needed pressure, but it also needed time for change if a national disaster was to be averted. The "cold turkey" approach imposed by the "reformers," with Western encouragement and pressure, caused a collapse, not only of the industrial system, but agriculture and the medical and social welfare apparatus as well.

The Russian people never approved this process. Polls from 1990 to the present show that Russians want social democracy, with a major government social service role, not laissez faire capitalism. They have also strongly opposed the massive theft of public

property. Russian elections have been a travesty. In the important 1996 election, Yeltsin started the campaign with an 8 percent popularity rating, reflecting total public disenchantment with "reform." He quickly sacked Chubais, the symbol of reform, and ran against his own reform policies—as well as "communism," which was not at issue, with the Communist Party running on a mildly reformist platform, and in no position to reestablish communism even if they wanted to. With the oligarchs and state controlling the media, huge illegal spending on the campaign, and western support, Yeltsin defeated both "communism" and reform. On the day after his election victory, he reinstated Chubais to push forward reform.

The West encouraged and pressed for rapid privatization, despite the uncongenial circumstances, because its main objectives were to obtain irreversible institutional changes away from socialism (and social democracy), and to end any military threat from a former military rival. The costs to the Russian populace were of little concern. Realizing Western ends required joint venture partners—as in Indonesia and the Philippines—who would make the necessary changes, without regard to the internal human costs. The Yeltsin team, like Suharto and Marcos, served this role well.

The West is now searching for scapegoats. One is that the "moguls" and "business oligarchs" are irresponsible and have sabotaged reform. But the moguls are the very children of reform, and they supported it all along, as allies of Yeltsin and the prime beneficiaries of his policies. Another scapegoat is the slowing up of the reform process, which has brought all these wondrous benefits! It is also pretended that the only choices for Russia are between "reform" and Communism. As with the drunkard who has looked everywhere for his eyeglasses perched on the end of his nose, the solution to the problem of why Russia is imploding is extremely simple—this is the latest phase of an ongoing "reform" debacle. ■

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1. Michael Specter, "Climb in Russia's Death Rate Sets Off Population Implosion," *New York Times*, March 6, 1994.

2. See David Kotz and Fred Weir, *Revolution from Above* (London: Routledge Press, 1997).



# A VISIT TO HEADQUARTERS ON THEIR ANNIVERSARY

BY LOUIS WOLF

Recent press reports, even before the embassy bombings, noted that the Central Intelligence Agency is expanding, fiercely recruiting personnel and garnering budget dollars. But its size and scope of operations had never really shrunk, as I was starkly reminded on a rare tour of its headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

Last September, "the campus," as they call the 258-acre complex, was open to journalists as part of the Agency's fiftieth anniversary celebrations, marking its founding under the National Security Act of 1947 (which also established the Department of Defense, the Air Force, and the National Security Council). The CIA has been the focus of my research since the 1960s, but "Retirees' Day," September 17, 1997, was the first and only time I ever set foot on its premises.

The building was filled with exhibits, some of them permanent, designed, apparently, to instill *esprit de corps* in the thousands of employees who bustle by each day. One of the most chilling exhibits was entitled, "The Cold War: Fifty Years of Silent Conflict," a kind of Cold War trophy room. As I was escorted past case after case of espionage paraphernalia, I thought of the untold human costs of the Cold War; I was in the very building where the plans had been generated to create, train, and arm intelligence services, secret police organizations, and death squads to engage in repression throughout the world, and where thousands of covert operations had been hatched, and still are.

I saw transmitters that looked like cigarette lighters, miniature cameras in wristwatches, playing cards with hidden maps, a lipstick holder that was actually a single-shot pistol, a tobacco pipe that shot bullets, coins with knives inside them, and a pocket diary that could burst into flames. As if these were the non-violent items, another case featured "Assassination Weapons," including a poison dart attributed to the KGB and a poison-tipped

umbrella allegedly from Bulgaria. The descriptive sign noted, matter-of-factly, "Assassination is sometimes used by intelligence agencies...." No disclaimer suggested that the CIA was not still included, despite a 1976 Executive Order to the contrary.



CIA headquarters, Langley, Virginia.

In the Exhibit Center, the permanent museum, I saw William "Wild Bill" Donovan's boots and OSS uniform, an eerie bust of Hermann Goering donated by Allen Dulles, Ernesto Che Guevara's battered flashlight, hollowed-out Eisenhower silver dollars for concealing microfilm, microdot cameras, cane guns, poison spikes, propaganda leaflets, and even a 300-pound chunk of the Berlin Wall.

As we headed for the "Company Store," the Agency's retail shop, I noticed the walls covered with art work, some of it huge, the fruits of the CIA's Fine Arts Commission, which "advises the Director of Central Intelligence on aesthetic matters relating to the Agency work environment." The shop was crammed with merchandise bearing the CIA logo, tee shirts, hats, mugs, shot glasses, coasters, paperweights, keychains, computer mouse pads, and much more. Many of the items were clearly marked, "Made in China."

When my escort asked what else I would like to see, I suggested the Operations Directorate and was told, "Oh, they're all over the building."

On a walk through the maze-like, right-angled corridors of the fourth floor, I saw overhead scale model mobiles of the now retired

U-2 and SR-71 spy planes, donations from Lockheed Martin. I then went to the Office of Communications exhibit, where encryption and decryption machines, electronic interception devices, scramblers, and mini-computers were displayed. Outside was a SCUD missile

from the Gulf War, a customized three-man submarine that could, I was told, sit silently under water in one spot for two weeks, and another very large chunk of the Berlin Wall.

Even though I had seen many aerial photographs of CIA headquarters, it was only there that I grasped the sheer size of the complex. The two main buildings are as long as three football fields; they have two and a half million square feet of working space. Still, despite the celebrations, morale has never been lower. Director George Tenet called upon his employees to "support each other, draw closer together, and

revive the sense of family that has been such a source of strength for this Agency."<sup>1</sup>

Despite its huge, still secret, budget, the CIA has had five directors in ten years and been battered by the Aldrich Ames debacle, the Guatemala and Honduras human rights scandals, embarrassing intelligence failures regarding the Soviet Union and, recently, India and Pakistan, resignations by high officials, and more than two dozen highly publicized sexual harassment suits. Morale, Secretary of Defense (then Senator) William Cohen said in 1995, had reached "ocean bottom levels."<sup>2</sup> Little has changed.

DCI Tenet reminded his rapt dinner guests in his opening speech, "Fifty years from now we can have another rousing celebration."<sup>3</sup> A poster nearby, for an in-house symposium, was even more optimistic: "CIA: Then, Now, Always," it read.

Always? That's a long time. ■

1. "Remarks at Retirees' Day," official CIA transcript, Sept. 17, 1997, p. 4.

2. William S. Cohen, "Nomination of John M. Deutch," Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Washington, D.C., Apr. 26, 1995, p. 30.

3. "CIA Celebrates 50 Years of Silent Service," *What's News at CIA*, Oct. 1997, p. 4.



# ON VISITING A HAVANA MUSEUM

BY PHILIP AGEE

In heated testimony to the U.S. Senate's Church Committee in 1975, former CIA Director Richard Helms gave a thumbnail sketch of the Agency's attacks against Cuba in the 1960s:

... invasions of Cuba ... were constantly running under the government's aegis.... We had task forces that were striking at Cuba constantly. We were attempting to blow up power plants. We were attempting to ruin sugar mills. We were attempting to do all kinds of things in this period. This was a matter of American government policy.

Fast forward to Havana in 1998.

The Miramar residential district along the sea is where many of Havana's pre-revolutionary rich enjoyed mansions and private clubs. Its main thoroughfare is 5th Avenue, a divided boulevard with a continuous and well-kept park in the center, known to many as Embassy Row.

After a period of deterioration following the emigration of their owners, many of the non-diplomatic houses along "La Quinta" have been restored, and they now serve as headquarters for Cuban and foreign business concerns, day-care centers, and high school and university buildings. But one cluster of three houses at the corner of 5th Avenue and 14th Streets is different. The sign in front announces the Museum of the Ministry of the Interior.

I must have passed these yellow and white houses dozens of times, but only on a trip this year did I take time for a visit. What I found was a collection of military and espionage objects that bear witness to Mr. Helms's allusion to the CIA's interventions and aggressions against Cuba.

The museum tells the story of many Agency operations, including what seem to be hundreds of attempts to infiltrate by sea and air, and it displays portraits of Ministry of Interior officials killed in suppressing them. But it begins with objects of pre-revolutionary Cuba, including two letters attesting to the CIA's role in establishing, training and supporting the worst security service of the Batista military dictatorship, the Bureau for Repression of Communist Activities. This service, known by its Spanish initials as BRAC, was notorious for its savage torture of regime opponents and for hanging the bodies of its victims from the poles of Havana streetlights. One letter dated 12 June 1956 is from Allen Dulles, then CIA Director, to General Batista informing

him that he was sending his Inspector General to "your great Republic" to discuss "matters of mutual concern." The other is a 1957 letter from Arthur Gardner, then U.S. Ambassador to Cuba, to the Chief of BRAC thanking him for the BRAC badge the chief had sent him and praising BRAC for its continuing success in the struggle against communism.

The displays that follow cover the revolutionary period through the 1980s and include a wide variety of weapons and equipment from rifles, bazookas, grenades, and rocket launchers, to miniature cameras. Other objects include clandestine communications equipment and various concealment devices, some given by the Agency to Cuban double

agents. When taken together, they constitute a 30-year hemorrhage of state-of-the-art technical equipment.

According to Museum officials, more than 60 additional objects from the 1990s are soon to be added to the Museum.

One can spend a couple of hours strolling through these buildings which were the first headquarters of the Cuban security service following the overthrow of Batista at the end of 1958. It is well worth a visit for anyone interested in this not-so-secret war. *CovertAction* thanks the museum staff, and its Director, Lt. Col. José A. Sáliva, for their assistance in the photography of the following small selection of museum objects. ■

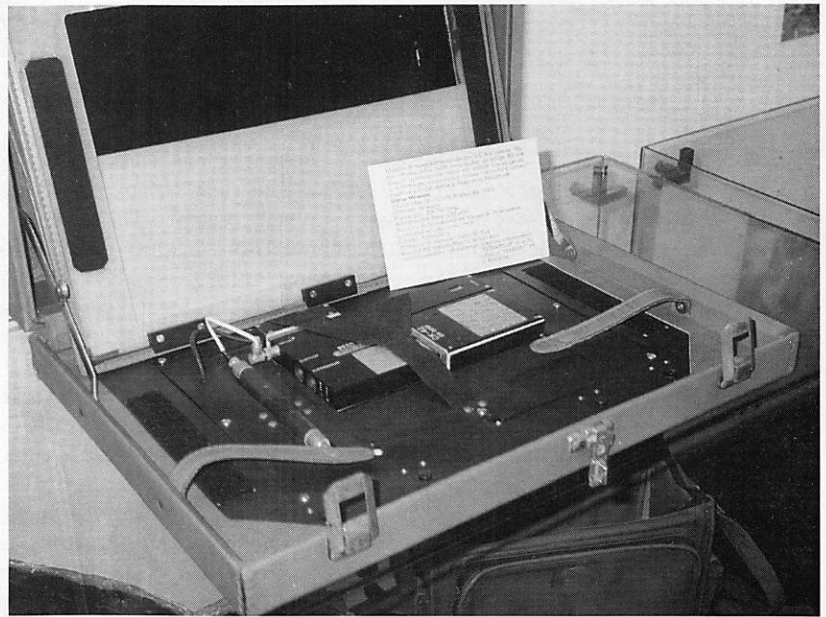


Photos by Patrick Moran

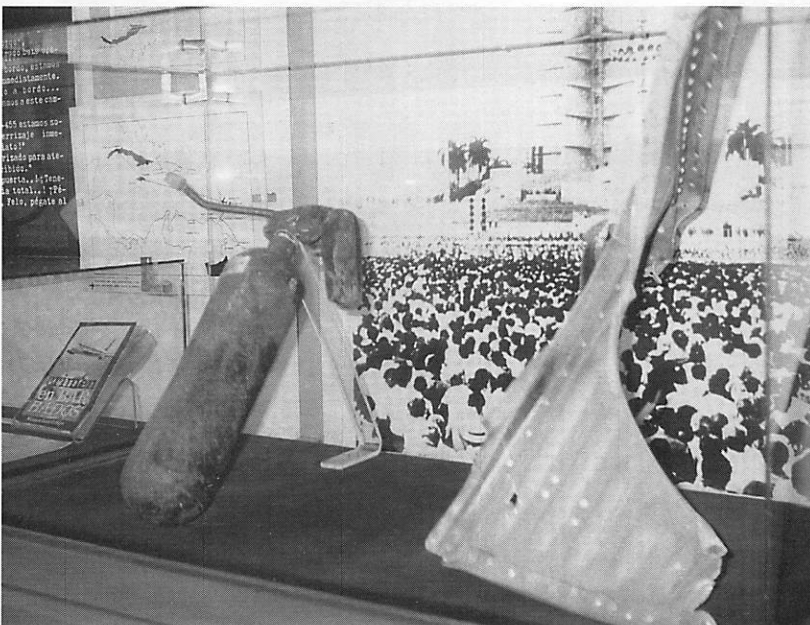




Kitchen furniture made in Japan and shipped to Cuba for a CIA agent who was actually a Cuban double agent working for Cuban security. The briefcase hidden behind the hinged lower panel contains a battery-powered radio transmitter.



Briefcase with hidden transmitter given by the CIA to a Cuban double agent, code name "Mateo," with which he communicated with the CIA in the U.S. Interests Section, Havana, until he sent his last message from the Plaza de la Revolucion in 1987 announcing his true loyalty.



A piece of the Cubana flight bombed by CIA-trained Cuban exiles after takeoff from Barbados on October 6, 1976, killing 73 passengers and crew. The perpetrators included Luis Posada Carriles, who this year admitted organizing the bombings of Havana hotels in 1997, one of which took the life of an Italian.



Weapons captured from a CIA airdrop to counterrevolutionaries, operating in the south-central Escambray mountains from 1959 to 1965.





Arms captured from would-be assassins of Raúl Castro who had planned an ambush in Santiago de Cuba for July 26, 1961.



A selection of dummy canned goods containing explosives, detonators, grenades, and other arms brought to Cuba in 1962 by two Canadian CIA agents. They were captured on arrival at Havana airport from Miami.

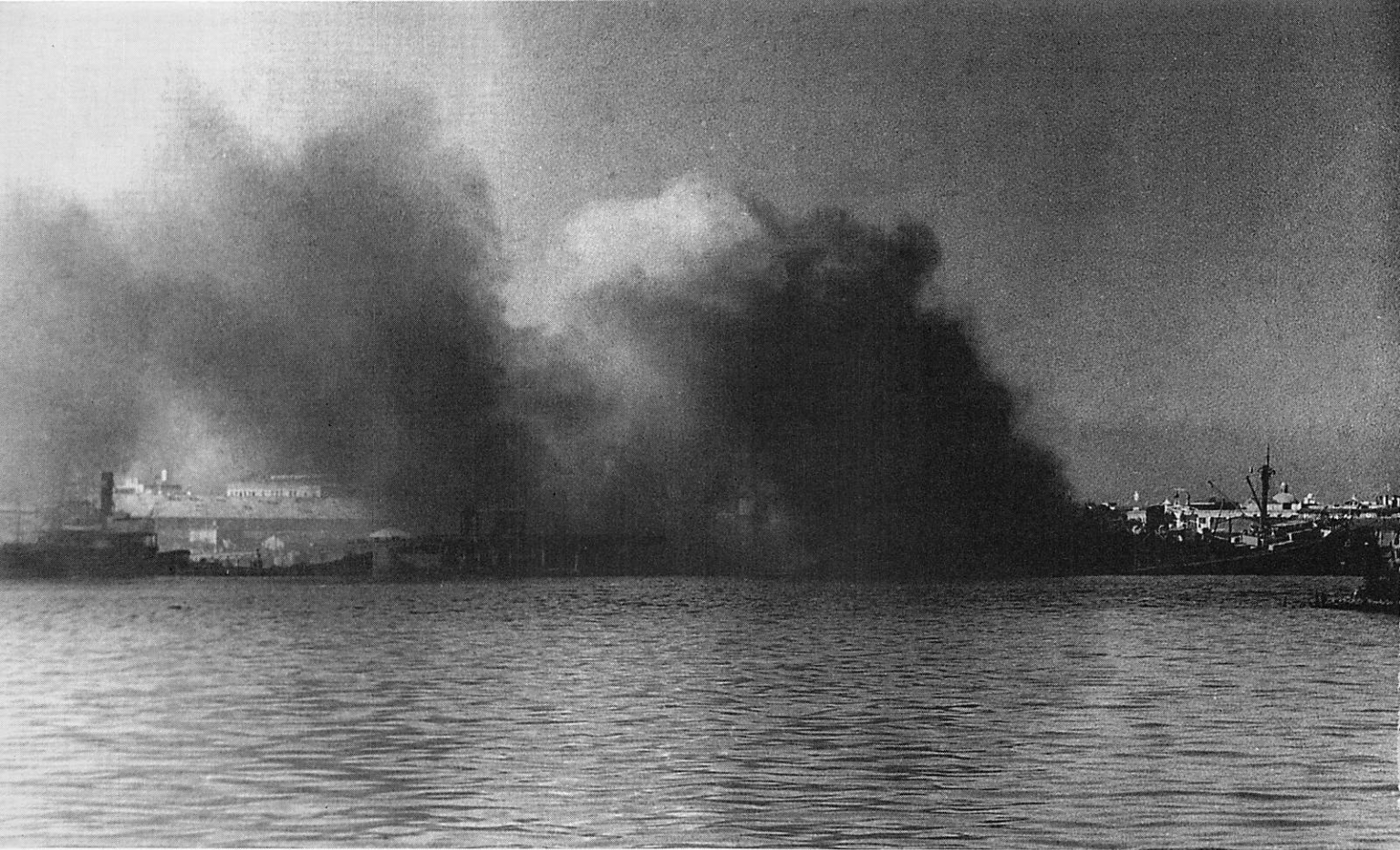


Artificial rock with concealed high-speed radio transmitter given by the CIA to the double agent to whom they gave the code name "Zafiro." He penetrated CIA operations for Cuban security from 1966 to 1976.



Frogman equipment worn by a maritime infiltrator of the Alpha 66 organization based in Miami who was captured on arrival.





Havana harbor, after the French ship, *La Coubre*, was blown up by counterrevolutionaries, March 1960.

## THE WAR AGAINST CUBA

BY JANE FRANKLIN

As soon as it became evident that revolutionary Cuba planned to control its own resources, Washington initiated a state of siege that has continued for almost 40 years. In the first year of the revolutionary government, 1959, continual raids emanated from Florida. In March 1960, President Eisenhower ordered the CIA to plan the invasion that ended in disaster at the Bay of Pigs.

After that debacle, Prime Minister Fidel Castro urged the Kennedy administration to enter into negotiations to establish diplomatic—even friendly—relations. Instead, President Kennedy launched another secret plan, Operation Mongoose, to overthrow the Cuban government, with invasion if necessary. This strategy led directly to the October missile crisis.

Washington has still not changed its policy of re-establishing economic control of the island only 90 miles from Florida. Using the

trade embargo as a constant overt economic weapon, Washington has employed an army of clandestine agents to carry out covert operations: assassinations, attempted assassinations, bombings, chemical-biological attacks, and coastal raids.

### RECENT BOMBINGS

Although the litany of U.S.-sponsored bombings in the early days of the Cuban revolutionary government is well-known, this terrorist campaign continues to the present moment.

In the summer of 1997, there was a bombing campaign engineered by Cuban-American terrorist Luis Clemente Posada Carriles, trained by the CIA. In November 1996, Channel 23 TV in Miami had interviewed both Posada and Orlando Bosch Avila, another notorious terrorist in the Cuban exile community. Posada emphasized his intention to continue terrorist activities against Cuba.

Then, from April through August 1997, at least five bombs were exploded in various Havana hotels, targeting tourists and the

tourist industry, now a mainstay of the Cuban economy. Three people were injured by one of the bombs on July 12. The Cuban tourist industry was also targeted by bombs at travel agencies in Mexico City and Nassau.<sup>1</sup>

On August 5, in Miami, a spokeswoman for the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), Ninoska Pérez, said that the bombings were probably being carried out by Cuban government officials who are against their present Cuban government. Almost a year later, however, Posada admitted to the *New York Times* (July 12, 1998) that one of the purposes of the bombing campaign was to make Cuba think there were operatives in the military.

On September 4, during the day, three bombs exploded within 45 minutes of each other in three Havana hotels, killing an Italian,

1. After at least five bombs and the wounding of three people, the CANF put a full-page ad in the August 13, 1997, *El Nuevo Herald*, the Spanish-language sister of the *Miami Herald*, to announce its support for "any act of internal rebellion" inside Cuba, including bombs targeted at tourists. But CANF said attacks abroad, like the one in Nassau, do not "contribute to solving the situation."

**Jane Franklin** is a writer and historian. Her latest book is *Cuba and the United States: A Chronological History* (Ocean Press: Melbourne, 1997), available from [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) or 800-243-0138. All photos from Prensa Latina.





**Cuban exile terrorist Orlando Bosch Avila, upon being charged, in Caracas, Venezuela, with the 1976 bombing of a Cubana airliner, killing 76 people.**

Fabio di Celmo, at the Copacabana. That night, a bomb went off in the Bodeguita del Medio, the Old Havana restaurant once frequented by Ernest Hemingway.

Before the fourth explosion, Cuban authorities had arrested a Salvadoran, Raúl Ernesto Cruz León, who had already planted the fourth bomb. They did not immediately announce the arrest of Cruz León, who, it was later learned, was in the pay of Posada.

Cuba's assertions that the bombing campaign had its roots in the United States were finessed by the State Department, which claimed to be willing to investigate the charge only if Cuba would provide "substantive information" to support its "contention."<sup>2</sup> Given

2. The *Miami Herald*, possessing no more (and probably less) information than the FBI had, was able, through interviews in Miami, Central America, and Havana, including one with Interior Ministry Col. Adalberto Rabeiro, the main investigator for Cuba, to publish more than sufficient details to justify such an investigation. Amid rumors in Miami that Posada was behind the bombings, *Miami Herald* reporter Juan O. Tamayo reported on September 12, 1997, that Posada, nicknamed "Bambi," was last reported to be living in El Salvador. Tamayo pointed out that Posada had told a Miami TV station in a 1996 interview that a bombing campaign against tourist targets in Cuba would diminish Castro's main source of hard currency. He reported that friends of Posada said he moved to El Salvador after being forced to leave Honduras due to allegations that he set off 41 bombs there in 1995 as part of a military-backed campaign to scare President Carlos Roberto Reina into abandoning plans to trim the military. On November 16, after having sent an investigative reporter to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, the *Miami Herald* exposed a complex network of terrorism, leading to the question why a newspaper can do this and the FBI and CIA cannot. Tamayo revealed that the summer bombings were "the work of a ring of Salvadoran car thieves and armed robbers directed and financed by Cuban exiles in El Salvador and Miami." Posada, he wrote, better known in El Salvador as "Don Naki," was

"the key link between El Salvador and the South Florida exiles who raised \$15,000 for the operation." In two lengthy front-page articles by Ann Louise Bardach and Larry Rohter in the *New York Times*, on July 12 and 13, 1998, Posada acknowledged many terrorist acts. As he did in his 1994 autobiography, he mentioned by name some of his financial supporters from the Cuban American National Foundation.

Washington's history of ignoring evidence of terrorism against Cuba waged from Miami, it would have been pointless, or worse, to turn evidence over to the State Department.<sup>3</sup>

On September 10, Cuba announced the arrest in Havana of Cruz León, for placing six of the bombs that had exploded in several hotels in recent weeks, including the four on September 4, one of which killed Fabio di Celmo. He said he was paid \$4,500 for each bombing. Cuba also stated that Cruz carried out two bombings on July 12, one of which had led to injuries.

Cuban officials said that Cruz León had been paid by a "subversive structure subordinate to the Cuban American National Foundation." CANF spokesman Fernando Rojas in Miami denied it, but Posada later boasted to the *New York Times* (July 12, 1998) that he had engineered that bombing campaign and paid Cruz, whom he referred to as a "mercenary." He said that leaders of CANF had financed his operations and that Jorge Mas Canosa, the founder and longtime head of the hard-line Cuban American National Foundation, personally supervised the flow of money and logistical support. Far from showing remorse for killing the Italian tourist, Posada asserted that Fabio di Celmo was "sitting in the wrong place at the wrong time."

3. In fact, Cuban Interior Ministry officials said they were aware of more than 30 terrorist plans hatched in Miami against Cuba by CANF, Alpha 66, PUND (the late Frank Sturgis's Democratic National Unity Party), and followers of Orlando Bosch from April 1994 to September 1997.



**Raúl Cruz León, arrested in September 1997, after a bombing spree.**





Bay of Pigs invaders, captured by Cuban armed forces, Playa Giron, April 1961.

Invader's badge.

## THE LATEST ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

A number of early attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro have been well-documented, covered not only in the news media, albeit well after the fact, but even described in detail during congressional investigations in the 1970s.<sup>4</sup> But these attempts continue.

4. *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders: An Interim Report*, Senate Select Committee to Study Government Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Part B, Nov. 1975, pp. 71-180.

On October 27 of last year, only a few weeks before the November 23, 1997, death of Mas Canosa, a U.S. Coast Guard patrol sighted a boat adrift in waters off the west coast of Puerto Rico. Although the boat had mechanical problems and was taking on water, the four Cuban Americans aboard insisted on continuing their voyage. The Coast Guard ordered them to a police dock in Aguadilla, where U.S. Customs agents, suspicious of their conflicting stories, searched the 46-foot vessel. They discovered two .50-caliber military sniper rifles, along with 70 rounds of ammunition, night

scopes, rifle tripods, three fatigue uniforms, and communications equipment. The two Barrett #82A1 rifles, almost five feet long and weighing 30 pounds each, are strictly military weapons designed for extreme long-range killing and for attacking vehicles and aircraft. One of the men claimed that their purpose was to kill Fidel Castro when he landed on Venezuela's Margarita Island for the Ibero-American Summit on November 7.

Customs found the boat was registered to Nautical Sports, Inc., a Florida company of which CANF director José Antonio Llama is



president, director, secretary, and treasurer. Llama belongs to Brigade 2506, an organization of veterans of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. In 1996, he co-founded a Madrid-based organization of Cuban exiles to lobby the Spanish government to support the 1996 Helms-Burton Act, successor to the 1992 Torricelli Act—both created by CANF to tighten the U.S. trade embargo against Cuba.

Llama's boat, *La Esperanza*, had been docked at the home of his friend Marco Antonio Sainz until just before it left Florida. Sainz and Feliciano Foyo, CANF treasurer, are partners in the Florida Falcon Chemical Corp. Luis Posada has named Foyo as one of his CANF supporters. Sainz claimed he didn't know the people who came to "repair" *La Esperanza* (Customs found a false bottom) and then sailed it away.

One of the two guns was registered to José Francisco "Pepe" Hernández, the CANF president also named by Posada as one of his financial supporters (along with Mas Canosa). Hernández bought the rifle in 1994. The other rifle was also purchased in 1994 by Juan Evelio Pou, a member of Brigade 2506.

The four men on the boat had intriguing ties. A Cuban security agent who infiltrated the exile terrorist group Alpha 66 alleged that one of them, Angel Hernández Rojo, was a "top CIA agent" in charge of Cuban exile activities in Miami in 1970. Juan Bautista Márquez was identified by the same agent as captain of a CIA ship (the *Superfreezer*) used to ferry infiltration teams from Florida to Cuba. Angel Manuel Alfonso Alemán, longtime activist in the right-wing exile movement, headed the Association of Cuban Former Political Prisoners in Union City, New Jersey. Francisco Secundino Córdova, from Florida, has also been involved with Alpha 66, according to sources in the exile community.

For almost a year, the investigation continued, the defendants out on bail, charged with illegal weapons possession and making false statements to federal officials. Then, on August 25, 1998, after an extensive and politically volatile investigation led by Miguel A. Pereira-Castillo, the Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico, indictments were announced, charging—along with weapons offenses, false statements, and smuggling—the almost unknown federal crime of conspiracy to assassinate "an internationally protected person." This law, which allows the imposition of life imprisonment, specifically applies to efforts within the United States to assassinate foreign heads of state when they are not in their own countries and not in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

Those indicted are: the four men from the boat; CANF official Llama; his company, Nau-



In April 1961, counterrevolutionaries blew up the department store, El Encanto, destroying the building and killing a salesperson.

tical Sports, Inc.; José Rodríguez Sosa, the president of the Association of Veterans of Special Missions, an organization of Cuban exiles who worked on infiltration missions for the CIA in the 1960s; and Alfredo Domingo Otero, a rank-and-file member of CANF, allegedly in charge of communications with the boat.<sup>6</sup> Hernández, the CANF president, was not indicted, although the week before his lawyer had held a news conference saying that Hernández expected to be indicted and denouncing the prosecution as politically motivated.<sup>7</sup> The indictment was described in the

Justice Department press release as "part of a continuing investigation."

## CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

Just as bombings and assassination attempts have been an ongoing part of the U.S. war against Cuba, chemical and biological warfare (CBW) has been used repeatedly.

In August 1962, a British freighter, under Soviet lease and bound for the Soviet Union with 80,000 bags of Cuban sugar, docked in San Juan, Puerto Rico, for repairs. More than 14,000 sacks of sugar were off-loaded to facilitate repairs. CIA agents entered the customs warehouse and contaminated the sugar with a supposedly harmless but unpalatable chemical. But when President Kennedy learned of

6. "Who They Are," *Miami Herald*, Aug. 26, 1998, p. A4.

7. Larry Rohter and Ann Louise Bardach, "Cuban Exile Leader Among 7 Accused of Plot on Castro," *New York Times*, Aug. 26, 1998, p. A3.

5. 18 U.S.C. §§1117, 1116, and 1111.





**Some of the half million pigs that had to be slaughtered and incinerated because of the unprecedented swine fever epidemic that swept Cuba in 1971.**

the operation, he was furious and ordered that the doctored sugar not leave Puerto Rico. His anger was not over the operation, but because it took place on U.S. soil and, if discovered, would provide a propaganda field day for the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup>

Later that year, Cuban turkey farms were hit with a fatal virus. A Canadian agricultural technician advising the Cuban government admitted he had been paid by a U.S. military intelligence agent to infect the turkeys, but claimed he had pocketed the money, and that the turkeys—on farms he had visited—had died from “neglect.”<sup>9</sup>

The Cuban Armed Forces observed a large number of brilliant objects falling from a high altitude near Sancti Spiritus in Las Villas province in May of 1964. They proved to be globes of various sizes that broke up on contact with the earth, leaving a gelatinous substance that dissolved, similar to the culture broth used for bacteria.

In 1969 and 1970, according to Warren Hinckle and William Turner, the CIA used weather modification technology to ravage the Cuban sugar crop.<sup>10</sup>

The first swine fever ever found in the Western Hemisphere was detected in Cuba, in May of 1971. Within six weeks, Cuba had to

slaughter half a million pigs to prevent the spread of the disease throughout the nation. African swine fever is a highly contagious, usually lethal viral disease that infects only pigs. Nearly six years later, it was revealed by a U.S. intelligence source that the virus was introduced into Cuba when he was instructed to transfer it from Fort Gulick, a U.S. Army base and CIA training center in the Panama Canal Zone, to a group of Cuban exiles who took it to operatives inside Cuba in March 1971.<sup>11</sup>

During the 1970s, while further outbreaks of swine fever remained a constant threat, Cuban agriculture was further devastated by serious infestations of blue tobacco mold and sugar cane smut, both of which destroy the plants they infect. It has never been determined how these plagues arose.

CBW is always horrific, but it reached a new low

when the target became not only Cuban livestock or crops, but its citizens. In the summer of 1981 an epidemic of dengue fever swept Cuba, of a speed and virulence previously unknown in Latin America.

While the U.S. government denied involvement, a few years later, when Omega 7 leader Eduardo Arocena was on trial in New York City (on unrelated charges), he testified that he carried “some germs” to Cuba in late 1980. He protested that “we thought it was going to be used against the Soviet forces, and it was used against our own people, and with that we did not agree.”<sup>12</sup> Since the 1950s, the U.S. Army’s Fort Detrick, Maryland, biological warfare laboratory had included mosquitoes infected with yellow fever, malaria, and dengue fever in its arsenal. Several months after its onset, the dengue fever epidemic had been eradicated in Cuba, after killing 188 people, the majority of them children.<sup>13</sup>

12. See transcript of the testimony of Eduardo Victor Arocena, Southern District of New York, Sept. 10, 1984, pp. 2187-89, reprinted in *CovertAction Information Bulletin*, No. 22 (Fall 1984), p. 35.

13. See Bill Schaap, “The 1981 Cuba Dengue Fever Epidemic,” *CovertAction Information Bulletin*, No. 17 (Summer 1982), p. 28.



**Tobacco leaf infested with blue mold, 1971.**

8. See William Blum, *Killing Hope* (Common Courage Press: Monroe, Maine, 1995), p. 188.

9. *Ibid.* See also *Washington Post*, Mar. 21, 1977, p. A18.

10. Warren Hinckle and William Turner, *The Fish is Red: The Story of the Secret War Against Castro* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), p. 293.

11. Simultaneous stories in the *Newark Star-Ledger* and *Newsday*, by Drew Fetherston and John Cummings, Jan. 9, 1977.



## GRISLY IRONY

It is ironic that the United States will bomb Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Sudan in the name of a righteous crusade against the horrors of CBW, while at the same time it has been, and continues to be one of the few actual practitioners of this crime against humanity. In the case of Cuba, CBW may be continuing.

On a perfectly clear day, October 21, 1996, a Cuban commercial pilot flying over Matanzas province saw a single-engine S2R-T65 plane releasing an unknown substance in the form of a white or grayish mist some seven times in an intermittent manner. The plane, in fact, was a crop-duster operated by the U.S. State Department, which had permission to fly over Cuba on a trip from Patrick Air Force Base in Florida to Colombia, as part of a drug eradication operation. Responding to the Cuban pilot's report, the Cuban air controller contacted the U.S. pilot and asked if the plane was having any problem, to which the answer was "No."

Less than six weeks later, at the Lenin State Horticultural Farm in Matanzas, Cubans observed the first signs of a plague of *Thrips palmi*, a plant-eating insect that had never before been detected in Cuba. Among other means of dissemination, its larvae can be scat-

tered by air. Its reproductive cycle lasts between 15 and 21 days. It severely damages practically every crop and is resistant to a number of pesticides.

In December, the Cuban Foreign Ministry formally asked the State Department for a clarification of the October 21 incident. There was no reply for more than six weeks, when the U.S. Interests Section finally responded, stating that the State Department pilot, observing the Cuban plane, had used his "smoke generator" to indicate his location to the Cuban pilot. By this time, the *Thrips palmi* had spread rapidly, affecting corn, beans, squash, cucumbers, and other crops.

The incident remains unresolved. A February 29, 1996, "Report of the Subgroup for Investigation of Claims of Use or Escape of Agents Which Constitute Biological or Toxin Weapons," issued by the Federation of American Scientists, had noted that *Thrips palmi* was an ideal biological agent able to inflict heavy damage on food crops. Cuba referred to this report and other data in a submission to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, charging the U.S. with "biological aggression."

The Cuban pilot who had observed the State Department plane insisted that, as someone who had been a fumigation pilot for 11 years, he was certain that what he saw was liq-

uid, not smoke. Moreover, since both planes were flying under radar control and in contact with air traffic control, the proper method for signaling was through the air traffic controller, not with "smoke signals." In 35 years as a pilot, he said, he had never heard of anyone signaling their position with smoke.

Cuba requested a meeting of the members of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, and Storage of Biological Weapons. In the fall of 1997, a majority of the U.N. signatories to the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention convened to consider Cuba's charges. As of this writing, the investigation continues.

There is no end to it. As recently as May 1998, a group of Cuban-American infiltrators were arrested on Cuba's north coast. Their Miami supporters announced that they had hoped to foment an uprising. Posada bragged that this was one of his operations, yet another violation of the Neutrality Act.

The covert continues to be part of the overt policy of starving the Cuban people into submission with such laws as the Torricelli Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996. Whether through bombs and toxins or laws and subversion, the aim is always, in the vain-glorious words of Senator Robert Torricelli, to "wreak havoc on that island." ■

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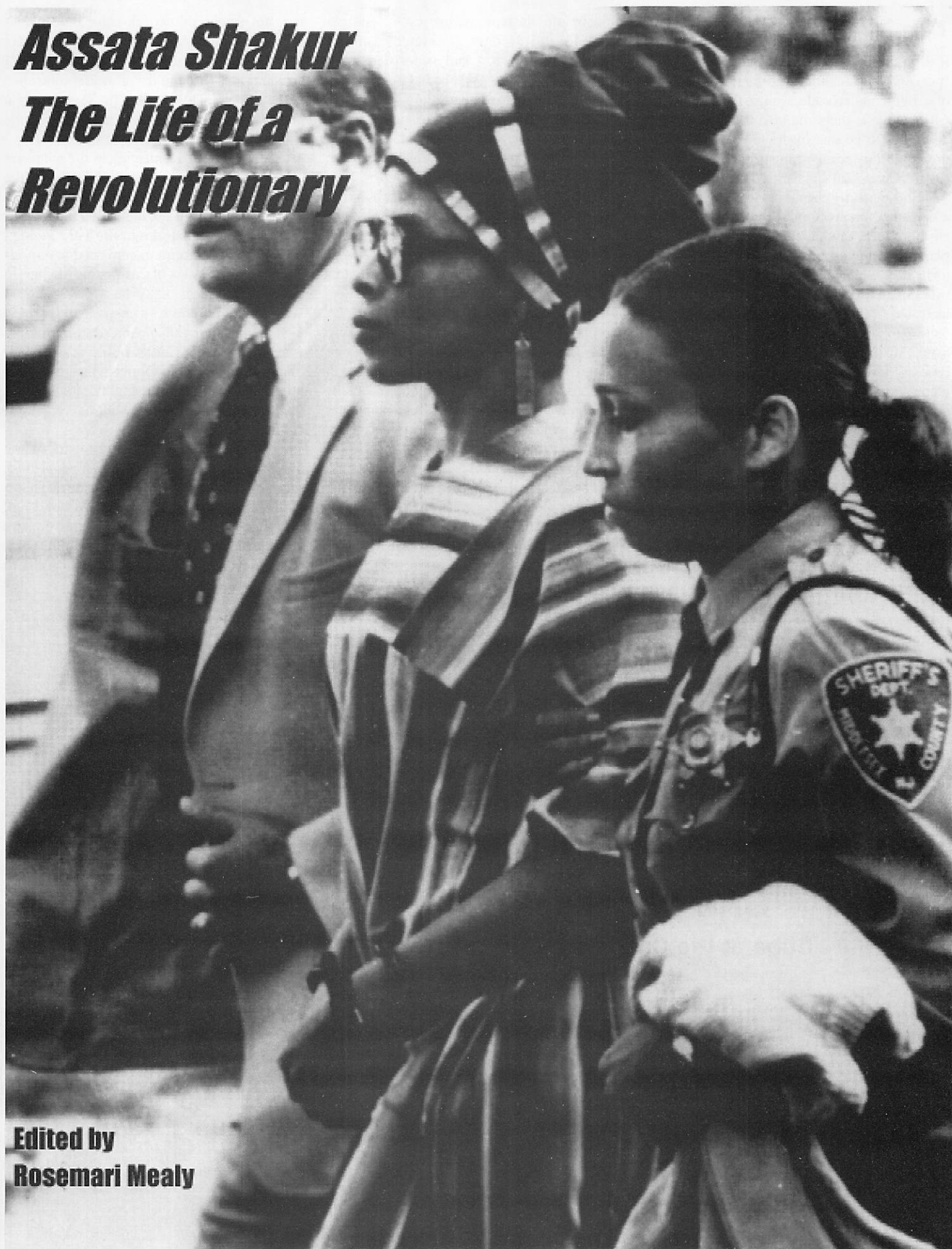
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# ***Assata Shakur*** ***The Life of a*** ***Revolutionary***



**Edited by**  
**Rosemari Mealy**



**Editors' Note:** This article contains portions of the text of several letters and interviews by Assata Shakur and comments by two noted attorneys, Lennox Hinds and Michael Ratner. The text that follows in italics is by Rosemari Mealy, who has excerpted Assata's writings for *CovertAction*.

**C**overtAction Quarterly has always attempted to present an alternative perspective that goes directly to the heart of political issues. When tyrannical governments infringe on the basic fundamental rights of individuals and groups through both domestic and foreign counterinsurgency programs, their victimization has been reported in this magazine. Revelations over the years have exposed, for example, the vicious methods of the FBI's Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) used against U.S. political activists. Many innocent individuals have been entrapped and then railroaded through a hostile court system, criminalized for no other reason than speaking out and acting on their political beliefs. Forgotten in general by the American public, more than 200 of these men and women currently languish in prisons throughout this country, some for more than 25 years.

One person who was able to escape horrendous persecution, after being convicted in 1977 by an all-white jury and sentenced to life plus 33 years in prison, was Assata Shakur (formerly known as JoAnne Chesimard).

In her written statement to the 54th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, held in Geneva, Switzerland in March 1998, Assata Shakur testified:

The U.S. Senate's 1976 Church Committee report on intelligence operations inside the U.S.A. revealed that, "The FBI has attempted covertly to influence the public's perception of persons and organizations by disseminating derogatory information to the press, either anonymously or through 'friendly' news contacts."

In 1978 my case was one of many cases brought before the United Nations..., exposing the existence of political prisoners in the United States, their political persecution, and the cruel and inhuman treatment they receive in U.S. prisons.... [See sidebar.]

I was falsely accused in six different "criminal cases," and in all six of these cases I was eventually acquitted or the charges were dismissed. The fact that I was acquitted or that the charges were dismissed, did not mean that I received justice in the courts; that was cer-

tainly not the case. It only meant that the "evidence" presented against me was so flimsy and false that my innocence became evident. This political persecution was part and parcel of the government's policy of eliminating political opponents by charging them with crimes and arresting them with no regard to the factual basis of such charges. ...

On May 2, 1973, I, along with Zayd Malik Shakur and Sundiata Acoli, were stopped on the New Jersey Turnpike, supposedly for a "faulty tail light." Sundiata Acoli got out of the car to determine why we were stopped. Zayd and I remained in the car. State Trooper Harper then came to the car, opened the door, and began to question us. Because we were black, and riding in a car with Vermont license plates, he claimed he became "suspicious." He then drew his gun, pointed it at us, and told us to put our hands up in the air in front of us, where he could see them. I complied and in a split second, there was a sound that came from outside the car, there was a sudden movement, and I was shot once with my arms held up in

the air, and then once again from the back. Zayd Malik Shakur was later killed, Trooper Werner Foerster was killed. I was left on the ground to die and when I did not, I was taken to a local hospital where I was threatened, beaten, and tortured....

Even though trooper Harper admitted that he shot and killed Zayd Malik Shakur, under the New Jersey felony murder law, I was charged with killing both Zayd Malik Shakur, who was my closest friend and comrade, and charged in the death of Trooper Foerster. Never in my life have I felt such grief. Zayd had vowed to protect me, and to help me to get to a safe place, and it was clear that he had lost his life trying to protect both me and Sundiata. Although he was also unarmed, and the gun that killed Trooper Foerster was found under Zayd's leg, Sundiata Acoli, who was captured later, was also charged with both deaths. Neither Sundiata Acoli nor I ever received a fair trial. We were both convicted in the news media way before our trials. No news media was ever permitted to interview us, although

## THE U.N. PETITION

On December 11, 1978, attorney Lennox Hinds, on behalf of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the National Alliance Against Racism, and the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ, sent a petition to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights alleging a "consistent pattern of gross ... violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of certain classes of political prisoners in the United States because of their race, economic status, and political beliefs."

The petition, referring to the case of Assata Shakur, stated that, "The FBI and the New York Police Department, in particular, charged and accused Assata Shakur of participating in attacks on law enforcement personnel, and widely circulated such charges and accusations among police agencies and units. The FBI and the NYPD further charged her as being a leader of the Black Liberation Army, which the government and its respective agencies described as an organization engaged in the shooting of police officers. This description of the Black Liberation Army and the accusation of Assata Shakur's relationship to it was widely circulated by government agents among police agencies and units. As a result of these activities by the government, Ms. Shakur became a hunted person; posters in police precincts and banks described her as being involved in serious criminal activities; she was highlighted on the FBI's most wanted list; and to police at all levels she became a 'shoot-to-kill' target."

In response to the petition, seven international jurists visited a number of prisons on August 3-20, 1979, and reported their findings. They listed four categories of prisoners, the first of which were political prisoners, defined as "a class of victims of FBI misconduct through the COINTELPRO strategy and other forms of illegal governmental conduct who as political activists have been selectively targeted for provocation, false arrests, entrapment, fabrication of evidence, and spurious criminal prosecutions. This class is exemplified by at least: The Wilmington Ten, the Charlotte Three, Assata Shakur, Sundiata Acoli, Imari Obadele and other Republic of New Africa defendants, David Rice, Ed Poindexter, Elmer 'Geronimo' Pratt, Richard Marshall, Russell Means, Ted Means, and other American Indian Movement defendants."

"One of the worst cases," they wrote, "is that of Assata Shakur, who spent over twenty months in solitary confinement in two separate men's prisons subject to conditions totally unbefitting any prisoner. Many more months were spent in solitary confinement in mixed or all-women's prisons. Presently, after protracted litigation, she is confined at Clinton Correctional Facility for Women in maximum security. She has never on any occasion been punished for any infraction of prison rules which might in any way justify such cruel or unusual punishment."

**Rosemari Mealy** is a radio producer-activist and host on WBAI-FM in New York City and on its Pacifica Network. She is the author of *Fidel and Malcolm X: Memories of A Meeting* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1993). Mealy has lived and worked in Cuba. (Photo on left by AP/Wide World Photos. Assata being transferred to Middlesex County Jail after her indictment.)





**Assata speaking to U.S. Women's delegation, Havana, Cuba, January 1998.**

the New Jersey police and the FBI fed stories to the press on a daily basis....

Because of government persecution, I was left with no other choice than to flee from the political repression, racism, and violence that dominate the U.S. government's policy towards people of color, and in 1979, fearing that I would be murdered in prison, and knowing that I would never receive any justice, I was liberated from prison, aided by committed comrades who understood the depths of the injustices in my case, and who were also extremely fearful for my life.

The greatest fear that Assata had to endure during the early years of her incarceration was for the safety of her daughter, Kakuya, who was born while Assata was confined to a hospital ward.

After the daring escape from a maximum security unit at New Jersey's Clinton Correctional facilities, Assata lived and struggled underground for many years. She was placed on the FBI's Most Wanted list and hunted by federal officials during this period.

There was great relief among the progressive community when it became known that Assata

had been liberated from prison on Black Solidarity Day, November 2, 1979. Bright yellow posters with Assata's photo were anonymously printed, and appeared on signposts throughout Harlem, with the message, "Assata Is Welcome Here." But, at the same time, Black women throughout the United States were summarily detained by the police under the pretext that they resembled the so-called fugitive. Homes of Black activists in New York and other cities were raided by heavily armed SWAT teams, where police informants had directed them to what were falsely believed to be safe houses harboring this dangerous "cop killer."

Assata's family was also harassed. Her aunt and attorney, Evelyn Williams, was jailed for criminal contempt for vigorously defending her client. Ms. Williams, in her book *(Inadmissible Evidence [Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1993])* provides in detail a frightening saga of American jurisprudence. Before she passed in 1995, Assata's mother, Doris, bore the emotional scars induced by mental torture. Imagine your phone ringing constantly in the middle of the night with a sadistic caller telling you that your daughter is dead!

If the psychological warfare that was waged against her immediate family by the U.S. police

and other law enforcement agencies throughout the years took place in any other country, it would be deemed a human rights violation.

In her own autobiography, Assata [Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1987], she chronicles her experiences, and describes herself as a "20th century escaped slave."

In the late 1980s, Assata Shakur publicly emerged in Cuba where she was accorded the status of political refugee.

Throughout the years, the New Jersey police have been particularly vindictive, vowing to capture Assata Shakur, dead or alive. On December 24, 1997, the New Jersey State Police called a press conference to announce that they had written a letter to Pope John Paul II—who was about to embark on a trip to Cuba—asking him to intervene on their behalf to have Assata extradited to New Jersey.

Assata sent an open letter to the Pope, which received widespread international dissemination. It was published in Arabic, French, Spanish, and several other languages. In the United States, the letter went virtually unnoticed by the mainstream press, but was given front page coverage by New York's only Black daily, the *Daily Challenge*. The letter is reprinted at pages 38 through 40.





### *Affirmation*

*I believe in living.  
I believe in the spectrum  
of Beta days and Gamma people.  
I believe in sunshine.  
In windmills and waterfalls,  
tricycles and rocking chairs.  
And i believe that seeds grow into sprouts.  
And sprouts grow into trees.  
I believe in the magic of the hands.  
And in the wisdom of the eyes.  
I believe in rain and tears.  
And in the blood of infinity.*

*I believe in life.  
And i have seen the death parade  
march through the torso of the earth,  
sculpting mud bodies in its path.  
I have seen the destruction of the daylight,  
and seen bloodthirsty maggots  
prayed to and saluted.*

*I have seen the kind become the blind  
and the blind become the blind  
in one easy lesson.  
I have walked on cut grass.  
I have eaten crow and blunder bread  
and breathed the stench of indifference.*

*I have been locked by the lawless.  
Handcuffed by the haters.  
Gagged by the greedy.  
And, if i know any thing at all,  
it's that a wall is just a wall  
and nothing more at all.  
It can be broken down.*

*I believe in living.  
I believe in birth.  
I believe in the sweat of love  
and in the fire of truth.*

*And i believe that a lost ship,  
steered by tired, seasick sailors,  
can still be guided home  
to port.*



## A LETTER TO THE POPE

Havana, Cuba  
March 1998

Your Holiness,

I hope this letter finds you in good health, in good disposition, and enveloped in the spirit of goodness. I must confess that it had never occurred to me before to write to you, and I find myself overwhelmed and moved to have this opportunity. Although circumstances have compelled me to reach out to you, I am glad to have this occasion to try and cross the boundaries that would otherwise tend to separate us.

I understand that the New Jersey State Police have written to you and asked you to intervene and to help facilitate my extradition back to the United States. I believe that their request is unprecedented in history. Since they have refused to make their letter to you public, although they have not hesitated to publicize their request, I am completely uninformed as to the accusations they are making against me. Why, I wonder, do I warrant such attention? What do I represent that is such a threat?

Please let me take a moment to tell you about myself. My name is Assata Shakur and I was born and raised in the United States. I am a descendant of Africans who were kidnaped and brought to the Americas as slaves. I spent my early childhood in the racist segregated South. I later moved to the northern part of the country, where I realized that Black people were equally victimized by racism and oppression.

I grew up and became a political activist, participating in student struggles, the anti-war movement, and, most of all, in the movement for the liberation of African Americans in the United States. I later joined the Black Panther Party, an organization that was targeted by COINTELPRO, a program that was set up by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to eliminate all political opposition to the U.S. government's policies, to destroy the Black Liberation Movement in the U.S., and to discredit activists and to eliminate potential leaders.

As a result of being targeted by COINTELPRO, I, like many other young people, was faced with the threat of prison, underground, exile or death.

At this point, I think that it is important to make one thing very clear. I have advocated and I still advocate revolutionary changes in the structure and in the principles that govern the U.S. I advocate an end to capitalist exploitation, the abolition of racist policies, the eradication of sexism, and the elimination of political repression. If that is a crime, then I am totally guilty.

To make a long story short, ... let me emphasize that justice for me is not the issue ... it is justice for my people that is at stake. When my people receive justice, I am sure that I will receive it, too. I know that Your Holiness will



Reuters / Paul Hanna / Archive Photos





reach your own conclusions, but I feel compelled to present the circumstances surrounding the application of "justice" in New Jersey. I am not the first nor the last person to be victimized by the New Jersey system of "justice." The New Jersey State Police are infamous for their racism and brutality. Many legal actions have been filed against them and just recently, in a class action legal proceeding, the New Jersey State Police were found guilty of having an "officially sanctioned, de facto policy of targeting minorities for investigation and arrest."

Although New Jersey's population is more than 78 percent white, more than 75 percent of the prison population is made up of Blacks and Latinos. Eighty percent of women in New Jersey prisons are women of color. There are 15 people on death row in the state and seven of them are Black. A 1987 study found that New Jersey prosecutors sought the death penalty in 50 percent of cases involving a Black defendant and a white victim, but in only 28 percent of cases involving a Black defendant and a Black victim.

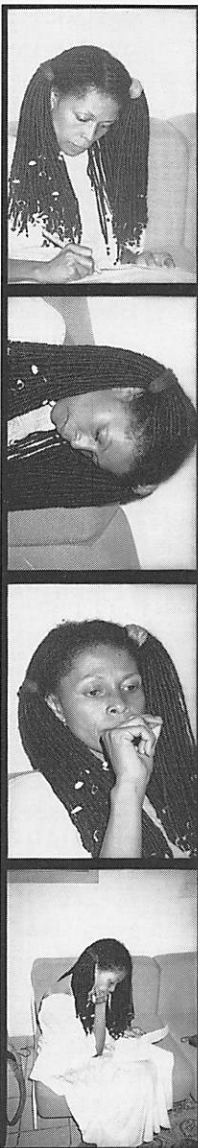
Unfortunately, the situation in New Jersey is not unique, but reflects the racism that permeates the entire country. The United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. There are more than 1.7 million people in U.S. prisons. This number does not include the more than 500,000 people in city and county jails, nor does it include the alarming number of children in juvenile institutions. The vast majority of those behind bars are people of color and virtually all of those behind bars are poor. The result of this reality is devastating. One third of Black men between the ages of 20 and 29 are either in prison or under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system.

Prisons are big business in the United States, and the building, running, and supplying of prisons has become the fastest growing industry in the country. Factories are being moved into the prisons and prisoners are being forced to work for slave wages. This super-exploitation of human beings has meant the institutionalization of a new form of slavery. Those who cannot find work on the streets are forced to work in prison.

Not only are prisons being used as instruments of economic exploitation, they also serve as instruments of political repression. There are more than 100 political prisoners in the U.S. They are African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Native Americans, Asians, and progressive white people who oppose the policies of the United States government. Many of those targeted by the COINTELPRO program have been in prison since the early 1970s.

Although the situation in the prisons is an indication of human rights violations inside the United States, there are other, more deadly indicators. There are currently 3,365 people now on death row, and more than 50 percent of those awaiting death are people of color. Black people make up only 13 percent of the population, but we make up 41.01 percent of persons who have received the death penalty. The number of state assassinations has in-





creased drastically. In 1997 alone, 71 people were executed.

A special reporter assigned by the United Nations Organization found serious human rights violations in the U.S., especially those related to the death penalty. According to these findings, people who were mentally ill were sentenced to death, people with severe mental and learning disabilities, as well as minors under age 18. Serious racial bias was found on the part of judges and prosecutors. Specifically mentioned in the report was the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the only political prisoner on death row, who was sentenced to death because of his political beliefs and because of his work as a journalist, exposing police brutality in the city of Philadelphia.

Police brutality is a daily occurrence in our communities. The police have a virtual license to kill and they do kill: children, grandmothers, anyone they perceive to be the enemy. They shoot first and ask questions later. Inside the jails and prisons there is at least as much brutality as there was on slave plantations. An ever-increasing number of prisoners are found hanging in their cells.

The United States is becoming a land more hostile to Black people and other people of color. Racism is running rampant and xenophobia is on the rise. This has been es-

pecially true in the sphere of domestic policy. Politicians are attempting to blame social problems on Black people and other people of color. There have been attacks on essentially all affirmative action programs designed to help correct the accumulated results of hundreds of years of slavery and discrimination. In addition, the government seems determined to eliminate all social programs that provide assistance to the poor, resulting in a situation where millions of people do not have access to basic health care, decent housing or quality education. It was with great happiness that I read the Christmas message that Your Holiness delivered. I applaud you for taking up the cause of the poor, the homeless, the unemployed. The fact that you are addressing the issues of today, unemployment, homelessness, child abuse, and the drug problem, is important to people all over the world. One third of Black people in the United States live in poverty, and our communities are inundated with drugs. We have every reason to believe that the CIA and other government agencies are involved in drug trafficking.

Although we live in one of the richest, most technically advanced countries in the world, our reality is similar to an undeveloped, Third World country. We are a people who are truly seeking freedom and harmony.

All my life I have been a spiritual person. I first learned of the struggle and the sacrifice of Jesus in the segregated churches of the South. I converted to Catholicism as a young girl. In my adult life I have become a student of religion and have studied Christianity, Islam, Asian religions and the African religions of my ancestors. I have come to believe that God is universal in nature, although called different names and with different faces. I believe that some people spell God with one "O" while others spell it with two.

What we call God is unimportant, as long as we do God's work.

There are those who want to see God's wrath fall on the oppressed and not on the oppressors. I believe that the time has ended when slavery, colonialism, and oppression can be carried out in the name of religion. It was in the dungeons of prison that I felt the presence of God up close, and it has been my belief in God, and in the goodness of human beings that has helped me to survive. I am not ashamed of having been in prison, and I am certainly not ashamed of having been a political prisoner. I believe that Jesus was a political prisoner who was executed because he fought against the evils of the Roman Empire, because he fought the greed of the money changers in the temple, because he fought against the sins and injustices of his time. As a true child of God, Jesus spoke up for the poor, the meek, the sick, and the oppressed. The early Christians were thrown into lions' dens. I will try and follow the example of so many who have stood up in the face of overwhelming oppression.

I am not writing to ask you to intercede on my behalf. I ask nothing for myself. I only ask you to examine the social reality of the United States and to speak out against the human rights violations that are taking place.

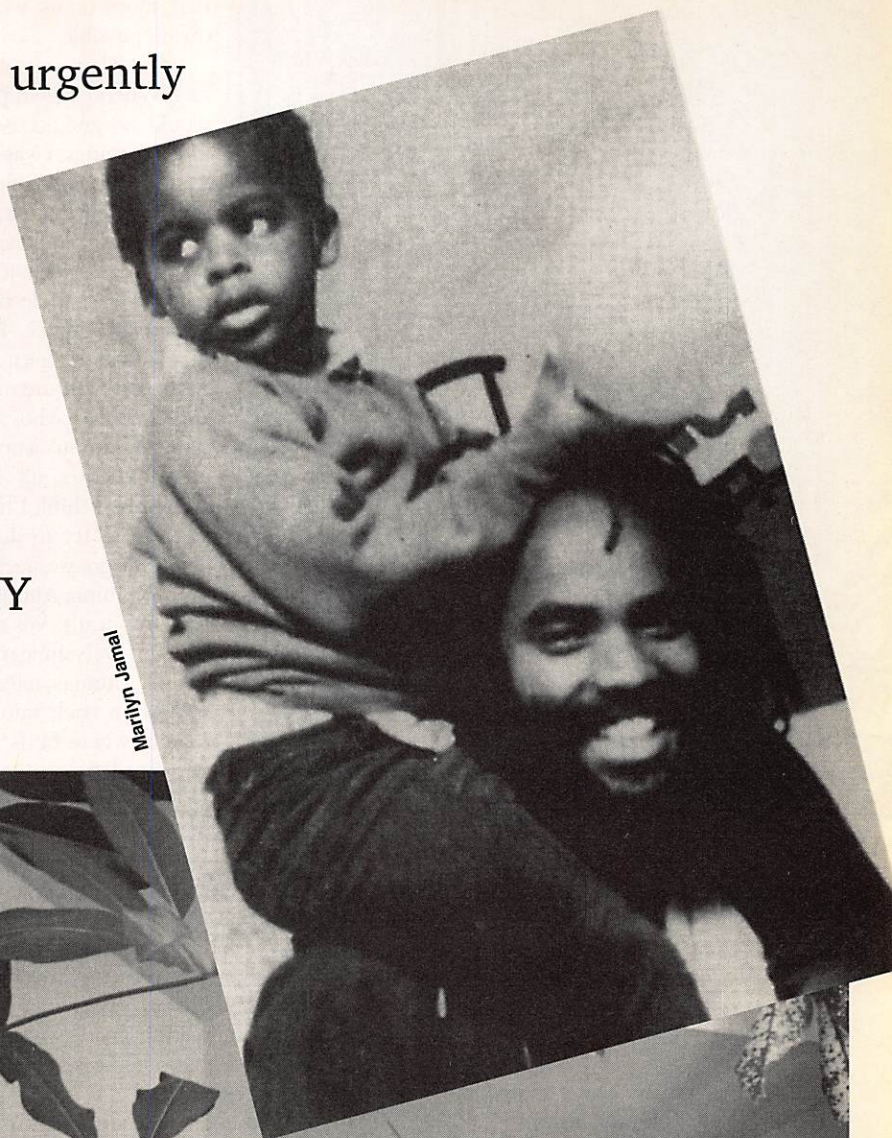
On this day, the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., I am reminded of all those who gave their lives for freedom. Most of the people who live on this planet are still not free. I ask only that you continue to work and pray to end oppression and political repression. It is my heartfelt belief that all the people on this earth deserve justice: social justice, political justice, and economic justice. I believe it is the only way that we will ever achieve peace and prosperity on earth. I hope that you enjoy your visit to Cuba. This is not a country that is rich in material wealth, but it is a country that is rich in human wealth, spiritual wealth and moral wealth.

Respectfully yours,

Assata Shakur  
Havana, Cuba



Mumia's legal-defense team urgently needs money to pursue his appeal. Please make tax-deductible contributions payable to the Bill of Rights Foundation, earmarked "Jamal," and send to the Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, 163 Amsterdam Avenue, #115, New York, NY 10023-5001.



Marilyn Jamal



Eliana Levy





Elana Levy

*The following excerpts are from an exclusive interview that appeared on January 21, 1997, on "The Black World Today" website (www.tbwt.com). Journalist and activist, Elombe Brath, and Rosemari Mealy discussed the letter to the Pope and the issue of religion in Cuba with Assata Shakur:*

**Rosemari Mealy:** Many individuals who have been most hostile toward the Cuban Revolution have also been some of the first to criticize the Vatican's visit to Havana. Curiously, some other groups purporting to represent the New Jersey State Police have attempted to have you extradited back to the United States. Is your open letter in response to those news reports which were circulated last month to this effect?

**Assata Shakur:** This open letter is a response to that specific event, but it is a response to a larger issue, which is the issue of police brutality, of oppression. I have nothing whatsoever to say to the New Jersey State Police. I don't believe that they deserve a response since they sneakily wrote a letter to the Pope and refused to publish it or to assert publicly what their intentions were. I felt that I had to tell the Pope about my reality, and to talk about the reality in which I grew up, and in which my people are still living.

**RM:** I assume then that you found yourself in a unique situation. While as an internationalist, living in a country where the Pope is visiting, you also had access to having your letter delivered directly to him. This was something

that most of us would never dream possible.

**AS:** That's absolutely correct. When I was in prison they would say and accuse me of all kinds of things, I was not able to answer. I was not able to defend myself. I felt that since I could answer, and I could speak to the Pope, I could write to the Pope, that I needed to do that. Again, I want to reiterate, I don't feel that I'm talking for myself, but I think that there are many sisters and brothers who are in my same condition, whether it's in exile, whether it's in prison. Therefore, I think I have a duty to them to try to do all that I can. This goes especially to the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, who is facing death. We must work and do everything possible to ensure Mumia's release and to bring him back into the community where he is so desperately needed.

**RM:** With the Pope's arrival, the news in this country is inundated by perspectives from exiles and others who are ignorant of Cuba's revolutionary achievements. Having lived and visited there myself, I see how the airwaves and TV cameras have attempted to present Cuba as an island without hope or soul. From your perspective, and from observations made within your own community, what are the sentiments as you see them expressed?

**AS:** I think people are certainly very interested in hearing what the Pope has to say. I think that people in Cuba, in general, are interested in spirituality, and spirituality as it relates to social justice. The Pope has made many statements recently which have dealt very much with the current issues that people are facing around the world.... I think that the Pope has turned over a new leaf or grown, and that the whole so-called Cold War Era is coming to an end. I think that people are seeing that the construction of socialism and the practicing of religion has become more and more interactive. These two things are not contradictory by any means. The construction of socialism and the practicing of religion are more complementary than contradictory. People in Havana seem to be chilling out and enjoying the day, and feeling hopeful, because the people in Miami who have been so critical of the Revolution, who have been doing everything to promote counterrevolution are certainly not popular here. People do not see them as the bearers of religion, and they no longer can use religion to hide their counter-revolutionary activities.

**Elombe Brath:** One of the things being projected here relates to the big media spin regarding religion in Cuba. Yet you would think that with the Pope visiting, they would have to admit that it's not just Catholicism that exists in Cuba. A variety of denominations exist such as the Assemblies of God, the Protestants, and the Pentecostals, the Baptists, and also Santeria. Gloria Rolando's recent film, *Eyes on the Rainbow*, in which you are the subject, presented a very personal side of you showing that you have become more oriented toward our traditional African religion. What could you say about religion in Cuba?

**AS:** In the early 1990s, the Cuban Communist Party changed its position on religion, even though Cuba never discriminated against those who practiced religion. Inside of the party, people who had religious beliefs were not admitted. The party admitted that this was an error and began admitting people with religious beliefs and others who were already in the party and had practiced their beliefs clandestinely came out of the closet so to speak. This made for a healthy situation. I believe that the spirituality is one of the things which has helped the religion to survive. During all of the political struggles of Cuba going back to the struggles against Spanish colonialism, religion has been a very important factor, especially the African religions. Africans who practiced those religious beliefs during the war for independence in those tightly knit religious houses where they worked secretly to preserve the African rituals were able to secretly and clandestinely move to plot the war for independence against Spain. And the same things happened with the revolution that triumphed in 1959. Religion has been a very important part in my opinion of the Cuban revolutionary spirit. These times are very crucial in terms of religion and iaremore and more being divided along the lines of whether you are on the side of the oppressed or oppressor ... whether you are on the side of pomp and circumstance or whether you are on the side of those who have nothing....

**EB:** Assata, how would you directly address how the people in the United States can respond to your particular situation?

**AS:** I think the first thing that people need to do is to become involved. I believe that the only way that people like myself and others who are in prison or exiled will ever be "safe" is for people to build a strong movement around the issue of political repression. We must build a strong movement to free political prisoners. In conjunction, we must build a strong movement for amnesty for all of those people—those political activists—who were victimized by COINTELPRO.... We must demand freedom and amnesty for our political prisoners.



*In January of 1998, during the Pope's visit to Cuba, Assata agreed to do an interview with NBC journalist, Ralph Penza, about her letter to the Pope, her experiences in the New Jersey court system, and her views on the treatment of Blacks in the U.S. during the last 25 years. The interview, as edited and broadcast, read like something out of the Police Gazette. It catapulted Assata Shakur into the limelight once again, prompting the New Jersey State Police to state openly that they are willing to do whatever is necessary to have her brought back from Cuba. It also prompted an unprecedented intervention by Governor Christine Todd Whitman. Assata wrote a lengthy critique of the show, which stated, in part:*

I agreed to do this interview because I saw this secret letter to the Pope as a vicious, vulgar publicity maneuver on the part of the New Jersey State Police, and as a cynical attempt to manipulate Pope John Paul II. I have lived in Cuba for many years, and was completely out of touch with the sensationalist, dishonest, nature of the establishment media today. It is worse today than it was 30 years ago. After years of being victimized by the "establishment" media, it was naive of me to hope that I might finally get the opportunity to tell "my side of the story." Instead of an interview with me, what took place was a "staged media event" in three parts, full of distortions, inaccuracies, and outright lies. NBC purposely misrepresented the facts. Not only did NBC spend thousands of dollars promoting this "exclusive interview series" on NBC, they also spent a great deal of money advertising this "exclusive interview" on Black radio stations and also placed notices in local newspapers.... In an NBC interview, Governor Whitman was quoted as saying that "this has nothing to do with race, this has everything to do with crime." Either Governor Whitman is completely unfamiliar with the facts in my case, or her sensitivity to racism and to the plight of Black people and other people of color in the United States is at a sub-zero level....

The NBC story implied that Governor Christine Whitman raised the reward for my capture based on my interview with NBC. Whitman claimed that she was writing Janet Reno for federal assistance in my capture, based on what she saw in the NBC interview. The fact of the matter is that she has been campaigning since she was elected into office to double the reward for my capture....

Anybody who knows anything about New Jersey politics can be certain that her motives

are purely political. She, like Senator Robert Torricelli and several other opportunistic politicians in New Jersey, came to power, as part-time lobbyists for the Batista faction—soliciting votes from right-wing Cubans. They want to use my case as a barrier to normalizing relations with Cuba, and as a pretext for maintaining the immoral blockade against the Cuban people.

In what can only be called deliberate deception and slander, NBC aired a photograph of a woman with a gun in her hand implying that the woman in the photograph was me. I was not, in fact, the woman in the photograph.... It was a vile, fraudulent attempt to make me look guilty. NBC deliberately misrepresented the truth.... Not once have the New Jersey State Police, Governor Whitman, or NBC come forth and stated that I was not

## Governor Whitman ... and Senator Torricelli ... want to use my case as a barrier to normalizing relations with Cuba and as a pretext for maintaining the immoral blockade against the Cuban people.

the woman in the photograph, or that I had been acquitted of that charge....

In a clear attempt to discredit me, Col. Carl Williams of the New Jersey State Police was allowed to give blow-by-blow distortions of my interview. In my interview I stated that on the night of May 2, 1973, I was shot with my arms in the air, then shot again in the back. Williams stated, "that is absolutely false. Our records show that she reached in her pocketbook, pulled out a nine-millimeter weapon and started firing." However, the claim that I reached into my pocketbook and pulled out a gun, while inside the car, was even contested by Trooper Harper. Although in three official reports, and when he testified before the grand jury, he stated that he saw me take a gun out of my pocketbook, he finally admitted under cross-examination that he never saw me with my hands in a pocketbook, never saw me with a weapon inside the car, and that he did not see me shoot him.

The truth is that I was examined by three medical specialists: (1) A neurologist who testified that I was paralyzed immediately after being shot. (2) A surgeon who testified that "It was absolutely anatomically necessary that both arms be in the air for Mrs. Chesimard to

## THE INJUSTICE OF THE TRIAL

Assata was convicted in New Jersey as an accomplice to the murder of state trooper Werner Foerster and of atrocious assault on James Harper with the intent to kill. Under New Jersey law, if a person's presence at the scene of a crime can be construed as "aiding and abetting" the crime, that person can be convicted of the substantive crime itself. The state of New Jersey convicted Sundiata Acoli for these same murders after Assata was severed from the proceedings because of her pregnancy. The jury at Assata's trial for the same offenses was permitted to speculate that her "mere presence" at a scene of violence, with weapons in the vehicle, was sufficient to sustain a conviction—even though three neurologists testified at the trial that her median nerve had been severed by gunshot wounds, rendering her unable to pull a trigger, and that her clavicle had been shattered by a shot that could only have been made while she was seated in the car with her hands raised. Other experts testified that a neutron activation analysis administered by the police right after the shootout showed no gun residue on her fingers, meaning she had not shot a weapon. She was also convicted of possession of weapons—none of which could be identified as having been handled by her—and of the attempted murder of state trooper Harper, who had sustained a minor injury at the shootout.

It had been and is my view that it was the racism in Middlesex County, fueled by biased, inflammatory publicity in the local press before and throughout the trial, fanned by the documented government lawlessness, that made it possible for the white jury to convict Assata on the uncorroborated, contradictory, and generally incredible testimony of trooper Harper, the only other witness to the events on the turnpike. Harper's testimony as well as that of all the other state's witnesses was riddled with inconsistencies and discrepancies. On three separate official reports, including his grand jury testimony, Harper said that he saw Assata take a gun from her pocketbook, while in the car, and shoot him. He admitted, on cross-examination during both Sundiata's trial and Assata's trial, that he never saw Assata with a gun and did not see her shoot him—that, in fact, he had lied.

—Lennox Hinds



receive the wounds." The same surgeon also testified that the claim by Trooper Harper that I had been crouching in a firing position when I was shot was "totally anatomically impossible." (3) A pathologist who testified that "There is no conceivable way that it [the bullet] could have traveled over to hit the clavicle if her arm was down." He said it was impossible to have that trajectory.

The prosecutors presented no medical testimony whatsoever to refute the above medical evidence....

In an obvious maneuver to provoke sympathy for the police, the NBC series juxtaposed my interview with the weeping widow of Werner Foerster. While I can sympathize with her grief, I believe that her appearance was deliberately included to appeal to people's emotions, to blur the facts, to make me

look like a villain, and to create the kind of lynch-mob mentality that has historically been associated with white women portrayed as victims of Black people. In essence, the supposed interview with me became a forum for the New State Police, Foerster's widow, and the obviously hostile commentary of Ralph Penza....

As I watched Governor Whitman's interview, the one thing that struck me was her "outrage" at my joy about being a grandmother, and my "quite nice life," as she put it, here in Cuba. While I love the Cuban people and the solidarity they have shown me, the pain of being torn away from everybody I love has been intense. I have never had the opportunity to see or to hold my grandchild. If Governor Whitman thinks that my life has been so nice, that 50 years of dealing with racism, poverty,

persecution, brutality, prison, underground, exile, and blatant lies has been so nice, then I'd be more than happy to let her walk in my shoes for a while so she can get a taste of how it feels. I am a proud Black woman, and I'm not about to get on the television and cry for Ralph Penza or any other journalist, but the way I have suffered in my lifetime, and the way my people have suffered, only God can bear witness to....

It has been a long time since I have lived inside the United States. But during my lifetime I have seen every prominent Black leader, politician, or activist come under attack by the establishment media. When African Americans appear on news programs, they are usually talking about sports or entertainment, or they are in handcuffs. When we have a protest, they ridicule it, minimize it,

# IMMORAL BOUNTY

BY MICHAEL RATNER

Recent, widely publicized attempts by the United States government to extradite Assata Shakur from Cuba began with New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman's March 1998 letters to Attorney General Janet Reno and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright requesting that they pressure Cuba to return Assata. Whitman asked that any lifting of the embargo with Cuba be conditioned on Assata's return and that of 90 other claimed fugitives from the United States.<sup>1</sup> Whitman also offered a \$100,000 bounty to anyone who could bring her back. Whitman herself announced the reward on Radio Marti—a station set up by Congress to transmit to Cuba—and asked the Cuban people to help in the capture. Presumably the reward would be paid for Assata's capture and return, dead or alive. Such a morally offensive offer is

tantamount to a solicitation to kidnap or commit murder; it also violates the sovereignty of Cuba as well as international law. Imagine if Fidel Castro broadcast a radio message into the United States offering a similar reward for one of the many real terrorists the United States is shielding. It is likely Cuba would be bombed or invaded.

On April 2, Cuba forcefully turned down any request for Assata's extradition. A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, Alejandro Gonzalez, said Assata was "a civil rights activist." He stated that she would not be extradited, as the "government of Cuba has sufficient reasons to disagree with the charges against her and fears that she might be the target of unfair treatment." In other words, the Cuban government understands that Assata was railroaded: She was illegally stopped by racist New Jersey State police,<sup>2</sup> shot in the back with her hands in the air, tried by a jury inflamed by politicians and a press bent on her conviction.

The U.S. understands that Cuba has neither the intention nor the obligation to extra-

dite Assata, yet, in July 1998 the State Department insisted on her extradition, treating the request in a mocking, almost racist manner. When asked at a press conference about the extradition of Assata and others, spokesperson James Rubin replied: "There are several people involved here, and I'm fearing that I will mess up their names; but since they are prisoner-escapees, I'm not going to worry about it that much. [Laughs.] [Laughter.]"<sup>3</sup>

Is it any wonder the Cuban government worries that Assata was or may not be treated fairly?

Rubin then details Assata's alleged crime, and says there is a 1905 extradition treaty (amended in 1926) with Cuba, but it hasn't "been invoked, presumably because the Castro government won't abide by the treaties." An astute reporter then pointed out that "Cuba's response generally is that extradition is a two-way street and that there are a number of people accused of murder here in the U.S. that Cuba would like back." Rubin can make no meaningful response to the point; he can only mock Cuba by saying, "when there are murderers in Cuba, they send them to the United States ... [and] if we have a convicted murderer, they would simply be returning these people to the United States."

3. Department of State Press Conference of July 2, 1998.

**Michael Ratner** is an attorney who works with the Center for Constitutional Rights, and co-author, with Michael Steven Smith, of *Che Guevara and the FBI* (Ocean Press: Melbourne, 1997).

1. Even prior to the notoriety of the request for Assata's extradition, Congress had included a request for the "[e]xpulsion of criminals from Cuba" in the Helms-Burton statute. Section 113 reads: "The president shall instruct all United States Government officials who engage in official contacts with the Cuban government to raise on a regular basis the extradition of or rendering to the United States of all persons residing in Cuba, who are sought by the United States Department of Justice for crimes."

2. For some discussion of racial targeting, particularly by the New Jersey State troopers, see, for example, "Driving While Black," Peter Noel, *Village Voice*, June 9, 1998, p. 39; "Racial 'Profiling' at Crux of Inquiry into Shooting by Troopers," John Kifner and David M. Herszenhorn, *New York Times*, May 8, 1998, p. B1.



or cut the numbers of the people who attended in half. The news is big business and it is owned and operated by affluent white men. Unfortunately, they shape the way that many people see the world, and even the way people see themselves. Too often Black journalists and other journalists of color mimic their white counterparts. They often gear their reports to reflect the foreign policies and the domestic policies of the same people who are oppressing their people. In the establishment media, the bombing and murder of thousands of innocent women and children in Libya or Iraq or Panama is seen as "patriotic," while those who fight for freedom, no matter where they are, are seen as "radicals," "extremists," or "terrorists."

*Today, Assata Shakur's voice remains fresh*

*and strong. She refuses to be silenced even in exile. She poses even more of a threat as her messages are read on the Internet or in magazines like CovertAction Quarterly. Concerned about issues particularly those which affect the youth of this country, she extols:*

Like most poor and oppressed people in the United States, I do not have a voice. Black people, poor people in the U.S. have no real freedom of speech, no real freedom of expression, and very little freedom of the press. The Black press and the progressive media have historically played an essential role in the struggle for social justice. We need to continue and to expand that tradition. We need to create media outlets that help to educate our people and our children, and not annihilate their minds. I am only one woman. I own no

TV stations, or radio stations, or newspapers. But I feel that people need to be educated as to what is going on, and to understand the connection between the news media and the instruments of repression in America.

All I have is my voice, my spirit, and the will to tell the truth. But I sincerely ask those of you in the Black media, those of you in the progressive media, those of you who believe in truth and freedom, to publish my side of the story and to let people know what is happening. We have no voice, so you must be the voice of the voiceless. Free all Political Prisoners.

I send you Love and Revolutionary Greetings From Cuba, One of the Largest, Most Resistant and Most Courageous Palenques (Maroon Camps) That has ever existed on the Face of this Planet. ■

# FOR ASSATA

There are, however, both legal and political answers to the U.S. extradition request. Even assuming the treaty is still valid, it contains an absolute exception to extradition for crimes that are of a "political character."<sup>4</sup> Assata's claimed offense clearly fits within this exception and the Cuban government has said so. Moreover, the treaty states that this decision is solely that of the Cuban government and its determination is final.<sup>5</sup> There would also seem to be serious questions regarding the United States' continued reliance on this treaty after it has repudiated other treaties with Cuba, organized and supported the Playa Giron invasion, embargoed the country in an effort to strangle it economically, cut off diplomatic relations and labeled it a terrorist state. But, for the United States political grandstand-

ing, inconsistency, and decisions made for its own benefit are not unusual.

Even apart from her innocence, it is politically hypocritical for the United States to insist on Assata's extradition or that of any other of the 90 so-called fugitives. If there is a place terrorists can call home, it is the United States. Its history is hardly honorable. It was a welcome home to many prominent Nazis, particularly scientists that the U.S. used in its own production of weapons of war. Today it gives refuge to criminals who have attacked and murdered scores if not hundreds of Cubans. Most notorious of these is Orlando Bosch, living in Miami, who was convicted of blowing up a Cubana airliner killing 76 people, including the young Cuban fencing team. And what of the agents of the CIA who planned and paid for numerous sabotage and terrorist attacks in Cuba?

But the U.S. is not only a home for Cuban terrorists. Living among us is Emanuel Constant, the former head of the Haitian paramilitary organization FRAPH; its members tortured and murdered hundreds in the aftermath of the 1991 coup in Haiti. During the coup, Constant was on the CIA payroll. After the coup, the U.S. labeled FRAPH terrorist, yet refused a Haitian extradition request, and the State Department stopped his deportation back to Haiti. And what of the Salvadoran General José Guillermo García and the head of

El Salvador's national guard, General Vides Casanova, who according to the United Nations covered up and protected the murderers of the three nuns and lay worker in El Salvador. They obtained political asylum and are living well in Palm Coast, Florida. The U.S. has laid out a welcome mat for other terrorists, including General Hector Gramajo, accused of killing as many as 10,000 Guatemalan Indians; General Prosper Avril, a former dictator of Haiti, responsible for the torture of opposition leaders; and Sintong Panjaitan, an Indonesian general, responsible for the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre in East Timor that killed hundreds. But these are only a few terrorists who the U.S. has welcomed; scores more are probably unknown to the public, hidden in the U.S. after carrying out its bidding overseas.

Yet despite the hypocrisy of the United States and Cuba's unwavering support for Assata and her innocence, this effort to pressure Cuba must be taken seriously by all who care about the cause of justice. Ideologues and opportunists in the U.S. Congress may try to condition more open and fair relations with Cuba on its agreement to extradite Assata and others who have been granted asylum. While Cuba would not acquiesce to such conditions, it could put Assata in an uncomfortable situation. So the fight for Assata and for Cuba must continue! ■

4. Article VI of the treaty states: "A fugitive criminal shall not be surrendered if the offense in respect of which his surrender is demanded be of a political character, or if it is proved that the requisition for his surrender has, in fact, been made with a view to try or punish him for an offense of a political character." Interestingly, after the revolution it was the United States that first invoked this "political offense" exception to shield two escaped murderers who had been convicted of killing a prominent member of the Cuban Communist Party. *Ramos v. Diaz*, 179 F. Supp. 458 (1959).

5. Article VI states: "If any question shall arise as to whether a case comes within the provisions of this article, the decision of the authorities of the government on which the demand for the surrender is made, or which may have granted the extradition shall be final."



# Cuba, the U.S., and this thing called democracy

by William Blum

**D**uring the Clinton administration, the sentiment has been proclaimed on so many occasions by the president and other political leaders, and dutifully reiterated by the media, that the thesis: "Cuba is the only non-democracy in the Western Hemisphere" is now nothing short of received wisdom in the United States.

Let us examine this thesis carefully for it has a highly interesting implication.

During the period of the Cuban revolution, 1959 to the present, Latin America has witnessed a terrible parade of human rights violations—systematic, routine torture; legions of "disappeared" people; government-supported death squads picking off selected individuals; massacres en masse of peasants, students, and other groups, shot down in cold blood. The worst perpetrators of these acts during all or part of this period have been the governments and associated paramilitary squads of El Salvador, Guatemala, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Uruguay, Paraguay, Haiti, and Honduras.

## HUMAN RIGHTS IN CUBA

Not even Cuba's worst enemies have charged the Castro government with any of these violations, and if one further considers education and health care—both of which are guaranteed by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms—areas in which Cuba has consistently ranked at or near the top in Latin America, then it would appear that during the near-40 years of its revolution, Cuba has enjoyed one of the very best human-rights records in all of Latin America.

If, despite this record, the United States can insist that Cuba is the only "non-democracy" in the Western Hemisphere, we are left with the inescapable conclusion that this thing called "democracy," as seen from the White House, may have little or nothing to do with many of our most cherished human rights. Indeed, numerous pronouncements emanating from Washington officialdom over the years make plain that "democracy," at best, or

at most, is equated solely with elections and civil liberties. Not even jobs, food and shelter are part of the equation.

Thus, a nation with hordes of hungry, homeless, untended sick, barely literate, unemployed, and/or tortured people, whose loved ones are being disappeared and/or murdered with state connivance, can be said to be living in a "democracy"—its literal Greek meaning of "rule of the people" implying that this is the kind of life the people actually want—provided that every two or four years they have the right to go to a designated place and put an X next to the name of one or another individual who promises to relieve their miserable condition, but who will, typically, do virtually nothing of the kind. Provided further that in this society there is at least a certain minimum of freedom—how much being in large measure a function of one's wealth—for one to express one's views about the powers-that-be and the workings of the society, without undue fear of punishment, regardless of whether expressing these views has any influence whatsoever over the way things are.

It is not by chance that the United States has defined democracy in this narrow manner. Throughout the Cold War, the absence of "free and fair" multiparty elections and adequate civil liberties were what marked the Soviet foe and its satellites. These nations, however, provided their citizens with a relatively decent standard of living as to employment, food, health care, education, etc., without omnipresent Brazilian torture or Guatemalan death squads. At the same time, many of America's Third World allies in the Cold War—members of what Washington still likes to refer to as "The Free World"—were human-rights disaster areas, who could boast of little other than the 30-second democracy of the polling booth and a tolerance for dissenting opinion so long as it didn't cut too close to the bone or threaten to turn into a movement.

## COLD WAR PROPAGANDA

Naturally, the only way to win Cold War propaganda points with team lineups like these, was to extol your team's brand of virtue and damn the enemy's lack of it, designating the former "democracy" and the latter "totalitarianism."

Needless to say, civil liberties and elections are not trifling accomplishments of mankind.

Countless individuals have suffered torture and death in their pursuit. And despite the Cold War blinkers, which even today limit the United States' vision of this thing called democracy, there would still be ample credit due Washington if, in fact, in the post-World War II period, the U.S. had been using its pre-eminent position in the world, its overwhelming "superpower" status, to spread these accomplishments—to act as the unfailing global champion of free and fair elections, multiple parties, a free press, a free labor movement, habeas corpus, and other civil liberties icons. The historical record, however, points in the opposite direction.

## SUPPORTING DICTATORSHIPS

Although the words "freedom" and "democracy" rolled easily and routinely off the lips of American leaders, American policies habitually supported dictatorships. Indeed, it would be difficult to name a brutal right-wing dictatorship of the second half of the twentieth century that was not supported by the United States—not merely supported, but often put into power and kept in power against the wishes of the populace.

As numerous interventions have demonstrated, the engine of American foreign policy has been fueled, not by a devotion to democracy, but rather by the desire to:

- 1) make the world safe for American transnational corporations;
- 2) enhance the financial statements of defense contractors at home who have contributed generously to congresspeople;
- 3) prevent the rise of any society that might serve as a successful example of an alternative to the capitalist model;
- 4) extend political and economic hegemony over as wide an area as possible, as befits a "great power"; and
- 5) fight a moral crusade against what cold warriors convinced themselves, and the American people, was the existence of an evil International Communist Conspiracy.

Over the past 50 years, in striving to establish a world populated with governments compatible with these aims, the United States has—apart from monumental lip service—accorded scant priority to this thing called democracy. ■

William Blum is the author of *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1995), portions of which can be read at [http://members.aol.com/wblum6/American\\_holocaust.htm](http://members.aol.com/wblum6/American_holocaust.htm). To purchase, see p. 66.



# WHY DO THEY HATE US?

BY EDWARD S. HERMAN

**I** imagine this scenario: A major U.S. newspaper publishes an extensive interview with long-time Cuban refugee terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, in which Posada claims that his terrorist acts against Cuba over the past several decades have been funded by the Cuban American National Foundation, located in Miami. Posada, trained by the CIA for the Bay of Pigs invasion, asserts that he retains very good relations with U.S. officials, who look the other way as he organizes his terrorist operations. The paper describes several recent assassination attempts against Castro organized by Posada, and several weeks after the interview, the paper reports that a further assassination attempt by Posada had fallen through because of resentment by his collaborators at his "confession."

As a result of the interview, and based on other information on terrorist sites in Miami, the Cuban government carries out secret bombing raids on Miami, knocking out the CANF building and damaging other sites, with only a modest number of "collateral" casualties. The Cubans claim the right of self defense under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, noting the ongoing activities of Posada and his own admission that the United States tolerates, if it does not encourage his terrorist activities. President Clinton, Secretary of State Albright, and Defense Secretary Cohen, after considering the Cuban claims, acknowledge their justice and U.S. guilt and say that the United States will not retaliate but will instead clean out the terrorist sites.

Pretty far-fetched, isn't it? We would be outraged, and Cuba would be immediately bombed in retaliation. And in fact Cuba would never attack Miami, because it would expect such retaliation. But in terms of the logic of their case for bombing Miami, it is exactly that of the United States in bombing Afghanistan and the Sudan, and possibly more compelling because the terrorist attacks emanating from Miami have been going on for several decades.

The difference is that, as a superpower, we have taken upon ourselves the right to exercise force, and to ignore legal processes, that seem grotesque when applied by others. This superior right is so ingrained that the public doesn't see the gross double standard involved, and they don't see that it is self-serving. The

guy." What has driven us in these cases has hardly been generosity or a devotion to democracy; it has been the importance of oil and the access to and favorable climate for investment provided by the dictators. In both Saudi Arabia and Indonesia our policies have put us into an antagonistic relationship to popular and democratic forces in those countries.

Nevertheless, the media here do not focus on this double standard and our de facto support of convenient tyrants (for many years, even decades, including Mobutu, Marcos, the Somoza family, the Duvaliers, and Trujillo).

Our double standards and opportunism go farther. In the deeply troubled Middle East, the United States not only protects the Saudi and other family dictatorships, it imposed the dictatorship of the Shah on Iran by a U.S.-organized coup in 1953, and in the 1980s it actively supported Saddam Hussein, even helping him obtain and use "weapons of mass destruction," as he fought Iran and attacked his own Kurds. The discovery that he was a bad man by invading Kuwait in 1990, and the subsequent war and extended boycott imposed on Iraq in the 1990s, may strike others as hypocritical and opportunistic. Similarly, the fact that the U.S. allows Israel alone to maintain a nuclear arsenal, and protects each and every one of its incursions into Lebanon, and steady dispossession of Palestinian homes, land, and water, arouses immense anger in the Middle East.

The American people are largely protected from understanding why large numbers hate us by politicians and pundits who demonize our enemies, stress the positives—and we do decent things, and support democracies, when not in conflict with business demands—and refuse to admit the elements of self-interest, opportunism, and double standards in our actions, that are so obvious to many people abroad. ■



**US funded terrorist Luis Posada continues his bombing campaign against Cuba.**

*Prensa Latina*

media cause the public to think that our behavior abroad is disinterested and generous. This applies to other matters. For example, we claim to be boycotting Cuba in the interest of "democracy," and even passed a "Cuban Democracy Act." But there is no "Saudi Democracy Act," and for 32 years we were closely allied with the Suharto dictatorship in Indonesia. Suharto was referred to by a Clinton administration official in 1995 as "our kind of



Publishers' Note: We have always believed that critical analysis of the mainstream media and of government contrived disinformation is an essential part of the purpose and function of this magazine. While nearly any analysis of current or historical events will touch upon the media and the role they play in transforming the views of the rich and powerful into "conventional wisdom," the subject deserves its own treatment.

It has been some time since CovertAction Quarterly has devoted space to such specific analyses, a lack we intend to correct. In this issue, we commence with an overview by Michael Parenti, one of the finest media critics and political scientists in this country. It has many helpful suggestions on how to read the establishment press.

To demonstrate the application of the principles he elucidates to a spe-

cific example, we present Thomas Deichmann's report on the coverage of the war in the Balkans and the vicious attacks he faced when he showed that the "picture that fooled the world" was an astonishing misrepresentation. He also challenges what has become known as the "journalism of attachment," the view that some journalists, deciding who is right and who is wrong, are taking the moral high road by ignoring or distorting evidence that reflects badly on those who they have decided are the victims, to bolster their contrary position.

Finally, although our dear friend Ron Ridenhour's untimely death in May was a great tragedy, we are honored to present an appreciation of his lifetime of courageous groundbreaking investigative reporting by one of his closest friends.

# MEDIA EVASIONS

BY MICHAEL PARENTI

We often think of the news media as sensationalistic and intrusive. In fact, the press's basic modus operandi is evasive rather than invasive. More important than the sensationalistic hype is the artful avoidance.

**Omission.** The most common form of news evasion is outright omission. Information and analysis that reflects poorly upon the higher circles are least likely to see the light of day. Sometimes not just vital details but the entire story is suppressed. Thus, in 1965 the Indonesian military-trained, financed, and advised by the U.S. national security state—overthrew President Achmed Sukarno and eradicated the Indonesian Communist Party and its allies, killing half a million people (some estimates are as high as a million) in what was the greatest act of political mass murder since the Nazi Holocaust. The generals destroyed hundreds of clinics, libraries, schools, and community centers that had been opened by the communists. Here was a truly sensational—as opposed to sensationalistic—story if ever there was one, but it took three months before it received passing mention in *Time* magazine and yet another month before it was reported in the *New York Times*, accompanied by an editorial that actually praised the Indonesian military for "rightly playing its part with utmost caution."<sup>1</sup>

Information about the murder and torture perpetrated by U.S.-sponsored surrogate forces

in the Third World, about the CIA's longtime involvement in drug trafficking, and about most other crimes committed by the U.S. national security state are either omitted from the mainstream media or denied by media editorialists and commentators with a vehemence and unanimity that would be called "totalitarian" were it to occur in some other countries.

**Labeling.** A label predefines a subject by simply giving it a positive or negative tag without benefit of any explanatory details. Some positive labels are: "stability," "the president's firm leadership," and "a strong defense." Some negative ones are: "leftist guerrillas," "Islamic terrorists," and "conspiracy theorists." The press itself is falsely labeled "the liberal media" by the hundreds of conservative columnists and commentators who crowd the communications universe while claiming to be shut out of it. In the June 1998 California campaign for Proposition 226, a measure designed to cripple the political activities of organized labor, union leaders were repeatedly labeled as "union bosses," while corporate leaders were never called "corporate bosses."

A strikingly deceptive label is "reform," whose meaning is inverted and misapplied to the dismantling of social reforms. So the media talked of "welfare reform" when referring to the elimination of family assistance programs. Over the last 30 years, "tax reform" has repeatedly served as a deceptive euphemism for laws that have reversed the progressive tax reforms of past generations by reducing upper-income taxes, including inheritance taxes, corporate taxes, and capital gains, shifting the payment burden still more regressively upon middle and low income strata.

In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, "reform" has meant the expropriation of the public economy by private investors, complete with massive layoffs, the abolition of human services, and a drastic increase in unemployment and human suffering. So with "IMF reforms" throughout much of the Third World. Yet these "reforms" are portrayed in the media as bringing greater free-market prosperity to the targeted populations.

"Free market" itself is a pet label, evoking images of economic plentitude and democracy. In reality, free-market policies undermine the markets of local producers, provide state subsidies to multinational corporations, and create greater gaps between the wealthy few and the underprivileged many. Free markets are free for those who have lots of money.

A favorite negative label of late is "hardliner." Anyone who resists the heartless "reforms" of the free-market plunderers is deemed a hardliner. An article in the *New York Times* used "hardline" eleven times to describe Bosnian Serb leaders who opposed attempts by NATO forces to close down the "hardline Bosnian Serb broadcast network."<sup>2</sup> This repression of a network that was the only dissenting voice for ordinary Serbs in Bosnia was considered "a step toward bringing about responsible news coverage in Bosnia." The story did note "the apparent irony" of using foreign soldiers for "silencing broadcasts in order to encourage free speech." The troops, who shut down the stations, were labeled "NATO peacekeepers."

Michael Parenti's two most recent books are *America Besieged*, and *Blackshirts and Reds: Rational Fascism and the Overthrow of Communism* (both from City Lights Books).

1. *New York Times*, Apr. 4, 1966.

2. *New York Times*, Oct. 10, 1997.



It is no accident that “hardliner” and various other labels are never subjected to precise definition. The efficacy of a label is that it not have a specific content that can be held up to any test of evidence; better it be self-referential, evoking an undefined but distinctly evocative image.

**Preemptive Assumption.** Frequently the media accept as given the very policy position that needs to be debated. During the 1980s when the White House and the military-industrial complex proposed a sharp increase in military spending, the press discussed how much increase was needed. Absent was any opinion that called for substantial reductions in the arms budget. When policy elites call for cuts in Medicare or welfare or various other human services, media pundits discuss the amounts to be cut and the possible effects. The policy itself is preemptively accepted without critical debate.

Likewise with the public discussion on “Social Security reform,” a euphemism for the privatization and eventual abolition of a program that is working well. In the United States, Social Security operates as a three-pronged human service: In addition to retirement pensions, it provides survivors’ insurance (up until the age of 18) to children in families that have lost their breadwinner, and it offers disability assistance to persons of pre-retirement age who have sustained serious injury or illness. From existing press coverage you would never know the good that Social Security does. Instead the media assume the very thing that needs to be debated: that the program is in danger of collapsing (in thirty years) and therefore needs drastic “reform.”

**Face-Value Transmission.** One way to lie is to accept at face value what are known to be official lies, uncritically passing them on to the public without adequate confirmation. U.S. governmental and business leaders forever talk about “global leadership,” “national security,” “free markets,” and “reforms,” when what they mean is “All Power to the Multinationals.” And the media uncritically echo them, transmitting their loaded vocabularies and policy agendas to wider publics.

When challenged on this, reporters insist that they cannot inject their own personal ideology into their reports. Actually, no one is asking them to. My criticism is that they already do. Their conventional ideological perceptions usually coincide with those of their bosses and with officialdom, making them faithful purveyors of the prevailing political

orthodoxy. This confluence of bias is experienced as the absence of bias, and is described as “objectivity.”

**Slighting of Content.** One has to marvel at how the media can give so much emphasis to style and process, and so little to actual substance, so much focus on what policy will get through with no thought about who will benefit or be harmed by the policy, so much speculation about the future with hardly a glance at present politico-economic realities. A glaring example is the way elections are reported. The political campaign is reduced to a horse



Reuters / HO / Archive Photos

**Clandestine video of Indonesian soldier torturing East Timorese youth, part of evidence presented to U.N. by José Ramos Horta.**

race: Who will run? Who will win the nomination? Who will win the election? News commentators sound more like theater critics as they hold forth on what candidate is projecting the most positive image, and whose ads are most effective. The actual issues are accorded scant attention, and the democratic dialogue that is supposed to accompany a contest for public office rarely takes place.

Accounts of major strikes—on those rare occasions the press attends to labor struggles—offer a similar slighting of content. We are told how many days the strike has lasted, the inconvenience and cost to the company and the public, and how negotiations threaten to break down. Missing is any reference to the *content* of the conflict, the actual issues: the cutback in wages and benefits, loss of seniority, or the unwillingness of management to negotiate a new contract.

**False balancing.** In accordance with the canons of good journalism, the media are supposed to offer us both sides of an issue. In fact, both sides are seldom accorded equal prominence. One study found that on National

Public Radio, supposedly the most liberal of the mainstream media, right-wing spokespeople are often interviewed alone, while liberals—on the less frequent occasions they appear—are almost always offset by conservatives.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, *both* sides of a story are not necessarily *all* sides. Left-progressive and radical views are almost completely shut out. False balancing is evident in a BBC report that spoke of “a history of violence between Indonesian forces and Timorese guerrillas”—with not a hint that the guerrillas were struggling for their lives against an Indonesian invasion

force that had slaughtered some 200,000 Timorese.<sup>4</sup> Instead, a terrible act of aggression was made to sound like a grudge fight, with “killings on both sides.” By imposing a neutralizing gloss over the genocidal invasion and annexation of East Timor, the BBC announcer was introducing a distortion.

The U.S.-supported wars in Guatemala and El Salvador were often treated with the same false balancing. Both those who burned villages and those who were having their villages burned were depicted as equally involved in a contentious bloodletting. In an attempt to neutralize oneself, one neutralizes the subject matter and thereby drastically distorts it.

Looking at the Bright Side. It is sometimes amazing how the media will paint a positive picture if it is in keeping with what

the higher circles want us to believe. In a story about two former South Korean presidents who were being tried for crimes against their people, the *New York Times* reported: “While a relatively small number of South Koreans were tortured to death under Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh, the great majority of people gained immensely in economic terms during their rule.”<sup>5</sup> Imagine applying such a grotesquely upbeat observation to the U.S. context: “While a relatively small number of women are raped and murdered in America, the great majority have gainfully entered the job market.”

Another example might suffice. To assure us that the economy was doing fine during the late 1980s, an NPR report noted: “If you take food, fuel, and housing out of the equation, inflation has been really quite moderate.”<sup>6</sup> To be sure, if you remove a few other major items, it disappears altogether.

3. See report by R. B. Duboff in *In These Times*, Mar. 27, 1985.

4. BBC World News, Dec. 11, 1997.

5. *New York Times*, Dec. 4, 1995.

6. “All Things Considered,” National Public Radio, Apr. 17, 1989.



**Follow-up Avoidance.** When confronted with an unexpectedly heterodoxical response, media hosts quickly change the subject, or break for a commercial, or inject an identifying announcement: "We are talking with [whomever], who is associated with [whatever]." The purpose is to avoid going any further into a politically forbidden topic.

During the Pope's recent visit to Cuba, a BBC anchorperson enthused: "Christmas in Cuba: For the first time in almost forty years Cubans were able to celebrate Christmas and go to church!" She then linked up with the BBC correspondent in Havana, who observed, "A crowd of two thousand have gathered in the cathedral for midnight mass. The whole thing is rather low key, very much like last year." Very much like last year? Here was something that craved clarification. Instead, the anchorperson quickly moved to another question: "Can we expect a growth of freedom with the pope's visit?"<sup>7</sup>

On a PBS talk show, host Charlie Rose asked a guest, whose name escaped me, whether Castro was bitter about the historic failure of communism. No, the man replied, Castro is proud of what he believes communism has done for Cuba: advances in health care and education, full employment, and the elimination of the worst aspects of poverty. Rose looked at him stone-faced for an instant, then swiftly turned to another guest: "What impact will the Pope's visit have in Cuba?" Rose ignored the errant one for the rest of the program.<sup>8</sup>

**Framing.** The most effective propaganda relies on framing rather than on falsehood. By bending the truth rather than breaking it, using emphasis and other auxiliary embellishments, communicators can create a desired impression without departing too far from the appearance of objectivity. Framing is achieved in the way the news is packaged, the amount of exposure, the placement (front page or buried within, lead story or last), the tone of presentation (sympathetic or slighting), the headlines and photographs, and, in the case of broadcast media, the accompanying visual and auditory effects.

Newscasters use themselves as auxiliary embellishments. They cultivate a smooth delivery and try to convey an impression of detachment. They affect a knowing tone designed to foster credibility, voicing what I call "authoritative ignorance" as in remarks like: "How will this situation end? Only time will tell"; or "No one can say for sure." Sometimes trite truisms are palmed off as penetrating truths. So we are fed sentences like: "Unless the strike is settled soon, the two sides will be in for a long and bitter struggle." And:

"Because of heightened voter interest, election-day turnout is expected to be heavy."

**Learning Never to Ask Why.** Many things are reported in the news, but few are explained. Little is said about how the social order is organized and whose interests prevail. Instead we are left to see the world as do mainstream pundits, as a scatter of events and personalities propelled by happenstance, circumstance, confused intentions, and individual ambition—never by powerful class interests—yet producing effects that serve such interests with impressive regularity.

Passive voice and impersonal subject are essential rhetorical constructs for this mode of evasion. So we read or hear that "fighting broke out in the region," or "many people were killed in the disturbances," or "famine is on the increase." Recessions apparently just happen like some natural phenomenon ("our economy is in a slump"), having little to do with the profit accumulation process, the constant war of capital against labor, and the contradictions between productive power and earning power. As Marx noted: recessions occur because workers cannot make enough money to buy back the goods and services they produce. Needless to say, such heresies are rarely entertained in the press.

If we are to believe the media, stuff just happens. Referring to Los Angeles traffic problems, one NPR announcer observed that earlier in the century "LA had a labyrinth of electric cars" that spanned the entire metropolis, but it "disappeared as LA developed a massive freeway system."<sup>9</sup> In fact, the electric car system wasn't a "labyrinth" but one of the world's largest inter-urban electric rail systems, covering a 75-mile radius with three thousand quiet, pollution-free electric trains that carried 80 million people a year without major accidents. And it didn't just "disappear." General Motors and Standard Oil, using dummy corporations as fronts, purchased the system, scrapped its electric cars, tore down its transmission lines, and placed GM buses fueled by Standard Oil on LA's streets. Then came the corporate push for more cars and freeways, all at great cost to taxpayers in money and lives. The transformation of Los Angeles's transit system, and that of numerous other cities, involved active human agency in the form of powerful special interests. It was not something that just happened.

"Globalization" is another pet label that the media presents to us as a natural and inevitable development. In fact, globalization is a deliberate contrivance of multinational interests to undermine labor, consumer, and environmental regulations in various nations. If by "globalization" we mean the integration of the world's population in productive cooperation,

then what we actually are experiencing is *de*-globalization, an ever greater concentration of politico-economic power in the hands of an international investment class, accomplished under such arrangements as GATT, which divest the peoples of the world of any protective input.

**Never Going All the Way.** Taught to never ask why, we fail to associate social problems with the socioeconomic forces that create them, and we learn to truncate our own critical thinking. Imagine if we attempted something different. Let's say we tried to explain that wealth and poverty exist together not in accidental juxtaposition, but because wealth *causes* poverty, an inevitable outcome of economic exploitation both at home and abroad. How could such an analysis gain any exposure in the capitalist media or in mainstream political life?

Suppose we start with a particular story about how child labor in Indonesia is contracted by multinational corporations at near-starvation wage levels. In 1996, after decades of effort by some activists, this information finally did appear in the centrist mainstream press. Suppose we then crossed a line and said that these exploitative relations are backed by the full might of the Indonesian military government, which for more than 30 years was completely supported by the U.S. national security state, and that this support is not an aberration but is given to numerous other repressive governments. Then suppose we crossed that most serious line of all and instead of just deploring this fact we also asked *why* successive U.S. administrations have involved themselves in such unsavory pursuits throughout the world. Suppose we concluded that the whole phenomenon was consistent with the U.S. dedication to making the world safe for the free market and the giant multinational corporations. Such an analysis almost certainly would not be printed anywhere except in a few select radical publications. We crossed too many lines. Because we tried to explain the particular situation (child labor) in terms of a larger set of social relations (corporate class power), our presentation would be rejected out of hand as "ideological" or "Marxist."

In sum, the news media's daily performance is not a failure but a skillfully evasive success. Their job is not to inform but to *dis*inform, not to advance democratic discourse but to mute it. The media give every appearance of being vigorously concerned about events of the day, saying so much, meaning so little, offering so many calories and so few nutrients. When we understand this, we move from a liberal complaint about the press's sloppy performance to a radical analysis of how the media serve the ruling circles with much craft and craftiness. ■

7. BBC World News, Dec. 26, 1997.

8. The Charlie Rose Show, PBS, Jan. 22, 1988.

9. "Marketplace," National Public Radio, May 11, 1998.



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# Misinformation: TV Coverage of a Bosnian Camp

by Thomas Deichmann

In August 1992, media coverage of the Bosnian war gained unprecedented influence on decision-making processes in the West. Reports about horrifying conditions in camps run by the Bosnian Serbs galvanized world opinion. The visit to the camps at Omarska and Trnopolje by a British team from Independent Television News (ITN) on August 5, 1992, gave rise to the image of the Serbs as the new Nazis of the Balkans. The picture of an emaciated Muslim behind barbed wire, taken in Trnopolje camp by ITN and first broadcast on August 6, was seen as proof of the existence of Nazi-style concentration camps run by Bosnian Serbs.

The media coverage of Bosnian camps fueled the rapid escalation of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. From July 1992 onward, comparisons of the civil war in Bosnia to the Nazi past was the key message of many Western media reports. At the end of July, the then leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadzic, had agreed to permit a team of British journalists to visit the camps in Bosnia. Shortly after this invitation, Penny Marshall and Ian Williams from ITN and Ed Vulliamy from the *Guardian* arrived in the war zone. Their visit to the camp at Omarska was an oppressive experience, and also a disappointment. Marshall and Williams were annoyed because, despite Karadzic's promises, they were not allowed to enter all of the buildings.

After a dispute with the authorities, they departed for the last stop on their trip: Trnopolje, located only a few miles away and directly adjacent to the small town of Kozarac. In May 1992, Kozarac had been taken by Serbian units; many Muslim inhabitants had been killed and many more driven out, seeking refuge in the Trnopolje schoolhouse, the nearby community center, and the open area behind both buildings. In Trnopolje, the ITN reporters shot the pictures that were destined to have worldwide impact. The most significant

was that of an emaciated man, Fikret Alic, in a group of Muslims under the blazing sun, bare-chested, behind a barbed-wire fence.

## THE NAZI COMPARISON

The impact of this image on world opinion was profound because of the symbolic link with Nazi concentration camps. Marshall and Williams were the first to supply a suitable illustration for the comparisons to the Nazi past. The image of Alic behind barbed wire was reproduced worldwide in virtually every significant medium. It has become the "proof" of the existence of concentration camps in Bosnia, 50 years after the end of the Third Reich.

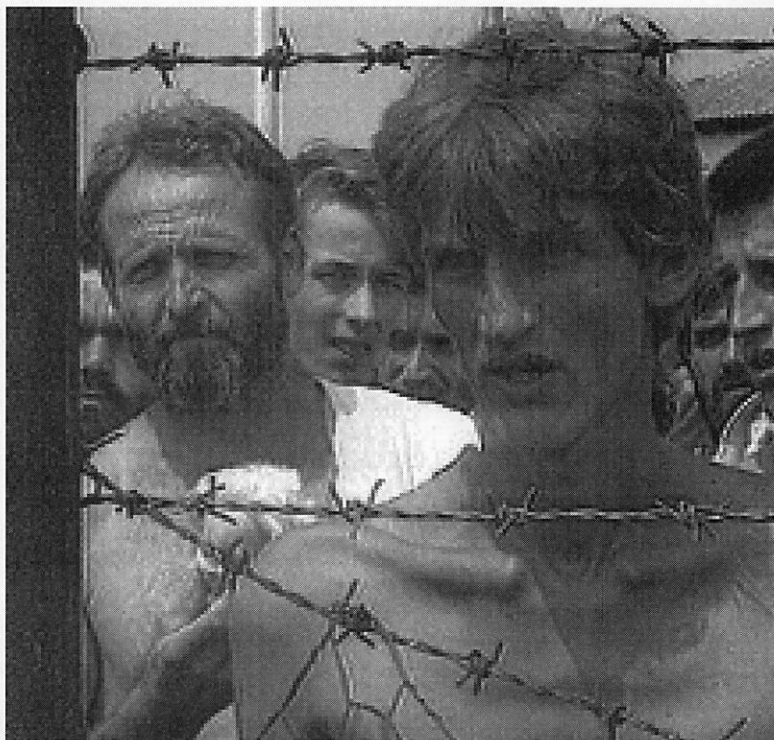
Marshall and Williams did not call Trnopolje a concentration camp, and both have expressed reservations about the way the images were interpreted. Ian Williams voiced

tion the barbed-wire fence in Trnopolje at all, and he stated that Trnopolje should not be called a concentration camp.<sup>2</sup> But regardless of what the British reporters said at the time, the image of Alic behind barbed wire told its own story. "The Proof" was the banner headline over the picture as published on August 7 by the *Daily Mail*. "Belsen '92" was how the *Daily Mirror* captioned the photograph the same day. In the United States, ABC News introduced its August 6 news item about the Bosnian camps with the comment, "Faces and bodies that hint at atrocities of the past. But this is not history, this is Bosnia. Pictures from the camps: A glimpse into Genocide."<sup>3</sup>

There were only a few critical comments on the disclosures of the British reporters. Phil Davison, a foreign correspondent who covered the war from both sides for the British daily *Independent*, explained: "Things had gone slightly quiet, suddenly we had death camps, we had concentration camp stories, we had direct comparisons with the Second World War. I felt at that stage, there was an exaggeration."<sup>4</sup>

U.S. politicians reacted as emotionally as the journalists. Tom Lantos (D.-Cal.), a member of the House Foreign Relations Committee, said in an interview for Channel Four on August 6: "I very much hope so that those horrendous pictures which are reminiscent of the concentration camps that the Nazis had during World War Two minus the gas chambers will stir public opinion both in Europe and the United States...."<sup>5</sup>

The broadcast of ITN's images led to a rapid response from international politicians at different levels. In an article entitled "How media misinformation led to Bosnian intervention," George Kenney, who resigned as the Yugoslav desk officer at the U.S. State Department in August 1992, gave his personal account of how the in-



his concerns in an interview with the British *Press Gazette* only a month after his visit to Trnopolje: "In a sense it's almost the power of the images going two steps ahead of the proof that went with them."<sup>1</sup>

Ed Vulliamy's first article on Omarska and Trnopolje was published in the British *Guardian* on August 7, 1992. He did not men-

tion the barbed-wire fence in Trnopolje at all, and he stated that Trnopolje should not be called a concentration camp.<sup>2</sup> But regardless of what the British reporters said at the time, the image of Alic behind barbed wire told its own story. "The Proof" was the banner headline over the picture as published on August 7 by the *Daily Mail*. "Belsen '92" was how the *Daily Mirror* captioned the photograph the same day. In the United States, ABC News introduced its August 6 news item about the Bosnian camps with the comment, "Faces and bodies that hint at atrocities of the past. But this is not history, this is Bosnia. Pictures from the camps: A glimpse into Genocide."<sup>3</sup>

2. Ed Vulliamy: "Shame of Camp Omarska," the *Guardian*, Aug. 7, 1992.

3. Cited in ITN *Lunch Time News*, London, Aug. 7, 1992.

4. Interview with Phil Davison in a Channel 4 documentary, "Journalists at war," London, Aug. 24, 1993.

5. Channel 4, "Seven O'clock News," London, Aug. 6, 1992.

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1. Interview with Ian Williams: "An image too strong for truth," *Press Gazette*, London, Aug. 1992.



terpretation that the world placed upon ITN's pictures of the Trnopolje camp helped Washington move to a war footing. Kenney wrote: "The first turning point, that led straightaway to the introduction of Western troops, coincided with ITN's broadcast of images of what was widely assumed to be a concentration camp, at the Bosnian Serb-run Trnopolje refugee collection center in August 1992."<sup>6</sup>

Kenney also noted that a wave of sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs from international organizations, up to and including the threat of military attack, was the direct result of ITN's coverage. Aroused by the barbed-wire picture, on August 18, the British government decided to make 1,800 British soldiers available for peace-making in the area of conflict.

In the U.S., presidential candidate Bill Clinton took the initiative in his campaign, making constant references to the ITN pictures and requesting military action against the Serbs. In Brussels, a NATO staff of advisers met on August 6 for an emergency meeting to speed up the planning of a military intervention in the Balkans. The ITN image of the barbed wire was to become a great influence on the later work of the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague. In the final report of the Commission of Experts, which was completed in summer 1994 to provide conclusions regarding the evidence of violations of humanitarian laws committed in the former Yugoslavia, the barbed wire in Trnopolje was mentioned several times.

In the first trial of the War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague, against the Bosnian Serb Dusko Tadic, which lasted from August to October, 1996, the barbed-wire fence and the famous ITN shot played a prominent role. Tadic was accused by an anonymous witness known only as "L" of participating in numerous atrocities in Trnopolje camp, where L said he had worked as a guard with Tadic and participated in the atrocities. During his testimony, L, who had been brought to the Tribunal from a Bosnian prison in Sarajevo, made a drawing to show how the barbed-wire fence allegedly enclosed the entire camp area. ITN rushes were presented to the court as further evidence for the prosecution.

Tadic's defense lawyer, Prof. Mischa Wladimiroff, who suspected L of lying, con-



Reuters / Jerry Lampen / Archive Photos

**Dusko Tadic, at his trial in The Hague in 1996.**

fronted him out of court; in the presence of a court official L broke down and admitted that he had made the entire story up. The official reported to the Judges, and all parties agreed his testimony would be withdrawn and disregarded. Nevertheless, Tadic was convicted of charges unrelated to Trnopolje, and the subliminal power of L's map and the ITN images survived unscathed. After the trial, Wladimiroff met with L, now identified as Dragan Opacic, who confessed that he had never worked at Trnopolje, but that he had been forced by the police in Sarajevo, who threatened to kill him and his whole family, to testify against Tadic. They showed him video tapes of Trnopolje to bolster his credibility. Among them were the ITN pictures of the barbed-wire fence.<sup>7</sup>

## **DIplomacy and Journalistic Activism**

The ITN coverage is a striking example of how quickly media reports can influence international diplomacy and military planning. Penny Marshall's barbed wire picture was certainly not the only reason for a new dynamism in the initiatives of Western governments. But it triggered an avalanche which brought others down with it.

In a unique situation in summer 1992 two trends converged. On the one hand, there was the general crisis of Western international diplomacy resulting from the end of the Cold War. The U.S. establishment in particular was confronted with the fact that its dominant role, based on institutional and political arrangements instituted after the Second World War, was called into question. The Bosnian war started in a period in which there were more uncertainties and competing ideas about the future of America's role in international relations than there were clear and consensual values.

On the other hand, a number of journalists were dissatisfied with the indecisiveness of their governments. They sensed a lack of purpose and a vacuum in international diplomacy and felt the need to intervene in this process. The notion that journalists should have a stronger obligation to put pressure on their own governments to make political and military decisions found a clear expression in discussions of the Bosnian war. In the introduction to a book on media coverage of the war, the editors stated:

"The conflicts in Bosnia focused frustration at the limits of international diplomatic action. Although the media rarely affected decisions, it sometimes placed those in the policy field under great pressure. In the absence of a clear and strong international, particularly Western, policy that there had been over the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, policy was characterized by indecision and a lack of cohesion."<sup>8</sup>

Some journalists explicitly redefined their job as one of morally and politically legitimizing more Western military intervention as the only solution. To a certain extent, they tried to fill a vacuum in international diplomacy.

To what extent and why the ITN pictures had such an impact on decision-makers in Western governments was discussed by media experts. Even many who would argue that governments in general are resilient in the face of intense media pressure and do not alter policy to meet the demands of the press—a view that is shared by this author—argued that the ITN broadcast was an exceptional instance in which policy indeed was changed as a result of media reports. The editors of *Bosnia by Television* concluded with reference to research done by Nik Gowing that "the most significant example of this was the ITN reporting on

6. George Kenney, "How media misinformation led to Bosnian intervention," *LM*, No. 99, Apr. 1997, p. 12; see also George Kenney's editorials at <http://www.idsonline.com/gkenney>.

7. Interview with Mischa Wladimiroff by Thomas Deichmann, "They were looking for the best picture," *LM*, No. 97, Feb. 1997, p. 27.

8. James Gow, Richard Paterson, and Alison Preston, eds., *Bosnia by Television* (London: British Film Institute, 1996), p. 2.



Bosnian Serb concentration camps in the summer of 1992.”<sup>9</sup> Gowing summarized the reactions of Western leaders as “policy panic,”<sup>10</sup> a view shared by George Kenney, who wrote about State Department public affairs officials being “in a nuclear panic.”<sup>11</sup>

From the beginning, there were a few journalists and officials who warned about negative consequences resulting from the dynamic created by the ITN reports. Nik Gowing noted that the ITN broadcast was not seen by everybody as having a positive result for the Bosnian Muslims. He referred to humanitarian organizations who voiced the criticism that the pressure of ITN’s reports actually furthered Serbian ends, because refugees were moved out of camps and out of Bosnia. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) observed that, because of the international excitement generated by the ITN reports, every chance had been lost to attain a solution enabling the Muslims to stay in this region.<sup>12</sup>

## AN ASTONISHING MISREPRESENTATION

Four and a half years later, I discovered that ITN’s coverage was not as accurate as suggested. The central image of the barbed wire in Trnopolje—what British newspapers called “Belsen ‘92”—was misleading. The fact is that Alic and the other men in the famous picture were not encircled by a barbed-wire fence. There was no barbed-wire fence surrounding the Trnopolje refugee and transit camp. The barbed wire was only around a small compound next to the camp, which had been erected before the war to protect agricultural products and machinery from thieves, and which the journalists had entered.

Penny Marshall and her team got their famous pictures by filming the camp and the Bosnian Muslims from *inside* this compound, shooting through the compound fence at people who were actually standing *outside* the area fenced in with barbed wire. It was almost by accident that I discovered this. Prof. Wladimiroff was the first to tell me that he did not believe the barbed-wire fence encircled the entire camp at Trnopolje. A few days later, my wife and I were looking at the picture when she observed that the barbed wire appeared to be nailed from the inside, the “prisoner’s” side, which I knew from having worked as a gardener, was not the usual practice. I then began intensive research, studied the ITN outtakes, visited Trnopolje, and interviewed former guards and civilians from the area.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

10. Nik Gowing, “Real-time TV coverage from War. Does it Make or Break government Policy?” in *ibid.*, p. 89.

11. Kenney, *op. cit.*, n. 6, p. 12.

12. Nik Gowing, “Real-time television coverage of armed conflicts and diplomatic crises: Does it pressure or distort foreign policy decisions?” Working Paper 94-1, June 1994, Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The unedited ITN rushes I obtained show clearly from where the famous shot was taken. Also the Tribunal in The Hague and the ICRC confirmed that there was no barbed wire around the camp. Ultimately, ITN admitted that there had been no barbed wire around the Trnopolje camp. In March 1997 ITN solicitors read a statement to the British High Court saying that ITN’s reports “did not describe the camp as ringed with barbed wire....”<sup>13</sup>

An analysis of the role played by the famous ITN image raises several questions of concern for the media. The crucial piece of evidence allegedly supporting the assumption that Nazi-style concentration camps were maintained in Bosnia was entirely problematic. Nevertheless, the outcome of the developments in the summer of 1992 was that journalists felt they had an unprecedented influence on politics and firmly believed they had taken the high moral road.

Some reporters got further lost in simplistic attempts to cover a complex civil war, blaming the Serbs for whatever happened. Veteran BBC war reporter Martin Bell, criticizing the media’s approach to the “siege” of Sarajevo, stated: “One thing these stories all had in common was that they tended to reinforce the stereotype of good Muslims and bad Serbs.... Some reporters’ sympathies were coopted so openly that they started to refer to the Serbs, in the language of the Bosnian presidency, as ‘aggressor forces.’ The Serb’s case, even if they had one, went unheard.”<sup>14</sup>

Nik Gowing characterized some of the strongly anti-Serb reporting in Bosnia as “a secret shame” for the journalism community: “I think there is a cancer now affecting journalism.... I think it is the unspoken issue of partiality and bias in foreign reporting.”<sup>15</sup> Gowing’s statement as well as the hostile reactions by some colleagues to my revelations refer to a trend, in which journalists take sides and adopt a moral mission rather than doing their traditional job as war reporters.<sup>16</sup> In a time of uncertainty and lack of direction, journalists were seeking new moral absolutes and arguments to put their own governments under pressure to intervene in the Balkans.

In an interview, Peter Handke, a well-known Austrian writer, was asked why he be-

lieved that he had become the target of a witch-hunt by leading European intellectuals and newspapers after publishing a travelogue of the former Yugoslavia in early 1996, which questioned the way that the Serbian people had been demonized in discussions of the Balkan war.<sup>17</sup> The author replied: “I don’t like to theorize or politicize, but Serbia was probably what corresponded to the inner emptiness of many people, who otherwise no longer have any commitment, any passion or, above all, any vision. The artificially created aggressor Serbia and the tunnel vision it produced then came along and filled the emptiness.”<sup>18</sup>

This trend has brought forth a new code of conduct regarding what can and cannot be said. The moral agenda of journalists has created an orthodoxy that no one is allowed to challenge. If you do so you not only risk becoming a target of smear campaigns, you are silenced. Gowing noted, “There is something rather taboo, or even heretic...to talk about this in media circles.”<sup>19</sup>

## LEGAL BATTLES

There is also, it seems, a far greater willingness to take legal action against critics of the consensus. That is what happened in Britain. ITN’s response to the publication of my article, “The Picture That Fooled the World” in *LM* magazine in February 1997 was to sue the editor, the publisher, and the magazine for libel. The article had been published in various versions in four countries, including prestigious papers like *Weltwoche* in Switzerland and *Standard* in Austria, well before it came out in Britain. But only in the U.K. was there a legal basis for a libel writ—not against the German author but against the English magazine. ITN used the repressive British libel laws to hinder an important discussion for the media profession. Whereas in many other countries the subject was widely discussed in a controversial but mainly constructive fashion, in Britain the risk of being sued by ITN stopped several journalists from covering the story. Articles that did appear were often only part of a smear campaign against the author and the magazine.

ITN has become the subject of some criticism, however. Harold Evans, former editor of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* stated that “it is a shame that it [ITN] did not choose to seek redress against *Living Marxism* in a television confrontation...rather than by issuing writs and apparently silencing discussion of a complex situation.”<sup>20</sup>

13. See ITN’s statement concerning the High Court apology by Two-Ten Communication to ITN, Apr. 17, 1997, 1997-M-No.354; this and other documents and articles concerning the controversy are on LM’s website: <http://www.informinc.co.uk/LM-vs-ITN>.

14. Martin Bell, *In Harm’s Way: Reflections of a War-Zone Thug* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), pp. 99-100.

15. Nik Gowing, speaking at a meeting organized by the International Center for Humanitarian Reporting in Boston; *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 1997; see also at <http://www.latimes.com/archives>.

16. For a critique of this trend, see: Mick Hume, *Whose war is it anyway? The dangers of the Journalism of Attachment* (London: JP Graphics, 1997).

17. Peter Handke, *A Journey to the Rivers: Justice for Serbia* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997).

18. Interview with Peter Handke by Thomas Deichmann, “When you ask questions, they scream, vilify and denounce,” *LM*, No. 91, June 1996, p. 17.

19. See n. 15.

20. Harry Evans, “The charge of freedom,” *The Guardian*,





**The other side of the war: May 1993, Sarajevo: The participants in the "Miss Besieged Sarajevo 93" beauty pageant, holding a banner that reads, "Don't Let Them Kill Us."**

AP / Wide World Photos

Additionally an open letter signed by prominent journalists and academics including Noam Chomsky and Phillip Knightley appeared in the U.K. *Press Gazette* and *The Spectator* encouraging "all journalists to support LM against the libel writ and defend a free press and open debate."<sup>21</sup> Knightley further called it a "case of historical importance. A win for ITN will be a blow to free speech."

The publishers of LM have launched an "Appeal in Defence of Free Speech," which has won support from many prominent individuals such as Doris Lessing and William Boyd. Even Martin Bell, who had been attacked by LM editor Mick Hume for his concept of a "Journalism of Attachment," concluded: "I think it was wrong of ITN to take LM to court. I have often been libeled but have never sued. I think it is wrong for journalists to do so."<sup>22</sup>

An international campaign to support LM and press freedom was also started in Germany. Hundreds of individuals have signed an Appeal launched by individuals like the

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the head of the German Union for Journalists, Detlef Henschel, the General Secretary of the West German PEN, Johano Strasser, and the veteran "think tank" of the Social Democratic Party, Peter Glotz.

Despite the mounting criticism, ITN raised the stakes in July 1997 and accused LM of "express malice"—a charge which takes the case further away from an investigation into the factual evidence and carries the threat of punitive damages if accepted by the Court. LM's legal coordinator, Helen Searls, warned that this latest ITN move represents an ominous new use of libel laws to impose yet further restrictions on free speech: "ITN wants to punish LM ... to pursue LM for having a bad attitude."<sup>23</sup>

It seems ironic that ITN, which has promoted its own human rights achievements, is prepared to silence its critics on the basis of English libel laws which, according to a recent U.S. court ruling, "fail to measure up to basic human rights standards and are repugnant to

public policy and the constitutional ideal of free speech."<sup>24</sup>

Hopefully, the implications of the questions related to ITN's barbed wire pictures from Trnopolje can soon be examined in full detail and openly debated without fear of being sued, even in the United Kingdom. ■

24. *Times* [London], December 2, 1997.

**Readers may support LM's  
legal defense by sending  
contributions, payable to  
Off The Fence Fund, to:**

**BM Off The Fence  
London WC1N 3XX  
United Kingdom**

June 22, 1997.

21. U.K. *Press Gazette*, May 9, 1997; *The Spectator*, May 3, 1997.

22. Letter from Martin Bell to the author.

23. Helen Searls, "No ordinary libel case," LM, No. 105, Nov. 1997.



# RON RIDENHOUR: A TRUE JOURNALIST

BY GEOFFREY F.X. O'CONNELL

## THEY LIE

What you have to understand  
about the government is that  
the motherfuckers lie.  
That's the first thing.  
They lie.  
About little things.  
About big things.  
About just about any goddamn thing  
you can think of when it serves their purpose.  
Don't get me wrong.  
You find honest people  
in the strangest places.  
So you never stop looking.  
But skepticism of a broad and deep range  
of government claims is a good thing.

—Ron Ridenhour

From March 1969, when Ron Ridenhour typed his first letter to Congress detailing the atrocities that came to be known as the My Lai Massacre, until his death this year on May 10 at age 52, he never failed to wield his words in the cause of justice.

As a young soldier drafted into the Army during the Vietnam War, Ridenhour risked his life, first as a door-gunner, hanging treetop level from bubble-topped helicopters, then as a "lurp" (Long Range Reconnaissance and Patrol), one of a small team choppered into remote and forbidding territory.

**Geoffrey F.X. O'Connell** was Ron's editor on investigative projects from 1972 to 1981, including work at the alternative newsweekly *New Times* in Phoenix. O'Connell is a freelance writer and television producer based in Stamford, Connecticut.

## UNCOVERING MY LAI

It was during his tour in Vietnam in 1968 that Ridenhour learned of the massacre at My Lai (then called "Pinkville" in the lexicon of "Charlie" Company) from a fellow soldier who was a participant. While still a soldier, he investigated the atrocity, in which, over a four-hour period, hundreds of unarmed old men, women, and children were gunned down by U.S. troops, who also committed numerous acts of torture and rape against the civilian population of the village. At great personal risk, Ridenhour sought out other participants and observers to the massacre and slowly put the pieces together.

Upon his release from the Army, he carefully compiled a letter (now known as the "Ri-

denhour letter"), addressed to the President and members of Congress, informing them that "something rather dark and bloody did indeed occur sometime in March 1968, in a village called 'Pinkville' in the Republic of Viet Nam." The letter contained specific facts, names (Lt. William Calley's name was spelled phonetically as "Kally"), and even the coordinates for the village's location. The specificity of detail in the letter forced the Army to begin an investigation, which was made public by Seymour Hersh, in the *New York Times*, on November 26, 1969. The ultimate public outcry once the massacre was exposed, helped to turn many Americans against the continuing war and gave credence to the anti-war movement.

Less than a year later, Ridenhour returned to Vietnam to become a freelance reporter, re-







Ridenhour, a soldier turned journalist, returned to Vietnam after exposing My Lai atrocities.

AP / Wide World Photos

maining there from August 1970 until July 1971, primarily as a stringer for *Time* magazine. During that time, he contributed his tenacity, passion, and relentlessness to a number of investigations, including major articles on the use of Agent Orange by American troops, the "fragging" of officers by enlisted men, and the U.S.-led invasion of Cambodia. He was unique among his colleagues—covering a war in which he had only recently been involved as a combatant.

Throughout his life, Ridenhour's constant refrain was that the My Lai massacre was "an operation, not an aberration." This premise was hotly disputed by U.S. military apologists who excused the massacre as the acts of a single "crazy" Lieutenant (Calley) or the spontaneous frustrations of war-weary soldiers who

simply "lost it." At the time of his death, Ridenhour was compiling Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for data on other massacres in other areas of Vietnam, to support his thesis that My Lai was only one of many and that it was an act of policy, not accident.

### NEW TIMES - 1970s

Ridenhour returned to his native Phoenix in the spring of 1972 and, while attending classes at Arizona State University, began writing for the alternative newsweekly *New Times*. During the next eight years, he also freelanced for *New Times Magazine* in New York and for CBS News.

Starting in 1974, Ridenhour exposed a substantial number of abuses of power:

- 1) The secret CIA proprietary airbase, Marana Intermountain Park in Tucson, Arizona;
- 2) Diversion to "counter-subversive measures" of federal funds earmarked to fight organized crime;
- 3) The use of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) to coordinate and fund domestic intelligence and counterinsurgency programs of the FBI, CIA and Pentagon;
- 4) The existence of "Cable Splicer," a linchpin of Operation Garden Plot, the Pentagon's sister program to the FBI's COINTELPRO and the CIA's CHAOS domestic surveillance and disruption programs;
- 5) Major safety and regulatory violations in the nuclear power industry;



6) Widespread acts of torture and brutality by New Orleans police;

7) Torture tactics used by the government of El Salvador against human rights activists and rebel sympathizers; and

8) U.S. government involvement in the formation of the militia movement.

One of his biggest stories began when he was traveling by train from Washington, D.C., to Virginia, and overheard two commuters alluding to a secret CIA airbase, known publicly as Marana Intermountain Air Park, in Tucson, Arizona. Ridenhour returned home and began digging.

After a check of Intermountain's annual corporate financial report, he concluded there were holes in the company's cover story that it was engaged in a commercial fire-fighting business. He was able to show that the Marana base, established as Intermountain in October 1961, was initially obtained for CIA use in connection with anti-Castro guerrilla operations in preparation for the Bay of Pigs assault. He published his findings in 1975 simultaneously in the Phoenix newsweekly *New Times* and the New York-based national magazine of the same name (but not ownership).<sup>1</sup>

During the course of his Marana investigation, Ridenhour developed new sources with information on other secret government operations and began a dialogue about domestic surveillance with three former law enforcement agents in the Tucson area. The former agents corroborated government documents adding a new twist to an old story.

"The new twist," wrote Ridenhour, "is that Federal money, earmarked for fighting 'organized crime,' was apparently channeled into 'anti-subversive' activity [in Tucson]. The LEAA seemed more than eager to help foot the bill through grants offered to Arizona police agencies."<sup>2</sup>

Ridenhour undertook a complete examination of LEAA grants in the state, concluding that, in his words, "after three years, \$600,000 and 40,000 hours, the Organized Crime Strike Force accomplished only the prosecution of four small-time desperados."<sup>3</sup> Diversion of money to "anti-subversive" activities undermined legitimate organized crime activity at a time when the state was the land fraud capital of the world and gangland slayings delineated turf. As a result of Ridenhour's work, the newly appointed Attorney General disbanded the Organized Crime Strike Force.

During the course of his LEAA investigation, Ridenhour was told by sources that the diversion of funds to counterintelligence pro-

grams was the tip of a national iceberg. One source, a former law enforcement officer, told Ridenhour that he had been part of a large gathering of military and police in California. "They gave speeches for two days, telling us all about how the revolution was coming, already started, in fact. About how the police would have to be the first line of defense until the Army could move in and take over," Ridenhour quoted the source as saying.<sup>4</sup>

## CABLE SPICER AND GARDENPLOT

Subsequently, Ridenhour and I devoted six months to preparing a 16-page special section on the domestic military counterinsurgency plan code-named "Cable Splicer." This was ground-breaking work and was the first major exposure of this plan to subvert civilian government with martial law. Ridenhour introduced the report with this perspective: "In 1971, Senator Sam Ervin's Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights revealed that Military Intelligence had established an intricate surveillance system covering hundreds of thousands of American citizens.... The subcommittee issued a report condemning the Pentagon's monitoring of the 'peaceful activities of non-violent citizens' whose only offense was 'to stand on their hind legs and exercise the rights they thought the Constitution guaranteed.' The subcommittee had seen only the tail of the monster."<sup>5</sup>

Ridenhour later uncovered another crucial piece of the puzzle, "Garden Plot." He wrote in a *New Times* expose: "It is a plan that outlines extraordinary police and military procedures to stamp out unrest in this country. Developed in a series of California meetings from 1968 to 1972, Cable Splicer is a war plan, adapting to American conditions numerous procedures used by the U.S. Army in Vietnam."<sup>6</sup>

4. "More Than Just a Game: The Cable Splicer Papers," *New Times* weekly, Nov. 19, 1975; and see "Garden Plot & SWAT: U.S. Police As New Action Army," *CounterSpy*, Winter 1976 (Vol. 2, Issue 4), p. 16.  
5. *Ibid.*, "More Than Just a Game...."  
6. *Ibid.*

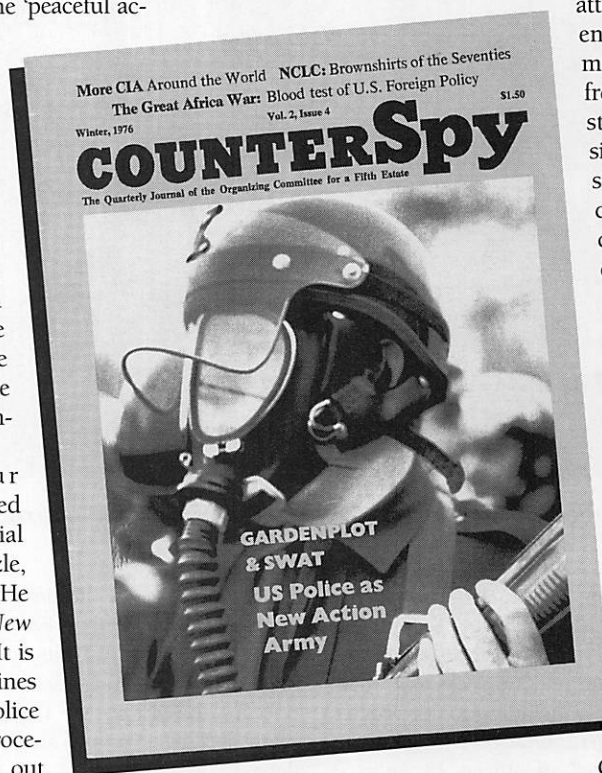
Ridenhour traced military involvement in domestic protest to the Detroit riots of 1967, the most destructive civil disturbances of the decade. Forty-three people died, several hundred were wounded, and more than 5,000 were left homeless. Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff of the Army, set up a task force to study "every aspect of the Army's role in civil disturbances."

How did the Pentagon define "militant groups"? Documents from their war games sessions that Ridenhour uncovered provide some idea. At the Cable Splicer III After Action conference, held in California in May 1970, Los Angeles Police Department Inspector John A. McAllister enumerated what he called "revolutionary criminology." Revolutionaries are all alike, he said, and guerrilla activity ranges from outings in the park and rock festivals to political assassinations.

Ridenhour characterized what he found in the secret documents about these domestic war games: "Cable Splicer I was conducted in California in May 1968, barely a month after the army task group became the Directorate.

The conference was attended by 307 law enforcement and military officials from all over the state. It was designed as a workshop seminar on civil disturbance control and as an organizational prelude to Cable Splicer II. Cable Splicer II was a bigger affair. It began on February 10, 1969, with the Governor's Orientation Conference, the kick-off for a series of joint military-police training sessions across the state of California."

The existence of such meetings was cause enough for alarm, but as Ridenhour combed the documents, a picture of a new anti-democratic culture emerged. He wrote: "Before an audience of 500—including generals from the Pentagon, the Sixth Army, and the National Guard, dozens of lesser officers, police chiefs and sheriffs from as far east as Washington, D.C., California state legislators, a dozen Military Intelligence officers, and executives from telephone, utility and defense-contract



1. "Yes, We Have No Maranas," *New Times Magazine*, July 1974, and *New Times* weekly, Aug. 21, 1974.

2. "Was the Mafia on Campus?" *New Times* weekly, Sept. 24, 1975.

3. *Ibid.*



companies—Governor Ronald Reagan took the microphone. It was a week after he had promised to keep California's universities open at the point of a bayonet, if necessary. 'You know,' he began, 'there are people in the state who, if they could see this gathering right now and my presence here, would decide that their worst fears and convictions had been realized—I was planning a military takeover.'"

Within five years, Governor Reagan became President Reagan, and his top Cable Splicer coordinator, Edwin Meese, became the nation's attorney general. Another key player in the California Cable Splicer exercises, Colonel Louis O. Giuffrida, commandant of the California Specialized Institute (CSTI) at San Luis Obispo. At CSTI, domestic war-gamers were trained in "Civil Emergency Management," i.e. the imposition of martial rule. Ridenhour, using government documents, reported that between September 1971 and May 1975 nearly 5,000 state and federal officials, and military and law enforcement personnel, had been trained at CSTI.

Ridenhour continued to pursue the progression of these stories through the next decade, paying close attention to Colonel Giuffrida, who followed his governor, Reagan, to Washington, D.C., to head the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). As reporters, Congress and the public increased its scrutiny of traditional intelligence and "anti-subversive" organizations, Ridenhour chronicled the changing rubric of civil disorder control, from the inflammatory, military-tinted pronouncements of the early Cable Splicer conferences to the linguistically laundered rhetoric promulgated under agencies such as FEMA.

## "DEMILITARIZATION"

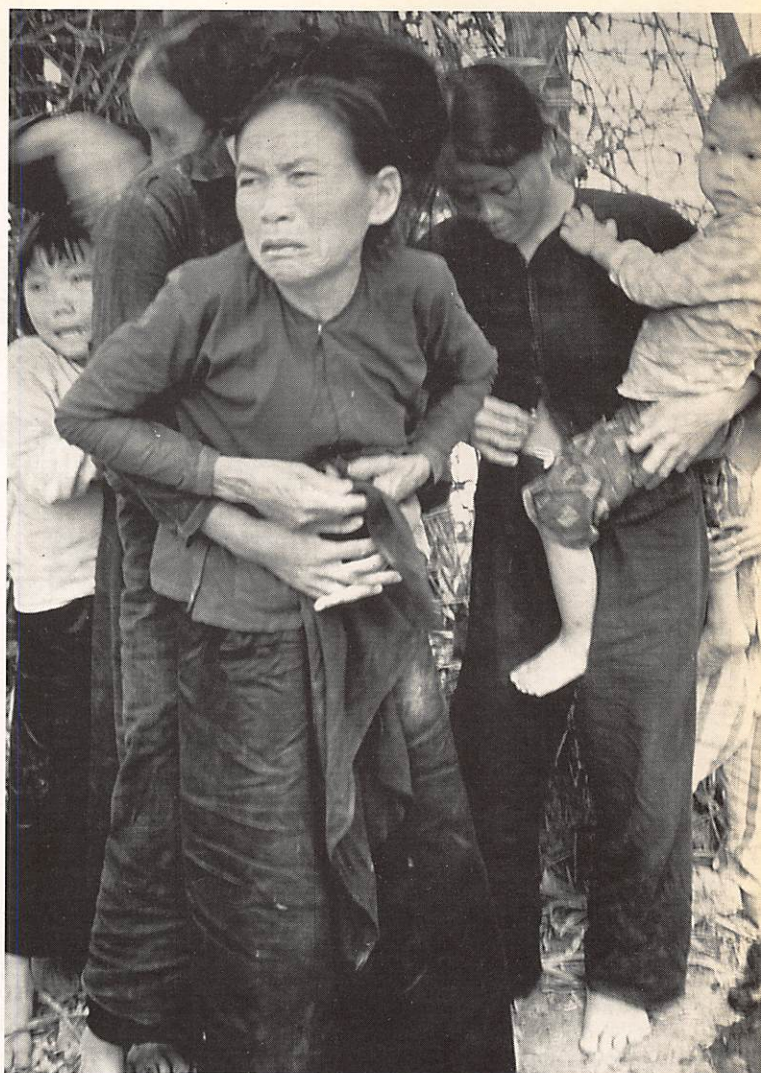
Starting in the spring of 1976, Ridenhour was on the lookout for early signs of this "de-militarization" of disturbance control, and found evidence of it in unlikely places. That year, Ridenhour researched and wrote a three-part series for *New Times* in Phoenix about a "mystery man" who, despite a lack of academic credentials, was appointed head of the Agriculture Division at Arizona State University. Ridenhour learned that this man, Richard Soderberg, was interested in "data management" on a vast scale. To secure funding for his secret, college-based projects, Soderberg allegedly represented to state officials that he wanted to establish an intelligence system "similar to one he set up in Vietnam." Ridenhour detailed the similarities between Soderberg's domestic far-reaching plans and the infamous "Operation Phoenix" CIA counterinsurgency project he saw at work in Vietnam.<sup>7</sup>

7. "ASU's Mysterious Computer Man: Farming in a Brave New World," *New Times* weekly, Apr. 14, 21, and 28, 1976.

## NEW ORLEANS - 1980s-1990s

In 1981, Ridenhour moved to New Orleans to work for a news-weekly, covering a major police violence event known as "the Algiers incident" where, following the shooting death of a white police officer in a predominantly black neighborhood, New Orleans police went on a week-long rampage, resulting in the deaths of four black citizens and the beating and torture of scores of others. Ridenhour's tough and relentless reporting on the events focused attention upon the police department and prosecutorial coverup. Ultimately three homicide detectives were convicted of federal civil rights violations and were sent to prison for their actions.

Ridenhour subsequently worked for a business weekly in New Orleans, covering municipal corruption and scandals, ultimately winning the prestigious George Polk Award for Local Reporting in 1988 for a series on tax-collection abuses in New Orleans. In addition to his award-winning reporting on police brutality, nuclear power issues, and government corruption in his adopted home, New Orleans, he continued the course he began in 1969 with his courageous expose of the horrors of My Lai. The day of his death, his desk was stacked high with the draft of a story on the career of General Colin Powell, details on the emergence of the "militia movement" (a movement he saw the seeds of in the apocalyptic vision of Cable Splicer participants), and 921 pages of newly arrived government intelligence reports he had fought for years to have declassified. The latter cache was related to a book-length probe of the roots of domestic spying and COINTELPRO-type activities directed against black soldiers who opposed segregation and mistreatment by the Army during World War II.



Ronald Haeberle / Time Inc.

**My Lai: GIs had tried to rape the woman in the rear of this photo, but were fought off by the older woman. As Sgt. Ronald L. Haeberle approached with his camera, the woman was rebuttoning her blouse. Haeberle took this picture and turned away. Shots rang out, and he turned back. The women and children lay dead on the ground.**

Ridenhour's journalistic techniques were always colored by his fundamental and unwavering perspective about the government: They lie. Ridenhour approached the claims of the government, whether State Department denials of torture or local city officials claims of corruption-free tax collection, with deep and profound skepticism.

Ridenhour never gained the high-profile, high-salary status enjoyed by some others who first made their mark reporting on Vietnam. David Halberstam, the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, wrote: "[His work] was like hearing the purest voice of the American conscience."<sup>8</sup>

8. Read at a commemorative service for Ron Ridenhour in New Orleans, May 12, 1998.



# The Central Intelligence Agency

- versus -

## Daniel C. Tsang

BY DANIEL C. TSANG

Until last December, the CIA's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on its web-site ([www.odci.gov/cia/public\\_affairs/faq.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/public_affairs/faq.html)) provided a categorical, no-nonsense answer to the questions, "Does the CIA spy on Americans? Does it keep a file on me?" The CIA's answer: "No."

But I knew it wasn't true. Sometime back, the CIA had settled, out of court, my protracted lawsuit against the Agency for creating a dossier on me. The CIA agreed to release (most of) my classified file, pay my lawyers some \$46,000, expunge my name from its computers, and promise never to spy on my political activities or writings again. But significantly, it refused to make the same pledge to cover other Americans.

Just before last Christmas, a CIA official called the Washington-based Center for National Security Studies, which had represented me when it was still affiliated with the ACLU, to say it had changed its web-site in re-

sponse to a Center letter pointing out the fallacy of its web answer. Now, the CIA no longer claims it does not spy on Americans, and, in effect, states it reserves the right to do so.

My lawyers, Mark A. Srere and Kate Martin, believe I may well be the only American on whom the CIA has promised not to spy. In fact, they believe the CIA should not spy on the political activities of any American (or permanent resident), since the U.S. Privacy Act, passed by Congress after the intelligence abuses of the sixties, explicitly bars the federal government from collecting or retaining anything related to their First Amendment activities.

### ABOVE THE LAW

But Srere and Martin found, in the course of my case, that the CIA does not consider itself bound by the Privacy Act prohibition, since it considers itself empowered by other legislation to act in the area of "counterintelligence."

My dossier states that I came to the CIA's attention because of my tie to this magazine, then called *CovertAction Information Bulletin* (CAIB). I had indexed the first 12 issues of CAIB; the index appeared in issue 14/15 (1981). But in fact, the first document in my CIA dossier was a review I wrote of *CovertAction* and other "anti-surveillance" periodicals. That review appeared in *Library Journal* in September 1979.

*CovertAction* has always raised the ire of the CIA, given its practice of exposing the spy

agency's shenanigans. In its first four years, the magazine especially came under attack for its "Naming Names" column, which purported to "out" CIA officers working under diplomatic cover. The irony was that the list was compiled using public—not classified—sources, so that until the Intelligence Identities Protection Act was passed in 1982, nothing legally could be done to stop the column or put the magazine out of business.

But the CIA tried anyway, and I was one of those sucked into the dragnet. Years before Proposition 187 and the Asian fund-raising scandals, my suspiciously foreign-sounding last name must have made me a marked man to the CIA. In a January 6, 1982, cable (stamped "SECRET" and "EYES ONLY") from the CIA Director to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the CIA described this magazine as "an anti-CIA publication in which this agency has a CI [counter-intelligence] interest" and asked the INS to provide "any information" on me. It noted, "Tsang is associated with Covert Action Information Bulletin." Elsewhere in the dossier, the CIA noted that I had compiled the magazine's index, and, surprisingly, quoted me: "Tsang indicated that he works closely with CAIB" (December 7, 1981, cable from an overseas field station to CIA Director).

Other formerly classified cables revealed that the CIA was most interested in my nationality status, once describing me as a "Hong Kong-born Chinese." I suppose the nation's

**Daniel C. Tsang**, a social sciences bibliographer at the University of California, Irvine, hosts a progressive interview program, "Subversity," on KUCI. In addition to *CovertAction*, he indexed former spies Ralph McGehee's *Deadly Deceits* (New York: Sheridan Square Press, 1983) and Melvin Beck's *Secret Contenders* (New York: Sheridan Square Press, 1984). (For more on Tsang v. CIA, see: G.M. Bush, "Librarian Takes on CIA," *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, Feb. 6, 1992, Sec. II, pp. 1, 18; Kimberly Kindy, "Prying Eyes Were Watching UCI's Library Activist," *Orange County Register*, Jan. 25, 1998, pp. 1, 22; Daniel C. Tsang, "A CIA Target at Home in America," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 18, 1998, Opinion Section, pp. M2-3.) Copyright © 1998, by Daniel C. Tsang.



security would be safeguarded if one more subversive could be deported, just like the Nixon administration tried to get John Lennon kicked out of the U.S. for an old marijuana conviction. But eventually, the INS told the CIA it didn't have anything on me. It was right: I am a U.S. citizen through my mother, who was born in Seattle.

The exchange of secret cables began in the last month of 1981, after my index had come out, when Langley was asked by a field station abroad to find out anything it could about me and also about *Gay Insurgent*, a left magazine I had founded, "in order that he may be better identified" (December 7, 1981, cable from an overseas field station to CIA Director). The request, I discovered, was prompted by a query from an unnamed foreign agent. *Gay Insurgent* had published a piece about a softening of the official CIA attitude toward homosexuals; the *Washington Blade*, a gay paper in D.C., actually called the CIA to find out if that was true. But nothing about the *Blade* showed up in my file.

The foreign spy from the liaison service got his or her wish. In interrogatories, the CIA admitted that it had turned over the information about me in my dossier to a foreign government. Which government I never found out, because the CIA considered it classified. Nor did the Agency ever explain why it turned the information over. Its new web-site gives one a clue, however: There, it admits it "works with friendly foreign governments and shares pertinent information."

Among the information it shared with the foreign government: Where and what I studied in college and graduate school, what *Gay Insurgent* published ("gay socialist material and gay research material," says a December 15, 1981, cable from the CIA Director to an overseas field station), my links to Lavender Archives, a gay archive, and my founding of CARAT (Covert Action Research at Temple), formed after CAIB's founders Bill Schaap, Ellen Ray and Louis Wolf visited Temple University, where I was then working. The CIA's description of CARAT in the same cable: "This orga-

nization probably carries on research similar to that done by CAIB."

The last cable in my dossier is dated October 31, 1991, nearly a decade after the first, when an unidentified domestic field station sent the CIA Director a cable with the text

my dossier turned up not in its research section but in the CIA's Operations Directorate—its dirty work division. It took me eight long years—and many reams of paper disputing the CIA's "national security" claims—before I even got my still blacked-out file.

Ironically, the CIA's campaign against *CovertAction* encountered at some point a Deputy CIA Director of Operations who in effect professed to follow the very Privacy Act that my lawyers discovered the Agency had largely ignored.

In Veil, his biography of the late CIA Director William Casey, Bob Woodward reveals that the CIA, under Stansfield Turner, had compiled information about the funding of *CovertAction* and other magazines. Woodward wrote that when John M. McMahon, the Deputy Director of Operations under Turner, Casey's predecessor, found out that the CIA had done that, McMahon blew up:

"Stupid sons of bitches," he had yelled at a senior-staff meeting, "spying on Americans. If anyone got hold of this.... Don't you see? The perception."<sup>1</sup>

Woodward doesn't give the exact date of this outburst. If quoted correctly, McMahon may have been expressing his true feelings. Or he may have been playing-act, for during his tenure as Deputy Director of Operations, a two-page memo

about *CovertAction* was sent from his office (the signature is blacked out) to the FBI Director. The April 16, 1980, document, released under the Freedom of Information Act, definitely proves the CIA ignores the prohibition against collecting information on Americans' First Amendment protected activities. It described how CAIB came into being (it was announced at the World Festival of Youth and Students in Havana in July 1978) and included information of those about its original editorial staff. It gave detailed biographies of

1. Bob Woodward, *Veil* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 104.

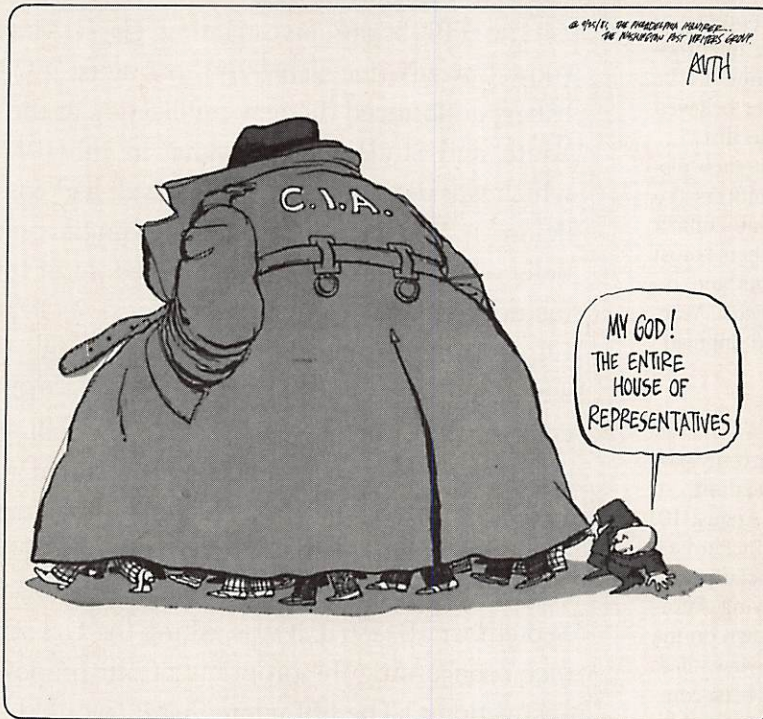
Number 14 - 15

October 1981

\$5.00

Special: COMPLETE CAIB INDEX

# CovertAction INFORMATION BULLETIN



an article about my CIA lawsuit that had just appeared three days earlier in the University of Michigan student paper, *Michigan Daily*. The cable, marked "temporary working copy—destroy after use" (it wasn't, I got it) had this added notation: "No record that Tsang was ever a contact of this office. Refer to HQs for review and disposition."

## IGNORING THE ACT

The Privacy Act prohibition appears to have been totally ignored by the CIA. Not only did it collect information on my publications and political activities, it turned the information over to another government. Significantly,



CAIB founders—all U.S. citizens—Bill Schaap, Ellen Ray, and Louis Wolf, mistakenly describing Wolf as a “member of the Fourth International” and as being “in contact with a member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in about 1969.” McMahon, who later became Deputy Director of Central Intelligence under Casey, would resign in 1986 after opposing expanding covert activities, especially in Afghanistan and Nicaragua.<sup>2</sup>

Turner himself had also been quite concerned about *CovertAction* after it began publishing in 1978. In a May 10, 1979, letter to Senator Lloyd Bentsen (D.-Tex.), Turner called its exposing of CIA undercover personnel “totally devoid of any redeeming social value,” with “an adverse impact on the effectiveness of our intelligence activities and on the professional effectiveness and morale of our personnel.” He added that current law had proven to be “inadequate in deterring these unauthorized disclosures and they continue to be made with virtual impunity.” Turner believed that they led to “reduced national security.”

In calling for legislation against such disclosures, Turner noted that CIA officers “so compromised” must reduce or break contact with “sensitive sources” and that others “must be removed from their assignments and returned from overseas at substantial cost: Years of irreplaceable area experience and linguistic skill are lost.”

## THE CIA'S DOSSIER

The CIA's own *CovertAction* dossier (only partially released under the Freedom of Information Act) also included an August 10, 1978, letter from General (Ret.) Richard G. Stillwell, president of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers, lobbying Attorney General Griffin Bell to crack down on the magazine. Wrote Stillwell: “In our view, there is reason to believe that crimes have been committed and will continue to be committed by the group sponsoring *Covert Action* in pursuit of its objectives. Is there not incitement to violation of law in the calls for assistance in the pages of this publication?”

In fact, that very month (August 1978) the FBI began a series of investigations into the magazine. (See sidebar.) But it all came to naught: The FBI could find no law being violated.

It was not until 1982 when Casey was CIA Director that Congress finally passed the Intelligence Identities Protection Act. The new law became, in effect, an Official Secrets Act, criminalizing the use of public information for the first time. It targeted alternative publica-

tions like *CovertAction*, which were engaged in a “pattern of activities” of exposing undercover agents. The law would, in practice, permit the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times* to identify an undercover CIA officer, but not *CovertAction*, which by then had published its last “Naming Names” column.

Although I've settled my case, I continue to wonder if the spying continues. Since I don't know which government asked the CIA for information about me, every time I go

abroad, I also wonder if I will be admitted into or let out of each country I visit. And I still want the CIA to tell me if they actually expunged my name from its computers.

## OTHER CASES

*Tsang v. CIA* was not the only case to uncover the federal government ignoring the Privacy Act. But in the other case, the plaintiffs, J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation and its then President Lance E. Lindblom lost their lawsuit

## FBI v. CAIB

This magazine itself was, in its early days, the target of two formal FBI investigations as well.

The FBI began investigating *CovertAction Information Bulletin* (now *CovertAction Quarterly*) in August 1978, shortly after its publishers announced the new publication at the 11th World Festival of Youth and Students in Havana, in July 1978. The premier issue, which was distributed at the Festival, had come out just a few weeks before, in Washington. The FBI's main file on *CovertAction*, only partially released in response to a Freedom of Information Act request, includes George Lardner Jr.'s August 3, 1978, article, “Worldwide Effort Being Launched to ‘Destabilize’ CIA,” in the *Washington Post*. The FBI's New York office promptly sent FBI Headquarters a photocopy of the entire first issue of *CAIB*, calling it (in a September 1, 1978, cover memo) “public source material and is unclassified.” The FBI began investigating *CAIB* (as well as former CIA officer Philip Agee, who penned an editorial in the first issue) under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, but apparently had second thoughts. By September 18, 1978, it was asking the U.S. Attorney General for advice “concerning the propriety of our proposed approach to the investigations.” The FBI wrote that it “would like your judgment as to whether we are proceeding correctly in this matter.” It apparently was not. The investigation ended that month without any indictments.

However, the FBI continued to monitor the publication, going into high gear when *CAIB* republished (it had been published in *La Repubblica* in Rome) a classified U.S. Army intelligence report about Italy in its April-May 1979 issue. Ironically, the Army, which released some of the FBI documents on this case to me, sent me copies of part of the *CAIB* issue with the entire article blacked out, contradicting the FBI's earlier assessment of *CAIB* as “public source” material! That investigation also came to nought and was closed in July 1979.

—Daniel C. Tsang

2. David B. Ottaway and Patrick E. Tyler, “CIA Deputy Chief McMahon Resigns,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 5, 1986, p. A4. But McMahon soon denied he resigned over policy issues, UPI Dispatch, “CIA's McMahon Denies He Quits Over Policies,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 8, 1986, p. A4.



14 Apr 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation

SUBJECT: ~~Covert Action Information Bulletin (CAIB)~~

1. The following material on Covert Action Information Bulletin (CAIB) is forwarded for your background information. Copies of issues of this publication are attached.

2. Covert Action Information Bulletin (CAIB) is a Washington, D.C. based anti-CIA publication which has been in existence since July 1978. This publication was established by Philip Agee and its existence announced in a speech made by Agee at the Havana World Youth Festival in July 1978. The magazine is the mouth-piece of a "world-wide network" of informants whose task it is to expose CIA personnel, sources and methods. This "network" called "CIA Watch", is felt by Agee to be a permanent weapon in the fight against "FBI, CIA, military intelligence and all the other instruments of U.S. imperialist oppression throughout the world."

3. Included on the original editorial staff of the magazine were Philip Agee and James Earl Elsie Wilcott. [REDACTED] These individuals are now members of CAIB's Board of Advisors, along with CAIB's Paris-based representative Karl Van Meter and Ken Lawrence, a journalist working out of Jackson, Mississippi, who is the director of the "Anti-Represion Resource Team", a research and publication project focusing on cases of political repression in the U.S. [REDACTED]

4. The three individuals who are on the Editorial Board of CAIB and who claim to be entirely responsible for the content of the magazine are William Schaap, his wife Ellen Ray, and Louis Wolf.

5. Schaap, a Washington lawyer, is a member of the National Lawyers Guild and is active in many of this group's projects. He is regarded as a military law expert. Ray, Schaap's wife, served on the advisory board of CAIB's predecessor "CounterSpy" (now publishing but not affiliated with CAIB). Both of these individuals served as National Lawyers Guild observers at the Baader-Meinhof trials in Germany.

officials may not realize that the CIA in fact ignores the prohibition against spying on Americans. In my case, my lawyers discovered that the CIA took an absolutist position that the agency could do whatever it wanted, as long as it was acting to counter foreign intelligence, regardless of what the Privacy Act prohibited.

Congress needs to beef up the Privacy Act to ensure that all agencies obey it. Otherwise it will remain eviscerated by a rogue agency like the CIA. ■

4. James Risen, "Despite Ban, Clinton Aide Sought CIA Data on Citizens," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 19, 1997, p. A1. Risen, now at the *New York Times*, did not seem very interested in my case when I contacted him at the *LA Times*, and never mentioned it in his article on domestic spying.

Philadelphia, [redacted] He was a member  
contact with a member of the Socialist  
Agee, Wolf wrote Dirty Work: The  
[redacted] individuals alleged to be

Meter were the publicized authors of which had in pre-publication advertising his book also named several hundred

against the FBI. In a disturbing 1996 decision, the federal District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the FBI can retain surveillance files on Americans despite the Privacy Act's prohibition on collecting information on First Amendment protected activities of Americans.<sup>3</sup> The Supreme Court later did not reverse.

In addition, the uproar over the Clinton administration's FBI Filegate scandal shows that concern about privacy transcends traditional political boundaries.

And spying on Americans continues to raise concern in the press. When President Clinton's National Security Council last year asked the CIA to collect information on some Armenian Americans, even some former CIA officials were appalled.<sup>4</sup> Those

3. *J. Roderick McArthur Found. v. FBI*, 102 F3d 66 (D.C. Cir. 1996).

13. All portions of this document are

FOR THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR OPERATIONS:

Attachments: CAIB - July 1978  
CAIB - March-April 1980



# A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITIES

by William Preston, Jr.

In July 1978, the first issue of *CovertAction Information Bulletin* appeared. It seemed to be an opportune moment to challenge the CIA's entire panoply of illegal interventions in the affairs of other nations. The Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, chaired by Frank Church, had recently issued its report. The latter had detailed the "secret wars and coups, murders of foreign leaders, bribery of elected officials, assassination plots," and other malpractices by the United States.

These conclusions seemed to promise future reforms of and serious restrictions against the CIA's established ways of conducting its business abroad. In addition, Philip Agee and Louis Wolf had edited and published *Dirty Work*, a collection of investigative exposés of CIA tactics in Western Europe.<sup>1</sup> Would President Jimmy Carter make this issue a top priority of his administration and thereby rein in an agency out of control? If the CIA's toxic presence were to be limited or extinguished in countries around the world, certainly Carter could have rightfully claimed to have established "habitats for humanity" at a global level.

As the struggle between CAIB and the CIA played out in the next four years, however, the question of "identities" came to be a crucial component in the collapse of reform and the extension of the CIA's extraordinary authority. And that was all about "naming names," as CAIB entitled its column in each issue. Covert operations were obviously created, staffed, and run by individual operatives. Responsibility and accountability resided in these representatives. Naming them thus personalized the illegal tactics and publicized the perpetrators thereof, giving the activity a flesh-and-blood reality. It should be noted that the exposures did not come from classified sources, nor were the names unknown to the foreign countries and intelligence agencies in the areas being targeted.

While the CIA and its legislative supporters claimed that naming names exposed its officers to assassination, no such proof existed. The Intelligence Identities Protection Act

(IIPA), proposed by the CIA and introduced by its friends in Congress,<sup>2</sup> indicated the real motivation for the agency's concern. The naming became a crime if done "with intent to impair or impede the foreign intelligence activities of the United States." In other words, the IIPA would serve as an official secrets act to eliminate investigative journalism about covert operations, regardless of the constitutional and legal validity of the sources and methods involved.

The ethical claim that *CovertAction* was recklessly exposing citizen members of the CIA to murderous assault certainly lacked standing in the moral climate of Cold War America. As McCarthyism demonstrated, "naming names" was the way the search for unAmericanism would identify thousands of victims. Subsequently, the editors of and contributors to *CovertAction* were also named as KGB agents and communist conspirators. But that's not the point. The point is to ask what CIA officers were up to as compared with those seeking to enjoin their activities.<sup>3</sup>

## NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

The major identity that comes to mind is, of course, that of national sovereignty itself, once described by Woodrow Wilson as the holy grail of self-determination. Nor should it be forgotten that George Washington's Farewell Address vowed "friendship and commerce with all nations but involvement in the wars and domestic affairs of none." This Third World attitude was, in part, a reaction to French and British attempts to interfere in and influence the domestic politics and affairs of the new republic, seen as violations of its sovereignty at the time and greeted with outrage. And the Logan Act of 1799 barred any citizen from "holding correspondence with foreign governments or their agents in relation to the United States."<sup>4</sup>

In publicizing the CIA's unchecked and secret machinations in other nations' internal affairs, *CovertAction* thus represented the wisdom of the Founding Fathers and the ideals of Woodrow Wilson's Open Diplomacy. Even if somewhat quixotic, upholding that tradition against its corruption and abuse by covert op-

erations gave *CovertAction* an uncontested claim to the moral advantage.

In the January 1979 issue, further exposure of CIA relationships with foreign governments called attention to agency policies behind the subversive intent. The so-called Supplement B (to Field Manual 30-31B) indicated a CIA strategy that went well beyond simple support or cooperation with the host country's agencies and government in pursuit of common aims. Rather, if the host country followed policies contrary to those of the United States, the CIA was to take such measures as necessary to bring that government into line with the Cold War national interests of the United States. The fact that the CIA often backed the wrong side in such adventurous interference is only a piece of the indictment. The larger crime lay in the secret assumption of that authority in the first place.

A National Identities Protection Act, had the United Nations imagined such a concept, would have helped *CovertAction* counter the CIA's immense supremacy in information and communication resources. Not only were foreign governments subject to CIA subversive penetration, but the public consciousness and understanding in those nations also fell victim to mass disinformation campaigns that marketed the Agency's line on political, economic, and cultural issues.

In *CovertAction* Number seven, Sean Ger-vasi assessed the CIA's "covert propaganda capability" budget as one third or more of the total for all covert actions. In terms of global media presence, that amount equaled the combined budgets of the AP, UPI, and Reuters for their worldwide operations.<sup>5</sup> *CovertAction* was, therefore, up against an oligarchical speech community whose semantic power dominated the international arena. It was "an atmosphere of accredited mendacity," a way of shaping identities as the CIA destabilized regimes it despised.

## THE REAL CONTROVERSY

While "naming names" and "protecting intelligence identities" remained the ostensible subjects of the *CovertAction*-CIA debate between 1978 and 1982, the real controversy centered on the nature of the Agency itself. During testimony before a congressional committee in 1980, *CovertAction*'s Bill Schaap argued for the elimination of covert operations

William Preston, Jr., is professor emeritus of history at John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York. He is the author of *Aliens and Dissenters*, 2d ed. (Urbana: Univ. Illinois Press, 1994).

1. *CovertAction Information Bulletin*, No. 3 (January 1979), p. 8.

2. Announced by then Deputy CIA Director Frank Carlucci on NBC's *Prime Time Sunday*, July 8, 1979; see *CovertAction Information Bulletin*, No. 6 (Oct. 1979), p. 2.

3. *Ibid.*, No. 7 (Dec. 1979-Jan. 1980), pp. 2, 30-34.

4. John C. Miller, *The Federalist Era* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1963), pp. 190-92.

5. *Op. cit.*, n. 3, pp. 18-20.



and a focus on intelligence gathering alone, while insisting the United States' relations with other governments be open and public.<sup>6</sup> What that point of view ignored, however, was the long historical evolution behind covert action itself. A national security ideology dating back to the early twentieth century all but precluded any such extensive revolution in U.S. foreign relations.

## MANIFEST DESTINY

While the Manifest Destiny principle behind the nation's westward expansion had justified the removal and extermination of prior occupants of those lands, extending U.S. power overseas introduced a new ideological rationale. Global surveillance, intimidation, and intervention would now be vindicated by the doctrine of an international police power. While first made explicit in Theodore Roosevelt's corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, it had been clearly foreshadowed during the Spanish-American War. To civilize and uplift the Philippine people and to impose the benefits of "stable, orderly, and prosperous" governments on those "weaker and less advanced" had now become a duty of the United States. An ominous preventive aspect suggested the right to intervene before "improvident legislation" or "disorder" developed that might "adversely affect the future," in this case of Cuba. Revolution itself, of course, "must be discouraged." Thus, long before the Cold War, the premises and tactics that would sustain the CIA's covert operations had come into being.<sup>7</sup>

Admittedly, those policies had not yet developed either the secrecy or the geographic inclusiveness that characterized their application after World War II. The "punitive expedition," the concept of "protectorates," and the euphemism of "dollar diplomacy" had an unapologetic openness about the nature of U.S. foreign relations. And the opening of the Panama Canal seemed to limit the definition of the country's national interests to arenas close to major defense facilities in the Caribbean.

6. *Ibid.*, No. 8 (March-Apr., 1980).

7. Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1956), p. 59; Dana G. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 65, 470-72, 534.



Ellen Ray

In 1981, as the IIPA worked its way through Congress, it was learned that lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union had met secretly with CIA lawyers in an attempt to convince the Agency to agree to the "less unconstitutional" version of the bill. That version was then introduced in Congress as having the ACLU's support, to the consternation of some liberal members of Congress. The consternation of their rightwing colleagues was greater, however, and the "more unconstitutional" version was passed, a result the CIA had undoubtedly expected. Above, Morton Halperin of the ACLU (left) debates Bill Schaap of *CovertAction* (right) on the viability of the ACLU's unsuccessful strategy. Peter Weiss of the Center for Constitutional Rights moderates.

## FANATICISM AND SUSPICION

When the threats of communism and Soviet challenge arose, however, the atmosphere of fanaticism and suspicion took these earlier made-to-order doctrines to new levels of interpretation and application. Nations far and wide could now be suspected of "not meeting their international obligations," of "brutal wrongdoing," or of "an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society." The idea of protecting "substantial American interests" now knew no boundaries. Furthermore, such sweepingly vague authorizations also gave the CIA unlimited opportunities to shape national identities and consciousness so as to preclude those targeted from making choices hostile to U.S. foreign policies.<sup>8</sup>

In the U.S., however, the idea of influencing or subverting the domestic politics of other nations is a subject of anger and hysteria when such interventions affect its own affairs. In the 1996 presidential election, the idea that China

8. *Ibid.*

sought or attained such an impact so outraged the country that one would have thought the entire national identity was at stake.

Did *CovertAction* realize the opprobrium that would be attached to those that challenged the sacred text that the CIA charter had been written to enforce? The magazine represented a secular heresy disputing an ideological position that had been gaining momentum for some seventy years. Imagine the audacity! In 1982, the Intelligence Identities Protection Act became law. Soon after, *CovertAction* dropped the column "Naming Names."<sup>9</sup> IIPA has remained on the books, yet there has never been a federal prosecution under it. Perhaps the technology of surveillance has rendered them unnecessary. Today's secret intrusions have become the province of spy satellites. Uncle Sam is now a global Peeping Tom.

Still, readers of *CovertAction* have learned one valuable lesson, at least, from the many investigative exposés that were to follow in succeeding years: "One should never believe a thing until it has been officially denied." ■

9. *CovertAction Information Bulletin*, No. 16 (Mar. 1982), p. 2.



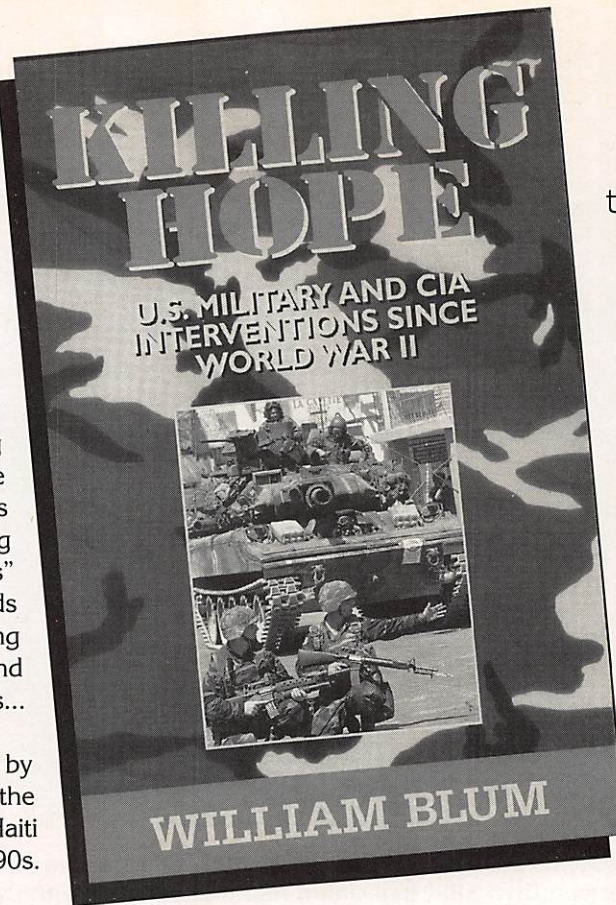
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