

ROGUE STATE



A Guide to the
World's Only Superpower

William Blum

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Introduction

This book could be entitled *Serial Chain-Saw Baby Killers and the Women Who Love Them*.

The women don't really believe that their beloved would do such a thing, even if they're shown a severed limb or a headless torso. Or if they believe it, they know down to their bone marrow that lover-boy really had the best of intentions; it must have been some kind of very unfortunate accident, a well-meaning blunder; in fact, even more likely, it was a humanitarian act.

For 70 years, the United States convinced much of the world that there was an international conspiracy out there. An *International Communist Conspiracy*, seeking no less than control over the entire planet, for purposes which had no socially redeeming values. And the world was made to believe that it somehow needed the United States to save it from communist darkness. "Just buy our weapons," said Washington, "let our military and our corporations roam freely across your land, and give us veto power over whom your leaders will be, and we'll protect you."

It was the cleverest protection racket since men convinced women that they needed men to protect them—if all the men vanished overnight, how many women would be afraid to walk the streets?

And if the people of any foreign land were benighted enough to not realize that they needed to be saved, if they failed to appreciate the underlying nobility of American motives, they were warned that they would burn in Communist Hell. Or a CIA facsimile thereof. And they would be saved nonetheless.

A decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, America is still saving countries and peoples from one danger or another. The scorecard reads

as follows: From 1945 to the end of the century, the United States attempted to overthrow more than 40 foreign governments, and to crush more than 30 populist-nationalist movements struggling against intolerable regimes. In the process, the US caused the end of life for several million people, and condemned many millions more to a life of agony and despair.

As I write this in Washington, DC, in April 1999, the United States is busy saving Yugoslavia. Bombing a modern, sophisticated society back to a pre-industrial age. And The Great American Public, in its infinite wisdom, is convinced that its government is motivated by "humanitarian" impulses.

Washington is awash with foreign dignitaries here to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, three days of unprecedented pomp and circumstance. The prime ministers, presidents and foreign ministers, despite their rank, are delighted to be included amongst the schoolyard bully's close friends. Private corporations are funding the opulent weekend; a dozen of them paying \$250,000 apiece to have one of their executives serve as a director on the NATO Summit's host committee. Many of the same firms lobbied hard to expand NATO by adding the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, each of which will be purchasing plentiful quantities of military hardware from these companies.

This marriage of NATO and the transnationals is the foundation of the New World Order, the name George Bush gave to the American Empire. The credibility of the New World Order depends upon the world believing that the new world will be a better one for the multitude of humanity, not just for those for whom too much is not enough, and believing that the leader of the New World Order, the United States, means well.

Let's have a short look at some modern American history, which may be instructive. A congressional report of 1994 informed us that:

Approximately 60,000 military personnel were used as human subjects in the 1940s to test two chemical agents, mustard gas and lewisite [blister gas]. Most of these subjects were not informed of the nature of the experiments and never received medical followup after their participation in the research. Additionally, some of these human subjects were threatened with imprisonment at Fort Leavenworth if they discussed these experiments with anyone, including their wives,

parents and family doctors. For decades, the Pentagon denied that the research had taken place, resulting in decades of suffering for many veterans who became ill after the secret testing.¹

Now let's skip ahead to the 1990s. Many thousands of American soldiers came home from the Gulf War with unusual, debilitating ailments. Exposure to harmful chemical or biological agents was suspected, but the Pentagon denied that this had occurred. Years went by while the GIs suffered terribly: neurological problems, chronic fatigue, skin problems, scarred lungs, memory loss, muscle and joint pain, severe headaches, personality changes, passing out and much more. Eventually, the Pentagon, inch by inch, was forced to move away from its denials and admit that, yes, chemical weapon depots had been bombed; then, yes, there probably were releases of the deadly poisons; then, yes, American servicemen were indeed in the vicinity of these poisonous releases, 400 soldiers; then, it might have been 5,000; then, "a very large number", probably more than 15,000; then, finally, a precise number—20,867; then, "The Pentagon announced that a long-awaited computer model estimates that nearly 100,000 U.S. soldiers could have been exposed to trace amounts of sarin gas..."²

Soldiers were also forced to take vaccines against anthrax and nerve gas not approved by the FDA as safe and effective, and punished, sometimes treated like criminals, if they refused. (During World War II, US soldiers were forced to take a yellow fever vaccine, with the result that some 330,000 of them were infected with the hepatitis B virus.³) Finally, in late 1999, almost nine years after the Gulf War's end, the Defense Department announced that a drug given to soldiers to protect them against a particular nerve gas, "cannot be ruled out" as a cause of lingering illnesses in some veterans.⁴

The Pentagon brass, moreover, did not warn American soldiers of the grave danger of being in close proximity to expended depleted uranium weapons on the battlefield.

If the Pentagon had been much more forthcoming from the outset about what it knew all along about these various substances and weapons, the soldiers might have had a proper diagnosis early on and received appropriate care sooner. The cost in terms of human suffering was incalculable. One gauge of that cost may lie in the estimate that one-third of the homeless in America are military veterans.

And in the decades between the 1940s and 1990s, what do we find? A remarkable variety of government programs, either formally, or in effect, using soldiers as guinea pigs—marched to nuclear explosion sites, with pilots then sent through the mushroom clouds; subjected to chemical and biological weapons experiments; radiation experiments; behavior modification experiments that washed their brains with LSD; exposure to the dioxin of Agent Orange in Korea and Vietnam...the list goes on...literally millions of experimental subjects, seldom given a choice or adequate information, often with disastrous effects to their physical and/or mental health, rarely with proper medical care or even monitoring.⁵

The moral of this little slice of history is simple: If the United States government does not care about the health and welfare of its own soldiers, if our leaders are not moved by the prolonged pain and suffering of the wretched warriors enlisted to fight the empire's wars, how can it be argued, how can it be believed, that they care about foreign peoples? At all.

When the Dalai Lama was asked by a CIA officer in 1995: "Did we do a good or bad thing in providing this support [to the Tibetans]?", the Tibetan spiritual leader replied that though it helped the morale of those resisting the Chinese, "thousands of lives were lost in the resistance" and that "the U.S. Government had involved itself in his country's affairs not to help Tibet but only as a Cold War tactic to challenge the Chinese."⁶

"Let me tell you about the very rich," wrote F. Scott Fitzgerald. "They are different from you and me."

So are our leaders.

Consider Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser to Jimmy Carter. In a 1998 interview he admitted that the official story that the US gave military aid to the Afghanistan opposition only *after* the Soviet invasion in 1979 was a lie. The truth was, he said, that the US began aiding the Islamic fundamentalist Moujahedeen six months *before* the Russians made their move, even though he believed—and told this to Carter—that "this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention".

Brzezinski was asked whether he regretted this decision.

Regret what? That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap and you want me to regret it? The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter: We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War. Indeed, for almost 10 years, Moscow had to carry on a war unsupportable by the government, a conflict that brought about the demoralization and finally the breakup of the Soviet empire.⁷

Besides the fact that there is no demonstrable connection between the Afghanistan war and the breakup of the Soviet empire, we are faced with the consequences of that war: the defeat of a government committed to bringing the extraordinarily backward nation into the 20th century; the breathtaking carnage; Moujahedeen torture that even US government officials called "indescribable horror"⁸; half the population either dead, disabled or refugees; the spawning of thousands of Islamic fundamentalist terrorists who have unleashed atrocities in numerous countries; and the unbelievable repression of women in Afghanistan, instituted by America's wartime allies.

And for playing a key role in causing all this, Zbigniew Brzezinski has no regrets. Regrets? The man is downright proud of it! The kindest thing one can say about such a person—as about a sociopath—is that he's amoral. At least in his public incarnation, which is all we're concerned with here. In medieval times he would have been called Zbigniew the Terrible.

And what does this tell us about Jimmy Carter, whom many people think of as perhaps the only halfway decent person to occupy the White House since Roosevelt? Or is it Lincoln?

In 1977, when pressed by journalists about whether the US had a moral obligation to help rebuild Vietnam, President Carter responded: "Well, the destruction was mutual."⁹ (Perhaps when he observed the devastation of the South Bronx later that year, he was under the impression that it had been caused by Vietnamese bombing.)

In the now-famous exchange on TV between Madeleine Albright and reporter Lesley Stahl, the latter was speaking of US sanctions against Iraq, and asked the then-US ambassador to the UN: "We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And—and you know, is the price worth it?"

Replied Albright: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price—we think the price is worth it."¹⁰

One can give Albright the absolute full benefit of any doubt and say that she had no choice but to defend administration policy. But what kind of person is it who takes a job appointment knowing full well that she will be an integral part of such ongoing policies and will be expected to defend them without apology? Not long afterwards, Albright was appointed Secretary of State.

Lawrence Summers is another case in point. In December 1991, while chief economist for the World Bank, he wrote an internal memo saying that the Bank should encourage migration of "the dirty industries" to the less-developed countries because, amongst other reasons, health-impairing and death-causing pollution costs would be lower. Inasmuch as these costs are based on the lost earnings of the affected workers, in a country of very low wages the computed costs would be much lower. "I think," he wrote, "the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that."¹¹ Despite this memo receiving wide distribution and condemnation, Summers, in 1999, was appointed Secretary of the Treasury by President Clinton. This was a promotion from being Undersecretary of the Treasury—for international affairs.

We also have Clinton himself, who on day 33 of the aerial devastation of Yugoslavia—33 days and nights of destroying villages, schools, hospitals, apartment buildings, the ecology, separating people from their limbs, from their eyesight, spilling their intestines, traumatizing children for the rest of their days...destroying a life the Serbians will never know again—on day 33 William Jefferson Clinton, cautioning against judging the bombing policy prematurely, saw fit to declare: "This may seem like a long time. [But] I don't think that this air campaign has been going on a particularly long time."¹² And then the man continued it another 45 days.

Clinton's vice president, Albert Gore, appears eminently suitable to succeed him to the throne. In 1998, he put great pressure on South Africa, threatening trade sanctions if the government didn't cancel plans to use much cheaper generic AIDS drugs, which would cut into US companies' sales.¹³ South Africa, it should be noted, has about three million HIV-positive persons among its largely impoverished

population. When Gore, who at the time had significant ties to the drug industry¹⁴, was heckled for what he had done during a speech in New York, he declined to respond in substance, but instead called out: "I love this country. I love the First Amendment."¹⁵

It's interesting to note that when Madeleine Albright was heckled in Columbus, Ohio in February 1998, while defending the administration's Iraq policy, she yelled: "We are the greatest country in the world!"

Patriotism is indeed the last refuge of a scoundrel, though Gore's and Albright's words don't quite have the ring of "*Deutschland über alles*" or "Rule Britannia".

In 1985, Ronald Reagan, demonstrating the preeminent intellect for which he was esteemed, tried to show how totalitarian the Soviet Union was by declaring: "I'm no linguist, but I've been told that in the Russian language there isn't even a word for 'freedom'."¹⁶ In light of the above cast of characters and their declarations, can we ask if there's a word in American English for "embarrassment"?

No, it is not simply that power corrupts and dehumanizes.

Neither is it that US foreign policy is cruel because American leaders are cruel.

It's that our leaders are cruel because only those willing and able to be inordinately cruel and remorseless can hold positions of leadership in the foreign policy establishment; it might as well be written into the job description. People capable of expressing a full human measure of compassion and empathy toward faraway powerless strangers—let alone American soldiers—do not become president of the United States, or vice president, or secretary of state, or national security adviser or secretary of the treasury. Nor do they want to.

There's a sort of Peter Principle at work here. Laurence Peter wrote that in a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence. Perhaps we can postulate that in a foreign policy establishment committed to imperialist domination by any means necessary, employees tend to rise to the level of cruelty they can live with.

A few days after the bombing of Yugoslavia had ended, the *New York Times* published as its lead article in the Sunday Week in Review, a piece by Michael Wines, which declared that "Human rights had been

elevated to a military priority and a preeminent Western value...The war only underscored the deep ideological divide between an idealistic New World bent on ending inhumanity and an Old World equally fatalistic about unending conflict...there is also a yawning gap between the West and much of the world on the value of a single life."

And so on. A paean to the innate goodness of the West, an ethos unfortunately not shared by much of the rest of the world, who, Wines lamented, "just don't buy into Western notions of rights and responsibilities."¹⁷ The *Times* fed us this morality tale after "the West" had just completed the most ferocious sustained bombing of a nation in the history of the planet, a small portion of whose dreadful consequences are referred to above.

During the American bombing of Iraq in 1991, the previous record for sustained ferociousness, a civilian air raid shelter was destroyed by a depleted-uranium projectile, incinerating to charred blackness many hundreds of people, a great number of them women and children. White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater, reiterating US military statements that the shelter had been a command-and-control center, said: "We don't know why civilians were at that location, but we do know that Saddam Hussein does not share our value for the sanctity of human life."¹⁸

Similarly, during the Vietnam War, President Johnson and other government officials assured us that Asians don't have the same high regard for human life as Americans do. We were told this, of course, as American bombs, napalm, Agent Orange and helicopter gunships were disintegrating the Vietnamese and their highly regarded lives.

And at the same time, on a day in February 1966, David Lawrence, the editor of *US News & World Report*, was moved to put the following words to paper: "What the United States is doing in Vietnam is the most significant example of philanthropy extended by one people to another that we have witnessed in our times."

I sent Mr. Lawrence a copy of a well-done pamphlet entitled *American Atrocities in Vietnam*, which gave graphic detail of its subject. To this I attached a note which first repeated Lawrence's quotation with his name below it, then added: "One of us is crazy", followed by my name.

Lawrence responded with a full page letter, at the heart of which was: "I think a careful reading of it [the pamphlet] will prove the point

I was trying to make—namely that primitive peoples with savagery in their hearts have to be helped to understand the true basis of a civilized existence.”

The American mind—as exemplified by that of Michael Wines and David Lawrence—is, politically, so deeply formed that to liberate it would involve uncommon, and as yet perhaps undiscovered, philosophical and surgical skill. The great majority of Americans, even the most cynical—who need no convincing that the words that come out of a politician’s mouth are a blend of mis-, dis- and non-information, and should always carry a veracity health warning—appear to lose their critical faculties when confronted by “our boys who are risking their lives”. If love is blind, patriotism has lost all five senses.

To the extent that the cynicism of these Americans is directed toward their government’s habitual foreign adventures, it’s to question whether the administration’s stated interpretation of a situation is valid, whether the stated goals are worthwhile, and whether the stated goals can be achieved—but *not* to question the government’s *motivation*. It is assumed *a priori* that our leaders *mean well* by the foreign people involved—no matter how much death, destruction and suffering their policies objectively result in.

Congressman Otis Pike (R.-NY) headed a committee in 1975 which uncovered a number of dark covert actions of US foreign policy, many of which were leaked to the public, while others remained secret. In an interview he stated that any member of Congress could see the entire report if he agreed not to reveal anything that was in it. “But not many want to read it,” he added.

“Why?” asked his interviewer.

“Oh, they think it is better not to know,” Pike replied. “There are too many things that embarrass Americans in that report. You see, this country went through an awful trauma with Watergate. But even then, all they were asked to believe was that their president had been a bad person. In this new situation they are asked much more; they are asked to believe that their country has been evil. And nobody wants to believe that.”¹⁹

This has been compared to going to a counselor because your child is behaving strangely, and being told, “You have a problem of incest in your family.” People can’t hear that. They go to a different counselor. They grab at any other explanation. It’s too painful.²⁰

In *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides, speaking of the practice of plundering villages, the main source of a warrior's livelihood, tells us that "no disgrace was yet attached to such an achievement, but rather credit".

Almost all of us grew up in an environment in which we learned that thou shalt not murder, rape, rob, probably not pay off a public official or cheat on your taxes—but not that there was anything wrong with toppling foreign governments, quashing revolutions or dropping powerful bombs on foreign people, if it served America's "national security".

Let us look at our teachers. During the bombing of Yugoslavia, CBS Evening News anchor, Dan Rather, declared: "I'm an American, and I'm an American reporter. And yes, when there's combat involving Americans, you can criticize me if you must, damn me if you must, but I'm always pulling for us to win."²¹ (In the past, US journalists were quick to criticize their Soviet counterparts for speaking on behalf of the State.)

What does this mean? That he's going to support any war effort by the United States no matter the legal or moral justification? No matter the effect on democracy, freedom or self-determination? No matter the degree of horror produced? No matter *anything*? Many other American journalists have similarly paraded themselves as cheerleaders in modern times in the midst of one of the Pentagon's frequent marches down the warpath, serving a function "more akin to stenography than journalism".²² During the Gulf War, much of the media, led by CNN, appeared to have a serious missile fetish, enough so to suggest a need for counseling.

The CEO of National Public Radio, Kevin Klose, is the former head of all the major, worldwide US government broadcast propaganda outlets, including Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty and the anti-Castro Radio Marti, which broadcasts into Cuba from Florida. NPR, which can be thought of as the home service of the Voice of America, has never met an American war it didn't like. It was inspired to describe the war against Yugoslavia as Clinton's "most significant foreign policy success."²³

And the head of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Robert Coonrod, has a résumé remarkably similar to that of Klose, from Voice of America to Radio Marti.

Is it any wonder that countless Americans—bearing psyches no less malleable than those of other members of the species—are only dimly conscious of the fact that they even have the *right* to be unequivocally opposed to a war effort and to question the government's real intentions for carrying it out, without thinking of themselves as (horror of horrors) “unpatriotic”? Propaganda is to a democracy what violence is to a dictatorship.

During the 1991 Gulf War, the Bush administration conducted three briefings a day with such telegenic figures as generals Colin Powell and Norman Schwarzkopf. Marlin Fitzwater later recalled that when ABC-TV interviewed a group of Kansans around a kitchen table, “every answer at that table reflected one of the reasons we had given for going in.”²⁴

In Spain, in the 16th century, the best minds were busy at work devising rationalizations for the cruelty its conquistadors were inflicting on the Indians of the New World. It was decided, and commonly accepted, that the Indians were “natural slaves”, created by God to serve the conquistadors.

Twentieth-century America took this a step further. The best and the brightest have assured us that United States interventions—albeit rather violent at times—are not only in the natural order of things, but they're actually for the *good* of the natives.

The media and the public do in fact relish catching politicians' lies, but these are the small lies—lies about money, sex, drug use and other peccadillos, and the ritual doubletalk of campaignspeech. A certain Mr. A. Hitler, originally of Austria, though often castigated, actually arrived at a number of very perceptive insights into how the world worked. One of them was this:

The great masses of the people in the very bottom of their hearts tend to be corrupted rather than consciously and purposely evil...therefore, in view of the primitive simplicity of their minds, they more easily fall a victim to a big lie than to a little one, since they themselves lie in little things, but would be ashamed of lies that were too big.²⁵

How many Americans, after all, doubt the official rationale for dropping the A-bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki—to obviate the need for a land invasion of Japan, thus saving thousands of American lives? However, it's been known for years that the Japanese had been

trying for many months to surrender and that the US had consistently ignored these overtures. The bombs were dropped, not to intimidate the Japanese, but to put the fear of the American god into the Russians. The dropping of the A-bomb, it has been said, was not the last shot of World War II, but the first shot of the Cold War.²⁶

In 1964, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, when asked about US involvement in the overthrow of the government of Brazil, declared: "Well, there is just not one iota of truth in this. It's just not so in any way, shape or form." Yet, the United States had been intimately involved in the coup, its role being literally indispensable.²⁷

In the 1980s, the Reagan administration declared that the Russians were spraying toxic chemicals over Asia—the so-called "yellow rain"—and had caused thousands of deaths. So precise was Washington's information they could state at one point that in Afghanistan 3,042 had died in 47 separate incidents. President Reagan denounced the Soviet Union for these atrocities more than 15 times in documents and speeches. The "yellow rain", it turned out, was pollen-laden feces dropped by huge swarms of honeybees flying far overhead.²⁸

These are three examples, chosen virtually at random. Numerous others could be given. But at the beginning of the 21st century do the American people really need to be reminded that governments lie, that great powers lie greater, that the world's only superpower has the most to lie about, i.e., cover up? Do I have to descend to the banality of telling this to my readers?

Apparently so, if we are to judge by all those who swallowed the "humanitarian" excuse for the bombing of Yugoslavia without gagging, including many on the left.

The idea of "altruism" has been a recurrent feature of America's love affair with itself. From 1918 to 1920, the United States was a major part of a Western invasion of the infant Soviet Union, an invasion that endeavored to "strangle at its birth", as Winston Churchill put it, the Russian Revolution, which had effectively removed one-sixth of the world's land surface from private capitalist investment. A nation still recovering from a horrendous world war, in extreme chaos from a fundamental social revolution, and in the throes of a famine that was to leave many millions dead, was mercilessly devastated yet further by the invaders, without any provocation.