

# A Review of Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair's End Times

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Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair are both veteran journalists and authors doing the kind of muckraking political and other investigative writing only found in the US online and in out-of-the-mainstream publications and political newsletters like the one they co-publish and edit - CounterPunch with its counterpart web site of the same name.

Cockburn is also a regular columnist with The Nation magazine, and his writings appear regularly in the New York Free Press and Los Angeles Times. He formerly wrote extensively for numerous other publications as well including the Wall Street Journal's far right editorial page oddly in the 1980s when its late editor Bob Bartley decided to have an alternate point of view and certainly got an exceptional one the mirror opposite of the array of extremist hard right contributors he allowed regular space to all the time as does his successor today. Cockburn's also authored, co-authored and co-edited 18 books, the latest one being "End Times - The Death of the Fourth Estate," along with co-author St. Clair, and subject of this review.

St. Clair has authored, co-authored and co-edited 10 books including his powerful and extraordinary post-9/11 2005 expose of war profiteering - Grand Theft Pentagon - Tales of Corruption and Profiteering in the War on Terror. He's also worked as an environmental organizer and activist, writes for the environmental magazine Forest Watch, the Anderson Valley Advertiser, and has written for Friends of the Earth, Clean Water Action Project and his native state Hoosier Environmental Council. In addition, he's a contributing editor of In These Times magazine and has written for The Nation, The Progressive, New Left Review and other publications.

End Times - A Collection of Essays from Cockburn and St. Clair On the Dismal State of the Dominant Print Media

"End Times - The Death of the Fourth Estate" is a collection of 50 wide-ranging essays written in recent years under six topic headings, mostly by Cockburn and St. Clair with a few by other contributors, on the dismal state of the corporate print media today. They were dominant at their zenith in the mid-1970s Pentagon Papers - Watergate era but now, the authors say, are in an inevitable state of decline agreeing with media mogul (Cockburn-labeled "WORLD-SCALE MONSTER") Rupert Murdoch's characterization of a long twilight at best.

Even more, their current state is symptomatic of our overall societal decay with unprecedented wealth disparities, the nation in endless wars of illegal aggression, predatory corporate giants ruling the world, and our democracy on life support heading for the

crematorium to be heralded on arrival in front page coverage of the nation's leading purveyors of "news unfit to print." This review covers the authors account of their decline at a time noted historian Gabriel Kolko calls "the most dangerous period in mankind's entire history" when the kind of news and information we most need isn't served up by the dominant fourth estate suppressing it in service to power. The essence and flavor of the book is covered with selected examples from it in an age of media concentration, deregulation and "in-bed-with" journalists posing as the real thing.

The book came out at a time public distrust for traditional print and electronic news is increasing as growing numbers of people, hungry for real information, are turning to alternate sources including a new, vibrant world of them online like CounterPunch the authors say gets around three million daily hits, 300,000 page views, and 100,000 unique visitors including 15,000 regular US military readers stationed around the world, a sign many thousands more of them visit other sites like CounterPunch and pass on what they learn to others. A hopeful, but not certain, indication of a growing trend too powerful to stop. More on that at the end.

The Fourth Estate "tremble for Power," the authors state, acting instead as "Accomplices in the great and ongoing Cover-up of Everything that Really Matters" that destroys their reliability to deliver real news and information. Still, as End Times contributor Ken Silverstein (co-founder with Alex Cockburn of CounterPunch in 1993) writes, there were moments when broadsheet papers like the Washington Post (New York Times and others) did what their readers want and expect - their job reporting the news and enough of it in depth from investigative work unimaginable today in an age of lies, cover-up and "journalism" being just another profit center. Silverstein cites late fall 1974 as the Washington Post's time of "supreme triumph" post-Watergate after reporters Woodward and Bernstein took credit toppling Richard Nixon who did a pretty good job doing it to himself the way George Bush is trying to match today.

From its brief time of triumph forward, it's been all downhill since with the corporate media now concentrated and dominant and little more than our national thought-control police gatekeepers daily serving up a full plate of pap and propaganda suppressing real news "fit to print" but hardly ever is or at least where it's easy to find. That's the dismal state of the prominent print press today End Times writes about drawing lots of blood dissecting it, example by example, showing it's doing what 1920s intellectual writer and dean of journalists in his day, Walter Lippmann, called the "manufacture of (public) consent" in a nominally democratic state where it can't be done by force.

"Manufacturing Consent" was the title used by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky for their landmark 1988 book explaining the dominant media's "propaganda model" to program the public mind to go along with whatever agenda best serves the power structure. It was also the subject noted author, academic and social critic Michael Parenti chose for his 1986 book "Inventing Reality" explaining how they "set(ing) the agenda, defining what it is we must believe or disbelieve, accept or reject (by) defining the scope of respectable political discourse, channeling public attention in directions that are essentially supportive of the existing political-economic system." In other words, the idea is to make us submissive good citizens willing to go along with whatever agenda the supreme rulers of the universe wish even if their interests harm ours.

Today, prominent broadsheets like the Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Wall Street Journal and New York Times (along with publications they own) have a

virtual stranglehold on mass print communication along with major publishers of large-scale circulation magazines like Time and US News and World Report. They're able to use their reach and influence (even ebbing) to destroy the free marketplace of ideas vital to a healthy democracy now on life support at best in large measure from the damage these papers and magazines inflict on the body politic.

### **The Washington Post's Fall from Grace**

Ken Silverstein explained "The Fall of the Washington Post" when Katherine Graham ran the paper and in 1974 signaled Watergate-type exposes and similar reporting no longer were welcome in the press she felt "should....be rather careful about its role." She called for a return to basics with journalists behaving more deferentially to the powerful figures they covered. And so they have with assistant managing editor Bob Woodward of Watergate fame now fawning over George Bush in books like *Bush at War* and *Plan of Attack*, former Fed chairman Alan Greenspan in *Maestro*, and others best ignored.

Cockburn and St. Clair continue the saga in Woodward at Court saying first off "It's been a devastating fall for what are conventionally regarded as the nation's two premier newspapers, the New York Times and the Washington Post." The Times saw its "star reporter" Judith Miller fall from grace, and the Post faced the challenge of dealing with its famed staffer's multiple conflicts of interests including his formerly concealed (to the public and his bosses) role in the outing of Joe Wilson's wife Valerie Plame when she worked at CIA.

In an embarrassing climb-down, Woodward had to testify in a two-hour deposition to Special Council Patrick Fitzgerald whom he denounced on TV the night before Lewis Libby's indictment in the case as "a junkyard dog of a prosecutor" in his post-Watergate role as chief flatterer of George Bush and other powerful Washington figures. Cockburn and St. Clair speculated whether Woodward's high level (unrevealed) source for the Plame leak was Dick Cheney ending their article referring to Woodward going "From Nixon's nemesis to Cheney's savior," but the same can be said for the kind of empire-supportive "journalism" found all through the dominant press, especially on issues like war and peace.

### **The "Dogs of War"**

The authors devote a whole section to it called "The Dogs of War." In it we learn how easily journalists are corrupted so news can be managed to deliver only favorable accounts of some of the most appalling events. Even more stunning is the authors citing a 1977 Rolling Stone Carl Bernstein story estimating more than 400 journalists were allied in some way with the CIA between 1956 and 1972 leaving readers to wonder how many do it now in the age of George Bush when anything goes and the law of the land is just an artifact.

Joe Trento's "Secret History of the CIA," published in 2001 and cited in "End Times," gave us an idea of its extent earlier naming big names involved in a CIA operation code-named "Mockingbird," not too subtly picked using a bird known to mimic the calls of other birds. Noted syndicated columnist through the 1970s Joseph Alsop was one of them along with his brother Stewart. Other notables "willing to promote the views of the CIA" included Ben Bradlee (*Newsweek* and *Washington Post*), James "Scotty" Reston (*New York Times*), Charles Douglas Jackson (*Time* magazine), and Walter Pincus (*Washington Post*), among others.

The section also includes St. Clair's article *How to Sell a War*. It makes powerful reading, and he's right observing it'll be remembered for how it was sold, not how it was waged. It will

also be remembered for portraying an illegal lost cause as a noble undertaking. St. Clair explains it was a propaganda war, designed by PR experts, promoted by spin doctors, all aimed at us as the target audience ingesting it like mother's milk – at least most of us long enough to get the war machine rolling and be too far along to be recalled – until eventually and inevitably it is because the best-laid plans turned to mush.

In charge were people like ad maven Charlotte Beers appointed Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (aka pre-war propaganda) for her known business skills as “a grand diva of spin.” Fortune magazine featured her among the most powerful women in America in 1997 for her achievements advertising the merits of Uncle Ben's Rice and Head and Shoulders shampoo. The Bush administration naturally thought she could sell America to the Muslim world in her Brand America campaign as well as she could peddle over-the-counter products to gullible consumers. She fleeced the taxpayers a whopping \$500 million trying, stayed on from October, 2001 till just before the March, 2003 “shock and awe” assault began mistakenly thinking the war was won before the real fireworks began.

St. Clair explained tens of millions more went into prepping the public on Saddam's danger to the free world and why he had to be removed before “the smoking gun” we saw turned out “to be a mushroom-shaped cloud” according to National Security Advisor at the time Condoleezza Rice. Topping the threat-sellers was Washington heavy-hitting hired gun and “Beltway fixer” John Rendon, head of the Rendon Group. He's been around Washington for years and earlier got the Bush administration's assignment to sell the Afghanistan bombing, following up with a host of PR schemes on Saddam and Iraq, pre and post-March, 2003. He flopped convincing the UN and NATO pre-war but had no trouble duping the US public long enough to convince them blowing up Iraq was the best way to save it and end up being be safer at home.

St. Clair also reviews the role of other players in the scheme to sell war and occupation including the one played by PR firm Hill & Knowlton's Victoria Clark in her role at DOD as PR assistant secretary to Donald Rumsfeld and other assorted players in the media like writer and accomplished liar Laurie Mylroie, the Post's Charles Krauthammer, Max Boot, and the lead role played out daily on the New York Times' front pages mainly by now discredited and fired Judith Miller.

Cockburn devoted a chapter to her deservedly. He titled it well – Judith Miller: Weapon of Mass Destruction. Indeed she was and then some, and it's arguable that without this now disgraced former Times' reporter (or someone else in her shoes) there might not have been an Iraq war. Miller was part of the scheme from the get-go serving up a daily serving of propaganda in what media critic Norman Solomon calls “the most valuable square inches of media real estate in the USA” – the Times' front page.

Miller introduced us to Khidir Hamza, Saddam's self-proclaimed bomb-maker, later outed as a fraud. She kept at it daily using as her key source leading Iraqi exile and known fraudster/schemer Ahmed Chalabi. She also was little more than a Bush administration/Pentagon stenographer/cheerleader transmitting their lies and deceptions to the public effectively enough to sell a war based on administration lies and hers that never should have happened with many in the Washington power structure now wishing it hadn't.

Cockburn writes about her: “With Miller we sink to the level of straight press handout. Lay all

Judith Miller....stories end to end, from late 2001 to June, 2003, and you get a desolate picture of a reporter with an agenda, both manipulating and being manipulated by US government officials, Iraqi exiles and defectors, an entire Noah's Ark of scam-artists." And he added most of what she wrote was "garbage, garbage that powered the Bush administration's propaganda drive toward invasion....She knew what she was doing." One thing she didn't or left out was Ben Franklin's take on wars that "There's no such thing as a good war and there is no such thing as a bad peace." Case close, and well said about a woman who disgracefully won a Pulitzer Prize for her reporting Cockburn and others demand be thunderously withdrawn to complete a full defrocking.

The killing fields for unembedded independent journalists in Iraq was covered as well. It's been notorious (the worst in the world by far) with over 130 "wrongful deaths" reported since March, 2003 including those deliberately targeted for elimination by US or other forces to silence them. In times of war, the first casualty is always truth with corporate media "embeds" obliging to keep it that way, and the Pentagon ready to target anyone reporting what Washington wants suppressed. It was covered in Christopher Reed's contribution titled Have Journalists Been Deliberately Murdered by the US Military along with examples by Cockburn and St. Clair in their essays. Reed mentions Britain's Independent Television News (ITN) senior unembedded war correspondent Terry Lloyd killed near Basra on the third day of the war. A court of law ruled on his case calling it "Unlawful homicide" at the hands of US Marines, but his deliberate targeting is only one among many others.

Al-Jazeera was first targeted in November, 2001 when a US missile destroyed its Kabul offices in Afghanistan. It was no accident. The Pentagon repeatedly harasses the Arab news channel in Iraq as well, occasionally closed it down, and in 2003 attacked its Baghdad offices by air killing one of its correspondents and injuring another. One other example of willful murder was veteran cameraman Mazen Dana targeted by a US tank in broad daylight while he filmed outside Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad. Still another time, a US tank, with no provocation, fired point blank at the Palestine Hotel housing most unembedded international journalists killing reporters from Reuters and the Spanish network Telecinco.

Thankfully, in spite of clear dangers to their safety, independent unembedded journalists (like Alex's brother Patrick Cockburn) are getting out real news on the war so others like Reed, A. Cockburn and St. Clair can help spread it to many others here at home and around the world. None of it shows up though in the "newspaper of record" the authors devote a whole section to with examples below.

### **The Long Ugly Record of the New York Times**

The New York Times calls itself the "newspaper of record" reporting "All the News That's fit to Print." A more accurate label would be the closest thing in the commercial media to an official ministry of information and propaganda. Former longtime NYT journalist John Hess said it this way: "(I) never saw a foreign intervention that the Times did not support, never saw a fare...rent...or utility increase that it did not endorse, never saw it take the side of labor in a strike or lockout, or advocate a raise for underpaid workers. And don't get me started on universal health care and Social Security. So why do people think the Times is liberal?"

Cockburn had plenty to say about the Times as well, and reflected in his Rosenthal's Times essay on AM Rosenthal's passing in May, 2006 saying he "saved" the Times as Executive Editor in the 1970s enhancing its coverage at the same time "sow(ing) the seeds for the

Times' present difficulties" fostering the likes of Judith Miller and the rest of the paper's staff who knew what the boss wanted and dared not deliver under Rosenthal through the mid-1980s and for his successors thereafter.

The Times wanted war in Iraq and served up generous helpings of lies to get it with Michael Gordon helping Miller report phony stories like the aluminum tubes for uranium enrichment one that was pure baloney and lots of others in a daily drumbeat of scare-talk misinformation. When everything began unravelling, the best the Times could do was offer "a few strangled croaks" in an 1100 word editorial climb-down never even mentioning the lead role Miller played making the case for war that disgraced the Times and got her fired.

The Times is also notorious for rewriting history when their fraudulent "first draft" of it unravels. They did it last September claiming "the 'possibility' that Saddam Hussein 'might' develop 'weapons of mass destruction' and pass them to terrorists was the prime reason Mr. Bush gave in 2003 for ordering the invasion of Iraq." Miller's reports of clear evidence he had them pre-war is now only a "possibility" according to Times-speak. This kind of revisionism is standard practice at the NYT and one more example of its shameless deference to power.

Earlier, Cockburn and St. Clair reported an egregious example in what they called "one of the greatest humiliations of a national newspaper in the history of journalism." It was about the Times' key role framing Wen Ho Lee beginning March 6, 1999 in the James Risen/Jeff Gerth Breach at Los Alamos story claiming an unnamed lab scientist gave the Chinese People's Republic stolen nuclear secrets. It got Lee arrested, fired and held without bail in solitary confinement for 278 days ending when he pleaded guilty to the watered-down charge of improperly downloading Restricted Data with Judge James A. Parker apologizing for the government's "abuse of power" the Times could never admit responsibility for.

Then there's the Cockburn - St. Clair piece on NYT Kid Glove Journalism on the NSA's Illegal Spying without warrants violating the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) requiring them. The Times held off reporting the story for a year staying mute in deference to the Bush administration's request, then leaving out a full account of it when it finally did.

Endless examples could be given of the Times' betrayal of the public trust in service to power. A striking one goes back to the 1945 writing of science reporter William Laurence on the Manhattan Project, who along with his Times assignment was also on the War Department payroll as a PR consultant/cheerleader-propagandist writing press releases on the atomic weapons program. His job was to mislead the public initially covering-up what actually happened at the first atomic bomb Alamogordo, NM test. From there, it was to sell the program, lie about the Hiroshima/Nagasaki horror on the ground, and then deny what historian-attorney Jonathan M. Weisgall later called the "silent nuclear terror of radioactivity and radiation" and that radiation sickness killed people. He was such a good liar, he won a Pulitzer Prize for it and got to fly on the plane that bombed Nagasaki, later describing it in the Times with religious awe. But the Times duplicity didn't end there.

Beverly Ann Deepe Kever, in her 2004 book "News Zero," documented the central role the Times played for years thereafter creating false and misleading perceptions about the nature and dangers of nuclear power in any form and the deadly effects of radiation. More than any other source, the Times willfully and deceitfully misled the public, opinion leaders, production workers, uranium miners, US servicemen exposed to radiation, Pacific islanders exposed to tests, and everyone living near nuclear test sites or where nuclear materials are

produced, processed or used. To this day, little has changed at the Times in how it reports on this vital issue it's complicit in keeping its readers in the dark about.

More examples of Times duplicity involve the paper's one-sided support for all things business because it's a major player itself in the corporate giant community. So it showed strong support for NAFTA even though it was clear before it passed it would cause hundreds of thousands of job losses in its three signatory countries including many high-paying US ones.

Earlier it was late on major stories like the 1980s Savings and Loan scandal and then tepid reporting how excess banking deregulation and concessions to Wall Street caused it. It was the same covering the 1991 Bank of Credit and Commerce (BCCI) \$20 billion + heist scandal, and since March, 2003 it failed to report on the misuse of multi-billions of taxpayer dollars by the likes of Halliburton, Bechtel, the entire defense establishment, and other war profiteers benefitting hugely from the scheme in Afghanistan and Iraq. But readers of this review can get the whole ugly story told stunningly in St. Clair's 2005 book "Grand Theft Pentagon" that shows how profitable wars are and why we fight so many of them.

Such is the state of the leading newspaper on the planet today saying a lot about how bad the rest of the dominant media are. Cockburn explained part of the problem in his essay on the Post's Katherine Graham titled She Needed Fewer (political) Friends. They dined at her Georgetown home and turned out in force for her July, 2001 funeral because she was one of them. Long before it corrupted Graham's Post, it was how business was done at the Times best remembered during James "Scotty" Reston's prime years, the most influential, widely-read journalist of his time. He walked easily in the halls of power, befriended its denizens, and tainted his objectivity by giving them free reign to do almost anything without fear they'd be held to account for it by him.

Today, fourth estate elites' values are the same as the figures they cover because they'd paid so well for their work. It stands to reason they want to protect their high salaries and prominent positions by never biting the powerful hands feeding them. They, and their younger up-and-coming aspirants, have what Cockburn calls a built-in "compass in their heads" to know what to do and how to please the boss. Any divergence could mean "swift and disastrous retribution" with reassignment to the Siberia of obit writing or an invitation to find another line of work in an age when it's hard telling the difference between prostitution and so-called journalism corporate media-style.

### **More Examples of the Fourth Estate's Fall from Grace**

The authors' book is wide-ranging and full of examples of fourth estate betraying the public trust precipitating its fall from grace. Rare exceptions aside, the dominant media never report what the authors published in their stunning 1998 book "Whiteout" about the CIA's long history of involvement in and profiting hugely from drugs trafficking. In his essay What You Can't Say, Cockburn explained the book "protrayed Uncle Sam's true face (that CIA was) Not a rogue agency but one always following the dictates of government, murdering, torturing, poisoning, drugging its own subjects, approving acts of monstrous cruelty" developed by Nazis recruited to America post-war.

Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Gary Webb said it too and got mainstream space in Knight Ridder's flagship San Jose Mercury News doing it for his 1996 Dark Alliance 20,000 word three-part series later expanded into his 550 page 1999 book with the same

title. It involved CIA, the Nicaraguan Contras in the 1980s, and the distribution of crack cocaine in Los Angeles at the time. It got him national attention, and what the authors call “one of the most venomous and factually inane assaults on a professional journalist’s competence in living memory” by his colleagues at the New York Times, Washington Post, Washington Times, LA Times, American Journalism Review with even the “progressive” Nation magazine piling on (dis)courtesy of its contributor David Corn who poses as a liberal but often doesn’t act like one. It cost Webb his career and marriage and finally his life in an apparent suicide in December, 2004 the result of his depression because his career was ruined.

The authors also wrote about The History of “Black Paranoia” that’s easily justified from the long history of white on black abuse. One example was the 600 poor black men recruited in 1932 in Macon County, Alabama for a US Public Health Service study for which they used as guinea pigs. Four hundred were infected with syphilis, were lied to and told they were being treated for bad blood, and only got an aspirin-iron supplement so researchers could monitor the natural progression of the disease. After penicillin was available as a cure in 1943, the study subjects never got it and 100 of them died from neglect with an overdose of racism. The authors quote Dr. Vanessa Gamble, associate professor of history of medicine at University of Wisconsin, Madison, saying these kinds of experiments go back over 100 years usually “done by whites on slaves and free blacks” than on poor whites.

Then there’s the ugly history of snooping on blacks most notoriously done by the FBI against Martin Luther King and the infamous COINTELPRO program begun in 1956. J. Edgar Hoover said it was to “expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit or otherwise neutralize (meaning assassinate)” black organizations like the Black Panthers the FBI wanted to destroy and pretty much did.

The Nixon foray on drugs and later Reagan-Bush-Clinton one and now GW Bush all out war on them is really a war on blacks mainly. It led to the US having the largest prison population in the world at over 2.2 million with over 1000 new prisoners put in cages each week in a burgeoning prison-industrial complex that’s now big business exceeding \$40 billion annually and rising with blacks being the main source of revenue for it. Blacks account for half the prison population, over half of them are there for non-violent offenses, and half of those are drug-related. While inside, these and other prisoners are exploited by private contractors as de facto chattel making them the cheapest, easiest source of near-free labor this side of slavery and one more reason why “black paranoia” is real.

Other examples show it, too, with contributor Ishmael Reed writing on How the (white-controlled) Media Use Blacks to Chastise Blacks letting them say and write the kinds of things they can more easily get away with without being called racists. A lot of it is blaming the victim the way Reagan administration officials did it to impoverished single black mothers demonizing them as “welfare queens” to help justify Reagan’s assault on essential social services he saw no need for.

Add to it the way elections are now held with voter roles cleansed of blacks along with their being intimidated the way they were in Florida with many prevented from getting to the polls, others turned away after arriving, and still more legitimate black voters obstructed with long lines, too few voting machines and precincts closing early to keep black people from voting “the wrong way.” The fourth estate turned a blind eye, but St. Clair wrote about it in his essay What You Didn’t Read About the Black Vote in Florida. He used the characterization Edward Herman chose for his 1984 book “Demonstration Elections” saying

the process “demonstrated how rotten the whole system is” throughout the country.

Then there’s torture the authors say is As American as Apple Pie that goes on routinely in the home-based US Gulag Prison System this reviewer wrote about in an early 2006 essay by that name calling it a crime against humanity and shame of the nation. The fourth estate never reports it and was embarrassed when they had to after the Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib scandals broke, but quickly backed off once the heat died down.

### **CounterPunch’s Side of the Story**

The final part of the book includes some of its most interesting parts that only can be touched on here. One is Cockburn’s essay on The Great Communicator who needs no identifying except to point out what a dreadful job of it he did except for hard core true believers hanging on every word the way they do for GW Bush like it’s gospel. In Reagan’s case, Cockburn wrote some classic lines saying “Truth for him, was what he happened to be saying at the time. He went one better than George Washington in that he couldn’t tell a lie and he couldn’t tell the truth, since he couldn’t tell the difference between the two.”

Mark Hertsgaard wrote how deferentially the press treated Reagan in his 1989 book “On Bended Knee” explaining they never tried laying a glove on him till the Iran-Contra scandal broke in 1986 and then did its best to go easy. All this was for “an awful president, never as popular as the press pretended, presiding over a carnival of corruption and greed” only the Bush administration has exceeded, so far. But when he died in June, 2004, the media practically defied him for endless days of turgid eulogies suppressing his callous indifference for the needy and scorched earth legacy he left behind in Central America, the Middle East, Africa and other parts of the world where he won’t be easily forgiven if ever.

Gore, Clinton and Kerry are then deservedly taken to the wood shed in a trio of essays. Gore is portrayed as an erstwhile opium-laced marijuana and coke user selling himself otherwise in 2000 when the authors wrote about him as a tough-on-crime law and order hard-liner supporting the death penalty that’s far from the image he’s now covets as a friend of the earth. Clinton, on the other hand, back then wanted an office in Harlem to shed his image as a moral reprobate and war criminal but keep the false part of it as a man of the people “feeling our pain.”

Then there’s John Kerry the authors give twice the space to as the former president and vice-president combined. It’s to tell the story of a 1966 Skull and Bones elite secret society Yale grad who joined the Navy and shot up the world from his Swift boat patrol in Vietnam. In the process, he earned Silver and Bronze Stars, three Purple Hearts, and former CNO (chief naval officer, Vietnam) Admiral Elmo (Bud) Zumwalt’s opprobrium for being a loose cannon killing too many civilian non-combatants and assaulting other non-military targets. He was so zealous and out-of-control the admiral “virtually (had) to straightjacket him” to hold him back saying Kerry even then had large ambitions his Vietnam service would haunt him pursuing if he tried doing it on a national stage.

The book ranges over much more from Billy Graham the anti-semite and supporter of mass-killing in Vietnam if the Paris peace talks failed, to the press’ endorsing and covering up the Delta Force slaughter at Waco, to all the pro-war news fit to buy from willing fourth estate players and PR pros like the Lincoln Group hired to plant phony stories in Iraqi newspapers and at US-controlled al-Arabiya TV about Pentagon military successes in the country the public there could plainly see was pure baloney. Lincoln also had a near open-ended \$100

million PsyOps contract to improve its creativity and foreign public opinion about the US, especially the military needing all the burnishing it can get.

The final section also covered The Row Over the (powerful) Israeli Lobby the press can't admit exists with Cockburn saying it's been a fixed part of the scene for over six decades and questioning its existence is like doubting there's a Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor or White House on Pennsylvania Avenue. Part of the Lobby's job is suppressing real news about Palestine Cockburn says he first wrote about in 1973 and continued thereafter exposing wanton Israeli acts of daily killings including targeted assassinations, land confiscations, home demolitions, torture, illegal settlement building on occupied lands and a host of other endless human degradations to ethnically cleanse all parts of Palestine Israelis want for themselves. Try finding news on that in "The Newspaper of Record" that's only possible if a publication named the Times operates on another planet and does there what journalists should be paid here to do - their job.

There's lots more this review can't include, so it will end with a final well-deserved jab at a worthy recipient before some final personal comments. It's Cockburn's article called Murdoch's Game about the venomous king of media moguls the author calls (as mentioned above) a "WORLD-SCALE MONSTER." He writes what distinguished Australian-raised journalist Bruce Page did about him in his chronicle called "The Murdoch Archipelago." It has material in it Murdoch supporters wouldn't want repeated in polite company about "one of the world's leading villains (and) global pirate" they support no doubt because of his rampages in the mediasphere putting world leaders on notice what he expects from them and what he's prepared to offer in return.

The essence of Page's book is that Murdoch's core thesis is wanting to privatize "a state propaganda service, manipulated without scruple and with no regard for truth" in return for "vast government favors such as tax breaks, regulatory relief, and monopoly" market control as free as possible from competitors having too much of what Rupert wants for himself. The problem is he usually gets his way mostly in places that matter most with the biggest markets and greatest profit potential in a business where reporting accurate news is off the table and partnering with governments assuring a growing revenue stream is all that counts. Cockburn sums up Murdoch's Game in the essay's lead-in quote from Othello: "I have done the state some service, and they know 't."

### **Some Final Thoughts of Hope for What's Ahead**

At the top of this review, this writer noted the public's hunger for real news and information turning for it to progressive publications and online web sites providing it to growing audiences disillusioned with what they're not getting in the mainstream. Do you blame them? The above material offers plenty of examples making the case.

But as alternative news sources gain prominence and influence, the battle lines are forming to preserve and keep them free from state or corporate control. It's the battle for Net Neutrality pitting us, the public, against telecom, broadcast and cable giants, and what's at stake is the last media frontier of a free and open internet that's the best hope to revive a flagging democracy now on life support at best. The demise of HR 5252 in the Senate (the so-called "Anti-Net Neutrality Bill) in the 109th Congress means it's up to the current 110th Congress to settle the issue by either keeping the internet free and open or allowing it to be exploited by corporate predators for commercial gain and allow them to control its content to suppress material like this review.

Those concerned enough better do more than just hope for a favorable outcome from a corrupted Congress unpredictable on which way it'll go on an issue that can turn either way but is picking up positive tailwind with Democrat presidential candidate John Edwards voicing support for Net Neutrality in a recent Howard University speech. He now joins others in the field like Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and Bill Richardson plus Al Gore who may jump in later as well.

This is what's needed and more as freedoms don't protect themselves and the power lined up against them is formidable. The commercial giants are outspending public interest advocates 500 - 1, but concerned citizens fought back flooding the 109th Congress with over one million letters (and did it again to the 110th with over 1.6 million) and took to the streets in 25 cities delivering "Save the Internet" petitions to their senators last summer demanding they oppose the corporate attempt to gut Net Neutrality and instead enact a free and open internet information commons. This issue can be won, but only by lots more letters, emails, phone calls and innovative action from an aroused and mobilized public unwilling to let business or government take away what already belongs to us and that we can't afford to lose. Stay closely tuned.

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