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**June 9, 2005**

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by KATHY KELLY

*About the Downing Street  
Memo...*

**US Media Shamed by Brit**

## Other Lands Have Dreams

From Baghdad to Peking Prison  
Kathy Kelly



## Journalist

By DAVE LINDORFF

**A**t this stage, it seems almost pointless to say it, but once again, the corporate media in America have been exposed as a cowardly mass of toadies who cannot bring themselves to publish or air anything remotely critical of the administration unless compelled to do so by cattle prods...or a reporter from a foreign news organization doing what reporters are supposed to do routinely.

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The current example of this pathetic behavior is the page-one treatment finally accorded--after a fashion--to the damning memorandum delivered to British PM Tony Blair back in the summer of 2002 by his chief of intelligence, informing him of a meeting with U.S. officials, where he learned that the US planned to invade Iraq, and that the reasons for doing so, and the intelligence would be "fixed" to justify the action.

Although this devastating memo surfaced in the UK nearly a month and a half ago, and has been the lead story in Britain for some time, where it has thoroughly destroyed whatever credibility the prime minister still had, it has been largely buried in the U.S. media if it was mentioned at all, and in every case it has been presented not as evidence of President Bush's criminal behavior in lying to the American public to create a war, but as a problem for Blair.

Now, thanks to Blair's visit to Bush, and to the presence of less deferential British journalists at a joint White House press conference--instead of the usual White House press corps stenographers and TV airheads--Bush was forced to address the question of the memorandum, and the American media were

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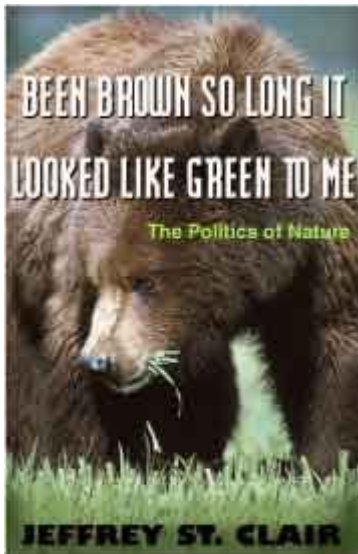
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Haitsma

forced to mention it. (*The New York Times* did so on page 7, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, for the first time, on page 1). The question was asked by a Reuters reporter, Steve Holland.

Even so, the subsequent articles were cast, embarrassingly, as reaction pieces, with headlines like the one in the *NY Times* ("Bush and Blair Deny 'Fixed' Iraq Reports"). In the case of papers like the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, this embarrassment was compounded. *Inquirer* readers might have been excused for being perplexed at reading a page one story headlined "'02 memo on Iraq is rebutted." It reads like a classic second-day follow-up story, but how would a reader know what the "'02 memo" reference meant, since there was no first story about the memo?

Bush himself chose not to respond directly to Holland's question, which was whether the '02 memorandum presented to Blair was "an accurate reflection of what happened" at the White House. Instead, Bush said that the memo was "not credible" because of how it had surfaced--in the middle of Blair's re-election campaign.

This was a ludicrous position to take, since it implies the memo itself is of dubious origin. In fact, both Blair and the memo's author have long since vouched for its authenticity and accuracy, so the issue is not its credibility as a document, but whether what it reported was an accurate account of what actually transpired at meetings between White House officials and British intelligence in 2002.

Blair--no doubt trying to save his own ass back home where such a lame answer would be fodder for more bad press--came quickly to Bush's defense, saying, "No, the facts were not being fixed, in any shape or form at all." It was an assertion that anyone who has been following events for the past two years knows to be totally bogus and desperate, and which

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is being laughed down in Britain, but apparently it was good enough for the tame media here.

Blair's denial was the lead in most of the stories that ran in today's U.S. media, and it was basically taken at face value. Even the *NY Times*, which claims it is trying to improve its shoddy reporting standards, didn't bother to go to a Democratic or anti-war source for a comment on the Blair and Bush responses to Holland's question.

It is hardly an edifying moment for the American media.

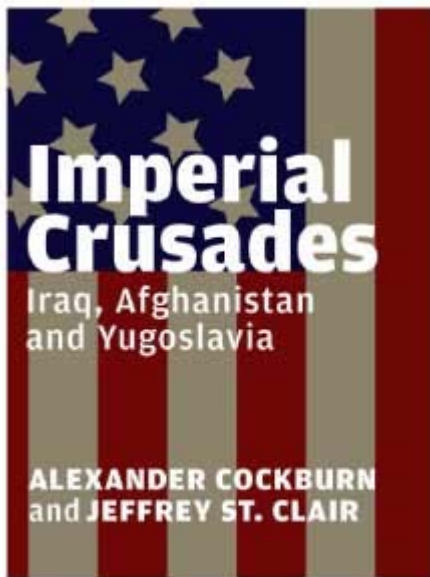
Caught red-handed trying to deep-six a crucial story about White House lying and about a secret campaign to get the U.S. into a war with Iraq, the corporate U.S. media have finally had to at least report to the public about a memorandum that exposes this crime.

In an astonishingly forthright article about the memo and the corporate media blackout that greeted it in America, *USA Today* (in an article by Mark Memmott) yesterday wrote that the reports on the press conference comments on the memo were "the most attention paid by the media in the USA so far to the 'Downing Street memo'."

The article went on to say:

*The Sunday Times' May 1 memo story, which broke just four days before Britain's national elections, caused a sensation in Europe. American media reacted more cautiously. The New York Times wrote about the memo May 2, but didn't mention until its 15th paragraph that the memo stated U.S. officials had "fixed" intelligence and facts.*

*Knight Ridder Newspapers distributed a story May 6 that said the memo*



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Iraq, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia  
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June 6, 2005

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*"claims President Bush ... was determined to ensure that U.S. intelligence data supported his policy." The Los Angeles Times wrote about the memo May 12, The Washington Post followed on May 15 and The New York Times revisited the news on May 20.*

*None of the stories appeared on the newspapers' front pages. Several other major media outlets, including the evening news programs on ABC, CBS and NBC, had not said a word about the document before Tuesday.*

It added, in a touch of candor unusual for an American newspaper, "Today marks *USA TODAY's* first mention."

It could be that the American public will now begin to see Bush and the war party (which includes the Democratic backers of the war like John Kerry and Sen. Joe Lieberman) the way they came to see Presidents Johnson and Nixon, after publication of the Pentagon Papers, as deceitful manipulators and war-mongers.

The strategy now will be to help the White House deny everything, with the Big Lie.

I guess that's got to be judged a step forward.

**Dave Lindorff** is the author of [Killing Time: an Investigation into the Death Row Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal](#). His new book of CounterPunch columns titled "[This Can't be Happening!](#)" is published by Common Courage Press. Information about both books and other work by Lindorff can be found at [www.thiscantbehappening.net](http://www.thiscantbehappening.net).

He can be reached at: [dlindorff@yahoo.com](mailto:dlindorff@yahoo.com)

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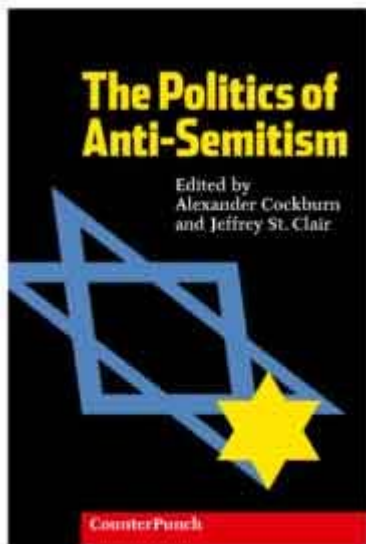
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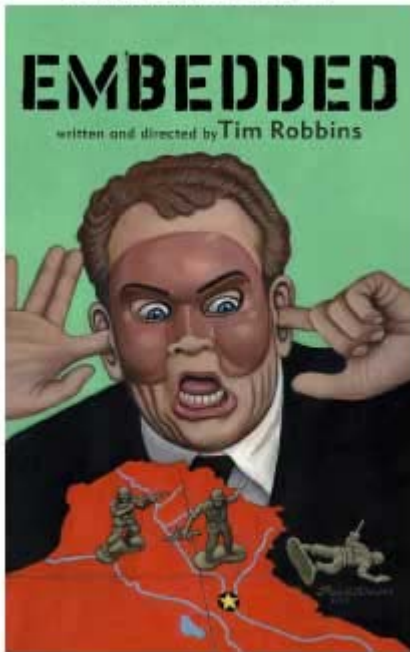
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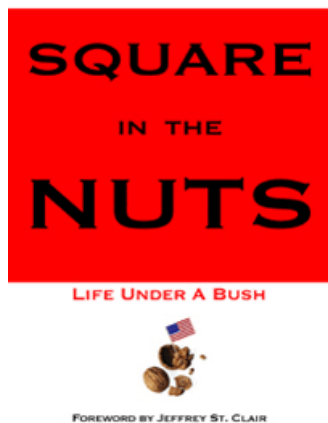
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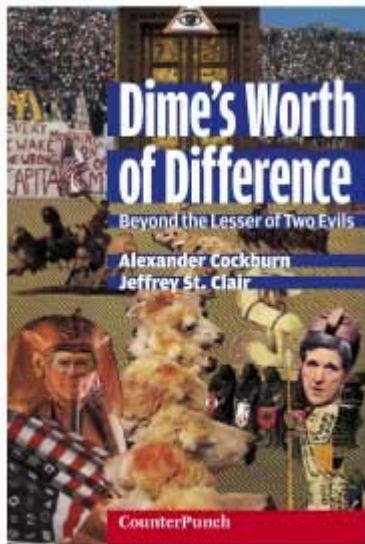
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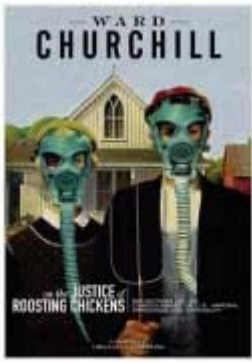
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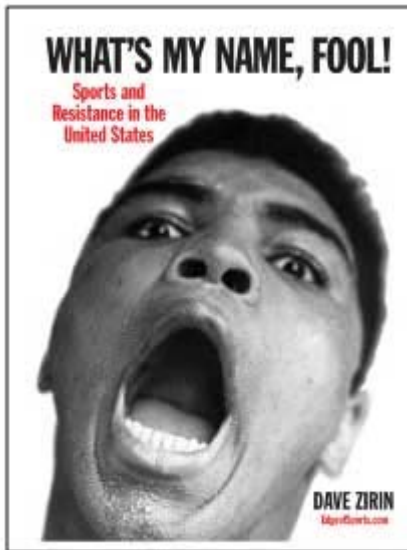
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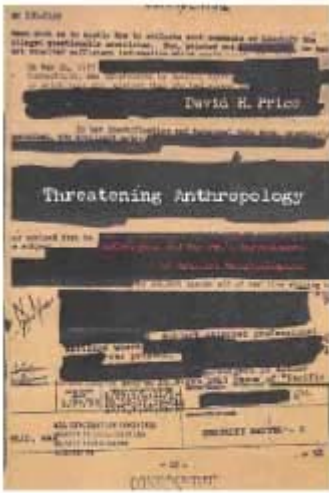
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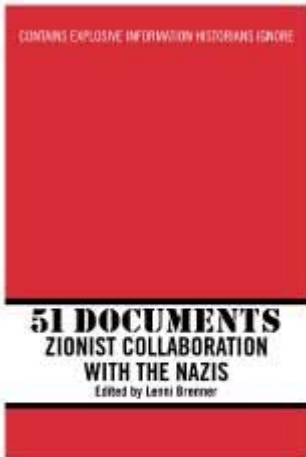
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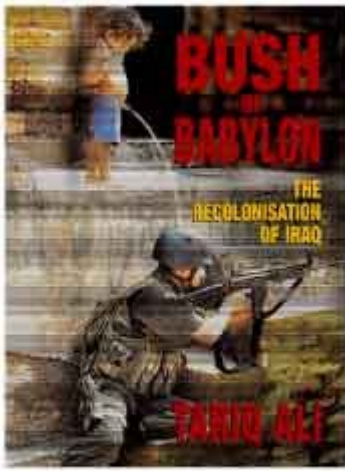
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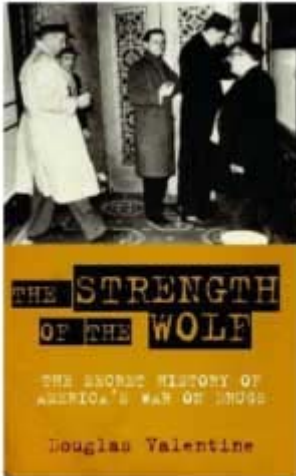
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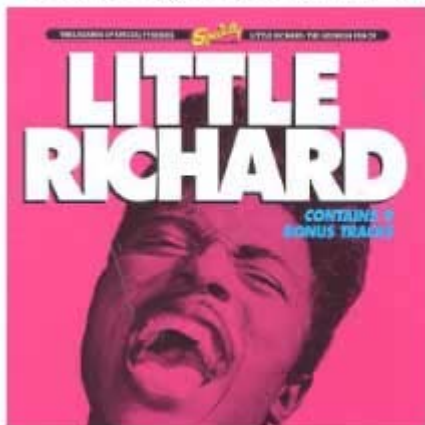


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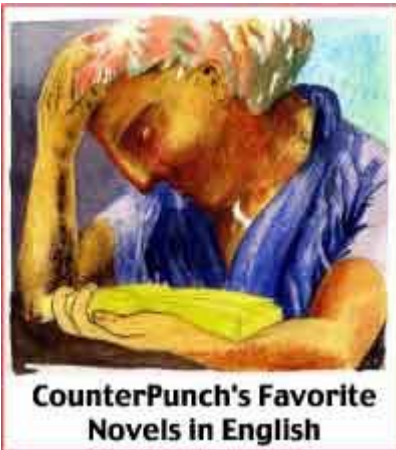


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