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counterpunch

edited by alexander cockburn and jeffrey st.clair

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Weekend Edition
February 24 / 25, 2007

"An American Strike on Iran is Essential for Our Existence"

AIPAC Demands "Action" on Iran

By GARY LEUPP

Former CIA counterterrorism specialist Philip Giraldi, comparing the propaganda campaign against Iran to that which preceded the war on Iraq, has recently declared, "It is absolutely parallel. They're using the same dance steps-demonize the bad guys, the pretext of diplomacy, keep out of negotiations, use proxies. It is Iraq redux." He's only one of many in his field (including Vincent Cannistraro, Ray McGovern, and Larry C. Johnson) doing their best to expose the Bush-Cheney neocon disinformation campaign according to which Iran is planning to produce nukes in order to commit genocide, while abetting terrorists in Iraq who are killing American troops.

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Their efforts, and those of many others, are producing results. The mainstream corporate press is far more skeptical about administration claims pertaining to Iran than they ever were towards the equally specious claims made about Iraq on the eve of the 2003 invasion. The American people are now inclined to distrust claims made by nameless officials about Quds Force-provisioned IEDs and EFPs, etc., supposedly smuggled by "meddling" Iranians into Iraq. Unfortunately the Congress dominated by Democrats elected in a popular expression of antiwar sentiment has not taken a firm stance against an attack on Iran based on lies. Maybe given the nature of the power structure it simply can't.

Gibaldi matter-of-factly sums up the unfortunate politics of situation.

"The recent formation of the Congressional Israel Allies Caucus should. . . be noted as well as AIPAC's highlighting of the threat from Iran at its 2006 convention in Washington, an event that featured Vice President Dick Cheney as keynote speaker. More recently, Senator Hillary Clinton addressed an AIPAC gathering in New York City. Neither was shy about threatening Iran. AIPAC's formulation that the option of force 'must remain on the table' when dealing with Iran has been repeated like a mantra by numerous politicians and government officials, not too surprisingly as AIPAC writes the briefings and position papers that many Congressmen unfortunately rely on."

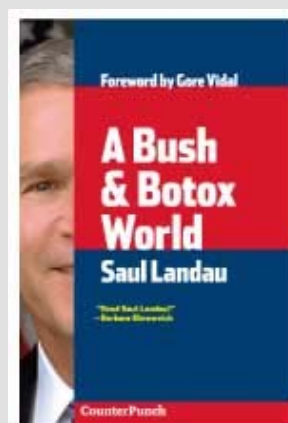
In other words, the American Israel Political Action Committee is the main political force urging---indeed, *demanding*---U.S. action. That's the AIPAC already under scrutiny for receiving classified information about Iran from Lawrence Franklin, former Defense Department subordinate of Douglas Feith. (That's the neocon Feith who supervised the Office of Special Plans---headed by Abram Shulsky, the neocon specialist on Leo Strauss who currently heads up the Iran Directorate at the Pentagon---that shamelessly cherry-picked intelligence to support the Iraq attack. That's the Franklin who worked in the OSP, and was sentenced last month to 13 years in prison. Feith has not been indicted on any charge and continues to insist in defiance of reason and even a Pentagon internal investigation finding it "inappropriate" that his office's disinformation project was "good government." Small wonder Gen. Tommy Franks, formerly head of the U.S. Central Command, famously called Feith "the fucking stupidest guy on the face of the earth." Congressional investigations are just now getting underway into Feith's role in facilitating the invasion of Iraq.)

That's the AIPAC embarrassed by the indictment of its policy director Steven Rosen and senior Iran analyst Keith Weissman for illegally conspiring to pass on classified national security information to Israel. Despite the already intimate ties between Israeli and U.S. intelligence (documented by Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski among others) it seems the Israelis felt obliged to spy on the Pentagon to learn just how inclined the Americans were to oblige them



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by attacking Iran.

Now, as Israeli calls for a U.S. attack on Iran become more shrill by the day, AIPAC recognizes that the American people profoundly distrust Vice President Cheney and the nest of neocon liars he has sheltered. The Bush-Cheney war machine has been pretty well exposed, and that must worry the warmongers within the group. Israeli Defense Force chief artillery officer Gen. Oded Tira has griped that "President Bush lacks the political power to attack Iran," adding that since "an American strike in Iran is essential for [Israel's] existence, we must help him pave the way by lobbying the Democratic Party (which is conducting itself foolishly) and US newspaper editors. We need to do this in order to turn the Iran issue to a bipartisan one and unrelated to the Iraq failure." Tira urges the Lobby to turn to "potential presidential candidates. . . so that they support immediate action by Bush against Iran," while Uri Lubrani, senior advisor to Defense Minister Amir Peretz, tells the Jewish Agency's Board of Governors that the US "does not understand the threat and has not done enough," and therefore "must be shaken awake."

Many Americans would find such statements deeply offensive in their arrogance and condescension. President Bush has indeed been weakened by the "Iraq failure" Tira acknowledges, arising from a war that the Lobby once endorsed with enormous enthusiasm. (As Gen. Wesley Clark put it way back in August 2002, "Those who favor this attack now will tell you candidly, and privately, that it is probably true that Saddam Hussein is no threat to the United States. But they are afraid at some point he might decide if he had a nuclear weapon to use it against Israel." Recall that that weapon was *imaginary*.) So now, the Israeli war advocates aver, the U.S. president needs to be *helped* to do the right thing and attack Iran by lobbyists who will use their power to force the *fools* in the Democratic Party, especially presidential candidates. Because Americans *don't understand* and have to be *shaken* out of their current skeptical mode.

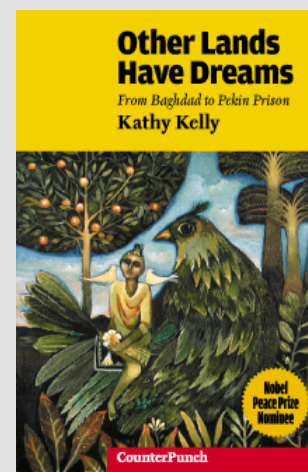
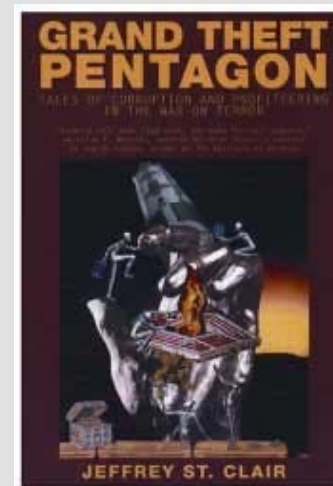
By who? By AIPAC, of course! The confidence expressed by these gentlemen (in the second most powerful political action committee in the country) is quite extraordinary. But alas, maybe it's warranted. Giraldi dispassionately concludes:

"Knowing that to cross the Lobby is perilous, Congressmen from both parties squirm and become uneasy when pressured by AIPAC to 'protect Israel,' even if it means yet another unwinnable war for the United States. The neocons know full well that if a war with Iran were to be started either inadvertently or by design, few within America's political system would be brave enough to stand up in opposition."

One should ask these spineless politicians how they suppose the people will remember their votes and positions within weeks of the "immediate action" Tira and his allies in the Bush administration (most notably Condi Rice's deputy Elliott Abrams, the most powerful neocon remaining in the team) are demanding. Will they not be

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blamed for the total collapse of cooperation between the U.S. occupation and Iraq's Shiite majority, the fall of the current client regime dominated by Iranian allies, the intensification of Shiite militia attacks on U.S. forces, the broadening of the current two-front war to enflame all of Southwest Asia?

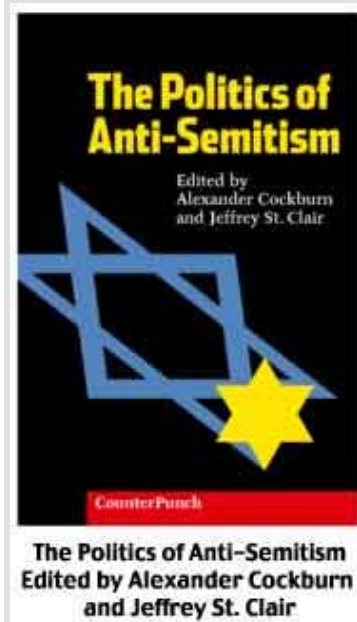
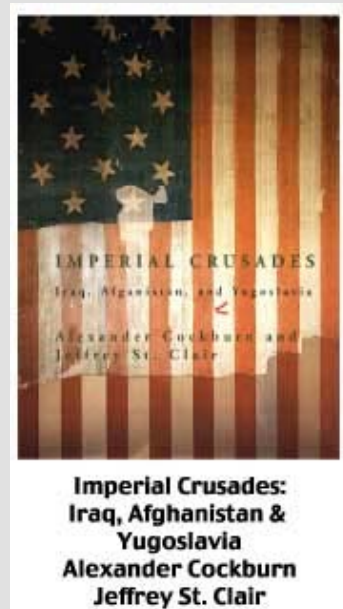
One should ask those squirming manipulators blissfully ignorant of the Islamic world---clueless about the difference between Arabs and Persians or Sunnis and Shiites, coached almost entirely by State Department Zionists who don't bother to conceal their Islamophobia---to recognize that American Jewry is not generally pro-neocon nor united in support of an Iran attack. Indeed many American Jews are *alarmed* at Israeli/AIPAC efforts to push the U.S. into another crusader war on a Muslim nation. (A lot of them are in New York. Hillary might consult with them rather than suppose that her ticket to the presidency is the support of the Cheney-friendly Lobby. But I wouldn't hold my breath on that.)

One should ask the Lobbyists as well as the government of Israel that they think they serve (as well as the *people* of Israel, honestly divided in their opinions) how the security of the Jewish State will be abetted by a generalized war between Israel's great patron and the entire Muslim world.

When one plays this Islamophobic game of exploiting ignorance, fear, hatred and bigotry; when one conflates al-Qaeda with Iraq with Hamas with Hizbollah with Iran knowing that most Americans know little about the details and will be inclined to side (for now) with Israel against Muslims in general; when one *lies* (as the neocons do with such arrogance, supposing they will escape any consequences of the lies down the road)---then one invites a backlash. We live in a racist culture that easily slides into religious bigotry. Why use that culture (not so dissimilar to the German culture of the 1930s) so shamelessly---against Arabs and other Muslim peoples of the Middle East? One's disinformation with its murderous results in the Muslim world might just produce the ignorant conclusion that could sweep Middle America down the road: "*The Jews made us do it.*" That's what the red-necks including a whole lot of today's brain-dead Christian Zionist fundamentalists will say as soon as everything goes wrong in the Middle East, Jesus doesn't come back and is nowhere in sight, and the three U.S. troops killed per day becomes six or ten for no good goddamned reason.

"*They have the money, they control the media and the politicians. They made us attack Iran and now look what's happening.*" That's what the ignorant who can one day cry "Nuke 'em all!" referring to Muslims, and the next day swear "Fucking Christ-killers" will say. Is the Lobby's paranoia about Iran's uranium enrichment so severe as to risk that kind of assessment, that kind of blowback bigotry?

We are perhaps arriving at a critical point in the history of the powerful Lobby, including its capacity to intimidate honest, critically reasoning people who do not embrace its fears, prejudices and preoccupations. It's under unprecedented scrutiny following the carefully argued paper by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, "The Israel



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Daryll E. Ray

Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy" and Jimmy Carter's book *Palestine: Peace, Not Apartheid* both published last year, to which it's reacted with its wonted technique of character assassination. The political power of the Lobby would appear to be reaching its zenith; and while it used its hand subtly in the build-up for war on Iraq, it now uses it in crude, bullying fashion. Israeli officials weren't publicly calling for the simple-minded Christian-Zionist Bush to "smite" *Iraq* to defend Israel in 2003, but now they're nervously demanding that Bush destroy *Iran's* nuclear facilities to prevent a "genocide" worse than that accomplished by Hitler! Their boldness betrays a confidence that they can indeed continue to shape American political discourse about the Middle East (to the exclusion of any audible Arab or Muslim voice) and that to challenge them is indeed "perilous."

"Attack Iran! NOW! Or support GENOCIDE! and side with the new HITLER! Destroy Iran's nuclear facilities! NOW! Or reveal your thinly-disguised ANTI-SEMITISM!"

That's the hyper-message calculated to stimulate an assault, to which the calm counterterrorism analyst Giraldo draws our attention. One could respond to the message with a polite, firm, principled refusal:

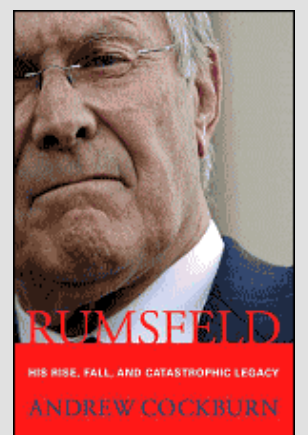
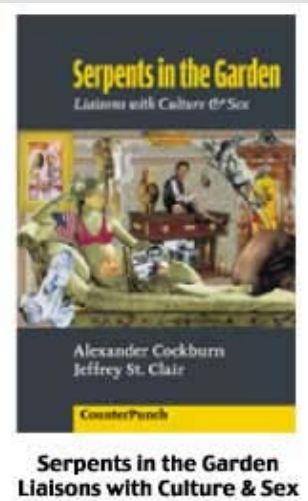
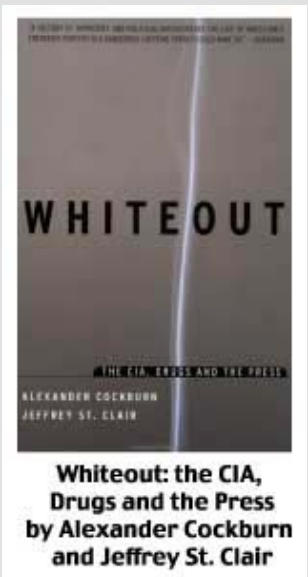
No thanks this time, AIPAC. You're just not credible. Can't do it for you. My constituents aren't into more war, and they think this whole Iran thing's a lot of hype. I can't support nuking Iran, and frankly, I don't see how you can either. I don't think you speak for all or even most American Jews, and you can't scare me this time by accusations of anti-Semitism. I can't have an attack on Iran my conscience, sorry. I'd rather be defeated in the next election. Keep your money; I just can't do what you ask.

Will the Congress targeted by the Lobby be able to say that? If it doesn't, all the belated, posturing moves to limit Bush's power, withdraw troops and end the imperialist war in Iraq will mean nothing. An attack on Iran will unleash the gates of hell. The attackers will argue that a new situation makes all prewar debate irrelevant (or even if encouraging doubt about the "existential" cause, downright treasonous). The fascistic proclivities of the administration will blossom immediately. The legal basis has been laid for the repression of the dissent an Iran attack will naturally inspire. Prison camps, suspension of habeas corpus. The proponents of the war are comfortable with these things, and the waters have already been tested.

O nation miserable,
With an untitled tyrant bloody-scepter'd,
When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again?

Can the American people allow this unelected unpopular administration, headed by a manifestly stupid sadistic fool, to continue to provoke international contempt and fear, while planning more carnage?

Gary Leupp is Professor of History at Tufts University, and Adjunct Professor of Comparative Religion. He is the author of [Servants, Shophands and Laborers in in the Cities of Tokugawa Japan](#); [Male Colors: The Construction of](#)



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[Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan](#); and [Interracial Intimacy in Japan: Western Men and Japanese Women, 1543-1900](#). He is also a contributor to CounterPunch's merciless chronicle of the wars on Iraq, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia, [Imperial Crusades](#).

He can be reached at: gleupp@granite.tufts.edu



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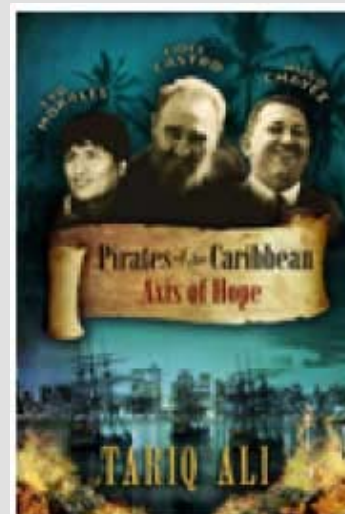
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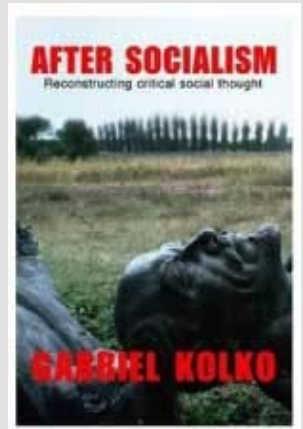
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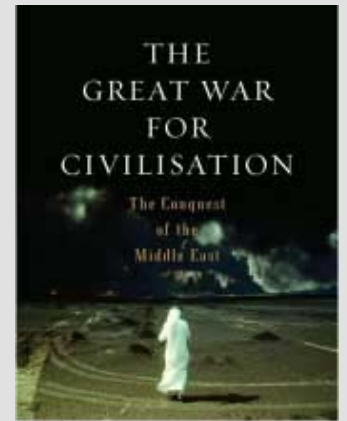
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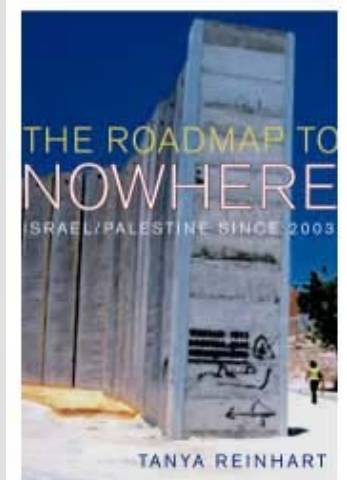
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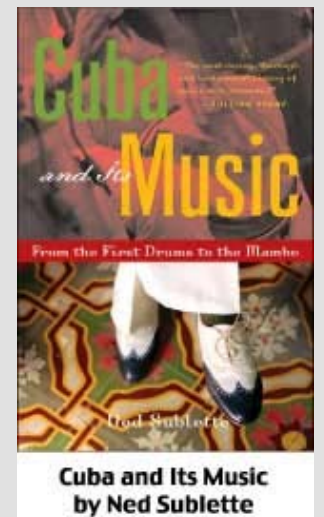
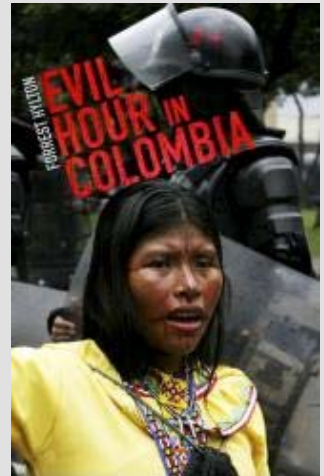
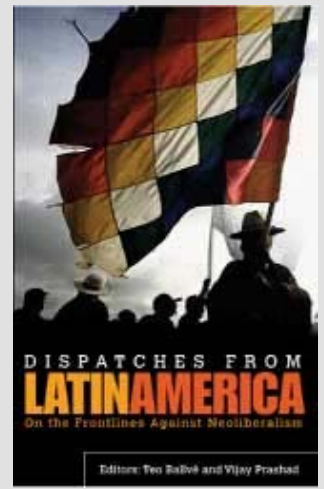
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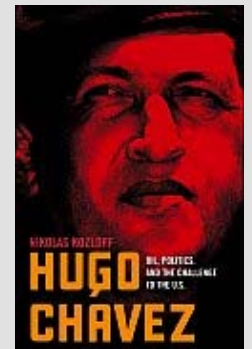
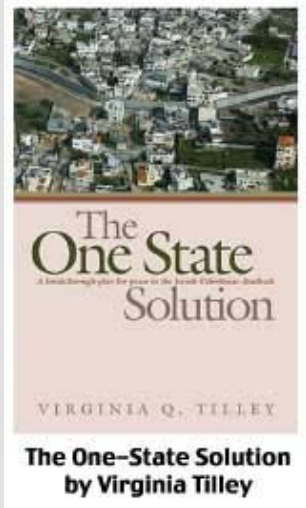
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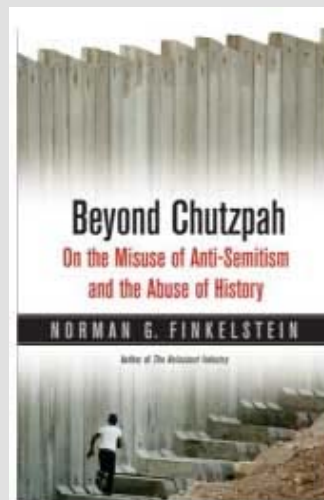
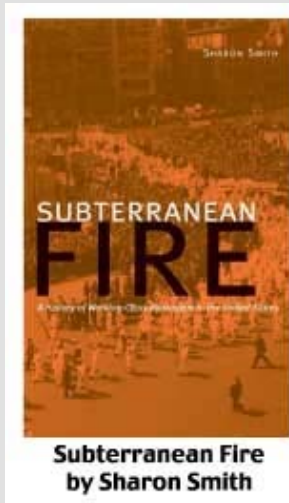
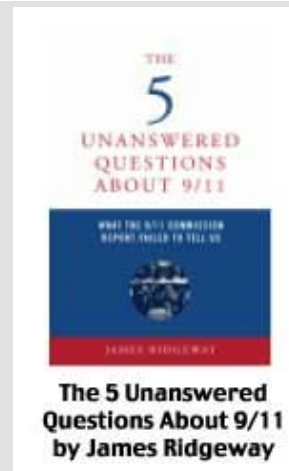
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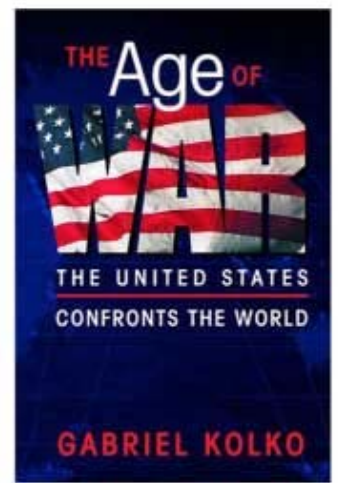
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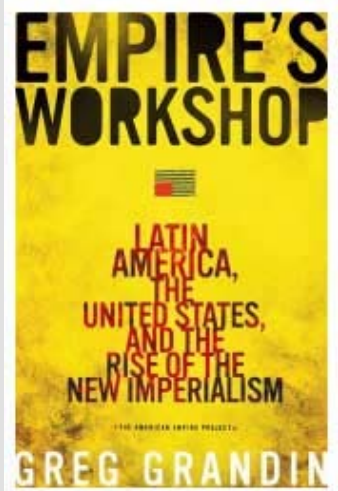
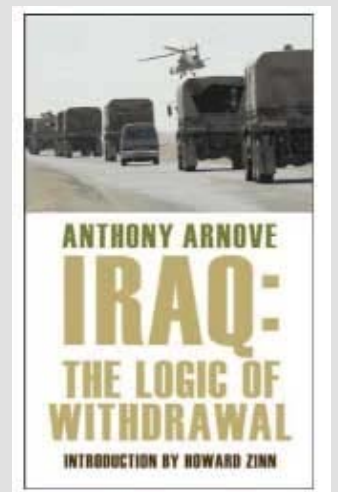
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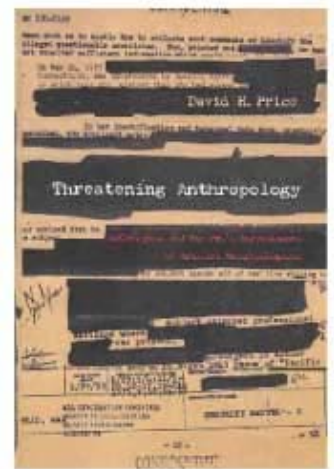
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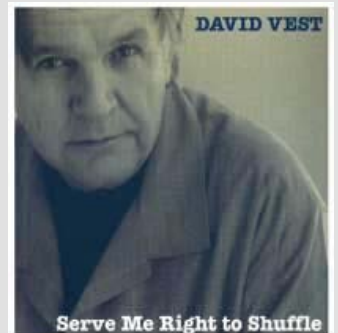
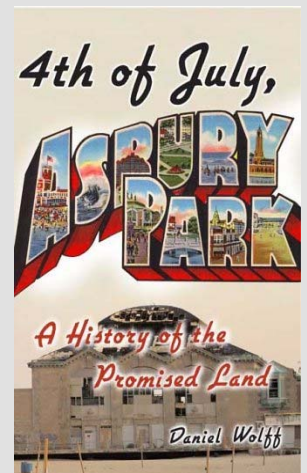
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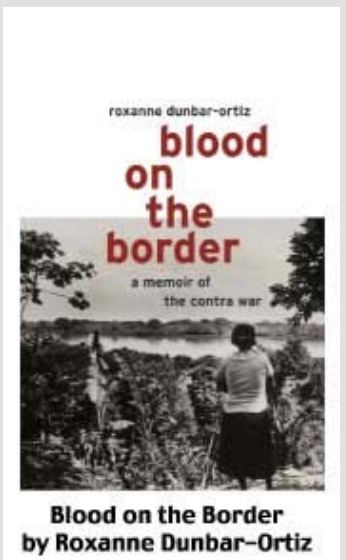
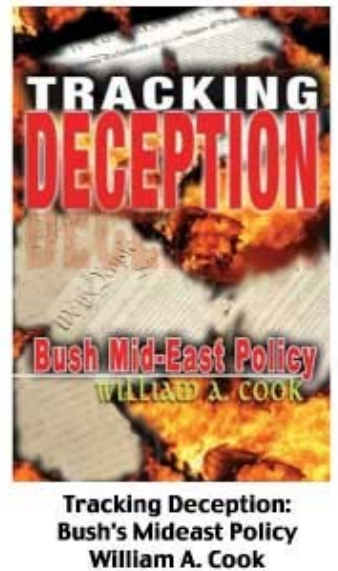
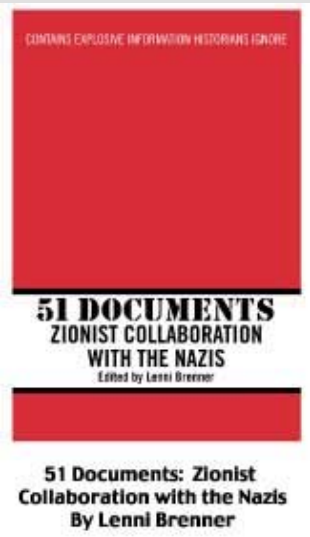
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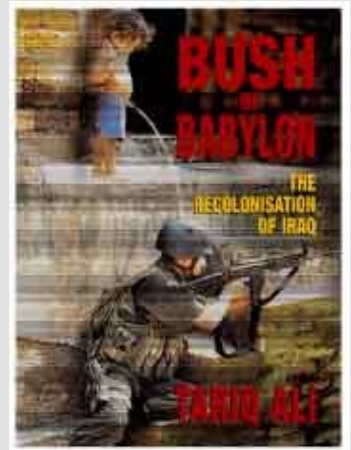
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