

out.

And so was the “liberal” media. The smoke had hardly cleared from lower Manhattan when already 44 percent of the American people had been led to believe that Saddam was the principal culprit. Surely they did not jump to such an egregiously erroneous conclusion through a process of divination: The administration and its willing accomplices in the media did their level best to fix the Big Lie in the American consciousness.

Perhaps the biggest lie of all was the smear campaign conducted by the War Party against anyone who questioned the wisdom of attacking and occupying Iraq. The most massive antiwar movement in world history was smeared as both an Islamic conspiracy and a communist front. Newscasters wore “patriotic” lapel pins as they broadcast news of American bombs raining down on newly “liberated” Iraqis. Reading government press releases practically verbatim to its fear-deadened and thoroughly manipulated audience, Fox News turned itself into the 21st-century equivalent of a Soviet-era state-run media outlet, the Pravda of the War Party, brazenly propagandistic to the point of self-parody.

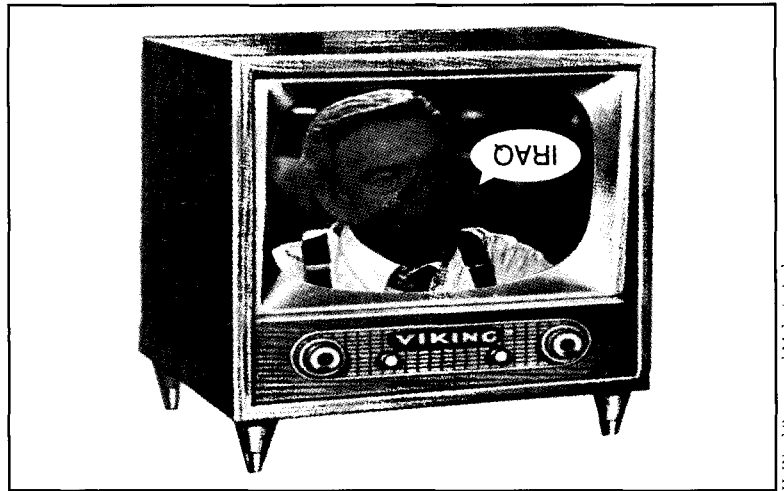
In order to get even a semblance of what was—and is—going on in the Middle East, and what their own government was up to, Americans had to turn to the foreign media, but the distorting effects of war hysteria were all too apparent there as well—especially the penumbra of prevarication emanating from the Murdoch media empire and the domain of Lord Black. The London *Telegraph*, for example, was forever finding papers in the ruins of Baghdad—which they just happened to come across, you understand—that “proved” all sorts of untruths: for example, that George Galloway had received payments from the Iraqi government and that Muhammad Atta had met with an Iraqi agent at the Prague airport. Both documents proved to be forgeries: Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenberg, writing in *Newsweek*, reported that the “evidence” of the Prague connection trumpeted by the *Telegraph* was “probably a fabrication.” About the Galloway papers, there was no doubt at all: The smeared former British MP was awarded a substantial libel judgment, but the Labour Party, which had promptly expelled him the moment the charges were leveled, somehow did not feel obligated to restore his membership.

Forgery seems to be one of the War Party’s favorite tactics, as George W. Bush discovered to his great chagrin when someone talked him into including the infamous 16 words in his State of the Union Address that alluded to Iraq’s alleged efforts to procure uranium from “an African nation.” That nation, it turned out, was Niger, and the President’s certainty sprang from his belief that the CIA had the documents ostensibly proving that Saddam had made such an effort. These, too, turned out to be forgeries—and not very good ones, at that.

A grand jury empaneled in Washington, D.C., is currently looking into the Niger uranium forgeries, although we have heard next to nothing about it in the media, except for a few paragraphs buried near the end of stories about *l’affaire Plame*. The outing of a CIA agent by someone in or close to the White House is another story that the media is hardly making any effort to investigate. When former ambassador Joseph C. Wilson went public with the true story of Saddam’s nonexistent Niger adventure—he had personally investigated the matter and reported back to the CIA that the charges were bogus—his wife, Valerie Plame, a CIA agent, was “outed” by vengeful neocons out to punish them both. A grand jury is investigating that,

too—but we do not hear much about that, either.

We do not hear about a lot of things. For example, in the run-up to war, the antiwar movement was examined under a media microscope, and the old practice of red-baiting was suddenly in vogue. It was almost enough to make me feel young again. *L.A. Weekly*, *Salon*, and, of course, professional neocon character assassins such as David Horowitz and David Frum, went over the political résumés of the antiwar opposition with a fine-toothed comb. Somehow, the War Party escaped similar scrutiny.



H. Ward Street and Melanie Anderson

So, the media was servile, lazy, arrogant, and slavishly dependent on government handouts and sources in reporting the Iraq war: I’m shocked—*shocked*, I tell you! You mean there’s gambling in this casino? Why should the media be any less decadent and indifferent to truth than their thoroughly degraded audience, whose inability to distinguish between reality and fantasy is exemplified by the success of the “reality show” genre, which first became popular—where else?—on Fox. c

On the Way to Inverness

by Peter Hunt

Small flocks of grazing black-faced sheep below
The ancient mountain-pass, blue haze of sky—
Row-boats rocking in their emerald castles
To the sad Highland song across the loch,
Silver flash of fish, sweet heather smell,
Lapping foam beyond the sea’s fierce roar:
A haunted peace hard-won from bitter war.

The Fall of Lord Blackadder and Lady Manolo (of Blahnik)

by Kevin Michael Grace

Mark Steyn once told me a revealing story about Conrad Black's "conservative" Canadian national newspaper, the *National Post*. It seems star columnist David Frum had ventured this evaluation: "The *Post* has a problem. It was started to save Canada, but Canada isn't worth saving."

Ah, the authentic voice of the Canadian neoconservative! Or, as English journalist Geoffrey Wheatcroft would say, the "self-hating Canadian." (Same thing, actually.) Steyn remains a Canadian citizen but persists in playing the "one-man global content provider." Frum, as we know, coined the infamous phrase "Axis of Evil" before finally taking American citizenship.

Conrad Black actually *renounced* his Canadian citizenship—and in a patently insulting manner. "For a wide range of reasons," he announced in 2001, "citizenship of Canada is not now for me competitive with that of the United Kingdom and the European Union." A year earlier, when he shocked Canada by selling his newspaper semi-monopoly (except for half of the *Post*, later sold for one dollar, and a few minor local papers) to Izzy Asper, stalwart defender of Black's nemesis, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, he explained: "The reputation of Canada is not particularly great amongst American investors, and the big presence we had there was not doing the valuation of our stock any good." So long, suckers.

As investors would later discover, however, most damaging to the valuation of Black's media company, Hollinger, was Black himself. And his "wide range of reasons" was rather narrow. Black was determined to enter Britain's House of Lords, and, in order to do so, he was required to quit Canada. The vicious Chrétien had blocked Black's ennoblement with reference to a fiendishly obscure Canadian parliamentary resolution. Chrétien insisted Canadian citizens could not accept British honors; laughable, but Tony Blair took fright. Black got his ermine robe in 2001, but if he had known in 1999 the disasters that would befall him—disgrace, divestment, threats of bankruptcy and imprisonment—he might have said, "Thanks, but no thanks."

He *might* have. You see, Conrad Black, like his hero Napoleon, is never happy (if that is the right word) unless at war on all fronts. Perhaps this has something to do with being Canadian. For so many Canadians, their birthright is as easily discarded as a tissue. Black carries his like a cross.

Or perhaps Black's wrath is congenital. His father, George Black, a brewery executive, retired from business (and largely from life) at 48. Soon after the death of his wife in 1976, after spending the evening with Conrad, he walked up his circular

staircase and then crashed through the banister to the floor below. His son rushed him to hospital, where he died the next day. In 1982, Black told biographer Peter Newman that his father's last words to him that night had been: "Life is hell, most people are bastards, and everything is bullsh-t." (Black later denied this account to biographer Richard Siklos, author of the fine *Shades of Black*.)

Conrad Black was always singular. Born in 1944, he grew up in his own wing of the later death-haunted Toronto home. He was chauffeured to school at the elite Upper Canada College (UCC). An autodidact obsessed with military history and strategy, he bought his first stock at eight but was hardly a *laissez-faire* capitalist. He recounts in his autobiography, "One of the few substantive political differences I had had with my father was over his view that Franklin D. Roosevelt was a socialist, if not a communist. He has always been, next to Abraham Lincoln, the American leader I most admired."

Napoleon, FDR, and Lincoln: not the heroes of a conservative; rather, the heroes of a power worshiper. Black, however, is not a man who has ever had much use for authority, when not wielded by him. He compared UCC to a "concentration camp" and was expelled in 1959 after selling examination papers he and three others had stolen. According to his autobiography, he is "neither proud nor ashamed of what happened." Black's first felony was highly profitable ("a margin of 100 per cent, as I had no cost of sales"); he realized \$1,400 (about \$9,500 Canadian today).

Black entered poorly regarded Carleton University in Ottawa, where he remained a diffident student and enjoyed an old-fashioned, chaste bachelordom of cards, tobacco, and booze. After graduation, he enrolled in Toronto's prestigious Osgoode Hall Law School but left after a year.

It was only after Black moved to Quebec in 1966 that he began to make his fortune. Black was that rarest of Anglo-Canadians—a Francophile. He learned French (something few Anglos did or do), took a law degree at Laval in Quebec City and an M.A. in history from McGill in Montreal and began his laudatory biography of Maurice Duplessis, published in 1977. Duplessis, premier of Quebec from 1936 to 1939 and from 1944 until his death in 1959, was fiercely Catholic, conservative, and nationalist. His Quebec was hated by Pierre Trudeau and swept away by the Quiet Revolution.

It was in Quebec that Black got into journalism and met his lifelong partners, David Radler and Peter White. Radler became Black's chief operating officer and hatchet man; White has been a prime mover in Conservative politics for decades and was prime minister Brian Mulroney's principal secretary.

They began buying small Quebec (and later British Columbian) newspapers. Radler "phased-out" employees by

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