

# America meddling in East

**William Blum** is a renowned critic of United States foreign policy. A former State Department worker, he left in 1967 due to US actions in Vietnam. He has written, researched and talked extensively on CIA interventions and assassinations. He has authored many books, including *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2*, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*, *West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir* and *Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire*

**I**N previous reports I've discussed why I thought that the political uprisings in Eastern Europe of the past 18 months, which have resulted in changes of government in Georgia and Ukraine and the potential for the same elsewhere, have not entirely been phenomena of spontaneous combustion. I've pointed out that in each case all or most of the usual American suspects have been involved - the National Endowment for Democracy (and two of its wings: the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs), the Agency for International Development (AID), George Soros's Open Society organisations, Freedom House, *et al*.

I've received some criticism for this point of view from those who believe that the people in each of these countries had strong motivation for their demonstrations based on legitimate grievances and didn't need "outside agitators". I don't question at all the existence of their grievances, but I maintain that the demonstrators needed various sparks, tutelage, and financing. Consider what their most commonly stated grievances have been - unemployment, other economic hardships, questionable elections, and government corruption.

Does not each of these apply in full, overflowing measure to the United States? As one example, is there any parliament in the world whose members receive more in bribes ("political contributions") than members of the US Congress? Are there not millions of Americans who hate their leaders every bit as much as the people in Georgia and Ukraine hated theirs? If it's not a majority of Americans who feel this way, neither has it been majorities in Eastern Europe that have been rising up. Why don't we have an uprising here? Why don't we choose a symbolic colour and throw the scoundrels out? Perhaps all we need are some wealthy outside agitators. The old joke goes: Why won't there ever be a *coup d'état* in the United States? Because there's no American embassy in Washington.

The phenomenon is not new. The United States made use of paid-for street crowds and chaos for their first post-World War II regime change, Iran in 1953; neither is it new in Eastern Europe, for the same tactics were employed by the National Endowment for Democracy and Agency for International Development in toppling governments in Bulgaria and Albania in the early 1990s.

**Intelligence failure or imperial**

**ambitions?** On March 31 the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction delivered its report to the president. The Commission concluded that "the Intelligence Community was dead wrong in almost all of its pre-war judgments about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. This was a major intelligence failure. Its principal causes were the Intelligence Community's inability to collect good information about Iraq's WMD programmes, serious errors in analysing what information it could gather, and a failure to make clear just how much of its analysis was based on assumptions, rather than good evidence."

Many people, including members of the Commission, likely take the above to mean that if "the intelligence community" [sounds like a small town in New England] had only done its job better it would have learnt that Iraq didn't have an arsenal of WMD sufficient to pose any kind of serious threat to the United States and a lot of bloody horror

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It should come as no surprise that the multi-coloured revolutions sweeping Eastern Europe have been financed by various US institutions and think tanks. After all, America made use of paid-for street crowds and chaos for their first post-World War II regime change - Iran in 1953. Moreover, carrying out such practices in Eastern Europe is not new either. The same tactics were employed by the National Endowment for Democracy and Agency for International Development in toppling governments in Bulgaria and Albania in the early 1990s

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could have been avoided. That, however, is a highly questionable assumption. It presumes that the Bush administration actually went to war because it genuinely believed that Iraq was both dangerously armed and an "imminent" threat to use those arms against the United States. But the Bush administration knew perfectly well that Iraq's military capability was nothing to be particularly concerned about. Here's Colin Powell, speaking in February 2001 of US sanctions on Iraq: "And frankly they have worked. He [Saddam Hussein] has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction. He is unable to project conventional power against his neighbours." And here is Condoleezza Rice, in July of that year, speaking of Saddam Hussein: "We are able to keep arms from him. His military forces have not been rebuilt."

**Cuba, the never-ending double standard:** The European Union is once again admonishing Cuba to release its "dissidents" from prison. The United States is pressuring the United Nations Human Rights Commission, currently meeting in Geneva, to pursue this same goal. Cuba's critics are particularly upset that many of those arrested are journalists and poets. What they consistently fail to acknowledge

is that the arrests of these persons had nothing to do with them being journalists or poets, or even being dissidents *per se*, but had everything to do with their very close, indeed intimate, political and financial connections to American government officials.

The United States is to the Cuban government what Al Qaeda is to Washington, only much more powerful and much closer. During the period of the Cuban revolution, the United States and anti-Castro Cuban exiles in the US have inflicted upon Cuba damage greater than what happened in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001. In 1999, Cuba filed a suit against the United States for \$181.1 billion in compensation for victims of (at that time) forty years of aggression. The suit accuses Washington policies of being responsible for the death of 3,478 Cubans and wounding or disabling 2,099 others.

Cuban officials delivered the papers for the suit to the US Interests Section in Havana, but the Americans refused to

accept them. The Cuban government then took its case to the United Nations, where it has been in the hands of the Counter-Terrorism Committee since 2001. This committee is made up of all 15 members of the Security Council, which of course includes the United States, and which may account for the inaction on the matter.

Would the US ignore a group of American dissidents receiving funds from Al Qaeda and engaging in repeated meetings with known leaders of that organisation in the United States? Would it matter if these American dissidents claimed to be journalists or (gasp) poets? In the past few years, the American government has arrested a great many people in the US and abroad on the basis of alleged ties to Al Qaeda, with a lot less evidence to go by than Cuba had with its dissidents' ties to the United States.

The US has, of course, also arrested numerous American dissidents at anti-war, anti-globalisation, anti-School of the Americas, and other demonstrations, many sentenced up to months in prison with concurrent physical and psychological abuse.

**Inflammatory history textbooks:** Japanese school textbooks have again come under emotional attack from South Korea and China, both victims of brutal Japanese imperial policy before and during

# ern Europe's 'revolutions'

the World War II. Critics, including North Korea as well, have long complained that Japanese history texts have consistently denied the country's wartime aggression. On April 5, the Japanese Education Ministry approved a new edition of a text already in use, which critics say further distorts the past and portrays imperial Japan as a liberator rather than an occupier of its Asian neighbours. They point out that the text shuns the word "invasion".

When, it has to be wondered, will the scores of victims of US imperial aggression begin to complain about American history textbooks? As one example, the last I knew, in the pages of these books, the United States never "invaded" Vietnam. Will future American history texts speak of the US "liberation" of Iraq and Afghanistan? Is there any current textbook that conveys to the minds of young Americans the God-awful consequences of Washington's roles in Indonesia 1965, Greece 1967 or Angola 1975, to name but a few?

Frances Fitzgerald, in her study of American history textbooks, observed that "According to these books, the United States had been a kind of Salvation Army to the rest of the world: throughout history, it had done little but dispense benefits to poor, ignorant, and diseased countries. ... the United States always acted in a disinterested fashion, always from the highest of motives; it gave, never took."

**Economics 101 revisited:** When California had its "energy crisis" in 2000-2001, very little of what I read about it made much sense to me; the articles just didn't explain in one understandable step after another exactly what was happening and why. The reason for this, I later concluded, was that the writers were largely analysing the situation in textbook fashion, Economics 101 cause-and-effect stuff - the scientific method. It was only after the criminal, manipulative role of Enron and other corporations was revealed that the picture began to come into focus for me. This is but one example of why, over the years, I've come to the conclusion that the underlying reasons for economic phenomena and/or the explanations presented for them derive from the following: 50 percent of them are political or ideological in nature, 20 percent fraud and "legal" manipulation, 20 percent psychological, 10 percent scientific; the percentages are, of course, rough estimates.

The current campaign for social security reform, though presented in economic terms, is actually motivated by political and ideological considerations. The rise or fall of the stock market from day to day is an example of the psychological factor, though each day Wall Street issues an official explanation in economic terms. We're told that the recent great rise in the cost of oil is a classic example of the law of supply and demand, as immutable as the law of gravity. I, however, remain sceptical. For here and there in various cities of the Middle East and Europe and North America, a relative handful of men, some of them oil company executives, have seen that the time was right to make decisions to satisfy a particular desire

of theirs: to become even richer.

**Primitive emotions:** A sad tale about Ahmad and Mazari Ayubi, a married couple in Afghanistan. They're first cousins. "There is a saying in our country that a marriage between cousins is the most righteous because the engagement was made in heaven," says a prominent Afghan doctor.

Ahmad and Mazari have had eight children. All but one of them are paralysed from the neck down and mentally retarded or have already died from the same brain disorder. Ahmad has now agreed to Mazari's request to stop having children. A remaining source of tension between them is whether to agree to the marriage of their healthy son, age 13, to his first cousin, the 10-year-old daughter of Ahmad's brother. This match was arranged by Ahmad's mother before her death and is pushed by Ahmad's brother, who keeps insisting that "even if all our grandchildren come out sick, I will not make my mother unhappy in her grave."

ecuted. But it turns out that in 1989 the United States asked the Netherlands to extradite Frans van Anraat, a Dutch businessman, for exporting chemicals to Iraq which were allegedly used by the Iraqi government to produce some of the poison gas used against Kurds and Iranians. This is now in the news because van Anraat - who had lived in Iraq from 1989 to 2003, when the US invasion began - is currently being prosecuted in the Netherlands. The case is seen as a landmark because it would be the first time a businessman has been prosecuted for war crimes by a national court. Mr van Anraat may have made some mistakes, but none so foolish as to not be living in the United States when he was a chemical exporter.

**Some questions for God:** Word from Rome was that the favourite to become the new pope had been Cardinal Giuseppe Scola of Italy. But his candidacy failed because other cardinals were reluctant to have a Pope Scola. I would love to have been in heaven to see the

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The US wants Cuba to release its 'dissidents' from prison, on the grounds that the detainees are journalists and poets. In reality, those incarcerated had close political and financial connections with US officials. The point is that America is to Cuba what Al Qaeda is to Washington. Thus, would Washington ignore a group of American dissidents receiving funds from Al Qaeda and engaging in repeated meetings with known leaders of that organisation in the US? Would it matter if these American dissidents claimed to be journalists or (gasp) poets?

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My first reaction upon reading the brother's remark was to think: "Oh the hell with all of them, they're too hopelessly primitive to get upset about, it's better this way, maybe the whole damn breed will die out."

My second thought was this: There are probably lots of American soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq, part of military machines that have killed well over a hundred thousand people and disabled yet more in those two woeful lands, soldiers who know that what they're part of is maddeningly stupid and cruel, but who reason "even if we kill everyone and destroy everything, I will not make my mother country unhappy in its time of need; I will not betray the confidence she placed in me."

**Another entry into the Hypocrisy Hall of Fame:** According to a US Senate report, from 1985 through 1989, the United States provided "Iraq with 'dual use' licensed materials which assisted in the development of Iraqi chemical, biological, and missile-system programmes, including: chemical warfare agent precursors; chemical warfare agent production facility plans and technical drawings ... [and] chemical warhead filling equipment."

None of the American businessmen who exported these materials has ever been prosecuted.

pope's face when he discovered that there was no God. As some people would love to see my face in heaven as I was confronted by God. The difference is that John Paul would be terribly shocked, while I would be thrilled, although I'd have a number of questions to ask the Lord:

- 1) Who do you admire more - the believer who goes to church and does good deeds because he hopes to be rewarded by you or at least not be punished by you, or the atheist who works to enhance human rights because that's the kind of society he wants to live in and not because he'll be judged in some future life by you?
- 2) Do you recognise Al Qaeda as a faith-based initiative?
- 3) Why did you allow John Paul to work against liberation theology in Latin America?
- 4) How did this world become so unbearably cruel, corrupt, unjust, and stupid? Did it reach this stage by chance, by - you'll pardon the expression - evolution, or did you plan it this way? Or did the devil make you do it?
- 5) Is it true that if you wanted us to go naked, we wouldn't have been born with clothing on?