Chain of Fools

Things are looking a bit grim for the Bush faction these days

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Things are looking a bit grim for the Bush faction these days. Their chief bagman, Jack Abramoff, is in the clink, naming names. Their top congressional enforcer, Tom DeLay, is in the dock, sinking fast. Their "war of choice" in Iraq has stalled in murderous quagmire. Their poll numbers are plummeting as scandal after scandal turn the American people against them. What, then, will be the fate of these brutal, bungling, bloodstained goons when they face the voters in the coming elections?

Why, victory, of course!

In fact, this year's congressional races and the presidential contest in 2008 are already over, and the Bushists have won. It's true that some of the candidates have not yet been chosen — including whatever frontman the goon squad picks to replace the kill-crazy klutz from Crawford — but the vast machinery of electoral malfeasance that propelled this extremist faction to power over the wishes of the electorate in both 2000 and, yes, 2004, is not only still in place, it's growing stronger all the time.

No one has laid bare the malodorous innards of this democracy-devouring monster better than Mark Crispin Miller, whose new book, "Fooled Again," takes us back to the dastardy of Election Day 2004 and the hydra-headed campaign of vote-rigging that preceded it. This second heist of the White House is one of the great untold stories of our time — even though it was largely carried out in plain sight. Miller performs the simple but increasingly rare act of journalism and gathers a mountain of overwhelming evidence from publicly available material. This is no "conspiracy theory" stitched together from anonymous sources, strained inferences and dark innuendo, but a solid case based on official records, sworn testimony, eyewitness accounts, news reports and the Bushists' own words.

The game was actually given away long before the balloting, when one of the faction's congressional waterboys, Representative Peter King, was captured — on film — boasting that the fix was in. At a White House chow-down in summer 2003, King was asked who he thought would win in 2004. "It's already over," King said. "The election's over. We won. … It's all over but the counting. And we'll take care of the counting."

Indeed they did. As often noted here, tens of millions of votes are now counted using paperless, easily hackable electronic voting machines programmed — and often administered — by a handful of corporations whose officers are unabashed Bush backers. Two of these, the notorious Diebold and lesser-known but equally shadowy ES&S, were kickstarted by right-wing tycoon Harold Ahmanson, once the major backer of the Christian Reconstruction movement — which advocates total theocratic rule of state and society by

Christian mullahs, with death for homosexuals, disenfranchisement for unbelievers and slavery for debtors, among other delights.

With these corporations at the helm, the 2004 vote was the most shambolic in U.S. history, plagued by an epidemic of machine breakdowns and shortages (almost entirely in key Democratic precincts) and by a rash of "glitches" that "inexplicably" switched the voter's intended choice to a different candidate, or added hundreds or even thousands of "ghost" votes to a candidate's total. In every single recorded case of such "accidents," the beneficiary of these unearned votes was President George W. Bush. Meanwhile, as in 2000, strange voting patterns emerged in pockets across the country, where unknown fringe candidates unaccountably received thousands of votes — at the expense of the Democratic candidate.

Of course, gaming the electronic voting grid was only part of the operation. Voter suppression techniques first unlimbered in 2000 were polished to a high sheen in 2004. These included purges of deliberately misidentified "felons" from the rolls; mass intimidation campaigns in poverty-ridden districts (e.g., "official" notices that anyone owing back rent, child support, unpaid traffic tickets, etc. would be arrested if they tried to vote); reducing the number of polling stations in Democratic-leaning precincts and stocking them with old, derelict machines; and a sophisticated, nationwide scam of deceitfully "registering" Democratic voters — who then discovered they were not on the books when they showed up to vote. The Republican National Committee paid millions to the man behind this flim-flam, the theocrat and Bush insider Nathan Sproul.

The 2004 vote also saw a repeat of the exit poll debacles of 2002 and 2000, with the final results in each case defying the poll data to a remarkable degree. For decades, exit polls have proven so consistently reliable that they are used by many institutions — including the U.S. State Department — to gauge the fairness of elections around the world. Yet only in the United States, and only in the last three elections involving the Bush faction, have they failed utterly to jibe with the official tally.

Miller's book also includes insightful analysis to help us understand how this gaggle of militarists, millenarists and money-grubbers have managed to seize and keep power in a decayed, sclerotic republic whose institutions have proven too weak to withstand the gang's fanaticism — and too corrupt to resist the bribery, legal and otherwise, that the Bushists dole out from public and private coffers.

Despite the scandals, the indictments, the mounting death toll in Iraq and the ever-deepening unpopularity of Bush and his minions, the faction's tools for "manufacturing consent" — so ably exposed by Miller — are greased and ready, unchallenged by the clueless, spineless Democrats and the dollar-dazzled media. So look for more "astonishing upsets" and poll-confounding "surprises" in the coming national elections, as brute power rapes reality once again.

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