

From Hiroshima to Syria, The Enemy Whose Name We Dare Not Speak

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

On my wall is the front page of *Daily Express* of September 5, 1945 and the words: "I write this as a warning to the world." So began Wilfred Burchett's report from Hiroshima. It was the scoop of the century. For his lone, perilous journey that defied the US occupation authorities, Burchett was pilloried, not least by his embedded colleagues. He warned that an act of premeditated mass murder on an epic scale had launched a new era of terror.

Almost every day now, he is vindicated. The intrinsic criminality of the atomic bombing is borne out in the US National Archives and by the subsequent decades of militarism camouflaged as democracy. The Syria psychodrama exemplifies this. Yet again, we are held hostage to the prospect of a terrorism whose nature and history even the most liberal critics still deny. The great unmentionable is that humanity's most dangerous enemy resides across the Atlantic.

John Kerry's farce and Barack Obama's pirouettes are temporary. Russia's peace deal over chemical weapons will, in time, be treated with the contempt that all militarists reserve for diplomacy. With Al-Qaida now among its allies, and US-armed coupmasters secure in Cairo, the US intends to crush the last independent states in the Middle East: Syria first, then Iran. "This operation [in Syria]," said the former French foreign minister Roland Dumas in June, "goes way back. It was prepared, pre-conceived and planned."

When the public is "psychologically scarred", as the Channel 4 reporter Jonathan Rugman described the British people's overwhelming hostility to an attack on Syria, reinforcing the unmentionable is made urgent. Whether or not Bashar al-Assad or the "rebels" used gas in the suburbs of Damascus, it is the US not Syria that is the world's most prolific user of these terrible weapons. In 1970, the Senate reported, "The US has dumped on Vietnam a quantity of toxic chemical (dioxin) amounting to six pounds per head of population". This was Operation Hades, later renamed the friendlier Operation Rand Hand: the source of what Vietnamese doctors call a "cycle of foetal catastrophe". I have seen generations of young children with their familiar, monstrous deformities. John Kerry, with his own blood-soaked war record, will remember them. I have seen them in Iraq, too, where the US used depleted uranium and white phosphorous, as did the Israelis in Gaza, raining it down on UN schools and hospitals. No Obama "red line" for them. No showdown psychodrama for them.

The repetitive debate about whether "we" should "take action" against selected dictators (i.e. cheer on the US and its acolytes in yet another aerial killing spree) is part of our brainwashing. Richard Falk, emeritus professor of international law and UN Special

Rapporteur on Palestine, describes it as “a self-righteous, one-way, legal/moral screen [with] positive images of Western values and innocence portrayed as threatened, validating a campaign of unrestricted political violence”. This “is so widely accepted as to be virtually unchallengeable”.

It is the biggest lie: the product of “liberal realists” in Anglo-American politics, scholarship and the media who ordain themselves as the world’s crisis managers, rather than the cause of a crisis. Stripping humanity from the study of nations and congealing it with jargon that serves western power designs, they mark “failed”, “rogue” or “evil” states for “humanitarian intervention”.

An attack on Syria or Iran or any other US “demon” would draw on a fashionable variant, “Responsibility to Protect”, or R2P, whose lectern-trotting zealot is the former Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans, co-chair of a “Global Centre”, based in New York. Evans and his generously funded lobbyists play a vital propaganda role in urging the “international community” to attack countries where “the Security Council rejects a proposal or fails to deal with it in a reasonable time”.

Evans has form. He appears in my 1994 film *Death of a Nation*, which revealed the scale of genocide in East Timor. Canberra’s smiling man is raising his champagne glass in a toast to his Indonesian equivalent as they fly over East Timor in an Australian aircraft, having just signed a treaty that pirated the oil and gas of the stricken country below where Indonesia’s tyrant, Suharto, killed or starved a third of the population.

Under the “weak” Obama, militarism has risen perhaps as never before. With not a single tank on the White House lawn, a military coup has taken place in Washington. In 2008, while his liberal devotees dried their eyes, Obama accepted the entire Pentagon of his predecessor, George Bush: its wars and war crimes. As the constitution is replaced by an emerging police state, those who destroyed Iraq with shock and awe, and piled up the rubble in Afghanistan and reduced Libya to a Hobbesian nightmare, are ascendant across the US administration. Behind their beribboned façade, more former US soldiers are killing themselves than are dying on battlefields. Last year, 6,500 veterans took their own lives. Put out more flags.

The historian Norman Pollack calls this “liberal fascism”. “For goose-steppers,” he wrote, “substitute the seemingly more innocuous militarisation of the total culture. And for the bombastic leader, we have the reformer *manqué*, blithely at work, planning and executing assassination, smiling all the while.” Every Tuesday, the “humanitarian” Obama personally oversees a worldwide terror network of drones that “bugsplat” people, their rescuers and mourners. In the west’s comfort zones, the first black leader of the land of slavery still feels good, as if his very existence represents a social advance, regardless of his trail of blood. This obeisance to a symbol has all but destroyed the US anti-war movement: Obama’s singular achievement.

In Britain, the distractions of the fakery of image and identity politics have not quite succeeded. A stirring has begun, though people of conscience should hurry. The judges at Nuremberg were succinct: “Individual citizens have the duty to violate domestic laws to prevent crimes against peace and humanity.” The ordinary people of Syria, and countless others, and our own self respect, deserve nothing less now.

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