The China Syndrome
NY Times 5/13/03
by Paul Krugman

A funny thing happened during the Iraq war: many Americans turned to the BBC for their TV news. They were looking for an alternative point of view — something they couldn't find on domestic networks, which, in the words of the BBC's director general, "wrapped themselves in the American flag and substituted patriotism for impartiality."

Leave aside the rights and wrongs of the war itself, and consider the paradox. The BBC is owned by the British government, and one might have ex-

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Saving Private Lynch
story 'flawed'
BBC 04/16/03
by John Kampfner

Private Jessica Lynch became an icon of the war, and the story of her capture by the Iraqis and her rescue by US special forces became one of the great patriotic moments of the conflict.

But her story is one of the most stunning pieces of news management ever conceived.

Private Lynch, a 19-year-old army clerk from Palestine, West Virginia, was captured when her company took a wrong turn just outside Nasiriya and

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Saving Private Lynch...

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was ambushed.

Nine of her comrades were killed and Private Lynch was taken to the local hospital, which at the time was swarming with Fedayeen. Eight days later US special forces stormed the hospital, capturing the "dramatic" events on a night vision camera.

They were said to have come under fire from inside and outside the building, but they made it to Lynch and whisked her away by helicopter.

Reports claimed that she had stab and bullet wounds and that she had been slapped about on her hospital bed and interrogated.

But Iraqi doctors in Nasiriya say they provided the best treatment they could for the soldier in the midst of war. She was assigned the only specialist bed in the hospital and one of only two nurses on the floor.

"I examined her, I saw she had a broken arm, a broken thigh and a dislocated ankle," said Dr Harith a-Houssona, who looked after her.

Jessica amnesia

"There was no [sign of] shooting, no bullet inside her body, no stab wound - only road traffic accident. They want to distort the picture. I don't know why they think there is some benefit in saying she has a bullet injury."

Witnesses told us that the special forces knew that the Iraqi military had fled a day before they swooped on the hospital.

"We were surprised. Why do this? There was no military, there were no soldiers in the hospital," said Dr Anmar Uday, who worked at the hospital.

"It was like a Hollywood film. They cried 'go, go, go', with guns and blanks without bullets, blanks and the sound of explosions. They made a show for the American attack on the hospital - action movies like Sylvester Stallone or Jackie Chan."

There was one more twist. Two days before the snatch squad arrived, Harith had arranged to deliver Jessica to the Americans in an ambulance.

But as the ambulance, with Private Lynch inside, approached a checkpoint American troops opened fire, forcing it to flee back to the hospital. The Americans had almost killed their prize catch.

When footage of the rescue was released, General Vincent Brooks, US spokesman in Doha, said: "Some brave souls put their lives on the line to make this happen, loyal to a creed that they know that they'll never leave a fallen comrade."

The American strategy was to ensure the right television footage by using embedded reporters and images from their own cameras, editing the film themselves.

The Pentagon had been influenced by Hollywood producers of reality TV and action movies, notably the man behind Black Hawk Down, Jerry Bruckheimer.

Bruckheimer advised the Pentagon on the primetime television series "Profiles from the Front Line", that followed US forces in Afghanistan in 2001. That approach was taken on and developed on the field of battle in Iraq.

As for Private Lynch, her status as cult hero is stronger than ever. Internet auction sites list Jessica Lynch items, from an oil painting with an opening bid of $200 to a $5 "America Loves Jessica Lynch" fridge magnet.

But doctors now say she has no recollection of the whole episode and probably never will.

And a vast paranoia sweeps across the land
And America turns the attack on its Twin Towers
Into the beginning of the Third World War
The war with the Third World
And the terrorists in Washington
Are shipping out the young men
To the killing fields again

And no one speaks

And they are rousting out
All the ones with turbans
And they are flushing out
All the strange immigrants

And they are shipping all the young men
To the killing fields again

And no one speaks

And when they come to round up
All the great writers and poets and painters
The National Endowment of the Arts of Complacency
Will not speak

While all the young men
Will be killing all the young men
In the killing fields again

So now is the time for you to speak
All you lovers of liberty
All you lovers of the pursuit of happiness
All you lovers and sleepers
Deep in your private dream
Now is the time for you to speak
O silent majority
Before they come for you!

by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

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A Familiar Odor
Washington Post Editorial 5/25/03

WHEN PRESIDENT BUSH was running for office, he spent a good deal of time promising to restore dignity to the White House. No Lincoln Bedroom sleepovers or White House coffees. But it didn't take too long for the Bush White House to make the same discovery as its predecessors: the enormous money-raising potential of an incumbent administration. Vice President Cheney soon opened the vice president's mansion to big givers.

Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson briefed donors in his government office. Now, with the 2004 campaign officially underway, and the president poised to vacuum up $170 million or more, a new lure is being dangled to those who can raise the big bucks: lunch with presidential adviser Karl Rove. As The Post's Mike Allen reported the other day, supporters who agree to raise $50,000 and up will qualify: "Details regarding the luncheon will be provided upon the receipt of your commitment pledge," the solicitation letter promises. It may be that this is business as usual, but that's precisely the problem; the notion that it's only natural to offer lunch with one of the most important people on the government payroll -- if the price is right -- is exactly what's troubling here.

Sure, some of the fundraisers will be there only so they can tell their friends at the club that they just had lunch with Mr. Bush's chief strategist. Others may have more self-interested motives in obtaining the opportunity to whisper in Mr. Rove's ear. If there is any doubt about this, one need only look at some of the evidence recently unsealed in the litigation over the new campaign finance law, which demonstrated just how closely checks and policy positions were linked. For example, a "call sheet" for Team 100, the Republican National Committee's big donor program, gave then-Chairman Jim Nicholson this heads-up about U.E. Patrick of Patrick Petroleum: "Pat is a Republican supporter, but is concerned about the current Republican estate tax legislation. He has deferred his decision to join Team 100 pending questions about the estate tax, as he feels the proposed bill is not aggressive enough." The Democrats did likewise. A call sheet for then-Democratic National Committee Chairman Donald Fowler suggested that he seek money from the top brass at Panhandle Eastern Corp., noting that one of those being hit up "was at the meeting with President Clinton dealing with deep water drilling rights in the Gulf of Mexico. The Clinton Administration was instrumental in getting this issue through Congress."

Mr. Bush pulled off an astonishing feat in the 2000 election, when he assembled a battalion of more than 200 "pioneers" who each raised $100,000. But the Bush campaign balked for weeks before eventually releasing the names of the first pioneers, and disclosure after that was spotty. With Mr. Bush now in office, prompt and full disclosure of those who are bankrolling his campaign is critical. This campaign will feature a new tier of fundraiser, the "Rangers," who collect $200,000 and up. The campaign says it plans to reveal its top donors, and that's welcome news; Mr. Bush's Democratic rivals should do the same. If the White House feels comfortable selling access to Mr. Rove, it also ought to feel comfortable letting the public know who has a seat at the table.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, as of March 1, 2001

- 696,661 U.S. troops served in the Gulf War between August 2, 1990 and July 31, 1991 -- these are considered "Gulf War Conflict" veterans by the VA;
- 504,047 are separated from service and eligible for benefits through the VA;
- As of December 1999, more than 263,000 sought medical care at the VA;
- Of the 504,047 eligible veterans, 185,780 (36%) filed claims against the VA for service-related medical disabilities;
- Of the 171,878 VA claims actually processed, 149,094 (86%) were approved in part (note -- most claims are made up of multiple issues, if any one issue is granted, VA considers it approved);
- Of the 504,047 eligible for VA benefits, 149,094 (29%) are now considered disabled by the VA eleven since the start of the Gulf War; and
- Another 13,902 claims against the VA still pending.
- More than 9,600 Gulf War veterans have died.
- As of February, 2003, 11,377 deployed Gulf War veterans have died, according to a new report from the Department of Veterans Affairs Information System.

According to the Department of Defense, by 1999, the military revealed

- As many as 100,000 U.S. troops were exposed to repeated low-levels of chemical warfare agents, including sarin, cyclosarin, and mustard gases;
- More than 250,000 received the investigational new drug pyridostigmine bromide (PB pills) the Pentagon "cannot rule out" as linked to Gulf War illnesses;
- 8,000 received the investigational new botulinum toxoid (Bot Tox) vaccine;
- 150,000 received the hotly debated anthrax vaccine;
- 436,000 entered into or lived for months within areas contaminated by more than 315 tons of depleted uranium radioactive toxic waste possibly laced with trace amounts of highly radioactive Plutonium and Neptunium, almost all with out any awareness, training, protective equipment, or medical evaluations; and
- Hundreds of thousands lived outdoors for months near more than 700 burning oil well fires belching fumes and particulate matter without any protective equipment.
- Each of these exposures took place while troops were either engaged in combat, serving in a war zone, or stationed in the volatile region for a number of months.

The source for the above statistics about veterans of the first Gulf War is the National Gulf War Resource Center. (www.ngwrc.org)

U.S. and European companies sold Iraq chemical and biological warfare agents as well as the "dual use" technology used to produce SCUD missiles. Five thousand U.S. Gulf War veterans have filed suit against those chemical warfare agent-producing companies. Up until August 1990, the [first] Bush Administration actively supported and encouraged export of dual-use high-technology equipment to Iraq. The [first] Bush Administration also opposed a proposed weapons and high-tech trade embargo against Iraq, even though the U.S. knew the Iraqi military used chemical weapons against Iraqi civilians and Iranians between 1980 and 1988.

Source: Steve Robinson, Executive Director NGWRC, on May 29, 2003
**Blix suspects...**

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Iraq's evasive behaviour could have been due to Saddam's desire to dictate the conditions under which people could enter the country.

"For that reason he said 'no' in many situations and gave the impression he was hiding something." The White House, which accused Dr Blix of hindering its drive for international support for the war, has sent its own inspectors to Iraq.

The security situation made it impractical for UN inspectors to return and work alongside the US, Dr Blix said. Collaboration might also be tricky for political reasons. "I also have the impression that the negative attitude to UN inspectors...is turning into a generally defensive attitude towards the United Nations."

Lieutenant General David McKiernan, commander of land forces in Iraq, insisted that the hunt for chemical, biological and nuclear weapons would continue.

"We continue to get reports of locations and we go and exploit them," he said. "I am personally a believer that we have not fully developed the intelligence on locations."

Most of the intelligence was now coming from the Iraqi people themselves. The US military task force hunting for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is due to leave next month. Its officers are reported to be frustrated by their failure to find Saddam Hussein's banned weapons.

Mr Blix ended the interview with a touch of humour. Asked about his retirement plans, he talked of spending time on a small Swedish island where "I look forward to going hunting for wild mushrooms."

For more information regarding this article visit: http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,962535,00.html

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**The China Syndrome**

(Continued from page 1)

pected it to support that government's policies. In fact, however, it tried hard — too hard, its critics say — to stay impartial. America's TV networks are privately owned, yet they behaved like state-run media.

What explains this paradox? It may have something to do with the China syndrome. No, not the one involving nuclear reactors — the one exhibited by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation when dealing with the government of the People's Republic.

In the United States, Mr. Murdoch's media empire — which includes Fox News and The New York Post — is known for its flag-waving patriotism. But all that patriotism didn't stop him from, as a Fortune article put it, "pandering to China's repressive regime to get his programming into that vast market." The pandering included dropping the BBC's World Service — which reports news China's government doesn't want disseminated — from his satellite programming, and having his publishing company cancel the publication of a book critical of the Chinese regime.

Can something like that happen in this country? Of course it can. Through its policy decisions — especially, though not only, decisions involving media regulation — the U.S. government can reward media companies that please it, punish those that don't. This gives private networks an incentive to curry favor with those in power. Yet because the networks aren't government-owned, they aren't subject to the kind of scrutiny faced by the BBC, which must take care not to seem like a tool of the ruling party. So we shouldn't be surprised if America's "independent" television is far more deferential to those in power than the state-run systems in Britain or — for another example — Israel.

A recent report by Stephen Labaton of The Times contained a nice illustration of the U.S. government's ability to reward media companies that do what it wants. The issue was a proposal by Michael Powell, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, to relax regulations on media ownership. The proposal, formally presented yesterday, may be summarized as a plan to let the bigger fish eat more of the smaller fish. Big media companies will be allowed to have a larger share of the national market and own more TV stations in any given local market, and many restrictions on "cross-ownership" — owning radio stations, TV stations and newspapers in the same local market — will be lifted.

The plan's defects aside — it will further reduce the diversity of news available to most people — what struck me was the horse-trading involved. One media group wrote to Mr. Powell, dropping its opposition to part of his plan "in return for favorable commission action" on another matter. That was indiscreet, but you'd have to be very naïve not to imagine that there are a lot of implicit quid pro quos out there.

And the implicit trading surely extends to news content. Imagine a TV news executive considering whether to run a major story that might damage the Bush administration — say, a follow-up on Senator Bob Graham's charge that a Congressional report on Sept. 11 has been kept classified because it would raise embarrassing questions about the administration's performance. Surely it would occur to that executive that the administration could punish any network running that story.

Meanwhile, both the formal rules and the codes of ethics that formerly prevented blatant partisanship are gone or ignored. Neil Cavuto of Fox News is an anchor, not a commentator. Yet after Baghdad's fall he told "those who opposed the liberation of Iraq" — a large minority — that "you were sickening then; you are sickening now." Fair and balanced.

We don't have censorship in this country; it's still possible to find different points of view. But we do have a system in which the major media companies have strong incentives to present the news in a way that pleases the party in power, and no incentive not to.