



SOBAKA

SEVENTEEN

final issue

- **mexico**
 - **moscow**
 - **nazi studs**
 - **long goodbyes**
- 

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A fitting end for the life of a misfit magazine

last Rites

sobaka: 1998-2006

YOU CAN PUSH, you can squeeze, you can put all of your weight on it but sometimes the fat bitch just won't fit inside the coffin. For years I tried to bury *Sobaka*, this thing that started as a lark with two friends I barely know anymore. But she would never fit in the grave.

Now that I've finally dug a hole big enough (after estranging readers with, lo, an eight month interruption in publishing), you'd think I'd feel grief. Instead I feel like a murderer that's finally disposed of the body. I'm overwhelmed by a sense not of grief but sweet relief.

There's a long story and a short story to everything. Being a stranger, you don't deserve more than the crib notes. But it's *my* magazine that I'm saying last rights for — me, the one constant through the eight inexplicable years that we carried on — and it would be insensitive not to give it a full eulogy.

I tried to tell everyone that would listen: there was no grand plan behind *Sobaka* when we launched in 1998, much less a business plan. I'd become burned out writing *about* other people, *for* other people. I'd learned to hate paragraphs, and neatly compacted leads that aspired to be informative and interesting, and especially the mediocre hacks that hadn't more than a ready line of cash to justify their lording over my words.

It left a sick taste in my mouth, like sucking on a lollypop and finding a copper filling in the

center. So I amused myself (and no one else) with dense word doodles that said nothing and expressed even less.

Then, one night in early 1998, I hailed a cab to take me down to a friend's house in Wicker Park, which was then still in the throes of the heavy gentrification that has spread like a white-toothed tumor through most of Chicago's northside. My driver was a foreigner and it appeared to be (and it was) his first day on the job. After a few vague questions in his heavy Russian accent, he stopped the car, turned off the ignition, and announced that I could find my own way, because he was getting a drink.

Meet Misha Pozhininsky.

After listening to Misha's stories of the war in Afghanistan, being a bodyguard in Tajikistan and scraping out a living in the post-Soviet Russian democide, I asked him if he'd ever written about any of it. He shyly said he had, but nothing in English. A week later I introduced him to my friend Julija, and we made a magazine together.

Julija was gone after one or two issues, and Misha held on to submit pieces occasionally — actually, outside of myself, he's the only person who was there both at the start and now at the end. We had no idea what we were doing, and it showed. There's little content from the first few issues in our online archives. It's better for everyone that way.

But as bad as they were, people seemed to like them. Professors, journalists, and other peo-

ple with entirely too much respectability to be amused by a poorly printed and miserably designed zine began to sign up. We were underground, like folkies that would sell handmade crafts on the side of the road, or punks operating a record label out of the trunk of their car.

Sobaka never made news, but that was never the intention. It used to drive me crazy to hear people say that the magazine was “political”. In retrospect, looking back on the cotton-candy world that existed in the American retard’s mind prior to 9/11, I suppose anything foreign that wasn’t also edible would qualify as “political”. And sadly, the label did eventually apply.

But then, it was about the *story*. Everything, everything you see — a drug lord’s life, a peasant family’s death, a detour off the on-ramp to Central America’s tourist traps to see how the locals really behaved when they thought no one was watching — *it’s all about the god-damned story*. From the time I was a child, I had an immoderate curiosity about how people lived outside of my cozy little tenement world. As an adult, it probably got the best of me. Most people come home with pictures and a few shoddy trinkets, but I felt (and I still do) that I got something better: another piece of knowledge that would help me figure it all out.

I thought I could drink in the entire world. I booked trips in the middle of winter to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and flailed in the poisoned atmosphere amid the haunted ruins that ring the dead Aral Sea. So I’ve been to Asia, but not Japan, China or Thailand.

I had a friend that used to talk about Haiti, that beautiful disaster that brings to mind what a country run by people like me would look like given twenty years of megalomania gone to pot. So two weeks after returning from Tashkent, I was burning cigarettes at gang-run checkpoints and spending the night on the banks of the Massacre River, jumping at every sound, ever shriek, every scream.

I’ve been to Haiti two dozen times since then, but never to the Bahamas, the Caymans, or any of the other places white folks go so they can look like black folks a week later.

The Caucasus, the Balkans — any place with

a mountain and a fair chance of stepping on an unused landmine, I was game. I wrote about it. Other people wrote too. Some of them even got the point of what *Sobaka* was all about.

In 2001 — after the internet fortunes evaporated, though no one from this gutless generation has the balls to jump out the window over it — *Sobaka* hit the internet. Originally it was a long advertisement for the magazine, then held the archives, then a few new stories every week. People began to read it, especially after 9/11. Military contractors, constitutional scholars and outlaw magazines on the Third World: we all got something good out of it.

Sobaka eventually became successful enough to support me, and one other person. But by and large, it was a labor of love. We never accepted nor applied for grant money of any kind, though my incredulous pals were always telling me I was stupid to cherish our independence.

But a strange thing happens when you realize that what you began as a lark, which no one ever took as seriously as you did, suddenly has readers. Television, at least, runs infomercials for aerobic machines and juicers at night. The internet never sleeps. Unblinking eyes digested our content and demanded more. They were never satisfied.

To meet demand, we (for there was now a “we”: a dizzying array of co-editors, ending with Mark Irkali, that signed up for a twirl or two before stepping off and vomiting in the nearest receptacle) published things we didn’t necessarily like but figured some other people would. It’s all feed for the unblinking eye. It might not have the savory taste of steak but most people don’t eat steak everyday, and those that do tend to die suddenly.

That’s the kind of shit you say when you’re compromised. The credo had once been that I liked it, and fuck all if anyone else does. Now? Well, this might not be *my* cup of tea, but someone will enjoy it...

Similarly, *Sobaka* had once been something I cared about far more than anyone else did. Now? *Everyone* seemed to care about this bastard more than its daddy.

It figures. They didn't have to raise it. They could go home at the end of the day. They weren't stuck with the screaming neurotic brat demanding food, love and a clean diaper at four in the morning when all you want to do is roll into bed and unwind from all of the ugliness that's now become a part of your daily life.

Don't get me wrong: it's still better to write about suffering than to suffer. It's even better to make other people suffer, and we did some of that, too. But it's hard to draw a line and keep your distance when *this* is what you do, *this* is what you've become, and you have no interests other than charting how much more fucked up the world is, with daily measurements.

Writers for the newswires are usually locals, these days at least, and they feel they're chronicling the decay of something important to them, something they also hope to see resurrected. Obsessed with categorizing ugliness, NGO workers of various stripes usually got into the business because they're idealistic types, and can rationalize that they're making the world a better place in their own way.

The screaming pessimism of *Sobaka*, the alternating concern and cynicism, the despair? That was me. That's the one thing that could never be duplicated: the hopelessness, the belief that the names would change but nothing would get any better. You don't have to agree with it — I'd actually be interested in knowing how you manage to think any differently. But I can't see it any other way.

I recall, many years ago, setting off for Albania for the first time and reading a mass-market guidebook. It made the place sound beautiful — rustic, to be sure, but a cakewalk.

Immediately over the border, our car was commandeered by an armed gang — bandanas around their faces, pistols in their belts, everything. It was two hours to the nearest bus, and four more hours until that bus came. People were shocked to see us standing out in the open, as if we didn't know that no one walked the streets like this in broad daylight.

Albania is safer now, more prosperous, more secure. But the sickness that causes human beings to behave like savage animals when

they think no one is looking (or, worse, when everyone they see is doing the same) knows no boundaries. It could have been Haiti in 2004 — just trade the blond hair and blue eyes for a darker suit.

Or it could be the southside of Chicago, the handsome little neighborhood on the south shore they call "Terrortown". The chances are pretty damned good that more people were murdered in Terrortown or Englewood last week-end than were killed in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip put together. The American body-count in Iraq is probably higher, but not by as much as you think.

I once would have mainlined this like a junkie. I still like to indulge. But I've never had the faintest belief that anything could stop it.

That lack of belief is why I'm closing up shop now, after eight years of bringing down the hate, categorizing it, sending it to a lab for compositional studies and preserving it in a clear plastic jar. Nothing about my beliefs has changed — if anything, they've been strengthened. I just don't think there's much else we can say that we haven't said already, and nothing new to tell you that you can't already find in the archives.

If I'm allowed a nostalgic moment (and like I said, it's my magazine, so live with it), I keep coming back to that feeling of *worthiness* we had when we sat at Julija's kitchen table, drawing up ideas and prefacing nearly every sentence with "Wouldn't it be cool if..." It seems like the happiest time I can remember in the last eight years: a step into the unknown, preparing to carve into paper words that can't be erased — much happier than getting the first issue from the printer and noticing all the little things that had come out wrong.

This is what everyone wants to know about themselves, about everything: *If you had to do it all over again, would you?*

All I got out of this, in the end, was a mountain of debt, heartbreak, exhaustion, insomnia and a pain so vague but all-consuming it can only be coming from a wound inside my head.

But come to think of it, that's pretty much what I started with. And in this world, breaking even isn't so bad. ■

DON'T EXSPRES

Real Letters. Sadly.

NOTHING BETTER

THAN TAKING A YEAR OFF TO COLLECT
NEW KOOK SPECIMENS. THESE ARE NOT
THE BEST LETTERS WE'VE RECEIVED DURING
OUR UNINTENTIONAL SABBATICAL,
BUT IT BRINGS ME NO JOY TO DECLARE
THAT THEY ARE IN FACT THE MOST REPRESENTATIVE. OH, AND PRESUME A *SIC*.

WHY YOU SUCK DICK

Why you suck dick?

Aca Aliev

CROATIAN FOR "WANKER"

Whatever you think and write WE LOVE OUR ANTE—nobody can change our wish and freedom. Greetings from Bosnia-Hercegovina/ HERCEG-BOSNA. Za dom spremni.

Mladen Bosnjak

ARMENIAN RETARD

Hello Cali, your newsletter speaks in elusive language. Why not get to the point?

That is why I ask what is this about. If a person has to make a stand on something, fear of being direct, shows you really are not sure of what you stand for. I do recall going on some internet sites checking out Arabic culture and

Armenian history. I am from USA and no matter what is going on here I will never be afraid to speak my mind and deliver what I believe in. No government controls me. I believe in human rights for all people. That is one of the most important things in life we should live for.

Phyllis Melkonjan

DUTCHBAT FUCKING IDIOT

Dear Madam/Sir, My name is Erik Brouwer, a writer/journalist from Holland. I will be traveling to Zagreb the 21st of February to meet interesting people like Ivo Goldstein etc. I followed your work on Ante Pavelic and his legacy and would like to make an article about it. Is it possible to meet you? I am staying in Zagreb till the 2nd of May.

PS: I can bring a translator if you would like that.

Erik Brouwer

TOOTH NAZI

You ask for "feedback" in *Sobaka 16* and buster

I'm prepared to give it! I subscribed with the thought that this was a publication that would "speak plainly" and "carry a big stick". It is far from it!! There are many issues I wish you would cover. I have been studying the history of the introduction of floride into the mainstream of elementary schools and public works reservoirs since the 1950s. I can send you many "links". This is not an issue for "kooks" but a pressing concern for millions of Americans worldwide!! [etc. etc. etc.]

Andrew Graciella

WHAT TOM CLANCY WROUGHT

Hey Cali, too bad you couldn't make it to Colombia when I was there. Awesome time. Fired off a big-gun (and I do mean a big one BIG GUN) for the first time since I was in the army. Rode a Huey. The whole thing stinks but God what a great time it is to play around with our taxpayer hardware.

"Samuel"

ANARCHISTS ANONYMOUS

[Etc. etc. etc.] ...I don't believe there should be governments. I have been anti-authoritarian almost my whole life and in the last five months I have read anarchist thinkers Bookchin, Fred "The Match" and Kropotkin to try to understand ways of feeling the world. I present but my thoughts don't cohere. Please write me if you want and tell me what you think of my solutions which you can find on my blog.

Andre Hrniak

ANTI-DEFAMATION DWEEB

I died laughing reading your Dossier profiles of Georgian warriors. Do they really write poetry? I find that funny but also alarming; this is the reason for this message. I am a poet myself and I wish I could create a corporate organization

to tell the world that they DO NOT speak for me, in fact I believe they cast asperities on poets in the craft today. Do you know of an organization which does this and if so I would like to know about what they are doing to defend the reputations of poets and poetry from associations with our "black sheeps". Spread the word.

Robert Gibbon

THE WACKY ADVENTURES OF JEFFREY SILVERMAN, PART IX

[Etc. etc. etc.] ...I am still muckraking and staying low; the US cancelled my passport for failure to appear for a civil hearing in Kentucky, said that I made a child but refused me a DNA test since I had visited the child a few times; I think it was related to my digging and articles, not being able to prove it.

They refused to consider my financial mess over kidney failure and that proved everything.

I even got arrested getting off the plane the last time I went to the US on a bench warrant and held on 30,000 dollars and Kentucky wrote an order for the arresting State to hold my passport, they refused, (based on secret documents in the file), refused [sic sic sic sic] to considered "full faith and credit in the case" and handed it and my plane ticket back and I immediately flew away.

[Etc. etc. etc.] ...However, it also says that I can use this paper to seek admission to the US. They went to alot of trouble to shut me up. I have no intention of ending up in Club Cuba.

Too bad I don't work for the *New Yorker*.

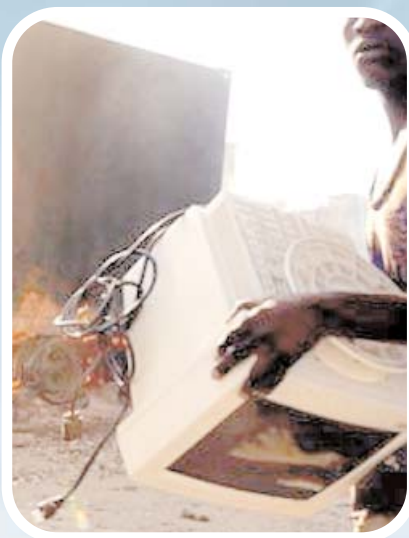
Jeffrey Silverman



from the edge

zone

- haiti
- cali ruchala



THEY FINALLY GAVE ME TIME TO THINK. ON A rooftop in a dead industrial zone, looted a year ago and then freshly looted just a few days before, with a weak, moist wind blowing in from the bay off Port-au-Prince, I pissed over the side of the building down into the black-

ness below, hoping no one was underneath me but not caring enough to check.

I could do this all night, I thought. It's easier with *klarin*, a harsh Haitian rum squeezed from wild shoots of cane and pressed in someone's cellar. It seems to inflate the bladder at an impossible rate. This is the filthiest place in the Western Hemisphere, as the pundits are so fond of noting, and I was pretty damn satisfied to revel in it all again.

Halfway between Petionville and Citey Soley—between rich and poor, heaven and hell,

as Marx would have it — there's a curious little area, a strip of buildings built on soil that some long overthrown government decreed to be free of death and taxes for all of time. The land is valuable but only to Americans, who frequently insist on this type of status when cutting sweetheart manufacturing deals with Haitians. With great pomp — sometimes even the sweat glands of the embassy are involved — the deals are initialed, stamped, even sealed with a wedding to a naugahide bride and the adoption of a lucky honkey from the Great White North into one of the country's nefarious clans through an arranged marriage.

And then nothing happens. Inertia as you can only find in the tropics sweats the life out of them. They idle, the manufacturing plants that were to be staffed by black Haitians wearing clothing with the names of sports they've never heard of and cities they've never seen, motionless in the chaos of the sun.

The whole thing isn't quite a sham, at least not more than anything else down here. In America, the connections are made to facilitate the deal. In Haiti, the deal is secondary to the making a useful connection. What are they going to do — sue?

Sometimes, in some way, something really does come of those deals, though no one gets rich (they're already rich). Not even the looters — hooked through the gills by a government

job or a member of a mob roaming the city in the back of a truck manufactured during the Eisenhower administration—get rich off of it. They steal a handful of rags, smash anything too big to carry on their backs and rough up the manager a little while police and security guards look on with all of the emotion of a magistrate that no longer believes he can change the world or the men who dwell on it.

I saw the scene play out from a second storey window two blocks away. There's nothing noble nor shocking about it. Only in retrospect, with the knowledge that someone would die over a few spindles of mixed cotton and polyester and some Tinkerbelle decals, did I feel anything. It was pity. And disgust. Even Chairman Mao, who mowed down millions of peasants, claimed that the only thing that moved him to tears was watching one of his beloved Chinese suffer. I'm sure that what followed his outpouring of pity was disgust. It doesn't matter who or what it's directed at. Irrelevant. Empathy is always followed by revulsion. I'm in Haiti — I keep coming back to Haiti — because I want to know why. ■

dirge

- dagestan
- ruslan mahmedov



IT IS A STRANGE THING. EVERYTIME I COME TO MAKHACHKALA, they blow something up. The jihadis, or the FSB, the Federals or the local administrators, people of the cross or people of the crescent moon. They take turns, blowing up houses, cars, convoys each other. Popular

Π A DIFFERENT COUNTRY, DIFFERENT PEOPLE CARRYING ON RATHER STRANGELY, THE LOSS OF A FEW LITTLE VANITIES, OF A CERTAIN PRIDE THAT HAS LOST ITS JUSTIFICATION, THE LIE IT'S BASED ON, ITS FAMILIAR ECHO—NO MORE IS NEEDED, YOUR HEAD SWIMS, DOUBT TAKES HOLD OVER YOU, THE INFINITE OPENS UP JUST FOR YOU, A RIDICULOUSLY SMALL INFINITE, AND YOU FALL INTO IT . . .

Π TRAVEL IS THE SEARCH FOR THIS NOTHING, THIS BIT OF INTOXICATION FOR NUMB-
SKULLS. — **Céline.**

wisdom is not often wise but the rumors say they are working together.

And they are. It is not in a conspiracy, just a system. Federals of all kinds need rebels, and prefer the wild but ineffective Dagestani kind to their ruthless and efficient masters in Chechnya. Dagestani *jihadis* were once left alone: they took over small villages, installed the *shariat*, abused people, offended clan leaders, were driven out. It didn't make news. Then the Federals declared war. Now the *jihadis* seek refuge from the clans, and by the laws of the mountains they are accepted. Warfare is urban, concentrated in the cities.

I come to Makhachkala ever two months. I check email, read up on world news that does not cross the canyons to my village, collect books I have ordered, order some more. And I report on the bombings that occur when I arrive. I assure some parties that this is only a coincidence.

The latest explosions have been one-sided; the Federals against the *jihadis*, trapping them, usually, in a hide-out. It is burned to the ground, or blowing smoke out of windows like screaming mouths. Afterward, spokesmen take over from the soldiers, listing with great care all of the atrocities the dead jihadi was respon-

sible for. Nobody heard of him before then, but he was a ruthless criminal mastermind and Dagestan is safer without him.

It follows this pattern every time. The triumphalism of the Russian FSB spokesman feeds the cries of vengeance from the *jihadis*. Without it, they would have nothing to fight against. It is rather mild here, considering the fierce weather and terrain, and there are few who feel inclined to fight. Federals are our “invaders,” *jihadis* our “defenders.” They would have no reason to be here without the other, and vice-versa.

This time the slain man was introduced posthumously as Makhach Rasulov. He was killed, the spokesman said with relief, before he could kill again. It was a three hour shoot-out with the authorities, and preliminary reports said Mr. Rasulov was killed by agents and his fellow *jihadis* blew themselves up with him.

There was one difference between Rasulov and his predecessors: everyone already knew him. This was because the FSB — perhaps the same spokesman — held a similar conference six months ago, in October 2005, to introduce the same corpse to the public, and similarly announce his passing to the swine-infested hell of the unredeemed Muslim.

How is it possible that the same man could die twice? How is it possible that anyone listens to someone who could present things in this way, and deny that the obituaries his bosses had written before had ever been read?

The questions are not rhetorical and the answers are not complex. This is theater, not real life. Performances. The action must keep going. Sometimes, things slip up; we see the wristwatch on the arm of the Greek maiden, the Helens or Cassandras. We agree to look beyond—why ruin a good play, a good time, with nitpicking?

So Rasulov is dead. Dagestan is safe again. The Federals are our heroes and the *jihadis* our shame. I purchase my book and walk quickly through streets of tired peasants wearing a patchwork of urban/modern and traditional



clothes. The mosques are alive with solemn prayers and the whirr of tape recorders. The buses are delayed, but at least there's a good excuse now. ■

enemy

- afghanistan
- akhmed vassiliev



THESE ARE GOOD ROADS. EVERYONE SAYS THE YANKEES BUILD the best roads. They are demonic, they lack tails but to listen to the locals talk even this is not certain. What is certain in these parts of Afghanistan is that there have never been better roads. Even if they use them for quick access

to kill their builders.

I've spent months altogether in the parts of Afghanistan where the roads wind off, two kilometers or so from the nearest hut of yellow mud bricks. I work as a contractor, spells here and there when people hire me, a good, atheist Muslim from a Soviet university, a Turkish speaker with a smattering of Pashto learned in the bazaars and villages like these. They don't respect me, but they don't hate me either here. And it's easier to be an interloper when you are a man, less of a costume to wear, less clichés to memorize, and it is less distasteful to speak in their language when you are not sure that they are wrong, or less sure that your mentors were right.

The "good old days" of American prosperity never came to these places. Not that they wanted anything to do with the desert camo capitalists who penetrated the country in October 2001. These are not the tribes of *qulchi* nomads who respect power, or are willing to pretend faith and friendliness for free passage or a few dollars for buttons of opium.

Once I did see some humvees with civilian markings — marks of the NGOs that operate from fortified compounds in Kabul, come in the flesh to teach civilization to the villagers. It's simple to the natives, really. They see brunettes with scrubbed skin or men with CIA-agent hair in a helmet gripping their skull. Mullah Omar is familiar to them. These creatures are not.

Most of these villages are Omar's lands, except Paktia. Here a minority of tribes and/or clans, despite years of propaganda from the Russians, then the Tajiks, then the Taliban and now the Americans, devote themselves, marrow and soul, to the cause of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Much of Paktia (I couldn't say how much, but the CIA no doubt has a classified map with appropriate shadings) belongs to Hekmatyar, and because it is traditionally a hatchery for mercenaries, much of Paktia is willing to fight for him.

Π THE SUNSETS IN THAT AFRICAN HELL PROVED TO BE FABULOUS. THEY NEVER MISSED. AS TRAGIC EVERY TIME AS A MONUMENTAL MURDER OF THE SUN! BUT THE MARVEL WAS TOO GREAT FOR ONE MAN ALONE. FOR A WHOLE HOUR THE SKY PARADED IN GREAT DELIRIOUS SPURTS OF SCARLET FROM END TO END; AFTER THAT THE GREEN OF THE TREES EXPLODED AND ROSE UP IN QUIVERING TRAILS TO MEET THE FIRST STARS. THEN THE WHOLE HORIZON TURNED GRAY AGAIN AND THEN RED, BUT THIS TIME A TIRED RED THAT DIDN'T LAST LONG. THAT WAS THE END. ALL THE COLORS FELL BACK DOWN ON THE FOREST IN TATTERS, LIKE STREAMERS AFTER THE HUNDREDTH PERFORMANCE. IT HAPPENED EVERY DAY AT EXACTLY SIX O'CLOCK. THEN THE NIGHT SET IN, WITH ALL ITS MONSTERS . . .

The Afghan press has been mocking Hekmatyar for thirty years in a Babel of the languages mentioned previously. When the patrician tongue of Ronald Reagan caressed him, the Russians heaped scorn upon the "bandit." And now vice-versa. Hekmatyar is certifiably a scoundrel, this I know, but don't tell that to the people of Paktia. You'll lose at least an ear over that, and maybe more.

The Americans are mocking Hekmatyar for his behavior. Namely, he is making videos like Osama bin Laden for Al-Jazeera TV. In them, he even rests a machine gun against the wall over his shoulder. And he speaks in Arabic rather than Pashto, so better that they understand him. The English mock him for the same reasons the Russians did: because they cannot catch this unscrupulous cattle-rustler, much less Omar or Bin Laden.

Hekmatyar is now loyal to them. First he made peace with Omar, then with Bin Laden. In Paktia he recruits and he hides, building a tribal army like a cockroach, stowing energy as he did in another war, to fight another day, with better odds. ■



the mountain & the hole

THIS IS WHERE it ends: four feet wide, ten feet deep, eight feet tall, and walled off by partitions that do not quite reach the ceiling.

At sundown, one group is leaving as another arrives, exhausted and drenched in sweat from hours of hustle in the bowl of Mexico City's poisons. The men slouch down the stairs to the basement, where the only thing resembling a shower is a metal faucet at the end of a system of exposed pipes with a filthy steel basin underneath. Their wives, daughters, in-laws or cousins begin the day's meal over a hotplate, tapping power from an iffy looking wall circuit connected by a system of wires to a light socket in the center of the room. Emboldened by numbers, roaches scurry up the walls at will, across bags of rags and whoever happens to be sitting on them, casting transient shadows as they race along the

BY CALI RUCHALA
cali@diacritica.com

naked bulb.

Walking from one end of the room to the other is like peering into a dozen jail cells. But this is home for the people gathered here: a home they actively sought out, sold their worldly possessions to acquire. They're far out on the edge — on the margins of the margins — in one of the most unforgiving slum cities in the world.

The "rooms" (called "holes" by the people who dwell in them) are rented — one family, often with as many as six people stuffed inside, to each cell. Most of them came to Mexico City from the provinces — economic migrants in a city that can't even afford to take care of its own. Every year, more than a million Mexicans come of age and enter the job market. Fewer



than a third have a shot at receiving a paycheck. The rest either wander around from city to city or — more likely — head north to the industrial alley that hugs the banks of the Rio Grande, trying to find a way to make it across.

Prometheus' Tomb. This is where it begins: Aquismon, a small town deprived of just about any passing interest in the south of San Luis Potosi state. Up in the high mountains, the air in Aquismon burns after breathing in the chemical haze of the Ciudad for so long. Aquismon is connected by a single bus line to the larger town of Ciudad Valles (population: 100,000). In the evenings, the traffic all seems to be going the other way. Aquismon is a village that any resident of Central Asia, the Caucasus or some of

strapped to their backs wear homemade clothing as colourful as anything seen in the south, though contemporary, American-style dress is preferred by the young, brandishing the logos of conglomerates and franchises and brands.

Eighty years ago, the noted French lunatic Antonin Artaud walked these trails on his journey across the backwaters of Mexico. He made most of the junket on horseback. Weak, nauseous and tormented by opium withdrawal, he described a tortured landscape, of bodies captured in stone, frozen forever in mid-seizure. "It was," he wrote, "as if Nature had chosen this mountainside to lay bare her imprisoned flints."

Artaud, of course, was nuts. But about the landscape in certain parts of Mexico, he was dead-on: it's not hard to imagine this godforsaken place as Prometheus' tomb. These little towns are far off the beaten path even for most Mexicans, and the lack of ready access is

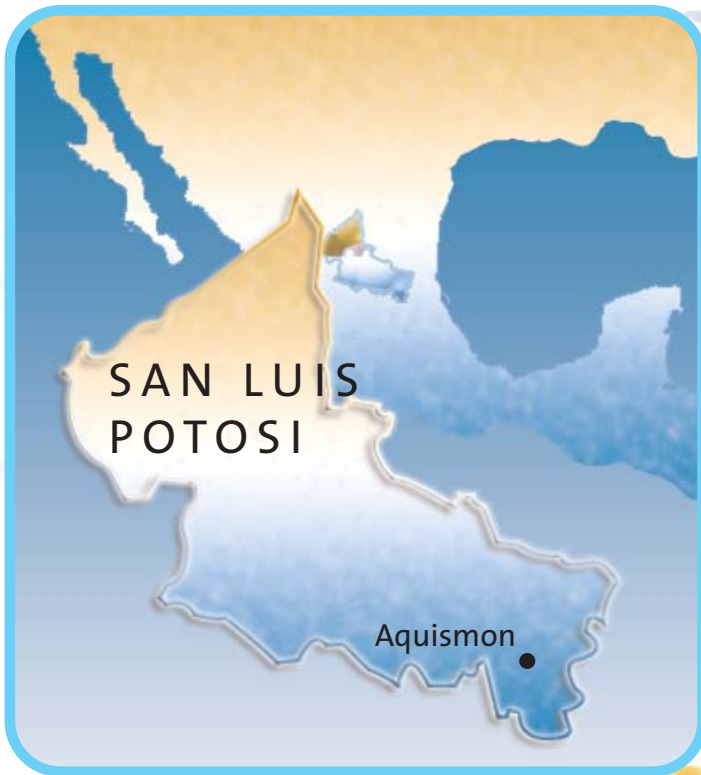
DEATH IN THE MOUNTAINS OF OLD MEXICO

the more remote outreaches of the Balkans would recognize. There are market days, small plots of family farms, tiny industries, the ruins of tourist traps dreamed up by bureaucrats or swindlers where foreigners never stray.

The people here are dark — mostly Huastec Indians, vaguely related to the Maya, a shade or two darker than most Mexicans. Unlike the peasants further south in Mexico and in Guatemala, they speak Spanish fluently and without hesitation or any noticeable accent that I could detect. The older people trudging through the high altitude noon with bundles

a symptom, not the cause. Aside from the amateur anthropologist or collector of road-kill, there's little reason for anyone to go to a place like Aquismon. There are even fewer reasons to stay.

On market days, Aquismon does come alive, like a terminal patient experiencing a sudden resurgence before their vitality drains away. Through the day and the night the town explodes in a blast of colour, noise and fragrance, of blankets thrown open to test the strength of their threads, fruits weighed by hands more accurate than scales, animals



murdered in a filthy courtyard while children throw stones at its severed head. After twilight, the winds pick up velocity as they peel off the cold stone of the mountains, and labourers and anyone else who can afford it get drunk. The sound of synthesized Mexican pop music overpowers the instruments of the mariachi until both peter out, or pass out, a few hours before daybreak.

And just as suddenly, it's over and gone, the chaos of mismatched bodies replaced by the tempo of a city on the brink of nothing.

Aquismon is one of those dying stations of the earth: a place with little to do, even less to look forward to, and nothing much to think about but getting the hell out. Practically everyone has a brother, father, or son in *el norte*, and many hang their lives in the balance of a weekly trip to Valles, where money sent from the United States can be collected. Not all of the migrants depopulating this mountain town head north, however. While the mass migration from the Mexican countryside into the cities of the 1970s and '80s has dwindled, many, by wish or lack of opportuni-

ty for a longer ride, turn instead toward the Ciudad.

The Hole. Agustin Ortega, together with his two sons and a nephew, are lifers in the Hole. Economic migrants, they escaped a life of grinding poverty in San Luis Potosi where Agustin's wife and daughters still reside. They've lived in the run-down migrants' hotel in Mexico City for the better part of two years.

Ortega left Aquismon with a little money he managed to borrow from a local hood. Two years later, he tells me, he still hasn't cleared his debt, thanks to a usurious rate of interest. Every two weeks, an associate of the lender draws back the blanket that serves as the doorway of Ortega's cell and collects the interest.

Agustin works as a day labourer, when he can find any work at all. He's vague on his salary, but if he's anything like the rest of Mexico's working poor, he probably isn't collecting more in a month than what the Huastecans who have gone to America would make in a day of under-the-table labour — and much of that is sent home to his wife. He worked as a gardener on the estate of a male *telenovela* star a few months ago, he said, but was terminated when he took a day off work to be with one of his sons. Since then, work has been irregular: the longest job he's held was refinishing a floor in a condominium, and that was for all of a week.

This paltry and volatile income is supplemented by the work of his other family members staying in the Hole, to a certain extent. When he lost his job gardening for the TV actor, he was pleading with the police to release one of his sons, Carlos, from lock-up. Carlos rarely comes "home" to the Hole anymore. He spends most nights in the streets with a gang of other migrant kids, residents of a minor league underworld for Mexico's cartels. Agustin worries about him. "He's lost who he is in this place," he tells me. Agustin last

saw him about a week ago, when his son stuffed a wad of pesos into his old man's hand. Agustin had in idea how he'd gotten it. He took it anyway.

Crime in the hole itself isn't much of a problem, but most of the residents live somewhat sketchy lives. Obviously they're not master criminals — if they were, they wouldn't be in this godforsaken place. A few — men and women alike — work as prostitutes when they're really hard up for money, which seems to occur about once or twice a month.

The Ortegas haven't been back to Aquismon since arriving here—no time, and never enough money. It's apparent that, like most of the migrants from the provinces here, Agustin feels trapped. He exchanged the poverty of San Luis Potosi for a more dehumanizing poverty in the capital. He has no idea what would happen if he failed to pay off his debt, but he fears repercussions against his wife and daughters back home. He already feels his family slipping away, as aside from Carlos' run-ins with the police, one of his daughters became engaged without his permission to a man almost as old as himself. When asked what he plans to do for the future, he smiles wearily and says, simply, "Work."

After the Banquet. Back in Aquismon. The weather has been torrid, the sky like fired coke, the particles of dust like a thousand white-hot suns shading everything in the vivid surreality of a dream. I've been here for a week, though for what, I'm not sure. The bus comes and goes and I always seem to miss it with a kind of paralyzing stupidity. It rarely runs on time, but then neither do I.

Mark arrived here two days ago after a hurried flight to Mexico City. He said he thought the sunshine would do him good. Now he knows better. The thick air makes it difficult to sleep, but hours cannibalize the time and there's little accomplished at the end of the

day to show for it.

For four days, I've been trying to meet with the local hustler that swindled the Ortegas and bonded them as virtual slaves in the capital. I've just about given it up as hopeless. Communities always protect their pimps, whether it's here or Chicago's bombed out Englewood neighbourhood. A few days ago, a man on the make sized me up in the family-run café I'd been eating at, asked a few intrusive questions and vanished without paying — a habit only thugs and aristocrats, in any city, can get away with. I thought it'd been a feeler from the mysterious Ramon, who no one seemed to know in the first breath but asked nervously how I did in the next.

It's a strange phenomenon, closing ranks around a pimp, only partially explained by fear. I thought of all of the detective movies I'd seen from Hollywood, Bollywood and Hong Kong. "Who wants to know?" ought to be a phrase in the universal language by now, as ubiquitous as *kaput* and *Coca-Cola*.

Other than feigned ignorance of bush league mafiosi, people here were amicable enough, easy in conversation after the initial hustle was over. It was almost apologetic: "Sorry, but I had to try to rob you. Now that we've gotten beyond that, how about a drink?" It was as ritualized and insincere as a handshake.

Despite my dark warnings, Mark was getting particularly friendly with the daughter of the owner of the place we were staying, purging the last vestiges of an ill-timed evangelical experience from his soul. The main topic of conversation was how we could help them get to America. Everyone in Yugoslavia has a cousin in America. Everyone in Mexico has a brother, sister, mother or son in the great kitchen to the north. The few left behind, it seems, are well on their way.

By this time, a friend from Mexico City, Aly, had made the trip out to Aquismon as well, forming a strange gang of Mexican-American colonists in our hovel. Like all Mexicans who rate middle-class or higher, she hated the poor

with a passion. The dirt got in her hair and the insects, which the environment here breeds into tough, warlike little fuckers, crawled under her skin. Mark — with all five days of life experience in Mexico — attempted to enlighten a lifelong member of the elite about sociological expressions of poverty or some such. She wasn't having it. The stories of day labourers in desolate hotels bored her — there are millions of them, she said, so why is this one more sad than the others? While Mark attempted to explain personal truths and universal realities, I looked out the window at a drunk who had been passed out in a doorway since sunrise. A boy, about the age of ten or twelve and probably his son, had given up trying to rouse him and began dragging him by his shirt through the dirt and the stones, inch by inch tearing the skin off his back.

Another Long Goodbye. As much as our hosts liked our money and the possibility of a gringo taking a surplus daughter off their hands, the owners of the house couldn't help but to ask what the hell we were doing there. I got the impression that except for a legendary American doctor who was a resident of the down (and who we always seemed to miss in passing), they didn't get many visitors and few that wanted to stay.

None of us shared the locals' passionate desire to leave this place, though. Mark and I had the dull prospect of work and impossible deadlines in Chicago. Aly had an ex-husband stalking her old haunts — with her painfully Catholic father's encouragement. After more than a decade crawling through Haiti, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia, I've come to realize that paradise, like refuge, is where you find it. And right then, which meant right now, Aquismon was a little bit of both.

The story — the reason I was in this little town to begin with — was without an end-

ing, without conclusion. The Ortegas were back in their hole, and I'd given up trying to discover the man that made them suffer. Desperate for some sort of narrative thread to tie the saga together, I visited Agustin's wife and remaining family.

I met Pilar, his wife, in the market, where she sold crafts knocked together by her mother and other old people in the neighbourhood for a rather substantial percentage of the profits. None of them caught my fancy, but it was pretty clear she'd have no time to talk if I didn't make it worth her while. I wound up holding two fragile miniatures in my palm: a bird and a three-legged chair, both far too fragile to pocket.

Pilar had no insights into the mysterious Ramon. She had few insights into anything, it seemed, answering questions with staccato stock phrases. She said she missed her husband, though she betrayed no emotion in her face or voice. And it took Aly, with all of her bigotry, to make me realize why this was so. Should she miss her husband any more than the husbands drawn away to work in California? the sons in Cleveland laundries or Catskill gardens? From end to end in this town, there didn't seem to be one complete family to be found. There was a fever of rootlessness, though those left behind were living in the dust of their ancestors and hadn't, in fact, gone anywhere. Loneliness and grief were the baseline sentiment and, because universally shared, taken as nothing out of the ordinary.

It was just about time to move on. We'd overstayed our welcome and weariness was beginning to set in. Aly and I bundled into her car and waited while Mark said his goodbyes to his interrupted beloved. As painless as the whole affair seemed at the time, it wasn't as simple as trading addresses and promising to write. He emerged from the house looking devastated.

"I'm going to come back," he said as we began the ascent and descent down the road to Valles. "I know I'm going to come back."

The gringo would be the only one. ■



DON'T BUY PARTS from that man," he says, and then he adds, like a portion of a poster pasted to the bottom of another, "*brother.*"

In the Russian language it is a strange sound, to call a stranger your brother. You can judge much about that, the psychology of our nation.

But this *was* a strange man. I too am a strange man, but not in the market, when I just want to get the pieces that will bring my automobile back to life and go home.

"Who are you to tell me who to buy from?" I say.

"Buy from your own kind," he says, and he is still calm. Smooth.

"If we do not buy from *them*, they will have no choice but to leave."

It is marvelous, I meditate on my way home from this last encounter with the Nazis, that democ-

BY MISHA POZHININSKY
misha@diacritica.com

racy is so strong in Russia that the "boycott", a word I never heard in my life, is now the tool of the extremists and maximalists. But really it's not. The real reason for this whispered boycott of foreign sellers in the street — who until 15 years ago were citizens of our same country — is "agitation." A few pamphlets have been given to me, and on this day, with my hose and a piece of metal which is vital to my engine but faulty, I brought home some more of them.

With cartoons and bright red letters (the color of dissatisfaction in Russia, as long as I can remember, has been red, and also the color of beauty, which is another case for the psychologists), they blame my ills on these "southerners". The southerners are the friends of the Jews, who dislike everything Russian and endlessly plot our destruction. They cite the names of oligarchs and they roll off the tongue of the anti-Semite with venom: *berezovsky... gusinsky... khodorkovsky...* All Jews. Like the rest of the oligarchic class, in truth, they are people I would not mind with bullets in their chests beside their gaudy jewelry.



The Jews are easy. But there is no easy word for the “blacks” in Russia. Sometimes they mean Azeris and Chechens, who are considered congenital criminals here. And Tatars and Tajiks. They are Muslims and so they more foreign to the Russian of the north, and they want to take the construction jobs that we should have, and then take their pieces of our empire away, and our piece of their empires away.

But sometimes they also mean the Georgians and the Armenians and the Ossetes. Of course, they mean *the ones you don't know*. Everyone knows one “good” Georgian. It's their poor relatives, the backward drunks, that fuck it up.

I am not a liberal but it's hard not to laugh at this propaganda. It is like it is aimed at those who have been robbed or beaten by a black and no one else. You have to be of an intelligence that is less than a drunkard to enjoy this material.

Fucking the Russian Out of You. For more than a decade, Moscow has required “residency permits” which are checked by police and require a bribe to go without, although they are really an excuse for police to stop the creatures of the Caucasus. In the dark, anyone but a blond can look like a creature of the Caucasus. I am Ukrainian and Russian, but they stop me too because my hair is usually shaved and my eyes are black, and I'm old so my features look foreign. Everyone looks foreign and strange in the night. This is the reason, I think, even the firemen wouldn't care if a police building here were on fire but would let it burn.

But these measures of the city government — the “population control” — do not go far enough for the right-wing. It is not uncommon to hear calls for mass deportation of the “foreigners,” and also those who are Russian citizens, who are from Russian republics such as Chechnya and Tatarstan. They want them to stay in their little homelands, but they also want to abolish these little homelands — Chechnya, Tatarstan, and so forth. They will not

stay home but we dislike even those who do. It is hopeless to figure this out but I try.

Behind these politicians of the right (very few of them have a proletarian background: they were created in the same belly as the “democrats” and “communist” leaders today, which is to say in the belly of the Party), there are millions of ordinary supporters, who are begged to vote as a national duty and do so without the militant feelings of the men handing out these pamphlets or beating up African students or Afghan vendors in the subway stations.

My dead father would cry over this. He was wounded many times fighting Nazis in World War II and hated Germans his whole life. I don't like them either.

It is a different kind of intolerance I have. I couldn't give a shit about preserving the “tolerance” of Russia or Moscow or St. Petersburg or Kaliningrad or any of the other cities. Like all of the Russian people, I hate anyone who is doing better than me. And I also hate those that emulate other peoples. I would like to burn the hair off of the punks that dress in Italian clothes and act as feudal lords, speaking English with each other like the landlords spoke French before 1917, to sound sophisticated. And I would like to smash the bones of those who would seek to disrupt the pitiful living of a man with dark skin.

The Mongols fucked the Aryan out of the Russian, we all have slanted eyes and swarthy bodies from their rape. The struggle for “white” Russia is seven centuries too late.

But I'm not someone that would slap a man without knowing his name. So the next time I was in the market, and the man — I think it was the same man, but all of the bald fucks look much similar to one another than to me — I engaged him in conversation. He told me of a meeting that was taking place for “whites,” and gave me the address. I asked twice because I know the address well. It is in my same building, where I live, one floor below.

The Wolfsblair. The network of the Nazis, I have heard it said on television, is very advanced compared to other Nazi parties. This was on a liberal television station which would like to say that if this isn't quite the fault of President Vladimir Putin, he is at least not without blame for the tragedies of the beatings and murders by the Nazis. They also say there are forty to fifty thousand skinheads in Russia. They seem not to know each other that well, however, outside of the one group which features men who would never survive a military encounter wearing costumes and marching like they are prepared to take on the world.

But this was no big meeting center and the masses would not march out of this "beer hall" to overthrow the government. It was just a man's apartment.

It smells in that room, like everything is washed with sweat. I arrived early (I had nowhere else to go that day). I watched each person come in one at a time. It did not surprise me that I was the oldest except for one man who lived there and his wife. Each was also male except for the wife and one man who brought his girlfriend. She looked like a man too. My hair is cut military-style but it was still longer than hers. I wondered to myself what it was about young Nazis that makes them want to look like they were the well-fed of some concentration camp.

Six people, not including the husband and wife and a boy that appeared to be their son, arrived after me. They talked not much at all. I didn't want to say very much or ask very many questions in case they thought I was with the police. I was not afraid but would never want to be confused with scum.

The meeting began and the husband told everyone that he was glad we came. I realized — maybe I was the only one not aware of this — that this was not a "real" meeting but an introduction course for new recruits to what they all called (once in English) "The Cause."

To my surprise, the owner then gave the floor to the boy I thought was his son. He was not older than twenty. He wore a coat of the kind that I had in the army, but on the shoul-

der, in place of a rank, was a strange symbol I did not recognize at first but then remembered from a television program on "threats from the Nazis". It was a swastika disguised in the style of the Orthodox church's crucifix.

The boy told us he was concerned about the future of Russia, as we all are. He saw businessmen tearing the country apart, appealing to our enemies to overthrow the government.

The business
l e a d e r s

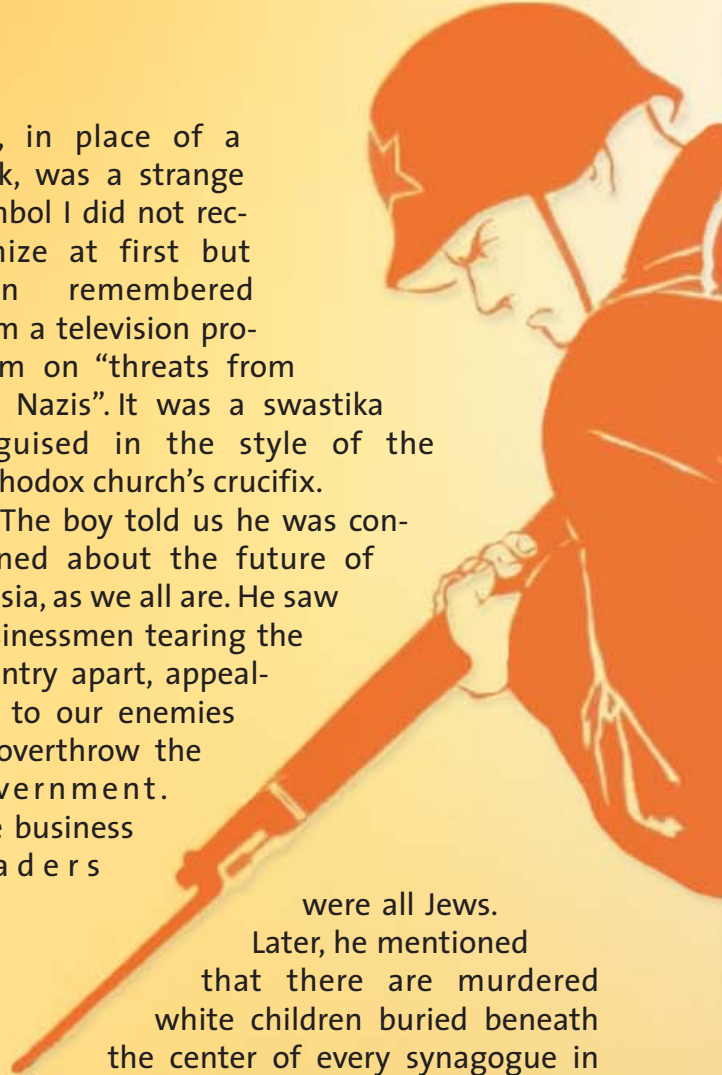
were all Jews.

Later, he mentioned that there are murdered white children buried beneath the center of every synagogue in the world. He said this casually: "They go to synagogues, which have dead white children buried in them."

I could not help it then — I admit I would make a poor spy — and laughed. Are there people stupid enough to believe such a thing? It's like old peasants chasing down children with red hair to drown them. I have no education but how could any person with a thought in their head believe it? But I was the only one to laugh. They did believe this. It all made sense to them.

A chill hit me as the boy continued. He was toward the end. Maybe they ended early because of my interruption of his fairy tale. It was getting late anyway and the people who did not live so close would have to run through one of the most dangerous parts of this city to their homes, which were probably also in miserable parts of the city.

The boy looked at me out of the corner of his eye as I slowly put on my coat as if to walk outside with the others. But his father did not





German member of parliament and gay activist Volker Beck after being attacked at Moscow's first gay rights rally by Russian skinheads.

conceal his dislike of me. What the hell, I thought, I hate all of my neighbors, these no more than the others, so I would ask the question that bothered me since I saw this kid.

"I say," I asked him, "where did you get that coat from?"

"Why?"

"Because it looks very old, but I do not see the discolorations which would be on the shoulders where the old patches were. Were you in the army?"

He shook his head and turned to the ugly little bitch with the shaved head again.

"So you are wearing a costume?" I was trying not to be as cruel as it sounded to my ears now and his then.

He gave me a hard stare. "I know how to fire a gun if that's what you're asking."

"Every kid here knows how to fire a gun," I said. "Don't give me that shit about what a tough guy you are in the street. Because you're wearing a coat you bought for 200 rubles in the street from some old homeless veteran. So it's a costume."

How sad was this? I thought. At least Hitler and Mussolini were soldiers. This boy should have served in the draft like all kids his age but probably had that poor fuck pay for him to get out of it. They rationalize it as "not fighting for the Jews."

I had enough of this but he had enough of me too, and walked off with the man-woman to hand her his pamphlets from a dirty box. And I walked out the door.

I went up one flight of steps, since I didn't care if they followed me. At that moment, I saw that one of my neighbors was in his doorway. He was not coming or going or standing there, but lying flat on the ground, completely drunk. He snored loudly and anyone who passed by him, as I did, saw the top of his trousers had slipped, exposing the filthy crack of his ass.

I know the group of four men who live in this apartment well. They are from Dagestan, one of the republics of the south. They are much hated by the Nazis, because they command more money from us than they give, and despite it they live as they did centuries ago. My ex-wife was a Chechen, and I was shocked by the stone huts of her relatives on my first visit.

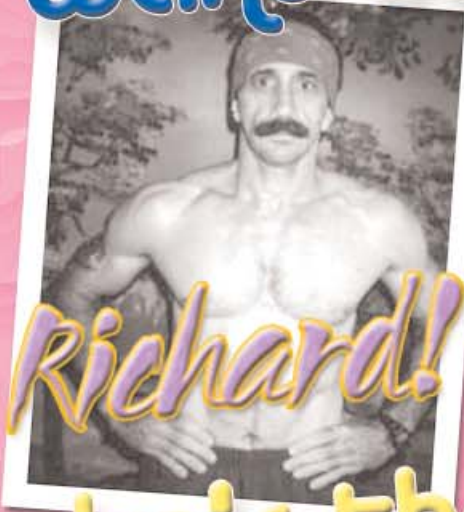
To the Nazis, they have overrun us... and collapsed in a heap, drunk. But I was still glad that no one from downstairs was there to see it.

I roughly grabbed the man by the top of his trousers to rouse him, then used both hands to drag him a foot indoors. One other, the old man of this house, was sleeping upright in a chair. Nobody awakened. I closed the door. In the future, I never mentioned this incident to the Dagestanis when I saw them, or the incident downstairs to the Nazi boy and his parents when I saw them. I would hope they would do the same for me, even though they would both pick my pocket clean. ■

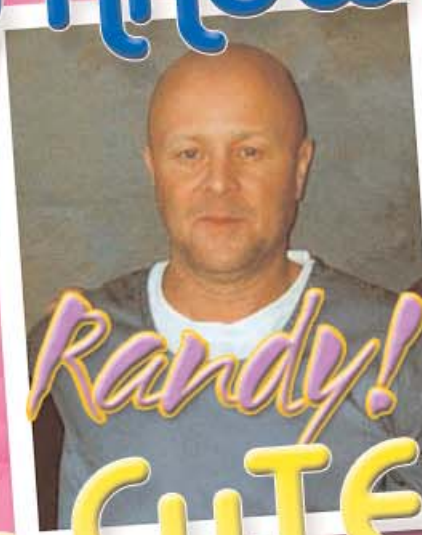
TIGER MEAT

all the GIRLS
want to know...

ISSUE 14
VOLUME 88
3 ZOGBUX!



Richard!



Randy!



Bruce!

who's the CUTEST NAZI
on DEATH ROW?



**'I MAILED MY PANTIES
TO AN INMATE'**
HOW CLARA MET MR. RIGHT

**'MY SKINHEAD
TURNED GAY!'**
QUEER... OR JUST LONELY?



HONKEY JIHAD

THE ORDER: AMERICA'S LAST ANGRY WHITE MEN

THE FREAKS MIGHT BE winning, but take heart, America: the revolution isn't going to be led by a faux hawk warrior with a spike in his septum. The sheep don't respect him and the government doesn't fear him. And if the whiff of grapeshot doesn't send him scurrying like so many hippies, the scorn and jeers of the crowd certainly will.

The only thing the government fears more than white trash with guns is white trash with a brain. Agents and informers move among them, like the Thought Police among Oceania's proles, scooping up the hotheads individually and marking down those with the promise of leadership skills before they do too much damage, win too many converts, threaten the system that buys them a bouquet of flowers after fucking them in the ass.

We're coming up now on the 20th anniversary of the government's successful prosecution of the Order, a gang of uppity white trash cowboys that the former head of the FBI's counterterrorism branch once called the most organized indigenous terrorist group in United

BY CALI RUCHALA
cali@diacritica.com

States history. Nearly a decade before your average Midwest yokel knew anything about *al-Qaeda* or its more picaresque cousins in the international jihad, the Order set up training camps, assassinated symbolic enemies and kicked open the doors to "Terrorism, Inc." by funding practically every racist group worth a goosestep in the United States. Their spokesman was eloquent, their leader charismatic and the very portrait of honkey masculinity that gets white folk to dream of creating their own personal Vietnams in backwoods Alabama precincts. This, not catchy slogans or peaceful protests, is the ultimate threat to a system that treats *all* poor folk like trash, without distinction.

Today, the leaders of the Order are lionized by their squeamish ideological descendants,

who are content for the most part to toss the word “nigger” around on chatboards behind handles like “AUSCHWITZ4REAL” and “BURN-JEWBURN”. Their slain leader is considered a martyr of what they call the “Second American Revolution” and the writings of his jailed comrades regarded as something like sacred bumperstickers, slogans splashed across white power record covers and t-shirts. Watchdog groups warn that despite the extreme likelihood that none of the prominent Order members will ever breathe fresh air beyond the confines of the prison yard before they die, their influence has not been stomped out. To the contrary, with free pixels replacing ink and paper, it’s growing.

And without hearing another word, you’d quiver down to the skids in your silkies at the thought of these big, bad Hitlers scribbling their *Kampfs* on prison-issue toilet paper. The very notion of these brawny cons inspiring another Order fills the government with dread. And it’s not for reasons of public safety; certainly not because they threaten to overturn the joys of our multicultural candyland.

The fact of the matter is that far from emulating the mechanized death fantasies beloved Adolf, the Order — remember, the most advanced indigenous terror group this nation has ever seen — killed precisely *three* people, and one of them was their own. Lone postal workers have racked up a higher bodycount, as have a dozen ethnic terrorist groups that you’ve never heard of. Their acts of destruction were, for the most part, laughable failures — bombs that failed to damage their targets or simply minor diversions for their main activity, which was the creative redistribution of wealth through bank robbery. And far from behaving like psychopaths drunk on a tall shot of noxious racist propaganda, the Order conducted their operations with an almost robotic discipline, passing up plenty of opportunities to indulge in the satisfying but ultimately pointless murder of one of their racial enemies.

Though the Order at one time was a big business for hack crime writers and Hollywood producers, their legend among the fringe of

the political right (or those that demonize them) is about the only heat they generate these days. As with all sensational crimes of the past, their deeds have been alternately romanticized or satanized until it’s difficult to separate facts from myth. The federal government ultimately wrote the only book on the Order that matters, creating a narrative — almost a creation myth — that was plausible enough to garner convictions. But truth is not the law, and, as a professor once told me, the law is not justice.

None of the Order members that went down when the Feds rained on their parade have disclosed much about the inner workings of the organization, least of all about their crimes. Government informers have until now filled in the holes in the chronology. This might get huzzahs from the pews of the courtroom, but not to anyone with any experience as a priest on the other side, by the altar. The irony is that the various groupies and hangers-on around the Order are as prone to playing up their ferocity as any of those with an interest in burying them and everything they stood for.

Ultimately, cutting through all of the hype around the organization, one sees not a rampaging clique of neo-Nazi psychos, and still less the gravest terrorist threat that Backwoods America ever produced. They were something much worse: white trash with guns *and* a brain.

Land of the Dog Eaters. There’s something glorious about lemonade on a hot summer day. A white porch with fresh paint, a rocking swing and a cold glass of lemonade and you feel like a Southern lord, taking a break from the hard labor of accounting for a field rolling with black chattel.

Of course, this is Ozark country, and it’s hard to imagine any profitable plantation in this beaten, ugly wilderness. My friend tells me it’s the hottest day of the year: even the rocks seem to be steaming. Poor, ugly and remote: it was the perfect incubator for the group that, more than any other, gave a kick in the ass to

the radical right wing in the United States in the late 1970s and inspired the Order: the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord.

“Never heard of ‘em,” my friend, a recent transplant from New England, tells me. “This is supposed to be Klan country, but I don’t see that there are all that many black people to get their panties in a twist. I *do* see how a man could go stir crazy down here.”

The CSA began as a pretty run-of-the-mill Christian commune in the mid-1970s before their infection by mountain madness turned terminal. They were led by a fundamentalist hellraiser named James Ellison, preaching a gospel of communalist, messianic Christianity. America, like mankind, was godless and lost. But Jesus didn’t die for the redemption of nation states. Out in the Ozarks, they bought a little compound and devoted themselves to developing a personal relationship with a fickle Yahweh.

Ellison was an eccentric, but his crusade against wickedness really didn’t harm anybody. That changed with the arrival of his first disciple worthy of the name: the erratic, eccentric and outright psychotic Randall Rader.

A hippie burnout and guitarist in Sunset Strip rock bands during the Summer of Love, Rader became a born-again Christian and chose God over Clapton in 1974. He hooked on with the CSA and by 1977 had become a member of the CSA’s inner circle, referred to as the “elders”.

It’s never been determined how much influence Rader wielded over Ellison, or vice-versa. Nevertheless, by 1979, Ellison had experienced a whole new kind of awakening. He had been exposed to the hilariously insipid brand of racist Christianity called Christian Identity, which has it that the Anglo-Saxons are the *real* Hebrews and the *faux* Jews among us the literal descendants of Satan. By chance, Ellison sucked down this sweet nectar of learning at the knee of a prominent Identity preacher named Dan Gayman, and at the side of future Olympic Park bomber and scourge of redneck gay clubs and abortion clinics throughout the South, Eric Rudolph.

Back at the CSA compound, Rader placed himself in charge and was mainlining some heavy shit. He bypassed the other “elders” and became the leader of the camp in all but name. Moreover, he ceased wearing the plain clothing of the CSA congregation in favor of something far more militaristic. A former CSA leader turned government informant remembers Rader strutting around in a “Nazi-like uniform, often carrying a German bullwhip and even wearing a monocle.”

Ellison, upon his return, didn’t disapprove. Completely taken with what he had heard during his sojourn, Ellison began preaching the holy claptrap of Christian Identity to his followers and inviting fellow believers from the likes of the Aryan Nations and the various “klaverns” of the Ku Klux Klan to preach the gospel and Goebbels. By virtue of their ascetic lifestyle and cult-like conviction to racism, the CSA soon became the leader of the rather sad pack.

Always unconventional, Ellison now began receiving more than the casual nudge from his Teutonic Jehovah. For one thing, God told him to take a second wife. The One who wore a crown of thorns in Jerusalem also send a heavenly memo appointing Ellison “King James of the Ozarks” — a very real title that the CSA faithful took very seriously, culminating in a very bizarre coronation ceremony.

While Ellison amused himself with statecraft and polygamy, Rader had undertaken the process of beating the meek Christians of the Bull Shoals Lake commune into an army fit to prevail in the coming race war. After extensive research and some painful trial and error, he became an expert in weapons modification, transforming legal semi-automatic rifles into illegal full-automatics and even building homemade landmines to ring the camp. He also wrote a comprehensive (and, according to a former Army Ranger shown a sample of the contents by the author, quite excellent) guerrilla warfare manual for his soldiers of God. Later, Rader would become commandant of “Silhouette City,” where ambitious survivalists could pay the CSA \$500 for a basic training course featuring shooting targets designed to

resemble Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir.

Rader's aggressive posture eventually led the CSA from survivalist-type goals of waiting out the apocalypse or defending themselves from a government gone mad into more aggressive action. Among the plans allegedly drawn up by Rader was the bombing of a dam and a large target in downtown Oklahoma City: the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

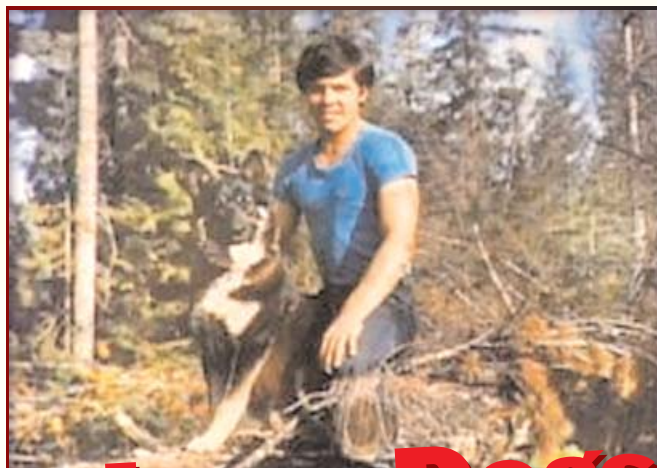
But incapable (for the moment anyway) of taking out his frustrations on the government, Rader's rage found an outlet in beating down his followers. He began using his bullwhip to punish lackadaisical workers or those he felt were holding back from a full commitment, body and soul, to the CSA.

That wasn't his only strange motivational tactic. Once, to impress a group of scrubs wheezing their way through bootcamp at Silhouette City, he killed his own dog and tore its skin off.

And then he ate it.

Perhaps inevitably, the two demented street preachers of Bull Shoals Lake had a falling out. Informers (including Ellison himself) later stated matters came to a head regarding Rader's neglect of his one-year old daughter, who supposedly drowned in a basement when he was charged with watching her. Whatever the case, Rader wandered out of Bull Shoals Lake for the last time in 1982, sleeping on the couches of CSA apostates and the like-minded psychos living on the fringe of the fringe. Eventually, a new group called the Order would have use for his services.

The Good Humor Man. Bob Mathews once made ice cream for a living. That's the most embarrassing thing I could find out about him. Allegations that he paid his boys' way through the brothels of the Pacific Northwest (propagated by a former Order associate turned informant) or that he impregnated a child and got his jollies on interracial porn (pushed in a movie starring a Baldwin Brother as the aforementioned turncoat) have never stood up to



Must Love Dogs

Like his mentor William Pierce, Bob Mathews found himself unlucky in love and resorted to one convenience of this decadent modern age: the personal ad. From the depths of his achy breaky heart, he placed his bait in the unlikely stream of *Mother Earth News* and waited for the replies to roll in. The future Debbie Mathews responded and wooed Mathews with her letter describing her longing for children, a husband and a lovely white family. Mathews and Debbie hit it off but she never conceived any children of any color, but they did adopt one. Bob eventually left Debbie by the wayside (the exact time and circumstances aren't clear) and made off with a barely legal little muffin from Wyoming named Zillah, who would eventually bear Mathews' only child.

serious inquiry. Only a few of the men he would gather around him would fit the typical m.o. of the sketchy, rot-headed racist that Randall Rader and James Ellison exemplified, and it doesn't fit for their leader either.

Robert Jay Mathews was born on January 16, 1953, in a shithole called Marfa, Texas. After a series of failed business ventures, his father moved the family to Arizona, first to Phoenix and later to Tempe. Those who seek to find "the roots of hate" won't find anything in Robert Mathews' upbringing. His parents fretted as



Bob Mathews facing down the fearsome tolerance towels of the anti-racists at an Aryan Nations' rally in Spokane

their son began his shift to the extreme right, worried by a heated rhetoric that gradually took on a more and more anti-American tone.

For it was at the tender age of 12 that Mathews became a card-carrying member of the John Birch Society, that famous hotbed of Commie-haters that had earlier nurtured such racist icons as William Pierce, author of *The Turner Diaries*. The Birchites are considered fairly pathetic by hardcore racist standards (they do not “name the Jew,” which is apparently the handshake that lets you into the club), and Mathews moved up the foodchain quickly. From the Birchites he graduated to full-fledged tax protester, becoming sergeant-at-arms of one such group before he finished high school.

In 1972, Mathews went one step further, forming his own tax protester group embroidered with the kind of militia trappings that wouldn't come into fashion on the right for another two decades. He called it the “Sons of Liberty,” and invited a Phoenix-area television crew to come out to the desert and see his masked group of supposed military veterans training for the fight against commies. The local branch of the FBI, apprised of the group by the TV crew, made no small effort to ascertain Mathews' true identity.

But the Sons of Liberty never went any-

where, and from reports appeared to be little more than a group of drinking buddies that liked to shoot off guns in the desert in the middle of the night. In any case, Mathews had already fallen afoul of the authorities, with a misdemeanor conviction for willful failure to pay his taxes. He realized that despite the brave words that had been filling his ears for the previous half-dozen years, his comrades in the movement had no intention of doing more than waiting for the government to send them a citation and caving in. Despondent, depressed and feeling suffocated on his home turf, Mathews borrowed some money from his father, packed up and, “with twenty five dollars” to his name, hit the road for Metaline Falls, Washington.

The Brotherhood. Taking on manly jobs like zinc mining and working in a cement factory, Mathews was soon able to sock enough money away for his own property and a mobile home. The 53 acres of forested land was soon cleared and dotted with a military-style barracks and other improvements done in tandem with some of his new friends.

Bob had joined William Pierce's National Alliance sometime around 1980 (a check of an ancient NA mailing list, which was passed around within the White Nationalist movement like a lambskin condom at a Deadhead orgy, finds a name similar to “Mathews” — spelled “Matthews” — from Washington state). He brought in new members for the NA, but unlike many in the factional extreme right, made common cause with those in other groups as well. Mathews was planning for something he didn't yet understand, recruiting for a cause he didn't quite know.

By early 1983, Mathews was a veritable troubadour on the scene, showing up at the National Alliance's annual Leadership Conference (where he gave a short but rousing speech), the Aryan World Conference (where he met the CSA's James Ellison for the first time), and numerous sit-downs at the Aryan Nations compound, located in nearby Hayden Lake,

Idaho. At one Aryan Nations rally in June, Mathews faced down a protester who had just kicked an Aryan Nations bodyguards in the balls — a cameraman happened to capture the image of Bob's biceps and the cowering demonstrator on film.

Eventually, in September 1983, Mathews felt he was ready. During his wandering out on the fringe, Mathews had rated (and would continue to rate) the men he came across, picking out those he felt had the mind and mettle to conduct the dirty work of a revolution. Gathering in the bunker on his Metaline Falls homestead, nine men swore an oath penned by Mathews and, sensing a symbol was necessary, repeated the following words in a circle with a white baby at their center:

I, as an Aryan warrior, swear myself to complete secrecy to the Order and total loyalty to my comrades.

Let me bear witness to you, my brothers, that should one of you fall in battle, I will see to the welfare and well-being of your family.

Let me bear witness to you, my brothers, that should one of you be taken prisoner, I will do whatever is necessary to regain your freedom.

Let me bear witness to you, my brothers, that should an enemy agent hurt you, I will chase him to the ends of the earth and remove his head from his body.

And furthermore, let me bear witness to you, my brothers, that if I break this oath, let me be forever cursed upon the lips of our people as a coward and an oath breaker.

My brothers, let us go forth by ones and twos, by scores and by legions, and as true Aryan men with pure hearts and strong minds, face the enemies of our faith and our race with courage and determination.

We hereby invoke the blood covenant and declare that we are in a full state of war and will not lay down our weapons until we have driven the enemy into the sea and reclaimed the land which was promised to our fathers of old, and through our blood and His will, becomes the land of our children to be.

The Order (or *Bruders Schweigen*, the Silent Brotherhood, as they usually called themselves) was born.

The Robbin' Hoods. Like most novice revolutionaries, the Order made a series of fumbling starts before things really got rolling. Their first scheme to acquire money was to hire themselves out as spare time contractors to the US Forestry Service clearing trails. It was hard, back-breaking work, and obviously left some of the members anxious to start sticking it to The Man in earnest.

In October 1983, a few members of the Order elected to try a more creative method of accumulating wealth for their warchest. Cruising through Seattle, they targeted a pimp for a beating but were forced to back down. Later that month, Mathews and several other Order members disguised themselves as Mexicans (a favorite device of Mathews, who was enamored by international terrorist Carlos the Jackal) and robbed Worldwide Video, a porn emporium in Spokane. Their total take: \$369.

Other aspects the Order's wealth creation plan weren't going so hot either. In Hayden Lake, Order members led by David Lane and Gary Lee Yarbrough were using the Aryan Nations' printing press to run off counterfeit \$50 bills. The money, however, was of such poor quality that they didn't pass scrutiny. Order member Bruce Pierce (no relation to William) was arrested for passing a fake \$50 and charged with weapons violations to boot.

Desperate to kickstart the group, Mathews pushed forward. In desperation more than by design, on December 20, 1983, he robbed the City Bank in Seattle. This is usually regarded as the first successful operation by the Order, but it wasn't. Though Mathews walked out of the bank with some \$25,900, a dye pack in the bag exploded, covering the bills with permanent red ink. Mathews' crew were able to "wash" most of the money, but the cleanser discolored most of the notes and made them unusable.

The City Bank robbery was intended to raise bail for Bruce Pierce. After pleas from his wife,



The Hipster

One of the more worldly members of the Order, Bruce Carroll Pierce was born in Kentucky in 1954. He dropped out of high school just prior to graduation to elope with his pregnant high school sweetheart, then moved back to work for the local newspaper. He was, not to put too fine a point on it, a pot-smoking yuppie dork. Suffering a premature midlife crisis, in 1979 he divorced his wife and moved to Missoula, Montana, where he met his second wife and lived in a trailer with a total of three children from their earlier marriages. Destitute, he was collecting welfare when a chance encounter brought him to the Aryan Nations' compound in Idaho. He volunteered as a bodyguard for AN leader Pastor Richard Butler when he witnessed firsthand Mathews' taming of the counter-protesters at Riverfront Park in Spokane. He was among the most versatile but uncontrollable of Mathews' men, and would soon quibble with Mathews over the direction of the organization.

the judge eventually allowed him to bail out on a mere \$250 surety bond. One month later, Pierce and Yarbrough robbed the Washington Mutual Bank in Spokane after planting a fake bomb nearby as a diversion, netting \$3,600.

If the payoff was weak, the Order was at

least getting on-the-job training. There appeared to be minimal risk: none had been identified to date, and though Pierce had been nabbed passing fake banknotes, the authorities failed to finger him as part of a wider conspiracy. It was important to keep things in perspective, though: by February, members of the Order had begun to sell some of their personal belongings to pay for basic necessities.

The tide turned for good on March 16, 1984. Months earlier, Mathews and Co. had cased an armored truck making cash pick-ups and deliveries in downtown Seattle. After their earlier failures, this time the boys in black made good. Once again, a fake bomb threat was called in to draw the police to a far-away location as a Continental armored truck pulled up to a Fred Meyer store. After the driver stepped out, Randy Duey stood in his way, Bruce Pierce drew a bead on his head and Bob Mathews disarmed him. Gary Yarbrough (the only member of the Order that could be said to have a useful criminal background) drove up in a beater and began to load up with cash from the armored truck. The take: a cool \$43,345 in unmarked, untainted, non-consecutive bills — multiplying the Order's total stash by a magnitude of ten.

The Continental heist was an astounding success by any measure. It steeled the morale of the Order's inner-circle (usually called, in the Leninist fashion, the "action group" as they were committing most of the crimes). On April 23, the Order hit another armored car at Seattle's Northgate Mall. Again, a diversionary bomb was planted; again, Pierce (disguised as a window washer) pulled his gun while Mathews flashed a sign that read "Get Out or You Die". To further intimidate the guards, two other Order members, Denver Parmenter and Andrew Barnhill (the latter a former member of Ellison's CSA), pulled up and brandished shotguns. The guards (one of whom was the same guard robbed in the Continental heist) quickly surrendered and Yarbrough pulled up in a van to start loading up the loot.

The Order pulled in an astounding \$500,000 from the Northgate heist, though some

\$200,000 was in the form of worthless checks that had to be burned. Still, the Order netted more than \$300,000 from a robbery which took no longer than two minutes. Furthermore — and contrary to later accounts by prosecutors and witnesses which painted him as a sociopath — Mathews had insisted that not a single hair on the head of the guards should be harmed in the robbery. Accordingly, he rehearsed the fundamental steps of the heist until the members knew it by heart. Despite the high tension of the situation, everyone had remained calm, and no one was hurt.

But though some witnesses would later claim to be in thrall to Mathews and his remarkable charisma, the Order's first ringing success created disputes that would later cripple the group while the government was still chasing its tail. Roughly speaking, Mathews led one faction, Bruce Pierce the other. Pierce was flush with success and believed the Order should begin carrying out their political operations, including working their way down a "hit list" of Jewish businessmen, politicians and opinion-makers, including Henry Kissinger and the head of the Rothschild banking family.

Pierce had by this point gone totally underground, as a bench warrant had been sworn out for his arrest for failure to appear on the counterfeiting charge. Three days later, an improvised explosive created by his own sweat and love exploded in the Congregation Ahavath Israel synagogue in Boise, Idaho. It did practically no damage and no one was injured. Mathews was quick to condemn the bombing as "unauthorized". The feud was out in the open.

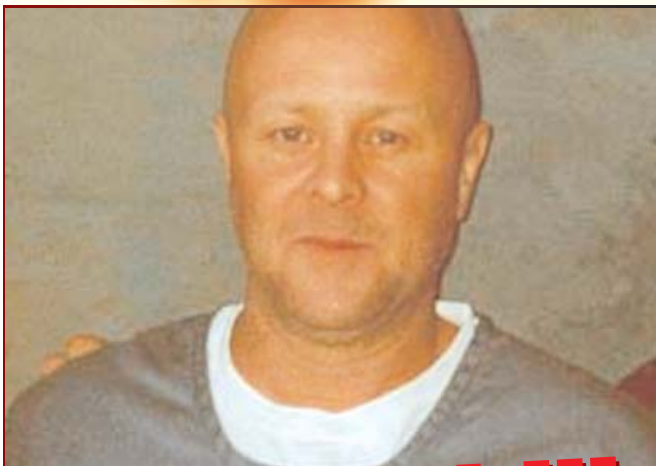
Bob Mathews initially conceived the Order as a terrorist vanguard which would grow slowly as their exploits became known, drawing into the main group like-minded individuals or inspiring copycats across the United States. Order members and their families were usually paid "salaries" after successful heists, but with the costs of living on the road, maintaining safehouses, purchasing gear and disposable vehicles and tracking targets, it was by no means a windfall. A few hundred thousand

wouldn't last forever, and Mathews believed that the group's treasury had to be far larger before they could openly declare war. But the demand for concrete political action by Bruce Pierce's faction led to Mathews' acquiescence in what would be the Order's most infamous crime: the murder of an asshole.

In Tepid Blood. Alan Berg was not on the Order's original hitlist, drawn up at the time of the group's inaugural oath in Mathews' backyard. He was added as late as May 1984, according to most accounts, with two other names. The first was Morris Dees, who as the founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center was bankrupting numerous Klan groups with strategic civil suits (and would later break the Aryan Nations and seize the very Hayden Lake compound where many individual members of the Order made their bones). The second, hilariously, was television producer Norman Lear, whose glory days of breaking American taboos were far behind him but continued to represent the "Hollywood Jew" in the racist mindset.

The addition of Berg was far more personal than anyone else on the Order's hitlist. It's true that Berg, a precursor of the acerbic talkshow host that people listen to even though they hate him, had some influence: his flagship station in Denver transmitted at 50,000 watts and carried his jeers and sneers far and wide. But he was still a local celebrity in a backwater market that didn't entirely know what to think of him. Allegedly, readers of a Denver newspaper had voted Berg both the most loved and most hated radio personality in town — in the same year.

Berg loved cracking dirty jokes, advising offended callers to get laid more often and generally ridiculed even those who called in to swear their adoration. One of the obsessive callers he liked to bait was none other than the Order's David Lane, then a member of David Duke's Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Tapes reportedly exist of Lane's calls to Berg, though I haven't been able to locate them. Reports indicate that Berg thoroughly trounced Lane,



The Ladykiller

Randy Evans was considered something of a minor member of The Order, but played a starring role in the saga of the unfortunate Walter West. The facts of the story are far from clear: West's body has never been recovered and details of his murder as a loose-lipped informant relies primarily upon the shaky testimony of government informants. Still more opaque is the fate of West's widow, Sue West, who may be the fourth murder victim of the Order. According to prosecutors, West was traveling with Randy Evans and several other Order associates in 1985 as they fled a nationwide manhunt. They eventually found refuge in the Ozarks at the Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord compound near Bull Shoals Lake. Sue West was apparently in the company of Evans, who had helped lure her husband into the woods more than a year earlier. Her body was found on March 19, 1985 under a bridge near the Turner Turnpike, her throat slashed. No one was ever charged.

dubbing him a "sick and pathetic human being". Lane is far and away the most intelligent leader the extreme right has had in decades, but as Berg controlled the microphone, this was probably true.

Berg was the first and only member of the

Order's hitlist to get whacked. He wasn't, however, the Order's first casualty. Two of the three deaths attributed to the Order came within three weeks of each other; the first, usually forgotten by the strange collusion of enemies and fellow travelers, was one of their own.

Walter West was a member of the Aryan Nations. He was also a recovering alcoholic. Testimony at the Order trial in Seattle indicates that West had fallen rather hard off the wagon in the Spring of 1984 and had been blabbing in bars near Hayden Lake about neo-Nazis knocking over armored cars. On May 27th, Randy Duey, Randy Evans, David Tate and Richard Kemp lured Wally into the woods somewhere near the compound. When they were deep enough into the wilderness, Kemp turned and cracked West square in the face with a hammer. Then he hit him again. West reportedly looked at Duey and cried "What's going on, Randy?" His pal Randy answered with a comradely blast in the forehead from his semi-automatic rifle, blowing the top of West's head clear off from the rest of his body.

West's body was never found. Kemp later allegedly stated that "I put him so far back in the woods that only God knows where he is."

Meanwhile, a unique type of spy had been doing some advance work for another Order team in Denver. Bob Mathews had more or less left his wife and taken a 20 year old girl, Zillah Craig, as his mistress. Zillah's mother, a homely but harmless housewife named Jean Craig, was looped into the Order's plot and assigned the duty of stalking Alan Berg's daily routine. She gained access to the radio station and followed her target, noting when he left for the morning and arrived at the studio, when he left again and when he arrived home. She passed on her information to Mathews as an Order crew holed up in a Denver hotel.

On June 18, 1984, at 9 o'clock, Berg returned from a quick trip to the corner store. In a nearby car were Lane, Mathews and Pierce. Seeing Berg exit from his car, Mathews threw open the car door. Pierce lept out, pumping twelve .45 caliber slugs into Berg's chest and face. Berg's cigarette, reportedly, was still burning on the

ground when police arrived on the scene minutes later.

It was the Order's most cold-blooded crime, and later the fodder for a number of books, plays, movies based on plays, and urban legends. Berg naturally had attracted a number of psychotic fans and enemies over the years, but suspicion soon centered on his former sparring partner, David Lane.

Ukiah Heap. Less than a month after terminating Denver's iron lung, the Order pulled off what was at the time the largest overland robbery in United States history. In a little more than five minutes, Mathews and the largest contingent of Order members to take part in a single operation scored more than \$3.6 million dollars from an armored truck in the sleepy town of Ukiah, California. It dwarfed their previous earnings; no racist group since the Third Reich had ever had this much money in their hands. It also led, indirectly, to the disintegration of the Order and the incapacitation of quite nearly the entire organized extreme right in the United States for the next decade.

The Ukiah heist had its origins in a small ad that Bob Mathews had placed in the *Spotlight*, a now-defunct populist and conspiracy-prone newsletter put out by Willis Carto of the Liberty Lobby. In 1982, a man named Charles Ostrout responded to Mathews' call for a network of activists seeking the creation of a "white homeland" in the Pacific Northwest. Ostrout was a supervisor for Brink's in the Bay Area. He visited Mathews in Metaline Falls and kept in touch. Ostrout now provided hard information on a lonely Brink's route in northern California that would provide the White Nationalist movement with more money than it knew what to do with.

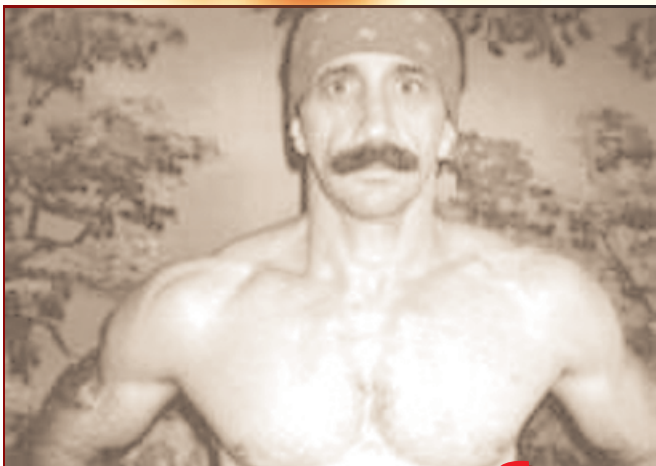
Members of the Order spent a considerable amount of time casing the route and working out a plan for the daring daylight raid. On July 19, they met for a final prep and, *à la* Keri Strug, said a lil' prayer for the operation's success.

Robert Merki, who had upgraded the Order's crude counterfeiting operation, watched the

Brink's truck pass on its normal route while dressed in drag in a McDonald's parking lot. Sometime later, out on the highway, Mathews, Pierce and the rest of the crew forced the truck to the side of the road on a steep incline which caused traffic to slow to less than 30 miles per hour. Mathews held the usual "Get Out or You Die" sign while Denver Parmenter brandished a "fake bazooka" (Parmenter later became a federal informant, and may have stressed the fact that he held a phony weapon in order to make it easier for him to avoid more serious charges.) The guards remained frozen. That was when Pierce, who had been showing signs of becoming seriously unhinged, jumped on the hood of the truck, his face uncovered by the handkerchiefs the rest of the members were using to conceal their identities, and fired four shots at the windshield. Armored trucks are naturally equipped with bulletproof glass, but the two guards scrambled out — and locked the doors behind them.

While the Order members screamed at the guards to unlock the back door, Pierce noticed some movement through the window and, naturally, shot at it. Out scrambled a black female guard. Taking out an *untermensch* would have been a golden opportunity to blow off a little steam in a high tension situation, but no one (not even Pierce) availed themselves of the opportunity. Instead, the Order members began bailing the money into their getaway cars. Though it took much longer than planned (and many commuters on Highway 20 stopped to gawk before Andrew Barnhill began directing traffic... with his rifle), the Ukiah heist otherwise went off without a hitch. It was only later that they realized a major gaffe: Mathews had accidentally dropped his gun at the scene. It was the one mistake which would begin the unraveling of the honkey jihad.

A Nazi Carnegie. By this point, Richard Scutari had been recruited into the Order and provided a far more healthily paranoid influence in their day-to-day operations. At Scutari's insistence, the robbers had switched cars *twice* after the



Cap'n Beefcake

During interviews with the press leading up to the Order trial in Seattle, prosecutors and government agents would often point to Richard Scutari as the shadowy “weapons expert” responsible for the tightened discipline and military efficiency within the Order after he joined. Scutari had been a deep sea diver in the Navy, and refers vaguely to some post-war freelancing work in Biafra, the site of a ghastly civil war. In 1979, he met Andrew Barnhill, who was then a member of the Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord. Scutari vanished for a time, to Latin America he later claimed, to do freelance “security work” for unnamed patrons in Costa Rica against the Nicaraguan Sandanistas. Scutari was back in Florida when Barnhill invited him in 1984 to meet Bob Mathews, and Scutari soon introduced voice stress analyzers and other security gadgetry to his new pals. During the Berg murder and the Ukiah heist, Scutari was away from the scene in a separate car, counting off the elapsed time into a radio to better coordinate the operations.

Ukiah heist and even left a cache of water and food nearby in case they had to flee on foot. Also at Scutari's suggestion, the group scattered following the robbery and counting of the loot.

It was then that Pierce and Mathews had their final falling out over the future of the movement. This time, Pierce was in favor of conducting more robberies as well as assassinations, while Mathews wanted time to build the group's infrastructure. Unable to reach a consensus, new roles were handed down and the Order essentially split, with Pierce left free to basically form his own cell to run as he saw fit. Under the new arrangement, Mathews — far and away the most charismatic of the Order — would be in charge of recruitment, long-term strategy and disbursement of the enormous funds now at their disposal.

Duey was given \$500,000 from the Ukiah heist to oversee the creation of an “Aryan Academy” but it never got off the ground. Richard Scutari made a trip to the Ozarks with a more concrete plan. Randall Rader, the dog-eating guru of the Covenant, Sword, and Arm of the Lord, was given some \$145,000 of Scutari's lucre to act as commandant of two paramilitary training camps which would transform raw Order recruits into holy soldiers of God. Rader immediately purchased 110 acres of land near Priest River, Idaho. He set up a front company to make bulk purchases of weapons, gear and surveillance equipment and decorated his new home with machine gun nests, foxholes, a sophisticated closed-circuit security system and even a radio tower.

As members were drawn from a variety of right-wing extremist groups, the Order had ties to just about everyone else in the movement. Now Mathews began a barnstorming of the East Coast and the South to spread his largesse, win new friends and influence people.

The late William Pierce of the National Alliance was long suspected of having received between \$100,000 and \$200,000 from Mathews. The only witness to their September 1984 meeting was Zillah Craig, who later testified that she had seen Pierce (who Mathews held in awe, according to her) accept a paper bag containing what she suspected was a large amount of cash. Not long after, Pierce moved out of Washington, DC for good and onto a

300+ acre plot of land in West Virginia that he purchased with just under \$100,000 in cold, hard — and most likely stolen — cash.

The only recipient of Mathews' generosity to testify in public about his Magical Mystery Tour was Glenn Miller, Imperial Wizard of the Carolina Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (CKKKK), who later traded in their white sheets for military garb as the White Patriot Party. According to Miller, he had been visited by Parmenter and Barnhill back in April 1984:

In the backyard, Parmenter, the taller of the two, said "Mr. Miller, we're really impressed with you and your group, and we'd like to give you a little donation," while handing me \$1000 in cash.

I was flabbergasted. I'd never received a donation nearly that large before. I think I stammered something like, "Are yaw'll sure you can afford it?" ...

Andy Barnhill and Denver Parmenter had visited me for the purpose of checking me out personally, so that Mathews could decide whether or not I was worthy of receiving Order money, and of closer association with The Order.

Obviously, I passed their inspection with flying colors, because The Order decided that the CKKKK would receive more money than any other group in the country, and they gave money to about a dozen.

Bob himself showed up in North Carolina in mid-August 1984 with his pregnant girlfriend. Mathews told Miller that he wanted to give him \$75,000 in a few days, and another \$125,000 in the near future to help his KKK faction "get even better". Miller (who would later testify as a government witness after reaching a plea bargain) wrote that his first thought was "FBI". But "the dollar signs in my eyes got the better of me" and he accepted. According to Miller, a number of Order members that witnessed his receipt of the initial \$75,000 in cash later turned state's evidence (he mentions Craig and Parmenter by name).

In late September, Mathews turned up again, this time accompanied only by Barnhill. He handed Miller another brick of stolen loot

as well as a document that Miller was asked to memorize and burn:

The document given to me by Bob Mathews contained several things: Code names; a suggestion that my group expand to cover nine listed Southern states; a request that I maintain a record of how money was spent; and a statement indicating how future stolen money would be divided. As I recall, about 60% would be divided among those doing the robbing, and 40% divided among selected above-ground groups, which judging from the number of code names amounted to ten or twelve.

According to Richard Scutari, the Order envisioned several smaller extremist groups in the South being brought under Miller's control. It should be noted that of all of those to testify on the government side in the future trials associated with the Order, Miller is the only one to resurface with any success in the White Nationalist movement, much to the consternation of Scutari & Co.

The Hunted. By now, the Feds were beginning to get a bead on what they were up against. Despite the same personnel being involved in most of the robberies, up until now no one had connected all of the dots. Bruce Pierce had been arrested but only on a simple counterfeiting and an incidental weapons charge. No one had taken much notice that he had (rather foolishly) used the prison phone to call a number of his co-conspirators while in the slammer. Also, a search for Pierce back in May had turned up David Lane, Duey and Robert Merki in the act of printing up scores of fake \$10 bills, but none were arrested and the operation was simply moved to Merki's home. The addition of Scutari to the inner-circle had greatly improved the Order's internal security, but some of their novice errors were coming back to haunt them.

Police found the gmm. Smith and Wesson handgun dropped by Bob Mathews in the back of the Brink's truck in Ukiah. A simple trace revealed the buyer: Andrew Barnhill. The Order



The Philosopher

Far and away the most intelligent member of the Order (and probably the entire extreme right in the United States in the last century), David Lane had already passed through the gauntlet of racist groups when he joined the Order. In the late 1970s, the champion golf pro of Aurora, Colorado had been an organizer for David Duke's Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, then the head of the Aryan Nations' Colorado chapter. In 1982, he moved to Hayden Lake and met Bob Mathews. He literally wrote the book on the Order: a kind of "manual" advising all members to carry a large quantity of cash and at least one quality fake ID and other useful advice. "Sometimes you are a sheep," he wrote, "and then you change to a wolf. Until you can sit at a table or in a bar with a beautiful white woman and her nigger boyfriend or husband and convince them you are overflowing with brotherly love and affection, you are not yet a completed agent of the white underground."

had become masters of obtaining purloined identities, but Barnhill had for some reason purchased this particular gun under his own name.

FBI agents searched Barnhill's home. He wasn't present, but there was enough incriminating evidence on hand to lead to the Feds'

next big break. Barnhill had clipped and saved a newspaper story about the Northgate Mall heist back in April. The article was set aside with other items of sentimental value, including Barnhill's own baby teeth.

Knowing now that there was an Idaho connection to the robberies, the authorities began sifting through phone calls made to numbers in the Idaho-Eastern Washington-Wyoming area from payphones near the site of the Ukiah heist. They turned up a common link: the home of Robert Merki, used as a "message center" for members of the Order and their associates to leave and pick up messages under their code-names.

In September, a number of members of the Order were under surveillance. Agents on a stakeout of Yarbrough's home watched him leave for a few minutes to place a call at a public phone. Yarbrough's home phone was in perfect working order. Pulling up on his property in a Forest Service truck, agents took fire from the house and Yarbrough made his getaway. Aside from portraits of Hitler and Jesus side by side and other tacky souvenirs of Naziana, agents discovered a large quantity of ammunition — and the MAC-10 used by Bruce Pierce to gun down Alan Berg.

Word of the raid got through to the rest of the scattered members of the Order. Mathews called for an emergency meeting at the Priest River compound led by Randall Rader, but due to the greater scrutiny members were now subject to, it was more than three weeks before all of them arrived.

Barely two months into its existence, Rader's camp was already disintegrating. Denver Parmenter, later called by prosecutors as a government witness, described a scene somewhere between *Lord of the Flies* and *Naked Lunch*, albeit without the sodomy. Parmenter, Kemp and Barnhill chafed under Rader's leadership, which had hardly grown more tender from the days when he'd beat his underlings at Silhouette City with a bullwhip. A couple were drinking from morning until they passed out, plotting darkly to dispose of Rader and seize

control of the camp. One member had been locked in a “brig” for unaccounted spending. Rader himself became convinced that their neighbors down the road were a group of witches spying on the camp and, in all seriousness, turned his surveillance equipment around to capture their disembodied outlines as they stole across the grounds at night.

Mathews himself appeared haggard, broken down, used up. The state of the Order’s paramilitary camp was certainly demoralizing, but one of those on hand later testified that he looked like he had aged ten years since Berg’s murder just four months before. Even Rader, searching the sky for a coven of cackling green hags on broomsticks, thought Mathews was “losing it”.

Mathews began issuing orders. Duey had been attempting to make contact with an official at the Syrian embassy in Washington, believing that they would lend financial support to the Order. He was sent back to DC to follow up. Despite his exhausted state, Mathews tried exhorting his men by stating that they were now in a state of war with the FBI. From accounts given by the future turncoats, few responded to his war cry with enthusiasm. After several hours of indecisive arguments, the group basically decided to split their remaining funds and go their separate ways. Some would immediately begin contemplating surrender. The rest walked away from the camp (which Mathews, to the relief of all involved, dissolved) and into the teeth of the largest Federal manhunt since the days of Jesse James.

The Thrill of the Chase. Martinez is a strange name for a neo-Nazi. Tom Martinez was a strange guy. Despite his suspiciously Latin surname, Martinez had been a bonafide member of a number of racist groups and was accepted in their circles for years. He claimed to have gotten involved in radical politics after run-ins with blacks in innercity Philadelphia. William Pierce for his part later claimed he had to kick Martinez out of the National Alliance for being

disruptive, but Martinez certainly earned Bob Mathews’ trust, enough to become an associate (though not a full-fledged member) of the Order.

Tom had been the recipient of some of the improved counterfeit money the Order produced after Robert Merki signed on; David Lane had driven across the country with bills for Martinez and others to pass. Martinez, it turns out, tried to use the notes at a liquor store right near his home. The manager recognized Martinez’s bills as fake and he was arrested on June 29, 1984.

Martinez got in touch with Mathews, who encouraged him to go underground. Martinez also claimed that Mathews plotted the murder of the liquor store owner to eliminate him as a witness. This was apparently a bridge too far, and facing a stiff sentence for passing counterfeit money, Martinez agreed to cooperate in bringing the Order down.

On November 23rd, Martinez boarded a plane for Portland, Oregon where he was met by Mathews and Yarbrough. They spent the night in the Capri Motel — Martinez in Room 14, Mathews and Yarbrough in Room 42.

According to Martinez, Mathews instructed him to travel to Mobile, Alabama. There he was to link up with David Lane and take part in the assassination of Morris Dees, the head of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Jean Craig, according to Martinez, was once again lending her grandmotherly charms to the operation, staking out the SPLC’s offices and recording the details of Dees’ daily rounds.

The authorities had hoped Mathews would lead Martinez (and Martinez would lead them) to a larger warren of Order members, but the group was too scattered to pick up more than two or three individuals at a time. Accordingly, FBI agents and a SWAT team surrounded the hotel in the early hours of November 24th, prepared to move in for the kill.

By chance, Mathews decided to drop by Martinez’s room. As he left Room 42 to go downstairs, he caught sight of someone crouching in the bushes. Mathews immediately broke into a sprint; inexplicably, the agents

Yes, even cons have fanboys. One has taken KenDolls and old school GI Joes and altered them with markers to resemble members of the Order. This is the David Lane KenDoll, holding two of his most famous prison writings—the 14 Words and 88 Precepts. Take that, Jews!



began to fire (one bullet ricocheted and hit the hotel manager through a window). Yarbrough, alerted by the gunfire, leapt from the bathroom window, only to find himself surrounded by FBI agents with their guns drawn. The first full-fledged member of the Order was now in custody.

Taking cover behind a pillar, Mathews returned fire, hitting one agent in the foot and leg (he later claimed to have deliberately fired low based on his pursuer's "handsome" white face). Mathews was hit in the hand by a shotgun blast, causing him to drop his weapon and recoil in pain. He took off running, catching rides with a couple of unsuspecting tourists on their way into the mountains to the town of Brightwood, where Scutari had recently set up a safehouse.

Scutari soon arrived and painfully ripped the flesh from Mathews' wounded hand (they had no anesthesia). Scutari urged Mathews to flee the Pacific Northwest for Arizona. Mathews refused, deciding to head out by ferry to Whidbey Island, in Washington state's Puget Sound, instead.

News of the shoot-out reached members of the Order in their far-flung hideouts. Pierce and Evans showed up on Whidbey Island from Nevada, but only remained for a day before leaving again. They undoubtedly believed that

the FBI was hot on Mathews' heels and to remain on Whidbey Island was suicide.

Painfully, with his left hand, Mathews scrawled out a "declaration of war" and gave it to Randy Duey to mass-produce and send to the media before he left the island on December 1. Scutari and a newer recruit, Frank Silva, left on December 6.

The very next day, someone on Whidbey Island — the Feds have never revealed who — walked to a payphone, called the police, and notified them of Mathews' presence on the island.

Who dropped the dime on Mathews? Robert Merki, the counterfeiter that donned high heels and support hose during the Ukiah heist, was thought to be the main suspect, as he was arrested without incident after the call was made and FBI agents stormed onto the island. He also later became a government witness, as did his wife Sharon, who had run the Order's message center. But there would be little reason for the Feds to conceal this particular detail when Merki took the stand. The Merkis also left their teenage son behind with Mathews; it seems highly unlikely they would inform the Feds and arrange their own surrender without securing the safety of their son.

Scutari, for his part, doesn't address the matter of the phone call at all but points to *No Heroes*, the memoir of Danny Coulson, the FBI's chief of counterterrorism at the time. Coulson claims that after the shoot-out at the Capri Motel, a member of the Order wandered into the dragnet and was "doubled", leading the Feds to Whidbey Island. Scutari identifies this man as a new recruit from California known only as "Fritz".

Whatever the truth, more than one hundred FBI agents surrounded Mathews in his suddenly exposed refuge. The Merkis' son surrendered. Coulson phoned Mathews inside the house and initially spoke with him, but eventually Mathews stopped answering. Coulson reports that at one point the agents reported hearing a single gunshot followed by a "wail". Believing Mathews to be dead, they pumped the house with CS gas to drive out anyone else who might be lurking and stormed the building. To their surprise, Mathews opened fire — from the ceiling. Holed up in the attic, he continued raking the ground floor with gunfire until the agents were forced to withdraw.

The stand-off continued well into the night. A helicopter buzzed the building in a strange attempt at annoying Mathews into surrender. Instead, he opened fire through the roof, and the helicopter flew away.

Finally, the agents came to the decision to deliberately burn Mathews out. A phosphorescent flare was dropped on the roof and caught fire. Soon the house was an inferno, setting off the huge stockpile of ammunition Mathews had with him. Mathews was believed to have kept shooting until he could no longer stand the smoke. He eventually fled into the bathtub, which fell through the burning building to the ground floor.

The next morning, when the ashes had cooled, agents found his body, blackened beyond recognition. Dental records later indicated that it was Bob Mathews, but an ID was made on the spot from a nugget of melted gold from a pendant Mathews had kept around his neck. Still visible were a cross, a shield, and the inscription *Bruders Schweigen*.

Turkey Shoot. One-by-one, members of the Order still at large were picked up. Without Mathews, the organization was demoralized, frustrated, confused — and hunted. Those in custody were subject to a tough but legal interrogation, but it was hardly necessary. Fifteen months after the founding members swore their oath, many began to reveal choice bits of information in search of a plea bargain. The trial of the Order took place in Seattle the following year, and a staggering number of the "Silent Brotherhood" had much to say.

The Seattle trial of the surviving (and non-cooperating) members of the Order cost more than one million dollars and involved some 1,538 exhibits. Two hundred eighty witnesses testified. Order members were convicted of a total of 65 individual crimes and 176 acts of racketeering under the RICO statute.

Members of the Order were also defendants in two other trials. The first involved the murder of Alan Berg; the second, a wide-ranging sedition trial in Fort Smith, Arkansas involving the leaders of practically every prominent White Nationalist organization in America. Having more or less doubled the sentences handed down in Seattle by invoking RICO, the government now intended to implicate leaders from across the country along with Bruce Pierce, David Lane and others in a massive conspiracy to overthrow the United States government, the lynchpin being their acceptance of money from the Order after the Ukiah heist.

The evidence was copious — most of the witnesses from the Seattle trial were rolled out again, with the notable addition of Glenn Miller — but flawed, as the government was never able to prove that the defendants ever spoke of the matter with one another, much less actively planned anything. Still, the expense, the strain and, in most cases, the pre-trial detention of most of America's extreme right leaders was a terrible blow from which the organizations never recovered.

Of the surviving members of the Order, only one (Frank Silva) who refused to cooperate has seen the light of day since capture. All of the rest are facing long sentences and the prospect

or certainty of dying without having done so.

Bruce Pierce held out until March 26, 1985, when he was arrested in Rossville, Georgia. He claims that agents threatened him with the prosecution of his wife and by his own admission he began to talk. These admissions were entered in a statement, which he later recanted. As the triggerman of the Berg assassination, he had the most to gain by talking but never took the stand as a government witness. He accordingly received the harshest sentence — a total of 250 years — as the lead defendant in both the Order trial in Seattle and the Berg murder trial in Denver which followed.

Randy Duey was captured by agents at a safehouse with a gun in each hand, two copies of Mathews' declaration of war, several copies of William Pierce's *The Turner Diaries* and a letter to an unnamed Syrian official proposing a plan to fund Mathews' war against the FBI. He was sentenced to 100 years in prison.

Gary Yarbrough was the first full-fledged member of the Order in custody, captured in the abortive raid on the Capri Motel in Portland. He refused the government's offer of immunity and was sentenced to 80 years in prison.

Andrew Barnhill, who purchased the gun Mathews left at the scene of the crime in Ukiah under his own name, refused to cooperate with the government and received a 40 year sentence.

Richard Kemp never cooperated with the authorities and was sentenced to 60 years in prison.

Richard Scutari was built up into a bogeyman by prosecutors based on his colorful history; many believed the mantle of leadership after Mathews' death would logically pass to the former demolition man. He was sentenced to 60 years, and due to his "weapons expertise" has been kept in a variety of SuperMax penitentiaries, more often than not under solitary confinement.

David Lane eluded the FBI manhunt for some time. In early 1985, he showed up near Raleigh, North Carolina and asked White Patriot Party Glenn Miller to hide him out or

drive him to Idaho. Miller considered it "subtle blackmail" for having accepted the \$200,000 in loot several months earlier, but agreed to have one of his party's members do so. Lane holed up in a cabin in Virginia until April 1985, when the owner of the property called the Feds. Lane was lured to Winston-Salem where he was picked up in a supermarket parking lot. He was given a life sentence.

David Tate, wanted for the murder of Walter West, fled the West Coast for the Ozarks. On April 15, 1985, Tate's vehicle was pulled over by Missouri state trooper Jimmie Linegar. The officer called for back-up after suspecting Tate was using a fake ID. Just after another cruiser pulled up, Tate emerged from his van firing. Bullets ripped through Linegar, killing him instantly — the third and final victim of the Order's nationwide crime spree.

The incident concentrated the nationwide dragnet for the remaining Order fugitives on the Ozarks. Helicopter gunships with infrared sensors scanned the hills and valleys while canine units and heavily armed agents poked through the scrub. While searching for Tate, the agents happened across Frank Silva at a campground and took him into custody.

Meanwhile, Randy Evans and three Order associates had managed to reach what they thought was friendly ground — the Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord compound near Bull Shoals Lake, still presided over by the King of the Ozarks, James Ellison. Federal agents surrounded the compound in a stand-off with the CSA that many feared would end in the kind of inferno that devoured the body of Bob Mathews on Whidbey Island. With far more at stake (and the CSA much better armed than one lone Nazi with a crippled hand), the Feds permitted Robert Millar, pastor of the Elohim City Christian Identity commune in Oklahoma, to act as a third-party negotiator. Ellison later testified that while he was speaking with Millar, Randy Evans was busy trying to convince the embattled CSA die-hards to go out in a blaze of glory the next day (April 20th) — in honor of Adolf Hitler's birthday. When he heard it firsthand, Ellison responded to Evans' pas-

sionate argument in favor of mass suicide by socking Evans in the eye. On April 22, Evans and the Order associates surrendered. The previous day, a dirty and unwashed David Tate had been picked up by agents in a park near the surreal but family-friendly tourist trap of Branson. The Order, for all intents and purposes, was done.

The Turncoats. Randall Rader, the former CSA peckerwood and scourge of PETA activists everywhere, left the Order shortly after Mathews dissolved the Priest River camp. After his arrest, Rader flipped and testified for the government before entering the anonymity of the Witness Protection Program. James Ellison, whose CSA was brought down by the FBI in April 1985, became a government witness as well, and broke up the courtroom when the former white supremacist firebrand revealed he was a half-breed Cherokee. He has attempted to make something of a comeback on the far right, though with limited acceptance.

Robert and Sharon Merki, Denver Parmenter and even Zillah Craig, Mathews' girlfriend and the mother of his child, took the stand at the Order trial and have vanished from the face of the earth. Mathews' wife, Debra, remains in Washington with their adopted son, supposedly still close to the Aryan Nations.

Glenn Miller was prosecuted for violating a previous court order originally authored by Southern Poverty Law Center head Morris Dees. In the meantime, word of Bruce Pierce's original statement to the authorities (later recanted) had spread through the press. Miller publicly ridiculed the notion that he had received money from the Order, but later lost his nerve, issued his own "Declaration of War" and went underground. He was picked up by the authorities in a trailer in the Ozarks not long after. He testified at the Fort Smith Sedition Trial as a prosecution witness for a reduced sentence, then entered the Witness Protection Program. He now lives in Missouri.

Tom Martinez — immortalized in a letter by Mathews' as "the Traitor in Room 14" — wrote a fairly fanciful book about his peripheral

involvement with the Order. Mathews decreed that Martinez should have his head severed for cooperating with the government; it appears that someone did once try to carry out Bob's Talebanesque sentence but was arrested before he could do so. Martinez now speaks on behalf of the Anti-Defamation League and other anti-racist groups about his experiences.

Silence of the Lambs. Despite the acquittals at Fort Smith, the government considered the FBI's destruction of the Order a success, and the destruction of Bob Mathews personally an even greater one. There was no hand-wringing about FBI conduct at the stand-off on Whidbey Island, nor inquiries as to why no quarter was given to a man directly implicated in just a single murder. Mathews had plenty of time to escape, however, and certainly never intended to be captured alive. While it's rather useless to insist upon the point, it doesn't appear that Mathews did anything to avoid the suicidal stand-off, and probably welcomed it.

Just a couple of weeks before his death, in fact, Mathews addressed a letter to a newspaper in Washington in which he presaged his own death. "It is logical to assume," he wrote, "that my days on this planet are rapidly drawing to a close. Even so, I have no fear. For the reality of life is death. I have made the ultimate sacrifice to secure the future for my children."

It could have been written by a *taleb* in Afghanistan, a Chechen in a hostage stand-off, a *jihadi* in Iraq. "Understand," they told *al-Jazeera* during the Dubrovka Theater crisis in Moscow several years ago, when Chechen "black widows" led by fundamentalist rebels held several hundred theater-goers hostage, "that we love death more than you will ever love life." The sentiment was the same. But Mathews' war of liberation, his honkey jihad, never got off the ground. He hoped to go out in a blaze of glory, inspiring followers in word and deed to take up the battle themselves.

"Sometimes you are a sheep," David Lane had written, "and then you turn into a wolf."

The silence of the lambs is deafening. ■

SAIGON LESSON PLAN

BY BRUCE SHARP
cambodia@aol.com

ON APRIL 30, 1975, as the last of the helicopters lifted off from the roof of the embassy in Saigon, a myth was laid to rest. After years of claiming that the United States was winning in Vietnam, after claiming that peace was at hand, there was finally no denying the final outcome. The Communists had won.

Many observers familiar with the history of Southeast Asia understand all too clearly that the Far Right doesn't remember the lessons of the war. That is unfortunate. It is made even more unfortunate by the fact that the Far Left doesn't remember those lessons, either.

That we find ourselves mired in an unpopular war in Iraq is evidence that the Right is deaf to the lessons of Indochina. That the Left — or the Far Left, at least — thinks it would be better if we simply abandoned the Iraqis is evidence that they are blind to the consequences of failure.

The Right: Double Feature Mythology. Call it the Rambo Myth: we lost in Vietnam because we fought with one hand tied behind our back: *"Somebody wouldn't let us win!"* Blame a weak-willed Congress, blame a hostile media, blame a communistic peace movement. Blame somebody. *Somebody* wouldn't let us win.

A realistic evaluation of this myth would admit that, indeed, somebody wouldn't let us win. That "somebody" was the North Vietnamese army.

Before there was Sylvester Stallone, there was John Wayne. The Rambo myth was merely second on the bill: long before *Rambo*, there was *The Green Berets*, and the myth of imminent victory. Victory was always just another year off, another 100,000 soldiers away. Just a

few more of those tough-as-nails, good-hearted John Wayne types, and the Commies would be done for.

Pick the cliché of your choice: We always had the upper hand, and we could always see the light at the end of the tunnel. We were always winning... and yet somehow, in the end, we lost.

The Right's view of Vietnam is as simple as that: two movies, two myths, and no explanation of how we went from one to the other.

At the upper levels of government, realistic assessments of the prospects in Vietnam came far too late to matter. The preferred myth of the Vietnam War did not evolve: it did not slowly shift from "we're winning," to "we're winning, but not by as much," to "they're winning," to "somebody wouldn't let us win." Instead, abruptly, the myth of victory just around the corner was replaced by the myth that traitors in our midst had refused to let us win.

The current war in Iraq demonstrates that conservatives are still having trouble recognizing

history had such power rained down upon an enemy. Had they never heard of "Arc Light"? Americans poured bombs, fire, and fury on the Vietnamese for years, and could not defeat them.

"But that was in the jungle," the neocons said. "Iraq is a desert. It's not the same." It was as though they believed that the bombs had simply bounced off the thick jungle canopy. The new enemy, with no leaves overhead, was doomed.

There are myriad reasons for supporting a particular viewpoint, some good, some bad. There were good people who supported the decision to go to war in Vietnam, and there are good people who supported the decision to go to war in Iraq. Similarly, there were good and bad reasons to oppose the war.

Conservatives, however, have focused almost exclusively on refuting the *foolish* reasons for opposing the war. But there is no particular need to refute stupid reasons: it's the good reasons that need to be addressed.

BLIND LEFT DEAF RIGHT & DUMB ALL AROUND

ing the difference between rhetoric and reality.

Conservatives do not like to be reminded that the war in Iraq was supposedly about finding weapons of mass destruction. Nor do they like to be reminded of May 2003, when George Bush donned a flight suit and stood in front of a banner reading "Mission Accomplished," announcing that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended." The only people who truly believed that it was over were the ones who did not understand the nature of guerrilla warfare.

Deceived by their own sound bites about "shock and awe," they imagined that never in

During the Vietnam War, conservatives decried the socialist posturing of campus radicals, and ignored the more rational voices of elder statesmen who warned against involvement in Vietnam. It's easy to dismiss the naïve rants of Tom Hayden; it's much more difficult to dismiss George Kennan.

Today's Right still has their attention focused on the wrong critics. The Right needs to stop telling us that Michael Moore doesn't know what he's talking about. Moore is unimportant. It would be far better to address Kennan, or Robert McNamara, or Hans

Morgenthau.

Morgenthau, one of the most influential political scientists of the last century, had argued forcefully against American military involvement in Vietnam. In 1965, describing the confusion and obfuscation which led to the escalation of the war in Indochina, Morgenthau described a phenomenon that could be applied precisely to Iraq:

While normally foreign and military policy is based upon intelligence — that is, the objective assessment of facts — the process is here reversed: a new policy has been decided upon, and intelligence must provide the facts to justify it... The Government fashions an imaginary world that pleases it, and then comes to believe in the reality of that world, and acts as though it were real.

This, Morgenthau argued, was why public officials despised the press. “They resent the confrontation of their policies with the facts. Yet the facts are what they are, and they take a terrible vengeance on those who disregard them.”

Morgenthau had warned against wider involvement even in the 1950s. Others, armed with boundless optimism, charged ahead boldly, only to be confronted by the “terrible vengeance” that Morgenthau had predicted. No individual in the American government exemplifies this better than Robert McNamara.

As Secretary of Defense under Kennedy and Johnson, McNamara was one of the primary authors of the Vietnam disaster. Yet day by day, month by month, year by year, the gulf between myth and reality grew wider. A loyalist at heart, he refrained from public criticism of the war even after his departure from the Cabinet in 1968.

Time has tempered McNamara’s hubris. Looking back decades later, he lists a host of reasons for the American failure. No only did we misjudge the intentions of our adversaries, we misjudged our allies as well: “We saw in them a thirst for — and determination to fight for — freedom and democracy. We totally misjudged the political forces within the country.”

And, he notes, we underestimated the power of nationalism to motivate a people to fight and die. Similarly, our “profound ignorance” of history and culture led us astray. We placed too much faith in high-tech weaponry; we failed to win hearts and minds, failed to maintain public support for the war, failed to recognize our own fallibility... *failed, failed, failed.*

American involvement in Indochina had been based primarily on the doctrine of “containment”: the idea that it was necessary to prevent the spread of Communist influence. Yet the man generally acknowledged as the chief architect of that policy — George Kennan — opposed its application in Vietnam. Speaking in 1968, Kennan argued that after several years of American involvement, “it has been inescapably evident that the entire venture was in several ways grievously unsound. It was unsound in the first place because it was devoid of a plausible, coherent, and realistic object.”

The architects of the Vietnam War were ideologues, not realists: convinced that Communism was evil, they could never understand why the Vietnamese peasants seemed so damn *unappreciative*.

The same holds true for the war in Iraq. If you want to be a savior, you have to ask whether or not you look credible to your flock. Those who supported the invasion of Iraq assured us that we would be met by cheering crowds and greeted as saviors. Conservatives believed that it was simple: we were there with the best of intentions, and thus, we would be welcomed. No one in the Bush administration seems to have considered the possibility that the Iraqis might not see it that way.

For the moment, ignore the assertion by the Far Left that the invasion of Iraq was motivated by crass imperialism. What the Right failed to understand is that good intentions count for nothing. If the Iraqis do not believe that we are there with good intentions, they will not welcome us.

Donald Kirk, a veteran correspondent who reported from Indochina in the Sixties and Seventies, spent several months in Baghdad in the summer and fall of 2004. According to Kirk,

"I can say with certainty that it's far more dangerous getting around the Iraqi capital than it ever was in Saigon except during offensives that were always of limited duration. And no one considers venturing alone in the Iraqi countryside, as was often possible in Vietnam."

Are we feeling welcome yet?

Few on the Right are addressing the issues: instead, the response to criticism of the Iraq adventure has been to impugn the motives (or the patriotism) of the critics.

An anthropologist once discussed the difficulty of arguing against a deeply-held belief. If you suggest that perhaps rain dances don't really cause rain, the true believers will think that you don't want rain: they will believe that you want their crops to fail, and their people to starve. So it is with today's conservative pundits: if you suggest that the Iraq war is not going to stabilize the Middle East, they insist that you don't want stability.

Anyone who does want stability in the Middle East needs to recognize just how dire the current situation really is. Or, alternatively, they need to start deciding who they'll blame once the extent of the American failure is utterly undeniable.

The Left: Living With What's Left Behind. The Right can't understand how to recognize a futile war. The Left, by contrast, can't seem to understand what happens after such a war.

Perhaps it's important to distinguish between the Left and the Far Left. Unfortunately, it isn't easy to determine exactly what the mainstream Left thinks about Iraq. In the period preceding the war, the mainstream Left seemed to be missing in action. Or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that they were missing in *inaction*. In September 2002, in one of his final interviews, 98-year-old George Kennan questioned the Left's lack of opposition: "I wonder why the Democrats have not asked the president right out, 'What are you talking about? Are you talking about one war or two wars? And if it's two wars, have we really faced up to the competing demands of the two?'" The

failure to ask such questions was "a shabby and shameful reaction".

The loudest voices in opposition to Iraq have consistently come from the extremists. Maybe that should be Lesson One for opponents of the war: if you want to stop looking stupid, stop embracing Michael Moore. Stop pretending that John Pilger is the voice of reason. Stop holding up George Galloway as an honest critic of foreign policy.

The Right's delusion of choice was that the Iraqi people wanted us to invade. The Left's delusion is that the world will be a better place if the resistance wins.

Delusions rarely end well. The pseudoscience of Marxism formed the basis for Communism, Maoism, and the decrepit, thuggish regime of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. It also gave birth to the incomprehensible brutality of Cambodia's killing fields. Yet many on the Left seemed vaguely surprised that the Asian communists turned out to be something other than warm-hearted, selfless societies that the likes of Jan Myrdal had predicted.

Like George Kennan, Donald Kirk also worries that the lessons of Indochina have gone unheeded. In the '60s and '70s, Kirk's articles from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia consistently display a sober realism that contrasted sharply with the rosy assessments of the US military's official spokesmen. Kirk, however, was equally astute in his view of the enemy. Long before the Khmer Rouge seized power in Cambodia, Kirk interviewed refugees who told horrifying tales of torture and public executions in the areas held by the rebels.

Writing in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of Saigon, Kirk reminds us of the allies we abandoned: "Those who think final defeat was inevitable and the United States could or should have done nothing more for their South Vietnamese allies are guilty of severe memory loss. They have forgotten the panic of millions of South Vietnamese who could not have imagined the U.S. would desert them after having made one do-or-die commitment after another."



HERO!

tifiable than that so few voices should be raised in protest against the assassination of a people. How many of those who say they are unreservedly in support of the Khmer Rouge would consent to endure one hundredth part of the present sufferings of the Cambodian people?"

Today, few on the Left remember

Ponchaud.

Ask them

who revealed

the horrors

of the Khmer

Rouge to the

outside world, and they are probably going

to say... John Pilger.

In 2003, for example, Norway's Sophie

Foundation awarded Pilger a \$100,000 prize

for his work over the last 30 years.

It is critical to remember those commitments, Kirk notes, when opponents of the war in Iraq argue that the U.S. should pull out now. How many on the Left understand that Iraq, like Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, is populated by human beings who will have to live under whatever monstrous regime is left behind?

The selective blindness of the Left was never more apparent than in the mid- and late 1970s, when the Khmer Rouge starved and slaughtered some two million Cambodians. François Ponchaud, one of the first writers to extensively document the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge, was exasperated by the Left's response to the horrifying stories emerging from Cambodia. Ponchaud threw down the gauntlet to his erstwhile colleagues: "Nothing could be more natural than that the press should rise up to denounce violations of human rights in Spain, Latin America, and South Africa. But nothing could be less jus-

FASCIST!



Presenting the award, the head of the prize jury declared that Pilger "was one of the first journalists to alert the world to the agony suffered by the Cambodian people under the Pol Pot regime." This, apparently, was in reference

to a documentary Pilger had made in 1979... after the Khmer Rouge had been overthrown. Pilger's "scoop" had come roughly two years after Ponchaud's book had decried the Left's indifference... and more than five years after Donald Kirk had described, in detail, Khmer Rouge atrocities.

Pilger is now among the most vocal critics of the American presence in Iraq — and if resisting that presence requires the occasional public beheading, well, that's the price you pay. Interviewed by the *Green Left Weekly* in early 2004, Pilger was asked if he thought that the anti-war movement should be supporting the Iraqi resistance. "Yes, I do," Pilger replied. "We cannot afford to be choosy. While we abhor and condemn the continuing loss of innocent life in Iraq, we have no choice now but to support the resistance, for if the resistance fails, the 'Bush gang' will attack another country. If they succeed, a grievous blow will be suffered by the Bush gang."

Perhaps we can all look forward to the moving documentary that Pilger will create about the innocent victims who are murdered by the fundamentalist thugs... after they've been usurped by someone else, of course. No sense in throwing mud at them while they're still useful in the fight against imperialism, is there?

A similar sentiment was voiced by Arundhati Roy:

For these reasons, it is absurd to condemn the resistance to the US occupation in Iraq as being masterminded by terrorists or insurgents or supporters of Saddam Hussein ... The Iraqi resistance is fighting on the frontlines of the battle against Empire. And therefore that battle is our battle.

Like most resistance movements, it combines a motley range of assorted factions. Former Baathists, liberals, Islamists, fed-up collaborationists, communists, etc. Of course, it is riddled with opportunism, local rivalry, demagoguery, and criminality. But if we are only going to support pristine movements, then no resistance will be worthy of our purity.

This is not to say that we shouldn't ever criti-

cize resistance movements. Many of them suffer from a lack of democracy, from the iconization of their "leaders," a lack of transparency, a lack of vision and direction. But most of all they suffer from vilification, repression, and lack of resources.

Those poor Islamic fundamentalists... they're suffering from our vilification. But do they really need our support in order to bomb civilians and decapitate infidels? It seems likely that their holy war will continue, regardless of whether or not it has Roy's seal of approval.

Siding with murderous religious fanatics in the name of humanity is offensive not only for its short-sighted stupidity: it's also offensive for its hypocrisy.

The radical Left views American imperialism as the most repressive, destructive force in the world. In effect, the people who would have to live under regimes led by the likes of Al-Zarqawi are written off: sure, they will be repressed and brutalized, but that's the price you pay. They are pawns in a larger struggle. But isn't this precisely the kind of cynical, callous, war-by-proxy mentality that the Left condemns when it is employed by the Right? In the name of opposing Communism, the Right supported murderous regimes in places like El Salvador and Guatemala, and the Left pointed to the blood on their hands. Decades later, they can see Iraqi blood on Bush's hands, but can't see it on their own... even when they insist that "we have no choice" but to support those who are detonating bombs among the innocent every day.

So, more than thirty years after the fall of Saigon, where are we now? We are not yet at the end: in the near term, no one will be clambering to the embassy roof, and there will not be an armada of helicopters lifting the last of the Americans out of the Green Zone. The war is not over. It is still not too late to bring Iraq back from the brink of disaster. But the Right needs to acknowledge the mess they have made, and the Left needs to understand that cheering for medieval barbarians will not make the world a better place. ■



S O B A K A DOSSIER

Name: Abu Jihad

aka: Khalil al-Wazir

Born: 10/10/35 Ramallah

Died: 4/16/88 Tunis

Claim to Fame: The only
man who could tell

Arafat when to bathe

Body Count: hundreds

GIVE IT UP FOR Hollywood: we never thought it possible to make the shadowy world of Middle East terrorism and counterterrorism into a cowboy movie. But desperate to pull *some* kind of meaning out of the retaliatory assassinations carried out by Israel following the 1972 massacre of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, which accomplished little but the mothballing of disposable functionaries of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the film *Munich* does everything but hand out white and black Stetsons. The lead assassin even questions the legitimacy and effectiveness of his mission at the end, though the lid is quickly clapped shut on such notions when a post-script to the film notes that the big kahuna of the terrorists being pursued through suitably photogenic locales was bagged by an Israeli hit squad a few years later.

And as for the man who was in all likelihood the *real* big kahuna and mastermind of the killings in Munich? Though unmentioned in

the film, the Israelis got him too — sixteen years after Munich, and long after the desire for vengeance for “the spilling of Jewish blood” had given way to the desire for a morale-boosting headline in the midst of the nightmare of the *Intifada* drawing the Israeli Defense Forces into an increasingly hopeless civil war.

By that time, isolated from his colleagues at the head of the movement and increasingly irrelevant in the day-to-day mayhem of the PLO, he wasn’t worth the effort anymore. The seventy-seven bullets that tore into the flesh of Khalil al-Wazir were supposed to be *magic* bullets that would end all of the pain of the festering Palestinian problem for Israel. But it’s not like the movies: Yitzhak Shamir’s fairy tale didn’t come true.

According to the rather breezy press accounts of the time, Khalil al-Wazir could have been Everyterrorist, the Everyman of radical movements worldwide, right down to his *nom de guerre*: Abu Jihad.

Only bits and pieces of his biography were known in the Western world, which in the

Spielbergian fashion of the Cold War that gave birth to that monster of the blockbuster, tended to view men and ideals and the wars born from their intersection as wholly good or wholly bad. He was either a bloodthirsty terrorist, speaking the stuttering shibboleth of nonsense of all Arab villains in Hollywood, or a cultured intellectual driven by the pain of his people into acts he would otherwise find repugnant. Apologists for the Israeli assassination portrayed him as the reprobate Yassir Arafat's right arm and partner-in-crime. Apologists for two decades of PLO atrocities portrayed him as a terrorist with the soul of a poet, or at least a philosopher.

It's not that hard to construct movie villains: simply make sure they don't speak English and wave guns around recklessly. They have all of the depth and nuance of a wife-beater or child molester. But it's even easier to construct martyrs for a lost cause. Neither is very helpful to anyone that really wants to understand the world, but they do sell movies. And revolutions.

The Making of the Man. Abu Jihad, like most of the early leaders of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and members of his doomed nation, was a refugee. That part of his character would remain a constant. He wandered most of the Middle East in his life, an ambitious emigrant in Cairo and Kuwait City to a frequent flyer on a revolutionary's grand tour, seeing the inside of safehouses and not much else in Libya, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Algeria. But he would always be a refugee: launched from the village of Ramlah by the soldiers of the nascent army of the Israeli state after the Jordanian withdrawal and scattered, at the age of 13, to wherever he might land.

He first settled in the Burayj refugee camp in Gaza in 1948, and then in Cairo, where he befriended a young engineering student named Yassir Arafat. After attending what is now called Cairo University, Abu Jihad received a bit of military training courtesy the Egyptian army (as had Arafat).

Egypt was then a hothouse of revolutionary

currents, from the embryonic and conservative fundamentalism of the Muslim Brotherhood to the messianic pan-Arab nationalism of Nasser. Depending on who is telling the story, young Khalil was influenced by one or the other. His consciousness of Islam, however, was always sublimated to the more narrow aim of a free Palestine. Like all proper demagogues, he would freely let drop appeals to Almighty Allah as the righteous auditor of his cause, but the cause was first and foremost the constitution of Palestinian statehood rather than some wacky desire to decimate wickedness and resurrect a state of meek believers.

Arafat and several other Palestinians had moved from Egypt to Kuwait in the mid-1950s, mostly as grim economic migrants seeking to get a piece of the oil boom in the tiny Gulf State country. In the late 1950s, Abu Jihad joined them, working as a teacher. Arafat had already networked with a group of other Palestinians in Kuwait and would claim his organization began as early as 1956, but it wasn't until Abu Jihad joined them that *Fatah* (a reverse acronym for *Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastin*, or Palestinian National Liberation Movement, though the simple word would be repeatedly reverse engineered over the years) was born.

The nucleus of the PLO — more or less a shell organization which Fatah took over, after joining in coalition with a wide variety of smaller Palestinian groups — was already in place. Arafat was the charismatic fundraiser, a would-be Che Guevara and posterboy for the movement. Faruq Qaddumi would hold the portfolio for the PLO's "normal" relations with states as a kind of Foreign Minister. Abu Iyad would serve as the PLO's security czar, responsible for the personal safety of its leadership and regarded with a healthy sense of fear by the rank and file.

Abu Jihad, on the other hand, had a far more opaque responsibility in the organization. Zoran Andjelic remembers:

Abu Jihad could be regarded as Arafat's "chief of staff" or more accurately "chief of cabinet," as it



The most famous photograph from the Munich Olympics since Jesse Owens: a Black September terrorist on the balcony of the Olympic Village apartment where Israeli hostages were being held

is in literal French. He was considered the PLO's Defense Minister but this was only a small part of it. He maintained relations with foreign entities on a level equal to Arafat. It was said in the Socialist nations that to speak to Abu Jihad or Arafat was the same thing. Journalist Ze'ev Schiff even called him "Arafat's eminence gris" and it was fashionable then to think that he was running the PLO behind the scenes. But the truth is that Abu Jihad did not have that aspiration. He was stronger than Arafat but he did not want to create a second PLO. There is much to say about him but he was loyal to Arafat and I do not think he thought once of creating a rival organization or of murdering Arafat, which he would have had done if he desired to lead Fatah and the PLO.

The close relationship with Arafat — as close as anyone has ever gotten to the mercurial PLO leader — was shown by Abu Jihad holding the chair at Supreme Military Council meetings during Arafat's frequent absences in Algeria and the Persian Gulf. Abu Jihad never once tried to fracture the organization or depose his boss. And Arafat never once suspected Abu Jihad of either, which was also a departure

from the norm.

The Making of a Robot. Abu Jihad's whereabouts for the next several years are unknown. Like Arafat, he was constantly on the move, establishing Fatah cells in Algeria and elsewhere in the north of Africa. By 1965, the nucleus was reunited in Damascus at the invitation of the Syrian government. Relations quickly soured, however, and in 1966 the entire top echelon of Fatah was rounded up by Syrian security agents. Abu Jihad's young wife, Intisar, actually led the organization for a few months while the men were all in jail.

A chilling anecdote about Abu Jihad can be traced from this time in Damascus. Supposedly, while searching Abu Jihad's apartment, a Syrian security agent knocked his infant son off the balcony in the direct presence of his father. Abu Jihad did not even flinch.

This anecdote — often retold over the years, though it could not be found in PLO literature — is entirely false. But the veracity is less important than the fact that there was something about Abu Jihad which led people to believe it. Unlike Arafat, Abu Jihad or most of the PLO leaders beneath them, Abu Jihad was endowed with an almost robotic sense of self-control. When others would retaliate against Israeli attacks with a temper tantrum and a fusillade of mortar shells over the border, Abu Jihad would calmly calculate the logic of the response. Was a counterattack purely for the sake of revenge, a hasty decision born of anger and frustration? Would the PLO appear to be weak or strong by such a response? Arafat was prone to flying off the handle at the most vulgar provocation. Abu Jihad would sometimes talk him out of it, sometimes not. His steely demeanor and willingness to compromise when the end result would leave the PLO in a stronger position was noted by diplomats and spies who eavesdropped on him, leading to the birth of the legend of Abu Jihad as a would-be "moderate" within the PLO leadership.

Inspiring Defeat. The Palestinian movement was physically and spiritually crushed by the poor showing of their side in the Six Day War, which cemented the reputation of Arab armies as piss-poor combatants. But the Palestinians always embraced Arafat's self-aggrandizing image as the lone revolutionary, waging a lonely struggle, fortified by spirit alone. Thus came the romantic flair of the Rambling Chairman, riding through Occupied Palestine in June 1967 on a motorcycle, picking up the pieces of his shattered organization, rebuilding Fatah cells, recruiting old rivals, patching up the organization with spit and spackle and bits of hardened humus. In reality, Fatah gloried in the destruction of the Palestinian movement and the renewed hardship in the occupied territories, and Abu Jihad was on hand with Arafat to implement their plan of creating a network of cells in Israel's backyard which would conduct irregular operations (read: terrorism) while maintaining their readiness to rise the next time Israel's enemies poked at the frontiers. Happy people make for lousy revolutionaries.

For the time being, most of the leadership of Fatah set up shop in Jordan — close enough to nurture the new infrastructure in Palestine while conducting wildcat raids across the border. The most noteworthy of the latter enterprises was the so-called "Battle of Karamah" in March 1968, the first supposed armed confrontation between the "resistance" and the "occupiers" since the founding of the Jewish state. From the West Bank of the Jordan River, PLO guerrillas infiltrated Israeli territory. And then they died. By the dozens. Reputedly, 150 PLO guerrillas were killed compared to only 29 Israelis. That Arabs were once again wasted before the might of the Israeli Defense Forces was no surprise — nor, given recent events, should be the manner in which the catastrophic losses were transformed by propaganda into a grandiose "victory". One PLO broadcast monitored in the 1980s in Lebanon even called it, rather inexplicably given the context, the "Stalingrad of the Palestinians". Sadly, many more "last stands" and "turning points" were to come.

Ghost Soldier. It really shouldn't have been surprising that Arafat would eventually accept the Oslo Peace Accords, with their concept of a more or less independent Palestinian entity to be reached by fits and starts based on future negotiations. Arafat had always wanted a state, to be given full plate at the diplomatic receptions he attended as a "president" rather than a rather colorful bandit. And if he couldn't have his own, he'd settle easily for someone else's.

The PLO's first attempt to get control of physical territory outside of Israel came to naught in September 1970 — "Black September" — when Jordan's security forces fought a desperate, often teetering battle to expel the PLO. Arafat and Abu Jihad ridiculed claims that the PLO had been planning to depose Jordan's King Hussein and transform Jordan into a home for the sweating mass of Palestinian refugees already living there. Challenged by the Arab world (who were none too pleased to have the troublesome PLO foisted on them now), Jordan's secret police turned up recorded conversations involving senior PLO leaders discussing just such a plan.

"Black September" would soon have another, more chilling meaning, as the name of the PLO-based organization that conducted several of the most notorious terrorist acts in the world in the 1970s. Over the years, what was once whispered has been overwhelmingly confirmed: while all attacks conducted by the PLO were generally a collective decision requiring full council approval, Abu Jihad, as the "minister of defense" within the PLO, had absolute authority over planning and executing the raids. Abu Jihad — and not the men later hunted down in the "Ghost War" by Israeli assassination squads — is reputed to have briefed the Black September squad which carried out the murder of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. His voice was also recorded by a listening post in Cyprus giving commands to the squad which seized American diplomats at a reception at the Saudi Embassy in Khartoum in

1973. Throughout the mid-1970s, as the Ghost War raged, the carnage of encounters like Karameh and the Six Day War was transformed into a murderous game of chess — a war no longer conducted by soldiers and guerrillas but by spies and terrorists, assassins and bomb-makers. Abu Jihad may have realized the futility of the Ghost War, but carried on all the same, preparing squads for still more horrific operations designed to recapture the initiative.

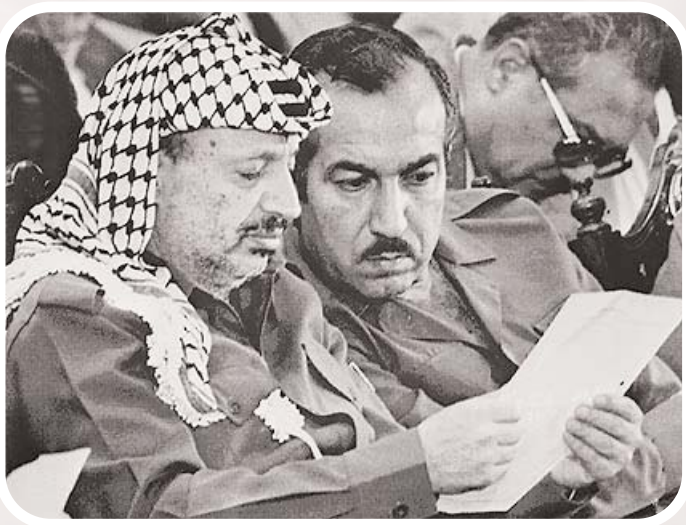
Beirut Revelry. Despite being armed with the best Soviet weaponry a Third World revolutionary army could get, the PLO was blasted out of Amman. After another pit stop in Damascus, Arafat's eye turned toward Beirut, Lebanon as his new headquarters.

Destabilized by thousands of Palestinian refugees, Lebanon's fractious political system, based on a kind of ethnic parity and power-sharing, was disintegrating. Traditional clan leaders were forming or consolidating tribal militias ostensibly for "self-defense" (though

act of the drama which led to the Lebanese Civil War, the president had requested Syrian military intervention to establish order. They never really did (nor did they intend to), but managed to keep their allies from being beaten too badly by the other militias. And faced with the prospect of having his troublesome Palestinian brothers establish roots in his own state as they did in Jordan, Syrian President Hafez Assad was more than willing to invite the PLO to carve out a state of their own within the tortured republic.

The Lebanese Civil War lasted long enough to outlive most of the original participants. The PLO played a major role in the early stages of the war, but did not really become a dominant military presence (one of many) until the middle stage of the war, from 1979 until 1982. They played no role in the end.

Arafat and the PLO established their headquarters in the Faqahani area of West Beirut. The area was honeycombed with PLO gunmen and checkpoints, which multiplied when the battles in Beirut heated up and streetfighting



Arafat and Abu Jihad confer. Despite the stark contrast between the two men (and in spite of the best efforts of many to fan the flames), there was never the slightest indication of dissension through more than twenty years of partnership.

they were nearly always headed by a clan leader's son). The PLO had been beaten down like a bitch when confronted by the superior firepower of a third-rate power like Jordan, but against the small Lebanese militias they had a fighting chance.

The PLO also had a protector, as in the final

across the "Green Line" became more savage and intense.

Abu Jihad was saddled with still another duty during the PLO's exile in Lebanon — procuring the weapons and equipment necessary for holding fixed positions in combat against other militias, which was different than what the PLO had previously required for crossborder raids or terrorist attacks. From Hungary, he purchased several ancient Soviet-made tanks which were sent to the Bekaa

Valley. Abu Jihad was also placed in a supervisory position following the establishment of different PLO “brigades,” which often coalesced around charismatic commanders and thus were in a position of considerable independence from central command. This generally meant cajoling, threatening and at times “eliminating” commanders who refused or quarrelled with orders handed down from West Beirut. Over time, commentators in Israel would attribute the relative cohesion of the PLO despite several shattering setbacks to Abu Jihad’s effective — and ruthless — discipline of PLO subordinates.

Abu Jihad also picked up another new weapon for the PLO on his mercenary shopping spree through East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and North Korea — artillery and tubes for firing the rockets which would rain down on Israel from Lebanese positions in retaliation for Israeli air strikes, assassinations, and sometimes for the sheer hell of it. The PLO had fewer than three dozen cannons capable of hitting Israeli towns in 1979; by June 1982, Abu Jihad had managed to up the total to some 250. He even gave the periodic attacks on Israeli settlements in Galilee a charming name: “the Clouds of Hell”, based on the terrifying noise and random trajectory of his somewhat antiquated but devastating Grad missile arsenal.

On the Road Again. The PLO plan to elbow their way into Lebanon’s crowded lobby worked only too well. Aside from the hostility of Israel, which was suffering the barrage of Abu Jihad’s Clouds of Hell, the PLO had also earned the enmity of practically every political entity in Lebanon aside from the small Sunni Arab community (and even some of them hated Arafat’s guts). The Shi’ites in the south were often coming to blows with the PLO garrisons which had set up camp in their towns, evicting residents and exposing them to Israeli airstrikes and retaliatory incursions. The Druze chieftain in the Shouf, Walid Jumblatt, became annoyed when Leftist groups which had been allied in a coalition presided over by his late

father had thrown their lot with the PLO (who were after all fighting the classic communist “war of national liberation” — or so they said). But most of all, the presence of the PLO in Lebanon aroused the ire of the Maronite Christians under the banner of the most politically sophisticated movement in Lebanon, the Phalange. The ambition of Bashir Gemayel (like all the other national leaders, the son of a clan chieftain, Pierre Gemayel) to unite Lebanon under his control, ideologically and militarily, dovetailed nicely with the Israelis’ new-found interest in the goings-on north of Galilee. Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his brawny Defense Minister, Ariel Sharon, thus committed the IDF to its first foreign adventure on behalf of the Maronites, and the sinister presence of Arafat and the PLO made it all possible.

Despite all of their preparations, the PLO were utterly crushed in the early hours of the Israeli attack across the northern frontier. The Syrian “peacekeepers” became involved, and the West panicked in an attempt to stanche the bleeding and avoid a conflict in the Middle East teasing the world once again with a superpower confrontation. Abu Jihad was everywhere during the war, attempting to hold the patchwork PLO units together amid appalling losses and staggering rates of desertion. The greatest losses inflicted on the Israelis by Palestinian gunmen came not from the PLO “battalions” facing the Israeli border but wild-cat gunmen (often members of criminal syndicates) from within Palestinian refugee camps that lined the roads leading to West Beirut.

Unknown to the Israelis (or even the members of the US embassy in Beirut), the Americans had some time earlier established a covert line of communication directly to Abu Jihad through Reagan administration aide Robert Ames. The intelligence link was so secretive that no one outside of Arafat and Abu Jihad knew about it. As the Americans desperately attempted to figure out a way to get the PLO out of Beirut before the IDF occupied the entire country or another Arab state became involved, the link proved to be invaluable to



He's tortured by the fact that only one of the Ghost War's casualties turned out to be directly related to the Munich massacre — and that was in 1992. Also not pictured: the Israel hit team that killed an innocent waiter in Lillehammer, Norway after mistaking him for Ali Hassan Salameh.

dodge Arafat altogether and deal directly with his subordinate. Despite his sinister reputation, the Americans surprisingly found him easier to deal with than the aging boy wonder of Palestinian politics. Things said to Abu Jihad didn't show up in the papers the next day. He was also less mysterious about his intentions. With surprising indifference to the mystique of Arab unity, Abu Jihad revealed that the PLO would never commit the majority of their forces to Syria, where the leadership would once again live or die (and probably die) at the pleasure of Hafez Assad. Abu Jihad's candor allowed negotiators to abandon a Syrian solution and save precious time in the circuitous and byzantine negotiations that usually take place among Middle Eastern nations, where things unsaid are often more important than any item on the agenda.

In the end, only a fraction of the PLO forces took the highway east to Damascus. Abu Jihad instead invited Tunisia, hitherto a minor player,

to the table in the Middle East poker game. The majority of PLO troops evacuated by sea, leaving Lebanon in its final death agony. But the snub to Syria didn't come without cost: Assad, humiliated by Syria's poor showing in the war, condemned Arafat at a meeting of the Syrian parliament and backed Abu Musa, formerly a loyal and storied PLO commander, in a revolt from his base in Tripoli. PLO units, despite the agreement for withdrawal, remained active in northern Lebanon for some time, but exhausted their strength in this internecine civil war.

Intifada Alone. From Tunis, Abu Jihad attempted to guide the rudder of the PLO through yet another transition. Terrorist squads continued to worm through Western Europe and the Communist Bloc. Relations with Syria and even Jordan were papered over. But more than ever before, the PLO drifted aimlessly, directionless. The most prominent PLO dissident and Arafat's real nemesis, Abu Nidal, scored far more headlines with brazen attacks from his base in Baghdad (it had been a Nidal attack, ironically, which provided Israel with the final pretext to attack PLO bases in Lebanon, as Begin blamed the assassination attempt on Arafat rather than Nidal). The 1980s steamed on but the Palestinian cause seemed to have lost its momentum.

From all accounts (outside of its own), the PLO had little to do with the outbreak of the *Intifada*, the spontaneous and seemingly infectious uprising of stone-throwing youths and steely-eyed bombers in the occupied territories. The Israeli Defense Forces were caught in a hell of repression and retaliation as the long-awaited uprising prophesized by hundreds of slain martyrs finally arrived. New leaders were created on the spot, and in the tumult, PLO cells either went rogue and disregarded orders from abroad or dissolved from indecision and inactivity.

Abu Jihad, Arafat, and the other Palestinian leaders of course attempted to act as leaders for the *Intifada*, but were just as often scorned

by the new breed in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The PLO leaders were consequently attempting to gain control of a militant uprising while claiming credit for it to all who would listen.

Among those who *did* pay credence to the PLO claims were the Israelis. Their own selective leaks and planted stories had once mocked Abu Jihad as Arafat's lackey, a boneheaded thug responsible for most of the PLO's failures. While unraveling the evolution of thought within the Israeli security agencies is a hopeless endeavor, at some point their view of Abu Jihad had changed — if it had ever really been as daft as they let on. But this too was a miscalculation: just as they had failed to finger him as the true mastermind of numerous atrocities and acts of terrorism during the Ghost War, and then written him off as the chairman's gofer, they now imputed far more power to Abu Jihad than he actually held.

Abu Jihad and other PLO leaders had been permitted to return to Jordan as the chief ballast in King Hussein's opportunistic balancing act (he wished to annoy Syria, which had washed its hands of Arafat, as well as Israel). From here, Abu Jihad commanded the Fatah "Western Command" or "Western Sector", responsible for operations (in every meaning of the word) in Israel from Amman. But in July 1986, Jordan ordered the closure of more than two dozen PLO and Fatah offices in Jordan and gave Abu Jihad 48 hours to get out.

Ghost Assassins. Israel has never acknowledged their culpability in the assassination of Abu Jihad. Piecing together credible information that was published over the following years, however, it appears that the Likud government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir decided that Abu Jihad was controlling the *Intifada* by remote control, and believed his elimination would disrupt if not decapitate the movement in the occupied territories. It is still regarded as one of the most technically brilliant if strategically dense covert operations in history.

An advance party of seven Mossad operatives — they had mastered the Lebanese dialect of Arabic — departed for Abu Jihad's villa in Tunis, where he and his family were now living after expulsion from Jordan. They took detailed notes of possible entry points, escape routes, and handled all other matters relating to supply and procurement for the operation.

On April 16, 1988, commandos not from Mossad but the *Sayeret Matkal* — the highly-trained special reconnaissance unit attached to the Israel Defense Forces' General Staff — landed on the beach in Tunis. Vehicles purchased by the Mossad advance team drove them to Abu Jihad's villa. The troops moved past his wife (as in the Ghost War, spouses and children of suspected terrorists were officially off-limits) and raked the body of their target with machine gun fire. The entire assassination took no more than thirty seconds — one for each year, one could say, that Abu Jihad had been in the game.

Over the Mediterranean Sea, a special communications plane jammed all radio and television signals in the area around Abu Jihad's home to buy time for the escape. The commander on board the plane was General Ehud Barak, the deputy chief-of-staff of the IDF and future Labour Prime Minister. The raid, it would seem, was commanded by Lt. General Moshe Ya'alon, credited by many as the "mastermind" of Israel's strategy of selective assassination of top Palestinian leaders which continues to this day. Confronted by Jeffrey Goldberg of *The New Yorker* in 2004, General Ya'alon did not deny his role in the assassination of Abu Jihad, but expressed bitter remorse for it — of a sort. Had he do it all over again, he would not target Abu Jihad at all, but Arafat.

The Unmaking of a Martyr. The reaction to the killing of Abu Jihad was swift. Not just Tunisia but all of the Arab states as well as the United States, the Soviet Union — indeed, nearly the entire world — condemned the assassination before the United Nations. Israel, the US envoy stated, had acted beyond its borders in direct violation of international law. Ezer Weizman,



The funeral procession of Abu Jihad, taking his coffin to its final resting place in Syria. Hafez Assad, who had imprisoned the entire PLO leadership and tried to kill Abu Jihad at least twice, gracefully accepted his body on behalf of Syria's sacred soil in yet another Mideast political mindfuck.

the noted Israeli “dove” politician, condemned it outright. “We are trying to find Palestinians to talk to us,” he said. “I don’t think the assassination contributes to this. Liquidating individuals will not advance the peace process.”

Ha’aretz’s Yoel Marcus was less diplomatic:

The Abu Jihad operation may make us feel good, may be good for our egos, but it does not in itself really address the weighty problems this country should be struggling with. The killing of Abu Jihad is a symbolic illustration of what is happening to us. It was an operation made for a nostalgia movie about the good old days of brilliant punitive raids — because it does not advance us one inch towards a solution of the problems that have produced this or that ‘Abu’.

Yitzhak Shamir shrugged. “I heard about it on

the radio,” he told reporters.

Of course, the assassination of Abu Jihad — the “father of holy war” — did nothing to beat down the fires of the *Intifada*. Terrorism continued unabated. It was only a decade later, when a new *Intifada* was unleashed and Arafat appeared to have totally lost control of the situation as well as what shreds of his credibility he still had left, that observers began a reappraisal. The Palestinian cause, it seems, has always lacked that rare creature which has often characterized the peaceful kind of revolutions foreign powers are comfortable with: the moderating figure who has the power to fight his enemies, but can control his allies and zealous followers as well. Moderate Palestinian leaders are without power, the powerful without respect, both at home and abroad. No one has managed to inspire the same fear and respect, to combine self-discipline with camaraderie, fanaticism with pragmatism, since the death of Abu Jihad.

Abu Jihad was as much of a fanatic as anyone in Hamas or the splintered pieces of *al-Qaeda*, but unlike most fanatics, he understood when a painful compromise is still better than defeat. He was less Gandhi than a swarthy Timothy McVeigh, but this is hardly a damning indictment in a neighborhood where missionaries of non-violence are in short supply, and where the passive leader of a peace movement would be mowed down without remorse. ■

San Juan

Cali Ruchala
JUNE 23 2006

why stay alive? why fight it? why fight at all?

I don't know. It's easy to let go — easier than it is to wake up every morning, still aching from the pain, trying to find some reason to throw yourself back into a struggle you want no part of.

Everyone has faced this. Everyone. I'm just making the mistake of being honest about it.

Not long ago, I had to answer this question for you. why stay alive? All I could do was pick over a body of cliches and lies.

We know the truth, though.

No, it doesn't get any easier. It doesn't get any better. And it's probably going to get worse. You'll get older, just like I am, just like all of us. And it's harder to keep on fighting.

Everyone know this. Everyone's been there and has seen it. I know they've seen it. They've looked over

the edge and seen that big fucking nothing. And for the sake of self-preservation, they turned back and forgot all about this place.

I could never forget.

I couldn't give you an answer then. I couldn't tell you why you shouldn't die. But I think I can now, and I owe this much to you.

Three months isn't a long time to know someone — not unless you've been in a state of emotional hibernation, a kind of biochemical shellshock from the age of 14. That's how it was, how I felt. There are some benefits to being a sociopath — no regrets, no bonds of attachment, the drunken hypnosis of listening to one rhythm in your mind, the sound of blood in your brain, repeat over and over again.

It would have been safer for all involved to treat this as the sleazy encounter you no doubt intended. You're too damaged to get what you want, but you're too young to realize it. I know. I'm the same way.

We should have known better. I should have known better. All of the evidence was there, had I known enough to

look for it.

But I'm still an expert in masks. Tearing them down is how I've made my living, and I'm damn good at it. And I looked at yours and saw clear through to the other side, to that devastated, brutalized child so close to the surface you can hear her breath drowning out your own.

I thought I could talk her down. I thought I could save her, and you. I thought I could give you one good reason not to die.

I couldn't.

But something else happened. You may have been dying inside, but I felt something inside of me, something buried for decades, locked up tight in a frenzied mania for self-preservation, being reborn.

You had nothing to do with it, not consciously, but I owe this to you. I remembered — for the first time in YEARS I remembered what it meant to care about someone so much you'd not only die for them, but hand them the weapon to finish the job. On a whim.

It's a remarkable feeling — the greatest narcotic known to man. And it can't last.

So I came to this city, following you to San Juan. You asked me to come. For the first time since I met you, I wanted to tell you no.

But I wanted to see you more.

We had to know it was coming to this. It couldn't end any other way. Start with the guns, end with an atomic bomb.

I traveled four thousand miles to have my heart ripped out, spat upon, and shoved back in.

On a whim.

It was so easy for you. You changed your mind. One night's rest and a heavy rain, and I was back on the streets again.

But I was right to leave without saying anything. Even then, I didn't want to hurt you. And more than that, I didn't want to give you an alibi, to hold that one insult in your heart like a keepsake, to convince yourself that what you did was justified.

And now I was here, back at the end of the line. This is what it looks like: four thousand miles from home, a gloomy hotel, hot sheets in a dirty city. The alarm is broken, which is just as well because I don't want to sleep tonight. I want to remember every second that passes, I want to remember what it feels like to wonder when the hell the rain will stop and realize it's still the sound of blood throbbing in my brain.

The beach was back toward your hotel, but I didn't care. Twenty-eight hours in San Juan was all I had. It wasn't much and it was already half-gone.

From end to end. Back and forth. Twice. I wanted an answer. For you, but more importantly, now, for me.

This place isn't where people come to find a reason not to die. I have no fucking idea why they come here at all — but I know why you did. With strange faces, in an alien terrain, you forget yourself and lose all the pain and the trauma in an adrenaline rush. You become, for an instant or as long as it lasts, someone else. Someone better, because

everyone's better when you hate yourself so bad you make a game of self-annihilation.

I stood on the beach and the tide rolled up to my ankles, sucking me down into the sand. My body went slack and felt myself pulled by the current. Is this what it's like to let go? Tell me what it's like in your mind. This isn't new to me either but it's been a long time...

Nobody knows I'm here. Nobody would know. In an instant, it'd be like I never existed. I could roll out with the waves and no one would ever find out.

The sky was as hostile as the sea, colored like zinc, and just as filthy, as filthy as the city of San Juan, covered in the same layer of scum that clings to every surface, from the face of the street to the faces of the locals, rooted deep down in their pores. It seemed to be encouraging me. No one would ever know...

And that's when I felt it. It snapped. It snapped BACK. Everything was so hostile, so alien, conspiring to pull me down with the current, push me over. And that's when it hit. An overpowering life instinct snapped me back from the brink. Like a gear locking back into formation, a slack belt tightening on an antique machine.

All at once, and it all became so clear.

On my own terms — a flip of the safety on a revolver, a piece of hot metal slamming out the daylight —

It's possible, someday. But only on my own.

I'll never hand them the gun. I'll never take it from them. They'll have to tie my hands behind me because I'll never slip the rope around my own neck.

They'll never pull me under. They'll never beat me down. Never.

I left the beach and shook off every grain of sand. I didn't want one speck of dust on me, not a piece of this place touching my flesh, contaminating my spirit.

I've got an answer for you now, and I want you to hear it.

Why live? Why not die?

Because I'll never let them beat me.

Thanks

...and I hope thanks is good enough because thanks is all you're going to get.

Eight years is a long time to accrue debts. Settling scores, even in this meagre way, is unfortunately long overdue.

Many people deserve a gold star for what they've put in or put up with. These are some of them.

Christopher Szabó and **Zoran Andjelic**, who were more than contributors or writers-for-hire, but invaluable friends, confidants and mentors. **Misha Pozhininsky**, for showing me that brute force trumps technique in every situation. **Mark Irkali**, because it didn't end so hot but we had some pretty good times. **Bruce Sharp**, whose quiet iconoclasm has put more idols out of commission than all of the bombs of the radical chic. **Bruce Sterling**, yeah, that Bruce Sterling, for being the first character to take us seriously. **C.L.F.**, because I swore I'd never write about you but I hope you can understand why I did. **Jeff Chapman**, for showing me that the world is worth exploring. **Dean Webb**, for beating down. All of the **people who submitted** over the years but were rejected, for reminding us how badly y'all suck. **George Baloglou**, for the mathematical postcards and kind words over the years. **Jeffrey Silverman**, may you find the evil embassy clerks that are persecuting you, and break their dentures with your bare hands. **Pierre Lafitte**, for bringing me to Haiti and starting a love affair that is going to end badly someday. **Hyppolite Pierre**, for saying I understood and inspiring me to try to understand more. **The girl** in Port Angeles, Washington, that gave me ten dollars without me asking in 1992, because it was just enough to get home. **Pepper Lizetsky**, for putting up with more than even most of these. **Emir K.**, wherever the hell you are these days: we met in possibly the most desperate circumstances two human beings can find themselves in, and there's something to be said for making a friendship out of it. **Sinisa Djuric**, with sincere hopes that you come to realize someday what a hell of a writer you can be in this foreign language. **Kamran Ince**, who I wished I had understood when it might have done me some good. **David Johnson**, for tolerating the years of freeloading on your dime. **Kris** and **Casey Kane**, because someday we're really going to get together. The best **José** in Mexico City, for the bail. **Tijana**, the only person I've ever met in my life utterly incapable of malice. **Mara**, for being the *beba* I never dared to carry with me.

To our supporters: I hope it was worth it for you. I'm not sure it was for me. In the words of Nixon: we'll see you again. ■