

The Miller's Tale

Far from being a martyr for press freedom, the *New York Times* reporter was Chalabi's mouthpiece.

By Justin Raimondo

LIBERALS HEAR THE WORDS “prosecutor” and “subpoena” in the same sentence as the word “journalist,” and their knees jerk uncontrollably. Ye gods! To the barricades! Thus the board of the American Society of Journalists rushed to defend *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller, who was refusing to testify in the Plame leak case, by pinning her with their Conscience in Media Award. That is, until they belatedly discovered that she doesn't have a conscience. As *Editor and Publisher* put it:

The group's First Amendment committee had narrowly voted to give Miller the prize for her dedication to protecting sources, but the full board has now voted to not accept that decision, based on its opinion that her entire career, and even her current actions in the Plame/CIA leak case, cast doubt on her credentials for this award.

ASJ President Jack El-Hai noted opposition from the membership of his organization, which he summed up as “A feeling that Miller's career, taken as a whole, did not make her the best candidate for the award.”

A masterpiece of understatement, but if the War Party was giving out awards for journalistic excellence—say, the Leo Strauss Prize for Fiction Disguised as Reporting—Judy would win it hands down. The full story of her contribution to Iraq's WMD mythos would fill a multi-volume set. But the most egregious—and, in retrospect, most telling—example of Miller's role as a war propagandist

came out on Sept. 18, 2002, in a *New York Times* story that touted the claims of one Khidhir Hamza, an alleged Iraqi “nuclear weapons scientist” who estimated that in two to three years Saddam would have the capacity to wield a nuclear sword. As it turned out, however, Hamza was not any kind of scientist, never having conducted a single scientific experiment, and was possessed, according to Imad Khadduri—a real Iraqi nuclear physicist who supervised key aspects of Iraq's weapons program—of a “deep inner fear of radiation” that “prevented him from ever entering the reactor hall or touching any scientific gadgets, probably due to his continual fear of an electric jolt that he experienced as a child.”

Hamza showed up at the doorstep of Ahmad Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress in 1994. The INC, which was on the U.S. payroll collecting “intelligence,” recommended him to their CIA handlers, but something about Hamza didn't quite add up, and Langley wasn't interested. It was a healthy instinct that steered the CIA away from Hamza—and caused the agency to view Chalabi with something less than enthusiasm—and not just because the Iraqi defector exaggerated his scientific credentials.

Hamza handed over documents, including a 20-page “progress report” on Iraq's nuclear weapons program, which eventually wended their way to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In the winter of 1995, IAEA inspectors made a surprise visit to Baghdad, where they showed up at the

offices of Iraq's nuclear development agency armed with the “progress report”—complete with diagrams—which purported to show that Iraq was in the advanced stages of nuke-making. This was the smoking gun the War Party had long been looking for: it seemed that Hamza—and Miller—were vindicated.

Upon closer inspection, however, IAEA personnel noted discrepancies in the document. To begin with, it seemed to have been written by an Iranian. “Most notable,” says Khadduri, “was the use of the term ‘dome’—‘Qubba’ in Iranian, instead of ‘hemisphere’—‘Nisuf Kura’ in Arabic.” This and other internal clues convinced the IAEA that Hamza's report had originally been written in Farsi and translated into Arabic. It was “not authentic,” as an IAEA spokesman put it. That is to say, it was a forgery.

When Patrick J. Fitzgerald, the prosecutor in the Plame leak case, hears the word “forgery,” he reaches for the legalistic equivalent of his revolver—his subpoena power. That's because forgery is what *l'affaire* Plame is all about. It was the Niger uranium forgeries—documents purporting to be correspondence between Niger government officials and the Iraqis—that served as the basis for the administration's contention that Saddam had tried to procure weapons-grade uranium in “an African nation,” as the president averred in his 2003 State of the Union address. Shortly afterwards, the IAEA debunked the documents as fakes: an hour with Google sufficed to prove that these were forgeries, and crude ones at that.

The White House, red-faced, tried to downplay the importance of the documents in crafting those fateful 16 words, but renewed focus on this startling lapse was brought to bear four months later by former Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson, whose op-ed piece, “What I Didn’t Find In Africa,” led to the administration’s campaign to discredit him—and ended in the “outing” of his wife, Valerie Plame, a CIA agent who worked covertly in the field of nuclear-weapons proliferation. The exposure of Plame triggered an FBI investigation, which set “Bulldog” Fitzgerald not only on the trail of the outers but also sniffing around for a hint of who forged the Niger uranium papers.

On May 20, 2004, combined Iraqi and American forces raided Chalabi’s home and descended on the offices of the Iraqi National Congress, seizing documents, computers, and—much to the outrage of Chalabi’s fan club over at the American Enterprise Institute—even

tion directly to the Baghdad station chief of Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security.

An intelligence source in Washington was cited in news accounts as saying that hard evidence of the betrayal was contained in an electronic communications intercept by the National Security Agency that wound up in Iranian hands: “This was ‘sensitive compartmented information’—SCI—and it was tracked right back to the Iranians through Aras Habib,” a longtime aide to Chalabi. He headed the INC’s Pentagon-funded “intelligence collection” program that funneled defectors’ tall tales to the administration and the media in the run-up to war. Habib fled to Iran just in time to avoid being caught in the raid.

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seized it: not out of spite, as Chalabi’s defenders claimed, but as evidence of his espionage on behalf of Iran.

Fitzgerald’s inquiry was sparked by the outing of Plame, but in tracing this act of treachery back to its origins he may have uncovered new trails leading to other crimes—perhaps even treason. Law enforcement sources insist they have “rock solid” evidence that Chalabi & Co. delivered vital U.S. secrets to the Iranians, but who among those government officials with access to this highly compartmentalized information gave Chalabi access? Fitzgerald is no doubt interested in the answer to this question.

As the major journalistic conduit through which Chalabi’s lies made their way into the media and became the conventional wisdom, Miller was at the epicenter of the INC-Iranian disinformation campaign. In short, she knows where all the bodies are buried.

That’s why she spent 85 days in jail. Not because she hadn’t understood I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby’s clear waiver giving her permission to testify but because Fitzgerald finally agreed to narrow the range of his questioning to matters only pertaining directly to her conversations with Libby. The idea that she is a martyr to the concept of a free press inverts her real role in this matter, which has been to obstruct not only justice but also truth—the truth about how we were lured into the Iraqi quagmire by unscrupulous government officials of dubious loyalty. She isn’t protecting the First Amendment. Instead, she is shielding a cabal of traitors caught up in the web of their own betrayals. As government prosecutors untangle the threads, the spider in the center seeks to scuttle away and hide itself—in the end, however, it can only bare its fangs as the exterminators move in for the kill. ■

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Chalabi’s personal copy of the Koran. The Pentagon’s favorite Iraqi exile leader, who had been flown into Iraq on the eve of the invasion at U.S. taxpayers’ expense, had gone from being the toast of the White House to occupying the dog house—and, for a while there, it even looked as if he might wind up in the big house as an Iraqi court charged him with corruption and other crimes. What caused this meteoric descent in his fortunes? The mystery was cleared up when it came out that Chalabi was suspected of handing over vital U.S. intelligence to the Iranians, including the knowledge that the Americans had broken the Iranian code. Apparently Chalabi communicated this informa-

tion directly to the Baghdad station chief of Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security. An intelligence source in Washington was cited in news accounts as saying that hard evidence of the betrayal was contained in an electronic communications intercept by the National Security Agency that wound up in Iranian hands: “This was ‘sensitive compartmented information’—SCI—and it was tracked right back to the Iranians through Aras Habib,” a longtime aide to Chalabi. He headed the INC’s Pentagon-funded “intelligence collection” program that funneled defectors’ tall tales to the administration and the media in the run-up to war. Habib fled to Iran just in time to avoid being caught in the raid. Habib’s job was to retail the fabrications of Iraqi exiles, such as Hamza, to Western governments and media outlets, and all this was grist for Miller’s mill. In the aftermath of an invasion that yielded zero evidence of Iraq’s fabled

How I Became a Conservative

In praise of beauty, order, history, and Edmund Burke

By Roger Scruton

I WAS BROUGHT UP at a time when half the English people voted Conservative and almost all English intellectuals regarded “conservative” as a term of abuse. To be a conservative was to be on the side of age against youth, the past against the future, authority against innovation, the “structures” against spontaneity and life. One had no choice, as a free-thinking intellectual, but to reject conservatism. The choice remaining was between reform and revolution. Do we improve society bit by bit, or do we rub it out and start again? My contemporaries favored the second option, and it was when witnessing what this meant, in Paris in May 1968, that I discovered my vocation.

In the street below my window the students were shouting and smashing. The plate-glass windows of the shops appeared to shudder then give up the ghost, as the reflections suddenly left them and they slid in jagged fragments to the ground. Cars rose into the air and landed on their sides, their juices flowing from unseen wounds. The air was filled with triumphant shouts as lamp-posts were uprooted and piled to form a barricade against the next vanload of policemen.

The van came cautiously round the corner, jerked to a halt, and disgorged a score of frightened policemen. They were greeted by flying cobblestones and several of them fell. One rolled over on the ground clutching his face, from which the blood streamed through clenched fingers. There was an exultant shout, the injured policeman was helped

into the van, and the students ran off down a side street, sneering at the *cochons* and throwing cobbles as they went.

That evening a friend came round: she had been on the barricades and was very excited. Great victories had been scored: policemen injured, cars set alight, slogans chanted, graffiti daubed. The bourgeoisie were on the run, and soon the Old Fascist and his regime would be begging for mercy.

The Old Fascist was de Gaulle, whose *Mémoires de Guerre* I had been reading that day. The memoirs begin with a striking sentence—*Toute ma vie, je me suis fait une certaine idée de la France*. I had been equally struck by the description of the state funeral for Valéry—de Gaulle’s first public gesture on liberating Paris. The image of the cortège, as it made its way to Notre Dame, the proud general first among the mourners, and here and there a German sniper still looking down from the rooftops, had made a vivid impression on me. I compared the two bird’s-eye views of Paris: that of the sniper and my own on to the riots in the Quartier Latin. They were related as yes and no, the affirmation and denial of a national idea. According to the Gaullist vision, a nation is defined not by institutions or borders but by language, religion, and high culture; in times of turmoil and conquest it is those spiritual things that must be protected and reaffirmed.

Of course I was naïve—as naïve as my friend. But the ensuing argument is one to which I have often returned. What, I

asked, do you propose to put in the place of this “bourgeoisie” whom you so despise and to whom you owe the freedom and prosperity that enable you to play on your toy barricades? What vision of France and its culture compels you? And are you prepared to die for your beliefs, or merely to put others at risk in order to display them? I was pompous, but for the first time in my life I felt a surge of political anger, finding myself on the other side of the barricades from the people I knew.

She replied with a book: Foucault’s *Les mots et les choses*, the bible of the *soixante-huitards*, the text that seemed to justify every transgression by showing that obedience is merely defeat. It is an artful book, composed with a satanic mendacity, selectively appropriating facts in order to show that culture and knowledge are nothing but the “discourses” of power. Its goal is subversion, and it argues that “truth” is tied to the form of consciousness imposed by the class that profits from its propagation. Look everywhere for power, he tells his readers, and you will find it. Where there is power, there is oppression. And where there is oppression, there is the right to destroy.

My friend is now a good bourgeoisie like the rest of them. The French intellectuals have turned their backs on 1968. Foucault is dead from AIDS. However, his books are on university reading lists all over Europe and America. His vision of European culture as the institutionalized form of oppressive power is taught as gospel to students who have