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Review

The Seven Deadly Spins: Exposing the Lies Behind War Propaganda

By Mickey Z.

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July 15, 2004—The vast majority of citizens of the United States are either unaware or don't care about the magnitude and regularity of the crimes committed by their government in their name. They rather think their government is a "light unto the world," going about its business, wishing nothing other than to be left alone to pursue its peaceful American dream. Whether this is due to the disingenuousness of those citizens or the effectiveness of these spins is debatable.

This book is more of a too often obscure but important documentation proving the United States government continues to be, and with occasional competition always has been, the greatest threat to world peace. It serves also as a look into the modus operandi of the mafia enterprise known as America.

Mickey's historical reach encompasses with equal clarity events as disparate as George Washington's racism justifying the slaughter of Natives by labeling them savages and brutes, to the current campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, and beyond. Yet his narrative is vivifying rather than ponderous. He touches upon many important U.S. historical epochs to prove even more than what the worst cynic might have suspected: the whole history of this country is conceived and steeped in bloodshed and suffering and spin. From the arrival of Columbus in 1492 right up to the current imperial crusades in Iraq, Afghanistan, Colombia, Israel/Palestine, and, given the nature of spin and the complicity of the corporate media, U.S. policy has been one imperial aggrandizement after another.

The Seven Deadly Spins are used to turn America's long historical penchant for war, brutality, and ethnic cleansing into something other than what it really is, often its very opposite, to justify it, and allow its perpetuation. Part of the aim of spin is to glorify war as the triumphing of the quasi-religious good, the United States and its actions, over the foreboding evil, the enemy du jour, in the eternal Manichean struggle between the forces of light and darkness. Another part is to sanitize the wanton bloodshed of countless innocents and other atrocities. For the charade to continue, these must be whitewashed as unfortunate accidents, or justified as necessary for a greater good, when they are acknowledged at all.

Vietnam and the ethnic cleansing of Native Americans are the most obvious of many examples of American rapine. Far too many are quite forgiving of these and a long list of like outrages. Mickey quotes Robert Jensen as saying, "In affluent societies, one should expect a lot of 'willed ignorance' from people. If one's privilege is based on maintaining the empire, it's not surprising that some people won't want to know about what the empire really does."

Although the information is available, fewer bother to learn about U.S. complicity in other imperial intrigues, like the assassination of Allende in Chile and the installation of the brutal Pinochet in his stead, for example. Likewise the U.S.-backed Suharto and his *multiple* genocides in Indonesia and East Timor. The assassination of Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954 was accomplished at Eisenhower's behest, ushering

in four decades of terror resulting in 200,000 murders. Mickey touches upon these shameful but hardly anomalous chapters in American history, as well as countless assaults on Cuba over a century, 32 interventions in Latin America between 1934 and 1989 alone, along with interventions into Grenada, Somalia, Serbia, Kosovo, the Congo, Panama, Russia in 1919, the calculated indifference to the Rwandan genocide contrary to international law, and the reality of the often surreptitious motives animating U.S. policy in World Wars I and II. Mickey doesn't so much cover old territory in describing these shameful chapters in U.S. foreign policy as he does detail the perennial spin that is used to justify, slant, and hide them.

Mickey's prose is inimitable, terse, buoying and accessible. We observe along with him the rule in U.S. political affairs, conscious and deliberate, which invariably gives lie to the conventional history. Illustrative is President James Polk unilaterally provoking a war with Mexico in 1846, which, as intended, eventuated in U.S. annexation of what are now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, California, and part of Colorado. Mickey cites Teddy Roosevelt, enshrined on Mount Rushmore with all that's good and decent about America, as saying, "I should welcome any war, for I think this country needs one." The sinking of the *Maine* in Havana Harbor, probably the result of an accidental explosion of its coal-fired engine, soon served as the pretext for war with Spain. This short war in turn led to the U.S. invasion of the Philippines, and the merciless slaughter of 600,000 defenseless Filipinos.

One of many virtues of this book is the sources from which it draws, and with whom Mickey's writing deserves to be classed: Noam Chomsky, William Blum and Howard Zinn are the most noteworthy. Equally as important voices as Paul Atwood, Mark Zepezauer, Ward Churchill, and Kenneth C. Davis are also cited. All draw a similar picture. As Paul Atwood puts it, "While we claim to be a generous, humane society, I see us as cold-blooded, selfish, increasingly narcissistic and out of touch with a broader reality. Though half the population of the planet goes to bed hungry every night, we Americans are grossly overfed. There is a direct connection between these two phenomena but we are in denial about it."

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