

## **2011: a Reagan odyssey**

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**A**mericans live in the world first made possible by the massive exploitation of German cinematography on the outskirts of what was then a young California city. Their history does not come from books but from what was originally celluloid and now are billions of digital signals. Hence it is no wonder that the 'greatest US president' was an iconic product of the film and propaganda industry which has done more to sell the US 'way of life' and its vision of the world than anything else, including Coca-Cola.

Ronald Reagan, an entirely synthetic personality – like the digital Max Headroom created during his presidency<sup>1</sup> – was given to us all a century ago. He has portrayed all the important mythic roles the republic had to offer in the 20th century: scientist, athlete, army officer (ironically George A. Custer), New Dealer, unionist, anti-communist, and spokesman for a variety of corporate interests, mainly the General Electric trust. He became rich from speculation when real estate was being expropriated from Japanese-Americans in California and influential as an FBI informer. All told it was an excellent record to propel him into the California governor's mansion as the representative of its most reactionary business elements.

However it was not until the so-called 'Reagan Revolution' that the con-man from GE and FBI stooge became the leading light of American idealism. Reagan's presidency and the nauseating hagiography that was already being produced during his second, Alzheimer's term represent the pinnacle of the true American empire, the one which liberals like to forget when they laud 'progressive California'. Reagan represented the victory of Manifest Destiny over all other un-American forms of conquest. While previous US presidents

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<sup>1</sup> See <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2Qb6RsGONo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2Qb6RsGONo)>

were beholden to Atlantic, and hence transatlantic elites, Reagan was the first president to draw his power base from those who had not only conquered the North American continent but built their palaces on the West coast. Richard Nixon had tried to do this but was essentially scuttled by the North-eastern elite. Nixon never had the control over the media which was the essence of Reagan's career and the source of his electoral power. To say also that Ronald Reagan was the nation's first 'television president' is by no means a cliché: Reagan established the narrative by which the television portrayal of government or war was for all intents and purposes its essence. What was not seen on television – never happened.

It is necessary to bear this in mind when reviewing the events of the past weeks. The vicious and obscene snuff-movie broadcast throughout the world in which the conquest of Libya is consummated by Qaddafi's murder was not accidental. When Ronald Reagan called Qaddafi a 'mad dog' he was following a carefully honed script. This 'mad dog' imagery – that of an animal infected with rabies who can only be 'put down' – is the language of the West, the language of slaughtering Native Americans and making trophies out of their body parts. This kind of language could still be found in bumper stickers proclaiming 'save a walleye, kill an Indian' which could be found on cars of white fishermen protesting that Native Americans retained salmon fishing rights, while non-Indians could only fish during the season. Of course this viciousness is not unique to the Western elite, it is simply less sublimated, less polite. But then most of America is un-sublimated and far from polite when it comes to the use of violence, as can be seen in the exponential growth of police and army slaughter films since 1981.

### **The entirely synthetic, digital president**

**E**very president since Reagan has been obliged to follow the tone set by the country's terrorist-in-chief. George Bush Sr and George W Bush as well as William Clinton were integral parts of the Reagan tradition – liberal fantasies to the contrary not

withstanding. In 2008, the ultimate synthetic president was elected, Barack Obama, a man with no publicly traceable political history, whose entire campaign relied on the illusion that there was a mass movement to which he did not even belong, and whose greatest political inspiration is Ronald W. Reagan. Obama's likely political-professional history is not much different from that of Reagan's: an apparent Mr Nobody gets picked from a West Coast college, is channelled anonymously through the cadre institutions of the Northeast elite and moves to the Midwest. With no traceable political debts he finds himself a US Senator, and before his first term expires he is on the Democratic ticket for president. Obama is the apogee of the Reagan Revolution, the entirely synthetic, digital president, incorporating the most modern and vicious weapons arsenal the world has ever known.

### **The damned – the non-American**

**B**ut there is a story behind all this and it is not just the story of oil and mineral wealth. The US has always had a religious component to its imperial designs – no matter how cynically or hypocritically pursued. It is a story of damnation and salvation. Ultimately there can be no salvation for the damned – the non-American. But the illusion of salvation has to be maintained, otherwise its value in the US would be called into question. Everyone in the world must want to be American – even if it is actually impossible and for many perhaps even undesirable. When the US unleashed the atomic bomb in 1945, the country's corporate and military leadership were sure they had found the ultimate imperial weapon. They believed that with the bomb they could absorb all the 'old European' empires and march into their long-desired Pacific empire unthreatened by retaliation or by 'yellow hordes'. Hence the Korean War and then the Vietnam War became real traumas for the US elite. Unable to admit to their subjects at home that the two great wars fought before were for loot and empire, they had to invent a new and utterly unseen threat. They could not explain that after ostensibly fighting for the freedom of all nations for the second time in a century, they

were in fact suppressing that very freedom everywhere. American 'interests' had to be defined as 'democracy and freedom' without anyone being able to measure what the content of those interests actually was. Anyone who did not want American 'democracy and freedom' was damned.

## **Democracy and freedom**

**W**hen the second world war ended many of the peoples in what was later to be called the 'third world' took 'democracy and freedom' seriously and began to fight for independence from European (and American) domination. Wars of independence were being fought all over the world, in Korea, in Vietnam, in Malaysia, in the Dutch East Indies, throughout Africa and in Latin America. Without exception the US was overtly or covertly fighting to suppress these independence movements or to absorb them into the US empire. The majority of these wars did not take place on television. Until the Soviet Union broke the US atomic monopoly, it was assumed that the US would prevail by sheer size and massive force. Carpet-bombing the industrialised northern half of Korea was just one expression of the US way of delivering 'democracy and freedom'.

While a phoney war was staged in the US media between the US and its former W.W.II ally, the Soviet Union, real wars with weapons of mass destruction were waged by the US throughout the planet – mainly against what George Carlin called 'brown people'. The phoney war was dead serious in that US strategic planners – several of whom were outright fascists recruited from Eastern Europe or Germany – were doing their very best to calculate the chances of annihilating the Soviet Union first without being seriously injured. However, the public discussion was a ruse. It kept everyone looking at alleged Soviet expansion when the only country that had been expanding since the end of the war was the US.

In this global war of bombing and assassination (the major tactics employed by the US), the Soviet Union served as the face of the enemy. But already by the time Nixon entered

the White House this was no longer very plausible. It was becoming increasingly difficult to claim that the Soviet Union was going to destroy the world (actually the US strategic policy). With détente and Nixon's entry to China, the last classical enemies were gone – but the war was not over. Carter's ludicrous attempts to blame the Soviet Union for the war his national security advisor Brzezinski instigated and covertly funded in Afghanistan were largely a deadly distraction with no initial impact on the new 'enemy'. Reagan's attempts to portray Nicaragua and the Sandinistas as the new world evil – although viciously pursued by his 'Contra-Freedom Fighters' – never made much of an impression in the American consciousness. Reagan struck gold however when he publicly called Libya's nationalist leader Qaddafi, a 'mad-dog'. The image was wonderful. A mad-dog cannot be cured, it can only be killed. A mad-dog is like the damned, beyond salvation.

Of course the next step was to make the 'mad-dog' present itself; mad dogs are only dangerous if they come close. But how many Americans know where Libya (or Africa for that matter) is?

## **Infamous fabrications**

Successive violent 'terrorist' events were then attributed to the 'mad dog'. Soon the 'mad dog' in Libya was funding or otherwise supporting everything that the US government or its corporations found objectionable or an obstacle. The two most infamous fabrications were the so-called LaBelle disco bombing in Berlin and the Lockerbie aircraft bombing. Both of these events were attributed to Libya and hence to Qaddafi without the slightest verifiable proof. Although to this day no unimpeachable evidence has ever been shown that Libya was involved in any way, the mere repeated assertion – primarily through television – that Libya and Qaddafi were responsible simply became fact. No corporate media outlet (and the vast majority of media are business corporations) gave serious attention to the lack of evidence or the fact that these were mere assertions on the part of the Hollywood president trying to give teeth to his 'mad dog' fantasy. (There is of course no

reason why any corporate reporting should deviate from the official line since it is its function to propagate that line in the first place.)

The vicious murder of the last real enemy of the US empire, the last man to have ejected US military from his country and to have defended his people against neo-colonialism under the US, is a fitting fulfilment of the promise Reagan made to the American people and the world and an apt commemoration of the centenary of 'the greatest American president'. The mutilated remains of anti-colonialism, nationalism, secular Arab socialism, and African independence as it was conceived by Nkrumah and Lumumba (both deposed by the US) will be dragged through the virtual streets of the corporate mediascape, a bloody space odyssey.

In 2011, Qaddafi's murder is the apex of Reaganism and the Age of Reagan – from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama – essentially it is the spirit of the Gipper, and, in that sense, 'all American'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Gipp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Gipp)> and <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knute\\_Rockne,\\_All\\_American](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knute_Rockne,_All_American)>