

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپائی

AUGUST 27, 2018

by JEFFREY ST. CLAIR - ALEXANDER COCKBURN
28.08.2018

The Horrors of John McCain: War Hero or War Criminal?



Photo Source AFGE | [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

John McCain has left the planet, amid contrails of encomia exalting him as an “American” hero, even from the likes of [Bernie Sanders](#) and [Alexandra Ocasia-Cortez](#).

You say you want a revolution

Well, you know

We all want to change the channel

But if you go Tweeting pictures of John McCain

We're all going to know that, baby, you're just the same

Here is a piece that Cockburn and I wrote in 1999 about a psychiatric evaluation of McCain underwent while a prisoner of war in North Vietnam. The psychological portrait drawn by Spanish psychiatrist Fernando Barral is that of a deeply narcissistic personality, cold, hardened and largely devoid of human empathy, a man who seemed to view the bombing of civilian populations as a kind of sport. These aggressive personality traits have also characterized his nasty political career. –JSC

The top war-monger in Congress has been Senator John McCain, Republican from Arizona, seeker of the Republican presidential nomination. In one rhetorical bombing run after another, McCain has bellowed for “lights out in Belgrade” and for NATO to “cream” the Serbs. At the start of May he began declaiming in the US senate for the NATO forces to use “any means necessary” to destroy Serbia.

McCain is often called a “war hero”, a title adorning an unlovely resume starting with a father who was an admiral and graduation fifth from the bottom at the US Naval Academy, where he earned the nickname “McNasty”. McCain flew 23 bombing missions over North Vietnam, each averaging about half an hour, total time ten hours and thirty minutes. For these brief excursions the admiral’s son was awarded two Silver Stars, two Legions of Merit, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, three Bronze Stars, the Vietnamese Legion of Honor and three Purple Hearts. US Veteran Dispatch calculates our hero earned a medal an hour, which is pretty good going. McCain was shot down over Hanoi on October 26, 1967 and parachuted into Truc Boch Lake, whence he was hauled by Vietnamese, and put in prison.

A couple of years later he was interviewed in prison camp by Fernando Barral, a Spanish psychiatrist living in Cuba. The interview appeared in *Granma* on January 24, 1970.

Barral’s evaluation of McCain is quoted by Amy Silverman, author of many excellent pieces on McCain in the Phoenix-based *New Timesweekly*. Here’s how Barral described “the personality of the prisoner who is responsible for many criminal bombings of the people.” Barral goes on, “He (McCain) showed himself to be intellectually alert during the interview. From a morale point of view he is not in traumatic shock. He was able to be sarcastic, and even humorous, indicative of psychic equilibrium. From the moral and ideological point of view he showed us he is an insensitive individual without human depth, who does not show the slightest concern, who does not appear to have thought about the criminal acts he committed against a population from the absolute impunity of his

airplane, and that nevertheless those people saved his life, fed him, and looked after his health and he is now healthy and strong. I believe that he has bombed densely populated places for sport. I noted that he was hardened, that he spoke of banal things as if he were at a cocktail party.”

McCain is deeply loved by the press. As Silverman puts it, “As long as he’s the noble outsider, McCain can get away with anything it seems – the Keating Five, a drug stealing wife, nasy jokes about Chelsea Clinton – and the pundits will gurgle and coo.”

Indeed they will. William Safire, Maureen Dowd, Russell Baker, the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *Vanity Fair*, have all slobbered over McCain in emurpled prose. The culmination was a love poem from Mike Wallace in 60 Minutes, who managed to avoid any inconvenient mention of McCain’s close relationship with S & L fraudster Charles Keating, with whom the senator and his kids romped on Bahamian beaches. McCain was similarly spared scrutiny for his astonishing claim that he knew nothing of his wife’s scandalous dealings. His vicious temper has escaped rebuke.

McCain’s escape from the Keating debacle was nothing short of miraculous, probably the activity for which he most deserves a medal. After all, he took more than \$100,000 in campaign contributions from the swindler Keating between 1982 and 1988, while simultaneously log-rolling for Keating on Captitol Hill. In the same period McCain took nine trips to Keating’s place in the Bahamas. When the muck began to rise, McCain threw Keating over the side, hastily reimbursed him for the trips and suddenly developed a profound interest in campaign finance reform.

The pundits love McCain because of his grandstanding on soft money’s baneful role in politics, thus garnering for himself a reputation for willingness to court the enmity of his colleagues.

In fact colleagues in the Senate regard McCain as a mere grandstander. They know that he already has a big war chest left over from his last senatorial campaign, plus torrents of pac money from the corporations that crave his indulgence, as chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee. Communications companies (US West, Bell South, ATT, Bell Atlantic), have been particularly effusive in McCain’s treasury, as have banks, military contractors and UPS. They also know he has a rich wife and the certain knowledge that his supposed hopes for an ending to soft money spending will never receive any practical legislative application.

McCain is the kind of Republican that liberals love: solid military credentials as a former POW, ever ready with acceptable sound-bites on campaign finance reform and other

cherished issues. Thus it was that McCain drew enthusiastic plaudits last year when he rose in the Senate chamber to denounce the insertion of \$200 million worth of pork in the military construction portion of the defense authorization bill. Eloquently, he spoke of the 11,200 service families on food stamps, the lack of modern weapons supplied to the military, the declining levels of readiness in the armed forces. Bravely, he laid the blame at the doors of his colleagues: “I could find only one commonality to these projects, and that is that 90 percent of them happened to be in the state or districts of members of the Appropriations Committees.” Sternly, in tones befitting a Cato or a Cicero, the senator urged his colleagues to ponder their sacred duty to uphold the defense of the Republic rather than frittering away the public purse on such frivolous expenditure: “We live in a very dangerous world. We will have some serious foreign policy crises. I am not sure we have the military that is capable of meeting some of these foreseeable threats, but I know that what we are doing with this \$200 million will not do a single thing to improve our ability to meet that threat.”

In the gallery, partisans of pork-free spending silently cheered while those who hoped to profit from portions of the \$200 million gnashed their teeth in chagrin. Yet, such emotions were misplaced on either side. This was vintage McCain. Had he wished to follow words with deeds, he could have called for a roll-call on the items he had just denounced so fervently. That way the looters and gougers would have had to place their infamy on the record. But, no, McCain simply sat down and allowed the offending expenditure to be authorized in the anonymous babble of a voice vote (“All those in favor say Aye”). Had McCain really had the courage of his alleged convictions he could have filibustered the entire \$250 billion authorization bill, but, inevitably, no such bravery was in evidence. Instead, when the \$250 billion finally came to a vote, he ^voted for it.

This miserable display provides useful insights into the reason for McCain’s ineffectiveness on issues such as campaign finance that have garnered him so much favorable publicity. A conservative Senate staffer offers these observations on McCain’s fundamental weakness of character: “The real question is why this Senator did not use the strong leverage he has to insist that his ‘ethical’ position be incorporated into a major bill? After all, Senator McCain couched his concerns in issues of the highest national importance: readiness, modernization, and the military’s ability to defeat the threats we face (whatever they are). “Pragmatism is the most commonly heard excuse. If McCain had made a pain out of himself in insisting on keeping the unneeded and wasteful pork out of the Milcon Authorization bill, some people would argue he would have lost comity with

his Senate colleagues. They wouldn't respect him anymore; they would have been angry with him, because he kept them up late (it was about 10:30 pm), and they would have been embarrassed by his showing them up as pork-meisters. This would weaken his ability to get things done.

“This argument assumes politics in the US Senate is a popularity contest: if you want to get anything done around here, you have to go along and get along. Well, this place is a popularity contest, but it is supposed to be one with the voters, not one's colleagues. Besides, this place doesn't really operate that way. Here, they have contempt for fluffy show pieces. Show them you mean business, and you're someone who has to be dealt with (rather than a talk-only type), and you'll begin to get some results. Get ready for a fight, though, because they are some on the other side who are no push-overs. Obviously, Mr. McCain was not prepared to make that investment.”

This article appeared in the May 1999 edition of CounterPunch magazine