



Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs and the Press

Alexander Cockburn, Jeffrey St. Clair

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In the late summer of 1996, a young reporter on a California newspaper electrified the United States with the charge that the CIA had conspired in the smuggling of cocaine into the US, subsequently disseminated in the form of crack into black urban neighbourhoods. Within days, black communities erupted in fury. Radio stations in Los Angeles, Washington DC and Detroit broadcast thousands of Gary Webb's series in the "San Jose Mercury News". Black politicians seized on the issue, demanding a thorough investigation. As the furore mounted, with the "Mercury News" coming up with fresh disclosures and putting many of the basic documents up on its Internet Web site, the Washington establishment struck back at allegations that challenged the very credentials of the state. First came formal government denials. Then, convoluted and self-contradictory rationales began to appear in the nation's most influential newspapers. This is a survey of the violent storm provoked by Webb's articles. It outlines the charges and dissects the government and media counter-attacks. Webb is by no means the first investigator to explore the CIA's hidden history of drug involvement. The book goes back to the very origins of the Agency, and lays out a saga which shows that the CIA: promoted mind-control drugs in the 1940s and 50s, sponsoring LSD research on unsuspecting citizens - many of them black males, locked up in mental hospitals; was involved in the heroin trade in South-East Asia in the 50s and 60s; backed anti-Castro Cuban drug smugglers in South Florida; struck deals with heroin-trafficking Afghan mujahideen; and organized drug smuggling from Latin America, through Central America, into the US. Alexander Cockburn is the author of "Corruptions of Empire", "Fate of the Forest" (with Susanna Hecht), "The Golden Age is In Us" and "Washington Babylon" (with Ken Silverstein).

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