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Robert Fisk on the Imperialist War in Africa



[Map of Mali where French imperialistic forces are bombing the country in several regions. The war is spreading to neighboring Algeria.](#), a photo by [Pan-African News Wire File Photos](#) on Flickr.

Robert Fisk

Friday 18 January 2013

Algeria, Mali, and why this week has looked like an obscene remake of earlier Western interventions

We are outraged not by the massacre of the innocents, but because the hostages killed were largely white, blue-eyed chaps rather than darker, brown-eyed chaps

Odd, isn't it, how our "collateral damage" is different from their "collateral damage". Speaking yesterday to an old Algerian friend in the aviation business, I asked him what he thought of his country's raid on the In Amenas gas plant. "Brilliant operation, Robert," he shouted down the phone. "We destroyed the terrorists!" But the innocent hostages? What about their deaths, I asked? "Poor guys," he replied. "We had thousands of women and children killed in our war [in the 1990s] – terrible tragedy – but we are fighting terrorism."

And there you have it. Our dead men didn't matter in the slightest to him. And he had a point, didn't he? For we are outraged today, not by the massacre of the innocents, but because the hostages killed by the Algerian army – along with some of their captors – were largely white, blue-eyed chaps rather than darker, brown-eyed chaps. Had all the "Western" hostages – I am including the Japanese in this ridiculous, all-purpose definition – been rescued and had the innocent dead all been Algerian, there would have been no talk yesterday of a "botched raid".

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Basil Davidson Hosts African History Series



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Detroit MLK Day Rally & March, Jan. 21, 2013, Noon

If all those slaughtered in the Algerian helicopter bombing had been Algerian, we would have mentioned the “tragic consequences” of the raid, but our headlines would have dwelt on the courage and efficiency of Algeria’s military rescuers, alongside interviews with grateful Western families.

Obscene

Racism isn’t the word for it. When George W Bush and Lord Blair of Kut al-Amara kicked off their war crimes with a full-scale invasion of Iraq, we didn’t care a damn about the Iraqis. Ten thousand dead in a year? Twenty thousand? Or as George Bush said, “Thirty thousand, more or less.” More or less what? But no problems with our precious dead. We know, for example, that since the Bush-Blair Iraqi adventure began, exactly 4,486 American military personnel died in the war.

So you know whom we care about. And whom we don’t care about. Watch carefully in the coming weeks, therefore, for the growing “Roll of Honour” of French troops in Mali, interviews in the French press with their relatives, statistics of the wounded. And don’t waste your time searching for details of dead Nigerian soldiers – or, indeed, dead Malian soldiers – because there will be no details of their sacrifice.

From the Middle East, the whole thing looks like an obscene television remake of our preposterous interventions in other parts of the world. French troops will be in Mali for only “several weeks”, Hollande and his cronies tell us. Isn’t that what we said when British troops first appeared on the streets of Northern Ireland, and then spent decades fighting there? Isn’t that what the Israelis said when they marched into Lebanon in 1982 and stayed for another 18 years? Isn’t this what we thought when we invaded Afghanistan? That our chaps might not even hear a shot fired in anger?

It was incredible to watch that old rogue Bernard Kouchner this week, mischievously demanding that British troops on the ground in Mali assist in France’s fight against Islamist “terror”. His eyes were alight with both cynicism and patriotism – a peculiarly French characteristic – as he played his 1914 entente cordiale “we’ll-be-in-Timbuktu-by-Christmas” routine. But why are “we”, the West, in Mali? How many readers – hands up, oh virtuous and honest folk, could actually name the capital of Mali two weeks ago?

I called up another friend, a French ex-legionnaire, yesterday. Why was France in Mali, I asked? “Well, they say that the Islamists would have reached Bamako and there would have been a Taliban-in-Kabul situation, a state that had fallen into extremist hands. But I myself don’t understand. Mali is an artificial state whose northern inhabitants, especially the Tuaregs, have always refused to be ruled by a black government in the south. It’s tribal, with a veil of ‘Islamism’ over the top of it – and now how do we get ourselves out of this mess?”

Disdain

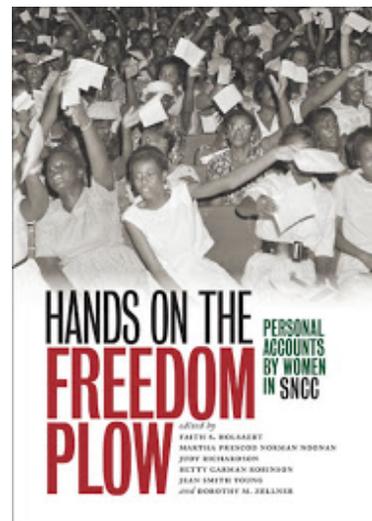
Maybe we should ask Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the presumed “mastermind” – note the comic-cuts language we have to use for these vagabonds – of the Algerian raid. This is the “legendary” – again, note the adjective – “Mr



Photo by Tony Stone of the "The '63 Freedom March" in Detroit on 6-23-1963, courtesy of the Walter P. Reuther Library
2013 Detroit MLK Day Rally and March for "Jobs, Peace & Justice"
Monday, January 21, 2013, NOON
 Central United Methodist Church, 23 E. Adams and Woodward, Detroit, MI
 MORE INFO: 313-405-2185 DONATIONS NEEDED

Click on This Photo to Read About King Day in Downtown Detroit at Central United Methodist Church

Detroit 9th Annual MLK Day Rally & March



Join the Rally & March on Monday, Jan. 16, 2012 at the Central United Methodist Church, Woodward & Adams at Noon

Detroit Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Rally & March Took Place on January 17, 2011



Marlboro”, whose interest in contraband and semtex explosive belts seems to outweigh his duties to Islam. North African journalists know a lot about Belmokhtar and his cross-border trade in cigarettes, weapons, 4x4s, drugs, diamonds and illegal migrants, and they are also appalled that Algeria – Belmokhtar’s own birthplace – should now be involved in the Western crusade in Mali.

France’s overflights have been bitterly criticised in the Algerian press – a fact largely ignored in London where “wars on terror” take precedence over local Algerian opinion – as a symbol of Algerian humiliation at the hands of the country’s former colonisers.

But why should we care about the Algerians when they treat our dead with the disdain we have always shown for the Muslim dead of Iraq, Afghanistan or, for that matter, Palestine? Syria, please note, is temporarily in a different category, since our desire to destroy Bashar al-Assad allows us to turn all his victims into honorary Westerners. Odd, that. For among the rebels facing the ruthless Assad are folk very similar to Mr Belmokhtar and his merry Islamists, the very men who rouse the anger of Crusader Kouchner.

Do I sniff a bit of old-fashioned colonial insanity here? Carry on up the Niger? French troops battle rebels. “Terrorists” in retreat. Daily headlines from 1954 until 1962. In a country called Algeria. And I promise you, the French didn’t win that war.

Posted by [Pan-African News Wire](#) at [12:03 AM](#) 

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The MLK Day Event Was Held at Central United Methodist Church Located Downtown on Woodward at Adams at Noon

The Historic Massey Lectures
Delivered Over the CBC by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Nov. 1967

[Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. CBC Massey Lectures, Nov. 1967, Part I](#)

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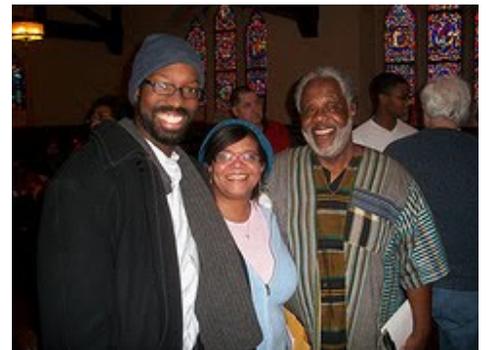
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[Abayomi Azikiwe, PANW Editor, Broadcast on CJAM, Windsor, Canada on MLK Day 2011](#)

Willie Mukasa Ricks Speaks at Detroit MLK Day Rally & March, Jan. 17, 2011



Just Click on This Photo to Hear the Former SNCC Field Secretary's Address to Over 1,000 at Detroit MLK Day Rally

Naome Debebe-Bogale of the Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) Speaking at MLK Day in Detroit



This Event Was Held on January 18, 2010 at Central United Methodist Church

Video Presentation of Detroit 2010 MLK Day Rally

[Speeches From the Detroit 2010 MLK Day Rally](#)