FISK, Robert

**The Great War for Civilisation**

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From ‘villains’ to 'flies’ and 'niggers’ in one hundred pages, it’s not difficult to see how easily my father’s world of 'pure, clean and upright’ Britons bestialised its enemies. Though there are a few references to the 'boldness’ of Afghan tribesmen - and just one to their 'courage - no attempt is made to explain their actions. They are evil, hate-filled, anxious to prove their Muslim faith by 'cutting pieces out the unfortunate Britisher’. The notion that Afghans do not want foreigners invading and occupying their country simply does not exist in the story.

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Terrorism” is a word that has become a plague on our vocabulary, the excuse and reason and moral permit for state-sponsored violence— our violence—which is now used on the innocent of the Middle East ever more outrageously and promiscuously. Terrorism, terrorism, terrorism. It has become a full stop, a punctuation mark, a phrase, a speech, a sermon, the be-all and end-all of everything that we must hate in order to ignore injustice and occupation and murder on a mass scale. Terror, terror, terror, terror. It is a sonata, a symphony, an orchestra tuned to every television and radio station and news agency report, the soap-opera of the Devil, served up on prime-time or distilled in wearyingly dull and mendacious form by the right-wing “commentators” of the American east coast or the Jerusalem Post or the intellectuals of Europe. Strike against Terror. Victory over Terror. War on Terror. Everlasting War on Terror. Rarely in history have soldiers and journalists and presidents and kings aligned themselves in such thoughtless, unquestioning ranks.

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Soldier and civilian, they died in their tens of thousands because death had been concocted for them, morality hitched like a halter round the warhorse so that we could talk about 'target-rich environments' and 'collateral damage' - that most infantile of attempts to shake off the crime of killing - and report the victory parades, the tearing down of statues and the importance of peace.  
Governments like it that way. They want their people to see war as a drama of opposites, good and evil, 'them' and 'us', victory or defeat. But war is primarily not about victory or defeat but about death and the infliction of death. It represents a total failure of the human spirit.

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