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IN YOUR WORDS

🗨 **How a court extended spies’ reach**
Everything I read and see these days about the way the American government is behaving indicates to me that Bin Laden won a victory in 2001, because we let him win. That single action has allowed us to destroy ourselves from within, something I predicted would happen on the day of the attacks. I said the resulting anger against the terrorists from these insane attacks would cause us to fear and destroy ourselves.

RAM, SAMUDRAL

Isn't the whole idea of secret courts unconstitutional? Wasn't it the intent of the founding fathers to create a state where this sort of thing didn't exist, where everything was out in the open and the government accountable to the people?

REGS264, NEW YORK

The principles of democracy and liberty by which this country supposedly operates are given daily lip service in schools, in the mainstream media, and in politics — but are nowadays routinely ignored in practice. Whatever the arc that American totalitarianism may seek to take, little time remains for the people of this nation to stop it, and to actually reassert the principles of democracy and liberty we extol.

FRED DRUMLEVITCH, TUCSON, ARIZONA

🗨 **Bangladesh factory inspections**
It is about time that such inspections be made. There must also be some guarantee that the needed safety improvements are actually made. Working with the unions is a terrific idea — enabling the workers to have some voice in their work conditions.

ELEPHANT LOVER, NEW MEXICO

Safety has a cost. It is worth it. Frankly, I would rather wear clothes made by decently paid, safe and fairly treated workers and pay more for them have a clear conscience.

MARGARET, ATLANTA

👉 See what readers are talking about and leave your own comments at [inyt.com](#)

IN OUR PAGES

1914 Opera Singer Wins Court Case
Mlle. Lucy Arbelle, the operatic singer, was granted 30,000fr. damages in the Paris Courts yesterday [March 12] against Mme. Massenet, widow of the composer, and Mlle. Juliette Massenet, his daughter, in the suit which she brought against the composer's heirs respecting her claim to the sole right to create the title-rôles of the operas "Cléopâtre" and "Amadis." The plaintiff claimed that the composer expressed the dying wish that she alone should play the rôle of Cléopâtre and also of Amadis, declaring that he would prefer to destroy the works if for any reason she was unable to create the roles.

1939 Gang Shipping Drugs Is Jailed
PARIS An international drug ring, operating between America and France, was smashed over the week end by the arrest of fifteen men and women, who allegedly distributed narcotics in Montmartre and Montparnasse. The organization was reported to have smuggled hundreds of pounds of heroin during recent months. The drug ring, officials said, appears to have no connection with the alleged activities of Isaac Leifer, so called "grand Rabbi of Brooklyn," who was arrested in Paris last summer when found in possession of Jewish Bible stuffed with heroin.

👉 Find a retrospective of news from 1887 to 2013 in *The International Herald Tribune* at [iht-retrospective.blogs.nytimes.com](#)

Joe McGinniss, 71; wrote of political powers and true crime

BY BRUCE WEBER
AND EMMA G. FITZSIMMONS

Joe McGinniss, a journalist whose book-length investigations of political lives and horrific crimes often triggered controversy, critical debate and mega-sales, died on Monday in Worcester, Mass. He was 71.

The cause was complications of pros-

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tate cancer, his wife, Nancy Doherty, said. He lived in Pelham, Mass.

Mr. McGinniss was just 26 in 1969 and a columnist for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* when he published "The Selling of the President 1968," about the image-makers behind Richard M. Nixon's successful 1968 campaign. The book portrayed the Nixon team in an unflattering, cynical light and sent signals to candidates of all stripes about the hazards of granting reporters intimate access to political decision-making.

His 1983 book, "Fatal Vision," focused on the murder trial of Jeffrey MacDonald, an Army doctor and a Green Beret accused of killing his pregnant wife and two daughters. Mr. McGinniss lived

with Dr. MacDonald's defense team during the trial and eventually decided that the jury had decided correctly in convicting Dr. MacDonald. He sued Mr. McGinniss and remains in prison.

More recently, in 2010, Mr. McGinniss moved next door to Sarah Palin, former governor of Alaska and Republican vice-presidential candidate, and her family in Wasilla, Alaska, while working on a book about her. The television host Glenn Beck suggested that Mr. McGinniss was a peeping Tom who wanted to peer into Ms. Palin's daughters' bedrooms, and Todd Palin, Ms. Palin's husband, accused him of stalking the family.

The book, "The Rogue: Searching for the Real Sarah Palin," published in 2011, made sensational allegations, including one that Ms. Palin had taken drugs when she was young.

"The Selling of the President" was redolent of iconoclasm and the counter-cultural attitude prevalent among Mr. McGinniss's generation of reporters.

Mr. McGinniss quoted Roger Ailes, the creator of Fox News, who was then a Nixon campaign aide, as saying: "Let's face it, a lot of people think Nixon is dull," adding, "They look at him as the kind of kid who always carried a bookbag. Who

was 42 years old the day he was born."

The book was a mammoth best seller and a revelation to many readers, introducing them to what is understood as a tenet of political campaigns today: that they are driven by manipulative intent. The New York Times critic Christopher Lehmann-Haupt described it as "stinging, bitterly comic, a series of smartly turned-out scenes from backstage at the 1968 presidential turkey raffle."

"How Mr. McGinniss got to witness these scenes I don't know," Mr. Lehmann-Haupt wrote, adding, "But what he saw and heard he has recorded artfully enough to simultaneously entertain us and make us fear for the future of the Republic."

In a statement on Tuesday, Mr. Ailes said: "Joe McGinniss will be remembered as a talented man. He changed political writing forever in 1968. We differed on many things, but he had a good heart."

Mr. McGinniss's distaste for Nixon was evident in the book, and he was never loath to reveal his presence in his work. His other studies in contemporary politics were equally audacious in that way, if less critically successful. His 1993 biography, "The Last Brother: The Rise

Refuge for birds and people



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROGER BALLE

SAFE HOUSE
An asylum can be either a refuge or a place of madness. In Roger Ballen's new book, "Asylum of the Birds," it is both. His photographs were taken in Johannesburg in a dilapidated house that was inhabited by hundreds of birds — and dozens of immigrants, fugitives or homeless people. [lens.blogs.nytimes.com](#)



SCARY AND FUNNY
The house, whose walls were covered in drawings by residents, became his project. "It's a way of transforming what I'm seeing,"

said Mr. Ballen, an American who has lived in South Africa for over 30 years. "I want to transform the physical world into the psychological world."



CHAD BATKA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES
Joe McGinniss in 2011. He first gained fame for a book about the 1968 presidential race.

and Fall of Teddy Kennedy," was replete with salacious details of Senator Edward M. Kennedy's family history and speculation about family members' emotions and motivations, though it was short on sourcing and, to many critics, credibility.

And "The Rogue," written when Ms. Palin was among the most scrutinized politicians in America, broke little new ground and was taken to task over of its "caustic, unsubstantiated gossip about the Palins," as *The Times's* critic Janet Maslin wrote.

None of Mr. McGinniss's books was as controversial as "Fatal Vision." In 1979, while working for *The Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, Mr. McGinniss was asked by Dr. MacDonald to write a book about the trial. Dr. MacDonald, who contended that his family had been attacked by four intruders, clearly thought the author would be an ally and help turn public opinion in his favor.

In his lawsuit, Dr. MacDonald accused Mr. McGinniss of breach of contract, saying the author had agreed to write a book that would exonerate him. A jury could not reach a verdict in the case, and it was settled out of court.

In 1989, the writer Janet Malcolm caused a sensation with an essay, published in *The New Yorker*, about the treacherous moral path walked by journalists, taking the McGinniss-MacDonald relationship as its case study and casting Mr. McGinniss in an especially harsh light.

"Every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to notice what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible," the essay, published in 1990 as a book, "The Journalist and the Murderer," began.

Acts of peace and possible ways to heal



Didi Kirsten Tatlow

LETTER FROM CHINA

BEIJING "Why not let him visit the Holocaust memorial?" asked Chan Koonchung, the Beijing-based Hong Kong writer, of President Xi Jinping of China.

Mr. Chan, the author of "The Fat Years," a novel about an überconfident China, was talking about news reports that the German government didn't want the Chinese leader to make an official visit to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe during his visit to Berlin later this month.

With its intimate experience of the difficult intellectual debates and honesty needed to work through a national trauma of totalitarianism and wartime aggression, the German government feared being dragged into the history wars between China and Japan over World War II, reported Reuters and *Der Spiegel*.

For months, senior Chinese and Japanese officials, including Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, had traded veiled and not-

so-veiled barbs about who was more dangerous to peace in Asia — a rising, un-democratic China, or a Japan whose prime minister prayed at the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, where 14 Class A war criminals

are honored. Fueling the tensions was a dispute over islands in the East China Sea claimed by both countries.

On Jan. 24, Xinhua, the Chinese state news agency, appeared to drag Germany into the quarrel when it posted on Twitter the iconic photograph of Willy Brandt in 1970, when he was the chancellor of Germany, on his knees in Warsaw in front of a memorial to the Jews murdered by Nazi Germany, in a gesture of humility that stunned and impressed the world.

"Only a correct attitude towards history can shape future: Chinese Ambassador," Xinhua said. Japan, implied China, lacked Mr. Brandt's "correct attitude." Yet neither Japan nor China was "correct," Mr. Chan said.

In 2011, appreciating the depth of the problem, he and other intellectuals tried to organize a conference of Japanese and Chinese historians willing to talk — honestly, painfully — about the past. It was to take place in 2012, the 75th anniversary of the 1937 Nanjing Massacre, when Japanese soldiers went on a deadly rampage in the city.

The Chinese government says at least 300,000 Chinese were killed, while other estimates have ranged from 30,000 to 200,000. Last month, Beijing declared two days of national remembrance — one on Dec. 13, for the massacre, and one on Sept. 3, to mark the victory over Japan in 1945.

Yet the war is so politicized in China, and dislike of Japan runs so deep in some quarters, that it was hard to find Chinese historians willing to challenge the state's narrative, Mr. Chan said. Over all, China's record of truth-telling about its own past was poor. There were real issues to face, such as collaboration during the war. But in the absence of honest discussion, what was the point of a conference?

Mr. Chan gave up. For historical reasons, Berlin could have been a good place to hold such an event, he said, but "It never got into the planning stage."

Meanwhile, the reports that Germany rejected Mr. Xi's Holocaust memorial visit seem to have alarmed officials in Berlin, who need China's support for a political solution to the crisis in Ukraine, where Russia has effectively seized Crimea.

On Sunday, in a call with the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, Mr. Xi offered his support, and Ms. Merkel told Mr. Xi that she was "very happy" over his coming visit, a spokesman said.

So far, no itinerary has been announced. On Tuesday, a German Foreign Ministry spokesman, Konrad Lax, said that was merely because it was still too early. "We were not negative or laggardly toward the wishes of the Chinese delegation," Mr. Lax said.

Another German official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said an itinerary would be known probably only on March 21. If Mr. Xi wants to visit the memorial, he can do so privately. "It's often the case that visiting heads of state" may undertake activities "that are not part of the official program," he said.

Mr. Chan, for one, hopes Mr. Xi will see the memorial. The president might learn something about history, about truth-telling, about reconciliation.

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