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A critical biography of the iconic communist revolutionary, and an exposé of the liberals who lionize him.

Nearly four decades after his death, it's impossible to avoid the image of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara everywhere from T-shirts to cartoons. Liberals consider Che a revolutionary martyr who gave his life to help the poor of Latin America. *Time* named him one of the one hundred most influential people of the last century. And a major Hollywood movie is about to lionize him to a new generation.

The reality, as we learn from Cuban exile Humberto Fontova, is that Che wasn't really a gentle soul and a selfless hero. He was a violent Communist who thought nothing of firing a gun into the stomach of a woman six months pregnant whose only crime was that her family opposed him. And he was a hypocrite who lusted after material luxuries while cultivating his image as a man of the people.

Fontova reveals that Che openly talked about his desire to use nuclear weapons against New York City. Such was Che's bloodthirsty hatred that Fontova considers him the godfather of modern terrorism.

Exposing the Real Che Guevara is based on scores of interviews with survivors of Che's atrocities as well as the American CIA agent who interrogated Che just hours before the Bolivian government executed him.

Exposing the Real Che Guevara: And the Useful Idiots Who Idolize Him Details

Date : Published April 19th 2007 by Sentinel HC (first published 2007)

ISBN : 9781595230270

Author : Humberto Fontova

Format : Hardcover 256 pages

Genre : History, Politics, Nonfiction, Biography



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Anthony says

Initially I was reluctant to read EXPOSING THE REAL CHE GUEVARA: AND THE USEFUL IDIOTS WHO IDOLIZE HIM because of the idiotic title. I felt (and still feel) that while the author probably meant the title to be provocative, it actually makes the book sound like it is an unscholarly and heavily biased Republican tirade against a leftist hero. The last thing I wanted to do was waste my time and clutter my mind with a book that had as much intelligence, sophistication, and historical basis as something Faux News pundits and neo-conservative clowns Glenn Beck or Sean Hannity would put out. Especially given the fact that Humberto Fontova has been featured on such nauseating shows as Bill O'Reilly's and other Faux News brain debilitating entertainment for Tea-bagging, Israeli worshiping, "knee-pad" conservatives.

Surprisingly, I'm glad I took a chance and read this book. Although Fontova, who escaped Fidel's Cuba as a child with his immediate family, has an axe to grind, his assertions are all backed up with sources and eyewitness testimony from ex-Fidelista Cuban guerillas, Bay of Pigs survivors, CIA agents (not the most trustworthy sources, I admit), and people who were close friends to both Che and Castro.

Having read and enjoyed Jon Lee Anderson's biography of Che, I was shocked to realize how truly biased and one sided Anderson's highly sympathetic portrayal of Che is. In fact, given the mass of information that Anderson omitted to mention in his biography of Che, and his lionizing of Che as some kind of humanitarian genius with a courageous soul, he goes much further than simply being sympathetic toward Che. His biography is more like a worshipful and uncritical homage to someone he adores. For instance, Anderson never mentioned that there is absolutely no real evidence of Che having obtained a medical degree. Anderson portrays Che as being a self sacrificing warrior who lived a Spartan life who was disdainful of material possessions, when in reality Che lived in one of the most luxurious mansions in Cuba after the revolution, complete with pool and several large television sets. Anderson also portrays Che's victories in battle such as the Battle of Santa Clara and the Bay of Pigs as being of much greater significance than they actually were, actually being small skirmishes with low casualties on both sides.

Anderson's subtle, but pervasive distortion of facts makes sense when one realizes that the sources that he uses were approved and published by Castro and Che's widow such as Che's diaries.

What really gets me is that Che admirers love to try to excuse Che and Castro's crimes away by pointing out that Batista was a corrupt dictator who was living a life of luxury while Cuba's poor starving peasants lived in squalor and filth. While this is certainly true, Che supporters are constructing a false dichotomy whereby they offer only two choices: Castro or Batista while believing that anyone who fought for or was associated with the latter were counterrevolutionary capitalist fascist pigs who deserved being tortured, put in concentration and labor camps, and execution.

Fortunately, reality isn't so simple, and there are more choices to choose from than between two tyrants. Many of the men fighting in Batista's army were poor backward peasants who enlisted for the pay with no real loyalty to Batista, while many of those who were fighting against Batista were leftist nationalists, liberals, Cuban nationalists, and anti-communists. Many of the people who Che had executed ranged from these (both Batista and anti-Batista fighters) to peasant women found aiding people deemed enemies of Castro to teenage males between the ages of 14 and 17. Would someone please explain to me how these victims of the Cuban revolution were "counterrevolutionary" threats? Was killing them and dumping their bodies

unceremoniously in mass graves (estimated to be around 14,000) truly necessary? Were they all really just "CIA agents and informers" as Che so callously generalized them, while he extra-judiciously condemned them to death using "revolutionary justice?"

The rebels were right to oust Batista from power, but Batista was quickly replaced by a regime that was just as corrupt and tyrannical and as quick to squash through violence and coercion any opposition, including that which came from those who fought alongside Castro who saw Fidel's seizure of power as a betrayal to all those who viewed the revolution as a pathway to democracy and free elections.

Fontova points out the abject hypocrisy from Che admirers like U.S. senator Eugene McCarthy who was adamantly against the death penalty yet was willing to overlook the show trials and subsequent executions carried out by Che's firing squads. This same starry eyed attitude toward one of communism's most blood-thirsty executioners by people so ready to condemn capital punishment in other countries is typical of many of Che's admirers and perfectly summed up by Carlos Santana's inane response to being informed about Che's atrocities. Santana's response was to protest that one should not "get hung up on the facts" and that Che was all about "compassion" and "love."

On the other hand, Fontova is not critical at all of Batista's regime, openly supports neo-liberalist economics, and scoffs at the idea of the United States ever having imperialistic tendencies or repressive foreign policies. His description of Che Guevara never even tries to give an impression of being even handed or balanced, which at least Anderson gives the facade of doing so. Although this probably has more to do with the fact that the right has never been as successful as the left in its ability to mask their ulterior objectives.

In any case, EXPOSING THE REAL CHE GUEVARA is an essential book to read back to back with Anderson's biography so as to give the reader a better idea of who Guevara really was.

Varmint says

Do you know someone who is "Gay for Che"? A person who considers themselves tolerant and humane and progressive, but for some reason idolizes a dictators right hand goon?

I got into an ugly little argument at the bookstore while buying this. An old hippie explained that she'd just come back from cuba. And that I shouldn't believe the work of some miami fascist. She insisted "The people", loved their Che. This is the mindset you will encounter from these imbeciles. She thinks people who live in a communist dictatorship, who would be thrown in prison just for owning this book, are somehow more reliable than refugees and survivors living in a free country with a free press.

An important work that suffers from the authors passions. It feels disorganised, jumping around in time and place. I understand that it couldn't have been easy reliving the murder of various relatives and family friends, but I would have preferred something more linear.

Mike (the Paladin) says

If you are one who worships at the alter of "Che" you will be annoyed here. Since I was in high school

(1960s) Che Guevara has been an icon of the political left...the "revolution" of Marxist Stalinism Communism or possibly Stalinist Marxist Communism, or whatever.

The irony, well ironies of this love affair with Che has always seemed humorously sad to me. Being in school in the 1960s he was almost a contemporary and was just coming into his own so to speak. The image that shows up on T-shirts, sweatshirts, posters and so on is from his book Guerrilla Warfare. It was showing up and the "liberal left" students in our high school were as enamored with him as all the other elite people. This was the first irony as they used their freedom of speech to argue for a "revolutionary Marxist movement" that would take away their freedom of speech.

This kind of thing continues to this day as writers, rock musicians, actors, movie makers, etc., etc. continue to gush over Che they fail to realize that he imprisoned in camps and dungeons the writers, rockers and movie makers in Cuba. He turned the Cuban movie industry into a propaganda machine.

Here you will get eye witness accounts of the atrocities, lies and evil surrounding this icon of the left who was quite likely a psychopath.

I know from the start here that many will not give my review any credence. They get a "shiver up their leg" at the very thought of "Che the heroic Guerrilla". (By the way that's also a lie to as accounts from those who were with him bear out.) They will never read this book. Go to the top of the page and type in Che's name and look at the large number of books about the man holding him up as a great humanitarian...including a graphic version for indoctrination of children.

Held up as a man who eschewed material possessions we never hear how he confiscated one of the biggest mansions in Havana as his own after the owners fled Cuba. A home with multiple bedrooms, baths and 10 televisions including one with a 10 foot screen with remote control in 1959. In 1959 that was extreme luxury. Held up as a paragon of Justice he's the one who said we don't need evidence, we manufacture evidence.

This is the man who said don't let these lawyers delay the executions label them coco0nspiritors.

This is the man who was behind a plot to blow up the Statue of Liberty, the Liberty Bell and the Washington Monument...and this is real. A Canadian news anchor smuggled the dynamite into the US. A New York police cadet infiltrated the plot and reported it to the FBI and Canadian Mounted Police.

Read this book if you have an open mind. Of course some may say mine was made up as I've always "known" the "cult of Che" was nonsense. The book's here if you care to read it. It's information from people who were there. Not starry eyed students and leftist dreamers.

Andres says

A very biased view of Ernesto "Che" Guevara's revolutionary career.

Che has been a hero of mine for as many years as it's been since he was first thrust into the public arena. His life is a fascinating tapestry of the bourgeois and the revolutionary, full of as many contradictions as it is of predictable behaviors.

I've read probably every single biography of Che that's been published in Spanish and English, including

those published by the Cuban Revolutionary Government. Between all of them, of which there are more than ten, though I'm too lazy to go and look up exactly how many, they paint a pretty complete picture of his life.

Che wasn't perfect, he wasn't a superman and he certainly made his share of mistakes, some of them as disastrous as the one that cost him his life in Bolivia at the hands of the Bolivian government and our own CIA.

This book's author is one Humberto Fontova, who is a Cuban exile that fled with his parents from Cuba at the time of Castro's takeover, to live in New Orleans.

Now, Mr. Fontova wields a wicked pen, and a lot of his book is interesting, and maybe even guilty of providing the odd nugget of previously unpublished information, but it's inevitably tainted by his background. Far be it for me to stereotype someone based on his nationality and background as an exile, but the unfortunate truth is that the Cuban exile community is chock full of people whining on and on about how much they used to have in Cuba, how unfair the revolutionaries were, and how evil Castro and Guevara behaved.

The truth of the matter is that Cuba in the Batista days was nothing more than a Havana that was a whorehouse and cabaret for rich Americans and the Italian mob, and a countryside that was kept in thrall to the needs of the few in power and their cronies.

Had any of the Cuban leaders at the time funneled even a fraction of the money being thrown left and right in Havana, at the night clubs, casinos and cabarets, back into the countryside, the whole revolution would have been unnecessary and would have floundered or never happened at all.

Castro and Guevara triumphed precisely because the Batista regime created the perfect conditions for a revolutionary venture. And all the 'haves' did nothing to stop it. Then, of course, once Castro came into power he came down hard on those who had created the intolerable conditions he tried to rectify.

Did a few innocent people lose their possessions, and in some (perhaps many) cases their lives? Of course. It was a bloody revolution, no pun intended.

Adding insult to injury, the USA, urged by the exile community and many American companies guilty of bleeding the Cuban masses out of any semblance of profits for their labor and products, instituted an embargo that is still active to this day.

Castro wasn't a Bolshevik communist at the time, and neither was Che. With the embargo we pushed them into the Soviet's arms, since the alternative would have been for them to be excluded from international trading of any sort, with the subsequent collapse of their economy and society this would have provoked.

Mr. Fontova, unfortunately, parrots all the whiny, one-sided complaints of a segment of Cuban society that was actively or passively complicit in the unsavory conditions extant during the Batista regime. One may excuse Mr. Fontova due to his age when all this happened, plus his upbringing in a house where such views must have been his daily bread.

To conclude this impromptu review, I do not regret shelling out some hard cash for his book. As I said, it contains invaluable and previously unavailable information regarding Che, mainly from interviews and research done on members of the Cuban Exile community. But it is the most one-sided tome of all that are out there. Even Castro-sponsored books about Che aren't as one-sidedly complimentary towards Guevara as

Fontova's is derogatory.

J Aurelius says

I am very concerned that some people don't realize that Castro had good intentions when he started out but Communism is only good in theory. There is a lot of fascist shit going on in America but to each their own. Needless to say, I am not above gaining information from both sides.

Tim P says

Not the most scholarly work ever written, but contains enough information and details to shoot massive holes through most of the popular memory of Che.

Phillip says

Lived as a murdering bastard. Died a coward. It is amazing that people walk around wearing T-shirts with his picture. Why not Hitler? If Che and his murdering crowd had been just a tad bit luckier, or more skilled (he was kind of a clutz and no military genius), we would have had 9/11 a long time ago. The left, in its guilt-driven angst, made a hero of someone who spent most of his time in NY (in the penthouses of idiots) running down this country and telling bozos why he was so great. After he died, when he was no longer a threat to a jealous presidente, Castro made him into a hero. Cuba desperately poor and under the boot of communism, needed something uplifting.

We should have opened trade with Cuba years and years ago. Instead we let their people starve and Castro and Che become folk-heroes. If more Americans could have seen what Cuba was under Castro, the Fidel/Chi PR effort would have had a pretty hard time.

Wear your shirt if you are clueless or if in fact you really don't care for what America has stood for. You dopes.

PEJ

Abigail says

I always wondering what the hell was the deal with this guy? It never made sense to me why people made him into this Jesus figure when he worked alongside Castro whom everyone hates and he was a guerilla, which means he killed people (A LOT OF INNOCENT PEOPLE). Che was a disgusting, demented man along the likes of Hitler, maybe even worse.

If you have some retarded poster or T-shirt of this guy burn it now before you humiliate yourself even further - this goes for you too Carlos Santana (stupid hippie, I never liked him anyway).

Oh and might I say I don't like how the author makes it sound like every liberal likes this guy, he has that part completely misconstrued.

Cindy says

The cover art/title are enough to grab any person's interest. As Fontova begins, I associate myself with the many that thought of him as a freedom fighter, as the protagonist in Motorcycle Diaries who grows to be a hero for the masses. And then I see this title that labels me a "useful idiot" and my opinion changes as I read. I loved reading a different perspective of Che. Told from the point of view of a child of refugees, his bias is blatant and I think his anger clouds his writing. He lacks organization and cohesion, making his argument sloppy. But he does raise some very interesting questions and sites many alternate sources for the "facts" of Che's life. If you have the inclination, it's an interesting read and has plenty of sources for further reading.

Carlos Mendoza says

I used to mentally deduct 20 IQ points from anyone I see wearing a Che T-shirt.

I don't do that anymore.

Now I deduct 50 points.

In North Korea, the cult of personality surrounding Kim Jung Il has its narrative so well-controlled that citizens there really, truly believe that he has superhuman powers. This happened because there is no other available, realistic counter-narrative about him there. The propaganda machine controls every aspect of the story about his life. Such was the case for many Che disciples. This book should help to open many eyes.

That's if they bother to read about him at all. For most, simple circular logic is sufficient.

"Che is totally cool because so many celebrities idolize him."

"So many celebrities idolize Che because he is totally cool."

Rage Against the Machine fails to see the sweet irony in using Che as their mascot, then quoting Orwell in song. "He who controls the Present, controls the Past. Who controls the Past, controls the Future." They fail to see how Che's history has been either written by the members of the Castro regime itself, or by psychopathic communist sympathizers who so desperately need a figurehead for whom they can claim a cool, celebrity status.

The truth is Che was a murderer, a tool for doing Castro's wetwork, and a coward when facing death. The documented evidence of his crimes after the revolution, often in his own words, and with eye-witness accounts, is overwhelmingly presented in this book. The very same useful-idiots who call men torturers for pouring water on the face of enemy combatants have no qualms wearing the t-shirts of a man who delighted in conducting, and participating in, trial-less executions.

I could do without some of Mr. Fontova flippant remarks, but I don't doubt his research into the real Che, nor the facts he presents. The trail of bodies and ruined lives is still too fresh, and fortunately, unlike North Korea, enough have escaped to share the real truth.

Bliss Tew says

"EXPOSING THE REAL CHE GUEVARA-AND THE USEFUL IDIOTS WHO IDOLIZE HIM" is a book the entire world should read, especially the "useful idiots who idolize him." Their idolization of the late communist terrorist, murderer, revolutionary, and invader of foreign lands would likely discontinue, even though such idolization is popular in some circles, if they knew the eye-witness facts presented in Mr. Fontova's excellent book about Che.

The irony of movie stars and politicians giving a standing ovation of the debute of Robert Redford's movie "MOTORCYCLE DIARIES," a movie that "glorified a man [Che] who jailed or exiled most of Cuba's best writers, poets, and independent filmmakers" is brought out early in the book's introduction.

Mr. Fontova who is himself part of a refuge family that fled Castro and Che's Cuba, used eye-witnesses to assemble his book about the blood-thirsty Che "the Pig" Guevara. I highly recommend to anyone with a desire for truth to read Mr. Fontova's book to get a better understanding of the life and deeds of Che Guevara including the way he died in a foreign country he had invaded to bring about an insurrection.

Kelsey says

Ernesto (Che) Guevara has been compared by some to Jesus Christ and yet described by many who left Cuba as a murdering psychopath. I think it makes more sense to believe those who knew him and fled rather than the handful of sycophant celebrities who, even now, wear his engraved image. His firing squad eventually taped their victims's mouths shut so they would no longer yell out, "Long Live Christ the King." In a letter to his father, Che wrote about his humble beginnings which led him into Fidel Castros' favor, "I'd like to confess,Papa, at that moment I discovered that I really like killing."

Humberto Fontova's collective accounts from escaped Cubans of Che and his influence are sickening. Quantifying just how many suffered and died is impossible as long as it remains closed in its communist state. I cannot understand how the superficiality of branding has won so many empty heads and hearts without giving Castro some nod for marketing brilliance. Evil? Yes. But also genius.

Nocheevo says

The book covers the real Che Guevara. In a packed 208 pages, Humberto Fontova, covers the story of this plucky Irish expat from Argentina's non-hiding Nazi minority ethic group as he backpacks upwards in an effort to visit Jimmy Dean of the Norte Americano movies, to his initial keyboard fumbling in the NY

electro-trash scene before switching to turntables and finding success with Rage Against the Machine in which he made the guitar sound un-guitar whilst poster boy Tom Morello mimed. Along the way its an inspiring philosophical tale of never selling out and keeping your head in the slipstream of pop culture.

Obviously the above is a joke review of this joke of a book.

Firstly to highlight my biased mindset that could have impacted on my reading. I consider myself fairly left leaning, in that its easy to be pink with a comfortable life kind of way, much like Richard Burton considered himself a socialist. I've moshed to Rage against the machine. I have read much about revolutions and Che since my early teens. I visited Cuba. I owe a screen print of the Korda photograph and have a wallet featuring Che. Yet I have the print because it is an impressive piece of art, I appreciate the irony of the wallet and I don't think he was "the most complete human being of our age".

I read this hoping for a second view point on the myth of Che. Debunk the half truths, unravel the spin and maybe even explore the capitalistic misappropriation of the image and marketing of Che. Sadly what you get with this book is a collection of ham fisted they say/ we say examples and deliberate misinterpretations to present the case, mocking asides on any A to C grade celebrity who make have mentioned Che, wore a shirt, visited Castro Cuba, produced a film, drank rum or listened to Son. Worst of all is much of the evidence in this book is on the level of puerile insults written on a school toilet wall.

Examples :

Che stank.....repeated throughout "...down to the swimming hole on many afternoons – not that Che got wet"

A feeble attempt to link Nazism to the 26 July Movement by the choice of a Red and Black colour scheme. Senor Fontova totally over looks the historical link to left wing politics caught up in the colours.

Che bribed the disenchanted Cuban army commanders to avoid fighting is dragged up as an example of an ineffective guerrilla and military leader. Sounded very clever to me.

There seems to be an anti-argentinian slant in some points. It seems the Argentinians may be considered the arrogants of latin america.

A lot of the anger seems to be in that Che as a martyr has been marketed better than what the counter point could muster. That will not change with this book.

I understand the Cuban "exiles/ refugees" of which the author is one are likely to be burdened with pained hearts at least until the Castros shuffle off but producing hymn books like this for the choir isn't really going to achieve much.

Kitty Red-Eye says

Read about 2/3 of this book and I think I get the point. Actually, the point is in the title. The book goes on to elaborate why the personality cult really is a stroke of idiocy (given that we trust the author's version of events, then obviously he is right to say "idiots").

Actually, I don't doubt that Cuba is every bit the dictatorship and that the Cuban revolution was every bit as bloody and unfair as all other revolutions I've heard about. I do have a problem with the tone of the author, though, since it's impossible to disagree with passion. Even to question passion is difficult. The book is very aggressive in tone, tearing its subject apart bit by bit, then stomping on the remains, shouting TAKE THIS! AND THIS! AND THAT AND THAT AND THAT! - So even if I actually do sympathize somewhat, it's a little difficult to read. I guess I'd prefer a more sombre style. I won't hold it against the author, though, since he is personally affected, and that his family's, and other families', tragedy turned upside-down in a mockery of history, equal to the "war is peace, lies are truth, ignorance is strength"-slogans from 1984. The personality cult of Che and lack of outrage against the Cuban regime adds insult to injury, and this book is very marked by that.

Personally, I'd prefer a "lower tone", not sure how to put it. I mean, I don't mind the level of criticism. If it's true, then it's true, no matter who likes or dislikes it. Maybe the author is overdoing it, I can't be the judge of that, since I'm no expert in history or in Cuban affairs. It just rings true, as I've heard so many stories like it before. But I can't really judge. So then, understandable as the author's outrage is, it would have been easier to read if I didn't constantly have the feeling he was writing with the caps lock on.

I'd be very interested in the history, though, could I only trust what I was reading. But it's a bit like reading about Venezuela. No matter what you say, someone's gonna start screaming at you about how stupid-lefty or stupid-righty you are. Argh.

Check book, couldn't find it on goodreads yet, recommended: <http://www.amazon.com/Guerillas-Histo...>

Don Incognito says

An eye-opening account, documented with many endnotes, of who Ernesto "Che" Guevara was and how he behaved. The sources are usually Cubans--exiles in Miami; surviving relatives of people executed on Guevara's orders (Fidel Castro put him in charge of executions); Bay of Pigs invasion survivors; and former Cuban Communists who defected to the U.S. Most biographies of Guevara are hagiographies, some written by the Cuban government itself. Some of the principal facts you will learn are:

-Guevara wasn't Cuban, but a native of Argentina. (My personal observation: Being not born in the country they rule, or help rule, is something common among major Communist and socialist leaders. Guevara was Argentinian; Joseph Stalin was ethnically Georgian, not Russian; Adolf Hitler was Austrian-born; Napoleon was not French but Corsican.

-Guevara enjoyed killing people and/or watching them die. How do we know? He said so once, in a letter to his father after the first time he killed someone. Also, he had a window installed in his office so he could watch his firing squad execute people outside. This is in contraindication to most biographies, which present Guevara as saintly. (Some even equate him with Jesus Christ, calling him "Chesucristo.")

-He passionately hated the United States, and, in a famous speech given before the UN, declared a desire to see it destroyed. (The author implies that Guevara wanted to launch the nuclear weapons that the Soviets placed in Cuba.)

-As a military strategist and field commander, he was totally incompetent, and once admitted to a colleague that he knew nothing about military strategy. (Despite that, he wrote a famous primer on how to conduct guerrilla warfare.) The "revolution" that took over Cuba consisted of nothing but Che bribing the military commanders of the Batista regime, with very little actual combat occurring. Batista's officers were already

not very motivated to fight, because the Batista regime was corrupt and unpopular.

During Guevara's campaigns in other countries, trying on Cuba's behalf to help local Communists take over, his military performance simply makes him look ridiculous. He fails to recruit local peasants as guerrillas, and can't even lead his men without getting lost--for months! That last part is in Bolivia, where Guevara is finally captured and killed in a joint operation by the Bolivian army and CIA.

-When not clearly possessing superior force, Guevara was a coward. In the Bolivian capture that I mentioned above, when facing Bolivian soldiers, Guevara surrendered quickly, repeatedly telling them he was "worth more alive than dead." The other thing noted in the book is, Guevara was terrified of Fidel Castro, and sucked up to him whenever possible, including in a famous farewell letter. (The sucking up didn't help. Castro bullied Guevara a number of times, and in fact, the real reason Castro sent Guevara abroad in the first place was to get rid of him.

The weakness of the book is that the author, being a Cuban exile who lost family and friends to Guevara's firing squads, writes with an obviously angry and contemptuous attitude. However, facts are facts, and if his anger throws the reader into doubt, the footnotes are there to be checked.