

INSIDE: THE KING AND THE SOCIALIST ● SHOPPING AT THE END OF THE WORLD ● NATURE'S ASSASSIN ● SEE GAZA AND WEEP ● DEATH OF A DELUSION ● & MORE

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**MOMMA
TOLD ME
NOT
TO COME**

Uniforms, \$500 suits and Three Dog Night.
Stan Cox visits a surreal Star Wars conference

ColdType *The* READER

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THE KING AND THE SOCIALIST

Pablo Ouziel on the spat between Juan Carlos and Hugo Chavez

On August 1, 1969, Time magazine quoted Generalissimo Francisco Franco saying: “Conscious of my responsibility before God and history and taking into account the qualities to be found in the person of Prince Juan Carlos of Borbón, who has been perfectly trained to take up the high mission to which he might be called, I have decided to propose him to the nation as my successor.” With this statement began the formal relationship between Spain’s present king and the country’s fascist dictator.

At the recent Ibero-American Summit in Santiago de Chile, Juan Carlos the King of Spain pointed his finger at Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and asked him, “Why don’t you shut up?”, after Chávez had called José María Aznar, Spain’s former Prime Minister, a fascist.

This scene from the Ibero-American Summit has travelled the globe through every mainstream news media channel, used as an opportunity to attack Hugo Chavez for his rudeness and out-

of-line commentary, when not only is it a fairly accurate statement, but should also be used as an opportunity by political analysts worldwide to bring out the extent to which fascist factions are still very much alive in Spain’s political reality.

It is important to note that this incident in the Ibero-American Summit is not an isolated one. Already earlier this year, Chavez called Aznar “a fascist who supported the coup (of April 2002) and who is of the same kind as Adolf Hitler, a disgusting and despicable person who you feel sorry for, a true servant of George W. Bush”. This statement was made shortly after Aznar made a call “on the United States, Europe and the Latin American democracies, to close ranks and defeat Hugo Chavez’s 21st century socialism.”

Even Spain’s Minister for External Affairs and Cooperation, Miguel Ángel Moratinos on November 2004, during an interview in the program ‘59 segundos’ of TVE, acknowledged Aznar’s support for the coup against Hugo Chavez in 2002: “During the previous govern-

Juan Carlos the King of Spain pointed his finger at Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and asked him, “Why don’t you shut up?”, after Chávez had called José María Aznar Spain’s former Prime Minister a fascist

The King only has his crown thanks to the father of fascism in Spain, Francisco Franco

ment, something unheard of in Spanish diplomacy took place, the Spanish Ambassador received instructions to support the coup, something which is not going to be repeated in the future. This is not going to be repeated because we respect the wish of the people.”

The fact remains that, during the Ibero-American Summit, Chavez was verbally attacking a man who had supported a coup against him, a fact which should have been made clear in the mainstream media’s coverage of the incident.

Instead, the reporting of the incident between the King and Chavez managed to ignore this, and the historical facts which made the King of Spain react with so much anger upon hearing the word ‘fascist’.

Aznar’s background

In order for the whole incident to be put into perspective, we must understand, first, Aznar’s background as a supporter of fascism and, second, the fact that the King only has his crown thanks to the father of fascism in Spain, Francisco Franco.

With regard to Aznar, it is important to highlight his membership in the Frente de Estudiantes Sindicalistas (FES), a student branch of the Falange Española Independiente (FEI), and part of the official party charged with developing the ideology for Franco’s regime once the war had ended.

It is also important to emphasize that throughout his career, Aznar has never denounced the Franco regime and when democracy was reintroduced in Spain in 1978, he opposed the new

constitution. Aznar’s loyalty to Franco was further made clear when he denounced the municipal government of Guernika – best known as the scene of one of the first aerial bombings by Nazi Germany’s Luftwaffe – for wanting to change the name of their main street from “Avenida del General Franco” to “Avenida de la Libertad”.

Regarding the King of Spain, it is important to note that his grandfather King Alfonso XIII left Spain on April 14, 1931, when the dictatorship of the aristocrat and military official Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja, whom he had supported, came to an end and the Second Spanish Republic was proclaimed.

In 1936, the Civil war broke out, and it was not until years later after millions of Spanish people had suffered through the war and a brutal dictatorship, that in 1969 General Franco officially designated a heir and gave the title of Prince of Spain to Juan Carlos, the current king of Spain, therefore reintroducing the monarchy through a young prince he had personally groomed, who in his investiture in the Cortes, kneeling at Franco’s left, swore his loyalty “to his Excellency the Chief of State and fidelity to the principles of the National Movement, and the fundamental laws of the Kingdom.”

According to a Time magazine article titled ‘A Crown for Juan Carlos?’ dated August 23, 1971, it was clear for Franco that the only way to bring back the monarchy was if he brought it back himself: “Franco, a lifelong monarchist, knows that in Spain there is no great affection for the crown... If Franco does not put a king back upon the throne, no

one else will.” So just before his death on October 30, 1975, he gave full control to Juan Carlos and on November 22, following Franco’s death, the Cortes Generales proclaimed Juan Carlos King of Spain. Only a few days after Franco’s death, Juan Carlos said of the brutal dictator; “An exceptional figure has entered history... Remembering Franco will constitute for me a demand for good behaviour and loyalty.”

Transition to democracy

So, although under the leadership of King Juan Carlos, Spain did formally complete its transition from dictatorship to democracy with the Spanish Constitution of 1978, leaving in place a constitutional monarchy, it would be hard to believe that someone who swore loyalty to a brutal fascist would have no animosity to such ideals.

For this reason as a Spaniard, it is disappointing for me to see how people around the world receive the media sound bites regarding the heated exchange between a King and a president, without being granted the opportunity to understand the historical

events which lead to such a situation. Both Aznar and the King of Spain have embraced fascism at some point in their lives and have built their power upon its foundations, so although one today would struggle to prove the statement that they are currently fascists, it can at least be said of them, that at one point both of them certainly were.

For this reason, I choose to do two things, one is to correct the statement by the Spanish newspaper El Mundo; “The King has put Chavez in his place in the name of all Spaniards,” – by saying that he has certainly not done so in my name, and secondly, I wish to address all those moralists discussing Chavez’s manners, by asking them whether they think it was good manners for Aznar to support a coup against Hugo Chavez, and whether they think it was good manners and a show of love to the Spanish people, when the King swore loyalty to the brutal dictator who killed so many of our relatives. **CT**

Pablo Ouziel is an activist and a freelance writer based in Spain.

Both Aznar and the King of Spain have embraced fascism at some point in their lives and have built their power upon its foundations

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NATURE'S ASSASSIN

David Pratt on the world's deadliest disease

Those freakishly dolled-up marauders no longer roam the city streets and villages. But another indiscriminate killer still does

I am in Liberia, West Africa. It is November: the end of the rainy season in a country that is among the wettest on Earth, its hot, humid climate providing the ideal breeding ground for the mosquito. The author Graham Greene came here in the 1930s, before penning his now famous travel book, *Journey Without Maps*, which documented the appalling health conditions that prevailed in a place where venereal disease and malaria were rife.

The last time I was in Liberia, the country itself was embarking on a journey. It was a journey without limits in terms of the barbarism experienced by its citizens. That was in 2003: a time when, wracked by anarchy and civil war, Liberia was a hellhole.

In the tumbledown capital, Monrovia, with its mouldy damp-blackened buildings, it was commonplace to see doped-up teenage gunmen, unnervingly attired in women's wigs, night-dresses and other voodoo regalia they believed powerful "juju" or magic, capable of protecting them from the bullets of rival killers. Rarely have I been in a spookier place.

Liberia is quieter now, its people trying desperately to rebuild their lives and heal the scars of a collective horror any sane person would find difficult to comprehend. Today, those freakishly dolled-up marauders no longer roam the city streets and villages. But another indiscriminate killer still does. A killer that is, without question, the female of its species.

Attracted by the odour and warmth of living bodies, and armed with a piercing proboscis, it favours the quiet time between dusk and dawn when its victims are asleep.

Just like Liberia's homicidal militiamen, the female anopheles mosquito makes no distinction in its bloodletting. Women, children, the elderly and infirm have all succumbed to its scourge. In the thousands of years that this insect has been on the planet, drilling into the blood-filled capillaries and squirting countless malaria parasites known as plasmodia into its victims, it has ravaged humankind more than all of history's armies combined.

Malaria, like the demon in The Rolling Stones' song *Sympathy For The*

Devil, has indeed been around for many a “long long year”. The disease has always been a global health threat. Only the plague and soon, perhaps, HIV, have had a greater influence on our demographic history. Some scientists believe that of every two people who have ever lived, one has died of malaria.

It is probable that the mosquito and its parasite were here long before humankind, making our dinosaur predecessors among its earliest victims. Signs of the disease have been found in Egyptian mummies and the skeleton of a child buried in a Roman cemetery. DNA evidence suggests that it may have contributed to the downfall of the Roman Empire. More than 2000 years ago, the Greek historian Herodotus noted that in swampy areas of Egypt, some people would sleep in tall structures that mosquitoes could not reach, or under special material that the insects failed to penetrate.

It is probable that malaria stopped the armies of Genghis Khan and Attila the Hun in their tracks, and killed as many soldiers in the Far East during the second world war as did bullets and bombs.

As for the present and future, the statistics – current and projected – are terrifying.

Today, malaria, which takes its name from the Italian for “bad air”, affects more people than ever before, stalking more than 100 nations and threatening half of the world’s population. Of the million people who will die this year following the symptoms of fever, shivering, headaches, vomiting and joint pains, most will be in such places as

Liberia and other sub-Saharan African countries.

The vast majority are aged under five years old, and from impoverished families. Malaria is the plague of the poor. In many parts of Africa it is not unusual to find families with an income of less than £100 a year spending a quarter of this hard-earned money on malaria treatment.

First encounter

It was among the poor and dispossessed that, some 25 years ago, I first encountered the disease. Shortly afterwards, I contracted it myself. I had gone, not to Africa, but to Central America, as a freelance correspondent on assignment, spending months living with guerrilla fighters and refugees in the steamy hot, mountainous forests of Nicaragua and El Salvador. At some point during that time, the anopheles mosquito did its work. Like most victims, I was probably bitten at night, the insect injecting me with the one-celled plasmodia parasite when I was sleeping deeply after yet another long, exhausting day in the sweltering bush.

Scientists say that as many as 50,000 plasmodia could swim in a pool the size of a full stop. But it takes only one to enter the bloodstream and make its way to the host’s liver, where it multiplies and infects the red-blood cells, to trigger malaria.

Four species of plasmodia normally infect humans, and by far the most dangerous is *Plasmodium falciparum*. It is also the most prevalent, accounting for more than half the cases of malaria worldwide, and over 90% of deaths.

It is probable that malaria stopped the armies of Genghis Khan and Attila the Hun in their tracks

BITE OF DEATH

Malaria's great menace lies in its capacity to strike people already exposed to other debilitating diseases or conditions, such as dysentery, tuberculosis, bilharzia or malnutrition

Rarely has nature created a more lethal pairing than that of the mosquito and *falciparum*. While a virus like measles consists of just a few genes, malaria is made up of 5,000, with the ability to multiply rapidly and resist drugs used to treat the infected.

My own malaria would prove very resistant to treat. But before then came the crushingly debilitating symptoms. The first flush of fever hit one afternoon, as I interviewed some Salvadoran refugees – many of whom were infected with malaria – in a place called Colomoncagua on the Honduran border. By evening, it had taken a colossal grip.

“You’re 106,” announced one of the North American Jesuit priests who worked helping the refugees, after pulling a thermometer from my mouth.

“I’m pretty sure it’s malaria. We’ll have to get you out to a hospital in the capital,” he said, as I struggled to focus on the blurred face in front of me.

I spent the next few days laid in the back of a pick-up truck en-route to the Honduran capital Tegucigalpa, in the throes of delirium. In the worst cases of malarial fever, temperatures can climb so high that the sufferer boils to death. Through the interminable shaking, burning and cold, I remember little except for the reassuring voice of an Italian photographer colleague, Massimo Martino, promising me endlessly: “We will be there soon David, very soon.”

It would be another week after making Tegucigalpa and receiving initial treatment that I finally arrived in the UK. There, at London’s famous St Pancras hospital for tropical diseases, my diagnosis was confirmed. So, too, was

amoebic dysentery. According to the doctors, this, combined with the anaemia caused by the malaria, meant I was lucky to have made it home.

Malaria’s great menace lies in its capacity to strike people already exposed to other debilitating diseases or conditions, such as dysentery, tuberculosis, bilharzia or malnutrition. The pairing of the mosquito and *falciparum* is a devastating combination which, when allied with hunger and poverty, makes for a dual assault sometimes described by humanitarian workers as “the perfect storm”.

Poorest communities

Understanding the full force of this storm, and the role malaria plays in it, involves a journey into some of the world’s poorest communities. Places like the town of Kasongo in South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It was there, in the town’s dilapidated hospital, that I encountered tiny, three-year-old Kabemba Ndarabo, spreadeagled on a table, malnourished, riddled with worms and infected with malaria. The hospital was equipped with wooden storage cupboards half-eaten by termites; radiological equipment layered with dust; recycled surgical gloves; and stinking, faeces-filled toilet cubicles.

All of this was evidence of a public health system that had broken down, in an area where malarial exposure is among the highest anywhere. In such places, it’s not unusual to be bitten by an infected mosquito 700 times a year (around twice each night).

Little Kabemba Ndarabo’s chances

of survival were slim, despite his mother's determined 30-mile-long hike to bring him to the only hospital. Malaria's burden is harsh in terms of death, but it goes far beyond that. When one child is dying of the disease, a mother or father is often forced to ignore the others. If the parents themselves are afflicted, their families probably won't eat, making them, too, vulnerable to illness.

Kabemba's mother had marched those long miles leaving behind two other children. Since her husband was killed in the civil war that gripped Congo, she had been the only breadwinner. How, I asked, would the other children eat in her absence?

"Our neighbours in the village will feed them the best they can. They don't have enough for themselves but they will give something," she replied, highlighting once again the knock-on effects malaria has on communities living a subsistence existence.

No longer a threat?

Malaria, like measles or polio, is no longer perceived as a threat across the developed world. Occasionally, we hear news of a traveller who has fallen victim to the disease. But for the most part, it is considered an exotic thing of the past, dismissed easily with another gin and tonic: a mixer which contains the quinine known to be useful in combating malaria.

But in the slums of places such as Dhaka in Bangladesh, where washing means scooping up stagnant water from ponds full of raw sewage surrounded by swarms of mosquitoes,

malaria is an ever-present grim reaper. Here, some residents have devised a system of "hanging latrines" – precarious bamboo platforms raised a few feet above the water, and screened with rags. In the rainy season, the sluggish water rises above the tops of the stilts supporting some huts, flooding the floors and tiny alleyways with dead vermin, human faeces and other refuse. Malarial-carrying mosquitoes congregate in dense clouds. And one in 10 children here will die before they are five. During a visit last year, I heard one man compare living in Dhaka's slums to a state of "semi-death".

According to researchers interviewed by National Geographic, one of the most unfortunate things about malaria is that prosperous nations have rid themselves of it, thus ensuring little outcry about its prevalence elsewhere. "In the meantime, several distinctly unprosperous regions have reached the brink of total malarial collapse, virtually ruled by swarms of buzzing, flying syringes," observes the magazine's writer Michael Finkel.

The discovery that mosquitoes carry the parasite that was then passed to humans, was made in 1876, by British scientist Patrick Manson. Four years later, French doctor, Alphonse Laveran, identified the culprit as the plasmodium parasite, while in 1897, another British scientist, Ronald Ross, found the malaria parasite in the anopheles mosquito.

These discoveries, and the launch of anti-malaria campaigns following the second world war, led to considerable success in combating the disease. Per-

When one child is dying of the disease, a mother or father is often forced to ignore the others. If the parents themselves are afflicted, their families probably won't eat

The threat to US troops passed and the United Nations-backed global antimalarial campaign faltered in the face of the tenacity of the mosquito species

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haps most notable was the discovery of the insecticidal effects of the compound known as DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane) by Swiss chemist Paul Muller, who in 1948 was awarded the Nobel Prize for his work. By the 1960s, however, DDT's success was discredited, as evidence mounted of its effect on wildlife and that the ever stubborn mosquito had become resistant to it.

After more than 100,000 cases of malaria were recorded among US troops during the Vietnam war, the US government invested heavily in the development of anti-malarial drugs. But in the decades that followed, the threat to US troops passed and the United Nations-backed global antimalarial campaign faltered in the face of the tenacity of the mosquito species. Western interest seemed to tail off.

Holy Grail

Today, the race to find a vaccine has become a holy grail for big drug companies such as GlaxoSmithKline and charities such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Gates, the world's richest man, seems to be on a personal crusade to rid the world of malaria. "It just blows my mind how little money has been spent on malaria research," he told New Yorker writer Michael Specter in 2005. "What has prevented the rich world from attempting this? I just keep asking myself, 'Do we really not care because it doesn't affect us?'"

At last, though, the world appears to be waking up to the threat posed by malaria, and the possibility of a "miracle" vaccine may be a little closer. A few weeks ago, scientists and campaigners

welcomed the early results of a malarial vaccine prototype trial in African infants. Although researchers insist that caution is needed in interpreting the data from the study involving 214 babies in Mozambique, the vaccine has so far appeared to be safe, and highly protective. After three months, infants who had received it were 65% less likely to contract malaria than those without.

The quest for the vaccine represents a partnership between several African nations, the pharmaceutical industry and the PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI). "These results essentially provide another green light indicating that we can move towards a large phase-three trial with this vaccine," says Christine Loucq, director of MVI. That trial is expected to begin next year in 10 sites across sub-Saharan Africa and, if successful, the vaccine will be licensed in 2011. Such a success would mark a phenomenal step forward in the fight against malaria and the "audacious goal" Gates defined as "a day when no human being has malaria, and no mosquito on Earth is carrying it".

Last week, before leaving for Liberia, I visited a pharmacy to stock up on mosquito repellent and anti-malarial pills. Tonight after dusk in Monrovia, I will use that repellent, swallow my Malarone and make sure my mosquito net is tight shut against those nocturnal killers.

Elsewhere in Africa and around the world, countless millions of others, too poor to eat let alone pay for this protection, will be bitten. And every 30 seconds, another child will be killed by malaria. **CT**

SALVATION LIES IN CONDIMENTS

Fred Reed finds a solution to the schools problem

I am going to revitalize the American mayonnaise industry. Yes. Such is the patriotism rampant in this column. We will fill the nation's swimming pools with the purest domestic variety, and then drown the entire staff of the public school system in it. I personally will tie cinderblocks to them.

My love of country is great: I will use no Chinese mayonnaise.

And then I'll bring back the one-room school house. Many will denounce me in the public prints as retrograde. Well, when you have driven your car into a swamp full of underfed alligators, retrograde is what you want to be.

Why the one-room school house? Because it rewards initiative and brains and individualism and other things America no longer stands for and in fact can't stand.

Think about it. In a school of one room, students can advance as they will. If a child of eight can read as well as the 15-year-olds, he can read with them. If he is able to do algebra when he is ten, why, he can do so. If he can't,

he can stay with kids at his own level. If the teacher can't, put her in a tumbrel and take her to the mayonnaise. Is this not a splendid idea?

No. Today, advancement in the public schools depends on race, creed, color, sex, and national origin, on time served, docility, pernicious pseudopsychology, tolerance of pointless make-work, on preference for form over substance. Learning anything is irrelevant. Indeed it is discouraged, as it might increase the self-esteem of the smart. What counts is absorbing group-think like a napkin in a beer spill. The important things are doing witless homework and pasting pictures in stupid projects. This is pure hell for the very bright, and tends strongly to favor girls, who are more likely to do things they know to be stupid.

Next I am going to devastate the schools by giving the students hope. I will set up a comprehensive test, lasting perhaps a week, of everything that a graduate of a high school should learn. And I will tell the students that when they can pass that test, they can pick up

Learning anything is irrelevant. Indeed it is discouraged, as it might increase the self-esteem of the smart. . . The important things are doing witless homework and pasting pictures in stupid projects

Schools exist to keep children off the streets and off the job market, to serve as day care, to provide submissive drones for the office market, and to instill appropriate values, meaning those that make for political passivity and high consumption. Americans exist to buy things

their diplomas at the door. Gone, outa there. No more listening, agonized, to mouth-breathing IQ-85 preliterate marginal humans burbling ed-school Marxibabble.

Can you conceive of the academic frenzy that hope of escape would inspire, at least in the bright? A fair few kids in the fifth grade read at a twelfth grade level. (And plenty of affirmative-action teachers, documentably and obviously, don't.) Lots could advance by broad jumps in all subjects if allowed to. Why not let them, and let them test out when they can? Isn't the purpose of school to get them to learn?

Of course not. Schools exist to keep children off the streets and off the job market, to serve as day care, to provide submissive drones for the office market, and to instill appropriate values, meaning those that make for political passivity and high consumption. Americans exist to buy things.

Fascination with the dull

Now, again, I understand that any notion of rewarding competence runs against the national character. I am aware of the almost lascivious fascination with the dull, slow, inferior, substandard, puzzled, coarse, shiftless, lame, and useless. We have affirmative action to ensure the perpetuation of these ideals.

However, as a titillating venture into intellectual pornography, let's consider how the schools look to the bright. Yes, yes, I know: the bright are elitist, and contribute nothing to civilization except all of it, and must be crushed. But...consider the bright anyway.

Think of it as abnormal psychology, or peeking at dirty pictures.

Ponder Bobby Lou, who carts around an IQ of 145 or 160. Understand that he is innocent of this mistake. He didn't mean anything by it. No intention of offending motivated him. Think of it as a genetic accident. But there he is: a freak, cursed by nature.

Every day, for all of his young life, he goes to school and does what seem to him appallingly stupid things. They probably seem appallingly stupid to the other kids too, but they are worse for him. He listens to teachers with IQs so far below his that he couldn't reach them with a rope and a bucket. Globble-gurble. Blah blah blah. Wabble wabble. He squirms. He twitches. He thinks, "Why can't I read my physiology text that I found at Reiter's Scientific, or take Peggy Sue into the woods to cop a feel? God, I've seen bugs more intelligent than this woman, and more interesting. I've seen mothballs more..."

Now, being average is not reprehensible, any more than being unable to bench press Oprah Winfrey. However, there is something to be said for matching capacity to opportunity. If you want to teach Bobby Lou, you get someone bright, and let Bobby advance as he chooses. If you want to elevate Oprah, you get a fork lift.

But undeserved suffering is nonetheless inflicted on Bobby Lou. He rebels, or snores loudly, and the teachers think something is wrong with him. His grades are poor because he doesn't want to paste pretty pictures in notebooks full of foolishness. In high school he takes to petty delinquency and to

drink, becomes morose, and maybe lapses into terrorism. If he does, it is justified. (Come to think of it, I would issue him a hand grenade at matriculation to encourage the teachers not to bore him. Ha.)

In a one-room school, he could move at his own rate, and then test out of the whole fetid business.

Better yet would be separate tests of different subjects. When a kid demonstrates that he can read at the twelfth grade level, no teacher should ever again be allowed to so much as mention reading to him, unless it be to ask him to coach her. If the kid passes what is now the tenth-grade Algebra II, or chemistry or physics, that should be it. He should then have a choice of taking advanced courses, taught by a vertebrate, or going behind the school to smoke and drink beer.

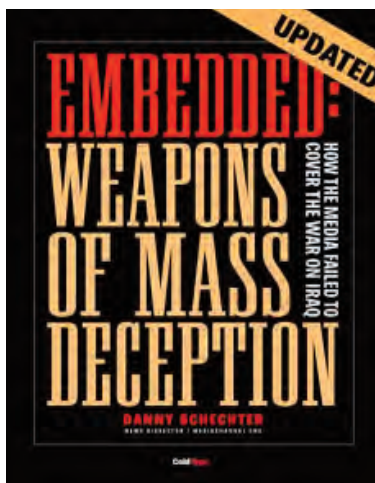
I figure we can generalize the ap-

proach. We could have tests of what a student is expected to learn at a run-of-the-mill university (nothing), and at a middling or a first-rate university. (Surely someone remembers what they taught?) Really bright students could test out of the degradation in its entirety. The effect would be to unemploy a lot of professors, but we could just stuff them into the mayonnaise along with the rest.

I know what you are thinking. What if we run out of mayonnaise? Improvise. Ketchup. Salad dressing. **CT**

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SEE GAZA AND WEEP

Stuart Littlewood ventures into a land under siege

He'd had no visitors since February and when he heard we were coming, he burst into tears, said a colleague,

In the run-up to the Annapolis conference on Israel and Palestine, I went to Gaza on an unusual mission, joining a party of priests bringing moral support to the Christian community and to its Muslim citizens, all suffering horribly under Israel's collective punishment and cruel siege.

Traffic into Gaza through the elaborate new border 'facility' at Erezis down to a tiny trickle these days since Israel branded the Palestinian seaside enclave a 'hostile entity'.

The purpose of our visit was to bring moral support to elderly Fr Manuel, who ministers to his flock, runs an excellent school (for Christians and Muslims) and is revered as a local hero. Should he ever leave Gaza the Israeli authorities will not allow his return, so he has allowed himself to be incarcerated there for nine years. He'd had no visitors since February and when he heard we were coming, said a colleague, he burst into tears.

We also wanted to show solidarity with the whole courageous population, Muslim and Christian, and apologist for the British government's indiffer-

ence to Israel's military onslaught, the spiteful economic sanctions and the west's meddling in Palestine's democratic affairs.

Thanks to our noisy arrival at breakneck speed through Gazar streets with a police escort and sirens blaring – that's VIP treatment here – our small group quickly grew into a media circus. The Rajah crossing into Egypt, now permanently closed, then followed the barrier wall down to the sea and the coast road back to Gaza City. On the way I noted the deserted beaches and the disuse fishing boats. Israel has banned fishing off the Gaza coast, ruined the livelihood of 3,000 licensed fishermen and their families, and impoverished the local diet.

The military fires on boats that defy the ban. Palestinians are also prevented from developing maritime trade or natural resources within their territorial waters. Gaza is just 365 sq km – 45 km long, up to 12 km wide and entirely sealed from the outside world by an Israeli fence guarded by watchtowers, snipers and tanks. Israel controls Gazar airspace, coastal waters and airwaves. A

vast prison with air-strikes, beach shelling, troops, tanks, armoured bulldozers, uncaring of civilian casualties.

Whilst much has been blasted into rubble or skeletal remains, this was once an attractive place and many fine buildings survive. So does the defiant community, though wearied by years of humiliation and occupation. Gaza could easily blossom into a coastal paradise; a prosperous, independent trading state. But Israel's hatred of Gaza and its people is terrifying. The economy is strangled and for 1.5 million souls, life is hell.

Fuel and candles are running out. Supplies of basics are exhausted, so even hygiene is fast becoming impossible. Power cuts disrupt hospital treatment and what few drugs there are cannot be kept refrigerated. Many look death in the face as medi-care collapses.

Flour to make bread has doubled in price; cement for concrete to repair damaged homes and infrastructure has gone up 1,000 percent! Some schools are having to teach three shifts a day. It is truly a humanitarian crisis, as the UN and various charities have repeatedly warned western governments. A friend emailed: "Today in Gaza ... we have no cement to build graves for those who die."

Reality of sanctions

A communiqué received from the Ministry of Health in Gaza reveals the stark reality:

Cancer patients: Of 450 patients 35% are children and 25% women. They are forbidden to leave Gaza for medical treatment or surgery. For many, there is

no medication because cancer drugs cannot cross the border.

Renal Failure patients: 400 should undergo dialysis three times a week, but machine break-downs have cut this to twice a week, with serious consequences for patients.

Hemodialysis machines: Of 69 machines in four hospitals 20 are out of order. Israel blocks supply of spares deeming them not humanitarian items. three more have exceeded their design/ Cardiac patients: 400-450 patients suffer from severe shortage of drugs.

No spares can be shipped in for therapeutic and diagnostic equipment that breaks down:

Stock levels. Zero stock of 85 items of essential medical drugs. Zero stock of 12 items of essential psychiatric drugs. Two weeks' stock of anaesthetics for surgery, after which the theatres will close down. Zero stock of X-ray bags and sterilization bags. Near zero stock of stationery, medical files and examination forms. These are re-used several times risking errors in documentation. Severe shortage of cloth and dressings, barely enough body bags and hospital bed covers. Zero stocks of patients' food in all hospitals. Two weeks' stock of hospital cleaning fluids. Diesel and gas stocks for under 15 days. Severe shortages of medical disposables, lab materials and blood bank materials.

"The total number of people who died as a result of the border closure since June has risen to 44. Prevention of patients from traveling and prevention of entry of food, milk formula and fuel is an organized crime committed by the Israeli occupation to exhaust and de-

Israel's hatred of Gaza and its people is terrifying. The economy is strangled and for 1.5 million souls, life is hell

In the meantime (UK) Channel 4 News reports, Israel blackmails chronically sick patients. If they agree to inform on relatives and friends they can cross the border for treatment... if not they can "stay in Gaza and die"

stroy the health sector, as part of the Israeli policy to kill and humiliate our people," concludes the Health Ministry statement.

The Physicians for Human Rights organisation has attempted to bring seriously ill residents out of Gaza for proper hospital treatment, but even requests on behalf of advanced cancer cases are invariably refused. So they die in agony. 20-year-old Nail Al Kurdi, succumbed only a week ago, still waiting for permission to cross. For five months PHR submitted request after request to let him through, and even petitioned the High Court of Justice, but each time he was refused "for security reasons". Two days later, an eight-year-old boy also died waiting for medical treatment in Israel. I'm told he had the necessary permit but was repeatedly turned back at the border.

It is estimated that a thousand patients – advanced cases of kidney disease and cancer and those badly injured by Israeli air-strikes – need immediate transfers. In the meantime (UK) Channel 4 News reports, Israel blackmails chronically sick patients. If they agree to inform on relatives and friends they can cross the border for treatment... if not they can "stay in Gaza and die".

International obligation

The International Committee of the Red Cross repeatedly reminds that Israel is obliged under international law to ensure that humanitarian supplies reach Palestinian civilians. Yet I learned that medicinal drugs purchased with money from sales of my book *Radio*

Free Palestine, could not be delivered and would have to be smuggled in somehow.

On October 11., the European Parliament passed a resolution calling on the Israeli government to lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip and fulfill its international obligations guaranteeing the flow of humanitarian aid, and assistance and essential services.

Luisa Morgantini, Vice President of the European Parliament, said: "I was recently in Gaza and I saw how the Strip is suffocating in a serious humanitarian crisis due to the raids and the closure imposed by the Israeli Army: massive devastation of public facilities and private homes, the disruption of hospitals, clinics and schools, the denial of access to proper drinking water, food and electricity, and the destruction of agricultural land wanted by Israel, create a true catastrophe for civilians. ..."

The EU has demanded that the Israeli government fully respects human rights and international law and ends not only the emergency in Gaza but also the military occupation of the West Bank, where Israel continues its theft of Palestinian land with impunity. Instead of complying, Israel has declared Gaza a 'hostile entity' and ratcheted-up the misery, announcing that "additional sanctions will be placed on the Hamas regime.

Hamas was democratically elected as the Palestinian government in 2006, thus a legitimate power, while Israel is an illegal armed occupier. As to whether Hamas is a 'terrorist organisation'... let's first check the definition of terrorism. PHR investigated the effects of am-

munition used by the Israeli Defence Force in Gaza and the West Bank. They found that the high-velocity 5.56mm/.223 calibre round fired by the M-16 weapon, widely used by the IDF, “tends to break open on impact causing a ‘lead storm’ in tissue, even without impacting a bone... and large temporary cavities, and extensive damage to muscle, nerves and blood vessels, as well as fracture. The massive tissue destruction... produces a frightening clinical presentation which greatly challenges the surgeons.

When there are many such injuries, medical resources are stressed to the limit.” The majority of victims of these injuries will have permanent damage in the affected leg. Witness reports to PHR team and information to other human rights organizations, suggest those injured in this manner (were unarmed) and at most throwing stones.”

As guests in this tight-knit Gaza community, we had been invited for coffee at the House of Fatah and the residence of Hamas prime minister, Ismail Haniya. Relations between religious and political factions seem friendly and good humoured and they stand together against a merciless enemy.

There is broadly no trouble between Muslims and Christians – a small miracle considering that their tormentor has powerful Christian backing. As the whirlwind visit came to an end, taking our leave entailed the wrench of saying goodbye to brave people the west has trampled and written off, then running the gauntlet of Israel’s horrendous border security. It was back to Erez and its

state-of-the-art de-humanisation, to shuffle through a maze of steel gates, cattle pens and a sinister X-ray machine, on Israeli command, and queue interminably for questioning by the rudest people on earth.

Only 50 or 60 people had gone through the crossing that day, so the three-hour hold-up was entirely down to Israeli bloody-mindedness. Complaining to Her Majesty’s Government seems pointless: the responsible British foreign office Minister is a former chairman of Labour Friends of Israel.

Pride and resilience

In spite of all, there is astonishing pride and resilience among the Gazans. However if you kick, murder and starve and commit crimes against humanity often enough, a victory of sorts can be yours. But tell us, Mr Gordon Brown, why is Britain complicit in such a base and cowardly scheme? We hit bottom in Iraq... how much lower can we sink?

Gaza was formerly under British mandate, surely sufficient reason to feel special responsibility for its wellbeing. Yet it was not even on the government’s agenda at Annapolis. For Gazans, the “final status negotiations” was a sick joke. So I urge the British government: Go see for yourselves the misery, the human tragedy and the devastation you have heaped on these people. Then amaze us. Lift this cruel siege and end 90 years of betrayal that has so shamed Britain.

Land supplies on Gazar empty beach: Palestinian territorial waters. Suspend all trade association agreements until Israel complies with UN

It was back to Erez and its state-of-the-art de-humanisation, to shuffle through a maze of steel gates, cattle pens and a sinister X-ray machine, on Israeli command, and queue interminably for questioning by the rudest people on earth

UNDER SIEGE

Watch out when decent Americans finally understand what their tax dollars have been paying for in the Holy Land

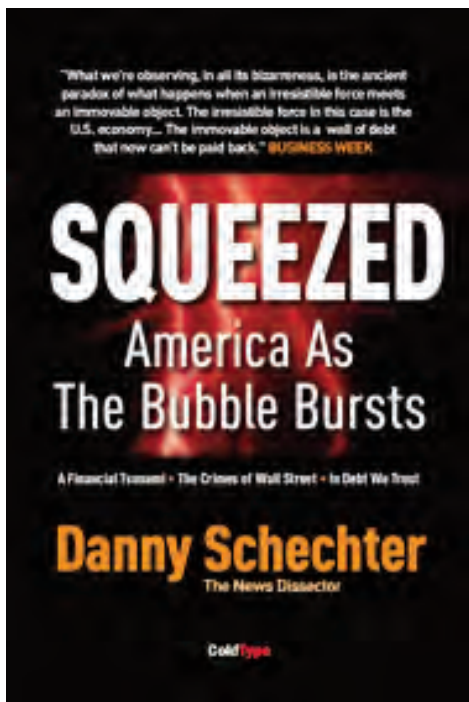
resolutions and International Court of Justice rulings, ends its unlawful occupation and withdraws behind pre-1967 borders. Realise that Israel is no western-style democracy but a ruthless ethnocracy. And when British voters finally discover that half their MPs are signed-up Friends of Israel, they will question how such slavish devotion to this foreign military power can possibly be in the best interest of our Christian and increasingly Muslim-inclusive, nation.

To the Bush administration and its admirers: You may be the most powerful but you are the most hated. Watch out when decent Americans finally un-

derstand what their tax dollars have been paying for in the Holy Land.”

And, lastly, to church leaders in western Christendom: Are you going to sit there while the Holy Land is stolen from under your noses? **CT**

*Stuart Littlewood is an English marketer turned writer-photographer. He admires the work some churches are doing in the Occupied Territories and tries to get involved. Earlier this year, he published a book **Radio Free Palestine** about the plight of the Palestinians under military occupation. It is available at www.radiofreepalestine.co.uk*



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THE TUMULT AND THE SHOUTING DIES

Uri Avnery on what the peace conference really achieved

The tumult and the shouting dies,
The captains and the kings depart..." Rudyard Kipling wrote in his unforgettable poem "Lest We Forget".

King George departed the Annapolis peace conference even before the tumult had died. His helicopter carried him away over the horizon, just as his trusty steed carries the cowboy into the sunset at the end of the movie. At that moment, the speeches in the assembly hall were still going ahead at full blast.

This summed up the whole event. The final statement announced that the United States will supervise the negotiations, act as a referee of the implementation and as a judge throughout. Everything depends on her. If she wants it – much will happen. If she does not want it – nothing will happen.

That bodes ill. There is no indication that George Bush will really intervene to achieve anything, apart from nice photos. Some people believe that the whole show was put on to make poor Condoleezza Rice feel good, after all her efforts as Secretary of State have

come to nought.

Even if Bush wanted to, could he do anything? Is he capable of putting pressure on Israel, in the face of vigorous opposition from the pro-Israel lobby, and especially from the Christian-Evangelist public, to which he himself belongs?

A friend told me that during the conference he watched the televised proceedings with the sound turned off, just observing the body language of the principal actors. That way he noticed an interesting detail: Bush and Olmert touched each other many times, but there was almost no physical contact between Bush and Mahmoud Abbas. More than that: during all the joint events, the distance between Bush and Olmert was smaller than the distance between Bush and Abbas. Several times Bush and Olmert walked ahead together, with Abbas trailing behind.

That's the whole story.

Sherlock Holmes said in one of his cases that the solution could be found in "the curious incident of the dog in the night-time." When it was pointed

There is no indication that George Bush will really intervene to achieve anything, apart from nice photos

AFTER ANNAPOLIS

They denounced Abbas as a collaborator and a traitor, reiterating that Hamas would never recognize Israel nor accept a peace agreement with it

out to him that the dogs did nothing, he explained: “That was the curious incident.”

Anyone who wants to understand what has (or has not) happened at Annapolis will find the answer in this fact: the dogs did not bark. The settlers and their friends were keeping quiet, did not panic, did not get excited, did not distribute posters of Olmert in SS uniform (as they had done with Rabin after Oslo). All in all, they contented themselves with the obligatory prayer at the Western Wall and a smallish demonstration near the Prime Minister’s residence.

This means that they were not worried. They knew that nothing would come out of it, that there would be no agreement on the dismantling of even one measly settlement outpost. And on the forecast of the settlers’ leaders one can rely in such matters. If there had been the slightest danger that peace would result from this conference, they would have mobilized their followers en masse.

Very worried

The Hamas movement, on the other hand, did organize mass demonstrations in Gaza and the West Bank towns. The Hamas leaders were very worried indeed.

Not because they were afraid that peace would be concluded at the meeting. They were apprehensive of another danger: that the only real aim of the meeting was to prepare the ground for an Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip.

Ami Ayalon, a former admiral who once posed as a man of peace, and who

is now a Labor member of the cabinet, appeared during the conference on Israeli TV to say so quite openly: he was in favor of the conference because it legitimizes this operation.

The line of thought goes like this: In order to fulfill his obligation under the Road Map, Abbas must “destroy the terrorist infrastructure” in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. “Terrorism” means Hamas. Since Abbas is unable to conquer the Gaza Strip himself, the Israeli army will do it for him.

True, it may be costly. In the last few months, a lot of arms have been flowing into Gaza through the tunnels under the border with Egypt. Many people on both sides will lose their lives. But, “What can you do? There is no alternative.”

It may be that in retrospect, the main (if not the only) outcome of Annapolis will be this: the conquest of the Gaza Strip in order to “strengthen Abbas”.

Hamas, in any case, is worried. And not without reason. In preparation for such a confrontation, the Hamas leaders have become even more shrill in their opposition to the meeting, to which they were not invited. They denounced Abbas as a collaborator and a traitor, reiterating that Hamas would never recognize Israel nor accept a peace agreement with it.

I can picture in my mind a conference of the opponents of the proposed peace process, a kind of anti-Annapolis. Not the routine meeting planned by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Tehran, to which only Muslims will be invited, but a joint meeting of all extremists on both sides. Khalid Mashal and Ismail Hanieh

will sit opposite Avigdor Liberman, Effi Eytam and Benny Elon, and deliberate together how to frustrate the “Two-State solution”.

If I were invited to moderate this conference, I would start like this: Gentlemen (Ladies will not be present, of course), let us begin by summing up the points on which there is agreement, and only afterwards deal with the points in dispute.

So: all of you agree that the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River will become one state (general agreement). You, Palestinian gentlemen, agree that the Jews will enjoy full equality (agreement on the Palestinian side of the table). And you, Israeli gentlemen, agree that Arabs will enjoy full equality (agreement on the Israeli side of the table). And, of course, you do agree that there will be full freedom of religion for all (general agreement).

If this is the situation, gentlemen, then the only remaining disagreement concerns the name – whether to call the state Palestine or Israel. Is it worthwhile to quarrel and spill blood about that? Let’s agree on a neutral name, something like Isrestine or Palael.

Back to the White House: if the three leaders agreed there in secret deliberations that the Israeli army will invade the Gaza Strip, that is very bad news.

It would have been better to get Hamas involved – if not directly, then indirectly. The absence of Hamas left a yawning gap at the conference. What is the sense in convening 40 representatives from all over the world, and leaving more than half the Palestinian peo-

ple without representation?

More so, since the boycott of Hamas has pushed the organization further into a corner, causing it to oppose the meeting even more vociferously and incite the Palestinian street against it.

Hamas is not only the armed body that now dominates the Gaza Strip. It is first of all the political movement that won the majority of the votes of the Palestinian people in democratic elections – not only in the Gaza Strip, but in the West Bank, too. That will not change if Israel conquers the Strip tomorrow. On the contrary: such a move may stigmatize Abbas as a collaborator in a war against his own people, and actually strengthen the roots of Hamas in the Palestinian public.

Terrorist infrastructures

Olmert said that first of all the “terrorist infrastructure” must be eliminated, and only then can there be progress towards peace. This totally misrepresents the nature of a “terrorist infrastructure” – regrettable from a person whose father was a senior Irgun “terrorist”. It also shows that peace does not head the list of his aspirations – because that statement constitutes a deadly landmine on the way to an agreement. It is putting the cart in front of the horse.

The logical sequence is the other way round: First of all we have to reach a peace agreement that is acceptable to the majority of the Palestinians. That means (a) to lay the foundations for a State of Palestine whose border will run along the Green Line (with limited swaps of territory) and whose capital will be East Jerusalem, (b) to call upon

The boycott of Hamas has pushed the organization further into a corner, causing it to oppose the meeting even more vociferously and incite the Palestinian street against it

AFTER ANNAPOLIS

If the masses become convinced that the political path of Abbas is bearing fruit and is leading to the end of the occupation, Hamas, too, will be compelled to change course

the Palestinian people to ratify this agreement in a referendum, and (c) to call upon the military wing of Hamas to lay down their arms or to be absorbed into the regular forces of the new state, similarly to what happened in Israel, and join the political system in the new state. If there were an assurance that this is the way things will go ahead, there is still a reasonable chance of convincing Hamas not to obstruct the process and to allow Abbas to manage it – as Hamas has agreed in the past.

Why? Because Hamas, like any other serious political movement, is dependent on popular support.

At this point, with the occupation getting worse from day to day and all the routes to peace seemingly blocked, the Palestinian masses are convinced that the method of armed resistance, as practiced by Hamas, is the only one that offers them any hope. If the masses become convinced that the political path of Abbas is bearing fruit and is leading to the end of the occupation, Hamas, too, will be compelled to change course.

Distrust and disdain

Unfortunately, the Annapolis conference did nothing to encourage such hopes. The Palestinian public, like the Israeli one, treated it with a mixture of distrust and disdain. It looks like an empty show run by a lame duck American president, whose only remaining pleasure is to be photographed as the leader of the world. And if Bush gets the UN resolution he wants to hide behind – another resolution that nobody will take seriously – it will not change any-

thing.

Especially if it is true, as reported in the Israeli press, that the Israeli government is planning a huge expansion of the settlements, and if the army chiefs start another bloody war, this time in Gaza.

Then did this spectacle have no positive side at all? Will it be forgotten tomorrow, as dozens of other meetings in the past have been forgotten, so only people with an exceptional memory are aware they ever happened?

I am not sure that this is so.

True, it was only a waterfall of words. But in the lives of nations, words, too, have their value.

Almost the whole of humanity was represented at this conference. China. India. Russia. Europe. Almost all Arab governments lent their support. And in this company, it was solemnly resolved that peace must be established between Israel and an independent and viable State of Palestine. True, the terms were not spelled out, but they were hovering over the conference. All the participants knew what they were.

The representatives of the Israeli mainstream joined – at least pro forma – this consensus. Perhaps they did so tongue in cheek, perhaps only as a ploy, perhaps as an act of deceit. But as our sages said ages ago: he who accepts the Torah not because of itself will in the end accept it for itself. Meaning: if somebody accepts an idea from tactical calculation he will be compelled to defend it, and in the end he will convince himself. Even Olmert has already declared on his way home: “Without the Two-State Solution, the State of Israel

is finished.”

In connection with this, a competition between cabinet members is already developing, and that is a good sign. Tzipi Livni has set up more than a dozen committees of experts, each one charged with dealing with a particular aspect of peace, from the division of water to the allocation of television channels. (For those with a good memory: this is happening 50 years after I proposed the setting up of exactly such an apparatus, which I called the “White General Staff”, as opposed to the

“Khaki General Staff”).

True, the Annapolis conference was no more than a small step, taken under duress. But it was a tiny step in the right direction.

The consciousness of a large body of people changes only in a long and slow process, at an almost geological pace. This cannot be detected with the naked eye. But, as Galileo Galilei murmured to himself: “And yet it does move!” **CT**

Uri Avnery is an Irgun veteran turned Israeli peace activist

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MAMA TOLD ME NOT TO COME

Stan Cox joins ThreeDog Night at a surreal Star Wars conference

"The new space policy says we can defend the heavens with technology. But we can't, and the Chinese just proved it"

Possibly the most surreal moment of October's Strategic Space and Defense Conference in Omaha, Nebraska, came not during the presentations by weapons contractors or top generals in the US Strategic Command, but in a curious opening ceremony featuring Three Dog Night.

The early '70s pop-rock legends seemed to step onto the stage out of some kind of time warp, singing about love, peace, and eco-consciousness, to polite applause. After running through favorites like "Never Been to Spain", "Out in the Country", and "Old Fashioned Love Song", the group came around to its minor hit "Liar," the chorus of which involved the whole group shouting the word "Liar!" three times, out at an audience that held in its collective head all of America's space-war secrets.

Floodlit by the houselights at each repetition of "Liar", none of the uniforms or \$500 suits stood in protest, but they didn't smile either.

Said one observer, "The new space policy says we can defend the heavens

with technology. But we can't, and the Chinese just proved it."

Precisely six years earlier, on Jan. 11, 2001, the Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organization issued a report to Congress. The group, which had been headed by President-elect George W. Bush's Defense Secretary-to-be Donald Rumsfeld, asserted that it's only a matter of time until there's all-out war in the heavens:

"We know from history that every medium – air, land and sea – has seen conflict. Reality indicates that space will be no different. Given this virtual certainty, the U.S. must develop the means both to deter and to defend against hostile acts in and from space – and ensure continuing superiority."

The current thinking of military and industry officials was revealed at the conference, held in the backyard of the US Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM). And that strategy includes not just war mongering against countries like China and Pakistan by "space warriors," but it poses a threat to the safety

and liberties of all Americans.

The militarization of space

Military space officials will have to develop new doctrine and concepts for offensive and defensive space operations, power projection in, from, and through space, and other military uses of space.

– Rumsfeld’s Commission Report

The opening talk at the Strategic Space conference was given by USSTRATCOM acting commander Lt. Gen. Robert Kehler, who repeated that old cliché about the Chinese curse, “May you live in interesting times.” Implicitly responding to China’s January self-attack, he added, “Well you know what? We get paid to deal with interesting times.”

But how USSTRATCOM plans to deal with them isn’t clear. In 2002, the Air Force undersecretary for military space acquisitions told The New York Times, “We haven’t reached the point of strafing and bombing from space,” but that “we are exploring those possibilities.”

This fall marks the 40th anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty, an agreement among 98 nations (including the U.S.) that, banned nuclear arms from space but left out mention of other weapons. Nevertheless, no nation has ever launched an attack into or from space, and the costly US missile-defense program that began life two decades ago as President Reagan’s “Star Wars” dream continues to founder.

Spending on missile defense has doubled since 2000, and the program is

expanding into Poland and the Czech Republic. But Bruce Gagnon of Brunswick, Maine, coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, believes the US Missile Defense Agency, with its current official budget of more than \$9 billion, is just “a Trojan Horse.”

He says, “Missile defense brings in the money but the real story is offensive, preemptive attack technologies for global strike. That’s where the real action is.” Gagnon agrees that current U.S. space policy remains entirely consistent with the aggressive stance taken in the Rumsfeld report, “although they have slacked off just a bit on their rhetoric.”

In September, The New York Times relayed a similar message from a former Pentagon official, who said that space weapons are “still definitely part of the program, but they don’t emphasize it because the arms-control people come out of the woodwork.”

From the World Policy Institute and other sources, we know about some of the weapons under planning or development in the murkier parts of the military-industrial budget:

- Micro-satellites that could stalk and destroy satellites of other nations
- The Evolutionary Air and Space Global Laser Engagement (EAGLE) project, a series of orbiting mirrors to direct beams from ground- or air-based lasers at targets in space
- The ground-based Kinetic Energy Anti-Satellite Weapon, which could shoot down satellites with missiles, along with the Kinetic Energy Intercep-

Gagnon agrees that current U.S. space policy remains entirely consistent with the aggressive stance taken in the Rumsfeld report, “although they have slacked off just a bit on their rhetoric”

WAR IN SPACE

He says that in its "global strike" capacity and its drive to enforce what the generals like to call "our mastery of space", USSTRATCOM has turned Omaha into "the most dangerous place on the face of the Earth"

tor, a missile-defense system that could double as an anti-satellite weapon

● The Washington Post revealed that the Congress has appropriated \$100 million for a space-weapon system called "Falcon," described as "a reusable Hypersonic Cruise Vehicle (HCV) capable of delivering 12,000 pounds of payload at a distance of 9,000 nautical miles ... in less than two hours." House and Senate conferees wrote, "Enhancing these capabilities is critical, particularly following the Chinese anti-satellite-weapons demonstration last January."

● Hypervelocity Rod Bundles, or "Rods from God," 20-foot-long, one-foot-diameter tungsten poles (existing only on paper at this point) that would be hurled from low-Earth orbit at 25,000 miles per hour to pulverize "hardened" targets in enemy territory.

Such specifics were scarce at the Omaha conference, but the audience knew how to peer between the speakers' euphemisms and understand what was being discussed when, for example, Global Strike deputy commander Rear Adm. James Caldwell said his mission was to "deliver global effects, both kinetic and non-kinetic" or when Air Force Col. Kevin McLaughlin, as if giving a medical lecture, spoke of the "timely application of space power."

USSTRATCOM was created in 1992, replacing and expanding upon that old nuclear warhorse, the Strategic Air Command. Not long after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, USSTRATCOM – which already commanded the nation's nu-

clear weaponry – was given a host of other missions, including those of the former Space Command and a new Global Strike Integration Command, which will wield space weapons if they're ever fully deployed.

Tim Rinne is state coordinator of Nebraskans for Peace, which holds demonstrations outside the Strategic Space conference each October. He says that in its "global strike" capacity and its drive to enforce what the generals like to call "our mastery of space", USSTRATCOM has turned Omaha into "the most dangerous place on the face of the Earth."

Harking back to filmmaker Stanley Kubrick's classic tale of nuclear Armageddon, Rinne likens USSTRATCOM to "Dr. Strangelove on steroids."

What will it take to start a war in space?

A 'Space Pearl Harbor' will be the only event able to galvanize the nation and cause the US Government to act.

– Rumsfeld's Commission Report

Why should we citizens even care what goes on outside the planet and its atmosphere? The prospect of space war seems a lot less ominous than did, say, the threat of a US-Soviet nuclear holocaust. Nobody lives in space; no civilians will be maimed or killed by a robotic shoot-em-up in orbit.

Helen Caldicott and Craig Eisen-drath answered such arguments in their book *War in Heaven: The Arms Race in Outer Space*, published earlier this year. In the wake of the Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957, they wrote, humans

across the globe began asking, “Would [outer space] be the venue for wars and synchronized killings, or the common space for a complex of cooperative peaceful efforts benefiting our species? The two uses of space could not exist side by side.”

They stress that the first deployment of weapons will set off a multi-trillion-dollar arms race, risk littering orbital space with enough debris to make it unusable for any civilian purpose, and possibly trigger a nuclear war.

The central problem is the vulnerability of orbiting spacecraft. They have the great advantage of “seeing” vast regions of the Earth’s surface, but that leaves them hanging out there fully exposed. Space objects not only have nowhere to hide; they also move in fully predictable ways, making them vulnerable to attack at an adversary’s convenience.

USSTRATCOM’s Gen. Kehler – who, ironically, bears a slight resemblance to the late actor Peter Sellers (but only as he played the amiable President Muffley, not the crazed Dr. Strangelove) – emphasized that dilemma with an old war axiom: “If the enemy’s within range, so are you.”

That places space weapons in a classic “use ‘em or lose ‘em” position, pushing their owner to launch a preemptive strike at the first sign of danger. In the words of one analyst, “The hair trigger that characterized nuclear deterrence during the Cold War would be elevated to the heavens.”

As for what might bump that hair trigger, most of the rhetoric at the conference focused on the so-called “war

on terror.” But when Air Force Lt. Gen. Frank Klotz predicted that “our next conflict may involve more traditional warfare against an adversary with more significant forces,” he was pointing at the country that seemed to be on everyone’s minds: China.

Back in 2000, China’s official Xinhua News Agency gave U.S. strategic planners reason to worry, with an coyly “hypothetical” article predicting that “For countries that could never win a war with the United States by using the method of tanks and planes, attacking the U.S. space system may be an irresistible and most tempting choice.”

China only knocked out its own satellite on Jan. 11; nevertheless, one conference speaker equated that incident’s impact to the alarm caused by the Challenger and Columbia space-shuttle disasters of 1986 and 2003. Others in the hall implicitly compared the event to an even bigger turning point, referring to it as “1/11.”

Speaker after speaker voiced the feeling of vulnerability that comes with having one’s most critical military hardware protected by nothing but the void of space:

Space is no longer a sanctuary

“In the past, we were the unique masters of the air and space domains. Today, that cannot be taken for granted.”

“Space is not a benign environment anymore.”

“Malicious actors can disrupt communications links, and thereby our very way of life.”

“We aren’t ready for the big show.”

“They simply are not going to allow China to become an economic or military rival in space”

WAR IN SPACE

To create havoc in space, nukes are really overkill. A missile that simply dumped a load of sand in low-earth orbit could render military commanders blind and deaf

It fell to a civilian, an industry man – Northrup-Grumman vice president Frederick Ricker – to hearten the military whiners: “If we can’t have sanctuary in space, we can certainly have superiority.”

Tim Rinne of Nebraskans for Peace sees a near-obsession with the “terrestrial and celestial encirclement of China,” led by the warriors at USSTRATCOM with no thought given to diplomacy. “They simply are not going to allow China to become an economic or military rival in space.”

The big money behind space technology

The loss of space systems that support military operations or collect intelligence would dramatically affect the way US forces could fight.

– Rumsfeld’s Commission Report

Without space hardware and software, the U.S. military would be crippled. Seventy percent of the bombs that struck Iraq during the Pentagon’s 2003 “Shock and Awe” campaign were satellite-guided, and the looming attack on Iran would be almost completely by remote control.

Space hasn’t yet been “weaponized,” but it is heavily militarized. When they aren’t talking about China, military leaders discuss the possibility of, say, Pakistan falling to Taliban types who might turn to “space jihad,” shooting a nuclear weapon into orbit and detonating it. The resulting electromagnetic pulse could disable spacecraft across a quarter of the Earth’s orbital space.

But to create havoc in space, nukes

are really overkill. A missile that simply dumped a load of sand in low-earth orbit could render military commanders blind and deaf.

The pristine emptiness into which Sputnik ventured fifty years ago this fall no longer exists. Today, the busier orbits around Earth (ranging from 300 to 22,000 miles out) better resemble the industrial parks and military bases that litter the outskirts of cities.

The Air Force Space Command actually keeps a catalog of every human-made object that orbits the Earth. The number of such objects currently stands at 18,400. That includes only those measuring 4 inches or more across; however, at a speed of 16,000 miles per hour, even a nut or bolt can mortally wound a satellite.

The Colorado Springs-based Space Foundation reports that the global space industry grew at warp speed in 2006, at an 18 percent annual rate that sent it past \$220 billion. Half of that activity is commercial, with the biggest growth in ‘lifestyle media’ (mostly satellite TV) and global positioning systems (GPS). But another 28 percent of total world spending is by the U.S. government.

When we think of “the space program,” we generally think of the National Aeronautic and Space Administration’s (NASA’s) space shuttle flights, the international space station, and future trips to the moon and Mars. But budgets for war-fighting and spying in space quietly add up to almost three times NASA’s budget. The United States accounts for 95 per cent of the world’s spending on militarization of

space and owns more than half of all military satellites.

And starting this year, USSTRATCOM's satellites will be allowed to keep an eye not only on foreign foes but on you and me as well. This spring, the government for the first time granted the Department of Homeland Security and other domestic law-enforcement agencies access to 'real-time, high-resolution images and data' from military intelligence satellites as they pass over America's cities and countryside.

Indeed, after her conference talk, Brig. Gen. Jennifer Napper, deputy commander for USSTRATCOM's Global Network Operations told reporters, "The FBI and CIA are in our operations center 24/7." What are they doing there? No one on the outside can be sure.

In its article on the newly permitted domestic spying from space, the Wall Street Journal says of intelligence satellites, "The full capabilities of these systems are unknown outside the intelligence community, because they are among the most closely held secrets in government."

Corporate space pork

The US Government needs to become a more reliable customer of commercial space products and services.

– Rumsfeld's Commission Report
(emphasis theirs)

More than half of the Rumsfeld Commission members had current or former ties to the aerospace industry. In the wake of that report, five of the top space-weapon and missile-defense con-

tractors – Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, SAIC, and General Dynamics – shelled out a total of \$13 million in political campaign contributions from 2001 to 2006.

Congressional support for space weapons is bipartisan, led by a Space Power Caucus established in 2003. The top 15 House and top 15 Senate recipients of campaign funds from missile defense contractors are split almost evenly between the two major parties.

Three of the top four House recipients are Democrats, the champion being John Murtha of Pennsylvania with \$319,000 in contributions between 2001 and 2006. Rep. Murtha famously turned against the Iraq war in 2005, but he continues working hard to bring missile-defense pork projects to his state.

At the Strategic Space conference, the Exhibit Hall provided defense contractors the opportunity to make the case for their products. There, the romance and adventure of space was eclipsed by the workaday concerns of industry; indeed, far more interesting displays and more enthusiastic sales reps can be seen at, say, a lawn-care convention.

When I asked a veteran military journalist about the Exhibit Hall, which seemed to hold all the competitive atmosphere of a Quaker meeting, he told me, "Yeah, they're always pretty laid back in there."

In the hall, at Orbital Sciences Corporation's booth, company rep Joshua Dinman was busy handing out what seemed to be the most popular aircraft in sight: spongy little rockets with the Orbital logo that could be shot the

In the hall, at Orbital Sciences Corporation's booth, company rep Joshua Dinman was busy handing out what seemed to be the most popular aircraft in sight: spongy little rockets with the Orbital logo that could be shot the length of the hall with a rubber band

WAR IN SPACE

"Our ammunition division – Now they're doing very well, what with Iraq and Afghanistan. For them, it's been hard to keep up"

length of the hall with a rubber band. I asked him what function this meeting serves; surely, I said, your corporation and the Pentagon address the military's hardware needs in other venues.

He shrugged: Right. This is just a place to fly your corporate flag, and the real 'meat' is in one-to-one meetings." Those meetings aren't only with Pentagon brass. "We all get together here. Everyone in this industry works together on programs."

(One example of that: Orbital is one of 14 subcontractors on the Kinetic Energy Interceptor, with Northrop Grumman as prime contractor. The work is being done in nine states, ensuring wide political support.)

Another company – Alliant Techsystems, which likes to go by the name "ATK" – sponsored the conference name-tag pouches and had a prominent booth just inside the entrance to the hall. One of the reps, Cliff Baker, noted that ATK is the nation's largest manufacturer of solid-fuel propelled rockets, builds and refurbishes all Minuteman and Trident nuclear missiles and half of all tactical missiles, and supplies 95 percent of all the US military's ammunition (which, although he didn't say so, includes cluster bombs.)

Mr. Baker agreed that the Strategic Space conference was mainly an opportunity to "meet and greet, learn names." He said ATK doesn't go head-to-head with other giants like Boeing, Raytheon, and Lockheed-Martin; rather, those companies are generally ATK's customers.

Baker said he wouldn't call manufacturing for the military a "growth indus-

try" so much as a "replenishment industry." "Take GPS satellites. There are only five launches a year of new ones, and with limited slots, that won't change." But growth areas do exist: "Our ammunition division – Now they're doing very well, what with Iraq and Afghanistan. For them, it's been hard to keep up."

By this point in the conference, there were words going through my head, words that I realized were bubbling up from Three Dog Night's performance the night before: "Mama told me not to come."

Our future depends on the future of space

The US must be cautious of agreements ... that may have the unintended consequence of restricting future activities in space.

– Rumsfeld's Commission Report

Experts Michael Krepon and Christopher Clary of the Henry L. Stimson Center have shown convincingly how the Rumsfeld Commission was dead wrong in declaring war in space to be inevitable. They note that even in the darkest days of the Cold War, and despite the Star Wars program, the U.S. and Soviet Union showed no eagerness at all to put weapons in space. Today, U.S. military dominance is so complete that taking the fight to space would add very little and probably make all U.S. forces more vulnerable.

As for potential adversaries, Krepon and Clary ask, "Why would an attacking country or terrorist group choose a distant target that provides services to

many nations, rather than focusing on a distinctly American target?"

But that hasn't held back the space warriors. United Nations efforts supported by Canada, Russia, European Union members, and a long list of other nations to ban space weaponry have been vigorously opposed by the Bush Administration. A State Department official has succinctly explained the U.S. position: "Arms control is not a viable solution for space."

And in Omaha, Gen. Kehler stressed USSTRATCOM's distrust of treaties symbolically: "Boundaries drawn by us will be viewed by the enemy as seams to exploit."

Other American space hawks have derided international efforts to promote peace and harmony in the heavens as a type of "lawfare," defining it straight-

facedly as "a strategy of using or misusing law as a substitute for traditional military means to achieve military objectives."

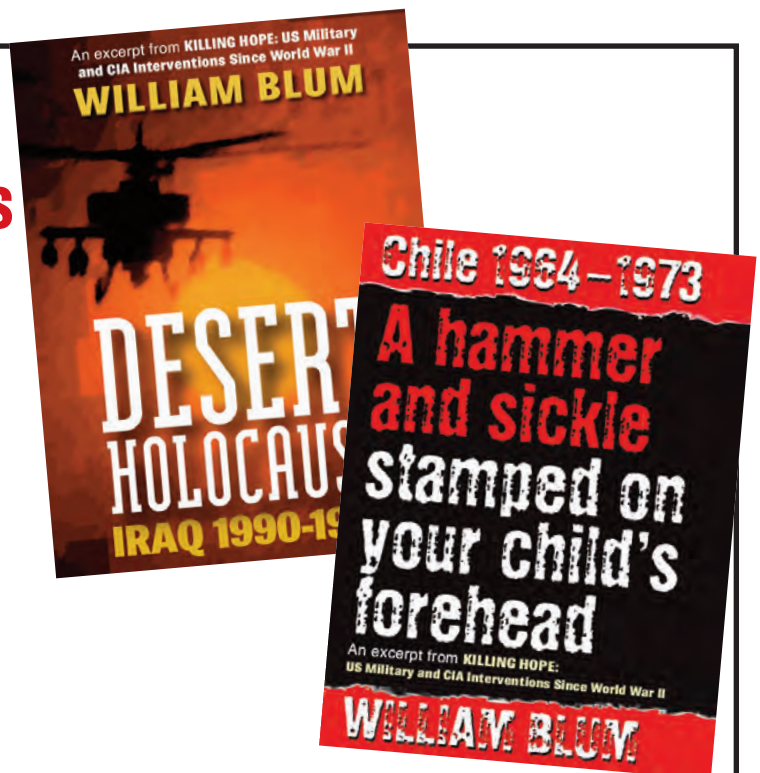
USSTRATCOM and its supporters regard other nations' plans to substitute legal accords for bombing and shooting as a diabolical scheme that can and must be foiled. So, thanks to the space warriors who get together in Omaha each fall, you might lose your TV reception, your Google Earth views, and maybe your hometown and your family, but at least you'll be safe from "lawfare." **CT**

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A State Department official has succinctly explained the U.S. position: "Arms control is not a viable solution for space"

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THE PROLIFERATION GAME

Catherine Collins & Douglas Frantz on the bomb trade

Pakistan's nuclear arsenal – as many as 120 weapons – is no more Pakistani than your television set is Japanese. Or is that American?

Globalization. What a concept. You can get a burger prepared your way practically anywhere in the world. The Nike Swoosh appears at elite athletic venues across the United States and on the skinny frames of t-shirted children playing in the streets of Calcutta. For those interested in buying an American automobile – a word of warning – it is not so unusual to find more “American content” in a Japanese car than one built by Detroit’s Big Three.

So don’t kid yourself about the Pakistani bomb. From burgers to bombs, globalization has had an impact. Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal – as many as 120 weapons – is no more Pakistani than your television set is Japanese. Or is that American? It was a concept developed in one country and, for the most part, built in another. Its creation was an example of globalization before the term was even coined.

A proliferation chain reaction

So where to begin? Some argue that

Pakistan started down the nuclear road under President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s 1953 Atoms for Peace program, billed as a humanitarian gesture aimed at sharing the peaceful potential of atomic energy with the world. But Atoms for Peace was a misnomer – a plan to divert growing domestic and international concern over radioactive fallout from America’s nuclear tests. It would prove to be a White House public relations campaign to dwarf all others.

In fact, Atoms for Peace educated thousands of scientists from around the world in nuclear science and then dispatched them home, where many later pursued secret weapons programs. Among them were Israelis, South Africans, Pakistanis, and Indians. Homi Sethna, chairman of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission, spelled out the program’s impact after his country tested its first nuclear device in 1974. “I can say with confidence,” he wrote, “that the initial [Atoms for Peace program] cooperation agreement itself has been the bedrock on which our nuclear

program has been built.”

If you think that India’s program, in turn, did not inspire Pakistan’s, think again.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the late Pakistani prime minister and father of Benazir Bhutto, first talked publicly about nuclear weapons in the early 1960s when he was Pakistan’s energy minister. In his 1967 autobiography, Bhutto wrote, “All wars of our age have become total wars... and our plans should, therefore, include the nuclear deterrent.” But Pakistan’s generals rejected his ideas, arguing that the cost of producing a nuclear bomb would cut too deeply into spending on conventional weapons. It wasn’t until after Bhutto became prime minister that he officially launched Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program in 1972.

Enter A.Q. Khan

Consider here, yet another atomic beginning: Pakistan, a poor, backward country, with little indigenous technical or industrial infrastructure, made next to no progress on the nuclear front, despite Bhutto’s enthusiasm, until the arrival of Abdul Qadeer Khan at the end of 1975.

The Indian-born Khan had fled his home in Bhopal in the 1950s to settle in the new state of Pakistan. There, he went to university, quickly becoming frustrated by the lack of opportunity. Study and advanced degrees in Europe followed until, finally, Khan found himself working at the Physics Dynamics Research Laboratory in Amsterdam in the spring of 1972.

At the time, powerful companies like

Westinghouse and General Electric controlled the facilities that provided enriched uranium to civilian reactors throughout the Western world. In 1971, in an effort to protect the fledgling U.S. commercial nuclear industry, President Richard M. Nixon had ordered that the closely guarded enrichment technology not be shared with any other country, not even allies. That led other nations to begin developing their own enrichment technology to ensure continual access to an adequate fuel supply. The lab where Khan was employed, known by its Dutch initials FDO, was the in-house research facility for a Dutch conglomerate that worked closely with Urenco, a consortium formed by the governments of Britain, West Germany, and the Netherlands to design and manufacture centrifuges.

To cut right to the chase, Khan, who was able to work at the lab without serious scrutiny from the Dutch security police, found that he had easy access to the latest uranium-enrichment technology. Within three years, he had left the lab – in possession of plans for Europe’s most advanced centrifuge and a shopping list of relevant equipment manufacturers, experts for hire, and sources for the necessary raw materials to enrich uranium for a nuclear bomb, all scattered across the globe.

Before leaving the lab, Khan wrote Prime Minister Bhutto, offering his services and returned to Pakistan to launch that country’s own uranium-enrichment laboratory.

FDO was just the start of Khan’s reliance on the outside world for bomb-making help. With the support of Pak-

Within three years, he had left the lab – in possession of plans for Europe’s most advanced centrifuge and a shopping list of relevant equipment manufacturers, experts for hire, and sources for the necessary raw materials to enrich uranium for a nuclear bomb, all scattered across the globe

The so-called Islamic bomb turns out not to be an indigenous product, but instead a little bit American, Canadian, Swiss, German, Dutch, British, Japanese, and even Russian

istani scientists and military officers, working undercover as “diplomats” at the country’s missions around the world, he set up what became known as “the Pakistani pipeline,” securing high-tech equipment from literally hundreds of companies in 20 or more countries.

While some of this is well known, a series of little-publicized letters between Khan and a Canadian-Pakistani engineer, Aziz Abdul Khan, in 1978 and 1979 offer a revealing look at the degree to which globalization shaped Pakistan’s nuclear program. The so-called Islamic bomb turns out not to be an indigenous product, but instead a little bit American, Canadian, Swiss, German, Dutch, British, Japanese, and even Russian.

Aziz Khan was one of dozens of Pakistani scientists living abroad whom Khan tried to recruit for what he described as a “project of national importance.” According to the letters between them, while Aziz Khan declined the offer, he agreed to provide A.Q. Khan with scientific literature and to spend his vacations at A.Q. Khan’s laboratory outside of Islamabad, training and mentoring young engineers.

We obtained the letters – which cover the comings and goings of nuclear experts from nine different countries – from an American government official, who, in turn, received them from Canadian law enforcement officers after they were taken from Aziz Khan, following his arrest in Montreal in 1980.

These exchanges provide a rare behind-the-scenes glimpse into Khan’s

nuclear Wal-Mart in its infancy, long before he began peddling his finished wares to Iran, North Korea, and Libya. After a decade of diplomatic rhetoric about the need to stop the spread of nuclear technology, they also offer a window into the ineffectiveness of American and European export controls. By setting these letters – often colorfully translated from Urdu by the Canadian authorities – against the backdrop of the news coverage of the time, you can see just how disturbingly international the assistance was that Khan received.

Buying “ducks” from Russia

It was an exciting time for Pakistan’s fledgling nuclear program. On June 4, 1978, A.Q. Khan wrote to Aziz Khan, describing early tests of his centrifuge designs, referring to the process of substituting helium for uranium gas as putting “air in the machine.”

“June 4 is a historical day for us. On that day we put ‘air’ in the machine and the first time we got the right product and its efficiency was the same as the theoretical. . . As you have seen, my team consists of crazy people. They do not care if it is day or night. They go after it with all their might. The bellows have arrived and like this we can increase the speed of our work.”

Khan’s international nuclear shopping spree was soon on display as he wrote proudly to his Canadian friend just a week later to recount the trip made by a member of his clandestine procurement network to Japan to obtain some critical, though unexplained help. “Colonel Majeed is back from

Japan and thanks God all the problems have been solved. Next month the Japanese would come here and all the work would be done under their supervision.”

The following month, he wrote Aziz Khan about one of his Pakistani protégés: “Dr. Mirza is back from America. He had gone to get the training for the control room of the air conditioning plant.” In the same letter, he announced that “the plant of Switzerland has arrived,” probably a reference to a specialized pumping system to move uranium gas in and out of the centrifuges during enrichment.

In August, the scientist told Aziz Khan that Colonel Majeed was on the road again, “leaving for Germany, England and Switzerland. He would be looking for cable and sub panels. Our friend from Kuwait will join us in November and in this way we will not have to worry about generators and emergency power supply. He has 15 years experience.” Within weeks, Khan wrote enthusiastically that “a German team was here. After staying five days, they went back. It was quite a busy time.”

A.Q. Khan was also in the hunt himself. Mentioning that he had sent a cable to California, he wrote in the fall of 1978 that, “if our two units are ready, then myself and Dr. Mirza would come for thanks and maybe we could meet you.” The “two units” was probably a reference to two huge air conditioners that Khan bought from an unidentified U.S. company.

In the spring of 1979, Khan would explain: “Dr. Alam, Dr. Hashmi and my-

self are going to Germany and Switzerland for two or three days. We have to buy some material there and then we will return through London.”

Khan’s project was seen abroad as a potentially profitable market, and the Russians, too, were rushing to sell their wares. Using a primitive code, Khan wrote: “Hopefully, in winter there will be ducks from Russia. This is a big job. Now the emergency generators are going to be installed very soon.”

UK shipments stopped

But all was not perfect. During the summer of 1978, a British member of Parliament asked why a British subsidiary of the American Emerson Electric Co. was selling Pakistan the same high frequency inverter that Britain was using in its own uranium-enrichment project – and by the fall, shipments to Pakistan had been stopped. Khan complained that a German supplier had tipped the British off when he did not get the nod on a business deal.

“That man from the German team was unethical. When he did not get the order from us, he wrote a letter to a Labour party member and questions were asked in Parliament. Work is still progressing satisfactorily but the frustration is increasing. It is just like a man who waited for 30 years but cannot wait for a few hours after the marriage ceremony.”

By the spring of the following year, Khan’s team was feeling the strain. He once again wrote Aziz Khan about his troubles in a clumsy code:

“For such a long time, no one has taken a single day’s holiday. Everybody

Khan complained that a German supplier had tipped the British off when he did not get the nod on a business deal

GOING NUCLEAR

Khan's success in obtaining nuclear material abroad did not go unnoticed. American intelligence watched his procurement operation and U.S. officials occasionally complained in public

is working very hard so that by the end of the year, the factory should start working and should start providing cake and bread. Here there is shortage of food and we need those things very badly. From everywhere our food is being stopped.”

Khan's success in obtaining nuclear material abroad did not go unnoticed. American intelligence watched his procurement operation and U.S. officials occasionally complained in public, prompting Aziz Khan to write in June 1979: “There is no doubt that you guys made people here sleepless.... These days you are famous all over the world.”

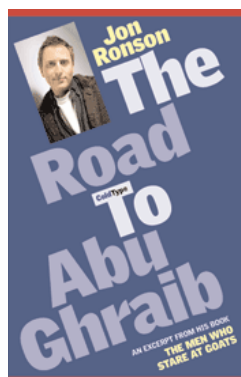
In August of 1979, still struggling, Khan wrote his friend of a deal that he could not consummate in Canada, probably a reference to difficulties obtaining a specialized type of inverter essential to operating the uranium enrichment plant.

“You must be reading that your countrymen have decided to drink our blood. The way they are after us, it looks as if we have killed their mother. Their building of castles in the air has

beaten the Arabian Nights. There is lots of pressure, but I have trust in God in doing my work. I am thinking, if I finish this job, then I would solve the purpose of my life.”

Khan did indeed overcome the obstacles – with plenty of help from his friends around the world. And he had learned his lesson well. When he was finished helping Pakistan build its bomb, he turned his talents to another kind of globalization – marketing his wares, and those of his associates from Europe, Asia, and South Africa, to a new set of clients. **CT**

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BAN THE BOMB – BUT ONLY IN IRAN!

George Monbiot wonders why Israel doesn't count

George Bush and Gordon Brown are right: there should be no nuclear weapons in the Middle East. The risk of a nuclear conflagration could be greater there than anywhere else. Any nation developing them should expect a firm diplomatic response. So when will they impose sanctions on Israel?

Like them, I believe that Iran is trying to acquire the bomb. I also believe it should be discouraged, by a combination of economic pressure and bribery, from doing so (a military response would of course be disastrous). I believe that Bush and Brown – who maintain their nuclear arsenals in defiance of the non-proliferation treaty – are in no position to lecture anyone else. But if, as Mr Bush claims, the proliferation of such weapons “would be a dangerous threat to world peace”⁽¹⁾, why does neither man mention the fact that Israel, according to a secret briefing by the US Defense Intelligence Agency, possesses between 60 and 80 of them?⁽²⁾

Officially, the Israeli government maintains a position of “nuclear ambi-

guity”; neither confirming nor denying its possession of nuclear weapons. But everyone who has studied the issue knows that this is a formula with a simple purpose: to give the United States an excuse to keep breaking its own laws, which forbid it to grant aid to a country with unauthorised weapons of mass destruction⁽³⁾. The fiction of ambiguity is fiercely guarded. In 1986, when the nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu handed photographs of Israel's bomb factory to the Sunday Times, he was lured from Britain to Rome, drugged and kidnapped by Mossad agents, tried in secret and sentenced to 18 years. He served 12 of them in solitary confinement and was banged up again – for six months – soon after he was released.

But in December last year, the Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert accidentally let slip that Israel, like “America, France and Russia” had nuclear weapons⁽⁴⁾. Opposition politicians were furious. They attacked him for “a lack of caution bordering on irresponsibility.”⁽⁵⁾ But US aid continues to flow without

In 1986, when the nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu handed photographs of Israel's bomb factory to the Sunday Times, he was lured from Britain to Rome, drugged and kidnapped by Mossad agents, tried in secret and sentenced to 18 years

The deal went ahead, and from then on the US administration sought to bamboozle its own officials in order to defend Israel's lie

impediment.

As the fascinating papers released last year by the National Security Archive show, the US government was aware in 1968 that Israel was developing a nuclear device (what it didn't know is that the first one had already been built by then).⁽⁶⁾ The contrast to the efforts now being made to prevent Iran from acquiring the bomb could scarcely be starker.

Sale of jets

At first, US diplomats urged the government to make its sale of 50 F4 Phantom jets conditional on Israel's abandonment of its nuclear programme. As a note sent from the Near East Bureau to the Secretary of State in October 1968 reveals, the order would make the US "the principal supplier of Israel's military needs" for the first time. In return it should require "commitments that would make it more difficult for Israel to take the critical decision to go nuclear."⁽⁷⁾ Such pressure, the memo suggested, was urgently required: France had just delivered the first of a consignment of medium range missiles, and Israel intended to equip them with nuclear warheads.

Twenty days later, on November 4, 1968, when the assistant defense secretary met Yitzhak Rabin (then the Israeli ambassador to Washington), Rabin "did not dispute in any way our information on Israel's nuclear or missile capability"⁽⁸⁾. He simply refused to discuss it. Four days after that, Rabin announced that the proposal was "completely unacceptable to us"⁽⁹⁾. On November 27, Lyndon Johnson's admin-

istration accepted Israel's assurance that "it will not be the first power in the Middle East to introduce nuclear weapons"⁽¹⁰⁾.

As the memos show, US officials knew that this assurance had been broken even before it was made. A record of a phone conversation between Henry Kissinger and another official in July 1969 reveals that Richard Nixon was "very leary of cutting off the Phantoms"⁽¹¹⁾, despite Israel's blatant disregard of the agreement. The deal went ahead, and from then on the US administration sought to bamboozle its own officials in order to defend Israel's lie. In August 1969, US officials were sent to "inspect" Israel's Dimona nuclear plant. But a memo from the State Department reveals that "the US government is not prepared to support a "real" inspection effort in which the team members can feel authorised to ask directly pertinent questions and/or insist on being allowed to look at records, logs, materials and the like. The team has in many subtle ways been cautioned to avoid controversy, "be gentlemen" and not take issue with the obvious will of the hosts."⁽¹²⁾ Nixon refused to pass the minutes of the conversation he'd had with the Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir to the US Ambassador To Israel, Wally Barbour⁽¹³⁾. Meir and Nixon appear to have agreed that the Israeli programme could go ahead, as long as it was kept secret.

The US government has continued to protect it. Every six months, the intelligence agencies provide Congress with a report on technology acquired by foreign states that's "useful for the

development or production of weapons of mass destruction.” These reports discuss the programmes in India, Pakistan, North Korea, Iran and other nations, but not in Israel⁽¹⁴⁾. Whenever other states have tried to press Israel to join the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the US and European governments have blocked them⁽¹⁵⁾. Israel has also exempted itself from the biological and chemical weapons conventions⁽¹⁶⁾.

By refusing to sign these treaties, it ensures that it needs never be inspected. While the IAEA's inspectors crawl round Iran's factories, put seals on its uranium tanks and blow the whistle when it fails to cooperate, they have no legal authority to inspect facilities in Israel⁽¹⁷⁾. So when the Israeli government complains, as it did last week, that the head of the IAEA is “sticking his head in the sand over Iran's nuclear programme”⁽¹⁸⁾, you can only gape at its chutzpah. Israel is constantly racking up the pressure for action against Iran, aware that no powerful state will press for action against Israel.

Dangerous states

Yes, Iran under Ahmadinejad is a dangerous and unpredictable state involved in acts of terror abroad. The president is a Holocaust denier opposed to the existence of Israel. During the Iran-Iraq war, Iran responded to Saddam Hussein's toxic bombardments with chemical weapons of its own⁽¹⁹⁾. But Israel under Ehud Olmert is also a dangerous and unpredictable state involved in acts of terror abroad. Two months ago it bombed a site in Syria (whose function is fiercely disputed). Last year it

launched a war of aggression against Lebanon. It remains in occupation of Palestinian lands. In February 2001, according to the BBC, it used chemical weapons in Gaza: 180 people were admitted to hospital with severe convulsions⁽²⁰⁾. Nuclear weapons in Israel's hands are surely just as dangerous as nuclear weapons in Iran's.

So when will our governments speak up? When will they acknowledge that there is already a nuclear power in the Middle East, and that it presents an existential threat to its neighbours? When will they admit that Iran is not starting a nuclear arms race, but joining one? When will they demand that the rules they impose on Iran should also apply to Israel?

CT

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*George Monbiot's latest book is **Heat: How To Stop The Planet From Burning**. This column originally appeared in London's Guardian newspaper.*

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OF SOUNDBITES AND REALITY

William Blum on lies and hypocrisy in the Middle East and beyond

In October, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told assembled world leaders at the United Nations that the time had come to take action against Iran. “None disagrees,” she said, “that Iran denies the Holocaust and speaks openly of its desire to wipe a member state – mine – off the map. And none disagrees that, in violation of Security Council resolutions, it is actively pursuing the means to achieve this end. Too many see the danger but walk idly by – hoping that someone else will take care of it. ... It is time for the United Nations, and the states of the world, to live up to their promise of never again. To say enough is enough, to act now and to defend their basic values.”^[1]

Yet, later the same month, we are informed by Haaretz, (frequently described as “the New York Times of Israel”), that the same Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni had said a few months earlier, in a series of closed discussions, that in her opinion “Iranian nuclear weapons do not pose an existential threat to Israel.” Haaretz reported that

“Livni also criticized the exaggerated use that [Israeli] Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is making of the issue of the Iranian bomb, claiming that he is attempting to rally the public around him by playing on its most basic fears.”^[2]

What are we to make of such a self-contradiction, such perfect hypocrisy?

And here is Fareed Zakaria, editor of *Newsweek International*: “The one time we seriously negotiated with Tehran was in the closing days of the war in Afghanistan, in order to create a new political order in the country. Bush’s representative to the Bonn conference, James Dobbins, says that ‘the Iranians were very professional, straightforward, reliable and helpful. They were also critical to our success. They persuaded the Northern Alliance [Afghan foes of the Taliban] to make the final concessions that we asked for.’ Dobbins says the Iranians made overtures to have better relations with the United States through him and others in 2001 and later, but got no reply. Even after the Axis of Evil speech, he recalls, they offered to cooperate in Afgha-

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nistan. Dobbins took the proposal to a principals' meeting in Washington only to have it met with dead silence. The then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, he says, 'looked down and rustled his papers.' No reply was ever sent back to the Iranians. Why bother? They're mad."^[3]

Dobbins has further written: "The original version of the Bonn agreement ... neglected to mention either democracy or the war on terrorism. It was the Iranian representative who spotted these omissions and successfully urged that the newly emerging Afghan government be required to commit to both."^[4] ... "Only weeks after Hamid Karzai was sworn in as interim leader in Afghanistan, President Bush listed Iran among the 'axis of evil' – surprising payback for Tehran's help in Bonn. A year later, shortly after the invasion of Iraq, all bilateral contacts with Tehran were suspended. Since then, confrontation over Iran's nuclear program has intensified."^[5]

Shortly after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iran made another approach to Washington, via the Swiss ambassador who sent a fax to the State Department. The Washington Post described it as "a proposal from Iran for a broad dialogue with the United States, and the fax suggested everything was on the table – including full cooperation on nuclear programs, acceptance of Israel and the termination of Iranian support for Palestinian militant groups." The Bush administration "belittled the initiative. Instead, they formally complained to the Swiss ambassador who had sent the fax." Richard Haass, head

of policy planning at the State Department at the time and now president of the Council on Foreign Relations, said the Iranian approach was swiftly rejected because in the administration "the bias was toward a policy of regime change."^[6]

So there we have it. The Israelis know it, the Americans know it. Iran is not any kind of military threat. Before the invasion of Iraq I posed the question in this report: What possible reason would Saddam Hussein have for attacking the United States or Israel other than an irresistible desire for mass national suicide? He had no reason, and neither do the Iranians. Of the many lies surrounding the invasion of Iraq, the biggest one of all is that if, in fact, Saddam Hussein had those weapons of mass destruction the invasion would have been justified.

The United States and Israel have long strived to dominate the Middle East, viewing Iraq and Iran as the most powerful barriers to that ambition. Iraq is now a basket case. Iran awaits basketization. And, eventually perhaps, the omnipresent American military bases, closing the base-gap between Iraq and Afghanistan in Washington's encirclement of China, and the better to monitor the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea areas.

There was a time when I presumed that the sole purpose of United States hostile policy toward Iran was to keep the Iranians from acquiring nuclear weapons, which would deprive the US and Israel of their mideast monopoly and ultimate tool of intimidation. But now it appears that destroying Iran's

military capability, nuclear and otherwise, smashing it to the point of being useless defensively or offensively, is the Bush administration's objective, perhaps along with the hope of some form of regime change. The Empire leaves as little to chance as possible.

Cuba and Original Sin

Since the early days of the Cuban Revolution assorted anti-communists and capitalist true-believers around the world have been relentless in publicizing the failures, real and alleged, of life in Cuba; each perceived shortcoming is attributed to the perceived shortcomings of socialism – It's simply a system that can't work, we are told, given the nature of human beings, particularly in this modern, competitive, globalized, consumer-oriented world.

In response to many of these criticisms, defenders of Cuban society have regularly pointed out how the numerous draconian sanctions imposed by the United States since 1960 are largely responsible for most of the problems pointed out by the critics. The critics, in turn, say that this is just an excuse, one given by Cuban apologists for every failure of their socialist system. It would be very difficult for the critics to prove their point. The United States would have to drop all sanctions and then we'd have to wait long enough for Cuban society to recover what it's lost and demonstrate what its system can do when not under constant attack by the most powerful nation in the world.

The sanctions (which Cuba calls an economic blockade), designed to create discontent toward the government,

have been expanding under the Bush administration, both in number and in vindictiveness. Washington has adopted sharper reprisals against those who do business with Cuba or establish relations with the country based on cultural or tourist exchanges; e.g., the US Treasury has frozen the accounts in the United States of the Netherlands Caribbean Bank because it has an office in Cuba, and banned US firms and individuals from having any dealings with the Dutch bank.

The US Treasury Department fined the Alliance of Baptists \$34,000, charging that certain of its members and parishioners of other churches had engaged in tourism during a visit to Cuba for religious purposes; i.e., they had spent money there. (As George W. once said: "U.S. law forbids Americans to travel to Cuba for pleasure."^[7])

American courts and government agencies have helped US companies expropriate the famous Cuban cigar brand name 'Cohiba' and the well-known rum 'Havana Club'.

The Bush administration sent a note to American Internet service providers telling them not to deal with six specified countries, including Cuba.^[8] This is one of several actions by Washington over the years to restrict Internet availability in Cuba; yet Cuba's critics claim that problems with the Internet in Cuba are due to government suppression.

Cubans in the United States are limited to how much money they can send to their families in Cuba, a limit that Washington imposes only on Cubans and on no other nationals. Not even

American courts and government agencies have helped US companies expropriate the famous Cuban cigar brand name 'Cohiba' and the well-known rum 'Havana Club'

ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

For years American political leaders and media were fond of labeling Cuba an "international pariah". We don't hear much of that any more. Perhaps one reason is the annual vote at the United Nations on a General Assembly resolution to end the US embargo against Cuba

during the worst moments of the Cold War was there a general limit to the amount of money that people in the US could send to relatives living in the Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe.

In 1999, Cuba filed a suit against the United States for \$181.1 billion in compensation for economic losses and loss of life during the first forty years of this aggression. The suit held Washington responsible for the death of 3,478 Cubans and the wounding and disabling of 2,099 others. In the eight years since, these figures have of course all increased. The sanctions, in numerous ways large and small, makes acquiring many kinds of products and services from around the world much more difficult and expensive, often impossible; frequently, they are things indispensable to Cuban medicine, transportation or industry; or they mean that Americans and Cubans can't attend professional conferences in each other's country.

The above is but a small sample of the excruciating pain inflicted by the United States upon the body, soul and economy of the Cuban people.

For years American political leaders and media were fond of labeling Cuba an "international pariah". We don't hear much of that any more. Perhaps one reason is the annual vote at the United Nations on a General Assembly resolution to end the US embargo against Cuba. This is how the vote has gone:

	Yes-No	
1992	59-2	(US, Israel)
1993	88-4	(US, Israel, Albania, Paraguay)

1994	101-2	(US, Israel)
1995	117-3	(US, Israel, Uzbekistan)
1996	138-3	(US, Israel, Uzbekistan)
1997	143-3	(US, Israel, Uzbekistan)
1998	157-2	(US, Israel)
1999	155-2	(US, Israel)
2000	167-3	(US, Israel, Marshall Islands)
2001	167-3	(US, Israel, Marshall Islands)
2002	173-3	(US, Israel, Marshall Islands)
2003	179-3	(US, Israel, Marshall Islands)
2004	179-4	(US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau)
2005	182-4	(US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau)
2006	183-4	(US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau)
2007	184-4	(US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau)

Cuba's sin, which the United States of America cannot forgive, is to have created a society that can serve as a successful example of an alternative to the capitalist model, and, moreover, to have done so under the very nose of the United States. And despite all the hardships imposed on it by Washington, Cuba has indeed inspired countless peoples and governments all over the world.

Long-time writer about Cuba, Karen Lee Wald, has observed: "The United States has more pens, pencils, candy, aspirin, etc. than most Cubans have. They, on the other hand, have better access to health services, education, sports, culture, childcare, services for the elderly, pride and dignity than most of us have within reach."

In a 1996 address to the General Assembly, Cuban Vice-President Carlos Lage stated: "Each day in the world 200

million children sleep in the streets. Not one of them is Cuban.”

On April 6, 1960, L.D. Mallory, a US State Department senior official, wrote in an internal memorandum: “The majority of Cubans support Castro ... the only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship. ... every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba.” Mallory proposed “a line of action that makes the greatest inroads in denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and the overthrow of the government.” Later that year, the Eisenhower administration instituted the embargo.^[8]

Reason Number 3,467 for having doubts about our God-given free-enterprise system

I recently bought my first cellphone and took it with me to Burlington, Vermont, only to discover that it didn’t work there. It seems that AT&T/Cingular doesn’t have cellphone towers in that area. But other phone companies do have towers there and their subscribers’ phones work. Is that not a really clever system?

To have a single national telephone system with all towers available for use by everyone would presumably upset libertarians and others who worship at the shrine of competition. So instead we’re given another charming “market solution”, and the beauty of competition is preserved. Why stop there? Just

imagine the advantages in being able to call around to find out which fire station will give you the best rate should your house suddenly go up in flames.

An unwelcome guest at the table of respectable opinion

In the September edition of this report I presented a review of New York Times reporter Tim Weiner’s new book *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*. It was rather critical of the book, particularly as to what has been left out about CIA operations and the effect upon foreign peoples of these operations. The net result of these numerous omissions is to paint a picture of US foreign policy that significantly downplays the actions most destructive to the peace, prosperity, and happiness of the world. It’s an old story – the media decide which issues to cover in the first place; they then decide how many sides there are to an issue; and then they decide what type of coverage is “balanced”. The major ideological problem of the American media is that they do not believe that they have any ideology.

But I wondered if I was not being somewhat unfair to Weiner in one or more cases; perhaps he had a good reason for some of his omissions; perhaps in the 700 pages, including 155 pages of small-type notes, I had missed something I thought had been omitted. I decided to send a copy of the review to him, hopefully to get his reaction, and wrote to the Times asking for his email address. I got back an email from Weiner himself which read, in full:

“Dear Mr. Blum: I read your review several days ago. And I’ve read all your

To have a single national telephone system with all towers available for use by everyone would presumably upset libertarians and others who worship at the shrine of competition

ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

books. best wishes, tw”

No challenges to anything I said; no corrections. I'd be surprised if he's done more than skim a few pages of any of my books. His letter is his way of saying: "I really don't want to hear from you again. Our worlds are not designed for mingling. Our truths are not the same, and neither my publisher nor the New York Times pays me to disseminate yours."

CT

NOTES

[1] Haaretz.com (Israeli newspaper), October 1, 2007

[2] Haaretz.com, October 25, 2007; print edition October 26

[3] Newsweek, October 20, 2007

[4] Washington Post, May 6, 2004

[5] Washington Post, July 22, 2007, p.B7, op-ed by Dobbins

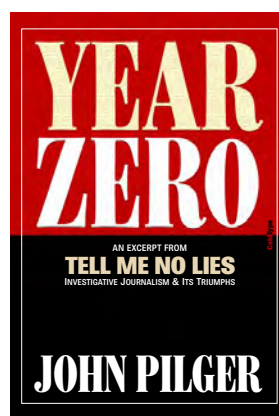
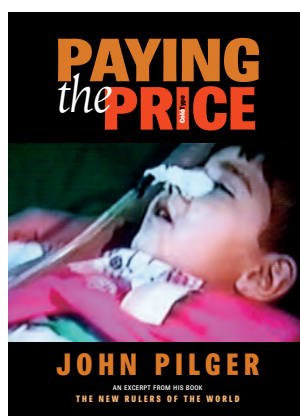
[6] Washington Post, June 18, 2006, p.16

[7] White House press release, October 10, 2003

[8] Department of State, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, Volume VI, Cuba" (1991), p.885

William Blum is the author of Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2; Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower; West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir; and Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire

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WEATHERING THE STORM

Lawrence Houghteling wants to get rid of the Head Gardener

Dear Abby,

I'm a member of a large old community garden association. A long time ago the members created a sensible framework for running the association and settling all the problems that inevitably arise in any organization that includes so many members and so many points of view. For the most part our system of rules has served us well, allowing most members to garden as they wish and to feed themselves and their families (and even occasionally earn a little cash from their efforts) with as little outside interference as possible.

Quarrels and factional differences are hardly unknown in our garden, yet the various factions have usually had some sense of a common good, and most of these disputes have gotten settled. Of late, however, the arguments have gotten more heated, and the by-play between the factions has grown more intense, and just plain meaner. The faction of which I'm not a member got control of the garden a few years ago – in a rather irregular manner, but that's neither here nor there —and

soon afterwards seized upon the excuse of a blight which threatened us all to institute some new policies that have made the other main faction and even many gardeners who try to avoid the incessant bickering very unhappy indeed. Using this new and admittedly serious blight as an excuse, the Head Gardener and his group acquired some dangerous poisons which according to them we all needed to fight off the infestation. Some of these poisons they used (with results that many, including me, believe have made the blight worse) but a lot more of the poison is in storage somewhere

It's pretty obvious to most of us by now that the Head Gardener is a stubborn, lying jerk, and most of his policies are now pretty constantly under attack. But he's still Head Gardener, and he still has all those poisons I mentioned, and God knows what he still might do. Luckily, we have a big election to choose a new garden government coming up in about a year, and it seems likely that the Head Gardener's faction will be defeated and replaced with people who

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Punishment is secondary; the main thing is to let future Head Gardeners know that there are some lines they'd better not cross

are more clear-headed, which would obviously be a good thing.

The problem is, even if he goes away, we'll still have these poisons stored up, ready to be used in case of any danger, real or imagined. And we have the example of how the present Head Gardener has been acting for the last few years, lying whenever it suits his purposes and bullying everyone who doesn't agree with him to get his way, and of how he's gotten away with behaving that way.

We do have a section in the bylaws that spells out how we can remove officials (even Head Gardeners) who have misbehaved. This power has hardly ever been used, and it's pretty clearly a dangerous business. But dangerous compared to these new poisons? I don't think so. It seems obvious to me and a whole lot of the ordinary gardeners that if we want this community garden to keep going, we'd be well advised to get up on our hind legs and remove the present Head Gardener from power. Prune him before he does worse stuff yet, and show anybody else with a mind to act the way he's behaved what could happen to them.

But most of the so-called leaders of my faction are arguing that we don't want to stir things up: just wait, let time and next year's election straighten things out, they say. They claim they're "practical," but I think they're lily-livered, and frightened of what the scary Assistant Head Gardener might do to them in retaliation. But then at other times I think they're looking forward to having control of the poisons themselves. I don't much like either thought,

but there it is.

It seems to me that if we're to going to stay safe from the poisons we've got lying around just waiting to be abused then We the People need to exercise our right (in fact, I'd call it our obligation) to call out the present Head Gardener, and put him through the political trial our bylaws call for, and get rid of him and the poisons he's responsible for. We need to make an example of him for lying and pushing people around, and we need to force him to leave the Long Shed, and not just leave him to slink away next year after his faction gets defeated. Which isn't even a sure thing.

Punishment is secondary; the main thing is to let future Head Gardeners know that there are some lines they'd better not cross. And we need to find and get rid of all the stored-up poisons, which we'll never do if we don't take the present guy head on. I've been around too long to believe you can let even excellent people be tempted by having dangerous poisons lying around to use "just this once" or "only for a little while." Way I see it, either we get rid of the poisoner and his poisons, or we're poisoned in the long run.

What do you think, Abby? – **Lorenzo the Gardener**

Dear Lorenzo,

I'm reminded of what Bob Dylan told Columbus. Which is to say, "Good luck."

CT

Lawrence Houghteling is a teacher at the Heritage School, a public high school in Spanish Harlem, New York

SHOPPING AT THE END OF THE WORLD

Michael I. Niman on the demise of our greatest passion

In a consumer culture, life is all about you. What are your immediate wants and needs? How do you feel? Are you comfortable? Thirsty maybe? Mood okay? Happiness comes in a box from the mall. Or a pill from the doctor. Whatever. Just as long as you buy it. Forget about where things come from, who made them, under what conditions – or how the raw materials came to be in the manufacturer's possession. And forget about where things go when you're done with them. Leave those worries to the bleeding hearts, the tree-huggers and all the other America-haters. You work hard. You deserve creature comforts. End of story. Let's shop.

This year's Black Friday shop-a-thon bested last year's sales numbers by more than eight per cent. This might seem weird, given the collapse of the dollar, the epidemic of mortgage foreclosures, the expanding pension and healthcare crisis, peak-oil-induced soaring energy costs and the overall meltdown of the economy.

And then there's end times environ-

mentalism – the fact that most of the world, including we Americans, seem to have just discovered global warming, acid rain, habitat destruction, collapsing fisheries, oceanic dead zones, deforestation, drought-induced wildfires, climate-change-induced floods and so on. After years of listening to network weather forecasters predict “another beautiful day” without ever mentioning the phrase “global warming,” Americans finally began to get it this year.

Most are concerned, if not outright scared shitless, about dying oceans, burning forests and highways clogged with tractor-trailerloads of trash heading no place in particular. And we're all pretty much aware that the dollar is now a soft currency whose value is held hostage by our Chinese economic masters – because, well, we gave them all our dollars in exchange for a lot of shit that's mostly now buried in landfills, incinerated or floating around in some ocean trash vortex. We now know, like we never did before, that our shopping is killing the planet. But, like the pale gray, semi-lifeless forms that clog the

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At the White House, rapture-ready end-timers aren't viewed as fringe lunatics. White House records show that they're regularly received in the Oval Office as religious advisors

doorways of public buildings, sucking off of what they all know to be their executioner, we just can't help ourselves.

For many, living a responsible, low-consumption lifestyle is a fate worse than death – so perhaps, like the smokers in the doorway, they've opted for death. This scenario paints Black Friday hoarding as an act of collective suicide – shop till you drop. Then there are the nihilists. They don't want to die, and they certainly don't want to commit suicide. They just have no hope. To them, our damnation is a foregone conclusion. So why not at least have a good time on our collective way out? The world's fucked, so let's shop.

Then there are the believers. Almost all of these folks believe we're going to be saved. They fall into two categories – the God's-gonna-save-us tribes, and the scientists-will-figure-it-out cults

The God crowd

The God crowd itself falls into two general categories. The first group believes that some nonterrestrial force will ultimately save us from ourselves – hence we can carry on playing with matches and eating all the candy we want, waiting for our parents or the hall monitor or some other surrogate grown-up to come scold us and make things all right.

The second group is a bit nastier. They believe that their own deity will show up at the end of time and save people like them, and only people like them, whisking them away on the Rapture Express to their own gated community in the sky. The rest of us mud people can stay behind on a spent core of an earth, waiting to face a fiery Ar-

mageddon. To them, environmentalism makes no more sense than painting a house right before an arson. Black Friday is like an eviction party for this crew.

Whatever you do, however, don't write these folks off as fringe nutjobs. Their ranks include current and former US government officials who are or have been responsible for our environmental and economic policies. Notable among them is the former Reagan administration secretary of the interior, James Watts – the man responsible for axing Jimmy Carter's sustainable energy and environment initiatives a generation ago. Folks like him aren't just waiting for the apocalypse they've been actively working to bring it on.

George W. Bush hangs with this crowd as well. At the White House, rapture-ready end-timers aren't viewed as fringe lunatics. White House records show that they're regularly received in the Oval Office as religious advisors. Their religion, however, feels like it's lifted from an Indiana Jones film. The rapture they so impatiently await, it seems, won't come until the state of Israel occupies all of its Old Testament stomping grounds and rebuilds the ancient Temple of Solomon on the site of the 1,300-year-old Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosques. With all this heeby-jeeby going on, who needs to worry about global warming – especially when the Israelis are only about ten years away from firing up the rapture escalator to the heavens – which of course the Israelis won't be allowed onto, but that's another story.

This all fits with the Bush adminis-

tration's modus operandi. Their plan for the Iraq war is to leave office and let the next administration sort out their mess. Likewise, their plan for the environment is to leave the planet. Of course, however Bush leaves the planet, there'll be someone here to have to deal with the mess that's left behind.

The techno-fundamentalists

Then there are the technology worshipers. They're out in their SUVs cruising the Big Boxes, secure in their belief that no matter how much they fuck up the world, science will find a way to fix it. If the rapturites are all about Indiana Jones, these techno-worshipers are diehard Trekkies. They meditate to mantras like "fusion energy." They follow charismatic preachers such as Virgin Group CEO Richard Branson, who offered \$25 million to anyone who figures out how to get this carbon dioxide stuff out of the atmosphere and back into soda bottles where it belongs. In the meantime, well, his company's fleet of jet airliners are belching out the death gases like there's no tomorrow.

That's the beauty of the techno-fix. We don't have to do anything – especially anything that feels like a sacrifice. We can consume and befoul while indulging in all the hedonistic whims we feel. We'll eat candy all day and never be fat. We'll flip the channel and watch Britney freak out while we wait for scientists to perform liposuction on our bloated planet.

The techno-fix is a fantasy. It's atoms for peace and a work-free robotic uto-

pia all rolled into one. The techno-fundamentalists are putting all of their faith in this one hand. When they fold, we lose. End of game. This hand's not real. It only works on TV and in the movies, where replicators materialize food while trash just sort of disappears into endless space. This isn't real. This ain't our world.

The grown-ups

There's one more group out there, but numerically they seem to be the smallest. That's the let's-roll-up-our-sleeves-and-deal-with-it crowd. The truth is that the technology exists for us to deal with our environmental problems. It always has, throughout all of human history. But it involves scrapping the fantasies most people still cling to. We can't count on scientists or gods to save us from ourselves. We're the problem. So we have to be the solution.

And I hate to be the bearer of difficult news, but switching brands just isn't going to save us. Lowering the thermostat in your McMansion or putting ethanol into the SUV won't do it. An overpopulated world full of people buying Energy Star air conditioners isn't going to be our salvation. Buying a different product won't cut it. A different lifestyle, however, might. But we have to act fast, because one of these years there won't be a Cyber Monday following Black Friday. **CT**

Dr Michael I. Niman is a professor of journalism at Buffalo State College, New York.

An overpopulated world full of people buying Energy Star air conditioners isn't going to be our salvation

ONSET OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Carolyn Baker checks out Danny Schechter's latest book

The American empire is descending into catastrophic financial collapse, already bankrupt, which will eventually result in the abject impoverishment of all but a very few of its privileged inhabitants

"Vulture restructuring is a purging cure for a malignant debt cancer. The reckoning of systemic debt presents regulators with a choice of facing the cancer frontally and honestly by excising the invasive malignancy immediately or let it metastasize through the entire financial system over the painful course of several quarters or even years and decades by feeding it with more dilapidating debt."

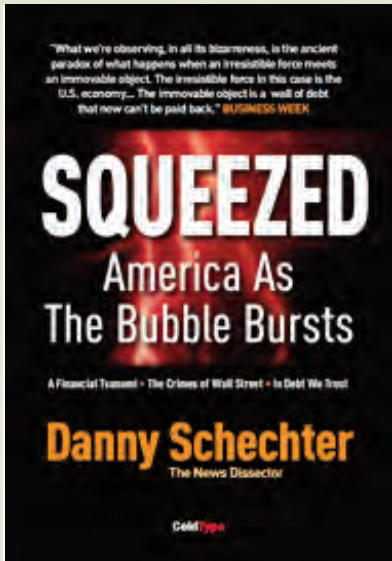
– Henry Liu,
"The Pathology Of Debt"

For more years than I can count I've heard Danny Schechter's name bandied about in progressive circles, but for all his tireless activism, he did not fully capture my attention until I saw his stunning documentary *In Debt We Trust*. By that time I had forsaken my myopic focus on imperialism, the Iraq War, the Democratic Party, and of course, Bush-bashing. It was becoming painfully and increasingly clear to me that history was repeating itself, and being an historian, I was well aware that it never does so in

exactly the same manner but often with enough mirroring of earlier eras that it behooves human beings to sit up and pay attention.

About the same time that *In Debt We Trust* appeared on my radar screen, Chalmers Johnson's *Nemesis* was released, hammering home the inescapable similarities between the fall of the Roman Empire and the demise of the United States. Despite the divergence of focus between Schechter's documentary and Johnson's *Nemesis*, both ultimately reveal that the American empire is descending into catastrophic financial collapse, already bankrupt, which will eventually result in the abject impoverishment of all but a very few of its privileged inhabitants.

After purchasing *In Debt We Trust*, I showed it regularly to a particularly endangered species in the empire's economic war on its own citizens, students. As a result, many "come to Jesus meetings" and "true confession sessions" ensued in my classes as they unburdened their souls regarding the gargantuan student loan debt with which they



SQUEEZED

America As The Bubble Bursts

DANNY SCHECHTER

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would leave college and their accelerating awareness that glamorous, cushy, lucrative jobs with which they might pay off their debts would not exactly be falling at their feet.

Then came Danny’s new e-book *Squeezed* and his request that I review it. After reading it, the above description “a diary of the onset of the Greater Depression” came to mind. Let me explain.

I had recently read Doug Casey’s *What’s About To Hit Us Will Be Far Bigger Than The Great Depression* in which he uses the term “The Greater Depression” to describe the economic tsunami dead-ahead. Then after reading

Squeezed, I realized that Danny has given us an extraordinary diary explaining exquisitely how we arrived on this path. “Great Depression” and “diary” are words that automatically hook most historians, and clearly, I’m no exception, particularly since I have acquired some financial literacy in recent years and have come to understand the quintessential role of economics in world, national, and local events.

Early in the book the following quote from the National Association For Business Economics appears, and I find it absolutely stunning:

“The combined threat of subprime loan defaults and excessive indebtedness has supplanted terrorism and the Middle East as the biggest short-term threat to the U.S. economy.”

Some sleight of hand the ruling elite have accomplished since 9/11, namely, that while Americans were pondering the color of the government’s daily terrorist threat assessments, that government and its corporate cronies was taking them to the cleaners, picking their pockets, swindling, cheating, extorting, defrauding, hustling, ripping-off, double-dealing, conning, hornswoggling, hoodwinking, fudging, gouging, bamboozling, scamming, screwing, shafting, and let’s not forget bilking the American middle and working classes. Hey, look over there – see the Italian spider climbing up the wall – or Osama hiding under your bed? And while you look, we’ll steal you deaf, dumb, and blind!

Schechter succinctly informs the reader early-on of the book’s contents stating that:

While Americans were pondering the color of the government’s daily terrorist threat assessments, that government and its corporate cronies was taking them to the cleaners

BOOK REVIEW

In progressive circles we can say anything about anything as long as we don't imply that anything was a conspiracy

- It discusses how debt has restructured our economy and put our people under a burden that many will never crawl out of. It shows how access to credit has, for many, gone, in Steven Green's phrase "from a luxury to a necessity to a noose." It identifies the profiteers and calls for an investigation and the prosecution of those behind this shrewdly engineered ponzi scheme.

- It offers the critique of a media critic who has monitored flawed and superficial reporting on the subject and who is trying to challenge the news media to improve its coverage the problem and it also monitors some of what it has done. It discusses the making of my own new film intended to fill part of void. The story of *In Debt We Trust: America Before the Bubble Bursts* discusses its impact and the battle to get it seen.

- It advocates a debt relief movement in America and argues that such a movement would have tremendous resonance across the spectrum of political life. It urges citizens to get involved and politicians to respond.

On each topic, *Squeezed* superbly elucidates the key issues and documents the twists and turns of the odyssey that has resulted in the early stages of the Greater Depression which we have now entered.

Near the end of the book appears a Q & A section with Schechter and Gregory Paschal Zachary of Alternet from a 2006 interview entitled "Young Borrowers Face A Life Of Debt".

The portion of the dialog I found most illuminating was the interviewer's question:

Paschal Zachary: *You suggest at times that there is a conspiracy to trap as many Americans as possible into crushing debt, simply in order for banks to boost profits. Is it really that bad?*

Schechter: *The card companies are a cartel. They collaborate as much as they compete. They use the same techniques. There are people who see techniques, and the companies who use them, as evil. I don't personally like those terms. But I think the card companies are insensitive. They are chasing revenue and they don't care how they get it. They go over the top.*

While I agree with Danny's answer, what really intrigues me is the interviewer's question, again echoing that dreaded word that sends progressives screaming into the night as if their hair is on fire: conspiracy. You see, in progressive circles we can say anything about anything as long as we don't imply that anything was a conspiracy. It all just sort of happened because stuff just happens, and it's "irrational" and a bit wacky to imply otherwise.

Earlier in the book, Schechter offers a blistering paragraph that probably did set Zachary's hair on fire if he's read the e-book and if he really is as terrified of "conspiracy theory" as he sounds:

"Driving this change is a growing concentration of power in the financial and banking sector. That, in turn, unleashed a process called FINANCIALIZATION with the economy dominated by a vast CREDIT AND LOAN COMPLEX every bit as insidious as the Military Industrial Complex. This Complex is shadowy and omnipresent, active in funding our politicians and lobbying for

laws that benefit their businesses. At the same time, it is invisible to most of us. It operates through a fog of shadowy lobbyists, interconnected institutions and highly legalized (and hence poorly understood) rules, laws and procedures underpinning the market system and the high-speed computers that move money and buy/sell orders around the world in seconds.” (Page xxii)

A powerful explanation indeed, but not quite specific enough in my opinion.

Within the past few days, former Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Catherine Austin Fitts, also formerly an investment banker on Wall St. with Dillon Read, has posted on her blog – <http://www.solari.com/blog> – a section entitled “Who’s Who In The Housing And Mortgage Bubble” in which she catalogs the major players in the housing bubble/mortgage crisis in terms of banking giants, government agencies, credit rating agencies, the nation’s top four auditors, and various industry associations. Given the dearth of this kind of clarity regarding the mortgage mess, Fitts’s posting is priceless.

Schechter devotes one section of the book to mis-information and bogus reporting on the part of mainstream media’s coverage of the current economic meltdown. In it he correctly exposes the fallacies behind rosy economic forecasts but does not address another chimera, that is, the ostensible “losses” being suffered by Goldman Sachs, Citibank, AIG, and others. I documented the transparency of these so-called losses in my September article

“Bush’s Bogus Bailout”, and Fitts has superbly documented them on her Solari website and on her blog. In addition, she has researched more thoroughly than anyone I know, in all of her writings and particularly at her Aristocracy Of Stock Profits website – <http://www.dunwalke.com> – the prodigious criminality of the American political and corporate capitalist systems.

The question that few have asked is: Who are the losers? When we see CEOs like Charles Prince leaving Citigroup with a \$42 million severance package and \$53 million in stock options, can we respond with anything but bemused scorn at the simplistic reportage that financial institutions involved in the mortgage crisis are “losing” anything? And when Citigroup is bolstered with a \$7.5 billion infusion of cash from an Abu Dhabi investor in what has become the “great American fire sale” conducted by the same corporate pimps who created the housing bubble, can we feel anything but rage at their criminality, enabled by their media accomplices? Even more egregious than media complicity is that of politicians who wallow in the spoils of the debt industry.

Schechter cites David Sirota’s October, 2007 blogpost (Page 48):

“Donations plentiful to candidates in midst of possible predatory lending regulation ... Payday lenders have given nearly \$64,000 to the 2008 candidates for president, with a vast majority of that going to Democrats, many of whom have accused the industry of unfair lending practices ... Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton,

When we see CEOs like Charles Prince leaving Citigroup with a \$42 million severance package and \$53 million in stock options, can we respond with anything but bemused scorn at the simplistic reportage that financial institutions involved in the mortgage crisis are “losing” anything?

BOOK REVIEW

The victims are millions of former homeowners soaking in financial bloodbaths of foreclosure and bankruptcy, as well as the hoards of employees that have been and will be laid off as a result of the carefully-crafted housing bubble train wreck

a U.S. senator from New York, and New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson each has received more than \$22,000 from payday lending sources, more than any other candidates during the campaign.

As *Squeezed* notes, these Democrats and many more also caved in on the 2005 bankruptcy bill written by and for the credit card industry.

Pam Martens in her fabulous November 28 article “Crony-Capitalists Fiddle While Main Street Burns” – <http://www.counterpunch.org/martens11272007.html> – states that, “The saga of how the top minds in Washington and on Wall Street have dealt with the deepening financial crisis in the U.S. would make a great Hollywood screenplay, except for this: It’s absurdly unbelievable.” Comparing the “sinking” of Citigroup to the doomed Titanic, Martens opens the article with a largely unknown fact, namely that:

“The largest bank in the United States (by assets), Citigroup, is discovered to have stashed away over \$80 Billion of Byzantine securities off its balance sheet in secretive Cayman Islands vehicles with an impenetrable curtain around them. Citigroup calls this black hole a Structured Investment Vehicle or SIV. Wall Street insiders call it a “sieve” that is linked to the breakdown in trading of debt instruments around the globe and the erosion of wealth in assets as diverse as stock prices to home values. Additionally, tens of billions of dollars in short term commercial paper backed by these and similar Alice in Wonderland assets are sitting in Mom and Pop money market funds at the largest financial institutions in America,

with a AAA rating from our renown credit rating agencies.”

While over time, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, and other subprime players have managed to maintain sterling personas in the eyes of outsiders, those who dig deeply such as Fitts, Martens, and Schechter have discovered a very different reality behind the smoke and mirrors. The magnitude of that horror movie reveals itself almost daily in ever-new disclosures regarding the venality at the core of the housing bubble disaster.

Indeed, there are victims of massive corporate fraudulent inducement, but they are not members of upper-level management of Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, J.P. Morgan Chase, or Lehman Brothers. They are millions of former homeowners soaking in financial bloodbaths of foreclosure and bankruptcy, as well as the hoards of employees that have been and will be laid off as a result of the carefully-crafted housing bubble train wreck. As if all of this were not egregious enough, Bethany McLean, Fortune Magazine Editor and co-producer of *Enron: The Smartest Guys In The Room* comments on the a pending lawsuit by what’s left of Enron against Citibank which claims that Citi helped the now defunct firm manufacture financial statements. Well, we all know what happened to the pensions and retirement funds of former Enron employees.

Worse yet, as *Squeezed* points out, “The dollar may be in a free fall. Hold on to your hats and your homes.” Freefall? Yes indeed, said Gerald Celente, Director of Trends Research Insti-

tute in a story reported on November 19 by United Press International which stated that a financial crisis will likely send the U.S. dollar into a free fall of as much as 90 percent and gold soaring to \$2,000 an ounce. Celente, forecasting a “Panic of 2008” asserted that “We are going to see economic times the likes of which no living person has seen.”

Sunday Telegraph reporter Liam Halligan stated in “Dollar’s Fall Is Now A Bigger Political Issue Than An Economic One” that “The importance of ‘dollar divestment’ cannot be overstated. At the very least it means the greenback has much further to fall – plunging the US into recession. But it begs a bigger, more alarming, question: How will Washington react to the end of the US hegemony?”

Astutely, Schechter picks up on the “Shock Doctrine” nature of the crisis as perceived by Naomi Klein through the lens of “disaster capitalism” and concludes:

“One analyst in the New York Times called it “shock therapy,” the very term writer Naomi Klein explores in her new book on “disaster” capitalism showing the link between the shock therapy once doled out in mental hospitals, shock and awe bombing, shock interrogation techniques whose aim is to “disorient” prisoners and shock strategies used in economic policy that has devastated so many countries in which it was tried. Now it has come home to the US – the country that has been exporting it overseas.”

On a recent Democracy Now show, Klein explained:

“The history of the contemporary

free market was written in shocks.... Some of the most infamous human rights violations of the past thirty-five years, which have tended to be viewed as sadistic acts carried out by anti-democratic regimes, were in fact either committed with the deliberate intent of terrorizing the public or actively harnessed to prepare the ground for the introduction of radical free-market reforms.”

The only difference here is that, so far, there have been no serious reforms proposed and the market is anything but free. With its interest cut, the Fed bails out and rewards the very institutions that were profiting on ill gained profits from predatory lending.” (70)

And now for the part that is really American—you know—all of the “So what do we do about it?” questions. Danny would answer:

“The first step is raising awareness. People don’t usually talk about this problem. It’s a point of embarrassment to be overwhelmed by debt. When you give people permission to talk about this, they pour out. We also need grassroots political action to promote responsible lending. We have to roll back the bankruptcy law changes. We have to fund counseling and advice. We need to make financial literacy part of our educational system.”

Fundamentally, I agree with him, but as he already knows, I no longer believe in any intact political system that could make any of this happen. When I talk about debt, I almost always speak of it in relation to the Greater Depression we have entered and take these realities much further by illustrating how they are an integral part of the collapse not

“With its interest cut, the Fed bails out and rewards the very institutions that were profiting on ill gained profits from predatory lending”

BOOK REVIEW

As for an educational system that will teach financial literacy instead of testing students five hours a day, four days a week-well, there's just too much dumbing down to be done

only of the American empire, but of civilization itself.

For years I have been referring to the Terminal Triangle: Peak Oil, climate change, and global economic meltdown, the latter explained in Danny's book in terms of the international ramifications of the Greater Depression. And of course, there are "other horse-men" of the apocalypse, as enumerated by Sally Erickson in her recent blog, so I find it impossible to discuss the mortgage crisis without connecting it with the additional impending global catastrophes that spell the end of the world as we have known it. Just as we have entered the Greater Depression, we are engulfed by collapsing institutions – especially the American political system, which are in an abject state of dissolution and therefore incapable of affecting change at requisite levels, for all the reasons Danny has so thoroughly documented in his book.

As for an educational system that will teach financial literacy instead of testing students five hours a day, four days a week-well, there's just too much dumbing down to be done. After all, who prints those tests and the textbooks students can barely read even when they're seniors in high school? Go to the head of the class if you answered: "Subsidiaries of all the scumbag corporations you just mentioned above."

When I talk about collapse, my second paragraph usually goes something like, "Get out of debt, get out of debt, get out of debt – unless you plan to be an unincarcerated (or incarcerated) wage slave of corporate capitalism for

the rest of your life."

I could not agree more with Danny's directive to talk about debt, become financially literate as individuals, avoid and liberate ourselves from debt, and watch and share with others *In Debt We Trust*. But I must add that all evidence points to the frightening reality not only of an economic depression dead-ahead, but an even more frightening scenario: a world in which it will be very difficult to obtain food, drinkable water, or healthcare—thanks again to the Terminal Triangle.

As I scour the blogosphere, I find almost no progressive voices discussing the dire economic realities of this moment. After all, it's much easier to bash Bush, obsess about clueless, corporately-owned candidates, or blog about green products, green shopping, green living, and all manner of green-wash. Meanwhile, I continue to ask: What have you done to prepare for a post-petroleum world? As the Terminal Triangle becomes ever-more cataclysmic, how will you acquire food, drinkable water, and healthcare for yourself and your loved ones?

Feeling "squeezed" now? You ain't seen nothin' yet. **CT**

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DEATH OF A DELUSION

John S. Hatch on the crimes and the shame of the USA

“Yet we can maintain a free society only if we recognize that...no one can win all the time.”

– Richard Nixon, Sept. 16, 1970, shortly after ordering a coup d’etat against President Allende of Chile.

“I just want you to know that, when we talk about war, we’re really talking about peace.”

– George W. Bush, June 18, 2002

See, in my line of work you got to keep repeating things over and over and over again for the truth to sink in, to kind of catapult the propaganda.”

– George W. Bush, May 24, 2005

Whence to begin the mourning?

With a genocide that transformed living Native children into dog food in the certitude that God approved the cleansing of American soil of such savages who with their parents had lived in harmony with the land for thousands of years?

With the Divinely sanctioned enslavement of entire African cultures and

enduring racism crippling entire generations of victims and victimizers? What kind of narcotizing American Dream would be required to smother the nightmare of Jesus-jabbering lynch-mobs whose nooses still swing from twenty-first century branches?

With the delusional notion of God-granted American Exceptionalism which justifies any and every bloody whim of domestic and foreign policy and excuses both from the normal constraints of civilized human behavior—to paraphrase Richard Nixon: ‘If America does it, it’s not illegal...’?

What kind of humans cannot commit crimes without first making accomplices of their gods, the better to hide under pious pretensions of righteousness afterward? And then to forget. Always the convenient forgetting. No one can remember like an Israeli or forget like an American.

What kind of gods would quietly counsel a President to promulgate Hitlerian Big Lies to enable the invasion of a sovereign nation which posed no threat whatsoever to its neighbors or to America, to torture and slaughter and

What kind of gods would quietly counsel a President to promulgate Hitlerian Big Lies to enable the invasion of a sovereign nation which posed no threat?

MASTER RACE?

War hero Tibbets' later unapologetic comment could be applied to many, many beneficiaries of America's magnanimous sharing of The Divine American Dream: '...that's their tough luck for being there'

disperse its inhabitants at random and with such abandon that record-keeping is not required or desirable, where body counts are not conducted of the living or the dead, to dishonor even its child victims as (not-at-all) regretted but inevitable 'collateral damage'? All this after years of sanctions which killed a million of the very young, the very old, and the sick? Would not such clandestine counsel make such a God Himself dubious? And if the President only thought he heard this neo-Divine call to carnage, could not he himself be considered delusional if not downright insane?

Enduring gods. Savage gods. Enabling gods. Recidivist gods. The same gods who whispered to other Presidents, who gave their divine imprimatur to domestic genocide, to slavery, to countless invasions of countless nations, to assassinations, to torture, to the murder of inconvenient democracies and the prevention of others. The gods of convenient amnesia; the gods of American Exceptionalism, Triumphalism and Racism. Gods finally in their twilight.

No regrets

In time for Remembrance Day 2007, General Paul Tibbets died of old age untinged by regret or guilt or a single second thought. He piloted the Enola Gay, a plane named after his proud mother, the plane that dropped the Atomic bomb on Hiroshima that ended the war after the war to end all wars. It is difficult, even after all this time, to estimate the number of innocent dead from that terrifying attack, but about

140,000 died on that day or shortly after. (Robert Oppenheimer: 'We have become the destroyer of worlds.') Lest we forget. Lest we remember.

Even such an unimaginative man as General Tibbets (who managed to drop the bomb as a mere Colonel) nevertheless required at least two useful myths (still conveniently shared by many of his credulous countrymen) in order to dream his serene American dreams – firstly that Hiroshima, home to hundreds of thousands of non-combatants qualified as a military target; and secondly, millions of lives, even Japanese lives were saved by eliminating the need for an otherwise inevitable invasion.

Curiosity about the little-understood effects of radiation on the human body was not a factor. Nor was the desire to test a new weapon 'in the field' while sending a powerful message to the Russians, to whom the Japanese had been negotiating surrender for approximately three months. War hero Tibbets' later unapologetic comment could be applied to many, many beneficiaries of America's magnanimous sharing of The Divine American Dream: '...that's their tough luck for being there.' A note to Iranians – don't blame us when you get vaporized if you insist on standing underneath our bombs...

'That's their tough luck for being there' sounds chilly, but it could be an official American dictum, chiseled above the entrance to Congress, and strictly observed as a matter of faith as blind as Lady Justice is naively believed to be. Tough luck indeed for Native Americans, for Black slaves and their

descendants, for residents of Mexico, Hawaii, Panama, Japan, the Philippines, Lebanon, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Chile, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Grenada, Haiti, Afghanistan, Iraq, and so on, and some more than once. Tough luck for being in America's way when America needs black bodies, elbow room, or a 'back yard', or oil, or bananas, or convenient enemies, or just to prove a point: 'Every ten years or so, the United States needs to pick up some small crappy little country and throw it against the wall, just to show the world we mean business.' – Michael Ledeen, neo-con darling of darkness, Reagan and Bush. Ledeen wasn't joking, and the world has the cuts and bruises – and dead bodies – to prove it.

No regrets

As an aside, in four volumes of combined Nixon and Kissinger memoirs, approximately two million words, not a single one is set aside to express regret or condolence regarding the deaths of up to a couple of million innocent Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian civilians, although Nixon is on record elsewhere chiding his Secretary of State for being too squeamish regarding the possible use of nuclear weapons in the region, explaining that he, the President doesn't 'give a shit' about civilian deaths. Quite often a factor in setting Nixon White House foreign policy was a need to see who could be the toughest manly man, and people died because of it. One wonders under which section of American Exceptionalism to file those deaths, not that any names would be available.

The exercise of American power and American violence has always been accompanied by the most punctilious if self-serving religious justifications enunciated by self-appointed earthly representatives of God, normally the ones with the fleetest feet and sharpest elbows on the crowded path to the overburdened Presidential ear.

Thus the venerated Billy Graham could offer encouragement to Richard Nixon regarding the killing of South Asian 'slants' and 'gooks' (also called 'cunt-eyes' by brave spreaders of democracy) and commiseration regarding the general perfidy of American 'jigaboos' and Jews, while later finding no fault with Reagan for employing torture and murder in 'Communist' Central America, including even the rape and murder of (Catholic) nuns, and the killing of an Archbishop, never mind thousands of farmers, teachers, lawyers, civil rights workers, health-care providers, and children.

Now Franklin Graham admirably fills the paternal sandals in condemning all of Islam as being 'evil', while Christian leader and former Presidential candidate Pat Robertson (now unsurprisingly endorsing Rudy Giuliani for President) flat out espouses the assassination of (democratically elected) President Hugo Chavez, a devilish Venezuelan 'socialist' who dares to lay claim to Venezuelan oil. The nerve! Didn't the wicked Iranians once try that? What would an American Jesus do with a meddling foreign President? Kill him!

It is recalled that an unacceptably pacifist religious leader, Martin Luther

The venerated Billy Graham could offer encouragement to Richard Nixon regarding the killing of South Asian 'slants' and 'gooks' (also called 'cunt-eyes' by brave spreaders of democracy)

MASTER RACE?

Death by smallpox and death by radiation poisoning would rank about equal as ghastly means of relatively slow demise, and in the premeditative sang-froid required to visit them on human beings

King was invited and encouraged to commit suicide by the Nixon administration's FBI, an invitation which he (no doubt politely) declined. But somebody just wouldn't take no for an answer.

Truman's order to drop the A-bomb on Hiroshima, then on Nagasaki (another was under construction and planned for a third Japanese city – we'll never know what nifty name might have topped 'L'il Boy' and 'Fat Man' in that grotesque nomenclature) – the act perhaps represented a new moral low, but if so it was one of degree, not of kind. Would a similar device have been utilized against American Natives had it been available at the time?

Actually a comparable, if more primitive sort of weapon was on hand in the form of blankets deliberately infected with smallpox (America's first WMD, bestowed as a gift), and was employed to notoriously deadly effect. Death by smallpox and death by radiation poisoning would rank about equal as ghastly means of relatively slow demise, and in the premeditative sang-froid required to visit them on human beings. White phosphorous would be faster in comparison, but not inhaled depleted uranium, against which even being a God-fearing American is apparently not an effective defense.

But if killing 'savages' is the god-sanctioned goal, then both the means and the measures of success are important, but secondary considerations. One can't blame America if the world happens to be so full of savages. Anyway, the dream-gods would have smiled at such an innovative use of smallpox, an early manifestation of 'Good 'Ol Amer-

ican Ingenuity', and then assisted in the forgetting. Always the forgetting.

The Bush Administration, after harshly and unilaterally abrogating so many treaties and agreements painstakingly achieved and designed to advance the level of civilization amongst nations and after simultaneously dismantling cherished and indispensable Constitutional standards and safeguards at home, now contemplates the pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons against predictably maligned Iran.

For the corporate media, for politicians and a good percentage of the public, bellicosity is once again the prized measure of patriotism, and may facts be damned ('...the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country.' – Goering).

Previous intervention

With the help of the dream-gods Bush and America perhaps forgot that America intervened once before, in 1953 to depose an elected Prime Minister who dared declare Iranian oil an Iranian asset, and then to bolster a Shah, a stooge and despot who became so despised that not even United States-trained secret police with all the latest implements and techniques of torture and terror (admittedly likely quaint by today's standards) could keep him on the Peacock Throne. Now America, the only nation to have employed nuclear weapons, a nation in possession of a

huge and (illegally) ever-growing stockpile, threatens a nation with no such weapons (although an extremely belligerent close neighbor has at least 200), using as a justification a torn and tattered list of lies and fabrications to once again insult the intelligence of even the sleepest and most forgetful American and bring outrage to a wearied world.

And that is the point. The American exceptionalist/triumphalist/racist dream-gods are tired now, and they are dying of overwork, and embarrassment at too much of a good thing. Members of the Bush putsch and all their enablers in both Houses of Congress, the Project for a New American Century, in big business, the mainstream media, the neo-Christian churches, the military, all outdid and overextended themselves after the godsend of the new 'Pearl Harbor event'.

They went too far, and even the famously quiescent and obedient American who always mistakes passivity for patriotism and national aggression as a birthright can no longer hide behind a shield of somnolent, voluntary, convenient ignorance. Bush and Cheney lied and catapulted America into a grotesque invasion that has led to the deaths and displacement of millions, and completely needless suffering beyond the capability of human imagination or forgiveness.

They and their enablers were either hugely, unpardonably incompetent or downright complicit in the event that served as the false rationalization for the Iraq invasion and for grotesque crimes against humanity: the deliberate bombing of vital services such as water

and electricity infrastructure, the deliberate bombing of hospitals, attacks on ambulances and medical personnel, the murder of journalists and non-combatants, the use of cluster-bombs against civilians, white phosphorous and 500 and 1,000 pound bombs on civilian populations, the use of experimental weapons against civilian populations, the use of wanton sadistic torture, and various cover-ups.

Where's our freedom?

And quite aside from further enriching the rich while allowing residents of New Orleans to drown while 'Blackwatering' survivors, at home the Bush Administration has been responsible for the cynical destruction of what many Americans complacently thought were inalienable rights, even reaching back 500 years to retroactively snatch away the previously sacrosanct concept of habeas corpus.

Since then, only a fool would talk about 'freedom' in America, except in the past tense. The vaunted two-century old guarantee of American rights turned out to be only a 'goddam piece of paper', while Bush can boast an ever more militarized, surly, and anti-citizen law enforcement apparatus, the armed forces (and so much for the restraining concept of 'Posse Comitatus'), the National Guard, Backwater (and a dozen other mercenary outfits), and a bunch of empty concentration camps waiting for the American version of Kristallnacht, a mere stroke of the pen, or even a Presidential or Vice-Presidential nod away.

The newly confirmed chief law-en-

Members of the Bush putsch and all their enablers in both Houses of Congress, the Project for a New American Century, in big business, the mainstream media, the neo-Christian churches, the military, all outdid and overextended themselves after the godsend of the new 'Pearl Harbor event'

MASTER RACE?

**Sso far
Americans
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empire is a
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let them
continue to
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lunatic boundary
between life
and the death
of mankind, but
without their
Jesus crutches
or infantile
magical thinking**

forcement officer is by now the second Torturer Attorney General, already advocating retroactive exemptions for illegal spying on Americans, already an enthusiastic disciple of the 'Unitary Executive' theory, another bogus power grab conferring unlimited power upon the President to do virtually anything, anything he pleases.

Since, in the US, power used to be shared amongst all three branches of government, this mortal imbalance leaves the legislative and judiciary virtually impotent, something we have seen with the use of signing statements (and a Congress compliant to the point of abject cowardice), and a stacked and submissive Supreme Court which can also simply be ignored with impunity if and when convenient.

All this as stock markets tumble along with the precipitous fall of the dollar which is being abandoned around the world as reserve currency, foreclosures are at an all-time high, the manufacturing base continues to dwindle, trade deficits and debt continue to skyrocket, and America stubbornly retains almost 150 military bases worldwide in the absence of any credible military threat while millions of American children continue to be denied health coverage, veterans are disqualified from care and are often abandoned to the streets (one in four homeless Americans is a veteran; a huge number of children also have no home), the education system is a shambles (many teachers are hardly more educated than their students), the cynically neglected environment may be past the point of no return (why spend money when the

'Endtimes' are coming anyway?), the privatized and brutal prison system is one of the few growth industries with more Americans incarcerated than in any other nation on earth, and that in huge disproportion to color and ethnicity... America is coming apart.

Americans know

A full six years after the first election was stolen on Bush's behalf, no American can any longer pretend not to know what is going on. Ignorance, feigned or real, is not a defense in law, nor was it credited at the Nuremburg Trials after WWII, nor among the ordinary citizenry of Germany (people were hanged for far less than what Bush, Cheney et al have perpetrated). While free speech has been seriously assailed, so far Americans are still free to think as they please – for those who think that empire is a desirable goal along with its conjoined doctrine of American Exceptionalism, let them continue to stand on the lunatic boundary between life and the death of mankind, but without their Jesus crutches or infantile magical thinking.

For those who wish to conquer the world, at least don't pretend to care about freedom or democracy, the rule of law or the primacy of human values, or anything other than the advancement of a doomed and insane criminal crusade.

For others, the crude excesses of the Bush Administration, the culmination of a progression that began long ago – the domestic crimes, the cynical lies, lies, contemptuous lies, the crimes against humanity, the unpardonable

stupidity, negligence, greed, hubris, sadism, the contempt for shared human and civilizing values, the resultant critical loss of respect in the world, the sadness of forever lost potential, the coming economic catastrophe brought about by last-gasp laissez-faire Reaganesque kleptomomics, are the greatest threat faced by America, and likely the world. America has no time left – it must grow up or blow up.

Bush has three choices – he can go peacefully at the end of his term, abandoning his partners in crime to inevitable war crimes charges; he can dig in his cowboy heels and suspend elections indefinitely by using newly existing provisions to declare an emergency a la Musharraf; he can accomplish the former and thrill his neo-con Armageddonite friends (and perhaps indulge his

self-destructive self) by starting a unilateral nuclear war with Iran which would likely draw in Russia, China, Israel, Pakistan, India and possibly even France. In the process North Korea would also become a victim, and certainly the world and mankind would never be the same. All because of a failure to stand up to one vain, greedy, stubborn and ignorant man. Or two.

If Bush and Cheney are allowed to continue along their nihilist course, it will be small consolation that what might remain of America won't be able to pretend innocence through willful ignorance. And delusion is not a defense. **CT**

John S. Hatch is a Vancouver writer and filmmaker. He can be reached at john.s.hatch@gmail.com

For those who wish to conquer the world, at least don't pretend to care about anything other than the advancement of a doomed and insane criminal crusade

"This is eyewitness reporting at its best – clear, well-observed, fair. Read it, and you'll understand why most of what you read about Israel and the Palestinians is nonsense"

– Charles Glass, former ABC News Chief Mideast Correspondent



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EAT THIS!

Jason Miller responds to a letter-writer

Rarely a day goes by that I don't catch scent of the pungent aroma of the famous Kansas City barbeque I still crave

"If PETA is putting something out, I will always have my doubts – they see things one way and one way only. Theirs. In many ways the activists in this country are terrorists of a kind...."

– Excerpt from a recent email

For a year now I have been an ethical vegetarian. Last Thanksgiving, I made what I thought was an enlightened moral decision to stop eating meat and to severely restrict my egg and dairy consumption. However, an email recently hit my inbox that presents such a powerful argument justifying the wanton torture and slaughter of animals (so we can please our palates) that my moral sensibilities and capacity to reason have been utterly disarmed. Signed with a cryptic "JC," this missive pummeled me with points I had not even considered when I made what I now rightly view as my ridiculous decision to go "meatless."

In fact, rarely a day goes by that I don't catch scent of the pungent aroma of the famous Kansas City barbeque I still crave – one can barely travel a mile or two in KC without finding oneself in olfactory range of restaurants that prepare extraordinarily delicious servings of non-human animal flesh. I fully admit that I miss devouring tender, succu-

lent sauce-drenched ribs, burnt ends, sliced beef, brisket....As I write this, I'm salivating like one of Pavlov's dogs tethered to the Cathedral Tower in Limerick on a Sunday morning....

What an extraordinary dilemma JC has created for me. At times I am still consumed by an almost overwhelming temptation to indulge myself in the consumption of one of my fellow animals. Feasting on sentient beings that had endured tortured, miserable existences (existences that were mere warm-ups for the sheer savagery that awaited them in the slaughterhouse) was one of my favorite pastimes.

So the question is, do I continue denying myself the sublime pleasure of dining on animal tissue in order to appease my conscience, or do I embrace JC's brilliant justification of meat consumption and satiate my hunger with a thick rare burger drowned in Heinz?

Allow me to examine and dissect some of JC's eloquent and illuminating conclusions:

JC: *"I can't be held responsible for how turkeys or any animals are slaughtered. I'm never going to give up meat or fish or fowl, as our diet does require us to have protein and other nutrients that we receive from these products and I*

and many others enjoy eating them.”

So, forget the notion of the banality of evil. As a consumer, even if I eat meat I am absolved of ALL responsibility for the unimaginable horrors the producers inflict upon factory-farmed animals from “cradle to grave.”

For Christ’s sake! I’ve been subsisting for over a year without said “protein and other nutrients” from meat! I am a miracle of modern science!

And I find it nearly impossible to disagree with JC’s statement that “I and many others enjoy eating them.” (The “them” being animals of course – I would be lying if I said I didn’t enjoy eating meat). As I was growing up my mother frequently confronted me with the question, “If everyone else jumped off a bridge would you do it too?” Obviously the “correct” response was “no.” Sorry, Mom, but JC’s lemming logic is a hell of a lot more enticing than going against the grain and “doing the right thing.” Screw that – I’ll have the porterhouse, please!

JC: *“People have to eat and the bulk of their protein comes from animal sources. They have been doing it since the cave man and it isn’t going to stop anytime soon. Tofu just doesn’t cut it for most people as a meat substitute, nor those grotesque meat imitations made from veggie products and then shaped into meat like looking products.”*

Now that is a truly impenetrable Maginot Line of reasoning. I can’t begin to argue with the assertion that people have to eat. And the bulk of my protein

did indeed come from animal sources for about 39 years of my life. JC is a tough nut to crack! And to think I’ve actually been eating tofu and “those grotesque meat imitations made from veggie products and then shaped into meat like looking products.”

I cannot imagine what I’ve been thinking. Hunks of blood-saturated animal flesh, fat, and muscle that at some point in the production process were commingled with various organs, hooves, fur, and shit – forget those “grotesque meat imitations.” I can really wrap my appetite around mutilated and raw animal parts that quickly rot if they aren’t refrigerated.

Sorry Bossy, Wilbur and feathered friends. Since we human animals don’t find “meat like looking products” to be delectable, we’re going to continue confining you in dark, cramped quarters throughout your rueful lives, pumping you full of a toxic stew of antibiotics and growth hormones, causing you to grow so rapidly that you become crippled, performing surgery on you with no anesthetic, ripping out your teeth and clipping off your beaks so that when you go insane from the conditions under which we keep you, you can attack your fellow victims without damaging our product, loading you into severely over-crowded trucks in which you will go without food or water for several days, and ultimately hanging you by your hind legs, slitting your throats, crushing your skulls, and boiling you to death.

Besides, consuming animal flesh worked well for Neanderthals and a mere 50,000 years have passed. Don’t

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UNDERSTANDING

It is God's will that we adhere to the law of supply and demand as the chief guiding principle of humanity

rush us into making changes.

JC: *"All the people that chose to eat vegetarian style to attempt to make a statement, can do so, but their numbers will never increase enough to make a difference in the amount of animals that are slaughtered. Its supply and demand and it appears that the demand is still there. I think a more riveting point in considering limiting human consumption of some of these products is to be more careful about the meat/fowl/fish one eats is because of all the contamination w/ e.coli, salmonella & mercury. That to me, is the real concern."*

She's right. Every last one of us who "eat vegetarian style" just wants "to make a statement." It has NOTHING to do with ethics, moral or conscience. We're just showing off, carving out a niche and making a name for ourselves. And there are so damn few of us that the immutable laws of capitalism (which all good libertarians from Texas KNOW were handed down to Moses along with the Ten Commandments) will inevitably prevail. It is God's will that we adhere to the law of supply and demand as the chief guiding principle of humanity. So when JC so astutely observes, "it appears the demand is still there," who are we humble herbivores to argue?

And what self-respecting speciesist inflated with the hubris of humanity's inherent right to subjugate and exploit "lesser" beings wouldn't agree with this gem from JC?:

"I think a more riveting point in con-

sidering limiting human consumption of some of these products is to be more careful about the meat/fowl/fish one eats is because of all the contamination w/ e.coli, salmonella & mercury. That to me, is the real concern."

Fuck the non-human animals. Humans are the REAL concern. Why didn't I think of that before I wasted 12 months of prime meat-eating time? Keep brutalizing the cows, pigs and chickens. Just take care not to get sick when you eat them.

JC: *"This is not one plight that I'm going to worry about – especially since it is an American tradition. If people want to eat plain lasagne for T-day or just a green bean casserole for any holiday they can certainly do so, but it isn't something that I would personally choose to do."*

Inflicting unconscionable pain and abuse upon non-human animals so that we can eat them is an "American tradition." JC is right! And you don't fuck with traditions, especially American ones. Like bombing smaller countries into the Stone Age. Manifest destinying our way across the North American continent. Installing and supporting ruthless dictators who adhere to the Washington Consensus. Wielding our economic power like a cudgel to beat sovereign nations into submission. Lynching. Jim Crow. Slavery. Native American genocide. Just to name a few.

And I have to admit that there is something fundamentally flawed with anyone who would "want to eat plain lasagna for T-day or just a green bean

casserole for any holiday.” That is just plain un-American. Let’s start carving that bird!

JC: *“Again, if PETA is putting something out, I will always have my doubts – they see things one way and one way only. Theirs. In many ways the activists in this country are terrorists of a kind. They think they are more civilized in their behavior but they try to terrorize people “by educating them” to the extreme conditions some animals face and are unable to be reasoned with at all. Its their way or the highway.”*

“If PETA is putting something out, I will always have my doubts – they see things one way and one way only.” Amen to that, JC. Simply examine their name. Can you imagine a more arrogant, rigid group than the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals? Thanks to JC’s email, I too am beginning to harbor many doubts about them. Where the hell do Ingrid Newkirk and her band of “terrorists of a kind” get off thinking they are “more civilized in their behavior?” As human beings, don’t we have the God-given right of dominion, which would mean we can abuse animals whenever we damn well please? And PETA members, don’t you dare terrorize us with

your knowledge. The reality is that we enjoy eating the flesh of dead animals and the more ignorant of their pain we remain, the better. So PETA, you can take OUR way or the highway. I think you know where the meat-eating population wants you to shove your ethics. We’re broiling pork chops tonight!

So for a year now I have engaged in this rotten behavior known as vegetarianism. I have been depriving my body of protein, have been eating “grotesque” meat substitutes for no reason, have been violating sacred American traditions, have been “making a statement,” have been engaging in a form of elitism, and have been a “terrorist of a kind.” Somebody stop this bus! I want off!

Mea culpa!

And just how many pounds of meat must I consume before I am once again practicing the “American Way of Life” and reveling in its “non-negotiable” splendor? **CT**

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Just how many pounds of meat must I consume before I am once again practicing the “American Way of Life”

Check out ColdType’s collection of photo essays at
<http://coldtype.net/photo.html>

ILLEGAL ALIENS

Gary Corseri names the real enemies of society

The ones who stole it from Iroquois and Seminole, Choctaw and Cree, then forced Black slaves to work it till they bled.

The ones who “appropriated” from Toltec and Olmec, Aztec and Maya (when they had made a new country), then broke the new country on an anvil of iron, taking the best, “removing” survivors south of the river to the hard-scrabble country of sagebrush and cactus, in the land without borders.

The ones who made a Declaration and a Constitution arrogating to themselves the right of rebellion, the right of election, but to those outside of their silk-stockinged class – the right of obedience, the fealty of surrender.

The “Captains of Industry” who herded the masses into drudgery factories, shops built on plunder, despoiling the wonders of canyons and prairies, giving back sustenance while hoarding and building Potomac mansions, Hudson castles.

Cattlemen and rustlers, hired guns, Pinkerton goons, G-men and “revenooers,” cavalry coming in the hard nicks of time, roughshod-riding sheepmen and farmers, injuns, wetbacks, the abandoned, the desperate.

Politicians and lawyers spinning silken webs from embouchures of mealy mouths, embezzling the simple, the uninformed, the hard-working, the trusting – of scraps of life’s savings, their holdings, the runes of their ruins.

Flak-men and flak-women knowingly contorting, packaging air, wrapping dreams in tissues of promises, poisoning, defrauding, lollygagging, Jim-crowing, filibustering, carpet-bagging, stealing airwaves, vision-impostors, re-shaping, repossessing.

Haters, liars, shape-shifters, refashioning

dreams, grotesqueries of power, wealth, arrogance, murderers awarding themselves the right to kill millions, seize gold, oil, water in other lands from other people in the name of the country they stole from the Red man, the Black man, white workers, the indentured, day-laborers and children.

Wily, clever, sinuous, slanderous drum-beaters for false causes, warmongering slumlords, dumb lords of the manor robbing health, education, living wages, dignity, history from the hearts of the people, from the minds of the people, from the souls of the people.

Scribblers of orders shipping jobs over borders, imprisoning those within and without, separating, fragmenting, scattering, obviating.

Prison guards, security guards, cops, militia, national guards in the service of the State, the elite, the decadent, the abhorrent, the whoring.

Illegal aliens: takers, heart-breakers, despair-makers, fakers at the top of their dung heaps, burying hope in their dung, burying home, family, beauty, innocence, friendship, community – until the dead awaken, until the dead say No, seize back, and blood pulses in cadaverous veins, and the clay gods break, and the shallow icons are trumped and broken, the chained knees unchained and the chains broken, the murdochs of murkiness broken, and love is reborn in the world again, the possible flourishes in a heap of old bones, language ignites synapses of power, and courage reigns in the world again under the eye of old wisdom. **CT**

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