

**INSIDE:** OSAMA BIN LYNCHED ● WHERE HAVE ALL THE GRAVEYARDS GONE? ● WHY FACTS NO LONGER MATTER ● A TALE OF TWO HOSPITALS

# The <sup>ColdType</sup> READER

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GREG MARINOVICH

# BANG-BANG!

**PULITZERS, POWER AND VIOLENT DEATH: AN EXCERPT FROM THE BANG-BANG CLUB, BY GREG MARINOVICH & JOAO SILVA**

# The **ColdType** READER



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# f5.6 should be right

In this excerpt from *The Bang-Bang Club*, **Greg Marinovich & Joao Silva** tell of the events that led to Marinovich receiving a Pulitzer prize for his photographs of a vicious killing in South Africa

(JOH-106)SOWETO, SOUTH AFRICA, SEPT.15  
– HUMAN TORCH – A small boy runs past as a youth clubs the burning body of a man identified as a Zulu Inkatha supporter and set alight by rival African National Congress supporters, Soweto, South Africa, Saturday morning.

(AP ColourPhoto) (mon71224/str. SEB BALIC)  
1990

EDS. NOTE: – COLOUR CONTENT:  
ORANGE/RED FLAMES – PERSONS IN  
SILHOUETTE, VERY LITTLE DETAIL.

– Associated Press photo caption

## SEPTEMBER 15, 1990

There aren't many trees in Soweto. The gang-ravaged neighbourhood of White City has particularly few, but that morning it had lost several more. Some of the scarred thorn trees along the main through-road had been roughly chopped down and dragged into the street to provide obstacles to possible attacks by hostel Zulus and police. I slowed my car to a crawl, negotiating the newly-felled trees, kerbstones and burning tyres that imperfectly barricaded the way to the rows of Jabulani Hostel's dormitory blocks. The sun was not yet up, and the highveld chill kept fogging the windscreen. It was a month after my first foray into the hostels and I had been back in the townships almost every day since then.



### THE BANG-BANG CLUB: Snapshots From A Hidden War Greg Marinovich & Joao Silva

Movie tie-in edition, published by  
Basic Books, **\$16.99**  
(*\$11.25 at Amazon.com*)

Some of the scarred thorn trees along the main through-road had been roughly chopped down and dragged into the street to provide obstacles to possible attacks by hostel Zulus and police

Today I was with Tom Cohen, a reporter with the AP who had been posted here from the US just days before. We were planning to do a feature on the hostels as flashpoints of violence. I had established a good relationship with the AP. They didn't have anyone regularly getting them conflict pictures and they were all too willing to pay me day-rates or to buy pictures from me.

In the month since I had photographed

## COVER STORY

**It was a comfort to be with other journalists, an illusion of safety in numbers. And maybe they had information about something hot that was going on**

the Pondo's death in Soweto, I had become completely absorbed by the news and hadn't touched the larger format view camera which I normally used for softer documentary stuff. Each day I tried to control my fear and sought out access to the township clashes – I was becoming hooked on the adrenaline and the notion that I was photographing the final push for liberation as it was happening.

As Tom and I inched along the road, two teenage boys emerged from the inky blue shadows and padded up to my window. They wore knitted woollen caps pulled down low over their foreheads and baggy slacks with hems shortened to leave a gap of a few inches above their loosely-laced canvas takkies – the informal uniform of petty township thugs, tsotsies.

"Heytada," I greeted them in tsotsietaal, the township vernacular. "Hola," they responded with the Spanish greeting that ANC militants had brought back from guerrilla training camps throughout socialist Africa, where most of their military instructors had been Cuban. Tsotsies liked to be considered comrades – full-blooded ANC guerrillas or activists; they wanted to be a part of the ANC-aligned neighbourhood militia that came to be known as 'self-defence units'. Law-abiding residents duly addressed the tsotsies by the abbreviation *coms*, but snidely called them *comtsotsies* behind their backs.

"What's going on, *coms*?" I asked. The boys always knew where things were happening, but it was 50/50 as to whether they would tell you. "It's bad," they said. "All night, *nyaga-nyaga* with the *fokken amaZulu*."

"Is it quiet now?" I asked, as I glanced nervously towards the hostel that dominated the low hill some 300 metres in front of us. "Tsk," was the dismissive reply, "give us petrol, *mlungu*." I smiled weakly, trying to think of a way for this whitey to get around the demand. I knew they wanted the fuel for Molotov cocktails.

"Leave them. They're journalists, they can't," another youth commanded from the side of the road. I looked over at him, but could not make out his features in the

near dark. He was probably a real comrade, a trained ANC fighter, commanding the thugs' respect. The *comtsotsies* turned sullen and began to move away from the window, but then one leant forward and whispered: "Give us your gun."

"I don't have one," I said. This was easier to handle than the demand for petrol, since I had never owned a firearm. He looked at me in disbelief, it was clear to me that he subscribed to the widely-held notion that every white man owns a gun. "Straight, *com*," I said. "You can search the car."

The thugs exchanged words in a language I didn't understand and then drew back. I eased the car into gear and left the barricades behind, driving slowly onto a bridge that crossed the railway line running alongside the hostel's fortress-like eastern edge. There were three men in long overcoats on watch at the gate that cut through the red brick perimeter wall, defaced by badly executed graffiti proclaiming it Inkatha territory. They stared at us as we approached, the long coats doubtless hiding shotguns or assault rifles. Instead of turning into the entrance, I said to Tom, "I don't feel too good about this, let's keep driving." He readily agreed – we were both scared to go into a hostel following a night of conflict. We caught up with a car ahead of us, recognising a couple of fellow journalists inside: Simon Stanford and Tim Facey, a television crew for the BBC. We exchanged waves, then followed them as they skirted the south side of the hostel. It was a comfort to be with other journalists, an illusion of safety in numbers. And maybe they had information about something hot that was going on.

Leaving the hostel behind, we looped around Jabulani stadium and turned east again to recross the railway tracks. Simon and Tim were driving slowly, clearly just cruising, but we decided to stick with them in any case. After a kilometre we turned left and followed the tracks up to Inhlazane train station, the closest stop to Jabulani Hostel. We were just a couple of hundred metres short of the corner where the *comtsotsies* had demanded petrol

10 minutes previously, but we found that the stretch of road that would have allowed us to complete our left-handed circle was blocked by several makeshift barricades.

Groups of residents, ANC sympathisers, watched us approach as the early light gradually erased the smudgy darkness. I parked and we got out to speak to the combatants. We introduced ourselves as journalists. The men and youths were aggressive, agitated. They had obviously been up the whole night, skirmishing with their Inkatha enemies from the hostel across the railway tracks. They were not keen to have us around.

“We work for the foreign press, AP and BBC.” I said. But one of the men was suspicious, “You’re from *The Citizen*,” he insisted, referring to a disreputable racist daily that had been set up by a covert government propaganda fund. Every black person I knew hated the paper’s political reporting and editorials, but it nevertheless had a massive black readership drawn by its comprehensive horse racing results and excellent punter’s guide.

“Not *The Citizen*, mjita (my friend), I promise,” I protested. This was more than a little disingenuous, since all the local papers subscribed to the AP and often used the wire pictures to further their own particular bias. But the partial truth enabled us to stay.

A shrill whistle galvanised the comrades and someone yelled a warning that the police were coming:

“Poyisa!” Tom and I followed on the heels of the boys fleeing for shelter behind the station ticket office next to the road. Within seconds an armoured military personnel carrier, a tough, heavy Casspir designed for the bush war in Angola but now used in the townships by the police, careened up the road. The Casspir’s massive wheels simply crunched over the rocks and rubble barricade the residents had erected in a vain attempt to control access to their area.

The police fired randomly from inside the towering behemoth as it sped by, rocking from side to side on its rigid springs. What cowboys, I thought: it would have been stu-

pid bad luck if any of us had been hit. As soon as the Casspir rounded a corner, the coms emerged from cover and tried to drag a big garbage skip into the road to make a more effective barrier. It was like watching a game. The residents could not match the heavily-armed police with their rocks and the rare firearm; but equally the police could not quell the unrest by racing through the township, firing wildly.

The coms grew more at ease with our presence. The shared excitement had broken down some of the mistrust, so we could take pictures more freely. Within a few minutes, shooting broke out again, this time at the bridge leading over the tracks. I ran up the slope of the embankment that bordered the line. A handful of older ANC supporters crouched behind the heavy iron plates edging the bridge. Thirty feet below us were the sunken tracks and the austere concrete platform of Inhlazane station. I ducked down beside a man wearing a soft cloth cap and carrying a revolver. We crouched below the bulwark at the entrance to the bridge. “No pictures, you hear?” he said, glaring fiercely at me. I reluctantly lifted my hands off the cameras to show my acquiescence. He peered over the top, across the railway lines. Several other coms lifted their heads, not wanting to miss out if the gunman hit anything. He cautiously lifted the revolver above the edge and fired, then dropped down onto his haunches again to cheers and admiring calls from the women down behind us at street level. Return fire from the Inkatha side occasionally whistled comfortably high above our heads, but we all ducked reflexively.

A train stopped at the station. The driver was either ignorant or uncaring of the clash going on above him. Some of the young combatants ran down to meet the train, in case there were Inkatha members on it, or to guide their own to the safe side of the tracks. I watched them re-emerge at the top of the wide concrete stairs, pushing and pulling a tall man in a blue workman’s coverall jacket. He was at least a head taller than the boys, but he did not resist as they tugged and

**Some of the young combatants ran down to meet the train ... I watched them re-emerge at the top of the wide concrete stairs, pushing and pulling a tall man in a blue workman’s coverall jacket**



**A man stabs at Lindsay Tshabalala, a Zulu killed as a suspected Inkatha member by African National Congress supporters**

drove him towards ANC territory. He could have been returning from a night shift or making an early start to visit friends, but he had unwittingly disembarked into our insignificant little skirmish.

At first, I was not sure of what was going on, but as soon as they had him off the bridge and out of sight of the Inkatha members opposite, they began to stone and stab him. I watched as he fell to the ground, then tried to crawl under a door propped up across the dented steel drums of a street vendor's stall. I was terrified that I might again witness a murder like the brutal killing at Nancefield Hostel a month before. It had been the first time I'd seen a person killed and I could still not shake off the feeling of guilt that he had died so close to me that I could have reached out and touched him, yet all I had done was take pictures. As much as I wished that I could have had another chance to try to stop his death, that Saturday morning seemed

too soon to be offered a chance to redeem myself.

The coms dragged the silent and unprotesting man they had identified as a Zulu to his feet and down the path to the street below. More people gathered around, mostly teenage boys, but there were one or two older men and a handful of even younger boys as well. They crowded around the bloodied Zulu and the assault intensified. A youth ran in and leapt high to deliver a kind of kung fu kick. Another slapped the Zulu hard across the face, a demeaning blow usually reserved for obstinate women and disobedient children. A man in a long-sleeved white shirt hauled out a massive, shiny bowie knife and stabbed hard into the victim's chest. I was in the midst of the crowd, separated from Tom and the other journalists. My heart was racing and I had difficulty taking deep enough breaths. Stepping across the chasm from my presumed role as a detached observer to that

of a participant, I called out: “Who is he? What’s he done?” A voice from the crowd replied, “He’s an Inkatha spy.” I tried to see who was speaking, to make contact with an individual amid the killing fervour.

“Are you sure he’s a spy? How do you know?” I asked. Another voice answered: “We know.” It was the man in the white shirt, absolute certainty in his flat voice. But he had stopped the attack for the moment and was looking at me. He seemed to be the leader, though I did not see him command or direct the action. Perhaps it was just that he was older.

“What if you’re wrong,” I said. “I mean, last month I saw Zulus, Inkatha, kill a Pondo because they thought he was Xhosa. Just here, at Nancefield Hostel. Maybe he is Zulu, yes, of course he is, but maybe he is not Inkatha. He could be ANC. Just make sure.” The man nodded while I talked, watching me shrewdly. Despite the garbled way it came out, he understood. But what I had to say did not matter. He and the others knew their decision had already been made.

The attack resumed and it looked as if the Zulu was now in a state of shock. Maybe the boys had demanded that he give the ANC nicknames for the neighbourhood streets, or someone had shown him a one rand coin and he had identified it as “iLandi”, betraying the rural Zulu dialect that characteristically changed ‘r’ to ‘l’. That would have been enough to secure his death sentence. But I never actually heard the man utter a single word throughout his ordeal. He did not appeal for mercy, nor even look to me for help. He seemed not to recognise what was happening. I wondered if he was mentally deficient, drugged, or just dumb with terror.

My questions had attracted attention from the coms and some of the assailants began an ominous hissing. “No pictures, no! Fokoff!”

I managed a fleeting defiance: “I’ll stop taking pictures when you stop killing him,” but the attack simply went on, moving down the street as the Zulu stepped slowly and ponderously forward. Now, one person after

the next took turns to inflict an injury on the defenceless man. It was as though this was a rite that had been played out before, and everyone but me knew the liturgy.

I noticed odd details. The sun had cleared the single story houses and shone with the extraordinary clarity of a spring morning. It would be a hot day.

I saw a young man with a wisp of a beard step forward and stand on his toes to thrust a knife into the Zulu’s chest. His victim just stared dumbly ahead as the knife plunged in, while I released the shutter and wound on the next frame. A part of me did not want to be a photographer just then, but as with the killing in Nancefield Hostel, I smoothly exchanged camera bodies to shoot slide as well as colour negative, ensuring I had material for both the AP and the French agency, Sygma.

The progress down the street halted when the Zulu collapsed into a sitting position on the pavement. Most of the mob was edging away by then and others had slipped behind me, probably to avoid being photographed. The man in the white shirt moved in again, I had a camera in front of my face as I shot and cranked the advance on my shabby Nikkor-mat. I took a few steps back, driven by a nervous impulse, some vague sense of unease about the spot I was occupying. Afterwards, Simon, the BBC cameraman, would say: “Jesus, did you see that guy try to stab you?”

For those crucial minutes, it was as if I lost my grasp of what was going on. I was present, but nothing entering through my senses registered. The pictures I kept mechanically taking would later substitute for the events my memory could not recall.

By now, the victim was lying on his side, propped up on one elbow, facing away from me. A teenager with one arm in a plaster cast used his good hand to throw a rock at his helpless target. In the picture, the victim seems to be looking directly at his assailant while the rock, captured in mid-air, is hurtling towards him. Did it hit him? I can’t recall and as my cameras were without motor-drives, there is no photographic memory; no

**I saw a young man with a wisp of a beard step forward and stand on his toes to thrust a knife into the Zulu’s chest. His victim just stared dumbly ahead as the knife plunged in, while I released the shutter and wound on the next frame**

## COVER STORY

**The boy carefully doused the Zulu with the petrol. Then he walked over to where I was standing with the man in the white shirt. The kid knew what must come next, but he would not, or could not, do it himself**

next moment. Another image is of the man in the white shirt stabbing his knife down into the top of the Zulu's head as he sits on the road, almost absentmindedly reaching up towards the source of pain. I don't know if I noted that either.

My awareness gradually returned. The victim was now flat on his back some yards in front of me. All around him, the street was empty. The man in the white shirt was standing next to me, my left shoulder brushing his right. He lifted his right hand, the one he had used for stabbing, to look at a little cut he had sustained and drew his breath in sharply under his teeth: "Ththth", like a child letting it be known he has hurt himself on the playground.

I peered down at the cut at the base of his thumb; he held it out to ensure I saw. There was a thin line of red along a shallow incision in the soft pink-brown skin of his hand, no deeper than a clumsy shaving cut. I felt we were both acutely aware of how grotesque this instant of bonding was. The moment was broken when a boy, no older than 13, walked across the deserted tarmac to the inert man and unscrewed the cap of the Molotov cocktail he was carrying. I was relieved that I had refused to earlier allow the comsotsis to siphon petrol from my tank – what if it were fuel from my tank that was poured over that victim? The boy carefully doused the Zulu with the petrol. Then he walked over to where I was standing with the man in the white shirt. The kid knew what must come next, but he would not, or could not, do it himself. I watched him surreptitiously slip a box of matches into the older man's left trouser pocket, on the far side from me, and whisper in his ear. The man in the white shirt tried to make out that nothing unusual was happening, that I had not caught this grim interchange.

The hissing and cursing around me had grown louder, more menacing. But I was determined not to leave the scene. I had failed to prevent the man's death, but fuck them if I was going to leave and let them burn him too. I stood my ground next to the

man in the white shirt, both of us staring at the body, pretending to be oblivious of the matches in his pocket. I heard the urgent calls from Simon, unnerved by the sight of me just standing next to one of the killers. "What's happening?" he demanded. I could not answer. "What did they say?" he asked. His words seemed to break the spell and I moved away, reluctantly, but also with relief. I felt as if a giant spring was wound up inside me, desperate for release. We agreed to leave, but then an excited shout went up from near the railway tracks. Onlookers drawn by the drama and participants in the killing ran up the embankment and we followed them. I was panting, though the sprint was brief. A handful of residents were trying to attack a man in a blue shirt, but their assault lacked the conviction of the earlier mob, and when one of those who had taken part in the first attack stretched out his arms protectively to ward off the blows, the attackers backed off. I didn't know why, but it seemed that he knew the man was not Inkatha; or perhaps he just been sickened by the previous murder.

There was a low brick building, the ticket office, between me and where the Zulu lay in the street. Suddenly I heard a hollow whoof and women began to ululate in a celebration of victory. I ran towards the edge of the elevation. The man I had thought dead was running across the field below us, his body enveloped in flames. Red, blue and yellow tongues licked the clothing and skin off his body. It was a stumbling, urgent run as he tried to escape the pain. I lifted the long lens camera. The human torch slowed and dropped to a squat. As I focused, I noted that the early sun was right behind the burning man. The camera's light meter did not work and so I twisted the aperture wide open: f5.6 should be right. I depressed the shutter, then pulled the camera away from my face for a second to advance the crank and frame my next exposure. A bare-chested, barefoot man ran into view and swung a machete into the man's blazing skull as a young boy fled from this vision of hell, from an enemy who would not die.

I lurched down the slope and stood over





the prostrated body that crackled and smoldered. I tried to breathe without allowing the pungent, acrid smell to penetrate my lungs. I shot a few pictures, but I was losing the battle to suppress my emotions. I left while he was still twitching, moaning in a low monotonous, most dreadful, voice. Nearby, Tom was interviewing someone about the killing and I had trouble controlling my own voice as I said: “Tom, let’s go.”

“Yeah, okay,” he seemed in shock too, but wrapped up in talking with one of the killers. “Let’s go, now!” I repeated raising my voice and he took in the danger of the situation; the crowd could turn on us at any time and we had more than we needed. We walked to the car without exchanging a further word.

We got in the car, I started the engine and we drove off. Tom was looking at me, not sure of what to say, not even sure of what he had just seen. Around the first corner I pulled over and, closing my eyes, began to beat the steering wheel with my fists. Finally I could scream.

Only from the following day’s newspapers did I learn the man’s name: Lindsay

Tshabalala. I will never forget it now, but when I was so close to him, he was only an anonymous, unlucky Zulu who should never have caught the train that morning.

The pictures of the fiery death of Lindsay Tshabalala set off a series of events that I could never have imagined. On the other side of the world, in London, it was a sunny Saturday, and AP’s day photo editor ‘Monty’ Montgomery was alone on the morning shift. He prepared for the day by checking through the inter-bureau messages, domestic and international news copy and the pictures that had come in overnight. He scanned the newspapers to see how the previous day’s AP pictures had fared against their rival wire services – Reuters and Agence France Presse. He noted that the major stories of the day were the growing Gulf crisis, a coup in Sudan, the Mohawk siege in Canada, the Aquino murder trial in the Philippines and Princess Diana due to appear on the balcony of Buckingham Palace for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

Not long into his shift, Monty got a call from Denis Farrell in AP’s Johannesburg of

**The man I had thought dead was running across the field below us, his body enveloped in flames. Red, blue and yellow tongues licked the clothing and skin off his body**

## COVER STORY

**When the first picture appeared on his screen, he muttered “Holy shit!” to himself in the deserted office. He was used to seeing thousands of pictures but he had rarely seen anything like this**

fice. Denis told him that a stringer had arrived with film of an event in Soweto, but he thought the pictures too graphic to run on the wire. What he really meant was that they were probably too graphic for the US newspapers. There was an unspoken rule that overly graphic pictures of violence should not move on the wire, and the US had a lower tolerance for violent images than the rest of the world. Monty asked Denis to pick out the best images and let him see them.

Monty had a lot to do that day and the new technology then in place was cumbersome, slow and needed constant coaxing. When the first picture appeared on his screen, he muttered “Holy shit!” to himself in the deserted office. He was used to seeing thousands of pictures but he had rarely seen anything like this. He wondered if I was black and if I was with the ANC.

In those days, AP was using the Leafax, one of the first machines that scanned directly from the negative, as opposed to scanning from a print. The negatives had to be selected and scanned, cropped, toned and captioned, one at a time; and then transmitted to London on a phone line. Before digital technology made everything faster and easier, a black and white transmission took seven minutes, while colour transmissions took three times longer.

In Johannesburg, Denis struggled with the backlit, difficult ‘Human Torch’ negative. The Leafax was an imperfect machine, and so to get better quality he made a print of the picture in the darkroom, sending it with the old fashioned drum transmitter. The pictures came in slowly, dependent on ‘clean’ phone lines. Every time there was a crackle or noise on the line, it left a mark, or a ‘hit’, on the image that arrived at the other end and the separation would have to be resent. The process of getting pictures to the AP’s newspaper and magazine clients was an intricate, slow and painful procedure.

Chief photo editor Horst Faas, wire veteran and two-time Pulitzer prize winner (1965 Vietnam and 1972 Bangladesh) came in shortly after the first pictures had landed.

He took one look at them and despite his view that a story needed just one or two key images, he sent a customarily terse note to Johannesburg on the message wire:

‘ëjobp/pho/lonp Send all pictures. faas/lonp.’

Faas, Monty and Denis feared that the notoriously sensitive New York desk would kill the pictures because they were too gory. But on that weekend the London people convinced their cautious counterparts across the Atlantic to let all the pictures move on through to the newspapers. Their fears were well founded: by Monday morning there was an outcry from some of the newspaper editors and publishers who own the AP. They objected to such brutal pictures running on the wire. One editor complained that he ran a family paper, and castigated the AP for putting out such pictures. It was not as if the existence of pictures on the wire obliged anyone to print them; only a fraction of any day’s production are ever published – hundreds of pictures are routinely ignored.

But Monty and Faas believed that the pictures of Lindsay Tshabalala’s death should be seen. To censor pictures that are too strong, indecent or obscene was to make decisions for the reader that were not theirs to make. They held that it should be shown that people were inflicting terrible violence on other people. In fact, some newspapers in the US did pull back from publishing the pictures, though many papers around the world ran them.

In South Africa, the violence of the photographs had an explosive effect. The South African government saw Lindsay Tshabalala’s death as a perfect opportunity to portray the ANC as killers who could never be entrusted with leading the country. Within days, police approached the AP Johannesburg bureau to see if I would hand over my pictures to enable them to identify the killers. It would also be necessary for me to appear in court to validate the authenticity of the pictures so that they could be submitted as evidence. The police had not contacted the AP or the local newspapers about my photographs of

the Inkatha warriors killing the alleged ANC supporter the previous month – it was presumably not in the interests of the South African state to prosecute their allies. Luckily, the police were trying to find one Sebastian Balic, the pseudonym I had adopted for my by-line, consisting of my middle name and my mother’s maiden name. I had done this to avoid being detected by the military police, who were haphazardly searching for me to complete my military service. During my initial two years of compulsory national service in the army I had refused to carry a weapon. I had been allowed to get away with that little defiance because they needed me to translate Russian – something I just managed to do with a pile of dictionaries as the language is similar to my parents’ mother tongue: Serbo-Croat. But by the time I was called up for camps, as the extended military call-up was known, I knew that even without carrying a gun, I would be playing my part in supporting apartheid.

Despite my horror at the brutal murder and the desire that the killers be prosecuted for it, there was no way I was going to testify. I had been allowed to stay during the clashes because I had convinced the ANC supporters that I was a journalist and not a police informer. If I did testify, journalists covering the war would almost certainly be targeted as soon as word spread. And once in court, Seb Balic would be revealed as Greg Marinovich. After I refused, the prosecutor issued a 205 subpoena, a court order used to force journalists, doctors and others to testify. The AP lawyers ascertained that the state would press ahead with charges against me if I refused to testify – with a maximum sentence of 10 years for contempt of court and several more for avoiding military camps. I decided to leave, rather than try my luck with the courts. So, within 24 hours, I was on a plane to London, leaving my house mates to deal with the security branch and plainclothes policemen who would occasionally appear at the door.

Once in London, I felt that the AP and my magazine photo agency Sygma were less

than helpful in finding me work. I unrealistically expected them to care about what I was going through; I understood the business associations as a form of friendship, rather than just an exchange of dollars for my pictures. I felt betrayed that neither agency took me under its wing in that strange city. I was in a troubled state of mind, shocked at what I had seen and depressed at having had to leave South Africa. I kept in touch with very few people back home, and most of my calls were to the Johannesburg AP office, trying to find out when I could return. Money was not really an immediate problem as the British affiliate of my journalists’ union back home gave me some money and let me stay in the union apartment in the city whenever it was free. When it was occupied, I would spend time at my aunt and her husband’s house in the country, where I was made to feel completely at home. But they lived far from London and it was expensive and time-consuming to commute from there all the time. Camera Press, a picture agency, let me chase their unpaid bills and shoot local events: it was a job and I could survive on it, but I did not want to cover press conferences, rugby matches or London demos.

I had lots of feature ideas that nobody would assign. I was swiftly learning the dictum of journalism: if it bleeds, it leads. Papers would pay for photographers to go to war zones a lot quicker than they would spring for an essay on gypsy life in Eastern Europe. And so I decided that a good war was what I needed to take my mind off South Africa and to stop me wallowing in self pity. After two months, Stuart Nicol, a former freelancer who had become the picture editor on the *European* newspaper, looked through my portfolio and sent me off on my first ever international assignment. He simply gave me a plane ticket and a wad of travellers cheques. I assumed I would have to sign some kind of undertaking to work for them until the Second Coming, but Stuart waved me off with an amused smile. My assignment was to cover the student riots in the streets of Belgrade and the possible collapse of Yugoslavia; but,

**The AP lawyers ascertained that the state would press ahead with charges against me if I refused to testify – with a maximum sentence of 10 years for contempt of court and several more for avoiding military camps**

## COVER STORY

**Renfrew called to tell me in reverent tones that I was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize, and, as I had a one-in-three chance of winning I should stick close to the phone that night. I made an appropriately awed response, but I really was not very excited as I had no idea what this Pulitzer thing was**

by the time I arrived, the police had already beaten the opposition into submission and there was nothing to photograph. I stayed in progressively cheaper hotels and finally in youth hostels to save the paper's money – I was so green that I did not yet know that it is a foreign correspondent's duty to stay in the most costly hotels and run up impressive expenses.

Belgrade in November of 1990 was dark, cold and full of miserable people. I skulked around the region doing inconsequential features, hoping for distraction. One afternoon, I lay on my hotel bed wistfully aroused as I listened to the noisy sex of an anonymous couple on the other side of the thin wall.

Then the paper sent me to Hungary to do a story on the revival of Judaism – a happy story and a chance to escape the Slavic wretchedness of Yugoslavia. The Hungarian capital, Budapest, even in mid-winter, was full of beautiful women and excellent ice cream. But all I could think about was South Africa and my depression grew so severe that I became obsessed with thoughts of suicide. One cold evening I went for a walk and found myself on a bridge over the Danube. I was staring down into the swirling, icy waters: as if I were being drawn down into the current, tugged toward the water. The thought crossed my mind that the river might not be deep enough: what if I plunged off and landed in waist-deep water, cold and embarrassed? I reassured myself that the mighty Danube had to be deep, but the distracting thought made it all seem ridiculous. I pulled back, angry with myself that I could give up so easily. Right then, I decided to go home. Despite my paranoia, the police were not waiting at Johannesburg airport to arrest me.

The Hostel War was going on much as it was when I had left and I easily slipped back into the grisly routine of covering the violence. I again took up stringing for the AP, Sygma and others where I had left off three months earlier. One day, the police came in to the AP office to try to pressurise the bureau chief, Barry Renfrew, into giving them Seb

Balic's address. I was in the newsroom and watched him courteously let them out after telling them that he did not have an address for me, but would let them know when he did. It was all a charade, but it kept my stress levels pretty high. I then began to get phone calls about awards the Lindsay Tshabalala photographs were winning; the pictures had been submitted for awards from institutions I had never heard of without my even knowing about it. While visiting my uncle and aunt on their mango farm outside Barberton, a rural farming area 450 kilometres east of Johannesburg, Renfrew called to tell me in reverent tones that I was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize, and, as I had a one-in-three chance of winning I should stick close to the phone that night. I made an appropriately awed response, but I really was not very excited as I had no idea what this Pulitzer thing was. After putting the phone down, I went and looked it up in the encyclopaedia.

### **APRIL, 1991**

The phone rang at about ten that night, waking me from a deep sleep. I heard the distinctive click of an overseas line. It was the AP photo boss, Vin Alabiso, to tell me that I had won the Pulitzer Prize for Spot News. Less than four months after turning away from the Danube's frigid waters, I had joined that journalistic elite – I was a Pulitzer Prize winner, but right then I did not have a clue as to its significance. I wondered if there were money involved, but I was soon to discover what all the fuss was about. The next call was from the Johannesburg office – they needed pictures of me celebrating as soon as possible. They had the champagne ready . . . **CT**

*Greg Marinovich won a Pulitzer prize for his photographs of the Soweto murder. He is now a freelance filmmaker and photographer, based in Johannesburg. Co-author Joao Silva was severely injured in a landmine explosion in Afghanistan last year while on assignment for the New York Times. The film version of **The Bang-Bang Club** opened in North America this month*

# Surprise, surprise! Iraq war *was* about oil

If you read the American media, you'll have probably missed some of the latest evidence of how the West lied about the reasons for its war on Iraq, writes **Ray McGovern**

**A**fghanistan may be the graveyard of empires, but Iraq is home to a graveyard sense of humor. Iraqis wonder aloud whether the US and Britain would have invaded Iraq if its main export had been cabbages instead of oil.

However obvious the answer, a remarkable array of American pundits and pseudo-savants have resisted giving the oil factor any pride of place among the motives behind the US/UK decision to invade Iraq in 2003. To this day, the Fawning Corporate Media (FCM) continue to play the accustomed role as government accomplice suppressing unwelcome news.

So, if you don't tune in to Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now* or read the British press, you will have missed the latest documentary evidence showing that Great Britain's Lords and Ladies lied about how big oil companies, like BP, lusted after Iraqi oil in the months leading up to the attack on Iraq.

Oil researcher Greg Muttitt's new book *Fuel on Fire: Oil and Politics in Occupied Iraq* presents that evidence, since Muttitt had better luck than American counterparts in getting responses to his Freedom of Information requests.

After a five-year struggle, he obtained more than 1,000 official documents which – how to say this – do not reflect well on

the peerage, the captains of the oil industry, and the government of Tony Blair.

On April 19, the British *Independent* published a major story about these disclosures, which America's FCM have avoided like the plague.

Quoting the released British documents, the *Independent* showed BP salivating over an expected windfall of Iraqi oil, with the saliva politely sponged up by Foreign Office functionaries. From the *Independent*:

“The Foreign Office invited BP in on 6 November 2002 to talk about opportunities in Iraq ‘post regime change.’ Its minutes state: ‘Iraq is the big oil prospect. BP is desperate to get in there.’

“Whereas BP was insisting in public that it had ‘no strategic interest’ in Iraq, in private it told the Foreign Office that Iraq was ‘more important than anything we’ve seen for a long time’ – it [BP] was willing to take ‘big risks’ to get a share of the Iraqi reserves, the second largest in the world..”

Of course, BP was singing a different tune for the average folks. Lord Browne, then-BP chief executive, insisted on March 12, 2003, a week before the invasion of Iraq: “It is not, in my or BP’s opinion, a war about oil.”

The official documents, however, offer a contradictory account. Gosh, would BP officials lie?

The minutes of a similar meeting with BP and Shell on Oct. 31, 2002, reinforce the

**Quoting the released British documents, the Independent showed BP salivating over an expected windfall of Iraqi oil, with the saliva politely sponged up by Foreign Office functionaries**

## TELLING LIES

**Gee, what kind of person would suggest that President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney might take the country to war with so much as a thought in their heads about locking down control of Iraq's vast oil reserves?**

point. They show then-British Trade Minister, Lady Symons, agreeing that British oil companies must not lose out in competing for Iraqi oil, particularly “if the UK had itself been a conspicuous supporter of the US government throughout the crisis.”

Prime Minister Tony Blair was equally disingenuous in his public remarks. On April 19, *Democracy Now* ran a brief clip in which British author Muttitt called to mind Blair's assurances to a TV audience on Feb. 6, 2003, six weeks before the war: “The idea that we're interested in Iraq's oil is absurd, it's one of the most absurd conspiracy theories you can imagine.”

Muttitt pointed out that, as Blair was saying this, a secret (until now) Foreign Office document setting out British strategy toward Iraqi oil asserted, “Britain has an absolutely vital interest in Iraq's oil.”

The *London Mail Online* on April 20 summed up the contradictions with classic English understatement. It noted that the flurry of meetings between oil executives and the Labour government in late 2002 “appear to be at odds with their insistence Iraq's vast oil reserves were not a consideration ahead of the March 2003 invasion.”

### **Back in Washington**

America's FCM have yet to acknowledge this latest embarrassment of how fully its prominent members were wrong about this oil issue as they queued up behind the Bush/Blair invasion in 2002-2003. Top pundits echoed Blair's dismissal of the oil motive as a “conspiracy theory.”

Instead the FCM agreed that the “pre-emptive war” was needed to protect Americans from Iraq's WMD and stop Saddam Hussein's collaboration with Osama bin Laden – even if there were no WMD stockpiles and there was no collaboration.

The war's defenders also sprinkled in some noble sentiments about advancing human rights and spreading democracy. If the “no blood for oil” argument was mentioned, it was put on a tee so it could be easily swatted away by the Bush administration.

For instance, on Dec. 15, 2002, “60 Minutes” correspondent Steve Croft asked then Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, “What do you say to people who think this [the coming invasion of Iraq] is about oil?” Rumsfeld replied:

“Nonsense. It just isn't. There – there – are certain ... things like that, myths that are floating around. I'm glad you asked it. I – it has nothing to do with oil, literally nothing to do with oil.”

Gee, what kind of person would suggest that President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney might take the country to war with so much as a thought in their heads about locking down control of Iraq's vast oil reserves?

Cheney, of course, understood the geopolitical importance of oil before he joined Bush in running for the White House. As CEO of Halliburton in autumn 1999, Cheney had observed that:

“Oil companies are expected to keep developing enough oil to offset oil depletion and also to meet new demand. So where is the oil going to come from?”

“Governments and the national oil companies are obviously in control of 90 percent of the assets. Oil remains fundamentally a government business. The Middle East, with two-thirds of the world's oil and the lowest cost, is still where the prize ultimately lies.”

Since the Iraq invasion, several Washington insiders have blurted out the suppressed Realpolitik about the strategic value of oil.

As early as May 2003 (in the heady days of “Mission Accomplished”), then Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz nonchalantly responded to a question about why Bush attacked Iraq, but not North Korea, by noting that Iraq “floats on a sea of oil.”

At that early stage, Wolfowitz apparently still thought the Iraq war would be the “cakewalk” predicted by his neoconservative colleague Kenneth Adelman. With the war supposedly won – and with Americans famously tolerant of the behavior of winners – Wolfowitz might have thought some

candor wouldn't raise many eyebrows.

At that point, the Bush team still harbored hope that convicted felon/conman extraordinaire Ahmed Chalabi could be put in power in Baghdad, open the door to Western oil companies, and – not incidentally – recognize Israel.

Wolfowitz, Adelman, and the neoconservative crowd would have been wiser to temper their hubris with a smidgeon of common sense. The notion that Chalabi had, or could garner, a significant following in Iraq was a pipe dream.

The State Department conducted a poll of Iraqis in 2003, finding Chalabi to be the only listed political leader whose unfavorable ratings exceeded his favorable ones. And small wonder. Chalabi and his wealthy family had left Iraq in 1956.

(As a benchmark for those who might remember, 1956 was two years before the New York Giants baseball team broke my heart by leaving the Polo Grounds and moving to San Francisco.)

Despite Chalabi's lack of Iraqi roots, the neoconservative movers and shakers in Washington and Baghdad still helped get him appointed in 2005 as Deputy Prime Minister and Chair of the Iraq Energy Council, which directed Iraqi oil policy. Chalabi was also in and out as acting Oil Minister.

#### **Insiders reveal oil role**

Bush's first Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, who was fired in late 2002 after disagreeing with Bush on tax cuts and Iraq, was one of the first insiders to detail the administration's Iraqi oil obsession, tracing it back to the days after Bush's inauguration as Bush's advisers planned how to divvy up Iraq's oil wealth.

O'Neill told author Ron Suskind for his 2004 book, *The Price of Loyalty*, that Bush's first National Security Council meeting just days into his presidency included a discussion of invading Iraq. O'Neill said even at that early date, the message from Bush was "find a way to do this."

Subsequent disclosures have corroborat-

ed O'Neill's account about the importance of oil in Bush's calculation. Though Freedom of Information requests in the United States have been nowhere near as successful as those in London, one did hit pay dirt.

A FOIA lawsuit forced the Commerce Department to fork over some documents of Cheney's Energy Task Force documents from March 2001, including a map of Iraqi oilfield, pipelines, refineries, terminals, and potential areas for exploration. There also was a Pentagon chart titled "Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield Contracts," and one chart detailing Iraqi oil and gas projects.

Al Qaeda's Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks gave Bush and Cheney the political opening they needed to turn their designs on Iraqi oil into reality. And the two also began linking Saddam Hussein and his fictional stockpiles of WMD to al Qaeda.

Suskind wrote, "Documents were being prepared by the Defense Intelligence Agency, Rumsfeld's intelligence arm, mapping Iraq's oil fields and exploration areas and listing companies that might be interested in leveraging the precious asset.

"The desire to 'dissuade' countries from engaging in 'asymmetrical challenges' to the United States ... matched with plans for how the world's second largest oil reserve might be divided among the world's contractors made for an irresistible combination, O'Neill later said," according to Suskind.

One oil executive confided to a *New York Times* reporter a month before the war on Iraq, "For any oil company, being in Iraq is like being a kid in F.A.O. Schwarz."

As the years wore on and the Bush administration struggled to control the violent resistance to the US occupation of Iraq, other prominent Americans began acknowledging the obvious importance of oil in the US calculation for war.

Former Chairman of the Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan in his 2007 book *The Age of Turbulence* wrote: "I am saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: the Iraq war is large-

**Al Qaeda's Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks gave Bush and Cheney the political opening they needed to turn their designs on Iraqi oil into reality**

## TELLING LIES

**The neocons running Bush/Cheney policies had great difficulty distinguishing between the strategic interests of Israel on the one hand, and those of the US on the other**

ly about oil.”

In a talk at Stanford on Oct. 13, 2007, former CENTCOM commander Gen. John Abizaid seconded Greenspan. “Of course it [Iraq] is all about oil,” Abizaid said.

### **Not exclusively oil**

But the motivation to attack Iraq was not solely oil. Nor was it solely to acquire permanent or “enduring” military bases. Nor was it only to make the Middle East safer for Israel.

In my view it was an amalgam of ALL OF THE ABOVE plus a few others like vengeance and what the Chinese used to call “great-power chauvinism.” I am always surprised at those who take the position that just one of these motives was operative and insist on excluding others. Neither life, nor policy making, is that simple.

A few months after the war started, I coined the “acronym” OIL to address US/UK motives. I must put the term “acronym” in quotation marks, because Jon Stewart has rightly accused me of “violating the rules for acronyms” because O was for oil; I for Israel; and L for logistics (the military bases), Stewart insisted that OIL could not be the acronym if the “O” was one of the elements. It was a good spoof, meeting my desire to call primary attention to OIL. I still think the “acronym” performs a useful function as mnemonic.

Hopefully, we have already taken care of the oil motive in what is said above. How about Israel? Well, candor requires acknowledgment that the neoconservatives running Bush/Cheney policies had great difficulty distinguishing between the strategic interests of Israel on the one hand, and those of the US on the other.

While this was clear from the outset of the Bush administration, specific evidence emerged in London at the Chilcot hearings on Iraq in January 2010.

Former Prime Minister Tony Blair spoke publicly about Israel’s input into the all-important Bush-Blair deliberations on Iraq in Crawford, Texas, in April 2002. Inexplicably,

Blair slipped up on his propensity for hiding important facts from the public and told some truth, though his indiscretion got little attention in America’s FCM. Blair said:

“As I recall that [April 2002] discussion, it was less to do with specifics about what we were going to do on Iraq or, indeed, the Middle East, because the Israel issue was a big, big issue at the time. I think, in fact, I remember, actually, there may have been conversations that we had even with Israelis, the two of us [Bush and Blair], whilst we were there. So that was a major part of all this.”

Blair’s remarks reinforced earlier ones by Philip Zelikow, a former member of the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, executive director of the 9/11 Commission, and later counselor to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Zelikow told an audience at the University of Virginia in September 2002 that the “real threat” from Iraq was not to the United States. Rather, the “unstated threat” from Iraq was the “threat against Israel.” He added, “The American government doesn’t want to lean too hard on it rhetorically, because it is not a popular sell.”

### **‘Enduring’ military bases**

Then there are the ‘enduring’ military bases, which used to be called ‘permanent’ bases. Today, Defense Secretary Robert Gates is engaging in not-so-subtle pleading with the Iraqi government to permit some American forces to remain at some large bases beyond the agreed end-of-2011 withdrawal date.

To refresh memories of the Bush/Cheney approach to the base and oil issues, it might be helpful to recall one of President Bush’s more significant “signing statements.” In early 2008, Bush wrote that he did not feel bound by the Defense Authorization Act’s following specific prohibitions:

“To establish any military installation or base for the purpose of providing permanent stationing of United States Armed Forces in Iraq, “ or “To exercise United States control of the oil resources of Iraq.”



I was reminded of Bush's signing statement as I watched Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Feb. 18 wordsmith a similar Obama administration approach to Afghanistan. Clinton said:

"In no way should our enduring commitment be misunderstood as a desire by America or our allies to occupy Afghanistan against the will of its people ... we do not seek any permanent American military bases in their country."

But who are we to believe? Just ten days before (on Feb. 8) Afghan President Hamid Karzai openly confirmed that the Obama administration has been in secret talks with him to formalize a system of permanent (or maybe "enduring"?) military bases in Afghanistan.

The Bush signing statement about bases and oil now seems emblematic, inasmuch as it points to the reasoning so many Americans have come to tolerate – and even endorse; that is, the concept that the first resource wars of the 21st Century were simply necessary to emplace military bases to ensure that US gas stations don't run dry.

After all, many of us already are paying more than \$4 a gallon at the pump.

One can understand, without condoning it, that many Americans have become comfortable with the notion that we are somehow exceptional, and thus entitled to more

than our proportionate share of the world's natural resources.

The FCM are a very huge help in persuading Americans that it is okay to ignore the suffering and devastation inflicted abroad, because we have to protect our "way of life" from those who are just plain "jealous."

Over the past decade, this mode of thinking has found expression in several interesting ways. Three examples that come to mind:

1. 'I don't care what the international lawyers say, we're going to kick some ass!' (Bush in the White House bunker, evening of 9/11);

2. "Kick Their Ass & Take Their Gas!" (prominent placard held by Crawford Texans counter-demonstrating against supporters of Cindy Sheehan, August 2005);

3. "We go to war for oil. It's a good reason to go to war." (Ann Coulter, speech at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, April 21, 2011).

And so it goes.

**CT**

*Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington, DC. He served as a CIA analyst for 27 years, and is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS). This article appeared first at Consortiumnews.com.*



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# The strange death of multiculturalism

Trevor Grundy reports on the disturbing upsurge of anti-Muslim racism in Britain and Europe

**For those with eyes to see and ears to hear, the hidden message was discernible: Immigrants are our misfortune**

*“Islamophobia has become a socially acceptable form of bigotry in some circles in Britain. It is my profession – the media – that is driving much of this anti-Muslim sentiment. It’s the media that churns out Islamophobic headlines, editorials, columns, imagery. You can say things about Muslims in the British press that you could never say about any other members of a minority.”*

– Mehdi Hasan, senior editor (politics) of the *New Statesman* in a speech delivered to an audience of an estimated 500 people at the Muslim Leadership annual dinner in London on 18 March, 2011.

**T**HE DEBATE about the apparent collapse of multiculturalism in western Europe, including the United Kingdom, moved into top gear last October when the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, told the youth wing of her Christian Democrat Union that this concept had “utterly failed.”

In a landmark speech, Mrs Merkel broke one of Germany’s last taboos, and courted anti-immigration support, by saying that those people from a different background had failed to live happily alongside native Germans.

There are seven million foreign residents living in that country and some 4.3 million are Muslims. Over 3,000 mosques are dotted across that land.

In tub-thumping mood, she told a captivated audience of young men and women that the so-called “multikulti” concept in her country had failed.

“This approach has failed, utterly,” she declared days after a poll showed that a third of all Germans viewed most immigrants as little more than scroungers and welfare cheats.

They included Turks, who had helped Germans achieve what’s called an “economic miracle” following Hitler’s defeat and the destruction of the Third Reich after May 1945.

Then, turning her attention to the largely unspoken fear that the national character (German-ness) was being lost amidst the further construction of mosques, the appearance of more and more headscarves in classrooms and Turkish ghettos springing up in Berlin and other parts of the country, she added – “We feel bound to the Christian image of humanity. Those who do not accept this are in the wrong place here.”

For those with eyes to see and ears to hear, the hidden message was discernible: Immigrants are our misfortune.

Chancellor Merkel’s speech came not long after a Bundesbank board member, Thilo Sarrazin, moved a white pawn onto a once brightly coloured multi-kulti chess board placed there by a book published last year called *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (Engl:

*Germany abolishes/does away with itself*).

In it he said that four million Muslims in Germany were “dumbing down” society and that the national Christian identity of Germans was in danger of being lost.

The book was popular, one of the most successful by a German author in a decade.

His views were known to fellow academics. But what he wrote would once have been anathema to the liberal democrats who paraded after the Second World War as the champions of democracy and who showed the world the smiling, open, transparent and above all multicultural face of West Germany after the fall of the wall in 1989.

In 2009 in *Lettre Internationale* a German quarterly magazine, Sarazzin described Arab and Turkish immigrants as men and women unwilling to integrate fully into German society. He said: “Integration requires effort from those who are to be integrated. I will not show respect for anyone who is not making that effort. I do not have to acknowledge anyone who lives by welfare, denies the legitimacy of the very state that provides that welfare, refuses to care for the education of his children and constantly produces new little headscarf girls. This holds true for 70 percent of the Turkish and 90 percent of the Arabic population of Berlin.”

Regarding Islam he wrote:

“No other religion in Europe makes so many demands. No immigrant group other than Muslims is so strongly connected with claims on the welfare state and crime. No group emphasises their differences so strongly in public, especially through women’s clothing. In no other religion is the transition to violence, dictatorship and terrorism so fluid.”

An opinion poll showed that one fifth of all Germans agreed with him.

The poll came at a time when anti-Christian violence was sweeping parts of the Muslim world, especially in Pakistan, Ethiopia and Afghanistan. Tragically, some of that violence was caused by anti-Islamist/

Muslim events that took place in Europe and America. The burning of the Koran and publication of idiotic cartoons mocking Islam in Denmark but two examples.

The soaking of the Holy Koran with petrol and setting it alight caused violent reaction in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Then that reaction appeared in Britain to vindicate the belief held in ultra-nationalist circles that Muslims are a violent lot, always on the rampage, always attacking Christians.

Less than six months after the German chancellor’s speech, the Vatican’s observer to the United Nations warned that anti-Christian violence would worsen worldwide if such events continue.

“We are living at a particularly complicated moment for the defence of Christian human rights, especially in certain countries of Asia and Africa,” Archbishop Sivano Tomasi was quoted as saying in the Roman Catholic weekly magazine *The Tablet* (19 March 2011).

“Discrimination against Christians isn’t just restricted to a lack of respect for their religious faith – it’s also leading to murder and violence and this is now growing,” he added.

The Vatican representative was speaking after the 02 March killing by gunman of Shahbaz Bhatti, a Catholic minister in Pakistan’s federal government, whose funeral in Islamabad’s Our Lady of Fatima Church was accompanied by angry Christian protests.

“We need to analyse this phenomenon, which is already far too widespread, case by case,” Archbishop Tomasi said in an interview with Vatican Radio.

“There is a common denominator which links these acts to violence against Christians – they’re seen as easy targets and objects because they don’t seek violence or take reprisals.”

#### **Away from controversy**

Muslims in Britain and Germany believe the same might be said about them.

Until Merkel’s speech, Germans of political note kept well away from controversy

**The soaking of the Holy Koran with petrol and setting it alight caused violent reaction in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Then that reaction appeared in Britain to vindicate the belief held in ultra-nationalist circles that Muslims are a violent lot, always on the rampage, always attacking Christians**

## RACISM'S SHADOW

**David Cameron said there would be stronger scrutiny of certain Muslim groups which receive public funds to fight extremism but which did little to earn their keep**

that could be construed as right wing, even neo-Nazi.

Since 1945, politicians of all shades of opinion have spoken in broad positive terms about multiculturalism.

So something both important and alarming (critics of Germany's immigration policy would add the word courageous) was beating close to the heart of German-ness and the country's political system and it comes at a time when imported 'cheap labour' is seen as a threat to the European working classes who are facing tough times because of economic collapse caused by mounting inflation, bank failures, cynicism about political leaders around the world and growing concern about globalization which has underscored, if needs be once again, the incredible differences in living standards between not only haves and have nots but the mighty difference between our new economic masters prompting the brain-battering phrase – the haves and the have yachts.

In Germany, significant post-war immigration began in the 1960s when Turks and others arrived to fill the labour vacuum left by the war dead.

Mrs Merkel recalled that in the 1960s, foreign workers (*gastarbeitern*) were needed. Chillingly, she said: "We kidded ourselves a while, we said: 'They won't stay, sometime they will be gone.' But this isn't reality."

Her speech triggered a sharp response from various Jewish leaders, Stephen Kramer of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, one of them.

He said the debate was making foreigners (and minorities including German Jews) "uneasy and scared."

### **Multi-millionaire leaders**

David Cameron is Britain's 21st Old Etonian prime minister, a multi-millionaire and, by marriage, connected to the English aristocracy. Eighteen members of the British cabinet are multi-millionaires. One doesn't have to be a Marxist to grasp where his, and their, interests lie. But the response to Angela Merkel's speech took many by surprise. He

made it at a security conference in Munich on 10 February this year.

Against a backdrop of draconian cuts to the public sector and massive pre-2007-level rewards to the bankers, the British prime minister rose and condemned state multiculturalism. He echoed the words of Mrs Merkel and suggested, like some 19th century banner-waving Christian reformer that multiculturalism should be replaced with something more much more vibrant and British. "Frankly," he told delegates, "we need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and much more active, muscular liberalism."

This signaled a tougher stance on groups promoting Islamist extremism and his speech in southern Germany angered several leading Muslim groups in Britain while others queried its timing – the day that the extremist nationalist English Defence League organised a march protesting against Muslims in the town of Luton (29 miles/46 kms north of London) where in 2009 a small group of Muslims had denounced British soldiers in Iraq as "murderers" and "baby killers."

The small "Islamic" demonstration produced angry headlines and widespread condemnation but most Muslims in Luton denounced the placard wavers. "These people do not represent the Muslim community" one of them told a reporter from the conservative *Daily Telegraph* newspaper.

David Cameron said in his speech that henceforth there would be stronger scrutiny of certain Muslim groups which receive public funds to fight extremism but which did little to earn their keep.

On the Muslim groups that speak for their community, he remarked, "Let's properly judge these organizations. Do they believe in universal human rights – including for women and people in other faiths? Do they believe in equality of all before the law? Do they believe in democracy and the right of people to elect their own government? Do they encourage integration or separatism?"

The speech – it stopped short of underly-

ing Britain's Christian heritage – raised eyebrows among the Muslim community and temperatures among socialists and liberals in the British media.

The Muslim Council of Britain's secretary general, Faisal Hanjra, described the prime minister's speech as disappointing, saying, "Again, it just sees the Muslim community is very much in the spotlight, being treated as part of the problem as opposed to part of the solution." He added, "We need to be clear, Islamist extremism and Islam are not the same thing."

Increasingly, those who curry favour with the English establishment – they include prominent politicians, journalists and even well known Christian church leaders – insist that they are.

**The things they say**

One of Britain's best known Muslims is Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, co-chairman of the Conservative Party, a minister without portfolio in Britain's coalition government.

When I was invited to attend the annual Muslim leadership dinner at a leading London hotel on the evening of 18 March, I was handed a copy of *Emel*, the leading Muslim lifestyle magazine in the UK which contained a long article about Warsi, whom the *Daily Telegraph* calls the 23rd most influential right – winger in Britain.

In it she said that in Britain things can be said about Muslims that could never be said about any other minority group. She listed recent newspaper headlines and they included such uncouth gems as "Muslim students back killing in the name of Islam," "Muslim plot to kill the Pope," and "Muslims force Britons to eat Halal meat."

She drew attention to the danger of categorizing Muslims as either moderate or extreme.

"If you are saying that the only Muslim who is acceptable is the one who we can define as moderate, then what you are saying is that to be a Muslim is toxic per se and only the detoxified moderate is acceptable." She continued, "You cannot say someone is

an extremist Muslim. He's just an extremist."

She said that attacks on Muslims and Islam are now part of polite conversation at dinner parties organized and attended by members of the English middle class establishment.

She said that in Leicester, the English Midlands city which is now running to seed and which is lived in, mostly, by first, second and third generation Muslims.

Mehdi Hasan, one of Britain's best known journalists who is the political editor of the *New Statesman* magazine, addressed the audience of over 500 people.

He said Islamophobia has become a "socially acceptable form of bigotry" in some circles.

"It is my profession – the media – that is driving much of this anti-Muslim sentiment. It's the media that churns out Islamophobia headlines, editorials, columns, imagery. You can say things about Muslims in the British press that you could never say about any other members of a minority."

As he spoke, I wondered if he had been thinking about what Martin Amis, one of Britain's best known and richest novelists, told the journalist Ginny Dougary when she interviewed him in 2006, when he was still boiling with anger about 9/11:

"There is a definite urge – don't you have it? to say, 'The Muslim community will have to suffer until it gets its house in order' ... What sort of suffering? Not letting them travel. Deportation farther down the road. Curtailing of freedoms. Strip-searching people who look like they from the Middle East or from Pakistan. Discriminatory stuff, until it hurts the whole community and they start getting tough with their children."

Change the word Muslim to Jew, replace Pakistan with Israel and see what happens.

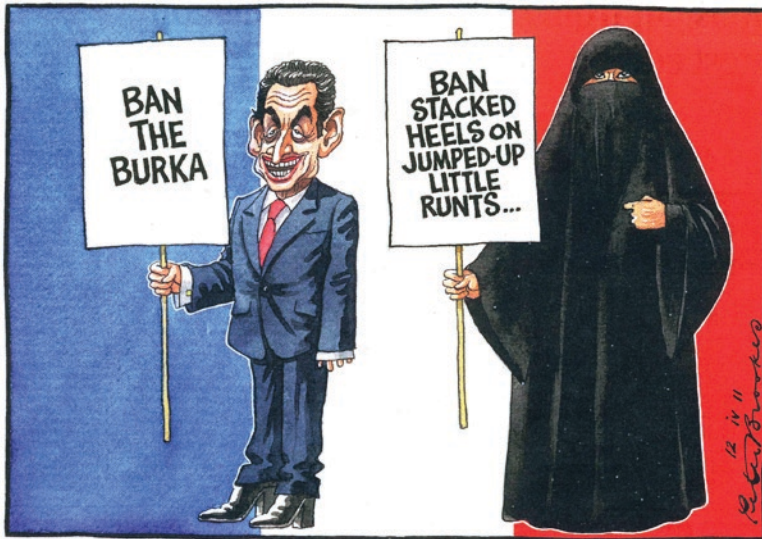
Hasan told one of the thousand of so "jokes" involving Muslims that are swirling around.

*A man saved a small boy from being attacked by a mad dog in a London park.*

*A photographer from one of the scare-*

**He said Islamophobia has become a "socially acceptable form of bigotry" in some circles**

## RACISM'S SHADOW



**Exposing hypocrisy: Peter Brookes' cartoon appeared in the Times newspaper**

*mongering English tabloids saw this heroic act, and took pictures. He told the local hero -in-the-making that he'd soon be famous and much loved. The following day, he said, headlines would read – "Brave British hero saves innocent child from mad dog."*

*Mr Hero explained that he wasn't British.*

*Okay, said the photographer. The headline would instead read, "Brave Londoner saves innocent child from mad dog."*

*"I'm not from London either," the man explained, "I've just arrived in this country and I'm a student from Pakistan."*

*The following day the Daily Express headline yelled out: "Islamic fundamentalist asylum seeker kills innocent British dog."*

*Applause was loud but underneath the smiles I sensed a growing anger.*

*Freud told us that we usually joke about things that frighten us the most.*

*Muslims in Britain are the new Jews, the new "silly" Poles, "half insane" Irish, "cunning/crafty" Slovaks, "mumbling and fumbling" "Red" Indians, and "dumbo/ mumbo/jumbo hands out all begging "Africans.*

*How does an Islamist mother teach her child to put on his underpants correctly?*

*She tells him the fuse goes at the front.*

*A cartoon shows two Muslim women in recently bought traditional dress in a London street.*

*"Does my bomb look too big in this?"*

one asks the other.

There are thousands of them.

Call up Google and type in "Anti-Muslim jokes in Britain."

Then do it again. Call up Google and type in "Anti-Jewish jokes in Nazi Germany."

### **Greatest challenges**

Last december year I had a long interview in London with Terry Sanderson, President of the UK's National Secular Society about Britain and its Muslim community.

He told me that accommodating Islam's special demands will be one of the greatest government challenges of the 21st century. He warned that if the British continue burying their head in the sand about a need for accommodation and continue pretending that Islamist fundamentalists are not running some faith schools where children are taught to hate Christians, Jews, then there could soon be two societies and two cultures in Britain.

He spoke with controlled passion about this need constructive debate about the urgent need to have an accommodation with the religious and cultural needs of Muslims living in Europe, the USA and other parts of the world.

"What's happening now is that there is a strong mood within the Muslim community not to be part of the whole but to be separate. It is as though they want to create Pakistan in Britain and keep it separate and I think that once you do that, multiculturalism falls apart because you don't have a multicultural society, you have cultures living on the same island but completely separated."

Sanderson was speaking in December last year, a month after the publication in France of a government-backed report into the impact Muslim students and their parents remaking on the state school system.

The High Council for Integration in Paris reported growing problems with pupils of immigrant backgrounds who object to courses about the Holocaust, the Crusades or evolution, who demand Halal meals and

reject French culture and its values. The French report said: "It is becoming difficult for teachers to resist religious pressure. We should now reaffirm secularism and train teachers how to deal with specific problems linked to the respect of this principle."

Sanderson is one of the few top British intellectuals calling for an independent investigation into how religion is taught in state schools. "If you look at some of these faith schools you will see that some really suspect people have got their hands on them," he told me.

I stopped the interview and asked if he really wanted to be quoted saying that some Muslims appear to want to establish Pakistan in Britain.

"Isn't that just what the neo-Nazis want us to believe?"

He said yes it was but it was it was the truth.

Two days later I saw that my piece written for *Ecumenical News International*, part of the World Council of Churches in Geneva had been picked up by the English Defence League and published on their website.

### Race riots

As I write this in April, I read in the *Times* newspaper that it's the 30th anniversary of the Brixton Race Riots in London. New immigrants in 1980 felt they were being harassed by white policemen and picked on by society as a whole.

In the same paper on 4 April I read about violent deaths in Afghanistan started by a Koran-burning incident in America. Twelve people have been killed at the time of writing.

President Karzai called on the US Congress to join President Obama in condemning the burning in Kandahar which followed the mock "trial" in the Florida Church of a man called Terry Jones, a fundamentalist Christian pastor and hero of the English Defence League (EDL) which has taken over prime spot in the UK as the country's most fervently nationalist organization following the demise of the British National Party

after its leader Nick Griffin made a fool of himself in a television programme aired in October 2009.

A crowd of several hundred protestors marched on a UN-compound in Kandahar two days after seven foreign UN workers and five Afghan protestors were killed in similar demonstrations in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif,

Mr Jones has refused to apologise for what Mr Obama called "an act of extreme intolerance and bigotry."

Could an incident like that spread if someone burnt a Koran or beat up or killed a "militant" Muslim in Britain or Germany? Only a fool would say no.

On 11 April, the *Daily Mail* newspaper reported that a senior member of the British National Party, 42 year old Sion Owens, had been arrested for burning a copy of the Koran in his garage.

Police fear that this former key supporter of Nick Griffin (who likes to pose as white Britons' champion against fundamentalist Islamists) will become a right-wing martyr and that other far-right nationalists will attempt to emulate his actions, which prompted Saqed Mueen of Britain's Royal United Services Institute to comment that this was proof enough of what he called "the globalization of outrageous stunts."

Also on 11 April, France passed a new law banning the wearing of any form of clothing concealing one's face in public. Several people including two heavily veiled women were arrested.

"Women in France have the right to freedom of religion and expression. They must also be free to protest when this right is violated," said John Dalhuisen, Europe and Central Asia Programme Director at Amnesty.

"This law puts France to shame – a country that prides itself on the human rights it claims to promote and protect, freedom of expression included," says the internationally respected human rights organisation.

"The law preventing women in France from expressing their values, beliefs and

**Police fear that this former key supporter of Nick Griffin will become a right-wing martyr and that other far-right nationalists will attempt to emulate his actions**

## RACISM'S SHADOW

**Messages about race and religion delivered by politicians on international platforms can be all-to-easily mis-represented and twisted**

identity should be scrapped,” Amnesty’s Dalhuisen declared.

Perhaps, unwittingly, highly educated and economically privileged men and women – including Merkel in Germany and Cameron in England – are delivering a disturbing message to Muslims in the European Union (EU) that they were useful and wanted but now useless and unwanted – their religious beliefs and practices disturbing to Christians in secular Europe.

The future of Britain’s still quiet but increasingly disturbed Muslim community is one that should be studied by responsible politicians, academics, historians, journalists, teachers and social workers.

Yet quiet debate on the subject of the future of the Muslim community in Britain and elsewhere will be hard to achieve. The most calm and tolerant men and women go berserk, like Vikings with unsheathed swords, when the subject comes up.

Messages about race and religion deliv-

ered by politicians on international platforms can be all-to-easily mis-represented and twisted to gloss the fouler thoughts of people with very different agendas.

Terry Sanderson’s call for an independent inquiry into how Britain can best accommodate Muslim aspirations in the 21st century cannot be answered too soon by a weak and confused coalition government led by multi-millionaires and public schoolboys.

The alternative to investigation and public debate could prove to be what a South African prime minister said in another age and different part of the world “ simply too ghastly to contemplate.” **CT**

*Trevor Grundy is a British journalist who worked in central, eastern and southern Africa from 1966-1996. he is the author of **Memoir Of A Fascist Childhood**, an excerpt from which was published by ColdType last year.*



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# More humanitarian regime change

**Alan Maas** reports on the international intervention that helped remove another president from power

**T**he former president of Ivory Coast who refused to accept the results of a November election and continued to rule over the West African country has been arrested after a military assault led by French and UN forces.

The media portrayed the capture of Laurent Gbagbo as a victory for democracy. But both sides have been guilty of violence and repression during the escalating conflict since the disputed vote. And Western governments didn't intervene on the side of Gbagbo's rival Alassane Ouattara to see justice done, but to safeguard the financial interests of multinational corporations and ensure the continued dominance of France, Ivory Coast's former colonial ruler.

Ouattara will take power in the Ivory Coast – or Côte d'Ivoire, as it is known in French – indebted to imperialism, and with little control over Ivorian fighters who were loyal to him during the post-election civil war, and who are now reportedly exacting revenge on supporters of Gbagbo. As Ugandan writer and broadcaster Kalundi Serumaga wrote in an article for *CounterPunch*<sup>1</sup> “The ultimate tragedy for Côte d'Ivoire is not that Gbagbo had to be driven out by force of arms, but that someone else has replaced him by the same means.”

Ouattara won a November 28 runoff election for the presidency by a narrow 54 percent margin according to results accepted as

official by the UN. But Gbagbo claimed that vote fraud in the northern part of the country, where Ouattara has his base, cost him the election. The country's Constitutional Council – under the control of a supporter of Gbagbo – annulled hundreds of thousands of votes for Ouattara, enough to declare Gbagbo the winner.

Both men claimed to be the official head of state and set up parallel governments – though Ouattara's operated out of a hotel in the city of Abidjan and was dependent on protection from UN peacekeeping forces who have been stationed in Ivory Coast since the country's 2002-2003 civil war.

## Escalating violence

Gbagbo used his control over the central government apparatus to repress Ouattara supporters, but both sides have been implicated as violence escalated this year. In fact, in the single-worst massacre of the renewed civil war – in the Western town of Duékoué, where more than 800 people were found shot to death or killed with machetes at the end of March – UN officials blamed Ouattara followers for the killings and demanded that the president hold his supporters accountable.

*Foreign Policy's* Elizabeth Dickenson pointed out<sup>2</sup> that while the media have singled out Gbagbo for the atrocities his soldiers have committed:

**Both men claimed to be the official head of state and set up parallel governments – though Ouattara's operated out of a hotel in the city of Abidjan**

## MEDDLING IN AFRICA

**For more than a century, France has used superior firepower to determine who will rule Ivory Coast**

“It’s important not to forget that Ouattara-loyal forces are also fighting ... When I was in Liberia earlier this month, officials in the peacekeeping mission there were adamant that refugees fleeing into that country [from Ivory Coast] were of all political persuasions – meaning that Gbagbo-supporting civilians feared for their lives under pro-Ouattara forces, just as the opposite was also true.”

In spite of these circumstances, the UN and its military force of nearly 10,000 “peacekeepers” intervened decisively on Ouattara’s side following the election, when the European Union and the US officially recognized his administration over Gbagbo’s. Over the past month, the superior weaponry of UN forces – as well as French troops, who have had an ongoing presence in Ivory Coast since the end of direct colonial rule 50 years ago – began to tip the balance.

Gbagbo was arrested at his home in Abidjan, the country’s major city on the southern ocean coast, on April 11. Both Ivorian and UN officials claim that soldiers loyal to Ouattara carried out the arrest, not French troops, as the media initially reported.

But even if this is true, UN and French forces cleared the way with a series of military assaults – officially coming in response to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon’s authorization of the use of force to stop “threats to civilians.”

Under this “humanitarian” cover, UN and French attack helicopters twice targeted the presidential palace and Gbagbo’s residence for bombardment. The former president’s actual arrest was preceded by a column of more than two dozen armored vehicles advancing on Gbagbo’s compound from the French military base in Ivory Coast.

For more than a century, France has used superior firepower to determine who will rule Ivory Coast. Just seven years ago, in the aftermath of the civil war, French troops carried out a massacre that cost the lives of as many as 70 Ivorians, and the commander of French forces in the country was suspended after helping in the cover-up of the possible execution of an Ivorian prisoner.

To many Ivorians – whatever they think of Gbagbo – the arrest of the former president will look like the latest example of the French empire’s long reach.

Kalundi Serumaga pointed out another “historical resonance” in the latest Western intervention in Africa: “That the economic goods of the region have always held more importance to the world than the people actually living there.”

With the largest economy among the former French colonies of sub-Saharan Africa, Ivory Coast is especially rich in a commodity dear to Western markets: cocoa. The country produces more cocoa than any other, accounting for more than one-third of the world’s supply.

As Serumaga wrote: “This could help explain why, despite the fact that the people are politically split nearly 50-50, the Western powers are for once determined to see an African election result, however marginal, implemented to the fullest extent of whatever military might can be mustered. All this in defense of not even an economy, but of a commodity to which some wretched African voters find themselves harnessed.”

### **Cocoa is king**

The cocoa economy is responsible for heightening the tensions between the North and South of the country that were at the roots of the bloody civil war in 2002-03, and that underlay the battle between Ouattara and Gbagbo. From Ivory Coast’s beginning as an independent country in 1960, its economy has been dependent on a large population of immigrants, particularly from neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso to the north. According to SocialistWorker.org’s Matt Swagler<sup>3</sup>, the “foreign” African population in Ivory Coast was already one-quarter of the total in 1965, and it has grown in proportion since. Between one-half and two-thirds of the rural labor force – vital to the flow of cocoa – is made up of immigrants.

As Swagler wrote earlier this year:

“The crisis – then and now – has been driven primarily by unemployment, a grow-

ing wealth divide, and the discrimination faced by many Northern residents who are, or are presumed to be, immigrants from neighboring countries. These “Northern” populations are the backbone of the Ivorian labor force, producing vast profits for foreign and Ivorian elites, while facing the greatest poverty and instability.

“Ouattara draws much of his support from this section of the population, who hope he will lift them out of second-class status. Hailing from the north of Ivory Coast, Ouattara himself has been accused of being ‘non-Ivorian’ by his political opponents.”

Those opponents include Gbagbo, who, after a decade in power, was facing growing disillusion and anger as the UN-administered elections approached last year.

Ironically, the former trade union and opposition leader won the presidency 10 years before in a mirror image of today – Ivory Coast’s then-military leader Robert Guéï tried to deny Gbagbo’s victory and stay in power. Ultimately, popular protests forced Guéï to back down, and Gbagbo took office.

But as Swagler reports, “over the past decade, Gbagbo has embraced both the profiteering of foreign corporations and the xenophobia encouraged by his predecessors. Despite his ‘anti-imperial’ claims today, Gbagbo has been quite accommodating to French capitalism.” US corporations also extended their reach under Gbagbo – not only agribusinesses like ADM and Cargill seeking greater investments in cocoa and coffee, but US oil companies involved in exploration and drilling off the country’s Atlantic coast.

With Gbagbo ratcheting up the scapegoating of “foreigners,” Ouattara had a strong base among the disproportionately working-class residents of the North, especially those with roots in Mali, Burkina Faso and other countries.

But Ouattara is no rebel. He previously served as prime minister for three years at the end of the 33-year reign of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who took office after independence and followed an highly pro-business agenda, in collaboration with the

former colonial rulers.

For more than 20 years before that, and again for five years after, Ouattara was a high-ranking official at the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He served at the IMF at the high point of its devastating structural adjustment programs in sub-Saharan Africa to cut social services and lower trade barriers to foreign imports from Europe and the US

With ties to the French government that are, if anything, stronger than Gbagbo’s, Ouattara is sure to champion the kind of pro-business, pro-free trade policies that have impoverished Ivory Coast along with all of sub-Saharan Africa – including the rural labor force of the North that supported him.

This helps explain why France and the US tilted toward Ouattara even though Gbagbo had proved a pliable supporter of Western business interests. As Maurice Fahe, a member of the Worker’s Party of Ivory Coast, told Matt Swagler earlier this year:

“The current position of France and the USA has nothing to do with democracy. The idea is to use “democracy” to promote the person that they think is the most capable of realizing favorable conditions for pillage. The problem with Gbagbo is that he has been unable to resolve internal contradictions, to bring the order necessary for the pursuit of the peaceful plundering of the country.”

Gbagbo is guilty of many crimes as president of Ivory Coast, but Ouattara will not be a greater champion for the country’s poor and working class – and his rise to the presidency thanks to Western intervention is no victory for democracy. **CT**

#### NOTES

1. <http://www.counterpunch.org/serumaga04122011.html>
2. [http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/04/01/the\\_fog\\_of\\_war\\_in\\_abidjan](http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/04/01/the_fog_of_war_in_abidjan)
3. <http://socialistworker.org/2011/01/19/crisis-in-ivory-coast>

*Alan Maas* is editor of *Socialist Worker*. – <http://socialistworker.org> – where this essay was first published.

**With ties to the French government that are, if anything, stronger than Gbagbo’s, Ouattara is sure to champion the kind of pro-business, pro-free trade policies that have impoverished Ivory Coast along with all of sub-Saharan Africa**

# Who do we fight next?

Yesterday the West's big enemy was Communism, now they're fighting Islamicism. What's next? asks **Mats Svensson**

**Four soldiers lead a prisoner towards the bandstand, a ragamuffin. Bound by the hands and the feet and with a noose around his neck. Mobutu humiliates him and asks the people what to do with him**

**T**he year is 1974. It is my second Sunday in Brazzaville. I am for the first time invited home to a family in the district of Poto Poto. The house is made of sun-dried clay. The door is painted in green and red. The houses are lying tightly against each other. Red earth. A small child crawls into my lap.

We eat lunch in front of the house. Dried fish, chicken stew, zacka zacka and manioc. Before we have finished lunch the son calls that the football is about to begin. We move into a dark, cramped room. In the small room the furniture is placed tightly along the walls and a few paintings are hanging high up by the ceiling. A naked light bulb gives light.

It is a broadcast from Kinshasa. The broadcast begins with Mobutu coming down from the heavens, through the clouds. Each day's television broadcast ends with Mobutu returning to heaven: He disappears offscreen as the national anthem fades out. Mobutism is being established and God has been made visible. He comes every day into people's homes via television.

When the introduction is over, we see how Mobutu lands by helicopter at the big football stadium in Kinshasa. More than 30,000 spectators have gathered. They have been waiting for a long time. Mobutu climbs the small bandstand that has been built in the middle of the stadium. In his leopardskin hat, Mobutu speaks, screams and the crowds

are clapping their hands and singing. I do not understand very much, my host just says calmly, "Mats, wait, you have to stay and see the rest."

Four soldiers lead a prisoner towards the bandstand, a ragamuffin. Bound by the hands and the feet and with a noose around his neck. Mobutu humiliates him and asks the people what to do with him. The people cry out, "Kill him, kill him." The prisoner is led away. The next prisoner appears and the procedure is repeated. A total of seven death sentences are imposed.

A few hours later, I return to the mission station in Plateau and meet missionary Bryngård. I am shocked and tell him what I have seen. Bryngård says, "This happens all the time. We're not the only ones who know about it, all foreign diplomats have seen the same thing. Mats, never forget that Mobutu is being supported by the West. Everything has become permissible in the fight against Communism." It is as if Bryngård had said, Mobutu is a son of a bitch, but he is our son of a bitch.

When I experienced this, Mobutu had only been in power for nine years. 23 years later in 1997 he was forced into exile. During all those years he was supported by us in the West. Mobutu had our support while the people suffered under growing poverty.

The year is 1975. I stand on the border to

Cabinda. At my side, I have pastor Zamba. Now an old man, a happy man. Zamba listens to a small black transistor radio. We have moved to a small hill where he knew that we would get good reception. Up here the Congo, in the valley below the enclave of Cabinda. Zamba waiting, waiting. Yes, he says, we have waited for a long time. When the radio voice from Luanda finally proclaims that Angola has become free, the tears flow freely down Zamba's cheeks. "Another free people in Africa," says Zamba. Quietly, as if within himself, he continues, "I hope the people of Angola get to experience true freedom as opposed to us in French Congo which is still governed from Paris."

The year is 1976. I have gotten to know Claude. A young French engineer working for the French company Elf. Out in the sea, off the coastal town of Pointe Noire, he's looking for oil. Claude is a socialist. Ashamed of his job. Had wanted to work on something completely different, but "you have to take the few jobs that are available." A few weeks before I leave the Congo, we meet one last time. We meet at the large waves, south of the small coastal town. We drink wine and eat cheese, bread and fruit. Claude is angry, disappointed and dejected. He tells me that the French company Elf has just signed a deal with the Congolese state. A good deal for France, a bad deal for Congo. In the agreement, one had agreed to share the profits equally 50/50. "But we are in control," says Claude, "we determine the costs and will ensure that we never achieve any profits. Everything will end up outside

this country."

It has been 36 years since Mobutu played Pontius Pilatus. 34 years ago since I had a lesson in neo-colonialism. During these years I have actively participated in an international club that has loudly and clearly spoken about the need for human rights and democracy, the need for everyone's free vote. A club that at the same time has made harmonized power discharge permanent.

When Mobutu left he had five billion dollars in his accounts. The accounts had been filled while we together fought Communism.

The year is 2011. Mubarak leaves Cairo after 30 years in power. He promised us stability and to fight Islamism. Our relationship with Mubarak is like a blue print of Mobutu. Just before Mubarak is forced away by his own people we in the West still sing the refrain of "stability." As soon as he leaves his palace his accounts are strangled in Switzerland. He who "created" stability is now called the Tyrant. He who received billions of dollars from the West to combat Islamists no longer receives any blood money. We wash our hands. We meet in Paris, Davos or why not Stockholm. We are just as harmonized when we support the tyrant as when we overturn him.

**CT**

*Mats Svensson, a former Swedish diplomat working on the staff of SIDA, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, is presently following the occupation of Palestine.*

**When Mobutu left he had five billion dollars in his accounts. The accounts had been filled while we together fought Communism**

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# Bug affairs

There's a new scare sweeping middle class cities in North America and Europe – bed-bugs are invading. No need to worry, writes **Hugh Pennington**, they're irritating, but they don't spread disease

**Anecdote has driven the perception that the bugs have gone on the rampage, and epidemiologists are reluctant to put much weight on stories. But the recent ones have been very persuasive**

**B**edbugs never went away. DDT gave them a hard time in the 1940s and for years afterwards, until Rachel Carson's campaigns outlawed it, but resistant strains survived. Other insecticides – synthetic organophosphates and pyrethroids – have come and gone, but none has been a challenge for the bugs' versatile genomes. Blood is their only food. The bug explores the skin of its victim with its antennae. It grips the skin with its legs for leverage, raises its beak, and plunges it into the tissues. It probes vigorously, tiny teeth at the tip of the beak tearing the tissues to forge a path until it finds a suitable blood vessel. A full meal takes 10 to 15 minutes. A hungry bug is squat and flat like a lentil. When replete, its distension shapes it like a long berry. A bug will feed weekly from any host that is handy.

Bedbugs do not spread disease. Their presence has been taken as an indicator of poor home hygiene, and they can be a precipitant of entomophobia, but beyond that they haven't had much significance for public health. Nobody counts them or keeps national records of infestation rates. There are hardly any 20th-century baseline measures that might enable us to assess the accuracy of claims that there has been an upsurge in the 21st. Anecdote has driven the perception that the bugs have gone on the rampage, and epidemiologists are re-

luctant to put much weight on stories. But the recent ones have been very persuasive. In New York in 2010 bedbugs turned up in the Empire State Building, a theatre in the Lincoln Center, and at the Metropolitan Opera House. It is said that they were in attendance at the 2005 Labour Party Conference in Brighton, and in 2006 they were found in a guest room at the five-star Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park Hotel in Knightsbridge. Analyses shows that the number of bedbug calls to pest controllers in London and Australia has increased significantly since 2000.

Why the resurgence? The bugs' resistance to insecticides has been blamed, along with the increase in international travel and in the sale of second-hand furniture. Genetic fingerprinting of the bugs might shed light on the comparative importance of movement from city to city, travel across national boundaries and purely local spread; but such studies have only just started. In truth our understanding of how bedbugs get about has changed little since 1730, when John Southall published his *Treatise of Buggs*:

“By Shipping they were doubtless first brought to England, so are they now daily brought. This to me is apparent, because not one Sea-Port in England is free; whereas in Inland-Towns, Buggs are hardly known ... If you have occasion to change Servants, let

their Boxes, Trunks, &c. be well examin'd before carried into your Rooms, lest their coming from infected Houses should prove dangerous to yours ... Upholsterers are often blamed in Bugg-Affairs; the only Fault I can lay to their Charge, is their Folly, or rather Inadvertency, in suffering old Furniture, when they have taken it down, because it was buggy, to be brought into their Shops or Houses, among new and free Furniture, to infect them."

Southall's worries about the role of ships in transporting bedbugs persisted. Robert Usinger, the author of the monumental *Monograph of Cimicidae* (the family to which the bedbug belongs), saw a thriving colony of the tropical bedbug, *Cimex hemipterus*, on a liner sailing from Hong Kong to San Francisco. But local transport is just as much of a problem. In 1944, Usinger was bitten by the common bug, *Cimex lectularius*, on a bus in Atlanta, Georgia. And in the summer of 1947 a number of ladies in Dundee were referred to the local dermatologist because they had developed a red band studded with blisters, some described as being "as big as a pigeon's egg", on the backs of their calves. All of them had travelled on the lower deck of a tram on the same route. Investigation showed that only one tram was infested. The bugs had settled in a groove in a wooden slat that held a seat in place. They sat in a row on the edge of the wood, the dermatologist said, "extracting nourishment from the legs of unsuspecting lady passengers. Men were never affected, their stouter nether garments providing sufficient protection. The tram was disinfected, the grooves were planed out ... the epidemic came to an end."

In 2008, bugs were found on the New York subway, on wooden benches on station platforms at Hoyt-Schermerhorn in Brooklyn, Union Square in Manhattan and Fordham Road in the Bronx, and in 2010 in a booth at Ninth Street Station on the D Line. 'If you put out your Linnen to wash,' Southall said, "let no Washer-woman's Basket be brought into your houses; for they

often prove as dangerous to those that have no Buggs." The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service has found bedbugs at airports in woven cane baskets and woven straw bags – as well as on roses from Kenya, in baggage from Europe, and on an airport inspection bench.

So it is clear that bedbugs can hitchhike long distances and ride about town. But how good they are at very local travel remains undetermined. Urban myths have been around for a long time. 'Bedbugs are popularly credited with an amazing amount of intelligence,' observed the British Ministry of Health's *Report on the Bedbug* in 1934. "It is stated that they will travel long distances, 50 yards or more, in search of food, will unerringly choose the direction in which their food is to be found, will go by way of windows, eaves and gutters if unable to get through the party wall, and will drop from the ceiling onto their victims. We are not prepared to say how much of this may be due to popular superstition." The report was produced because "the infestation of new council houses has become a matter of concern to Local Authorities who are responsible for their maintenance and management." Whether bugs became common in these council houses is not clear; it is certain, however, that the current upsurge in bedbug numbers cannot be blamed on an increase in social housing stock.

Hundreds of scientific papers have been published on bugs, though funding for bug research has never been easy to get because of their medical unimportance. Surveys of prevalence are expensive and are hardly ever done. But bugs are easy to keep in the laboratory. Some investigators have allowed bugs to feed on them for convenience, and to save money. Much attention has been paid to their method of reproduction. Males mate preferentially with recently fed females. The male sexual organ, called the paramere, has a sharp point, which the male bug uses to penetrate the abdominal wall of the female. Sperm are injected into the abdominal cavity. This process is sometimes lethal; repeat-

**The bugs had settled in a groove in a wooden slat that held a seat in place. They sat in a row on the edge of the wood, the dermatologist said, "extracting nourishment from the legs of unsuspecting lady passengers"**

## THEY'RE BITING

**On one occasion a guest was moved from a room after being bitten, only to discover insects in the second room; then, within 18 minutes of being moved to a third, he found them there as well**

ed matings reduce the female lifespan. This sexual conflict of interests has been of great interest to evolutionary biologists.

Males attempt to mate with any moving object the size of a fed female, including juvenile bugs and males who have sucked blood. But in these cases they dismount quickly – good news both for the male, who doesn't waste his sperm, and for the mountee, since penetration would quite likely have perforated his guts to mortal effect. The males back off because inappropriate partners produce chemical deterrents – alarm pheromones. Their smell is easily detected by humans. It has been described as an 'obnoxious sweetness', and is characteristic of a bedroom with a heavy infestation. It is highly likely that these pheromones are what the bedbug-sniffer dog detects. Two firms in Florida train them, usually using animals rescued from shelters. One firm prefers beagle mixes, the other labrador retriever mixes. Bold claims are made for their success. New York City is hiring two, and Lola, a Jack Russell bitch, has been imported into the UK.

Bedbugs avoid the light and are thigmotactic: they love contact with rough surfaces. They seek cracks and crevices, preferably in wood or paper, in which they establish refugia to digest their meals and breed, among an accumulation of faeces, egg shells and cast-off skins. Bugs in refugia are hard to reach with pesticides. Drastic measures have been used. A note in the *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps* in 1926 entitled 'Disinfestation of Barracks' records that the British Army of the Rhine had been contacted by the representative of a firm in Frankfurt am Main who wanted to explain the use of a substance with the trade name Zyklon 'B'. He described it as 'siliceous earth impregnated with hydrogen cyanide, to which is added a tear gas', and noted that it was extensively used by the German government. A large advertisement inside the front cover of the standard German work on bedbugs published in 1936 says: 'Zyklon and T-Gas exterminates bugs ... without damaging the furnishings.'

The current upsurge has been good news for pest controllers. Booksellers have benefited too: a copy of Southall's 44-page treatise was auctioned by Bonhams at Oxford in October 2010, and despite being disbound, lacking a frontispiece and having numerous ink annotations, went for £132 inclusive of the buyer's premium. And bugs have brought business to lawyers. The landmark case this century has been *Mathias v. Accor Economy Lodging Inc.* The plaintiffs, Burl and Desiree Mathias, were bitten by bugs while staying at a Motel 6 in downtown Chicago. They claimed that in allowing guests to be attacked by bedbugs in rooms costing upwards of \$100 a day, the defendant was guilty of wilful and wanton conduct. The jury awarded each plaintiff \$5000 in compensatory damages and \$186,000 in punitive damages. The defendant appealed, complaining primarily about the level of the punitive damages, but the appeal court judge, Richard Posner, dismissed the appeal. His decision was bold: a Supreme Court statement had been made not long before that 'few awards exceeding a single-digit ratio between punitive and compensatory damages, to a significant degree, will satisfy due process.' Posner noted that bedbugs had been discovered at the motel in 1998 by EcoLab, an extermination service. They recommended that every room be sprayed, at a cost of \$500. The motel refused. Bugs were found again in 1999. The motel tried without success to get an exterminator to sweep the building free of charge. In the spring of 2000 the motel manager told her superior that guests were being bitten and were demanding, and receiving, refunds, and recommended that the motel be closed while every room was sprayed. Her boss refused. On one occasion a guest was moved from a room after being bitten, only to discover insects in the second room; then, within 18 minutes of being moved to a third, he found them there as well. "Odd that at that point he didn't flee the motel," Posner comments. He was unimpressed by the instruction given to desk clerks by the motel manage-



## THEY'RE BITING

ment that bed bugs should be called ticks, “apparently on the theory that customers would be less alarmed, though in fact ticks are more dangerous than bedbugs because they spread Lyme Disease and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever”.

This is the bedbug paradox. For most individuals their bites have only nuisance value. Yet they arouse much more disgust than many other insects whose bites transmit potentially lethal infections.

The bugs in the Empire State Building, Lincoln Center Theater and the Met were found in the basement employee changing room, a dressing-room, and back of house. The likelihood of being bitten in a public place without beds is remote. And if the New York subway had the London Tube's metal seats rather than wooden ones there would be no bug refugia. Alleviation here would be easy. But it is unlikely that the public will come to terms with bugs. They will continue to turn to lawyers. Posner's

judgment and its financial consequences are on record.

The bedbugs' lifestyle makes it unlikely that they will go away soon. The contrast with the body louse is instructive. Their refugia and breeding places are the seams of human clothing. Body heat is necessary for egg hatching, so those who take their underclothes off at night and change their garments more than once a month will never be very lousy even if they consort with those who are. The natural habitat of the bedbug is the home. In Europe and North America the only one left for the body louse is the homeless. **CT**

*Hugh Pennington contemplated an entomological career 50 years ago, but when advised by the Natural History Museum that the only jobs were in the Colonies chose medicine as a way of being paid to study bugs. This essay originally appeared in the London Review of Books – <http://lrb.co.uk>*

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# A tale of two hospitals

Barry Lando contrasts events that didn't occur in Kuwait 1991 with some that really happened in Bahrain 20 years later

**“They tore the babies out of the incubators, took the incubators, and left the babies on the floor to die”**

Scene One: The Human Rights caucus of the US Congress hears the testimony of a fifteen-year old girl, introduced by only her first name Nayira, in order, the audience is told, to protect the safety of her family. The young girl recounts how invading soldiers had stormed into the hospital where she says she had been working as a volunteer. Tearfully, she describes how rampaging soldiers had trashed the hospital, brutalized patients, gone “into rooms where fifteen babies were in incubators. They tore the babies out of the incubators, took the incubators, and left the babies on the floor to die.”

That story is flashed around the world by a horrified media. “I don't believe that Adolf Hitler ever participated in anything of that nature,” declares the outraged American President.

If anything justified the US going to war against Saddam in 1991 to a wavering Congress and American public, that performance was it.

The problem was that the story was not true. Kuwaiti medical authorities denied that the incubator incident had ever occurred. It was only after the end of the Gulf War, however, that the deception was finally revealed. It was a total fabrication, right out of the fertile, high-priced imagination of Hill and Knowlton, the Kuwaiti ruling family's Washington P.R. firm. Nayira,

the tearful fifteen-year-old girl who had so convincingly recounted the atrocity, turned out to be the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States; she had never been in Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion. By the time that was discovered, however, the US-led coalition had charged in and the Kuwaiti royal family was securely back on its throne, and the folks at Hill and Knowlton had earned their pay.

Scene Two: Police swarm through the wards of another major Arab hospital. At least 32 doctors, including surgeons, physicians, pediatricians and obstetricians, are arrested and detained. Their apparent crimes, guaranteeing medical care to people wounded in a popular uprising against an aged, corrupt dictator.

According to emails received from a surgeon at the hospital and published by the London *Independent*, “One doctor, an intensive care specialist, was held after she was photographed weeping over a dead protester. Another was arrested in the theatre room while operating on a patient ... many of the doctors, aged from 33 to 65, have been ‘disappeared’ – held incommunicado or at undisclosed locations. Their families do not know where they are. Nurses, paramedics, and ambulance staff have also been detained. The emails provide a glimpse of the terror and exhaustion suffered by the doctors and medical staff.

“The author of the emails, a senior surgeon, was taken in for questioning at the headquarters of the interior ministry. He never re-emerged. No reason has been given for his arrest, nor has there been any news of his condition.”

A hospital in Libya? In battered Misurata, perhaps? Where President Obama has ordered a couple of Predator drones to join in the flailing struggle against the barbarous Muammar Gadhafi, where Senator John McCain jetted in himself for a quick look-see and instantly declared the rebels – my heroes. Libya, where France and England have dispatched an unknown number of military trainers to see if they can whip the hapless, squabbling rebels into shape?

No, that hospital is not in Libya, but in Bahrain – the Salmaniya Medical Complex, the tiny state’s main civil hospital. And, of course, the more than a thousand heavily armed invading troops who are backing the local police terrorizing the hospital, “disappearing” doctors, and brutally crushing the local uprising are Saudis.

The same Saudis who gave the US and Nato the green light to intervene to save the largely Sunni rebels in Libya. In exchange for which America discretely turned its back as the Saudis invaded Bahrain to prevent a

Shiite majority there from toppling a repressive Sunni monarch. God only knows what the experience will do to radicalize tens perhaps hundreds of thousands of Shiites.

But true to its promise, America’s back remains turned.

**A footnote:** Such smarmy diplomatic trade-offs are not at all unique. In 1991, for instance, the US and its coalition allies were also looking for Arab “cover” for their move into Kuwait. In exchange for agreeing to back the invasion, Syria was given – among other things – a free hand to take control of most of Lebanon.

Community also lifted economic sanctions it had imposed against Syria, while Britain restored diplomatic relations. In the end it was all symbolic: none of the 18,000 Syrian troops who joined the coalition forces in Saudi Arabia ever fought. [See Barry Lando, *Web of Deceit*, (Other Press, New York, 2006) pp. 140-141] **CT**

*Barry M. Lando spent 25 years as an award-winning investigative producer with “60 Minutes.” He has produced numerous articles, a documentary and a book, “Web of Deceit,” about Iraq. Lando is just finishing a novel, The Watchman’s File,” a novel of Israel’s most closely-guarded secret*

**In exchange for agreeing to back the invasion, Syria was given – among other things – a free hand to take control of most of Lebanon**



“David Swanson writes in the tradition of Howard Zinn. War Is A Lie is as clear as the title. Wars are all based on lies, could not be fought without lies, and would not be fought at all if people held their governments to any reasonable standard of honesty.” – **Charles M. Young.**

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# War reporting: Ours and theirs

**Simon Liem** interviews Nikolai Lanine, a former Russian soldier, who contrasts Soviet media coverage of the war he fought in Afghanistan with the Canadian media's handling of the current war

**The Taliban is often portrayed as a foreign proxy force that is invading Afghanistan from Pakistan. This is similar to how the Soviet media described the situation in Afghanistan**

**N**ikolai Lanine immigrated to Canada in 2000. Shortly after he arrived, he again found himself a citizen of a country that was waging war on a place he left over 12 years prior.

At 18, Lanine was drafted into the Soviet army. He served in Afghanistan for 16 months until the Soviet withdrawal in February of 1989, just over nine years after the war began.

As Canada and NATO's war in Afghanistan progressed, the stories Lanine was reading and hearing started to sound familiar. The tone and language of the media and government rhetoric was not so different from what he had heard in the USSR.

The similarities shocked Lanine. He wanted to know if what he saw as parallels were really true. The Soviet war veteran began to study the coverage of the respective wars by Western and Soviet journalists.

He translated Russian newspaper articles and clipped photographs that anyone would describe as propaganda. He did side-by-side comparisons with what was coming from Canadian and Western media. The results were startlingly similar and revealed how a country at war views itself, whether it be free and democratic or a closed society.

Lanine now lives in Victoria, B.C., and works as a public health nurse. He spoke about his media criticism.

**LIEM: Canada's stated objectives for its Afghanistan mission include security, humanitarian assistance and reconciliation. Can you compare those to Russia's objectives during the Soviet-Afghan war?**

**LANINE:** The Soviet Union and Canada's claimed objectives are similar, although there are some differences mainly due to the different international situations of the Cold War and today.

Canadians were told we're in Afghanistan because of "self-defence" and because "helping Afghanistan will protect Canada". The USSR claimed that by sending troops to Afghanistan it was preventing "threat to the security of [the Soviet] southern borders" from Islamic fundamentalists. The invasion was also seen as self-defense to prevent a "neighboring country with a shared Soviet-Afghan border ... [from turning] into a bridgehead for ... [Western] aggression against the Soviet state". The USSR was claiming it was protecting security of Afghanistan itself from external interference from Pakistan and Iran. Currently, Canada/NATO claims that improving security in Afghanistan will prevent the country from becoming a safe haven for terrorists. The Taliban is often portrayed as a foreign proxy force that is invading Afghanistan from Pakistan. This is similar to how the Soviet media described the situation in Afghanistan:

US and Pakistani-trained Islamists crossing into Afghanistan and threatening its security. The Soviet goal was “to prevent the establishment of ... a terrorist regime and to protect the Afghan people from genocide”, and also to provide “aid in stabilizing the situation and the repulsion of possible external aggression”. The USSR saw its actions as protection from radicals who were threatening to destabilise Soviet Central Asian republics and exporting their fundamentalist struggle across the region “under the green banner of Jihad’, to the territory of the Soviet Central-Asian republics”.

Humanitarian assistance was also one of the claimed Soviet objectives in Afghanistan. Just as Canadians believe that “this mission is about Canadians helping Afghans”, Soviets were saying that they were “helping friendly [Afghan] nation”. Like today, Soviets claimed they had to provide security for any kind of development, and fighting insurgency was portrayed as protecting the population from Islamic radicals who targeted anyone associated with Afghan government and Soviets: teachers, geologists, civil and agricultural engineers, medical personnel, various advisors. So Soviet fighting was presented as a protection of peaceful Afghan population to normalize life for Afghans and “to help the hapless Afghan people to defend their freedom [and] their future”. Like today, Soviet economic development and humanitarian aid were limited to cities and areas under army control. It was often done by combat units, who, like my regiment, were delivering fuel, food, blankets, clothing, school supplies etc. to the population. Such efforts were portrayed in Soviet media with images of Soviet troops distributing aid, building schools and houses, or Soviet doctors treating Afghans. However, the media was not giving voices to Afghans who were opposing the Soviet invasion or victims of Soviet bombings.

**Reconciliation became an objective for both Canada and the USSR later in war. The initial Soviet approach was**

**similar to Canada’s in 2006, during fighting around Kandahar, when the Canadian government claimed it was “not negotiating with terrorists”. Later, Canada acknowledged the Afghan government’s negotiations with “moderate Taliban”. Likewise, Soviets changed their approach in 1987, after the Afghan government declared the “policy of national reconciliation”. On the ground, I witnessed a lot of talks with locals and insurgents, and I can see some of the dynamics and sentiments of those days replaying now.**

**LIEM: According to your research there are strong similarities between the Western media’s coverage of the war and the Soviet media’s coverage. Can you explain your comparison and say why you think a free press can come to resemble a state-controlled one?**

**LANINE:** I was not comparing the *freedom* of the press. I focused on the *framework* and *outcomes* of media coverage. Just as we compare public and private health care, or Soviet and Canadian hockey teams focusing on *performance*, not the ideological background. I was simply looking at *what* the media covered and *how it covered it*.

Of course, there are some differences in coverage. Soviet coverage in the first years of war was almost incomprehensible. However, during Gorbachev’s semi-liberal reforms coverage improved. I went through old Soviet articles, particularly from the last couple of years of war, and looked at the framework of coverage and the language used. For example, I looked at how much the media focused on positive stories of Soviet soldiers vs. negative stories on insurgency; or how often and why the media was critical of the Soviet role in Afghanistan. What I found was that Soviet coverage of the last years of war was compatible to that of Canadian coverage in 2006-07. There are differences, of course: for example, the Soviets didn’t report casualties in the beginning at all and even, at the height

Humanitarian assistance was also one of the claimed Soviet objectives in Afghanistan. Just as Canadians believe that “this mission is about Canadians helping Afghans”, Soviets were saying that they were “helping friendly [Afghan] nation”

## INTERVIEW

**Like Canadian media now, Soviet media showed images of reconstruction projects, girls attending schools, a soldier holding a smiling Afghan child, women working equally to men, Soviet-built hospitals, smiling Afghans and soviet soldiers shaking hands, Soviet medics treating Afghans**

of the media's freedom, coverage of Soviet casualties was not as complete as Canadian coverage now. Another example, Canadian media does mention Afghans killed by us, although rather superficially, while Soviets didn't mention them until the end of war. However, the overall framework of coverage is very similar: we are doing the right thing by fighting in Afghanistan for our own security and a better future for Afghans, with media focusing heavily on our military and reconstruction.

The media's images have a lot of similarities too. Naturally, 30-year old b/w photos from *Pravda* look bleak compared to modern high quality images, but if you look at what *messages* those images communicate it's hard to ignore similarities. Like Canadian media now, Soviet media showed images of reconstruction projects, girls attending schools, a soldier holding a smiling Afghan child, women working equally to men, Soviet-built hospitals, smiling Afghans and soviet soldiers shaking hands, Soviet medics treating Afghans. Images also portrayed hardships of Soviet soldiers in combat or a disabled veteran learning how to walk with prosthetic legs. The themes were very similar to what I see in the Canadian media today.

I think another reason is kind of subconscious self-censorship. Soviet and Canadian journalists are products of their societies, raised to be proud of their countries and their values, and not to challenge self-narratives. And their reporting reflects that. Both Canadian and Soviet journalists reported forming a bond with soldiers they went on missions with in Afghanistan. It's incredibly hard – almost impossible – for a person to witness the agony of a fallen soldier's family and then write an article questioning if the soldier died for a right cause or if he was supposed to be at that war in the first place. It's only human to gravitate to stay within the accepted moral and ideological boundaries of one's society.

Free press resembles a state-controlled one when it stops challenging the status quo. In Canada, the media goes more or less

with the government's version of events in Afghanistan. Most coverage is done by journalists embedded with troops and focused on the personalities of our soldiers and our Afghan allies and the benefits of our presence in Afghanistan. One gets only a one-sided picture. One can hear about the sacrifices our troops are making, how they believe in their mission while serving in harsh and dangerous conditions, confronting an elusive and ruthless enemy. Media would tell us stories about a successful Canadian reconstruction project; soldiers coping with deaths around them and believing that their friends didn't die in vain; a wounded Afghan saved by our medics; a distinguished or fallen soldier; a disabled veteran's struggle to rebuild his life; soldiers' challenges of coping with PTSD and difficult transitions back into society. These are true and important stories. However, they are only a *part* of the larger picture. And they happen to be exactly the kind of stories that the Soviet media was telling. In 1980s, the Canadian and Western media were covering the war in Afghanistan from the point of view of *Afghans*, including, ironically, the radicals we are fighting now. The West justifiably ridiculed the Soviet media for not challenging the Soviet government, for presenting a one-sided picture of war and leaving out the narrative of Afghans. With few exceptions, I don't see Canadian media doing a much better job now.

**LIEM: How would you respond to those who would say that your comparison is unfair because Western media operates in an open society with a free press whereas the Soviet media was state controlled?**

**LANINE:** The extent of media freedom is irrelevant here. I noticed that for Canadians, the shock of comparing Canadian and Soviet media comes from a conventional wisdom that everything in the USSR was bad by definition and journalists were dishonest. Soviet soldiers often expressed anger with the Soviet media for telling only half-the truth about the war. While collaborat-

ing with the British media watchdog Media Lens on on-line article “Invasion – a comparison of Soviet and Western media performance”, I researched and interviewed some Soviet journalists who covered Afghanistan in the 1980s. I also occasionally speak to Canadian journalists here. Apart from different cultures, I didn’t find any differences between Russians and Canadians. Yes, they functioned within different systems and it’s reflected in their writings, but this is as far as the differences go. A Canadian journalist told me that getting embedded with troops meant that journalists would see only what the military wanted them to see. Even if you write honestly, coverage would be limited and one-sided. It was different with Soviet journalists: some of them saw a lot, but it didn’t matter, because they had to write what they were ordered to. And even if they wrote the truth, it couldn’t get through the censorship anyway, so coverage ended up being one-sided too. Different systems, similar outcomes. You have to ask: did the Canadian media go out of its way to challenge the government and our assumption that we have the right to fight in Afghanistan? Did it challenge the status quo and ask unpopular question about the war? In this sense, I don’t think it performed much better than the Soviet media did. The right of the Canadian media to challenge the government is protected by law. Soviet journalists were taking tremendous risks even by hinting at criticism of Soviet policies in Afghanistan. The few, who dared to do that, lost their jobs or were persecuted (11).

Of course, Western media is free in ways that the Soviet media never was; nobody can dispute that. In fact, Soviet media didn’t have any freedom at all until Gorbachev relaxed censorship in the late 1980s. As I said earlier, I was not comparing degrees of media independence, but rather the *outcomes* of media coverage. Judging by what people say, Canadians are not necessarily better informed by free media about the current war in Afghanistan than Soviet citizens were by a state-controlled one in the 1980s. The

depth of understanding is roughly the same from what I can see around me. And this is when Canadians have almost unlimited access to information while Soviet citizens didn’t. Yes, it is an unfair comparison in a sense that the Soviet media didn’t have the freedom and advantages that Canadian media has, and you can’t even compare working conditions for Soviet and Canadian journalists. And precisely because of that, a comparison of war coverage in Afghanistan is not in favour of the free Canadian media, because outcomes are compatible to the state-controlled Soviet one. I spent almost 1.5 years in Afghanistan and have been following events there since the 1980s, so I have some understanding of the place and I am able to connect the dots most of the time, but I can’t get an accurate picture of the situation there from the Canadian media. I have to search alternative sources to understand what’s happening in Afghanistan. The Canadian media doesn’t give me a full picture, just as the Soviet media didn’t.

**LIEM:** In a previous interview you said that the Soviet Union got caught up in the “idea of [its] own goodness” and that you were surprised to see the same thing happening in Canada. Can you explain what you meant by that?

**LANINE:** Like Canadians today, Soviets believed that they went to Afghanistan out of good intentions to help Afghans to get rid of an oppressive regime and Islamic fundamentalists and to provide Afghans with a better future. Once we believe this self-created narrative, we start seeing war through the prism of self-righteousness, and our actions as unquestionably good. We see ourselves as a positive force doing the right thing and making big sacrifices for the benefit of others (Afghans). We collectively fall in love with this righteous self-image, celebrate ourselves and don’t stop to examine our actions.

When Soviets were talking about the cost or war, it usually implied losses by Soviet and Afghan troops. The focus of the Soviet

**I can’t get an accurate picture of the situation there from the Canadian media. I have to search alternative sources to understand what’s happening in Afghanistan. The Canadian media doesn’t give me a full picture, just as the Soviet media didn’t**

## INTERVIEW

It looks like we simply can't imagine that that we might be doing something wrong

media and public were on the Soviet blood and sacrifices, not Afghan ones. These attitudes are not that different in Canada today. We keep asking the same question: "Does it cost Canada too much to be in Afghanistan?" forgetting Afghans. It looks like we simply can't imagine that that we might be doing something wrong. So when in 2006, the Canadian debate on Afghanistan started resembling a Soviet one, it came to me as a

shocking surprise.

CT

*Simon Liem is completing a bachelor's degree in journalism at the University of Concordia in Montreal, Quebec. TA shorter version of this interview was originally published in the Link, Concordia's independent student newspaper, which has been reporting on activism, student politics and the arts for more 30 years.*



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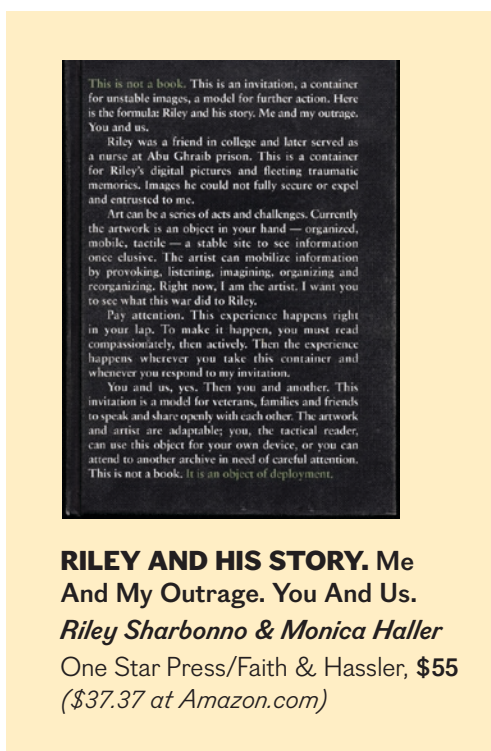
# The Abu Ghraib photos you haven't seen

Riley Sharbonno went to war and returned with memories that we should all take the trouble to see, writes **Nick Turse**

I've spent a big chunk of the last decade immersed in people's wartime memories. I've traveled across the globe to interview survivors about them – soldiers, guerrillas, civilians. I've read countless memoirs, reporters' accounts and historians' works on the subject of war. Along the way, I've also learned a lot about memory, specifically how people remember and forget certain incidents.

I've spoken to not a few veterans who've committed atrocities – including men who readily admitted the brutal deeds they had carried out as teenagers or 20-somethings. But sometimes I knew about a specific horrific act they witnessed or probably carried out and it seemingly was news to them. “I don't recall it, but I can believe it” is a standard response. Or there was the officer who reportedly went around rounding up men to kill a group of women and children. “I guess I've wiped Vietnam and all that out of my mind. I don't remember shooting anyone or ordering anyone to shoot,” he said when confronted. But he didn't dispute that the massacre had occurred, saying “I don't doubt it, but I don't remember.”

Riley Sharbonno didn't round up people. He didn't carry out any massacres and didn't witness any. But Sharbonno did go to war. And he did return with memories that were mixed up, messy or missing. Monica Haller helped to put them together in a fascinating



**RILEY AND HIS STORY. Me  
And My Outrage. You And Us.**

*Riley Sharbonno & Monica Haller*

One Star Press/Faith & Hassler, \$55  
(\$37.37 at Amazon.com)

Riley Sharbonno didn't round up people. He didn't carry out any massacres and didn't witness any. But Sharbonno did go to war

photo book – a term she eschews, instead calling the project “an object of deployment.”

A thick tome of more than 470 pages, *Riley and his story. Me and my outrage. You and us.* is a piece of art and a historical document. It's a war story and a meditation on memory as well as a rumination on its absence. About to go into its second printing, “Riley and his story” offers readers something unique and haunting: a look through the eyes of a vet-

## BOOK REVIEW

**There are no detainees on leashes or nude human pyramids or unmuzzled dogs menacing naked defenseless men. Still, this young veteran's pictures offer a clear vision of the awfulness that is war**

eran who served at perhaps the most notorious locale of the Iraq War, one that historians will catalog alongside My Lai, No Gun Ri, Samar and Sand Creek – notable sites of past American atrocities. Sharbonno, a nurse at the infamous Abu Ghraib prison in 2004 and 2005, offers us a tour of his tour of duty through some of the 1,000 photographs he took. But these aren't the photos of Abu Ghraib that we've seen before. There are no detainees on leashes or nude human pyramids or unmuzzled dogs menacing naked defenseless men. Still, this young veteran's pictures offer a clear vision of the awfulness that is war.

"Many events during my time in Iraq were too complex, too horrific, or beyond my understanding. There were simply too many things I witnessed there on a given day to process, so I stored them as photos to figure out later," writes Sharbonno, who provides snippets of text – taken from conversations with Haller over a period of three years – that narrate his photos throughout the book.

Right away we're hit with a two-page spread. Thick fingers, clad in white surgical gloves, holding a shard of metal shrapnel still coated with human viscera. Then we're off with Sharbonno on a convoy, a medical supply run between Baghdad and another place whose name is destined for infamy: Fallujah. The central feature of these photos, and other out-the-window shots from helicopters later in the book, is not the Iraqi landscape, not fields of brown and green, or waterways with floating garbage, or the trash dump with grazing cows in it: It's the gun barrel in the foreground. And it reveals so much that many books on the Iraq War fail to convey.

As a capstone to the sequence, Sharbonno explains the story behind one key photo, an instance in which he spotted a figure in a dump truck with what appears to be a machine gun mounted on it; a figure neither he nor any of the others in his vehicle were able to discern as either friend or foe. The Americans pointed their weapons at the mystery man, but none pulled a trigger. Instead, Sharbonno took his picture. I'm certain the

nameless, faceless figure is grateful for it, but it only drives home the fact that this is the essence of the American project in Iraq – a machine gun perpetually pointed out the window, automatically trained on anyone who happens to be there.

There are also blank spaces in the book. Pages without pictures or text. Pages with only text. Pages that offer clues about what might be missing. "Even today, there is so much – huge chunks – that I can't figure out if the events really happened or not," Sharbonno writes. There are some things that never appear in photos but are so vivid that we can't help seeing them. We're reminded that before it was a notorious site for American atrocities, Abu Ghraib was a notorious site for Saddam Hussein's atrocities. The young veteran writes:

"At Abu Ghraib everywhere we dug – and we dug four or five times – everywhere we dug we found human remains. I dug once to try and build a garden, we dug to build a shower, which ended up being the morgue. We dug to put in fences, to put cables down. ... Every time we dug, we found human remains. Every time. The prison is built on a mound of human remains. It's just disgusting."

And sometimes we're just left wondering. A large part of the book consists of pictures from one mass-casualty situation. Bloody shots. Gory shots. Shots of medical professionals moving with rapidity. " 'Holy shit. Is this really happening?' So I just snapped pictures," he writes in the midst of the morbid montage. Picture after picture. Pictures of parts of humans turned into chop meat. Unidentifiable bits of bodies torn open. Why is a nurse taking pictures through all of this? We're left to wonder. Why, at one point, does Sharbonno even pick up someone else's camera and start taking pictures with it? Why isn't he doing something medical? If the emergency room tent is filled to capacity with staff, why is he there potentially getting in the way? And if he isn't in the way, why isn't he lending a hand? But then, if we look closely, we notice Sharbonno is apparently in some of the photos. (We can tell by his

name tape on the back pocket of his pants.) So he was lending a hand. Then who took these photos? Maybe someday Sharbonno will sort all of this out for us, but in this book he doesn't. It's another blank spot, but what we can be sure of is that if he hadn't documented the mass-casualty event, then it would be one big blank. We'd probably never know what it was like to be inside that tent and see the things Sharbonno saw, so we're lucky he was playing photographer and not nurse for at least part of the time. We're luckier still that Haller provided a means to get those pictures into our hands.

In addition to grisly, mundane and inexplicable photos, sometimes there's a repetitive photo, one that seemingly stands in for missing images. Over and over we see a shot of weapons laid out in precise formation alongside neatly stacked ammunition. Most belonged to Marines killed on an operation not far from Abu Ghraib and their fellow Marines who stood guard over their bodies, while a few weapons were taken from Iraqis who killed those Americans. After we've gotten through looking at Iraqi bodies that have been turned inside out – gruesome shots of wounded, dying and dead detainees – we repeatedly see this tasteful photo of weapons that seem to stand in for dead Marines. It wasn't that Sharbonno didn't have access and opportunity to take pictures of the dead Marines – he covered their body bags with ice all through the night – but for whatever reason he didn't. Why not? We can speculate, but in the end we're left to wonder why their bodies remain out of sight when so many Iraqis' bodies don't. These questions lurk throughout the book, and far from being a shortcoming, they are what gives the book its ultimate power. Countless questions about the Iraq War still remain to be asked, let alone answered. Haller and Sharbonno's book helps to give voice to so many of them.

"These aren't the photos we're likely to find in grandma's photo album 50 years from now. But it would be nice if they could just sit somewhere like that," Sharbonno writes in the latter part of the book and then re-

peats it almost verbatim closer to the end. The sentence clicked for me on a lot of levels. In recent years, some Vietnam veterans have gone out to the backyard to burn the photo album or the shoebox of images that they don't want their kids to find after they die – pictures of mutilated bodies and severed heads and unit members clowning with corpses. The men in these now fading photos look much like the modern-day US soldiers mistreating Afghan corpses in the recently released "Kill Team" images.

Some Vietnam-era snapshots are turning to ash, but that won't be the case for digital photos sent and shared and copied in ways that were impossible a few decades ago. *Riley and his story* contains very different types of photos than those of the Kill Team or the Abu Ghraib torturers or the more generic war porn that circulates online, but it's just as integral to understanding "the awful stuff," as Sharbonno puts it, namely the stuff of war itself.

Since creating *Riley and his story. Me and my outrage. You and us.*, Monica Haller has gone on to collaborate with many other veterans, survivors, victims and perpetrators of war. The results, many other "objects of deployment," however, have not yet been published. But one hopes they will be. Soon. And in great quantity. Especially valuable will be projects with noncombatants – the population that knows the most about and suffers the most because of modern war; people who lost friends and family members, people who were physically and psychologically wounded, people who were made homeless and hopeless, people who were made refugees, people who already had hard lives before war arrived on their doorstep. These "objects of deployment" will offer an important means for Americans to begin to understand the true nature of their wars. And we need them now more than ever. **CT**

To see excerpts from the book, go to [www.rileyandhisstory.com](http://www.rileyandhisstory.com) and then click on "Download a PDF" at the bottom of the Web page that comes up

**After we've gotten through looking at Iraqi bodies that have been turned inside out – gruesome shots of wounded, dying and dead detainees – we repeatedly see this tasteful photo of weapons that seem to stand in for dead Marines**

**Nick Turse** is a historian, essayist, investigative journalist and currently a fellow at Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute. His latest book is ***The Case for Withdrawal from Afghanistan*** (Verso Books). He is also the author of ***The Complex: How the Military Invades Our Everyday Lives***. His website is [NickTurse.com](http://NickTurse.com)

# The shrinking of New Orleans

It's s against a divided community, devastated landscape and a displaced citizenry, but how can a TV series portray the real story behind a city's struggle?, asks **Bill Berkowitz**

**She quizzically looked him up and down and asked, "What are you boy?" Uncle Joe responded: "I'm from New York City and I'm Jewish." She quickly responded: "I knew you weren't no white man!"**

Last month saw the start of the second season of HBO's TV series "Treme" premiered. Last year's 10-episode season was a Grand Slam for most television critics, yet the series did not draw a large audience despite the fact that David Simon and Eric Overmyer, who had been the architects of "The Wire," an HBO masterpiece, were the creators behind "Treme."

Last April, the *New York Times*' Alessandra Stanley wrote that the series (which was set three months after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina), was "a tribute to the 'real' New Orleans by filmmakers who have become connoisseurs of the city, depicting its sound and ravaged looks with rapt reverence and attention to detail."

Recognizing that Simon and Overmyer had an extremely difficult story to tell, Stanley wrote that "Treme" "is most of all a story about survival – and the pursuit of pleasure – in the wake of a catastrophe that quickly morphed into, as one character puts it, 'federally induced disaster.'"

"Treme" year one was all that and more. It was great storytelling, authentic music, and a collection of extraordinary, yet recognizable folk – a cross-section of the likeable and the less likeable – played by an ensemble of exceptional actors. The show no doubt provided a voice to many that had none, as well as employment opportunities

for those who really needed it.

Anyone who has visited New Orleans during the nearly six years since Katrina, will recognize that what *Salon*'s Heather Havrilesky called the fight for "survival – of a culture, a city, of downtrodden individuals," is a battle that continues to this day. We, the viewer as voyeur, might have expected "Treme" to tell us all there was to know about post-Katrina New Orleans. But it couldn't and it didn't.

## My New Orleans excursion

Here's a story my father told me one afternoon a long time ago while we were sitting in Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village. It was the 1930s. My Uncle Joe was selling insurance policies door-to-door in rural Louisiana. One afternoon, he knocked at the door of a small homestead and a black woman answered. Joe told her why he had come to her home. She quizzically looked him up and down and asked, "What are you boy?" Uncle Joe responded: "I'm from New York City and I'm Jewish." She quickly responded: "I knew you weren't no white man!"

That story has been spinning around family circles for years, mostly because I tell it over and over again. My father told it to me, but I never really knew if it was true or apocryphal.

In month, my wife Gale and I went to

New Orleans. She was there to attend a conference, and I was stringing along. Actually, I was there for more than just a bit of stringing. Strange as it had always seemed to me, our family has deep roots in New Orleans and in Bogalusa, some 70 miles away. My New York City born and bred uncle and his family moved to Bogalusa, becoming one of the first Jewish families in town.

The last time I was in New Orleans/Bogalusa was 1948, when my mother, father, sister and I took a train from New York to attend the wedding of my cousin, Uncle Joe's daughter. I of course, remember nothing of that trip, but there are family stories: the "coloreds only" water fountain my mother was warned to stay away from by some white guy on the street; relatives who ran a department store in Bogalusa; and me running in and out of doors at my uncle's house, which must have seemed palatial to a 4-year-old growing up in a one-bedroom apartment in the Bronx.

I was excited about visiting my cousin, the woman who had gotten married in 1948, and who I hadn't seen in nearly 63 years. As a bonus, Lance Hill, an old friend from Kansas, had agreed to spend an afternoon showing us as much of post-Katrina New Orleans as possible.

Hill picked us up on a warm Tuesday afternoon outside the hotel we were staying at in the French Quarter. He shepherded us around town for the next five to six hours. We drove and we talked; mostly we asked questions and Hill explained what we were seeing.

After driving around the well-appointed residential areas surrounding the French Quarter, our first major stop was the lower Ninth Ward, where the levees breached during Hurricane Katrina. I took pictures of a batch of abandoned houses, their front doors marked for demolition nearly six years ago by National Guardsmen; a few of the older homes that had been renovated; and about a half-dozen newly-built "Brad Pitt Houses" ("green" houses sponsored by Pitt's Make It Right foundation). Mostly we saw vast

stretches of abandoned streets. No trees, no cars. Only concrete slabs, and a few molded ramshackle structures providing witness to this once vibrant, if poor, neighborhood.

Hill was not your usual tour guide. He has lived in New Orleans for more than thirty years; for nearly twenty of those years he has been the Executive Director of the Southern Institute for Education and Research, whose offices are located on the Tulane University campus. Hill is well versed in the politics of his adopted hometown and he is a historian and the author of *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and The Civil Rights Movement* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Hill was a community organizer for fifteen years; from 1989-1992, he served as Executive Director of the Louisiana Coalition against Racism and Nazism (LCARN), the grass roots organization that led the opposition to former Klansman David Duke's Senate and Gubernatorial campaigns. One of the coalition's founders, Hill directed LCARN's research program and extensive media campaigns. The New Orleans *Times-Picayune* credited LCARN for "much of the responsibility" for Duke's defeat in the 1990 Senate campaign.

According to Hill's bio posted at the Institute's website, "The Institute's tolerance education program – the most comprehensive project of its kind in the South – has provided training to more than 4,000 teachers from 785 schools in the Deep South. The program uses case studies of the Holocaust and the Civil Rights Movement to teach the causes and consequences of prejudice."

We drove across the bridge where the police refused to let residents trying to escape from the flood pass, the Super Dome which "housed" thousands in unbearably ghastly conditions, several school that were once public schools but that had been subsequently converted into charter schools, and the housing projects that were demolished by the city in the face of protests that they could be rehabilitated and remain viable housing for low income residents. Hill

**The last time I was in New Orleans/Bogalusa was 1948, when my mother, father, sister and I took a train from New York to attend the wedding of my cousin, Uncle Joe's daughter**

## AFTER THE STORM

**It's not just the well-publicized cases of police misconduct that we need to know about. Or the wholesale turning over of the public school system to charter schools**

pulled the car over and we stared at the site where hundreds of people once lived; now an empty, rock strewn, fenced in lot.

### **"Treme": Season Two**

In her review of "Treme" for Salon in early April of last year, Heather Havrilesky pointed out that Simon and Overmyer "offer up such an intimate portrait of this strange, soulful American city that watching it makes you feel as if you're there, mopping your brow over a cold beer in a dark corner bar, taking in a jazz band at a club, tapping your foot along with a parade on its streets. Suddenly, all the talk of the uniqueness of New Orleans culture, the passionate embrace of its music, the struggle to revive the Lower Ninth Ward and bring its natives back home in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, all of it comes together and you can feel the heart-break of this city, from the second-line parade that opens the first 80-minute episode to the slow funeral procession that ends it."

However, the first season barely scratched the surface.

"Treme" is an extraordinary piece of entertainment, fortified by an admixture of politics and history. It has no pretensions to the depth of analysis of Spike Lee's brilliant 2006 documentary "When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts," or his follow-up, 2010's "If God is Willing and Da Creek Don't Rise," both of which also premiered on HBO.

Nor is "Treme" "Trouble the Water," a remarkable Academy Award nominated film directed by Tia Lessin and Carl Deal – (<http://www.troublethewaterfilm.com>)

So if you're going to watch "Treme" – and I heartily suggest you do – don't expect it to get at the whole truth of Hurricane Katrina's effect on New Orleans and its people.

Nevertheless, it is important to ask some Poor Boy-sized questions about what is included and what is left out of "Treme."

Will more of the troubling reality of New Orleans' deracinated political landscape make its way into Season Two? Will there be any answers offered up as to why more than

100,000 African Americans never made it back to the city?

Will the story be told of how the city's "old-line families," represented by such "prominent figures ... as former New Orleans Board of Trade President Thomas Westfeldt; Richard Freeman, scion of the family that long owned the city's Coca-Cola bottling plant; and William Boatner Reily, owner of a Louisiana coffee company... [along with] some newcomers and non-whites," as the *Wall Street Journal's* Christopher Cooper reported in September 2005, were committed to a developing a new post-Katrina socio-economic order for New Orleans?

And what of that Dallas meeting of business and political elites, also reported by Cooper, which took place in those early days after Katrina?

As James Reiss, descendent of an old-line Uptown family, told Cooper, "Those who want to see this city rebuilt want to see it done in a completely different way: demographically, geographically and politically. I'm not just speaking for myself here. The way we've been living is not going to happen again, or we're out."

Cooper pointed out that Reiss "acknowledge[d] that shrinking parts of the city occupied by hardscrabble neighborhoods would inevitably result in fewer poor and African-American residents."

It's not just the well-publicized cases of police misconduct that we need to know about. Or the wholesale turning over of the public school system to charter schools. What about public policies that explicitly perpetrate a permanent reduction in affordable housing for the poor and the working poor? What about federal and State disaster and reconstruction aid that failed to provide sufficient funding to homeowners to rebuild in the Lower Ninth – that led to those empty blocks and cement slabs where families had lived for generations?

In a commentary about the 2008 elections – <http://www.southerninstitute.info/commentaries> – dated December 6, 2008, and published in *Louisiana Weekly*, Lance

Hill asked, “So how is possible that New Orleans can be a black majority city, where black voters command 60% of the actual vote, yet the City Council and School Board are majority white? The answer lies in the geography of election districts.”

Hill concluded his piece by writing: “New Orleans remains one of the most racially polarized cities in the United States. At the heart of the distrust is the fear that many blacks have that whites have not relented in their plans to demolish black neighborhoods under the banner of protecting residents or reducing government costs. Indeed, while the debate on reducing the “footprint” of the city at the expense of black neighborhoods has largely been put to rest, some white leaders continue to float proposals to selectively ‘greenspace’ poor neighborhoods into parks or retention ponds but this time through zoning laws or withholding public services and utilities.”

Another telling election – and one that put the issue of a divided community directly into the spotlight – took place in the city in May 2006, when Mitch Landrieu, son of a civil rights pioneer and the city’s last white mayor, squared off against incumbent Mayor Ray Nagin, who, after Katrina, had become somewhat of a national lightening rod. What was particularly unique about this race wasn’t so much that Nagin prevailed – which did surprise many – but rather the way the votes were divided. When Nagin first ran for Mayor in 2002, as

the business candidate, he received 86% of the white and 38% of the African American vote. By 2006, the numbers dramatically reversed itself as Nagin received 83% of the African American vote and only 21% of the white vote. For more on this complicated election, check out “Race,” an extraordinary documentary film by Katherine Cecil – <http://www.racethedocumentary.com>

These days, we are constantly hearing from the City’s Chamber of Commerce types the slogan, “New Orleans is back.” The New Orleans Saints’ Super Bowl victory certainly created great joy amongst the people, and judging from the hordes of tourists we saw in late-March the refrain “New Orleans is Back” appears to be true in certain ways.

However, anyone who visits New Orleans now, nearly six years after the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina, should not be fooled by what all too often seems like a hollow catch-phrase. For the more than 100,000 African Americans that haven’t yet been able to return home and most likely never will, New Orleans may forever be Louis Armstrong singing “Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans when that’s where you left your heart” – <http://www.lyricsbox.com/louis-armstrong-lyrics-do-you-know-what-means-to-miss-new-orleans-pd2gnrx.html>. **CT**

*Bill Berkowitz is a freelance writer and longtime observer of the conservative movement*

**Anyone who visits New Orleans now, nearly six years after the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina, should not be fooled by what all too often seems like a hollow catch-phrase**

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# Cowards and crack dealers

**David Michael Green** tells how an email exchange exposed the foolishness and sheer ignorance of American political thought

Entering into discourse with them was like stepping into an evidence-free zone, a place with all the logical integrity of a Dali painting

**D**amn, I'm embarrassed for regressives. And it's a good thing I am, too. Somebody's gotta do it, and it sure as hell ain't gonna be them.

There are basically two kinds of regressives, and they are both paragons of shameful behavior, though of rather different kinds.

The first type is the trooper. He watches Beck, listens to Limbaugh, and not only takes his cues as to what to think, he also unknowingly receives his marching orders as to what to even think about. Do you imagine, for instance, that tens of millions of fat, white, male, Southern, old farts all of a sudden individually came to the simultaneous conclusion that Obama's White House has too many czars in it? Yeah, me neither.

These people are all over the place. They're your neighbor, your uncle, your barber, your nightmare. They are astonishingly lazy and dumb, politically, but it's important to note that that is absolutely by choice. Because what they really are, at their core, is deathly frightened. So much so that they cling onto the mythologies fed to them, and cannot be moved from belief in those rusty shibboleths, no matter what. If Jesus himself appeared before their eyes and said, "Hey man, knock it off with all this messiah shit, would ya? It was all just an elaborate practical joke which went badly awry, and 2000 year ago at that!", it still wouldn't matter. They would

say "No, no dude. You are the son of God! We insist!" And, if he persisted in telling him that he wasn't, they would... well, they'd crucify him.

I can't tell you how many encounters I've had with these regressive shock troops over the years which have brought this home to me. At first I was astonished and puzzled. Entering into discourse with them was like stepping into an evidence-free zone, a place with all the logical integrity of a Dali painting. Upside down. After a while, though, I realized that there must be something deeper going on which causes people to cling so militantly to what is manifestly sheer bullshit.

That something is fear. This is what the Founders and their fellow Enlightenment school travelers (myself included) missed. Only some people some of the time are capable of thoughtful policy decisions based on rational analysis of carefully sifted evidence. Anyone who's deeply frightened, for whatever reason, doesn't fall into that category. Religious conservatives love to remind us that there are no atheists in foxholes, and they're mostly correct. What they don't get is that this observation doesn't prove the inevitability of god, but rather the opposite. What it shows is that if you're scared enough, you'll believe anything, including that doing deals-with-deities, like "I swear I won't drink or smoke or use bad words anymore, God, if you'll just get me out of this tight spot",



would actually work. Exactly how much we really believe in the power of said divinities is reflected in the drunken, cursing and smoking soldiers out on leave the very next night, having survived the fire.

Well, nobody is shooting at regressives in America right now, but by golly it sure must feel like it to them. You gotta be powerful askeered to act as stupid as these folk do. I'll give you a recent example of what I'm talking about, which is very much similar to multiple such encounters I've had in the past.

This local dude I've never met somehow found out about me and my politics and decided he was going to give me a right good education by adding my name to his distribution list for these right-wing email blasts he spews every few days. No doubt you know what I'm talking about – this crap constantly bounces around online – and you've probably received many of the same ones from time to time. It's utterly embarrassing garbage on a good day, and frighteningly dispiriting most of the rest of the time.

He was right, though. It is educational. You can really learn a lot about America by observing this sort of sad foolishness. So I let the email come without objection, until one day I couldn't take the sheer ignorance of it any longer. The thing that set me over the edge was a quote from some European guy (apparently regressives forgot momentarily that they're supposed to act all contemptuous of Europeans), which the local yokel sent out to his list, claiming that this was perhaps the most profound thing uttered in the last millennium. And, no, I'm not exaggerating. That's really what he said. So what was this amazing piece of wisdom? Just a short passage noting that America will probably survive the incalculable devastation of the Obama presidency, but far more troubling is the implication that a great nation would choose this man for its president!

And that was about all I could take. In truth, this was pretty mild – and even quasi-intellectual – compared to most of the stuff you see. And, of course, I even agree that the Obama presidency has been fairly disas-

trous, albeit precisely because his policies are almost uniformly regressive in nature, a fact which regressives seem to be utterly blinded from seeing because the guy is black and a Democrat and not afraid to not be stupid in public. But I think what set me off about this particular missive was the absolute inanity of it, the complete violation of any sense of historical truth represented in its content, particularly given the presidency before Obama's, much loved by regressives, which we just got through barely surviving. This is truly Orwellian stuff. This is Winston Smith sitting in the Ministry of Information, rewriting history.

So I sent this guy a note, and I asked him if he could please just give me two or three reasons why Obama was the worst thing to ever happen to the republic. Having gone down this path before, I knew what the very first thing on the list would be (because these troops take their marching orders from above, they are completely predictable), and sure enough, it was what I thought he'd say, that Obama is constantly apologizing for America to other countries. So I asked this guy for one single example of that. And he wrote me back with some vague allusion to an apology for human rights and immigration policy and China. So I said, "Could you please just supply me the quote of Obama making the apology?" And he said he didn't have it off hand, but I could surely just Google it.

Well, of course, I already had. But I said to him, anyhow, "Let me get this straight. You're claiming that Obama is the worst thing ever to happen to America. You're spreading that claim all around to everyone you know, arguing that your indictment represents some profound wisdom and the last-hour warning of a deeply concerned patriot. And the very first item among your bill of particulars is the claim that president apologizes for his country. But when asked for several examples, the best you can come up with is a single one, but you don't actually know what was said. Do I have that right?"

I should point out here that the actual in-

**You can really learn a lot about America by observing this sort of sad foolishness. So I let the email come without objection, until one day I couldn't take the sheer ignorance of it any longer**

## DEBATE THIS!

**When I asked whether he teaches his children not to apologize when they hurt someone else, he accused me of dragging his kids into a political debate – you know, just like liberals did to Sarah Palin**

cident in question involved a low-level bureaucrat who, in discussions with Chinese counterparts, apparently acknowledged that immigration legislation coming out of Arizona does not reflect the highest pinnacles of human rights aspirations. But these words were not an apology. And they were not spoken by Barack Obama, or even his secretary of state (remember her, the 1990s version of regressive fear-driven wrath, who seems to be okay by them now?). Moreover, this was the only ‘example’ given of the what was supposed to be a whole litany of similar transgressions, causing our friend in question to put this item at the very top of his list.

Finally, I can’t help but also note that even if the claim was true, would it necessarily be so wrong to apologize, especially given America’s history in Iran and Guatemala and Cuba and South Africa and Nicaragua and Honduras and El Salvador and Chile, and just about every country in Latin America and a whole bunch more in Africa and Asia and even Europe? I mean, what is the notion here? That we’re perfect? Or is it that we’re simply too bitchen to apologize, even when we do screw up?

Well, by this time, the guy was totally freaking out and telling me that he was going to remove my name from his mailing list and I should just leave him alone. When I asked whether he teaches his children not to apologize when they hurt someone else, he accused me of dragging his kids into a political debate – you know, just like liberals did to Sarah Palin. Even though, of course, I wasn’t doing that at all – I was asking about him, not his kids, and what his moral values are. Finally, I asked him whether he didn’t think that he was effectively committing treason by publically tearing down the American president on the basis of lies.

He wrote me back promising that he would absolutely cease reading my mail anymore. Hmmm. Wonder why?

It would be lovely if that was just one guy out there, frightened of his own shadow, willing to suspend disbelief entirely to assuage those fears, and disposed to the destruction

of America out of personal cowardice. Alas, this is, instead, an entire radio audience. This is an entire political party. This is a very large chunk of the third most populous country in the world.

But as ugly as the radio and television audience is, it’s the folks on the other side of the microphone who are truly evil. These are the Rush Limbaughs and Newt Gingriches and Sarah Palins of this country who have recognized that there is some serious adoration and power (oh, and did I mention the money?) in catering to a nation’s insecurities. Can we just be honest about this? These folks are nothing but political crack dealers. They are absolutely capable of saying anything – or of failing to say anything – in order to peddle their sick wares.

This last week has been an absolute case in point. I have searched – in vain, shockingly enough – to find any regressive pundit who had anything seriously positive to say about the president’s obliteration of Osama bin Laden.

In a sane world, that quest would not be such a quixotic-to-the-point-of-being-absurd proposition. I mean, after all, aren’t the folks on the right the ones who have been banging the terrorism drum for a decade now? Aren’t they the folks who adore military solutions to American foreign policy problems? Haven’t they been using 9/11 to justify every imaginable policy, including even tax cuts? Aren’t these exactly the folks among all of us who should be most gaga that Osama now swims with the fishies in the Indian Ocean?

Yes, yes, yes and yes. In a sane world, that is. In our world, on the other hand, this event was a disaster for such folks, who don’t actually give a damn about national security anyhow, but have made whole careers out of pretending otherwise.

Like I said, I’m embarrassed for these people. Check out a sampling of their commentary regarding what was one of the biggest national security developments – on their terms, especially – in contemporary American history:

In “Obama Administration Takes Victory

Lap In Clown Car”, Jim Treacher belittles Obama for screwing up his signal achievement. Included among the president’s crimes are the fact that his speech “was originally announced for 10:30 but didn’t happen until 11:30. By that time, the news Obama was supposed to be breaking had broken already. Not the best start”. Wow. There’s an epic screw-up, eh? Trying to get the words of the speech right, the president came out an hour later for the press conference than the time he had just got done surprise-announcing. Such a blunder, that. Imagine how irate Treacher would have been if Obama had, say, declared an American war had ended in “mission accomplished” victory before it had even begun?

Or take Andrew Bolt (please), who writes in “Obama’s Victory Turns Into Farce” that farce is just exactly what happened, “thanks to all the President’s familiar traits of ineptitude, regal disdain and fuzzy Leftism”. Ineptitude? Wait, wasn’t Obama announcing that he had taken out Osama bin Laden, Public Enemy Number One? I think Bolt refers to Obama’s decision not to show the world gory photos of bin Laden shot through the head, given that such images might incite violence against Americans. If anyone reading this can discern the fuzzy leftism in that decision, please do let the rest of us know, especially now that about 80 people have already been murdered in Pakistan in reprisals for the attack, less than a week later. But be sure not to mention it to that commie subversive George W. Bush, however, who wouldn’t let photographs be taken of caskets arriving to Dover Air Force Base anymore, after decades of that journalistic tradition.

Thoughtful Sarah Palin also joined that chorus. She tweeted (appropriately enough) that Obama must release the pics, else he’s a girly-man: “No pussy-footing around, no politicking, no drama. It’s part of the mission.” Um, wait, do I have this right? Sarah Palin criticizing Barack Obama for too much theatricality? Oh lord, there actually is a parallel universe on the other side of the looking glass!

This photo conspiracy is one of the great tropes now emerging, to the point where the Baltimore Sun could run a piece entitled, “Do they really expect us to believe bin Laden is dead?” Here, the author opines, “Does anyone believe Osama bin Laden is dead? He supposedly died in 2007, we’ve heard nothing since, then all of a sudden he’s dead again. This would not be the first time the government misrepresented the facts. Are we suppose [sic] to believe a president who wouldn’t even make public his birth certificate [sic]? I think it’s an Obama ploy to make himself look good for re-election. After all, how does a vastly inexperienced, non-military president eradicate bin Laden when previous, experienced presidents couldn’t [sicker]? I want to see bin Laden’s body, but we can’t. A day after his demise he was disposed of at sea. Why do you think that is? Maybe he was really already dead and someone had to be disposed of to make it seem that bin Laden was killed when he wasn’t. Why wouldn’t our government want us to see bin Laden’s body, unless it wasn’t his? Sooner or later the government will figure out that we aren’t as gullible or as stupid as it thinks.” No, as a matter of fact, it turns out that some of us are vastly more stupid than any government could have imagined...

Then there’s Good old John Bolton, who criticizes Obama for burying bin Laden at sea. And you know what a great contribution Mr. Bolton has made to American diplomacy over the years. In any case, his criticism is the equivalent of lambasting Babe Ruth for not hitting that 715th home run. Worse, it comes from a guy who sat on the bench in Little League.

Or take the great pundit-warrior, Victor Davis Hanson, who’s really upset about Obama referring to the actions he took as president, labeling his administration “The First-Person Presidency”, and pretending to be unaware that the insecure Lil’ Bush did this far more than Obama does. Like, for example, “Good afternoon. On my orders, the United States military has begun strikes against Al Qaeda terrorist training camps

**Thoughtful Sarah Palin also joined that chorus. She tweeted (appropriately enough) that Obama must release the pics, else he’s a girly-man**

## DEBATE THIS!

**Nobody on the right, as far as I could see, had any praise for the president, despite the fact that – whatever one thinks of the deed itself – Obama took a large risk, and he pulled off without a hitch the foreign policy coup of a generation**

**David Michael Green** is a professor of political science at Hofstra University in New York. More of his work can be found at his website, [www.regressiveantidote.net](http://www.regressiveantidote.net).

and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. ... More than two weeks ago, I gave Taliban leaders a series of clear and specific demands.” Or, “On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein’s ability to wage war. These are opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign.” Yo, Vic! Hello?! Is your memory really that bad, or is it just, er, that convenient?

Or how about Peggy Noonan, who wrote speeches for Ronald Reagan and hasn’t had the good sense for thirty years now to deny it? She just penned a piece in which she fell all over herself praising the military for taking out Osama, but couldn’t quite muster the words for the president. Perhaps if he had tucked tail and run from Lebanon, or maybe traded missiles to the Iranian mullahs in exchange for hostages, she would be far more effusive. Who knows?

Not to be outdone, in his latest column George F. Will miraculously managed to turn the whole affair into a call for considering whether NATO should be disbanded. No, I’m not kidding. Bet you didn’t see that one coming, did you?

The only bit of truth (and I emphasize the word ‘bit’) I saw from the right anywhere was Ross Douthat’s remark that “For those with eyes to see, the daylight between the foreign policies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama has been shrinking ever since the current president took the oath of office. But last week made it official: When the story of America’s post-9/11 wars is written, historians will be obliged to assess the two administrations together, and pass judgment on the Bush-Obama era.”

Regrettably, this is precisely correct. Barack Obama is Bush/Cheney. I was stunned to see a regressive say that about a president they’ve spent two-plus years trying to turn into some sort of Neville-Chamberlain-in-drag-doing-bong-hits-wearing-tie-dye-and-campaigning-for-George-McGovern. I thought, “Damn!”, this could get interesting. It didn’t. Instead of knocking around his

fellow travelers for being so willfully stupid about politics Obama style, Douthat instead starting taking whacks at Democrats, in the most condescending manner imaginable, for the same thing – that is for excusing what Obama does simply because he has a D after his name. Douthat happens to be right about that (though there are plenty of real progressives who have been scathingly consistent about both presidents’ ugly policies), but the far greater crime is that of the loons on the right. Because, after all, Bush was an order of magnitude worse, simply by invading Iraq (which Obama would not have done), an episode which Douthat seems to have entirely forgotten. In any case, in an act of true weirdness, he then goes on in his piece to rant about the perils of the imperial presidency. As if he was some sort of Neville Chamberlain-in-drag ...

In sum, nobody on the right, as far as I could see, had any praise for the president, despite the fact that – whatever one thinks of the deed itself – Obama took a large risk, and he pulled off without a hitch the foreign policy coup of a generation. I mean, really. Yes, it does get bigger than this. But not often.

Ya wanna know why they can’t acknowledge this achievement?

‘Cause here’s what they were really thinking:

“Damn!”

“Damn, damn, damn, damn, damn!”

“Shit!”

“Man, this makes us look stupid. This reminds people that our guy couldn’t do the job in eight years’ time. Some might even remember how he said that he ‘didn’t even think about bin Laden anymore’. This completely blows our whole ‘we’re tough, they’re weak’ line we’ve been using since Truman. This jacks O’Whatshisname up in the polls, while we look like idiots, running around talking about birth certificates.

“Damn!”

“This is all about something way more important than national security.”

“This is about job security.”

“Ours.”

**CT**

# Palestine unity and the new Middle East

There's a new dimension to the Arab-Israeli conflict since the revolution in Egypt – but Israel is no longer calling the shots, writes **Ramzy Baroud**

**I**sraeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's response to the Hamas-Fatah deal in Cairo was both swift and predictable. "The Palestinian Authority must choose either peace with Israel or peace with Hamas. There is no possibility for peace with both," he said, in a televised speech shortly after the Palestinian political rivals reached a reconciliation agreement under Egyptian sponsorship on April 27.

Despite numerous past attempts to undercut Mahmoud Abbas, stall peace talks, and derail Israel's commitment to previous agreements, Netanyahu and his rightwing government are now arguing that Palestinians are solely responsible for the demise of the illusory 'peace process'. Israeli bulldozers will continue to carve up the hapless West Bank to make room for more illegal settlements, but this time their excuse may not be 'natural expansion'. The justification might instead be Israel has no partner. US and other media will merrily repeat the dreadful logic, and Palestinians will, as usual, be chastised.

## **Israel almost negligible**

But, frankly, at this juncture of Middle East history, Israel is almost negligible. It no longer has a transformative influence in the region. When the Arab people began revolting, a new dimension to the Arab-Israeli conflict emerged. As the chants in Cairo's

Tahrir Square began to adopt a pan-Arab and pro-Palestinian language, it became obvious that Egypt would soon venture outside the political confines of Washington's patronizing labels, which divide the Arabs into moderates (good) and radicals (bad).

A day after the handshakes exchanged by chief Fatah representative, Azzam al-Ahmed, and Hamas's leaders, Damascus-based Dr. Moussa Abu Marzoug and Gaza-based Mahmoud Al Zahar, the forces behind the agreement in Cairo became apparent. While Israeli leaders used the only language they know for these situations – that of threats, intimidation and ultimatums – the US response was flat, confused, and extraneous.

Aside from the outmoded nature of US officials' remarks, the focus was largely placed on the only leverage the US has over Abbas and its Fatah allies. Jennifer Rubin wrote in her *Washington Post* blog on April 29: "The Obama administration is reluctant to articulate clearly a position that if a Hamas-Fatah unity government emerges as Mahmoud Abbas has been describing, the US will cut off aid."

The temporary reluctance is not pervading, however. "Congress is an entirely different matter," Rubin wrote, quoting an angry, unnamed official: "The only acceptable answers (to whether the US should fund the new Palestinian government) for most

**At this juncture of Middle East history, Israel is almost negligible. It no longer has a transformative influence in the region**

## BALANCE OF POWER

**What really allowed Israel and the US to control the outcome of political events, even internal Palestinian affairs, was the lack of any real political balance surrounding this conflict**

Americans would be no or hell no.”

But how effective will such financial arm-twisting be, especially with the possibility of other donor countries following suit?

If the question had been asked prior to the Arab Spring – and the Egyptian revolution in particular – the answer would have been marred by uncertainty. A whole class of Palestinian politicians had arranged their stances almost exclusively around funding issues.

What really allowed Israel and the US to control the outcome of political events, even internal Palestinian affairs, was the lack of any real political balance surrounding this conflict. The US and its allies defined the will of the ‘international community’, and the region was trapped in Washington’s – and Tel Aviv’s – political designations of friends and enemies. It was a political stalemate par excellence, and only Israel benefited.

This analysis is not merely relevant to recent events. The greatest Israeli gain of the Camp David agreement (1979) was not of bringing peace to the region – for no regional peace truly followed. It was the total marginalization of Egypt as a powerful Arab party from virtually all Arab affairs of concern to Israel. The absence of Egypt in the process made it possible for Israel to repeatedly attack Lebanon, and also to further its colonization and destruction of the occupied territories.

### **New Arab reality**

Now Egypt is back – not merely in terms of a return to the ‘Arab fold’ – but as the party that will increasingly define the new Arab reality. The signing of the Hamas-Fatah deal may have come as a surprise in terms of media coverage, but it was really a predictable consequence in a chain of events that signaled the remaking of a region. Now the Middle East is spearheaded by a powerful Arab country, secure enough to reach out to multiple partners – other Arab countries, as well as Iran, Turkey and others.

Not only did both Turkey welcome the deal, it was also one of the main sponsors

of the Palestinian rapprochement. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has been instrumental in pushing for Palestinian unity. As for the Iranian position, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi hailed the “auspicious” agreement, which he described as “one of the achievements of the Egyptian revolution,” according to the *Tehran Times* (April 30).

The Israeli vision for the region was to keep it politically divided at any cost. Without such a division, Israel is likely to be on the defensive, and the US will be consumed in crisis management. A Palestinian unity in post-revolution Egypt, with the blessing of all Arab countries, Turkey, Iran, and many others, is an extremely worrying prospect for Israel.

Of most concern is the rise of Egypt as a political party, one that is capable of making decisions on its own. Aside from sponsoring the unity agreement between Hamas and Fatah, without Israeli or US permission, Egypt’s new foreign minister, Nabil al-Arabi, also described the decision to seal off Gaza as “shameful”, and he promised to lift the siege (as reported by Aljazeera on April 29).

“Egypt is charting a new course in its foreign policy that has already begun shaking up the established order in the Middle East, planning to open the blockaded border with Gaza and normalizing relations with two of Israel and the West’s Islamist foes, Hamas and Iran,” wrote David D. Kirkpatrick in the *New York Times* (April 30). Such language was, at one time, unthinkable. Now, thanks to the will of the Egyptian and Arab peoples, it is likely to define the new Arab political discourse. Not even a fiery speech by a discredited Israeli Prime Minister could prevent this powerful paradigm shift. **CT**

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# Osama Bin Lynched

David Swanson on the futility of almost 10 years of war

About 10 years ago a bunch of psychotic killers crashed planes into buildings. A tall skinny guy who took credit said he was protesting the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia and US support for Israel's war on Palestinians. That wasn't exactly going to hold up in a court of law as a justification for mass-murder. But the US government had already, before 9-11, turned down offers from the Taliban to put bin Laden on trial in a third country, and it turned those offers down again.

Instead, the US president said he had no interest in bin Laden, but proceeded to encourage Americans to be afraid of their own shadows. He used that fear to help launch a war without end. We've now had nine-and-a-half years of pointless horrific murderous war in Afghanistan and eight years of the same in Iraq, plus a drone war in Pakistan, a new war in Libya, and smaller wars and special military operations in dozens of other countries.

We watched foreign-looking people on television dancing in the streets and celebrating the crimes of 9-11 and we thought how evil and barbaric they must be. Knowing nothing about the decades our government had spent exploiting and occupying their countries, toppling their democratic leaders, and kicking in their doors, we assumed that these subhuman monsters were

celebrating the killing of Americans because they just happened to dislike us or because their stupid religion told them to.

Of course, we used to have lynch mobs in this country. Ask the Freedom Riders who left for the deep south 50 years ago. But we had outgrown that. We were not driven by blind vengeance. We were civilized. The reason we locked up far more people in prison than any other country and killed some of them was a purely rational calculation dealing with prevention, deterrence, and restitution. We weren't monsters. We didn't torture or cut people's heads off.

## Like animals

But those beasts that we started locking up in Guantanamo: they were a different story. They clearly could not be reasoned with. They had to be tied up like animals just to control them. Our government wouldn't do that to people if it didn't have to, so clearly it had to. To think otherwise would be inappropriate, disloyal, disobedient. It was best to think what we were told to think, and if most of those people in Guantanamo turned out to be innocent, well at least they weren't real people like us.

And so we gave up 800 years of civil rights. We tore up the Magna Carta. Because people should have the right to a trial only when the government doesn't tell us they are guilty. We gave up our opposition

**We were not driven by blind vengeance. We were civilized ... We weren't monsters. We didn't torture or cut people's heads off**

## WAR ON WAR

**If we gave bin Laden a semi-fair trial, how would we explain denying one to so many other people?**

to torture. We abandoned our trepidation regarding aggressive wars. We sat silent as President Obama declared his right to assassinate Americans and threw a whistleblower, naked, into a 6' x 12' cell in Virginia. We asked Congress to obey the president and the media to cheer for our team. And we watched lots of movies.

The cool thing about movies is that torture works. Completely unlike reality, the torture victim always tells the truth in movies. And killing people works great, too. It doesn't disturb the killer at all or have any nasty side effects. People backing the same cause as the victim never appear as the credits are rolling. Happily ever after is what comes from killing people. The best thing for us to do, unless we're busy shopping, is to cheer and scream like deranged maniacs whose team just won the super bowl.

### **War did nothing**

And so, after 10 years of shredding the rule of law, hiring mercenary armies, invading helpless unarmed countries, causing the deaths of over a million people, and learning to love torture, all of this warfare did absolutely nothing to locate Osama bin Laden, who was hiding near the capital of a country to which we had decided to allow nuclear bombs and to give billions of dollars. We fought a war in Iraq on the pretense that Iraq was giving bin Laden nukes, while bin Laden was hiding out in a nuclear nation and almost certainly with the knowledge of that nation's military.

Pakistan is now on call should Saudi Arabia need any troops to kill its own people, the United States having heeded bin Laden's demand and pulled its troops out to deploy them elsewhere in the region – a region in which our government supports and arms dictators until they are nonviolently overthrown or, as in Libya, a rebel force led by a

CIA stooge can be backed instead. Only massive ignorance can continue to ask “Why do they hate us?”

And so, after nearly a decade, our government bothered to look for bin Laden, found him, and murdered him. But what choice did they have? A truly fair trial would always involve the risk of acquittal. A semi-fair trial would have risked bringing up undesirable topics, such as the US failure to prevent 9-11, our decades' old support for bin Laden, bin Laden's evasion of the US in 2001 and ever since, bin Laden's reasons for 9-11, and the question of precedent.

If we gave bin Laden a semi-fair trial, how would we explain denying one to so many other people? And a truly unfair military trial would have made the United States look even worse. As a CIA guy told me on the radio: killing him was “cleaner.”

Who else used to talk about killing people in terms of cleanliness, I forget? But that's what we do now. We don't try people as we tried the Nazis. We don't lock people up and torture them. We kill them. It's cleaner. And then we dance in the streets cheering for the killing. But killing Saddam Hussein didn't bring peace. Killing Muammar Gadaffi will not bring peace any more than killing his children and grandchildren has. Killing Osama bin Laden will bring no peace and is no justice.

Non-violently overthrowing the governments of Tunisia and Egypt and Yemen points us in a better direction, albeit one we can't picture from Hollywood movies in our heads.

Enough is enough.

End the war without end.

Bring the troops and contractors and mercenaries home. **CT**

*David Swanson's latest book is **War Is A Lie** – <http://warisalie.org>*

**READ THE BEST OF TOM ENGELHARDT**  
<http://coldtype.net/tom.html>



# Where is your democracy?

49 countries now make missile carrying drones, writes **Kathy Kelly**, who wonders when one will be aimed at the United States

**O**n May 4, 2011, CNN World News asked whether killing Osama bin Laden was legal under international law. Other news commentary has questioned whether it would have been both possible and advantageous to bring Osama bin Laden to trial rather than kill him.

World attention has been focused, however briefly, on questions of legality regarding the killing of Osama bin Laden. But, with the increasing use of Predator drones to kill suspected “high value targets” in Pakistan and Afghanistan, extrajudicial killings by US military forces have become the new norm.

Just three days after Osama bin Laden was killed, an attack employing remote-control aerial drones killed 15 people in Pakistan and wounded four. CNN reports that their Islamabad bureau has counted four drone strikes over the last month and a half since the March 17 drone attack which killed 44 people in Pakistan’s tribal region.

This most recent suspected strike was the 21st this year. There were 111 strikes in 2010. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan estimated that 957 innocent civilians were killed in 2010.

I’m reminded of an encounter I had, in May, 2010, when a journalist and a social worker from North Waziristan met with a small Voices for Creative Nonviolence delegation in Pakistan and described, in gory

and graphic detail, the scenes of drone attacks which they had personally witnessed: the carbonized bodies, burned so fully they could be identified by legs and hands alone, the bystanders sent flying like dolls through the air to break, with shattered bones and sometimes-fatal brain injuries, upon walls and stone.

## Do the people know?

“Do Americans know about the drones?” the journalist asked me. I said I thought that awareness was growing on university campuses and among peace groups. “This isn’t what I’m asking,” he politely insisted. “What I want to know is if average Americans know that their country is attacking Pakistan with drones that carry bombs. Do they know this?”

“Truthfully,” I said, “I don’t think so.”

“Where is your democracy?” he asked me. “Where is your democracy?”

Ideally, in a democracy, people are educated about important matters, and they can influence decisions about these issues by voting for people who represent their point of view.

Only a handful of US officials have broached the issue of whether or not it is right for the US to use unmanned aerial vehicles to function as prosecutor, judge, jury and executioner in the decision to assassinate anyone designated as a “high value tar-

**With the increasing use of Predator drones to kill suspected “high value targets” in Pakistan and Afghanistan, extrajudicial killings by US military forces have become the new norm**

## OFF TARGET

**Who knows?  
One day drone  
missiles may be  
aimed at us**

get” in faraway Pakistan or Afghanistan.

Would we want unmanned aerial vehicles piloted by another country to fly over the US, targeting individuals deemed to be a threat to the safety of their people, firing Hellfire missiles or dropping 500 pound bombs over suspected “high value targets” on the hunch of a soldier or general without evidence and without any consideration of which innocent civilians will also be killed?

Fully informed citizens might be invited to consider the Golden Rule of “do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” but they would certainly be involved in the debate over how we will be treated in future years and decades when these weapons have proliferated.

In 1945, only one country possessed the atomic bomb, but within decades, the “nuclear club” had expanded to five declared and four non-declared nuclear-armed states in a much less certain world. Besides the risk of nuclear war, this weapon proliferation has consumed resources that could have been directed toward feeding a hungry world or eradicating disease or easing the effects of impoverishment.

### **Big business in drones**

As of now, worldwide, 49 companies make 450 different drone aircraft. Drone merchants expect that drone sales will earn \$20.2 billion over the next 10 years for aerospace war manufacturers [connection. [ebscohost.com/c/articles/59293062/unmanned-ambitions](http://ebscohost.com/c/articles/59293062/unmanned-ambitions)]. Who knows? One day drone missiles may be aimed at us.

Also worth noting is the observation that drones will make it politically convenient for any country to order military actions without risking their soldiers’ lives, thereby making it easier, and more tempting, to start wars which may eventually escalate to result in massive loss of life, both military and civilian.

Voices for Creative Nonviolence believes that standing alongside people who bear

the brunt of our wars helps us gain needed insights. Where you stand determines what you see.

In October and again in December of 2010, while in Afghanistan, I met with a large family living in a wretched refugee camp. They had fled their homes in the San Gin district of the Helmand Province after a drone attack killed a mother there and her five children. The woman’s husband showed us photos of his children’s bloodied corpses. His niece, Juma Gul, age 9, had survived the attack. She and I huddled next to each other inside a hut made of mud on a chilly December morning. Juma Gul’s father stooped in front of us and gently unzipped her jacket, showing me that his daughter’s arm had been amputated by shrapnel when the US missile hit their home in San Gin. Next to Juma Gul was her brother, whose leg had been mangled in the attack. He apparently has no access to adequate medical care and experiences constant pain.

It’s impossible to conjecture what would have happened had Osama bin Laden been apprehended and brought to appear before a court of law, charged with crimes against humanity because of his alleged role in masterminding the 9/11 attacks. But, I feel certain beyond doubt that Juma Gul posed no threat whatsoever to the US, and if she were brought before a court of law and witnesses were helped to understand that she was attacked by a US unmanned aerial vehicle for no reason other than that she happened to live in proximity to a potential high value target, she would be vindicated of any suspicion that she committed a crime. The same might not be true for those who attacked her. **CT**

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co-coordinates Voices for Creative  
Nonviolence. Visit [www.vcnv.org](http://www.vcnv.org) for a  
resource packet on drone warfare  
<http://vcnv.org/drone-resisting-sanitized-remote-control-death>*

# Why facts no longer matter

**Danny Schechter** tells how media outlets have become the new carnival buskers

**H**ow should we understand this latest and most troubling insight into the reality of our media ecology?

In the aftermath of the resolution of the Great Birther bash-up, even as President Obama tried to lay the issue at rest by producing the document that showed, proved, verified, documented, and validated his birth in one of the great states of our disunion, it was said that its release would only fuel more debate, and convince no one.

In other words, in the end, this long debated fact didn't matter. Facts no longer seem to matter on other issues, too, as articulated in the now infamous memo issued by retiring Senator Jon Kyle whose office, when confronted with evidence that he misspoke on the matter of how much money Planned Parenthood spent on abortions – he claimed 90%, the truth was but 3%, issued an advisory that said, “The statement was not meant to be factual.”

Jon Stewart's Daily Show and Stephen Colbert had a lot of fun with that but one thing that's not funny is that even when media coverage discredits or exposes some canard, public opinion is not necessarily impacted.

It doesn't change the minds of those whose minds are made up. Once some people buy into a narrative or worldview they seem to be locked into a way of thinking. For some, efforts to discredit a conspiracy theory

offer more evidence that the conspiracy is valid, because why else would THEY want to refute it.

If you don't trust the President, don't believe he is an American or do believe he is a socialist, nothing he or his supporters say will change your mind. After all, what would you expect them to say? So even refutation can turn into reinforcement and trigger more stridency.

Dismissing critics as “silly,” as Obama has done, only annoys them and makes them more determined to cling to their ideas, attitudes and anger.

The values (and prejudices) people grew up with often shape their worldviews. Their parochialism limits what they are exposed to. Their schooling and narrow range of experience seem to have had little impact in broadening their views.

Political scientist Thomas Patterson describes this as “The process by which individuals acquire their political opinions is called political socialization. This process begins in childhood, when, through family and school, Americans acquire many of their basic political values and beliefs. Socialization continues into adulthood, when peers, political institutions and leaders, and the news media are major influences.”

Writes Edward Song on *Huffington Post*, “For example, people who believe in health care reform value helping the poor and

**If you don't trust the President, don't believe he is an American or do believe he is a socialist, nothing he or his supporters say will change your mind. After all, what would you expect them to say?**

## SHAMEFUL MEDIA

**Their programs program the audience by constantly and continually framing issues in a trivial matter**

needy. For progressives, it is moral to help the poor.

“For conservatives, helping the poor is helping people who are irresponsible, and goes against their principle of individual responsibility. The conservative’s solution to poverty is called ‘Tough Love.’ Whether you believe in helping the poor is a matter of values and not a matter of logic. Believing otherwise is the big progressive mistake over the last 40 years.”

Conservative columnists like John Hawkins seem to subscribe to this view too. Writing on Townhall.com, he argues, “The sad truth of the matter is that most Americans don’t pay much attention to politics and those that do often just parrot doctrine instead of investigating issues with an open mind. This allows lies, myths, and dubious assertions to live on long after they should have shriveled and died in the light of day.”

Surprisingly, he also quotes JFK: “No matter how big the lie; repeat it often enough and the masses will regard it as the truth.”

Media outlets play a role in fashioning a culture of repetition, producing armies of “ditto heads” who are exposed to message-point pseudo journalism that they in turn regurgitate to advance partisan agendas. This approach is built into the design of the new polarizing and politicized media system.

This leads in the words of Vietnam War chronicler Tim O’Brian to how “you lose your sense of the definite, hence your sense of truth itself.” He was writing about military wars abroad but his insight applies to political wars at home as well. We are all becoming casualties of a media war in which democracy is collateral damage.

No surprisingly, the dominance of conservative media produces more people who align themselves as conservatives and will only understand the world that way. The shortage of progressive media outlets limits the mass circulation of progressive perspectives. No wonder the media marketplace is so devoid of competing ideas.

Beyond that, media outlets legitimize virtually all controversies as valid, however con-

trived they may be, just to have something to talk about. This legitimates subjects with the noise of continuing blather and contentious discussion featuring superficial analysis by unqualified pundits.

One consequence, according to GOP political consultant Mark McKinnon, is that voters cast ballots on attributes not issues. “They want to see the appearance of strength in leaders, and are less persuaded by what they say.”

### **Impressions, not facts**

That means news programs ultimately trade in fostering impressions, not conveying information. Viewers trust their feelings over facts. Remember, one of the most profitable formats on cable TV is not news but wrestling driven by cartoonish characters and invented confrontations. Is it any wonder that ratings hungry news programs take a similar approach to political combat. They are in the business of producing numbers for advertisers more than explanations for viewers.

John Cory commented on the media role in legitimating the birther issue and turning it into a form of entertainment, calling it a sorry and sad day for America,” as he asked, “What does it say about our ‘media’ that they have spent so much time and so much effort promoting crazy over reality? That our ‘media’ relishes circus clowns jumping out of their clown-cars and spraying clown-seltzer everywhere and then giddily covers the wet and stained audience reaction while ignoring the burning of fact?”

So, it is the media system itself, not Donald Trump or some crazy, that is the real “carnival barker”, to use the President’s words. Their programs program the audience by constantly and continually framing issues in a trivial matter. Manipulating emotion is their modality, doubt their currency and cynicism their methodology, except, of course, on issues like the economy, Israel or US wars. The shame of it is that they know what they are doing, know what the impact of what passes for “coverage” will be, but do it anyway.

**CT**

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# Need boots on the ground? Call Mr Transom

It began as a ‘no-flight zone’, now ‘boots are on the ground’ in Libya. Look where these words got us before, says **Philip Kraske**

**B**ill Clinton was Mr. Teflon, George W. Bush was The Cowboy, and it is clearer every day that President Barack Obama is Mr. Transom. Transom, that is, in the sense of “slipping it over without anybody making a fuss.” The One, as we all know, abhors a fuss.

Hence insurance-company control of health-care was slipped over the transom as “reform.” Lifetime imprisonment – sorry, “detention” – of men not involved in any declared war is slipped over because they are, conveniently, too dangerous to ever be let out. (The “detainees” must shake their heads in amazement at the fear their reputations inspire.)

What else? Withdrawal from Iraq isn’t quite withdrawal, Afghanistan is still too chaotic (and too full of American bases) to be released from the American grip, dictators who awaken the wrath of their people are urged by all good democratic peoples to resign, um, unless they have a massive US military base or allow US special forces to romp in their hills or, as with Bashar el-Assad, comfort the Israelis with their optometrical gravity. Yes, those cases are quietly passed over the transom into policy.

## Thin end of the wedge

The latest example of Transomism is Libya. Remember when we were all mulling over the virtues of the “no-flight zone”?

“Humanitarian intervention”? Ah, for the good old days. Turns out those were really the thin edge of the wedge. Once Nato started firing missiles at Gadaffi him still in power.

And now we are on to the next phase of the transom. Libyan loyalists – or at least the mercenaries who would like to live to see their paychecks – have taken the predictable step of getting close enough to the rebels and surrounding themselves with civilians to nullify the effect of airstrikes. So it turns out that boots on the ground really are necessary. The trouble for the Pentagon is, how to sell this phase to the public? Not to fear. Our smarmy mainstream media has risen handsomely to the challenge:

“With civilians dying daily in Misurata, the push is now for the broadest possible interpretation of the United Nations Security Council resolution allowing ‘all necessary means’ for the protection of the Libyan people and for, in the words of one person involved, ‘getting this over as quickly as possible.’ The talk here is of weeks rather than months,” writes the *New York Times* “Globalist” Roger Cohen.

Cohen is a poor writer, and in love with his position as a foreign-policy savant, but he is worth reading: he brings you the fine print of the empire’s line. Note how he greases the transom hinges: “as quickly as possible,” “weeks rather than months.”

**Remember when we were all mulling over the virtues of the “no-flight zone”?**  
**“Humanitarian intervention”?**  
**Ah, for the good old days**

## REGIME CHANGE

**Personally, I think that those crafty folks in military-security America knew with great precision what the consequences of intervention were – knew them way back when the rest of us were fretting about no-fly zones**

“This embryonic force is not going to defeat Gadaffi in the foreseeable future,” Cohen says of the rebels. He actually traveled to rebel-held Libya (“The tricolor is everywhere.”) to be able to write that. But the implication he makes is clear: advisers and trainers are necessary, but for weeks rather than months, if not in the foreseeable future.

James M. Dubik, in his *Times* op-ed article, finishes the grease job. He says of Cohen’s “embryonic force”: “To give them a fighting chance, NATO must put military advisers and combat air controllers on the ground – not just British, French and Italian, but also a small number of American ones.”

Once again we note: “Also a small number.” And another hinge of the transom is quieted.

He adds, “Such measures are essential, but they would require relaxing the Obama administration’s prohibition on the use of American ground forces.”

### Boots on the ground

And after American boots are on the ground, as Dubik writes, Americans will need to be a force shaping the new Libya and providing security as they do in Iraq. He’s surely right: Lots of Libyans are going to be damn angry about losing their government contracts, privileges, and probably a lot of property; and they’re going to blow up a few cars to express their dismay. Americans will need to jump in with medical care and statistics.

Dubik, a retired Army lieutenant general who oversaw the training of Iraqi troops for two years, sums up with painful naiveté: “The charade is over: America has intervened in a civil war with the de facto aim of regime change in Libya. Washington must now accept that decision and face its consequences.”

Personally, I think that those crafty folks in military-security America knew with great precision what the consequences of intervention were – knew them way back when the rest of us were fretting about no-fly zones. After all, they’ve been through the same drill, with not much variation, in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

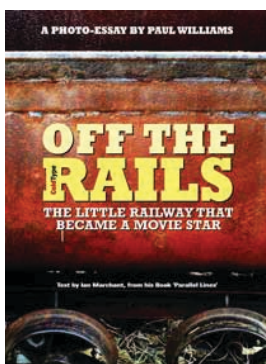
Oil-rich country, runaway Arab liberation spree that needs to be headed off, crappy army, a huge land area jutting far into the new Chinese playground and just thirsting for an American base or three. How could they resist?

All it took was that magic phrase “all necessary means,” in the U.N. Resolution. There’s nothing that a Pentagon general likes more than that word all – so simple, so far-reaching, so flexible, so all. Because once you’re in, you’re in till the end, whatever you want that to be.

Thank you, Mr. Transom.

**CT**

*Philip Kraske’s latest novel is Flight In February (Eyestorms Books), available at Amazon.com. Read the first chapter at [www.philipkraske.com](http://www.philipkraske.com)*



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# Harper can't beat the BS-detector

**Michael Keefer** on the misguided campaign by Canada's PM Stephen Harper to buy not-so-stealthy US fighter bombers

**S**tephen Harper's campaign to persuade Canadians of the merits of the Lockheed-Martin F-35A Joint Strike Fighter has been a stealthy one. But has he successfully evaded the BS-detector radar defences of the Canadian electorate?

## 1. A stealthy price?

Mr. Harper has told us – in that bored-Sunday-school-teacher tone of patient exasperation that seems to be his native accent – that the 65 F-35As he bargained for at a cost of just \$75 million Canadian each are a “good deal” for this country.

But there are problems with that price-tag – a figure which, as defence journalist David Pugliese notes, “is nowhere to be found in official US government reports on the aircraft.”

The US Government Accountability Office (GAO) “has warned about serious ongoing problems with the aircraft and rising costs,” and estimates “that the F-35 model that Canada is buying will cost between \$110 to \$115 million per plane.”

US Vice Admiral David Venlet, who heads the F-35 Joint Program Office, testified to a US congressional committee in March 2011 that his confident “procurement cost estimate” for the F-35A, the conventional take-off and landing model that Stephen Harper wants, is “\$126.6 million (including \$15 million for the engine).”

Winslow Wheeler, a former defence procurement analyst with the GAO and currently Director of the Straus Military Reform Project of the Washington, DC Center for Defense Information, warns that the F-35As, including their engines, will probably cost Canada “around \$148 million” each.

Recently defeated in the general Election (and since resigned) Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff has said that the price per unit will amount to some \$156-million US when a maintenance contract is included.

Steven Staples, President of the Rideau Institute and founder of Ceasefire.ca, noted in January 2011 that “Canadians are being asked to spend between \$16 and \$21 billion of public dollars in initial purchase and maintenance costs, according to Department of National Defence estimates, [...] without a clear explanation of why [F-35s] are needed for our protection.” According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, however, the DND estimates are misleading: the F-35 program's full cost to Canada will be more like \$29.3-billion, or \$450-million for each plane over its planned lifetime.

Stephen Harper does indeed have supporters in this debate. Prominent among them is retired General Paul Manson, former Chief of the Defence Staff – who in January 2011 stealthily neglected to say, when he co-authored an *Ottawa Citizen* op-ed piece

**“Canadians are being asked to spend between \$16 and \$21 billion of public dollars in initial purchase and maintenance costs ... without a clear explanation of why [F-35s] are needed for our protection”**

## BELOW THE RADAR

**Shortly after the Pentagon cancelled the second engine program in March 2011, all twelve of the F-35 test planes had to be grounded due an in-flight failure of both electrical generators in one of the Pratt & Whitney engines**

pushing the F-35 deal, that he is also a former Chairman of Lockheed Martin Canada, and a former member of the Board of that same company.

When he's not in stealth mode, General Manson's default posture seems to be bluster: his notion of refuting Winslow Wheeler's critique of the F-35 deal is to denounce it as "a low-credibility rant by an American visitor from a left-wing Washington organization renowned for its anti-defence posture." (That would be the Center for Defense Information, "an organization founded by retired American generals and admirals.")

### **2. Stealthy engines?**

There may be problems not just with the F-35A's price, but with its engine as well. The Pentagon's original procurement plans called for the development of two competing engine models, one by Pratt & Whitney, and the other by General Electric and Rolls-Royce. Shortly after the Pentagon cancelled the second engine program in March 2011, all twelve of the F-35 test planes had to be grounded due an in-flight failure of both electrical generators in one of the Pratt & Whitney engines.

That little glitch may evoke unhappy memories among retired air force pilots of another Lockheed single-engine fighter, the CF-104 Starfighter, which entered service with the Canadian air force in 1962. Canada had a total of 200 CF-104s, of which fully 110 were lost in accidents, many of them engine flame-outs. The surviving Lawn Darts, or Widowmakers, as pilots called them, were replaced by two-engine CF-18s during the 1980s.

We should be asking whether it makes sense for an air force that flies fighter planes, sometimes in difficult weather conditions, out of bases like Cold Lake, Alberta and Goose Bay, Labrador, to send its pilots up in single-engine aircraft.

But Stephen Harper appears to have finessed the engine question by quoting a price for the F-35A that includes neither the program's rapidly escalating development

costs over the past several years nor – more basically – the cost of supplying these aircraft with engines.

Is it possible, one might wonder, that Harper actually means it when he sits down at the piano to warble out John Lennon's peace anthem, "Imagine"? Is he willing to buy fighter-bombers, yes, but not the engines that would get them into the air, where they might harm other human beings – or even other fifth-generation fighter aircraft, like the Chinese J-20 and the Russian Sukhoi 35S and T50 PAK SA? Or are Harper's "Imagine" and his fiddling with F-35 figures just two more instances of stealth behaviour?

### **3. A not-so-stealthy aircraft?**

There appear to be problems, finally, with the F-35s performance. Perhaps most strikingly, the plane's geometry means that it is significantly stealthy (that is, able to avoid early detection and 'lock-on' by enemy radar) only from directly in front. Together with recent and ongoing improvements in air defence radar systems, this suggests that the F-35 will be unable to reliably carry out its primary ground-attack role unless air defences have already been disabled by more capably stealthy fighters like the F22.

In other respects as well the F-35 has been harshly criticized. Winslow Wheeler has called the aircraft a "gigantic performance disappointment," with sluggish aerodynamics and merely average performance as a bomber. Although it is being marketed as a multi-role aircraft, the F-35 appears to be overmatched by other currently available fighter aircraft, in terms both of the weaponry it can carry and its powers of evasion. One expert has quoted Major Richard Koch, chief of the USAF Air Combat Command's advanced air dominance branch, as saying: "I wake up in a cold sweat at the thought of the F-35 going in with only two air-dominance weapons." And in a recent computer-simulation wargame conducted in Australia which matched F-35s against new-generation



Russian fighters, the F-35s were outmaneuvered, out-climbed, and outrun – or, as one report brutally put it, they were “clubbed like baby seals.”

Some of the basic facts about the F-35’s limitations have been usefully summarized by the Australian expert, and F-35 opponent, Carlo Kopp:

“The F-35 is an aircraft which was defined as a battlefield interdicator, intended to attack and destroy hostile battlefield ground forces, once opposing air defences have been stripped away by the much more capable, and now cheaper F-22 Raptor. The JSF aircraft was defined for a very narrow niche role, and its intended performance and capabilities were constrained to avoid overlapping other US Air Force capability niches, such as ‘deep strike’ occupied by the F-15E and F-22A, and ‘air dominance’, occupied by the F-22A.

“The actual F-35 aircraft, as it has ‘de-evolved’ through a problematic and protracted development process, shows all the signs of falling well below the promised and mediocre performance targets set in the original definition document.

“[...] What is remarkable about the Canadian government decision to pursue the F-35 is that it occurred during a period where the failure of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is patently obvious, well documented publicly, and provable by reading a myriad of US and non-US public documents.”

A lucid alternative to the F-35A program

has been advanced by Steven Staples of the Rideau Institute and published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. He proposes, first, abandoning so-called “expeditionary” roles for the Canadian air force. (And why not? Since the Cold War that justified Canada stationing interceptors and fighter-bombers in Western Europe is long past, of what conceivable use are F-35s abroad, unless to participate in dubious and illegal resource wars like the one currently underway in Libya?)

Staples suggests extending the life of Canada’s existing CF-18s by restricting them to a domestic air defence and air surveillance and control role, and considering less expensive alternatives to the F-35. (These might include modernized versions of the current CF-18 Super Hornet, or other aircraft such as the Saab Gripen or the Dassault Rafale – and, for other purposes, the coming generation of long-range, long-endurance pilotless aircraft.)

We could then, Staples says, use the money saved by these measures “to contribute to Canadian and global security in more effective ways.” **CT**

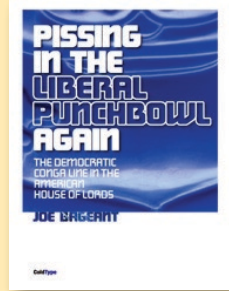
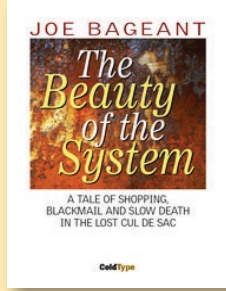
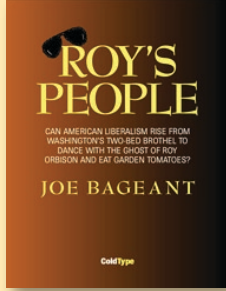
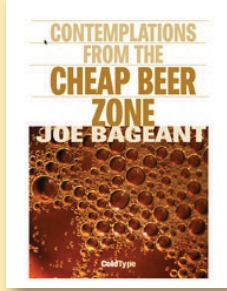
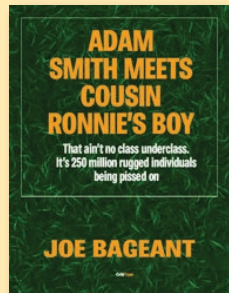
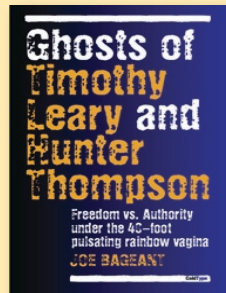
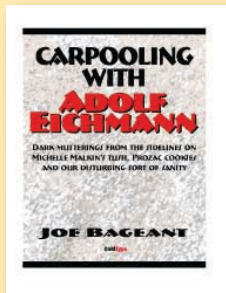
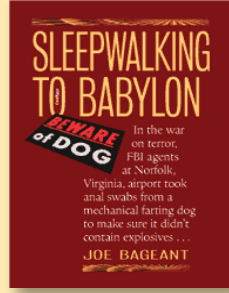
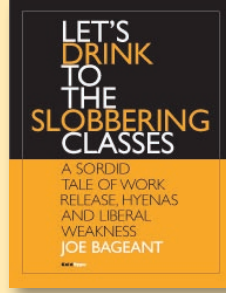
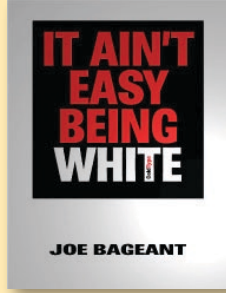
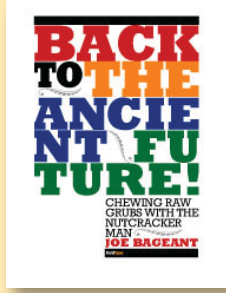
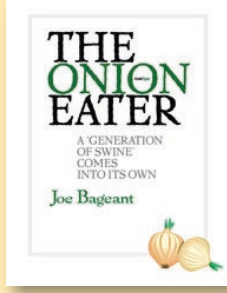
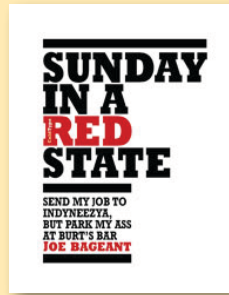
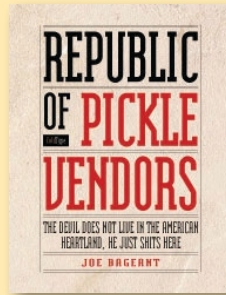
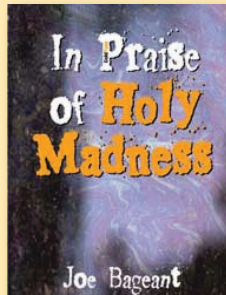
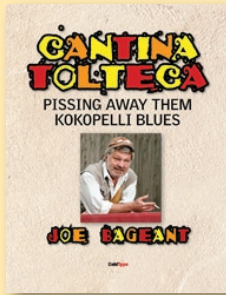
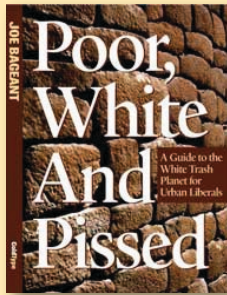
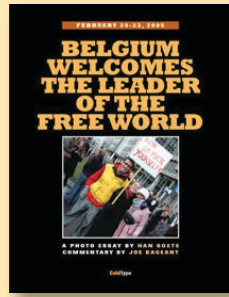
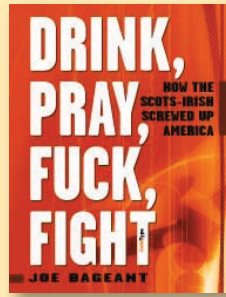
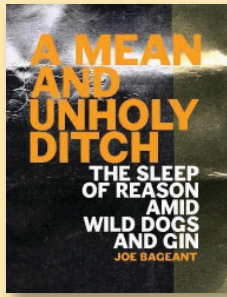
*Michael Keefer is a graduate of the Royal Military College of Canada, the University of Toronto, and Sussex University. He is a Professor in the School of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph, where he has taught since 1990, and former President of the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English.*

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# Traveling along the highway of death

**John W. Whitehead** is angered by the continuing carnage and slaughter that is being conducted in our name

*“Now thou art come unto a feast of death.” – Shakespeare, 1 Henry VI 4.5.7*

**W**ar is not about territories. War is not about oil. War is not even about winners and losers. In the end, all that can really be said is that war is about killing. It is about the taking of human life.

“No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main,” wrote John Donne. “Any man’s death diminishes me because I am involved in Mankind...”

If this is so, then we belong to a race of human beings that has been greatly diminished over time. In fact, one “atrocitologist” estimates that roughly 174 million people died in the 20th century alone due to acts of war, genocide and tyranny.

War is also about the loss of humanity – a loss that has become an inherent part of modern-day warfare. And with every new death, civilian or otherwise, we lose yet another piece of our humanity and regress toward our primitive, animal instincts. This is what we must grapple with in the wake of the reported assassination of Osama bin Laden and the NATO airstrike said to have claimed the lives of leader Muammar Gaddafi’s 29-year-old son and three young grandchildren. Whether or not it was actually bin Laden or Gaddafi’s relatives who were killed,

as some have questioned, is not the issue. As CIA Director Leon Panetta remarked, “Bin Laden is dead. Al-Qaida is not.”

In other words, while Americans may be celebrating the death of “the most infamous terrorist of our time,” seeing it as a fitting act of retribution for the innocent lives lost on 9/11, the war effort is far from over. Indeed, America’s military response to 9/11 has spawned such blowback in the Middle East that we now find ourselves in a permanent state of war.

As a result, the war machine will continue unimpeded and the civilian death toll will rise higher with every passing day. All the while, most Americans, comforted by expressions of patriotism and pride in their military, distracted by mindless entertainment, technological gadgets and materialistic pursuits, and relatively insulated from the devastation being wrought overseas, seem to be unconcerned about the escalating costs of war – in dollars and lives. Even as these endless wars drag America to the brink of bankruptcy, both financially and morally, most Americans continue to live in a state of denial about the part we have played – are playing – in this bloody tragedy.

Modern technology totally dehumanizes warfare and, in the process, totally dehumanizes us as human beings. While it allows us to wage battles from afar, modern technological warfare also reduces the act of killing

**Even as these endless wars drag America to the brink of bankruptcy, both financially and morally, most Americans continue to live in a state of denial about the part we have played – are playing – in this bloody tragedy**

## WAR MACHINE

**A report submitted to the Commission of Inquiry for the International War Crimes Tribunal stated that those killed were Palestinian and Kuwaiti civilians trying to escape the siege of Kuwait City and the return of Kuwaiti armed forces**

human beings to nothing more than targeting blips on a screen – a macabre video game with faceless victims and no danger of someone shooting back. And when an American drone annihilates innocent civilians in some far-away land, this is simply written off as yet another technological blip.

I was an infantry officer in the Army from 1969 to 1971. Men in my platoon who had served time in Vietnam told me many stories – but none more chilling than the one from two helicopter pilots. They told me how they would shoot the “friendlies” on their way back from reconnaissance missions just so they could empty their ammunition before returning to base. The “friendlies” were South Vietnamese women and children, helpless victims in a war they did not understand. But to the American pilots, they were simply dots on the ground.

This is what warfare does to so-called civilized people. Unfortunately, these “joy killings” are not isolated instances. Take, for instance, a US-led attack that occurred during the Gulf War on the night of February 26–27, 1991, after Saddam Hussein announced a complete troop withdrawal from Kuwait in compliance with U.N. resolutions.

### **Highway slaughter**

On a 60-mile stretch of road from Mutlaa, Kuwait, to Basra, Iraq, a convoy of more than 2,000 vehicles and tens of thousands of Iraqi soldiers and civilians were fleeing. These were people who were putting up no resistance, many with no weapons, leaving in cars, trucks, carts and on foot. The American armed forces bombed one end of the main highway from Kuwait City to Basra, sealing it off, then bombed the other end of the highway, sealing it off. They positioned mechanized artillery units on the hill overlooking the area and then, both from the air and the land, massacred every living thing on the road. Fighter bombers, helicopter gunships and armored battalions poured merciless firepower on those trapped in the traffic jams, backed up as much as 20 miles. One US pilot reportedly said, “It was

like shooting fish in a barrel.” That fateful stretch of road has since been dubbed the “Highway of Death.”

A report submitted to the Commission of Inquiry for the International War Crimes Tribunal stated that those killed were Palestinian and Kuwaiti civilians trying to escape the siege of Kuwait City and the return of Kuwaiti armed forces. The report claimed that no attempt was made by US military command to distinguish between military personnel and civilians.

Pictures taken after the attack show charred and dismembered bodies. Some of these photographs can be viewed by clicking on the link for Peter Turnley’s photo essay, “The Unseen Gulf War” – <http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0212/pto1.html> – Ramsey Clark, a former US Attorney General under Lyndon Johnson, suggested the carnage could only have resulted from the use of napalm, phosphorus or other incendiary bombs – anti-personnel weapons outlawed under the 1977 Geneva Protocols.

The killing did not stop with the Gulf War. Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the American government dispatched its arsenal of deadly weapons to Afghanistan to quash Osama bin Laden and the Al-Qaida network – but to no avail. And once again, there were reports of the indiscriminate killing of civilians by American forces where entire villages were wiped out and women and children lay dead on the cold earth of Afghanistan. Then the American military industrial complex trained its sights on Iraq, once again unleashing its awesome war machine. And the carnage continued, made even worse by horrifying reports of Iraqi prisoners being tortured, raped and subjected to all manner of other abuses at the hands of US soldiers.

Most recently, reports and photos have surfaced of a so-called “kill team” comprised of US soldiers in Afghanistan who murdered innocent civilians, mutilated their corpses, and then photographed the kills. As *Rolling Stone* magazine reported, “The photos, obtained by *Rolling Stone*, portray a front-line culture among US troops in which killing Af-

ghan civilians is less a reason for concern than a cause for celebration. 'Most people within the unit disliked the Afghan people, whether it was the Afghan National Police, the Afghan National Army or locals,' one soldier explained to investigators. 'Everyone would say they're savages.' One photo shows a hand missing a finger. Another depicts a severed head being maneuvered with a stick, and still more show bloody body parts, blown-apart legs, mutilated torsos. Several show dead Afghans, lying on the ground or on Stryker vehicles, with no weapons in view."

Despite the rising death toll among the military and civilians, despite the cost to the economy (the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan alone have already cost more than \$1 trillion), despite the fact that the American military, acting as an international police force, is spread dangerously thin, despite the fact that Congress has yet to actually declare war against most of the countries in which America is making war (thus undermining the one thing that stands between us and tyranny - our Constitution), the Ameri-

can government continues to bang the war drums. And when all is said and done, after all the blather about national security and fighting terrorism and defending freedom abroad have died down, if these endless wars amount to anything at all, it is nothing less than the utter destruction of every decent and noble ideal for which America is supposed to stand.

The fact that modern technological warfare is turning human beings into non-feeling killing machines should cause us to tremble. It should give us reason to pause and question how we could let ourselves travel so far down the road to perdition. We have placed others on the highway of death. In the end, however, it is we who are traveling the highway of death. May God help us all. **CT**

*John W. Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His new book **The Freedom Wars** (TRI Press) is available online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). He can be contacted at [johnw@rutherford.org](mailto:johnw@rutherford.org)*

**If these endless wars amount to anything at all, it is nothing less than the utter destruction of every decent and noble ideal for which America is supposed to stand**

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## HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



# Humanitarian intervention, again!

We've been along this path before. Don't we ever learn from our mistakes?, wonders **William Blum**

**If you went into surgery to correct a knee problem and the surgeon mistakenly amputated your entire leg, what would you think if someone then remarked to you how nice it was that "you actually no longer have a knee problem, thank God." ... The people of Iraq no longer have a saddam problem**

**O**n April 9, Condoleezza Rice delivered a talk in San Francisco. Or tried to. The former Secretary of State was interrupted repeatedly by cries from the audience of "war criminal" and "torturer". (For which we can thank our comrades in Code Pink and World Can't Wait.) As one of the protesters was being taken away by security guards, Rice made the kind of statement that has now become standard for high American officials under such circumstances: "Aren't you glad this lady lives in a democracy where she can express her opinion?" She also threw in another line that's become de rigueur since the US overthrew Saddam Hussein, an argument that's used when all other arguments fail: "The children of Iraq are actually not living under Saddam Hussein, thank God."

My response to such a line is this: If you went into surgery to correct a knee problem and the surgeon mistakenly amputated your entire leg, what would you think if someone then remarked to you how nice it was that "you actually no longer have a knee problem, thank God." ... The people of Iraq no longer have a Saddam problem.

Unfortunately, they've lost just about everything else as well. Twenty years of American bombing, invasion, occupation and torture have led to the people of that unhappy land losing their homes, their schools, their electricity, their clean water,

their environment, their neighborhoods, their archaeology, their jobs, their careers, their professionals, their state-run enterprises, their physical health, their mental health, their health care, their welfare state, their women's rights, their religious tolerance, their safety, their security, their children, their parents, their past, their present, their future, their lives ... more than half the population either dead, disabled, in prison, or in foreign exile ... the air, soil, water, blood and genes drenched with depleted uranium ... the most awful birth defects ... unexploded cluster bombs lie in wait for children ... a river of blood runs alongside the Euphrates and Tigris ... through a country that may never be put back together again.

In 2006, the UN special investigator on torture declared that reports from Iraq indicated that torture "is totally out of hand. The situation is so bad many people say it is worse than it has been in the times of Saddam Hussein." Another UN report of the same time disclosed a rise in "honor killings" of women.

"It is a common refrain among war-weary Iraqis that things were better before the US-led invasion in 2003," reported the *Washington Post* on May 5, 2007.

"I am not a political person, but I know that under Saddam Hussein, we had electricity, clean drinking water, a healthcare system that was the envy of the Arab world

and free education through college,” Iraqi pharmacist Dr. Entisar Al-Arabi told American peace activist Medea Benjamin in 2010. “I have five children and every time I had a baby, I was entitled to a year of paid maternity leave. I owned a pharmacy and I could close up shop as late as I chose because the streets were safe. Today there is no security and Iraqis have terrible shortages of everything – electricity, food, water, medicines, even gasoline. Most of the educated people have fled the country, and those who remain look back longingly to the days of Saddam Hussein.”

And this from two months ago:

“Protesters, human rights workers and security officials say the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has responded to Iraq’s demonstrations in much the same way as many of its more authoritarian neighbors: with force. Witnesses in Baghdad and as far north as Kirkuk described watching last week as security forces in black uniforms, tracksuits and T-shirts roared up in trucks and Humvees, attacked protesters, rounded up others from cafes and homes and hauled them off, blindfolded, to army detention centers. Entire neighborhoods ... were blockaded to prevent residents from joining the demonstrations. Journalists were beaten.”

So ... can we expect the United States and its fellow thugs in NATO to intervene militarily in Iraq as they’re doing in Libya? To protect the protesters in Iraq as they tell us they’re doing in Libya? To effect regime change in Iraq as they’re conspiring, but not admitting, in Libya?

Similarly Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Syria ... all have been bursting with protest and vicious government crackdown in recent months, even to a degree in Saudi Arabia, one of the most repressive societies in the world. Not one of these governments has been assaulted by the United States, the UK, or France as Libya has been assaulted; not one of these countries’ opposition is receiving military, financial, legal and moral support from the Western powers as the

Libyan rebels are – despite the Libyan rebels’ brutal behavior, racist murders, and the clear jihadist ties of some of them. The Libyan rebels are reminiscent of the Kosovo rebels – mafiosos famous for their trafficking in body parts and women, also unquestioningly supported by the Western powers against an Officially Designated Enemy, Serbia.

So why is only Libya the target for US/NATO missiles? Is there some principled or moral reason? Are the Libyans the worst abusers of their people in the region? In actuality, Libya offers its citizens a higher standard of living. (The 2010 UN Human Development Index, a composite measure of health, education and income ranked Libya first in Africa.) None of the other countries has a more secular government than Libya. (In contrast some of the Libyan rebels are in the habit of chanting that phrase we all know only too well: “Allah Akbar”.) None of the others has a human-rights record better than that of Libya, however imperfect that may be – in Egypt a government fact-finding mission has announced that during the recent uprising at least 846 protesters were killed as police forces shot them in the head and chest with live ammunition. Similar horror stories have been reported in Syria, Yemen and other countries of the region during this period.

It should be noted that the ultra-conservative Fox News reported on February 28: “As the United Nations works feverishly to condemn Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi for cracking down on protesters, the body’s Human Rights Council is poised to adopt a report chock-full of praise for Libya’s human rights record. The review commends Libya for improving educational opportunities, for making human rights a “priority” and for bettering its “constitutional” framework. Several countries, including Iran, Venezuela, North Korea, and Saudi Arabia but also Canada, give Libya positive marks for the legal protections afforded to its citizens – who are now revolting against the regime and facing bloody reprisal.”

Of all the accusations made against Gad-

**The Libyan rebels are reminiscent of the Kosovo rebels – mafiosos famous for their trafficking in body parts and women, also unquestioningly supported by the Western powers against an Officially Designated Enemy, Serbia**

## ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

**Gaddafi's principal crime in the eyes of US President Ronald Reagan (1981-89) was not that he supported terrorist groups, but that he supported the wrong terrorist groups; i.e., Gaddafi was not supporting the same terrorists that Washington was**

dafi perhaps the most meaningless is the oft-repeated: "He's killing his own people." It's true, but that's what happens in civil wars. Abraham Lincoln also killed his own people.

Muammar Gaddafi has been an Officially Designated Enemy of the US longer than any living world leader except Fidel Castro. The animosity began in 1970, one year after Gaddafi took power in a coup, when he closed down a US air force base. He then embarked on a career of supporting what he regarded as revolutionary groups. During the 1970s and '80s, Gaddafi was accused of using his large oil revenues to support – with funds, arms, training, havens, diplomacy, etc – a wide array of radical/insurgent/terrorist organizations, particularly certain Palestinian factions and Muslim dissident and minority movements in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia; the IRA and Basque and Corsican separatists in Europe; several groups engaged in struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa; various opposition groups and politicians in Latin America; the Japanese Red Army, the Italian Red Brigades, and Germany's Baader-Meinhof gang.

It was claimed as well that Libya was behind, or at least somehow linked to, an attempt to blow up the US Embassy in Cairo, various plane hijackings, a bomb explosion on an American airliner over Greece, the blowing up of a French airliner over Africa, blowing up a synagogue in Istanbul, and blowing up a disco in Berlin which killed some American soldiers.

In 1990, when the United States needed a country to (falsely) blame for the bombing of PanAm flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, Libya was the easy choice.

Gaddafi's principal crime in the eyes of US President Ronald Reagan (1981-89) was not that he supported terrorist groups, but that he supported the wrong terrorist groups; i.e., Gaddafi was not supporting the same terrorists that Washington was, such as the Nicaraguan Contras, UNITA in Angola, Cuban exiles in Miami, the governments of El Salvador and Guatemala, and the US

military in Grenada. The one band of terrorists the two men supported in common was the Moujahedeen in Afghanistan.

And if all this wasn't enough to make Gaddafi Public Enemy Number One in Washington (Reagan referred to him as the "mad dog of the Middle East"), Gaddafi has been a frequent critic of US foreign policy, a serious anti-Zionist, pan-Africanist, and pan-Arabist (until the hypocrisy and conservatism of Arab governments proved a barrier). He also calls his government socialist. How much tolerance and patience can The Empire be expected to have? When widespread protests broke out in Tunisia and Egypt, could Washington have resisted instigating the same in the country sandwiched between those two? The CIA has been very busy supplying the rebels with arms, bombing support, money, and personnel.

It may well happen that the Western allies will succeed in forcing Gaddafi out of power. Then the world will look on innocently as the new Libyan government gives Washington what it has long sought: a host-country site for Africom, the US Africa Command, one of six regional commands the Pentagon has divided the world into. Many African countries approached to be the host have declined, at times in relatively strong terms. Africom at present is headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany. According to a State Department official: "We've got a big image problem down there. ... Public opinion is really against getting into bed with the US. They just don't trust the US." Another thing scarcely any African country would tolerate is an American military base. There's only one such base in Africa, in Djibouti. Watch for one in Libya sometime after the dust has settled. It'll be situated close to the American oil wells. Or perhaps the people of Libya will be given a choice – an American base or a NATO base.

And remember – in the context of recent history concerning Iraq, North Korea, and Iran – if Libya had nuclear weapons the United States would not be attacking it.



Or the United States could realize that Gaddafi is no radical threat simply because of his love for Condoleezza Rice. Here is the Libyan leader in a March 27, 2007 interview on al-Jazeera TV: “Leezza, Leezza, Leezza ... I love her very much. I admire her, and I’m proud of her, because she’s a black woman of African origin.”

Over the years, the American government and media have fed us all a constant diet of scandalous Gaddafi stories: He took various drugs, was an extreme womanizer, was bisexual, dressed in women’s clothing, wore makeup, carried a teddy bear, had epileptic fits, and much more; some part of it may have been true. And now we have the US Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, telling us that Gaddafi’s forces are increasingly engaging in sexual violence and that they have been issued the impotency drug Viagra, presumably to enhance their ability to rape. Remarkable. Who would have believed that the Libyan Army had so many men in their 60s and 70s?

As I write this, US/NATO missiles have slammed into a Libyan home killing a son and three young grandchildren of Gaddafi, this after repeated rejections of Gaddafi’s call for negotiations – another heartwarming milestone in the glorious history of humanitarian intervention, as well as a reminder of the US bombing of Libya in 1986 which killed a young daughter of Gaddafi.

### **Two more examples, if needed, of why capitalism can not be reformed**

Transocean, the owner of the drilling rig that exploded and sank in the Gulf of Mexico a year ago, killing 11 workers and sending two hundred (200) million gallons of oil cascading over the shoreline of six American states, has announced that (through using some kind of arcane statistical method) it had “recorded the best year in safety performance in our Company’s history.” Accordingly, the company awarded obscene

bonuses on top of obscene salaries to its top executives.

In Japan, even as it struggles to contain one of history’s worst nuclear disasters, Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) has proposed building two new nuclear reactors at its radiation-spewing power plant. The plan had taken shape before the March 11 earthquake and tsunami and TEPCO officials see no reason to change it. The Japanese government agency in charge of approving such a project has reacted in shocked horror. “It was just unbelievable,” said the director of the agency.

Which leads us to A.W. Clausen, president of Bank of America, speaking to the Greater Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, in 1970:

“It may sound heretical to some in this room to say that business enterprise is not an absolute necessity to human culture ... Ancient Egypt functioned more than 3000 years without anything resembling what we today understand by the term ‘corporate enterprise’ or even ‘money’. Within our span of years, we have witnessed the rise of the Soviet Socialist empire. It survives without anything you or I would call a private corporation and little that approaches our own monetary mechanism. It survives and is far stronger than anyone might have expected from watching its turbulent beginnings in 1917 ... It is easy to mislead ourselves into thinking that there is something preordained about our profit-motivated, free-market, private-enterprise system – that is, as they used to say of gold, universal and immutable.” **CT**

**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***

**Now we have the US Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, telling us that Gaddafi’s forces are increasingly engaging in sexual violence and that they have been issued the impotency drug Viagra, presumably to enhance their ability to rape**

# Where have all the graveyards gone?

**Adam Hochschild** reflects on the war that didn't end and its unending successors

**Stand on a hilltop in one of the sites of greatest slaughter – Ypres, the Somme, Verdun – and you can see up to half-a-dozen cemeteries, large and small, surrounding you**

**W**hat if, from the beginning, everyone killed in the Iraq and Afghan wars had been buried in a single large cemetery easily accessible to the American public? Would it bring the fighting to a halt more quickly if we could see hundreds of thousands of tombstones, military and civilian, spreading hill after hill, field after field, across our landscape?

I found myself thinking about this recently while visiting the narrow strip of northern France and Belgium that has the densest concentration of young men's graves in the world. This is the old Western Front of the First World War. Today, it is the final resting place for several million soldiers. Nearly half their bodies, blown into unrecognizable fragments by some 700 million artillery and mortar shells fired here between 1914 and 1918, lie in unmarked graves; the remainder are in hundreds upon hundreds of military cemeteries, still carefully groomed and weeded, the orderly rows of headstones or crosses covering hillsides and meadows.

Stand on a hilltop in one of the sites of greatest slaughter – Ypres, the Somme, Verdun – and you can see up to half-a-dozen cemeteries, large and small, surrounding you. In just one, Tyn Cot in Belgium, there are nearly 12,000 British, Canadian, South African, Australian, New Zealander, and West Indian graves.

Every year, millions of people visit the Western Front's cemeteries and memorials, leaving behind flowers and photographs of long-dead relatives. The plaques and monuments are often subdued and remarkably unmarital. At least two of those memorials celebrate soldiers from both sides who emerged from the trenches and, without the permission of their top commanders, took part in the famous informal Christmas Truce of 1914, marked by soccer games in no-man's-land.

In a curious way, the death toll of that war almost a century gone, in which more than 100,000 Americans died, has become so much more visible than the deaths in our wars today. Is that why the First World War is almost always seen, unlike our present wars, not just as tragic, but as a murderous folly that swept away part of a generation and in every way remade the world for the worse?

## **To Paris – or Baghdad**

For the last half-dozen years, I've been mentally living in that 1914-1918 world, writing a book about the war that killed some 20 million people, military and civilian, and left large parts of Europe in smoldering ruins. I've haunted battlefields and graveyards, asked a Belgian farmer if I could step inside a wartime concrete bunker that now houses his goats, and walked through reconstruct-

ed trenches and an underground tunnel which protected Canadian troops moving their ammunition to the front line.

In government archives, I've looked at laconic reports by officers who survived battles in which most of their troops died; I've listened to recordings of veterans and talked to a man whose labor-activist grandfather was court-martialed because he wrote a letter to the *Daily Mail* complaining that every British officer was assigned a private servant. In a heartbreakingly beautiful tree-shaded cemetery full of British soldiers mowed down with their commanding officer (as he had predicted they would be) by a single German machine gun on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme, I found a comment in the visitors' book: "Never Again."

I can't help but wonder: Where are the public places for mourning the mounting toll of today's wars? Where is that feeling of never again?

The eerie thing about studying the First World War is the way you can't help but be reminded of today's headlines. Consider, for example, how it started. High officials of the rickety Austro-Hungarian Empire, frightened by ethnic nationalism among Serbs within its borders, wanted to dismember neighboring Serbia, whose very existence as an independent state they regarded as a threat. Austro-Hungarian military commanders had even drawn up invasion plans.

When a 20-year-old ethnic Serb fired two fatal shots at Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife at Sarajevo in the summer of 1914, those commanders had the perfect excuse to put their plans into action – even though the killer was an Austro-Hungarian citizen and there was no evidence Serbia's cabinet knew of his plot. Although the war quickly drew in many other countries, its first shots were fired by Austro-Hungarian gunboats on the Danube shelling Serbia.

The more I learned about the war's opening, the more I thought about the US invasion of Iraq. President George W. Bush and

his key advisors had long hungered to dislodge Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein from power. Like the archduke's assassination, the attacks of September 11, 2001, gave them the excuse they had been waiting for – even though there was no connection whatsoever between the hijackers, mainly Saudis, and Saddam Hussein's regime.

Other parallels between World War I and today's wars abound. You can see photographs from 1914 of German soldiers climbing into railway cars with "To Paris" jauntily chalked on their sides, and French soldiers boarding similar cars labeled "To Berlin."

"You will be home," Kaiser Wilhelm II confidently told his troops that August, "before the leaves have fallen from the trees." Doesn't that bring to mind Bush landing on an aircraft carrier in 2003 to declare, in front of a White House-produced banner reading "Mission Accomplished," that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended"? A trillion dollars and tens of thousands of lives later, whatever mission there may have been remains anything but accomplished. Similarly, in Afghanistan, where Washington expected (and thought it had achieved) the most rapid and decisive of victories, the US military remains mired in one of the longest wars in American history.

### The Flowery Words of War

As the First World War made painfully clear, when politicians and generals lead nations into war, they almost invariably assume swift victory, and have a remarkably enduring tendency not to foresee problems that, in hindsight, seem obvious. In 1914, for instance, no country planned for the other side's machine guns, a weapon which Europe's colonial powers had used for decades mainly as a tool for suppressing uppity natives.

Both sides sent huge forces of cavalry to the Western Front – the Germans eight divisions with 40,000 horses. But the machine gun and barbed wire were destined to end the days of glorious cavalry charges forever. As for plans like the famous German one to

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## HISTORY'S LESSONS

**As for unplanned consequences, it's now a commonplace even for figures high in our country's establishment to point out that the Afghan and Iraq wars have created a new generation of jihadists**

defeat the French in exactly 42 days, they were full of holes. Internal combustion engines were in their infancy, and in the opening weeks of the war, 60% of the invading German army's trucks broke down. This meant supplies had to be pulled by horse and wagon. For those horses, not to mention all the useless cavalry chargers, the French countryside simply could not supply enough feed. Eating unripe green corn, they sickened and died by the tens of thousands, slowing the advance yet more.

Similarly, Bush and his top officials were so sure of success and of Iraqis welcoming their "liberation" that they gave remarkably little thought to what they should do once in Baghdad. They took over a country with an enormous army, which they promptly and thoughtlessly dissolved with disastrous results. In the same way, despite a long, painfully instructive history to guide them, administration officials somehow never managed to consider that, however much most Afghans loathed the Taliban, they might come to despise foreign invaders who didn't go home even more.

### **Unplanned consequences**

As World War I reminds us, however understandable the motives of those who enter the fight, the definition of war is "unplanned consequences." It's hard to fault a young Frenchman who marched off to battle in August 1914. After all, Germany had just sent millions of troops to invade France and Belgium, where they rapidly proved to be quite brutal occupiers. Wasn't that worth resisting? Yet by the time the Germans were finally forced to surrender and withdraw four and a half years later, half of all French men aged 20 to 32 in 1914 had been killed. There were similarly horrific casualties among the other combatant nations. The war also left 21 million wounded, many of them missing hands, arms, legs, eyes, genitals.

Was it worth it? Of course not. Germany's near-starvation during the war, its humiliating defeat, and the misbegotten Treaty of Versailles virtually ensured the rise of

the Nazis, along with a second, even more destructive world war, and a still more ruthless German occupation of France.

The same question has to be asked about our current war in Afghanistan. Certainly, at the start, there was an understandable motive for the war: after all, the Afghan government, unlike the one in Iraq, had sheltered the planners of the 9/11 attacks. But nearly ten years later, dozens of times more Afghan civilians are dead than were killed in the United States on that day – and more than 2,400 American, British, Canadian, German, and other allied troops as well. As for unplanned consequences, it's now a commonplace even for figures high in our country's establishment to point out that the Afghan and Iraq wars have created a new generation of jihadists.

If you need a final resemblance between the First World War and ours of the present moment, consider the soaring rhetoric. The cataclysm of 1914-1918 is sometimes called the first modern war which, among other things, meant that gone forever was the era when "manifest destiny" or "the white man's burden" would be satisfactory justifications for going into battle. In an age of conscription and increasing democracy, war could only be waged – officially – for higher, less self-interested motives.

As a result, once the conflict broke out, lofty ideals filled the air: a "holy war of civilization against barbarity," as one leading French newspaper put it; a war to stop Russia from crushing "the culture of all of Western Europe," claimed a German paper; a war to resist "the Germanic yoke," insisted a manifesto by Russian writers, including leftists. Kaiser Wilhelm II avowed that he was fighting for "Right, Freedom, Honor, Morality" (and in those days, they were capitalized) and against a British victory which would enthrone "the worship of gold." For English Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, Britain was fighting not for "the advancement of its own interests, but for principles whose maintenance is vital to the civilized world." And so it went.

So it still goes. Today's high-flown war rhetoric naturally cites only the most noble of goals: stopping terrorists for humanity's sake, finding weapons of mass destruction (remember them?), spreading a "democracy agenda," protecting women from the Taliban. But beneath the flowery words, national self-interest is as powerful as it was almost a hundred years ago.

From 1914 to 1918, nowhere was this more naked than in competition for protectorates and colonies. In Africa, for instance, Germany dreamed of establishing *Mittelfrika*, a grand, unbroken belt of territory stretching across the continent. And the British cabinet set up the Territorial Desiderata Committee, charged with choosing the most lucrative of the other side's possessions to acquire in the postwar division of spoils. Near the top of the list of desiderata: the oil-rich provinces of Ottoman Turkey that, after the war, would be fatefully cobbled together into the British protectorate of Iraq.

When it comes to that territory, does anyone think that Washington would have gotten quite so righteously worked up in 2003 if, instead of massive amounts of oil, its principal export was turnips?

Someday, I have no doubt, the dead from today's wars will be seen with a similar sense of sorrow at needless loss and folly as those millions of men who lie in the cemeteries of France and Belgium – and tens of millions of Americans will feel a similar revulsion for the politicians and generals who were so spendthrift with others' lives. But here's the question that haunts me: What will it take to bring us to that point? **CT**

*Adam Hochschild is the San Francisco-based author of seven books, including *King Leopold's Ghost*. His new book *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), has just been published. This essay first appeared at [www.tomdispatch.com](http://www.tomdispatch.com)*

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# Marching for Anzac in the 51st State

John Pilger challenges Australia's role as America's 'deputy sheriff'

Once, when Wally's mother came home, she found he had gotten a gun, put it in his mouth and blown his head off

The street where I grew up in Sydney was a war street. There were long silences, then the smashing of glass and screams. Pete and I played Aussies and Japs. Pete's father was an object of awe. He weighed barely 100 pounds, shook with malaria and was frequently demented. He would sit in a cane chair, drunk, scything the air with the sword of a Japanese soldier he said he had killed. There was a woman who flitted from room to room, always red-eyed, and fearful it seemed. She was like many mothers in the street. Wally, another mate, lived in a house that was always dark because the blackout blinds had not been taken down. His father had been "killed by the Japs." Once, when Wally's mother came home, she found he had gotten a gun, put it in his mouth and blown his head off. It was a war street.

The insidious, merciless, life-long damage of war taught many of us to recognize the difference between the empty symbolism of war and the actual meaning. "Does it matter?" mocked the poet Siegfried Sassoon at the end of an earlier slaughter in 1918, as he grieved his younger brother's death at Gallipoli. I grew up with that name, Gallipoli. The British assault on the Turkish Dardanelles was one of the essential crimes of imperial war, causing the death and wounding of 392,000 on all sides. The Australian and New Zealander losses were among the high-

est, proportionally; and 25 April, 1915 was declared not just a day of remembrance, but the "birth of the Australian nation." This was based on the belief of Edwardian militarists that true men were made in war, an absurdity celebrated last month.

Anzac Day has been appropriated by those who manipulate the cult of state violence – militarism – in order to satisfy a psychopathic deference to foreign power and to pursue its aims. And the "legend" has no room for the only war fought on Australian soil: that of the Aboriginal people against the European invaders. In a land of cenotaphs, not one stands for them.

## Abuse of memory

The modern war lovers have known no street of screams and despair. Their abuse of our memory of the fallen and why they fell, may be common among all servitors of rapacious power, but Australia is a special case. No country is more secure in its strategic remoteness and the wealth of its resources, yet no Western elite is more eager to talk war and seek imperial "protection."

Australia's military budget is A\$32 billion a year, one of the highest in the world. Fewer than two months' worth of this war bingeing would pay for the reconstruction of the state of Queensland after the catastrophic floods, but not a cent is forthcoming. In July, the same fragile flood plains will

be invaded by a joint US-Australian military force, firing laser-guided missiles, dropping bombs and blasting the environment and marine life. This is rarely reported. Rupert Murdoch controls 70 percent of the capital city press and his worldview is widely shared in the Australian media.

In a 2009 US cable released by WikiLeaks, the then Labor Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, who is now foreign affairs minister, implores the Americans to “deploy force” against China if Beijing does not do as it is told. Another Labor leader, Kim Beazley, secretly offered Australian troops for an attack on China over Taiwan.

In the 1960s, Prime Minister Robert Menzies lied that he had received a request from the American-created regime in Saigon requesting Australian troops. Oblivious, Australians waved farewell to a largely conscripted army, of whom almost 3,000 were killed or wounded.

The first Australian troops were run by the CIA in “black teams” – assassination squads. When the government in Canberra made a rare complaint to Washington that the British knew more than they about America’s war aims in Vietnam, the US National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy replied, “We have to inform the British to keep them on side. You in Australia are with us come what may.”

As an Australian soldier once said to me: “We are to the Yanks what the Gurkas are to the British. We’re mercenaries in all but name.”

#### Canberra Coup

WikiLeaks has disclosed the American role in the Canberra “coup” in 2010 against Rudd by Julia Gillard. Lauded in US cables

as a “rising star,” Gillard’s Labor Party plotters have turned out to be assets of the US embassy in Canberra.

Once installed as prime minister, Gillard committed Australia to America’s war in Afghanistan war for the next ten years – twice as long as Britain. Gillard likes to appear on TV flanked by flags. With her robotic delivery and stare, it is an unsettling tableau.

On 6 April, she intoned, “We live in a free country ... only because the Australian people answered the call when the decision came.” She was referring to the dispatch of Australian troops to avenge the death of a minor imperial figure, Gen. Charles Gordon, during a popular uprising in Sudan in 1885. She omitted to say that a dozen horses of the Sydney Tramway Company also “answered the call,” but expired during the long voyage.

Australia’s reputed role as America’s “deputy sheriff” (promoted to “sheriff” by George W. Bush) is to police great power designs now being challenged by most of the world. Leading Australian politicians and journalists report on the Middle East, having first had their flights and expenses paid by the Israeli government or its promoters.

Two Green Party candidates who dared to dissent and criticize Israel’s lawlessness and the silence of its local supporters, are currently being set upon. One Murdoch retainer has accused the two Greens of advocating a “modern rendering of Kristallnacht.”

Both have since received multiple death threats. **CT**

*John Pilger’s latest film, **The War You Don’t See**, is now available on DVD at Amazon.co.uk. His web site is [www.johnpilger.com](http://www.johnpilger.com)*

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