

**THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK | GEORGE MONBIOT**  
**BEYOND DOUBLE STANDARDS & HYPOCRISY | EDWARD S. HERMAN**  
**ARMED TO THE TEETH, BUT LIVING IN FEAR | DAVE LINDORFF**

NOVEMBER 2012

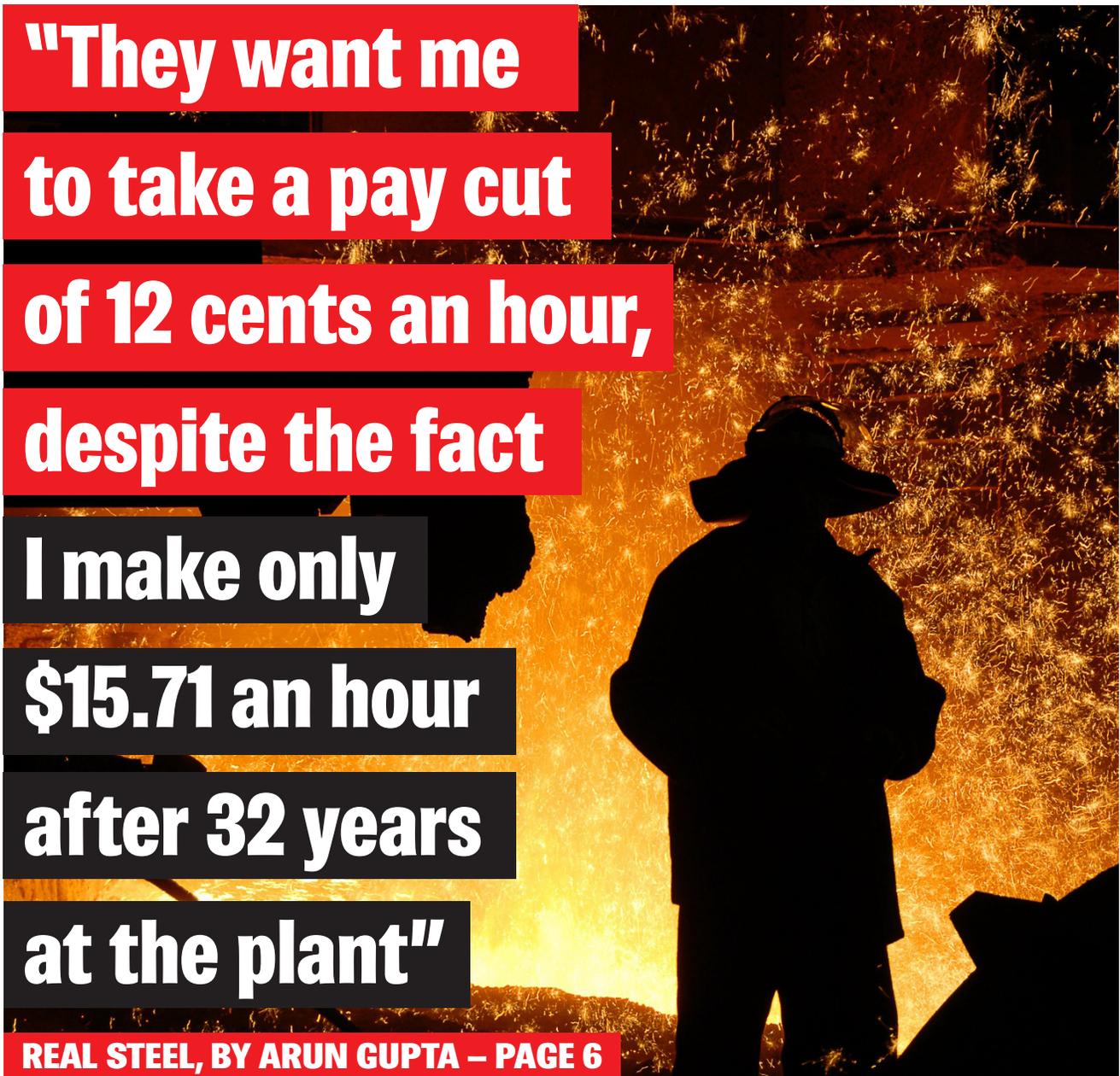
# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 70

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**REAL STEEL, BY ARUN GUPTA – PAGE 6**





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# Beyond double standards and hypocrisy

Edward S. Herman on the deceptive morality of our political leaders

Double standards have always been with us, but I wonder if they haven't reached new heights, along with hypocrisy, in the age of the "war on terrorism," "humanitarian intervention," and the proclaimed "responsibility to protect" (R2P), to be implemented by global interventionists who have institutionalized torture (or made it one de facto legitimate policy option), "extraordinary renditions" to torture regimes, the intensive use of drone bombings, including "double-tip" actions, and who have declared the entire earth a US "free fire zone"? These same drone organizers and apologists also speak almost daily about "our values" as they terrorize and kill, but see themselves as defending human rights and democracy and engaging in "self defense." George W. Bush attacked Iraq in alleged (but completely contrived) fear of Saddam Hussein's "weapons of mass destruction," but as soon as it became inescapably evident that this was a fraud, and that many thousands had already been killed based on this lie, Bush was allowed to be striving for freedom and democracy in Iraq, but for unknown reasons neglecting Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, and shrinking it in the homeland!

But his opening war-gambit-lie was salable to the *New York Times* and its colleagues, and to the intellectuals and pundits with influence. For example, on October 9, 2002, the saintly Elie Wiesel said on the *Oprah Winfrey*

Show that "Anything is better than war. I am not for war. But we have to disarm that assassin" – namely Saddam Hussein, who, according to Bush, Cheney and Judith Miller, and hence Wiesel and Winfrey, possessed these WMD. Thus "War is the Only Option," is the title of Wiesel's subsequent commentary in *The Observer* (Dec. 22, 2002). It helps being a saint to be able to get away with such a blatant contradiction based on a lie.

After the WMD gambit was exhausted we had the gang quickly accepting the new "democracy promotion" objective in Iraq, because Bush said that was so, and was "risking all" in pressing on with it, as asserted by Michael Ignatieff in his *New York Times* classic, "Who Are the American People to Think That Freedom is Theirs to Spread" (Oct. 7, 2005). George Packer, writing in the *New Yorker* back in 2004, agreed with Ignatieff that, "it's clear that, however clumsy and selective the execution, Bush wants democratization to be his legacy. So when his critics, here and abroad, claim that his rhetoric merely provides cynical cover for an American power grab, they misjudge his sincerity and tend to sound like defenders of the status quo." ("Invasion versus Persuasion," *New Yorker*, December 20, 2004.). So Packer, like Ignatieff, knows that Bush was sincere, but he is not a defender of the status quo and does suggest that we should "hold him to his own talk."

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The “terrorism” double standard has long been institutionalized, with establishment spokespersons internalizing the propaganda rule that we and the Israelis only “retaliate” to the terrorism of enemies and targets. The establishment pundits have been able to swallow a lot, and play dumb on a large scale, to stay with this usage. Thus Luis Posada Carriles, a member in high-standing of the Cuban refugee terror network, guilty of numerous terrorist acts, including the bombing of a Cuban airliner in 1976 with 73 resultant deaths, walks the streets of Miami today and is beyond extradition, whereas the United States is working hard to get Julian Assange extradited for prosecution for whistleblowing on US diplomacy and terrorist-war criminal acts. (His most notorious disclosure was of a US helicopter team in Iraq remorselessly killing civilians and journalists on the ground, a revelation that clearly threatened US national security.)

It should also be noted that while killer Posada is free, the Cuban Five infiltrators of Cuban terrorist groups in Florida who were seized in the United States in 1998 while trying to gain information on terrorist plots against Cuba, and shared some of this information with the FBI, have been imprisoned since 1998, their counter-terrorism efforts transformed into espionage.

These manifestations of a gross double standard, hypocrisy, and serious injustice, are ignored by the mainstream media and don't interfere with the rule that the United States is fighting a “war on terror.”

The most recent display of the terrorism double standard is the State Department's September 2012 removal of the Iranian opposition group, the Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK), from its list of designated terrorist organizations. The MEK worked earlier on behalf of Saddam Hussein and sometimes killed Americans, and reportedly has collaborated with the Israelis in assassinating Iranian scientists, but with the escalated US-Israel low-level warfare against Iran, MEK can be moved into a new, more positive “freedom fighter”

category. This has other amusing features. For one thing, MEK has very large amounts of money that it has spent in organizing protests and lobbying in Europe and the United States, the funding suspected to come from the freedom-loving Saudis and other governments hostile to Iran. Even while on the terrorist list, MEK was able to organize, propagandize and lobby in the United States and elsewhere in the West. It has also paid large sums to US notables like Howard Dean, Tom Ridge, Rudy Giuliani, Newt Gingrich and Ed Rendell to write and speak on their behalf. No prosecutions are in prospect for “material aid” to terrorists in this case.

One of the wonders of the war on terror is its massive use of airpower, increasingly drone warfare, and the US's ability to get this accepted in the West as a response to terror and not a case of terrorism itself. This has of course been accompanied by complementary apologetics: notably, that military targets are carefully chosen so that any “innocent” civilian deaths are not deliberate but unintended “collateral damage.” But if civilian deaths are predictable even if the specific victims are not known, the killings are deliberate and war crimes. Furthermore, the claims of care in targeting, and concern, and denials that civilian killings are sometimes quite acceptable, are false, but are taken as true by patriotic pundits and intellectuals (see my “Tragic Errors In US Military Policy: Targeting the civilian population,” *Z Magazine*, Sept. 2002). The long US use of depleted uranium and cluster bombs is testimony to an anti-civilian bias in military operations, as is the long tradition of “we don't make body counts.” The Iraq war of 2003 was begun with a “shock and awe” bombing program that was openly designed to terrorize the leaders and population and encourage surrender. The same was true of the 1999 escalation of the bombing of Serbia and increased orientation to attacking civilian facilities. But no matter: The United States does not terrorize, by patriotic and power definition.

It is also notable that studies which fo-

cus intensively on terrorism from the air are ignored or downplayed by the mainstream media. The fine book by Beau Grosscup, *Strategic Terror: The Politics and Ethics of Aerial Bombardment* (Zed Books, 2006) was not reviewed in any mainstream source in the United States. The mainstream may be preoccupied with “terrorism,” but writings on the subject have to stay within the party-line orbit to get a hearing,

A real problem has been presented to the media by the September 2012 report produced jointly by a Stanford Law School and New York University School of Law team entitled *Living Under Drones* (see <http://livingunderdrones.org>), and based on over 130 interviews carried out in Pakistan. The authors claim that the vast majority of victims of the drone war attacks are civilians, not “militants” – only 2 percent of those killed were identified as known “militants.” The Stanford-NYU authors explicitly deny the official claims of precise surgical strikes by the drones: “This narrative is false.” They also report that an important feature of the drone war is the regular use of a second missile strike shortly after the first strike – the combination euphemistically labelled a “double tap” – killing many local onlookers and rescue workers coming to the aid of the first-strike’s victims. These secondary strikes “have discouraged average civilians from coming to one another’s rescue, and even inhibited the provision of emergency medical assistance from humanitarian workers.”

The director of the charitable organization Reprieve is quoted in the report as saying: “An entire region is being terrorized by the constant threat of death from the skies.... Their way of life is collapsing... kids are too terrified to go to school, adults are afraid to attend weddings, funerals, business meeting or anything that involves gathering in groups.”

This sounds like a really dirty war OF terrorism, but while this is suggested in the London *Independent* (Jerome Taylor, “Outrage at CIA’s deadly ‘double tap’ drone strikes,” Sept. 25, 2012), the *New York Times*

had not yet mentioned the existence of the Living Under Drones document at the time of writing (Sept. 30, 2012). This is not news fit-to-print rapidly and with prominence, as happens when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asserts that the government of Bashar Al-Assad would have “blood on its hands” if it “refuses to allow this life-saving aid [that Clinton promises] to reach civilians” (Steven Lee Myers, “Nations Rebuke Leader of Syria as Assault Rages,” NYT, February 25, 2012. p 1; see also the long NYT article of March 3, 2012 on “Syria Blocks Red Cross From Taking Aid to Devastated Rebel Enclave in Homs”).

This brings us to some other double standard marvels. Iran is under steady attack and threat because of its alleged non-cooperation with the West and its UN instrument, the International Atomic Energy Agency, in their efforts to get Iran to terminate its nuclear program. Meanwhile, the United States can refuse to carry out its NPT promise to work toward the elimination of nuclear weapons, and Israel can build up a sizeable nuclear weapons arsenal with Western collusion outside of any IAEA jurisdiction, and both can threaten Iran on a daily basis, in a double standard that would be hard to surpass. Similarly, Israel can ethnically cleanse Palestinians on a systematic basis for decades without any penalty from the “international community” which in fact gives consistent support to this immoral and illegal process. Only when a US and Western target is accused of ethnic cleansing, as with Serbia in the 1990s, do the Western moralists, officials and their UN agents get aroused and move into action.

The hegemony of the double standard, and its partner, hypocrisy, flows from concentrated power, and their joint success in this modern age that, according to Steven Pinker, is one of the “Long Peace,” “recivilization” and the rise of our “better angels” after an unfortunate period like the 1960s. It is a marvelous illustration of the human capacity for self-deception. **CT**

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**“An entire region is being terrorized by the constant threat of death from the skies.... Their way of life is collapsing... kids are too terrified to go to school, adults are afraid to attend weddings, funerals, business meeting or anything that involves gathering in groups”**  
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**Edward S. Herman** is professor emeritus of finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania and has written extensively on economics, political economy, and the media

# Real steel

Arun Gupta returns to Niles, Ohio, a community in post-industrial turmoil

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The golden era of industry is gone, but it weighs on workers who lament the passing of the American Dream, while anxiously confronting a future that seems to be one of perpetual decline  
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**M**y childhood was made of steel. In 1969 my family moved from Niles, Ohio, to Baltimore, where my father designed ships at Bethlehem Steel's Sparrows Point Shipyard – what one historian notes “was once the largest steel-works in the world.”

It was a place of forbidding grandiosity: miles of clanking mills, blackened smokestacks and hellish furnaces, armies of grimy workers and supertankers in dry dock that blotted out the sky. I took pride in the millions of tons of steel forged annually, lived in a stable (if racist) working-class neighborhood near the plant and spent summers frolicking in the Olympic-size pool at the Sparrows Point Country Club.

Sparrows Point shut down its blast furnaces this past June, perhaps for the last time. A workforce that numbered 26,500 when we arrived in the United States had wasted away to 1,975 employees when its latest owner threw in the towel. The story is the same for much of the country. The golden era of industry is gone, but it weighs on workers who lament the passing of the American Dream, while anxiously confronting a future that seems to be one of perpetual decline.

The ripples of history surface in areas like Ohio's Mahoning Valley, known as the “Ruhr Valley of America,” for the 28 mills that

once lined the region. This year, 2012, is the 75th anniversary of the “Little Steel Strike” that turned the valley into a battlefield as steelmakers violently quashed unionization efforts. It's also the 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Steelworkers of America (USW) and the 35th anniversary of “Black Monday,” when more than 5,000 workers lost their jobs after the demise of Youngstown Sheet & Tube's Campbell Works in 1977.

It's local lore that people would point to soot from steel mills dusting fresh snow and say, “That's gold,” meaning that's what paid the bills. That's no more. The gigantic blast furnaces have long been demolished save for a few modern plants like V&M Star, which casts pipes for natural-gas fracking (and which was aided by \$20 million in federal stimulus money). Steelmaking in the valley is otherwise limited to warehouse operations employing dozens of workers in jobs such as cutting metal parts.

One such facility is Phillips Manufacturing in the town of Niles, which straddles the Mahoning River. Workers there produce dry-wall and steel corner beads and studs used in building construction. Except Phillips is now using “replacement workers” to fill orders. On Sept. 13, 44 members of USW Local 4564-02 shut off their machines before noon. In-



**COVER STORY**

stead of breaking for lunch, they walked out and struck over wage, benefits and seniority issues.

The dispute pits an emboldened corporation extracting ever-greater concessions from an ever shrinking-union. More significant, the history that shaped this area is in play as both sides try to turn it to their advantage. Organized labor often accepted racism in organizing, which enabled industrialists to divide workers along the color line.

In the Mahoning Valley, steel mill owners would employ blacks to cross the picket line. Today, Phillips is doing the same by bringing in African-American strikebreakers. As for the workers, who proclaim they are born and bred union, they have their own advantage: The city of Niles has dusted off a 1960s-era anti-scab law and invoked it against Phillips.

The stakes are higher for the steelworkers than the company. They must win this fight not only to retain decent-paying jobs with benefits, but to keep the local alive – one of the few institutions that can nurture a new generation of unionists.

Workers say since Phillips purchased the facility 14 years ago it has demanded concessions in every contract. David Hanshaw, a self-described “passionate Italian” and 30-year employee at the facility, is still angry about the givebacks Phillips extracted in 1998. “They took away our pensions, a weeks’ vacation and we had a pay freeze for five years.”

The current contract expired Aug. 9, and steelworkers walked out after management refused to budge on its demands despite 15 negotiating sessions. Local 4564-02 Vice President Tony Beltz says Phillips wants to hike workers’ payment for the family health care plan by 21 percent to nearly \$3,900 a year. The company also wants workers to pay for short-term disability insurance and it wants to terminate seniority rights for those who are out for more than six months, a serious concern for a workforce mainly in their 50’s and 60’s.

Beltz explains during contract talks man-

agement tried to split the union by offering skilled workers more pay while cutting wages for production workers. He says that gambit didn’t work because “we’re united.”

When the union asked for a wage increase to lighten the burden, the company offered some production workers 3 cents an hour, or \$62 annually. As for his situation, the 55-year-old Beltz says, “They want me to take a pay cut of 12 cents an hour, despite the fact I make only \$15.71 an hour after 32 years at the plant. It’s insulting.”

The steelworkers understand that swirling around the wage and benefits dispute are the punishing currents of history. Hanshaw thunders that the strike “is about America. I want it back. We’re sinking into a moral abyss.”

Beltz sees a generational divide hampering the labor movement. He comments that younger strikers have not been on the picket line as much as the older crew. “Half of these kids don’t know what a union is. They bitch about dues. But now they get it.”

One factor in why younger workers may be less fired-up is their paltry wages. Beltz says new hires start at \$9.90 an hour, about what a Starbucks barista earns. Hanshaw explains that because of low wages, “I’ve got two guys who ride bicycles to work. One guy can’t even come out to the picket line because he can’t afford gas.”

Paul Dierkes, who at age 56 has put in 27 years at the plant, says “We just want to do our job, get a paycheck and spend time with our family.”

But that’s not possible because strikers are caught between an unyielding company and weakening solidarity. Dierkes says on Oct. 8, during the fourth week of the strike, the company brought in four vans full of scabs. “These kids are in a rude awakening if they think things are going to get better. We told them, ‘Please don’t cross the picket line.’ But they don’t listen. If these kids keep crossing the picket line, they’re gonna eventually pay them nothing. You gotta keep the union alive and make sure people get paid fair.”

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**“They took away our pensions, a weeks’ vacation and we had a pay freeze for five years”**  
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**For companies like Phillips, and corporate America in general, even a handful of unionized workers is too many**  
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Some wonder if that's the company's goal – to smash the union. Mary Smith, a stout African-American who hails from Tennessee, has worked at the Niles plant for 32 years. Inside the warehouse the size of three football fields, she drives a tow motor, hauling doughnut-shaped coils of steel weighing up to 18,000 pounds, which are cut into building materials.

Smith says, "I think they're trying to break the union. This strike is more negative than previous ones. They are playing hardball. They're taking scabs right over us." Smith says, "The scabs made sexually derogatory remarks to me, 'Pull your pants down. I want to see your cookie.' I tell them, if your mother were out here would you say the same thing?"

Smith is not one to back down, however. She arrives at Phillips at 4:30 a.m. every workday and stays up to 15 hours on the picket line. When asked about her devotion to the strike, Smith, a 62-year-old grandmother, says, "I'm fighting for my job and everyone's job."

Smith is referring to union jobs, not the category of "jobs" that has become an incantation. In the media, to speak of jobs is to invoke a mystical force that salves all social ills, but the ultimate source of which is unknown. If there is a single reason why Obama was re-elected, it's jobs. Specifically it's because the bailout his administration enacted saved Ohio's auto industry. The steel industry is too decimated to bail out, but the USW claims the auto rescue saved the jobs of 350,000 of its members – from glass workers who construct windshields to rubber workers who make car tires to chemical workers who manufacture paint brighteners.

It's hard to deny that the bailout worked. By June 2009 the unemployment rate in the region that includes Niles had shot up to 13.5 percent. In August, it touched 7.9 percent, below the national average.

But the reason why Obama has not clinched the race is due to widespread anxiety among workers. The bailout saved thou-

sands of union jobs in Ohio at the cost of forcing wages down, which impacts all workers. Average wages in Northeastern Ohio have dropped by nearly 9 percent since 2010. For many college graduates, a good job is working in a call center. One auto worker says for high-school graduates who can't land a spot on the production line, Walmart is a good option.

While these jobs are non-unionized, workers say they are treated better because of the spillover effect of organized labor. Local 4564-02 President Bill Irons stopped by the picket line one day with a crock pot of barbeque pork. A mountain of a man, Irons' bolt-like fingers are riven with cracks, as if the skin is straining to contain flesh and bone. Irons argues, "Unions keep companies honest. All the non-union guys benefit from safety improvements and higher wages that unions win."

Yet his local is in critical condition. Today it has 135 members at six plants. Twenty years ago, says Irons, the local had 800 members. A generation before that, it probably numbered in the thousands.

For companies like Phillips, and corporate America in general, even a handful of unionized workers is too many. After I finished talking with Irons, strikers pointed out that Phillips' president and CEO George Kubat was exiting the plant. I caught up with him at the gate and inquired about the status of negotiations.

Looking tense, Kubat said it was in the hands of a "federal negotiator." I asked three times if he foresaw the situation being settled anytime soon. After deflecting my question twice – "Email me" – he shook his head no. (I emailed Kubat as he requested, but received no response to multiple inquiries.)

Phillips is a privately held company based in Omaha. Workers fear it will shift production to its non-union facility there. Phillips doesn't publicize its vitals, but it seems to be thriving. Tony Beltz says, "There's been an increase in business." He says after four years with "zero overtime," workers regu-

larly logged 60-hour work-weeks this year. Further evidence of the company's good health was Phillips' announcement in June that it had acquired the assets of Steel Drum Industries in Tampa, allowing it to grow its business in the Southeast.

When I mentioned to workers that Kubat did not seem inclined to settle the strike, no one was surprised, given management's intransigence during negotiations. Bob, a 67-year-old lathe operator, became distraught when talking about the strike. "It's disheartening as hell to be treated like this. They're telling the guys in there, 'We're going to starve them out.'"

Even though strike-breaking has been all but legalized, the steelworkers have home-field advantage. Union sentiment is still strong in Niles. Phillips workers mention their families have been union for generations and recall as children their fathers going out on strike. People driving by regularly honk and wave at the strikers. Two men in a pickup truck leaned on the horn and yelled, "Local 396, plumbers and pipefitters. Yeah, go boys!" The pro-union mood has also been boosted by a referendum last year that resoundingly repealed an Ohio law eliminating collective bargaining rights for public-sector workers. The strikers' ace in the hole is the anti-scab law. According to local reports, on Sept. 28 the Niles city prosecutor "filed a criminal complaint against Phillips Manufacturing for breaking a city ordinance that prohibits the hiring of professional strike-breakers in place of employees who are involved in a labor dispute." Apparently the prosecutor did not know about the 1960s-era law. Niles City Councilman Dan Wilkerson, who has been a regular at the strike, drew the city's attention to it. Violating the law carries a minimum fine of \$500 and jail term of up to six months.

If unionism is part of Niles' legacy, then so is racism. And Phillips appears to be counting on it. At the end of one work day a van with half a dozen men, all of whom appeared to be African-American, pulled out of the lot as

strikers yelled "scab" and "don't come back." Paul Dierkes says that the day four vanloads of strike-breakers came into Phillips, all but a couple looked African-American.

Thomas Sabatini, a professor of US History at Youngstown State University, says Niles used to be a "sundown town," which was the norm in the North. Historian James Loewen writes that many sundown towns "formerly sported at their corporate limits signs that usually read, 'Nigger, Don't Let the Sun Go Down on You in \_\_\_\_.'"

The racial divide pains Mary Smith. The only African-American in the workforce, she says, "Phillips hasn't hired any in the last seven or eight years. So to see them bring these African-Americans in there in the vans makes me angry." Not that she has sympathy for the scabs. Smith says, "They can't get jobs by doing the right thing, only by doing the wrong thing. I shouldn't be saying this but they all look like thugs. They rub their fingers at us, 'We're taking your money.' They're cold-hearted in there, both the owners and the scabs."

Workers spend days sitting under canopy tents across the street from the main gate because an injunction has limited them to five pickets per entrance. They talk about the difficulty of staying on strike because they live from one paycheck to the next. Smith says, "I've had to sacrifice a lot over the years, missing vacations with my children and grandchildren because I had to be at work."

Smith says she was planning to retire next year, but is unsure now because the strike might drag on. For Bob, enjoying his golden years is not an option. "I can't afford to retire because of my wife's medical care," he says. "Some of her arthritis prescriptions cost nearly \$1,000 to refill."

One day they will all be retired. The question is who will replace them: a new generation of strike-breakers, or a new generation of organized labor? One that understands the fight is not only for jobs with living wages, but to bridge the racial and economic divides affecting all workers.

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**Arun Gupta is a founder of The Independent and The Occupied Wall Street Journal. He is writing a book on the "Decline of American Empire" for Haymarket Books. This article was first published at [www.truthout.org](http://www.truthout.org)**  
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# The empire strikes back

Imperialism did almost as much harm to the ruling nations as it did to their subject peoples, writes **George Monbiot**

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**Large numbers of men were castrated with pliers. Others were anally raped, sometimes with the use of knives, broken bottles, rifle barrels and scorpions. Women had similar instruments forced into their vaginas**  
.....

Over the gates of Auschwitz were the words “Work Makes You Free”. Over the gates of the Solovetsky camp in Lenin’s gulag: “Through Labour – Freedom!”. Over the gates of the Ngenya detention camp, run by the British in Kenya: “Labour and Freedom”. Dehumanisation appears to follow an almost inexorable course.

Last month, three elderly Kenyans established the right to sue the British government for the torture they suffered – castration, beating and rape – in the Kikuyu detention camps it ran in the 1950s.

Many tens of thousands were detained and tortured in the camps. I won’t spare you the details: we have been sparing ourselves the details for far too long. Large numbers of men were castrated with pliers. Others were anally raped, sometimes with the use of knives, broken bottles, rifle barrels and scorpions. Women had similar instruments forced into their vaginas. The guards and officials sliced off ears and fingers, gouged out eyes, mutilated women’s breasts with pliers, poured paraffin over people and set them alight. Untold thousands died.

The government’s secret archive, revealed this April, shows that the attorney-general, the colonial governor and the colonial secretary knew what was happening. The governor ensured that the perpe-

trators had legal immunity: including the British officers reported to him for roasting prisoners to death. In public the colonial secretary lied and kept lying.

Little distinguishes the British imperial project from any other. In all cases the purpose of empire was loot, land and labour. When people resisted (as some of the Kikuyu did during the Mau Mau rebellion), the response everywhere was the same: extreme and indiscriminate brutality, hidden from public view by distance and official lies.

Successive governments have sought to deny the Kikuyu justice: destroying most of the paperwork, lying about the existence of the rest, seeking to have the case dismissed on technicalities. Their handling of this issue, and the widespread British disavowal of what happened in Kenya, reflects the way in which this country has been brutalised by its colonial history. Empire did almost as much harm to the imperial nations as it did to their subject peoples.

In his book *Exterminate All the Brutes*, Sven Lindqvist shows how the ideology that led to Hitler’s war and the Holocaust was developed by the colonial powers. Imperialism required an exculpatory myth. It was supplied, primarily, by British theorists.

In 1799, Charles White began the pro-

cess of identifying Europeans as inherently superior to other peoples. By 1850, the disgraced anatomist Robert Knox had developed the theme into fully-fledged racism. His book *The Races of Man* asserted that dark-skinned people were destined first to be enslaved and then annihilated by the “lighter races”. Dark meant almost everyone: “what a field of extermination lies before the Saxon, Celtic, and Sarmatian races!”.

Remarkable as it may sound, this view soon came to dominate British thought. In common with most of the political class, W. Winwood Reade, Alfred Russell Wallace, Herbert Spencer, Frederick Farrar, Francis Galton, Benjamin Kidd, even Charles Darwin saw the extermination of dark-skinned people as an inevitable law of nature. Some of them argued that Europeans had a duty to speed it up: both to save the integrity of the species and to put the inferior “races” out of their misery.

These themes were picked up by German theorists. In 1893, Alexander Tille, drawing on British writers, claimed that “it is the right of the stronger race to annihilate the lower.” In 1901, Friedrich Ratzel argued in *j12*

that Germany had a right and duty to displace “primitive peoples”, as the Europeans had done in the Americas. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler explained that the eastward expansion of the German empire would mirror the western and southern extension of British interests. He systematised and industrialised what the imperial nations had been doing for the past five centuries. The scale was greater, the location was dif-

ferent, the ideology broadly the same.

I believe that the brutalisation of empire also made the pointless slaughter of the first world war possible. A ruling class which had shut down its feelings to the extent that it could engineer a famine in India in the 1870s in which between 12 and 29 million people died was capable of almost anything. Empire had tested not only the long-range weaponry that would later be deployed in northern France, but also the ideas.

Nor have we wholly abandoned them. Commenting on the Kikuyu case in the *Daily Mail*, Max Hastings charged that the plaintiffs had come to London “to exploit our feeble-minded justice system”. Hearing them “represents an exercise in state masochism”. I suspect that if members of Hastings’s club had been treated like the Kikuyu, he would be shouting from the rooftops for redress. But Kenyans remain, as colonial logic demanded, the other, bereft of the features and feelings that establish our common humanity.

So, in the eyes of much of the elite, do welfare recipients, “problem families”, Muslims and asylum seekers. The process of dehumanisation, so necessary to the colonial project, turns inwards. Until this nation is prepared to recognise what happened and how it was justified, Britain, like the countries it occupied, will remain blighted by imperialism. **CT**

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**George Monbiot** is George Monbiot is the author of “Heat: How to Stop the Planet from Burning”. Read more of his writings at <http://monbiot.com>

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**In 1893, Alexander Tille, drawing on British writers, claimed that “it is the right of the stronger race to annihilate the lower”**  
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# Israel's formula for a Gaza diet

Jonathan Cook tells how 400 trucks to feed the population became just 67

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**Even the liberal Haaretz newspaper euphemistically described this extreme form of calorie-counting as designed to “make sure Gaza didn’t starve”**  
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Six-and-a-half years go, shortly after Hamas won the Palestinian national elections and took charge of Gaza, a senior Israeli official described Israel’s planned response. “The idea,” he said, “is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger.”

Although Dov Weisglass was adviser to Ehud Olmert, the prime minister of the day, few observers treated his comment as more than hyperbole, a supposedly droll characterisation of the blockade Israel was about to impose on the tiny enclave.

Last month, however, the evidence finally emerged to prove that this did indeed become Israeli policy. After a three-year legal battle by an Israeli human rights group, Israel was forced to disclose its so-called “Red Lines” document. Drafted in early 2008, as the blockade was tightened still further, the defence ministry paper set forth proposals on how to treat Hamas-ruled Gaza.

Health officials provided calculations of the minimum number of calories needed by Gaza’s 1.5 million inhabitants to avoid malnutrition. Those figures were then translated into truckloads of food Israel was supposed to allow in each day.

The Israeli media have tried to present these chilling discussions, held in secret, in the best light possible. Even the liberal Haaretz newspaper euphemistically described this extreme form of calorie-count-

ing as designed to “make sure Gaza didn’t starve”.

But a rather different picture emerges as one reads the small print. While the health ministry determined that Gazans needed daily an average of 2,279 calories each to avoid malnutrition – requiring 170 trucks a day – military officials then found a host of pretexts to whittle down the trucks to a fraction of the original figure.

The reality was that, in this period, an average of only 67 trucks – much less than half of the minimum requirement – entered Gaza daily. This compared to more than 400 trucks before the blockade began.

To achieve this large reduction, officials deducted trucks based both on an over-generous assessment of how much food could be grown locally and on differences in the “culture and experience” of food consumption in Gaza, a rationale never explained.

Gisha, the organisation that fought for the document’s publication, observes that Israeli officials ignored the fact that the blockade had severely impaired Gaza’s farming industry, with a shortage of seeds and chickens that had led to a dramatic drop in food output.

UN staff too have noted that Israel failed to factor in the large quantity of food from each day’s supply of 67 trucks that never actually reached Gaza. That was because Israeli restrictions at the crossings created

long delays as food was unloaded, checked and then put on to new trucks. Many items spoiled as they lay in the sun.

And on top of this, Israel further adjusted the formula so that the number of trucks carrying nutrient-poor sugar were doubled while the trucks carrying milk, fruit and vegetables were greatly reduced, sometimes by as much as a half.

Robert Turner, director of the UN refugee agency's operations in the Gaza Strip, has observed: "The facts on the ground in Gaza demonstrate that food imports consistently fell below the red lines."

It does not need an expert to conclude that the imposition of this Weisglass-style "diet" would entail widespread malnutrition, especially among children. And that is precisely what happened, as a leaked report from the International Committee of the Red Cross found at the time. "Chronic malnutrition is on a steadily rising trend and micro-nutrient deficiencies are of great concern," it reported in early 2008.

Israel's protests that the document was merely a "rough draft" and never implemented are barely credible – and, anyway, beside the point. If the politicians and generals were advised by health experts that Gaza needed at least 170 trucks a day, why did they oversee a policy that allowed in only 67?

There can be no doubt that the diet devised for Gaza – much like Israel's blockade in general – was intended as a form of collective punishment, one directed at every man, woman and child. The goal, according to the Israeli defence ministry, was to wage "economic warfare" that would generate a political crisis, leading to a popular uprising against Hamas.

Earlier, when Israel carried out its 2005 disengagement, it presented the withdrawal as marking the end of Gaza's occupation. But the "Red Lines" formula indicates quite the opposite: that, in reality, Israeli officials intensified their control, managing the lives of Gaza's inhabitants in almost-

microscopic detail.

Who can doubt – given the experiences of Gaza over the past few years – that there exist in the Israeli military's archives other, still-classified documents setting out similar experiments in social engineering? Will future historians reveal that Israeli officials also pondered the fewest hours of electricity Gazans needed to survive, or the minimum amount of water, or the smallest living space per family, or the highest feasible levels of unemployment?

Such formulas presumably lay behind:

- the decision to bomb Gaza's only power station in 2006 and subsequently to block its proper repair;
- the refusal to approve a desalination plant, the only way to prevent overdrilling contaminating the Strip's underground water supply;
- the declaration of large swaths of farmland no-go areas, forcing the rural population into the already overcrowded cities and refugee camps;
- and the continuing blockade on exports, decimating Gaza's business community and ensuring the population remains dependent on aid.

It is precisely these policies by Israel that led the United Nations to warn in August that Gaza would be "uninhabitable" by 2020.

In fact, the rationale for the Red Lines document and these other measures can be found in a military strategy that found its apotheosis in Operation Cast Lead, the savage attack on Gaza in winter 2008-09.

The Dahiya doctrine was Israel's attempt to update its traditional military deterrence principle to cope with a changing Middle East, one in which the main challenge it faced was from asymmetrical warfare. The name Dahiya derives from a neighbourhood of Beirut Israel levelled in its 2006 attack on Lebanon.

This "security concept", as the Israeli army termed it, involves the wholesale destruction of a community's infrastructure

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**Matan Vilnai may have been thinking in similar terms when, months before Operation Cast Lead, he warned that Israel was preparing to inflict on Gaza a “shoah”, the Hebrew word for Holocaust**  
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to immerse it so deeply in the problems of survival and reconstruction that other concerns, including fighting back or resisting occupation, are no longer practicable.

On the first day of the Gaza offensive, Yoav Galant, the commander in charge, explained the aim succinctly: it was to “send Gaza decades into the past”. Matan Vilnai may have been thinking in similar terms when, months before Operation Cast Lead, he warned that Israel was preparing to inflict on Gaza a “shoah”, the Hebrew word for Holocaust.

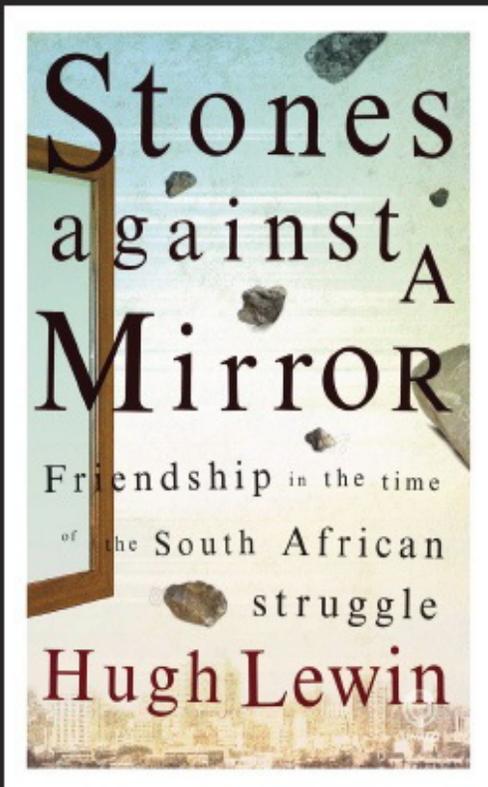
Seen in this context, Weisglass’ diet can be understood as just one more refinement of the Dahiya doctrine: a whole society re-fashioned to accept its subjugation through a combination of violence, poverty, malnutrition and a permanent struggle over limited resources.

This experiment in the manufacture of

Palestinian despair is, it goes with saying, both illegal and grossly immoral. But ultimately it also certain to unravel – and possibly sooner rather than later. The visit of Qatar’s emir, there to bestow hundreds of millions of dollars in aid, was the first by a head of state since 1999.

The Gulf’s wealthy oil states need influence, allies and an improved image in a new Middle East wracked by uprisings and civil war. Gaza is a prize, it seems, they may be willing to challenge Israel to possess. **CT**

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**Jonathan Cook** won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His latest books are “Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East” (Pluto Press) and “Disappearing Palestine: Israel’s Experiments in Human Despair” (Zed Books). His new website is [www.jonathan-cook.net](http://www.jonathan-cook.net)



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# Manipulating history

Ramzy Baroud discusses the different faces of popular resistance in Palestine

Apparently, ‘popular resistance’ has suddenly elevated to become a clash of visions or strategies between the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah and its rivals in Gaza, underscoring an existing and deepening rift between various factions and leaderships.

Addressing a Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) meeting in Ramallah on July 2011, PA President Mahmoud Abbas sounded as if he had finally reached an earth shattering conclusion, supposedly inspired by the ‘Arab Spring.’ “In this coming period, we want mass action, organized and coordinated in every place .. This is a chance to raise our voices in front of the world and say that we want our rights.” He called on Palestinians to wage “popular resistance”, insisting that it must be “unarmed popular resistance so that nobody misunderstands us,” (Reuters). He made a similar call at the UN General Assembly in September.

It was Abbas’ way of escaping forward. He needed to quell the mounting anger and resentment of his lack of leadership. His message targeted and continues to be aimed at dual audiences: Palestinians, thus the word “resistance” and international, thus ‘non-violence’ and “so that nobody misunderstand us.”

Abbas has little credibility as far as unleashing any form of resistance against Israel. Since its establishment in 1994 as a tran-

sitional body that would guide Palestinians towards independence, the PA has turned into an end in itself: dedicated to self-preservation, it means even conspiring with the Israeli government to manage the very occupation that has tormented Palestinians for over 45 years. Indeed, ‘security coordination’ between both sides predicates on the common understanding of silencing any dissent that would imperil the PA standing or how it is perceived by Israel as a security threat.

There is little, if any, evidence that the PA is leading a sincere ‘mass action, organized and coordinated in every place’. The PA-staged rhetorical revolution however served its purpose, at least for now, as Abbas and his men survived the regional upheaval.

The term, ‘popular resistance’ though is still being generously infused as if its mere repetition is a key to solving every political dichotomy facing Palestinians. The context in which it is used or manipulated is registering unfavorably among Palestinian factions that have long championed armed struggle and vehemently opposed Oslo and its institutions. Particularly irked by Abbas’ version is the Islamic Jihad in Gaza.

When Islamic Jihad Secretary General Ramadan Shallah addressed thousands of supporters in Gaza in celebration of the 31st anniversary of the movement’s founding, he addressed this very issue. He called for

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**Abbas has little credibility as far as unleashing any form of resistance against Israel**  
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**The 1936 uprising sent a stern message to the British government that Palestinians were nationally unified and capable of acting as an assertive, self-assured society in ways that could indeed disturb the matrix of British mandatory rule over the country**  
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a new national strategy, underscoring the failure of the so-called peace process. “The Palestinian project of establishing a state on the 1967 borders through negotiations has obviously failed,” he said.

Of course he also lashed out at ‘peaceful non-violent resistance’ which provided very useful sound bites quoted generously by the media. Interestingly, however, Shallah’s views on non-violent popular resistance were combined with his views on negotiations, thus interpreting the strategy of popular resistance as part and parcel of the PA’s futile hunt for ‘Israeli concessions’. “Nineteen years of failed negotiations have created a crisis which cannot be resolved by insisting on more negotiations, or through non-violent resistance,” he said, according to the Palestinian Ma’an News Agency (October 04).

A third and less factional reading of the popular resistance strategy was offered by the ever-articulate Palestinian activist Dr. Mostafa Barghouti, who was clear on Al Jazeera (October 18) when he defended Palestinians’ rights to resist by all means available, but asserted that popular resistance can be a more effective strategy at achieving political rights.

Obviously, the problem doesn’t exist within the non-violent popular resistance strategy itself, but its political contextualization and misuse by certain parties. When placed within a truly genuine framework aimed at devising a conducive and beneficial strategy for obtaining Palestinian rights, popular-resistance takes on a different look and feel altogether. Moreover, as far as Palestinian history is concerned, the strategy is hardly an alien concept or a defeatist attempt at not being ‘misunderstood’ by western benefactors.

History is rife with evidence. In September 19, 1989, the West Bank town of Beit Sahour led a campaign of popular resistance and civil disobedience that became the stuff of legends. It was an effort that was part of the awe-inspiring and massive mobiliza-

tion of the First Palestinian Uprising (1987-1993). Numerous attempts failed to break the collective will of Beit Sahour. The Israeli government moved its military in full force, launching ‘the biggest taxation raid in recent history’: occupation forces moved in en masse, and tax collectors worked their magic, confiscating all that they could seize. Many families were left with nothing. Most of the confiscated furniture and other personal belongings were sold at auctions inside Israel. The small town fell under a 45 day military curfew that started on the night of September 21. Hundreds of Beit Sahour residents were taken to military camps and many remained in prison under various excuses. The Israeli military may have thought it won a decisive battle, but on that day a star near Bethlehem shone in the night sky of Palestine. It connected past and present inspiring hope that people, despite the many years of military occupation, still had much power. It had even enough power for a small town to vex the leaders of Israel’s political and military establishments.

The story of popular resistance in Palestine is a century old. However, its origins are often dated to 1936, when Palestinians, Muslims and Christians, rebelled against the Zionist colonial drive and the British role in espousing it and laboring to ensure its success. In April 1936, all five Palestinian political parties joined in under the umbrella of the Arab Higher Committee (AHC). That unity was pressing and was a reflection of the general attitude among ordinary Palestinians. A general strike was declared, ushering the start of Palestine’s legendary civil disobedience campaign – as exemplified in its cry of ‘No Taxation without Representation’. The 1936 uprising sent a stern message to the British government that Palestinians were nationally unified and capable of acting as an assertive, self-assured society in ways that could indeed disturb the matrix of British mandatory rule over the country. The British administration in Palestine had thus far discounted the Palestinian demand

for independence and paid little attention to their grave concerns about the rising menace of Zionism and its colonial project.

Of course these are not distant histories. That collective action was hardly a passing phase, but was repeated throughout history, even after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 which institutionalized the Israeli occupation and ruthlessly punished those who dared resist.

The PA in Ramallah should quit utilizing and referencing the notion of ‘popular resistance’ while doing everything in its power

to suppress it; and Abbas’ rivals must not associate popular resistance with Oslo and its bankrupt institutions, for history can easily delink that distorted connection. Popular resistance in Palestine continues to exist not because of the Palestinian leadership but despite of it.

**CT**

*Ramzy Baroud (ramzybaroud.net) is an internationally syndicated columnist and the editor of PalestineChronicle.com. His latest book is “My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza’s Untold Story”*

**The PA in Ramallah should quit utilizing and referencing the notion of ‘popular resistance’ while doing everything in its power to suppress it**



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# Bad pharma. Bad journalism

David Cromwell is a fan of the work of medical writer Ben Goldacre, but wonders why he is so shy at responding to the arguments of his critics

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Industry-funded drug trials with negative results tend to be buried, glossed over or otherwise ignored  
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**B**en Goldacre is a medical doctor and science writer who, until November 2011, wrote the *Guardian's* Bad Science column which was presented as a thorn in the side of pseudoscience, quackery and 'Big Pharma', the giant and powerful pharmaceutical industry. On September 21, the *Guardian* published an extract, 'The drugs don't work: a modern medical scandal', from Goldacre's new book, *Bad Pharma*. A disturbing picture emerges of corporate drug abuse:

"Drugs are tested by the people who manufacture them, in poorly designed trials, on hopelessly small numbers of weird, unrepresentative patients, and analysed using techniques that are flawed by design, in such a way that they exaggerate the benefits of treatments. Unsurprisingly, these trials tend to produce results that favour the manufacturer. When trials throw up results that companies don't like, they are perfectly entitled to hide them from doctors and patients, so we only ever see a distorted picture of any drug's true effects."

As an example, Goldacre cites detailed medical reviews of trials testing the benefits of statins, cholesterol-reducing drugs, taken to reduce the risk of heart attacks. In 2003, two such reviews were published. Both found that industry-funded trials were about four times more likely to report positive results. A further review in 2007 found 20 new studies in the intervening four years. All but two of

them showed that industry-sponsored trials were more likely to report flattering results. In other words, industry-funded drug trials with negative results tend to be buried, glossed over or otherwise ignored.

Goldacre notes:

"In any sensible world, when researchers are conducting trials on a new tablet for a drug company, for example, we'd expect [...] that all researchers are obliged to publish their results, and that industry sponsors – which have a huge interest in positive results – must have no control over the data. But, despite everything we know about industry-funded research being systematically biased, this does not happen. In fact, the opposite is true: it is entirely normal for researchers and academics conducting industry-funded trials to sign contracts subjecting them to gagging clauses that forbid them to publish, discuss or analyse data from their trials without the permission of the funder."

As a further example, consider the giant pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline which wanted to extend the market for the commonly used antidepressant paroxetine to children. Drugs that are licensed for use in adults are sometimes also prescribed for children. Clearly this represents a potential hazard with the risk of unknown side-effects. Regulators have tried to address this by offering inducements to companies to apply for formal authorisation for drug use in chil-

dren. GSK therefore conducted a series of trials of paroxetine in children. However, at the end of the trials there was no clear benefit in treating depression. Rather than tell doctors and patients, or withdraw the drug, a secret internal company memo concluded: ‘It would be commercially unacceptable to include a statement that efficacy had not been demonstrated, as this would undermine the profile of paroxetine.’ In the year after this secret memo, 32,000 prescriptions were nonetheless issued to children for paroxetine in the UK alone. So while the company knew the drug didn’t work in children, it was in no hurry to tell doctors, despite knowing that large numbers of children were taking it.

Goldacre continues:

“It gets much worse than that. These children weren’t simply receiving a drug that the company knew to be ineffective for them; they were also being exposed to side-effects. This should be self-evident, since any effective treatment will have some side-effects, and doctors factor this in, alongside the benefits (which in this case were nonexistent). But nobody knew how bad these side-effects were, because the company didn’t tell doctors, or patients, or even the regulator about the worrying safety data from its trials. This was because of a loophole: you have to tell the regulator only about side-effects reported in studies looking at the specific uses for which the drug has a marketing authorisation. Because the use of paroxetine in children was “off-label” [i.e., marketing authorisation had been granted for adults, but not specifically for children], GSK had no legal obligation to tell anyone about what it had found.”

And he concludes:

“Missing data poisons the well for everybody. If proper trials are never done, if trials with negative results are withheld, then we simply cannot know the true effects of the treatments we use. Evidence in medicine is not an abstract academic preoccupation. When we are fed bad data, we make the wrong decisions, inflicting unnecessary pain and suffering, and death, on people just like us.”

No reasonable person could fail to be troubled by Goldacre’s damning assessment of the drugs industry. But had he gone far enough? Economist Harry Shutt didn’t think so. Shutt is a rare example of a professional economist who is also a radical critic of the current economic system. Since the 1970s, he has been a consultant for international development agencies including the UN and the World Bank. He has also written easily-digested books, such as *The Trouble with Capitalism* (Zed Books, 1998/2009) and *The Decline of Capitalism* (Zed Books, 2005), exposing the growing unsustainability of the status quo. In 2005, he warned presciently of ‘an unavoidable financial crisis’ on a greater scale than any before. Ever since the global crash of 2007-2008, he has argued that a return to enduring growth is neither desirable nor possible, and that western societies have to ‘grasp the nettle’ of a ‘post-capitalist’ economic future. His articulate thoughts on this can be found in his latest book, *Beyond the Profits System* (Zed Books, 2010).

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**Those dirty words: ‘Public Ownership’**  
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Shutt emailed Goldacre:

“The blindingly obvious inference of the extract from your book published in the *Guardian* – as of so many others you once commendably wrote in your Bad Science column – is that this is an industry totally unsuited to being run on profit-maximising lines by conventional shareholder companies. Given that, and the tremendous level of subsidy the industry already receives from governments around the world, why not spell out the vital necessity of locating it within publicly owned/non-profit organisations where there need be no obstacle to full transparency?”

In an *Observer* interview, Goldacre responded to Shutt (as well as other readers who had submitted questions after publication of the book extract):

“I am a realist about this. I don’t want a central-command state economy. In general,

.....  
**“This is an industry totally unsuited to being run on profit-maximising lines by conventional shareholder companies”**  
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**“If companies are allowed to hide the results of clinical trials then they will, and that will distort clinical practice. Doctors and patients will be misled and make sub-optimal decisions about what treatment is best for them”**

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drug companies are reasonably good at developing new treatments and there’s also a lot of good in the industry. The point of my book is that it’s possible for good people in badly designed systems to perpetrate acts of great evil completely unthinkingly. I don’t think any of the people I write about would punch an old lady in the face, but they would inflict the same level of harm when they are abstracted away from the outcomes of their actions.

“This is made easier, I think, because in general, most drugs do work better than nothing: it’s just that we may be misled into using, for example, an expensive new drug where an older, cheaper one is more effective.

“Overall, the problem is we don’t have a competent regulatory framework that prevents things from going horribly wrong. If companies are allowed to hide the results of clinical trials then they will, and that will distort clinical practice. Doctors and patients will be misled and make sub-optimal decisions about what treatment is best for them.

“Similarly, if you can get on to the market by making a me-too copycat drug that represents little or no therapeutic advance and is even less effective than the drugs that it copies, then you will. And you can get such a drug to the market because regulators approve new treatments even when they’ve only been shown only to be better than placebo.”

But this ducked the question that had been put to him, as Shutt pointed out in a follow-up email (October 9, 2012):

Dear Ben Goldacre

“I was disappointed in your response to my question regarding the appropriateness of the profit-maximising model for the pharmaceutical industry and surprised at your implied suggestion that I must be advocating a centrally planned (Soviet-style?) economy.

“You must be aware that many major industries in market economies are or have been state-owned without the countries concerned being identifiable as centrally planned. An

obvious example is the rail industry, which is state-owned in nearly every European country and demonstrably performs more cost-effectively than its privatised UK counterpart, which (as pointed out in a recent *Guardian* article) the overwhelming majority of the British public has consistently favoured being renationalised (along with the water sector) without anyone inferring that those expressing this view must be card-carrying Communists. You must likewise know that a major British drug manufacturer – the Wellcome Foundation – was until 1986 a wholly owned subsidiary of a charitable trust, and that charitable and NHS institutions continue to provide vital funding for medical research here and around the world – to the considerable profit of Big Pharma.

“In view of this and of your own work demonstrating the damaging consequences of profit-driven business models in terms of a) bad health outcomes and b) wasted public resources, I find your position rather baffling. Yet I am not so cynical as to suppose you might be motivated by a fear that reducing or eliminating perverse incentives to Big Pharma would tend to reduce the market for investigative journalism in the sector.”

Best regards

Harry Shutt

Receiving no reply, Shutt emailed him again on October 15:

Dear Ben Goldacre

“Further to my message of 9 October I have just noticed that in your response to some of the comments arising you repeat your assertion that you ‘don’t think it’s common that medical interventions do more harm than good’. This statement seems an obvious and regrettable departure from your normal very proper insistence that findings and policy in the field of medical science should be evidence-based. May I also point out that the same principle is supposed to apply as far as possible in social sciences such as economics, although there prac-

tioners are much more easily allowed to get away with claims – such as that ‘cutting taxes stimulates growth’ – for which there is no real evidential basis.

“It is of course well known that bigotry is too readily passed off as science in any field according to whichever ideology or vested interest is dominant. It has been one of the great merits of your Bad Science column that you have consistently challenged this tendency in the field of medicine and diet. It is therefore all the more disappointing that you seem unwilling to maintain this rational stance when the evidence you have so commendably accumulated points to a conclusion which, although totally logical, may be viewed as too politically extreme by Big Pharma and other powerful commercial interests.

“Given what is now at stake in the disintegrating global economy, leadership towards rational solutions to our problems from those such as yourself with established authority in their field has never been more needed. I hope you will not shrink from giving it through whatever medium you can.

“I look forward to receiving your reply.”

Best regards  
Harry Shutt

Ben Goldacre has not replied to Harry Shutt’s follow-up emails.

**Power, profit and the law**

Meanwhile, the *Guardian* published a positive review of Goldacre’s book by Luisa Dillner who works for the *British Medical Journal*. She concurred with his assessment of “how the \$600bn drug industry, doctors, academics, regulators and medical journals have let patients down.”

How will Big Pharma respond to Goldacre’s book? Dillner speculates:

“Drug companies may say that the problems he identifies have now disappeared. New rules insist they register the details of trials, and publish the results – whether negative or positive. But as Goldacre points

out, little has really changed, because no one checks up.”

Like Goldacre, Dillner hopes that better, tougher regulation will fix things, adding weakly: “At the *BMJ* we are revising our declarations of interest form to say we will seek [our emphasis] to work with doctors who have not received financial hand-outs from drug companies...”

Making it clear she doesn’t want to push things too far, she adds:

“But pharmaceutical companies are, after all, not charities. They exist to make and sell drugs, some of which work well, and to make a profit for their shareholders.”

Which begs the question: why not charities or public ownership, as suggested by Shutt? Dillner herself points out that doctors do not like admitting that they could ever be influenced by corporate ads and sponsorship, “even though the evidence to the contrary is overwhelming.” And because they are not charities or publicly owned, and exist to make a private profit for shareholders, Big Pharma massively inflates the cost of developing new drugs. Companies claim that it costs £550m to bring a new drug to the market, but Goldacre cites evidence putting it at a quarter of that cost.

Nick Harvey reports in *New Internationalist* that: “[O]ne-fifth of the world’s generic drugs – containing the same active ingredients as a patented drug but made by a different company at a fraction of the price – are made in India. As well as supplying India’s huge population, these drugs are shipped to poor countries around the world.”

Moreover, notes Harvey, the majority of global research and development funding is used to produce merely minor variations in existing drugs. This leads not only to high prices – indeed ‘mammoth profits are generated by aggressive pricing’ – but a dearth of genuinely new drugs.

Harvey adds:

‘Countries are allowed by the World Trade Organization to produce generic drugs if there is a major public health imperative, a practice

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**Because they are not charities or publicly owned, and exist to make a private profit for shareholders, Big Pharma massively inflates the cost of developing new drugs**  
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**That critics of the cynical, profit-driven and abusive practices of corporate drug companies call merely for better regulation provides a crucial insight into the dangerous imbalance of power in society**  
.....

known as compulsory licensing. India issued its first compulsory licence in March, ordering German drugmaker Bayer to allow a generic manufacturer to make its cancer drug Nexavar (sorafenib) for one-thirtieth of the usual \$5,000 price tag. India's patent controller argued that not only had Bayer failed to make the drug "reasonably affordable", it had failed to supply the drug in large enough quantities, a decision Bayer is challenging in the courts.'

Novartis, another large drugs company, is also mounting a legal challenge in India to enable it to continue patenting 'new' drugs that are little different from existing drugs.

Big Pharma is abusing its power to attack a legal framework that allows generic drug production to benefit people, particular in poor countries. So again – why not charities or public ownership?

.....  
**Who's living in Cloud-Cuckoo Land?**

In an astute piece on Goldacre's published response to Shutt's first email, titled 'Bad Pharma meets the Good Regulation Fairy', one commentator started off by quoting the Slovenian cultural critic Slavoj Žižek:

"It's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism."

Goldacre's evasive answer to Shutt illustrated that point. The author of the piece, a freelance journalist who maintains anonymity on his blog, rightly noted that Goldacre, in raising the spectre of a Soviet-style 'central command economy', was dismissive of Shutt's perfectly reasonable challenge. Goldacre's riposte was 'a very jaded straw man and definitely not what Shutt was advocating.'

The journalist continued:

"This was followed, most bizarrely, by the assertion that people in the drugs industry perpetuate acts of great evil, not because they are innately evil, but because they work in a badly designed system. This is precisely what Shutt was saying – it's a badly designed system, its acts are not the "fault" of the individuals working in it, so change the system.

As an answer, that lacks something. It's like saying 2+3 isn't 5, it's 5."

Goldacre's ineffectual rebuttal of Shutt's challenge boiled down to the good regulation fairy of a 'competent regulatory framework' to fend off rampant global capitalism. This displays a curious ideological faith in an inequitable system; curious, because it comes from a science writer and doctor who prides himself – usually with justification – on reliance on hard evidence and clear analysis.

The journalist then asks us to imagine the reaction if the state had been guilty of flooding hospitals, clinics and GP surgeries with dangerous or dysfunctional drugs. There would, of course, have been howls of outrage followed immediately by urgent and deafening demands for the privatisation of pharmaceuticals. That critics of the cynical, profit-driven and abusive practices of corporate drug companies call merely for better regulation provides a crucial insight into the dangerous imbalance of power in society. In his naive and faith-based appeal for a 'competent regulatory framework', Goldacre has overlooked the fundamental problem that western 'democratic' political systems are utterly dominated and skewed by destructive, profit-driven corporate priorities.

Given the failure of Goldacre's imagination, the journalist suggests a thought experiment. Consider 'an ideal world where the state sits benevolently above the fray and government regulation can do its job unimpeded. What would regulation actually do?'

"...competent and effective regulation will, if it does anything, radically reduce the number of pharmaceuticals that are allowed to go on the market. Thereby massively hitting drug company profits (they are currently the darlings of stock markets worldwide because they are so profitable) and, in turn, the number of people they employ.

"Thus, you are soon face to face with a fundamental conflict of our capitalist system. An unavoidable collision between the impulse most decent people share for reducing the anti-social effects of capitalism, against

the need for capitalism to prosper so that everyone can have good jobs and incomes. We are, whether we like it or not, materially dependent on the system's success. But a successful system causes results, such as global warming and prescribing dangerous medicines, that are inherently destructive."

He sums up cogently:

"If regulation of the pharmaceutical industry were actually competent, as Goldacre wants it to be, it would prevent capitalism from working (actually it's not working well anyway but effective regulation would be another drag on profits). A 2009 UN report found that a third of the profits of the world's biggest 3,000 companies would be wiped out if firms were forced to pay for the use, loss and damage to the environment they cause. In other words, truly effective environmental regulation would render capitalism impossible.

"So regulation is, quite deliberately, not effective. It allows, as research has found, just enough reform to buy off critics without seriously impeding corporate priorities. In the end, Goldacre's vision of a "competent regulatory framework" is far more utopian than changing the system so that profit maximization is not the modus operandi of pharmaceutical companies."

This is a devastating conclusion: it's the would-be reformers who are living in cloud-cuckoo land. The same applies to other 'mainstream' journalists, activists and writers, on any number of topics, who are propping up the present unjust, unstable and planet-devouring system of global capitalism by calling merely for 'better regulation'. Anything more challenging than this is well off the corporate media agenda. It is even off the agenda of the bulk of the green movement, trade unions, human rights groups and other major nongovernmental organisations that we are supposed to believe are challenging the status quo.

**Cut to the chase**

As mentioned earlier, Ben Goldacre has still

not responded to economist Harry Shutt's polite and rational follow-up emails. Perhaps he realises the simple points made by Shutt are unassailable. This is not unusual in our experience. Challenging those with a platform in the corporate media about its failure – indeed, its systemic inability – to question the very framework of corporate capitalism in which it is embedded is routinely met with silence, evasions or even condescending brush-offs. *Media Lens* has seen them all, whether from the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, the *Sunday Times* or the *Financial Times*.

Indeed, it was the *Sunday Times*'s economics editor who declared dismissively from his Murdoch-funded position that:

"Most of us get these things out of our system when we are students."

Well, undoubtedly he did; and perhaps with some residual feelings of regret or even guilt.

When the documentary film-maker Michael Moore was asked why he made his 2009 film, *Capitalism: A Love Story*, he responded:

"Well, I've been making movies for about twenty years now. Actually, it's twenty years ago this week *Roger & Me* was at the New York Film Festival. And the films I've done, from that one all the way through *Sicko*, always seem to come back to this central core concern, which is the economic system we have is unfair, it's unjust, it's not democratic, it seems to lack any sort of ethical center to it. And I guess I can keep making movies for another twenty years about the next General Motors or the next healthcare issue or whatever, but I thought I'd just kind of cut to the chase and propose that we deal with this economic system and try to restructure it in a way that benefits people and not the richest one percent."

Our battle, then, is not for 'reform' or better 'regulatory frameworks' applied to a fundamentally unjust and undemocratic state of affairs. It's about restructuring the economic system so that it benefits everyone and not just the rich few.

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**"A 2009 UN report found that a third of the profits of the world's biggest 3,000 companies would be wiped out if firms were forced to pay for the use, loss and damage to the environment they cause"**  
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**David Cromwell** is co-editor of *Media Lens*, a UK-based media analysis website at [www.medialens.org](http://www.medialens.org). His new book is, *"Why Are We The Good Guys? Reclaiming Your Mind From The Delusions Of Propaganda,"* published by Zero Books, [www.zero-books.net/books/why-are-we-the-good-guys](http://www.zero-books.net/books/why-are-we-the-good-guys)

**CT**

# A surrender of sorts

Relaxing in the afterglow of liberal totalitarianism, with **Fred Reed**

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**I sometimes wonder whether there is not some malign force in play, some diabolical miasma with a sense of humor that, having brought the Soviet Union down, amuses itself by turning the United States into the same thing**  
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**W**e are doomed, saith the preacher, and should accommodate ourselves to it. In times of growing governmental power, protestation at some point becomes futile. Little is served by standing in front of a charging Mongol army and shouting, “No! You should reconsider! Perhaps some other course would be advisable. Let’s parley....”

Complaint is useless. It is too late. It booteth not. We are done. The Mongols ride. America comes apart at the seams. The country turns into something altogether new, new for America.

In high school, I read Shirer, first *Berlin Diary* and then *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. I had little idea what I was reading. A naval base in rural Virginia is not a hotbed of historical understanding, or any understanding. I knew nothing of Weimar or the Spartacists or the Treaty of Versailles.

Still, I dimly grasped that a theretofore civilized country with great rapidity turned into something horrible. It was not an evolutionary change, like the Industrial Revolution.

Something alike happens in America, and one wonders – I wonder, anyway – how can this be? In little more than a decade, the Constitution has died, the economy welters in irreversible decline, we have perpetual war, all power lies in the hands of the executive, the police are supreme, and a surveillance be-

yond Orwell’s imaginings falls into place.

These observations are now commonplace. It is almost boring to read of them – yet they proceed apace. Where we go, we go fast. Already, there is no recourse against the authorities. Should you talk back to the police, you will spend the night in jail.

I sometimes wonder whether there is not some malign force in play, some diabolical miasma with a sense of humor that, having brought the Soviet Union down, amuses itself by turning the United States into the same thing. Or maybe it is just that if any state that can become totalitarian, it will.

Or maybe it was just a chance simultaneity of enabling events. Communism died in China and thus ceased to protect America from the withering competition of a populous, intelligent, and industrious race. The internet and easy transportation allowed American companies to abandon ship and head for cheaper climes. They did. Huge countries unexpectedly began a meteoric rise (if meteors rise), chiefly the BRICs. Big once-American corporations became free-floating transnational beings, loyal only to themselves. Open an apparently American laptop and you find that the screen and memory come from Korea, the hard drive from Malaya, the CPU from an Intel lab in Ireland, the whole thing assembled in Taiwan. America cannot stanch the bleeding. Corporations rule the country, and go whither they will.

Have you ever thrown a stick for a dog, which loves to chase it but, when he comes back with it, cannot bring himself to give it to you to throw again, although that is what he wants? The United States cannot let go of its empire. It fights war after war, constantly losing, bleeding money it doesn't have, because – because it can't let go. The military itself, an upgraded WWII force, badly unsuited to modern war, cannot let go of its glorious carriers and obsolescent combat aircraft. Governments, too, can suffer from arteriosclerosis.

And now the Pentagon growls fiercely at China, like an aging terrier at a Rottweiler pup. The world changes. Minds do not. Some minds do not.

Domestically, the storm likewise approaches. Desperation encourages desperate measures, a hard line, and invites the notorious Man on a Horse.

Economically, the country has trapped itself. It is bankrupt in all but admission, but it cannot spend more prudently. If it cuts welfare in the cities, riots will ensure and elections be lost. If it cuts the bloated federal bureaucracy, a form of welfare, the dismissed will add to an already dangerously high number of the unemployed. And elections will be lost.

Cut the military? It and its parasitic industries are so large, so deeply embedded in the fabric of the country, so rife with influential people with families to feed, that reductions are not possible. The suggestion of even minor and usually fraudulent cuts is greeted by predictions of dire but unspecified consequences. Minor cuts are not what are needed.

The dog cannot let go.

It is said that democracy depends on an informed public. This is to say that democracy is impossible. In the American case, blank ignorance of anything outside the borders leaves people easily manipulable. The genius of the American political system is that it is not necessary to suppress inconvenient information, but only to keep it off television.

So few people will encounter it as not to matter.

Giving people the choice between Candidate A and Candidate A, neither of whom addresses the real problems of the nation, is to grant them the influence they would have had in the Habsburg Empire. But it keeps them quiet.

It would be interesting to ask the general public: "Which of the following Arab countries is suspected of trying to develop nuclear weapons? (1) Turkey (2) Pakistan (3) Iran (4) Afghanistan (5) None of the above."

Nonsense is ever a firm basis for politics. The American public believes itself to be free, to have a spirit of rugged individualism, to live in a democracy admired by the world. In fact, Americans are not particularly free and becoming less so by the minute, are not individualists but herd consumers formed by a controlled press, and do not live in a democracy.

And totalitarianism comes. This is no longer the assertion of those dropped on their heads as children. Daily we read of more weaponry for the police, more surveillance authorized by courts, more unlegislated powers for Homeland Security. Currency controls fall into place to prevent people from fleeing the country with their assets.

In this direction, I think, lies the future. It is perfectly possible to store every email sent, every purchase made except by cash, every withdrawal of cash; to institute airport-style "security" for trains and buses; to monitor any conversation by telephone; automatically to track cell phones and read license plates and store it all. We are close. We are very close.

Protesting is pointless. No governmental mechanism prevents the headlong progress of things that would have sickened Thomas Jefferson. In the presidential debates neither Candidate A nor Candidate A said, so far as I know, a word about the tightening watchfulness.

The only reasonable approach is to lie down and enjoy it. Which I shall do. **CT**

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**And now the Pentagon growls fiercely at China, like an aging terrier at a Rottweiler pup. The world changes. Minds do not. Some minds do not**  
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**Fred Reed** has worked for *Army Times*, *The Washingtonian*, *Soldier of Fortune*, *Federal Computer Week*, and *The Washington Times*. His web site is [www.fredoneverything.net](http://www.fredoneverything.net)

# Killing Kennedy – again!

Jim DiEugenio reads the latest book from Fox News’s Bill O’Reilly and finds a strange and misleading tale of error and omission

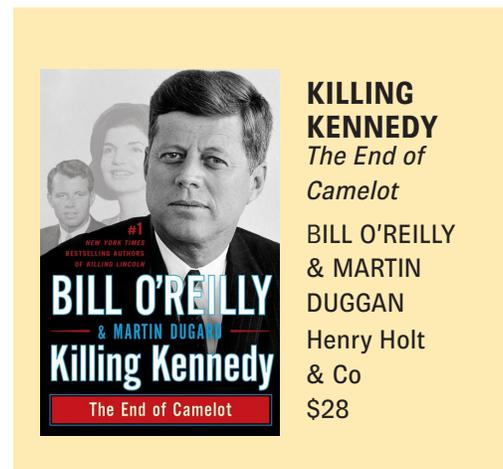
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Besides the obvious opportunity to cash in, what is the book’s purpose?  
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A long time ago, Fox News personality Bill O’Reilly was a high school history teacher. Martin Dugard was an author who had written a few history books, e.g. about Christopher Columbus and Stanley and Livingstone. Last year, the two men collaborated on a book about the murder of President Abraham Lincoln. *Killing Lincoln* proved to be a “killing” in another way, a financial one.

This year is the 49th anniversary of the assassination of President John Kennedy. Several writers and film producers are already preparing major projects for the 50th anniversary next year. It seems that O’Reilly and Dugard decided to get the jump on the occasion by trying to repeat the success of their book about Lincoln, thus, we have *Killing Kennedy*.

But the Kennedy case is not the Lincoln case. The Lincoln case is one that has settled into history. The incredible thing about the murder of President Kennedy is that, 49 years later, we are still discovering things that the government has tried to keep secret about the case.

For instance, just a few months ago it was learned that the Air Force One tapes at the National Archives were incomplete. They had been edited to eliminate a reference to a query about the location of Air Force General Curtis LeMay as President Kennedy’s body was being returned from Dallas.



This made the news since historians understand that LeMay and Kennedy knocked heads during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, but also because there have been reports that, for whatever reason, LeMay was present during the Kennedy autopsy at Bethesda Medical Center that evening.

I mention this not only to show that there are still important secrets seeping out about the murder of President Kennedy, but also because you will not find a word about any significant new evidence in this book. In fact, in regards to the actual murder of President Kennedy, this is a book that could have been written in 1965. I could find very little, if anything, pertaining to the actual assassination that was discovered in later decades.

Which poses a question: Besides the obvious opportunity to cash in, what is the book's purpose? It seems to be to re-sell the Warren Commission Report's initial assessment of the assassination to a new audience in a new millennium, except in an abridged version, jazzed up with some novelistic writing and some juicy tales of extramarital sex.

This book upholds every dubious central tenet of the Warren Report. It says that Lee Harvey Oswald shot and killed Kennedy by himself; that Jack Ruby then marched down the Main Street ramp of the Dallas Police station and killed Oswald alone and unaided; and that neither man knew each other or was part of a larger conspiracy.

In other words, even though 4 million pages of material have been declassified since 1964, none of this matters in the least to O'Reilly and Dugard. In *Killing Kennedy*, the Warren Commission got it right way back then and the hundreds of trenchant and book-length critiques of its faulty investigation aren't worth considering.

Indeed, one of the most startling things about the O'Reilly/Dugard book is its heavy reliance on the Warren Report because, since 1964, there have been other major official inquiries that have shown that the Warren Commission was not just a flawed inquiry, but that it was deprived of crucial information. With important pieces of the puzzle missing, the commission's conclusions were surely questionable.

**Selective History**

Given Official Washington's contempt for New Orleans DA Jim Garrison, I guess it's not surprising that O'Reilly and Dugard never mention his investigation or the discoveries he made about Lee Oswald's activities in New Orleans in the summer 1963. But they also ignore congressional inquiries, such as the 1975 Church Committee review by Senators Richard Schweiker and Gary Hart into the failure of the FBI and CIA to fully inform

the Warren Commission of relevant facts.

Then, there was the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA), which was in session from 1976-79 and concluded that there likely was a second gunman in Kennedy's murder.

In the 1990s, public interest in the case was renewed by Oliver Stone's movie "JFK" and especially its dramatic use of the Zapruder film of the kill shot knocking Kennedy's head backwards when Oswald was behind, not in front, of the motorcade. That forced the creation of the Assassination Records Review Board, which from 1994 to 1998 declassified about 2 million pages of documents that had been either completely hidden or severely redacted prior to that time.

Much of this information was extremely interesting, shocking or explosive – especially as it related to Oswald's curious relationship with US intelligence and right-wing activists.

Yet, in spite of all this, O'Reilly and Dugard term the Warren Report one of the backbones of their work (p. 306) and treat its conclusions as comparable in certainty to the evidence that John Wilkes Booth killed President Lincoln in 1865.

This indicates two things: 1.) Their research was not in any way complete or in-depth, and 2.) The book was agenda driven from the start. For to eliminate all this new information amounts to depriving readers of new evidence that challenges the Warren Commission's conclusions. The book wipes away all uncertainty about the mystery.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the depiction of Lee Harvey Oswald. Since the time of the Garrison investigation, until the discoveries about the CIA and Oswald in the declassified files of the ARRB, there has literally been a running stream of evidence to contradict the narrow and deliberately constricted portrait of Oswald in the Warren Report.

In fact, it has been revealed that, tipped off by Warren Commissioner (and former

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CIA Director) Allen Dulles, the FBI and CIA rehearsed their responses about Oswald's ties to the intelligence community. (Gerald McKnight, *Breach of Trust*, p. 323) That portrait was of the sociopathic loner who, frustrated in his own personal and professional ambitions, decided to release his anger by killing President Kennedy.

The problem with trying to maintain that stance today is that there is so much evidence to vitiate it. For example, although the authors briefly mention Oswald in New Orleans, they never bring up the address of 544 Camp Street, the address rubber-stamped on at least one of the pamphlets that was in Oswald's possession in the summer of 1963.

When Garrison discovered this, he walked down to the address and found that it was also the address that housed the private detective offices of Guy Banister, an FBI veteran who had retired and later opened up an investigative service in New Orleans.

Mostly Banister monitored the activities of what he thought were leftist organizations, i.e. socialists, integrationists, communists and pro-Castro sympathizers. He often employed undercover agents to keep tabs on these groups. Both Garrison and the HSCA interviewed several witnesses who stated that they saw Oswald at Banister's. Some of these witnesses said that Banister actually gave Oswald an office.

Therefore, Garrison thought Oswald made a dumb mistake by putting the address where he was supposed to be working undercover on this document. And we know from a declassified HSCA interview with Banister's secretary that Banister was very upset when he found out Oswald had done this.

What makes this information even more tantalizing are two other factors: One of the pamphlets that Oswald stamped Banister's address on was called "The Crime Against Cuba," a document written by New York activist Corliss Lamont. It became exceedingly popular and went through at least five

printings by 1967. But the one Oswald had in New Orleans was from the first printing, which was done in 1961. But Oswald could not have ordered this copy then since he was in the Soviet Union at the time. However, the CIA did order 45 copies of the first edition in 1961. (James DiEugenio, *Destiny Betrayed*, p. 219)

And, two, what makes that fact even more interesting is a discovery made through the declassified files of the ARRB that the CIA had decided to run a counter-intelligence program against the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in 1961. This included electronic surveillance, interception of mail, and, most importantly in regards to Oswald, the planting of double agents inside that organization. (John Newman, *Oswald and the CIA*, pgs. 236-243)

This CIA program was supervised by James McCord (who later surfaced as one of the Watergate burglars) and David Phillips, who was reportedly seen in New Orleans at Banister's office and at the Southland Center in Dallas with Oswald. (Larry Hancock, *Someone Would Have Talked*, pgs. 168, 183) Therefore, from these links, it is possible Oswald got the outdated Corliss Lamont pamphlet through Phillips via Banister.

Most people today would consider the above to be relevant information about Oswald, though not a whiff of it was in the Warren Commission – and today, 48 years later, none of it is in the O'Reilly/Dugard book.

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**The Mexico Trip**

The authors also briefly touch on Oswald's purported trip to Mexico City. Yet again, they essentially crib from the Warren Report and ignore the thousands of declassified pages by the ARRB. And this includes the remarkable 400-page Lopez Report done for the HSCA in the late 1970s.

O'Reilly and Dugard simply state that Oswald went to Mexico to get a visa to Cuba, which is not entirely accurate. It ignores the

fact that Oswald – or someone claiming to be him – also visited the Soviet consulate in addition to the Cuban consulate. The actual objective was to gain an in-transit visa to Cuba with the ultimate destination, Russia.

But this is just the beginning of what O’Reilly and Dugard do with Mexico City. The authors describe an argument between Oswald and Cuban consulate officer Eusebio Azcue. (p. 219) What they do not say is again rather important. Azcue went to the movies two weeks after the assassination and saw a newsreel of Oswald being shot by Jack Ruby. Azcue was stunned because the man he saw being shot in the newsreel was not the man he argued with in Mexico City. (Anthony Summers, *Conspiracy*, p. 348)

Further, Sylvia Duran, the Cuban receptionist in Mexico City who talked the most to the man called Oswald, later said the same thing. She said the man she talked to was short, about 5’ 4” tall, and had blonde hair. (ibid, p. 351) This does not describe Oswald.

There was a third witness in this regard, Oscar Contreras, a young man studying to be a lawyer at National University in Mexico City. Oswald had gone to the university cafeteria and was sitting next to him and his friends. He later struck up a conversation with Contreras about his inability to get a visa to Cuba. Later, Contreras stated that the man he talked to was not the Oswald shot in Dallas. (ibid, p. 352)

In passing, in relation to another subject, O’Reilly and Dugard point up another problem with Oswald in Mexico City. They admit that Oswald did not speak Spanish. Yet, in the tapes relayed to Washington by the CIA station in Mexico City, the man they say is Oswald spoke Spanish well. (Newman p. 335) Making this even stranger is that whoever this man on the tapes was, he spoke very poor, broken Russian. (ibid)

Again, every witness who knew Oswald testified that he spoke fluent Russian. Certifying this problem, when the CIA sent tapes

and photos to Washington and they were shown and played for the FBI agents interviewing Oswald, the agents said this photo was not Oswald and the voice on the tapes was not the man they interviewed. (Newman, p. 520)

Any fair-minded reader, when confronted with this information, would conclude something was amiss with the CIA’s story about Oswald in Mexico City. But O’Reilly and Dugard just leave this evidence out.

**The Case Against Oswald**

Which brings us to the authors’ case against Oswald. One of the most serious problems the Warren Commission had in making a case against the accused assassin was that the evidence in Dealey Plaza required that the actual shooting of Kennedy take place in six seconds. In the space of those few seconds, three shots were fired. Two of the three were direct hits on a target moving away from the marksman at a slight angle.

But there were two complicating factors in making this case. When the Commission tried to duplicate this feat with first-class marksmen from the armed services, none of them could achieve the goal. (Sylvia Meagher, *Accessories After the Fact*, p.108)

Secondly, by no stretch of the imagination was Oswald a first-class rifleman. In fact, when author Henry Hurt interviewed dozens of Oswald’s Marine Corps colleagues, they were dumbfounded that the Warren Commission could state that Oswald could perform with such shooting skill because the Oswald they recalled was either a mediocre shot or worse.

For instance, Sherman Cooley said, “I saw that man shoot, and there’s no way he could have learned to shoot well enough to do what they accused him of.” (Hurt, *Reasonable Doubt*, p. 99) And Cooley was an expert hunter and excellent shot. Hurt concluded after interviewing several dozen Marines, “on the subject of Oswald’s shooting ability there was virtually no exception ... it

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was laughable.” (ibid)

How do O’Reilly and Dugard get around this barrier and make Oswald the sole assassin of President Kennedy? They do something that not even Vincent Bugliosi did in *Reclaiming History*. They simply change the facts and write that “Oswald was a crack shot in the military.” (p. 15)

When I read that, the book almost dropped out of my hands. A statement like that is not a distortion of the facts. It is a deception. The authors source this to the Warren Report. However, upon finding the relevant section – pages 681-82 – the reader will see that nothing even approaching this kind of description appears on those pages.

For example, the Report says that “his practice scores were not very good,” and he scored two points above the minimum to qualify in the mid-range level for shooting ability. And from there he got worse before he left the Marines. There is no way, except on Fox News, that this qualifies as being a “crack shot.”

How intent are O’Reilly and Dugard on convicting Oswald for the reader? They leave out what many people think is the single most important piece of evidence in the Kennedy murder. Namely, the Zapruder film. The book spends several pages describing the shooting sequence in Dealey Plaza. But I could not find any mention of what the Zapruder film shows: Kennedy’s entire body rocketing backward with such force and speed that it bounces off the back seat.

This unforgettable sight takes place when Kennedy’s head is struck and a burst of blood and tissue explodes upward into the air. To any objective viewer it appears that it was this shot that caused Kennedy’s violent reaction.

In fact, when the Zapruder film was shown to the public for the first time in 1975 on ABC, this image created a firestorm of controversy that provoked the creation of a new investigation, namely the HSCA. Why? Because that sequence indicated a shot

from the front, while Oswald and the Texas School Book Depository were behind.

I think I understand why the authors left out this gruesome fact, while including another memorable image from the Zapruder film. In a panic attack, Jackie Kennedy crawled onto the trunk of the car to retrieve a piece of her husband’s skull that has just been blown out. (p. 271) If the book had described both actions – Kennedy’s body rocketing backwards and Jackie retrieving the piece of skull from the trunk – then the overwhelming impression would have been that Oswald was not the assassin, since the laws of physics suggest that a shot from behind would drive Kennedy’s head and skull fragments forward.

In describing the other shot that hit Kennedy, the one that has become known as the Magic Bullet, again the authors do something startling. They say that this bullet entered Kennedy at the level of his lower neck. (p. 266) Again, this is a deception. During the investigation by the HSCA, a medical panel reviewed the autopsy photographs of President Kennedy. An artist then duplicated the photos. Anyone can see that this shot did not enter the neck, but President Kennedy’s back. (Click here and scroll down <http://www.celebritymorgue.com/jfk/jfk-autopsy.html>)

O’Reilly and Dugard change this evidence for the same reason that Gerald Ford lied about this point in the Warren Report: to make it more feasible that this bullet, allegedly fired from six stories up, could hit Kennedy at this downward angle and still exit from his throat.

In order to preserve the story of the Magic Bullet, the authors then censor more important information. The book describes Dr. Malcolm Perry’s attempt to revive President Kennedy at Parkland Hospital by cutting a tracheotomy over his throat wound. (p. 276) What the authors omit is the fact that later on that day, during a press conference at the hospital, Perry said that this

wound in the front of the neck was one of entrance and therefore could not have been fired from the rear. (See p. 256 of Dr. David Mantik’s essay, “The Medical Evidence Decoded” in *Murder In Dealey Plaza*, edited by James Fetzer.)

But further, O’Reilly and Dugard also say that no bones were struck in Kennedy by this bullet. (p. 266) Yet, as both Dr. Mantik and Dr. John Nichols have demonstrated (the latter at the trial of Clay Shaw) if one follows the measurements for this wound given in the Warren Commission, the cervical vertebrae would have had to have been struck. Yet, there is no evidence of this on the autopsy x-rays and photos. This is more evidence of the magical qualities of this bullet.

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**Method to the Distortions**

Before leaving the mechanics of the actual assassination, let me note one more intriguing description given by the authors. Anyone familiar with the circumstances of the Kennedy case knows that in the Warren Commission scenario, Oswald was supposed to have constructed both a barricade of boxes behind him, and a small platform of boxes in front of him on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository. The latter was allegedly to conceal him from any intruder; the former was to supposedly rest and/or mount the weapon while awaiting the motorcade.

The problem with this is that fellow worker Bonnie Ray Williams testified that he was eating a chicken lunch on the sixth floor up until about 12: 20. (Meagher, p. 324) And secretary Carolyn Arnold saw Oswald on the second floor at about that same time. (Summers, p. 77) By eliminating this testimony, the authors avoid the obvious question: How could Oswald have moved all of those heavy boxes of books into place in just a matter of minutes? For if Arnold is correct, he could not have been on the landing below the sixth floor waiting for

Williams to leave.

To top it all off, O’Reilly and Dugard now add in something that is utterly startling. Forgetting about the boxes in front of their assassin, they actually write that Oswald shot at President Kennedy from a standing position! (p. 264) Yet, photos taken that day reveal that the window at which the alleged sniper was firing from was raised only about 15 inches. (DiEugenio, p. 352) If Oswald were firing from a standing position, it’s likely the shot would have shattered the glass in the window, which it did not.

But, as we have seen, with O’Reilly and Dugard there is a method behind their distortions, deceptions and omissions. Here it seems to be that they want to rely on the testimony of Howard Brennan to give a description of the shooter to the police. As many have noted, including ex-prosecutor Robert Tanenbaum, if Oswald was kneeling down resting his rifle on the boxes, how could Brennan give a description of height and weight? (p. 280)

But there is a further problem with the alleged issuing of Brennan’s description. As Tanenbaum, former Deputy Counsel for the HSCA, has noted, Brennan allegedly gave his description to the Secret Service a few moments after the shooting. Yet, all the Secret Service agents were at Parkland Hospital with the president. So whom did Brennan actually talk to in Dealey Plaza? (Meagher, p. 10)

Let us now move to the culminating two murders that weekend, those of officer J. D. Tippit and the shooting of Oswald by Jack Ruby. Needless to say, O’Reilly and Dugard write that it was Oswald alone who shot Tippit and it was the patriotic bar owner Ruby, alone and unaided, who shot Oswald.

Concerning the former, the authors ignore the new evidence in Barry Ernest’s book *The Girl on the Stairs*, in which he interviewed a Mrs. Wiggins who was a witness in the Tippit slaying. She certified by both a TV announcement and her own wall clock that the shooting took place at 1:06.

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She then said she saw the assailant flee the scene.

But the fact that the woman certified the time would eliminate Oswald as the killer, because the Warren Report stated that he left his rooming house at about 1:03, approximately a half hour after the assassination. (See, p. 163 of the Warren Report) It would be physically impossible, even for O'Reilly and Dugard, to get Oswald to traverse nine blocks in three minutes.

Again, the authors avoid this crucial point. Yet they do note something that highlights it. From the scene of the Tippit murder to the Texas Theater, where Oswald was apprehended, is eight blocks. Yet this book says it took Oswald 25 minutes to get there. And they have him running.

.....  
**Killing Oswald**

*Killing Kennedy* depicts Jack Ruby killing Oswald because of his outrage at what the alleged killer of Kennedy had done. But to eliminate any suspicion that Ruby had help in entering the Dallas Police basement on Sunday, Nov. 24, or had planned on killing Oswald 48 hours previous, the book curtails the picture of Ruby's weekend.

O'Reilly and Dugard note that Ruby was at the midnight press conference held by DA Henry Wade on Friday night after the assassination. (p. 287) But they do not fully inform the reader of what Ruby did there. Looking to the entire world like a reporter in the back of the room, Ruby corrected Wade when he mistakenly named the group Oswald had solicited for in New Orleans. This was an important distinction because the group Wade named, the Free Cuba Committee, was an anti-Castro organization. (Summers, p. 457)

*Killing Kennedy* does not tell the reader that Ruby was also at the police station on Saturday. He was trying to get details of when the police were going to move Oswald to another jail. (ibid, p. 458) Then, on Sunday morning, there is more than one report

that Ruby was at the Dallas Police station early in the morning, perhaps as early as 8:00 a.m. One of the sources was the kind of witness lawyers dream of having: a reverend (ibid, p. 460)

From all of the above, it would appear that Ruby was monitoring the station and trying to find out when Oswald was to be transferred. Did Ruby have help getting into the basement that Sunday morning in order to shoot Oswald? The Warren Report said Ruby came down the Main Street ramp and somehow evaded the guard there, Roy Vaughn, even though Vaughn knew Ruby.

But the HSCA discovered a new witness, one who appears to have been avoided by the Warren Commission. Sgt. Don Flusche told the new inquiry that there was no doubt in his mind that Ruby, whom he had known for years, did not walk down Main Street anywhere near the ramp because he was standing against his car at the time, which was parked across the street. (ibid, p. 462)

So how did Ruby get into the basement? The HSCA concluded that Ruby came down an alleyway at the side of the police station. In the middle of this alley is a door that opens to the ground floor of the building. From there he could have reached the basement.

It turned out that the Dallas Police Department's chief of security that day, Patrick Dean, had lied about this issue. He said the door could not be opened without a key. By interviewing three custodians, the HSCA proved this was false. It could be opened without a key "from the direction Ruby would have entered." (ibid, p. 468)

I could go on and on in this regard. The book is literally strewn with errors of omission or commission on almost every page, much of the disinformation focused on solidifying long-term right-wing mythology against Kennedy as historical fact, from laying the full blame for the Bay of Pigs fiasco at his doorstep to ignoring his plans for withdrawing US

military forces from Vietnam.

On the latter point, at the time of his death, Kennedy had committed not one more American troop to Vietnam than when he was inaugurated. And he was in the act of withdrawing the advisers he and President Eisenhower had committed. It was Johnson who reversed this plan within three months with the writing of NSAM 288. This contained the plans for a massive air, land and sea war against Vietnam that included the use of tactical atomic weapons in case of Chinese intervention. This is something Kennedy would never have even entertained, let alone signed off on.

Regarding both JFK and another historical figure featured in the book – Martin Luther King Jr. – the authors throw in many stories about extramarital affairs. In using the likes of David Heymann and Seymour Hersh’s discredited book, *The Dark Side of Camelot*, they present the most extreme tales in this regard.

I have dealt with this issue concerning Kennedy in my long essay, “The Posthumous Assassination of John F. Kennedy.” (See *The Assassinations*, edited by James DiEugenio and Lisa Pease, pgs. 324-73) Concerning King, many people who heard these alleged surveillance tapes, like journalist Ben Bradlee, felt they were created by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover.

Which brings us to a real quandary. O’Reilly and Dugard spend many pages describing the alleged character flaws of Kennedy and King. But they spend next to none describing the much larger flaws of J. Edgar Hoover, longtime CIA Director Allen Dulles and President Johnson. I wonder why – and there is a likely explanation.

For decades, it has been a strategic goal of the American Right to tear down the hero status of Kennedy and King, whereas there is no similar political need to disparage Hoover, Dulles and Johnson. So, a book that is designed to do several things at once – cement the conventional wisdom about the Kennedy assassination in line with the

original Warren Commission findings, pander to right-wing readers and make gobs of money – would naturally ignore all the messy evidence of CIA and FBI wrongdoing and highlight the human frailties of Kennedy and King.

Thus, *Killing Kennedy* is just the latest example of O’Reilly’s lucrative decision to sell out, even on a topic that once appeared to draw his honest interest. Many years ago O’Reilly was the host of a syndicated program called *Inside Edition* that drew on his past acquaintance with Gaeton Fonzi, the late, great field investigator for both the Church Committee and the HSCA. Fonzi supplied O’Reilly with many interesting stories about the Kennedy case in the early 1990s when Oliver Stone’s film was creating a new furor about the case. The stories all pointed toward a conspiracy, and some still exist on YouTube today.

But then, O’Reilly was hired by longtime Republican operative Roger Ailes to work for Rupert Murdoch’s Fox network. According to author Russ Baker, O’Reilly wanted to continue his investigative pieces on the JFK case at Fox, but these ambitions were quashed by Ailes, who had cut his teeth in politics as a media consultant for Kennedy’s archrival, Richard Nixon.

So today, O’Reilly’s work on the Kennedy case is contrary to what he did before. He even suggests the chief motive for his sell-out on page 313. He dedicates the book to his boss, Roger Ailes, whom he obsequiously calls “a brilliant, fearless warrior.”

That is a true confession. Too bad it came on the last page. If it came on the first page, we would have known that a supposed homicide investigation was being supervised by a political operative with an agenda to bend the history. **CT**

*Jim DiEugenio is a researcher and writer on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and other mysteries of that era. This essay originally appeared at [www.consortiumnews.com](http://www.consortiumnews.com)*

O’Reilly and Dugard spend many pages describing the alleged character flaws of Kennedy and King. But they spend next to none describing the much larger flaws of J. Edgar Hoover, longtime CIA Director Allen Dulles and President Johnson

# Averting the nightmare

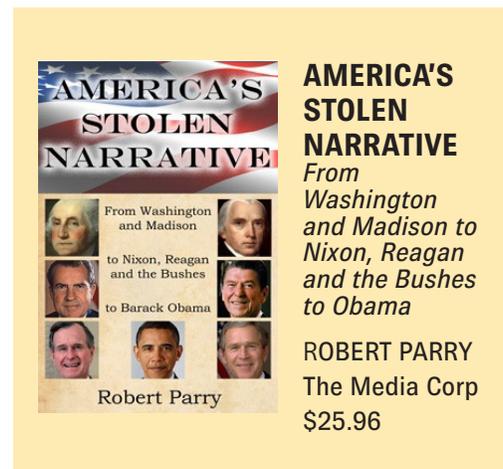
An excerpt from Robert Parry's new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*

By tinkering with the past or blacking out some key facts, the aliens can make their behavior appear normal, even admirable

Robert Parry's new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, is now available for sale, in print or electronically (from Amazon and barnesandnoble.com). The book's introduction explains why the theft of key chapters of America's historical narrative, from the Founding to Barack Obama's presidency, have been so costly to the nation and the world.

There was always something surreal about George W. Bush's presidency, like a science-fiction disaster movie in which an alien force seizes illegitimate control of a nation, saps its wealth, wreaks devastation on its people, but is finally dislodged and forced to depart amid human hope for a rebirth. In Bush's case, there was even a satisfying concluding scene as a new human leader takes power amid cheers of a liberated populace. The alien flees aboard a form of air transportation (in this case, a helicopter), departing to the jeers of thousands and many wishes of good riddance.

But then the depleted country must turn to rebuilding and recovery. Many of the humans find their jobs are gone, or their stock portfolios, or their homes. They grow disillusioned and impatient. It turns out that many of the alien's allies remain in positions of power, a stay-behind force, especially within the nation's propaganda structure as well as at high levels of the government, courts and business. These operatives quickly get to work



erasing memories of how the catastrophe occurred. They write a new narrative that shifts the blame to the new leader.

Facts are selectively presented to convince millions of the people that they should welcome another alien to rule them. Indeed, much of the population begins to accept a story line that places the alien conquest within the context of the nation's origins. It's all what the Founders intended. What the aliens understand – since they have studied this population for many years – is that they can direct the people by shaping the historical narrative. If the narrative can be shifted or falsified, the course of the nation can be redirected. By tinkering with the past or blacking out some key facts, the aliens can make their behavior appear normal, even admirable.

In this sci-fi metaphor, the only way for the humans to escape slavery is to rediscover and reclaim their truthful narrative, to identify and eliminate the false story lines that the aliens have inserted into the history. A truthful narrative is their only route to freedom.

On a bitterly cold day – January 20, 2009 – my youngest son, Jeff, then 20 years old, and I joined the masses of humanity that struggled against an overwhelmed mass transit system to get anywhere close to the US Capitol where Barack Obama was to be sworn in as the 44th President of the United States, the first African-American to hold that office.

We parked my green Chevy Prism in Pentagon City, an area of shops and restaurants near the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, and pushed our way into the Metro station and onto a train that took us across the Potomac River to Washington. There, we found ourselves exiting the train into even a larger throng of people. We inched and elbowed our way to an escalator and ascended to the bright frigid weather that had settled over the US capital.

Bending against the bitter cold, we maneuvered toward the Mall, confronting barriers that required special credentials to pass through. Not having those credentials, we kept bending left away from the Capitol building and its famous white dome. Finally, we found a spot on the Mall almost to 14th Street. We picked out a small opening and stood shivering among the other 1.8 million people who filled the blocks upon blocks west from the Capitol, which looked rather tiny from our perspective about a mile away. Our view of the Inauguration came mostly via the Jumbotron screens that were spaced along the edges of the Mall.

Despite the freezing temperatures and the transportation woes – not to mention the devastated economy and the two unfinished wars that George W. Bush was leaving behind – the crowd was remarkably friendly and upbeat.

Inauguration Day 2009 was filled with a joy that I have rarely seen on the streets of Washington, a city that even at its best is not known for spontaneous bursts of happiness.

But there was more than joy that day; there was a sense of liberation. People were not only witnessing Obama's swearing-in, but Bush's ushering-out. They not only cheered Obama and their other favorites, but many booed those considered responsible for the national plundering, especially Bush and his wheelchair-bound Vice President Dick Cheney.

When Bush arrived or when Cheney was wheeled into view, people shouted in anger or heckled. Bush was serenaded with the mocking lyrics, "Na-na-nah-na, na-na-nah-na, hey, hey, hey, goodbye." One group near us started singing, "Hit the road, Jack."

Some Georgetown students next to Jeff tut-tutted the failure of the crowd to show more deference to the departing President and Vice President, but most people either laughed or joined in. To them, it seemed that taunting Bush and Cheney was the least that could be done, since the pair had been spared impeachment and any other accountability for the harm they had caused.

Eight years after Bush and Cheney were handed control of the Executive Branch thanks to five Republican partisans on the US Supreme Court who had stopped the counting of votes in Florida, a fuller measure of the consequences from the Bush-Cheney administration was now apparent. Bush and Cheney were leaving behind a ballooning federal debt, an economy in freefall, unemployment skyrocketing (along with bankruptcies and foreclosures), environmental degradation, two open-ended wars that left hundreds of thousands dead, and the nation's image around the world soiled by torture and other official crimes.

For those who followed the machinations of politics closely, it was also clear how narrowly the democratic institutions of the American Republic had dodged a possibly fatal bullet fired by Bush's operatives who saw

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him as a leader to transform the US political system into a kind of one-party state.

Karl Rove and other Bush political aides boasted about a “permanent Republican majority,” one that would be backed by an aggressive right-wing media. In furtherance of that goal, Rove worked to politicize the Justice Department, install ideological judges on the federal bench, and team up with media attack specialists to bully the few dissenters who got in the way.

By hyping allegations of voter fraud, the Bush team also hoped to suppress the votes of minorities and other Democratic-leaning constituencies via ballot security measures. By going after unions, the Republicans reduced the money that Democrats would need to compete in political advertising. By loosening the restrictions on donations by the super-wealthy – in part by packing the federal courts with Republican judges who opposed campaign-finance restrictions – the GOP could further stack the deck.

For those Americans who still hoped for a meaningful system of checks and balances, they were often dependent on the mainstream US news media, but it had demonstrated a breathtaking degree of professional cowardice, especially after the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and before the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Under Rove’s vision of a restructured Republic with a controlling Republican Party, the mainstream media could be bypassed anyway with a multi-layered right-wing media messaging machine that would influence the public through TV, radio, magazines, newspapers, books and well-funded Internet sites. Rove’s scheme would keep Democrats around for show, a cosmetic appendage necessary to sustain the fiction of a democracy, but the Democrats really wouldn’t have much chance to compete.

When Bush was at his peak of power in the early- to mid-2000s, it seemed like only the bravest Americans – whether in politics, journalism or other walks of life – would challenge this Republican juggernaut. Even entertainers

who uttered critical words about Bush – like the Dixie Chicks – faced career reprisals and, in some cases, death threats. Post 9/11, there emerged a feeling of incipient totalitarianism as the Bush administration wiretapped communications and explored ways to “data-mine” the electronic records of virtually anyone who operated in the modern economy – what the Pentagon’s research arm, DARPA, called “Total Information Awareness.” The end of the old Republic was within sight.

It was only because of the courage of a small minority of Americans that this wave of Republican extremism met any resistance at all. Ultimately, however, it was Bush’s own mistakes – the disastrous turns in the Iraq War beginning in late 2003, his botched response to the Katrina hurricane disaster in 2005 and the catastrophic Wall Street collapse in 2008, partly due to Bush’s deregulatory fervor – that the tide gradually turned, making it possible for Democrats to gain a firmer foothold in the Congress in 2006 and then to surge to victory in 2008.

So, on that frigid day in early 2009, there were many cheers for President Obama when he was sworn in and gave his Inaugural Address. But some of the greatest enthusiasm was reserved for the moment when Bush boarded a helicopter for his departure, what many in the crowd viewed as his getaway.

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When Bush and Cheney finally left the scene – and the vast crowd began breaking up – the masses in this post-Bush/Cheney America actually had the look of bedraggled survivors in a sci-fi disaster movie, dressed mostly in ragtag clothing – ski caps, parkas, boots and blankets – bent against the cold and trudging through streets largely devoid of traffic. Jeff and I were among them. Knowing the impossibility of using the Metro, we set off by foot, shuffling back toward Arlington, our feet numb, our bodies shivering.

We trudged south toward the Potomac Riv-

er and picked our way past car barriers onto the 14th Street Bridge, part of the normally busy Interstate 395, except that only buses and official vehicles were using it on Inauguration Day. The bridge became an impromptu walkway with clumps of half-frozen pedestrians straggling across it, over the icy Potomac with a biting wind forcing people to tighten up their mufflers, tug down their ski caps and wrap themselves more firmly in their blankets.

After traversing the bridge, which seemed much, much longer than when I would cross it so often by car, Jeff and I found an exit ramp near the Pentagon, clambered over some road dividers, and worked our way down to Pentagon City and to my car. After driving home and sitting before a fire, it took much of the afternoon and evening for the cold to work its way out of our bodies.

Yet, as we were thawing – and Obama’s supporters were celebrating at Inaugural parties – the Republicans were already contemplating how to ensure the failure of the new President. Obama may have talked about his hope for a post-partisan politics and a nation coming together to confront a devastating financial crisis, but that is not what he would get.

The Republicans had a playbook dating back to the last Democratic president, Bill Clinton, when they displayed their new tactics of total political warfare and deployed their extraordinary media clout to challenge Clinton’s “legitimacy.” They kept him constantly on the defensive with investigations, allegations and suspicions. That playbook would now be dusted off for President Obama, except in the intervening 16 years, the Right had buttressed its media power with Fox News and many top-of-the-line Internet sites.

Obama might have wanted political peace but he would get ideological war. The Republican Party, which barely two years earlier had been contemplating a permanent majority, was not about to accept the legitimacy of this child of a white mother from Kansas and a black father from Kenya.

Yes, the Republicans recognized that their past leader, George W. Bush, had messed up. But they had come too far to simply sit down with Obama, this mixed-race interloper, and work on some compromises. It didn’t matter that the country was facing the worst economic disaster since the Great Depression. Even if some old-time Republicans – the few remaining “moderates” – would consider that possibility, the right-wing infrastructure that had grown with the Republican Party over the past three decades would not allow it.

The Right’s media machinery had its own imperatives. It fed on anger toward “lib-rhuls” and thrived on right-wing conspiracy theories. Like a voracious predator, this right-wing organism sized up Obama as prey. Politically speaking, he would be swarmed upon and torn limb from limb. He would be just a temporary obstacle to the grander Republican plan. Peace? There would be no peace.

Arguably, President Obama’s biggest political misjudgment after his election was to give too much weight to his own rhetoric about a post-partisan Washington, one where the magnitude of the various crises would force the two sides to work together constructively. Or perhaps he simply had to behave that way because he had made so many promises on the campaign trail about how he would reach across the aisle.

If he didn’t at least make the effort, he would stand accused of renegeing on his pledges and reigniting the partisan wars. Of course, he could not avoid that outcome, nor could he avert the blame. Mainstream news outlets, like CNN, would frame the story as Obama’s “failure” to end the partisan battles.

Even before taking office, Obama had signaled an eagerness for more continuity with the Bush administration than change, especially on national security and the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. He kept in place Bush’s Defense Secretary Robert Gates and retained Bush’s senior military command structure, including the high-

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profile Gen. David Petraeus.

Both Gates and Petraeus were closely associated with Bush's 2007 "surge" of US troops in Iraq, which received great credit from the Washington press corps for supposedly salvaging the Iraq disaster from defeat (although the actual reasons for the decline in violence in Iraq were much more complicated and, according to some military analysts, had little to do with adding 30,000 US reinforcements).

Obama also selected for his Secretary of State the relatively hawkish Hillary Clinton, his rival for the Democratic nomination in 2008. When Obama faced early decisions about what to do with the worsening security situation in Afghanistan, these choices would insure that he would be boxed in with recommendations for a similar "surge" there.

But a bigger miscalculation may have been made less by Obama than by many of Obama's supporters on the Left who unrealistically thought that his election would somehow fix things overnight, that the systemic political changes that the Right had engineered over four decades would just reverse themselves.

On that front, Obama could be blamed for raising hopes too much, but the simple fact was that American politics had been transformed by two elections in particular, one in 1968 when Richard Nixon defeated Vice President Hubert Humphrey and the other in 1980 when Ronald Reagan crushed President Jimmy Carter. Nixon's victory began the transformation of the Republican DNA, instilling a conscience-less ruthlessness focused only on getting and keeping political power. Reagan's victory added the ideological component that "government is the problem."

Combined with those two key victories came clever right-wing messaging, whether the exploitation of racial resentments among working-class whites or the alteration of the founding national narrative into a story of free-market selfishness. The GOP and its right-wing allies also set to work investing billions of dollars in a media out-reach infrastructure. Soon, the Right's angry messages were everywhere, about how "big gov-mint" programs

favored lazy minorities over hard-working "regular" people, i.e. whites. Other messaging blamed the nation's problems on the interference of "bureaucrats" with the "free market."

Especially given the failure of progressives to invest seriously in their own media infrastructure to counter these reactionary messages, the Right succeeded in setting the national agenda and rewriting the founding narrative. Again, the Left was caught flat-footed as the Right invested in "scholars" who delved back into the Revolutionary War era and cherry-picked quotes from key Founders that put the "free-market" extremism of the late 20th and early 21st centuries into a seamless context of America's founding struggle. Unregulated capitalism was made synonymous with the Founders' concept of "liberty."

Beyond rewriting the founding narrative, the Right had great success in framing the story of recent American history. From the days of Richard Nixon, the Republicans had grown more and more ruthless in how they grabbed for political power but they also displayed greater and greater skill at concealing some of their more outrageous tactics, even ones that bordered on treason, going behind the backs of sitting Democratic presidents to sabotage their foreign policies.

In 1968, Nixon's campaign disrupted President Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam peace talks while a half-million US soldiers sat in the war zone. In 1980, the overwhelming evidence now indicates that Ronald Reagan's campaign pulled a similar stunt to sink President Jimmy Carter's negotiations to free 52 American hostages then held in Iran. These parallel operations exploited the perceived weaknesses of the two Democratic administrations, that Johnson had no serious plan to end the Vietnam War and that Carter had made America weak before its enemies.

The one big Republican miscalculation over this four-decade-plus era had been the Watergate break-in in 1972 and the botched cover-up which led to Nixon's resignation in 1974. But even that political disaster taught the Republicans valuable lessons about how to

contain potential scandals. Indeed, the failure of Official Washington to fully comprehend the context of Watergate, especially its links to Nixon's earlier sabotage of the Vietnam peace talks, enshrined a dubious conventional wisdom that Watergate had been a one-off affair traceable to Nixon's personal paranoia.

The prevailing view after Nixon's resignation was that the national institutions – the press, Congress and the courts – had protected the Republic from a uniquely dangerous president, but that was only partly true. A misguided lesson from Watergate became a favorite Washington saying, that “the cover-up is worse than the crime.” Yet, if the full Watergate story were understood, it would have been clear that the broader crime encapsulated in Watergate was far worse than the cover-up.

As a setback for Republicans, the messy Watergate scandal was just a blip in a continuum that could be traced from Nixon's torpedoing Johnson's Vietnam peace process in 1968 through Reagan's similar tactics regarding Carter's Iran-hostage talks in 1980 to the readiness of the Republicans during Obama's presidency to hold the entire US economy hostage, blocking legislation to reduce unemployment and then blaming Obama for the high unemployment.

Along the way, the Right constructed a media propaganda system that shielded Republicans from much of the accountability that they deserved, making sure there would be no repeat of the Watergate debacle, no future GOP president would be forced out of office by getting caught in a scandal. The mainstream Democrats also played their part in this national tragedy by looking the other way when evidence surfaced about serious Republican misconduct.

Through this era – from Nixon's 1968 sabotage of the Vietnam peace talks to Obama's determination to “look forward, not backward” regarding torture and other crimes of George W. Bush's presidency – a recurring refrain from the Democrats was that a thorough airing of the dirty Republican laundry would

not be “good for the country,” an approach that only encouraged the Republicans to be more audacious.

And, as the US press corps became more careerist and less committed to the best principles of journalism, another important check disappeared. If the Founders were right that a functioning democracy required an informed electorate, then they also understood the corollary, that a system with a thoroughly misinformed population would be something quite different, something closer to a form of totalitarianism. It might retain the trappings of a democratic Republic but it would no longer be one.

In such a system, propaganda would systematically manipulate the voters, not just with an occasional lie or some ad hoc spin but with a consistent and unrelenting pattern of deception. A manufactured false history wouldn't just trick people from time to time; it would be inserted in their minds to control their future political judgments.

This nightmarish end result can be averted – the Republic can be saved – but only if the national narrative is corrected and repaired, if the real story is known. Such an undertaking – to fix the broken American narrative – obviously is a larger task than any one book or any one author can achieve. I don't pretend to be an expert on every facet of US history. In that sense, I'm sure this book (and this author) will disappoint some readers because some issue – some false narrative that is deserving of correction – is not addressed in these pages. For that, I apologize in advance.

I have addressed other false narratives in my previous books: *Fooling America*, *Trick or Treason*, *Lost History*, *Secrecy & Privilege*, and *Neck Deep* (the last written with two of my sons, Sam and Nat). In those books, you can find more about the actual history of America, both the good and the bad. But I believe that the historical accounts that are examined here represent important forks in the road for the American narrative. Straightening out these twisted pathways will give the people a better chance to find their way to a better place. **CT**

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**Robert Parry** broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the *Associated Press* and *Newsweek*. He founded *Consortiumnews.com* in 1995 as the Internet's first investigative magazine

# Tribute to a white trash saint

In the second of his ‘forgotten’ essays, **Joe Bageant** pays tribute to country music legend **Hank Williams**

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**If one were to choose the single factor -- other than native talent -- which pushed Williams out of the foggy anonymity of a small southern town and onto the path of fame, it would undoubtedly be his early marriage to his first wife, Audrey**  
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*Joe Bageant died last year at age 64. I knew him only for the last eight years of his life. I launched and managed his website – still do. About six weeks ago, I posted an article Joe had written when he was a beginning writer in Colorado. A scan of that article, “In the footsteps of Neal Cassady’s ghost”, had been sent to me by an old friend of Joe’s. I had no idea what the response might be to Joe’s take on Neal Cassady, but it was favorable and readers have asked for more. This article, originally published in the Colorado Daily on September 8, 1976, is about Hank Williams.*

– Ken Smith, [ken@kvsmith.com](mailto:ken@kvsmith.com)

**H**iram Hank Williams was his full name and he was born in Georgiana, Alabama on Sept. 17, 1923, the son of a railroad engineer and a very crude and dominant mother whose character had been permanently scarred by the harsh realities of a dirt-poor South.

Facts concerning his early musical development are hard to obtain from people who knew him in his youth.

Because of their great pride in his later fame, they all claim to have had a hand in

it. It’s a fairly safe bet that he got his share of white gospel music as a child; even today it’s inescapable in this region of Alabama. But the only individual firmly established to have had a direct influence on Williams was an old black street minstrel named Tee-Tot, known to have given guitar lessons to the young Williams, who followed him about.

If one were to choose the single factor – other than native talent – which pushed Williams out of the foggy anonymity of a small southern town and onto the path of fame, it would undoubtedly be his early marriage to his first wife, Audrey. It came natural for this ‘Bama boy – who throughout his life carried the tragic flaw of the deep southern style of matriarchal family – to marry a woman as forceful and overbearing as his own, someone to take the responsibility for his life upon herself. Before long, Audrey had him performing at every county fair and candy show in the cotton belt.

By 1946 Williams found himself being pushed through the office doors of the largest recording and publishing outfit in Nashville, Acuff-Rose. And on that day, the still-primitive country-music industry connected with

the gangly upping man who, shy hick that he was, would be the living embodiment of a style and form which would become the one all others would be judged against – and generate wealth of unbelievable proportions.

As Audrey prompted Williams from the background, he stood in the office and sang five songs, all destined to become great classics. Astounded at the young man's ability, yet skeptical one man could have actually written all five, Fred Rose sent Williams into a back room with orders to "Write some kind of song right here on the spot as proof." Fifteen minutes later he returned from the room with "Mansion on the Hill," performed to this day by such people as John Denver and Michael Murphey.

Rose was something of a genius when it came to hillbilly music and had pioneered the field about as far as it could go until that time. In Williams he instantly knew had the key to the hearts of rural America and ultimately a broader audience. Rose did well by Williams – making him a household word throughout the South and West, and a moderately wealthy man off the income from songs like "Move It On Over" and "When God comes to Gather His Jewels."

True success didn't arrive until Williams' material caught on in the national pop field.

It was a full two years before the perfect break came their way, enabling them to crash the popular market. It came with the aid of one of the most unlikely persons imaginable, considering the Williams image.

That person was Tony Bennett. Bennett record "Cold, Cold Heart," which sold millions and exposed the Alabama songwriter's talents to the urban public.

I remember distinctly the impact he had on many of my relatives and neighbors in rural Virginia during the early 50s. Williams and what he represented was more important, held in higher esteem than even the President (of course the hill people of Appalachia never seem to be satisfied with anyone occupying the White House because of the fierce distrust inherited from their Scotch-

Irish ancestors of anything that smells like authority).

Although everyone was very proud and a staunch Baptist or Methodist who believed in the virtues of God and hard work, most of them felt far removed from the America which generated movies, popular music or new and fashionable things. So when "Ole Hank" would sing "Why cain't ah free your dutiful mind, and mayult yore cold, cold hart?" millions of them flashed: "Jesus Christ, I don't believe it! He's one of us!"

For a long time I thought this primitive level of identification was perhaps unique only to those people I knew, but since then I've met Alabamans, Mississippians, and Louisianians who've experienced the same thing. But this is a reaction from way back up in the sticks, and not necessarily the most typical.

While Williams embodied many of the touch and beautiful aspects of the South and Southeastern honkey culture, he also posed nearly all of their bitterest faults and weaknesses. An alcoholic since his late teens, he came to be driven by a multitude of his own personal demons, becoming more self-destructive and withdrawn as the years passed. At the peak of his career he was failing miserably as a performer because of drunkenness, malnutrition and, towards the end, excessive use of pills. Countless thousands saw him stagger around mumbling, falling off stages or in a state of total helplessness. If he bothered to show up at all.

I've asked many people who saw him perform or knew him when he was in Nashville for their impressions. Most of them weren't exactly pretty:

"Up to a point, liquor and pills just made him sing better and better. Then, all of a sudden, he'd just cave in. Sometimes he would get real mean. You never knew which way he was going to go."

"I don't think he was so much a hateful guy inside. It was more like he would be burned up . . . or burned out as they call it. Blind crazy drunk and nothing mattered."

.....  
**An alcoholic since his late teens, he came to be driven by a multitude of his own personal demons, becoming more self-destructive and withdrawn as the years passed**  
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## REMEMBERING JOE

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**On New Year's Eve the reaper smiled, and Hank Williams died in the back seat of a Cadillac plowing through the hills of West Virginia**  
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By the end of 1952 Williams had become the most pathetic figure in country music. Divorced, addicted, shunned by his fellow artists, he careened around getting in and out of trouble.

During this time he began taking a series of "treatments" from a weird occult quack doctor, named Tobias Marshall, which contributed to the massive physical deterioration near the end.

September of '52 found him getting married to an ignorant, 19-year-old girl named Billie Jean Jones on the stage of an auditorium before several thousand gawkers who'd each paid 50 cents to get in. But it would be one of the last acts in the tragicomedy of country music's brightest star. At 29 he had only three months left.

On New Year's Eve the reaper smiled, and Hank Williams died in the back seat of a Cadillac plowing through the hills of West

Virginia. Too much booze, too many pills. Outside the car, the icy teeth of a blizzard snapped.

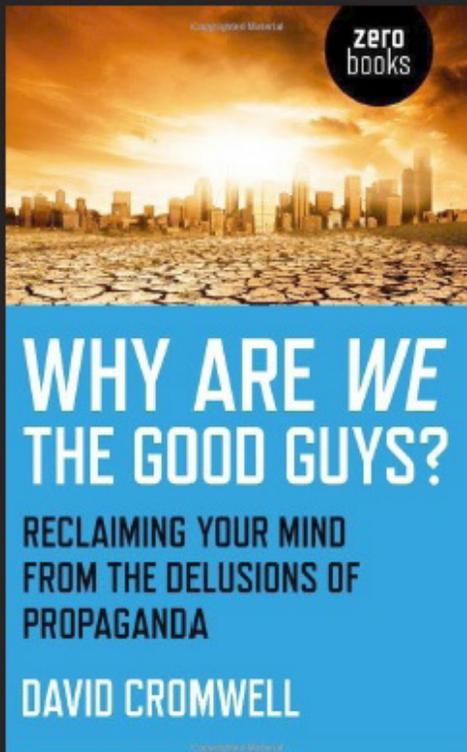
And on New Year's Day, all over the nation Hank Williams' fans cried in front of bulky old Philco radios leaking eulogies onto the hooked rug.

That was also the same day Billie Jean Jones stood on the toilet to slap her mother-in-law across the face and claw her eyes in a knock-down drag-out fight over Hank's car.

And Audrey, God bless her heart, was down at the funeral home removing the watch and rings from Hank's body.

The whole damned affair was so damned beautifully honkey white trash that it hurts. Just like his music did. **CT**

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*Joe Bageant's website is [www.joebageant.com](http://www.joebageant.com). Read his essays in pdf format at [www.coldtype.net/joe.html](http://www.coldtype.net/joe.html) - see advert on right*



*"One of the beacons in a politically dark world is the light cast by a few who analyse and reveal how journalism works in the cause of power. David Cromwell has pride of place in this company" – John Pilger*

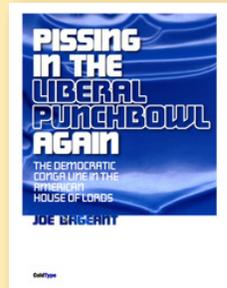
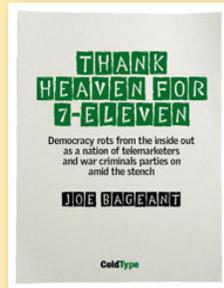
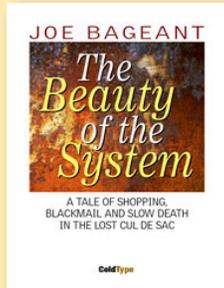
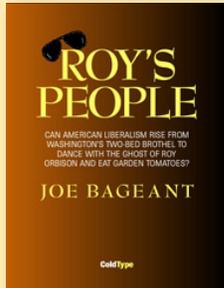
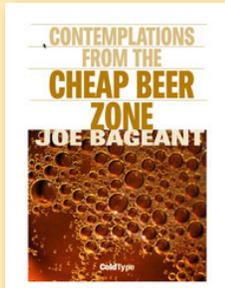
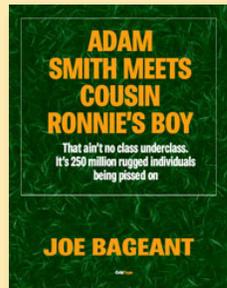
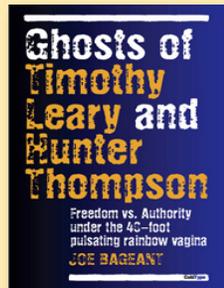
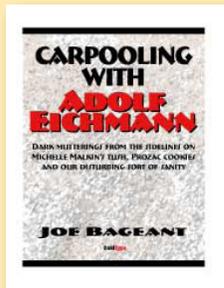
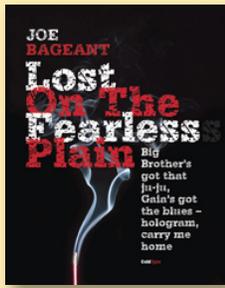
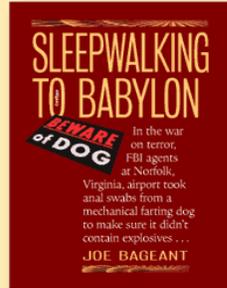
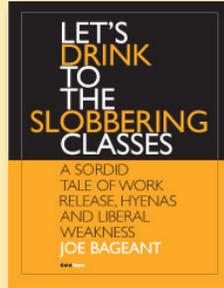
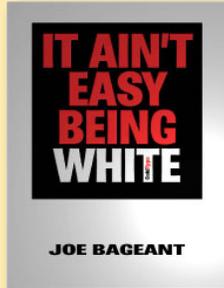
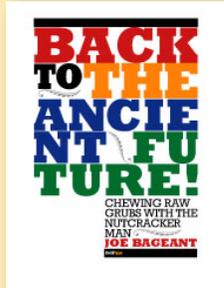
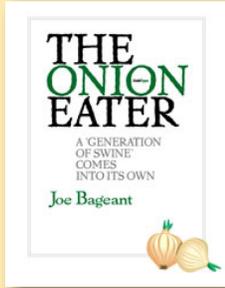
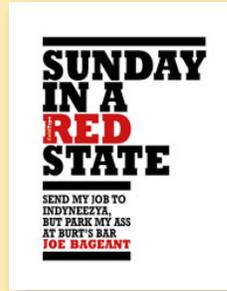
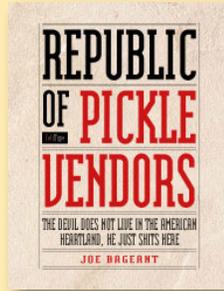
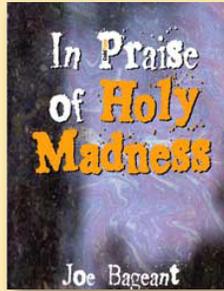
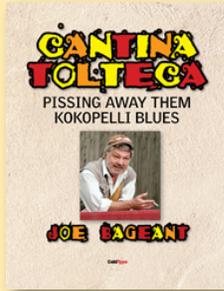
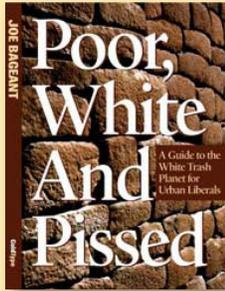
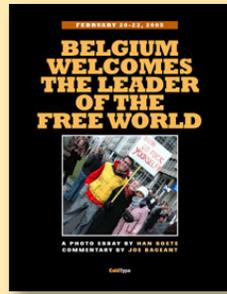
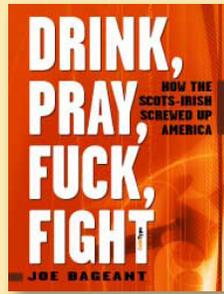
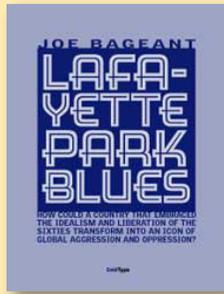
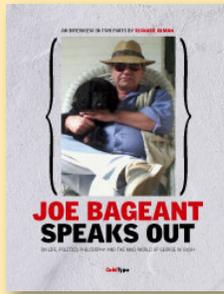
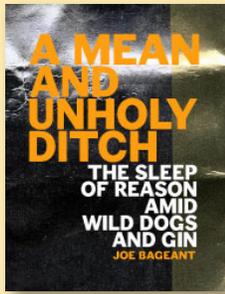
## WHY ARE WE THE GOOD GUYS?

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# The end of justice in America

John Pilger discusses a political show trial that has echoes of Stalin's Russia

.....  
**Dr. Dhafir was one of many Americans, Muslims and non-Muslims, who for 13 years had raised money for food and medicines for sick and starving Iraqis who were the victims of sanctions**  
.....

**I**n 1999, I travelled to Iraq with Denis Halliday who had resigned as assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations rather than enforce a punitive UN embargo on Iraq. Devised and policed by the United States and Britain, the extreme suffering caused by these “sanctions” included, according to Unicef, the deaths of half a million Iraqi infants under the age of five.

Ten years later, in New York, I met the senior British official responsible for the imposition of sanctions. He is Carne Ross, once known in the UN as “Mr.Iraq”. I read to him a statement he made to a parliamentary select committee in 2007 : “The weight of evidence clearly indicates that sanctions caused massive human suffering among ordinary Iraqis, particularly children. We, the US and UK governments, were the primary engineers and offenders of sanctions and were well aware of this evidence at the time but we largely ignored it or blamed it on the Saddam government. [We] effectively denied the entire population a means to live.”

I said, “That’s a shocking admission.”

”Yes, I agree,” he replied, “I feel very ashamed about it ... Before I went to New York, I went to the Foreign Office expecting a briefing on the vast piles of weapons that we still thought Iraq possessed, and the desk officer sort of looked at me slightly sheepishly and said, ‘Well actually, we don’t think there is anything in Iraq.’ “

That was 1997, more than five years before George W. Bush and Tony Blair invaded Iraq for reasons they knew were fabricated. The bloodshed they caused, according to recent studies, is greater than that of the Rwanda genocide.

On 26 February 2003, one month before the invasion, Dr. Rafil Dhafir, a prominent cancer specialist in Syracuse, New York, was arrested by federal agents and interrogated about the charity he had founded, Help the Needy. Dr. Dhafir was one of many Americans, Muslims and non-Muslims, who for 13 years had raised money for food and medicines for sick and starving Iraqis who were the victims of sanctions. He had asked US officials if this humanitarian aid was legal and was assured it was -- until the early morning he was hauled out of his car by federal agents as he left for his surgery. His front door was smashed down and his wife had guns pointed at her head. Today, he is serving 22 years in prison.

On the day of the arrest, Bush’s attorney-general, John Ashcroft, announced that “funders of terrorism” had been caught. The “terrorist” was a man who had devoted himself to caring for others, including cancer sufferers in his own New York community. More than \$2 million was raised for his surety and several people pledged their homes; yet he was refused bail six times.

Charged under the International Emer-

gency Economic Powers Act, Dr. Dhafir's crime was to send food and medicine to the stricken country of his birth. He was "offered" the prospect of a lesser sentence if he pleaded guilty and he refused on principle. Plea bargaining is the iniquity of the US judicial system, giving prosecutors the powers of judge, jury and executioner. For refusing, he was punished with added charges, including defrauding the Medicare system, a "crime" based on not having filled out claim forms correctly, and money laundering and tax evasion, inflated technicalities related to the charitable status of Help the Needy.

The then Governor of New York, George Pataki, called this "money laundering to help terrorist organisations ... conduct horrible acts". He described Dr. Dhafir and the supporters of Help the Needy as "terrorists living here in New York among us ... who are supporting and aiding and abetting those who would destroy our way of life and kill our friends and neighbours". For jurors, the message was powerfully manipulative. This was America in the hysterical wake of 9/11.

The trial in 2004 and 2005 was out of Kafka. It began with the prosecution successfully petitioning the judge to prohibit "terrorism" from being mentioned. "This ruling turned into a brick wall for the defence," says Katherine Hughes, an observer in court. "Prosecutors could hint at more serious charges, but the defence was never allowed to follow that line of questioning and demolish it. Consequently, the trial was not, in fact, what it was really about."

It was a political show trial of Stalinist dimensions, an anti-Muslim sideshow to the "war on terror". The jury was told darkly that

Dr. Dhafir was a Salafi Muslim, as if this was sinister. Osama bin Laden was mentioned, with no relevance. That Help the Needy had openly advertised its humanitarian aims, and there were invoices and receipts for the purchase of emergency food aid was of no interest. Last February, the same judge, Norman Mordue, "re-sentenced" Dr. Dhafir to 22 years: a cruelty worthy of the Gulag.

With their "terrorist" case "won", the prosecutors held a celebration dinner, "partying," wrote a Syracuse lawyer to the local newspaper, "as if they had won the Super Bowl ... having perpetuated a monstrous lie [against a man] who had helped thousands in Iraq suffering unjustly ... the trial was a perversion". No executive of the oil companies that did billions of dollars of illegal business with Saddam Hussein during the embargo has been prosecuted. "I am stunned by the conviction of this humanitarian," said Denis Halliday, "especially as the US State Department breached its own sanctions to the tune of \$10bn."

During this year's US presidential campaign, both candidates agreed on sanctions against Iran which, they claimed, posed a nuclear threat to the Middle East. Repeated over and over again, this assertion evoked the lies told about Iraq and the extreme suffering of that country. Sanctions are already devastating Iran's sick and disabled. As imported drugs become impossibly expensive, leukaemia and other cancer sufferers are the first victims. The Pentagon calls this "full spectrum dominance". **CT**

*John Pilger's documentaries have won academy awards in both the UK and the US. His website is <http://johnpilger.com>*

It was a political show trial of Stalinist dimensions, an anti-Muslim sideshow to the "war on terror"

**Read Katherine Hughes's account of the prosecution of Dr Dhafir in our e-reader at <http://coldtype.net/reader.html>**

# The universe unraveling

William Blum on the meddling that is ripping apart the Middle East

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**In the past 18 months it appears that at one time or another virtually every nation in the Middle East and North Africa as well as members of NATO and the European Union has been reported as aiding those seeking to overthrow the regime of Bashar al-Assad**  
.....

**T**he Southeast Asian country of Laos in the late 1950s and early 60s was a complex and confusing patchwork of civil conflicts, changes of government and switching loyalties. The CIA and the State Department alone could take credit for engineering coups at least once in each of the years 1958, 1959 and 1960. No study of Laos of this period appears to have had notable success in untangling the muddle of who exactly replaced whom, and when, and how, and why. After returning from Laos in 1961, American writer Norman Cousins stated that “if you want to get a sense of the universe unraveling, come to Laos. Complexity such as this has to be respected.”

Syria 2012 has produced its own tangled complexity. In the past 18 months it appears that at one time or another virtually every nation in the Middle East and North Africa as well as members of NATO and the European Union has been reported as aiding those seeking to overthrow the regime of Bashar al-Assad, while Russia, China, and several other countries are reported as aiding Assad. The Syrian leader, for his part, has consistently referred to those in combat against him as “terrorists”, citing the repeated use of car bombs and suicide bombers. The West has treated this accusation with scorn, or has simply ignored it. But the evidence that Assad has had good

reason for his stance has been accumulating for some time now, particularly of late. Here is a small sample from recent months:

- “It is the sort of image that has become a staple of the Syrian revolution, a video of masked men calling themselves the Free Syrian Army and brandishing AK-47s – with one unsettling difference. In the background hang two flags of Al Qaeda, white Arabic writing on a black field ... The video, posted on YouTube, is one more bit of evidence that Al Qaeda and other Islamic extremists are doing their best to hijack the Syrian revolution.” (*New York Times*, July 24, 2012)

- A leading German newspaper reported that the German intelligence service, BND, had concluded that 95% of the Syrian rebels come from abroad and are likely to be members of al Qaeda. (*Die Welt*, September 30, 2012)

- “A network of French Islamists behind a grenade attack on a kosher market outside Paris last month also planned to join jihadists fighting in Syria ... Two suspects were responsible for recruiting and dispatching people ‘to carry out jihad in some countries – notably Syria,’” a state prosecutor said. (Associated Press, October 11, 2012)

- “Fighters from a shadowy militant group [Jabhat al-Nusra] with suspected links to al-Qaida joined Syrian rebels in seizing a government missile defense base

in northern Syria on Friday, according to activists and amateur video. ...The videos show dozens of fighters inside the base near a radar tower, along with rows of large missiles, some on the backs of trucks.” (Associated Press, October 12, 2012)

- “In a videotape posted this week on militant forums, the Egyptian-born jihadist Ayman al-Zawahiri ... urged support for Syria’s uprisings.” (Associated Press, October 28, 2012)

According to your favorite news source or commentator, President Assad is either a brutal murderer of his own people, amongst whom he has had very little support; or he’s a hero who’s long had the backing of the majority of the Syrian population and who is standing up to Western imperialists and their terrorist comrades-in-arms, whom the US is providing military aid, intelligence, and propaganda services.

Washington and its freedom fighters de jour would like to establish Libya II. And we all know how well Libya I has turned out.

.....  
**Of backward nations and modern nations**

Page one of the October 24 *Washington Post* contained a prominent photo of a man chained to a concrete wall at a shrine in Afghanistan. The accompanying story told us that the man was mentally ill and that “legend has it that those with mental disorders will be healed after spending 40 days in one of the shrine’s 16 tiny concrete cells”, living “on a subsistence diet of bread, water and black pepper.” Every year hundreds of Afghans bring mentally ill relatives to the shrine for this “cure”.

Immediately to the right of this story, constituting the paper’s lead story of the day, we learn that the United States is planning to continue its policy of assassinating individuals, via drone attacks, for the foreseeable future. This is Washington’s “cure” for the mental illness of not believing that America is the savior of mankind, bringing democracy, freedom and happiness to

all. (The article adds that the number of “militants and civilians” killed in the drone campaign over the past 10 years will soon exceed 3,000 by some estimates, surpassing the number of people killed on September 11.)

Undoubtedly there are many people in Afghanistan, high and low, who know that their ancient cure is nonsense, but the chainings have continued for centuries. Just as certain, there are American officials who know the same about their own cure. Here’s a senior American official: “We can’t possibly kill everyone who wants to harm us. ... We’re not going to wind up in 10 years in a world of everybody holding hands and saying, ‘We love America.’” Yet, we are told, “Among senior Obama administration officials, there is a broad consensus that such operations are likely to be extended at least another decade. Given the way al-Qaeda continues to metastasize, some officials said no clear end is in sight.”

We can also be confident that there have been people chained to the wall in Afghanistan who were not particularly mentally ill to begin with but became so because of the cure. And just as certain, there have been numerous people in several countries who were not anti-American until a drone devastated their village, family or neighbors.

The *Post* article also reported that Adm. Mike Mullen, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, returned from Pakistan a while ago and recounted a heated confrontation with his counterpart, Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani. “Mullen told White House and counterterrorism officials that the Pakistani military chief had demanded an answer to a seemingly reasonable question: After hundreds of drone strikes, how could the United States possibly still be working its way through a ‘top 20’ list?”

American officials defended the arrangement even while acknowledging an erosion in the caliber of operatives placed in the drones’ cross hairs. “Is the person currently Number 4 as good as the Number 4 seven

.....  
**“We can’t possibly kill everyone who wants to harm us. ... We’re not going to wind up in 10 years in a world of everybody holding hands and saying, ‘We love America.’”**  
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**To demonstrate that the bullshit is bipartisan, we now present Mr. Mitt Romney, speaking during the presidential foreign policy debate: “Syria is Iran’s only ally in the Arab world. It’s their route to the sea. It’s the route for them to arm Hezbollah in Lebanon, which threatens, of course, our ally, Israel”**  
.....

years ago? Probably not,” said a former senior US counterterrorism official. “But it doesn’t mean he’s not dangerous.” The Post added this comment: “Internal doubts about the effectiveness of the drone campaign are almost nonexistent.”

The next day we could read in the Post: “There is ample evidence in Pakistan that the more than 300 [drone] strikes launched under Obama have helped turn the vast majority of the population vehemently against the United States.”

.....  
**Wake up and smell the bullshit.**

After the second presidential debate in early October, Luke Rudkowski of the media group We Are Change asked Florida Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, the chair of the Democratic National Committee, about President Obama’s widely reported “kill list” of Americans and foreigners who can be assassinated without charge or trial.

**Luke Rudkowski:** “If President Romney becomes president, he’s going to inherit President Barack Obama’s secret ‘kill list’? This is going to be debated. How do you think Romney will handle this ‘kill list,’ and are you comfortable with him having a ‘kill list’?”

**Debbie Wasserman Schultz:** “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

**Luke Rudkowski:** “Obama has a secret ‘kill list’ which he has used to assassinate different people all over the world.”

**Debbie Wasserman Schultz:** “I’m happy to answer any serious questions you have.”

**Luke Rudkowski:** “Why is that not serious?”

**Debbie Wasserman Schultz:** “Because I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

**Luke Rudkowski:** “Of course you don’t.”

The existence of the US ‘kill list’ has been publicly known for nearly two years and was the subject of a 6,000-word exposé in the *New York Times* in May.

At the same event, Sierra Adamson of

We Are Change asked former White House Press Secretary and current Obama campaign adviser Robert Gibbs about the US killing of Abdulrahman Awlaki, the teenage son of Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen.

**Sierra Adamson:** “Do you think that the killing of Anwar al-Awlaki’s 16-year-old son, who was an American citizen, is justifiable?”

**Robert Gibbs:** “I’m not going to get into Anwar al-Awlaki’s son. I know that Anwar al-Awlaki renounced his citizenship.”

**Sierra Adamson:** “His son was still an American citizen.”

**Robert Gibbs:** “Did great harm to people in this country and was a regional al-Qaeda commander hoping to inflict harm and destruction on people that share his religion and others in this country. And...”

**Sierra Adamson:** “That’s an American citizen that’s being targeted without due process of law, without trial. And he’s underage. He’s a minor.”

**Robert Gibbs:** “I would suggest that you should have a far more responsible father. If they’re truly concerned about the well-being of their children, I don’t think becoming an al-Qaeda jihadist terrorist is the best way to go about doing your business.” 2

To demonstrate that the bullshit is bipartisan, we now present Mr. Mitt Romney, speaking during the presidential foreign policy debate: “Syria is Iran’s only ally in the Arab world. It’s their route to the sea. It’s the route for them to arm Hezbollah in Lebanon, which threatens, of course, our ally, Israel.”

However, a look at a map reveals firstly that Iran does not share a border with Syria; there’s something called Iraq in between; and secondly that Iran already has access to the sea on both its north and south; actually about 1100 miles of coastline. Romney has made this particular blunder repeatedly, and the *Washington Post* has pointed it out on several occasions. *Post* columnist Al Kamen recently wrote: “We tried so hard back in February to get Romney to stop say-

ing that.” Of course, neither Obama nor the debate moderator pointed out Romney’s errors.

.....  
**The fate of those who do not love the empire**

On October 7 Hugo Chávez won his fourth term in office as president of Venezuela. The feeling of frustration that must have descended upon the Venezuelan and American power elite is likely reminiscent of Chile, March 1973, when the party of another socialist and American bête noire, Salvador Allende – despite the best intentions and dollars without end of the CIA – won about 44 percent of the vote in congressional elections, compared to some 36 percent in 1970. It was said to be the largest increase an incumbent party had ever received in Chile after being in power more than two years.

The opposition parties had publicly expressed their optimism about capturing two-thirds of the congressional seats and thus being able to impeach Allende. Now they faced three more years under him, with the prospect of being unable, despite their most underhanded efforts, to prevent his popularity from increasing even further.

During the spring and summer the Agency’s destabilization process escalated. There was a whole series of demonstrations and strikes, with a particularly long one by the truckers. *Time* magazine reported: “While most of the country survived on short rations, the truckers seemed unusually well equipped for a lengthy holdout.” A reporter asked a group of truckers who were camping and dining on “a lavish communal meal of steak, vegetables, wine and empanadas” where the money for it came from. “From the CIA,” they answered laughingly.

There was as well daily sabotage and violence, including assassination. In June, an abortive attack upon the Presidential Palace was carried out by the military and the ultra-right Patria y Libertad.

In September the military prevailed. “It is clear,” said the later US Senate investigating committee, “the CIA received intelligence reports on the coup planning of the group which carried out the successful September 11 coup throughout the months of July, August, and September 1973.” The United States had also prepared the way for the military action through its economic intervention and support of the anti-Allende media.

Chávez has already been overthrown once in a coup that the United States choreographed, in 2002, but a combination of some loyal military officers and Chávez’s followers in the streets combined for a remarkable reversal of the coup after but two days. The Venezuelan opposition will not again make the mistake of not finishing Chávez off when they have him in their custody.

Both Hugo Chávez and Salvador Allende had sinned by creating “nationalistic” regimes that served the wrong “national interest”. The hatred felt by the power elite for such men is intense. The day after the legally and democratically elected Venezuelan leader was ousted, but before being restored to power, the *New York Times* (April 13, 2002) was moved to pen the following editorial:

“With yesterday’s resignation [what the coup leaders called it] of President Hugo Chávez, Venezuelan democracy is no longer threatened by a would-be dictator. Mr. Chávez, a ruinous demagogue, stepped down after the military intervened and handed power to a respected business leader.”

It should be noted that the “respected business leader”, Pedro Carmona, quickly dissolved the National Assembly and the Supreme Court, and annulled the Venezuelan constitution.

And keep in mind that in the United States the *New York Times* is widely regarded as a “liberal” newspaper; most conservatives would say “very liberal”, if not “socialist”.

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**It should be noted that the “respected business leader”, Pedro Carmona, quickly dissolved the National Assembly and the Supreme Court, and annulled the Venezuelan constitution**  
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**William Blum**  
*is the author of “Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War I”, Rogue State: a guide to the World’s Only Super Power” and “West-Bloc Dissident: a Cold ar Political memoir”*  
 .....

**CT**

# Dreaming of duvets

David Smith-Ferri tells of an important initiative aimed at saving young lives in war-torn Afghanistan

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Last winter, particularly fierce, dozens of very young children froze to death in squalid, “refugee” camps on the outskirts of the city  
.....

*I have spread my dreams under your feet.  
Tread softly, because you tread on my dreams. —William Butler Yeats*

**H**aroon has recurring dreams. Haroon whose father was killed when he was a boy and who remembers a gnawing hunger during the long winter in every year of his childhood. At night, he dreams that someone drops him from a great height. He freefalls through the air, crashes to hard ground, and dies. During the day, he dreams of relief from the anger and confusion that pursue him, and of being a photographer, a traveler.

Faiz, who lost his parents when he was a boy, and whose brother was shot and killed in front of him, has nightmares, too. Each night at the Afghan Peace Volunteer (APV) House here in Kabul, as he sleeps against the wall a few feet away, his moans and cries wake me. By day, he dreams of being a journalist, of marrying and raising a family, of a world without borders and war.

In Afghanistan, with a child mortality rate of nearly 20 percent, many children never even have a chance to form dreams, yet alone to realize one. Life is especially hard on children whose families flee their homes, leaving behind not only their land and livelihoods, but their social networks. Across the country, 400 people are displaced every day by violence and poverty,

and many of them choose to come to Kabul, carrying their shattered dreams with them. Kabul, a city built to support 300,000 people, is now home to over five million.

Last winter, particularly fierce, dozens of very young children froze to death in squalid, “refugee” camps on the outskirts of the city. An estimated 35,000 people live in these camps, many of them having fled to Kabul from areas of heavy fighting in Helmand and Kandahar provinces. When we visit these camps, we find the residents in tattered cotton clothes and bare feet. They live without electricity or plumbing in huts they’ve constructed from mud, and the deaths of their children last year were as wholly preventable as the war their families fled.

Every evening at the APV House, a small group of young Afghan high school students gathers in their bedroom to sip green tea and study, leaning over their books on the one table in this sparsely furnished house. When night overtakes them, they sleep on thin blankets on a concrete floor, the pulse of the street below beating in their blood, its sounds seeping into their dreams.

Every morning when they wake, these young men roll up their blankets and makeshift pillows in a large sheet and carry them into another room. They sweep the floor with short-handled straw brooms purchased in the bazaar. Two hours later, their



**Afghani children live without electricity or plumbing, in huts constructed from mud.**

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The sewing group has also become a safe place, where dreams can be named, held in public, and nurtured cooperatively

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bedroom and late-night study is converted into a classroom where up to 20 Afghan women meet six days a week to learn how to sew.

These women, all living nearby in the Pul-e-Surk neighborhood of western Kabul, are of mixed ethnicity, Hazara, Tajik, Pashtun. That, in itself, is extraordinary, in a country where mistrust between ethnic groups is a major obstacle to the kinds of cooperation needed to build lasting peace. They have been meeting now for several months.

The class also offers a burgeoning network of social support for women whose responsibilities and daily routines often isolate them. Because of cultural norms and security concerns, many of these women spend their entire days in their homes, a place where they are subject to physical and emotional abuse from men and the physical and psychological strain of endless, often hard work. “I always wanted to have a job and earn an income for my family,” Faribah says, “but I have never been allowed outside the house. Coming to this sewing class is the very first time.” Others echo her words. “This is the first time I have been out of the

house to learn something,” Shararah says. “I have never been allowed outside before.” She adds that her husband is not employed and so there are problems at home. In a statement that brings murmurs of assent, Faribah tells us, “We are human beings. We have feelings and sentiments and we all want to be free, to have dignity, whether male or female, but here in Afghanistan we cannot be free. It is not only because of social traditions, but also because of war.”

The sewing group has also become a safe place, where dreams can be named, held in public, and nurtured cooperatively. These are mothers who dream of feeding their families, of getting out forever from under the crushing weight of poverty. Every day, when the women arrive for class, this dream enters the room with them. Its voice rings in their laughter, and speaks in the rapid, metallic sounds of the sewing machines. Long after they leave, it lingers.

And now its voice has grown. With winter approaching, Faribah, Shararah, Golbahar, Turpikay, Shakirah, and the rest of the group have decided to sew their personal dreams together with those of their com-

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**The cream of the aid money flowing into the country is skimmed off the top by corrupt officials. No one needs to point this out or explain it to these women. They have only to look around and see how little has been accomplished**  
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munity by making large, warm comforters – Afghan duvets – for families living in Kabul’s refugee camps. In the camps last year, children who died were sleeping with family members, but they rolled out from under their small blankets. A *New York Times* article quoted the father of one of the children who died, “Adults know how to keep warm, but the little ones do not.” So the women will make duvets that will cover the children and protect them all night.

The women will work closely with the Afghan Peace Volunteers on this project. Recently, they have held several meetings. They approach planning for the project with intelligence and confidence, drawing on their understanding of people and how things work in Kabul. Their statements are strong and clear. For warmth, the duvets will be made with a double layer of wool. They set a fee of 100 Afghanis (about \$2) per duvet that will be paid directly to the seamstress who makes it. At an expected two duvets per day, a woman can earn \$80-100 per month, and make a significant contribution to the welfare of her family.

At today’s meeting, they are equally strong on their ownership of the project, and their insistence on being involved in

its administration. “We want to be involved in all decisions,” especially those related to who is involved. A spirited discussion ensues. “In Afghanistan,” they state clearly, “we have all learned to cheat and lie.” The cream of the aid money flowing into the country is skimmed off the top by corrupt officials. No one needs to point this out or explain it to these women. They have only to look around and see how little has been accomplished despite great expenditures over the past eleven years. By the time aid reaches the people it is supposed to assist, so little of it is left that they feel justified in taking what they can. The duvet project, the women say, cannot succeed without honesty. And this requires clear rules, oversight, and accountability.

Today’s meeting ends. And slowly, slowly the women leave, saying long, lingering goodbyes to each other. Their dreams lay at our feet. All day, we tread softly. **CT**

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*David Smith-Ferri is a member of Voices for Creative Nonviolence ([www.vcnv.org](http://www.vcnv.org)) and the author, most recently, of “With Children Like Your Own”. He is in Kabul at the invitation of the Afghan Peace Volunteers ([www.2millionfriends.org](http://www.2millionfriends.org))*

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# Armed to the teeth, but living in fear

Dave Lindorff wonders why his countrymen are so insecure

**A** new study by researchers at the University of Illinois in Urbana, showing that young children who are fearful in childhood are likely to be conservative when they grow up got me thinking.

It's not just that a whole generation of kids who get regularly belted by their parents, who are warned that if they behave in a certain manner they'll go to hell, or that their faces will freeze in some horrible contorted way, or that they will be thrown out of the house, are becoming Republicans. It's that virtually the whole country is populated by adults who have been raised in a climate of fear by a media and a government that seems hell-bent on scaring the shit out of everyone.

The result is that a nation that once, for better or worse, was full of people who could strike out for unknown regions to stake a claim on land when they didn't even know how to farm (land admittedly belonging to native Americans who could understandably be expected to react with aggressive hostility to being expropriated), who could weather brutal winters with nothing to get them through but a musket and a store of root vegetables in the cellar, who could stand up to the mightiest military of its day and throw off a colonial yoke and boldly create a new country, now cowers in fear at the imagined threats of a landlocked group

of uneducated and incredibly poor people living in a country that is a throwback to the 16th century.

America is supposedly the "Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave," as our unsingable national anthem puts it at its most unsingable point, but to tell the truth, it is no longer either of those things. Just try telling a cop who stops you for standing off the side of the road with your thumb out and says you are breaking the law against hitchhiking, that he is wrong and that the law does not bar thumbing, and he will threaten you with arrest. Argue (which is your right), and you're likely to be slammed against his vehicle, cuffed, and dragged off to the slammer. Never mind that the cop is wrong about the law, and that your charges will be tossed later. If you resist, or mouth off further during this process, you might even be tased. In the end, you are busted, probably bruised, too, and you'll be detained for a couple of hours until your family can come spring you by paying an extortionate bail. You're not free, and the cop is certainly anything but brave.

When the Twin Towers in New York City were attacked and struck by two planes and collapsed, it was a horrible shock, but at no point was the United States threatened. Even if you throw in the attack by a third plane on the Pentagon, which collapsed a section of the world's biggest building, the

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**People in Hong Kong aren't afraid. People in Taiwan and China aren't afraid, and yet objectively they all live in much more vulnerable places**  
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US wasn't facing any existential risk. But the reaction of the American public to this attack on 9-11-2001, encouraged mightily by the US government, was to hunker down, beg for police-state laws, and to stop all normal activity.

In my town, the local school board cancelled all school trips for the rest of the 2001-2 school year, claiming, with the full support of most of the parents in the school district, that there was a risk that terrorists might attack school buses!

This is not rational behavior. It is irrational fear.

The same fear that has led to public support for bi-partisan funding of the most bloated, grotesquely over-armed military in the history of the world. It's not any good at fighting wars, as the defeat in Iraq, and the looming defeat in Afghanistan by forces armed with AK-47 rifles and home-made mines has proved, and it's not any good at fighting terrorism, as the spreading of fundamentalist Muslim terror groups across the Middle East and northern Africa demonstrate, but it creates a warm feeling of comfort for terrified Americans to see those huge nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, bristling with heavily armed fighter bombers on their decks, plowing through the ocean, just as it makes people comfortable to see US troops, puffed out with body armor so that they look like pro-football players on a gridiron, standing at the ready at some far off desert outpost.

They're "keeping us safe," people think, even as they rush out to buy guns in record numbers.

The depths to which this nation has sunk in this miasma of mindless fear became apparent when President Obama, at both the first abysmal debate and the third, opened his remarks by declaring that it was his primary duty as president "to keep Americans safe."

Huh?

I thought the primary responsibility of the president of the United States was to

defend the Constitution. In fact, here's the presidential oath:

*I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.*

Note that it doesn't say anything in this oath of office about keeping Americans "safe."

It's our Constitution and our freedom that the president is supposed to be defending, not our safety!

Imagine President George Washington, or President Abraham Lincoln, saying that their "number one goal" was to "keep Americans safe"!

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I was at a gathering of journalists last night – the annual dinner of the Knight-Bagehot Fellowship program. Actually it was a gathering of journalists, bankers, public relations executives and media tycoons, all of the latter of whom help to fund this program at Columbia University designed to train journalists to report on financial and economic affairs. A former director, Pauline Tai, from Hong Kong, an old friend, was talking with me and said that she was amazed in her visits back to the US, at how afraid Americans have become.

We remarked on how bizarre that was. America is far and away the most powerful nation in the world, favored in so many ways with abundant resources, with a diverse culture and population, and yet its people cower in fear. People in Hong Kong aren't afraid. People in Taiwan and China aren't afraid, and yet objectively they all live in much more vulnerable places – Hong Kong right next to a totalitarian government that could snuff out its civil liberties overnight, Taiwan under the threat of Chinese missiles just across a narrow strait – missiles that were test fired into adjacent shipping lanes during a crisis in 1995. And China itself a kind of pressure cooker of public frustration and

anger held at bay by a sclerotic Communist Party elite that doesn't really know how to change and reform without losing its grip in an uncontrolled explosion.

The same can be said of much of the rest of the world, from what I have seen in my own travels. Look at Greece. It is seeing its economy destroyed and pillaged by the greedy demands of banks in northern Europe and by the governments of the more powerful economies in the European Union, yet far from cowering in fear, its people are fighting back in massive public demonstrations.

Americans, worried about their own country's economic future, go out and buy more and bigger guns and huddle in their homes in fear of the future. And then they vote for politicians who tell them they should be afraid – whether of terrorists, “death panels” in Obamacare, a bankrupt Social Security program, the budget deficit, regulations, or a black president – and who, to public applause, hand ever more power over to an intrusive and increasingly violent domestic police/army.

The worst thing about all this fear and fear-mongering is that it has turned the US into a nation of conspiracy theorists, so ready to believe the most far-fetched plots and schemes by the rich and powerful that we Americans are unable to see the real challenge facing not just us, but the entire

world: the threat of catastrophic climate change. And that is a very real threat that cannot be avoided by cowering in a basement or by electing some tough-talking chief executive, or by buying guns. It can only be tackled by taking bold united action as a people to change the whole basis of the socio-economic system from one premised on encouraging wasteful consumption to one based upon utility and on bettering the lot of all as efficiently as possible.

It is time for Americans to reject the fear-mongering, and to take responsibility for our own society and government. We don't need a leader who will “keep us safe.” We need a leader who will denounce fear, who will declare that the freedoms that are enshrined in the Constitution's Bill of Rights are the foundation of this nation, and that we will rely on them, not police and armies, to move the country forward to face the real challenges of the future. **CT**

*Dave Lindorff is an award-winning American investigative journalist. He graduated from Wesleyan University in 1972 with a BA in Chinese language. He then received an MS in Journalism from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in 1975. He served for five years as a correspondent for Hong Kong and China. He is a founder of the online newspaper [www.ThisCantBeHappening.net](http://www.ThisCantBeHappening.net)*

Americans, worried about their own country's economic future, go out and buy more and bigger guns and huddle in their homes in fear of the future



# Drowning on Wall St and ending World War III

David Swanson tells why the US needs to forget its obsession with national defence and concentrate on problems that actually exist

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**We weren't supposed to have standing armies, much less armies standing in everyone else's countries, much less armies fighting wars over the control of fuels that destroy the planet and armies that themselves consume the greatest quantity of those fuels, even though the armies lose all the war**  
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Imagine if George W. Bush had stood on the smoking ruins of the World Trade Center and declared, “We are going to continue our pursuit of world domination and environmental destruction until the oceans rise, the storms surge, and this spot and all the surrounding streets are drowned in routine floods, destroying the infrastructure, and collapsing the buildings of this great city, while you morons are distracted by my screams for vengeance and genocide against people who’ve never driven an SUV a block in their lives or ever heard of us.”

Imagine if Barack “Clean Coal” Obama had followed the same honest path, and not only competed with Mitt Romney in debates over who could drill more oil, but also stated plainly and openly that the Pentagon is still not ready for World War II to end.

On August 14, 1941, the military brought before the Senate plans to build a permanent building that would be the largest office building in the world and would be called the Pentagon. Senator Arthur Vandenberg asked for an explanation: “Unless the war is to be permanent, why must we have permanent accommodations for war facilities of such size?” Then he began to catch on: “Or is the war to be permanent?”

We weren't supposed to have standing armies, much less armies standing in everyone else's countries, much less armies

fighting wars over the control of fuels that destroy the planet and armies that themselves consume the greatest quantity of those fuels, even though the armies lose all the wars. Before the Nobel Peace Prize was handed out to war makers, it was intended for those who had done the best work of removing standing armies from the world. World War II changed everything.

We never went back to pre-WWII taxes or pre-WWII military or pre-WWII restraint in foreign empire or pre-WWII respect for civil liberties or pre-WWII notions of who deserved a Nobel Peace Prize. We never saw another declaration of war from Congress, but we never stopped using those of 1941, never left Germany, never left Japan, never dismantled the Pentagon.

Instead, as William Blum documents in his remarkable new book, *America's Deadliest Export: Democracy*, since the supposed end of WWII, the United States has tried to overthrow more than 50 foreign governments, most of them democratically elected; interfered in democratic elections in at least 30 countries; attempted to assassinate over 50 foreign leaders; dropped bombs on people in over 30 countries; and attempted to suppress a populist or nationalist movement in 20 nations.

Oh, but we meant well, and we mean well. Absolutely not so. There's no “we” involved here. The US government meant

and means global domination, nothing else. And yet, even foreigners buy the US snake oil. Gaddafi thought he could please Washington and be spared. So did the Taliban, and Saddam Hussein. When Hugo Chavez heard about the coup planned against him in 2002, he sent a representative to Washington to plead his case. The coup went ahead just the same. Subcomandante Marcos believed Washington would support the Zapatistas once it understood who they were. Ho Chi Minh had seen behind the curtain when Woodrow Wilson was president; World War II didn't change quite everything. Maurice Bishop of Grenada, Cheddi Jagan of British Guiana, and the foreign minister of Guatemala appealed to Washington for peace before the Pentagon overthrew their governments. "We" don't mean well when we threaten war on Iran any more than we meant well when "we" overthrew Iran's government in 1953. The US government has the very same agenda it had in 1953 because it is still engaged in the very same war, the war without end.

At the very moment of supreme moral pretense in 1946, as the United States was leading the prosecution of Nazi war crimes and killing the Nazis found guilty, at the very moment when Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson was declaring that those who sat in judgment at Nuremberg would be subject to the same standard of law, the United States was giving Guatemalans syphilis to see what would happen to them, and importing Nazi scientists by the dozen to work for the Pentagon.

The war to save six million Jews that in reality condemned them and 60 million others to death, the war of innocence that followed the arming of the Chinese and the British, and before that the arming of the Nazis and Japanese, the war against empire that in reality spread the largest empire the earth has known, the war against inhumanity that in reality developed and used the greatest weapons ever directed against humans: that war wasn't a triumph; it IS a triumph.

It has never ended. We've never stopped making our children pledge allegiance like little fascists. We've never stopped dumping our money into the complex that Dwight Eisenhower warned us would exert total influence over our society. We've never stopped to consider whether attacks on a finite planet must end someday.

Truman showed Stalin a couple of bombs, and the goddamn flags haven't stopped waving yet.

If you don't believe me, read more William Blum. The Marshall Plan was a plan for domination – smarter and more skillful domination than some other attempts – but still domination. US capitalist control was the highest purpose. Sabotage of leftist political gains was the primary approach. It's never changed. Dictators that play along have "our" full support.

Don't go looking for "humanitarian" attacks by NATO in Bahrain or Saudi Arabia or Jordan or UAE or Qatar or Kuwait or Yemen, any more than Obama was willing to turn against Ben Ali or Mubarak or Gaddafi or Assad until doing so appeared strategic for the pursuit of global domination. The United States does not intervene. It never intervenes. It is incapable of intervening. This is because it has already intervened everywhere. What it calls intervening is actually switching sides.

If you don't believe me, read a short new book by Nick Turse called *The Changing Face of Empire: Special Ops, Drones, Spies, Proxy Fighters, Secret Bases, and Cyberwarfare*. The "new" US military is not a return to pre-WWII, not a reduction in financial expense, not a redirection away from global domination, not a shift toward somehow becoming defensive rather than offensive. The "new" military is a technological and tactical tweaking of the existing US empire based on racist exploitation. Here's what's new:

The branches are blurring. The military, CIA, State Department, and Drug Enforcement Agency are becoming a team that operates in secret at the behest of the Presi-

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**The United States does not intervene. It never intervenes. It is incapable of intervening. This is because it has already intervened everywhere. What it calls intervening is actually switching sides**  
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**Are you confident  
that everyone  
killed in a dozen  
raids a night is  
also Pure Satanic  
Evil deserving of  
execution without  
charge or trial?**  
.....

dent. (Before you cheer, stop and consider that come January the president may be long to the Bad Team.)

The Pentagon now has its own “intelligence” agency, while the State Department has its own office of proxy war making. US Special Forces are active in 70 nations on any given day, on behalf of the President, without the authorization of Congress, and in the name of the uninformed people of the United States.

The “special” forces, operating under the acronyms SOCOM and JSOC, are no longer special for being smaller. They’re special for having the power to operate in greater secrecy and without the apparent limitation of any laws whatsoever.

Remember that raid that killed Osama bin Laden? Yay! Hurray! Whooo Hooo! Murder is soooooo cool. But did you know that soldiers working for you do at least a dozen such raids somewhere in the world on any given night? Are you confident that everyone killed in a dozen raids a night is also Pure Satanic Evil deserving of execution without charge or trial? Are you certain that this practice sets a good example? Would you support other nations adopting its use? “Our” “special” forces are now larger than most nations’ militaries, and we don’t have the slightest idea what those forces are doing. “Our access [to foreign countries],” says Eric Olson, former chief of Special Operations Command, “depends on our ability to not talk about it.” Got that? Your hero-murderers want you to keep quiet.

Here’s what’s new: the US military has set up dozens of bases all over the world from which to fly killer robots known as drones. And there are dozens of bases all over the United States involved in the drone wars.

Turse helpfully lists them; I guarantee there’s at least one near you. Here in Virginia at Langley Air Force Base our brave desk-murderers watch what they oh-so-comically call “Death TV” – the live video feeds from drones flying over people’s homes on the other side of the world. At Fort Benning

in Georgia, where the annual protest of the School of the Americas torture school is coming up soon, they’re testing drones that can shoot to kill without human input. What could go wrong?

Not only has the blowback begun, but it’s how we learn where some of the drone bases are. In 2009, a suicide attack killed CIA officers and mercenaries at Forward Operating Base Chapman in the Khost province of Afghanistan, and only then did we learn that the base was used for targeting drone murders in Pakistan.

This is of course apart from the usual blowback of greatly heightened hostility which is being produced by the US military in nations all over the world. The 2010 attack on Libya, for example, resulted in well-armed Tuareg mercenaries, who had backed Gadaffi, heading back to Mali, destabilizing that country, and producing a military coup by a US-trained officer, as well as parts of the country being seized by the latest al Qaeda affiliate. And that’s in Mali. Never mind what a paradise Libya has become post liberation!

Many of the bases the US military uses abroad are in nations less heavily occupied than Afghanistan. They are permitted to operate where they do by the nasty governments of those nations, thanks to US support for dictatorship.

This explains why the Arab Spring produced so much footage of US-made armored personnel carriers, tanks, helicopters, and tear gas.

The Obama administration is eagerly increasing supplies of US-made weaponry to the very regimes beating, jailing, and killing pro-democracy activists. Repeat after me: “But it’s a jobs program.”

In fact, it’s a major jobs program. The Pentagon/State Department markets US weapons abroad, and the US tripled its sales of weapons abroad last year, now accounting for 85% of international weapons sales.

But the weapons sales are the least of it. The United States now maintains its own

troops in most nations on the earth and engages in joint training exercises with the local militaries.

The biggest areas for base construction today are probably Afghanistan and Africa. Despite the supposed “winding down” of the war on Afghanistan over the next 2 or 12 years, base construction is moving ahead full steam, including new “secret” bases for “special” forces, new “secret” drone bases, and new prisons.

The thinking – and I use the term generously – in Afghanistan and around the globe is that the United States should let the locals do more of the killing and dying. Of course, this hasn’t worked in Afghanistan or Iraq, any more than it worked in Vietnam. In Afghanistan, a proxy war in the 1980s produced notable blowback that can only be appreciated by fanatics for continued war, not by residents of New York City.

Friends, Romans, Countrymen, Countrywomen, let’s grow the fuck up. Stop blaming an imaginary being for a storm that you and your government produced. Stop thanking “God” for sparing one house while wiping out another.

Put down the flags and the bullshit love of country. If you want to love this country you’ll have to love the planet it’s on. If you want to love this planet you’ll have to love all of its people, and all of its other life forms. The storms are our own creation. The rising ocean is our own knowing act. If we want to turn this trend around we will have to shut down the Department of Defense and create a new department aimed at defending us from dangers that actually exist.

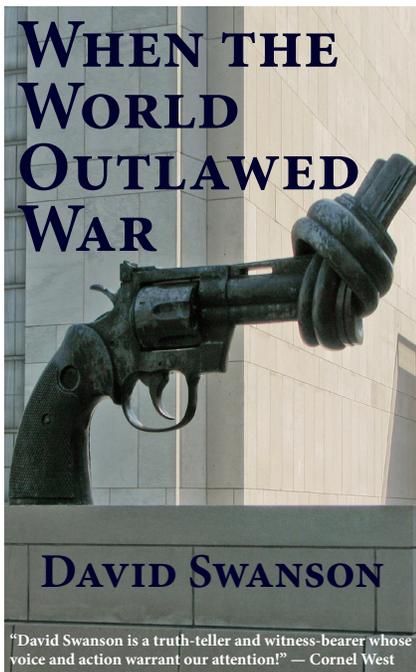
**CT**

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*David L. Swanson is an American activist, blogger and author. warisacrime.org*

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**Friends, Romans, Countrymen, Countrywomen, let’s grow the fuck up**  
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## Imagine if War Were Illegal — It Is!



In January 1929 the U.S. Senate ratified by a vote of 85 to 1 a treaty that is still on the books, still upheld by most of the world, still listed on the U.S. State Department’s website — a treaty that under Article VI of the U.S. Constitution is the “supreme law of the land.”

This treaty, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, bans all war. Bad wars and “good wars,” aggressive wars and “humanitarian wars” -- they are all illegal, having been legally abolished like duelling, blood feuds, and slavery before them.

The wisdom of the War Outlawry movement of the 1920s is revived in a new book by David Swanson. The full plan to outlaw war has never been followed through on. We have a duty to carry the campaign forward.

*“Swanson has done it again. This is a masterful account of how Americans and people around the world worked to abolish war as a legitimate act of state policy and won. Swanson’s account of the successful work of those who came before us to insist that war be outlawed compels us today to rethink the cost and morality of cynical or weary inaction in the face of our repeated resort to military threats and warfare to achieve policy goals.” — Jeff Clements, Author of Corporations Are Not People.*

[davidswanson.org/outlawry](http://davidswanson.org/outlawry)

# Revealing the two New Yorks

Gary Lapon reports on the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy – and explains why the most vulnerable are bearing the brunt of the ongoing crisis

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**Some sections of the city, such as Manhattan north of 39th Street, are practically back to normal. In the other New York, however, a humanitarian crisis is looming**  
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**H**urricane Sandy, the most devastating storm to hit New York City in decades, has left the city divided between areas facing ongoing devastation and those where life is returning to normal.

But the hurricane has also revealed divisions in the city that existed long before Sandy touched ground: between rich and poor, and between the workers who make the city run and the wealthy who reap the benefits.

Some sections of the city, such as Manhattan north of 39th Street, and inland parts of Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx, are practically back to normal. Residents have power, water and Internet, restaurants and stores are open, and for the most part, the bustle of the city has returned.

In the other New York, however, a humanitarian crisis is looming. As this article was being written, hundreds of thousands of people were still without power – and will be for several days more – after a transformer explosion that affected Manhattan below 39th Street.

Dozens of homes were destroyed in a massive six-alarm fire that hit Breezy Point in Queens on Monday night, leaving hundreds of residents homeless. NYU Langone Medical Center evacuated when its backup generators failed, and Bellevue Hospital, which suffered damage during the storm

and was running on generators due to a loss of outside power, evacuated some 500 patients on Wednesday.

Laura Durkay, a resident of the East Village and a SocialistWorker.org contributor, walked over 30 blocks on Wednesday to charge her cell phone in a deli in Midtown. “People are helping each other and sharing information,” she said. “A man parked his truck on 12th Street with his radio on, and people gathered around to listen to the news. Electricity is the biggest issue. Starbucks and other places are jammed with lines of people waiting to charge their phones.” In addition, cell phone service for many is spotty or down in areas without power.

*Socialist Worker* contributor Sherry Wolf, who lives in Park Slope in Brooklyn, described the scene at a makeshift shelter in her neighborhood:

“The Park Slope Armory that usually serves as a colossal YMCA – built by the 19th century robber barons as a fortress against the poor – is currently packed with more than 600 climate refugees, mostly seniors and others in desperate need. They appear like any of us would who haven’t worn dry socks in days – happy for the donated hot meals and a dry place to sleep, but uncomfortable, frustrated and frightened about what happens next. Even teens off school this week are helping out, though, so many

of us have displaced friends staying with us. In fact, I've got two camped out at my small place."

Although the Red Cross said that food relief was on the way, residents stuck in lower Manhattan were relying on the few restaurants, such as pizza parlors with gas ovens, that were serving food to long lines of those who could afford it. Other restaurants, such as Northern Spy Food Co., "served [free] lunch to everyone who lined up outside their restaurant at Avenue A and 12th Street," according to the Gothamist.

Another obstacle for the poor stuck in the blacked-out area of Manhattan: They can't use the assistance they receive for food purchases from the state's food stamp program because the subsidy is delivered electronically, via Electronic Benefit Cards. Wherever the power is out, the cards are useless.

Durkay described the contrast between her neighborhood and Midtown as "surreal. Midtown is basically functional, while my neighborhood is a disaster zone – no power or cell phone service, maybe one business out of every 10 or 20 open, no water or heat for many people, a few restaurants and bodegas open, but no grocery stores. Two guys called it the 'dead zone.'"

RESIDENTS OF public housing were especially hard hit, with nearly 60 complexes without power as of Wednesday. Durkay reported seeing residents on the Lower East Side, many of whom were without water or power, filling up buckets of water from fire hydrants outside their buildings.

Several of the public housing complexes in New York City are in Zone A, which is at greatest risk for flooding. Inside the high-rises of 14 stories high or more, thousands of residents, including the elderly, disabled and those with limited mobility, are stuck without water or power, with humanitarian consequences.

Hector lives in the Jacob Riis housing

project, which is located in Zone A on the Lower East Side. "They shut down the elevators and hot water just a few hours after I found out about the mandatory evacuation on Sunday," he said. The pre-emptive shutdown, presumably intended to force people to evacuate, actually made it more difficult for those trying to get out.

According to Hector, most residents of his complex decided to stay. Some thought that Sandy, like last year's Hurricane Irene, which mostly missed New York City, would end up being mostly hype. Others, especially immigrants, had nowhere to go because they were without family in the area – or no way to get there because of a lack of access to transportation.

The subway and bus system shut down at 7 p.m. on Sunday, and a cab ride from Manhattan to the outer borough, with extra fees for bridges and tolls, can run \$40 or more.

While most of New York City's homeless population rode out the storm in one of the city's 46,631 shelter beds, according to *Russia Today*: "Lacking enough beds to house all those in need, many shelters made exceptions, allowing their buildings to go over capacity for the night. But although the efforts helped many in need, there still wasn't room for everyone."

As the hurricane approached, several homeless remained on the streets to face the storm unprotected. But billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg had little sympathy. "There are some people that are just very difficult," he told the *New York Observer*. "They want to avoid interacting with others, and how you get to those has always been a challenge and as far as I know, we're doing a good job with that."

One homeless man, 43-year-old James, told freelance journalist Julia Reinhart: "I can't go back to the shelter system for another two months... Only once you've been out for a year, can you be classified as long-term homeless, and therefore get access to additional assistance." When Reinhart

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**"Midtown is basically functional, while my neighborhood is a disaster zone"**  
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**While the contrast between Hurricane Sandy's impact on different sections of New York City is stark, the truth is that New York has been sharply divided for a long, long time**  
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asked about the emergency shelters, James said, "No, they don't want us there. These shelters are for the good folks, the families that get evacuated. There is no room in there for me."

Also left twisting in the wind during the storm were the thousands of prisoners jailed at Rikers Island. Most are awaiting trial, but can't afford or were denied bail, or are awaiting transfer to serve minor sentences. Amy in Queens reported that the buses to Rikers Island, which had begun running again, were full of people anxious to visit their loved ones to make sure they were okay.

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THE STORM also raises questions about the state of New York City's basic infrastructure – and the priorities of the city's elites.

*ProPublica*, reporting on the failure of backup generators at NYU Langone Medical Center, explained that part of the system was in the basement, which flooded. New hospitals build generators above the level floodwaters are likely to reach, but according to hospital trustee Gary Cohn, "The infrastructure at NYU is somewhat old."

Tragically, lives were put at risk, including infants in neonatal intensive care, who had to be transported while nurses helped them breath manually. Years of medical research were also lost when the generator failed.

Cohn, the NYU trustee, is president of banking giant Goldman Sachs, which is helping fund the construction of a non-union Harlem Children's Zone charter school on public housing green space, in spite of community opposition. There is plenty of money for union-busting and school privatization, but updating hospital infrastructure is apparently lower down on the list.

Nor is there a centralized plan for dealing with hospital evacuations. According to a nurse at a downtown hospital, because of the continuing power outage, every hospital below 34th Street in Manhattan was ordered to evacuate its patients by the week-

end. But there was no plan where to put the patients – nurses and other staff were working around the clock to find hospital beds for all the people who were to be displaced.

Meanwhile, the demand for hospital beds may be increasing as the supply dries up – as a result of injuries from the storm, the potential for the spread of disease resulting from the breakdown of sanitation systems and the possible worsening of New York's rat problem.

Power is out below 39th Street because of an explosion at a Con Edison substation at 13th Street, next to the water on the eastern edge of Manhattan. In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, a senior Con Ed executive said the explosion might have been prevented had they moved some of the equipment to a higher level to avoid flooding, but that is "going to take some time." It's unclear why Con Ed, which knew about the risk of flooding after Hurricane Irene hit last year, did not take this precaution sooner.

A Con Edison employee, speaking anonymously, said that while company executives and Mayor Bloomberg declare that most New Yorkers will have power restored in four days, the real timeframe could be weeks – because of the unprecedented scale of the damage and the challenges it poses.

Con Ed workers are putting in 12 to 16 hour shifts in dangerous conditions to restore power as soon as possible.

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WHILE THE contrast between Hurricane Sandy's impact on different sections of New York City is stark, the truth is that New York has been sharply divided for a long, long time. It is both a playground for some of the wealthiest people in the world – home of the \$175 hamburger, \$3 million parking spot and the \$95 million condominium – and the home of some of the poorest people in the US.

The scale of inequality is staggering. New York City trails only Moscow for the most billionaires with 57, yet it is also home to

the poorest congressional district in the nation. The city's inequality surpasses that of Brazil, as Doug Henwood pointed out in a blog post last year: "The bottom half of the city's income distribution has 9 percent of total income; the bottom 80 percent, 29 percent...[the top 1 percent] has 34 percent of total income, compared with 19 percent for the US as a whole."

David Rohde, a Reuters columnist, pointed out that Hurricane Sandy exposed how unequal New York City has become:

"Divides between the rich and the poor are nothing new in New York, but the storm brought them vividly to the surface. There were residents like me who could invest all of their time and energy into protecting their families. And there were New Yorkers who could not.

"Those with a car could flee. Those with wealth could move into a hotel. Those with steady jobs could decline to come into work. But the city's cooks, doormen, maintenance men, taxi drivers and maids left their loved ones at home."

Rohde praised "the tens of thousands of policemen, firefighters, utility workers and paramedics who labored all night for \$40,000 to \$90,000 a year," as well as "local politicians who focused on performance, not partisanship, such as New Jersey Governor Chris Christie [and] New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg."

But it is politicians like Christie, Bloomberg and others – along with the corporate elites they serve – who are responsible for rising inequality in the first place.

In the years before Hurricane Sandy devastated his state, Christie took the axe to the benefits of the very workers who are taking the lead in helping residents during this crisis. Christie, with the help of several Democrats in the state legislature, attacked public workers with legislation to "remove health insurance from collective bargaining, more than triple employee health care contributions and raise workers' pension contributions." And Christie has led attacks on

teachers' unions in his state, using his platform at the Republican National Convention to demonize teachers' unions further.

Bloomberg, with a net worth of more than \$20 billion, is the tenth richest person in the US. Unsurprisingly, he opposed the extension of the so-called "millionaires' tax" that would have raised billions by taxing the very wealthy – money that could go towards repairing the city's outdated infrastructure.

During his term as mayor, Bloomberg's net worth has more than quintupled, while he slashed budgets impacting the neediest; cut funding to education, health care, child care, homeless shelters including for LGBT youth and libraries; and attacked the very public-sector workers whose response to Hurricane Sandy Bloomberg has hypocritically praised in front of television cameras.

According to an article from *US News and World Report*, the city could have protected New York City from the flooding with sea barriers of the kind used in major European cities – at a cost of just over \$6 billion. That's less than one-quarter of Bloomberg's current fortune – and less than one-third the amount that Bloomberg's net worth has increased since he became mayor.

THE EFFORTS of those workers have done an enormous amount to reduce suffering during this crisis. Limited bus service was active the next day, and full bus service as well as limited subway and train service was restored by the following day. The MTA workers who made this possible – and who run the largest public transportation system in the country, the backbone of New York City – are more than two-thirds Black and Latino workers, who have been working without a contract since January due to the MTA's unwillingness to give them a fair deal.

Meanwhile, the MTA has announced further fare increases that will push the cost of public transportation even more onto work-

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**In the years before Hurricane Sandy devastated his state, Christie took the axe to the benefits of the very workers who are taking the lead in helping residents during this crisis**  
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ing class New Yorkers.

Con Edison, despite making over \$1 billion in profits each year, locked out employees just a few months ago in order to impose a two-tiered pension system and increased health care costs that cancel out pay increases. These same employees are working around the clock in dangerous conditions in order to restore power.

Then there are Verizon workers, who went on strike in August 2011 after the telecommunication giant, also incredibly profitable, demanded cuts in their pension, health care and retirement benefits. They are currently working 12-hour days repairing the damage done to phone and Internet lines in New York City.

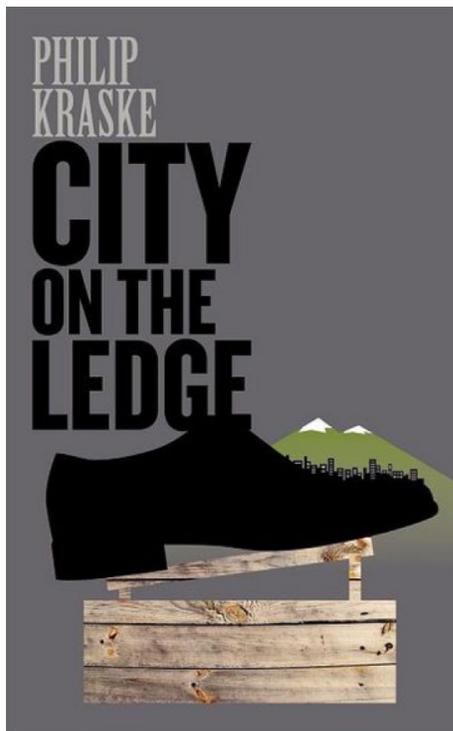
Just as Hurricane Sandy revealed the importance of dealing with climate change, it has also revealed the vital importance of public-sector and utility workers. Sandy has

showed that these workers, so often demonized and attacked, are so central to making this city, and our society, run.

Not only that, but the closure of grocery stores and restaurants across much of the city highlighted the vital work performed by a largely immigrant workforce for low wages in New York City's service industry.

While a general strike actively demonstrates the collective power of the working class to shut down production, Hurricane Sandy illustrates – by disrupting the everyday labor of millions of workers – the essential role performed by New York City's under-compensated and under-appreciated working class. **CT**

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**GARY LAPON** is an activist and healthcare worker in Western Massachusetts. This essay originally appeared at *Socialist Worker* – [www.socialistworker.org](http://www.socialistworker.org)



# CITY ON THE LEDGE

PHILIP KRASKE

Quito, Ecuador. In this unknown Andean capital ladled along the ledge of a volcano, an eruption is taking place. After centuries of oppression, the workers are on strike against the banana plantations. And if Ecuador, the top banana exporter in the world and the bargain basement of the industry, raises its price, then so will the others. Set against the emerald majesty of the Andes, full of local color, **City on the Ledge** witnesses the machinations of politicians, spies, diplomats, and lovers to pull off a revolution, or kill it before it can bloom.

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# Frankenstorm could have been avoided

Ritt Goldstein on the warnings that were ignored before Hurricane Sandy smashed into New York

As New York struggles in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy's 'Superstorm', reports indicating it will be weeks before many key services are restored, it's vital to reflect upon how such a disaster occurred, especially as NEW YORK WAS WARNED.

"Oh Great Lord of the Almighty Dollar", the panicked voice cried out, its Wall Street owner realizing he was indeed in truly deep-water, "how could you have forsaken your devoted and faithful?" But though this poor soul lifted entreaty after entreaty to what had become his sacred deities – those of Narcissism, Hubris and Greed – reality swept in like the hurricane it was, flooding Wall Street and much around it.

The Ancients knew what happens when one worships false gods, and today many are hopefully learning a lesson long forgotten, forgotten even though the biblical proportions of Sandy's flooding were predicted a year earlier.

In 2011, a report by New York State upon the impact of climate change had described the potential for the flooding news media have now allowed the world to witness. New York was warned, and even warned again just this September.

In September, an article in the *New York Times* – 'New York Is Lagging as Seas and Risks Rise, Critics Warn' – contained comments by Prof. Klaus Jacob, lead author

of the transportation section of the state study, Jacob quoted as observing that if the storm surge from Hurricane Irene had been about a foot higher, "subway tunnels would have flooded, segments of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive and roads along the Hudson River would have turned into rivers, and sections of the commuter rail system would have been impassable or bereft of power".

Hmmm, it seems Prof. Jacob had the right idea, especially as he went on to note that some of New York City's (NYC) under-river subway tunnels "would have been unusable for nearly a month, or longer, at an economic loss of about \$55 billion". The study outlined NYC needed to invest between ten and twenty billion to avoid such calamities; though, it didn't. Not a good decision.

I'll add that The Times pointedly quoted Jacob as observing he was "disappointed that the political process hasn't recognized that we're playing Russian roulette."

Last year, the activists of Occupy Wall Street filled New York's financial centre; this year, Mother Nature decided to personally protest. Russian roulette is a dangerous game.

Bloomberg News has reported that New York's subways may indeed "take weeks of work and tens of billions of dollars" to return to full service, and while "limited" subway service has resumed, there's no date for reopening service using the cross-river

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**Neoliberalism,  
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tunnels. Then, there's electric power, not to mention that Manhattan's electricity is distributed underground, an underground that's speculated to need days to dry.

I won't add anything regarding the corrosive effects which the seawater flooding New York will have on electrical equipment. And I certainly won't dwell upon the 'human costs'.

Neoliberalism, its Church of the Almighty Dollar, didn't care about Global Warming – it's money and business that are important! And so, there's perhaps a 'silver lining' to the money and business 'Frankenstorm' so nastily stole, but only if this latest wake-up call isn't denied, the capacity for denial seeming to be the favorite renewable resource of far too many.

I was born and raised in New York City, and there are times I indeed miss it. I used to fish in Breezy Point, the area where over a hundred homes burnt, and once – as a young man – even worked on Wall Street. Those places people are reading about – they used to be my home. But perhaps more than climate changes, perhaps people change too, and perhaps sometimes in a way that's as destructive as Sandy has proven.

The uncaring and insatiable greed of some, the wanton destruction across so

many levels of society that it's caused – so much of what was best has been taken from us. Those who cynically (and often selfishly) have dismissed the effects of Global Warming, may well yet succeed in destroying what's left, the fact that neither Obama nor Romney addressed the issue in debate speaking volumes.

According to an October poll by Pew Research, 85% of Democrats and 48% of Republicans believe in Global Warming. As for the rest, the capacity for denial appears indeed a favorite renewable resource, but, an increasingly and dearly expensive one.

As the very values that defined America changed, as Neoliberalism flourished, many of us have argued the effects of this are as devastating as Sandy's – though clearly not as easily seen – but what should be evident is what can happen if one is worshiping the wrong things, New York's devastation well highlighting what comes of it. **CT**

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*Ritt Goldstein is an American investigative political journalist living in Sweden. His work has appeared widely, including in America's Christian Science Monitor, Australia's Sydney Morning Herald, Spain's El Mundo, Austria's Wiener Zeitung, Hong Kong's Asia Times, and a number of other global media outlets*

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# Obama wins, but the people can still lose

So, the good guy won, but will anything change?, wonders **Danny Schechter**

**A** year into his presidency, Barack Obama began to plan his reelection bid. Having assessed the lessons of 2008, it was clear that grass roots mobilizations would be essential to assuring a turnout the next time around.

I made a film on that political campaign, exploring how local organizers built networks based in part on their candidates' community organizing experience. While most of the media framed the issue as Obama versus McCain, I was more interested in *how* he planned to win, than regurgitating the campaign's rituals and rhetoric.

From the beginning, the Obamanauts backed the idea of the "ground game" as essential to victory but it was soon enhanced with the latest new media applications – including blogs, facebooking, texting and tweeting.

The field director of that 2008 campaign David Plouffe became the campaign's organizer-in-chief in 2012. He ran that ground game, the Democrat's antidote to the TV commercial-driven "air war" blitz engineered by Karl Rove and his large list of wealthy right-wing benefactors.

*USA Today* noted, "President Obama and his aides cited a single reason for their reelection success. Turnout. Obama campaign officials said their get-out-the-vote organization – the people who make calls, knock on doors, micro-target potential voters and

drive supporters to the polls – was more than three years in the making, building on their record-breaking effort in 2008."

At first, Plouffe was picked by the candidate, who had himself been an organizer, to create a permanent campaign of organizers built on the model he engineered.

Initially, it was a network designed to build a more permanent movement, but soon turned into something else, as lawyer and former Yale Professor David Brown explained last April in a newspaper op-ed:

"It is disappointing that Organizing for America (OFA) has done so little to retool its successful campaign operation into something more. Much has been said about how from the beginning of Barack Obama's presidential campaign, he mobilized more of a "movement" than a traditional political campaign. But a movement it has not proved to be – and one major reason has been the way Obama and his team have used his supporters since winning the presidency. Instead of encouraging Obama backers to get engaged in community initiatives, this remarkable network of citizens was essentially viewed as a lobbying arm to get top-down legislation moving inside the Beltway."

It was maneuvers like this that lost Obama support with the 18- to 29-year-old youth vote this year. He won 66 percent of it in 2008, but dropped to 59 percent nationally.

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**"Much has been said about how from the beginning of Barack Obama's presidential campaign, he mobilized more of a "movement" than a traditional political campaign"**  
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**So, welcome to Term Two Mr. President, where you will be expected to be more of a magician than a mechanic. What rabbits can you pull out of your hat?**  
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A candidate who had been perceived as an outsider was either co-opted or chose to become the ultimate insider even on the symbolic level. Early on, he tried to set himself apart by not conforming to wearing the American flag pin that seems to be part of the American politicians' uniform, a contrived emblem of patriotic loyalty. That sartorial choice was soon abandoned.

He was soon spending more time with his Wall Street supporters and national security team than progressives. His then chief-of-staff, Rahm Emanuel, now the Mayor of Chicago, showed outspoken contempt for cause-oriented supporters. Activists in the black community like Jesse Jackson were frozen out.

The newly re-elected Obama is now under pressure from Republicans and conservative Democrats to compromise with them in the name of lowering the national debt run up by the Bush wars. Former Bank regulator Bill Black calls such a compromise "the Great Betrayal -- the adoption of self-destructive austerity programs and the opening wedge of the effort to unravel the safety net (including Social Security)."

Obama backers spin this idea much more positively arguing their man, will try to strike a "grand bargain" deal before December 31 or risk a worsening recession in the first half of 2013. The day after the election, the Congressional newspaper, the *Hill*, indicated there is no appetite for any compromise in the Republican-led, but Tea Party dominated House of Representatives.

"House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) informed his Republican colleagues that he will not give ground to Democrats on raising taxes despite President Obama's victory on Election Day... Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) speaking hours after his caucus made surprising gains to its majority, countered that his side will not relent

on extending Bush-era tax rates on wealthier households"

So, despite his victory, Obama returns to an environment of stalemate and confrontation that makes it very unlikely that he can enact his agenda despite his claim that "the best is yet to come." Writes the *National Journal*: "After all that, it turned out to be a big old status-quo election. President Obama wins. The Senate barely budges. The House stays about the same." The *New York Times* concludes: "Few if any expect him to seriously change Washington anymore."

Wall Street seems to have turned on him, while the financial crisis that he inherited has not got much better. Many experts say that a President can do little to create more jobs by himself. It's a "system thing," not a personal choice. So much for the man who started as the candidate for "change,"

It was only more military spending and some seasonal part time work that recently lowered the unemployment rate, but GOP hostility to any and all stimulus programs insures that the government cannot prime the pump. That fuels the expectation that the prospects for real change are stuck and/or sinking.

The foreign policy environment doesn't seem much brighter. Israel's President Bibi Netanyahu wasted no time to revive his threats to bomb Iran,

So, welcome to Term Two Mr. President, where you will be expected to be more of a magician than a mechanic. What rabbits can you pull out of your hat? **CT**

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**News Dissector** Danny Schechter blogs at [newsdissector.net](http://newsdissector.net) His latest books are "Blogothon" and "Occupy: Dissecting Occupy Wall Street: (Cosimo Books). He hosts a show on [ProgressiveRadioNetwork.com](http://ProgressiveRadioNetwork.com) (PRN.fm). Comments to [dissector@mediachannel.org](mailto:dissector@mediachannel.org)

# Top 1% income: up 27%, the rest: up 2%

Life at the top just gets easier and easier, says **Michael Meacher**

**D**espite the tsunami of public anger in Britain against bankers' bonuses and multi-million salaries, last year the pay and benefits of top business executives rose by just over £1 million each on average.

It rose from £56,150 a week to £76,920, a rise of £20,770 a week. This is a rise per week almost as great as the annual average wage in Britain today.

It's a marker of just how disjointed British society has become. So far from being all in it together, we have in fact never been further apart for over a century.

Nothing whatever has been done to arrest this slide into ever-growing inequality, and worst of all nothing has been done to stop huge payouts to executives even when their companies are making big losses.

What has happened is that as public pressure has increasingly been exerted against inordinate basic salary and bonuses, a way round has been found by massively inflating other components of the composite pay package.

In particular, long-term incentive plans (i.e. share awards based on companies' performance over several years) have soared by more than 80% across the corporate spectrum in the last year, so much so that this item accounted for

more than half of chief executives' total remuneration.

In other words, it increased their overall pay by more than £10,000 a week.

This might be justified on the grounds that it reflected the company's solid performance over those previous years.

But there are three counter-arguments.

One is that it may simply mirror a rising economy and does not particularly represent successful achievement on the part of top executives.

Second, even if that is not so, corporate success should properly be regarded as reflecting the performance of the whole corporate team, not just the person at the top, yet that pyramid below gets no comparable award.

The third is that when corporate performance takes a dive, the executives at the top don't take a comparable hit in their own pay packages.

In other words, under the present rigged system, pay at the top is a one-way escalator.

**CT**

*Michael Meacher is Labour MP for Oldham West and Royton, in the Northeast of England. He was environment minister 1997-2003. He writes a daily blog on the political issues of the day at [www.michaelmeacher.org](http://www.michaelmeacher.org)*

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Corporate success should properly be regarded as reflecting the performance of the whole corporate team, not just the person at the top  
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