

THE WAY WE WERE | CHELLIS GLENDINNING
MASSACRES THAT MATTER | DAVID EDWARDS
WHAT IF? | AHMAD BARQAWI

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 77



THE CRIME OF WAR

A GRAPHIC ADAPTATION OF WILFRED OWEN'S
CLASSIC WAR POEM **"DULCE ET DECORUM EST"**



Cover:
Illustration from *The
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– see Page 16

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Editor: Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net

Massacres that matter

David Edwards examines the differing media responses to massacres, revolutions and military coups in the Middle East

PART 1

'Responsibility To Protect' In Egypt, Libya And Syria

The 'responsibility to protect' (R2P), formulated at the 2005 UN World Summit, is based on the idea that state sovereignty is not a right but a responsibility. Where offending states fail to live up to this responsibility by inflicting genocide, ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity on their own people, the international community has a responsibility to act. Economic sanctions and the use of military force can thus be employed as 'humanitarian intervention'.

A second version of R2P, proposed by the [Gareth] Evans Commission, goes much further. It authorises 'regional or sub-regional organisations' such as Nato to determine their 'area of jurisdiction' and to act in cases where 'the Security Council rejects a proposal or fails to deal with it in a reasonable time'.

Gareth Evans – described by the BBC as someone 'who has championed the doctrine that the international community has a responsibility to protect civilians' – has an interesting CV. John Pilger wrote in 2000: 'One of the nauseating moments of the East Timor tragedy was in 1989, when Gareth Evans, the then Australian foreign minister, raised his champagne glass to his Indo-

nesian equivalent, Ali Alatas, as they flew over the Timor Sea in an Australian aircraft, having signed the Timor Gap Treaty. Below them was the small country where a third of the population had died or been killed under Suharto.'

Pilger added: 'Thanks largely to Evans, Australia was the only western country formally to recognise Suharto's genocidal conquest. The murderous Indonesian special forces known as Kopassus were trained in Australia. The prize, said Evans, was "zillions" of dollars.'

R2P is often described as an 'emerging norm' in international affairs. But as Noam Chomsky has noted, Japan's attack on Manchuria, Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia, and Hitler's occupation of Czechoslovakia were 'all accompanied by lofty rhetoric about the solemn responsibility to protect the suffering populations'. In fact, R2P has 'been considered a norm as far back as we want to go'.

On March 18, 2011, the day before Nato launched its assault on Libya, the BBC quoted from a speech by prime minister David Cameron: 'On the 23rd February the UN Secretary General cited the reported nature and scale of attacks on civilians as "egregious violations of international and human rights law" and called on the government of Libya to "meet its responsibility to protect its people."'

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Two weeks earlier, the BBC had published an interview with Gareth Evans, asking: ‘Is there a clear-cut case for a “responsibility to protect” justification for intervention in Libya?’

Evans responded: ‘Absolutely... The question now, of course, is whether a step further should be taken to go down the military path and I think, morally, the case is overwhelming.’

Two weeks later, on March 22, 2011, with Nato bombing underway, Jonathan Freedland focused in the *Guardian* on how ‘in a global, interdependent world we have a “responsibility to protect” each other’. Freedland’s article was titled: ‘Though the risks are very real, the case for intervention remains strong – Not to respond to Gaddafi’s chilling threats would leave us morally culpable, but action in Libya is fraught with danger’

One day later, the *Guardian*’s former Middle East editor Brian Whitaker wrote under the title: ‘The difference with Libya – Unlike Bahrain or Yemen, the scale and nature of the Gaddafi regime’s actions have impelled the UN’s “responsibility to protect.”’

Whitaker examined the origins and development of R2P, concluding that it had at last borne fruit: ‘it deserves to be recognised as an intervention based on principle and not as the “petro-imperialist” plot that Gaddafi claims it to be’.

The following day, also in the *Guardian*, Ian Williams discussed the origins and merits of R2P: ‘Under those principles, as Brian Whitaker demonstrates, the Libyan operation emerges with great credibility. Gaddafi had been repeatedly warned to stop killing his own people, but carried on using heavier and heavier weapons...’

Like other liberal commentators, Williams caveated freely, noting concerns about flaws in R2P, about ‘Washington’s methods and motivations’, and so on. But his conclusion was clear enough.

These articles were all published be-

tween March 22-24, 2011, shortly after Nato began its attacks. Whitaker referenced Freedland, Williams referenced Whitaker, an echo chamber in which three senior journalists all took seriously both R2P and the idea that the Libya ‘intervention’ was an example of the doctrine in action.

At the beginning of March, Timothy Garton Ash had also written in the *Guardian* on the application of R2P in Libya: ‘To intervene or not to intervene? That is the question... I defy anyone to watch Gaddafi’s planes attacking besieged towns and not accept that there is at least a legitimate question whether outside powers should intervene in some way to prevent him killing more of his own people.’

Although ‘unconvinced’ that a no-fly zone would be ‘justified – at the time of writing’ (our emphasis), Garton Ash nevertheless asked: ‘And do we not have some responsibility to protect the people who have risen against him, if only in the form of the no-fly zone supported by Libyans?’

In yet another *Guardian* piece the following week, Menzies Campbell, former leader of the Liberal Democrats, and Philippe Sands, professor of law at University College London, commented: ‘International law does not require the world to stand by and do nothing as civilians are massacred on the orders of Colonel Gaddafi...’

They added: ‘It would be tragic for the Libyan people if the shadow of Iraq were to limit an emerging “responsibility to protect”, the principle that in some circumstances the use of force may be justified to prevent the massive and systematic violation of fundamental human rights.’

The *Guardian* was not alone in tirelessly promoting R2P as a basis for a Western war in Libya. Also in March 2011, human rights barrister Geoffrey Robertson asked in the *Independent*: ‘Will the world stand idly by once Colonel Gaddafi, a man utterly without mercy, starts to deliver on his threat to “fight to the last man and woman” – and, inferentially, to the last child?’

Robertson also discussed the origins and development of R2P, concluding: ‘The duty to stop the mass murder of innocents, as best we can, has crystallised to make the use of force by Nato not merely “legitimate” but lawful.’

Ostensibly at the other end of the media ‘spectrum’, Matthew d’Ancona wrote of Libya in the *Telegraph* on March 27: ‘It is surely a matter for quiet national pride that an Arab Srebrenica was prevented by a coalition in which Britain played an important part...’

D’Ancona added: “‘R2P’ is being given a trial run in Libya, and the results of the experiment will have momentous consequences in the decades ahead.’

Clearly, in March 2011, readers were bombarded with commentary promoting R2P as a basis for Western military ‘intervention’ in Libya. As we have discussed, many of the alleged horrors said to justify Nato’s assault – Gaddafi’s use of vicious foreign mercenaries and Viagra-fuelled mass rape, his planned massacre in Benghazi – were sheer invention. The violent chaos that has befallen Libya since Nato’s war, however, is very real.

Some interesting questions arise. How did the same politicians and journalists respond to the overthrow of the democratically elected Egyptian government on July 3, 2013 by a military force trained, armed and supported by the United States? How did politics and media respond to the appalling and undisputed August 14 massacre of civilians by this same military? And how heavily did the much-loved R2P doctrine – allegedly rooted in ethics rather than realpolitik – feature in coverage of these crimes?

.....
Comparing Obama on Libya, Syria And Egypt

According to the Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Research, 1,295 Egyptians were killed between August 14-16, with

1,063 losing their lives on August 14 alone. The violence was one-sided, as the *Guardian* reported: ‘But the central charges – that most Brotherhood supporters are violent, that their two huge protest camps were simply overgrown terrorist cells, and that their brutal suppression was justified and even restrained – are not supported by facts.’

To put the slaughter in perspective, 108 people were killed in the May 25, 2012 massacre in Houla, Syria, which was instantly blamed by the West on Syrian president Assad personally, leading to a storm of denunciations and calls for a Western military ‘response’.

So how does the US-UK political response compare on Libya, Syria and Egypt?

The *Guardian* quoted Obama’s view on Libya in an article entitled, ‘Obama throws the weight of the west behind freedom in the Middle East’: ‘While we cannot stop every injustice, there are circumstances that cut through our caution – when a leader is threatening to massacre his people and the international community is calling for action. That is why we stopped a massacre in Libya. And we will not relent until the people of Libya are protected, and the shadow of tyranny is lifted.’

With standard objectivity, the *Guardian* described this as ‘a stirring speech’, one that placed the US ‘unambiguously on the side of those fighting for freedom across the Middle East’.

How did this US commitment to human rights manifest itself in the aftermath of the vast massacre committed by the Egyptian military junta on August 14? Obama commented: ‘We appreciate the complexity of the situation... After the military intervention [sic] several weeks ago, there remained a chance to pursue a democratic path. Instead we have seen a more dangerous path taken.’

‘The United States strongly condemns the steps that have been taken by Egypt’s interim government [sic] and security forces. We deplore violence against civilians.

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Many of the alleged horrors said to justify Nato’s assault – Gaddafi’s use of vicious foreign mercenaries and Viagra-fuelled mass rape, his planned massacre in Benghazi – were sheer invention

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**'Professionalism
has made
journalists
oblivious to the
compromises with
authority they are
constantly making'**
.....

We support universal rights essential to human dignity, including the right to peaceful protest. We oppose the pursuit of marshal law.'

Obama cancelled joint military exercises but he did not even suspend the annual \$1.3 billion of aid to Egypt's armed forces. Jen Psaki, a State Department spokeswoman, commented: 'This is a rocky road back to democracy. We continue to work at it.'

The *New York Times* noted that the \$1.3 billion in military aid 'is its main access to the kind of big-ticket, sophisticated weaponry that the Egyptian military loves'. Global Post listed the 10 biggest 'defence' contracts involving major US corporations like Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon and AgustaWestland.

Spencer Ackerman wrote in the *Guardian*: 'Perhaps the most mystifying thing about the cosmetic US response to Wednesday's massacre in Egypt is the reluctance for the US to use its massive aid leverage over Cairo's generals.'

This must indeed be 'mystifying' for journalists who believe that the United States is 'unambiguously on the side of those fighting for freedom'. Indifference to mass slaughter notwithstanding, Ackerman affirmed the happy truth:

'Paramount among US concerns was that the military not massacre Egyptian civilians.'

UK foreign secretary William Hague, who has tirelessly demanded war against Libya and Syria in response to crimes real, imagined and predicted, had this to say about the killing of many hundreds of civilians in Egypt: 'Our influence may be limited – it is a proudly independent country – and there may be years of turbulence in Egypt and other countries... We have to do our best to promote democratic institutions and political dialogue...'

Patrick Cockburn supplied a rare, honest summary of at least part of the ugly truth:

'For all their expressions of dismay at last week's bloodbath, the US and the EU

states were so mute and mealy-mouthed about criticising the 3 July coup as to make clear that they prefer the military to the Brotherhood.'

This helps explain why the Lexis media database finds exactly two articles containing the words 'Egypt' and 'responsibility to protect', or 'R2P', since July 3. One is a single-sentence mention in passing in an *Observer* editorial focusing on Syria. Ironically, the other cites a statement issued by Egypt's interior ministry after the August 14 bloodbath: 'Upon the government's assignment to take necessary measures against the Rabaa and Nahda sit-ins, and out of national responsibility to protect citizens' security, the security forces have started to take necessary measures to disperse both sit-ins.' ('Voices from the violence,' *Independent*, August 15, 2013)

R2P is simply not an issue for the US-UK alliance in Egypt. But what is so striking is that R2P is simultaneously not an issue for the ostensibly objective and independent 'free press'.

PART 2 The Media Response On Egypt, Libya And Syria

Corporate media coverage of atrocities in Egypt, Libya and Syria has closely matched US-UK government interpretations and priorities.

While the US government has refused to describe what was very obviously a military coup in Egypt on July 3 as a coup, many media have also tended to shy away from the term, referring instead to the 'ousting' and 'removal' of the elected government.

In reporting atrocities in Libya and Syria, the BBC focuses heavily on the word 'crime', but described the mass murder in Egypt on August 14 as a 'tragedy'. Killing in Syria is routinely described as a 'massacre', but in Egypt as the less pejorative 'crackdown'.

In February 2011, *The Times* insisted that 'there is incontrovertible evidence'

that demonstrators in Benghazi ‘are being blown apart by mortar fire’.

The ethical response to these and other alleged crimes by the Gaddafi ‘regime’: ‘British officials and private citizens must do all they can to cajole, pressure and exhort it out of power.’ (Leading article, ‘In bombing its own civilians, Libya stands exposed as an outlaw regime,’ *The Times*, February 23, 2011)

Compare *The Times*’ response the day after the August 14 massacre of perhaps 1,000 people by a military junta that had overthrown the democratically elected government: ‘The legitimacy of Egypt’s interim regime hangs by a thread after yesterday’s killings.’ (Leading article, ‘Murder in Cairo,’ *The Times*, August 15, 2013)

The Times at least recognised that there had been ‘a massacre’ following ‘a coup d’état’. But whereas Gaddafi’s ‘outlaw regime’ had to be forced ‘out of power’ – not just by officials but by UK ‘private citizens’ – Egypt’s ‘interim regime’ somehow retained shreds of ‘legitimacy’.

Should coup leader General al-Sisi be cajoled and ejected?

‘General al-Sisi’s most urgent task is to rebuild... faith. He still commands the support of many those who took to the streets in July... the US should enforce its own laws and suspend its aid to Egypt. It is too soon to give up on progress... but it will take more than hope to make it happen.’ (Leading article, ‘Crisis management,’ *The Times*, August 17, 2013)

It will take more than hope, but less than bombing, it seems. Private citizens can stand easy.

In 2011, the *Independent* celebrated the resurrection of ‘humanitarian intervention’: ‘The international community has managed to come together over Libya in a way that, even a few days ago, seemed impossible. The adventurism [sic] of Bush and Blair in 2003 looked as if it had buried the principle of humanitarian intervention for a generation. It has returned sooner than

anyone believed possible.’

On the success in Libya: ‘Concern was real enough that a Srebrenica-style massacre could unfold in Benghazi, and the UK Government was right to insist that we would not allow this.’

‘We’, of course, are legally and morally qualified to decide what to ‘allow’ in the world, despite ‘our’ occasional ‘adventurism’.

The banner front page headline of the *Independent* on Sunday (IoS) raged in the aftermath of Syria’s Houla massacre, long before responsibility had been established: ‘There is, of course, supposed to be a ceasefire, which the brutal Assad regime simply ignores. And the international community? It just averts its gaze. Will you do the same? Or will the sickening fate of these innocent children make you very, very angry?’ (*Independent* on Sunday, May 27, 2012)

Should we, then, be ‘very, very angry’ about ‘the sickening fate’ of unarmed civilian protestors massacred in cold blood in Egypt? The IoS editors have not commented, but their sister paper observed: ‘The Obama administration made its displeasure felt yesterday by cancelling joint military exercises. Yet Washington still refuses to call a coup a coup, preferring the influence that goes with \$1.3bn annual aid to Egypt’s military. It is high time that leverage is put to use. All support should now be withdrawn, pending free elections.’

No, ‘action’, no ‘intervention’, just withdrawal of support. The hand-wringing conclusion was positively Pinteresque: ‘The transition from autocracy to democracy was never going to be easy.’

The Observer’s ‘Honest Passion’ For War

The title of a March 13, 2011 *Observer* leading article was clear enough: ‘The west can’t let Gaddafi destroy his people’

Again, it goes without saying that the West is legally and morally qualified to de-

Should we, then, be ‘very, very angry’ about ‘the sickening fate’ of unarmed civilian protestors massacred in cold blood in Egypt?

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When official enemies are targeted, readers are personally exhorted to take action. We, as private citizens, are not to 'turn away'. We are to 'cajole, pressure and exhort', to passionately 'pledge' to do our bit for history
.....

termine what is and is not allowable in this world. After all, consider 'our' track record. The editors continued: 'It won't be too long, at this rate, before Benghazi itself is threatened. And be equally clear what will happen when it is: there will be another bloodbath, this time a slaughter of men and women who dared to stand against a vile regime. Who'll sit comfortably through what will doubtless be dubbed another Srebrenica?'

In a state of Churchillian high emotion, the *Observer's* editors demanded 'a common position which brooks no more argument' - further discussion would not be tolerated. Instead, we were all to 'pledge, with the honest passion we affect to feel that, whether repulsed in time or not, this particular tyranny will not be allowed to stand. Libya is part of freedom's future: it must not be buried by a quavering past'.

When official enemies are targeted, readers are personally exhorted to take action. We, as private citizens, are not to 'turn away'. We are to 'cajole, pressure and exhort', to passionately 'pledge' to do our bit for history. This is deeply flattering to readers' sense of self-importance. And ironic, given the media's consistent refusal to discuss foreign policy issues at election time, and given the major political parties' range of choice on foreign policy: war or war.

After Tripoli fell to Libyan 'rebel' forces in 2011, the *Guardian* wrote of Nato's assault: '...it can now reasonably be said that in narrow military terms it worked, and that politically there was some retrospective justification for its advocates as the crowds poured into the streets of Tripoli to welcome the rebel convoys earlier this week'.

So who won the argument for and against the assault?

'Because it was a close argument, there should be no point-scoring now.'

Again, we'd had our fun, there was nothing more to discuss.

A *Guardian* leader immediately after the August 14 massacre noted that the reaction of the international community 'failed lamentably to match the significance of these events'. The US government's comments were 'all rhetorical statements, unless and until the US is prepared to cut its \$1.3bn aid to Egypt's military' (our emphasis).

So while the *Guardian* had assailed readers with the West's 'responsibility to protect' with force in Libya (See Part 1 of this alert), and has again, now, in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack in Syria (see below), the need in Egypt was merely for the US to cut off aid.

The *Telegraph* also celebrated Nato's assault on Libya: 'As the net tightens round Muammar Gaddafi and his family, Nato deserves congratulations on having provided the platform for rebel success.'

And, after Houla, Assad simply had to go: 'Even the Russians, who have been remarkably obtuse over Syria, must surely now see that.'

By contrast, amazingly, a *Telegraph* leader after the coup, and even after the August 14 massacre, was titled: 'Democracy in Egypt is on the brink of collapse'

Was this an attempt at black humour? The editorial warned that, 'if order collapses, or can be maintained only by a state of emergency, then the prospects are bleak for democracy in Egypt'.

As if the massacre of hundreds of civilians by a military junta did not already indicate the complete collapse of 'democracy' and 'order'.

Should the West take military action? Alas, 'we are powerless to intervene', but using economic levers 'we must seek to bring pressure to bear where we can'.

.....
Damascus Gas Attack? 'Red Lines' Crossed, Broken, Smashed

As this was being written, one week after the massacre in Egypt, claims emerged of a major gas attack killing hundreds of ci-

vilians in Damascus, Syria. Channel 4's Sarah Smith asked the question that arises so readily, so naturally, for UK journalists: 'Syria chemical weapons horror – is it time for intervention?' (Smith, Snowmail, August 22, 2013)

No need for UN inspectors to gather factual evidence of chemical weapons use; Smith, Channel 4's business correspondent, already knew what had happened and who was to blame: 'There seems little doubt that red lines have now been crossed, broken and smashed to pieces. But what will anyone do about it?'

The 'red lines' of course referred to Obama's warning to the Syrian government that its use of chemical weapons would trigger US 'intervention'. No-one is pretending the US would bomb the 'rebels'.

In similar vein, a *Guardian* leader commented, again with no serious evidence: 'There is next to no doubt that chemical weapons were used in Ghouta in eastern Damascus... Nor is there much doubt about who committed the atrocity.'

A second leader continued to mislead readers, insisting on the need for 'clear and persuasive information' indicating that the Syrian government had used chemical weapons:

'That information may well exist – much of the evidence points in that direction.'

In reality, the truth is simply unknown. Even US intelligence officials argue that the responsibility of the Syrian government, let alone Assad, is no 'slam dunk'. Chemical weapons experts are also clear that much doubt remains.

It is of course possible that government forces launched the attacks, although it would have been an inexplicably foolish, indeed suicidal, act for Assad to order the mass gassing of civilians three days after UN inspectors had arrived in the country. In the *Daily Mail*, Peter Hitchens offered a rare rational comment on this theme:

'In those circumstances, what could possibly have possessed him to do something

so completely crazy? He was, until this event, actually doing quite well in his war against the Sunni rebels. Any conceivable gains from using chemical weapons would be cancelled out a million times by the diplomatic risk. It does not make sense. Mr Assad is not Saddam Hussein, or some mad carpet-biting dictator, but a reasonably intelligent, medically-trained person who has no detectable reason to act in such an illogical and self-damaging fashion.

'The rebels, on the other hand (in many cases non-Syrian jihadists who are much disliked by many ordinary Syrians because of the misery they have brought upon them), have many good reasons to stage such an attack.'

And recall that on May 6, speaking for the United Nations *independent* commission of inquiry on Syria, Carla Del Ponte said, 'there are strong, concrete suspicions but not yet incontrovertible proof of the use of sarin gas, from the way the victims were treated. This was use on the part of the opposition, the rebels, not by the government authorities'.

No matter, the front page of the *Independent* read: 'Syria: air attacks loom as West finally acts' (*Independent*, August 26, 2013)

Even the *Independent's* Robert Fisk commented: 'The gassing of hundreds in the outskirts of Damascus has now taken Syria across another of the West's famous "red lines" – and yet again, only words come from Washington and London.'

Once again, as in the case of Houla, there was instantly little or no doubt about responsibility.

Once again, the talk was of 'options', 'possibly airstrikes against missile depots and aircraft that Mr Assad would not like to lose,' the *Guardian* surmised.

And once again, discussion of the West's 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) exploded across the media 'spectrum': on the BBC, in an *Independent* leader and an article by Katherine Butler, in an *Observer* leader, in numerous editorials, letters and articles in

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The 'red lines' of course referred to Obama's warning to the Syrian government that its use of chemical weapons would trigger US 'intervention'. No-one is pretending the US would bomb the 'rebels'

RUSH TO WAR

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We ought to find it astonishing that the corporate media can flip direction with such discipline – between such clearly self-contradictory positions.
.....

the *Telegraph*, *Times* and elsewhere. In the last four days, the *Guardian* has published a flurry of articles discussing R2P in relation to Syria by Joshua Rozenberg, Malcolm Rifkind, Paul Lewis, John Holmes and Julian Borger.

The Lexis database continues to find (August 29) exactly no discussions of R2P in relation to the massacre by the West's military allies in Egypt.

We ought to find it astonishing that the corporate media can flip direction with

such discipline – instantly, like a flock of starlings – between such clearly self-contradictory positions.

In truth, it takes a minimal capacity for rational thought to see that the corporate 'free press' is a structurally irrational and biased, and extremely violent, system of elite propaganda.

.....
David Edwards is co-editor of Medialens, the British media watchdog. Its web site is <http://medialens.org>



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The way we were

Newsweek, Black Panthers and the National Guard – vignettes from an age of uncertain radicalism, from **Chellis Glendinning**

I plopped down onto the sidewalk in the first row of cross-legged protestors, eye-level with the shin-guards of the first row of National Guardsmen. My hair dropped down my back in a braid, and I was wearing a shirt made of an Indian-print bedspread. The blonde next to me leaned over and disclosed that she was on acid, in fact that she took acid every day.

I know all the details because a photograph of us showed up in *Newsweek* a few days later: me, the acid head, the dudes with their gas masks and rifles. It was snapped by photojournalist Peter Barnes, who later broke from the “objectivity” of press work, wrote a book on the oppression of soldiers, founded the progressive credit-card company Working Assets, wrote some more books – and even later than that, by 20 years and wild providence, became lovers with the subject of his camera aim whose Indian-print shirt had long since shredded into compost.

Another photo appeared in that article about the rabble-rousers in Berkeley: a helicopter soaring between the Campanile and Sproul Hall dropping toxic CS gas into the plaza like it was Vietnam. Down at ground level people were screaming, fainting, falling down, blinded, retching, and the National Guard was advancing into the crowds cracking skulls with their batons.

My husband Bill and I somehow ratcheted our bodies away from the toxic clouds, into

the cafeteria, down the spiral staircase of the kitchen, and out into the lower plaza. It was the first (and last) time I ever hurled a rock through a window, I was so appalled by the military exercise, and I wonder to this day whatever happened to the woman on acid.

The Third World Liberation Strike demanded that we students skip classes, so I regrouped in the Victorian house that Bill and I rented on Walnut Street, turned my attention to cooking Adele-Davis-style, shook my fist during protests against racism, played volleyball with my professor-pal Troy Duster and his social-science comrades – and quietly kept up with my homework.

I was taking The Sociology of the Family. At the end of the quarter, when I decided I'd hand in my paper on women in the Soviet Union and take the final so I could still graduate, the template was laid for a nightmare that plagued my dreams for decades after.

I nervously approached the lecture hall that I hadn't stepped Swedish clog into for three months. To my terror it was empty. Abandoned, reassigned, unavailable, gone. No students. No prof. No sign redirecting the Returning Striker.

Panic emanated from The Sociology of the Family again when I sheepishly edged toward the departmental office to retrieve the paper and final exam I had somehow managed to hand in. I rifled through the pile

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Down at ground level people were screaming, fainting, falling down, blinded, retching, and the National Guard was advancing into the crowds cracking skulls with their batons
.....

LOOKING BACK

.....
Some days I boasted a green leather jacket hinting of London Mod, purchased at the hippest of boutiques Red Square, and my closet burst with slinky 1930s dresses
.....

to no avail: neither was there – and I felt as adrift as a hippie waif on Telegraph Avenue. I finally mustered the courage to ask the secretary, and she offered that I must be “the one” who was instructed to see the prof.

He had a beard and glasses (as if I even remembered what he looked like). With a stern voice he told me to sit down, and I felt the axe about to fall. He then smiled and explained that there had been only two A’s in the whole quarter . . . and they were my paper and my exam. It was hardly the moment to speak of irony, as he blubbered on encouraging me to pursue graduate sociology. I had a flare for it, apparently. Somehow the news was more stultifying than if he’d announced I’d been kicked out for fraud.

The strike was a raging success, laying the ground for what then became a norm in higher education: Black, Chicano, Asian, and Native American studies. I went on to write books that sprang from such experiences as our Third World Liberation Strike – and at least hinted that I might have kind-of taken some sociology classes.

I really can’t figure out how I have wrangled my way through this life, somehow doing the most out-there-outrageous things – and at the same time being so timid.

The Cafe Mediterraneum was clearly the place to hang out. Michael Delacour was always there in his pea coat, earnestly talking revolution. There was Moe, with his waning hairline and cigar. Marty Schiffenbauer with his shorts, combat boots, and curly red locks flying every which-way. Old Carroll, the ghetto astrologer. Street poet Julia Vinograd in her yellow cap.

It was all I could do to go in there, I was so nervous: the place was that cool.

It was where the hot-and-heavy political strategizing took place. Where the Red Family grabbed a break from haggling about who did the dishes in the commune. Where the seekers from Shambhala Bookstore talked Krishnamurti, astrology, and Tibetan Buddhism. Where Simone de Beauvoir mixed it

up with Martin Heidegger. Where the espresso machine swooshed, Vivaldi’s “Primavera” echoed, and folks sported Mao caps. Where, for Chrissake, everyone smoked . . . Galoise.

I went, at first ordering cappuccino dusted with chocolate and toting the de rigueur blue pack of cancer sticks, later (after I launched a brief stint with a two-hour-a-day yoga-meditation practice), the far thinner rose-hips tea.

But I always felt a tad “thin” in the cool department.

I cottoned right up to the fashion side of things, though. I mean, how many cases of scabies can be traced to the ultra-wide bell-bottoms scrounged from piles of threads on the concrete floor of the San Pablo army-navy store?

As my signature, I donned the Pirate Coat I paid \$15 for at the Paris flea market. Some days I boasted a green leather jacket hinting of London Mod, purchased at the hippest of boutiques Red Square, and my closet burst with slinky 1930s dresses.

But maybe the finest of couture happened when we dressed up in garb appropriate to the film we were seeing: tux and gowns for Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers; trench coats for noir; boxy 1940s suits and spectators for Preston Sturges; kimonos for Rashomon.

Being in jail had its perks. Quiet time, good food, ample bedding, exercise, books for illumination, freedom to roam – they were not among them.

But it was a pre-feminist moment for us women to be together. I know now that we could have done things differently. There simply did not have to be that pre-midnight crescendo of panicked voices in a solitaire cell that some 100 women from the Mass Bust were now crammed into; we could have gathered into small groups to quietly discuss terror and claustrophobia. We could have been more supportive of our disparate needs. We could have meditated. Or done a ritual.

But what did we know?

We did know that the big bust was coming. Our own private rendition of Deep Throat within the police department had tipped us off, and a few had met in a living room just off campus to weigh our options. Tom Hayden was there. Wendy Schlesinger. Delacour. Bill Miller.

But somehow any planning we mustered had zero effect when the shit hit the fan and the cops cordoned off Shattuck Avenue, hemming in not just us anti-war protesters, but also innocent mailmen and shopping mothers. I was one of the Health Food 15. Guilty as all get-out, we had rushed into Goodson's, grabbed wire shopping baskets, and pretended to be buying organic oatmeal – but sure enough, a policeman emerged tall and angry through the back door and rounded us up for the bus ride to Santa Rita Detention Center.

Knowing it was coming, I had made my own plan for bail. It's not a plan that – what with post-9-11 paranoia – would fly today, but it did back then. I had hand-penned a letter to Wells Fargo bank authorizing my commune-mate to take out \$300 from my savings account, and when he showed up at the jail with papers for my release, I was never happier to see a parking lot.

The stories that came out of the men's section were grim. While we women had had the freedom to fashion the plastic bags filled with Wonder-bread-bologna sandwiches into “volleyballs” for our nervous amusement, the men had been jammed face down in the yard and made to lie there without flinching through the night. One had his head tied to an iron pipe, and an officer had banged the pipe till blood gushed from his eyes, nose, and mouth.

In the end, the Health Food 15 got off through the efforts of our pro-bono lawyer Bob Treuhaft. And in the end, the perk was seeing the system from the inside out.

 In their humongous leather jackets, the Black Panthers came on as fierce as the police they were bucking. One day a militaristic

line-up of them made the trek from downtown Oakland to hold forth at the noon rally in Sproul Plaza.

Their message was kind of confusing to those of us who had grown up on “We Shall Overcome” and sharpened our political teeth in the South during Mississippi Summer. Bristling with the radicalism of the international liberation/decolonisation movements, the Black Panthers announced that the new revolutionary tack was to stand alone, Whitey not invited. At the same time, they demanded our support.

After that, a lot of inter-racial marriages broke apart in a frenzy of political realignment. Along with everyone else, I was reading Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, and Frantz Fanon's notion of violence against whites as a cleansing act was flying through the halls of academia, so I wasn't completely in the dark about rage, separatism, and self-empowerment.

Just then something began to appear in the dark, hung on a peg in the hallway of the apartment we shared with a university secretary, who was white. It was the fiercest black-leather jacket of all. Every time it was there, a heavy silence emanated from behind her closed door, and soon she began to show up in a black beret behind the card table, taking the money and handing out leaflets, at Panther events.

I could only think that she, among very few, had mastered the delicacies of white support.

 I had no idea that we activists – sometimes amassed in crowds of 3000, sometimes 100,000 – had, through the years of rampaging around campus and in the streets, developed an unspoken method: a way of forming, spreading, taking over the city, then dispersing, and finally re-congealing like a dance that was in our genes. That is, until the neophytes arrived – which happened the summer after People's Park when every Tom, Dick, and Hari Krishna east of Sproul Plaza decided that Berkeley was the place

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One prisoner had his head tied to an iron pipe, and an officer had banged the pipe till blood gushed from his eyes, nose, and mouth.

LOOKING BACK

.....
Many in the New Left were joining gun clubs, just as some Students for a Democratic Society radicals back East were morphing into the Weather Underground
.....

to hone one's revolutionary skills. Suddenly, up against the Alameda County Sheriff's Department "Blue Meanies," the streets became a place of edginess, chaos, and utter lack of method.

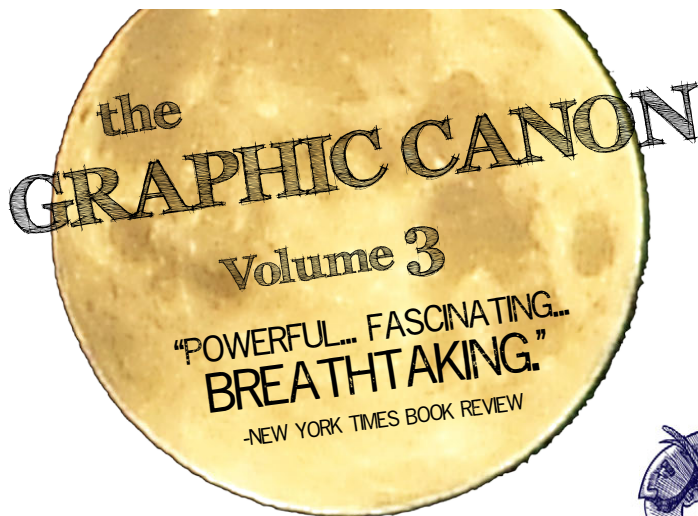
I said, "To Hell With It," and retired to my commune on Vine Street. It was a good time to pull back for a spell. The obvious next step was something akin to what we'd seen in the film *Battle of Algiers*, and indeed many in the New Left were joining gun clubs, just as some Students for a Democratic Society radicals back East were morphing into the Weather Underground.

Bill and I hightailed it to Europe, bought a second-hand Deux Chevaux in Amsterdam, and tooled at 40 mph through Holland, Denmark, Sweden, France, Andorra, Spain, and Morocco. When we got back and retreated

to a maple-sugar farm in Vermont, sure enough, the FBI tracked us down and paid a visit to see what we were up to.

Things being as they were, Bill refused to ID any of the folks in the photos and told the FBI dude to shove it. **CT**

.....
Chellis Glendinning is the author of six books, including "My Name Is Chellis and I'm in Recovery from Western Civilisation". Her "Off the Map: An Expedition Deep into Empire and the Global Economy: and "Chiva: A Village Takes on the Global Heroin Trade" won the National Federation of Press Women book award in nonfiction, in 2000 and 2006 respectively. She lives in Bolivia and can be reached via www.chellisglendinning.org
This essay originally appeared at the Rag Blog – <http://theragblog.blogspot.ca>



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The militarisation of America

Bill Van Auken tells how the military is moving into the area of civilian law enforcement in the United States

The recent deployment of Blackhawk helicopters in Chicago is only the latest in a series of “urban warfare training” exercises that have become a familiar feature of American life.

As elsewhere, this exercise was sprung unannounced on a startled civilian population. Conducted in secrecy, apparently with the collusion of local police agencies and elected officials, Democrats and Republicans alike, the ostensible purpose of these exercises is to give US troops experience in what Pentagon doctrine refers to as “Military Operations on Urban Terrain.”

Such operations are unquestionably of central importance to the US military. Over the past decade, its primary mission, as evidenced in Afghanistan and Iraq, has been the invasion and occupation of relatively powerless countries and the subjugation of their resisting populations, often in house-to-house fighting in urban centers.

The Army operates a 1,000 acre Urban Training Center in south-central Indiana that boasts over 1,500 “training structures” designed to simulate houses, schools, hospitals and factories. The center’s web site states that it “can be tailored to replicate both foreign and domestic scenarios.”

What does flying Blackhawks low over Chicago apartment buildings or rolling armored military convoys through the streets of St. Louis accomplish that cannot be

achieved through the sprawling training center’s simulations? Last year alone, there were at least seven such exercises, including in Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, Tampa, St. Louis, Minneapolis and Creeds, Virginia.

The most obvious answer is that these exercises accustom troops to operating in US cities, while desensitizing the American people to the domestic deployment of US military might.

Preparations for such deployments are already far advanced. Over the past decade, under the pretext of prosecuting a “global war on terror,” Washington has enacted a raft of repressive legislation and created a vast new bureaucracy of state control under the Department of Homeland Security. Under the Obama administration, the White House has claimed the power to throw enemies of the state into indefinite military detention or even assassinate them on US soil by means of drone strikes, while radically expanding electronic spying on the American population.

Military intervention

Part of this process has been the ceaseless growth of the power of the US military and its increasing intervention into domestic affairs. In 2002, the creation of the US Northern Command for the first time dedicated a military command to operations within the

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These powers are not being asserted for the purpose of defending the US population against terrorism or to counter some hypothetical emergency. The US military command is quite conscious of where the danger lies
.....

US itself.

Just last May, the Pentagon announced the implementation of new rules of engagement for US military forces operating on American soil to provide “support” to “civilian law enforcement authorities, including responses to civil disturbances.”

The document declares sweeping and unprecedented military powers under a section entitled “Emergency Authority.” It asserts the authority of a “federal military commander” in “extraordinary emergency circumstances where prior authorisation by the president is impossible and duly constituted local authorities are unable to control the situation, to engage temporarily in activities that are necessary to quell large-scale, unexpected civil disturbances.” In other words, the Pentagon brass claims the unilateral authority to impose martial law.

These powers are not being asserted for the purpose of defending the US population against terrorism or to counter some hypothetical emergency. The US military command is quite conscious of where the danger lies.

.....
When to intervene

In a recent article, a senior instructor at the Fort Leavenworth Command and General Staff College and former director of the Army’s School of Advanced Military Studies laid out a telling scenario for a situation in which the military could intervene.

“The Great Recession of the early twenty-first century lasts far longer than anyone anticipated. After a change in control of the White House and Congress in 2012, the governing party cuts off all funding that had been dedicated to boosting the economy or toward relief. The United States economy has flatlined, much like Japan’s in the 1990s, for the better part of a decade. By 2016, the economy shows signs of reawakening, but the middle and lower-middle classes have yet to experience much in the way of job

growth or pay raises. Unemployment continues to hover perilously close to double digits ...”

In other words, the Pentagon sees these conditions – which differ little from what exists in the US today – producing social upheavals that can be quelled only by means of military force.

What is being upended, behind the scenes and with virtually no media coverage, much less public debate, are constitutional principles dating back centuries that bar the use of the military in civilian law enforcement. In the Declaration of Independence itself, the indictment justifying revolution against King George included the charge that he had “affected to render the military independent of and superior to the Civil power.”

Side by side with the rising domestic power of the military, the supposedly civilian police have been militarised. An article published by the *Wall Street Journal* last month entitled “The Rise of the Warrior Cop” graphically described this process:

“Driven by martial rhetoric and the availability of military-style equipment – from bayonets and M-16 rifles to armored personnel carriers – American police forces have often adopted a mind-set previously reserved for the battlefield. The war on drugs and, more recently, post-9/11 antiterrorism efforts have created a new figure on the US scene: the warrior cop – armed to the teeth, ready to deal harshly with targeted wrongdoers, and a growing threat to familiar American liberties.”

The article describes the vast proliferation of SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) units to virtually every town in America, fueled by some \$35 billion in grants from the Department of Homeland Security, “with much of the money going to purchase military gear such as armored personnel carriers.”

This armed force was on full display in April when what amounted to a state of siege was imposed on the city of Boston,

ostensibly to capture one teenage suspect. The entire population of a major American city was locked in their homes as combat-equipped police, virtually indistinguishable from troops, occupied the streets and conducted warrantless house-to-house searches.

Social chasm

Underlying this unprecedented militarisation of US society are two parallel processes. The immense widening of the social chasm separating the billionaires and multi-millionaires who control economic and political life from American working people, the great majority of the population, is fundamentally incompatible with democracy and

requires other forms of rule. At the same time, the turn to militarism as the principal instrument of US foreign policy has vastly increased the power of the military within the US state apparatus.

Both America's ruling oligarchy and the Pentagon command recognise that profound social polarisation and deepening economic crisis must give rise to social upheavals. They are preparing accordingly.

The working class must draw the appropriate conclusions and make its own political preparations for the inevitable confrontations to come.

CT

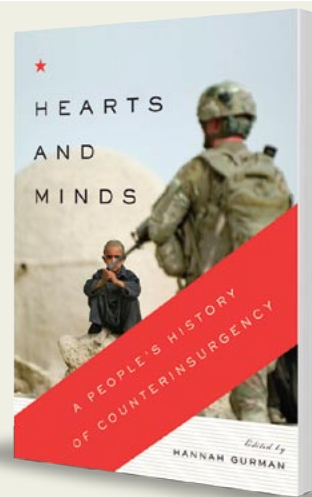
Bill van Auken is editor of the World Socialist web Site at <http://wsws.org> where this was first published

The immense widening of the social chasm is fundamentally incompatible with democracy and requires other forms of rule



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What if ?

So Hezbollah has been branded a terrorist organisation by the EU?
What should it do to get off the list? **Ahmad Barqawi** has a few suggestions

.....
What if Hezbollah swapped its arsenal of “primitive” missiles and Katyushas for a bunch of drones and F-16s? Would they then still be considered terrorists?
.....

Arab liberals and GCC-sponsored ‘intellectuals’ and media pundits could not contain their delight last month as they all went into jubilant throes of rapture over the EU’s acquiescence to American pressure to black-list the Lebanese Resistance Group Hezbollah (or its Armed Wing as it were) as a terrorist organisation.

Full-blown joy was in no short supply as Gulf-funded newspapers and media outlets went into celebratory overdrive, practically sharing a “moment of great relief” with the one entity that, in a word-association game, elicits “terrorism” for the majority of the people in this region: Israel.

Of course the reactionary monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council have themselves designated the Lebanese Shiite party as a terrorist organisation, fashioning measures and sanctions to target the party’s (non-existent) interests in the Gulf, these measures will most probably translate into wholesale arbitrary expulsions and random terminations of residency permits of Lebanese expats earning their livelihoods in these Sheikhdoms, especially those with the “wrong” religious affiliation.

Saudi Arabia has been spearheading a vigorous anti-Hezbollah screed ever since the assassination of their favorite Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Al Hariri, with blatant sectarian incitement and torrents of weaponised religious Fatwas as staples in the Kingdom’s

armory, but for a country whose main exports include religious fanatics of the Al-Qaida variety along with crude oil; labeling the Lebanese party as a terrorist organisation takes their hypocrisy to a whole new cosmic level.

Ultimately, the EU’s decision to ban the “Military Wing” of the Lebanese Resistance as a “terrorist organisation” will most probably have minimal effects on the Party’s political (and yes military) activities, but one has to wonder; what criteria were used to lump the Lebanese party in the same crowd with Al-Qaeda and its ilk? What constitutes as “terrorism” and what does not?

What if Hezbollah swapped its arsenal of “primitive” missiles and Katyushas for a bunch of drones and F-16s? What if the young men of the Lebanese resistance decided to pick up remote joystick terrorism instead of putting their lives at stake by being on the front lines defending their own towns and villages? Would they then still be considered terrorists?

What if Hezbollah took a leaf out of the CIA’s playbook on how to “humanely” treat prisoners of war? What if they pulled a Guantanamo, or a Bagram or an Abu Ghraib on Israeli captives, where water-boarding and sexual humiliations are matters of course? Would it be considered terrorism then or just standard operating procedures? Harsh Interrogation Techniques perhaps?

What if Hezbollah conducted a massive

illegal surveillance and private online data collection crusade not only on its own fellow Lebanese citizens but on the entire world population, wouldn't it be considered a parasitic terrorist entity then? Nah. That would be just too obvious for the EU.

Imagine the uproar if Hezbollah ran large scale bogus vaccination programs in other sovereign states only to illegally and forcibly obtain DNA samples from local residents (including children) on their obsessive manhunt for a "wanted" fugitive, wouldn't hot-headed Eurocentrics trip over themselves to deem that a form of terrorism? How about spying on UN officials and diplomats – including the Secretary General himself – hacking their e-mail addresses, collecting fingerprints and stealing their credit card numbers? Wouldn't that instantly earn them a pariah status by the self righteous EU?

What if Hezbollah had an arsenal of more than 250 nuclear warheads? What if Hezbollah carpet-bombed Tel Aviv with cluster munitions and white phosphorous shells to kingdom come? Would that constitute as terrorism or just a preemptive "self-defense" routine?

What if Hezbollah leader Hassan Nassarallah clumsily mounted an aircraft carrier with a giant "Mission Accomplished" banner attached to it after his "Military Wing" had illegally invaded, pillaged, occupied and decimated a sovereign country and looted its oil and natural resources leaving nothing but biological plagues and radioactive dust in their soil and water, under some trumped up weapons-of-mass-destruction pretext no less? Would the corporate world consider him a hero and hail him like the Second Coming?

What if Nassarallah followed the "fine example" of the double-tongued Barack Obama and fashioned a secret "Kill List" of his own – which included minors and civilians – for impulsive targeted drone annihilation and extrajudicial assassinations? Would he then receive a Nobel Peace Prize for that? How about if he rendezvoused with Israeli war criminals on the White House lawn to sign a humiliating peace treaty with the Zionist entity? I'd wager

he would be then declared the *Time's* "Man of the Year".

Imagine if the Lebanese resistance movement employed gut-wrenching force-feeding and coercion against their hunger-striking political detainees as a matter of course by shoving tubes up their haemorrhaging noses and down into their bellies, would that make them less terrorists and more civilised and liberal?

What if Hezbollah fighters took machetes to their victim's chests and cannibalised their remains and internal organs while smiling through their blood soaked teeth to the camera, would they then be considered bona fide "Freedom Fighters" deserving of western support and millions of dollars of military "non-lethal" aid? What if Hezbollah fighters staged photo-ops and smooched with hardcore right-wing Zionists of the John McCain and Joe Lieberman variety, would they be praised as moderate peace-loving democrats and true models for upright humanity?

What if Hezbollah resorted to car bombings, booby-trapped micro vans and suicide attacks in heavily populated civilian neighborhoods just like those head chopping, throat slitting FSA darlings of the West? Would it be elevated to the pantheons of "legitimate" Arab Spring, GCC-sponsored rebel movements?

Why can't Hezbollah leaders take their cue from those feuding Gulf States' Sheikhs and Emirs whom are gluttons for anything American and Western? Why can't they just play good hosts to a gigantic American military base in South Lebanon? This sure would get their name yanked off of that list of terrorist organisations.

Can't they just forsake their Turbans and traditional Thobes for million-dollar suits and silk neckties? What if Hezbollah leaders were white men with green eyes, and spoke with perfect, unaccented English? Would the EU still slap that "terrorism" label on a legitimate resistance movement?

Shouldn't we all be grateful that we have the European Union to tell us what constitutes as terrorism and what does not? **CT**

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What if Hezbollah carpet-bombed Tel Aviv with cluster munitions and white phosphorous shells to kingdom come? Would that constitute as terrorism or just a preemptive "self-defense" routine?

.....
Ahmad Barqawi,
*a Jordanian
 freelance columnist
 & writer based in
 Amman, he has
 done several studies,
 statistical analysis
 and researches on
 economic and social
 development in
 Jordan*

The crime of war

An excerpt – Wilfred Owen’s poem *Dulce et Decorum Est* – adapted by Jason Copley, John Blake, Michael Brent and Greg Powell – from *The Graphic Canon, Volume 3*, published by Seven Stories Press

.....
No visions of grand heroics here – just brutal reportage of young men sent into a slaughterhouse
.....

Wilfred Owen fought in the field and in the trenches during World War I, and the poetry he wrote is widely regarded as the finest to have sprung from that maelstrom. While recuperating from shell-shock (and from having his best friend blown to pieces right beside him, the young British poet-turned-soldier began writing unflinching, unromantic verse about the realities of war. No visions of grand heroics here – just brutal reportage

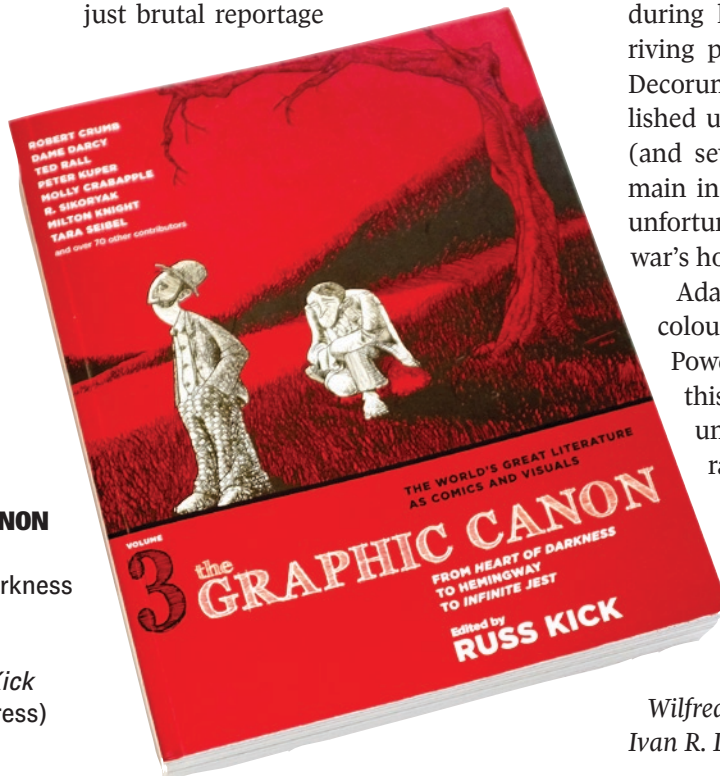
of young men sent into a slaughterhouse. (“I have suffered seventh hell,” he wrote to his mother.) After recovering for a year, during which he wrote most of his mature poems – including “Dulce et Decorum Est” and “Anthem For Doomed Youth” – Owen was sent back to the front. While taking part in an assault on German lines, he was killed exactly one week before the Armistice that ended the war. He was twenty-five.

Only five of his poems were published during his lifetime, the vast majority arriving posthumously, including “Dulce Et Decorum Est,” written in 1917 but not published until 1920. Collections of his poems (and several biographies and studies) remain in print to this day, testifying to the unfortunate timelessness of the subject of war’s horrors.

Adapter Jason Copley, artist John Blake, colourist Michael Brent, and letterer Greg Powell put forth a team effort to provide this gruesome adaptation of Owen’s unsparing account of watching a comrade die horribly from an asphyxiating gas (most likely chlorine, which forms hydrochloric acid when coming into contact with moisture in the lungs and eyes. **CT**

Source: Hibberdi, Dominick.

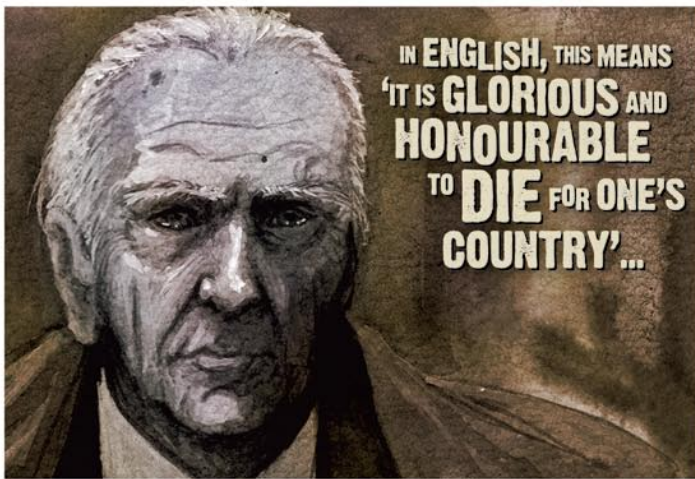
Wilfred Owen: A New Biography. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003

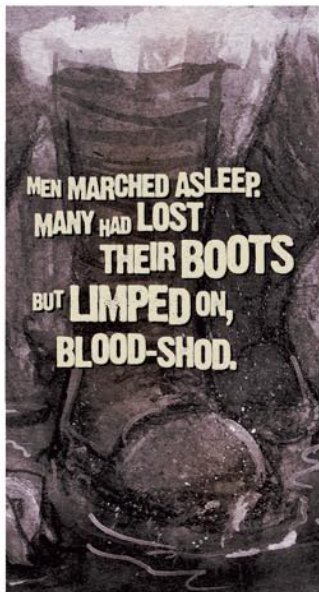
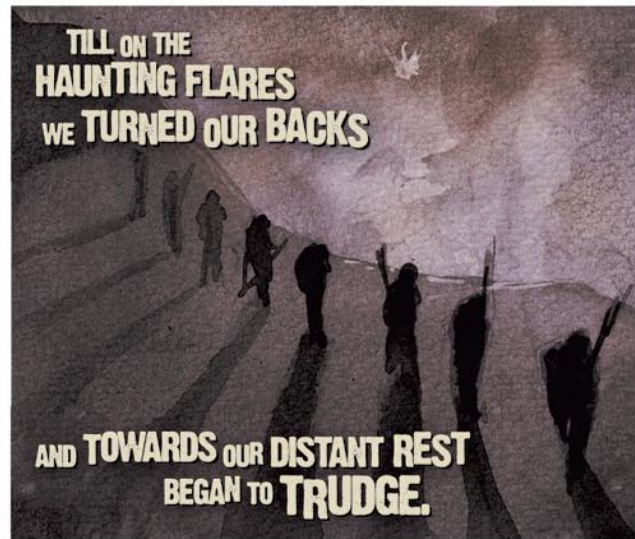
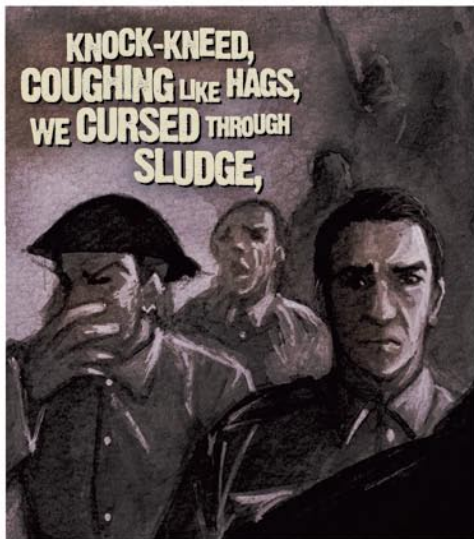


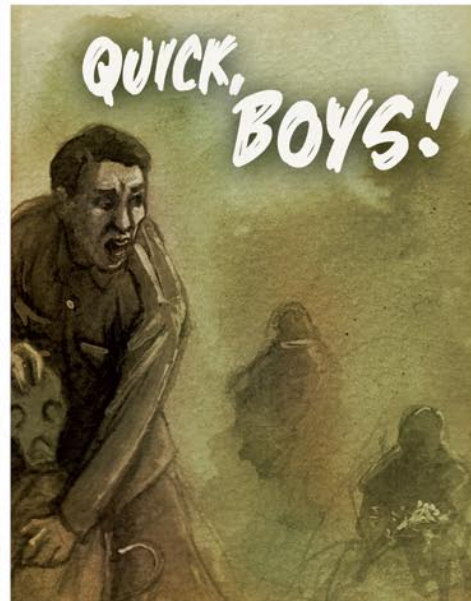
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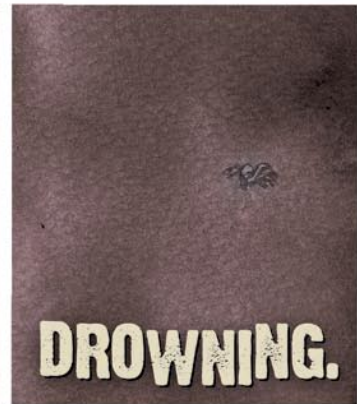
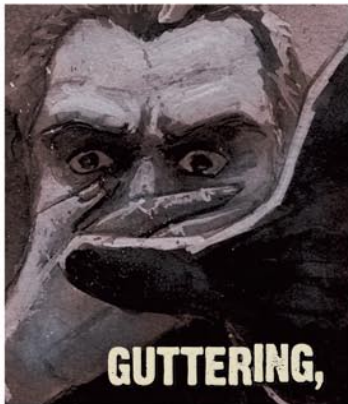
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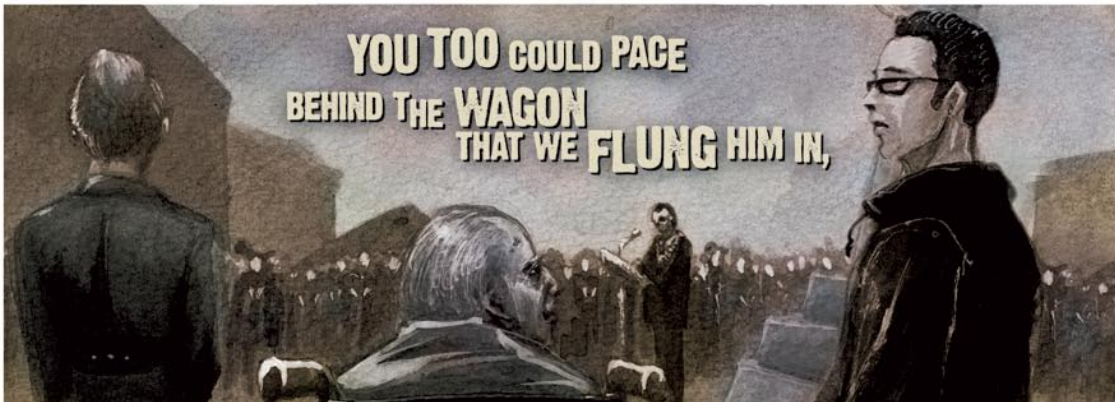
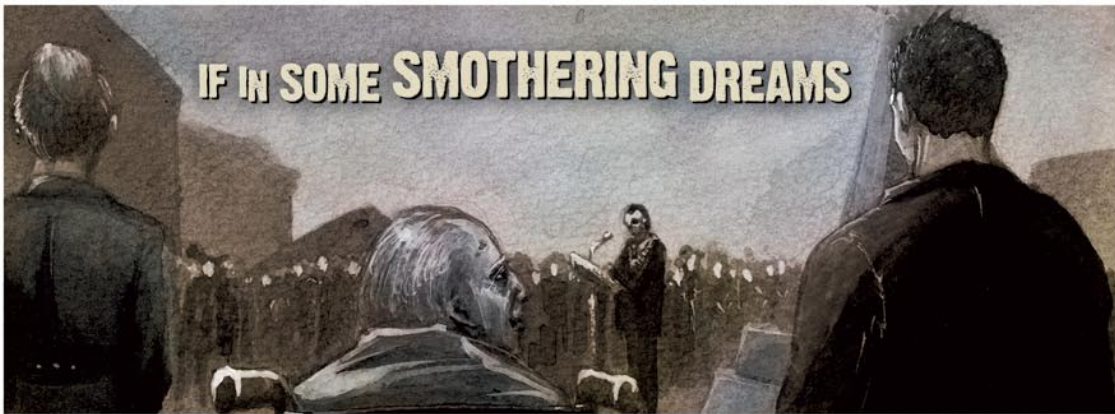
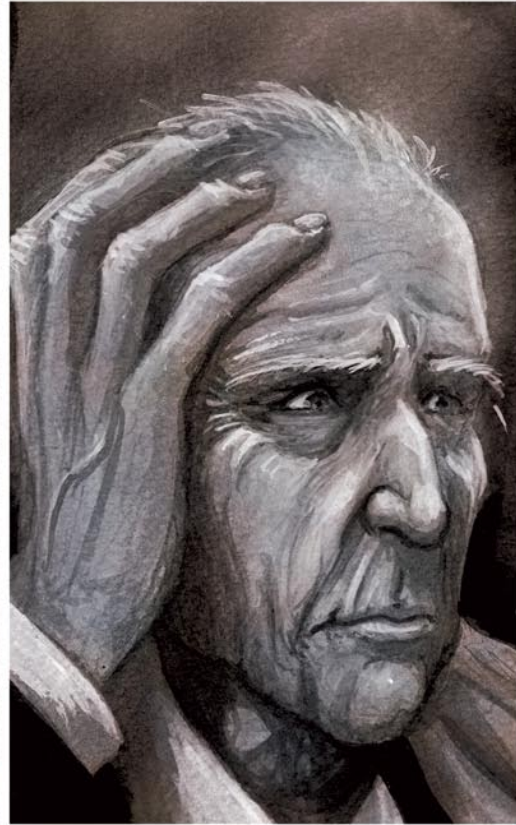
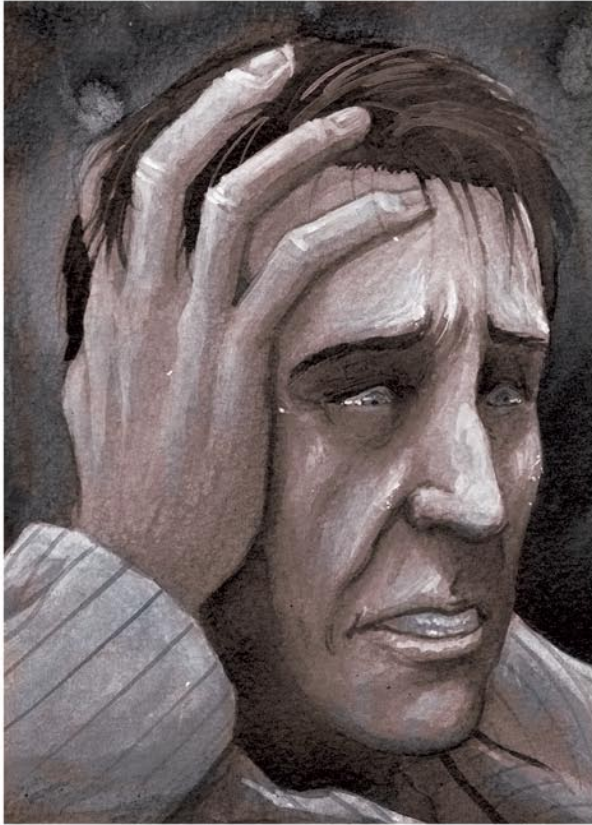
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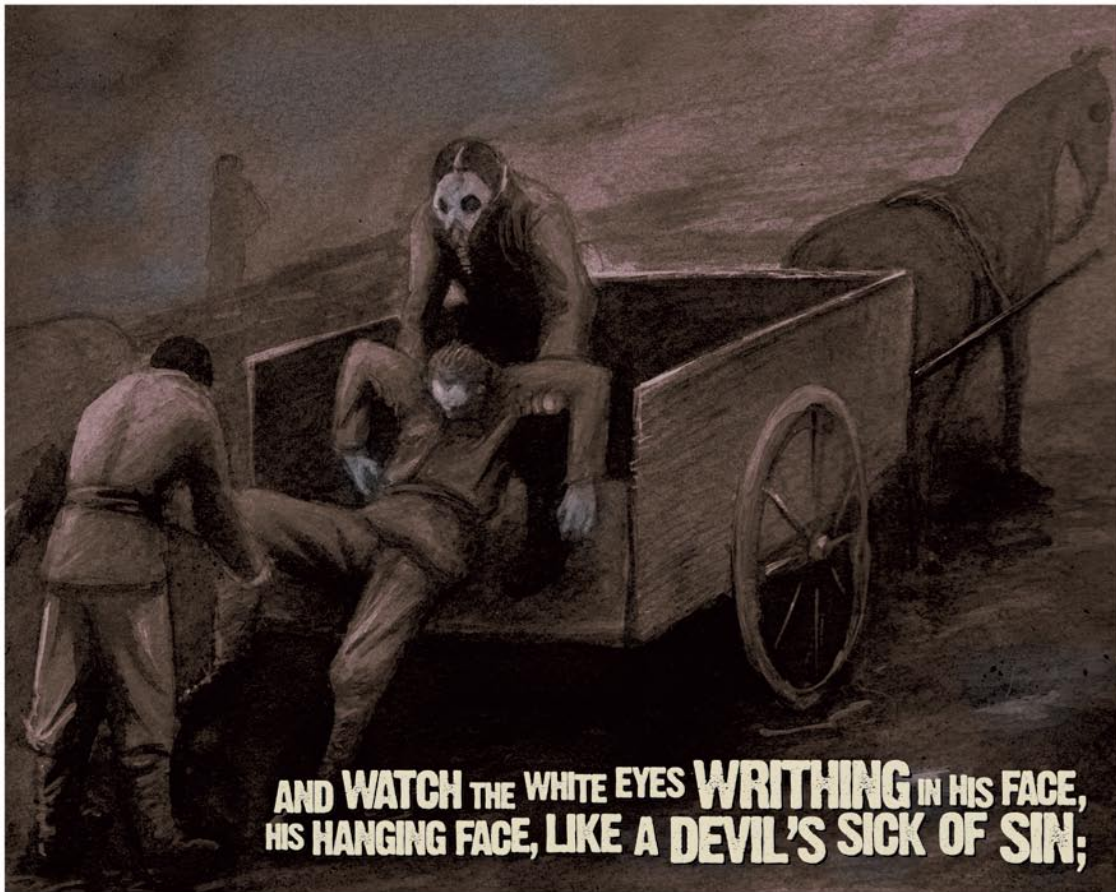


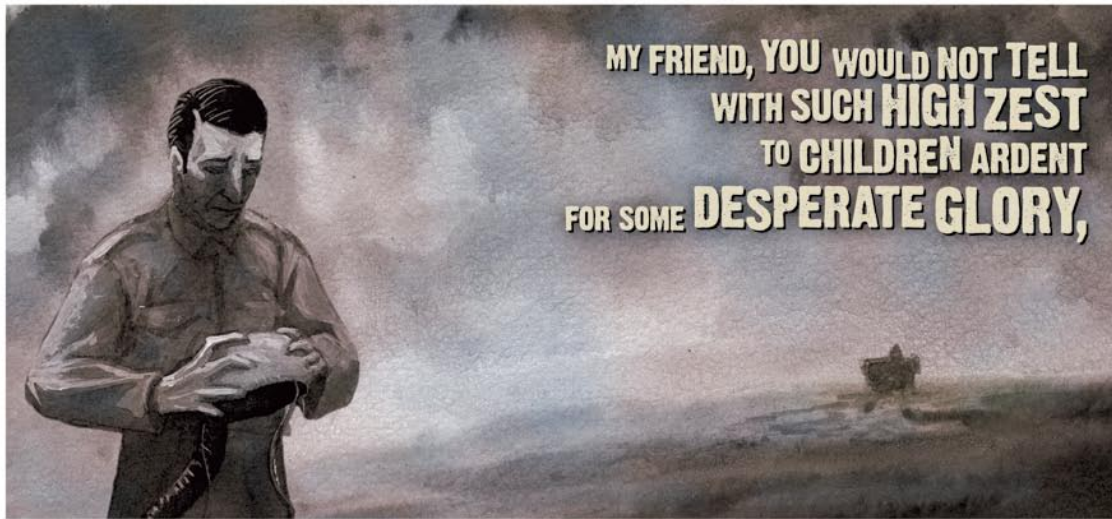












Life after the exit ramp

Stan Cox looks into his crystal ball and finds a future where the human economy will be rebuilt by ending exploitation and sharing economic power

.....
Would we simply forge ahead, hoping for a last-minute technological bailout?
.....

This article appeared in the July 2013 issue of the journal Solutions, which includes a regular feature in which authors are challenged to envision a future society in which all the right changes have been made.

The year is 2071, and the world is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the 2021 Mumbai Earth Treaty. On this momentous day, it seems appropriate to look back at the dramatic sequence of events that followed in the wake of that agreement. Today's world may seem somewhat tame and unexceptional, but its origins lie in the wrenching decisions of the 2020s that led to what is now known as the Great Deceleration – choices that had to be made quickly, at a time when no one could be certain of the consequences.

.....
The dilemma

Through the first two decades of this century, the world's biggest economies had continued to function as if the Earth's store of fossil fuels and other mineral resources was inexhaustible and its capacity to absorb greenhouse gases and other wastes was unlimited. Of course, few actually believed that to be true, but almost everyone acted as if it was true; the way that economies of the time were structured, their very survival depended on uninterrupted growth. It

was assumed, somewhat vaguely, that our ability to provide life's physical necessities, regardless of resource constraints, would follow the trajectory that digital technology had taken over the previous half-century, with rising efficiency, rapid doubling times, and no apparent endpoint.

Harsh realities could not be ignored forever. By 2020, rapid rises in global temperatures, the environmental outrages being committed in pursuit of exotic fossil fuel reserves, the rapid increase in frequency and intensity of climatic disasters, and the accelerated degradation of the planet's soils, oceans, and populations of plants and animals all were making it clear that humanity faced a stark decision. Would we simply forge ahead, hoping for a last-minute technological bailout? Or could we pull back within the necessary ecological boundaries and resolve not to trespass beyond them?

.....
Invisible futures

Earlier, as the twentieth century was ending, ecological economist Robert Costanza had foreseen the necessity of making such tough decisions. He and others had argued that for civilisation to endure intact through the coming century, we would be compelled to decide between the worldviews of the "technological optimist" and the "technological skeptic." Because the world can exist

in only one state at a time, they wrote, either the optimist or the skeptic, but not both, can be right in their assumptions about our actual future. Depending on which worldview we allowed to guide our actions – and, crucially, on which worldview turned out to be the correct one – we would see, in this schema (and using the nicknames assigned), one and only one of four scenarios come to pass:

- A **“Star Trek” future** would emerge if we acted in accordance with the technological optimists’ worldview and the optimists turned out to have been right.

- A **“Mad Max” future** would be our fate if we acted in accordance with the technological optimists’ worldview only to find that they had been wrong.

- A **“Big Government” future** would emerge if we acted in accordance with the technological skeptics’ worldview, but the optimists, not the skeptics, had actually been right.

- But an **“Ecotopia” future** (named with a nod to Ernest Callenbach’s 1975 novel of that title) would await if we acted in accordance with the technological skeptics’ worldview and *they* turned out to have made the right assumptions.

The names given to these alternative futures tell the story. In his *Star Trek* world, for example, seemingly miraculous climate-neutral energy technologies would be developed, making a life of leisure possible for twenty million human beings, a large share of whom would depart for a life on other planets or moons. In a *Mad Max* world, by contrast, betting on the emergence of world-saving technologies would turn out to have been a big mistake. Technological marvels, in particular abundant cheap energy sources, would never appear; the world would be run by greedy corporations, with individuals and governments powerless to control them; and the few people lucky enough to have jobs would slave away for ninety to a hundred hours a week, while everyone else scrambled for scarce food and shelter in

vast, brutal slums that had once been great cities. (And, as in the film, you could get yourself killed over a liter of gasoline.)

By taking the skeptic’s road, on the other hand, the world would risk missing out on post-industrial miracles that, some believed, might still be just around the corner. This became the chief preoccupation of leading free-market proponents. If economies were subjected to constraints, they argued, the *Star Trek* future would always remain a fictional future, a tragically missed opportunity. We would have to resign ourselves to living out this century in a Big Government world, one in which bureaucratic encumbrances and high resource taxes protect the ecosphere but at the cost of not letting economic growth reach its full potential. Those making this argument generally failed to point out that by taking the skeptics’ route, the world could actually keep open the option to take advantage – cautiously to be sure – of any promising new developments that actually did emerge; in fact, imposing restraints on resource exploitation could stimulate the discovery of many quality-of-life improvements that might not have arisen in a society devoted to growth for growth’s sake. And whatever its deficiencies, a world that had conserved and maintained its physical and biological foundations, and its options for innovation, would be far preferable to a *Mad Max* scenario from which there would have been no escape.

Two years later, a group of thinkers known as the Global Scenario Group set out to broaden and deepen the analysis of alternative visions, with their publication *Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead*. In it, they examined a larger set of possible futures, from a world that attempts to carry on business as usual, to a hyper-local Ecotopia, to a descent into barbarism. The two most desirable of the futures required a “Great Transition” that would be “galvanised by the search for a deeper basis for human happiness and fulfillment.” That search would be global in scope and would

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replace wealth accumulation as “a central theme of human development.” While policy reform and technological progress would be necessary to make consumption less dependent on material throughput, the Great Transitions would be required to break what had until then been a “lockstep connection between consumption and well-being.”

In the decades that followed, the Great Transition Initiative and allied efforts on every continent turned out a large body of work that would provide the post-2021 world a roadmap of sorts. The precise route to be taken to a sustainable future remained to be worked out, but the consequences of choosing one route over another were much clearer.

After ignoring such logic for decades, the world finally woke up. By the time delegates to the August, 2021 UN Earth Conference gathered in the half-flooded city of Mumbai, India, it had become clear that without a dramatic change of course, our civilisation was going to devolve into a Mad Max world long before salvation through technology could be achieved. Indeed, many of the world’s impoverished majority were already living in that world. The final available exit ramp was just ahead, and in an unprecedented moment of international collective decision-making, humanity swerved onto the ramp.

The hastily drawn-up Earth Treaty was limited in that it applied only to greenhouse emissions, leaving consideration of other ecological crises for another time; nevertheless, the emissions cuts it mandated – a 50 percent reduction globally, which meant cuts as large as 80 percent in the United States and 60 percent in Europe – would be deep and steep enough to shake the world economy to its roots. The treaty kicked off a process that eventually would bring to life (at least in some respects) that fourth future, the one labeled Ecotopia. But there were many missteps and meanders along the way.

The initial policies intended to achieve

those deep emissions cuts were focused on a global carbon tax, and they flopped. Firstly, the tax was widely regarded as unfair. Despite redistribution of revenues from the tax as a per-capita cash dividend, the world’s poor majority continued to suffer under shortages and inflation, while a rich minority could afford to pay any price to maintain their accustomed lifestyle. Secondly, the policy was largely ineffective. The tax was an indirect mechanism for suppressing consumption by making it more costly, but demand for those critical goods affected by the tax was much less elastic than had been anticipated. In an effort to lift prices high enough to drive down demand among the affluent, the tax had to be increased seven times in three years. But without an explicit ceiling on production or consumption (and with the annual dividend payment providing a strong economic stimulus), greenhouse emissions dipped only modestly, about as much as they had in the wake of the Great Recession of 2008-09. And, crucially, there still was no “floor” to ensure that everyone on Earth had access to sufficient resources. Stronger action was needed.

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The fair-shares solution

An epoch-making course change came with the 2024 Common Resources Treaty, signed and ratified by 227 nations. It imposed ironclad barrel-and-ton ceilings on global extraction of fossil fuels and other minerals. Specific extraction, import, and export ceilings were adjusted in accord with each country’s domestic endowment of resources, taking into account per-capita requirements for good quality of life. An impermeable ceiling with no offsets or other escape hatches meant that accustomed volumes of production, consumption, and wealth generation were no longer possible in wealthier nations, while a solid floor made possible a better life for resource-poor populations.

Production of superfluous consumer

goods was reduced even further when a large share of resources had to be diverted into building an ecologically durable society. That effort included massive investment in non-fossil, non-nuclear energy sources; conversion to a much less energy-dependent infrastructure; building or converting to more compact, low-consumption housing; a reworking of agriculture; and rearrangement of living and working patterns to reduce the amount of transportation required. Many saw parallels to the 1940s, when large sectors of Western economies were walled off from domestic consumption in order to meet the needs of wartime production.

And the wartime comparisons didn't stop there. This deliberately imposed scarcity, like all scarcities, triggered inflation that threatened the world's poor majority in particular. Governments had learned from experience with resource shortages, wartime and otherwise, that price controls would have to be imposed for essential goods and factors of production. And they knew that with price controls, demand would far outstrip available supplies and that rationing by quantity would be necessary to ensure fair shares for all.

At first, rationing was restricted to energy and carbon emissions. As a model for how to proceed, governments dusted off several turn-of-the-century British proposals that had never been passed into law. As eventually adopted, the various post-2024 ration systems set strict national carbon-emissions ceilings that were lowered year by year. Every purchase of energy was then accompanied by a transfer of the appropriate number of ration credits, with each credit corresponding to the quantity of carbon dioxide (or equivalent in other gases) expected to be emitted in generating the energy. Utilities and other businesses and government bought their credits, while individuals received free quotas of credits, which were deposited monthly into their personal "carbon accounts."

By the mid-30s, with these systems in

place, anthropogenic climate impact was already declining steadily. But a problem that some had foreseen from the beginning was now becoming obvious to all. As producers and consumers became more carbon-efficient, and as they spent less on energy, they spent more on other goods and services, stimulating production that often resulted in ecological damage extending well beyond greenhouse emissions. A new strategy was needed, and it employed the concept of "ecological footprint," which had by that time been under examination and refinement for several decades. It had finally become feasible to assign a fairly realistic footprint value to every good and service in the economy, not just to fuels and energy sources. An item's footprint value encompassed not just the greenhouse emissions generated during production but also all of its impacts on soil, water, biodiversity, and even whole ecosystems. So in fairly short order, in country after country, producers' and consumers' carbon accounts were replaced with eco-accounts. Everyone now received a fair monthly allotment of eco-points, and every good and service was assigned a point value. Like World War II-era grocery shoppers deciding whether to spend their meat points on a small piece of steak or a larger quantity of hamburger, consumers quickly became accustomed to a ration system that became the foundation of the one we still use today. For many products, the eco-point value, not the cash price, became the dominant factor in consumers' decisions on whether to buy and what to buy. And in yet another wartime parallel, non-essential products with too-heavy footprints were excluded from the economy altogether.

On to the next future

Our world today includes many of the elements foreseen so long ago for both the localised world of Ecotopia and the globally integrated world of the Great Transition vision. Gross domestic product as a measure

An item's footprint value encompassed not just the greenhouse emissions generated during production but also all of its impacts on soil, water, biodiversity, and even whole ecosystems

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By fostering a sense of common purpose and burden-sharing, rationing has been a highly effective alternative to the inevitably disappointing campaigns for voluntary restraint that characterised the early years of global ecological crisis
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of economic health was ditched long ago in favor of various quality-of-life indices. Daily life for most of us has indeed become more local, with small communities of a thousand or so population being the basic social unit. But strong political and intellectual relationships are maintained electronically among communities around the planet, many of whom will never meet physically because of limits on long-distance transportation. (And because the data centers that support today's "lean" Internet no longer have to bear a crushing burden of advertising and marketing traffic, they require far less energy than did early-century ones.) The worldwide consumption floor continues to ensure sufficiency. Although some people do, as was predicted, work as little as 20 hours per week, typical work weeks are still 25 to 30 hours; far less production is necessary, but human labour will always be needed to do much of the work previously done by fossil-fuel powered devices.

By fostering a sense of common purpose and burden-sharing, rationing has been a highly effective alternative to the inevitably disappointing campaigns for voluntary restraint that characterised the early years of global ecological crisis. Without national fair-shares rationing systems, international success in achieving ecological restraint probably would have been short-lived. However – and this cannot be stressed enough

– rationing is not a panacea. It was never a plug-in tool for limiting consumption or creating fairness in a growth economy. Rather, it was a policy that became necessary *once we had succeeded* through other means in pulling our economies back within critical boundaries.

Nor could rationing alone have eliminated the pervasive injustices that plagued the global economy. Early in this century, inequality of wealth and income – both among nations and within the world's biggest economies, especially those of the United States and China – was rising rapidly. Reversing that trend required a revolutionary transformation, a shift of power from the haves and the investors to the have-nots and the people who do the work of societies. At long last, we appear to have come close to achieving that shift in most of the world; however, an account of that experience will have to wait for another time. Suffice it to say that as difficult as it was for twenty-first-century nations to achieve sustainability and sufficiency, rebuilding the human economy in a way that eliminated exploitation and brought fair sharing of economic power was an even tougher job for us, their citizens. **CT**

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Stan Cox's most recent book is *Any Way You Slice It: The Past, Present, and Future of Rationing* (The New Press, 2013)

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Vultures and Red Wings

Dave Zirin tells how a billionaire sports owner is about to get a new sports arena from a city that has just declared bankruptcy

The headline juxtaposition boggles the mind. You have, “Detroit Files Largest Municipal Bankruptcy in History” on one day. Then you have “Detroit Plans to Pay For New Red Wings Hockey Arena Despite Bankruptcy on the next.

Yes, the very week Michigan Governor Rick Snyder granted a state-appointed emergency manager’s request to declare the Motor City bankrupt, the Tea Party governor gave a big thumbs up to a plan for a new \$650 million Detroit Red Wings hockey arena. Almost half of that \$650 million will be paid with public funds.

This is actually happening. City services are being cut to the bone. Fighting fires, emergency medical care, and trash collection are now precarious operations. Retired municipal workers will have their \$19,000 in annual pensions dramatically slashed. Even the artwork in the city art museum will be sold off piece by piece. This will include a mural by the great radical artist Diego Rivera that’s a celebration of what the auto industry would look like in a socialist future. As Stephen Colbert said, the leading bidder will be “the museum of irony.”

They don’t have money to keep the art on the walls. They do have \$283 million to subsidise a new arena for Red Wings owner and founder of America’s worst pizza-pizza chain, Little Caesar’s, Mike Ilitch,

whose family is worth \$2.7 billion dollars. [“Friends! Romans! Countrymen! Lend me your pensions!”]

How did Governor Snyder possibly summon the shamelessness to justify this?

Here’s how. He said, “This is part of investing in Detroit’s future, That’s the message we need to get across . . . As we stabilise the city government’s finances, as we address those issues and improve services, Detroit moves from a place where people might have had a negative impression . . . to being a place that will be recognised across the world as a place of great value and a place to invest.”

False promise

Where, oh where, have we heard this argument before? What city has heard the false promise that stadium construction on the public dime would be a post-industrial life raft? There are actually many, but none have heard it more and paid the cost quite like Detroit. A new Red Wings arena would be the city’s third publicly funded major sports stadium, joining the Tigers’ Comerica Stadium, and the Lions’ Ford Field. Each of these was billed as a “remedy” to save the city. Each of these has obviously failed. Fool us once, shame on you. Fool us twice, shame on us. Try to fool us three times? Go to hell.

I spoke with Marvin Surkin, co-author of

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A conservative agenda, has “been strip mining cities by privatizing almost all services, attacking public workers and their unions, while at the same time providing billion-dollar tax cuts for large businesses and cutting revenue sharing to the cities”
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the classic book *Detroit I Do Mind Dying*. He said, “These are more than just remedies that didn’t work. They are part of the problem because stadiums don’t address the central issues of falling population, falling tax base, declining wages, unemployment and the underfunding of schools.”

Surkin is correct. If anything, this kind of corporate welfare has over the last generation has exacerbated Detroit’s existing problems. Why? Because they siphon money out of the city services – things like schools and hospitals – while creating the very kinds of jobs that are the antithesis to the kinds that once built Detroit into the third largest city in the United States. No living wages. No job security. No tax base. Just spanking new stadiums for suburban sports fans, which Detroit residents will only be able to enter if they’re selling foam novelty fingers.

.....
Cut to the front

As Neal DeMause, who runs the indispensable website Field of Schemes – <http://fieldofschemes.com> – said, “There’s absolutely no reason on earth that the state of Michigan couldn’t say to Mike Ilitch, ‘Sorry, Detroit has more important things to do with its money.’ Instead, though, the governor seems content to let Ilitch cut to the front of the line for public funds, on the grounds that ‘who doesn’t get fired up’ about hockey. Even if you limited it to economic development projects, putting money into fixing city schools or restoring streetlights would do far more for Detroit’s business prospects than a hockey arena. This just goes to show the problem with carving out shares of tax revenue to go to development authorities – they end up basically serving as slush funds for developers, even when the city treasury is otherwise empty.”

There is a right wing narrative about Detroit that the city is in peril because of some combination of the 1967 “race riots” and greedy unions. The reality is that Black and Brown residents of Detroit made Motown

and those “greedy unions” built a stable working class that could realistically dream of a better life for their own children. The breaking of Detroit should be seen, in the words of David Sirota, as an indictment of right wing economic orthodoxy. Instead, the bankruptcy has been used as a warning to other cities that unions, pensions, and a culture of resistance are roads to ruin.

With this Red Wings arena, Snyder, Ilitch, and their ilk may have gone too far. The commitment of Detroit’s corporate masters to this stadium project actually acts like an autopsy, revealing who has really destroyed the Motor City. As legendary Detroit activist Grace Lee Boggs put it, a conservative agenda, has “been strip mining cities by privatizing almost all services, attacking public workers and their unions, while at the same time providing billion-dollar tax cuts for large businesses and cutting revenue sharing to the cities.” In a city that’s 83% African American and built on union labour, it’s a pelt long desired by the Snyders of this world. Neoliberalism has destroyed Detroit. Free trade deals have destroyed Detroit. Corporate welfare has destroyed Detroit. It’s perverse of Snyder and Detroit’s anti-union, pro-stadium mayor – and NBA hall of famer – Dave Bing to see stadiums as symbols of Detroit’s revival. They are symbols instead of its decline.

More and more people across the world are getting wise to these kinds of priorities. Perhaps Detroit should keep its eyes on Brazil, where mass discontent with the quality of schools, hospitals and the government led to marches on stadiums built or refurbished for the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics. One of the slogans amongst the Brazilian masses was “A giant awakes. Come to the streets.” In Detroit, if no one can afford to go to the game they might have no choice but to come to the streets. **CT**

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Dave Zirin is the author of the new book “*Game Over: How Politics Has Turned the SportsWorld Upside Down*” (The New Press)

By George, you don't get it

Detroit was a one-industry company town run, and ruined, by executives who forgot how to make cars people wanted to buy, writes **Donald Kaul**

There I was, sitting at my desk and looking out of the window – you know, writing – when my wife came in and plopped down a newspaper article in front of me.

“Read that,” she said with a cruel twinkle in her eye.

It was an article on Detroit by George Will, one of my least favorite columnists. I find his smug arrogance insufferable.

His article on Detroit was no exception. It began with a quotation from Darwin, followed by a biology lecture.

Eventually he got to the subject of Detroit. It seems he had come to Detroit, looked around, and discovered the source of its considerable misery.

Unions. That’s what did Detroit in, Will said – unions and their handmaiden, democracy.

And public unions were supposedly the worst. They were able to help elect the corrupt politicians who granted them fat paychecks and fatter pensions, all while private companies were complicit.

“Auto industry executives, who often were invertebrate mediocrities, continually bought labours peace by mortgaging their companies’ futures in surrenders to union demands,” he wrote.

That’s why they pay Will the big bucks. He can parachute into a place and within a few hours figure things out. Union mem-

bers are greedy. End of story.

If he had asked me about it, I could have saved him the trip. Of course unions are greedy. A hundred years ago, they asked Samuel Gompers, the most powerful labour leader of his day, what labour wanted and he answered: “More.”

They did then and they do now. So does everybody else. If I’m not mistaken, Will gets upwards of \$20,000 for delivering a speech to fat cats who want to hear their prejudices festooned with high-class quotations. But that’s not greed – apparently, it’s the free-market system.

We live in an economic environment where it’s not at all unusual for an executive of a struggling corporation to rake in a million dollars or more in annual compensation.

And if a CEO should be fired for incompetence, he or she gets a gold-plated severance package that makes no sense.

Then there are those financiers paid to move piles of money from one place to another – often for no useful purpose. They always take the trouble to keep a tidy sum for themselves, then claim the right to be taxed at a lower rate than the rest of us.

And take those “entrepreneurs,” like Mitt Romney, who will buy up a healthy company, scoop out its value for their own profit, then leave the shell to the workers, bereft of jobs, pensions, or benefits.

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A hundred years ago, they asked Samuel Gompers, the most powerful labour leader of his day, what labour wanted and he answered: “More”

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Detroit was a one-industry company town run by executives who forgot what that industry was
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In that atmosphere, do you really expect union workers to sit back and say “Oh, please don’t pay us any more. It might hurt the long-term health of the community.”

Get real.

Yes, Detroit’s public unions were short-sighted, but had they been less so it wouldn’t have made much difference. Detroit was a one-industry company town run by executives who forgot what that industry was – making cars that people wanted to buy. When the companies began to fail and the jobs began to leave town, the city’s obituary was written on the walls of its ruined factories, union or not.

Labour unions are among our most vilified institutions these days, their influence disappearing. The last session of the Michigan legislature passed a so-called “right-to-work” law that gutted labour rights, for crying out loud.

Unions deserve some of the criticism they get, certainly, but the answer to the problems they cause is not extermination, but reform. Unlike hedge fund managers, they owe their origins to need as well as greed.

Unions brought a degree of social justice to the workplace. They gave the average working stiff a sense of dignity that laissez faire capitalism denied him or her.

You want a country without unions? Try China, where workers have virtually no rights and workers endure appalling conditions. Or perhaps you’d prefer Russia? I understand Siberia is nice this time of year.

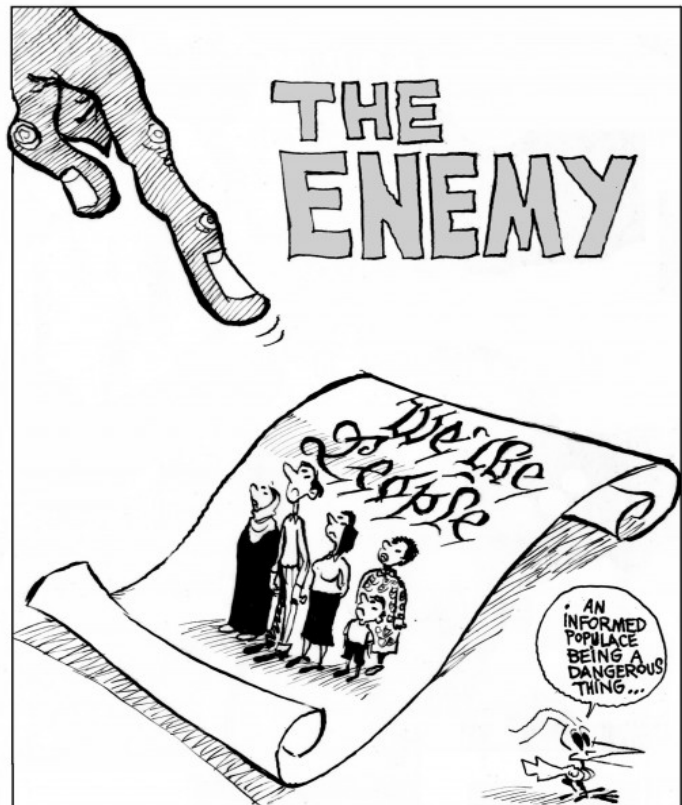
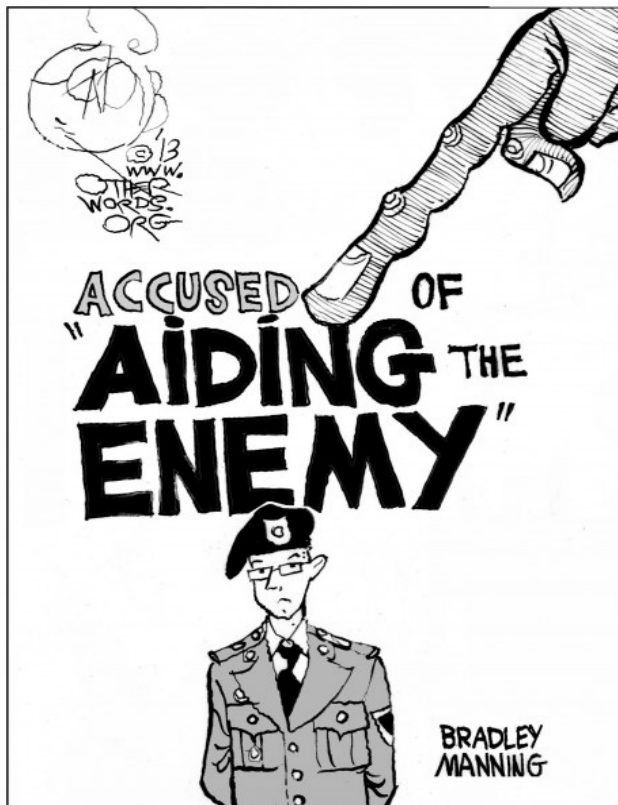
Workers of the world...aw, forget it. **CT**

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Donald Kaul grew up in Detroit and now lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

This article was originally published at <http://OtherWords.org>

BENDIB’S WORLD

Khalil Bendib, OtherWords.org



Tar sands bring more hell to Detroit

Margaret Kimberley tells how a three-storey pile of dirty fuel from Canada's tar sands came to be sitting on the bank of the Detroit River

If one picture is worth 1,000 words, then the pile of petroleum coke, petcoke, which sits along the Detroit River tells quite a story.

Beginning in November 2012, the Koch Carbon company began dumping the petcoke, which is a byproduct of tar sands oil production and also a cheap fuel. Koch Carbon is owned by those Kochs, Charles and David, the incredibly wealthy right wing industrialists who play a very public role in bringing union busting Right to Work laws, Stand Your Ground, and other horrors to state legislatures across the US.

But this is not just a story about the Kochs. It would be too simplistic to lay the blame at the feet of these obvious villains alone. The three story high pile of fossil fuel waste says quite a lot about the political and economic calamity that has ensnared Detroit and which moves more slowly but relentlessly to the rest of the country.

The petcoke originates from tar sands oil in Alberta, Canada; it is later refined by Marathon Petroleum and then purchased by the Koch company. Petcoke has been called the dirtiest of dirty fuels because it emits more carbon dioxide than coal and contains more metal and sulphur. As a byproduct it costs nothing to produce yet can be sold at a high profit. Without seeking permits, with no public notification whatever, Koch Carbon began dumping the petcoke last year



(Photo: Ruth Germain/Petroleum Coke Awareness Facebook)

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 The three story high pile of fossil fuel waste says quite a lot about the political and economic calamity that has ensnared Detroit

and it isn't hard to figure out why Detroit was chosen as the location.

Detroit as a sovereign public entity no longer exists. It is completely powerless, having been taken over by the "lords of capital" personified in this case by emergency manager Kevyn Orr. There is quite literally no one in Detroit's government with the power to stand up to the Kochs, Orr, or to anyone else who can do the city harm.

It is a sad tale indeed. Detroit residents near the pet coke pile have the toxic dusts in their homes and invariably in their lungs too. Despite assurances to the contrary, the dust cannot be contained and video footage showing a dark cloud blowing to Windsor,

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“What better place to dump a pile of poison than a city on the ropes which can no longer defend itself?”
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Ontario, gave the story new urgency to the public but less so to elected officials.

Michigan Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow could only muster enough energy to ask for an EPA study of the health effects of petcoke. The Department of Environmental Quality doesn't even pretend to protect the health of residents and has consistently downplayed the possibility of any health threat. What better place to dump a pile of poison than a city on the ropes which can no longer defend itself?

While the petcoke had been building for months the first action against it came not from the politicians but from ordinary citizens. On June 24th the Detroit Coalition Against Tar Sands demonstrated and blocked access to the petcoke site. The protest and months of media coverage forced the figurehead government officials to pretend they had some control and concern about the situation. Mayor Dave Bing said, “I want to make it clear that Detroit is not a dumping ground and residents of Southwest Detroit deserve to be protected from industrial by-products.

“What better place to dump a pile of poison than a city on the ropes which can no longer defend itself?”

Those are nice words but Bing can't do anything to stop this assault and Marathon Petroleum and Koch Carbon know it. The initial panic created by bad publicity and public questions at first caused the malefac-

tors to say they were in the process of shipping out the stockpile and that it would disappear by the end of August. Later they appeared at a public hearing and expressed an intention to request the proper permits to keep the petcoke on site. Now the story has changed yet again. The petcoke will go to another unlucky location in Ohio but may turn up again in Michigan after all.

Detroit's present represents the future for the rest of the country. If the lords want fracking, they will get it. If they want a key-stone pipeline to carry tar sands oil across the United States they will get it. If they want to take over one of the nation's biggest cities and decimate its public services they can do that, too.

The lords of capital have brought hell on earth to Detroit in more ways than one but that city isn't alone. State and local governments across the country are using it as a case study in how to decimate the power of unions and public employees. It doesn't take powers of clairvoyance to predict that president Obama will approve the Keystone XL pipeline which will bring tar sands oil and the need for new places to dump petcoke. Hell on earth is coming to a city near you.

CT

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Margaret Kimberley's Freedom Rider column appears weekly in Black Agenda Report – <http://blackagenda.org> – where this article first appeared.



Impoverished, gentrified, silenced

Momentous change almost always begins with the courage of people taking back their own lives against the odds. Just do it, urges **John Pilger**

I have known my postman for more than 20 years. Conscientious and good-humored, he is the embodiment of public service at its best. The other day, I asked him, “Why are you standing in front of each door like a soldier on parade?”

“New system,” he replied. “I am no longer required simply to post the letters through the door. I have to approach every door in a certain way and put the letters through in a certain way.”

“Why?”

“Ask him.”

Across the street was a solemn young man, clipboard in hand, whose job was to stalk postmen and see they abided by the new rules, no doubt in preparation for privatisation. I told the stalker my postman was admirable. His face remained flat, except for a momentary flicker of confusion.

In *Brave New World Revisited*, Aldous Huxley describes a new class conditioned to a normality that is not normal, “because they are so well adjusted to our mode of existence, because their human voice has been silenced so early in their lives, that they do not even struggle or suffer or develop symptoms as the neurotic does.”

Surveillance is normal in the Age of Regression – as Edward Snowden revealed. Ubiquitous cameras are normal. Subverted freedoms are normal. Effective public dissent is now controlled by police, whose in-

timidation is normal.

The traducing of noble words like “democracy,” “reform,” “welfare” and “public service” is normal. Prime ministers who lie openly about lobbyists and war aims are normal. The export of \$4 billion worth of British arms, including crowd control ammunition, to the medieval state of Saudi Arabia, where apostasy is a capital crime, is normal.

The willful destruction of efficient, popular public institutions like the Royal Mail is normal. A postman is no longer a postman, going about his decent work; he is an automaton to be watched, a box to be ticked. Huxley described this regression as insane and our “perfect adjustment to that abnormal society” a sign of the madness.

Are we “perfectly adjusted” to this? No, not yet. People defend hospitals from closure, UK Uncut forces bank branches to close and six brave women climb the highest building in Europe to show the havoc caused by the oil companies in the Arctic. There, the list begins to peter out.

At this year’s Manchester festival, Percy Bysshe Shelley’s epic poem *Masque of Anarchy* – all 91 verses written in rage at the massacre of Lancashire people protesting poverty in 1819 – is an acclaimed theatrical piece and utterly divorced from the world outside. Last January, the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission disclosed

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Parkhill is a symbol of the two-thirds society that is Britain today. The gentrified third do well, some of them extremely well, a third struggle to get by on credit and the rest slide into poverty
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that 600,000 Mancunians were living in “extreme poverty” and that 1.6 million, or nearly half the city’s population, were “sliding into deeper poverty.”

Poverty has been gentrified. The Parkhill Estate in Sheffield was once an edifice of public housing – unloved by many for its Le Corbusier brutalism, poor maintenance and lack of facilities. With its Heritage Grade II listing, it has been renovated and privatised. Two-thirds of the old flats have been reborn as modern apartments selling to “professionals,” including designers, architects and a social historian. In the sales office, you can buy designer mugs and cushions. This façade offers not a hint that, devastated by the government’s “austerity” cuts, Sheffield has a social housing waiting list of 60,000 people.

Parkhill is a symbol of the two-thirds society that is Britain today. The gentrified third do well, some of them extremely well, a third struggle to get by on credit and the rest slide into poverty.

Although the majority of the British are working class – whether or not they see themselves that way – a gentrified minority dominates parliament, senior management and the media. David Cameron, Nick Clegg and Ed Milliband are their authentic representatives, with only minor technical difference between their parties. They fix the limits of political life and debate, aided by gentrified journalism and the “identity” industry. The greatest ever transfer of wealth upwards is a given. Social justice has been replaced by meaningless “fairness.”

While promoting this normality, the BBC rewards a senior functionary almost \$1 million. Although regarding itself as the media

equivalent of the Church of England, the Corporation now has ethics comparable with those of the “security” companies G4S and Serco which, says the government, have “overcharged” on public services by tens of millions of pounds. In other countries, this is called corruption.

Like the fire sale of the power utilities, water and the railways, the sale of Royal Mail is to be achieved with bribery and the collaboration of the union leadership, regardless of its vocal outrage. Opening his 1983 documentary series *Questions of Leadership*, Ken Loach shows trade union leaders exhorting the masses. The same men are then shown, older and florid, adorned in the ermine of the House of Lords. In the recent Queen’s Birthday honors, the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Brendan Barber, received his knighthood.

How long can the British watch the uprisings across the world and do little apart from mourn the long-dead Labour Party? The Edward Snowden revelations show the infrastructure of a police state emerging in Europe, especially Britain. Yet, people are more aware than ever before; and governments fear popular resistance – which is why truth-tellers are isolated, smeared and pursued.

Momentous change almost always begins with the courage of people taking back their own lives against the odds. There is no other way now. Direct action. Civil disobedience. Unerring. Read Percy Shelley – “Ye are many; they are few.” And do it. **CT**

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John Pilger’s new film, “Utopia”, will be previewed at the National Film Theatre, London, in the autumn

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Where journalism and family mix

Alison Weir reports on another *New York Times* journalist with children in the Israeli military

The *New York Times* recently published a news brief, reporting that Israel is going to re-investigate an incident in which an American citizen, Tristan Anderson, was permanently maimed.

Anderson suffered extensive brain damage (part of his frontal lobe was destroyed) and paralysis, and was blinded in one eye, after Israeli soldiers shot him with a tear gas canister intended as a “barricade penetrator” from inappropriately close range. According to eyewitnesses, Anderson was shot as he was taking photographs in a Palestinian village after an unarmed protest against the illegal and extensive confiscation of village land.

Israeli forces have a history of shooting unarmed protesters with these canisters, which one expert likens to “a small missile.”

Yet the *New York Times* report, “Israel Reopens Inquiry Into Activist’s Injury” (July 11, 2013, P. 9) reveals few of these details.

The *Times* article states that Anderson was injured when he was hit in the head by a tear gas canister and is partly paralyzed and blind in one eye, but does not mention his extensive brain damage and that his paralysis is over half his body. It doesn’t reveal that the type of canister used is extraordinarily destructive or that it was fired at such close range.

The report also omits the fact that this incident is part of a pattern, even though Israe-

li forces have killed at least two Palestinians with these canisters, and shot out the eye of an American student with another. According to a report by an Israeli organisation, Israeli forces “frequently fire tear-gas canisters directly at demonstrators.”

The *Times* report states that the protest was “against the extension of Israel’s separation barrier in the West Bank” without citing the villagers’ actual complaint – the confiscation of their land and, thus, livelihood by Israel. It similarly fails to mention that over previous decades Israel confiscated over 80 percent of the village land and now intends to take between a quarter and a third of what remains to build the “barrier.”

Finally, the *Times* report repeats, without attribution, the Israeli security forces’ claim that the shooting occurred “during a clash,” implying that it happened accidentally during a violent engagement, ignoring eyewitness testimony that the protest had dissipated and most people had gone home.

The byline on the *Times* report is Myra Noveck. Noveck has bylined a number of stories for both the *New York Times* and its European affiliate the *International Herald Tribune*, where ZoomInfo lists her as a contributor.

Noveck is frequently cited in *New York Times* news reports as a contributor to stories, and a prominent Israeli newspaper calls her the *Times*’ “deputy bureau chief” for the

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.....
A multitude of journalists at the *Times* and elsewhere have had close personal and family ties to the Israeli military – almost none of them ever disclosed
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Times' Jerusalem bureau, its bureau for covering Israel-Palestine.

From information she has posted online, it appears that Noveck is an American who moved to Israel after college. According to Torah in Motion, which promotes Jewish dialogue and speakers, two of her children were serving in the Israeli military as of 2012. It is unclear whether her children are currently still on active duty or whether they are now serving as Israeli reserve soldiers.

In either case, it appears that while Noveck has been writing and contributing to news reports about Israel and about the Israeli military, her children have been serving in it.

Such a situation appears to constitute a clear conflict of interest – even according to the *Times*' own ethics standards – and should normally cause a journalist to be assigned to a different area of reporting.

When it came to light in 2010 that then chief of the *Times*' Jerusalem bureau, Ethan Bronner, had a son in the Israeli military, even the *Times*' own ombudsman concluded that Bronner should be reassigned.

In response to requests for information and interviews with Noveck and *Times* Executive Editor Jill Abramson, a *Times* spokesperson issued a written statement claiming that Noveck is “not a reporter,” but merely a “long-time news assistant in the *Times*'s bureau in Jerusalem.”

The statement went on to say: “She works under the direction of our bureau chief primarily doing translation and research. She is an Israeli citizen. If she has children and they are also Israeli citizens, presumably they would be required to serve in the military*. This situation would not constitute a ‘breach with impartiality.’”

I wrote back pointing out (1) that *Times*' conflict of interest requirements include family members and (2) that Noveck's byline appeared on a news report. The spokesperson then admitted that Noveck “on rare occasions received a byline” but still maintained that “she is not a reporter.”

However, the *Times*' published ethics standards generally extend ethical requirements “to all newsroom and editorial page employees, journalists and support staff alike.”

This incident is part of a pattern of ethics violations concerning reporting on Israel.

Isabel Kershner, a senior *Times* reporter in the region, is an Israeli citizen whose husband, according to Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) works for an Israeli organization, the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), which has close ties to the Israeli military and is “tasked with shaping a positive image of Israel in the media.”

A FAIR study of articles that Kershner had written or contributed to since 2009 found they had overwhelmingly relied on the INSS for analysis about events in the region.

A multitude of journalists at the *Times* and elsewhere have had close personal and family ties to the Israeli military – almost none of them ever disclosed, including the previous *Times* bureau chief Ethan Bronner, as noted above.

Jonathan Cook, a British journalist based in Israel, quotes a Jerusalem bureau chief who stated: “... Bronner's situation is ‘the rule, not the exception. I can think of a dozen foreign bureau chiefs, responsible for covering both Israel and the Palestinians, who have served in the Israeli army, and another dozen who like Bronner have kids in the Israeli army.’”

Cook writes that the bureau chief explained: “It is common to hear Western reporters boasting to one another about their Zionist credentials, their service in the Israeli army or the loyal service of their children.”

It would appear from this pervasive pattern that many of the owners, editors, and journalists who determine US reporting on Israel-Palestine believe that normal ethics requirements don't apply in regard to Israel.

This situation holds serious consequences for the American public. American taxpayers give Israel over \$8 million per day (more than to any other country) and, as a result, most of the world views Americans as responsible for Israeli actions, exposing us to

escalating risks.

Osama Bin Laden and others have often cited US support for Israeli crimes as a primary cause of hostility against us.

It is thus essential that Americans be accurately and fully informed. This is unlikely to happen while those reporting for American news media (whether “reporters” or “assistants”) have such close ties to Israel and its powerful military forces.

Anderson was shot in 2009 after a protest in the Palestinian village of Ni’lin in the West Bank. Since 2007 Ni’lin villagers and others have been demonstrating against the illegal Israeli confiscation of up to a third of the village’s land (following previous confiscations in which the majority of the village’s original land was taken by Israel).

Gabby Silverman, a witness to the shooting of Tristan Anderson, describes the incident: “Tristan had wandered off with his camera. I was looking at him. And out of nowhere, they opened fire on us. The first shot they fired, they got Tristan.”

Anderson is now in a wheelchair with permanent brain damage. He is hemiplegic (paralyzed on the left, formerly dominant, side of his body). He is blind in his right eye and part of his head and frontal lobe were destroyed.

The kind of canister Israeli forces shot at Anderson is particularly dangerous, according to their manufacturer itself. The shells have a range of several hundred meters, yet Israeli soldiers fired at Anderson from approximately 60 meters away.

The canisters’ manufacturer, Combined Systems, Inc. (CSI), classifies them as “barriade penetrators” and advises that they should not be fired at people. A spokesperson for an Israeli human rights organisation says, “It’s like firing a small missile.” Because of an internal propulsion mechanism, they hurtle through the air at 122 meters per second.

CSI is reportedly the primary supplier of tear gas to Israel. A watchdog group reports that the company flew the Israeli flag at its

Jamestown, Pennsylvania, headquarters until, in advance of a planned Martin Luther King Day demonstration, CSI took it down and replaced it with the Pennsylvania state flag.

According to an in-depth report on CSI by Pennsylvania professor Dr. Werner Lange, the company was founded by two Israelis, Jacob Kravel and Michael Brunn.

A month after Anderson was shot, a Palestinian nonviolence leader was killed by this same type of tear gas canister when an Israeli soldier shot it into the victim’s chest (the fifth Palestinian killed in Ni’lin by the Israeli military in a year and a half).

The next year Israeli forces fired a similar canister at a young American art student, Emily Henschowicz, destroying one eye. An eyewitness reported that an Israeli soldier intentionally aimed the canister at Henschowicz while she was participating in a nonviolent demonstration.

In 2012 another Palestinian was killed when an Israeli soldier shot him in the face with what appears to have also been a long-range CSI canister.

The occupying Israeli forces have consistently suppressed the Ni’lin villagers’ unarmed protests against the stealing of their land. As of 2012, Israel had arrested more than 350 villagers, killed 5 – including a 10-year-old child – injured “multiple” protesters with live ammunition, and broken the bones of 15 people with tear gas projectiles, according to the villagers’ website, created to document the situation.

There are similar reports from other Palestinian villages, where several other protesters have died from tear gas fired by Israeli forces. It is unfortunate that almost none of this was even hinted at in Myra Noveck’s *New York Times* report. **CT**

**While military service is required for both males and females in Israel, only about 50 percent actually serve; many Israelis have refused to serve in the Israeli military for reasons of conscience.*

The kind of canister Israeli forces shot at Anderson is particularly dangerous, according to their manufacturer itself. The shells have a range of several hundred meters, yet Israeli soldiers fired at Anderson from approximately 60 meters away

Alison Weir is the founder of If Americans Knew, at <http://ifamericansknew.org>

Masterpiece in propaganda

Jonathan Cook watches a movie about whistleblower Julian Assange

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To shore up his central argument about Assange's moral failings, Gibney needs to make a persuasive case that these defects are not only discernible in Assange's public work but in his private life too
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I have just watched *We Steal Secrets*, Alex Gibney's documentary about Wikileaks and Julian Assange. One useful thing I learnt is the difference between a hatchet job and character assassination. Gibney is too clever for a hatchet job, and his propaganda is all the more effective for it.

The film's contention is that Assange is a natural-born egotist and, however noble his initial project, Wikileaks ended up not only feeding his vanity but also accentuating in him the very qualities – secretiveness, manipulativeness, dishonesty and a hunger for power – he so despises in the global forces he has taken on.

This could have made for an intriguing, and possibly plausible, thesis had Gibney approached the subject-matter more honestly and fairly. But two major flaws discredit the whole enterprise.

The first is that he grievously misrepresents the facts in the Swedish case against Assange of rape and sexual molestation to the point that his motives in making the film are brought into question. To shore up his central argument about Assange's moral failings, he needs to make a persuasive case that these defects are not only discernible in Assange's public work but in his private life too.

We thus get an extremely partial account of what occurred in Sweden, mostly through the eyes of A, one of his two accusers. She is

interviewed in heavy disguise.

Gibney avoids referring to significant aspects of the case that would have cast doubt in the audience's mind about A and her testimony. He does not, for example, mention that A refused on Assange's behalf offers made by her friends at a dinner party for the Wikileaks leader to move out of her place and into theirs – a short time after she says the sexual assault took place.

The film also ignores the prior close relationship between A and the police interviewer and its possible bearing on the fact that the other complainant, S, refused to sign her police statement, suggesting that she did not believe it represented her view of what had happened.

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Torn condom

But the most damning evidence against Gibney is his focus on a torn condom submitted by A to the police, unquestioningly accepting its significance as proof of the assault. The film repeatedly shows a black and white image of the damaged prophylactic.

Gibney even allows a theory establishing a central personality flaw in Assange to be built around the condom. According to this view, Assange tore it because, imprisoned in his digital world, he wanted to spawn flesh-and-blood babies to give his life more concrete and permanent meaning.

The problem is that investigators have admitted that no DNA from Assange was found on the condom. In fact, A's DNA was not found on it either. The condom, far from making A a more credible witness, suggests that she may have planted evidence to bolster a case so weak that the original prosecutors dropped it.

There is no way Gibney could not have known these well-publicised concerns about the condom. So the question is why would he choose to mislead the audience?

Without A, the film's case against Assange relates solely to his struggle through Wikileaks to release secrets from the inner sanctums of the US security state. And this is where the film's second major flaw reveals itself.

Gibney is careful to bring up most of the major issues concerning Assange and Wikileaks, making it harder to accuse him of distorting the record. Outside the rape allegations, however, his dishonesty relates not to an avoidance of facts and evidence but to his choice of emphasis.

The job of a good documentarist is to weigh the available material and then present as honest a record of what it reveals as is possible. Anything less is at best polemic, if it sides with those who are silenced and weak, and at worst propaganda, if it sides with those who wield power.

Cat and mouse

Gibney's film treats Assange as if he and the US corporate-military behemoth were engaged in a simple game of cat and mouse, two players trying to outsmart each other. He offers little sense of the vast forces ranged against Assange and Wikileaks.

The Swedish allegations are viewed only in so far as they question Assange's moral character. No serious effort is made to highlight the enormous resources the US security state has been marshalling to shape public opinion, most notably through the media. The hate campaign against Assange, and the Swedish affair's role in stoking it, are ignored.

None of this is too surprising. Were Gibney to have highlighted Washington's efforts to demonise Assange it might have hinted to us, his audience, Gibney's own place in supporting this matrix of misinformation.

This is a shame because there is probably a good case to make that anyone who takes on the might of the modern surveillance and security empire the US has become must to some degree mirror its moral failings.

How is it possible to remain transparent, open, honest – even sane – when every electronic device you possess is probably bugged, when your every move is recorded, when your loved ones are under threat, when the best legal minds are plotting your downfall, when your words are distorted and spun by the media to turn you into an official enemy?

Assange is not alone in this plight. Bradley Manning, the source of Wikileaks' most important disclosures, necessarily lied to his superiors in the military and used subterfuge to get hold of the secret documents that revealed to us the horrors being unleashed in Iraq and Afghanistan in our names.

Another of the great whistleblowers of the age, Edward Snowden, was no more honest with his employers, contractors for the US surveillance state, as he accumulated more and more incriminating evidence of the illegal spying operations undertaken by the National Security Agency and others.

This documentary could have been a fascinating study of the moral quandaries faced by whistleblowers in the age of the surveillance super-state. Instead Gibney chose the easy course and made a film that sides with the problem rather than the solution. **CT**

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 <http://www.jonathan-cook.net>

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There is probably a good case to make that anyone who takes on the might of the modern surveillance and security empire the US has become must to some degree mirror its moral failings

When nationalism meets hypocrisy

How can the US complain about Russia's human rights abuses when it is just as guilty, asks **William Blum**

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Does the White House have no sense of shame? Or embarrassment? At all?
.....

It's not easy being a flag-waving American nationalist. In addition to having to deal with the usual disillusion, anger, and scorn from around the world incited by Washington's endless bombings and endless wars, the nationalist is assaulted by whistle blowers like Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden, who have disclosed a steady stream of human-rights and civil-liberties scandals, atrocities, embarrassing lies, and embarrassing truths. Believers in "American exceptionalism" and "noble intentions" have been hard pressed to keep the rhetorical flag waving by the dawn's early light and the twilight's last gleaming.

That may explain the *Washington Post* story (July 20) headlined "US asylum-seekers unhappy in Russia", about Edward Snowden and his plan to perhaps seek asylum in Moscow. The article recounted the allegedly miserable times experienced in the Soviet Union by American expatriates and defectors like Lee Harvey Oswald, the two NSA employees of 1960 – William Martin and Bernon Mitchell – and several others. The *Post's* propaganda equation apparently is: Dissatisfaction with life in Russia by an American equals a point in favor of the United States: "misplaced hopes of a glorious life in the worker's paradise" ... Oswald "was given work in an electronics factory in dreary Minsk, where the bright future eluded him" ... reads the *Post's* Cold

War-clichéd rendition. Not much for anyone to get terribly excited about, but a defensive American nationalist is hard pressed these days to find much better.

At the same time TeamUSA scores points by publicizing present-day Russian violations of human rights and civil liberties, just as if the Cold War were still raging. "We call on the Russian government to cease its campaign of pressure against individuals and groups seeking to expose corruption, and to ensure that the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of all of its citizens, including the freedoms of speech and assembly, are protected and respected," said Jay Carney, the White House press secretary.

"Campaign of pressure against individuals and groups seeking to expose corruption" ... hmmm ... Did someone say "Edward Snowden"? Is round-the-clock surveillance of the citizenry not an example of corruption? Does the White House have no sense of shame? Or embarrassment? At all?

I long for a modern version of the Army-McCarthy hearings of 1954 at which Carney – or much better, Barack Obama himself – is spewing one lie and one sickening defense of his imperialist destruction after another. And the committee counsel (in the famous words of Joseph Welch) is finally moved to declare: "Sir, you've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir? At long last, have

you left no sense of decency?” The Congressional gallery burst into applause and this incident is widely marked as the beginning of the end of the McCarthy sickness.

US politicians and media personalities have criticised Snowden for fleeing abroad to release the classified documents he possessed. Why didn't he remain in the US to defend his actions and face his punishment like a real man? they ask. Yes, the young man should have voluntarily subjected himself to solitary confinement, other tortures, life in prison, and possible execution if he wished to be taken seriously. Quel coward!

Why didn't Snowden air his concerns through the proper NSA channels rather than leaking the documents, as a respectable whistleblower would do? This is the question James Bamford, generally regarded as America's leading writer on the NSA, endeavored to answer, as follows:

“I've interviewed many NSA whistleblowers, and the common denominator is that they felt ignored when attempting to bring illegal or unethical operations to the attention of higher-ranking officials. For example, William Binney and several other senior NSA staffers protested the agency's domestic collection programs up the chain of command, and even attempted to bring the operations to the attention of the attorney general, but they were ignored. Only then did Binney speak publicly to me for an article in *Wired* magazine.”

In a Q&A on the *Guardian* Web, Snowden cited Binney as an example of “how overly-harsh responses to public-interest whistleblowing only escalate the scale, scope, and skill involved in future disclosures. Citizens with a conscience are not going to ignore wrong-doing simply because they'll be destroyed for it: the conscience forbids it.”

And even when whistleblowers bring their concerns to the news media, the NSA usually denies that the activity is taking place. The agency denied Binney's charges that it was obtaining all consumer metadata from Verizon and had access to virtually all

Internet traffic. It was only when Snowden leaked the documents revealing the phone-log program and showing how PRISM works that the agency was forced to come clean.

“Every country in the world that is engaged in international affairs and national security undertakes lots of activities to protect its national security,” US Secretary of State John Kerry said recently. “All I know is that it is not unusual for lots of nations.”

Well, Mr. K, anti-semitism is not unusual; it can be found in every country. Why, then, does the world so strongly condemn Nazi Germany? Obviously, it's a matter of degree, is it not? The magnitude of the US invasion of privacy puts it into a league all by itself.

Kerry goes out of his way to downplay the significance of what Snowden revealed. He'd have the world believe that it's all just routine stuff amongst nations ... “Move along, nothing to see here.” Yet the man is almost maniacal about punishing Snowden. On July 12, just hours after Venezuela agreed to provide Snowden with political asylum, Kerry personally called Venezuelan Foreign Minister Elias Jaua and reportedly threatened to ground any Venezuelan aircraft in America's or any NATO country's airspace if there is the slightest suspicion that Snowden is using the flight to get to Caracas. Closing all NATO member countries' airspace to Venezuelan flights means avoiding 26 countries in Europe and two in North America. Under this scenario, Snowden would have to fly across the Pacific from Russia's Far East instead of crossing the Atlantic.

The Secretary of State also promised to intensify the ongoing process of revoking US entry visas to Venezuelan officials and businessmen associated with the deceased President Hugo Chávez. Washington will also begin prosecuting prominent Venezuelan politicians on allegations of drug trafficking, money laundering and other criminal actions and Kerry specifically mentioned some names in his conversation with the Venezuelan Foreign Minister.

Kerry added that Washington is well

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And its alleged
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Its alleged civil
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Its alleged
everything?**
.....

aware of Venezuela’s dependence on the US when it comes to refined oil products. Despite being one of the world’s largest oil producers, Venezuela requires more petrol and oil products than it can produce, buying well over a million barrels of refined oil products from the United States every month. Kerry bluntly warned that fuel supplies would be halted if President Maduro continues to reach out to the fugitive NSA contractor.

.....
**Wow. Heavy. Unlimited power in the
hands of psychopaths. My own country
truly scares me**

And what country brags about its alleged freedoms more than the United States? And its alleged democracy? Its alleged civil rights and human rights? Its alleged “exceptionalism”? Its alleged everything? Given that, why should not the United States be held to the very highest of standards?

American hypocrisy in its foreign policy is manifested on a routine, virtually continual, basis. Here is President Obama speaking recently in South Africa about Nelson Mandela: “The struggle here against apartheid, for freedom; [Mandela’s] moral courage; this country’s historic transition to a free and democratic nation has been a personal inspiration to me. It has been an inspiration to the world – and it continues to be.”

How touching. But no mention – never any mention by any American leader – that the United States was directly responsible for sending Nelson Mandela to prison for 28 years.

And demanding Snowden’s extradition while, according to the Russian Interior Ministry, “Law agencies asked the US on many occasions to extradite wanted criminals through Interpol channels, but those requests were neither met nor even responded to.” Amongst the individuals requested are militant Islamic insurgents from Chechnya, given asylum in the United States.

Ecuador has had a similar experience with the US in asking for the extradition of several individuals accused of involvement in a coup attempt against President Rafael Correa. The most blatant example of this double standard is that of Luis Posada Carriles who masterminded the blowing up of a Cuban airline in 1976, killing 73 civilians. He has lived as a free man in Florida for many years even though his extradition has been requested by Venezuela. He’s but one of hundreds of anti-Castro and other Latin American terrorists who’ve been given haven in the United States over the years despite their being wanted in their home countries.

American officials can spout “American exceptionalism” every other day and commit crimes against humanity on intervening days. Year after year, decade after decade. But I think we can derive some satisfaction, and perhaps even hope, in that US foreign policy officials, as morally damaged as they must be, are not all so stupid that they don’t know they’re swimming in a sea of hypocrisy. Presented here are two examples:

In 2004 it was reported that “The State Department plans to delay the release of a human rights report that was due out today, partly because of sensitivities over the prison abuse scandal in Iraq, US officials said. One official ... said the release of the report, which describes actions taken by the US government to encourage respect for human rights by other nations, could ‘make us look hypocritical.’”

And an example from 2007: Chester Crocker, a member of the State Department’s Advisory Committee on Democracy Promotion, and formerly Assistant Secretary of State, noted that “we have to be able to cope with the argument that the US is inconsistent and hypocritical in its promotion of democracy around the world. That may be true.”

In these cases the government officials appear to be somewhat self-conscious about the prevailing hypocrisy. Other foreign poli-

cy notables seem to be rather proud.

Robert Kagan, author and long-time intellectual architect of an interventionism that seeks to impose a neo-conservative agenda upon the world, by any means necessary, has declared that the United States must refuse to abide by certain international conventions, like the international criminal court and the Kyoto accord on global warming. The US, he says, “must support arms control, but not always for itself. It must live by a double standard.”

And then we have Robert Cooper, a senior British diplomat who was an advisor to Prime Minister Tony Blair during the Iraq war. Cooper wrote:

“The challenge to the postmodern world is to get used to the idea of double standards. Among ourselves, we operate on the basis of laws and open cooperative security. But when dealing with more old-fashioned kinds of states outside the postmodern continent of Europe, we need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era – force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary to deal with those who still live in the nineteenth century world of every state for itself.”

His expression, “every state for itself”, can be better understood as any state not willing to accede to the agenda of the American Empire and the school bully’s best friend in London.

So there we have it. The double standard is in. The Golden Rule of “do unto others as you would have others do unto you” is out.

The imperial mafia, and their court intellectuals like Kagan and Cooper, have a difficult time selling their world vision on the basis of legal, moral, ethical or fairness standards. Thus it is that they simply decide that they’re not bound by such standards.

Hating America

Here is Alan Dershowitz, prominent American lawyer, jurist, political commentator and

fervent Zionist and supporter of the empire, speaking about journalist Glenn Greenwald and the latter’s involvement with Edward Snowden: “Look, Greenwald’s a total phony. He is anti-American, he loves tyrannical regimes, and he did this because he hates America. This had nothing to do with publicizing information. He never would’ve written this article if they had published material about one of his favorite countries.”

“Anti-American” ... “hates America” ... What do they mean, those expressions that are an integral part of American political history? Greenwald hates baseball and hot dogs? ... Hates American films and music? ... Hates all the buildings in the United States? Every law? ... No, like most “anti-Americans”, Glenn Greenwald hates American foreign policy. He hates all the horrors and all the lies used to cover up all the horrors. So which Americans is he anti?

Dershowitz undoubtedly thinks that Snowden is anti-American as well. But listen to the young man being interviewed:

“America is a fundamentally good country. We have good people with good values who want to do the right thing.”

The interviewer is Glenn Greenwald.

Is there any other “democratic” country in the world which regularly, or even occasionally, employs such terminology? Anti-German? Anti-British? Anti-Mexican? It may be that only a totalitarian mentality can conceive of and use the term “anti-American”.

“God appointed America to save the world in any way that suits America. God appointed Israel to be the nexus of America’s Middle Eastern policy and anyone who wants to mess with that idea is a) anti-Semitic, b) anti-American, c) with the enemy, and d) a terrorist.” – John LeCarré, *London Times*, January 15, 2003 **CT**

William Blum’s latest book is “America’s Deadliest Export – Democracy: The Truth About US Foreign Policy and Everything Else”

.....
The double standard is in. The Golden Rule of “do unto others as you would have others do unto you” is out

The Italian job

It's Toronto FC against AC Roma in the most underwhelming game of the year, writes **Tony Sutton**. Photos by **Kyle Sutton**



Who do ya love?: Italian fans parade before the start of the performance.

.....
Not only do TFC's owners consistently inflict crap teams on their long-suffering fans but they also charge them top dollar for the privilege of watching the increasingly-pitiful games
.....

There's nothing more cynical than a sports team looking for creative ways to lighten the wallets of gullible fans. Take, for example, Toronto FC which has the unfortunate distinction of being one of the worst teams in North America's Major League Soccer. Not only do its owners consistently inflict crap teams on long-suffering fans but they also charge top dollar for the privilege of watching the increasingly-pitiful games at their BMO Field stadium.

This is TFC's seventh year in the league. They finished bottom last season. This term they're doing better – next to bottom. Until a few weeks ago, their biggest achievement

was in not winning a home game for a year.

The formerly-fanatical fanbase is dwindling, so you'd expect a trace of humility from the club – reduced prices, for example – when the team played its annual pre-season 'exhibition' friendly against top European opponents Roma. Perhaps a sign of appreciation for their fans' long-suffering. Nope. Just another opportunity for painless cash extraction.

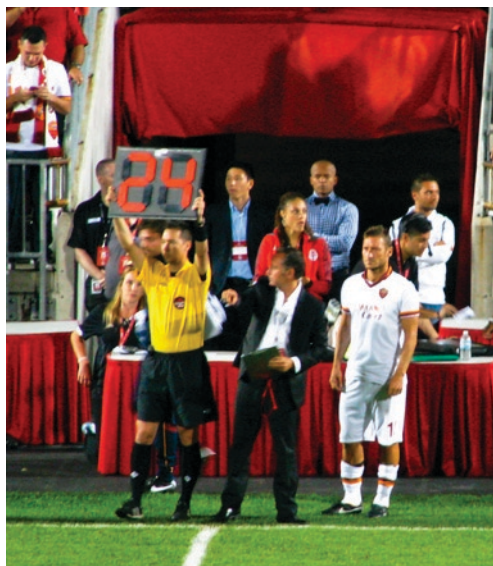
Last year when Liverpool were the visitors, my two tickets cost \$150. Each! Liverpool – owned by Boston's Fenway Sports, owners of baseball's Red Sox – put out what amounted to their reserve team. Indeed, most of their star players couldn't even be



Lesson learned?: The match is under way, but the stadium is far from packed.



Above: There's only one Francesco Totti.
Right: And here he is, coming on for the final 20 minutes



.....
It's just another
opportunity for
painless cash
extraction
.....



Same again!: The game is dull, the booze is expensive and Toronto are losing.

.....
Francesco Totti
ambled onto the
field for the final
20 minutes of a
staggeringly
boring game
.....



In the picture: Memories are made of this.

bothered to fly the short distance from Boston, where they were encamped, to Toronto to wave to their fans. “Rip-off,” cried angry fans, who pledged not to be fooled again.

But, luckily, the memories of sports fans are short. And TFC’s opponents this year were not Brits, but Italians – AC Roma – like Liverpool, just outside the top echelon of their respective soccer league. But, mindful of last year’s shortage of superstars they did

bring their aging hero Francesco Totti. And, yes, he *did* play, ambling on to the field for the final 20 minutes of a staggeringly boring game that his team won 4-1.

A good night’s entertainment? Hardly. Ah, but it’s the little extras that create the memory? Hmm. A beer? That’ll be \$14, sir. Hot dog? No problem. \$8. Replica Roma soccer shirt? Yours for \$110, \$130 if you’d like Totti’s name across the back. (Many fans sussed that one in advance: they bought their shirts before the game for \$25 at the area’s many flea markets.)

Wow, I can’t wait for next year’s big international ‘exhibition’, with the TFC team languishing in their usual position at the foot of the league walking onto the pitch accompanied by the mooing sound of bovine fans being led to the milking shed once more.

You could say I’m cynical. Perhaps. But as cynical as TFC’s owners? **CT**

.....
Tony Sutton is the editor of *ColdType*.
Kyle Sutton is a high school student at
Georgetown, Ontario

Guerilla ambush

Scott McLemee examines the rise of the ‘cool- sell’ age of advertising manipulation – and the role of Burger King’s Subservient Chicken

The most memorable thing about the 2002 science-fiction movie *Minority Report* was its depiction of advertising in a few decades – in particular the scene of Tom Cruise hurrying through a mall, besieged by holographic, interactive invitations to have a Guinness or use American Express, and asking him how he liked the tank tops he’d purchased at the Gap. The virtual skills address him by name (the character’s name, that is) thanks to retinal scanners, which are as ubiquitous in the 2050s as surveillance cameras had become in the century’s first decade.

They are pop-up ads from hell, swarming like hungry ghosts to devour everyone’s attention. (The people Tom Cruise rushes past are presumably getting their own biometrically personalised shopping advice.) The scene feels uncomfortably plausible; it’s the experience of being on the Internet, extended into public space and rendered inescapable.

How effective the film is as social criticism probably depends on what you make of the fact that a quarter of its budget came from product placement. *Minority Report*’s critique of advertising turns out to be, in part, critique as advertising.

Now, I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is that people have become so resistant to hard-sell advertisement (dodging TV commercials

with their DVRs, ignoring or mocking how ad agencies target their desires or insecurities) that they have lost influence. By the 2050s, our psychic callouses should be really thick.

The bad news concerns what is taking the place of the hard sell: a range of techniques discussed at some length in *Your Ad Here: The Cool Sell of Guerrilla Advertising* (New York University Press) by Michael Serazio, an assistant professor of communications at Fairfield University.

“Cool” advertising, as Serazio uses the expression, does not refer only to campaigns that make a product seem hip, hot, and happening – so that you will be, too, by buying it. The adjective is instead a nod to the contrast between Marshall McLuhan’s famous if altogether dubious categorisations of “hot” media, such as film or print, and the “cool” sort, chiefly meaning television.

A hot medium, goes the theory, transmits its content in high resolution, so that the recipient easily absorbs it through a single sense. A cool medium, with its low resolution, demands greater involvement from the recipient in absorbing the message. Someone reading Aristotle or watching *Citizen Kane* is more or less passively taking in what the hot medium bombards the eye with, while the *Gilligan’s Island* audience finds its senses quickened (auditory

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The good news is that people have become so resistant to hard-sell advertisement (dodging TV commercials with their DVRs, ignoring or mocking how ad agencies target their desires or insecurities) that they have lost influence

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At perhaps its most sophisticated level, cool advertising will cultivate the (potential) consumer's involvement almost as an end in itself
.....

and tactile in particular, according to McLuhan) by a need to compensate for the cool medium's low level of visual stimulation.

That makes as much sense as any of the sage of Toronto's other ideas, which is to say not a hell of a lot. Nonetheless, Serazio gets as much value out of the distinction as seems humanly possible by adapting it to the contrast between the old-school "hot" ad campaign – with its clear, strong message that you should buy Acme brand whatchamacallits, and here's why – and a variety of newer, "cooler" approaches that are more seductive, self-effacing, or canny about dealing with widespread cynicism about corporate hype.

A cool ad campaign, when successful, does not simply persuade people to buy something but creates a kind of spontaneous, intimate involvement with the campaign itself. The consumer's agency is always stressed. ("Agency" in the sense of capacity to act, rather than where "Mad Men" do their business.) The Dorito's "Fight for the Flavor" campaign of the mid-'00s empowered the chip-gobbling public to determine which of two new flavors, Smokin' Cheddar BBQ or Wild White Nacho, would remain on the shelves and which would be pulled. Bloggers and tweeters are encouraged to express their authentic, unscripted enthusiasm. "Buzz agents" are given free samples of a product, chat it up with their friends, then report back how the discussions went. (With word-of-mouth campaigns, the most important is authenticity. Fake that and you've got it made.)

And at perhaps its most sophisticated level, cool advertising will cultivate the (potential) consumer's involvement almost as an end in itself – for example, by providing an opportunity to control the behavior of a man in a chicken suit known as Subservient Chicken.

Let us return to the horrible fascination of Subservient Chicken in due course. But first, theory.

Foucault plus Gramsci equals about a

third of the stuff published in cultural studies – of which "critical industry media studies," the subspecialty into which Serazio's book falls, is a part. The conceptual work in *Your Ad Here* is done with Foucault's line of power tools, in particular his considerations on governance, while Gramsci seems along mostly to keep him company.

Advertising as governance sounds counterintuitive, given the connotation of state power it elicits, but in Foucault's work "government" refers to processes of guidance and control that may be more or less distant from the state's institutions. The teacher governs a class (or tries) and a boss governs the workplace.

Over all, "management" seems like a more suitable term for most non-state modes of governance, and it has the advantage of foregrounding what Serazio wants to stress: Foucault's point is that governance doesn't mean giving orders and enforcing obedience but rather "structuring the possible field of action of others" in order "to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such-and-such ends may be achieved."

Governance (management) in this sense is a kind of effective persuasion of the governed party (the student, the fry cook, etc.) to exercise his or her agency to perform the necessary functions of the institution (school, fast-food place) without being subjected to constant external pressure. Insofar as governance is an art or a science, it is through recognizing and anticipating resistance, and preventing or containing disruption. (Some remarks by Gramsci on hegemony and resistance also apply here, but really just barely.)

"Cool sell" advertising counts as governance, in Serazio's book, because it tries to neutralise public fatigue from advertisement overload – so that we're still incited to spend money and think well of a brand. That's the common denominator of viral marketing, crowdsourced publicity campaigns, plebiscites on snack-food availabil-

ity, and so on.

It occasionally sounds like Serazio is criticizing these methods as manipulative, but I suspect that's actually high praise, like when one horror fan tells another that a torture scene in "Hostel" gave him nightmares.

Which brings us back, as promised, to Subservient Chicken, whose role in promoting the Burger King menu remains oblique at best. But he undeniably garnered an enormous amount of attention – 20 million distinct viewers generating half a billion hits. "By filming hundreds of video clips of a man in a chicken suit," the author says, "and writing code for a database of terms that would respond to keyword commands for the Chicken to perform those videotaped

actions, [the advertising agency] concocted something that was, its own words, 'so creepy, weird and well-executed that many people who visited... thought they were actually controlling this person in a chicken suit in real life.' "

I can't help feeling this calls for more extensive Foucauldian analysis, but I won't be sticking around to see how that turns out. **CT**

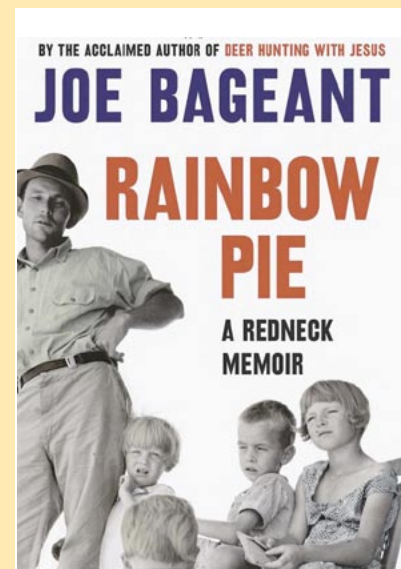
Scott McLemee is the Intellectual Affairs columnist for Inside Higher Ed – <http://insidehighered.com> – where this article originally appeared – find it at <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2013/07/17/review-michael-serazio-your-ad-here-cool-sell-guerrilla-marketing#ixzz2b1iue7ZD>

.....
Many people who visited... thought they were actually controlling this person in a chicken suit in real life

JOE BAGEANT Rainbow Pie: A Redneck Memoir

Bageant writes about the rural white underclass, not as an anthropological study of an exotic tribe, but as his very own people. Set between 1950 and 1963, combining personal recollections, family stories, and historical analysis, this book leans on Maw, Pap, Ony Mae, and other members of this dirt poor Scots-Irish family to chronicle the often heartbreaking postwar journey of 22 million rural Americans moving from their small subsistence farms into the cities, where they became the foundation of a permanent white underclass.

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I have a nightmare

Trevor Grundy wonders what Martin Luther King might have to say about the world fifty years after his famous speech

.....
"Black people are still bearing the brunt of the villainy but today the prism through which we must view that struggle is not just race, it is gender, it is human rights, it is the growth of powerful elites and populist right-wing movements that seem to undermine American democracy"
.....

Fifty years after a speech that helped change the face of racial segregation in the USA and colonialism in Africa, nightmares loom as large as dreams in the homelands of the holy trinity of non-violence, Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela.

It's all so different now, we're told.

On the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King's historic "I have a dream" speech in Washington DC on August 28, 1963 America has a black president and codified racial discrimination has disappeared.

But as economic stagnation throttles the life out of the poorest people in the world's richest nation, anger swells up.

Dreams turn into nightmares.

Young people in America and other parts of the world are hungry for change, writes entertainer and civil rights activist Harry Belafonte in London's *Observer*.

He says: "I can feel it is in the air when I speak at colleges all over America. People have once again had enough. Americans are opening their eyes to those in America who work tenaciously to keep America in this state of aggression and hostility and obsession with being number one. There is a cruelty about American politics and society that dumbfounds me."

And at a time when the black working class is forced to run in order to stay in the same place in several disintegrating US cit-

ies - Detroit the worst - the singer who bewitched the world with *Island in the Sun*, said, "The truth is that right now, we are more villainous than we are righteous. Black people are still bearing the brunt of the villainy but today the prism through which we must view that struggle is not just race, it is gender, it is human rights, it is the growth of powerful elites and populist right-wing movements that seem to undermine American democracy while peddling their version of America the great."

Harry Belafonte was with a number of other celebrities the day Martin Luther King stunned the world with his speech about memories, hopes and dreams. They included Sammy Davis Jr, Charlton Heston, Sidney Poitier, Burt Lancaster and Marlon Brando and 250,000 unknown Americans.

After the speech, President Kennedy said, "It was good. Damned good." The FBI's assistant director of domestic intelligence William Sullivan was also impressed. "We must mark King down now as the most dangerous Negro of the future of this nation," he said.

King was shot dead in April 1968.

But on August 28, 1963 not all Americans appreciated being told to dream.

Anne Moody, a black activist who made the trip to Washington DC from Mississippi, recalled - "I sat on the grass and listened to the speakers, to discover we had dream-

ers instead of leaders leading us. Just about every one of them up there was dreaming. Martin Luther King went on talking about his dream and I sat there thinking that in Canton we never had time to sleep, much less dream.”

Harry Belafonte believes today that King’s speech changed Africa as well as America.

After the war, when so many black Americans and Africans fought against Hitler, men and women returned home to find they were second, third, fourth class citizens.

Says Belafonte: “Black people were denied their basic rights. Then we looked around us and saw that England, Belgium and France, the great colonisers, were hanging onto their colonies.”

Ten years ago, the Indian civil rights activist Arundhati Roy (author of *The God of Small Things*) recalled the 40th anniversary of King’s speech.

She pointed out that the new elites of America, India and Africa use the names of King, Gandhi and Mandela as “mascots” to cloak their greed. In an article called “When the saints go marching out,” she asked, “Had he been alive today, would he have chosen to stay warm in his undisputed place in the pantheon of Great Americans? Or would he have stepped off his pedestal, shrugged off the empty hosannas and walked out onto the streets to rally his people once more?”

What might he have said about . . . ?

Gandhi’s India – “I have a nightmare that impoverished Indians will never rise up (peacefully, of course) and equalise the three million householders with excess of

\$100,000 investable funds, while one in four Indians goes to bed hungry or starving and when every second child in the land is underweight.”

His own America – “I have a nightmare that America’s first black president will never stop pandering to right-wing extremists in Israel, never stop using drones to attack (sometimes civilian) targets in the Middle East and Afghanistan and never have the guts or political acumen to stop supermarkets and grocery firms selling assault weapons to de-ranked members of the American public.

Mandela’s Africa – “I have a nightmare that the sycophantic and increasingly corrupt elite running the African National Congress (ANC) will never stop using the name Nelson Mandela as a blind to cover their own nefarious business activities which have turned once sincere and dedicated men and women into multi billionaires while most South Africans aren’t much better off than they were during the worst days of apartheid.”

“I have a nightmare.” Not a bad title for a speech and one that you might care to write or even deliver one day in your own less than dream-fulfilled part of the world. **CT**

Trevor Grundy is a British journalist who lived and worked in Africa from 1966-1996. He is the author of “Memoir of a Fascist Childhood,” published by William Heinemann, 1998 and Arrow Books, London, 1999. An excerpt from the book was published as a supplement to ColdType Issue 50

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The new elites of America, India and Africa use the names of King, Gandhi and Mandela as “mascots” to cloak their greed

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Torture and superpowers

Sherwood Ross compares the prison systems in the US, China and Russia and finds them remarkably similar in their inhumanity

.....
Cut off from every normal human interaction, prisoners describe their lockdown as being “buried alive”
.....

The three most powerful nations all operate prison systems that are places of sadism, sickness, and madness unfit for human habitation, much less human reformation.

They also lead the world with astonishing rates of imprisonment far higher than in other industrialised nations. “The US incarceration rate of 737 per 100,000 people is the (world’s) highest, followed by 611 in Russia,” Reuters reports. Compare the above rates with the following nations: Spain, 149; Canada, 114; Australia, 103; The Netherlands, 82; Germany, 80; Norway, 71; Denmark, 68; Sweden, 67; Finland, 60; and Japan, 54.

America has 2.3 million souls behind bars; China ranks second with 1.5 million, and Russia places third with 870,000 – a figure Deputy Justice Minister Yury Kalinin says actually is closer to 2 million. Whatever, all three inflict gruesome tortures on their prisoners.

To begin with, one permanent misery that equals torture is overcrowding. California is fighting a US Supreme Court order to slash a prison population 46% over capacity: 119,000 human beings stuffed into 33 prisons. It’s a story repeated over and again nationally – in Alabama, Illinois, ad nauseam.

“We send more people to prison, for more different offenses, for longer periods of time

than anybody else,” Ryan King of The Sentencing Project, told Reuters. Among the worst off are those isolated in California’s Pelican Bay “supermax,” locked into 11 x 7 foot windowless concrete cells for nearly 23 hours a day, without sunlight, fresh air, or human touch, according to a recent letter of appeal to Gov. Jerry Brown to end solitary.

.....
“Buried alive”

Cut off from every normal human interaction, prisoners describe their lockdown as being “buried alive.” These conditions of torture will not make anyone safer, or prepare men for release, the letter says. Prominent psychiatrists say if the prisoners are not mad when they enter isolation, they frequently go crazy in isolation and are incapable of clear thinking when released to society.

“We stand together against these shameful practices and consider them extensions of the same inhumanity practiced at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay,” the letter reads. “In defense of the US Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we, the undersigned, call on Governor Jerry Brown to end this torture at Pelican Bay and all California Prisons immediately.”

Among the signatories is Right Reverend Joseph Jon Bruno, DD., of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles; journalist Gloria

Steinem; the ACLU's Deputy Legal Director Vanita Gupta; *Tikkun* magazine founder Rabbi Michael Lerner; Michael Ratner, President Emeritus of the Center for Constitutional Rights and MIT Professor Noam Chomsky. America is the world leader in the use of solitary confinement, what one warden called "a clean version of hell." Eighty thousand inmates are suffering this way nationally.

Pelican Bay may be compared with Russia's notorious Kresty prison, St. Petersburg, built to hold 3,300, but containing 10,000. In a report on overcrowding, Radio Free Europe said the average inmate there has a living space smaller than a coffin – about 60 square centimeters – and that in 1998 alone 56 inmates died of asphyxiation.

China's prisons are just as bad. Liao Yiwu, the famed Chinese poet, describes very precisely "what it is like to be in constant fear, to live in a cramped cell with so many other men that there is barely room to lie down, and to be starved of proper food, and sex," writes Ian Buruma about him in the July 1 issue of the *New Yorker*. The poet, who was beaten during his incarceration with an electric baton, recalled, "I screamed and then whimpered in pain like a dog." Yiwu twice attempted suicide.

.....
Torture prisons

Torture is common in the prisons of all three countries. Human rights activist Lev Ponomaryov, reports NPR, says there are "dozens of torture prisons across Russia, where over the past eight years conditions have become so bad that some prisoners are driven to suicide. "They're told they're not human. They're punished for trying to defend their dignity. The old Soviet term for that was turning people into 'Gulag camp dust,'" Ponomaryov stated. In China, prisoners are forced to inform on their fellows and those who do not are beaten, some of them beaten to death, the *New Yorker* article asserted.

In America, where roughly 90,000-plus juveniles, half of them 16 or under, are confined in juvenile residence and 100,000 more in adult prisons, sexual abuse is also commonplace, according to the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission Report (PRECR) of June, 2009. But this seemingly is true in many other jails as well. Air Force veteran Tom Cahill recalled being gang-raped and beaten by the inmates while spending just one night in a San Antonio, Tex., jail. "I've been hospitalised more times than I can count and I didn't pay for those hospitalisations; the taxpayers paid," Cahill said. Over the years, the Veteran's Administration has shelled out \$200,000 in connection with that one rape. And *The Long Term View* (Vol.7, #2), published by the Massachusetts School of Law at Andover, quotes former prisoner Necole Brown recalling, "I continue to contend with flashbacks of what this correctional officer did to me and the guilt, shame, and rage that comes with having been sexually violated for so many years."

While many prisoners fear to reveal the beatings and rapes they have endured, a survey by the federal Bureau of Justice in 2007 estimated that 60,500 state and federal prisoners were sexually abused that year, most of the abuse, incredibly, coming at the hands of staff, not from other prisoners.

What's more, officials in all three countries view inmates as slave labourers and force them to work for little or nothing. Chinese Poet Yiwu, confined for his poem "Massacre," said, "prison personnel...were quick to take advantage of the free labour to fatten their wallets." In his prison, inmates spent at least 10 hours a day putting together medicine packets and those who resisted the work could be beaten up and thrown into "dark cells" just big enough to crawl into and lie down. Yiwu told of tortures and humiliations too nauseating to be cited in this article.

While the US has been critical of China's forced-labour policies, it has its own pool

.....
Air Force veteran Tom Cahill recalled being gang-raped and beaten by the inmates while spending just one night in a San Antonio jail
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GRUESOME LEGACY

The prison systems of the three nations have much in common: they are all inhumane; they all employ torture; they all exhibit little or no regard for human life; and they all spotlight the medieval mind-set and contemporary totalitarian practices of the societies that created them

of prison slaves perspiring what the Russians call “golden sweat.” History professors Steve Fraser, of Columbia University, N.Y., and Joshua Freeman, of Queens College, N.Y., write for TomDispatch that, “All told, nearly a million (US) prisoners are now making office furniture, working in call centers, fabricating body armor, taking hotel reservations, working in slaughterhouses, or manufacturing textiles, shoes, and clothing, while getting paid somewhere between 93 cents and \$4.73 per day.”

What began in the 1970s as an end run around the laws prohibiting convict leasing by private interests has now become an industrial sector in its own right, employing more people than any Fortune 500 corporation and operating in 37 states, the historians contend.

Since a large percentage of the victims employed at this labour are African-Americans, one wonders why it isn’t banned under apartheid statutes.

As Adam Gopnik pointed out in the *New Yorker* (Jan. 30, 2012): “More than half of all black men without a high-school diploma go to prison at some time in their lives. Mass incarceration on a scale almost unexampled in human history is a fundamental fact of our country today – perhaps the fundamental fact, as slavery was the fundamental fact of 1850.

In truth, there are more black men in the grip of the criminal-justice system – in prison, on probation, or on parole – than were in slavery then. Overall, there are now more people under “correctional supervision” in America – more than six million –

than were in the Gulag Archipelago under Stalin at its height. That city of the confined and the controlled, Lockuptown, is now the second largest in the United States.”

The most insidious crimes of all that governments commit against their prisoners is the Chinese practice of executing them in order to harvest their body organs – hearts, livers, corneas, etc. According to a report by Point Park News Service, Pittsburgh, Pa., Dr. Jianchao Xu, an assistant professor of nephrology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, N.Y., says independent studies reveal at least 30,000 Chinese Falun Gong practitioners have been killed for this purpose. “Millions are put into labour camps,” said Yang, “and they’re subjected to rape, torture, and, of course, organ harvesting,” adds Dr. Jingduan Yang, of Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting. In all three countries, medical care reflects the official view of prisoners: meaning that it ranges from poor to non-existent. Stories still emerge of American prisoners who die waiting for a doctor to see them.

The prison systems of the three nations have much in common: they are all inhumane; they all employ torture; they all exhibit little or no regard for human life; and they all spotlight the medieval mind-set and contemporary totalitarian practices of the societies that created them. **CT**

Sherwood Ross is a Miami, Florida-based PR consultant who formerly reported for the Chicago Daily News and worked as a wire service columnist. Reach him at sherwood.ross@gmail.com

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No peace in the Borderlands

‘Stand Your Ground’, border policing and the mass production of corpses of color, by **Murphy Woodhouse**

Trayvon Martin has been on my mind, and because he’s been on my mind, José Antonio Elena Rodríguez has too. Both were young, unarmed boys of color (17 and 16 years old, respectively) gunned down in 2012 – Trayvon by neighborhood watch volunteer-cum-vigilante George Zimmerman on February 26 in Sanford, Florida, and José Antonio by at least one unnamed Border Patrol (BP) agent on October 10 in Nogales, Sonora.

The connection between Trayvon and José Antonio is one that many folks can’t help but make here in Southern Arizona, but one that is not being made as often outside the borderlands for a number of reasons.

In some places, it is cops and vigilantes that pull triggers with impunity, but in the borderlands, in Nogales, Ciudad Juarez, San Diego, Douglas and many other communities, it is the Border Patrol as well. However, behind the security- and enforcement-centric frames that dominate what little coverage there is of the border, stories like that of José and other victims of BP violence can get lost or distorted. If, as many politicians and officials would have us believe, the border is a war zone, isn’t José Antonio just collateral damage, a tragic price to pay for a “secure” border?

The Zimmerman exoneration shocked millions in this country by revealing that

Florida state law, at the very least, provides a legal loophole for vigilante violence against people of color. What I want to show here is that there is a comparably terrifying situation in the borderlands, one in which state violence against migrants and Mexican nationals like José Antonio is carried out with almost total impunity and governmental nontransparency.

This is not an effort to direct attention away from Trayvon and toward José Antonio and the Border Patrol, to put the two tragedies into competition for attention. It is, rather, an attempt to link the two deaths, to show that they are both a part of the bigger picture of white supremacy and racialised control.

Throwing rocks

Because the shooting of José Antonio has not received as much national attention, a brief summary of the events that evening is in order. According to the US Border Patrol, the agents involved responded to a report of suspected smuggling around 11:30 pm on Oct. 10. Shortly after arriving, Border Patrol officials claim that assailants on the other side of the wall began throwing rocks at its agents.

After issuing repeated commands to stop, one agent opened fire into Mexico at the alleged rock-throwers. Two Nogales, Arizona,

They are both a part of the bigger picture of white supremacy and racialised control

.....
Regardless of the exact circumstances of either tragedy, both Trayvon and José Antonio were walking in places where they had every right to be at the time of their deaths, but were nevertheless viewed as a threat, dehumanised by the person who ended their lives
.....

Police Department officers on the scene throughout the incident, however, did not report that any BP agent issued a warning before opening fire.

Many people question the official story, with most focusing on the disproportional-ity of rocks and bullets and on the geogra-phy at the site of the shooting: Unlike most parts of the border wall just west of down-town Nogales, the section of wall near the shooting is on top of a 15- to 20-foot cliff, and its base is covered in dense brush, all of which makes seriously injuring agents on the other side difficult, if not impossible.

José Antonio’s family disputes Border Pa-trol’s claim that he was involved in the rock throwing or smuggling, contending instead that he was simply walking by on his way to help his brother out at the end of a con-venience store shift, as he had done many times before.

But regardless of the exact circumstances of either tragedy, both Trayvon and José Antonio were walking in places where they had every right to be at the time of their deaths, but were nevertheless viewed as a threat, dehumanised by the person who ended their lives: José Antonio, a Mexican citizen, was on Mexican soil, four blocks from his house and near the border wall on Calle In-ternacional in Nogales, Sonora, while Tray- von was on his way back to where he was staying in a gated community in Sanford, Florida. Both are stories of race and embod-ied suspiciousness, anecdotes of a decidedly non-post-racial present in which the color of one’s skin can literally be a matter of life and death.

To instinctively view folks crossing the border – or just on the other side of it – as dangerous, was a necessary first step along the way toward shooting José, or any of the countless others who have found them- selves on the wrong side of an agent’s gun. Similarly, it was Zimmerman’s immediate identification of Trayvon as a threat, the knee-jerk equation of youth and blackness with criminality, that started the chain of

events that ended with his senseless death.

I’m in no position to write with authority about the shooting of Trayvon Martin, a task which plenty of others are doing admirably well. But I do know the case of José Antonio well, and I believe it is important to spark conversations about the ways in which the two cases are similar and the illuminating ways in which they diverge.

At the heart of both tragedies is anxiety and insecurity. George Zimmerman, as ex- tensively laid out in a report by the Miami Herald, was obsessed with the protection of his gated community and the threats he felt that young men, often of color, posed to it. Similarly, José Antonio was walking in a place that, at least in the eyes of many Bor- der Patrol agents, is seething with threats: armed narcos, violent migrants, corrupt cops, even terrorists.

This is despite the fact that armed con- frontations are rare and no member of any terrorist group has ever been apprehended on the border.

I’ve spoken with many agents doing line- watch, their vehicles parked and idling, the imposing wall and brutal scrublands on both sides almost equally still. The strange fusion of boredom and anxiety is a hallmark of agent demeanor, at least that of many agents with whom I’ve spoken on the job.

.....
Cartel bullet

They warn me that if I insist on running or walking along the wall, I risk being picked off by a cartel bullet or knifed by a desper- ate, drug-addled smuggler. Almost a third are veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. Many more think of northern Mexico as a war zone, not far removed from the battlefields from which they may have just returned, and they find it difficult to understand why I would ever want to go there, let alone so often.

They seem, quite sincerely, to expect to find themselves in a firefight at any moment with the lawless, dark-skinned hordes they



Araceli Rodriguez, mother of José Antonio Elena Rodríguez, shares condolences across the border wall with Guadalupe Guerrero, mother of Carlos LaMadrid – a 19-year-old US citizen shot in the back three times by a US Border Patrol agent in May 2011 – during a binational protest march, 2 November 2012. (Photo: Murphy Joseph Woodhouse)

imagine to be on the other side, lurking, waiting. In my experience, these beliefs are widespread among agents, even though patrolling the border is among the safest law enforcement jobs in America.

After years of massive hiring and recruitment of veterans, an agent with many years of experience told me that they have seen BP culture change radically since they joined more than a decade ago.

“They have a totally different military attitude,” the agent said of many new recruits. “You throw in a little racism and guns, and that’s a bad mix.”

The agent went on to say that, “a lot of agents have very ethnocentric views. They’re always making fun of Mexico and

Mexicans. How do you have people rethink? How do you change someone’s philosophy about Latin America?” the agent asked. “All the guys think the answer is force. It’s a gun culture. No one wants to learn Spanish better. No one wants to be better informed about Latin America.”

.....
Vigilante laws

Both tragedies also happened against a backdrop of laws that sanction vigilante violence or lax agency protocol. Florida, like at least 19 other states, has a so-called “stand your ground” law that says that a resident who is “not engaged in unlawful activity . . . has no duty to retreat and has the right

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Both tragedies also happened against a backdrop of laws that sanction vigilante violence or lax agency protocol
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Since 2010, agents have shot and killed at least 20 people, one of whom was fellow agent Nicholas Ivie and seven of whom were 20 years old or younger
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to stand his or her ground and meet force with force, including deadly force if he or she reasonably believes it is necessary to do so to prevent death or great bodily harm to himself or herself or another, or to prevent the commission of a forcible felony.”

While Trayvon would likely still be dead without Florida’s Stand Your Ground law, it is hard to imagine Zimmerman’s exoneration without it. In a brilliant recent column responding to his acquittal, legal analyst Andrew Cohen argues that Zimmerman received, in the narrowest sense, a “fair trial” because the strict rules that govern criminal trials “did not allow jurors to deliberate over the fairness of Florida’s outlandishly broad self-defense laws.”

“What the verdict says, to the astonishment of tens of millions of us,” he writes “is that you can go looking for trouble in Florida, with a gun and a great deal of racial bias, and you can find that trouble, and you can act upon that trouble in a way that leaves a young man dead, and none of it guarantees that you will be convicted of a crime.”

In short, the jury, however racist they may or may not have been, was not entirely to blame. They were simply asked to evaluate if Zimmerman acted within the bounds of state law. The primary culprit was the madness of the law, the letter of which Zimmerman may indeed have been following. However, it is hard to believe that Trayvon’s race was not implicated in the apparent ease with which Trayvon was constructed as the aggressor, in the struggle that preceded his death, to the jury.

According to the 2004 Department of Homeland Security Interim Use of Force Policy, “[L]aw enforcement officers and agents of the Department of Homeland Security may use deadly force only when necessary, that is, when the officer has a reasonable belief that the subject of such force poses an imminent danger of death or serious physical injury to the officer or to another person.”

While many law enforcement agencies have similar rules of engagement, practically applied, the policy has been a Stand Your Ground law for Border Patrol agents, essentially guaranteeing impunity when they shoot and kill people.

“It errs on the side of the agent and agency,” the agent quoted above told me.

Talking through a hypothetical BP shooting, the agent explained that “all [the agent] has to say is this, and it has to be backed up by a set of circumstances: If he says in his report, ‘I feared for my life or I perceived a threat that might endanger the safety of others,’ if he articulates it in that way, it’s very difficult to second guess that agent. Even the lawyers in court will have a hard time,” the agent said. “Even when it’s not a just shoot, it comes out as just because of the circumstances.”

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At least 20 killed

Since 2010, agents have shot and killed at least 20 people, one of whom was fellow agent Nicholas Ivie and seven of whom were 20 years old or younger. I say “at least” for this reason: Jim Calle, a lawyer for the union local representing Tucson Sector agents, was quoted in an outstanding *Arizona Daily Star* investigation into these shootings saying that “[T]here are times when the public never learns about the shooting, never mind the process.” For example, US Customs and Border Patrol released no information whatsoever on the December 2, 2012, fatal shooting of 19-year-old Guatemalan national Margarito Lopez Morelos until a reporter contacted the agency after receiving an anonymous tip about the incident.

Agents often justify these shootings by claiming that migrants and other victims presented them with potentially lethal threats, often by throwing, or threatening to throw, rocks.

Here we see another parallel with Trayvon. After their deaths, both Border Patrol

and Zimmerman’s defense had to construct, however tenuously, José Antonio, allegedly armed with rocks, and Trayvon, allegedly armed with a sidewalk, as deadly threats deserving of deadly force. This is why historian Robin D. G. Kelley, like many other commentators, argues that “it was Trayvon Martin, not George Zimmerman, who was put on trial.”

BP agents have justified eight of the 20 known shooting deaths since 2010 by saying they were attacked with rocks and most of the reported assaults against agents annually are with rocks, not AK-47s, as their rhetoric might lead you to believe. No agent has ever been killed by a rock.

Unlike Zimmerman, agents who shoot and kill people can rest reasonably assured that they will never face a criminal trial. The last time an agent was criminally prosecuted for shooting a migrant was in 2008 when Cochise County Attorney Ed Rheinheimer brought second-degree murder charges against Nicholas Corbett, who shot and killed 20-year-old Francisco Javier Dominguez-Rivera at point-blank range in January of 2007. Two trials and two hung juries later, Rheinheimer dropped the case.

In the absence of criminal charges, victims’ families often pursue civil cases against agents, but these have a spotty track record of success. Agents can reasonably expect to avoid even agency sanction. Calle, quoted in the story mentioned above, said that it is “exceedingly rare that an agent faces disciplinary consequences for their conduct.” Union and agency officials, of course, claim that this is because shootings are almost always justified and within agency use-of-force parameters.

However, consistent, even award-winning, nontransparency from BP about agent-involved shootings and investigations into them, coupled with well-documented and statistically irrefutable reports of systemic physical and verbal abuse of migrants, leaves many to wonder what the Border Patrol is hiding.

Here we get into some of the key differences between the Trayvon and José Antonio cases. As flawed as it was, Trayvon’s death resulted in a trial while José Antonio’s shooter will almost certainly never face a jury. Zimmerman’s trial, as unlikely as a conviction was, did provoke a sustained and ongoing national conversation about race, as well as the woeful inadequacies and frequently racist outcomes of our criminal justice system.

In the absence of a high-profile trial, however, José Antonio and other victims of Border Patrol violence have been easier to forget, especially beyond the borderlands, where coverage of these deaths has been thin and sporadic. Beyond that, the media’s construction of Mexico and the borderlands as lawless, peripheral places has helped feed widespread misunderstanding and normalisation of the tragedies that happen there.

In the dark

But it’s not just the absence of a trial and critical coverage: José Antonio’s family doesn’t even know the name of the agent who killed him or whether the agent is still working for Border Patrol, nor have US officials investigating the shooting ever spoken with them about where the case stands. They are entirely in the dark. When Tucson or Pima County law enforcement officers shoot someone, the officer’s name is released and the investigation into the shooting is public.

The Border Patrol, however, keeps the names of agents involved in shootings secret. The only reason the family of 2011 Border Patrol victim Carlos Lamadrid knows the name of the shooter is because they sued the federal government for it so that they, in turn, could sue the agent for their loved one’s death.

I know José Antonio’s grandmother Taide and mother Araceli, and they have told me on numerous occasions that this information blackout is exasperating. “It’s what

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As long as young black men are instinctively viewed as threats, there will be more Trayvons, and as long as the border is patrolled and constructed as a war zone, there will be more José Antonios
.....

hurts the most,” Taide was recently quoted saying. Araceli’s route to work sometimes takes her past where her son was gunned down and along the border fence to a bus stop where BP agents are often parked nearby, on the other side.

She sometimes wonders if she’s looking at the person who took her son’s life.

José Antonio’s case, like countless cases before it, is fading in prominence. These border tragedies seem to happen, and then disappear into the opaque bowels of massive federal bureaucracies, shielded from scrutiny and informed public debate. However, while Comprehensive Immigration Reform’s (CIR) fate is uncertain, it is especially important now to keep the memory of these young men alive, to reflect on these tragedies and what reform would mean for border residents like José Antonio.

The US Senate’s version of CIR includes a rough doubling of Border Patrol presence on the southern border, from approximately 19,000 today to at least 38,000 over the next 10 years. Without dramatic changes in agency use of force policy and the development of meaningful mechanisms to transparently investigate and punish agents who violate the human rights of migrants, there is every reason to believe that this “border surge” will result in a dramatic increase in agent-involved shootings.

The bill does require a review of DHS use of force policy, but there are serious doubts about whether any changes of substance will result. Reform would also mean the rapid hiring of agents, a process that has been criticised in the past for filling agency ranks with poorly trained and screened people of questionable character, as well as increasing the frequency of agents shooting migrants.

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Toxi, militarised environment

But even with a reworked use-of-force policy and investigations with teeth, there is a more fundamental problem with border policing: that it takes place within such a

toxic, militarised, and racist rhetorical environment, one in which it is common sense, despite being completely mad, to believe that most people coming across the border represent a threat to agents and the nation. It was in this context that José Antonio, a likely-unarmed 16-year-old, was transformed into a menace deserving of up to 11 bullets in the back. It was in an analogous context that Trayvon Martin, in Zimmerman’s estimation, deserved a single bullet through the chest. As Robin D. G. Kelley has pointed out, “our black and brown children must prove their innocence every day.”

But on the evenings they were killed, neither Trayvon nor José Antonio got the chance.

As long as young black men are instinctively viewed as threats, there will be more Trayvons, and as long as the border is patrolled and constructed as a war zone, there will be more José Antonios.

Stand Your Ground laws are indeed a clear and present danger to young men of color, and all people to a lesser degree, just as CIR, as it now stands, is an existential threat to migrants and the millions of people who call the US/Mexico borderlands their home. But ultimately, it is the history and reality of racism, white supremacy and xenophobia that make these laws and legislative efforts deadly. **CT**

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***Murphy Woodhouse** is an MA student in the University of Arizona’s Center for Latin American Studies. His research interests include migration, deportation, US immigration enforcement and the Mexican drug war. He has spent a lot of time in Mexico, most recently covering the growing citizens’ movement against the drug war in Mexico. His work has been published in La Jornada, TheNation.com, Counterpunch, the Americas Program, Free Speech Radio News, the Missoulian and the Santiago Times. This essay is copyright, Truthout.org. and reprinted with permission” <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/17949>*

Unfit to print

Suddenly, all self-respecting billionaires need to own at least one newspaper, say **Emily Schwartz Greco & William A. Collins**

Buying islands and Picassos is out. Buying newspapers is in. We're not talking about subscriptions here. All self-respecting billionaires should own at least one newspaper, preferably a big one.

Within a single week, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos agreed to spend \$250 million to buy the *Washington Post* from the Graham family and Red Sox owner John W. Henry declared his intention to acquire The Boston Globe from The New York Times Co. for \$70 million.

Earlier this summer, BH Media, the newspaper division of billionaire Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway outfit, said it was snapping up the *Press of Atlantic City* for an undisclosed sum. BH Media already owned dozens of newspapers, including the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and the *Omaha World-Herald*.

Meanwhile, the arch-conservative billionaire brothers David and Charles Koch are still believed to be angling for the *Los Angeles Times* over the loud objections of the newspaper's own staff. If that doesn't pan out, maybe the less conservative billionaire Eli Broad – a supporter of both stem cell research and charter schools – will.

What are these moguls after? How did newspapers become status symbols in the Internet age?

It can't be profit margins or market growth. The *Washington Post* says its oper-

ating revenue plunged 44 percent over the past six years. And its print circulation contracted by 7 percent during the first half of this year alone.

Will Bezos, who says he only reads the digital editions of newspapers, use the *Post* to benefit Amazon? He denies it.

"The paper's duty will remain to its readers and not to the private interests of its owners," Bezos said on the day his media splurge went public. "We will continue to follow the truth wherever it leads."

Sticking with the status quo under new ownership probably beats what would happen if the Koch brothers bought the *Post* and handed editorial control over to the John Birch Society. But it's hard to buy the notion that the major media is totally smitten with a search for the truth.

The major mainstream media are card-carrying members of the Brotherhood of Secrecy. Like most TV, cable, and radio networks, big US newspapers generally belong to a small array of companies whose profits depend heavily on advertisers and the stock market. These aren't institutions noted for heartfelt concern over fairness or truth. And fairness and truth aren't usually the keys to how billionaires make their fortunes either.

Sure, there are plenty of brave independent journalists who manage to do their work in spite of the corporate menace. But neither the government nor Wall Street has to worry much about the mainstream press

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The arch-conservative billionaire brothers David and Charles Koch are still believed to be angling for the *Los Angeles Times* over the loud objections of the newspaper's own staff

FIT TO PRINT?

How loyal should the media remain to a security apparatus that snoops on them too?

joining their crusade.

Warren Buffett appears to belong to a special breed of newspaper-buying billionaire. In 1977, long before his ongoing newspaper-purchasing spree, he acquired *The Buffalo News*. Even before that, he bought the *Omaha Sun*, a weekly newspaper that won a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting under his wing. Prior to the Bezos buy-out, Buffett was the largest investor in *The Washington Post Co.*

But in general, it's hard to deny that the mainstream press is owned and run by the rich, largely for their own comfort.

Coverage can suffer as a result of the marriage of media and wealth. Take Social Security: News coverage and commentary both start from the corporate premise that benefits must be cut, while advocates who stress the importance of closing tax loopholes that benefit the wealthy are mostly

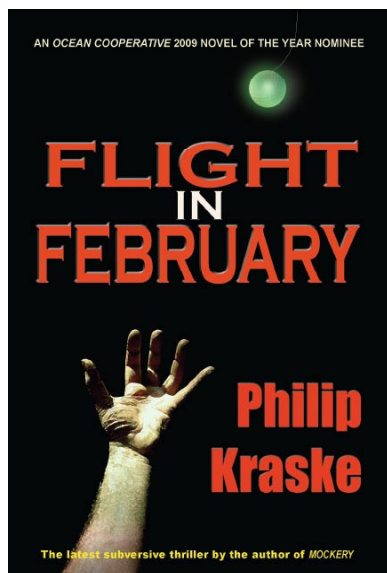
left out of the conversation.

Shortly before whistleblower Edward Snowden divulged that the National Security Agency is spying on everyone's phone calls and emails, the media discovered that it's facing unprecedented scrutiny. This creates a dilemma: How loyal should the media remain to a security apparatus that snoops on them too? Unfortunately, the answer is probably plenty loyal. Even without a billionaire owner at the helm, money usually trumps principle. It's just too expensive to get entangled in the truth. **CT**

Emily Schwartz Greco is the managing editor of OtherWords – <http://otherwords.org> – a non-profit national editorial service run by the Institute for Policy Studies.

William A. Collins is a former state representative and a former mayor of Norwalk, Connecticut

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FLIGHT IN FEBRUARY

Resurrection men

De-extinction sounds like a great idea. But there's a problem most people have overlooked, writes **George Monbiot**

Like big kids everywhere, I would love to see it happen. The idea of resurrecting woolly mammoths fires the imagination on all cylinders. Last month, interest in this marvellous notion was reignited by Professor Ian Wilmut, the man who cloned Dolly the sheep, as he ruminated about how it might be done. The answer, in brief, is that it pushes at the very limits of plausibility, but there's a tiny chance that, within 50 years or so, it could just happen.

Even if this minute chance is realised, please don't mistake de-extinction (as the resurrection business is now widely known) for reviving lost faunas and the habitats they used. At best it will produce a public cabinet of curiosities, at worst new pets for billionaires. There's an obvious, fatal but widely-overlooked problem with de-extinction. The scarcely-credible task of resurrection has to be conducted not once but hundreds of times, in each case using material from a different, implausibly well-preserved specimen of the extinct beast. Otherwise the resulting population will not be genetically viable.

For a species to have a reasonable chance of survival, across decades and centuries, it needs a wide genetic base: composed of a minimum of several hundred individuals. The European bison, or wisent, is considered a great success story: it was almost

extinct a century ago; now there are 3,000. But it remains acutely vulnerable because the entire population has been bred from the 54 animals to which the species was reduced by 1927. The bison are plagued by the problems associated with inbreeding, and a single cattle disease could finish them off, as a small genetic spectrum is less likely than a large one to offer resistance.

Last week, the Born Free Foundation doused the excitement over the birth in Chester Zoo of two Sumatran tigers, a species that is critically endangered. It pointed out that the global population in captive breeding programmes is too small to be genetically viable: if tigers become extinct in the wild, soon afterwards they will become extinct in captivity.

Pure fantasy

So the double-page painting published by *National Geographic* in April, depicting tourists in safari vehicles photographing a herd of woolly mammoths roaming across the Siberian steppes, is pure fantasy: the animals it shows are mumbo-jumbos.

And that's a great shame. As experiments by the Russian scientist Sergei Zimov show, mammoths could play a key role in restoring the ecosystems that once supported them. Perhaps 15,000 years ago, hunters using small stone blades moved into the Sibe-

The scarcely-credible task of resurrection has to be conducted not once but hundreds of times, in each case using material from a different, implausibly well-preserved specimen of the extinct beast

WELCOME BACK

.....
Like the resurrection men, I dream of their return, and the ecological revival that might ensue. But it's not going to happen
.....

rian steppes. Their enhanced technologies allowed them wipe out the mammoths and most of the musk oxen, bison and horses that grazed there. As a result, the great Siberian grasslands turned to mossy tundra, and have remained that way ever since.

These species sustained their own habitats. They recycled the soil's nutrients through their dung. Their grazing made the grass more productive and prevented it from growing long enough to kill itself. Long grass in Siberia flops over and insulates the soil, which then becomes too cold and wet for grass to grow. It's quickly replaced by moss, which is an excellent insulator, keeping the soil cold enough to prevent the grass from "returning. Zimov has shown that when large animals are brought back, their trampling quickly breaks up the fragile layer of moss and lichens, allowing the grass to dominate again within one or two years. The grazers in this habitat, in other words, are keystone species: animals that exert disproportionate impacts on their environment, creating the conditions which allow other species to live there.

Many of the large species we have lost performed such roles. They were essential to the survival of the complex ecosystems they dominated. Like the resurrection men, I dream of their return, and the ecological revival that might ensue. But it's not going to happen.

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Living and dying in zoos

The one or two specimens which even the most ambitious de-extinction programmes will struggle to produce will live and die in zoos. Or, perhaps, in the private collections of the exceedingly rich people who could fund their revival. The bragging rights, admittedly, would be incomparable. "Come and see my woolly mammoth" must be the world's greatest lost chat-up line (though it

could be horribly misinterpreted).

Lonely captivity is likely to be the fate of all the animals listed by the Long Now foundation's Revive and Restore programme as candidate species: passenger pigeons, ivory-billed woodpeckers, dodos, great auks, moas, elephant birds, quaggas, thylacines, Pyrenean ibex, Steller's sea cow, Yangtze river dolphins, mastodons, mammoths and sabretooth cats. De-extinction is already attracting plenty of money and expertise. Even if the necessary technologies somehow fall into place, sad and temporary exhibits for us to gawp at through the bars are the only likely outcome.

But before you despair, consider this: there are other means of restoring lost ecosystems, thousands of times easier than de-extinction, which could begin almost immediately. Restoring the Asian elephant to parts of its former range, for example (a project which, while the still-dead mammoth gets all the attention, is scarcely ever mentioned) would kickstart some key ecological processes.

As large parts of Europe are vacated by farmers, enough land is becoming available to make the revival of Europe's lost megafaunas possible. We could consider bringing back the lions, hyaenas and hippos which persist in Africa today, and introducing Asian elephants which, while not native here, are closely related to the great straight-tusked elephants that shaped our woodlands.

Does this project not have the same potential to inspire as attempts at de-extinction? And does it not possess the significant advantage that it can be done? **CT**

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George Monbiot's latest book is *Feral*: "Rewilding The Land, The Sea and Human Life." This essay originally appeared in *The Guardian* newspaper. More of his work appears at his web site <http://monbiot.com>

The abyss from which there is no return

John W. Whitehead looks at the pathology of a government that feels a need to treat its own people as dangerous criminals

“The National Security Agency’s capability at any time could be turned around on the American people, and no American would have any privacy left, such is the capability to monitor everything: telephone conversations, telegrams, it doesn’t matter. There would be no place to hide. If a dictator ever took over, the NSA could enable it to impose total tyranny, and there would be no way to fight back.” – Senator Frank Church (1975)

We now find ourselves operating in a strange paradigm where the government not only views the citizenry as suspects but treats them as suspects, as well. Thus, the news that the National Security Agency (NSA) is routinely operating outside of the law and overstepping its legal authority by carrying out surveillance on American citizens is not really much of a surprise. This is what happens when you give the government broad powers and allow government agencies to routinely sidestep the Constitution.

Indeed, as I document in my book, *A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State*, these newly revealed privacy violations by the NSA are just the tip of the iceberg. Consider that the government’s Utah Data Center (UDC), the central hub of the NSA’s vast spying infrastructure, will be

a clearinghouse and a depository for every imaginable kind of information – whether innocent or not, private or public – including communications, transactions and the like. In fact, anything and everything you’ve ever said or done, from the trivial to the damning – phone calls, Facebook posts, Twitter tweets, Google searches, emails, bookstore and grocery purchases, bank statements, commuter toll records, etc. – will be tracked, collected, catalogued and analyzed by the UDC’s supercomputers and teams of government agents.

By sifting through the detritus of your once-private life, the government will come to its own conclusions about who you are, where you fit in, and how best to deal with you should the need arise. Indeed, we are all becoming data collected in government files. Whether or not the surveillance is undertaken for “innocent” reasons, surveillance of all citizens, even the innocent sort, gradually poisons the soul of a nation. Surveillance limits personal options – denies freedom of choice – and increases the powers of those who are in a position to enjoy the fruits of this activity.

Past point of alarm

If this is the new “normal” in the United States, it is not friendly to freedom. Frankly, we are long past the point where we should

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By sifting through the detritus of your once-private life, the government will come to its own conclusions about who you are, where you fit in, and how best to deal with you should the need arise

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President Obama, whose administration has done more to undermine the Fourth Amendment's guarantee of privacy and bodily integrity than any prior administration
.....

be merely alarmed. These are no longer experiments on our freedoms. These are acts of aggression.

Senator Frank Church (D-Ida.), who served as the chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence that investigated the National Security Agency in the 1970s, understood only too well the dangers inherent in allowing the government to overstep its authority in the name of national security. Church recognised that such surveillance powers “at any time could be turned around on the American people, and no American would have any privacy left, such is the capability to monitor everything: telephone conversations, telegrams, it doesn't matter. There would be no place to hide.”

Noting that the NSA could enable a dictator “to impose total tyranny” upon an utterly defenseless American public, Church declared that he did not “want to see this country ever go across the bridge” of constitutional protection, congressional oversight and popular demand for privacy. He avowed that “we,” implicating both Congress and its constituency in this duty, “must see to it that this agency and all agencies that possess this technology operate within the law and under proper supervision, so that we never cross over that abyss. That is the abyss from which there is no return.”

Unfortunately, we have long since crossed over into that abyss, first under George W. Bush, who, among other things, authorised the NSA to listen in on the domestic phone calls of American citizens in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, and now under President Obama, whose administration has done more to undermine the Fourth Amendment's guarantee of privacy and bodily integrity than any prior administration. Incredibly, many of those who were the most vocal in criticizing Bush for attempting to sidestep the Constitution have gone curiously silent in the face of Obama's repeated violations.

Whether he intended it or not, it well may be that Obama, moving into the home

stretch and looking to establish a lasting “legacy” to characterise his time in office, is remembered as the president who put the final chains in place to imprison us in an electronic concentration camp from which there is no escape. Yet none of this could have been possible without the NSA, which is able to operate outside the constitutional system of checks and balances because Congress has never passed a law defining its responsibilities and obligations.

The constitutional accountability clause found in Article 1, section 9, clause 7 of the Constitution demands that government agencies function within the bounds of the Constitution. It does so by empowering the people's representatives in Congress to know what governmental agencies are actually doing by way of an accounting of their spending and also requiring full disclosure of their activities. However, because agencies such as the NSA operate with “black ops” (or secret) budgets, they are not accountable to Congress.

.....
“Strange and invisible city”

In his book *Body of Secrets*, the second installment of the most extensively researched inquiry into the NSA, author James Bamford describes the NSA as “a strange and invisible city unlike any on earth” that lies beyond a specially constructed and perpetually guarded exit ramp off the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. “It contains what is probably the largest body of secrets ever created.”

Bamford's use of the word “probably” is significant since the size of the NSA's staff, budget and buildings is kept secret from the public. Intelligence experts estimate that the agency employs around 38,000 people, with a starting salary of \$50,000 for its entry-level mathematicians, computer scientists and engineers. Its role in the intelligence enterprise and its massive budget dwarf those of its better-known counterpart, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The NSA's web-

site provides its own benchmarks:

“Neither the number of employees nor the size of the Agency’s budget can be publicly disclosed. However, if the NSA/CSS were considered a corporation in terms of dollars spent, floor space occupied, and personnel employed, it would rank in the top 10 percent of the Fortune 500 companies.”

If the NSA’s size seems daunting, its scope is disconcerting, especially as it pertains to surveillance activities domestically. The first inkling of this came in December 2005 when the *New York Times* reported that President Bush had secretly authorised the NSA to monitor international phone calls and email messages initiated by individuals (including American citizens) in the United States. Bush signed the executive order in 2002, under the pretext of needing to act quickly and secretly to detect communication among terrorists and their contacts and to quell future attacks in the aftermath of September 11, 2001.

The *New York Times* story forced President Bush to admit that he had secretly instructed the NSA to wiretap Americans’ domestic communications with international parties without seeking a FISA warrant or congressional approval. The *New York Times* had already sat on its story for a full year due to White House pressure not to publish its findings. It would be another six months before *USA Today* delivered the second and most significant piece of the puzzle, namely that the NSA had been secretly collecting the phone records of tens of millions of Americans who used the national “private” networks AT&T, Verizon and BellSouth.

It would be another seven years before Americans were given undeniable proof – thanks to NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden – that the NSA had not only broken privacy rules or overstepped its legal authority thousands of times every year but was actively working to flout attempts at oversight and accountability, aided and abetted in this subterfuge by the Obama administration.

Then again, all Snowden really did was confirm what we already suspected was happening. We already knew the NSA was technologically capable of spying on us. We also knew that the agency had, since the 1960s, routinely spied on various political groups and dissidents.

So if we already knew that the government was spying on us, what’s the big deal? And more to the point, as I often hear many Americans ask, if you’re not doing anything wrong, why should you care?

The big deal is simply this: once you allow the government to start breaking the law, no matter how seemingly justifiable the reason, you relinquish the contract between you and the government which establishes that the government works for and obeys you, the citizen – the employer – the master. And once the government starts operating outside the law, answerable to no one but itself, there’s no way to rein it back in, short of revolution.

As for those who are not worried about the government filming you when you drive, listening to your phone calls, using satellites to track your movements and drones to further spy on you, you’d better start worrying. At a time when the average American breaks at least three laws a day without knowing it thanks to the glut of laws being added to the books every year, there’s a pretty good chance that if the government chose to target you for breaking the law, they’d be able to come up with something without much effort.

Then again, for those who insist they’re not doing anything wrong, per se, perhaps they should be. Because if you’re not doing anything wrong, it just might mean that you’re not doing anything at all, which is how we got into this mess in the first place. **CT**

John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute and editor of GadflyOnline.com. His latest book The Freedom Wars (TRI Press) is available online at www.amazon.com

Then again, all Snowden really did was confirm what we already suspected was happening

Two births ...

One is a gilded arrival, the other a poisoned legacy, writes **Felicity Arbuthnot**

.....
One baby was born with all the trappings of privilege; the other was born with diseases created by an inhumane war
.....

“... war in our time is always indiscriminate, a war against innocents, a war against children.” (Howard Zinn, 1922-2010.)

On July 22 two babies were born – in different worlds. Prince George Alexander Louis, son of Britain’s Prince William and his wife Catherine, arrived in the £5,000 a night Lindo Wing of London’s St. Mary’s Hospital, weighing a super healthy 8lbs 6 oz.

According to the hospital’s website: “The Lindo Wing offers private en suite rooms, designed to provide you with comfort and privacy during your stay. Deluxe rooms or a suite are available on request. Each room has a satellite TV with major international channels, a radio, a safe, a bedside phone and a fridge. You and your visitors can access the internet and ... a daily newspaper is delivered to your room each morning throughout your stay. Toiletries are also provided.”

Also on hand is a “comprehensive wine list, should you wish to enjoy a glass of champagne and toast your baby’s arrival.”

Moments away are some of the world’s finest medical facilities and specialists, in the event of complications.

To mark the birth, the band of the Scots Guards played at Buckingham Palace, the fountains in Central London’s Trafalgar Square were lit with blue lights for six days

and the King’s Troop Royal Horse Artillery and the Honourable Artillery Company staged a 41-gun royal salute. At least, breaking the habits of the centuries, and recent decades, this time they didn’t kill anyone.

On the same day, a universe away, in Falluja, Iraq – poisoned by weapons armed with uranium, chemically and radiologically toxic, and white phosphorous, a chemical weapon, and other so far unidentified “exotic weapons” – baby Humam was born. In a city relentlessly bombarded in 1991 and again in two further criminal, inhuman US decimations in 2004.

Humam, whose name translates as “Brave, noble, generous,” was born with retrognathia, a congenital heart disease, omphalocele and polydactyly of upper and lower limbs. Omphalocele is an abnormality that develops as the foetus is forming. Some of the abdominal organs protrude through an opening in the abdominal muscles in the area of the umbilical cord. Polydactyly is the manifestation of extra digits on the hands or feet, in Humam’s case, both.

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Studies in Falluja

Dr Chris Busby, whose appointments have included sitting on the UK Ministry of Defence Oversight Committee on Depleted

Uranium, and is a visiting professor in Bio-medical Sciences at the University of Ulster, has made extensive studies in Falluja. He tested parents of “children with congenital anomalies and measured the concentration of 52 elements in the hair of the mothers and fathers. We also looked at the surface soil, river water and drinking water. We used a very powerful (mass spectroscopy) technique called ICPMS ... the only substance we found that could explain the high levels of genetic damage was the radioactive element uranium.”

Much has rightly been made of the use of depleted uranium (DU) in Iraq in 1991 and the subsequent decade-plus illegal bombing of the country by the US and UK, then the 2003 and subsequent onslaughts. But, says Busby, “Astonishingly, it was not depleted uranium. It was slightly enriched uranium, the kind that is used in nuclear reactors or atomic bombs. We found it in the hair and also in the soil. We concentrated the soil chemically so there could be no mistake. Results showed slightly enriched uranium – man-made.”

This enriched uranium was found in Falluja’s soil, water and in the hair of parents whose children had anomalies.

Relating to the near Dresden-like bombardment of November 2004, Busby is convinced of a connection between cancers, deformities and the uranium weapons:

“Uranium is excreted into hair and hair grows at a known rate: one centimeter per month. We obtained very long hair samples ... and measured the uranium along the lengths of the hair, which gave us historic levels back as far as 2005. In one woman, whose hair was 80 centimeters, the uranium concentration went up toward the tip of the hair, showing very high exposures in the past (and) “ the uranium was manmade, it was enriched uranium ...”, he stressed.

Busby says, “these results prove the existence of a new secret uranium weapon. We have found some US patents for thermobar-

ic and directed charge warheads which employ uranium ... to increase their effect.”

His team also: “ investigated bomb craters in Lebanon in 2006 after the Israeli attacks and found one which was radioactive and containing enriched uranium. We found enriched uranium in car air filters from Lebanon and also from Gaza. Others have found evidence of its use in Afghanistan and possibly also in the Balkans . . . an astonishing discovery with many global implications.”

Dr Busby claims that: ***“It is clear that the military has a secret uranium weapon of some sort. It causes widespread and terrifying genetic defects, causing cancer and birth anomalies and poisoning the gene pool of whole populations. This is a war crime and must be properly investigated.***

“This material ... is slowly contaminating the whole planet. It is poisoning the human gene pool, leading to increases in cancer, congenital anomalies, miscarriages and infertility ... It has probably been employed in Libya, so we must wait and see what levels of cancer and congenital disease appears there.” (Emphasis mine.)

Further, Dr Busby’s report, compiled with Malak Hamdan and Entesar Ariabi, found infant mortality in Falluja in 80 of every thousand births in neighbouring Jordan it is 17.

Pictures flash on a screen

The *Independent’s* Robert Fisk describes a visit to Falluja General Hospital last year, “The pictures flash up on a screen on an upper floor of the Fallujah General Hospital. And all at once, Nadhem Shokr al-Hadidi’s administration office becomes a little chamber of horrors. A baby with a hugely deformed mouth. A child with a defect of the spinal cord, material from the spine outside the body. A baby with a terrible, vast Cyclopean eye. Another baby with only half a head, stillborn like the rest ... a tiny child with half a right arm, no left

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Enriched uranium was found in Falluja’s soil, water and in the hair of parents whose children had anomalies

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"If fifty tonnes of the residual (depleted uranium) dust is left in the region, there will be an estimated half million cancer deaths by the end of the century" (2000)
.....

leg, no genitalia ... a dead baby with just one leg and a head four times the size of its body."

One British trained obstetrician somehow raised funds for a £79,000 scanner, for detection of congenital abnormalities. Why, she asked, would Iraq's Ministry of Health not hold a full investigation into Falluja's birth defect epidemic?

Answer, surely: because the cause would be weapons used by the US - to whom the government of Iraq owe their positions and their mega money accumulating enterprises.

Ironically the Ministry of Health under Saddam Hussein moved mountains, under the uniquely difficult circumstances of the embargo, to collect statistics from throughout the country and to press the relevant world bodies for widespread investigation into the cancers and abnormalities, to no avail.

Dr Samira Allani talks of: "the increased frequency (of congenital abnormalities) that is alarming." Congenital heart defects, a research paper she has written states, had reached "unprecedented numbers" by 2010. Still births and premature births also continue in an upward spiral.

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Lacking equipment

Falluja lacks even laboratory equipment to facilitate the treatment of foetal infections which are curable.

But this is an Iraq-wide phenomenon, ongoing since the 1991 bombings and simply multiply escalating.

In the southern holy city of Najav, Dr Sundus Nsaif says: "After the start of the Iraq war, rates of cancer, leukemia and birth defects rose dramatically in Najaf. The areas affected by American attacks saw the biggest increases ... When you visit the hospital here you see that cancer is more common than the flu."

Dr Nsaif comments on an active push by the government not to talk about the issue,

speculating the reason is perhaps in an effort not to embarrass coalition forces. Never mind embarrassment, the implications for claims for compensation could be a world first in the potential size of damages, where ever these weapons have been used.

In Basra it is reported that birth defects increased 17-fold in under a decade after the 2003 invasion and, as Falluja, over half of all babies conceived since are "born with heart defects."

"The Pentagon and the UN estimate that US and British forces used 1,100 to 2,200 tons of armor-piercing shells" made of depleted uranium during attacks in Iraq in just two months, March and April 2003. Enriched uranium is not mentioned. That added to the up to 900 tons in 1991, the subsequent illegal bombings and the bombardments including Falluja, March 2003-December 2011, when the US forces slunk out of their killing fields under cover of darkness.

The warning after 1991 by none other than the UK Atomic Energy Agency must never be forgotten, "If fifty tonnes of the residual (depleted uranium) dust is left in the region, there will be an estimated half million cancer deaths by the end of the century" (2000). The further horror of enriched uranium was not, seemingly, a known factor then.

There is surely a vast cover up on the effects of these weapons. As Mozghan Sava-bieasfahani has written, "The joint (World Health Organisation) and Iraqi Ministry of Health Report on cancers and birth defect in Iraq was originally due to be released in November 2012. It has been delayed repeatedly and now has no release date whatsoever."

He writes, "The back-breaking burden of cancers and birth defects continues to weigh heavily on the Iraqi people", in an article which draws attention to the fact that 54 eminent academics from a number of countries have written to the WHO demanding the release of the Report.

He adds that. in November, 2006, "The

British Medical Journal published an article entitled 'WHO suppressed evidence on effects of depleted uranium, expert says.' It suggested that earlier WHO reports were compromised by the omission of a full account of depleted uranium genotoxicity.

"Additionally, recent revelations by Hans von Sponeck, the former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, suggest that WHO may be susceptible to pressure from its member states.

"Mr. von Sponeck has said that 'The US government sought to prevent WHO from surveying areas in southern Iraq where depleted uranium had been used and caused serious health and environmental dangers.' "

Adding fuel to radioactive fire, there are reports that the latest WHO Report does not even touch on depleted uranium (yet alone enriched.) We will have to wait and see – and wait and wait. The WHO of course is an arm of the UN, so read US.

Effects of DU

One of the first people arrested in Iraq on the asinine US playing cards of the "most wanted" in 2003, was Dr Huda Ammash. Dean of Baghdad University, and internationally renowned environmental biologist, who earned her PhD at the University of Missouri.

She extensively researched and wrote papers on the effects of DU and other pollutants after the 1991 war and cited the International Treaties outlawing such weapons and stressed depleted uranium weapons not being "depleted" but a "radioactive waste", "DU is radiologically and chemically toxic to humans and other forms of life." She was way ahead in what she had detected.

Her contribution to the widely acclaimed *Iraq Under Siege – the Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War* (Pluto Press, 2000, updated 2003) was a wake-up call on the environmental Armageddon wrought on Iraq by the toxic weapons of 1991.

Her introduction read, "The Gulf war

ended in 1991, but the massive destruction linked to it continues. An unprecedented catastrophe resulting from a mixture of toxic, radiological, chemical and electromagnetic exposure is still causing substantial consequences to health and the environment much of Iraq has been turned into a polluted and radioactive environment."

The highly publicised book surely made her a marked woman. She was one of the first arrests of the Iraq invasion, dubbed "Dr Anthrax" in US disinformation, remaining in US custody until November 2005.

Robert Fisk, in his graphic article, cited above, writes: "This is too much. These photographs are too awful ... They simply cannot be published." He cites the pain of the parents, many who wanted to talk to him and the world to know.

The facts, the pictures, should be on the front page of news outlets across the globe until these obscene weapons are outlawed. Iraq's plight will be replicated.

They are the new Hiroshimas and Nagasakis, with the genetic burden loaded on future generations.

If the WHO Report ever comes out, it will be no help to baby Humam and uncounted others.

The birth was "very emotional" said Prince William's wife, Catherine, of that of Prince George Alexander Louis. Imagine being Humam's mother, or any mother in Iraq, who has no idea what horrors her precious offspring may present with.

The little Prince will be feted from the day of his birth until his death. Uncounted children of Iraq and wherever these weapons have been used, are fated from the day of their births.

Ironically the Prince's father and uncle, Prince Harry, both belong to the UK armed forces which is, with the US, partner in crime in these horrors. **CT**

Felicity Arbuthnot is a journalist and political activist based in London

The little Prince will be feted from the day of his birth until his death. Uncounted children of Iraq and wherever these weapons have been used, are fated from the day of their births

Goliath died for your sins

Brian Terrell tells how not to think about drones

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The story of David and Goliath is a “parable about technology,” but the problems with Bowden’s telling of it begin with the fact that there is no slingshot in 1 Samuel 17 nor, actually, was a slingshot to be found anywhere on the planet in David’s day
.....

The latest defense of remote control killing by the US appears in the September issue of The Atlantic, “The Killing Machines” in which author Mark Bowden tells us “how to think about drones.”

Known for his bestselling book, *Black Hawk Down* and for his curiously twisted justification of torture in the same magazine in October 2003 (“The Bush Administration has adopted exactly the right posture on the matter. Candor and consistency are not always public virtues. Torture is a crime against humanity, but coercion is an issue that is rightly handled with a wink, or even a touch of hypocrisy; it should be banned but also quietly practiced.”) Bowden continues in this latest article to collect the facts that ought to lead to unequivocal condemnation of certain US policies but cleverly presenting them in the end as ringing endorsements.

“The Killing Machines” opens by asking us to “consider David,” and so Bowden initiates his attack on history by misrepresenting its earliest written records. “The shepherd lad steps up to face in single combat the Philistine giant Goliath. Armed with only a slender staff and a slingshot, he confronts a fearsome warrior clad in a brass helmet and chain mail, wielding a spear with a head as

heavy as a sledge and a staff ‘like a weaver’s beam.’ Goliath scorns the approaching youth: ‘Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?’ (1 Samuel 17)

“Technology has been tilting the balance of battles since Goliath fell,” asserts Bowden, supporting this theory by misremembering that “David then famously slays the boastful giant with a single smooth stone from his slingshot.”

“What you have is a parable about technology,” says Bowden who describes David’s slingshot as “a small, lightweight weapon that employs simple physics to launch a missile with lethal force from a distance, was an innovation that rendered all the giant’s advantages moot.”

.....
Matter of fact

The story of David and Goliath is a “parable about technology,” but the problems with Bowden’s telling of it begin with the fact that there is no slingshot in 1 Samuel 17 nor, actually, was a slingshot to be found anywhere on the planet in David’s day. To place one in David’s hands when he met Goliath 10 centuries before the Common Era is a wild anachronism at best.

The “small, lightweight weapon that employs simple physics to launch a missile with lethal force from a distance”

cited as a biblical game changer did not exist before the invention of vulcanised rubber by Charles Goodyear, patented in 1884. The slingshot is an innovation of the 19th century and Bowden might just as well have had David slay Goliath with a Hellfire missile or with Luke Skywalker's light-saber as give him a slingshot.

David's weapon in 1 Samuel 17 was not a slingshot but a sling. Hardly an innovation, the sling had already been around for a long time and is thought to have been invented in the Upper Paleolithic, or Old Stone Age, about the same time as the bow and arrow. David's sling was a primitive device for flinging stones. It was widely used by shepherds to ward off predators, a weapon of low prestige that justified Goliath's disdain.

It was Goliath, not David, who with his bronze armor and iron tipped spear brought the latest technological innovations to his last and fatal conflict. David himself is recorded in 1 Samuel 17 as saying "All those who are gathered here shall see that the Lord saves neither by sword or spear," and the message of this story is the reverse of the lesson Bowden offers.

The story of David's victory over Goliath is one of many in the pre and early monarchical biblical history wherein the latest military innovations are defeated by simple men, women and children improvising crude household and agricultural implements for use as weapons.

Judges 4 tells of Jael, a Hebrew woman who killed Sisera, commander of "nine hundred chariots of iron" with a tent peg and wooden mallet. Sampson slaughtered a thousand armed Philistine soldiers with the jaw bone of a donkey (Judges 15). "When war broke out (between the Hebrews and the Philistines) none of the followers of Saul and Jonathan had either sword or spear," we read in 1 Samuel 13, yet these insurgents armed with hoes, axes and shovels rout-

ed the most technically advanced army of the day.

As drones are today, iron was literally the cutting-edge of weapons technology in David's and Goliath's time, an incalculable leap from the arms of wood, stone and bronze that preceded it and a decisive advantage to the first armies to attain it.

The Philistines, as vassals of the Egyptian empire, had access to the latest Iron Age armaments, much as the US and its allies today have the edge on drones. "No blacksmith was to be found in the whole of Israel, for the Philistines were determined to prevent the Hebrews from making swords and spears." (1 Samuel 13)

From Genesis to Revelation there can be found calls to war that are horrifying in their violence, but there is also a resilient strain of antipathy toward armaments technology in the Bible.

Long before Saul or David, the Hebrew people were liberated when the celebrated wheels of iron on the chariots of the Egyptian army were mired in the mud of the Red Sea. (Exodus 14) Tragically, after Israel's victory over the Philistines and in the pride that comes before the fall, Solomon not only imported the hated chariots of iron from Egypt for his own army but also "obtained them for export" (1 Kings 10) and so contributed to the ruin of his kingdom.

Balance of war

Bowden's presumption in "The Killing Machines" that technology is forever "tilting the balance of battles" in favor of the combatants who wield the newest lethal gadgets is disproved by the very Bible tale at the heart of his argument. It is also disproven by the succession of history from the death of Goliath to this very day.

The Catholic Agitator, published by

Bowden's presumption in "The Killing Machines" that technology is forever "tilting the balance of battles" in favor of the combatants who wield the newest lethal gadgets is disproved by the very Bible tale at the heart of his argument

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.....

the Los Angeles *Catholic Worker*, does not have the influence of *The Atlantic*, but its editor Jeff Dietrich is an astute student of scripture, history and current events whose analysis is better informed than Mark Bowden's. Writing about a decade and more of US war in Afghanistan, Dietrich says that "in the process we have learned that great wealth, military might and technological sophistication can be humiliated by impoverished men who live in caves, wear rags, fight with World War II assault rifles and improvised explosive devices fabricated out of stolen and surplus munitions, and who fund their operations with the national cash crop, opium, which is purchased largely by impoverished, unemployed US citizens."

The lessons for contemporary peoples in the clash of David and Goliath and that of Afghanistan and the United States are the same: that the side with the most fire-power and state-of-the-art weaponry will not always win.

Any nation that depends on such killing machines or that holds them in awe, whether these weapons are drones or spearheads of iron, is courting its own destruction.

All empires have their end and the perception that a nation can forestall its demise by keeping a technological edge or by sheer violence merits the scorn of both God and of history. The theological word for this is idolatry. The secular term is stupidity.

The premise of "The Killing Machine" is a distortion of one of the foundation-

al stories of our culture, one found in the Koran as well as in the Bible. What Bowden does with David and Goliath, he does also with the stories from present-day Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The "tacit" approval of US drone strikes by Pakistan's government that Bowden cites is as chimerical as David's slingshot. His article twists concepts of international and constitutional law just as it perverts the lessons of Goliath's demise.

Bowden does violence to ancient and contemporary narratives that people urgently need to hear, stories with truths that might serve to redeem our humanity and even give us a shot at survival. Bowden's counterfeit versions of these stories are devoid of morals. They are base superstitions and instead of counseling wisdom, these lying stories incite torture, murder and all of the foulest crimes.

"Drones distill war to its essence," says Mark Bowden. "War itself is terrorism," said Howard Zinn. "War is organised crime," said General Smedley Butler. Bowden's skillfully crafted propaganda justifying drone warfare is no other than an attempt to give moral validation to the essence of terrorism and crime. **CT**

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Brian Terrell farms with crude implements in Iowa and a co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence. On May 24 he finished a six month sentence at the Federal Prison Camp in Yankton, South Dakota, for protesting the killing machines operated from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri.

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Lying about Syria

David Swanson on the lying liars who lie about lying

US prepares for possible retaliatory strike against Syria,” announces a *Los Angeles Times* headline, even though Syria has not attacked the United States or any of its occupied territories or imperial forces and has no intention to do so.

Quoth the article: “the president made no decisions, but the high-level talks came as the Pentagon acknowledged it was moving US forces into position in the region.”

Forgive me, but who the SNAFU made that decision? Does the commander in chief have any say in this? Does he get to make speeches explaining how wrong it would be to attack Syria, meet with top military officials who leave the meeting to prepare for attacks on Syria, and go down in history as having been uninvolved in, if not opposed to, his own policies?

Threatening to attack Syria, and moving ships into position to do it, are significant, and illegal, and immoral actions. The president can claim not to have decided to push the button, but he can't pretend that all the preparations to do so just happen like the weather. Or he couldn't if newspapers reported news.

(Yes, illegal. Read the UN Charter:

“All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”)

“The Defense Department has a responsibility to provide the president with options for all contingencies,” said the so-called Defense Secretary, but do any of the contingencies involve defending the United States? Do any of them involve peace-making? If not, is it really accurate to talk about “all” contingencies?

In fact, Chuck Hagel only has that “responsibility” because Obama instructed him to provide, not all options, but all military options.

Faking attacks

Syrian rebels understand that under all possible US policies, faking chemical weapons attacks can get them guns, while shifting to nonviolent resistance can only get them as ignored as Bahrain. (Ba-who?)

“Obama also called British Prime Minister David Cameron,” says the *LA Times*, “to talk over the developments in Syria. The two are ‘united’ in their opposition to the use of chemi-

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Syrian rebels understand that under all possible US policies, faking chemical weapons attacks can get them guns, while shifting to nonviolent resistance can only get them as ignored as Bahrain

.....
The more Obama explains why it would be wrong and illegal and stupid and immoral to attack Syria, the more you can be sure he's about to do just that
.....

cal weapons, the White House said in a statement issued after the call." Well, except for white phosphorus and napalm. Those are good chemical weapons, and the United States government is against bad chemical weapons, so really your newspaper isn't lying to you at all.

What did Obama say to CNN?

"[T]he notion that the US can somehow solve what is a sectarian, complex problem inside of Syria sometimes is overstated"

Ya think?

CNN's Chris Cuomo (son of Mario) pushed for war:

"But delay can be deadly, right, Mr. President?"

Obama replied that he was still verifying the latest chemical weapons horseshit. Cuomo brushed that aside:

"There's strong proof they used them already, though, in the past."

Obama didn't reply to that lie, but spouted some vacuous rhetoric.

Cuomo, his thirst for dead Syrian flesh perhaps getting a bit frustrated, reached for the standard John McCainism. Senator McCain, Cuomo said, thinks US "credibility" is lost if Syria is not attacked. (And if the US government were to suddenly claim not to be an institution of mass-murder, and to act on that -- then how would its credibility be?)

Obama, undeterred, went right on preaching against what he was about to do. "Sometimes," Obama said, "what we've seen is that folks will call for immediate action, jumping into stuff, that does not turn out well, gets us mired in very difficult situations, can result in us being drawn into very expensive, difficult, costly interventions that actually breed more resentment in the region."

But you promised, whined Cuomo, that chemical weapons use would be

the crossing of a Red Line!

Obama replied that international law should be complied with. (For the uninitiated, international law actually forbids attacking and overturning other nations' governments -- even Libya's.) And, Obama pointed out, there are options other than the military.

There are?!

I've found that when Obama starts talking sense like this, he's actually moving rapidly in the opposite direction. The more he explains why it would be wrong and illegal and stupid and immoral to attack Syria, the more you can be sure he's about to do just that.

.....
Reasons not to attack

Here are my, previously published, top 10 reasons not to attack Syria, even if the latest chemical weapons lies were true:

1. War is not made legal by such an excuse. It can't be found in the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the United Nations Charter, or the US Constitution. It can, however, be found in US war propaganda of the 2002 vintage. (Who says our government doesn't promote recycling?)

2. The United States itself possesses and uses internationally condemned weapons, including white phosphorus, napalm, cluster bombs, and depleted uranium. Whether you praise these actions, avoid thinking about them, or join me in condemning them, they are not a legal or moral justification for any foreign nation to bomb us, or to bomb some other nation where the US military is operating. Killing people to prevent their being killed with the wrong kind of weapons is a policy that must come out of some sort of sickness. Call it Pre-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

3. An expanded war in Syria could become regional or global with uncontrollable consequences. Syria, Lebanon,

Iran, Russia, China, the United States, the Gulf states, the NATO states . . . does this sound like the sort of conflict we want? Does it sound like a conflict anyone will survive? Why in the world risk such a thing?

4. Just creating a “no fly zone” would involve bombing urban areas and unavoidably killing large numbers of people. This happened in Libya and we looked away. But it would happen on a much larger scale in Syria, given the locations of the sites to be bombed. Creating a “no fly zone” is not a matter of making an announcement, but of dropping bombs.

5. Both sides in Syria have used horrible weapons and committed horrible atrocities. Surely even those who imagine people should be killed to prevent their being killed with different weapons can see the insanity of arming both sides to protect each other side. Why is it not, then, just as insane to arm one side in a conflict that involves similar abuses by both?

6. With the United States on the side of the opposition in Syria, the United States will be blamed for the opposition’s crimes. Most people in Western Asia hate al Qaeda and other terrorists. They are also coming to hate the United States and its drones, missiles, bases, night raids, lies, and hypocrisy. Imagine the levels of hatred that will be reached when al Qaeda and the United States team up to overthrow the government of Syria and create an Iraq-like hell in its place.

7. An unpopular rebellion put into power by outside force does not usual-

ly result in a stable government. In fact there is not yet on record a case of US humanitarian war benefitting humanity or of nation-building actually building a nation. Why would Syria, which looks even less auspicious than most potential targets, be the exception to the rule?

8. This opposition is not interested in creating a democracy, or -- for that matter -- in taking instructions from the US government. On the contrary, blowback from these allies is likely. Just as we should have learned the lesson of lies about weapons by now, our government should have learned the lesson of arming the enemy of the enemy long before this moment.

9. The precedent of another lawless act by the United States, whether arming proxies or engaging directly, sets a dangerous example to the world and to those in Washington for whom Iran is next on the list.

10. A strong majority of Americans, despite all the media’s efforts thus far, opposes arming the rebels or engaging directly. Instead, a plurality supports providing humanitarian aid.

In sum, making the Syrian people worse off is not a way to help them.

But -- guess what? -- the evidence suggests strongly that the latest chemical weapons claims are as phony as all the previous ones.

Who would have ever predicted? **CT**

David Swanson’s books include “War Is A Lie.” He blogs at <http://davidswanson.org> and <http://warisacrime.org> and works for the online activist organisation rootsaction.org

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Making the Syrian people worse off is not a way to help them

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