

PUTIN, PETRORUBLES & CANADA | MURRAY DOBBIN
THE END OF THE MIDDLE CLASS | ANDREW S. FISCHER
PANDA SUTRA | FORBES HOWIE

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

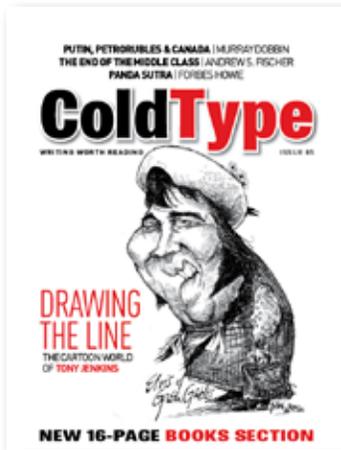
ISSUE 85

DRAWING THE LINE

THE CARTOON WORLD
OF **TONY JENKINS**



NEW 16-PAGE BOOKS SECTION



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ColdType

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Editor: Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net

Sinister faces behind strikes and revolutions

We want to know what you think of the stories in this issue of ColdType. Every letter published earns a free e-book. Write to editor@coldtype.net

Granville Williams' article about the British miners' strike and the pieces about the recent uprising in Kiev in the Ukraine (*ColdType* issue 84) are worrying for those of us who believe in democracy. Seems there was much political interference in both instances. Thatcher's government and her police played a major part in provoking the mineworkers 30 years ago, in a disgraceful display of political intervention that, fortunately, didn't end in open warfare. However, the US and NATO involvement in Ukraine was worse, showing, in common with the other 'color' revolutions in Eastern Europe and the Middle east, the West's disregard for basic human rights. The Western media also shows us that it's as untrustworthy as that in the countries our leaders claim are unfree. Whose side are they on? Not ours, certainly.

– **Anne Johnson, Toronto, Canada**

● *It seems these days that our governments see us, the people who elected them, as the enemy. One way to defeat them is to throw them out at next year's elections – in the case of Britain, US and Canada. Then again, if we look at the record, the opposition parties are no better than the clods they'll replace.*

– **Editor**

Farm aid

George Monbiot is spot on when he points to the real spongers in society (*Benefit claimants*



the government loves, Issue 84). Giant agricultural corporations are ripping the heart out of the countryside. I live in East Anglia, one of the main farming areas of Britain, and have witnessed the merciless destruction of the countryside over the past decades. My grandkids don't believe me when I tell them how, a couple of generations ago, we were surrounded by small farms with a variety of crops and livestock, the fields bounded by hedgerows and ditches, and woodlands and streams teeming with wildlife. Now we have massive fields that resemble a barren moonscape, the sound of animals replaced by the roar of giant machinery.
– **J. Turner, Lincoln, England**

On the road to revolution. But who's pulling the strings?

– **From ColdType Issue 83**

Photo: Sasha Maksymenko

LETTERS TO COLDTYPE

We deserve a break from bad news and misery every now and then

Missing Joe

Thanks for publishing the Joe Bageant article in the latest edition of *Coldtype*. His stuff is always compulsive reading (and re-reading, for that matter) and the world we inhabit is a worse-off place without his exceptional insights, written in a poignant manner that was nowhere as laid back as it appeared. On a selfish level, I hope there is an attic or basement somewhere stacked with a yet-to-be discovered trove from the mind and pen of Joe. Keep up the fine work with *ColdType*. – **Simon Crase, Wangaratta, Victoria, Australia**

● *We've got a few more of Joe's old newspaper columns, but we're going to use them sparingly, like an after-dinner glass of vintage brandy. More recent fans of Joe's writings will find many more of his longer essays in our archive at <http://coldtype.net/joe.html>* – **Editor**

Lighten up

I think lots of readers will agree with me when I say that *ColdType* needs to lighten up a bit. Yes, it's good to read an alternative viewpoint of the hapless state of our society, but we deserve a break from bad news and misery every now and then, son't we? – **M. Jacobson, New York, USA**

Congo tales

Is my friend a political assassin (ColdType Is-

sue 84) was a short, exciting, beautiful and thoughtful article. It captured in a short space plenty of stories rolled into one: the assassination of Sweden's prime minister Olaf Palme, the attempted assassination of ANC leader Oliver Tambo, the UN involvement in the Congo, and spying for South Africa's security agency, BOSS. How many interesting novels can possibly come from that one article? I'd like to sit with Bertil Wedin over a fire with biltong and a voice recorder listening to his tales. – **Ebrahiem Astrie, Port Elizabeth, South Africa**

Wide ranging

It is always a pleasure to get the latest issue of *ColdType* with its wide range of subjects and writers. From Orgreave through Exxon Valdez to Soccer Wars. Both regional and International reporting of the highest calibre shines a light on a range of subjects that are taboo to traditional media. – **Cyril Wheat, North Yorkshire, UK**

And, finally . . .

I must tell you my wife read and enjoyed *The Watchman's File* within three days of receiving it (*Mr Jones's letter was published last month*). With her coming from Israel, it certainly enhanced the story. – **Richard Jones, Johannesburg, South Africa**

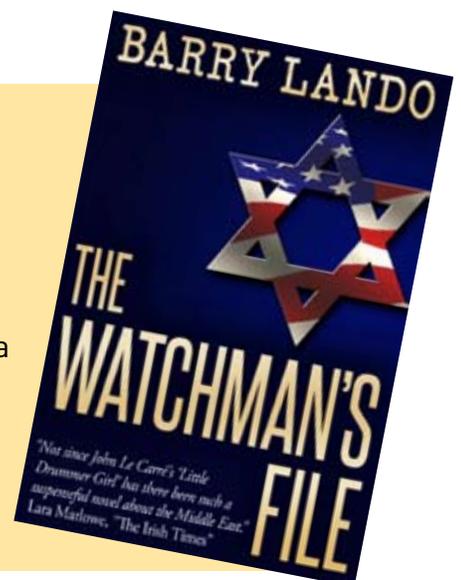
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One of our goals as we enter our 10th year of publication, is to improve our communication with readers. So, we'd love to read your opinions, in a paragraph of two, of the stories we produce in *ColdType*.

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20 years of apartheid by another name

On the eve of general elections 20 years after the end of apartheid, **John Pilger** recalls how Nelson Mandela sold out the people of South Africa

On my wall in London is my favourite photograph from South Africa. Always thrilling to behold, it is Paul Weinberg's image of a lone woman standing between two armoured vehicles, the infamous "hippos", as they rolled into Soweto. Her arms are raised, fists clenched, her thin body both beckoning and defiant of the enemy.

It was May Day 1985; the last great uprising against apartheid had begun. Twelve years later, with my thirty-year banning from South Africa lifted, there was a pinch-me moment as I flew into Jan Smuts and handed my passport to a black immigration officer. "Welcome to our country," she said.

I quickly discovered that much of the spirit of resistance embodied in the courageous woman in Soweto had survived, together with a vibrant ubuntu that drew together African humanity, generosity and political ingenuity – for example, in the dignified resolve of those I watched form a human wall around the house of a widow threatened with disconnection of her electricity, and in people's rejection of demeaning "RDP houses" they called "kennels"; and in the pulsating mass demonstrations of social movements that are among the most sophisticated and dynamic in the world.

On the twentieth anniversary of the first democratic vote on 27 April 1994, it is this resistance, this force for justice and real

democratic progress, that should be celebrated, while its betrayal and squandering should be understood and acted upon.

On 11 February, 1990, Nelson Mandela stepped out on the balcony of Cape Town City Hall with the miners' leader Cyril Ramaphosa supporting him. Free at last, he spoke to millions in South Africa and around the world. This was the moment, an historic split-second as rare and potent as any in the universal struggle for freedom. Moral power and the power for justice could triumph over anything, any orthodoxy, it seemed. "Now is the time to intensify the struggle," said Mandela in a proud and angry speech, perhaps his best, or the last of his best.

The next day he appeared to correct himself. Majority rule would not make blacks "dominant". The retreat quickened. There would be no public ownership of the mines, banks and rapacious monopoly industries, no economic democracy, as he had pledged with the words: "a change or modification of our views in this regard is inconceivable". Reassuring the white establishment and its foreign business allies – the very orthodoxy and cronyism that had built, maintained and reinforced fascist apartheid – became the political agenda of the "new" South Africa.

Secret deals facilitated this. In 1985, apartheid had suffered two disasters: the Johannesburg stock market crashed and

There would be no public ownership of the mines, banks and rapacious monopoly industries, no economic democracy, as he had pledged with the words: "a change or modification of our views in this regard is inconceivable"

SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTIONS

Within a decade, miners' leader Cyril Ramaphosa was deputy chairman of what was effectively a creation of apartheid. He is today one of the richest men in the world

the regime defaulted on its mounting foreign debt. In September that year, a group led by Gavin Relly, chairman of the Anglo-American Corporation, met Oliver Tambo, the ANC president, and other liberation officials in Mfuwe, Zambia.

The Relly message was that a “transition” from apartheid to a black-governed electoral democracy was possible only if “order” and “stability” were guaranteed. This was liberal code for a capitalist state in which social and economic democracy would never be a priority. The aim was to split the ANC between the “moderates” they could “do business with” (Tambo, Mandela and Thabo Mbeki) and the majority who made up the United Democratic Front and were fighting in the streets.

The betrayal of the UDF and its most effective components, such as the National Civic Organisation, is today poignant, secret history.

In 1987 and 1990, ANC officials led by Mbeki met twenty prominent members of the Afrikaner elite at a stately home near Bath, in England. Around the fireplace at Mells Park House, they drank vintage wine and malt whisky. They joked about eating “illegal” South African grapes, then subject to a worldwide boycott, “It’s a civilised world there,” recalled Mof Terreblanche, a stockbroker and pal of F.W. De Klerk. “If you have a drink with somebody... and have another drink, it brings understanding. Really, we became friends.”

So secret were these convivial meetings that none but a select few in the ANC knew about them. The prime movers were those who had profited from apartheid, such as the British mining giant Consolidated Goldfields, which picked up the tab at Mells Park House. The most important item around the fireplace was who would control the economic system behind the facade of “democracy”.

At the same time, Mandela was conducting his own secret negotiations in Pollsmoor Prison. His principal contact was Neil Bar-

nard, an apartheid true believer who headed the National Intelligence Service. Confidences were exchanged; reassurances were sought. Mandela phoned P.W. Botha on the his birthday; the Groot Krokodil invited him to tea and, as Mandela noted, even poured the tea for his prisoner. “I came out feeling,” said Mandela, “that I had met a creative, warm head of state who treated me with all the respect and dignity I could expect.”

This was the man who, like Verwoerd and Vorster before him, had sent a whole African nation to a vicious gulag that was hidden from the rest of the world. Most of the victims were denied justice and restitution for this epic crime of apartheid. Almost all the *verkrampptes* – extremists like the “creative, warm” Botha – escaped justice.

How ironic that it was Botha in the 1980s – well ahead of the ANC a decade later – who dismantled the scaffolding of racial apartheid and, crucially, promoted a rich black class that would play the role of which Frantz Fanon had warned – as a “transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged”.

In the 1980s, magazines like *Ebony*, *Tribute* and *Enterprise* celebrated the “aspirations” of a black bourgeoisie whose two-garage Soweto homes were included on tours for foreigners the regime sought to impress. “This is our black middle class,” the guides would say; but there was no middle: merely a buffer class being prepared, as Fanon wrote, for “its historic mission”. This is unchanged today.

The Botha regime even offered black businessmen generous loans from the Industrial Development Corporation. This allowed them to set up companies outside the “bantustans”. In this way, a black company such as New Africa Investments could buy part of Metropolitan Life. Within a decade, Cyril Ramaphosa was deputy chairman of what was effectively a creation of apartheid. He is today one of the richest men in the world.

The transition was, in a sense, seamless.

“You can put any label on it you like,” President Mandela told me at Groote Schuur. “You can call it Thatcherite, but for this country, privatisation is the fundamental policy.”

“That’s the opposite of what you said before the first elections, in 1994,” I said.

“There is a process,” was his uncertain reply, “and every process incorporates change.”

Mandela was merely reflecting the ANC’s mantra – which seemed to take on the obsessions of a supercult. There were all those ANC pilgrimages to the World Bank and the IMF in Washington, all those “presentations” at Davos, all those ingratiations at the G-8, all those foreign advisers and consultants coming and going, all those pseudo-academic reports with their “neo-liberal” jargon and acronyms. To borrow from the comic writer Larry David, “a babbling brook of bullshit” engulfed the first ANC governments, especially its finance ministries.

Putting aside for a moment the well-documented self-enrichment of ANC notables and suckering of arms deals, the Africa analyst Peter Robbins had an interesting view on this. “I think the ANC leadership [was] ashamed that most of their people live in the third world,” he wrote. “They don’t like to think of themselves as being mostly an African-style economy. So economic apartheid has replaced legal apartheid with the same consequences for the same people, yet it is greeted as one of the greatest achievements in world history.”

Desmond Tutu’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission brushed this reality, ever so briefly, when business corporations were called to the confessional. These “institutional” hearings were among the most important, yet were all but dismissed. Representing the most voracious, ruthless, profitable and lethal industry in the world, the South African Chamber of Mines summed up a century of exploitation in six and a half derisory pages. There was no apology for the swathes of South Africa turned into

the equivalent of Chernobyl. There was no pledge of compensation for the countless men and their families stricken with occupational diseases such as silicosis and mesothelioma. Many could not afford an oxygen tank; many families could not afford a funeral.

In an accent from the era of pith helmets, Julian Ogilvie-Thompson, the former chairman of Anglo-American, told the TRC: “Surely, no one wants to penalise success.” Listening to him were ex miners who could barely breathe.

Liberation governments can point to real and enduring achievements since 1994. But the most basic freedom, to survive and to survive decently, has been withheld from the majority of South Africans, who are aware that had the ANC invested in them and in their “informal economy”, it could have actually transformed the lives of millions. Land could have been purchased and reclaimed for small-scale farming by the dispossessed, run in the co-operative spirit of African agriculture. Millions of houses could have been built, better health and education would have been possible. A small-scale credit system could have opened the way for affordable goods and services for the majority. None of this would have required the import of equipment or raw materials, and the investment would have created millions of jobs. As they grew more prosperous, communities would have developed their own industries and an independent national economy.

A pipe dream? The violent inequality that now stalks South Africa is no dream. It was Mandela, after all, who said, “If the ANC does not deliver the goods, the people must do what they have done to the apartheid regime.”

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John Pilger’s new film, “Utopia”, opened in cinemas received glowing reviews in the UK and Australia. This article first appeared in the Sunday Times, Johannesburg

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Putin, petrorubles and Canada's PM

Murray Dobbin wonders if Canada's Prime Minister Steven Harper really wants to be America's 'useful idiot'

The generals surrounding Harper in the ridiculous war-room setting where he announced Canada was sending six fighter jets to bolster NATO's military buildup in eastern Europe looked very uncomfortable

Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper's embarrassing behaviour regarding the crisis in Ukraine – demonizing Vladimir Putin and upping the rhetoric – must be welcomed in the US which created the crisis in the first place and apparently believes it still has something to gain by isolating Russia. But it is not clear that Harper even realizes – or cares – what the larger game is.

And that game may include a Russia-driven shift in global currency allegiance that could devastate the economies of the US and Canada.

The generals surrounding Harper in the ridiculous war-room setting where he announced Canada was sending six fighter jets to bolster NATO's military buildup in eastern Europe looked very uncomfortable. Who likes being used as a prop for a faltering politician? The setting was a bad case of over-acting – as if we were joining the Allies in another world war rather than engaging in what one expert called “incremental posturing.”

Is Harper just a useful idiot to the US – ranting and raving about Russian expansionism and imperialism so that the US position looks more reasonable by comparison? He declared:

“When a major power acts in a way that is so clearly aggressive, militaristic and imperialistic, this represents a significant threat

to the peace and stability of the world, and it's time we all recognized the depth and the seriousness of that threat.”

It is difficult to know what is going on in the fevered imagination of the prime minister, but this time one has to really wonder if he has become genuinely unhinged – always a possibility with someone both paranoid and narcissistic. While it is clear that genuine foreign policy execution always plays a distant second role to micro-managing the electorate, it is still possible that Harper's domestic framing of foreign policy vis-a-vis Ukraine could inadvertently play a role that he didn't intend.

Why Putin doesn't want Ukraine

It is interesting that Harper virtually never talks about what is actually happening in Ukraine. The notion that Russia wants to occupy Ukraine or even invade it to protect ethnic Russians is far from the mark. The last thing Russia wants is responsibility for one of the worst basket cases in all of Europe. Ukraine is a nearly-failed state, all of its politicians are corrupt to a greater or lesser degree, it is bankrupt, has no effective police force and is held down by crumbling infrastructure, a decrepit industrial base, massive unemployment and a dysfunctional legal system. Putin is likely delighted to see the whole mess dumped into the lap of the US and EU to try to sort out – a process

that will take a decade and tens of billions of dollars just to tread water.

In its current state Ukraine will never be invited to join the EU because then the EU would be directly responsible for bailing it out. And trying now to bring Ukraine into NATO would be seen everywhere as madness – a provocation to which Russia would reply by cutting off gas to western Europe. So Putin will watch with the comfort of an oligarch as the IMF puts the fiscal boots to a country already on its knees. And, of course, he can play mischief with gas prices any time he wants. The IMF prescription of drastic cuts to government programs could well cause widespread social unrest – and play into the hands of the fascist parties given new prominence by the US-inspired coup. It could also turn many ethnic Ukrainians against the West, making its task of establishing stability that much more difficult.

It is extremely unlikely that Putin will intervene to protect ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine, either, unless there is virtual bloodbath. He will calculate that even a few hundred deaths of Russian separatists will simply reinforce his public relations victory over the West – confirming his framing of the issue as the ineptness and brutality of an illegal Kiev government that hates Russia and Russians. It makes far more sense for him to let the US and EU deal with such a crisis and damage what's left of NATO's shaky credibility than it is to be the bad guy and intervene militarily.

In the meantime, the demonization of Putin and Russia is having a major influence on an issue that has barely been mentioned in the media: Putin's plan to create the petroruble and decouple Russia's energy exports from the dollar.

Restacking the BRICS

It is arguable that push for the petroruble is a global issue many times more important to the US than anything that happens in the Ukraine, but American efforts to isolate Rus-

sia is actually accelerating the process. The desire is also driving Russia to look to the east instead of Europe for its future prosperity – aligning with China as both a market for its gas and a partner in undermining the petrodollar. China is already headed there. Its yuan is the second most used currency, ahead of the euro, in international trade settlements. China recently “opened two centers to process yuan-denominated trade flows, one in London and one in Frankfurt.”

The emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are grouped under the acronym BRICS. [According to](#) journalist Peter Koenig: “Other countries, especially the BRICS and BRICS-associates (BRICSA), may soon follow suit and join forces with Russia, abandoning the ‘petrodollar’ as trading unit for oil and gas. This could amount to tens of trillions in loss for demand of petrodollars per year.” In which case, “leaving an important dent in the US economy would be an understatement,” says Koenig. “Along with the new BRICS(A) currency will come a new international payment settlement system, replacing the SWIFT and IBAN exchanges, thereby breaking the hegemony of... the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) in Basle.”

The prospect of the US dollar losing its status as the world's trading currency is far and away the greatest threat to US hegemony in the world as it would turn the country's \$17-trillion (not counting unfunded liabilities) virtual debt problem into a real one. Until now, the huge external demand for US dollars has allowed it to accumulate enormous debts without defaulting. With Russia, China and the rest of the BRICS countries moving in this direction, the US is panic-stricken. It used to be said that the US dollar was backed by the Pentagon. Indeed, plans to decouple from the dollar was a common feature of three countries that experienced the wrath of US foreign policy and military intervention. Libya's Moammar Gaddafi was planning a gold-standard

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POWER PLAY

There is virtually nothing the US can do to stop this movement away from the dollar, provoked in part by the massive printing of money in repeated “quantitative easings” and accelerated by NATO’s adventurism

currency for all of Africa; Iraq was planning to quit using the dollar for its oil exports, as was Iran. Sanctions against the latter had as much to do with this plan as any other issue.

But Russia, China, Brazil and India are countries of a whole different order and out of reach of the Pentagon’s threats. There is virtually nothing the US can do to stop this movement, provoked in part by the massive printing of money in repeated “quantitative easings” and accelerated by NATO’s adventurism.

Germany’s ‘giant magnet’

If that were not a big enough headache for the US, Russia is well placed to detach Germany from the EU and US efforts to isolate Russia. While Russia will suffer economically in the short term from sanctions, the longer term looks brighter. At the same time that BRICSA is planning its new international payment system, China and Germany are negotiating another initiative that guarantees Russia a prominent role in one of the world’s most ambitious economic development schemes: the New Silk Road linking China and Europe. This initiative is intended to provide enormous impetus for development of western China and every-

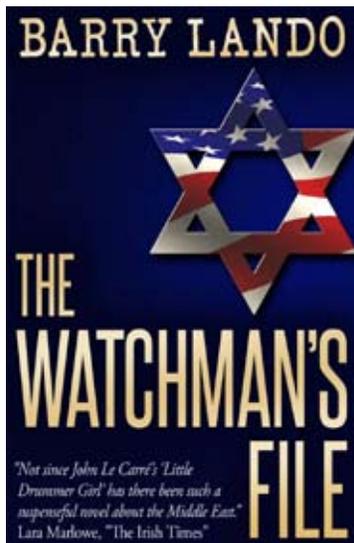
thing from there to Germany.

Says Koenig: “Germany, the economic driver of Europe – the world’s fourth largest economy (US\$ 3.6 trillion GDP) – on the western end of the new trading axis, will be like a giant magnet, attracting other European trading partners of Germany’s to the New Silk Road. What looks like a future gain for Russia and China, also bringing about security and stability, would be a lethal loss for Washington.”

So the Russian president, at record highs in public approval and now fully justified in facing east after being provoked by the West, doesn’t have to act. Everything is in motion for advantage Russia. And our war mongering prime minister will continue to aid Mr. Putin by demonizing him and justifying his eastern “pivot.”

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Murray Dobbin is an author, commentator and journalist. He is the author of five books and is a former columnist with *Financial Post* and *Winnipeg Free Press*. He is a board member of *Canadians for Tax Fairness* and on the advisory council of the *Rideau Institute*. He lives in Powell River, BC. This article was originally published in the award-winning British Columbia website *The Tye* at <http://thetyee.ca>



The Watchman's File

THE MOST CLOSELY-GUARDED SECRET OF ISRAEL'S MOSSAD

“Not since John Le Carré’s ‘Little Drummer Girl’ has there been such a nail-bitingly suspenseful novel about the Middle East.”

– Lara Marlowe, correspondent, *The Irish Times*

“A who-done-it worthy of Dashiell Hammett. I loved it.”

– Lesley Stahl, Correspondent, *60 Minutes*

“... set to rival Daniel Silva’s tales about Gabriel Allon.”

– Dusko Doda, Author of ‘*The Firebird Affair*’

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Manning and Snowden: America's new heroes

Andy Piascik hopes more of us will follow whistleblowers' fine example of resistance to the terror imposed by the ruling classes

From the beginning, US foreign policy has been predicated on conquest and whatever levels of violence were required to achieve it. Beneath the rhetoric of freedom lies a horrifying legacy of invasions, coups, proxy wars and support for a rogue's gallery of despots. With all of that, however, the violence and lawlessness of the Bush-Obama years is of a scale few if any of us have ever seen.

It is in this context that the state has come down so heavily on Chelsea Manning and is determined to do the same to Edward Snowden. With the ruling class here essentially at war with the world, including with the American people, anyone who exposes the workings of empire as Manning and Snowden have done is deemed a traitor. Such revelations cannot be tolerated, after all, because the emperors must be free first and foremost to do as they like.

Meanwhile, much of the world's population is aghast at what the United States has become. We can imagine that even in places that have suffered most hideously from US aggression, people can barely believe what they see. Probably never in its history has the United States been so isolated; what may be worse is that there is little dissent among elites as to whether this might not be a good thing.

Amidst the hysterical cries of "traitor," what Chelsea Manning revealed first and

foremost were war crimes. Rather than being jailed, tortured and demonized, let alone possibly imprisoned for the rest of her life, she should be thanked for saving many lives – Afghans, Pakistanis and Yemenis who might otherwise have been blown up by US bombs and American soldiers who otherwise would have recklessly been put in harm's way. Perhaps the only thing more horrifying than revelations like the collateral murder video is the fact that such acts, like the My Lai massacre in Vietnam, are standard operating procedure and not exceptions.

World of enemies

Similarly, Edward Snowden revealed the extent to which the US empire regards the rest of the world as enemies who must be monitored at all times. One of the most telling moments of Manning's show trial was when the prosecution referred to WikiLeaks and, by inference, Manning and Snowden, as "an intelligence agency for the public." As they are and, given the state of things, as they should be; and for that we should all be grateful.

Despite elite vilification of Manning and Snowden, important fissures between the rulers and the ruled have become apparent. We see, for example, that a majority of Americans believe the National Security Agency should be reined in big-time. We see

One of the most telling moments of Manning's show trial was when the prosecution referred to WikiLeaks and, by inference, Manning and Snowden, as "an intelligence agency for the public"

TELLING THE TRUTH

At the same time, for example, that Jimmy Carter spoke piously of human rights, he was making possible Indonesian terror against East Timor

as well serious outrage in both parties in both houses of Congress at how extensive the surveillance state has become. No such outrage or calls for drastic changes would be happening were it not for Snowden.

Manning and Snowden have been compared to Daniel Ellsberg, the man who, in 1971, revealed secret documents about the US war in Indochina. Though the Pentagon Papers undoubtedly increased the already massive public opposition to the war, that was arguably not Ellsberg's most important achievement. Perhaps more significant was the revelation of large-scale lying about the war. That Kennedy, McNamara, Johnson and Westmoreland (and later Nixon and Kissinger) had known that the war was essentially unwinnable short of nuclear weapons, even as they rained terror down on three countries ("Kill everything that moves") and sent tens of thousand of Americans to senseless deaths, was almost as terrible a truth as the real nature of the war itself.

Liars in charge

One result of the Pentagon Papers is that millions of Americans assume that those in charge regularly lie. And for good reason, for at the same time, for example, that Jimmy Carter spoke piously of human rights, he was making possible Indonesian terror against East Timor; that when Ronald Reagan was rhapsodizing about what a great guy Efrain Rios Montt was, he was arming, funding and covering up Montt's murderous campaign against Guatemalan civilians; that when Colin Powell and the rest of the Bush II gang cited weapons of mass destruction to justify an illegal invasion that has claimed more than a million Iraqi lives, they had documentary evidence in their possession that proved no such weapons

existed. As recently as last month, Secretary of State John Kerry declared that there "is no military solution in Syria" even as the US supplies arms to those fighting the Assad regime, many of whom are alleged to be linked to al-Qaeda. And would anyone be the least bit surprised if the recent terror alert was concocted to undermine the popular uproar over Manning and Snowden's revelations?

Implicitly, Manning and Snowden, like Ellsberg, also put the disgraceful role of the corporate media in the public eye. Reporters, editors and publishers have often been privy to US war crimes that they keep secret because of their enthusiasm for empire, then howl with outrage when such crimes are revealed – not at the crimes or criminals but at those who unmask them.

Manning and Snowden carry forward the great tradition of David Walker, Debs, Thoreau, Emma Goldman, Diane Nash, Cesar Chavez, Reverend King, the Berrigans and all those who have defied illegitimate authority at great risk to themselves. The question now is whether the rest of us shall follow their lead or instead be like Good Germans and pretend not to see the evil that surrounds us. The ruling class's ability to terrorize whoever they want wherever they want whenever they want without having to answer or be accountable to anyone is the crux of empire. Increased levels of resistance, especially of soldiers like Manning, is the only antidote. **CT**

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An Oslo criminal

The death of one of the architects of the Oslo Agreement reminds **Uri Avnery** of the huge significance of the accord

The death of Ron Pundak, one of the original Israeli architects of the 1993 Oslo agreement, has brought that historic event back into the public eye.

Gideon Levy reminded us that the Rightist rabble-rousers, in their furious onslaught on the agreement, called the initiators “Oslo criminals” – a conscious echo of one of Adolf Hitler’s main slogans on his way to power. Nazi propaganda applied the term “November criminals” to the German statesmen who signed the 1918 armistice agreement that put an end to World War I – by the way, at the request of the army General Staff who had lost the war.

In his book, “Mein Kampf” (which is about to lose its copyright, so that anyone can print it again) Hitler also revealed another insight: that a lie will be believed if it is big enough, and if it is repeated often enough.

That, too, applies to the Oslo agreement. For more than 20 years now the Israel right-wing has relentlessly repeated the lie that the Oslo agreement was not only an act of treason, but also a total failure.

Oslo is dead, we are told. It actually died at birth. And by extension, this will be the lot of every peace agreement in the future. A large part of the Israeli public has come to believe this.

The main achievement of the Oslo agree-

ment, an act of history-changing dimensions, bears the date of September 10, 1993 – which happened to be my 70th birthday.

On that day, the Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Prime Minister of the State of Israel exchanged letters of mutual recognition. Yasser Arafat recognized Israel, Yitzhak Rabin recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.

Today’s younger generation (on both sides) cannot realize the huge significance of these twin acts.

From its inception almost a hundred years earlier, the Zionist movement had denied the very existence of a Palestinian people. I have spent many hundreds of hours of my life trying to convince Israeli audiences that a Palestinian nation really exists. Golda Meir famously declared: “There is no such thing as a Palestinian people.” I am rather proud of my reply to her, in a Knesset debate: “Mrs. Prime Minister, perhaps you are right. Perhaps a Palestinian people really does not exist. But if millions of people mistakenly believe that they are a people and act like a people, they are a people!”

The Zionist denial was not an arbitrary quirk. The basic Zionist aim was to take hold of Palestine, all of it. This necessitated the displacement of the inhabitants of the country. But Zionism was an idealistic movement. Many of its East European ac-

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THE BIG LIE

Successive Israeli governments, both left and right, built settlements on Arab land at a frantic pace and took more prisoners

tivists were deeply imbued with the ideas of Lev Tolstoy and other utopian moralists. They could not face the fact that their utopia could only be realized on the ruins of another people. Therefore the denial was an absolute moral necessity.

Recognizing the existence of the Palestinian people was, therefore, a revolutionary act.

On the other side, recognition was even harder.

From the first day of the conflict, practically all Palestinians, and indeed almost all Arabs, looked upon the Zionists as an invading tribe that was out to rob them of their homeland, drive them out and build a robber-state on their ruins. The aim of the Palestinian national movement was therefore to demolish the Zionist state and throw the Jews into the sea, as their forefathers had thrown the last of the Crusaders quite literally from the quay of Acre.

And here came their revered leader, Yasser Arafat, and recognized the legality of Israel, reversing the ideology of a hundred years of struggle, in which the Palestinian people had lost most of their country and most of their homesteads.

In the Oslo agreement, signed three days later on the White House lawn, Arafat did something else, which has been completely ignored in Israel: he gave up 78% of historical Palestine. The man who actually signed the agreement was Mahmoud Abbas. I wonder if his hand shook when he signed this momentous concession, minutes before Rabin and Arafat shook hands.

Oslo did not die. In spite of the glaring faults of the agreement (“the best possible agreement in the worst possible situation,” as Arafat put it), it changed the nature of the conflict, though it did not change the conflict itself. The Palestinian Authority, the basic structure of the Palestinian State-in-the-Making, is a reality. Palestine is recognized by most countries and, at least partly, by the UN. The Two-State Solution, once the idea of a crazy fringe group, is today a world

consensus. A quiet but real cooperation between Israel and Palestine is going on in many fields.

But, of course, all this is far from the reality of peace which many of us, including Ron Pundak, envisioned on that happily optimistic day, September 13, 1993. Just over twenty years later, the flames of conflict are blazing, and most people don’t dare to even utter the word “peace”, as if it were a pornographic abomination.

What went wrong? Many Palestinians believe that Arafat’s historic concessions were premature, that he should not have made them before Israel had recognized the State of Palestine as the final aim.

Rabin changed his whole world-view at the age of 71 and took a historic decision, but he was not the man to follow through. He hesitated, wavered, and famously declared “there are no sacred dates”.

This slogan became the umbrella for breaking our obligations. The final agreement should have been signed in 1999. Long before that, four “safe passages” should have been opened between the West Bank and Gaza. By violating this obligation, Israel laid the foundation for the break-away of Gaza.

Israel also violated the obligation to implement the “third stage” of the withdrawal from the West Bank. “Area C” has now become practically a part of Israel, waiting for official annexation, which is demanded by right-wing parties.

There was no obligation under Oslo to release prisoners. But wisdom dictated it. The return of ten thousand prisoners home would have electrified the atmosphere. Instead, successive Israeli governments, both left and right, built settlements on Arab land at a frantic pace and took more prisoners.

The initial violations of the agreement and the dysfunctionality of the entire process encouraged the extremists on both sides. The Israeli extremists assassinated Rabin, and the Palestinian extremists started a campaign of murderous attacks.

Last month I already commented on our government's habit of abstaining from fulfilling signed obligations, whenever it thought that the national interest demanded it.

As a soldier in the 1948 war, I took part in the great offensive to open the way to the Negev, which had been cut off by the Egyptian army. This was done in violation of the cease-fire arranged by the UN. We used a simple ruse for putting the blame on the enemy.

The same technique was later used by Ariel Sharon to break the armistice on the Syrian front and provoke incidents there, in order to annex the so-called "demilitarized zones". Still later, the memory of these incidents was used to annex the Golan Heights.

The start of Lebanon War I was a direct violation of the cease-fire arranged a year earlier by American diplomats. The pretext was flimsy as usual: an anti-PLO terrorist outfit had tried to assassinate the Israeli ambassador in London. When Prime Minister Menachem Begin was told by his Mossad chief that the assassins were enemies of the PLO, Begin famously answered: "For me, they are all PLO!"

As a matter of fact, Arafat had kept the cease-fire meticulously. Since he wanted to avoid an Israeli invasion, he had imposed his authority even on the opposition elements. For 11 months, not a single bullet was fired on that border. Yet when I spoke a few days ago with a former senior security official, he assured me seriously that "they shot at us every day. It was intolerable."

After six days of war, a cease-fire was agreed. However, at that time our troops

had not yet succeeded in surrounding Beirut. So Sharon broke the cease-fire to cut the vital Beirut-Damascus highway.

The present crisis in the "peace process" was caused by the Israeli government's breaking its agreement to release Palestinian prisoners on a certain day. This violation was so blatant that it could not be hidden or explained away. It caused the famous "poof" of John Kerry.

In fact, Binyamin Netanyahu just did not dare to fulfill his obligation after he and his acolytes in the media had for weeks incited the public against the release of "murderers" with "blood on their hands". Even on the so-called "center-left", voices were mute.

Now another mendacious narrative is taking shape before our eyes. The large majority in Israel is already totally convinced that the Palestinians had brought about the crisis by joining 15 international conventions. After this flagrant violation of the agreement, the Israeli government was right in its refusal to release the prisoners. The media have repeated this falsification of the course of events so often, that it has by now acquired the status of fact.

Back to the Oslo Criminals. I did not belong to them, though I visited Arafat in Tunis while the talks in Oslo were going on (unbeknownst to me), and talked with him about the whole range of possible compromises.

May Ron Pundak rest in peace – even though the peace he was working for still seems far away. But come It will. **CT**

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Uri Avnery is an Israeli writer and founder of the Gush Shalom peace movement

For 11 months, not a single bullet was fired on that border. Yet when I spoke a few days ago with a former senior security official, he assured me seriously that "they shot at us every day. It was intolerable"

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Continental drift

Conn Hallinan on the fragmentation of Europe

In Scotland much of the fight for independence is over preserving the social contract that conservative Labor and right-wing Tory governments have systematically dismantled

“Happy families are all alike: every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”—“Anna Karenina” by Leo Tolstoy

The opening to Tolstoy’s great novel of love and tragedy could be a metaphor for Europe today, where “unhappy families” of Catalans, Scots, Belgians, Ukrainians, and Italians contemplate divorcing the countries they are currently a part of. And in a case where reality mirrors fiction, they are each unhappy in their own way.

While the US and its allies may rail against the recent referendum in the Crimea that broke the peninsula free of Ukraine, Scots will consider a very similar one on Sept. 18, and Catalans would very much like to do the same. So would residents of South Tyrol, and Flemish speakers in northern Belgium.

On the surface, many of these succession movements look like rich regions trying to free themselves from poor ones, but, while there is some truth in that, it is overly simplistic. Wealthier Flemish speakers in northern Belgium would indeed like to separate from the distressed, French speaking south, just as Tyroleans would like to free themselves of poverty-racked southern Italians. But in Scotland much of the fight is over preserving the social contract that conservative Labor and right-wing Tory governments have systematically dismantled. As for Cata-

lonia – well, it’s complicated.

Borders in Europe may appear immutable, but of course they are not. Sometimes they are changed by war, economic necessity, or because the powerful draw capricious lines that ignore history and ethnicity. The Crimea, conquered by Catherine the Great in 1783, was arbitrarily given to the Ukraine in 1954. Belgium was the outcome of a congress of European powers in 1830. Impoverished Scotland tied itself to wealthy England in 1707. Catalonia fell to Spanish and French armies in 1714. And the South Tyrol was a spoil of World War I.

Unemployment and austerity

In all of them, historical grievance, uneven development, and ethnic tensions have been exacerbated by a long-running economic crisis. There is nothing like unemployment and austerity to fuel the fires of secession.

The two most pressing – and the ones most likely to have a profound impact on the rest of Europe – are Scotland and Catalonia.

Both are unhappy in different ways.

Scotland always had a vocal, albeit marginal, nationalist party, but was traditionally dominated by the British Labour Party. The Conservatives hardly exist north of the Tweed. But Tony Blair’s “New Labour” Party’s record of spending cuts and privatization alienated many Scots, who spend more on their education and health services than

the rest of Britain. University tuition, for instance, is still free in Scotland, as are prescription drugs and home healthcare.

When Conservatives won the British election in 2010, their austerity budget savaged education, health care, housing subsidies, and transportation. Scots, angered at the cuts, voted for the Scottish National Party (SNP) in the 2011 elections for the Scottish parliament. The SNP immediately proposed a referendum that will ask Scots if they wanted to dissolve the 1707 Act of Union and once again become an independent country. If passed, the Scottish government proposes re-nationalizing the postal service and throwing nuclear-armed Trident submarines out of Scotland.

If one takes into account its North Sea oil resources, there is little doubt but that an independent Scotland would be viable. Scotland has a larger GDP per capita than France and, in addition to oil, exports manufactured goods and whisky. Scotland would become one of the world's top 35 exporting countries.

Giving up the pound

The Conservative government says that, if the Scots vote for independence, they will have to give up the pound as a currency. The Scots respond that, if the British follow through on their currency threat, Scotland will wash its hands of its portion of the British national debt. At this point, there is a standoff.

According to the British – and some leading officials in the European Union (EU) – an independent Scotland will lose its EU membership, but that may be bluster. For one, it would violate past practice.

When East and West Germany were united in 1990, some 20 million residents of the former German Democratic Republic were automatically given EU citizenship. If 5.3 million Scots are excluded, it will be the result of pique, not policy. In any case, with the Conservatives planning a referendum in 2017 that might pull Britain out of the EU, London is not exactly holding the high ground

on this issue.

If the vote were taken today, the Scots would probably vote to remain in Britain, but sentiment is shifting. The most recent poll indicates that 40 percent will vote for independence, a three percent increase. The “no” votes have declined by 2 percent to 45 percent, with 15 percent undecided. All Scottish residents over the age of 16 can vote. Given the formidable campaigning skills of Alex Salmond, Scotland's first minister, and leader of the SNP, those are chilling odds for the London government.

Catalonia, wedged up against France in Spain's northeast, has long been a powerful engine for the Spanish economy, and a region steeped in historical grievance. Conquered by the combined armies of France and Spain in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), it was also on the losing side of the 1936-'39 Spanish Civil War. In 1940, triumphant fascists suppressed Catalan language and culture and executed its president, Luis Companys, an act no Madrid government has ever made amends for.

Following Franco's death in 1975, Spain began its transformation to democracy, a road constructed by burying the deep animosities engendered by the Civil War. But the dead stay buried only so long, and a movement for Catalan independence began to grow.

In 2006 Catalonia won considerable autonomy, which was then overturned by the Supreme Tribunal in 2010 at the behest of the current ruling conservative Popular Party (PP). That 2010 decision fueled the growth of the Catalan independence movement, and in 2012 separatist parties in the province were swept into power.

Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's PP is pretty much an afterthought – 19 out of 135 seats – in Catalonia where several independence parties dominate the Catalan legislature. The largest of these is Province President Artur Mas's *Convergencia i Unio* (CiU), but the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC) doubled its representation in the legislature.

That doesn't mean they agree with one

The Conservative government says that, if the Scots vote for independence, they will have to give up the pound as a currency. The Scots respond that, if the British follow through on their currency threat, Scotland will wash its hands of its portion of the British national debt

THINGS FALL APART

The PP has been altogether ham-fisted about Catalonia and seems to delight in finding things to provoke Catalans

another. Mas's party tends to be centrist to conservative, while the ERC is leftist and opposed to the austerity program of the PP, some of which Mas has gone along with. The CiU's centrism is one of the reasons that Mas's party went from 62 seats to 50 in the 2012 election, while the ERC jumped from 10 to 21.

Unemployment is officially at 25 percent – but far higher among youth and in Spain's southern provinces – and the Left has thrown down the gauntlet. Over 100,000 people recently marched on Madrid demanding an end to austerity.

Rajoy – citing the 1976 constitution – refuses to allow an independence referendum, a stubbornness that has only fueled separatist strength. This past January the Catalan parliament voted 87 to 43 to hold a referendum, and polls show a majority in the province will support it. Six months ago, a million and a half Catalans marched in Barcelona for independence.

The PP has been altogether ham-fisted about Catalonia and seems to delight in finding things to provoke Catalans: Catalonia bans bull fighting, so Madrid passes a law making it a national cultural heritage. The Basques get to collect their own taxes, Catalans cannot.

How would the EU react to an independent Catalan? And would the central government in Madrid do anything about it? It is hard to imagine the Spanish army getting involved, although a former minister in the Franco government started Rajoy's party, and the dislike between Madrid and Barcelona is palpable.

Wait. There's more!

There are other fault lines on the continent.

Will Belgium split up? The fissure between the Flemish-speaking north and the French-speaking south is so deep it took 18 months to form a government after the last election. And if Belgium shatters, does it become two countries or get swallowed by France and the Netherlands?

The South Tyrol Freedom Party (STFP) is gearing up for an independence referendum and pressing for a merger with Austria, although the tiny province – called Alto Adige in Italy – has little to complain about. It keeps 90 percent of its taxes, and its economy has dodged the worst of the 2008 meltdown. But some of its German-Austrian residents are resentful of any money going to Rome, and there is a deep prejudice against Italians – who make up 25 percent of South Tyrol – particularly among those in the south. In this way the STFP is not very different than the racist, elitist Northern League centered in Italy's Po Valley.

It is instructive to watch the YouTube video on how borders in Europe have changed from 1519 to 2006, a period of less than 500 years. What we think of as eternal is ephemeral. The European continent is once again adrift, pulling apart along fault lines both ancient and modern.

How nations like Spain and Britain, and organizations like the EU, react to this process will determine if it will be civilized or painful. But trying to stop it will most certainly cause pain. **CT**

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Loss adjustment

When people say we should adapt to climate change, do they have any idea what that means? asks **George Monbiot**

To understand what is happening to the living planet, the great conservationist Aldo Leopold remarked, is to live “in a world of wounds ... An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise.”

The metaphor suggests that he might have seen Henrik Ibsen’s play “An Enemy of the People”. Thomas Stockmann is a doctor in a small Norwegian town, and medical officer at the public baths whose construction has been overseen by his brother, the mayor. The baths, the mayor boasts, “will become the focus of our municipal life! ... Houses and landed property are rising in value every day.”

But Dr Stockmann discovers that the pipes were built in the wrong place, and the water feeding the baths is contaminated. “The source is poisoned ... We are making our living by retailing filth and corruption! The whole of our flourishing municipal life derives its sustenance from a lie!” People bathing in the water to improve their health are instead falling ill.

Dr Stockmann expects to be treated as a hero for exposing this deadly threat. After the mayor discovers that re-laying the pipes would cost a fortune and probably sink the

whole project, he decides that his brother’s report “has not convinced me that the condition of the water at the baths is as bad as you represent it to be.” He proposes to ignore the problem, make some cosmetic adjustments and carry on as before. After all, “the matter in hand is not simply a scientific one. It is a complicated matter, and has its economic as well as its technical side.” The local paper, the baths committee and the business people side with the mayor against the doctor’s “unreliable and exaggerated accounts”.

Astonished and enraged, Dr Stockmann lashes out madly at everyone. He attacks the town as a nest of imbeciles, and finds himself, in turn, denounced as an enemy of the people. His windows are broken, his clothes are torn, he’s evicted and ruined.

Following the play

A recent editorial in the *Daily Telegraph*, which was by no means the worst of the recent commentary on this issue, follows the first three acts of the play. Marking the new assessment by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the paper sides with the mayor.

First it suggests that the panel cannot be trusted, partly because its accounts are unreliable and exaggerated and partly because it uses “model-driven assumptions” to forecast future trends. (What would the Tele-

After the mayor discovers that re-laying the pipes would cost a fortune and probably sink the whole project, he decides that his brother’s report “has not convinced me that the condition of the water at the baths is as bad as you represent it to be”

IBSEN'S WARNING

Climate breakdown proceeds in fits and starts, sudden changes of state against which, as we discovered on a small scale in January, preparations cannot easily be made

graph prefer? Tea leaves? Entrails?). Then it suggests that trying to stop man-made climate change would be too expensive. Then it proposes making some cosmetic adjustments and carrying on as before. ("Perhaps instead of continued doom-mongering, however, greater thought needs to be given to how mankind might adapt to the climatic realities.")

But at least the *Telegraph* accepted that the issue deserved some prominence. On the *Daily Mail's* website, climate breakdown was scarcely a footnote to the real issues of the day: "Kim Kardashian looks more confident than ever as she shows off her toned curves" and "Little George is the spitting image of Kate".

Beneath these indispensable reports was a story celebrating the discovery of "vast deposits of coal lying under the North Sea, which could provide enough energy to power Britain for centuries." No connection with the release of the new climate report was made. Like royal babies, Kim's curves and Ibsen's municipal baths, coal is good for business. Global warming, like Dr Stockmann's contaminants, is the spectre at the feast.

Everywhere we're told that it's easier to adapt to global warming than to stop causing it. This suggests that it's not only the Stern review on the economics of climate change (showing that it's much cheaper to avert climate breakdown than to try to live with it) that has been forgotten, but also the floods which have so recently abated. If a small, rich, well-organised nation cannot protect its people from a winter of exceptional rainfall – which might have been caused by less than one degree of global warming – what hope do other nations have, when faced with four degrees or more?

When our environment secretary, Owen Paterson, assures us that climate change "is something we can adapt to over time" or Simon Jenkins, in the *Guardian*, says that we should move towards "thinking intelligently about how the world should adapt to

what is already happening", what do they envisage? Cities relocated to higher ground? Roads and railways shifted inland? Rivers diverted? Arable land abandoned? Regions depopulated? Have they any clue about what this would cost? Of what the impacts would be for the people breezily being told to live with it?

No idea

My guess is that they don't envisage anything: they have no idea what they mean when they say adaptation. If they've thought about it at all, they probably picture a steady rise in temperatures, followed by a steady rise in impacts, to which we steadily adjust. But that, as we should know from our own recent experience, is not how it happens. Climate breakdown proceeds in fits and starts, sudden changes of state against which, as we discovered on a small scale in January, preparations cannot easily be made. Insurers working out their liability when a disaster has occurred use a process they call loss adjustment. It could describe what all of us who love this world are going through, as we begin to recognise that governments, the media and most businesses have no intention of seeking to avert the coming tragedies.

We are being told to accept the world of wounds; to live with the disappearance, envisaged in the new climate report, of coral reefs and summer sea ice, of most glaciers and perhaps some rainforests, of rivers and wetlands and the species which, like many people, will be unable to adapt.

As the scale of the loss to which we must adjust becomes clearer, grief and anger are sometimes overwhelming. You find yourself, as I have done in this column, lashing out at the entire town. **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>

Why are we paying to be spied on and robbed

Look how your hard-earned cash is being wasted, writes **John W. Whitehead**

“To force a man to pay for the violation of his own liberty is indeed an addition of insult to injury.” – Benjamin Tucker, 19th century advocate of American individualist anarchism

The US State Department wants \$400,000 to purchase a fiberglass sculpture of a camel looking at a needle for its new embassy in Pakistan. They’ve already spent their allotted \$630,000 to increase the number of “likes” and fans on their Facebook and Twitter pages. The NATO ambassador for the US needs \$700,000 for landscaping and gardening, the National Science Foundation would like \$700,000 to put on a theatrical production about climate change, and the Senate staffers need \$1.9 million for lifestyle coaching. Also, Yale University researchers could really use \$384,000 so they can study the odd cork-screw shape of a duck’s penis.

I promise this is no belated April Fools’ joke. These are actual line items paid for by American taxpayers, whose tax dollars continue to be wasted on extravagant, unnecessary items that serve no greater purpose than to fatten the wallets of corporations and feed political graft (such as the \$1 million bus stop, complete with heated benches and sidewalks which can only shelter 15 people and provides little protection from rain, snow, or the sun).

Case in point: despite the fact that we have 46 million Americans living at or below the poverty line, 16 million children living in households without adequate access to food, and at least 900,000 veterans relying on food stamps, enormous sums continue to be doled out for presidential vacations (\$16 million for trips to Africa and Hawaii), overtime fraud at the Department of Homeland Security (nearly \$9 million in improper overtime claims, and that’s just in six of the DHS’s many offices), and Hollywood movie productions (\$10 million was spent by the Army National Guard on Superman movie tie-ins aimed at increasing awareness about the National Guard).

This doesn’t even touch on the astronomical amounts of money spent on dubious wars abroad.

The costs of war

Consider that since 2001, Americans have spent \$10.5 million every hour for numerous foreign military occupations, including in Iraq and Afghanistan.

There’s also the \$2.2 million spent every hour on maintaining the United States’ nuclear stockpile, and the \$35,000 spent every hour to produce and maintain our collection of Tomahawk missiles. And then there’s the money the government exports to other countries to support their arsenals, at the cost of \$1.61 million every hour for

Americans have spent \$10.5 million every hour for numerous foreign military occupations, including in Iraq and Afghanistan

WAR ON WASTE

What we are witnessing is the emergence of a government mindset that interprets the Constitution one way for corporations, government entities and the wealthy, and uses a second measure altogether for average people

the American taxpayers.

Then there's the US Supreme Court's recent decision in *McCutcheon v. FEC*, which reinforces a government mindset in which the rights of the wealthy are affirmed by the courts, while the rights of average, working class Americans are routinely dismissed as secondary to corporate and governmental concerns. Under the guise of protecting free speech, a divided 5-4 Court did away with established limits on the number of candidates an individual can support with campaign contributions.

In doing so, the justices expanded on the Court's landmark 2010 ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC*, which not only gave unfettered free speech rights to corporations but paved the way for them to spend unlimited amounts of money promoting candidates, especially presidential candidates.

What this does, of course, is turn the ballot box into an auction block, wherein those who are "elected" to public office are bought and paid for by those who can afford to support their campaigns – namely, lobbyists, corporations and high-dollar donors. (Then again, perhaps it will remain status quo. According to a 2013 study by Trinity University, US Senators do not take into account the opinions and wishes of their lower class constituents. Rather, their voting was aligned with their upper class constituents. This dismissal of lower class opinion held true for both Republican and Democratic Senators, themselves made up of millionaires.)

When all is said and done, what we are witnessing is the emergence of a disconcerting government mindset that interprets the Constitution one way for corporations, government entities and the wealthy, and uses a second measure altogether for average Americans.

For example, contrast the Supreme Court's affirmation of the "free speech" rights of corporations and wealthy donors in *McCutcheon* and *Citizens United* with its tendency to deny those same rights to aver-

age Americans when government interests abound, such as in its 2012 decision in *Reichle v. Howards*, where a unanimous Supreme Court allowed immunity protections for Secret Service agents to trump the free speech rights of Americans, and you'll find a noticeable disparity.

Unfortunately, as I point out in my book "A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State", this constitutional double standard is coming to bear in all aspects of our lives, not just in the realm of campaign finance law.

It allows lobbyists intimate access to our elected officials, while prohibiting Americans from even standing silently in protest near a government building; it grants immunity to police officers who shoot unarmed citizens, while harshly punishing Americans who attempt to defend themselves, mistaking a SWAT team raid for a home invasion; and it gives government agents carte blanche access to Americans' communications and activities, while allowing the government to operate in secret, with secret hearings, secret budgets and secret agendas.

Militarized corporate empire

This is a far cry from how a representative government is supposed to operate. Indeed, it has been a long time since we could claim to be the masters of our own lives. Rather, we are now the subjects of a militarized, corporate empire in which the vast majority of the citizenry work their hands to the bone for the benefit of a privileged few.

Adding injury to the ongoing insult of having our tax dollars misused and our so-called representatives bought and paid for by the moneyed elite, the government then turns around and uses the money we earn with our blood, sweat and tears to target, imprison and entrap us, in the form of militarized police, surveillance cameras, private prisons, license plate readers, drones, and cell phone tracking technology.

All of those nefarious deeds that you read

about in the paper every day: those are your tax dollars at work. It's your money that allows for government agents to spy on your emails, your phone calls, your text messages, and your movements. It's your money that allows out-of-control police officers to burst into innocent people's homes, or probe and strip search motorists on the side of the road. And it's your money that leads to innocent Americans across the country being prosecuted for innocuous activities such as raising chickens at home, growing vegetable gardens, and trying to live off the grid.

Who's paying?

Just remember the next time you see a news story that makes your blood boil, whether it's a police officer arresting someone for filming them in public, or a child being kicked out of school for shooting an imaginary arrow, or a homeowner being threatened with fines for building a pond in his backyard, remember that it is your tax dollars that are paying for these injustices.

So what are you going to do about it?

There was a time in our history when our forebears said "enough is enough" and stopped paying their taxes to what they considered an illegitimate government. They stood their ground and refused to support a system that was slowly choking out any attempts at self-governance, and which refused to be held accountable for its crimes against the people. Their resistance sowed the seeds for the revolution that would follow.

Unfortunately, in the 200-plus years since we established our own government, we've let bankers, turncoats and number-crunch-

ing bureaucrats muddy the waters and pilfer the accounts to such an extent that we're back where we started. Once again, we've got a despotic regime with an imperial ruler doing as they please. Once again, we've got a judicial system insisting we have no rights under a government which demands that the people march in lockstep with its dictates. And once again, we've got to decide whether we'll keep marching or break stride and make a turn toward freedom.

But what if we didn't just pull out our pocketbooks and pony up to the federal government's outrageous demands for more money? What if we didn't just dutifully line up to drop our hard-earned dollars into the collection bucket, no questions asked about how it will be spent? What if, instead of quietly sending in our checks, hoping vainly for some meager return, we did a little calculating of our own and started deducting from our taxes those programs that we refuse to support?

If we don't have the right to decide what happens to our hard-earned cash, then we don't have very many rights at all. If they can just take from you what they want, when they want, and then use it however they want, you can't claim to be anything more than a serf in a land they think of as theirs. This was the case in the colonial era, and it's the case once again. **CT**

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John W. Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and author. He is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute and editor of GadflyOnline.com. His latest book "A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State" (SelectBooks) is available at amazon.com

It's your money that leads to innocent people being prosecuted for innocuous activities such as raising chickens at home, growing vegetable gardens, and trying to live off the grid

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ON STRIKE

Standing by their men

An excerpt from the new book, *Images Of The Past: The Miners' Strike*.
Photographs: **Martin Jenkinson**. Words: **Mark Metcalf**

Anne Scargill, wife of miners' leader Arthur Scargill, speaks at International Women's Day rally Chesterfield. (March 5, 1985)

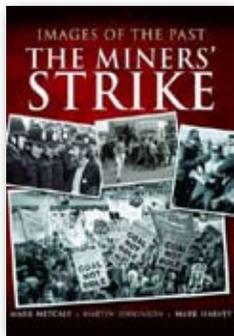


The coal miners' strike of 1984/5 was the longest, most bitterly fought national strike in British history. For a year over 100,000 members of the National Union of Mineworkers, their families and supporters, battled to prevent the decimation of the industry on which their communities depended. Margaret Thatcher's government aimed to smash the most militant section of the British working class so she could refashion society in favour of neo-liberal objectives that three decades later have crippled the world economy. At the heart of the conflict was the Yorkshire region, where the union photographer in 1984-85 was the late **Martin Jenkinson**, whose photographs are a unique social document on the dispute that changed the face of Britain



Councillor Margaret Hughes applauds a speaker at a Labour party rally in support of striking miners at Stoke on Trent, (November 30, 1984)

ON STRIKE



IMAGES OF THE PAST: THE MINERS' STRIKE

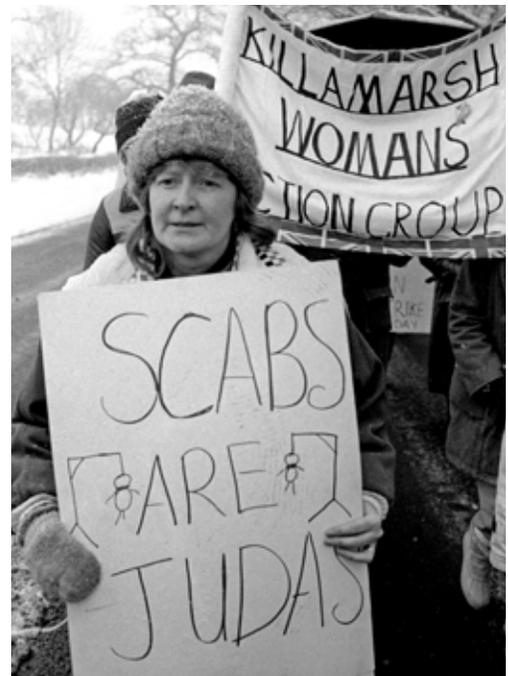
By Mark Harvey,
Martin Jenkinson,
Mark Metcalf

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The independent organising of welfare facilities – including social housing – had always been a big part of mining communities throughout Britain. ‘Societies’ created a community base of support for the sick and needy, generating a collective spirit that had stood the test of time. If the miners in 1984 were to stay out for any length of time then they were going to need everyone in their local communities to get involved.

In the lead-up to the strike there had been discussions in many mining communities about setting up communal kitchens, attached to which would be food-parcel centres. The aim was to prevent people being forced back to work by poverty. Women’s support groups quickly sprang up to turn the ideas into reality.

The women involved, many of whom





This page: First national women's march in support of striking miners, Barnsley. (May 12 1984)

Previous page (Top): Women support striking miners, Chesterfield. (March 3 1984)

Previous page (Bottom): Women march around the Derbyshire coalfield during the strike.

ON STRIKE

Right: Miners' wives and members of women's support groups make up food parcels for striking miners' families during the 1984–85 strike. (April 30, 1984)



Above: Counting teabags at Ellington Miners Support Group, Ashington. (Dec 6, 1984)

had never previously addressed a meeting in their life but who were by no means apolitical, were to find themselves plunged into the most exciting times of their lives as they spoke at many meetings and rallies, raised funds, provided welfare rights advice, took part in picketing and challenged the full force of the State, including the police. Some also took part despite resistance

at home from their partners who were not used to seeing women as equals who took a public role in political affairs.

Without the women's efforts there is no doubt the strike would not have lasted anywhere near as long. Amongst the women involved were a number who were on strike themselves from their jobs working in administrative roles in big NCB regional of-



fices, the pit canteens and cleaning offices. (Sadly there appear to be no reliable figures on the actual numbers of women strikers.)

In east Durham the women in the SEAM campaign swiftly organised kitchens in the Easington area. Very quickly there were established over 50 miners' support groups in the county and this helped ensure that Durham remained totally solid for the first five months of the strike.

Having started out by attempting to use women, and miners' wives in particular, as victims of an irresponsible strike the media were unable to ignore the highly politicised voice of women in mining communities. In the first few days of the strike the papers were full of stories in which women in Nottinghamshire were urging their husbands not to strike. In Barnsley, five women met and wrote to the *Barnsley Chronicle* to coun-

Above: Sheffield WAPC at Labour party local govt conference showing 'fists full of fivers'.

ON STRIKE



Left: Serving food to strikers' families at Barnsley (April 30, 1984)

ter the suggestion that women weren't in favour of the strike. Seeing the letter it wasn't long before other women were stimulated into getting involved.

Over the next few weeks the group helped with supplementary benefit claims for wives and children of striking miners. Welfare Rights workers provided the wom-

en with advice. In the following months the 50 women in Barnsley Women Against Pit Closures (BWAPC) organised 16 different kitchens, each providing 300 meals. The women also had to find the money to pay for the meals as, by and large, all women's support groups were responsible for finding their own funds.



In Carmarthenshire, Cynhedire WAPC raised £1,000–£1,500 a week to pay for their kitchen whilst in Faudhouse in West Lothian women collected in their village every day. In Kent the Women’s Committee regularly received food from the *Daily Mirror* printers and at Christmas turkeys arrived from Smithfield Market.

At their weekly meeting on 22 April 1984 BWAPC agreed to hold an All Women’s rally on 12 May 1984. Three women – Lorraine Bowler from Barnsley, Annette Hoyroyd of Nottingham (whose birthday it was) and

Maureen Douglass of Doncaster – were invited to speak, along with Jack Taylor and miners’ leader Arthur Scargill. Both men encouraged the women to lead the march and maintained a position, surrounded by children, a couple of rows behind.

Everyone involved hoped for at least 2,000 to turn up on the big day. At least five times as many came from all parts of the country and they were cheered all the way by people lining the street as they marched.

At the rally in Barnsley Civic Hall Lorraine Bowler said: “This fight does not just belong

Above: Miners’ wives and members of women’s support groups serving food to striking miners’ families during the 1984–85 strike – Cortonwood Miners Welfare. (July 23, 1984)

ON STRIKE



Above: National women's support group march and rally in London. (August 11, 1984)

to the men, it belongs to us all. It has been good over the weeks to compare how some men have reacted to women's involvement in the beginning and how they react now. It has been a gradual acceptance for most. The reception we receive from the men on picket lines and demonstrations is tremendous ... Being active, as we are, takes away most of the uncertainty that is involved in a strike ... We cannot allow this Government to decimate our industry and our communities. Is that what we want for our kids?

"In this country, we aren't separated as a class. We are separated as men and women ... I have seen change coming for years and the last few weeks has seen it as its best. If this Government thinks its fight is only with the miners, they are sadly mistaken. They are now fighting men, women and families."

As a result of the day's events links were

forged that established a national women's group – Women against Pit Closures – in all but name. Possibly the first ever national working class women's organisation, this was formally constituted on 22 July 1984 when miners' wives (around 75% of those present) and women supporters representing every British coalfield met at Northern College, Barnsley for their inaugural delegate conference.

This was called to co-ordinate a National Women's Demonstration in London with the purpose of highlighting women's support for the miners in their fight for jobs and against pit closures as well as to inform the public of the effects the pit closure programme would have on mining communities. It was intended to present the DHSS with a bill for £45,000,000, the sum that had been deducted from striking miners' social security entitlements over the first

20 weeks of the strike.

There was also to be a 100,000-signature petition presented to the Queen appealing to her to speak on behalf of the miners' defence of their jobs and communities. 15,000 women from all coalfields descended on the capital on 11 August, proving that the women behind the strike were determined to continue the struggle. **CT**

THE PHOTOGRAPHER: Martin Jenkinson (right) became a freelance photographer after being made redundant at a Sheffield factory in 1979. He specialised in industrial and trade union assignments. Martin was the official photographer on the People's March for Jobs in 1981 and was the photographer for the NUM newspaper the *Yorkshire Miner* during the strike against pit closures of 1984-85, the images he recorded being featured in this book. His daughter Justine has been managing his extensive photographic library since his death in June 2012.



who also works as a campaigning freelance journalist, particularly for the Big Issue in the North magazine and the publications of Unite the Union. A factory shop steward in 1984-85, Mark was a member of Save Easington Area Mines, an organiser at Peterlee support kitchen and a regular on picket lines. He is a member of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign.

THE WRITER: Mark Metcalf is a football author

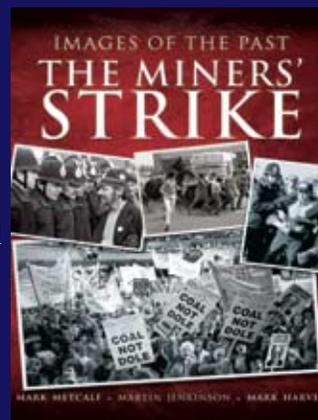
IMAGES OF THE PAST

THE MINERS' STRIKE

MARK METCALF • MARTIN JENKINSON • MARK HARVEY



The 1984/5 coalminers' strike was the longest, most bitter industrial dispute in British history. For over a year, hundreds of communities battled to prevent the decimation of an industry on which their livelihoods depended. Detailed, well written and lavishly illustrated, this book is a must-read and especially relevant on the 30th anniversary of the Miners' Strike.



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Panda Sutra

Forbes Howie on the ups and downs of getting grumpy bears to have sex

Getting the urine is not easy. Tian Tian lives alone in a big cage. She has been trained to urinate in a particular place, which is a small den with a concrete floor that is indented to make it easier to collect samples

There is nothing intrinsic to pandas that makes them bad at breeding. It is true that they only have one menstrual cycle each year, but this is true of many creatures. Animals that have multiple cycles per year, such as humans, cows, dogs and sheep, are the unusual ones.

Pandas are no different in their menstrual cycles from deer, stoats and badgers. The reason why pandas are going extinct is nothing to do with these cycles. It is because so much of their natural environment has been destroyed.

There has never been a panda birth in the UK. London Zoo had pandas in the 1970s and 1980s which never managed to produce any offspring. This is the second year in which Edinburgh Zoo has tried. They were fairly confident they had a fertilised egg last year that implanted, but for reasons unknown the female panda, Tian Tian, lost the foetus.

We have been less successful than others in this respect. The Chinese have become especially good at breeding pandas over the years, but other countries have also succeeded. In Europe, both Vienna and Madrid Zoos bred a panda cub last year, for example.

Various American zoos with pandas have produced as many as ten pairs and have been successful about half the time.

To help Edinburgh, the zoo is flying over a behavioural specialist from one of the panda centres in China and artificial reproduction experts from The Institute of Zoo and Wildlife Biology in Berlin.

At the laboratory in Edinburgh University, we are supporting the effort by carrying out two main tasks for the zoo. We are going to tell them when Tian Tian, the female panda, is ovulating and then we are going to tell them whether she is pregnant.

The bear necessities

For the first task, I have been spending a lot of time monitoring panda urine. We are looking at the oestrogen levels, which rise near the time of ovulation. Once Tian Tian ovulates and the egg is released, that's the prime time for her to mate.

We are measuring the levels daily at the moment and will move to twice a day once they are close to their peak. We think this is going to happen this month.

Getting the urine is not easy. Tian Tian lives alone in a big cage. She has been trained to urinate in a particular place, which is a small den with a concrete floor that is indented to make it easier to collect samples.

But probably because of the changes in her oestrogen levels, which is making her think about nesting, her normal behaviour patterns have gone askew. Like humans,

she normally likes to pee first thing in the morning, but she doesn't seem to be doing that at the moment. She's also not drinking as much as usual, so she's not peeing as much.

And she has started to pee outside her den, on earth and grass. So the keepers are keeping watch on her 24 hours a day over closed-circuit TV cameras. As soon as she's peed, they try to get in to suck it up in a syringe so that it can be sent to my lab for analysis.

Hidden cameras, raging sow

But to make matters more difficult, Tian and Tian and the male panda, Yang Guang, are a bit grumpy. They look cuddly, but the keepers warned me not to put my arms through the bars because they could quite easily take your arm off. This makes it harder to collect those urine samples. If she pees in the wrong place and doesn't move away, the sample soaks into the earth and is lost.

Pandas have to be kept in solitary, otherwise they would fight one another. We are talking about very expensive animals. They cost about £600,000 a year in protection funding to have from China and they have to be returned at the end of the ten-year term, so the zoo has to be very careful not to damage them in any way.

To create the ideal conditions for mating, the zoo has been working on various behavioural techniques. The pandas have swapped cages so that it recreates the conditions in the wild and allows the animals to scent one another.

For fear of causing the animals too much stress, a film crew that has been making a documentary about the mating story has been restricted in its efforts to record footage. For the same reason, we are also checking stress hormone levels. Only when the moment is right will the pandas be put together.

Once mating has taken place and we move to our second task of measuring

whether Tian Tian is pregnant, things are still not straightforward. Pandas come into heat in the springtime because that is when the bamboo is moist and nutritious. But over the summer, when bamboo gets woodier and less nutritious, panda can go through what we call pseudo-pregnancy, where the fertilised egg sits in the uterus.

This lasts anything from six to 12 weeks, and it can be particularly difficult to tell whether the panda is pregnant during this time. Because there is no placenta, you can't test pandas for placental markers in the urine in the way that you do in human pregnancy kits.

It will only be in the autumn that the fertilised egg implants into the lining of the uterus and starts to develop. The gestation period is then probably about 35 to 40 days, but even then it's very difficult to test for pregnancy in the human way because the panda's body size is tiny compared to the mother. Even when baby pandas are born, they are only about six inches long.

We are going to work on various ideas to see whether we can come up with a pregnancy test. It's too early to go into detail about the techniques that we will use, but it will involve looking at certain different steroids and proteins and making comparisons with samples of pregnant pandas from other zoos around the world.

Once we have established that Tian Tian is pregnant, we will continue checking stress hormone levels, since it is well known that stress in the mother can cause her to abort the baby. In the meantime, all we do is focus on our daily laboratory results. It won't guarantee a panda cub later this year, but it will certainly give us the best possible chance. **CT**

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Forbes Howie is head of Specialised Assay Service at University of Edinburgh. This article was originally published by The Conversation at <http://theconversation.com>

Pandas look cuddly, but the keepers warned me not to put my arms through the bars because they could quite easily take your arm off

The end of the middle class

Andrew S. Fischer discusses the hollowing out and destruction of the middle class . . . and warns of the revolution that will follow

My Economics 101 professor stated that mature economies tend to become service economies, with a strong implication that a service economy is superior to a manufacturing economy

The middle class is doomed, and very soon there will be a new class paradigm in the United States. The next few decades will be a difficult period as the transition unfolds. While there is probably some overlap in the current model of class in the United States, it is generally bracketed as follows:

- **Lower class:** the dependent poor, and workers barely earning a subsistence living
- **Working class:** hourly-wage earners, blue collar, high school educations
- **Lower middle:** lower level, white collar, some college or undergraduate degrees
- **Upper middle:** graduate degrees, higher level jobs, 100K-150K+ annual income
- **Upper class:** 200K-250K+ annual income, politically and socially connected

The new model will have just four classes:

- **Dependent class:** non-workers completely dependent on government largess
- **Subsistence class:** workers barely surviving, with no ability to save money
- **Comfortable class:** higher level jobs, able to accumulate savings and retire
- **One-Percenter:** the elite and connected, clearly the rulers of the nation

I'm not alone in seeing this. A great essay on the subject is "The Death (and Rebirth) of the Middle Class," by Paul Rosenberg, which can be found on the web. The book

"Coming Apart" by Charles Murray superbly illustrates the growing chasm between lower-middle-class and upper-middle-class neighborhoods. Gerald Celente, astute observer and publisher of the *Trends Journal*, often comments in web videos about this very problem. My purpose here is not to mimic these valuable sources, but to share my own thoughts.

My first fleeting thoughts about class germinated in childhood, around 1960. For some reason it came up at family dinner one evening, and my parents informed me that "we're lower-middle-class." Ten years later, my Economics 101 professor stated that mature economies tend to become service economies, with a strong implication that a service economy is superior to a manufacturing economy. However, I intuitively suspected that was a bad idea, and still do now, because obviously many services can be delayed or dropped. This is what we have today – a far more service-oriented and a far less manufacturing-oriented economy: more services which can be foregone if necessary (with many paying low wages), and fewer "breadwinner," material-goods-producing jobs.

Ten years after college, I wrote a short story entitled "Bowl Bound," (which can be found at amazon.com in my collection "Purgastories"), where a man from the future says, "by the year 2010, the world is po-

larized. There are the have's, and there are the have-not's. There are few in-betweens." My character may have been a little early, but the concept of a new class structure had obviously occurred to me over thirty years ago.

There are several reasons for this coming disastrous state of affairs. One was expressed in an essay handed to me by a work-acquaintance twenty years ago. I've searched for it on the web but can't find it, so I'm unable to credit its author. The gist of it was that the upper class had abandoned its role as the arbiter of good taste. In prior decades, the upper class had been seen by the other classes as an enviable state of being, and not simply because it had money. The members of the upper crust fancied intellectual pursuits, opera, fine art, etc., and the hoi polloi desired to emulate them. This tended to uplift the masses and encourage their aspirations. At some point, however, this changed. More and more unrefined people became very wealthy and barged into the ranks of the upper class. The elite's tastes drifted downward. Also, in my opinion, the advent of television, which in the 1960s unmistakably began catering to the mob taste, was a major factor here. I'll return to this later.

Another cause of the hollowing out of the middle class is the combination of disastrous government policies and corporate greed. As Celente correctly notes, the merger of state and corporate interests is the definition of fascism. That's what we have now. Again paraphrasing Celente, when certain businesses are deemed "too big to fail" by the powers that be, then it's clear that state and corporate interests have merged. He also identifies D.C. politicians and insiders, the big banks, Wall Street, and the Harvard-Yale-Princeton combine as our ruling axis of evil. In 1956, C. Wright Mills' "The Power Elite" (written that year) started this ball rolling, at least for me.

It's all there on the web for anyone to research. When "most favored nation" status

was granted to China in 1979, and Slick Willie Clinton reversed himself and renewed it in 1994, the game was over. Once China became quasi-capitalist and had access to the US market, its economy would become as good as gold. Prices for many consumer goods in the US dropped. Big US corporations found they could be more profitable making things in Asian factories and shipping them here. Labor costs over there were a small fraction of what they were in the USA. It was a new corporate world. It became all about the money, nothing else. Corporate leaders gave little thought to all the US jobs being sucked up by China. It was great for the consumer, true, but if consumers no longer earned income to buy the imported goods, what then?

The national government, in its usual myopic slog, rode to the rescue. Sure, just expand the welfare state. More people on food stamps, more on disability, Medicaid, welfare. No thought given to the problems this might cause, of course. Besides, "the more we hand out, the more votes we get." Business as usual in DC . . .

Today we're reaping the whirlwind and seeing what's happening to the middle class. Jobs which formerly were performed in lower class neighborhoods with high school level skills – light manufacturing, assembly, mom-and-pop stores, and the like – have migrated to China or local mega-retailers like Wal-Mart. In other words, a considerable amount of more or less breadwinner work has either disappeared or shifted to China, Wal-Mart and McDonald's. At one time, a married, working couple in a blue-collar neighborhood working in, say, a small toy factory could earn a decent living, but today they'd be lucky to make \$20 per hour between them. That might be enough to get by, but not to raise a family or save for retirement.

A friend recently sparked a key insight. What happens when the local factory closes, when decent-paying jobs for high-school graduates disappear? The cry of "re-educate

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THE NEW ECONOMY

As their already meager sources of income deteriorate, it's clear that most of today's lower class families will form the base of the new Dependent class

tion” is usually bandied about, but it’s not that simple. In colonial days, and doubtless all the way into the beginning of the industrial revolution, if you lost your job due to technological improvements it wasn’t that hard to find a new one. That was because most jobs required unskilled and manual labor. If your employer closed his ropetwisting house’s doors you could find a job down the road chopping down trees or building barrels at a similar wage. This isn’t true today. Losing your job stings; you’re without work for a long period and will likely obtain one at a lower wage. Many manual jobs have disappeared, and brainpower is what counts. A person assembling heating pads on a line, blister-packing small items or spot-welding metal boxes cannot easily train to become a computer programmer. Instead, they are forced to flip burgers or stock the shelves at Target – and what happens when even those jobs are lost during the upcoming Age of Robots?

Obviously, many blue-collar or lower-class (and my intent is not to use the term in a derogatory manner) workers who lose their jobs to 21st century automation will end up in lower-paying jobs, or none at all. At worst, they’ll end up on welfare and in the dependent class. At best, they’ll live at mere survival levels, and will be members of what I call the Subsistence class. These people will have plenty of company, however. As technologies improve, more and more white-collar jobs will shift elsewhere around the globe, especially to English-speaking India. Many people have already encountered this trend when phoning their cable company for support, much to their irritation. Labor is cheaper over there, of course, so the trend will expand. As long as the subsistence class can pay its cable bills, Comcast and its ilk won’t care.

In my own field, accounting, I’ve seen the double-edged sword of technology at work, close-hand. I practically fell in love with computer accounting in the late 1970s. It eliminated the drudge-work of manual

bookkeeping, improved accuracy and efficiency, and actually made it fun (at least for me). Over time, improvements made the software much more reliable, so much so that now practically anyone can perform bookkeeping tasks (and thousands of people proudly proclaim to be “certified QuickBooks experts”). Unfortunately, this development eliminated what were breadwinner jobs fifty years ago and transformed them into low-paying clerkships. Sure, you can shrug and say “that’s progress,” but not every bookkeeper has the ability to become a CPA and retain his or her standard of living. Also, someday soon everything will become paperless, and when that happens it will all be done over the web and/or in India. More jobs will be lost, as keyboard-punchers fall by the wayside. Perhaps more programmers will be needed, but today’s bookkeepers and accountants will likely be unable to make that transition and will end up with lower wages. It’s not the same as going from muleskinner to wood-chopper.

As their already meager sources of income deteriorate, it’s clear that most of today’s lower class families will form the base of the new Dependent class. Some current working class members will also move, unwillingly, into the Dependent class, while others will become members of the Subsistence class. This divergence applies to lower middle, upper middle and upper class members, as well. Most of these people will find their economic positions forced downward. Most of the lower middle class will end up in the new Subsistence class. Upper middle workers will split into the Subsistence and Comfortable classes. The majority of the upper class will be demoted into the Comfortable class; a select few will make it into the One-Percenters.

The colossal, ever-increasing national and global expansion of currency and debt can only accelerate the above process.

Much has been said and written about the 1% of the population whose wealth has flourished while everyone else’s has

remained stagnant. Some commentators insist that the extremely wealthy have achieved their status as a result of “hard work,” a phrase which is tossed about with such regularity that I consider it a form of brainwashing. We can get ahead in life through “hard work,” it is said. It is never just “work,” but always “hard work.” This may be true; working hard can get you noticed and appreciated by an employer, and result in more responsibility and income.

However, I believe that the majority of One-Percenters did not arrive at their fortunes through hard work. Rather, most of them have either inherited their wealth, been in the right place at the right time with the right product (internet boom), exploited various systems and changes in laws (financial houses), or made money by its creation out of thin air (big banks). Working long hours at a desk and making deals does not necessarily equate with hard work. To me, hard work is digging coal out of a mine, or the drudgery of an assembly line. It is not trading stocks and bonds on a computer. I understand how difficult it is to build up any business, but the type of business matters. As author Philip Wylie once wrote, “profit as the sole reason for a business is not enough.” In other words, businesses need to provide something worthwhile. Trading securities (or comic books) provides no value and doesn’t pass the test.

Many commentators believe that today’s entrepreneurs are no greedier than those of the past. I disagree, however, and believe that the current crop is greedier than their counterparts of yesteryear. As society’s values have changed over the past five or six decades, so have the views of corporate America’s movers and shakers. There is far less concern over ethical behavior, and even less over the treatment of employees. The business world has become a lot more ruthless, with the profit motive assuming far more importance. Corporations think nothing of sending their jobs to China in order to increase their bottom line. After all, the

stockholders must be kept happy. It doesn’t occur to them, or they don’t seem to mind, that as the bulk of the middle class melds into the Subsistence class its members will no longer be able to buy their products.

Anyone can see that the nation’s values have changed since 1960, and these are reflected in the business world. For example, divorce once carried a certain stigma. While the “tragedy of a broken marriage” was doubtless unjustified and overblown, once the shame factor was removed and divorce was considered an acceptable part of human life, the divorce rate skyrocketed. Although not necessarily a bad thing in itself, the resultant increase in single-parent households is definitely a bad thing. Study after study proves that children do much better in a home with two parents. It’s almost a matter of common sense – think about a kid living with a working class mom, no father around. Perhaps she works two jobs to keep them both afloat and the kid’s on his own a lot. Are his chances of success as good as a kid with both parents, even if both are working?

Higher divorce rates, lower SAT scores, the failure of public schools, technological distractions (computer games, smart phones, e.g.) and other attitudinal changes have infiltrated the minds of businesspeople as well as the general population. The culture has changed, and not for the better. The main driver of this process was, in my mind, television, which duly deserves a few paragraphs here.

Everyone has an opinion about TV. In my mind, the following quote is truly telling:

“[W]hen television is bad, nothing is worse. I invite each of you to sit down in front of your own television set when your station goes on the air and stay there, for a day, without a book, without a magazine, without a newspaper, without a profit and loss sheet or a rating book to distract you. Keep your eyes glued to that set until the station signs off. I can assure you that what you will observe is a *vast wasteland*.”

As society’s values have changed over the past five or six decades, so have the views of corporate America’s movers and shakers. There is far less concern over ethical behavior, and even less over the treatment of employees

THE NEW ECONOMY

TV promotes and glamorizes stupidity, mindlessness, vulgarity, rudeness, cruelty, trivial matters, magical thinking, and violence

“You will see a procession of game shows, formula comedies about totally unbelievable families, blood and thunder, mayhem, violence, sadism, murder, western bad men, western good men, private eyes, gangsters, more violence, and cartoons. And endlessly commercials – many screaming, cajoling, and offending. And most of all, boredom. True, you’ll see a few things you will enjoy. But they will be very, very few. And if you think I exaggerate, I only ask you to try it.” [Source: Wikipedia]

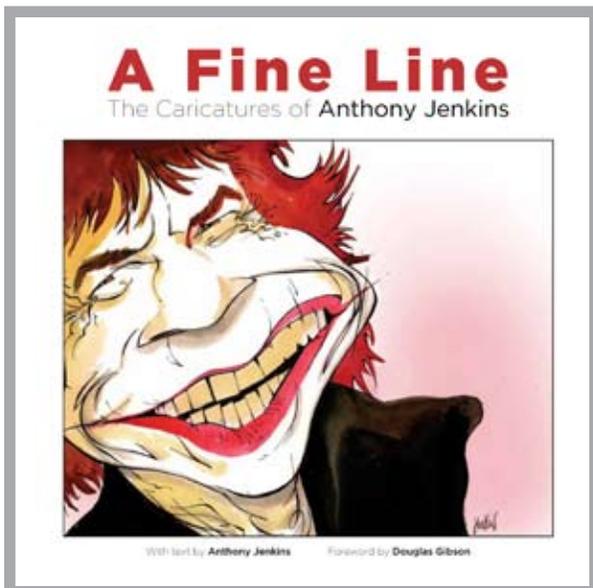
The above was presented in a speech by Newton N. Minow in 1961. He had just been appointed chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. Clearly, nothing has changed since then. Well, perhaps something has changed. The overall level of the proffered “entertainment” has decreased to the point where it encourages its viewers to emulate the worst of us. It promotes and glamorizes stupidity, mindlessness, vulgarity, rudeness, cruelty, trivial matters, magical thinking, and violence. Television is a terrible influence on society. It has become an idiot-box times twenty, a super-cretin-nitwit-box. Its defenders, who claim that TV has little effect on our society, are mistaken or lying. Television has been

the major source of our memes for at least fifty years, and most of them have been and continue to be appalling. But high-brow programming loses viewers and advertising revenues and, as noted above, the bottom line is what counts.

Again, that pesky bottom line. Whatever happened to employers who cared, at least to some degree, about their employees? Did they go by the wayside during the industrial revolution, when factory owners earned millions while paying their assembly-line employees pennies a day? Naturally, job-creators deserve higher incomes than unskilled laborers, but thousands of times as much? Are the One-Percenters really worth that much? Perhaps a few are, but only a few.

When the middle class melds into the four-class system I’ve depicted here, I wonder how long that system will last, and what will come after it. If history is any guide, I’m betting on a French Revolution right here at home. Be very afraid. Especially you One-Percenters. **CT**

.....
Andrew S. Fischer is an accountant, author, and designer of the *Ice Cold Ice Hockey* card game.



Again and again in these portraits, also, we see a tiny detail apparently catching the essence of the character, what in bolder times would have been called “the soul”.

Douglas Gibson

“The stark simplicity is stunning and the faces, often accentuated by a single feature are chillingly recognizable”.

Tony Sutton, ColdType

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We don't want you to swim in the river

Kathy Kelly on the effects of our latest weapons of despair

Last month, the US Navy unveiled its Mach 7 Magnetic Mangler, “a railgun straight out of Star Trek that can take out targets at 100 miles with a projectile flying at nearly 7,000 feet per second.” So far, the US military has spent \$240 million developing the railgun over a period of ten years. CBS News reports that the railgun won't go to sea until 2016, but one article suggests that the US military may have decided to show off the Magnetic Mangler in order to send a message to the Russian government.

While the American public gets to see the weapon, so do America's enemies. The military in recent years has timed the unveiling of new technology to global events.

The last time North Korea got frisky, the Navy showed off an anti-missile laser.

Now, with the crisis continuing in the Ukraine, the Navy is showing off something even scarier.

In advance of the University of Wisconsin's recent “Resources for Peace” conference, a professor friend asked participants to consider whether the increasing competition for depleted global resources, for goods to meet essential human needs, would tend inevitably to make people less humane. She was thinking particularly about what she termed “the shrinking humanism” seen in dystopian novels and films that portray cruelty and violence among people who fear for

their survival.

I posed her question to Buddy Bell, one of my young friends here at Voices for Creative Non-Violence, who has traveled to several war zones and has worked steadily among people suffering displacement and poverty in the United States. “Well,” he said, after a long pause, “there are precedents for dramatic and selfless service on behalf of sustaining a community, even in a time of desperation and war.” Then he went to his room and got me a CD. “Listen to the story Utah Phillips tells on Track 3,” he said.

Taking a swim

Utah Phillips, a folk singer and storyteller, had been a US soldier in Korea. His son asked if he had ever shot anyone. He said he didn't know, but that whether or not he shot anyone wasn't the story.

He told his son about a day when he was longing to take a swim in the Imjin River. His clothes and boots were rotting, and he had mold growing on his body. Chinese soldiers on the other side were having a wonderful time swimming.

Why, then, were the local Koreans insisting he must not swim in the river? “A young Korean told me, ‘You know, when we get married here, the young married couple moves in with the elders, they move in with the grandparents, but there's nothing growing! Everything's been destroyed, there's

He told his son about a day when he was longing to take a swim in the Imjin River. His clothes and boots were rotting, and he had mold growing on his body

ONE LIFE

Among the main casualties of war are those who starve and fall ill when valuable farmland is left as minefields

no food. So, the first baby that's born, the oldest, the old man, goes out with a jug of water and a blanket, sits on the bank of the river and waits to die. Then, when he dies, he'll roll over the bank and into the Imjin River and his body will be carried out to sea. And we don't want you to swim in the river because our elders are floating out to sea."

Utah Phillips seemed to want his son to understand that leaving people with nothing when you have everything is as serious a crime as shooting them. Utah Phillips, at least, consented not to use a resource he could have decided was free to everyone, out of respect for the cost his use would impose on people already giving up everything so that their young could survive with next to nothing.

The tradition of selfless and benevolent behavior continues in Korea's Jeju Island. Last month, we said goodbye to Joyakjol, a young South Korean activist who is part of the intergenerational campaign to protest construction of a US military base on the pristine shores of Jeju Island. Every morning, activists commit civil disobedience at the gates, risking arrest to block the trucks and construction equipment that come to tear apart their land.

Kids at risk

People living in landlocked Afghanistan also struggle to cope with consequences of interventionary struggles. They face mounting costs in lives and resources. Kevin Seiff, reporting for the *Washington Post*, has written several articles about risks to Afghan civilians, especially children, posed by undetonated grenades, rockets and mortar shells the US military leaves behind as it vacates scores of firing ranges in Afghanistan.

Dozens of children have been killed or wounded as they have stumbled upon the ordnance at the sites, which are often poorly marked. Casualties are likely to increase sharply; the US military has removed the munitions from only 3 percent of the territory covered by its sprawling ranges, offi-

cial said.

Clearing the rest of the contaminated land – which in total is twice as big as New York City – could take two to five years. US military officials say they intend to clean up the ranges. But because of a lack of planning, officials say, funding has not yet been approved for the monumental effort, which is expected to cost \$250 million.

According to the Mine Action Program in Afghanistan, most of the land requiring clearance would otherwise be used for agriculture, a "significant obstacle in a country where 70% of the labour force earns an income through farming or animal husbandry."

Among the main casualties of war are those who starve and fall ill when valuable farmland is left as minefields.

Some people pull together in the face of scarcity; some demand everything even when others have nothing. Today's crop of grim, dystopian novels and films, the concern of my professor friend, may at times ignore the kindness and solidarity that can occur among the dispossessed.

When many impoverished people, worldwide, don't want "the haves" to invade them, when, as "have-nots," they say, 'please, this is ours, it is almost all that we have, we cannot have you storming in and claiming it because you can,' we are astonishingly ill-equipped to understand their objection and honor their need.

These weapons we tout aren't futuristic; they announce our lack of a future. But everywhere around us, we can spot people who are volunteering to live simply so that others can simply live. And that choice is, in reality, open to each of us. **CT**

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Kathy Kelly (Kathy@vcnv.org)
co-coordinates *Voices for Creative Nonviolence* www.vcnv.org and is active with the *World Beyond War* campaign www.WorldBeyondWar.org When in Afghanistan, she is a guest of the *Afghan Peace Volunteers* (ourjournetytosmile.com)

Eight headlines the media won't print

Paul Buccheit highlights some hard news stories that we never read

The following are all relevant, fact-based issues, the “hard news” stories that the media has a responsibility to report. But the business-oriented press generally avoids them.

1. US Wealth Up \$34 Trillion Since Recession. 93% of You Got Almost None of It.

That's an average of \$100,000 for every American. But the people who already own most of the stocks took almost all of it. For them, the average gain was well over a million dollars – tax-free as long as they don't cash it in.

2. Eight Rich Americans Made More Than 3.6 Million Minimum Wage Workers

A recent report stated that no full-time minimum wage worker in the US can afford a one-bedroom or two-bedroom rental at fair market rent. There are 3.6 million such workers, and their total (combined) 2013 earnings is less than the 2013 stock market gains of just eight Americans, all of whom take more than their share from society: the four Waltons, the two Kochs, Bill Gates, and Warren Buffett.

3. News Sources Speak for the 5%

It would be refreshing to read an honest editorial: “We dearly value the 5 to 7 percent of our readers who make a lot of mon-

ey and believe that their growing riches are helping everyone else.”

Instead, the business media seems unable to differentiate between the top 5 percent and the rest of society. The *Wall Street Journal* exclaimed, “Middle-class Americans have more buying power than ever before,” and then went on to sputter: “What Recession?...The economy has bounced back from recession, unemployment has declined..”

The *Chicago Tribune* may be even further out of touch with its less privileged readers, asking them: “What's so terrible about the infusion of so much money into the presidential campaign?”

4. TV News Dumbed Down for American Viewers

A 2009 survey by the European Journal of Communication compared the US to Denmark, Finland, and the UK in the awareness and reporting of domestic vs. international news, and of ‘hard’ news (politics, public administration, the economy, science, technology) vs. ‘soft’ news (celebrities, human interest, sport and entertainment). The results:

- Americans [are] especially uninformed about international public affairs.
- American respondents also underperformed in relation to domestic-related hard news stories.

The Chicago Tribune may be even further out of touch with its less privileged readers, asking them: “What's so terrible about the infusion of so much money into the presidential campaign?”

STORY TELLING

Pfizer had 40% of its 2011-13 revenues and nearly half of its physical assets in the US, but declared almost \$10 billion in US losses to go along with nearly \$50 billion in foreign profits

- American television reports much less international news than Finnish, Danish and British television;

- American television network newscasts also report much less hard news than Finnish and Danish television.

Surprisingly, the report states that “our sample of American newspapers was more oriented towards hard news than their counterparts in the European countries.” Too bad Americans are reading less newspapers.

5. News Execs among White Male Boomers Who Owe Trillions to Society

The hype about the “self-made man” is fantasy. In the early 1970s, we privileged white males were spirited out of college to waiting jobs in management and finance, technology was inventing new ways for us to make money, tax rates were about to tumble, and visions of bonuses and capital gains danced in our heads.

While we were in school the Defense Department had been preparing the Internet for Microsoft and Apple, the National Science Foundation was funding the Digital Library Initiative research that would be adopted as the Google model, and the National Institute of Health was doing the early laboratory testing for companies like Merck and Pfizer. Government research labs and public universities trained thousands of chemists, physicists, chip designers, programmers, engineers, production line workers, market analysts, testers, troubleshooters, etc., etc.

All we created on our own was a disdainful attitude, like that of Steve Jobs: “We have always been shameless about stealing great ideas.”

6. Funding Plummet for Schools and Pensions as Corporations Stop Paying Taxes

Three separate studies have shown that corporations pay less than half of their

required state taxes, which are the main source of K-12 educational funding and a significant part of pension funding. Most recently, the report “The Disappearing Corporate Tax Base” found that the percentage of corporate profits paid as state income taxes has dropped from 7 percent in 1980 to about 3 percent today.

7. Companies Based in the US Paying Most of their Taxes Overseas

Citigroup had 42% of its 2011-13 revenue in North America (almost all US) and made \$32 billion in profits, but received a US current income tax benefit all three years.

Pfizer had 40% of its 2011-13 revenues and nearly half of its physical assets in the US, but declared almost \$10 billion in US losses to go along with nearly \$50 billion in foreign profits.

In 2013 Exxon had about 43% of management, 36% of sales, 40% of long-lived assets, and 70-90% of its productive oil and gas wells in the US, yet only paid about 2 percent of its total income in US income taxes, and most of that was something called a “theoretical” tax.

8. Restaurant Servers Go Without Raise for 30 Years

An evaluation by Michelle Chen showed that the minimum wage for tipped workers has been approximately \$2 an hour since the 1980s. She also notes that about 40 percent of these workers are people of color, and about two-thirds are women.

Here’s one more possible and welcome headline: **Progressives Unite Behind Wealth and Wall Street Taxes. CT**

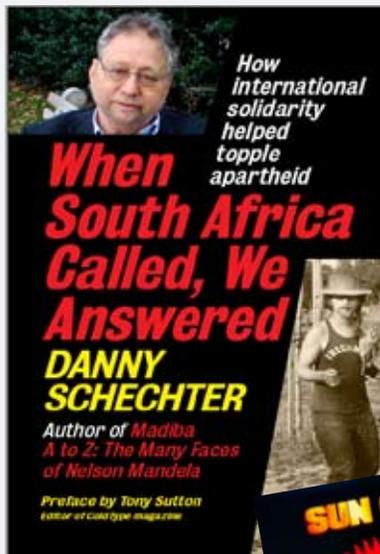
Paul Buchheit is a college teacher, an active member of US Uncut Chicago, founder and developer of social justice and educational websites (UsAgainstGreed.org, PayUpNow.org, RappingHistory.org), and the editor and main author of “American Wars: Illusions and Realities” (Clarity Press). He can be reached at paul@UsAgainstGreed.org

Answering the call

Danny Schechter talks about his new book on his involvement in South Africa's struggle for freedom. A free, pre-publication, e-book of the 300-page book is offered free to readers of ColdType this month

It may be the worst time to write and release a book about my involvement in a struggle to free South Africa. It's a bad time because, even as the country celebrates its twentieth anniversary as a democracy and prepares for this month's general election, there has never been more rancor and anger in a land we wanted to see as a Rainbow nation, a model for the world because of the way it achieved a relatively peaceful transition from white rule and promoted racial reconciliation.

An e-book version of my new book about the global solidarity movement, "When South Africa Called, We Answered: How Solidarity Helped Topple Apartheid," with a preface by Tony Sutton, a former editor of Johannesburg's classic *Drum* magazine, often spoken of as the *Life* magazine for the black communities during the glory days of resistance, is being given free to *ColdType* readers this month in advance of mainstream publishing in North America and South Africa.



Above: Cover of Schechter's new book. Right: Sleeve of the Sun City record he helped produce



I wrote the book because I wanted to be sure that the history of the projects I have been associated with over the past five decades is told; projects ranging from the all-star album "Sun City" by 58 Artists United Against Apartheid, the TV series South Africa Now, and my work with Nelson Mandela whose story I tell in the book, "Madiba A to Z: The Many Faces of Nelson Mandela" (<http://Madibabook.com>)

As I was writing about Mandela heroic

life, I thought there might be

value in writing my own story, too, by compiling the many essays I wrote alongside the media work I have done about South Africa for decades as a form of solidarity.

I know, as is all too often the case with a lot of my work, the timing may be problematic. The global anti-apartheid movement is long gone, and now, so is Madiba, the leader who largely inspired it. With all the memorializ-

The global anti-apartheid movement is long gone, and now, so is Madiba, the leader who largely inspired it

The news media have mostly moved on and are now more focused on the drama of the trial of Oscar Pistorius, South Africa's high-profile, disabled runner accused of intentionally shooting his girlfriend in a tragic and bloody late-night confrontation



Left: Danny Schechter's US [assport with South African visa, 1967. Right: Danny Schechter at funeral of ANC President General Albert Luthuli, Natal, South Africa, 1967.

ing, many confess to be “Mandela-ed out.” His life has been feted in print, and on the big screen, most recently by the epic movie, “Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom.”

The news media have mostly moved on and are now more focused on the drama of the trial of Oscar Pistorius, South Africa's high-profile, disabled runner accused of intentionally shooting his girlfriend in a tragic and bloody late-night confrontation.

Britain's *Financial Times*, reflecting the interest and interests of its readers, sent its editor, Lionel Barber, on a 12-day safari to Southern Africa to key in on today's challenges.

He notes that “twenty years after the end of apartheid (sic, it's 24 years) South Africa and its neighboring states, Namibia and Angola, face a second great struggle for progress, prosperity and a better future for all.”

He spent a day on the campaign trail with President Jacob Zuma, observing, “he can jive like a man half his age to the old liberation favorite, “Umshini Wami,” (“Bring me my Machine Gun.”)

The *FT* doesn't mention that this is an oft-repeated recycled act for JZ, as he's known, because he beat that song to death in his first

campaign five years ago.

In the end, Barber is upbeat about South Africa's economy, perhaps because it is still dominated by a multinational privately controlled mineral energy complex, with many of its companies based in London.

“If you believe in Africa,” he writes. “You have to be positive about South Africa.”

This is hardly the message of Zuma's many detractors. Soon, as the South African election in early May comes into focus, the rest of the world media will descend, and give local events their attention for a day or two.

They love conflict and this story is perfect, complete with bitter charges of corruption, defections by long-time supporters of Mandela's party, the ANC, and frustration in every community as the economy seems unable to eradicate poverty and distribute wealth fairly. The *FT* hints at this downside, but features the positive hopes of investors and financiers.

The truth is that 20 years after the country's first multiracial election in which the ANC promised “A Better Life For All,” many people there are living worse lives, with poverty today as deep as it was in the worse days of apartheid. It's not all the fault of South

Africans, but reflects a globalized world economy that benefits the 1% far more than the 99 %, especially in traditionally poor and colonized countries. At the same time, activists in West have also moved on – or moved off this political stage – as economic failures erupt in Europe and America, and as young people are stuck in a student debt bubbles, with calls for global economic justice movements losing visibility.

Global problems today may be even more serious, with inequality and climate change topping the list, but the sense of widespread moral outrage that fired the anti-apartheid movement seems on the decline.

At Mandela’s funeral, that international movement – in a way, a successor to a similar crusade against slavery a century and a half earlier – was barely referenced. Instead, the focus was on the utterings of heads of state – a great-men-make-history subtext vividly on display.

Even the ANC as a people’s movement was pushed aside by all the government dictated protocol and media-led deification of Mandela by politicians. Only the aging Archbishop Desmond Tutu criticized the white organizers for not inviting activists from abroad.

Even as the event celebrated the history of South Africa’s greatest son and his ‘long walk to freedom,’ it also rewrote history,

leaving out the mass global force responsible for generating pressure for sanctions and demands for Mandela and Co’s freedom.

That’s why I felt compelled to write this book, to add my small voice and the memory of worthy, although not always remembered, contributions to this important history,

South Africans also need to be reminded of the debt they owe to a world that responded to their call for support, and stood with them in the dark years. In an interdependent world, that movement played a crucial role. When present South African politicians ride the “gravy train,” they are betraying their friends abroad.

Unfortunately, the media that lionizes changemakers from above and ignores movements from below will always downplay that lesson, lest they encourage similar struggles on today’s global issues.

As a friend once told me when I went to South Africa at age 25 to enlist in what seemed to be a hopeless struggle, “It’s not the ship that makes the waves, but the motion on the ocean.”

CT

News Dissector Danny Schechter is a New York based blogger, (*NewsDissector.net*), editor of *Mediachannel.org*, author of 16 books, and director of more than 30 documentaries, including six with and about Nelson Mandela

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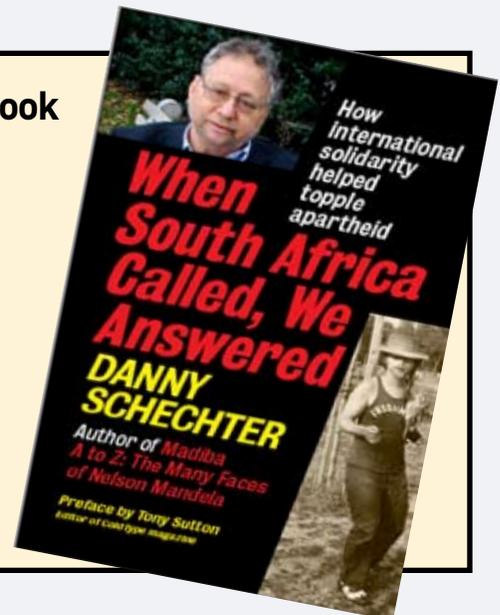
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WHEN SOUTH AFRICA CALLED, WE ANSWERED

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Drawing the line

Tony Sutton takes a cautious look inside a new book
– *A Fine Line: The Caricatures of Anthony Jenkins*

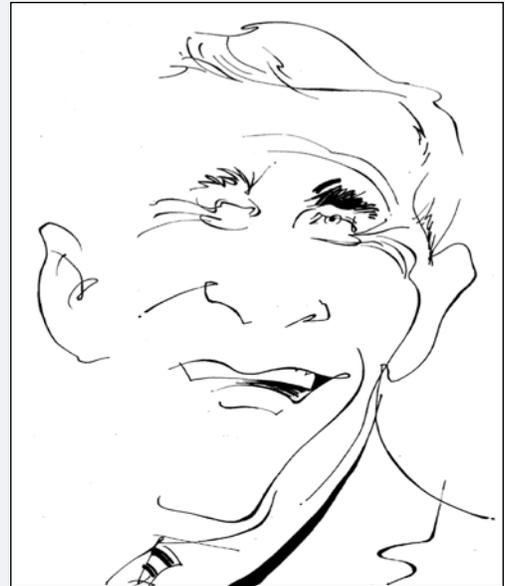


Richard Nixon

The stark simplicity is stunning and the faces, often accentuated by a single feature are chillingly recognizable

once worked for a company that produced magazines, including a business journal owned by an elderly lady (the word ‘elderly’ is an elastic concept, stretching further and further as you approach, but never quite reach it), aided and abetted by a long-suffering editor.

It was run on a precariously low budget, so one freelance artist was contracted to draw *all* the art in each issue for a very low fee. Perfect. Except he didn’t put mouths on faces. And that angered the boss, who insisted she was being ripped off: all illustrations were incomplete without mouths – preferably smiling – weren’t they? So deadline day was always frantic, the publisher tut-tutting through the

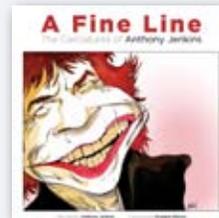


George Dubya Bush

office scrawling on page proofs, while her quick-thinking editor craftily walked in front deftly adding smiles to the artwork while no one was looking.

I, of course, cowered, whimpering, in a corner, praying for an infusion of alcohol ...

Looking through the pages of “A Fine Line”, a collection of caricatures by Toronto cartoonist Anthony Jenkins, I immediately wondered how those two ladies would react to some of his sparest images. Stripped to basic line- and brush-work, they’re missing not only mouths, but also eyes, noses and ears. The stark simplicity is stunning and the faces, often accentuated by a single feature, are chillingly recognizable.



A FINE LINE

By Anthony Jenkins

Published by
Nestlings Press
[nestlingspress.com/
AFineLine.php](http://nestlingspress.com/AFineLine.php)

\$19.95

Dick Cheney

Nixon, Reagan and Blair are there, along with Dubya and his crew of neo-maniacs

Mainly taken from the pages of Canada's *Globe and Mail* newspaper, where Jenkins laboured for many years, the works depict more than 100 of the most famous and infamous characters in politics, showbiz and the arts over the past few decades. Nixon, Reagan and Blair are there, along with Dubya and his crew of neo-maniacs; there's Elvis in the surreal guise of Canada's favourite schoolgirl, Anne of Green Gables (this month's cover image), Jagger in full leer, a

sulky Joni Mitchell, and Canada's favourite victim-in-his-own-mind Conrad Black.

"Jenkins is a dangerous man," writes author Douglas Gibson, in his introduction to "A Fine Line".

"He is clearly in touch with devilish powers that would frighten off a sensible Faust. Or perhaps he drinks potions that endow him with the same sort of magical powers that Oscar Wilde revealed in "The Picture Of Dorian Gray", where the flesh-



Barbara Amiel & Conrad Black



Ronald Reagan

Visit Anthony Jenkins' web site at <http://jenkinsdraws.com>



Mordechai Richler



Bob Dylan



Vladimir Putin

and-blood Dorian remains eternally youthful while the portrait at home does all of his ageing for him.

“When he produces a not-altogether-flattering portrait of you, day by day, week by week, month by month, *you will come to look more and more like that portrait!*”

“The terrifying process continues to this day. So I am very keen to do everything I can to stay in his good books.”

Jenkins is more sanguine about his art: “Some see caricaturing as a fundamentally mean occupation. Making fun, distorting, pointlessly exaggerating flaws. Self-aggrandizement at the expense of another.

“To me, taking the time to navigate around what makes one face unique, to twist and play with it and capture the famil-

iar in an interesting and different way, is a worthy occupation.

“A good caricature is a compliment. Someone cared enough to take the time to capture you in a way unique to them but recognizable to all.”

I’m with Jenkins on those points. I was also the recipient of one of his caricatures 20 years ago, presented when I left the *Globe and Mail*, after serving as the paper’s design director. It’s hanging on a basement wall, a place which I venture only with a stiff drink in hand, Dorian Gray in mind . . . I take a gulp of the fiery liquid, stare at the picture and a voice roars from the depths of my memory, “Where’s the bloody mouth?” **CT**

.....
Tony Sutton is the editor of ColdType

I still have the caricature Jenkins did of me. It’s hanging on a basement wall, a place which I venture only with a stiff drink in hand, Dorian Gray in mind . . .

War is good for us, claims dumb new book

David Swanson finds much to disagree with in Ian Morris's book of war

Morris maintains that the only way to make peace is to make large societies, and the only way to make large societies is through war

Ian Morris has stuck his dog's ear in his mouth, snapped a selfie, and proclaimed "Man Bites Dog." His new book, "War: What Is It Good For? Conflict and Progress of Civilization from Primates to Robots," is intended to prove that war is good for children and other living things. It actually proves that defenders of war are growing desperate for arguments.

Morris maintains that the only way to make peace is to make large societies, and the only way to make large societies is through war. Ultimately, he believes, the only way to protect peace is through a single global policeman. Once you've made peace, he believes, prosperity follows. And from that prosperity flows happiness. Therefore, war creates happiness. But the one thing you must never stop engaging in if you hope to have peace, prosperity, and joy is – you guessed it – war.

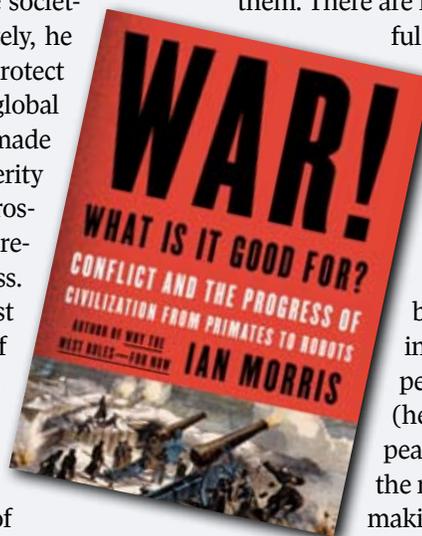
This thesis becomes an excuse for hundreds of pages of a sort of Monty Python history of the technologies of war, not to mention the evolution of chimpanzees, and various even less relevant excursions. These pages are packed with bad his-

tory and guesswork, and I'm greatly tempted to get caught up in the details. But none of it has much impact on the book's conclusions. All of Morris's history, accurate and otherwise, is put to mythological use. He's telling a simplistic story about where safety and happiness originated, and advocating highly destructive misery-inducing behavior as a result.

When small, medium, and large societies have been and are peaceful, Morris ignores them. There are lots of ways to define peaceful, but none of them put the leading war maker at the top, and none of them place at the top only nations that could be imagined to fall under a Pax Americana.

When societies have been enlarged peacefully, as in the formation of the European Union, Morris applauds (he thinks the EU earned its peace prize, and no doubt all the more so for its extensive war making as deputy globocop) but he just skips over the fact that war wasn't used in the EU's formation. (He avoids the United Nations entirely.)

When the globocop brings death and destruction and dis-



War!
What Is It Good For?
 Ian Morris
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
 \$22..23

order to Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, or Yemen, Morris sticks his fingers in his ears and hums. “Interstate wars” he informs us (like most of his other claims, without any footnotes) have “almost disappeared.” Well isn’t that great news?! (Morris grotesquely minimizes Iraqi deaths from the recent [nonexistent?] war, and of course supplies no footnote.)

In a culture that has long waged wars, it has been possible to say that wars bring courage, wars bring heroism, wars bring slaves, wars bring cultural exchange. One could have asserted at various points that wars were the only way to a great many ends, not just large societies that reduce small-scale murders. Barely a century ago William James was worried there was no way to build character without war, and defenders of war were advertising it as good for its participants in a much more direct way than Morris has been reduced to. Has war been the means of building empires and nations? Sure, but that neither means that empires are the only way to peace, nor that war was the only nation-building tool available, nor that we must keep waging wars in an age in which we aren’t forming empires or nations any longer. That ancient pyramids may have been built by slaves hardly makes slavery the best or only way to preserve the pyramids.

War and slavery

Tying something good, such as ending slavery in the United States, to a war, such as the US Civil War, doesn’t make war the only way to end slavery. In fact, most nations that ended slavery did so without a war. Much less is continuing to wage wars the only possible way (or even a useful way at all) to hold off the restoration of slavery or to complete its eradication. And, by the way, a great many societies that Morris credits with making progress through war also had slavery, monarchy, women-as-property, environmental destruction, and worship of religions now defunct. Were those institutions also necessary for peace and prosperity, or are they irrelevant to it, or did we

overcome some of them through peaceful means? Morris, at one point, acknowledges that slavery (not just war) generated European wealth, later crediting the industrial revolution as well – the godfather of which, in his mind, was no doubt peace created by war. (What did you expect, the Spanish Inquisition?)

The tools of nonviolence that have achieved so much in the past century are never encountered in Morris’ book, so no comparison with war is offered. Nonviolent revolutions have tended to dismember empires or alter the leadership of a nation that remains the same size, so Morris must not view them as useful tools, even when they produce more free and prosperous societies. But it’s not clear Morris can recognize those when he sees them. Morris claims that in the past 30 years “we” (he seems to mean in the United States, but could mean the world, it’s not totally clear) have become “safer and richer than ever.”

Morris brags about US murder rates falling, and yet dozens of nations from every continent have lower murder rates than the US Nor do larger nations tend to have lower murder rates than smaller nations. Morris holds up Denmark as a model, but never looks at Denmark’s society, its distribution of wealth, its social supports. Morris claims the whole world is growing more equal in wealth.

Back here in reality, historians of the Middle Ages say that our age has the greater disparities – disparities that are growing within the United States in particular, but globally as well. Oxfam reports that the richest 85 people in the world have more money than the poorest 3.5 billion. That is the peace that Morris swears is not a wasteland. The United States ranks third in average wealth but 27th in median wealth. Yet, somehow Morris believes the United States can lead the way to “Denmark” and that Denmark itself can only be Denmark because of how many people the United States kills in “productive wars” (even though they have “almost

Morris brags about US murder rates falling, and yet dozens of nations from every continent have lower murder rates than the US Nor do larger nations tend to have lower murder rates than smaller nations

Of course, the United States won't start a war against China, says Morris, because launching wars hurts a nation's reputation so severely

disappeared”). Morris writes these scraps of wisdom from Silicon Valley, where he says he sees nothing but wealth, yet where people with nowhere to sleep but in a car may soon be banned from doing so.

We're also safer, Morris thinks, because he sees no climate emergency worth worrying about. He's quite openly in favor of wars for oil, yet never notices oil's effects until the end of the book when he takes a moment to brush such concerns aside.

We're also safer, Morris tells us, because there are no longer enough nukes in the world to kill us all. Has he never heard of nuclear famine? Does he not understand the growing risks of proliferating nuclear weapons and energy? Two nations have thousands of nukes ready to launch in an instant, every one of them many times more powerful than the two nuclear bombs dropped thus far; and one of those nations is prodding the other one with a stick in Ukraine, resulting in more, not less, violence in the beneficiary of such expansionism. Meanwhile the officials overseeing US nukes keep getting caught cheating on tests or shipping nukes across the country unguarded, and generally view nuclear weapons oversight as the lowest most dead-end career track. This makes us safer?

Morris hypes lies about Iran pursuing nuclear weapons. He opens the book with a tale of a near nuclear holocaust (one of many he could have chosen). And yet, somehow disarmament isn't on the agenda, at least not with the priority given to maintaining or increasing war spending. Not to worry, he assures us, “missile defense” actually works, or might someday, so that'll protect us – although he parenthetically admits it won't. The point is it's warlike, and war is good, because war spreads peace. That's the role the US must play for the good of all: policeman of the world. Morris, while clearly a huge fan of Barack Obama, believes that all recent US presidents should have a Nobel Peace Prize. Never does Morris comment on the fact that the rest of the world sees the United States as

the greatest threat to world peace.

Morris admits that the United States is encircling China with weapons, but he describes in sinister tones China's response of building weaponry that will only serve a function near China's own shores, not as defensive or unimperialistic, but at “asymmetrical” – and we all know what that means: unfair! China might make it hard for the globocop to wage war on and around China. This Morris sees as the looming danger. The solution, he thinks, is for the United States to keep its militaristic edge (never mind that its military makes China's look like a child's toy). More drone killing is not only good but also (and this sort of nonsense always makes you wonder why its advocate bothers advocating) inevitable. Of course, the United States won't start a war against China, says Morris, because launching wars hurts a nation's reputation so severely. (You can see how badly the US reputation has suffered in Morris' eyes following its latest string of wars.)

And yet, what lies on the horizon, almost inevitably, Morris contends, is World War III.

There's nothing you can do about it. Don't bother working for peace, Morris says. But a solution may arrive nonetheless. If we can go on dumping our money into wars for just one more century, or maybe more, proliferating weapons, destroying the environment, losing our liberties in the model land of the free, then – if we're really lucky – the computer programmers of Silicon Valley will save us, or some of us, or something, by . . . wait for it . . . hooking us up to computers so that our minds all meld together.

Morris may be more confident than I that the result of this computerized rapture will be worldwide empathy rather than revolution. But then, he's had longer to get used to living with the way he thinks. **CT**

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*David Swanson's wants you to declare peace at <http://WorldBeyondWar.org> His new book is *War No More: The Case for Abolition*. He blogs at <http://davidswanson.org> and <http://warisacrime.org>*

The crucible of Iraq

Chris Hedges meets Hassan Blasim and explores the stories that make his book, *The Corpse Exhibition*, so riveting

The *Corpse Exhibition: And Other Stories of Iraq*, by Hassan Blasim, is the most important book to come out of the Iraq War. Blasim, whom I met with in Princeton, N.J., has a faultless eye for revealing detail, a ribald black humor and a psychological brilliance that makes every story in his book a depth charge. In this collection of short stories he explores through fiction the culture of violence unleashed under the bloody dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and exacerbated by an American occupation that has destroyed the damaged social cohesion and civil life that survived Saddam's regime. His prose, courtesy of a brilliant translation by Jonathan Wright, is lyrical, taut and riveting.

Militarism and violence are diseases. It does not matter under what guise they appear. Renegade jihadists, Shiite death squads, Sunni militias, Saddam's Baathists and secret police, Kurdish Peshmerga rebels, al-Qaida cells, gangs of kidnappers and the US Army 101st Airborne are all infected with the same virus. And it is a virus Blasim fearlessly inspects. By the end of this short-

story collection the reader grasps, in a way no soldier's memoir or journalistic account from Iraq can explicate, the crucible of war and the unmitigated horror of violence itself. The book is a masterpiece.

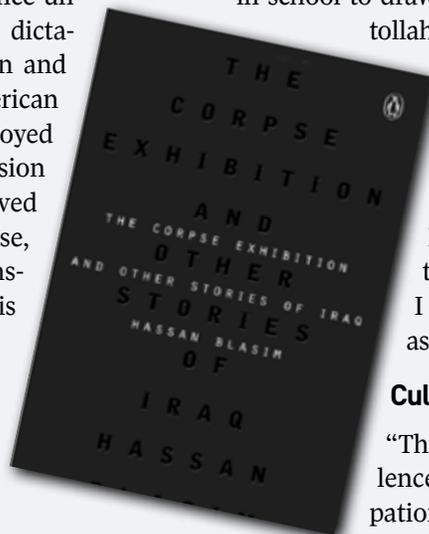
"When I was 6, during my first year at school, the Iran-Iraq War erupted," Blasim told me in a mixture of English and Arabic. "We were living in Kirkuk. We were taught in school to draw tanks or the face of Ayatollah Khomeini as the enemy.

The city of Kirkuk was beautiful. There were flowers everywhere. But we were never taught the names of the flowers. Even today I do not know the names of these flowers. I tried to learn their names as an adult."

Culture of violence

"There was a culture of violence that predated the occupation," he said. "Our teachers would hit us during class. When we went home we saw fathers abusing mothers. We were taught math and science, but we were not taught how to ask philosophical or critical questions. In this sense, we were never really educated. We were

By the end of this short-story collection the reader grasps, in a way no soldier's memoir or journalistic account from Iraq can explicate, the crucible of war and the unmitigated horror of violence itself



THE CORPSE EXHIBITION: AND OTHER STORIES OF IRAQ
Hassan Blasim

Penguin

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“The Ministry of Defense sent the report to the US Army, who bombed the teacher’s house by helicopter. His wife, his four children, and his elderly mother were killed”

not taught the fundamentals of human relationships. Violence became part of the Iraqi personality. The American occupation, however, has made this internal and external violence worse. The Americans destroyed the remnants of our culture, banished those among us who were struggling to create a space to think, to help us use our imaginations, to transform our society peacefully. Even under the dictatorship we had some semblance of a civic life. It was not perfect, but people were learning. You could see change. But when the Americans came and opened the border to these jihadists from Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iran, what happened? They gave the country to Iran. We are going backwards. There is a [prospective] Islamic law in Iraq that will permit a man to marry a 9-year-old girl. Iraq once had a strong civil law for marriage. It is not just that American soldiers come and kill. That is horrible enough. You have to ask what will happen to the children growing up around this violence. Iraq has been destroyed. The Iraqi soul has been disfigured.”

As a boy Blasim witnessed public executions, a memory he captures in his story “The Song of the Goats.” Three young Kurds, in the story, are tied to wooden stakes near a soccer field and shot. Blasim writes: “Before they did it, they announced over the loudspeakers, ‘These people are traitors and terrorists who do not deserve to eat from the bounty of this land or drink its water or breathe its air.’ As usual the Baathists took the bodies and left the stakes in place to remind everyone of what had happened.” Boys take the three stakes, which bear dried blood, to make goal posts. One of them says, “We’re still missing one goal post. Maybe they’ll execute another one and we can have the stake.” The father of one of the boys, when he hears this, weeps.

Violence becomes part of the landscape. “The days passed slowly and sadly, like the miserable face of the country,” Blasim writes in his story “A Thousand and One Knives.”

“The wars and the violence were like a photocopier churning out copies, and we all wore the same face, a face shaped by pain and torment. We fought for every morsel we ate, weighed down by the sadness and the fears generated by the unknown and the known.”

War spawns a peculiar, bizarre culture that Blasim lays out with precision. After the fall of the old regime, Iraqis line up to participate in a radio show, “Their Stories in Their Own Voices,” in which survivors tell their tales of horror and suffering. Some in the crowd belittle those whose stories are not lurid enough. The hierarchy of suffering, part of the dark pathology of war, entices victims to retreat into personal inner sanctums of misery and to sanctify their own victimhood. The sanctification of victimhood allows them to dismiss the suffering of those outside their ethnic or familial group. This process is used to justify acts of indiscriminate violence carried out in the name of vengeance.

At the radio show, itinerant cigarette vendors and pickpockets work the crowd in the midst of this orgy of pain. “I personally had more than twenty stories teeming in my memory about my long years of captivity in Iran,” the narrator thinks. “I was confident that at least one of them would really be the clincher in the competition.” A young woman tells how her husband, a policeman, was kidnapped by an Islamic group. His killers returned his body decomposed and decapitated. A woman, close to 90, waves her hand in derision and mutters, “That’s a story? If I told my story to a rock, it would break its heart.”

One radio show contestant “was a teacher who went to the police one day to report on a neighbor who was trading in antiquities stolen from the National Museum,” Blasim writes. “The police thanked him for his cooperation. The teacher, his conscience relieved, went back to his school. The police submitted a report to the Ministry of Defense that the teacher’s house was an al

Qaeda hideout. The police were in partnership with the antiquities smuggler. The Ministry of Defense sent the report to the US Army, who bombed the teacher's house by helicopter. His wife, his four children, and his elderly mother were killed. The teacher escaped with his life, but he suffered brain damage and lost his arms."

Professional executioners

Executioners, as Blasim writes, view themselves as professionals, even artists. Killing, among these self-professed professionals, has to be done with finesse. A corpse has to be displayed, as Blasim points out in his first story, "The Corpse Exhibition," in order to send a message. In the story the master of killing is a famous mortician who "was truly a great artist," one "in charge of the truth and creativity department."

He earned his reputation throughout the country because he skillfully put dismembered and mutilated bodies back together. The "people sought him out to patch together the bodies of their children and other relatives who were torn apart in explosions and random killings. They would pay handsomely to have him restore their children to the appearances by which they originally knew them."

And when the mortician kills he does so with flair that sets him apart. After a young recruit cannot find the nerve to kill a victim, the mortician drugs his trainee and skins him alive. He hangs the skin in front of the gate of the Ministry of Justice "like a flag of victory."

The book, in probing the culture of war, uses surrealism to explain the surrealism of war itself. A policeman, killed in a suicide bombing in the story "Crosswords," inhabits the body of a survivor. The dead policeman soon takes "control of his being." The survivor hears the voice of the policeman in his head. The two men argue and fight. The survivor stops making love to his wife because he "has the impression that he was sleeping with her along with another man,

and the policeman groaned and wailed like a crazed cat."

Specialties of war

In "The Iraqi Christ," a waiter mixes the names of the specials of the day with "the names of daily instruments of slaughter." The customers laugh. The waiter calls out orders such as: "One explosive, mind-blowing, gut-wrenching kebab. One fragmentation stew. Two ballistic rice and beans."

Boyhood games include running after automobiles transporting dead soldiers in coffins strapped to the roofs.

"Marwan and I would chase coffins. We would wait for them to reach the turn off the main road. The [Iran-Iraq] war was in its fourth year by this point. The coffins were wrapped in the flag and tied firmly to the tops of cars that came from the front. We wanted to be like grown-ups who, when a coffin passed, would stand and raise their hands solemnly and sadly. We would salute the dead like they did. But when a death car turned a corner, we would race after it down the muddy lanes. The driver would have to slow down so that the coffin didn't fall off. Then the car would choose the door of a sleeping house, and stop in front of it. When the women of the house came out they would scream and throw themselves in the pools of mud and spatter their hair with it. We would hurry to tell our mothers whose house the death car had stopped outside. My mother would always reply, "Go and wash your face," or "Go to Umm Ali next door and ask her if she has a little spice mixture to spare." And in the evening my mother would go and mourn with the local women in the dead man's house, slapping her face and weeping."

An ambulance driver in "The Reality and the Record" is kidnapped and sold from one extremist group to the next. He is forced to produce jihadist videos.

"Throughout the year and a half of my kidnapping experience, I was moved from one hiding place to another. They shot video

After a young recruit cannot find the nerve to kill a victim, the mortician drugs his trainee and skins him alive

He was smuggled out of Iraq and lived miserably as an undocumented worker in Turkey and Bulgaria, where he lost a finger while working illegally in a restaurant

of me talking about how I was a treacherous Kurd, an infidel Christian, a Saudi Terrorist, a Syrian Baathist intelligence agent, or a Revolutionary Guard from Zoroastrian Iran. On these videotapes I murdered, raped, started fires, planted bombs, and carried out crimes that no sane person would even imagine. All these tapes were broadcast on satellite channels around the world. Experts, journalists, and politicians sat there discussing what I said and did. The only bad luck we ran into was when we made a video in which I appeared as a Spanish soldier, with a resistance fighter holding a knife to my neck, demanding Spanish forces withdraw from Iraq. All the satellite stations refused to broadcast the tape because Spanish forces had left the country a year earlier.”

The mistake almost sees him killed, but he redeems himself in the eyes of his kidnappers when he is dressed up as an Afghan fighter with five men standing behind him. Six men are brought in “screaming and crying out for help from God, his Prophet, and the Prophet’s family.” The men are slaughtered in front of him as he announces before the camera that he is “the new leader of the al Qaeda organization in Mesopotamia.”

When violence is that random and capricious, everyone – and those of us who were war correspondents were not immune to this – becomes deeply superstitious. You believe in signs, totems, vague premonitions, dreams, opaque messages or warnings or ritualistic habits, as if you can do something to ward off the slaughter around you and control fate.

In the story “The Iraqi Christ” a Christian soldier named Daniel is stationed with his company in the front lines in the war against the Americans in Kuwait. Daniel, whom the other soldiers call “Chewgum Christ,” for his habit of always chewing gum, has bodily premonitions that warn him of attacks. The soldiers, enduring daily saturation bombing from American B-52 bombers and cruise missiles, cling to him like a life raft. When Daniel climbs out of a trench to

lie in the shade of a water tank the soldiers follow him “as if he were a shield against missiles.” Three bombs hit the trench 35 minutes later.

“In Daniel’s company the war played out like the plot of a cartoon,” Blasim writes. “In the blink of an eye, reality lost cohesion. It fell apart and you started to hallucinate. What could one make, for example, of the way a constant itching in Daniel’s crotch foretold that an American helicopter would crash on the headquarters building? Is it credible that three successive sneezes from Daniel could foretell a devastating rocket attack? They fired at us from the sea. We soldiers were like sheep, fighting comic book wars.”

In the story “The Hole,” a thief fleeing gunmen falls into a hole near the Natural History Museum in Baghdad and discovers a decrepit old man living next to the body of a Russian soldier who “fell in the forest during the winter war between Russia and Finland.” The old man lived in Baghdad during the ancient Abbasid caliphate and, after he had supervised the hanging of lanterns in the streets at that time, criminals angered by the illumination chased him into the hole. Those who fall into the hole, he tells the thief, learn “how to find out about events of the past, the present, and the future.”

“Are you with the government or the opposition?” the thief asks the old man.

“I’m with your mother’s cunt,” he answers.

“I’m speaking your language, man!” the old man says. “But you can’t speak my language, because I was in the hole before you. But you’ll speak the language of the next person who falls in.”

In ordered European societies, immigrants desperately trying to survive as exiles, straining to fit into an alien culture and speak an alien language, soon discover they are forever bound to this wheel of fire. That experience, too, is one the author knows intimately.

Poet and film maker

Blasim, 40, short and stocky and with a graying beard, is a poet and a filmmaker in addition to being an author. It took him four years to get from Iraq to Finland, where he has lived since 2004. He was smuggled out of Iraq and lived miserably as an undocumented worker in Turkey and Bulgaria, where he lost a finger while working illegally in a restaurant. Like most exiles, he is haunted by what those around him cannot comprehend. "There are disguised moments of sadness that hide in various clothes and smells," he writes. His work, because it eviscerates all who wield the weapons of violence and because it is written in raw street slang and colloquial Arabic rather than the formal, classical Arabic of the educated classes, was banned in Jordan and heavily censored in Lebanon. He said most exiles never adjust. Some turn with venom on Western culture and retreat into hatred and radical Islam. Others desperately attempt to assimilate into the new culture, learning its language and customs, cursing the backwardness of their homeland and often changing their names to mask their Arab identity. The two sets of exiles split into antagonistic groups, he said. "It is hard to find balance."

The last three stories are about exile. In "That Inauspicious Smile" an Iraqi cannot wipe a grin off his face and is beaten by a group of neo-Nazis. In "The Nightmares of Carlos Fuentes" a man wears a silver ring he took off the severed finger of a victim of a truck bombing in Iraq. When he arrives as a refugee in Holland he consults his cousin in France by phone about his changing his Arabic name. His cousin tells him: "You're quite right. It's a hundred times better to be from Senegal or China than it is to have an Arab name in Europe. But you couldn't possibly have a name like Jack or Stephen – I mean a European name. Perhaps you should choose a brown name – a Cuban or Argentine name that would suit your complexion, which is the color of burnt barley bread." His cousin

finds the name Carlos Fuentes in a newspaper "literary article of which he did not understand much" and suggests it to him. He changes his name to Carlos Fuentes. Fuentes learns flawless Dutch and "always scoffed at the immigrants and other foreigners who did not respect the rules of Dutch life and who complained all the time. He calls them 'retarded gerbils.'" He finds a Dutch girlfriend who "weighed two hundred pounds and had childlike features like a cartoon character." But then the "dream problem" begins. In his dreams he forgets his Dutch and "a group of children in the poor district where he was born [are] running after him and making fun of his new name." One night he dreams "he had planted a car bomb in the center of Amsterdam." He consults books and magazines on dreams, including Erich Fromm's "The Forgotten Language," which he says is "pure bullshit." He begins to alter "his eating and sleeping habits and when he went into and came out of the bathroom." "Fuentes would sit at the table chewing each piece of food like a camel, because he had read that chewing it well helps to get rid of nightmares." He eats a lot of chicken because "eating the fowl of the air might bring about dreams that were happier and more liberated." The nightmares continue. He begins to perform "mysterious secret rituals" such as dyeing his hair and his toenails green and sleeping on his stomach repeating obscure words. "One night he painted his face like an American Indian, slept wearing diaphanous orange pajamas, and put under his pillow three feathers taken from various birds."

Blasim, like his characters, endures the covert racism of supposedly post-racial societies. Liberal white Europeans and Americans, he says, regard racism as wrong but continue to unconsciously express racist impulses. Blasim, for example, was reading a book in a subway car when an older woman next to him asked if it was in Arabic. "It is beautiful script," she told him. "The writing goes from right to left, doesn't it?"

"It is beautiful script," she told him. "The writing goes from right to left, doesn't it?" He nodded. "Are you reading the Koran?" she asked. "No," he said, "Kafka"

Murderers and assassins are rich and powerful statesmen. American soldiers blow up houses on a whim, obliterating entire families. Death is a lucrative industry

He nodded. "Are you reading the Koran?" she asked. "No," he said, "Kafka."

Vias ordeal

He described to me his ordeal of getting a visa so he could go to the United States to give readings. At the US Embassy in Helsinki he had to pass through a security gantlet. When he eventually arrived before a woman behind a bulletproof window, she asked him the address he would be staying at in the US He did not remember. When he said he would get the information from his bag, she shouted, "Don't move!" "I felt I was back in Iraq. The US Army does not need a visa to go to Iraq. No one invites them. They arrive with guns. But if you are a writer and try to go to America with an invitation from your publisher you are nothing because you are an Iraqi."

Gaunted by violence

Blasim is as haunted by violence as his characters. He dedicates the story "Crosswords" to three friends who were killed or committed suicide. The cruelty and mayhem he witnessed drive him to create, to write and to film, he said. "I am always under stress," he said before stepping outside for another cigarette, away from the hotel lobby where we were seated at a coffee table. The trauma visits him at night, too. "I have the same dream, over and over," he said. "It is this. I am in Iraq. I am leaving the house. My mother asks if I have my identification card. I know why. If you are an Iraqi and you are picked up without your ID it is a huge problem. I studied art and film in college. I worked at the time at the reception desk of a hotel. One day I was smoking by the door and the secret police showed up and asked for my ID. I gave it to them. I told them I

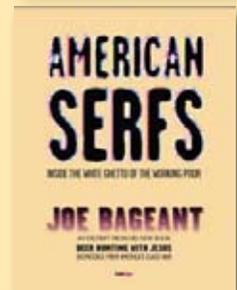
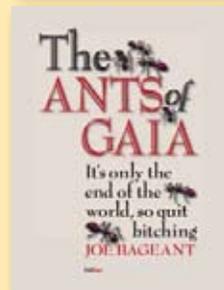
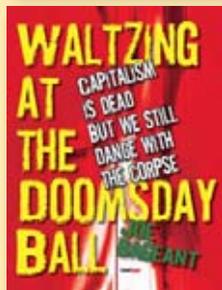
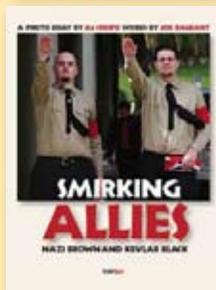
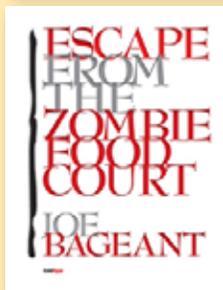
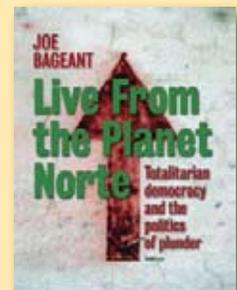
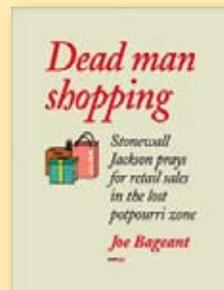
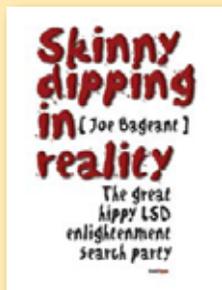
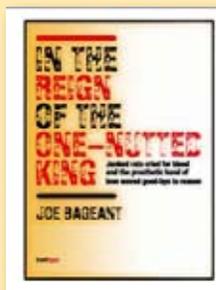
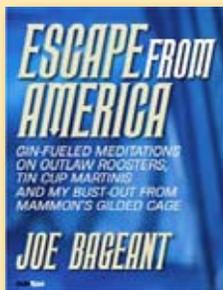
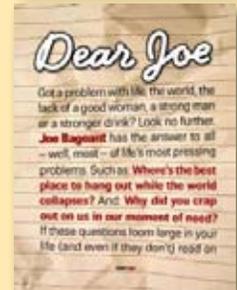
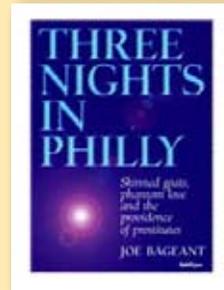
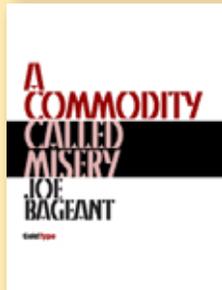
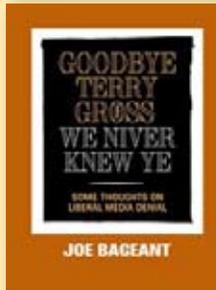
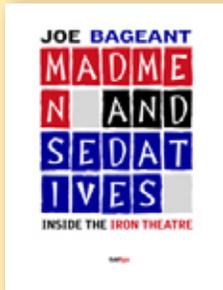
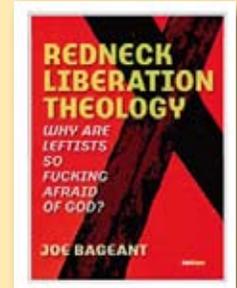
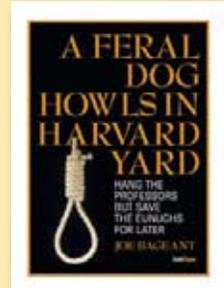
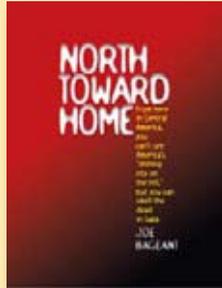
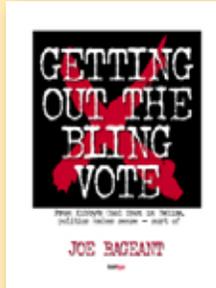
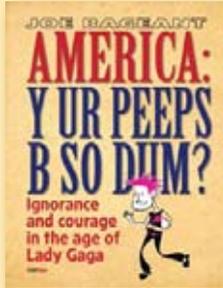
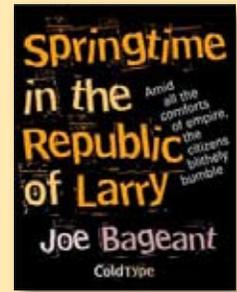
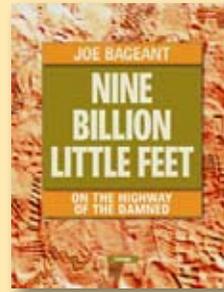
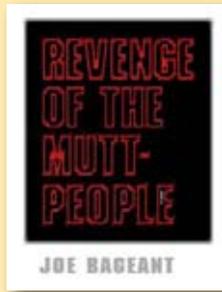
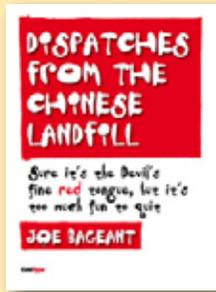
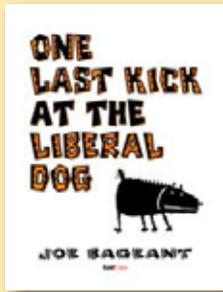
studied art and film. They told me it was a fake. I told them to call the college. They looked at me. 'Who are you?' they shouted. 'You think we are going to call your college?' I swore and said, 'Then how can I prove it is not a fake?' They were furious. They threw me into an army prison for a week with army deserters. They were torturing these deserters with hoses and water. A week later they released me."

Hallucinations merge with reality in war-time. Your eyes and memory play tricks on you. You experience things and then wonder if you experienced them. Morality is turned upside down. Killers prey on the weak, the vulnerable and the innocent in the name of God or the state or some twisted ethnic loyalty. Murderers and assassins are rich and powerful statesmen. American soldiers blow up houses on a whim, obliterating entire families. Death is a lucrative industry. You lose your footing. You peer in the terrifying possibilities of human evil. You struggle to give words to it.

"When you tell them these stories," Blasim writes in "The Composer," "after a time they think the stories are figments of imagination. Take our neighbor in the market, for example: Abu Sadiq, who sells onions. When he now tells his story about the battle with the Iranians at the River Jassim, it sounds like a Hollywood horror story he made up." **CT**

Chris Hedges spent nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans. He has reported from more than 50 countries and has worked for The Christian Science Monitor, National Public Radio, The Dallas Morning News and the New York Times, for which he was a foreign correspondent for 15 years.

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In the urinals at Joe Theisman's

Fred Reed visits Washington and finds himself slightly hungover, very confused and just a little bit cranky

**We are the
Admonished
People. Free?
No. Brave? No.
Watched, warned,
told, herded. Yes**

Back in Mexico after a frantic week in the Yankee capital, these days a cross between an asylum for the chronically paranoid, besieged city, and kindergarten run by a totalitarian Mommy. Cops everywhere, metal detectors everywhere else, concrete stop'em-bombs on sidewalks, pop-up metal barriers on streets on Capitol Hill. Bin Laden won, big time.

Crazy people hear voices, right? In Washington everybody hears them. At the airport of course the gurgly over-enunciated "security" announcements by some dimwit elocution major who sounds like she wants to lick the microphone. On the subway we are urged by other recorded Mommies to watch each other and report suspicious behavior. What behavior isn't suspicious late at night on an urban train system? "Yeah, officer, they're, like, swarthy and got beards and funny clothes and talk some weird language...."

Voices, instructions, warnings. We are the Admonished People. Free? No. Brave? No. Watched, warned, told, herded. Yes. Urban robots. Just what Georgey Wash and Tommy Jefferson had in mind, I think.

Yes, this is a stream of bare-consciousness column. Sorry. My childhood makes me do it. Anyway, dinner with friends at Joe Theisman's Restaurant, across from the King Street Metro stop in Virginia. Classy place, dark wood, good American food, pretty Russian waitress – DC has serious diversity, often

with great legs – and enormous TV screens everywhere.

Really. Above each urinal in the men's room, at face level, also a television screen. Now that's a serious sports bar. You never have to miss a play. If they had drink service, you wouldn't even need a table.

On another day we had a lunch invitation from John Duncan, R-Tenn., a loyal reader, so we made our way to Cap Hill. See? Fred is read in both high places and low dives, though you will have to decide for yourself into which category Congress fits. A delightful lunch. He is a Southern gentleman, a species regarded with derision in the North but, my God, after ten minutes in New Jersey I want to be in Tennessee.

Anyway, he is among my scarce stock of heroes, one of six Republicans who voted against our last damned-fool war in Iraq. For this he, and they, should be reelected in perpetuity, and the rest of the Republicans drowned. All Democrats without exception should be drowned. We would then have a small but respectable government of six. Oh, sweet thought.

Think: What higher form of patriotism is there than not sending our kids to die in pointless wars serving only to funnel yet more money to military industry? How many dead in his district, and in the country, wouldn't be if the rest of Congress had followed his lead? Most of them couldn't find

Iraq if they were standing in it. And how many millions of Iraqis, Pakistanis, Afghans, Cambodians, Viets, Laos, and so on have we killed for nothing? Don't get me started.

Thursday, off to the Café Asia, my old hangout, in Rosslyn, just over Key Bridge into Virginia, for lunch with Jim Webb, author of "Fields of Fire," for my money the best soldier's book to come out of Viet Nam.

OK, OK, this is getting to be a scrambled column. It's God's will. I have nothing to do with it. Thinking about Jim's book on the Scots-Irish, "Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America," and John Duncan's Southern constituency – the South is Scots-Irish territory – and my own birth in the coal fields of West Virginia (Crumpler, near Bluefield) followed much later by a boyhood in Athens, Alabama – has got me to thinking about run-on sentences. Although I never was a poor white, I lived among them, got drunk with them in high school, dated them. They weren't trash, just didn't have much money.

Doctor and teacher

My grandfather in Crumpler was a coal-camp doctor, up the holler from North Fork. It was black-lung, dirt-shack country, sharp slopes and awful diets, and sometimes when a miner fell sick on the other side of the mountain, the miners put Granddad in a coal car and took him under the damn mountain to see the patient. I guess he took house calls seriously.

My mother taught school there, to the extent that they had schools. Once she went way up the slope to check on a kid, and a little girl, astonished by this apparition, hollered, "Gret God A'mighty! Here come that teacher lady!" It wasn't Groton.

And I guess that's why I feel a certain affection for the Duncans and Webbs and Joe Bageant, who lived a mile down the street from me in Mexico until he died, and his book, "Deer Hunting with Jesus", is the funniest but saddest and most poignant book ever written about po' whites. It does contain

wisdom: "Never eat weenies out of a urinal no matter how high the betting gets."

Coming back to America, if Washington so qualifies, for me is a bit like coming home and a bit like visiting a foreign country. I am always reminded of how much I like the people. Americans are a friendly folk and, if they lack the sophistication of, say, the French or Germans, they also lack the stiffness and stand-offishness. My wife, Violeta, is Mexican. While there is much political hostility to swarming Latin immigrants, Vi is everywhere received with hospitality and courtesy. "Everywhere" to date means DC, San Fran, rural Virginia and Maryland, Chicago, several venues in Texas, and New York. (New Yorkers are courteous, dammit. They just go about it differently.)

On the other hand, I see a decline in maturity and public manners. In restaurants, instead of talking quietly in consideration of others, those under thirty tend to bellow, shriek, and cackle.

Apparently they think that strangers five tables away are deeply interested in what Shirley said to Samuel about something of, to us, superlative tediousness. It smacks not just of uncouth upbringing but of insecurity, of a need to be noticed. Somehow I think of dogs peeing on hydrants.

Their English is astonishing. Time and again we sat near groups – "near" being in voice range, which at times might be measured in parsecs – who could say "like" fifteen times in a sentence of eight words. "He was like, yeah, and I was like, well, why, and like, I didn't know why he was like, weird, so I was like, tell me, like, what are you thinking?" My daughter Macon calls it "an ummm-substitution strategy." I prefer Ummm.

And I was like, if you say "like" one more time, I'm going to, like, take a ball bat to you in the name of Milton, Ben Jonson, Galsworthy, and Thoreau.

Enough. I'm going to have a double shot of bust-head tequila, crank up the iPad, listen to some Handel, and crash. To sleep, perchance to dream.... **CT**

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Fred Reed lives in Mexico. He has worked for Army Times, The Washingtonian, Soldier of Fortune, Federal Computer Week, and The Washington Times. His web site is <http://fredon.everything.net>

Cold War II

Those evil Russkie he-men are making us frack ourselves, writes **Michael I. Niman**

Any American who fought against this corrupting concentration of wealth and power by speaking up for civil rights, union rights, public education or public health, was branded as a “communist” and “traitor”

As a child of the Cold War I grew up in a binary world of simple certainty. The globe was split in two, with an iron curtain separating the halves. There was our half, a consumer utopia blessed by god. And there was the other half, what our sainted President Ronald Reagan coined the “Evil Empire,” because, as the leader of the free world, he was free to take his foreign policy cues from sci-fi trilogies. Our side could do no evil, no matter how hard we tried. Their side, the Soviet Union, which we simply called “Russia,” was evil incarnate. Though their narrative was a bit different than ours, this arrangement worked out well for crooked, oppressive politicians and industrialists in both empires, with concerns of oppression and injustice at home taking a back seat to the more pressing need to fear the other empire.

Under this arrangement, we gave up on our dreams of social equality, starving social programs at home in order to fund a string of hot and cold wars abroad. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the leader of the “Free World” who oversaw the escalation of what we came to call the Cold War against the Russians, warned us, three days before leaving office, that, under this arrangement, “we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions,” what he termed “a military-industrial complex.” He warned us that this cabal had grown large enough to

dominate government and threaten democracy.

Our Russo-phobic chucklefest

Just as Eisenhower foretold, a lot of money continued to be made, and political power concentrated, while Russo-phobia dominated our culture and politics for another generation. Any American who fought against this corrupting concentration of wealth and power by, say, speaking up for civil rights, union rights, public education or public health, was branded by the military-industrial complex-linked media and politicians as a “communist” and “traitor” whose patriotic efforts to protect freedom at home somehow evidenced an Orwellian disdain for “freedom.” In this dystopia, Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, was investigated and harassed by the FBI as a suspected “communist” Russian sympathizer.

On the Russian side of the curtain, despotic vodka-fueled apparatchiks dispatched their political enemies to hellish gulags under the pretense of them being agents of American imperialism.

Then, according to the CIA, without warning, it was all over. The omnipotent evil empire that Saint Reagan warned us of just a few scant years earlier collapsed just after Christmas 1991. Whoosh. Gone. No more Evil Empire. Just a bunch of confused, disoriented, vodka-swiggling Russians, and a lot of new

nations with what we mostly saw as strange and difficult to pronounce names.

Apparently history has taught us nothing. We couldn't be gracious victors. While East German hipsters were still chipping away at the remains of the Berlin Wall, we invaded Russia with successive waves of carpetbaggers, fortune-seekers, adventurers, corporate franchisers, cigarettes, Budweiser, Coca Cola, and vagabond English teachers. Russians, with the gonad-driven drunken antics of their leaders and their lower-than-damn-near-any-place-else-on-earth male life expectancy (the average Italian male, for example, will live 18 years longer than his Russian counterpart), became the butt of American jokes and derision for over two decades.

As our Russo-phobia morphed into a pseudo-racist chucklefest, we lost site of the fact that this nation of supposed pasty-skinned, humorless drunks still controlled one of the world's two most insanely horrific arsenals of crazy death bombs – and the missile technology to dispatch these nuclear bad boys to any – or if the moment struck them – every place on earth. You don't have to like them, but this fact alone should, at least for the sake of necessity and mutual survival, command some modicum of respect.

Humiliating the Russians

Fast-forward to 2014, the 23rd anniversary of us humiliating the Russians over the fall of their supposed empire. The Russians have been working for years, spending gobs of money, preparing to host the 2014 Winter Olympics as a sort of debutante ball celebrating Russia as a 21st-century world power to be respected: the new, fully evolved Russia; Russia the player.

But we couldn't go along with the program and be good guests. No. We immediately set upon the Russians, poking fun at their brand-new substandard hotels, muddy tap water, lack of amenities, and so on. This need to humiliate the Russians and laugh at their bedding and room service even overshadowed legitimate concerns about human

rights and labor abuses in Russia that needed to be talked about.

A week after the Olympics were over, Russia invaded Crimea. No one's laughing now.

The politics behind the invasion and the conflicts between Ukrainian nationalism ethnic Ukrainian nationalism, Russian nationalism and ethnic Russian nationalism, and the history of the complex historical mess they all entail are a topic for another day. The one thing upon which all of us, those blessed by god and those cursed vodka drinkers, can agree, is that the Cold War is back, at least for the moment.

You have to admit, the timing is convenient, both for us handsome free Americans and for the cursed Russians. If you're Russian, forget about the regular jailing of protestors and musicians, your he-man government and its bizarre hatred of gay folks, the degradation of your environment and rape of your natural resources, and the rise of a billionaire mafioso class. You now have rude hubristic Americans to monopolize your hate and fear. Ditto for Americans. Forget every issue we were fretting about the day before masked, Russian-speaking troops swarmed over the border and "did not invade" Crimea, annexing it and immediately adding it to their national maps.

For the fracking interests, the timing couldn't be better.

One of the first things we're supposed to forget about in our newly rekindled Cold War mindset is why most of us are against fracking. Take some recent news headlines, for example: "Ohio Finds Link Between Fracking and Sudden Bursts of Earthquakes" in the *Los Angeles Times*; "Pollution Fears Crush Home Prices Near Fracking Wells" in *Forbes*; "Oklahoma is dealing with a significant increase in earthquakes near drilling sites" by Oilprice.com; "California Lawmakers Advance Bills to Stop Fracking" in Bloomberg News; and "California Drought Gives Boost to Anti-Fracking Movement" by Al Jazeera America. With increasing coverage of fracking pollution of groundwater, fracking operations' heavy use

You have to admit, the timing is convenient, both for us handsome free Americans and for the cursed Russians

FRACKED OFF

The usual suspects, the folks Eisenhower warned us against, power addicts who enrich themselves in our destruction, win again

of scarce water resources in drought-plagued areas, the connection between fracking and the otherwise mysterious earthquakes suddenly plaguing places like Arkansas, Ohio, and the United Kingdom, it's been a bad year for the fracking interests.

A new Cold War, however, creates a quantum shift in the conversation, away from cautious discussion of its dangers to the inevitability of fracking to undercut Russia's "energy stranglehold" on Europe. Some of the newest fracking headlines now read, "Fracking Boom Would Insulate Europe Against Cold War" in the *International Business Times*; "European Politicians Push for Fracking Amid Crimea Crisis" in the *Hill*; and "Amid Showdown with Energy-Rich Russia, Calls Rise in Europe to Start Fracking" in the *Washington Post*.

A billionaire's Cold War

With this suddenly new reality, not only do we give up the debate about fracking and start doing it on a wider scale, but members of Congress beholden to campaign contributions from energy billionaires and PACs are now moving to lift restrictions on energy exports. Energy industry engineers are touting plans to reverse pipeline flows to convert energy import terminals to energy export terminals. This would not only increase fracking and fracking-related problems and destruc-

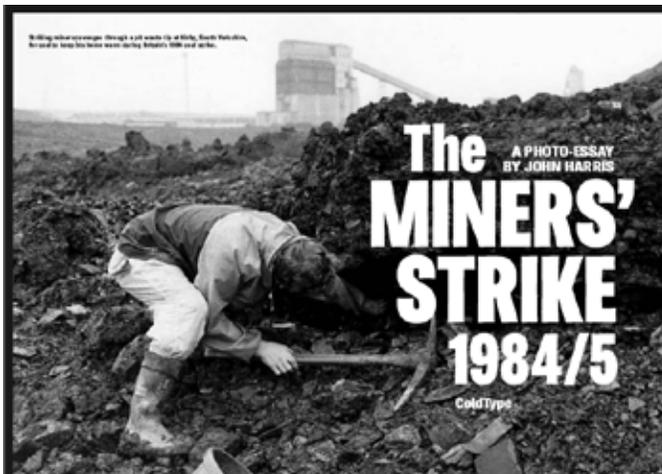
tion in the US, but it would also cause US energy prices to rise drastically, erasing any benefit US consumers might have experienced from the fracking boom while radically increasing the obscene profits energy corporations and energy billionaires have been extracting from the economy.

The usual suspects, the folks Eisenhower warned us against, power addicts who enrich themselves in our destruction, win again.

The end result of this new Cold War energy paradigm is more environmental destruction, more environment-related human health consequences, and higher energy prices. In a sane political environment, such policy moves would have no support from any place on the political spectrum – not from sociopaths wanting cheap energy at any environmental or human cost, or from environmentalists wanting to preserve life on the planet.

But we're at war, and war takes precedence over all forms of sanity and civility. With the Cold War rekindled, there will be no more debate. The war mandates what the warriors demand. **CT**

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Indocinating a new generation

William Blum on the lies of empire

Is there anyone out there who still believes that Barack Obama, when he's speaking about American foreign policy, is capable of being anything like an honest man? In a March 26 talk in Belgium to "European youth", the president fed his audience one falsehood, half-truth, blatant omission, or hypocrisy after another. If George W. Bush had made some of these statements, Obama supporters would not hesitate to shake their head, roll their eyes, or smirk. Here's a sample:

"In defending its actions, Russian leaders have further claimed Kosovo as a precedent – an example they say of the West interfering in the affairs of a smaller country, just as they're doing now. But NATO only intervened after the people of Kosovo were systematically brutalized and killed for years."

Most people who follow such things are convinced that the 1999 US/NATO bombing of the Serbian province of Kosovo took place only after the Serbian-forced deportation of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo was well under way; which is to say that the bombing was launched to stop this "ethnic cleansing". In actuality, the systematic deportations of large numbers of people did not begin until a few days after the bombing began, and was clearly a reaction to it, born of Serbia's extreme anger and powerlessness over the bombing. This is easily verified by looking at a daily newspaper for the few

days before the bombing began the night of March 23/24, 1999, and the few days following. Or simply look at the *New York Times* of March 26, page 1, which reads:

"... with the NATO bombing already begun, a deepening sense of fear took hold in Pristina [the main city of Kosovo] that the Serbs would **now** vent their rage against ethnic Albanian civilians in retaliation." [emphasis added]

On March 27, we find the first reference to a "forced march" or anything of that nature.

But the propaganda version is already set in marble.

"And Kosovo only left Serbia after a referendum was organized, not outside the boundaries of international law, but in careful cooperation with the United Nations and with Kosovo's neighbors. None of that even came close to happening in Crimea."

None of that even came close to happening in Kosovo either. The story is false. The referendum the president speaks of never happened. Did the mainstream media pick up on this or on the previous example? If any reader comes across such I'd appreciate being informed.

Crimea, by the way, did have a referendum. A real one.

"Workers and engineers gave life to the Marshall Plan ... As the Iron Curtain fell here in Europe, the iron fist of apartheid was

Most people who follow such things are convinced that the 1999 US/NATO bombing of the Serbian province of Kosovo took place only after the Serbian-forced deportation of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo was well under way

ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

The US did not get UN Security Council approval for its invasion of Iraq, the only approval that could legitimize the action

unclenched, and Nelson Mandela emerged upright, proud, from prison to lead a multi-racial democracy. Latin American nations rejected dictatorship and built new democracies ...”

The president might have mentioned that the main beneficiary of the Marshall Plan was US corporations, that the United States played an indispensable role in Mandela being caught and imprisoned, and that virtually all the Latin American dictatorships owed their very existence to Washington. Instead, the European youth were fed the same party line that their parents were fed, as were all Americans.

“Yes, we believe in democracy – with elections that are free and fair.”

In this talk, the main purpose of which was to lambaste the Russians for their actions concerning Ukraine, there was no mention that the government overthrown in that country with the clear support of the United States had been democratically elected.

“Moreover, Russia has pointed to America’s decision to go into Iraq as an example of Western hypocrisy. ... But even in Iraq, America sought to work within the international system. We did not claim or annex Iraq’s territory. We did not grab its resources for our own gain. Instead, we

ended our war and left Iraq to its people and a fully sovereign Iraqi state that could make decisions about its own future.”

The US did not get UN Security Council approval for its invasion, the only approval that could legitimize the action. It occupied Iraq from one end of the country to the other for eight years, forcing the government to privatize the oil industry and accept multinational – largely US-based, oil companies’ – ownership. This endeavor was less than successful because of the violence unleashed by the invasion. The US military finally was forced to leave because the Iraqi

government refused to give immunity to American soldiers for their many crimes.

Here is a brief summary of what Barack Obama is attempting to present as America’s moral superiority to the Russians:

The modern, educated, advanced nation of Iraq was reduced to a quasi failed state ... the Americans, beginning in 1991, bombed for 12 years, with one dubious excuse or another; then invaded, then occupied, overthrew the government, tortured without inhibition, killed wantonly ... the people of that unhappy land lost everything – their homes, their schools, their electricity, their clean water, their environment, their neighborhoods, their mosques, their archaeology, their jobs, their careers, their professionals, their state-run enterprises, their physical health, their mental health, their health care, their welfare state, their women’s rights, their religious tolerance, their safety, their security, their children, their parents, their past, their present, their future, their lives ... More than half the population either dead, wounded, traumatized, in prison, internally displaced, or in foreign exile ... The air, soil, water, blood, and genes drenched with depleted uranium ... the most awful birth defects ... unexploded cluster bombs lying in wait for children to pick them up ... a river

of blood running alongside the Euphrates and Tigris ... through a country that may never be put back together again. ... “It is a common refrain among war-weary Iraqis that things were better before the US-led invasion in 2003,” reported the *Washington Post*. (May 5, 2007)

How can all these mistakes, such arrogance, hypocrisy and absurdity find their way into a single international speech by the president of the United States? Is the White House budget not sufficient to hire a decent fact checker? Someone with an intellect and a social conscience? Or does the

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desire to score propaganda points trump everything else? Is this another symptom of the Banana-Republicization of America?

Long live the Cold War

In 1933 US President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized the Soviet Union after some 15 years of severed relations following the Bolshevik Revolution. On a day in December of that year, a train was passing through Poland carrying the first American diplomats dispatched to Moscow. Amongst their number was a 29-year-old Foreign Service Officer, later to become famous as a diplomat and scholar, George Kennan. Though he was already deemed a government expert on Russia, the train provided Kennan's first actual exposure to the Soviet Union. As he listened to his group's escort, Russian Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov, reminisce about growing up in a village the train was passing close by, and his dreams of becoming a librarian, the Princeton-educated Kennan was astonished: "We suddenly realized, or at least I did, that these people we were dealing with were human beings like ourselves, that they had been born somewhere, that they had their childhood ambitions as we had. It seemed for a brief moment we could break through and embrace these people."

It hasn't happened yet.

One would think that the absence in Russia of communism, of socialism, of the basic threat or challenge to the capitalist system, would be sufficient to write *finis* to the 70-year Cold War mentality. But the United States is virtually as hostile to 21st-century Russia as it was to 20th-century Soviet Union, surrounding Moscow with military bases, missile sites, and NATO members. Why should that be? Ideology is no longer a factor. But power remains one, specifically America's perpetual lust for world hegemony. Russia is the only nation that (a) is a military powerhouse, and (b) doesn't believe that the United States has a god-given-American-exceptionalism right to rule the

world, and says so. By these criteria, China might qualify as a poor second. But there are no others.

Washington pretends that it doesn't understand why Moscow should be upset by Western military encroachment, but it has no such problem when roles are reversed. Secretary of State John Kerry recently stated that Russian troops poised near eastern Ukraine are "creating a climate of fear and intimidation in Ukraine" and raising questions about Russia's next moves and its commitment to diplomacy.

NATO – ever in need of finding a *raison d'être* – has now issued a declaration of [cold] war, which reads in part:

"NATO foreign ministers on Tuesday [April 1, 2014] reaffirmed their commitment to enhance the Alliance's collective defence, agreed to further support Ukraine and to suspend NATO's practical cooperation with Russia. 'NATO's greatest responsibility is to protect and defend our territory and our people. And make no mistake, this is what we will do,' NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said. ... Ministers directed Allied military authorities to develop additional measures to strengthen collective defence and deterrence against any threat of aggression against the Alliance, Mr. Fogh Rasmussen said. 'We will make sure we have updated military plans, enhanced exercises and appropriate deployments,' he said. NATO has already reinforced its presence on the eastern border of the Alliance, including surveillance patrols over Poland and Romania and increased numbers of fighter aircraft allocated to the NATO air policing mission in the Baltic States. ... NATO Foreign Ministers also agreed to suspend all of NATO's practical cooperation with Russia."

Does anyone recall what NATO said in 2003 when the United States bombed and invaded Iraq with "shock and awe", compared to the Russians now not firing a single known shot at anyone? And neither Russia nor Ukraine is even a member of NATO. Does NATO have a word to say about the

One would think that the absence in Russia of communism, of socialism, of the basic threat or challenge to the capitalist system, would be sufficient to write *finis* to the 70-year Cold War mentality

ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

Cubans are in constant touch with relatives in the US, by mail and in person. They get US television programs from Miami and other southern cities; international conferences on all manner of political, economic and social issues are held regularly in Cuba

right-wing coup in Ukraine, openly supported by the United States, overthrowing the elected government? Did the hypocrisy get any worse during the Cold War? Imagine that NATO had not been created in 1949. Imagine that it has never existed. What reason could one give today for its creation? Other than to provide a multi-national cover for Washington's interventions.

One of the main differences between now and the Cold War period is that Americans at home are (not yet) persecuted or prosecuted for supporting Russia or things Russian.

But don't worry, folks, there won't be a big US-Russian war. For the same reason there wasn't one during the Cold War. The United States doesn't pick on any country which can defend itself.

Cuba ... again ... still ... forever

Is there actually a limit? Will the United States ever stop trying to overthrow the Cuban government? Entire books have been written documenting the unrelenting ways Washington has tried to get rid of tiny Cuba's horrid socialism – from military invasion to repeated assassination attempts to an embargo that President Clinton's National Security Advisor called “the most pervasive sanctions ever imposed on a nation in the history of mankind”. But nothing has ever come even close to succeeding. The horrid socialism keeps on inspiring people all over the world. It's the darnedest thing. Can providing people free or remarkably affordable health care, education, housing, food and culture be all that important?

And now it's “Cuban Twitter” – an elaborately complex system set up by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to disguise its American origins and financing, aiming to bring about a “Cuban Spring” uprising. USAID sought to first “build a Cuban audience, mostly young people; then the plan was to push them toward dissent”, hoping the messaging network “would reach critical mass so that dis-

sidents could organize ‘smart mobs’ – mass gatherings called at a moment's notice – that might trigger political demonstrations or ‘renegotiate the balance of power between the state and society.’” It's too bad it's now been exposed, because we all know how wonderful the Egyptian, Syrian, Libyan, and other “Arab Springs” have turned out.

Here's USAID speaking after their scheme was revealed on April 3: “Cubans were able to talk among themselves, and we are proud of that.” We are thus asked to believe that normally the poor downtrodden Cubans have no good or safe way to communicate with each other. Is the US National Security Agency working for the Cuban government now?

The Associated Press, which broke the story, asks us further to believe that the “truth” about most things important in the world is being kept from the Cuban people by the Castro regime, and that the “Cuban Twitter” would have opened people's eyes. But what information might a Cuban citizen discover online that the government would not want him to know about? I can't imagine. Cubans are in constant touch with relatives in the US, by mail and in person. They get US television programs from Miami and other southern cities; both CNN and TeleSUR (Venezuela, covering Latin America) are seen regularly on Cuban television”; international conferences on all manner of political, economic and social issues are held regularly in Cuba. I've spoken at more than one myself. What – it must be asked – does USAID, as well as the American media, think are the great dark secrets being kept from the Cuban people by the nasty commie government?

Those who push this line sometimes point to the serious difficulty of using the Internet in Cuba. The problem is that it's extremely slow, making certain desired usages often impractical. From an American friend living in Havana: “It's not a question of getting or not getting internet. I get internet here. The problem is downloading

something or connecting to a link takes too long on the very slow connection that exists here, so usually I/we get ‘timed out.’” But the USAID’s “Cuban Twitter”, after all, could not have functioned at all without the Internet.

Places like universities, upscale hotels, and Internet cafés get better connections, at least some of the time; however, it’s rather expensive to use at the hotels and cafés.

In any event, this isn’t a government plot to hide dangerous information. It’s a matter of technical availability and prohibitive cost, both things at least partly in the hands of the United States and American corporations. Microsoft, for example, at one point, if not at present, barred Cuba from using its Messenger instant messaging service.

Cuba and Venezuela have jointly built a fiber optic underwater cable connection that they hope will make them less reliant on the gringos; the outcome of this has not yet been reported in much detail.

The grandly named Agency for International Development does not have an honorable history; this can perhaps be captured by a couple of examples: In 1981, the agency’s director, John Gilligan, stated: “At one time, many AID field offices were infiltrated

from top to bottom with CIA people. The idea was to plant operatives in every kind of activity we had overseas, government, volunteer, religious, every kind.”

On June 21, 2012, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) issued a resolution calling for the immediate expulsion of USAID from their nine member countries, “due to the fact that we consider their presence and actions to constitute an interference which threatens the sovereignty and stability of our nations.”

USAID, the CIA, the National Endowment for Democracy (and the latter’s subsidiaries), together or singly, continue to be present at regime changes, or attempts at same, favorable to Washington, from “color revolutions” to “spring” uprisings, producing a large measure of chaos and suffering for our tired old world.

CT

William Blum is the author of “Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II,” “Rogue State: a guide to the World’s Only Super Power,” “West-Bloc Dissident: a Cold War Political Memoir,” and “America’s Deadliest Export – Democracy: The Truth About US Foreign Policy and Everything Else”

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I'm so confused . . .

Neil Clark is baffled by Western hypocrisy

Why was the occupation of government buildings in Ukraine a very good thing in January, but it's a very bad thing in April?

I'm confused. A few weeks ago we were told in the West that people occupying government buildings in Ukraine was a very good thing. These people, we were told by our political leaders and elite media commentators, were 'pro-democracy protestors'.

The US government warned the Ukrainian authorities against using force against these 'pro-democracy protestors' even if, according to the pictures we saw, some of them were neo-Nazis who were throwing Molotov cocktails and other things at the police and smashing up statues and setting fire to buildings.

Now, just a few weeks later, we're told that people occupying government buildings in Ukraine are not 'pro-democracy protestors' but 'terrorists' or 'militants'.

Why was the occupation of government buildings in Ukraine a very good thing in January, but it's a very bad thing in April? Why was the use of force by the authorities against protestors completely unacceptable in January, but acceptable now? I repeat: *I'm confused. Can anyone help me?*

The anti-government protestors in Ukraine during the winter received visits from several prominent Western politicians, including US Senator John McCain, and Victoria Nuland, from the US State Department, who handed out cookies. But there have been very large anti-govern-

ment protests in many Western European countries in recent weeks, which have received no such support, either from such figures or from elite Western media commentators. Nor have protestors received free cookies from officials at the US State Department.

Surely if they were so keen on anti-government street protests in Europe, and regarded them as the truest form of 'democracy', McCain and Nuland would also be showing solidarity with street protestors in Madrid, Rome, Athens and Paris? *I'm confused. Can anyone help me?*

A few weeks ago I saw an interview with the US Secretary of State John Kerry who said, "You just don't invade another country on phony pretexts in order to assert your interests." But I seem to recall the US doing just that on more than one occasion in the past 20 years or so.

Have I misremembered the 'Iraq has WMDs claim'? Was I dreaming back in 2002 and early 2003 when politicians and neocon pundits came on TV every day to tell us plebs that we had to go to war with Iraq because of the threat posed by Saddam's deadly arsenal? Why is having a democratic vote in Crimea on whether to rejoin Russia deemed worse than the brutal, murderous invasion of Iraq – an invasion which has led to the deaths of up to 1 million people? *I'm confused. Can anyone help me?*

We were also told by very serious-looking Western politicians and media ‘experts’ that the Crimea referendum wasn’t valid because it was held under “military occupation.” But I’ve just been watching coverage of elections in Afghanistan, held under military occupation, which have been hailed by leading western figures, such as NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen as a “historic moment for Afghanistan” and a great success for “democracy.” Why is the Crimean vote dismissed, but the Afghanistan vote celebrated? *I’m confused. Can anyone help me?*

Syria, too, is rather baffling. We were and are told that radical Islamic terror groups pose the greatest threat to our peace, security and our ‘way of life’ in the West. That Al-Qaeda and other such groups need to be destroyed: that we needed to have a relentless ‘War on Terror’ against them. Yet in Syria, our leaders have been siding with such radical groups in their war against a secular government which respects the rights of religious minorities, including Christians.

When the bombs of Al-Qaeda or their affiliates go off in Syria and innocent people are killed there is no condemnation from our leaders: their only condemnation has been of the secular Syrian government which is fighting radical Islamists and which our leaders and elite media commentators are desperate to have toppled. *I’m confused. Can anyone help me?*

Then there’s gay rights. We are told that Russia is a very bad and backward country because it has passed a law against promoting homosexuality to minors. Yet our leaders who boycotted the Winter Olympics in Sochi because of this law visit Gulf states where homosexuals can be imprisoned or even executed, and warmly embrace the rulers there, making no mention of the issue of gay rights.

Surely the imprisonment or execution of gay people is far worse than a law which forbids promotion of homosexuality to minors? Why, if they are genuinely concerned about gay rights, do our leaders attack Russia and not countries that imprison or execute gay people? *I’m confused. Can anyone help me?*

We are told in lots of newspaper articles that the Hungarian ultra-nationalist party Jobbik is very bad and that its rise is a cause of great concern, even though it is not even in the government, or likely to be. But neo-Nazis and ultra-nationalists do hold positions in the new government of Ukraine, which our leaders in the West enthusiastically support and neo-Nazis and the far-

right played a key role in the overthrow of Ukraine’s democratically elected government in February, a ‘revolution’ cheered on by the West. Why are ultra-nationalists and far-right groups unacceptable in Hungary but very acceptable in Ukraine? *I’m confused. Can anyone help me?*

We are told that Russia is an aggressive, imperialist power and that NATO’s concerns are about opposing the Russian ‘threat’. But I looked at the map the other day and while I could see lots of countries close to (and bordering) Russia that were members of NATO, the US-led military alliance whose members have bombed and attacked many countries in the last 15 years, I could not see any countries close to America that were part of a Russian-military alliance, or any Russian military bases or missiles situated in foreign countries bordering or close to the US. Yet Russia, we are told, is the ‘aggressive one’. *I’m confused. Can anyone help me?*

CT

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Neil Clark is a journalist, writer and broadcaster. His award-winning blog can be found at www.neilclark66.blogspot.com

Our leaders who boycotted the Winter Olympics in Sochi because of this law visit Gulf states where homosexuals can be imprisoned or even executed, and warmly embrace the rulers there, making no mention of the issue of gay rights

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Ten things you need to know about Tony Blair

Lindsey German & Robin Beste on the extremist thoughts of the former British prime minister

Blair believes it was a terrible error that the west did not launch an air attack on Syria in August 2013. He says the west should impose

no-fly zones and arm directly the Syrian rebels

In a speech on 23 April 2014, Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister who led his country into the disastrous war with Iraq, blamed Islamic extremism for failures of western intervention in the Middle East. Here are ten things he neglected to mention about the extremism of his own political career.

1. Tony Blair has never shown a shred of remorse for the extremism of mass slaughter and destruction for which he was directly responsible, not least in Iraq.

2. Tony Blair is a supporter of extremism around the world, whether it be the dictators in Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan, the despots ruling the oil states Kuwait and Bahrain, or Israel's apartheid regime that occupies Palestinian land in contravention of international law and countless UN resolutions. When prime minister, not content with waging illegal wars, he was up to his neck in CIA torture and kidnapping 'every step of the way'.

3. Tony Blair defends and applauds the military coup that overthrew the democratically elected government in Egypt, saying that it 'was the absolutely necessary rescue of a nation'. He was a supporter of the Egyptian dictator Mubarak, calling him "immensely courageous and a

force for good", right up to the day he was overthrown in a popular revolution by the Egyptian people.

4. Tony Blair blindly ignores the catastrophes in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, as he endlessly promotes more western military intervention, whether it be in Syria, Iran or beyond.

5. Tony Blair has called repeatedly for western military intervention in the Syrian civil war. He believes it was a terrible error that the west did not launch an air attack on Syria in August 2013. He says the west should impose no-fly zones and arm directly the Syrian rebels. He believes Britain should have invaded Syria, whether the British public wanted it or not (all opinion polls show a majority of the British public opposes intervention)..

6. Tony Blair's lack of self awareness and remorse makes him a highly dangerous individual and totally unsuited to his role as envoy for peace in the Middle East. He supported Israel's wars in Lebanon and Gaza. He never loses an opportunity to praise the Israeli apartheid state, one recent example being his sickening eulogy at the funeral of the mass murdering former Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, who he called "a giant of this land".

7. **Tony Blair** is pathologically incapable of recognising that his actions have not lessened, but have hugely exacerbated, the threat of terrorism. When in office, his own foreign policy establishment concluded that his wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were a major driving force behind acts of jihadist violence in Britain and beyond.

8. When under fire for his disastrous record, Tony Blair's answer is to blame the Muslims. He attacks Islam as a means of absolving his wars from any connection or responsibility for atrocities like the London bombings on 7 July 2005 and the killing in 2013 of UK soldier Lee Rigby. He accuses Muslims of imposing an ideology based on the belief that there is one proper religion and only one proper view of it. As he well knows, this is not the view of most Muslims in most countries. It is true however of his allies in Saudi Arabia.

9. **Tony Blair** is an 'extremist' when it comes to accumulating vast personal wealth - now calculated to be over £70 million - by exploiting the contacts he made when he

was prime minister, committing war crimes that should have seen him behind bars. He sells his services to merchant bankers, oil companies and despotic regimes such as Kazakhstan, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi. He is one of the world's highest paid public speakers, often earning over £250,000 for one speech. He flies around in a £30 million private chartered jet. On top of this, he takes £435,000 a year from the British taxpayers, who finance the prime minister's pension of £70,000 which he still draws, the £250,000 cost of his security and £115,000 for his 'political office'.

10. Such is the widespread revulsion towards Tony Blair's extremism, that he cannot travel anywhere without fear of facing a citizen's arrest for his war crimes. There have been five attempts so far. There is a bounty on his head for payment to anyone who gets close enough to apprehend him. See www.arrestblair.org for how you could pick up the reward. **CT**

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This article was originally published by the Stop the War Coalition
– <http://www.stopwar.org.uk>

SETTLING SCORES

THE MEDIA, THE POLICE AND THE MINERS' STRIKE

edited by *Granville Williams*

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Blair cannot travel anywhere without fear of facing a citizen's arrest for his war crimes. There have been five attempts so far

Trying not to give peace a chance

Ray McGovern tells how the US has missed many chances over the years to bring lasting peace between the West and Russia

The peaceful resolution of the Cuban missile crisis disappointed Air Force General Curtis LeMay and colleagues on the Joint Staff who wished to use Moscow's adventurism as a casus belli to launch a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union

The unnecessary and regrettable conflict between the US and Russia over Ukraine brings to mind sad remembrances of important junctures at which I watched – as a citizen and a CIA analyst – chances for genuine peace with Russia frittered away.

How vividly I recall John Kennedy's inaugural address when he bid us to ask not what our country could do for us, but rather what we could do for our country. Then and there I decided to put in the service of our government whatever expertise I could offer from my degrees in Russian. So I ended up in Washington more than a half-century ago.

The missed chances for peace did not wait. On April 17, 1961, a ragtag CIA-trained-and-funded paramilitary group of some 1,500 men went ashore on Cuba's Bay of Pigs and were defeated in three days by Cuban forces led by Fidel Castro. CIA Director Allen Dulles and the senior military had intended to mousetrap young President Kennedy into committing US military forces to a full-scale invasion, in order to bring what we now blithely call "regime change" to Cuba.

The planned mousetrap, shown for example in Dulles's own handwriting on paper found in his study after his death, didn't work. Kennedy had warned Dulles emphatically that he would not send US armed forces into the fray. He stuck to that decision, and thereby created a rancid hatred on the part

of Dulles, whom Kennedy fired, and from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, whom Kennedy should also have fired. The top generals, whom Deputy Secretary of State George Ball described as a "sewer of deceit," had been in on the cabal.

The failed invasion prompted Castro to strengthen ties with the Soviet Union, which in turn led to the Cuban missile crisis of October of 1962. I watched with particular attention that seminal event unfold, since I had orders to report to Army Infantry Officer Orientation School at Fort Benning on Nov. 3, 1962. (When we began our training, we had to postpone the segment on highly touted, relatively new weapons – grenade launchers, almost all of which had been scooped up and taken to Key West a few weeks before.)

As James Douglass details in his masterful "JFK and the Unspeakable", Kennedy's "failure" to send forces to rescue the paramilitary group on the beach at the Bay of Pigs was a sign of cowardice in the eyes of Allen Dulles; his brother, former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles; and the Joint Chiefs.

The peaceful resolution of the Cuban missile crisis disappointed Air Force General Curtis LeMay and colleagues on the Joint Staff who wished to use Moscow's adventurism as a casus belli – not only to achieve regime change in Cuba, but also to launch a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union itself. Yes, madness – but real enough. (And there's still

some of it around today.)

Kennedy and Khrushchev were acutely aware of how close they had come to incinerating much of the world – and decided to find common ground in order to prevent a re-run of the near-calamity. In a stunningly conciliatory speech at American University on June 10, 1963, Kennedy appealed for a re-examination of American attitudes towards peace, the Soviet Union and the Cold War, famously remarking, “If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can make the world safe for diversity.”

The Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was signed by the US and the USSR on Aug. 5, 1963, and further improvement in relations was expected – and strongly opposed by the cold warriors among the Joint Chiefs. For them it was the last straw when President Kennedy issued two Executive Orders for a staged withdrawal of virtually all US troops from Vietnam. They joined forces with Allen Dulles and others with feelings of revenge or fear that Kennedy was too soft on Communism.

And so, according to the persuasive case made by Douglass in “JFK and the Unspeakable,” they joined in a plot to kill Kennedy and derail for a generation the chance for real peace.

Chance #2 – Reykjavik, 1986

By the next high-profile opportunity for a comprehensive peace in 1986, I had spent most of my CIA career focusing on Soviet foreign policy and was able to tell the senior US officials I was briefing that Mikhail Gorbachev, in my view, was the real deal. Even so, I was hardly prepared for how far Gorbachev was willing to go toward disarmament. At the 1986 summit with President Ronald Reagan in Reykjavik, Iceland, Gorbachev proposed that all nuclear weapons be eliminated within ten years.

Reagan reportedly almost rose to the occasion, but was counseled to reject Gorbachev’s condition that any research on anti-ballistic missiles be confined to laboratories for that

decade. “Star Wars,” the largest and most wasteful defense-industry corporate welfare program, won the day.

I know the characters who, for whatever reason, danced to the tune of “Star Wars” – Reagan’s wistful wish for an airtight defense against strategic missiles, which the most serious engineers and scientists have said from the start, and still say, can always be defeated, and cheaply.

The naysayers to peace included ideologues like CIA Director William Casey and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, wind-socks like CIA Deputy Director Robert Gates and one of his protégés, Fritz Ermarth, a viscerally anti-Russian functionary and former Northrop Corporation employee who was a Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director of Soviet and European Affairs at the National Security Council (NSC) during Reykjavik.

According to author Jim Mann, several years after Reykjavik, Ermarth reflected on how he had been wrong in being overly suspicious of Gorbachev and how the intuition of Ronald Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz had been more perceptive.

As for “Star Wars,” Jack Matlock, whom Ermarth replaced at the White House and NSC, attributed the President’s refusal to compromise on anti-ballistic missile work beyond the laboratory to a mistaken belief that the proposed restrictions would be detrimental to the program. Matlock argued that the restrictions would have had little effect on research that was still in its very early stages. Matlock, who later served as US Ambassador to Russia, remains among the most widely respected specialists on Russia since George Kennan.

A career Foreign Service officer, Matlock missed the opportunity that Ermarth had to be initiated into the ethos of defense contractors like Northrop. According to its website: “From detection to tracking to engagement, Northrop Grumman is bringing its entire suite of expertise in systems integration, high-tech weaponry, and domain knowledge

It was the last straw when President Kennedy issued two Executive Orders for a staged withdrawal of virtually all US troops from Vietnam

UKRAINE ERUPTS / 2

Bush said he would not dance in celebration of the Berlin Wall coming down and assured Gorbachev that he had “no intention of seeking unilateral advantage from the current process of change in East Germany and in other Warsaw Pact countries”

to bear on the challenge of a layered missile defense capability.”

Also, in contrast to Matlock, Robert Gates was elected a director of Northrop Grumman on April 24, 2002, during one of his private-sector breaks between top jobs in the national security apparatus.

So, the Reykjavik summit was another blown chance for real peace that would have been beneficial for the world – but for Northrop Grumman, not so much.

Chance #3 – The Soviet Union Falls Apart

By the late 1980s and early 1990s with the crumbling of the Soviet bloc and then the collapse of the Soviet Union, another opportunity for genuine peace and nuclear disarmament presented itself, but blowing such chances had become predictable.

The failure of the Communist regimes in the USSR and in Eastern Europe brought with it a unique opportunity to create the kind of peace that Europe had not seen in modern times. It was an historic moment. President George H. W. Bush sensed this, even before the Berlin Wall fell, when he told a German audience in Mainz on May 31, 1989, “the time is ripe for Europe to be whole and free.”

To his credit, President Bush, the elder, refused to gloat over the historic concessions being made by Soviet President Gorbachev. Bush said he would not dance in celebration of the Berlin Wall coming down and assured Gorbachev that he had “no intention of seeking unilateral advantage from the current process of change in East Germany and in other Warsaw Pact countries.”

In early February 1990, Secretary of State James Baker told Gorbachev there would be “no extension of NATO’s forces one inch to the East,” provided that the Russians agreed that a united Germany could become a member of NATO.

As historian Mary Elise Sarotte has pointed out, “Such statements helped to inspire Gorbachev to agree, on Feb. 10, 1990, to internal German unification” – a bitter pill to swallow when earlier 20th Century history is

taken into account. The undertaking not to push NATO east was in the nature of a gentlemen’s agreement; nothing was committed to paper, and as the years went by, so did the gentlemen.

While US media have generally ignored this sordid history, one can find chapter and verse in Steve Weissman’s recent article, “Exposing the Cold War Roots of America’s Coup in Kiev.” And Der Spiegel published an even more detailed account in November 2009 in “Did the West Break Its Promise to Moscow?”

It didn’t take long, however, for Official Washington’s “triumphalism” to take over. “Free-market” experts were dispatched to Moscow to apply “shock therapy” to the Russian economy, a process that gave rise to a handful of well-connected “oligarchs” plundering the nation’s wealth while poverty spread among the masses of the Russian people.

With similar arrogance, the US government cast aside Russian objections to NATO expansion. On March 12, 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joined NATO. On March 29, 2004, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia also became NATO members. (Albania and Croatia joined on April 1, 2009.)

In a major speech in Munich on security policy on Feb. 2, 2007, Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was reasserting Russian self-respect, was blunt:

“I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation to the modernization of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them.”

In no way impressed by Putin’s protestations, and having already added 12 countries

on or near Russia's borders, NATO leaders kept on looking east. On April 3, 2008, at a summit in Bucharest, the heads of state of the alliance issued a declaration that included this relating to NATO plans for Ukraine:

"NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO."

Though the timing was left up in the air, Russia reacted strongly to the prospect, as anyone with an ounce of sense could have predicted.

Regarding Ukraine, the last straw came almost six years later when the US Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, neocon prima donna Victoria Nuland, along with US Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Piatt and others with an interest in stirring up trouble in Ukraine, helped precipitate a putsch that placed US lackeys in charge of a new government for Ukraine on Feb. 22, 2014.

In a major speech ten days later, Putin said:

"Our colleagues in the West ... have lied to us many times, made decisions behind our backs, placed before us an accomplished fact. This happened with NATO's expansion to the east, as well as the deployment of military infrastructure at our borders. ... It happened with the deployment of a missile defense system. ...

"They are constantly trying to sweep us into a corner. ... But there is a limit to everything. And with Ukraine, our Western partners have crossed the line. ... If you compress the spring all the way to its limit, it will snap back hard. ... Today, it is imperative to end this hysteria and refute the rhetoric of the cold war. ... Russia has its own national interests that need to be taken into account and respected."

Quotes around Russia's National 'Interests'

Putin's speech riled those who run the editorial section of the neocon *Washington Post*, which on March 20 denounced "Putin's expansionist ambitions" and reviled

those who are "rushing to concede 'Russian interests' in Eurasia." The *Post* lamented that President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry were among those who have said they recognize such "interests" in Ukraine.

And the *Post* gave space to former Bush national security adviser Stephen Hadley who wants NATO to "restate its commitment of the 2008 Bucharest Communiqué to ultimate NATO membership to Ukraine," and to "roll back the takeover of Crimea."

Oddly, abutting Hadley's drivel was an op-ed penned by former Carter national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. After excoriating "Russian aggression [and] Putin's thug-gish tactics," and comparing him to "a Mafia gangster," Hitler and Mussolini, Brzezinski nonetheless concluded: "The West should reassure Russia that it is not seeking to draw Ukraine into NATO."

Henry Kissinger, no peacenik he, wrote the same thing in a *Washington Post* op-ed of March 5, 2014: "Ukraine should not join NATO, a position I took seven years ago, when it last came up." Such suggestions from seasoned hands are not new. George Kennan, the author of the post WWII "containment policy," was a fierce opponent of the eastward expansion of NATO.

If today's Ukraine crisis is not to spin further out of control, President Obama needs to tell the neocons within his own administration – as well as Secretary of State Kerry – to cease and desist with their inflammatory rhetoric and their demands for confrontation.

If the objective of these hardliners was to poison US-Russian relations, they have done a good job. However, if they had illusions that Russia would stand for Ukraine being woven into NATO, they should take a course in Russian history.

Or is it possible that some of the administration's hawks are offended that Putin provided a path away from a near US military assault on Syria last summer by getting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to agree to sur-

If today's Ukraine crisis is not to spin further out of control, President Obama needs to tell the neocons within his own administration – as well as Secretary of State Kerry – to cease and desist with their inflammatory rhetoric and their demands for confrontation

COLD WAR II

"I sometimes get the feeling," said Putin, "that in America, people sit in a lab and conduct experiments, as if with rats, without actually understanding the consequences of what they are doing. Why do they need to do this?"

render his chemical weapons?

In a highly unusual Sept. 11, 2013, op-ed in the *New York Times*, "A Plea for Caution From Russia," Putin recalled that our countries "were allies once, and defeated the Nazis together," adding, "My working and personal relationship with President Obama is marked by growing trust."

Not rising to the bait

The good news, if there is any coming from the Ukraine mess, is that Putin has avoided returning the personal invective hurled at him. He does not want to burn any bridges. It would hardly be surprising, at this stage, were Putin to badmouth Secretary Kerry, but Putin has shown some restraint, while still putting Kerry in his place.

At a news conference on March 4, Putin was asked about Kerry's harsh attitude and whether it might be time to recall the Russian ambassador to the US Putin replied:

"The US Secretary of State is certainly an important person, but he is not the ultimate authority that determines the United States foreign policy. ... [Recalling our ambassador] would be an extreme measure. ... I really don't want to use it because I think Russia is not the only one interested in cooperation with partners on an international level and in such areas as economy, politics and foreign security; our partners are just as interested in this cooperation. It is very easy to destroy these instruments of cooperation and it would be very difficult to rebuild them."

Putin also fielded a question from six-year-old Albina toward the end of his marathon "Direct Line" TV conversation on April 17. She asked, "Do you think President Obama would save you if you were drowning?"

Putin: "I sure hope this doesn't happen, but you know that there are personal relationships as well as relations between governments. I can't say that I have a special personal relationship with the US President, but I think he is a decent man and brave

enough. So, I think he definitely would."

However, as for that "growing trust" with President Obama – and the chance for more progress toward a more peaceful world – the US hardliners who exacerbated the political situation in Ukraine, turning it into an international confrontation, appear to have succeeded in blocking the latest best hope for US-Russian cooperation.

But there remains an obvious solution to at least prevent matters from getting worse. The beneficiaries of "regime change" in Kiev, who now find themselves in power at least for the nonce, need to make clear that Ukraine will not attempt to join NATO; and NATO needs to make clear that it has no intention of folding Ukraine into NATO. (Polling shows a lack of enthusiasm among Ukrainians for NATO, in any case.)

This is the most important step to be taken to rebuild trust – or at least prevent the further deterioration of trust – between Obama and Putin.

At his press conference on March 4, President Putin complained about "our Western partners" continuing to interfere in Ukraine. "I sometimes get the feeling," he said, "that somewhere across that huge puddle, in America, people sit in a lab and conduct experiments, as if with rats, without actually understanding the consequences of what they are doing. Why do they need to do this?"

Putin has taken some pains to hold the door open to a restoration of trust with President Obama. From the US side, this might be the right time to close down the lab where all those destructive "regime change" experiments take place. **CT**

Ray McGovern works with *Tell the Word*, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He has focused on Russia for half a century; he serves on the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS). This essay originally appeared at <http://consortiumnews.com>

If this is freedom ... ?

Felicity Arbuthnot on Easter in Iraq – not a time for celebration

“We gather tonight knowing that this generation of heroes has made the United States safer and more respected round the world.” – President Barack Obama, State of the Union address, 24th January 2012

As Easter was celebrated in the US and UK with a message of hope, life is very much different in Iraq, where Fallujah and much of the country is again under siege, not by the US army of occupation this time, but by the US proxy government’s militias armed with weapons, supplied by the US.

In 2003, a month into the invasion, Easter Day fell on the same day as this year, 20th April, as Iraqis were incarcerated, tortured, and found with their heads drilled or no headless, bodies thrown on garbage piles.

Easter Day the following year, 2004 fell on Sunday 11th April, and was marked by Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt confirming again his total disregard for human life. In the words of former USCENTOCOM Commander General Tommy Franks, who led the Iraq invasion in March 2003, “it is not productive to count Iraqi deaths”.

The carnage of the first siege of Fallujah was underway. At the daily press briefing (2), General Kimmitt assured the media:

“The Marines remain ready, willing and able at any time to provide any level of hu-

manitarian assistance.

“Outside the city of Fallujah, I understand they’ve already set up facilities for any displaced persons that come out of the city that need assistance.

“That is something that the Marine Corps is expert in, the whole notion of assistance, rendering assistance to any town in the world at anytime.”

Then as now, it is impossible to know whether to laugh or weep.

General Kimmitt. was then asked:

“From here, from this podium, you talk about a clean war in Fallujah. But the Iraqis have an image through television from what is happening in Fallujah [including] killing children. Is there a way that you could convince Iraqis by your point of view that you have [only] utilized force against terrorists?”

With his hallmark contempt for humanity, or anything to do with “rendering assistance”, the general replied:

“With regards to the solution on the images of Americans and coalition soldiers killing innocent civilians, my solution is quite simple: change the channel. Change the channel to a legitimate, authoritative, honest news station.

“The stations that are showing Americans intentionally killing women and children are not legitimate news sources. That is

“With regards to the solution on the images of Americans and coalition soldiers killing innocent civilians, my solution is quite simple: change the channel”

REMEMBERING



Justice?: Positioning a naked detainee on a MRE Box, with a sandbag on his head, and attaching wires to his fingers, toes, and penis to simulate electric torture

propaganda, and that is lies. So you want a solution? Change the channel.”

Jonathan Steel of the *Guardian* persisted:

“General Kimmitt, you talk about changing channels, but what is your reply to people like [politician] Adnan Pachachi, who have accused the coalition forces of using collective punishment on the city of Fallujah?

Have you got a reply a little bit more nuanced and subtle than just to tell Mr. Pachachi to change channels?”

Without shame, the General responded to the situation in the town which has become known as “Iraq’s Guernica” with:

“In this case, we can disagree without being disagreeable, but it is not the practice of the coalition forces, any of the coalition nations, to exercise collective punishment or collective action on a city. That is just not done. It is not practiced. And it violates international law. And we don’t believe at this point that the coalition can be shown any proof to suggest that it is in violation of international law or the laws of land warfare.”

The town was, in fact, treated as a “free fire zone”, two hospitals, one a recently built emergency centre, were demolished while doctors and patients at the General Hospital, were initially handcuffed. The “liberators” regarded it as “a centre of propaganda”, because the staff talked, then as now, of the numbers of dead and wounded they were treating. As a result, the “non-American wounded were, in essence, left to die.

Lt-Col Pete Newell, said the US Forces wanted:

“ Fallujah to understand what democracy

is all about.”

And Colonel Ralph Peters, ever in pursuit of his vision of eternal war, said of this vision of democracy:

“We must not be afraid to make an example of Fallujah. We need to demonstrate that the United States military cannot be deterred or defeated. If that means widespread destruction, we must accept the price . . . Even if Fallujah has to go the way of Carthage, reduced to shards, the price will be worth it.”(2)

Now it is known what a pack of lies were Kimmitt’s assurances really were, perhaps someone should visit him and Colonel Peters with a view to including them in an upcoming historic class action law suit which has been filed in the US. (3)

Less than a month after Kimmitt’s channel changing advice, General Taguba released his report on what “democracy was all about” at the hands of the US military at Abu Ghraib prison, a short distance from Fallujah. It still chills and should shame for all time. Just a few of his findings showed that the intentional abuse of detainees by military police personnel included:

- Punching, slapping, and kicking detainees, and jumping on their naked feet.
- Videotaping and photographing naked detainees, both male and female
- Forcibly arranging detainees in various sexually explicit positions for photographing
- Forcing detainees to undress, and keeping them naked for several days at a time
- Forcing naked male detainees to wear women’s underwear
- Forcing groups of male detainees to masturbate while being photographed and videotaped
- Arranging naked male detainees in a pile and then jumping on them
- Positioning a naked detainee on a MRE Box, with a sandbag on his head, and attaching wires to his fingers, toes, and penis to simulate electric torture
- Writing “I am a Rapest” (sic) on the leg

of a detainee alleged to have forcibly raped a 15-year-old fellow detainee, and then photographing him naked

- Placing a dog chain or strap around a naked detainee's neck and having a female soldier pose for a picture

- A male MP guard having sex with a female detainee

- Taking photographs of dead Iraqi detainees.

- Breaking chemical lights and pouring the phosphoric liquid on detainees

- Threatening detainees with a charged 9mm pistol

- Pouring cold water on naked detainees

- Beating detainees with a broom handle and a chair

- Threatening male detainees with rape

- Allowing a military police guard to stitch the wound of a detainee who was injured after being slammed against the wall in his cell

- Sodomizing a detainee with a chemical light and perhaps a broom stick.

- Using military working dogs to frighten and intimidate detainees with threats of attack, and in one instance actually biting a detainee. (4)

Did the General not know of what was happening at the hands of US troops throughout the region? Baghdad, as Kurt Nimmo writes, the most advanced city in the Middle East, has now been designated in a recent survey (4) the world's worst city:

“a dangerous ruin, stricken by sectarian and religious violence, corruption, crime, unemployment, pollution and numerous other problems.”

Mark Kimmitt is now retired and “is an advisor to US firms in the Middle East”(5), presumably profiting from US destabilization and industrial scale murder and destruction, ongoing in Iraq, after eleven years, at an average of 1,000 souls a month.

It has to be wondered if, on the tenth anniversary of his massive Easter Day mis-truths, he reflected on his words, Iraq's ongoing carnage – and that when a journalist had asked him what he would say to Iraq's children, traumatized by the noise of America's war ‘planes and bombs, he replied: “Tell them it's the sound of freedom.” **CT**

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Felicity Arbuthnot is a British freelance journalist based in London.

Notes

1. <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0404/11/se.01.html>
2. <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/anarchism/writers/anarcho/war/iraq/fallujah/attack.html>
3. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/crimes-against-peace-historic-class-action-law-suit-against-george-w-bush/5378507>
4. <http://www.thetruthseeker.co.uk/?p=95369>
5. <http://www.mei.edu/profile/mark-kimmitt>

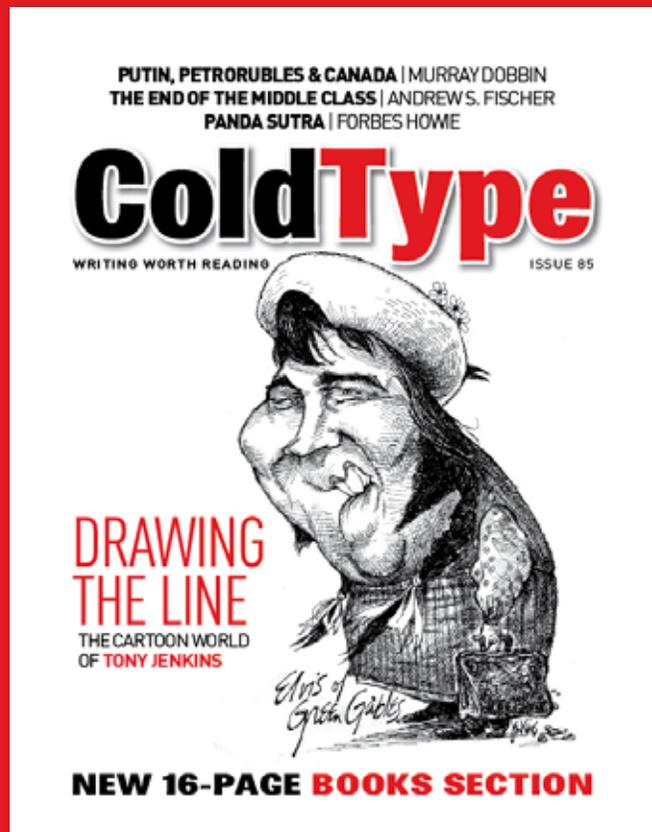
Baghdad, the most advanced city in the Middle East, has now been designated the world's worst city in a recent survey

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