

**THE RE-RETURN OF KARL MARX | ALAN MAAS**  
**BIG TIPS THE WAITERS NEVER SEE | SAM PIZZIGATI**  
**WORLD CUP BLUES | TONY SUTTON**

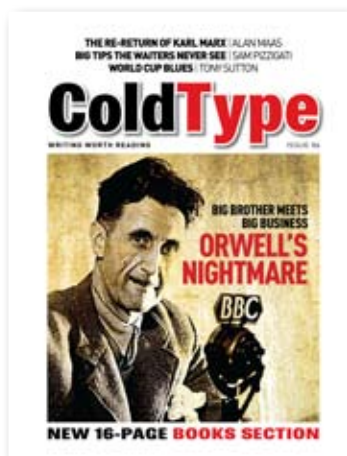
# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 86



**LOST IN AMERICA: ESSAYS BY LINH DINH & PETER VAN BUREN**



# ColdType

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# Orwell's nightmare

**John W. Whitehead** tells what happens when Big Brother meets Big Business

*"The Google services and apps that we interact with on a daily basis aren't the company's main product: They are the harvesting machines that dig up and process the stuff that Google really sells: for-profit intelligence." – Journalist Yasha Levine*

*"We know where you are. We know where you've been. We can more or less know what you're thinking about." – former Google CEO Eric Schmidt*

What would happen if the most powerful technology company in the world and the largest clandestine spying agency in the world joined forces? No need to wonder. Just look around you. It's happened already. Thanks to an insidious partnership between Google and the National Security Agency (NSA) that grows more invasive and more subtle with every passing day, "we the people" have become little more than data consumer commodities to be bought, sold and paid for over and over again.

With every smartphone we buy, every GPS device we install, every Twitter, Facebook, and Google account we open, every frequent buyer card we use for purchases – whether at the grocer's, the yogurt shop, the airlines or the department store, and every credit and debit card we use to pay for our transactions, we're helping Corporate America build a dos-

sier for its government counterparts on who we know, what we think, how we spend our money, and how we spend our time.

What's worse, this for-profit surveillance scheme, far larger than anything the NSA could capture just by tapping into our phone calls, is made possible by our consumer dollars and our cooperation. All those disclaimers you scroll through without reading them, the ones written in minute font, only to quickly click on the "Agree" button at the end so you can get to the next step – downloading software, opening up a social media account, adding a new app to your phone or computer: those signify your written consent to having your activities monitored, recorded and shared.

It's not just the surveillance you consent to that's being shared with the government, however. It's the very technology you happily and unquestioningly use which is being hardwired to give the government easy access to your activities.

In this way, Congress can pass all the legislation it wants – it will have no real effect on the NSA's activities – because the NSA no longer needs to dirty its hands by spying on your phone, email and internet activities, and the government can absolve itself of any direct wrongdoing. They can go straight to the source, as evidenced by a Freedom of Information Act request detailing the close relationship between Google higher-ups Eric

**The NSA no longer needs to dirty its hands by spying on your phone, email and internet activities, and the government can absolve itself of any direct wrongdoing**

**If, as the old adage warns, there's no such thing as a free lunch, then what does Google get out of the relationship? Simple: Google gets us**

Schmidt and Sergey Brin and NSA Director Gen. Keith Alexander. With Google in its hip pocket, the NSA can just bypass any legislative restrictions dreamed up to appease the electorate and buy their way into a surveillance state.

The government's motives aren't too difficult to understand – money, power, control – but what do corporate giants like Google stand to gain from colluding with Big Brother? Money, power, control. As privacy and security expert Bruce Schneier observed, “The main focus of massive Internet companies and government agencies both still largely align: to keep us all under constant surveillance. When they bicker, it's mostly role-playing designed to keep us blasé about what's really going on.”

While one billion people use Google every day, none of them pay to utilize Google's services. However, there's a good reason that Google doesn't charge for its services, and it has nothing to do with magnanimity, generosity, altruism, or munificence. If, as the old adage warns, there's no such thing as a free lunch, then what does Google get out of the relationship? Simple: Google gets us.

It turns out that we are Soylent Green. The 1973 film of the same name, starring Charlton Heston and Edward G. Robinson, is set in 2022 in an overpopulated, polluted, starving New York City whose inhabitants depend on synthetic foods manufactured by the Soylent Corporation for survival. Heston plays a policeman investigating a murder, who then discovers the grisly truth about what the wafer, soylent green – the principal source of nourishment for a starved population – is really made of. “It's people. Soylent Green is made out of people,” declares Heston's character. “They're making our food out of people. Next thing they'll be breeding us like cattle for food.”

Oh, how right he was. Soylent Green is indeed people, or in our case, Soylent Green is our own personal data, repossessed, repackaged and used by corporations and the government to entrap us. In this way, we're be-

ing bred like cattle but not for food – rather, we're being bred for our data. That's the secret to Corporate America's success.

Google, for example, has long enjoyed a relationship with clandestine agencies such as the CIA and NSA, which use Google's search-technology for scanning and sharing various intelligence. The technology leviathan turns a profit by processing, trading, and marketing products based upon our personal information, including our relationships, daily activities, personal beliefs, and personalities. Thus, behind the pleasant glow of the computer screen lies a leviathan menace, an intricate system of data collection which transforms all of us into a string of data, to be added, manipulated, or deleted based upon the whims of those in control.

Take, for example, Google's Street View program, which gives a fully immersive street level view of towns across the world. The program was constructed by Google Street View cars outfitted with 360 degree cameras, which seemed a neat idea to many people, most of whom didn't realize that the cars were not only taking pictures of all residential and commercial districts which they drove through, but were also “siphoning loads of personally identifiable data from people's wi-fi connections all across the world,” including emails, medical records, and any other electronic documents that were not encrypted.

Even the most seemingly benign Google program, Gmail, has been one of the most astoundingly successful surveillance programs ever concocted by a state or corporate entity. Journalist Yasha Levine explains: “All communication was subject to deep linguistic analysis; conversations were parsed for keywords, meaning, and even tone; individuals were matched to real identities using contact information stored in a user's Gmail address book; attached documents were scraped for intel – that info was then cross-referenced with previous email interactions and combined with stuff gleaned from other Google services, as well as third-party sources...”

Google then creates profiles on Gmail users, based upon “concepts and topics discussed in email, as well as email attachments [including] the content of websites that users have visited; demographic information – including income, sex, race, marital status; geographic information; psychographic information – personality type, values, attitudes, interests, and lifestyle interests; previous searches users have made; information about documents a user viewed and or edited by the users; browsing activity; previous purchases.”

Even if one isn't using Gmail themselves, but merely contacting a Gmail user, that person is subject to this mass collection and analysis of personal data. Google has gone so far as to disingenuously argue that “people who used Internet services for communication had ‘no legitimate expectation of privacy’ – and thus anyone who emailed with Gmail users had given ‘implied consent’ for Google to intercept and analyze their email exchange.”

What Google's vast acquisition and analysis of information indicates is that we are entering what some have called an age of infopolitics, in which the human person is broken down into data sets to be collated and analyzed, and used for a variety of purposes, including marketing, propaganda, and the squelching of dissent. As philosopher Colin Koopman notes, we may soon find ourselves in a more efficient version of the McCarthy era, in which one's personal beliefs or associations become fodder for the rising corporate surveillance state.

Email, social media, and GPS are just the tip of the iceberg, however. Google has added to its payroll the best and brightest minds in the fields of military defense, robotics (including humanoid robotics), defense, surveillance, machine learning, artificial intelligence, web-controlled household appliances (such as Nest thermostats), and self-driving cars. As journalist Carole Cadwalladr's predicts, “The future, in ways we can't even begin to imagine, will be Google's.”

Toward this end, Google has been working towards what one investor called “a Manhattan project of AI [artificial intelligence].” For those who remember their history, the Manhattan Project was a top-secret, multi-agency, multi-billion-dollar, military-driven government project aimed at building the first atom bombs. This project not only spawned the nuclear bombs used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but it also ushered in a nuclear arms race that, to this day, puts humanity on the brink of annihilation.

No less powerful and potentially destructive to the human race are modern-day surveillance and robotic technologies, manufactured by corporations working in tandem with government agencies. These are the building blocks of the global electronic concentration camp encircling us all, and Google, in conjunction with the NSA, has set itself up as a formidable warden.

The question is where will all this technology take us? It's a conundrum I explore at length in my book, “A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State”, which looks to film, fiction and art as indicators of the police state that now surrounds us, brought about with the help of the government and its corporate partners.

It won't be long before we find ourselves, much like Edward G. Robinson's character in *Soylent Green*, looking back on the past with longing, back to an age where we could speak to whom we wanted, buy what we wanted, think what we wanted without those thoughts, words and activities being tracked, processed and stored by corporate giants such as Google, sold to government agencies such as the NSA and CIA, and used against us by militarized police with their army of futuristic technologies.

Then again, George Orwell's description of the world of 1984 is as apt a description of today's world as I've ever seen: “You had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized.” **CT**

**It won't be long before we find ourselves, much like Edward G. Robinson's character in *Soylent Green*, looking back on the past with longing**

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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](http://amazon.com)

# Thinking the right thoughts

Why does the media always paint the West as 'the good guys' in world affairs? ask **David Cromwell and David Edwards**

**The reality is that 'we' must stifle other countries' independent development and, if required, bomb them into submission to Western state-corporate hegemony**

There are always convenient news-hooks on which corporate journalists can hang their power-friendly prejudices about the West being 'the good guys' in world affairs. Britain's Channel 4 News is not immune from this chauvinism. For example, Matt Frei introduced a report about last month's elections in Iraq with this propaganda bullet:

'Now, America once invaded Iraq so that, in large part, Iraqis could do what they did today – go to the polls.' (Channel 4 News, April 30, 2014)

Frei was, in fact, diligently reading out the first line of a blog piece by his colleague Jonathan Rugman, C4 News foreign affairs correspondent. The actual overriding reason for the West's war of aggression – strategic geopolitical dominance, including control of valuable hydrocarbon resources in the Middle East – was simply brushed aside. As ever, 'we' must be seen to be acting out of benign intent and pure desire to bring democracy to people around the globe. The reality is that 'we' must stifle other countries' independent development and, if required, bomb them into submission to Western state-corporate hegemony.

Frei acting as a mouthpiece to Rugman's bizarrely skewed perspective on the Iraq War was yet another case of sticking to the editorial line from the C4 News 'team you know and trust'. When we asked C4 News

correspondent Alex Thomson whether he agreed with this particular editorial monstrosity from his team he ducked out:

'whoah – I'm surfing right now and staying well out of this one!'

To be fair to Thomson, that was his jovial way of not defending his colleagues. He knows we know, and we know he knows we know, where his sympathies lie on that one.

Whereas Thomson has enough savvy to see behind much US-UK government rhetoric, he is aware that he must rein in any expressed scepticism to hang on to his job. As a general rule, journalists in the public eye are constrained to direct scepticism in one direction only: towards the propaganda output of officially declared enemies.

Thus, BBC Moscow correspondent Steve Rosenberg was free to make this observation via Twitter:

'Dominating the Russian airwaves, Moscow's lexicon for the Ukraine conflict: "junta", "fascists", "Banderovtsy", "genocide", "extremists"'

That's fine. But when has Rosenberg, or any of his colleagues, ever highlighted how 'our' airwaves are dominated by 'London's lexicon' and 'Washington's lexicon'? Why is it the job of a supposedly impartial BBC journalist to expose 'Moscow's lexicon', but not that emanating from London or Washington? Rosenberg ignored us when we

asked him those questions on Twitter.

### **The journalism of amnesia**

It is also a requirement for continued employment that corporate journalists forget about 'our' past crimes, or at least maintain a studied silence. For instance, reporting from Iraq, BBC Middle East correspondent Quentin Sommerville stated blandly on BBC News at Ten:

'This is the road to Fallujah – the city that American troops fought so hard to take.' (BBC One, April 30, 2014)

Yes, Fallujah – the city that was twice subjected to massive US onslaughts in April and November 2004 with devastating high-tech weaponry, killing at least 800 civilians in the second onslaught alone; the city that suffered numerous US war crimes, including the use of white phosphorus and depleted uranium munitions, leaving an ugly legacy of birth defects and increased incidence of infant mortality and cancer. Casting this appalling devastation as 'the city that American troops fought so hard to take' strips meaning from BBC 'journalism'. We might kindly call this 'amnesia'.

A similar ailment afflicted journalists when they reported the announcement that star BBC presenter Jeremy Paxman would be leaving the flagship *Newsnight* programme. Nobody in the news media knew, or could be bothered to recall, Paxman's ludicrous assertion that he, a much-vaunted robustly inquisitive and sceptical journalist, had been simply 'hoodwinked' by Bush and Blair's deceptive claims about Iraqi WMD.

Over a month before the invasion of Iraq, we had asked Paxman why, in his *Newsnight* interview with Tony Blair (February 6, 2003), he had failed to present even the most basic counter-arguments to Blair's deceptive case for war. Despite providing the Grand Inquisitor with details in advance, Paxman did not put to Blair that Iraq had been 'fundamentally disarmed' by 1998, according to chief UN arms inspector Scott Ritter. Paxman did not challenge Blair that

Iraq's nuclear capability had been 100% destroyed. The BBC alpha-male interviewer did not raise the fact that limited shelf-lives for any residual Iraqi chemical and biological weapons meant they would have already turned into harmless sludge.

Perhaps even more damning, Paxman failed to refer to the many credible and authoritative voices arguing that the impending war on Iraq was about oil and geostrategic power, and would have the effect of exacerbating the terrorist threat against the West. That Paxman could claim years later that he was 'hoodwinked' was a ludicrous attempt to abdicate responsibility for arguably the biggest betrayal of his career.

On the front page of the *Guardian*, Hannah Ellis-Petersen compiled some of 'Paxman's more memorable moments' from his *Newsnight* stint. These included a 1998 interview with Denis Halliday, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator who had resigned his post in Iraq in protest at what he rightly called genocidal sanctions. Ellis-Petersen wrote:

'Questioning his motives, Paxman asked him: "Aren't you just an apologist for Saddam Hussein?"'

For the *Guardian*, this outrageous question was merely a 'memorable moment'. Anyone remotely familiar with the facts of the appalling UN sanctions regime – imposed most cruelly by Washington and London, and leading to the deaths of an estimated half a million children under five; and likely well over one million people in total – would have hailed Halliday's bravery, outspokenness and compassion. Paxman's insulting challenge of Halliday was not so much a 'memorable moment', which casts the event as a tribute to the interviewer's supposed pedigree of truth-finding, but it was instead a shameful episode.

### **'A gunner on the lookout for threats from below'**

In short, to be a successful corporate journalist with high public visibility, two of

**That Paxman could claim years later that he was 'hoodwinked' was a ludicrous attempt to abdicate responsibility for arguably the biggest betrayal of his career**

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## CHANGING REALITY

**The kind of BBC reporting cited above requires that the reporter buys into the propaganda system that shapes how we, as news 'consumers' and compliant subjects, are supposed to see the world**

the most important attributes are to direct one's scepticism in the required direction – towards state 'enemies' – and to overlook or play down Western crimes. But perhaps the most important asset is the ability to believe sincerely in the essential ideological framework that drives Western government policies and public pronouncements: that 'we' are committed to making the world a better place.

BBC diplomatic correspondent James Robbins can always be relied upon to provide fine examples of such power-friendly journalism. Reporting recently on Syria for BBC News at Ten (April 28, 2014), he said ominously:

'So, crucially, could President Assad eventually win this civil war? He has a clear strategy: regime survival, whatever the cost.'

'Whatever the cost' carried the heavy implication that this would include the use of chemical weapons. The sheer evil of the Syrian leader radiated through Robbins' report.

Robbins added:

'President Assad is running again in elections in June. Much of the outside world regards that process as a grotesque sham. But Bashar Ashad looks strong with very powerful backers: Russia, Iran and the fighters of Hezbollah.'

It is de rigueur to describe elections in Syria as 'a grotesque sham', but not when reporting on a country that is a Western ally or is militarily occupied by the West, such as Afghanistan.

As well as Robbins' choice of words, it was notable to hear the menacing tone when he described Assad as looking 'strong with very powerful backers: Russia, Iran and the fighters of Hezbollah'. The BBC correspondent was clearly intent on portraying demonic enemies of the West all lined up against 'us': Russia, Iran and 'the fighters' of Hezbollah (not merely 'Hezbollah'). There was no mention of the other 'very powerful backers' fuelling the mass death in Syria – Saudi Arabia, Qatar, 'liberated' Iraq, 'liber-

ated' Libya and other US client states. As the *Washington Post* recently reported:

'the arrival at the ['rebel'] base last month of U.S.-made TOW antitank missiles, the first advanced American weaponry to be dispatched to Syria since the conflict began, has reignited long-abandoned hopes among the rebels that the Obama administration is preparing to soften its resistance to the provision of significant military aid and, perhaps, help move the battlefield equation back in their favor'.

The kind of BBC reporting cited above requires that the reporter buys into the propaganda system that shapes how we, as news 'consumers' and compliant subjects, are supposed to see the world. It is faith-based belief in the core ideology that Western leaders uphold genuine democracy and freedom that enables corporate journalists to deliver propaganda to the public in the most effective and persuasive way.

BBC 'defence' correspondent Caroline Wyatt is another repeat offender in this system of elite-friendly 'news'. Reporting from Afghanistan after a UK helicopter had crashed with the loss of five military personnel, she said (BBC Weekend News, April 27, 2014):

'Lynx helicopters have been vital there [in Afghanistan]. This is footage we took from a flight with the Army Air Corps in Helmand last year. A gunner on the lookout for threats from below. The pilot and copilot in the front; their skills honed by long years of training.' (Our emphasis).

Wyatt's report for BBC News gave an official, Western-power slant on war:

'The tragedy has brought tributes from the Prime Minister and many others. David Cameron said it brought home the sacrifices made by the UK's armed forces in Afghanistan.'

But then, Caroline Wyatt has a long dishonourable record in reporting Afghanistan in pro-Nato mode. In 2011, Wyatt was given 'a tour around' an Apache attack helicopter where she was shown laser-guided Hellfire



missiles and learned that 19 rockets could be fired out of one ‘rocket pod’. And in 2012, she wrote this:

‘Nato leaders want to send out a clear message of financial and political support for Afghanistan for the years after 2014, not least so that the manner of Nato’s exit doesn’t tarnish the alliance itself or the many sacrifices made over the past decade on Afghan soil.’

We wrote to her at the time and asked:

‘What about the Narang night raid, reported by Jerome Starkey of The Times and followed by strenuous Pentagon efforts to silence and discredit him?’

In the Narang raid, ten civilians, including eight boys, were killed in a Nato-authorized operation, possibly even led by US forces.

Our email to Wyatt continued:

‘What about the numerous Nato airstrikes and drone attacks that have killed Afghan civilians, many of them women and

children? What about the multiple instances of wedding parties being bombed?’

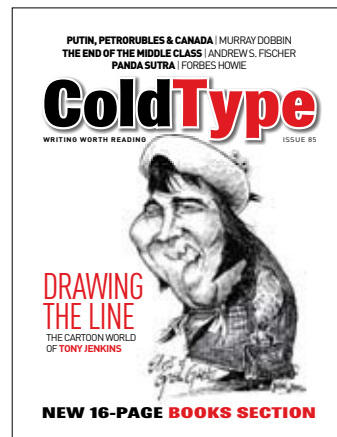
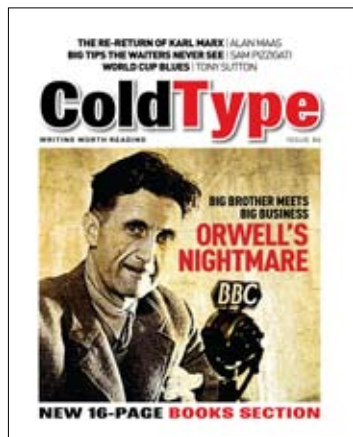
‘Given all that has happened in Afghanistan, what would it take to “tarnish” Nato? Can you explain how your standpoint can reasonably be described as “impartial”, please?’

The BBC journalist never did respond.

In the classic dystopian novel “Brave New World”, Aldous Huxley wrote of a world in which the population is provided with a drug called ‘soma’ to keep them content and docile, and thus distracted from challenging power. In the real world today, state and corporate elites have yet to drug the population in this way. But we do have the endless drip of poisonous propaganda courtesy of BBC News.

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*David Cromwell & David Edwards are co-editors of Medialens, the British media watchdog – <http://medialens.org>*

**In the Narang raid, ten civilians, including eight boys, were killed in a Nato-authorized operation, possibly even led by US forces**



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# Cartoon warfare

Whatever you hear to the contrary, Vladimir Putin is NOT Hitler, says **T. P. Wilkinson**

**Hitler, himself, did not become an acceptable enemy until it appeared that he had made a deal with Stalin in 1939 to divide Poland**

**T**he real Hitler was rather popular in upper class western circles, at least until the start of World War Two. The media's use of "Hitler" as a pejorative has little to do with the actual politics of the world's most famous fascist. The Hitlerization of Putin turns reality on its head, "making the actual aggressor appear to be a victim by accusing one's target of all the acts actually perpetrated by oneself."

There would appear to be something grotesque in the inflationary use of the term "Hitler" to attack any national leader opposed by the US regime and its vassals. What does the word "Hitler" actually mean – if anyone can be compared to Hitler, except actual fascists.

Before the outbreak of World War II, there had been very little mainstream negative reporting about the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP, or Nazi) regime although Adolph Hitler had been in power since 1932. In fact the German head of government and state enjoyed positive support, especially among the corporate elite in the US and UK. The massive public works programs initiated under the NSDAP were even praised by liberals as an indication of what could be done to remedy general economic problems in the midst of a global depression.

The only serious objections to Hitler came from two sectors: the Left, which enjoyed no

official sympathy, and the imperial business sectors (mainly in Britain) that were opposed to sharing any of their global wealth-streams with Germany. Of course the latter were thrilled that the NSDAP regime was increasing the profitability of investment in Germany and destroying the labor organizations of Europe's largest workforce. The only influential critics of Hitler before 1939 were the hardline Germanophobes in the US, UK and France. Hitler, himself, did not become an acceptable enemy until it appeared that he had made a deal with Stalin in 1939 to divide Poland. In the US, Hitler only became an acceptable enemy once the Anglophile sector of the US elite prevailed over the nativist-nationalist faction which opposed any intervention in Europe. However, the US war against Hitler only really began after war had been declared on Japan and Hitler in turn declared war on the US at the end of 1941.

## **British belligerence**

Until it became clear that the Soviet Union was defeating the German Wehrmacht, by 1942, the US had concentrated almost all of its efforts in the Pacific theater, waging war against its imperial rival in Asia. The prospect of Soviet victory over Germany induced the US regime to devote more attention to Europe. However, this came only after protracted campaigns in Africa and Italy. British belligerence toward the Germans



Cartoon characters: Left – a wartime image of Adolf Hitler; right – Russian President Vladimir Putin with his muzzled media (art: Peter Welleman)

The inflationary use of the term “Hitler” for any political personality to be vilified in the mass media is conspicuously distinct from the use of the term fascist

had been entrenched since the Great War but anti-Hitler propaganda only became important once France had fallen and German Luftwaffe attacks against the British Isles commenced.

In short, the history of anti-Hitlerism and the image of Hitler as the equivalent of evil did not attain its current universality in the West during the WWII. With the possible exception of Chaplin’s film “The Great Dictator” (1940), there was probably no conspicuous mass media image of Hitler in any way consistent with today’s stereotype. Moreover, in Anglo-American mass media, the name Mussolini is almost never used. Although Franco and Salazar remained European dictators from the 1930s until the 1970s without interruption, neither name has any status in the mass media cliché world.

It is tempting to assert that it was the NSDAP regime’s concentration camp system and brutal warfare in Eastern Europe that gave rise to the Hitler stereotype. However, as Norman Finkelstein showed, this version of Nazism had been largely irrelevant

outside of Germany and Eastern Europe for most of the post-war period. It only attaining polemical stature in the wake of the so-called Six-Day-War when massive efforts began to justify, mainly in the US, the realignment of the Middle East under Israeli hegemony. The modern “Hitler” stereotype actually has little in common with the historic Hitler or the prevailing relationships with Hitler and the NSDAP during the regime’s control of Germany.

### Political profiling

The inflationary use of the term “Hitler” for any political personality to be vilified in the mass media is conspicuously distinct from the use of the term fascist. Another reason for this bizarre phenomenon is the impact of a strong biographical school which treats the NSDAP regime under Adolph Hitler as determined entirely by the personality of Hitler, the man. This school of thought persists in national security “profiling” of political leaders, e.g. as practiced by offices within the US intelligence agencies. The official assessment of any political personal-

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## POWER PLAY

**US mass media creates a logical and emotional antipathy toward Putin's Russia which is made to appear as intolerant as that shown some fantastic Islamic states (of course not compared with Saudi Arabia, only with Iran)**

ity is presented to the media in the form of a psychological "celebrity biography." This supports an entrenched use of "celebrity" reporting to shape what the public views as information or news. "Hitler" is a term for "negative celebrity": a person who is unavoidable in the news (or is made to seem unavoidable) but for only negative reasons. Orwell described this phenomenon when he illustrated the function of Goldstein in 1984. Hence it was possible to call Manuel Noriega "Hitler", Saddam Hussein "Hitler" and now Putin, too.

Do Noriega, Hussein and Putin have any personal attributes in common? There are certainly none which would immediately suggest a relationship to the historical Adolph Hitler. They were not called Nazis or fascists? Perhaps because to be a Nazi or a fascist in the Anglo-American dominated mass media is not necessarily a bad thing. Salazar and Franco as well as Pinochet were all fascists and they were never called "Hitlers" by the Press. Perhaps fascist and national socialist are terms too complex to be used in celebrity reporting – the dominant form of so-called news dissemination.

Germany today presents a rather bizarre situation. Here we have been told for decades who Hitler was and what we were or are in relation to the era of the NSDAP regime. There is an old joke here about how the Austrians (especially through the Esterhazy family) appropriated Beethoven and Germans got Hitler from Austria in exchange. There are still people alive here who can remember the Nazi era. Until Willy Brandt became chancellor the federal government was headed mainly by people the US regime felt were at least good Nazis – the main thing being that they were not communists or social democrats. It was relatively easy to find people in high office, the academy and mass media who had been Nazis. But there was very clearly no Hitler. Even to compare the chairman of the SED (Socialist Unity Party) in East Germany to Hitler would have been viewed as tasteless

and inappropriate.

It is also a matter of record here that the extreme right/ neo-Nazi parties are so heavily infiltrated by undercover police and national security officers that jokes are made whether they would continue to exist without police membership. In short we have no Hitler candidates either in Germany or in Austria to attack.

### Media penetration

So why now does the Hitler label penetrate the informal mass media here in Germany? Why is it almost compulsory to be opposed to Putin? There are two complementary reasons for this trend. One is because the US mass media, both conventional and internet-based, has an enormous rate of penetration in Germany, enhanced through the saturation of smart phones and tablets which bombard consumers here almost non-stop. The tendency to sympathize with the consumer-identity message that dominates US mass media creates a logical and emotional antipathy toward Putin's Russia which is made to appear as intolerant as that shown some fantastic Islamic states (of course not compared with Saudi Arabia, only with Iran). Young people have learned to define their "freedom" in terms of direct and vicarious consumption – largely through fashion and internet products. Consumption is driven by "identity" politics. That is to say in the increasingly retarded process of human maturation, the creation, maintenance or remodeling of identity – normally an adolescent process – becomes permanent and product-driven.

Already by the late 1960s corporations had realized that by changing individualism into egotism the same energy that was threatening to vandalize the established social order could be turned into consumption. Youth were encouraged to become what they buy, which easily became buying in order to become. For instance the disappearance of gender-distinct clothing did not in itself cause a dissolution of gender

distinctions but it did add to the market potential for clothing and other products which could be called transgender. The impact of such changes was superficial until the 1980s. In the 1980s a major shift in US corporate strategy occurred. The Thatcher and Reagan “revolutions” were successful because corporations had finally found the means to promote mass economic egotism. This involved two political shifts: an end to permanent corporate employment and the subordination of the race and class struggles that had been boiling since the 1950s to individual identity politics.

### **Identity politics**

Although the Reagan regime was frequently attacked for its apparent pandering to the Religious Right, this actually kept most political opposition to Reagan focused on identity politics rather than on class or race issues, not to mention imperial warfare. The issue was not whether African-Americans have rights but who is actually African-American and what constitutes the essence of that identity to be protected. By abolishing for all intents and purposes permanent corporate employment as inherited from the New Deal, the foundation of the labor union structures were fundamentally undermined. No promise of job security meant that the prevailing union structures became useless. Add to this the identity political component and it was not difficult to persuade young people that a union was just another kind of meaningless conformity like a big monolithic corporation and that real individuality could only be found in one’s own unique employment relationship. Unique employment, unique consumption and unique identity configurations merged into what has really become an externalization of the human identity, programmed at corporate level and delivered individually by the latest version of hand-held electronic device.

This process has also reconstructed the definition of “freedom” as something solely individual and personal. Correspondingly a

“threat to freedom” need not take the form of military or police operations at all. A threat to freedom can be triggered by disconnection from the external identity production machine and its components: pop music, clothing, food, and synthetic messaging. In the USA to be black or brown, despite the skin color found among a miniscule number of the US elite, is to belong to the class of people who earn less, live shorter lives, and with the highest proportion of relatives in prison or subject to penal surveillance. This does not apply to homosexuals. Homosexuals do not constitute a class or a race in the US or anywhere else for that matter. However they do constitute a significant consumer group and include prestigious “market-makers” in the identity industry.

Hence when Vladimir Putin is presented as responsible for legislation or government policy that supposedly discriminates against homosexuals, Putin is attacking “identity product” and the consumers at the end of the hand-held devices are addicted to “identity product” much of which is sexuality based. Each consumer is induced to see the alleged acts of Putin in a way not unlike the reaction by a child of a parent or teacher who deprives the child of his electronic toys. The intensity of these reactions among youth has to be experienced to be believed. That is one of the means by which pseudo-dissent is cultivated, the kind of dissent that the owners of Twitter and Facebook have developed and marketed for the US corporate elite.

Describing Putin as Hitler in these terms feeds on the one hand on the relatively recent popularization of the narrative that homosexuals were persecuted under the NSDAP. However, the Hitler cliché among young people in Germany is less historically rooted than the general cliché that Hitler was the dictator par excellence.

However, for the older generations use of the Hitler cliché is actually rooted in a more insidious psy-war tactic. As the German

**Each consumer is induced to see the alleged acts of Putin in a way not unlike the reaction by a child of a parent or teacher who deprives the child of his electronic toys**

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## POWER PLAY

**One cannot accuse the Russians of Islamic terrorism, since everyone now knows that the Islamic terrorists are all in the pay of the US and Saudi Arabia**

government alternates between threats of economic and military action against Russia – while leading sectors of German industry know that they depend on Russian energy resources – an acute reversal is performed. The fact is that Hitler invaded the Soviet Union (Russia) with German troops, augmented by troops recruited from the occupied Eastern European countries. The ruler of the Soviet Union at the time, defending Russia was Stalin. Stalin defeated Hitler, forcing German forces to retreat to the River Elbe in Eastern Germany. Nearly seventy years later the German government with its troops deployed in numerous neo-colonial wars has been the dominant economic force in Eastern Europe since 1989. It has steadily pushed all its major manufacturing into the former COMECON countries. At the same time Russia lost virtually all its industrial trading partners as the dollar, deutschmark and finally the euro destroyed the payment system between Russia and its former trading and defense block. Meanwhile, German corporations control much if not most of the Baltic, Polish, Czech, Slovak and Rumanian economies. The Ukraine was a principal target for the expansion of the Hitler regime.

### **Obstructing cooperation**

Russia's actions – or, better said, reactions – have been to maintain cordial business relations and to rely upon those in major German corporations with important trading links to Russia to moderate the extreme, largely pro-US, faction that aims to isolate Russia entirely. The US still enjoys substantial support in Germany, in part because of the interlocking economic, political and cultural institutions that work overtime to maintain a pro-American environment. The US and UK, going back to the Rapello Treaty in 1922, have always tried to obstruct economic cooperation between Germany and Russia.

The largely pro-American German mass media portrays Putin as Hitler because they cannot portray him as Stalin. The image that

is to be created and maintained in the popular imagination is that Russia is invading Europe. In fact Germany has seized directly and indirectly nearly every economic asset that Hitler sought to hold before attacking the Soviet Union. Calling Putin Stalin under such conditions actually would recall that Stalin defended the Soviet Union against German invasion. By calling Putin Hitler, the image of a dictatorial leader of Russia “annexing” Eastern Europe piece by piece seems more emotionally plausible. Supposedly, Europe is defending itself from Russian aggression in 2014 the way the Soviet Union defended itself in 1940 (from whom?). No one can call Putin a communist or claim that there is a communist threat to be resisted in Eastern Europe. The governments in Berlin and Washington know that very well. One cannot accuse the Russians of Islamic terrorism, since everyone now knows that the Islamic terrorists are all in the pay of the US and Saudi Arabia.

The media strategy is an American one. It is based on making the actual aggressor appear to be a victim by accusing one's target of all the acts actually perpetrated by oneself. The status of “victim” is an elemental fiction in US media manipulation and psychological warfare. The population of Germany, a country whose controlling heights and mass culture are probably more Americanized than any other in the non-English-speaking world, is being told every day how they are potential victims of Russian power and that Putin is threatening all their cherished identity products. The Hitler cliché augments this narrative also because the absolute dictator makes everyone an absolute victim. **CT**

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*Dr. T P Wilkinson writes, teaches history and English, directs theater and coaches cricket in Heinrich Heine's birthplace, Düsseldorf. He is also the author of “Church Clothes, Land, Mission and the End of Apartheid in South Africa” (Maisonneuve Press, 2003).*

# The shooting party

As the food queues lengthen, Britain's government is giving taxpayers' money to the super-rich, writes **George Monbiot**

So now Britons might have to buy their own crutches, but they'll get their shotgun subsidised by the state. A few days after False Economy revealed that an NHS group is considering charging patients for the crutches, walking sticks and neck braces it issues, we discovered that Prime Minister David Cameron has intervened to keep the cost of gun licences frozen at £50: a price which hasn't changed since 2001.

The police are furious: it costs them £196 to conduct the background checks required to ensure that shotguns are issued only to the kind of dangerous lunatics who use them for mowing down pheasants, rather than to the common or garden variety. As a result they – sorry we – lose £17m a year, by subsidizing the pursuits of the exceedingly rich. The Country Land and Business Association – the armed wing of the Conservative party – complains that it's simply not fair to pass on the full cost of the licence to the owners of shotguns; unlike, say, the owners of passports or driving licences, who are charged on the basis of full cost recovery.

Three days later, the government announced that it will raise the subsidy it provides for grouse moors from £30 per hectare to £56. Yes, you read that right: the British government subsidises grouse moors, which are owned by 1% of the 1% and used

by people who are scarcely less rich. While the poor are being forced out of their homes through government cuts, it is raising the payments – across hundreds of thousands of hectares – that some owners use to burn and cut the land (helping to cause floods downstream), shoot or poison hen harriers and other predators, and scar the hills with roads and shooting butts. While the rest of us can go to the devil, the interests of the very rich are ringfenced.

Before examining the wider picture, let's stick with the shooting theme for a moment, and take a look at the remarkable shape-shifting properties of that emblem of Downton Abbey Britain: the pheasant. Through a series of magnificent legal manoeuvres it becomes whatever the wealthy want it to be.

When pheasants are reared, they are classed as livestock: that means the people who raise them are exempt from some payments of Value Added Tax and certain forms of planning control, on the grounds that they are producing food. But as soon as they're released they are classed as wild animals. Otherwise you wouldn't be allowed to shoot them. But if you want to re-capture the survivors at the end of the shooting season to use as breeding stock, they cease to be wild and become livestock again, because you aren't allowed to catch wild birds with nets. If, however, pheasants cause

**The Country Land and Business Association – the armed wing of the Conservative party – complains that it's simply not fair to pass on the full cost of the licence to the owners of shotguns; unlike, say, the owners of passports or driving licences, who are charged on the basis of full cost recovery**

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## EAT THIS!

**Governments almost everywhere are not seeking to prevent the resurgence of patrimonial capitalism, of which we have recently heard so much, but to hasten it. They are creating a world in which the rich may live by their own rules**

damage to neighbouring gardens, or to cars, or to the people travelling in those cars, the person who released them bears no liability, because for this purpose they are classed as wild animals – even if, at the time, they are being rounded up as legal livestock. The pheasant’s properties of metamorphosis should be a rich field of study for biologists: even the Greek myths mentioned no animal that mutated so often.

### Protecting the rich

In the treatment of pheasant and grouse shoots we see in microcosm what is happening in the country as a whole. Legally, fiscally and politically, the very rich are protected from the forces afflicting everyone else.

For example, earlier this year Richard Murphy of Tax Research UK listed the ways in which George Osborne has changed the tax regime for the largest corporations, and calculated that these concessions will cost the Exchequer an average of between £5bn and £10bn a year over the next six years. At the higher end of his estimate, that money could have prevented all the benefit cuts overseen by the Department for Work and Pensions.

But to call on the government to make rational and progressive fiscal decisions, as many of us do, is to misunderstand what it is attempting. It is not seeking to save the country from fiscal ruin – there are many ways of doing that without cutting essential services. It is re-engineering the United Kingdom as a plutocrats’ paradise, in which the rich are scarcely troubled by laws or taxes, while the poor are plunged into a brutal world of casual labour, insecurity and legal restraint.

There are a dozen ways in which it could have discharged the deficit without inflicting cuts in social security or other essential public services. It could have introduced land value taxation. Or it could have unlocked the deeply regressive banding of council tax which, as Ian Jack showed last

month, ensures that the Ukrainian oligarch Rinat Akhmetov, who bought a double pent-house in One Hyde Park for £136m, pays less in tax for that property than do the owners of a £200,000 house in Blackburn.

If even a flat council tax were applied – in other words, if everyone paid tax at the same rate – Mr Akhmetov might contribute around £2m a year to the exchequer, rather than £1,353. If council tax were progressive – in other words if those with the most expensive homes paid proportionately more – he might be charged £4 or 5m. Such taxes would have the additional benefit of suppressing house prices.

Or the government could have levied a Robin Hood tax on financial transactions, which, according to the Institute for Public Policy Research, would raise £25bn a year at a rate of just 0.01%. Or, instead of bamboozling the public and surreptitiously turning the UK into a new tax haven, it could have taken real action to prevent tax avoidance, saving, perhaps, tens of billions.

But governments almost everywhere, beholden to donors and newspaper proprietors, unchallenged by either opposition parties or their cowed and passive electorates, are not seeking to prevent the resurgence of patrimonial capitalism, of which we have recently heard so much, but to hasten it. They are creating a world in which the rich may live by their own rules.

So back we go to the hazy days of Edwardian England: a society dominated by rentiers, in which the city centres are set aside for those with tremendous wealth and the countryside is reserved for their bloodsports. As the queues lengthen at the foodbanks, our money is used to subsidise grouse and shotguns. That is all you need to know about how and by whom we are governed. **CT**

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*George Monbiot’s book “Feral” is released in paperback format this month. This article was originally published in the Guardian newspaper*



# An angry mother in a small town by the sea

**Stacey Warde** tells of the day an offended moralist decided to protect the morals of her daughter and any other impressionable youth in her town

In the early days of the *Rogue Voice*, when it was still a monthly newsprint journal, we published a story about what prisoners do when they get horny.

Tito David Valdez, Jr., doing 25-years-to-life for conspiracy to commit murder, wrote an essay about “Hittin’ it,” an intimate look at the secret ways inmates find opportunities to masturbate or get off without being observed in a well-guarded penal institution.

We also learned about lady boys in mini-skirts who look fabulous and would by all appearances seem to be real women, except for the fact they weren’t, and how most inmates, like David, avoided unnecessary drama and complications in prison, by not getting involved.

It was an informative and educational narrative. David’s column, a regular known to readers as “Life in the Cage,” and all his other subsequent columns, gave taxpayers a close-up, insider’s view of how their dollars were being spent to incarcerate convicted felons.

But one meddlesome mom from our fair village by the sea didn’t like his column. She felt we had stepped over the line, and offended the community standard for frank talk about prison sex in ‘06.

As any good moralist, she decided to take action. She meant to protect her teenage daughter and other impressionable youth in our town from the adult content, and unseemly influence of our magazine, which was

then in 2006 only four months old.

Like an enormous huffing beast, she stormed into the coffee shop where I was talking with a friend and barreled into the rear of the shop where we kept stacks of our magazine. I felt her rage as she passed by me.

Seconds later, she came back our way, a full stack of *Rogue Voices* stuffed under her arm. “Hey, wait a minute!” I demanded. “Where do you think you’re going with those?”

“I’m going to make a barbecue out of these,” she fumed, heading for the door.

“No you’re not!” I answered. “I work my ass off to put out those damned magazines. Put them back, right now!”

She harrumphed, breathing loudly and laboriously through her nose. I felt as if she were about to punch me, but she turned away, with close to 100 of my magazines stuffed under her arm, and walked out the door of the coffee shop.

A sheriff’s deputy arrived. The barista, a contributor and editor and supporter of the magazine, had called for law enforcement to protect my First Amendment right to free speech.

The angry mom had stolen that right. She was violating state, federal and constitutional law.

The deputy dutifully questioned me, asked me what was the problem, and I told him that a woman had walked out of the coffee shop with a stack of my magazines and threatened

**I felt as if she were about to punch me, but she turned away, with close to 100 of my magazines stuffed under her arm, and walked out the door of the coffee shop**

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## FREE SPEECH

**Not content with literally trashing our magazine, the angry mom rounded up a herd of like-minded matrons to pester local businesses to cease advertising in our magazine**

to burn them.

“Well, why should I help you,” he said finally, “when you write negative stories about law enforcement?”

Dell Franklin had recently written a first-hand account of the City of San Luis Obispo’s fascist policing operation to intimidate Mardi Gras revelers by bringing in hundreds of police from around the state to control the unruly student mob.

By many accounts, including Dell’s, the police, called upon to keep order, were as likely to create disorder – randomly shooting bean-bag rounds into parties, freely harassing passersby on the street, detaining and questioning revelers – as students were to misbehave by celebrating the centuries old annual tradition of upending the conventions of culture.

Dell’s article offered graphic evidence of police going a bit too far, terrorizing college students who were minding their own business.

“Your job,” I reminded the deputy, “is to protect my First Amendment right to free speech. It doesn’t matter whether you like what I print.” I pointed my finger in the direction where I’d last seen the angry mom walking out the door with my property: “She’s violating my right to free speech. What she’s doing is illegal.”

He thought for a moment. “It’s a free magazine, isn’t it?”

“That doesn’t mean she can take the whole stack!”

In fact, state Assemblyman George Plescia, a Republican from San Diego, had recently authored, and the legislature passed, a bill, AB2612, protecting free newspapers and magazines from abusers lifting full stacks off the racks. Apparently, San Diego was having the same problem. The offense carried a sizable fine.

“We must work to ensure that no one is able to deprive others of their First Amendment rights,” then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said in a statement on AB2612. “The freedom of the press is one of the most precious

freedoms that Americans enjoy.”

The deputy left, presumably to consult with the offending party, and asked me to wait. He returned and informed me that the woman had been reminded that it’s my right to publish what I want and that she didn’t have the right to refuse it.

“Where’re my magazines?” I asked.

“They’re gone,” he said.

I was too angry to press the matter about the fate of that stack of magazines. I did not want to be thrown in jail for harassing or assaulting an officer.

I wrote a letter to Plescia, thanking him for protecting my First Amendment rights, while local law enforcement and would-be protectors of community standards thought less of those rights than they should.

“I edit and publish a free monthly literary journal,” I noted after thanking him, “which has had its share of vandalism from those who object to its content.

“Until now, our only support [has come] from readers who do not want others deciding for them what they can or cannot read.

“Thanks for your support. We lift our hats to you, Mr. Plescia, for your defense of our First Amendment right to a free press.”

### Redeeming qualities

As regards community standards and federal guidelines for offensive material, we avowed again in our pages the value of reading, of determining for oneself whether there are any redeeming qualities in our content, which would then guarantee its full protection under the law.

Not content with literally trashing our magazine, the angry mom rounded up a herd of like-minded matrons to pester local businesses to cease advertising in our magazine or to quit displaying the *Rogue Voice* on their premises, which is their perfect right.

The Cayucos Chamber of Commerce, coerced, asked us to remove our rack from its vicinity. We lost one advertiser while another said: “Tell those gals to get a life!”

Those “gals,” I noted in a 2006 February

column titled “Our naughty little rag,” were going about town, raging to this or that business owner, “to protest its unseemly content, and to protect our impressionable teens from words like ‘fuck’ and ‘titty.’”

We were amazed that our troublesome youth had given up the internet and cell phones to go in “search of colorful language in the pages of our...morally reprehensible rag. It’s hard to imagine youngsters,” I mused, “pulling themselves away from their computers to actually read a newspaper; more terrible to think they’re reading one with naughty words.”

Oddly, or perhaps not so odd, the small-town upheaval came on the heels of an earlier trashing of another publication in which it seemed everyone everywhere in the county felt they had a moral duty to censor content they didn’t like.

### Residents went berserk

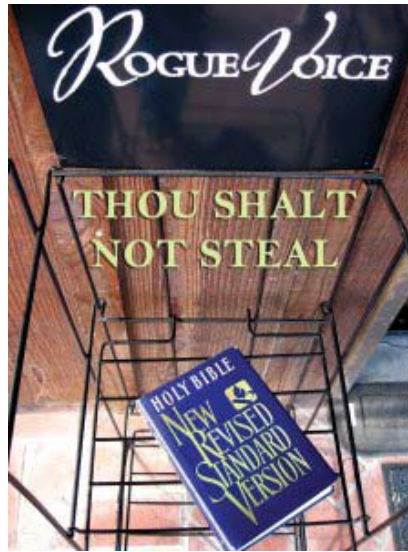
Local alternative weekly *New Times* had published a story about methamphetamine by Alice Moss that also included a recipe on how to make the stuff. Residents went berserk, lifting the rag off racks throughout San Luis Obispo County and sending them to the landfill.

An eerie absence of the weekly could be seen on virtually every rack in the county. Not one *New Times* could be found anywhere. The article itself had been informative enough and may have actually had some redeeming social value, despite its loony and irresponsible instructions on how to make meth.

A better method for informing readers about the ease of making meth would have been to take a photo of and list the ingredients. Let some fool decide how to put it all together. Good citizens, meanwhile, took it upon themselves to protect hapless individuals from the dubious joys of meth-making by eliminating the newspaper’s presence from our community.

The hysteria broke national news.

Amid the frenzy of throwing newspapers into the trash, KVEC hometown radio host



**Rogue Voice’s full page ad was addressed to the town’s angry brigade of moral crusaders.**

Dave Congalton asked me and Dell to go on the air to discuss the issue. Many callers agreed that while they may not like what our publication prints, it’s our legal right to publish as we see fit. In fact, despite our “liberal” label, as some claimed, our most vocal defenders were more often conservatives.

It wasn’t the last time hoodlums took it upon themselves to sabotage our publishing efforts. Throughout the county, we continually heard reports from our friends that individuals were helping themselves to stacks of our magazine and making them disappear.

Finally, we’d had enough and ran a full-page photo on the back cover of the *Rogue Voice* showing nothing but a bible sitting on our rack, no magazines, with the headline, “Thou shalt not steal.”

It may not have made any difference in whether people trashed our magazine but it made us feel better, and we got a good laugh out of it. More importantly, we continued to publish, 32 more editions in all, without apology, and with a commitment to give voice to those who don’t often have a voice, protected by the First Amendment. **CT**

*Stacey Warde is publisher of The Rogue Voice at <http://TheRogueVoice.com>.*

**An eerie absence of the weekly could be seen on virtually every rack in the county. Not one *New Times* could be found anywhere**

# How I found the lost camp of Lawrence of Arabia

A fantastic coincidence led to my discovery of a wartime camp in the Jordan desert that was occupied in 1918. This was a camp used by T E Lawrence, or “Lawrence of Arabia,” writes John B. Winterburn

**It was while reading T E Lawrence’s “Seven Pillars of Wisdom” that the possibility of finding this camp first occurred to me**

A fantastic coincidence, coupled with research, led to my discovery of a wartime camp in the Jordan desert that was occupied in 1918. This was a camp used by T E Lawrence, or “Lawrence of Arabia”, and British mobile units and was somewhat evocatively called “Tooth Hill”.

Earlier, these ancient landscapes of Edom had been thrust into modernity with the arrival of the Hejaz Railway, built by the Ottoman Turks in 1904. Ostensibly a holy railway built to transport pilgrims to the cities of Medina and Mecca, its capacity to transport troops re-militarised the landscape. This threatened British interests in Egypt and the Suez Canal, Britain’s main artery to India.

In July 1917 a young British officer called T E Lawrence captured the key town of Aqaba on the Red Sea, surprising both the British and Turkish high commands, who had considered it impossible. This enabled the Northern Arab Army of Emir Faisal to move northwards and the British to establish a beach-head and mount raids against the Turkish defences along the railway.

The British base expanded. By October, a small flight of aircraft was operating from a desert landing strip. Mobile British forces with Rolls Royce armoured cars and Talbot trucks carrying ten-pounder Indian mountain guns were able to operate in the hinterland.

In April 1918 these forces gathered over-

night at the Tooth Hill camp to begin a series of raids on the fortifications at Tel Shalm, Wadi Rutm and Mudawwara. Today these are just north of Jordan’s border with Saudi Arabia.

It was while reading T E Lawrence’s “Seven Pillars of Wisdom” that the possibility of finding this camp first occurred to me. The opening lines of chapter 105 read: “Our old camp behind the toothed hill facing Tell Shalm station.” This always caught my imagination. Where was this toothed hill and why did Lawrence make reference to it?

Lawrence’s own elaboration provided the first clue: “It was a wonderful show, for the cars were parked geometrically here, and the armoured cars placed there...”

Then other pieces of evidence began to surface. One was found in the war diary entries of X Flight RAF. It was a sketch map drawn after a reconnaissance flight made in early April 1918 in preparation for the raids on Tel Shalm. Flying without maps and with only a compass for navigation the pilots used familiar landmarks to guide them back to their airstrips. Without aerial cameras the pilots had to draw maps from memory. In this case, the pilot had noted the position of a significant landmark, and called it Tooth Hill.

The final clue, oddly, came in a coffee break at a conference. A Lawrence researcher I knew came across to me and asked: “I don’t suppose you know where this is, do



Six weeks later, walking across the desert to the site, we encountered broken glass, pot shards and spent cartridge cases lying around what appeared to be the site of a camp fire

you?” He showed me a photograph of several Rolls Royce armoured cars, parked in front of a distinctively shaped hill. My knowledge of the archives, Lawrence’s words and the landscape, combined with the photograph, lead to what can only be described as a eureka moment for me.

Six weeks later, walking across the desert to the site, we encountered broken glass, pot shards and spent cartridge cases lying around what appeared to be the site of a camp fire. The pottery looked like fragments of rum jars, a ubiquitous commodity in the British army on the Western Front, but not seen before in Jordan. Picking up the first piece of stoneware I turned it over and saw the initials SRD, the acronym for Service Ration Depot, a diagnostic inscription for these gallon jars.

Over the next two days a team of archaeologists, lead by my colleagues Nicholas J Saunders and Neil Faulkner, meticulously excavated the camp fire and recorded the many artefacts scattered around. Meanwhile metal detectors scanned the surrounding area and found shell cases and small items such as spark plugs that indicated vehicles had been maintained on this site.

Britain’s recent military deployments have seen its forces engaging insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan; fighting and defending fixed bases such as Camp Bastion against a highly mobile and fluid guerrilla force. But here in Jordan it was the British who were Athe insurgents in 1918.

Lawrence had given the concept of insur-



**Above: Tooth Hill Camp, 1918. JB Winterburn. Source George Pascoe, 1918**

**Left: D. E. Lawrence, 1919**

gency much thought. He realised that the small British contingent supporting regular and irregular Arab troops and armed Bedouin could defeat the Turks who outnumbered them significantly.

The forces camped at Tooth Hill with Lawrence were able to move freely. They could race across the desert on hit-and-run raids against the Turks, who were static, tied down to defending fixed locations along the railway. With mobile armour and field guns directed by aerial reconnaissance these raids were among the first combined actions seen in Arabia.

This site we discovered last year is significant because it is the only British campsite to be found in Jordan from the World War I era. Used for perhaps less than ten days its ephemerality and remoteness had concealed it for 94 years. It is fantastic to be able to connect such a place to Lawrence, and I like to think that here too, he was: “Happy with bully-beef and tea and biscuit, with English talk and laughter round the fire, golden with its shower of sparks from the fierce brushwood.”

**CT**

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**John B Winterburn** is a PhD candidate at University of Bristol, and the landscape archaeologist for the Great Arab Revolt Project. This article was first published at <http://theconversation.com>

# Big tips the waiters never see

The CEOs of America's 20 largest restaurant chains must be providing diners some mighty fine service. Their 'performance' is costing Uncle Sam nearly a quarter-billion dollars a year, says **Sam Pizzigati**

**Restaurant workers nationwide take home so little pay that over half of them have to depend on food stamps and other taxpayer-subsidized safety net programs**

**A** good many Americans now know the high-finance games that JP-Morgan Chase and other big banks like to play – at our expense. And big oil giants like ExxonMobil have been outraging Americans for years.

But plenty of other corporate giants that inflate our inequality have been flying under the radar screen. Who, for instance, has ever heard of Darden? Or Yum! Brands?

These little-known outfits just happen to rate as two of the biggest corporate behemoths in the restaurant industry. They've been squeezing workers – and soaking taxpayers – as relentlessly as any enterprises in America. Yet they barely have any national profile at all.

That may be about to change.

Last month, on the eve of the National Restaurant Association annual meeting, two top think tanks – the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington and Demos in New York – released new studies that detail how America's food-service giants are growing the gap between the nation's rich and everyone else.

Protesting restaurant workers recently took that message to the streets. Many of these workers are currently laboring at the \$2.13 hourly federal minimum wage for tipped workers, a base that hasn't budged since 1991.

Restaurant workers nationwide take

home so little pay, notes the new Institute for Policy Studies Restaurant Industry Pay study, that over half of them have to depend on food stamps and other taxpayer-subsidized safety net programs.

But the subsidies that taxpayers are laying out for the food-service industry actually go far beyond these federal safety net outlays. The tax dollars of average Americans are also subsidizing the sky-high pay that goes to the restaurant industry's top executives.

Under current tax law, corporations can essentially deduct off their taxes whatever many millions they pour into top executive pockets, so long as they define those millions as "pay for performance."

In 2012 and 2013, this loophole saved the restaurant industry's 20 top corporations – and cost the federal treasury – \$232 million, enough, notes the Institute for Policy Studies, "to cover the cost of food stamps for more than 145,000 households for a year."

Darden, the restaurant industry heavyweight that runs Red Lobster and Olive Garden, picked up \$3 million in these tax savings. Yum! Brands, the corporate home of Taco Bell, KFC, and Pizza Hut, grabbed another \$23 million.

And the top execs at Darden and Yum! Brands did plenty of personal grabbing of their own. In 2012 and 2013, Darden CEO Clarence Otis walked off with nearly \$9 mil-

lion in “performance-based” compensation, on top of over \$3 million in routine salary and perks. The chief exec at Yum! Brands, David Novak, pocketed \$67 million in “performance pay” for the two years.

Other top food-service industry executive players actually pulled in considerably higher sums. The industry’s king of the hill, Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz, cashed in an amazing \$230 million worth of stock options in 2012 and 2013, a windfall totally claimed as “performance-based.”

Overall, fast-food industry CEOs averaged \$23.8 million in 2013, more than quadruple, notes the new restaurant industry report from Demos, what the industry’s top execs averaged in 2000. Average wages for fast-food workers, by contrast, have inched up a miniscule 0.3 percent since then.

The fast-food industry, the new Demos Fast Food Failure study goes on to observe, now sports America’s widest corporate pay gap between CEO and workers. Fast-food chief execs in 2012 took home over 1,200 times the pay of average fast-food workers. In 2013, calculates study author Catherine Ruetschlin, the ratio once again topped over 1,000 times.

Restaurant industry movers and shakers have essentially hit upon the perfect formula for executive success: Pay your workers close to as little as the law allows – and make sure that no one changes the law. The National Restaurant Association has emerged as the leading corporate lobby powerhouse against raising the federal minimum wage.

The NRA’s lobbying lets image-conscious food-service industry CEOs have their cake and eat it, too. Case in point: Nigel Travis, the top exec at Dunkin’ Brands, the corporate front for Dunkin’ Donuts and Baskin Robbins. Travis told an interviewer recently

that he believed “the minimum wage will go up.” Added the exec: “So there’s no point fighting that.”

“Maybe there’s no point for Travis,” quips the Institute for Policy Studies study co-author Sarah Anderson. “He’s got the NRA to do that job.”

The National Restaurant Association, adds IPS study co-author Marjorie Elizabeth Wood, currently boasts a \$65 million budget. Those millions don’t just go to blocking minimum wage hikes. The NRA is also pushing against legislation that would guarantee American workers paid sick leave.

Pushing back this week – against the NRA – will be activists from the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, the National Domestic Workers Alliance, and National People’s Action. They’ll be staging a national march to “kick corporate cash out of Congress.”

This growing worker challenge to the restaurant industry status quo has industry powerhouses more than a little bit spooked. In its 2014 Securities and Exchange Commission filings, McDonald’s even cites as one of its new “risk” factors the “increasing focus on workplace practices and conditions” that “may intensify with increasing public focus of matters of income inequality.”

The suits at McDonald’s can’t seem to figure out how to ease this risk. Last week’s think tank reports on the restaurant industry suggest a simple solution: Just stop manufacturing more inequality. **CT**

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*Sam Pizzigati edits Too Much, a weekly newsletter on excess and inequality. He also contributes a weekly column to OtherWords, the Institute’s national non-profit editorial service. His latest book is “The Rich Don’t Always Win”*

**Overall, fast-food industry CEOs averaged \$23.8 million in 2013, more than quadruple what the industry’s top execs averaged in 2000. Average wages for fast-food workers, by contrast, have inched up a miniscule 0.3 percent since then**

**Tell us what you think of the stories in this issue of ColdType  
Send an e-mail to [editor@coldtype.net](mailto:editor@coldtype.net)**

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IN THE FRAME

# Dog days

No politics, no misery, and no hidden messages in this month's photo story. It's enough to say that dogs, not politicians, are (and have always been) man's (and woman's) best friends . . . photos from the collection of the State Library of New South Wales, Australia



**Top:** Little girl and a prizewinning Scottish terrier smile for the camera. Both look as though they'd rather be chasing through the grass.

**Right:** Margaret Shaffhauser poses with her prize bull terrier in a photo from the Canine Association Show on November 3, 1934. Margaret isn't looking at the camera. She's got her eye on the photographer's assistant standing outside the frame with a very large ice cream. The dog has his eyes on tastier food: the photographer. Fresh meat! Yum, yum!

Both photographs were taken by Sam Hood in the 1930s







**Above: Ted the dog answers the phone, "Sorry, no one's home right now, we've just been burgled, walls and all." The photograph was taken by an unknown photographer sometime in the 1930s**



**Left: Spot the winner – A group of Dalmatians and their owners preen for the judges at a dog show. Sam Hood took this picture in the 1920s.**

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## IN THE FRAME



Above, left: "Do as I say!" Young girl teaches her dog to sit up,

Above, Right: "Do as I say!" A dog trainer gives last minute instructions to one of the performers in his vaudeville act.

Right: The rich are different from us. Their women wear dead animals around their necks.

All photographs were taken in the 1930s by Sam Hood





**Above: Taking a short cut. Mr Tulk and his dog "Sausage" go fishing using a 'f ying fox' he built on Solitary Island. Photo taken in 1935 by Winifred Tulk**



**Left: Zoe, the police dog, is packing – a radio receiver on her back. Photograph by Sam Hood, 1939**

*From the collection of the State Library of New South Wales [www.sl.nsw.gov.au](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au)*

# Manhattan Skyline

**Linh Dinh** visits the non-touristy areas of New York City and finds a different country, where there's little room for free market capitalism

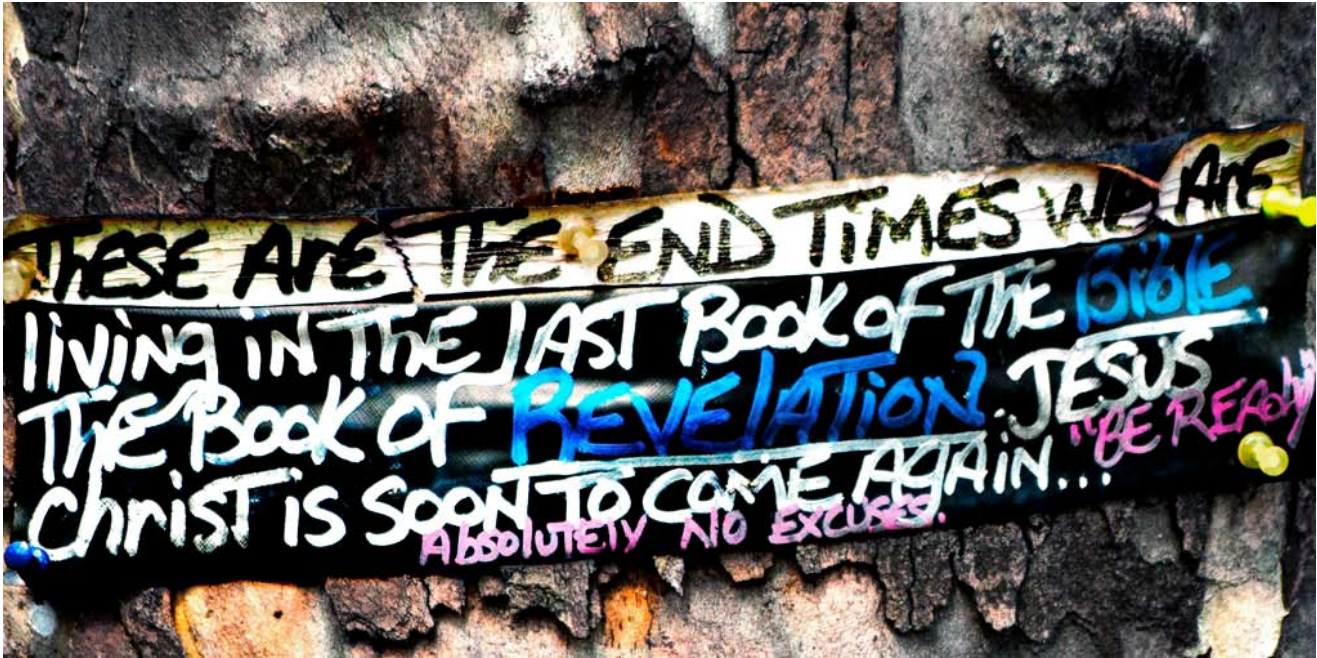
**Globalism is not just about exporting decent jobs, but also importing cheap labor until everyone everywhere makes just about nothing**

Getting off the Greyhound bus at the New York Port Authority Terminal, I immediately saw a man in his mid 50s digging through a garbage can. With his right hand, he held a plastic tray on which were placed whatever edible scraps he could find. Lickable flecks clung to his ample brown beard. Chewing while scavenging, he was quite leisurely with his task and no one among the many people sitting or standing nearby paid him any attention. Done with one trash can, he moved to the next, and since there were so many in this huge building, I imagined his daily buffet to be quite ample and varied.

Like central libraries, bus stations are daytime havens for America's homeless, but the man described above is a throw back of sort, for his number has dwindled considerably ever since Giuliani decided to hose most of them away. Los Angeles has its Skid Row, San Francisco the Tenderloin, and you can find hundreds of roofless Americans sprawling all over Northwest DC, the showcase quarter, but much of Manhattan has become quite sanitized, purged of not just the homeless but any other kind of poorer Americans, as well as the artsy, Bohemian types, who have mostly migrated to Brooklyn. Pumped up by Wall Street, much of Manhattan has become off limits to all but the super affluent. You can work there, sure, after taking two trains and a bus, but

don't think of moving in, not even into a closet, or curtained off corner of a roach motel-sized, shared apartment. As the rest of the country sinks, this island is buoyed by bailouts and quantitative easing directly deposited into its too-big-to-fail swindling houses, but hey, the Bangladeshi cab drivers and CUNY-graduated waiters and bell-hops also get their short stacks of nickels and dimes, so don't bitch, OK? Dwelling in this Green Zone, it would be easy to think that this country's near collapse is but a ridiculous rumor.

Speaking of Gotham cabbies, only 8% are native-born these days, and pointing to this fact, Pat Buchanan blames the liberal welfare state for the decline of the American work ethics. What he ignores is that the terms for driving a cab in New York are so bad, even many Pakistani immigrants have stopped driving. Instead of pocketing a share of each fare, most drivers must rent their vehicle at a fixed rate, so that they may even lose money at the end of a 12-hour shift. Thanks to an increasingly superfluous supply of labor, however, you can always get someone to do anything, and this is the direct result of having a porous border in a sinking economy. Globalism is not just about exporting decent jobs, but also importing cheap labor until everyone everywhere makes just about nothing. That's the master plan, dude, so although *ningún ser humano es ilegal* is self-



Writing on the wall: Harlem, New York

evidently true, it's also a smoke screen to make slaves out of us all.

In the film *Taxi Driver*, Travis complained, "All the animals come out at night—whores, skunk pussies, buggers, queens, fairies, dopers, junkies, sick, venal. Someday a real rain will come and wash all this scum off the streets." Well, 42nd Street is certainly spic and span now, with Travis' beloved Lyric Theater, where he took Betsy to see some starkly instructive coupling, long gone, as is the pen with half a dozen naked women. Standing in an individual booth, you deposited quarters to lift up a window, then after tucking dollars into the G-string of your chosen date, you're allowed to knead her for a bit. Many greasy spoons and mom and pops have also been shooed from Manhattan, to be replaced by chain stores and restaurants. In Manhattan alone, there are now 200 Subways, 74 McDonald's, many of them open 24/7, and 194 Starbucks. Dunkin' Donuts has 500 locations citywide. The biggest corporations shall roll over all!

The lamer Manhattan becomes, the more popular it is with the tourists who come to ride a double decker bus and gorge at a Mid-

town's Applebee's, TGI Friday, Olive Garden, Outback Steakhouse or Red Lobster. They travel to Babylon to experience all the comforts of Annandale, Virginia. Not long ago on 42nd Street, however, I did find another throwback, a guy who French kissed a mouse for tips, but before I could deconstruct his amorous technique, stratagem, fudged aims and secret meanings, six cops, no less, appeared to tell our ratty Casanova to beat it. Hey, there are still enough weirdos here. When Occupy was still happening in Zuccoti Park, I ran into a guy who was trying to enlist people into his "Fart Smeller Movement." To show what he was talking about, this dough-faced gent displayed a photo of himself squatting down, with his nose wedged into a woman's ass as she was, presumably, liberally exhaling. Listen, man, I don't want to come off as nostalgic for the New York of gutter punks and a nightly, Boschian bacchanal in Tomkins Square, with its in-house cannibal, but the Lawrence Welk version of the city just ain't cutting it.

Leaving Port Authority, I trekked north, and just past Lincoln Center, I encountered a young male beggar in a New Jersey Dev-

**Many greasy spoons and mom and pops have also been shooed from Manhattan, to be replaced by chain stores and restaurants**

**Universities have colluded with banks and government to fleece students and shackle them to a lifetime of debt servitude, but as long as you're still enrolled, and your payments deferred, life will seem good and promising, for the university's primary job is no longer to teach, but to maintain this rosy illusion**

ils cap and dirty jeans. With his small, beat up backpack and nearly empty cup, he sat in front of the cheery window of a clothing boutique. Head down, his face was obscured by this sign, "HOMELESS. Too honest to steal... Humble enough to Beg. JUST Trying to SURVIVE. ANYTHING HELPS! GOD BLESS." Two blocks from him, I then spotted a young, blonde woman in a bouffant pony tail, also begging. It was brisk, so her legs were wrapped in a thin, gray blanket, of the austere kind not found in any normal home, but to be handed out after an earthquake, hurricane, false flag terrorist attack or Second Coming of Jesus. At least it's not the packing stuff I've seen wrapped around the street pariahs of our nation's capital. On her bulky, hooded jacket, there was a small patch of the American flag. Reading a large book, she was also looking down, and so I couldn't immediately tell that I had met her before, in Philadelphia.

Born in Russia, Liza is 22-years-old. When she was seven, Liza was adopted, along with a younger sister, and brought to Cambridge, MA, but she never got along with her new mom, and so was put on lithium at 11, then sent to a boarding school at 14. Liza's drinking problem began around this time, and she was stuck in 9th grade for three years. Liza quit school, drifted around the country and drained half a gallon of whiskey a day, to the point of passing out, but she has pretty much cut out this suicidal habit. With her, um, All-American good looks, Liza can always count on making more than enough to survive, just by sitting behind a sign that says, "A LITTLE KINDNESS GOES A LONG WAY. GOD BLESS." For Liza's 21st birthday, her adoptive mother, a very rich woman, sent her \$20.

In 2011, Liza met her boyfriend, Harvey, at a Rainbow camp in Washington State. The Rainbow Family holds one large gathering each year in a national forest. While there, they shun money and alcohol while saying yes to universal love, world peace, hallucinatory drugs, food sharing, bartering, cot-

ton, skin, mud, strumming, drumming and singing, as well as shitting in the woods in a green, hygienic and inoffensive manner. Assholes, though, do show up and sometimes ruin the good vibes, but that's just life on this sick and unmoored planet. To the Rainbow Family, the world at large is considered Babylon. Done with ummmmming while standing in a circle, Liza and Harvey went down to San Francisco and chilled at the Occupy Camp for a while, and for cash, they begged in nearby Daly City, making over \$200 a day. It was mostly her bringing in the dough, for Harvey is no retinal lollipop.

Born in small town South Carolina, Harvey inherited a dilapidated house and crappy car when his parents suddenly died in an accident. A year later, he sold this house to a friend for \$70,000, or \$500 a month, then hit the road. There is an army of young, jobless Americans drifting from city to city. To survive, they beg, dumpster dive and use soup kitchens. Many sing or play music for change. In Berkeley, they swarm all over the university area, their scruffy presence contrasting sharply with the yuppyish or Gap-fashioned students, though I have been told that some of the homeless neo-primitives are actually alumnus of UC Berkeley. In this economy, it's all too easy to move from an overpriced dormitory to totally free off-campus accommodations that include sidewalks, church verandas, condemned homes, store entrances and landscaped knolls off freeway exit ramps. In Berkeley, you can also sleep unmolested at People's Park, where you will have plenty of company.

Universities have colluded with banks and government to fleece students and shackle them to a lifetime of debt servitude, but as long as you're still enrolled, and your payments deferred, life will seem good and promising, for the university's primary job is no longer to teach, but to maintain this rosy illusion. In these United States of universal debt bondage, universities have become a marketing branch of the criminal banks. It's all good, children, so just sign here to get



**End Israel Apartheid: Upper West Side, New York**

**At 168th and Broadway, a man was selling tamales from a shopping cart. It was only \$1.25 per item, and you could choose from chicken, pork, cheese, beans, Oaxaca styled or sweet**

your very own academic(ish) casket!

So Liza and Harvey are basically professional beggars, but before you scream, “Get a job, losers,” consider that less than 59% of working age Americans are actually employed, and 47% of the population are on some forms of government assistance, a record high, so nearly half of us are already de facto beggars, although most are not sitting on concrete in heat or cold, looking sorry, at least not yet. Simply put, many Americans have become redundant in an economy rigged to serve the biggest banks and corporations. With no one hiring us and our small businesses bankrupted by the behemoths, many of us are forced to beg, peddle, push or steal, though on a scale that’s miniscule compared to what’s practiced by our ruling thugs. As we shove dented cans of irradiated sardine into our Dollar Store underwear, they rob us of our past, present and future.

In this sick order, even the best among us are reduced to being outcasts, if not criminals to be locked up, tortured or killed. In this sinister arrangement, you’re lucky if you’re merely ignored, like the fiercely astute Paul Craig Roberts. Although countless Americans depend on him to understand more clearly the dangers and rot afflicting their unraveling society, he’s not paid for his

articles, but must depend on readers’ contributions to keep writing. In this evil mad house, even Paul Craig Roberts is a beggar. Meanwhile, morons are paid handsomely to waterboard the masses with septic sludge.

Past Columbia University, I crossed into Harlem, then Washington Heights. In the upper reaches of Manhattan, there are signs of the black market everywhere, for people must do what they can to get by, and since the residents here are mostly non-white, City Hall has pretty much left them alone. Like Jews a century ago, Latinos and blacks are selling just about everything on sidewalks. One guy was offering four old pairs of sneakers, which he left in a heap. Another had four pressure cookers displayed on a cloth-covered ironing board. At 168th and Broadway, a man was selling tamales from a shopping cart. It was only \$1.25 per item, and you could choose from chicken, pork, cheese, beans, Oaxaca styled or sweet. Like most conversations on the street, his sign was strictly in Spanish. Within sight of this, however, there was a huge McDonald’s that was packed with locals, including a grimy man with his head on a table, soundly sleeping. A guy in his mid 20s asked one customer after another if he could have some change “for something to eat.” He even approached

**Isn't it telling that the most lively streets and neighborhoods in America are filled with recent immigrants? They haven't been here long enough to become zombies**

people at the counter as they were paying. With his palm out and eyes like a basset hound's, he leaned towards a pretty young lady and muttered at her platinum-plated hoop earring. She gave him nothing.

To be fair, the panhandlers hounding this Mickey D's are a direct result of having two homeless shelters half a block away, and they don't usually come inside. In any case, step outside this corporate fortress and Washington Heights is still a wonderful mess of small stores and eateries. Isn't it telling that the most lively streets and neighborhoods in America are filled with recent immigrants? They haven't been here long enough to become zombies, and don't think I'm talking racially now for European cities are also much more exuberant and life-affirming than their American sisters, many of which have become desolate and menacing. Strapped to automobiles and conditioned to stare at one screen after another, bona fide Americans dread eye contact and the human breath. Alienated from all those nearest to us, we expect to be saved and led by our distant brainwashers and slave masters.

For any community to be healthy, local initiatives must be encouraged, nurtured and protected, so let's reclaim our home turf, reestablish the common and, in the process, regain our collective sanity and dignity. With this in mind, let's check out Word Up, a volunteer-run bookstore and mini art center in Washington Heights. Just over a year old, it is filled with people by day and hopping at night with either a concert, literary reading, play, film showing or lecture. Kids can even show up in the afternoon to get help with their homework. Sounds too good to be true, and in this culture of Lil' Wayne and Justin Bieber flanking a wife-beating boxer named "Money," this nourishing oasis is barely hanging on, sustained only by donations from a recent crowd-funding campaign. Already working for free, the 50-plus people who keep Word Up going are also beggars, but that's just how it is now, and if not for the

tireless efforts of its head beggar, Veronica Liu, Word Up would never have come into being in the first place.

Born in Toronto to Hakka and Filipino parents, Liu came to NYC 16 years ago. Before Word Up, she started Washington Heights Free Radio, which is operated out of her apartment. Liu is also a co-founder of Fractious Press and helps to organize the yearly book fair at the Ding Dong Lounge in Morningside Heights. Liu has a day job, and makes no money from her various community building efforts, which she does because, I don't know, maybe Liu's insane? According to the norms of Babylon, she is certainly batshit, but to gain, no matter how fleetingly, a bit of light and grace with one's words or actions is a reward in itself. Some may even claim it is a necessity. Since every evil act is accompanied by a lie, a disguise or suppression of meaning, a society that traffics in practically nothing but lies or distracting nonsense is also one that's drowning in serial and habitual evilness. Meaning is not just calling everything by its proper name, but grasping their relationship and having a sense of proportion, but these have all been banished from our public discourses. Bushed and Baracked, we seethe, scream, take our medication then joyfully jerk, with pomposity and authority, the voting lever.

### **Time for a beer**

Two thousand and five hundred words already and still no lager? So how is this a damn essay?! I hear you, I hear you, but at six to eight bucks a pop further South, I had to walk seven miles before I even dared to mumble in my humblest voice, and with my eyes filled with shame and mortification, "A bottle of your cheapest, please."

Yah, yah! I feel so much better already! Don't you? I'm so hopped up, I can run a marathon! OK, OK, I must calm down before I get flagged. We're in Reynold's, a musty Irish grotto in the middle of Nuevo Santo Domingo. There was a stuffed animal over the bar, but no one could tell me





Brian's thoroughly at home in Washington Heights, however, and is, in fact, married to a Dominican woman. In NYC for 25 years, he can't imagine returning to DePere, Madison or Milwaukee, where he has also lived

On the outside: Washington Heights, New York

what it was, not even the Wisconsin-born bartender, Brian. Although there were less than a dozen souls there, I couldn't imagine too many rooms in Washington Heights that contained more white people. I asked Brian, "Do Dominicans drink here?"

"Yeah, sometimes. Not really."

"So where do they drink?"

"On the streets. If you come here in the Summer, you'll see them all over the sidewalks with their bottles of Presidente! They like to drink outside, play dominoes outside. It's a different culture. Besides, it's too expensive inside a bar, and most of them don't have that much money."

In his mid 40's, Brian wore his beard long and bushy in a style that's now associated with Duck Dynasty. It evokes a down-home America that hunts, fishes and salutes the flag. Brian's thoroughly at home in Washington Heights, however, and is, in fact, married to a Dominican woman. In NYC for 25 years, he can't imagine returning to DePere, Madison or Milwaukee, where he has also lived, "It was very boring in Wisconsin. There was nothing to do." This Summer, he'll take his wife to his home state for the first time.

"Hey, maybe she'll love it there!" I said.

"I doubt it." Then, "There is a Latino guy who comes in here every now and then, and each time he does, he'd buy beer for the whole bar."

"That's pretty generous! How can he afford it?"

"No kids!" Brian smiled, "and I don't think he's married either. He's an older gentleman, retired. He used to work as a police detective."

"The last time he was here, he gave me \$10 for cab fare," Peggy interjected, "and I was just going to take the bus. What a nice man!" Sitting in a corner, she had been playing one crossword puzzle after another. She was bundled in a sweat shirt, hoodie and a padded, nylon jacket. Like the rest of us, she was certainly not dressed to kill, as is common further down the island. She did wear blue eye shadow, however, and her squarely trimmed fingernails were perked up by white nail polish.

Born in Brooklyn Heights in 1941, Peggy moved to Washington Heights as a child and has remained there ever since. The only other place she's been is Wildwood, New

**Swiveling on my stool, I turned to survey the glary, sun splashed scenery through the open door. A guy on a cheap scooter rolled by, then two smartly dressed kids with their mom appeared**

Jersey, where her family used to go during the Summer, for its beach. “I’ve never been anywhere, and I’m proud of it!”

Peggy worked 40 years as a school crossing guard, and now comes to Reynold’s every day at 8AM, as it opens, “I get up at 5:30 or 6, then I come here. I come here to watch television because I don’t have one at home.” She runs errands for the bar, does its laundry at a laundromat down the street, and they pay her with bottles of Coors Light, “People also buy me drinks. I never go without.” Peggy entered Reynold’s for the first time 44 years ago, six years after it opened “They built this bar around Peggy,” Brian joked.

Peggy’s husband died in 2003. Nearly daily, she orders a pastrami submarine from the same deli, and though she only pays them once a week, she does remember to tip the bicycle delivery man two bucks each time. Presently, two Dominican couples walked in, but only for the women to use the bathroom, it turned out, and soon after they left, a shouting match erupted over a clogged toilet.

“It’s your fuckin’ fault, you asshole!” A patron in his early 50’s hollered at an older man.

“Hey, calm down! I’m not allowed to show someone where the bathroom is?”

“Fuck no! Not when you know they’re not going to order anything!”

“How was I supposed to know? Unbelievable. You’re just a crank, man, and a racist!”

“I’m no fuckin’ racist! You saw some Dominican pussy and lost your fuckin’ mind.”

“Listen, I’m 62 years old. I don’t need to take your bullshit.”

“God bless you, but why don’t you shove your fuckin’ head down the toilet. Maybe that’ll fix it!”

The seething crank turned out to be Pat, a unionized building manager. Born in Ireland, he returns there often with his wife. When I told Pat I had been to England and Scotland, but never Ireland, he replied, “There’s nothing there. You’re not missing

anything.”

The people who live in Harlem are “animals,” Pat also informed me, and he spoke of how dirty it is compared to Washington Heights. During my three hours in Reynold’s, Pat never relaxed or smiled. Just about anything anyone said, he contested, and even when he agreed with you about something, he sounded argumentative. Maybe he’ll burst a blood vessel soon. Maybe someone will kill him. Pat did play Hendrix’ “All Along the Watch Tower,” then Tony Bennett’s “Rags to Riches,” however.

“Now, it’s the other way around,” a woman said in a throat cancery voice.

“You got that right!” Pat sneeringly concurred.

It was late afternoon by now. Swiveling on my stool, I turned to survey the glary, sun splashed scenery through the open door. A guy on a cheap scooter rolled by, then two smartly dressed kids with their mom appeared. It couldn’t have been a babysitter, I don’t think, for she was also fashionably attired. Her boots were certainly not remaindered bin quality. Across the street, a store was for rent, and there was a jeweler with “WE BUY OLD GOLD” in the window. The ubiquity of these signs is yet another indication of our destitution. Have you sold your heirloom, keepsake or wedding ring? I too have learnt how to Ebay.

I was very much at peace in that fine low life establishment, but like the Buddha, Jesus and George Harrison said, “All things must pass,” and so I had to extricate myself from Reynold’s. In any case, I don’t want to go from lower class to rags. My clothes are already torn and tattered. With the Fed right there, I’ll stay a beggar. So don’t blow or kiss me, blow up Goldman Sachs! **CT**

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*Linh Dinh is the author of two books of stories, five of poems, and a novel, Love Like Hate. He’s tracking our deteriorating socialscape through his frequently updated photo blog, Postcards from the End of America.*

# This land isn't your land, this land is their land

**Peter van Burren** discovers an empire in slow decline, city by city

**A**s America's new economy starts to look more like the old economy of the Great Depression, the divide between rich and poor, those who have made it and those who never will, seems to grow ever starker. I know. I've seen it firsthand.

Once upon a time, I worked as a State Department officer, helping to carry out the occupation of Iraq, where Washington's goal was regime change. It was there that, in a way, I had my first taste of the life of the 1%. Unlike most Iraqis, I had more food and amenities than I could squander, nearly unlimited funds to spend as I wished (as long as the spending supported us one-percenters), and plenty of US Army muscle around to keep the other 99% at bay. However, my subsequent whistleblowing about State Department waste and mismanagement in Iraq ended my 24-year career abroad and, after a two-decade absence, deposited me back in "the homeland."

I returned to America to find another sort of regime change underway, only I wasn't among the 1% for this one. Instead, I ended up working in the new minimum-wage economy and saw firsthand what a life of lousy pay and barely adequate food benefits adds up to. For the version of regime change that found me working in a big box store, no cruise missiles had been deployed and there had been no shock-

and-awe demonstrations. Nonetheless, the cumulative effects of years of deindustrialization, declining salaries, absent benefits, and weakened unions, along with a rise in meth and alcohol abuse, a broad-based loss of good jobs, and soaring inequality seemed similar enough to me. The destruction of a way of life in the service of the goals of the 1%, whether in Iraq or at home, was hard to miss. Still, I had the urge to see more. Unlike in Iraq, where my movements were limited, here at home I could hit the road, so I set off for a look at some of America's iconic places as part of the research for my book, "Ghosts of Tom Joad".

Here, then, are snapshots of four of the spots I visited in an empire in decline, places you might pass through if you wanted to know where we've been, where we are now, and (heaven help us) where we're going.

## **On the Boardwalk: Atlantic City, New Jersey**

Drive in to Atlantic City on the old roads, and you're sure to pass Lucy the Elephant. She's not a real elephant, of course, but a wood and tin six-story hollow statue. First built in 1881 to add value to some Jersey swampland, Lucy has been reincarnated several times after suffering fire, neglect, and storm damage. Along the way, she was a tavern, a hotel, and – for most of her life –

**My subsequent whistleblowing about State Department waste and mismanagement in Iraq ended my 24-year career abroad and, after a two-decade absence, deposited me back in "the homeland."**

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## LOST IN AMERICA / 2

**Trump Plaza, a monument to excess and hubris created by a man once admired as a business magician and talked about as a possible presidential candidate, is now a catalog of decay**

simply an “attraction.” As owning a car and family driving vacations became egalitarian rights in the booming postwar economy of the 1950s and 1960s, all manner of tacky attractions popped up along America’s roads: cement dinosaurs, teepee-shaped motels, museums of oddities, and spectacles like the world’s largest ball of twine. Their growth paralleled 20 to 30 years of the greatest boom times any consumer society has ever known.

Between 1947 and 1973, actual incomes in the United States rose remarkably evenly across society. Certainly, there was always inequality, but never as sharp and predatory as it is today. As Scott Martelle’s “Detroit: A Biography” chronicles, in 1932, Detroit produced 1.4 million cars; in 1950, that number was eight million; in 1973, it peaked at 12 million. America was still a developing nation – in the best sense of that word.

Yet as the US economy changed, money began to flow out of the working class pockets that fed Lucy and her roadside attraction pals. By one count, from 1979 to 2007, the top 1% of Americans saw their income grow by 281%. They came to control 43% of US wealth.

You could see it all in Atlantic City, New Jersey. For most of its early life, it had been a workingman’s playground and vacation spot, centered around its famous boardwalk. Remember Monopoly? The street names are all from Atlantic City. However, in the economic hard times of the 1970s, as money was sucked upward from working people, Boardwalk and Park Place became a crime scene, too dangerous for most visitors. Illegal drug sales all but overtook tourism as the city’s most profitable business.

Yet the first time I visited Atlantic City in the mid-1980s, it looked like the place was starting to rebound in the midst of a national economy going into overdrive. With gambling legalized, money poured in. The Boardwalk sprouted casinos and restaurants. Local business owners scrambled to find workers. Everyone and everything felt

alive. Billboards boasted of “rebirth.”

Visit Atlantic City in 2014 and it’s again a hollowed-out place. The once swanky mall built on one of the old amusement piers has more stores shuttered than open. Meanwhile, the “We Buy Gold” stores and pawnshops have multiplied and are open 24/7 to rip off the easy marks who need cash bad enough to be out at 4 a.m. pulling off their wedding rings. On a 20-story hotel tower, you can still read the word “Hilton” in dirt shadow where its name had once been, before the place was shuttered.

Trump Plaza, a monument to excess and hubris created by a man once admired as a business magician and talked about as a possible presidential candidate, is now a catalog of decay. The pillows in the rooms smell of sweat, the corners of doors are chipped, many areas need a new coat of paint, and most of the bars and restaurants resemble the former Greyhound bus terminal a few blocks away. People covered with the street gravy that marks the homeless wander the casino, itself tawdry and too dimly lit to inspire fun. There were just too many people who were clearly carrying everything they owned around in a backpack.

Outside, along the Boardwalk, there are still the famous rolling chairs. They are comfortable, bound in wicker, and have been a fixture of Atlantic City for decades. They were once pushed by strong young men, maybe college students earning a few bucks over summer break. You can still ride the chairs to see and be seen, but now they’re pushed by recent immigrants and not-so-clean older denizens of the city. Lots of tourists still take rides, but there’s something cheap and sad about paying workers close to my own age to wheel you around, just a step above pushing dollars into the G-strings of the strippers in clubs just off the Boardwalk.

One of the things I did while in Atlantic City was look for the family restaurant I had worked in 30 years earlier. It’s now a dollar store run by an angry man. “You buy or you

leave,” he said. Those were the last words I heard in Atlantic City. I left.

### **Dark Side of the Moon: Weirton, West Virginia**

The drive into Weirton from the east takes you through some of the prettiest countryside in Maryland and Western Pennsylvania. You cross rivers and pass through the Cumberland Gap along the way and it’s easy going into the town, because the roads are mostly empty during typical business hours. There’s nothing much going on. The surrounding beauty just makes the scarred remains of Weirton that much more shocking when you first come upon them. Take the last turn and suddenly the abandoned steel mills appear like a vision of an industrial apocalypse, nestled by the Ohio River.

In 1909, Ernest T. Weir built his first steel mill next to that river and founded what later became the Weirton Steel Corporation. In the decades to come, the town around it and the mill itself were basically synonymous, both fueled by the industrial needs of two world wars and the consumer economy created following the defeat of Germany and Japan. The Weirton mill directly contributed to wartime triumphs, producing artillery shells and raw steel to support the effort, while Weirton’s sons died on battlefields using the company’s products. (A war memorial across the street from the mill sanctifies the dead, the newest names being from the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan.)

At its peak, the Weirton Steel Corporation employed more than 12,000 people, and was the largest single private employer and taxpayer in West Virginia. The owners of the mill paid for and built the Weirton Community Center, the Weirton General Hospital, and the Mary H. Weir Library in those glory days. For years the mill also paid directly for the city’s sewers, water service, and even curbside garbage pickup. Taxes were low and life was good.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, however, costs rose, Asian steel gained traction and

American manufacturing started to move offshore. For the first time since the nineteenth century, the country became a net importer of goods. Some scholars consider the mid-1970s a tipping point, when Congress changed the bankruptcy laws to allow troubled companies an easier path to dumping existing union contracts and employee agreements. It was then that Congress also invented individual retirement accounts, or IRAs, which were supposed to allow workers to save money tax-free to supplement their retirements. Most corporations saw instead an opportunity to get rid of expensive pensions. It was around then that some unknown steelworker was first laid off in Weirton, a candidate for Patient Zero of the new economy.

The mill, which had once employed nearly one out of every two people in town, was sold to its employees in 1984 in a final, failed attempt at resuscitation. In the end, the factory closed, but the people remained. Today, the carcass of the huge steel complex sits at one end of Main Street, rusting and overgrown with weeds because it wasn’t even cost-effective to tear it down. Dinosaur-sized pieces of machinery litter the grounds, not worth selling off, too heavy to move, too bulky to bury, like so many artifacts from a lost civilization. A few people do still work nearby, making a small amount of some specialty metal, but the place seems more like a living museum than a business.

Most of the retail shops on Main Street are now abandoned, though I counted seven bars and two strip clubs. There’s the Mountaineer Food Bank that looks like it used to be a hardware store or maybe a dress shop. The only still-thriving industry is, it seems, gambling. West Virginia legalized “gaming” in 1992 and it’s now big business statewide. (Nationally, legal gambling revenues now top \$92.27 billion a year.)

Gambling in Weirton is, however, a far cry even from the decaying Trump Hotel in Atlantic City. There are no Vegas-style casinos in town, just what are called “cafes”

**Today, the carcass of the huge Weirton steel complex sits at one end of Main Street, rusting and overgrown with weeds because it wasn’t even cost-effective to tear it down**

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## LOST IN AMERICA / 2

**Booze is an older person's formula for destruction. For the younger set, it's meth that's really destroying Weirton and towns like it across the Midwest**

strung along Main Street. None were built to be gambling havens. In fact, their prior history is apparent in their architecture: this one a former Pizza Hut, that one an old retail store with now-blacked out windows, another visibly a former diner.

One sunny Tuesday, I rolled into a cafe at 7 a.m., mostly because I couldn't believe it was open. It took my eyes a minute to adjust to the darkness before I could make out three older women feeding nickels into slot machines, while another stood behind a cheap padded bar, a cigarette tucked behind her ear, another stuck to her dry lips. She offered me a drink, gesturing to rows of Everclear pure grain, nearly 99% pure alcohol, and no-name vodka behind her. I declined, and she said, "Well, if you can't drink all day, best anyway that you not start so early."

Liquor is everywhere in Weirton. I talked to a group of men drinking out of paper bags on a street corner at 8 a.m. They hadn't, in fact, been there all night. They were just starting early like the cafe lady said. Even the gas stations were stocked with the ubiquitous Everclear, all octane with no taste or flavor added because someone knew that you didn't care anymore. And as the state collects tax on it, everyone but you wins.

Booze is an older person's formula for destruction. For the younger set, it's meth that's really destroying Weirton and towns like it across the Midwest. Ten minutes in a bar, a nod at the guy over there, and you find yourself holding a night's worth of the drug. Small sizes, low cost, adapted to the market. In Weirton, no need even to go shopping, the meth comes to you.

Meth and the Rust Belt were just waiting for each other. After all, it's a drug designed for unemployed people with poor self-images and no confidence. Unlike booze or weed, it makes you feel smart, sexy, confident, self-assured – before the later stages of addiction set in. For a while, it seems like the antidote to everything real life in the New Economy

won't ever provide. The meth crisis, in the words of author Nick Reding in "Methland: The Death and Life of an American Small Town", is "as much about the death of a way of life as the birth of a drug."

The effects of a lifetime working in the mill – or for the young, of a lifetime not working in the mill – were easy enough to spot around town. The library advertised free diabetes screening and the one grocery store had signs explaining what you could and could not buy with SNAP (food stamps, which have been called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program since 2008). The local TV channels were chock-a-block full of lawyers' ads urging you to call in if you have an asbestos-related illness. A lot of health was left behind in those mills.

There are some nice people in Weirton (and Cleveland, Detroit, or any of the other industrial ghost towns once inhabited by what Bruce Springsteen calls "steel and stories"). I'm sure there were even nicer parts of Weirton further away from the Main Street area where I was hanging out, but if you're a stranger, it's sure damn hard to find them. Not too far from the old mill, land was being cleared to make way for a new Walmart, a company which already holds the distinction of being West Virginia's largest private employer.

In 1982 at the Weirton mill, a union journeyman might have earned \$25 an hour, or so people told me. Walmart pays seven bucks for the same hour and fights like a junkyard dog against either an increase in the minimum wage or unionization.

### **The Most Exclusive Gated Community: US Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina**

I grew up in a fairly small Ohio town that, in the 1970s, was just crossing the sociological divide between a traditional kind of place and a proper bedroom suburb. Not everyone knew each other, but certain principles were agreed upon. A steak should be one inch thick or more. A good potluck solved

most problems. Vegetables were boiled, faith rewarded. Things looked better in the morning. Kids drank chocolate milk instead of Coke. We had parades every Memorial Day and every Fourth of July, but Labor Day was just for barbecues because school began the next day and dad had to get up for work. In fact, that line – “I’ve got to get up for work” – was the way most social events broke up. This isn’t nostalgia, it’s history.

In 2014, you could travel significant parts of the decaying Midwest and not imagine that such a place had ever existed. But turn south on Interstate 95 and look for the signs that say “Welcome to US Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune,” in Jacksonville, North Carolina. Actually, welcome to almost any US military base outside of actual war zones, where a homogeneous military population and generous government spending (re) creates the America of the glory days as accurately as a Hollywood movie. For a first-time visitor, a military base can feel like its own living museum, the modern equivalent of Colonial Williamsburg.

Streets are well maintained, shaded by tall trees planted there (and regularly pruned) for just that purpose. Road, water, and sewer crews are always working. There are no potholes. There is a single school with a prominent football field, and a single shopping area. The restaurants are long-time Department of Defense franchise partners and there’s always a pizza place with a fake-sounding Italian name. Those creature comforts on such bases in the US and around the world come at a cost to taxpayers of billions of dollars a year.

Some of the places employ locals, some military spouses, some high school kids earning pocket money after school. The kids bag groceries. Everybody tips them; they’re neighbors.

The centerpieces of any base like Camp Lejeune are the Base Exchange and the Commissary. The former is a mini-Walmart; the latter, a large grocery store. Both are required by law not to make a profit and so sell

products at near wholesale prices. Because everyone operates on federal property, no sales tax is charged. When a member of a Pentagon advisory board proposed shutting down some of the commissaries across the US, a step that would have saved taxpayers about \$1.4 billion a year, World War III erupted in Congress and halted the idea.

Over in officers’ housing areas, everyone cuts their lawns, has a garage full of sports equipment and a backyard with a grill. Don’t keep up your assigned housing unit and you’ll hear from a senior officer. People get along – they’re ordered to do so.

The base is the whole point of Jacksonville, the town that surrounds it. The usual bars and strip clubs service the Marines, and Camp Lejeune is close to being the town’s sole employer like that old steel mill in Weirton or the gambling palaces in Atlantic City. The base shares another connection to places like Weirton: as men lost their health in the mills thanks to asbestos and other poisons, so Camp Lejeune’s drinking water was contaminated with trichloroethylene, a known carcinogen, between 1953 and 1987.

There, however, the similarities end.

Unlike the archipelago of American towns and cities abandoned to shrivel and die, the “city” inside Camp Lejeune continues to thrive, since its good times are fully covered by taxpayer money. The 23% of the national budget spent on defense assures places like Camp Lejeune of their prosperity.

The Department of Defense, with 3.2 million employees (albeit not all in uniform) is the world’s largest employer. It makes up more than two percent of the American labor force.

And the military pays well; no scrambling for a minimum wage at Camp Lejeune. With combat pay more or less standard since 9/11 (the whole world being a battlefield, of course), the Congressional Budget Office estimates that the average active duty service member receives a ben-

**The usual bars and strip clubs service the Marines, and Camp Lejeune is close to being the town’s sole employer like that old steel mill in Weirton or the gambling palaces in Atlantic City**

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## LOST IN AMERICA / 2

**Even at night, the Harlem sidewalks here are full of people. I never felt unsafe, even though I obviously wasn't from the neighborhood. People seemed eternally ready to give me directions or suggest a local eatery I shouldn't miss**

efits and pay compensation package worth \$99,000. This includes a livable pension after 20 years of service, free medical and dental care, free housing, a clothing allowance, and more. In most cases, dependents of service members continue to live on a base in the United States while their husbands or wives, fathers or mothers serve abroad. Unlike in the minimum-wage jobs many other Americans now depend on, service members can expect regular training and skills enhancement and a clear path to promotion. Nearly every year, Congress votes for pay increases. The arguments for military benefits may be clear – many service members lead difficult and dangerous lives. The point is, however, that the benefits exist, unlike in so many corporate workplaces today. The government pays for all of them, while Atlantic City and Weirton struggle to stay above water.

### **Small Town America in the Big Apple: Spanish Harlem**

The number of Americans who have visited Harlem, even for a quick stop at a now-trendy restaurant or music club, is unknown but has to be relatively small. Even many lifetime New Yorkers riding the uptown subway under the wealthy upper east side are careful to hop off before reaching the 116th Street stop. Still, get off there, walk a few blocks, and you find yourself in a micro-economy that, in its own way, has more in common with America of the 1950s than 2014.

There are, of course, no shaded areas along the block I was visiting in what has traditionally been known as Spanish Harlem, no boyish Little League games. But what you do find are locally owned stores with hardly a franchised or corporately owned place in sight. The stores are stocked with a wondrous hodge-podge of what people in the area need, including South American root vegetables, pay-as-you-go cell phones, and cheap school supplies.

These stores could not exist in many

other places. They are perfectly adapted to the neighborhood they are in. While the quality of goods varies, prices are wondrously below what similar things cost a half-dozen subway stops away in midtown Manhattan. In the stores, the employees of these family businesses speak the same languages as their mostly Dominican immigrant customers, and those who work there are eager to make suggestions and help you find things.

People actually chat with each other. Customer loyalty is important, so prices are often negotiable. When he discovered that his customer was also his neighbor, one shop owner helped carry purchases upstairs. Another store informally accepted and held package deliveries for neighbors.

The guy selling frozen ices on the sidewalk nearby did not work for a conglomerate and doled out healthy-sized servings to his regulars. He told me that he bought his raw materials in the very grocery store we were camped in front of.

Even at night, the sidewalks here are full of people. I never felt unsafe, even though I obviously wasn't from the neighborhood. People seemed eternally ready to give me directions or suggest a local eatery I shouldn't miss. The one established mega-corporate store in the area, a Rent-a-Center charging usurious prices for junk, had no customers inside on the day I visited. The shop next to it, with an impressive array of used TVs and small appliances from unknown Chinese manufacturers, seemed to be doing gangbuster business. The owner shifted among English, Spanish, and some sort of Dominican creole based on the needs of his customers.

Few things here are shiny or new. There are vacant lots, an uncomfortable sight at night. Homeless people, some near naked despite the weather and muttering to themselves, are more prevalent than in Midtown. The streets have more trash. I saw drug deals going on against graffiti-scarred walls. There is a busy methadone clinic on



a busy street. Not everyone is the salt of the earth, but local businesses do cater to the community and keep prices in line with what people could pay. Money spent in the neighborhood mostly seems to stay there and, if not, is likely sent home to the Dominican Republic to pay for the next family member's arrival in town – what economist John Maynard Keynes called the “local multiplier effect.”

One study found that each \$100 spent at local independents generated \$45 of secondary local spending, compared to \$14 at a big-box chain. Business decisions – whether to open or close, staff up or lay off – were made by people in the area face-to-face with those they affected. The businesses were accountable, the owners at the cash registers.

The stretch of Spanish Harlem I passed through is a galaxy away from perfect, but unlike Weirton, which had long ago given up, Atlantic City, which was in the process of doing so, or Camp Lejeune, which had opted out of the system entirely, people are still trying. It shows that an accountable micro-economy with ties to the community can still work in this country – at least in the short run. But don't hold your breath. Target recently opened its first superstore not far away and may ultimately do to this neighborhood what cheap foreign steel imports did to Weirton.

### **Looking Ahead**

I grew up in the Midwest at a time when the country still prided itself on having something of a conscience, when it was a place still built on hope and a widespread belief that a better future was anybody's potential birthright. Inequity was always there, and there were always rich people and poor people, but not in the ratios we see now in America. What I found in my travels was place after place being hollowed out as wealth went elsewhere and people came to realize that, odds on, life was likely to get worse, not better. For most people, what passed for hope for the future

meant clinging to the same flat-lined life they now had.

What's happening is both easy enough for a traveler to see and for an economist to measure. Median household income in 2012 was no higher than it had been a quarter-century earlier. Meanwhile, expenses had outpaced inflation. US Census Bureau figures show that the income gap between rich and poor had widened to a more than four-decade record since the 1970s. The 46.2 million people in poverty remained the highest number since the Census Bureau began collecting that data 53 years ago. The gap between how much total wealth America's 1% of earners control and what the rest of us have is even wider than even in the years preceding the Great Depression of 1929. Argue over numbers, debate which statistics are most accurate, or just drive around America: the trend lines and broad patterns, the shadows of our world of regime change, are sharply, sadly clear.

After John Steinbeck wrote “The Grapes of Wrath”, he said he was filled with “certain angers at people who were doing injustices to other people.” I, too, felt anger, though it's an emotion that I'm unsure how to turn against the problems we face.

As I drove away from Atlantic City, I passed Lucy the Elephant still at her post, unblinking and silent. She looks out over the Boardwalk, maybe America itself, and if she could, she undoubtedly would wonder where the road ahead will take us. **CT**

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***Peter Van Buren** blew the whistle on State Department waste and mismanagement during Iraqi reconstruction in his first book, “We Meant Well: How I Helped Lose the Battle for the Hearts and Minds of the Iraqi People”. He writes about current events at his blog, We Meant Well. His book “Ghosts of Tom Joad: A Story of the #99Percent” has just been published.*

*This essay was originally published at <http://tomdispatch.com>*

**What I found in my travels was place after place being hollowed out as wealth went elsewhere and people came to realize that, odds on, life was likely to get worse, not better**

# Break the silence

A new world war beckons if we don't take action, writes **John Pilger**

**The degree of human suffering, let alone criminality, is little acknowledged in the west, despite the presence of the world's most advanced communications and nominally freest journalism**

**W**hy do we tolerate the threat of another world war in our name? Why do we allow lies that justify this risk? The scale of our indoctrination, wrote Harold Pinter, is a “brilliant, even witty, highly successful act of hypnosis”, as if the truth “never happened even while it was happening”.

Every year the American historian William Blum publishes his “updated summary of the record of US foreign policy” which shows that, since 1945, the US has tried to overthrow more than 50 governments, many democratically elected; grossly interfered in elections in 30 countries; bombed the civilian populations of 30 countries; used chemical and biological weapons; and attempted to assassinate foreign leaders.

In many cases Britain has been a collaborator. The degree of human suffering, let alone criminality, is little acknowledged in the west, despite the presence of the world's most advanced communications and nominally freest journalism. That the most numerous victims of terrorism – “our” terrorism – are Muslims, is unsayable. That extreme jihadism, which led to 9/11, was nurtured as a weapon of Anglo-American policy (Operation Cyclone in Afghanistan) is suppressed. In April the US state department noted that,

following Nato's campaign in 2011, “Libya has become a terrorist safe haven”.

The name of “our” enemy has changed over the years, from communism to Islamism, but generally it is any society independent of western power and occupying strategically useful or resource-rich territory. The leaders of these obstructive nations are usually violently shoved aside, such as the democrats Muhammad Mossedeq in Iran and Salvador Allende in Chile, or they are murdered like Patrice Lumumba in the Congo. All are subjected to a western media campaign of caricature and vilification – think Fidel Castro, Hugo Chávez, now Vladimir Putin.

## **Backing neo-Nazis**

Washington's role in Ukraine is different only in its implications for the rest of us. For the first time since the Reagan years, the US is threatening to take the world to war. With eastern Europe and the Balkans now military outposts of Nato, the last “buffer state” bordering Russia is being torn apart. We in the west are backing neo-Nazis in a country where Ukrainian Nazis backed Hitler. Having masterminded the coup in February against the democratically elected government in Kiev, Washington's planned seizure of Russia's historic, legitimate warm-water naval base in Crimea failed.

The Russians defended themselves, as

they have done against every threat and invasion from the west for almost a century.

But Nato's military encirclement has accelerated, along with US-orchestrated attacks on ethnic Russians in Ukraine. If Putin can be provoked into coming to their aid, his pre-ordained "pariah" role will justify a Nato-run guerrilla war that is likely to spill into Russia itself.

Instead, Putin has confounded the war party by seeking an accommodation with Washington and the EU, by withdrawing troops from the Ukrainian border and urging ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine to abandon its provocative referendum. These Russian-speaking and bilingual people – a third of Ukraine's population – have long sought a democratic federation that reflects the country's ethnic diversity and is both autonomous and independent of Moscow. Most are neither "separatists" nor "rebels" but citizens who want to live securely in their homeland.

Like the ruins of Iraq and Afghanistan, Ukraine has been turned into a CIA theme park – run by CIA director John Brennan in Kiev, with "special units" from the CIA and FBI setting up a "security structure" that oversees savage attacks on those who opposed the February coup.

Watch the videos, read the eye-witness reports from the massacre in Odessa last month. Bussed fascist thugs burned the trade union headquarters, killing 41 people trapped inside. Watch the police standing by.

A doctor described trying to rescue people, "but I was stopped by pro-Ukrainian Nazi radicals. One of them pushed me away rudely, promising that soon me and other Jews of Odessa are going to meet the same fate... I wonder, why the whole world is keeping silent."

Russian-speaking Ukrainians are fighting for survival. When Putin announced the withdrawal of Russian troops from the border, the Kiev junta's defence secretary – a founding member of the fascist

Svoboda party – boasted that the attacks on "insurgents" would continue. In Orwellian style, propaganda in the west has inverted this to Moscow "trying to orchestrate conflict and provocation", according to William Hague.

His cynicism is matched by Obama's grotesque congratulations to the coup junta on its "remarkable restraint" following the Odessa massacre. Illegal and fascist-dominated, the junta is described by Obama as "duly elected". What matters is not truth, Henry Kissinger once said, but "but what is perceived to be true."

### **Damning the victims**

In the US media the Odessa atrocity has been played down as "murky" and a "tragedy" in which "nationalists" (neo-Nazis) attacked "separatists" (people collecting signatures for a referendum on a federal Ukraine). Rupert Murdoch's *Wall Street Journal* damned the victims – "Deadly Ukraine Fire Likely Sparked by Rebels, Government Says". Propaganda in Germany has been pure cold war, with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* warning its readers of Russia's "undeclared war". For Germans, it is an invidious irony that Putin is the only leader to condemn the rise of fascism in 21st-century Europe.

A popular truism is that "the world changed" following 9/11. But what has changed? According to the great whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg, a silent coup has taken place in Washington and rampant militarism now rules.

The Pentagon currently runs "special operations" – secret wars – in 124 countries. At home, rising poverty and hemorrhaging liberty are the historic corollary of a perpetual war state. Add the risk of nuclear war, and the question begs: why do we tolerate this? **CT**

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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 Guardian, UK*

**Like the ruins of Iraq and Afghanistan, Ukraine has been turned into a CIA theme park – run by CIA director John Brennan**

# Losing Russia

Russia's actions in Crimea were no more illegal than those of the West in Kosovo, says **Jonathan Power**

**What these soldiers, leading the Russian-speaking revolt, are wearing can be bought in any army surplus store**

**W**hen it comes to Ukraine, the US and the EU are adopting a holier than thou attitude which, unfortunately, leads them not to worship at the altar of truth.

Take the issue of the fuss made over alleged soldiers wearing Russian uniforms. They are not dressed in the smart fatigues of the unmarked Russian soldiers in Crimea, about which President Vladimir Putin has acknowledged he misled us.

What these soldiers, leading the Russian-speaking revolt, are wearing can be bought in any army surplus store. As for the photos Western intelligence has persuaded much of the media to use as evidence, they are hazy and would not be admissible in a court of law.

The Ukrainian Security Agency announced that it captured 20 of its Russian counterparts. But then it reduced the number to 10 and then to three. But the last figure received much less highlighting from Western governments and media than the first.

The West isn't innocent in this crisis

How all this "Russian interference" compares with the post Cold War expansion by Nato forces up to Russia's borders, senior Western politicians' (including the US ambassador) provocative support for a revolutionary movement that included a healthy contingent of neo-fascists who now

have seats in the Ukrainian cabinet, and the funding of opposition forces and NGOs, is to be wondered at.

I've long been surprised at the tolerance for Western NGOs based in Russia and China. Imagine the reverse.

The West has no moral or legal capital

As for international law the US, the UK and France ignore it when convenient.

When in 1980 Iraq's Saddam Hussein launched an invasion of Iran the US and the UK supplied him with weapons and military intelligence. When the US feared the World Court would find against it for mining the harbours of revolutionary Nicaragua it withdrew from the Court.

When Nato was intent on bombing Serbia and later Kosovo, it bypassed the UN Security Council although, according to the Charter, it is the only body that can legalise offensive military activity.

When the Security Council voted against the US, UK and France launching a second Iraq war they ignored its majority vote against.

When the West won a resolution, with Russian support, to protect civilians in the Libya of Muammar al-Gaddafi, it bent Security Council authority and did not stop air attacks until he was overthrown.

Kosovo and Crimea – the latter at least wasn't bombed

The Russians were furious. Ironically,

when most Western nations decided to recognise Kosovo as a state independent of Serbia against the wishes of Russia and even some EU members such as Spain, they gave a hostage to fortune. Russia is now able to say over Crimea we are only doing what you did over Kosovo.

The trouble with behaving like this is that international law and the Security Council don't, like an elastic band, return to their original shape when stretched. So when it came to Crimea, where Russia was arguably in the wrong, many influential countries in the world, such as India, China, South Africa, Brazil and Israel kept silent and did not vote to back the Western condemnation. (Neither did they support Russia.)

### **Self-defeating to lose Russia**

Losing Russia through mismanagement of a crisis is not a very clever thing to do.

It means that there will be no more nuclear disarmament for as far into the future as one can see. Trade and financial exchange with Russia's big and growing market will be hit by sanctions.

Nationalism in Russia, even among the intelligentsia, is rising fast. (Remember how, after 9/11, 80 percent of Russians supported the US.) Russia and China will become closer.

The US and the EU are shooting themselves in the foot. Former president, Richard Nixon, the author of detente, is presumably turning in his grave. He tried to persuade

President Bill Clinton, gung-ho on expanding Nato to Russia's borders, despite an American promise to go easy.

President Barack Obama, after steering well clear of Clinton-type policy, now is in danger of being dragged down by a similar one. Is he downplaying the many ways Russia cooperates with the West?

Russia provides transport on its rockets to the International Space Station, which no other nation is capable of doing at the moment. It supplies engines to US space rockets. It cooperates with the West in combating Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

It has granted permission for US war materials en route to Afghanistan to use Russian trains. It has given its permission for overflying to Afghanistan. (Russia shares an interest with Nato in Afghanistan since it lost a million men in its own foolish war there.) Russian support is now needed in the next delicate stage of Nato withdrawal.

With Syria it persuaded Bashar Al-Assad to give up its chemical weapons and now has moderated its arms shipments.

Not least, it is a positive diplomatic force in pushing Iran to prove to the world community that it has no program to build nuclear weapons.

Does the West really want to lose Russia? **CT**

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*Jonathan Power is a columnist and associate at the Transnational Foundation for Peace & Future Research in Lund Sweden.*

**The US and the EU are shooting themselves in the foot. Former president, Richard Nixon, the author of detente, is presumably turning in his grave**



# A good old American tug on the fabric of peace

Philip Kraske on American bumbling and its consequences

**Imagine how different if the U.S. had favored, publicly and privately, negotiations between the pro- and anti-Russian elements in both the capital and around the country**

Imagine how different Ukraine would be today if the U.S. and – prodded by the U.S. – the European Union had not put their weight behind the Maidan Revolution. Lacking that sweet five billion bucks that Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland bragged about, the rebels would not have overturned the government. The country would be simmering, rather than shooting, and united at least in their disgust with their corrupt government. And Crimea would still be Ukrainian.

Imagine how different if the U.S. had favored, publicly and privately, negotiations between the pro- and anti-Russian elements in both the capital and around the country. This, together with an electoral, by-the-book change in the government might have been a truly salutary watershed in the country's politics.

The Cold War – how the U.S. military must be rubbing its hands! – might not have been rekindled. And Russia, for its part, might not have been stuck once again with its reputation for hegemony.

“All around, the fabric of peace and order is fraying,” *New York Times* columnist David Brooks lamented last month. “The leaders of Russia and Ukraine escalate their apocalyptic rhetoric. The Sunni-Shiite split worsens as Syria and Iraq slide into chaos. China pushes its weight around in the Pacific.”

Yet the first two crises – Ukraine and the Sunni-Shiite conflict – are surely the result of American bumbling, the latter the aftershock of America's ham-fisted invasion of Iraq. As to China, what weight is he referring to? Their half-hearted squawking about the Senkaku/Diaoyu isles, which Japan also claims? The Chinese government has not lifted a finger regarding “illegal” flyovers of the islands, which makes one wonder if the government isn't just making a gesture to domestic constituencies, like the military or the business elite who wants to exploit the area's oil and gas deposits. At any rate, the government is evidently not willing to throw any weight into the air over the issue.

## Desire for dominance

Brooks quite rightly praises the system of foreign affairs going back to the Treaty of Westphalia, which protects “the desire for regional dominance and the desire to eliminate diversity.” And he goes on to decry that “China, Russia and Iran have different values, but all oppose this system of liberal pluralism.”

Surely he has forgotten recent American history. Has regional dominance anywhere been greater than America's in Latin America over the past century? Its foreign-policy domination of west Europe has been only slightly less great. And as to pluralism and

diversity, who can forget Condoleeza Rice's carefree statement in an August 2008 *Foreign Affairs* issue, "Indeed, we have shown that by marrying American power and American values, we could help friends and allies expand the boundaries of what most thought realistic at the time." The list of abandoned, scarred offspring from that unhappy marriage lengthens every year.

"Preserving that hard-earned [liberal, pluralistic system] ecosystem requires an ever-advancing fabric of alliances, clear lines about what behavior is unacceptably system-disrupting, and the credible threat of political, financial and hard power enforcement," Brooks concludes, and he's again right.

### **Blissful disregard for law**

Yet America's blissful disregard for international law seems not to trouble him. From many possible examples, take drone attacks. They are a "system-disrupting" element if there ever was one. What excuses will the State Department make when Syria uses them against rebels? Or when China zaps a dissident in Manila or Jakarta? Or when Russia sends them to Ukraine? Just when international law was getting some real post-World War II force and character, along came the neocons to shatter it, and Obama to make sure the pieces never get put back together.

For what is most troubling about Brooks's article – and many others like it from conservative policy circles – is how they cannot see America's own contribution to the unraveling of international relations. Or rather, they can see it, but they cannot talk about it. A recent article by the excellent *Times* business columnist Gretchen Morgenson offers a look at the small world of important opinion leaders and policy-makers. She is referring to the financial world in this quote, taken from the book by Elizabeth Warren, "A Fighting Chance," but it can be applied as well to the airy world of foreign affairs.

"After dinner, Larry leaned back in his chair and offered me some advice," Ms. Warren writes. "I had a choice. I could be an insider or I could be an outsider. Outsiders can say whatever they want. But people on the inside don't listen to them. Insiders, however, get lots of access and a chance to push their ideas. People – powerful people – listen to what they have to say. But insiders also understand one unbreakable rule: They don't criticize other insiders."

Ms. Morgenson followed up the quote: "A spokeswoman for Mr. Summers did not respond to a request for comment."

Of course not: why respond to outsiders?

We outsiders have the luxury of looking at the world much more realistically than Mr. Brooks and wondering why America is doing so much to break down and dominate the international system. We wonder why the American government is so intent on trying to break Ukraine off from Russia and make an enemy of President Putin, whose behavior on the international scene, at least, has been basically responsible, if we remember his cooperation on Syria, Iran, North Korea and Afghanistan. He hasn't deserved the White House snubbing, especially Obama's refusal to go to the Sochi Olympic Games.

William Pfaff, the veteran foreign-affairs commentator, said tellingly: "Tact seems a quality long abandoned in an America where officials communicate in obscenities." Putin has given up trying to please the Americans, and you can hardly blame him.

But it's Condoleeza Rice and David Brooks and his blinkered band of brothers who control the policy and the airwaves. We outsiders can only stand around saying whatever we want as we watch the fabric of peace and order fraying all around us. **CT**

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*Phillip Kraaske is an American author who lives and teaches in Madrid, Spain. His latest novel is "City On The Ledge"*

**What excuses will the State Department make when Syria uses drones against rebels? Or when China zaps a dissident in Manila or Jakarta? Or when Russia sends them to Ukraine?**

# Seeing is not believing in Ukraine

Jeff Nygaard on the effects of our latest weapons of despair

**In hindsight, it's amazing that anyone gave any credence to such obvious propaganda. But that's how it is when the population of a "democratic" nation is being asked to support a war**

**B**ack in 1982 the Reagan administration produced "sensitive intelligence... on the continuing Nicaraguan military buildup." It featured "reconnaissance photography" that "intelligence officials said proved Nicaragua, with Cuban and Soviet assistance, was assembling the largest military force in Central America."

The *New York Times* dutifully reported the propaganda in an article headlined "US Offers Photos of Bases to Prove Nicaragua Threat." The article featured the comments of John T. Hughes, "the premier photo interpreter in the US intelligence community."

The deputy CIA director at the time, Adm. Bobby R. Inman, trumpeted the propaganda campaign to the *Times*, saying that "It's time to get some concern in this country about [Nicaragua's] military buildup. It's vastly beyond any defensive need." (These words, it's worth noting, were spoken by a high official of the country whose actions were dramatically increasing Nicaragua's "defensive need." Yet, he wasn't joking.)

"Mr. Hughes," reported the *Times*, "presented a photograph of a recently completed garrison at Villa Nueva. [Ed. Note: A garrison is a military post.] He said that the configuration of the garrison, including the style and placement

of the barracks, vehicle storage areas and training fields and obstacle course, closely resembled garrisons in Cuba and the Soviet Union. 'This is the pattern we see time and time again in Nicaragua,' he said. 'It's the pattern we've seen time and time again in Cuba.'"

We all know about the various military attacks that Cuba has launched against the United States. And Nicaragua under the Sandinistas posed a similar military threat to the United States. That is: None. These photos of a supposed "garrison" could have been taken anywhere, and the patterns they revealed could have had any meaning that anyone wanted to give them. In hindsight, it's amazing that anyone gave any credence to such obvious propaganda. But that's how it is when the population of a "democratic" nation is being asked to support a war.

## **That was 1982. Now It's 2014.**

Some things never change. On April 20th of this year – 32 years after the photos of a Cuban-style garrison were used to justify a US war against Nicaragua – the *New York Times* ran an article headlined "Photos Link Masked Men in East Ukraine to Russia." The article was co-written by three *Times* reporters, including the infamous Michael Gordon (author of previous war-hysteria articles from Iraq to Syria.) This



article began,

“For two weeks, the mysteriously well-armed, professional gunmen known as ‘green men’ have seized Ukrainian government sites in town after town, igniting a brush fire of separatist unrest across eastern Ukraine... Now, photographs and descriptions from eastern Ukraine endorsed by the Obama administration on Sunday suggest that many of the green men are indeed Russian military and intelligence forces – equipped in the same fashion as Russian special operations troops involved in annexing the Crimea region in February. Some of the men photographed in Ukraine have been identified in other photos clearly taken among Russian troops in other settings.

“The Ukrainian government provided these photographs last week to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna. Ukraine says the photographs document that the armed men who have taken over government buildings in eastern Ukraine are Russian combatants. The State Department, which has also alleged Russian interference, says that the Ukrainian evidence is convincing.”

It was a little less convincing after the *Times* ran an article just two days later headlined “Scrutiny Over Photos Said to Tie Russia Units to Ukraine.” The *Times* politely reported that the group of photos that they had published “has come under scrutiny,” by which they meant that they’re not what they were claimed to be. For example, the man who actually took one of the photos that was said to have been taken in Russia – Maxim Donduyuk – “said that he had taken the group

photograph [in Ukraine] and posted it on his Instagram account. ‘It was taken in Slovyansk,’ he said in a telephone interview. ‘Nobody asked my permission to use this photograph.’”

The *Times* checked back with the State Department spokeswoman, Jen Psaki, who had made the original claims about the group photo a couple of days earlier. She “acknowledged that the assertion that the photograph in the American briefing materials had been taken in Russia was incorrect.” But who cares about the facts? Not Ms. Psaki, who now tells the *Times*, “We don’t have a shadow of a doubt about the connection... between the Russians and the armed militants” in eastern Ukraine. And to back up our claims we’ll doctor as many photographs as we need to!

### **Everything about these photos shouts “Propaganda!”**

The *Times* reports that the Ukrainian government – which represents one side in a multi-sided dispute – “provided these photographs,” which were “endorsed by the Obama administration.” The eleven grainy photos published by the *Times* came complete with circles, arrows, and captions to help us get the propaganda points. The NATO chief is quoted saying that all the unrest in eastern Ukraine “is being carried out at the direction of Russia,” but even the *Times* had to note that “His evidence, however, was mostly circumstantial...”

Photo propaganda has been around as long as photos have been around, and in the age of Photoshop and instantaneous Internet distribution it’s easier than ever to use photographic “evidence” to support

**The eleven grainy photos published by the *Times* came complete with circles, arrows, and captions to help us get the propaganda point**

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## POWER PLAY / 4

**Whether or not the residents of Ukraine are better off being allied with Europe or with Russia, what is clear is that the response by US leaders to either decision could make things much better or much worse**

any point one wishes to make. That's why headlines like "Photos Link Masked Men in East Ukraine to Russia" should not only be kept off the front page, they should be kept out of the daily news flow entirely

I began this piece by reminding readers that mysterious photos – supposedly from Nicaragua – were used in the 1980s to whip up fears in the US population that were then manipulated to build support for a criminal war. These current photos from Ukraine are being put forward to scare us again, but this time the stakes are even higher, as the escalating conflict between Russia and the US involves two huge powers, both of which are heavily armed with nuclear weapons. No country in the Western Hemisphere (other than our own) has nuclear weapons. So, while the US attack on "Communism" in Central America was a living hell for the people in that region, an escalation of the current

crisis would threaten not only the people in the region, but would pose enormous threats to the global economy and environment, as well.

Whether or not the residents of Ukraine are better off being allied with Europe or with Russia, what is clear is that the response by US leaders to either decision could make things much better or much worse. So far, the US response to the crisis appears to be to demonize Russia and to emphasize a military response. Much propaganda is being deployed to support this dangerous course. See Nygaard Notes #550 for ideas on how to resist the propaganda. And, when it comes to Ukraine, always remember that seeing is not believing. **CT**

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*Jeff Nygaard is the editor of Nygaard Notes, an independent newsletter, published at <http://nygaardnotes.org>*

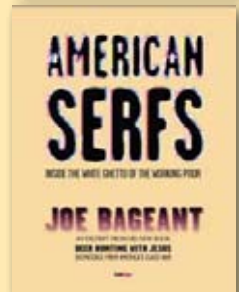
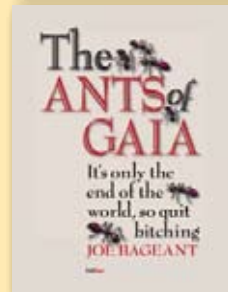
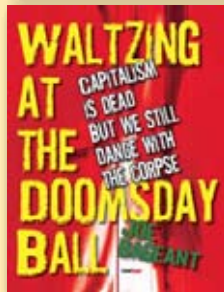
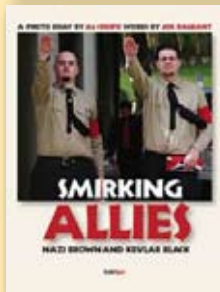
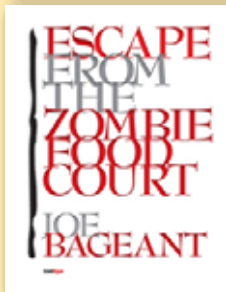
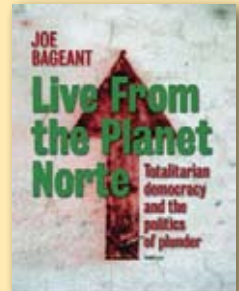
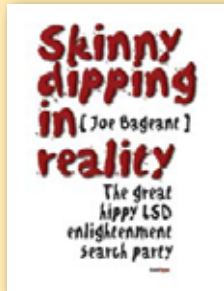
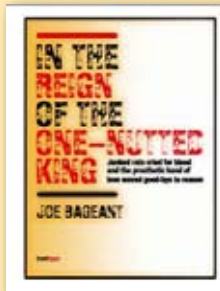
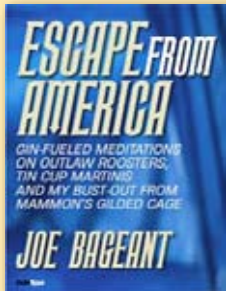
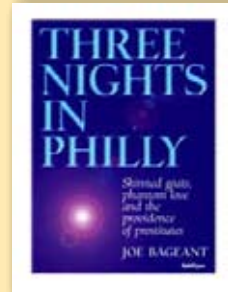
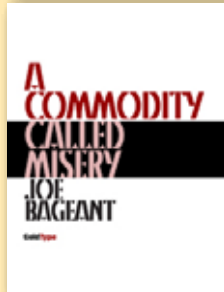
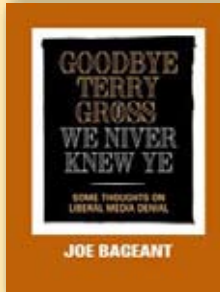
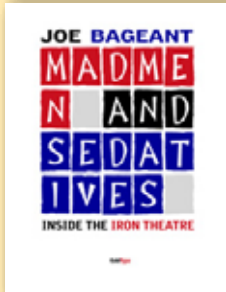
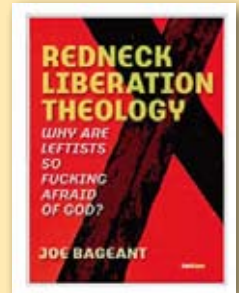
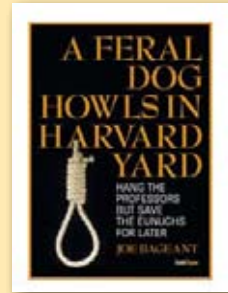
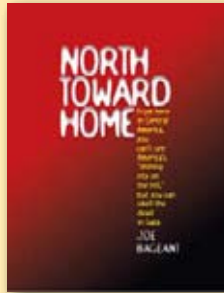
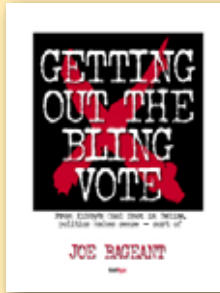
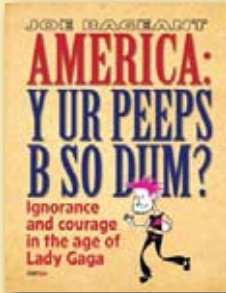
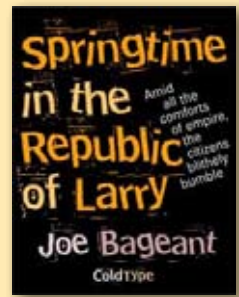
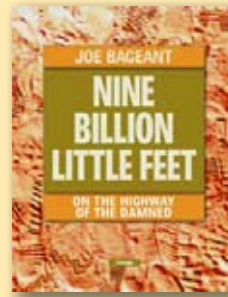
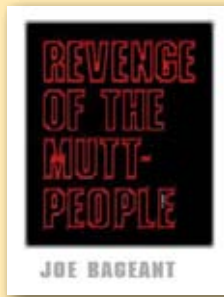
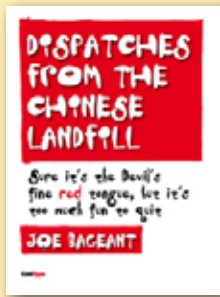
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## BENDIB'S WORLD

Khalil Bendib, OtherWords.org





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# Navigating Syria: Mission impossible

**Ramzy Baroud** tells us that Syria belongs to its people, not the oppressors on either side of them

**Some self-proclaimed 'progressives' have decided to elevate the status of Bashar al-Assad to that of being the last line of defence against American imperialism**

I unfriended another Facebook friend this week. It may seem to be a trivial matter, but for me, it is not. The reason behind my action was Syria. As in Egypt, Syria has instigated many social media breakups with people whom, until then, were regarded with a degree of respect and admiration.

But this is not a social media affair. The problems lie at the core of the Syrian conflict, with all of its manifestations, be they political, sectarian, ideological, cultural, and intellectual. While on the left (not the establishment left, of course), Palestine has brought many like-minded people together, Egypt has fragmented that unity, and Syria has crushed and pulverized it to bits.

Those who cried over the victims of Israeli wars on Gaza, did not seem very concerned about Palestinians starving to death in the Yarmouk refugee camp on the outskirts of Damascus. Some squarely blamed the Syrian government for the siege that killed hundreds, while others blamed the rebels. Some writers even went further, blaming the residents of the camp. Somehow, the refugees were implicated in their own misery and needed to be collectively punished for showing sympathy to the Syrian opposition.

The only line of logic that exists in the Yarmouk narrative, as in the Syrian story as a whole, is that there is no logic. It has turned out that solidarity with Palestinians has limits. If forces loyal to President Bashar al-As-

sad do the shooting – and the shelling and the starving – then the plight of the refugees is open for discussion.

It also has turned out that some of those who pose as human rights activists are rarely compelled by ethical priorities, but rather dogmatic ideology that is so rigid it has no space for a sensible argument based on a serious investigation of facts.

Some self-proclaimed 'progressives' have decided to elevate the status of Bashar al-Assad to that of being the last line of defence against American imperialism. They have done so with Libya's Muammar Gaddafi as well. Their line of reasoning doesn't stem from a serious understanding of the legacies of both men, but an entirely different set of representations, as in the West's own attitude towards Libya and Syria. Syria supported Hezbollah and Hamas in their resistance to Israel. True. Leading US neoconservatives have plotted for years to 'roll back' Damascus, and to subdue any resistance to Israeli hegemony. Also true. But between delineating these truths and others, in all that the Syrian government has done – the horrendous war crimes, the perpetual sieges, the unhindered violations of human rights – everything is somehow forgiven. They are not to be discussed, or even acknowledged. In fact, for some, they never happened.

The other side is just as culpable. Crimes committed by opposition forces and al-Qae-

da affiliated groups are heinous and barbaric. A simple news search produces volumes of crimes, massacres of entire villages, and whole families or individuals who belonged to the wrong sect, or religion.

The intellectual crowd that opposes Assad is also unmoved by all of this. They often pin the blame on Assad or the thugs (shabiha) for any reported crime anywhere in Syria. And when news emerges that the victims were loyalists to Assad, they find ways to twist the story in order to place the blame on Assad forces anyway. But when more is revealed to prove the responsibility of an opposition-affiliated militia, or a gang, they simply shift gears to another massacre elsewhere, which is real or fabricated.

How is one to navigate a Syria where there are no 'good guys', where a return to the status quo of an inherently corrupt, oppressive and an undemocratic, clan-based government is unthinkable? And where neither al-Nusra, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant nor any other warning faction offers the antidotes to Syria's many ills – even worse, they offer an archaic and essentially violent interpretation of Islam?

How is one to navigate the Syrian intellectual realm when both narratives are riddled with half-truths or outright lies, where each discourse is predicated on the complete dismissal of the other? How is one to navigate this territory when many intellectuals who also masquerade as 'human rights activists' turn out to be narrow-minded ideologues devoid of any humanism?

Bashar is not a deity. He is no Che Guevara either. The crimes his forces committed, would be enough to send thousands of his backers to a never ending imprisonment. His opponents are no liberators. Few amongst them have any potential of being a harbinger of democracy or justice. Their crime record is vile and frightening.

The Syrian narrative is very complex because a 'just solution' is not a matter of a clever articulation of words. Aside from the Syrian camps, parties involved include West-

ern powers, Arab governments, Israel, Russia, Iran, and a cluster of intelligence agencies and legions of foreigners, on all sides. The agendas are mostly sinister. The media campaigns are driven by lies. The story of the Ghouta chemical attack of last year is particularly poignant. A war was about to break out, led by the US and cheered on by Arabs. A recent investigation by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh suggests that the whole thing might've been a plot, involving Turkey, to indict the regime. He argues that the Americans knew it, yet still were ready to go to war.

If the Nusra group was indeed behind the Ghouta killings of hundreds of innocent Syrians, the Syrian army is not innocent; far from it; as it has killed thousands. The barrel bombs continue to level entire neighborhoods. Those who survived the chemical attacks, manage to die in numerous other ways.

New killing methods are now reportedly include crucifying victims. All of Syria is in fact being crucified. In fact, despite their differences, Syria's warring parties are united in the blood of Syrians – and Palestinians – which they shed on a daily basis. When over 150,000 Syrians, including 10,000 children are dead, and 6.5 million are internally displaced, and 2.5 million have fled beyond the country's borders, no one is innocent. As for the pseudo-intellectuals who are keeping track of one body count, and ignoring the other, they must wake up to the fact that there is only one pool of victims, the Syrian people.

Bishop Desmond Tutu is famous for his quote "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor." Some of those who applied the quote abundantly in the case of Palestine, are now ignoring it in the case of Syria, for it doesn't fit perfectly with their ideas, where there can only be space for one single unadulterated and simplified narrative. All 'facts' are carefully selected and stacked in so carefully away to glorify one party and demonize the other. In their world, the story

**How is one to navigate a Syria where there are no 'good guys', where a return to the status quo of an inherently corrupt, oppressive and an undemocratic, clan-based government is unthinkable?**

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## BLAMING ASSAD

**You side with the victim, no matter her colour, sect or creed. You remain committed to the truth, no matter how elusive**

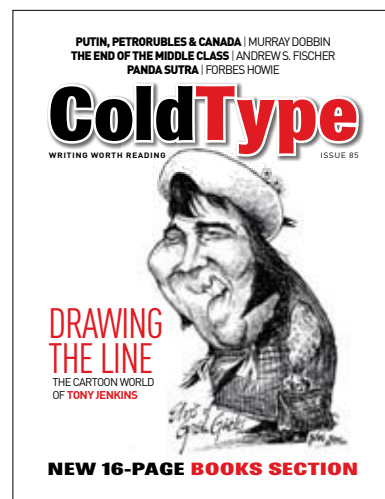
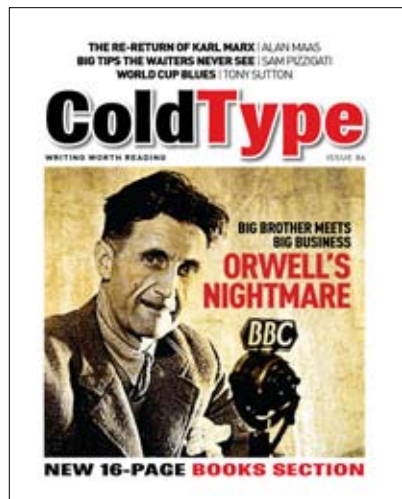
is convincingly clear, and those who don't agree to its every component must be either a Jihadist, a Zionist, an Assad-sympathizer, a fan of Hezbollah or on the payroll of one intelligence service or the other.

But how do you navigate an impossible story? The answer: You side with the victim, no matter her colour, sect or creed. You remain committed to the truth, no matter how elusive. You drop every presupposition, abandon ideology, permanently discard dogma, and approach Syria with abundance of humanity and humility. We need to understand the roots of this heinous war, but we also need it to end for the good of the Syrian people. The Syrian conflict should not be a stage of bloody political intrigues for the West and Russia, Israel, Iran and the Arabs. Syria is not a God-given inheritance of the

Assad-clan and their friends, or a space for another extremist experiment, as was the case in Afghanistan and Somalia, or another imaginary battlefield for social media leftists, whose claim to socialism is an occasional Facebook profile photo of a clasped fist, or an earth shattering quote about defeating capitalism.

Syria belongs to its people. You either stand on their side, or the side of the oppressor. **CT**

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*Ramzy Baroud is the managing editor of Middle East Eye. He is an internationally-syndicated columnist, a media consultant, an author and the founder of PalestineChronicle.com. His latest book is "My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story" (Pluto Press, London).*



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# World Cup blues

A blue shirt, giant flag, buxom beauty and an angry English soccer hooligan. **Tony Sutton** remembers the hottest soccer World Cup final in history

**S**unday, July 17, 1994. I'm in Pasadena, California, where the biggest sporting event on the planet – soccer's World Cup Final – will soon kick off. Wearing a blue soccer shirt, a giant Italian flag wrapped around my shoulders, I'm part of a tsunami of fans, a tidal wave of yellow and blue surging towards the city's Rose Bowl stadium.

Through the crush I spot a guy in a white England shirt. Ah, a fellow-countryman. He's 40-ish, short, stocky, cropped hair, tattoos. I move across and say hi. He looks me up and down, then demands, "You English?" I confirm that fact. He snarls, "Well, why are you supporting Italy? **All** – he emphasises his words to impress everyone in the vicinity – **real Englishmen hate them**, especially after what **their** cops did to us in Sardinia last time . . ."

*Well, yes, the 1990 World Cup in Italy was not the finest time to be an English soccer hooligan. Kings of the terrace, they were the hardest men in football, feared the world over for their arrogant, mindless, violence. Look at an English fan the wrong way and you'd lose all your teeth.*

*But it all went wrong for them in Cagliari. In his book "Among The Thugs," Bill Buford describes in bone-chilling detail the battle that raged before England's first-round game against Holland, when thousands of rampaging fans*



*met their Waterloo on the streets of the Italian city. Giving supporters of a rival league team a good kicking was no big deal, writes Buford, but fighting cops was a serious miscalculation. After a running battle through the streets, the English horde was ambushed, bombarded with canisters of tear-gas and then savagely beaten by the baton-wielding policemen. England fought the law and the law won.*

*To add insult to injury, the English soccer team was humbled on the field later in the tournament, defeated in a semi final shoot out in Turin by their German arch-rivals.*

Jeeze, I think, taking an involuntary step backward, I've found the craziest Limey in town, and he's upset that I'm dressed in the uniform of the enemy: a traitor to a nation of soccer hooligans!

I cautiously remind him that England's flat-footed clods didn't even qualify to travel to the US for the contest; and Ireland, my second favourite team – who had beaten Italy in one of the earlier games in the contest – was eliminated in a previous round. So my choice of teams to cheer for is limited to two, neither of which I really care about. But I dislike Italy's opponents, three-time champions Brazil, even more than the Azzurri. That's why I'm wearing blue. So, what's the problem?

**"Why are you rooting for Italy. You're English, and all REAL Englishmen hate them, especially after what their cops did to us in Sardinia last time. . ."**

**Above, left: Striker, the mascot for the US World Cup Finals**

**The flag is not for waving, but to drape over my head and shoulders; the water to pour over the flag so my brain won't fry in the hellish heat inside the ground**

He sneers a mixture of contempt and spittle, then demands, "Are you a fucking moron? Why are you here if you don't like either side?"

"Business trip," I reply, tempted to suggest that only a moron would wear an England shirt today, considering that team's recent performances. But I don't. Instead, I tell him that I'm a consultant to the company that owns the local paper, the *Pasadena Star-News*; I'm helping co-ordinate its coverage of the event, and my bonus is a ticket for the final.

Another sneer, this one clearly dismissive. "Bloody amateur. Not even a *real* fan." Then, the ultimate insult, "I suppose you like *baseball*, as well?" We drift apart. Mercifully, I reflect later, before he hears my two-word response.

I rejoin the crowd, carefully avoiding maniacs and fanatics, many of seem to be on day release. And I now know my place in the soccer hierarchy, so I join the blue section of the throbbing mob. We cheer, we sing, we applaud sexist jokes about our Brazilian opponents and their wives. Local residents line the side of the route. They stand in gardens, They sprawl in deckchairs. They lunch on hot dogs from sizzling barbecues, with cold beers in hand. They are enthralled by the passing show. And, judging by the flags planted on their green, green lawns (many prayers here for weed killer and irrigation), they're rooting for the Blues. Seems I've picked a winning team. First time ever . . .

I'd decided to support Italy earlier in the morning, over a late breakfast, after which I trekked into Pasadena to buy my blue shirt and monster Italian flag. Then, pausing only to buy sunglasses, sunscreen and several bottles of water, I joined the procession to the Rose Bowl. The flag was not for waving, but to drape over my head and shoulders; the water to pour over the

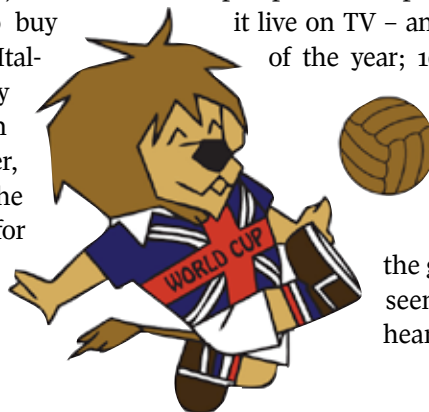
flag so my brain wouldn't fry in the hellish heat inside the ground. I'd been to the third place game a day earlier and had felt the effect of the heat and LA's notorious smog on my eyes, which were streaming tears from the moment the game began until halftime when I fled for sanctuary, and a fistful of cold beers, at a nearby bar.

Then I bought a small stuffed toy – Striker, the mascot of the games – for my wife . . .

*I recall another World Cup incident, this time in 1966, when the finals were held in England. The event was memorable for two reasons: England won the contest for the first and only time, beating Germany in the final with a still-disputed goal that either did or didn't cross the line, depending on which language you spoke.*

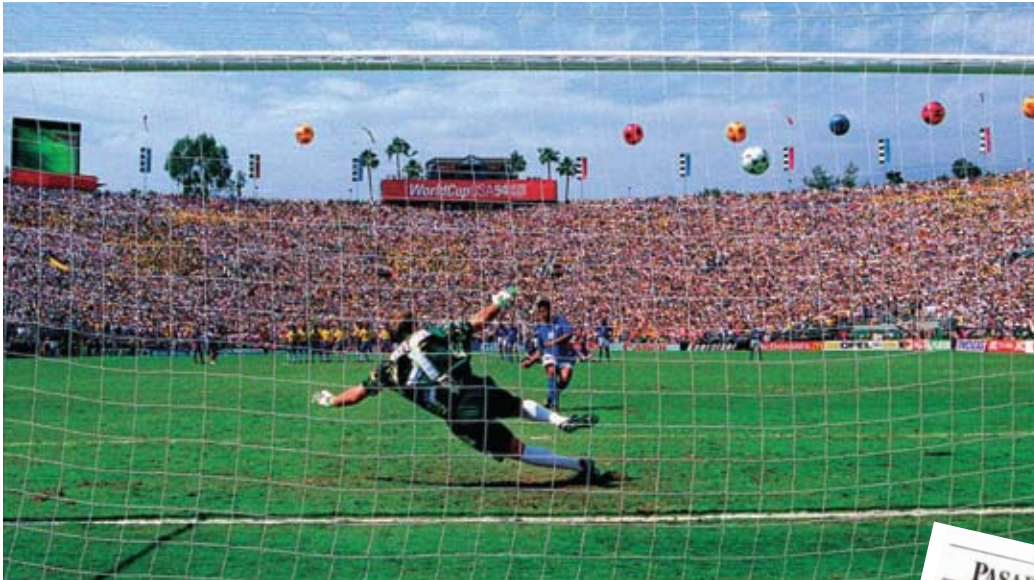
*The second reason? I was a teenager, in a Woolworth store in my home town in England with my new girlfriend who was cooing over a display of the World Cup mascot, a cute little lion named Willie. Unnoticed, I palmed a commemorative keyring, which I proudly presented as a token of my love as we left the store. Ungrateful is not the word to describe her reaction: batshit crazy would be more accurate. She declared she'd never speak to me again unless I returned Willy to the store shelf. I objected: stealing a keyring was stupid, I agreed, but returning it was doubly nuts. She stared me down. I did as ordered. She's still my sweetheart – we've been married for more half a lifetime. I still follow her instructions. Sometimes.*

You will not believe the heat at the Rose Bowl as the match starts. It's 12:30 pm – timed so pampered European audiences can watch it live on TV – and one of the hottest days of the year; 100,000 fans are sweltering in the stands. On field, it's almost impossible to walk, let alone run, but the players struggle through the game, during which there seems more likelihood of heart attacks than goals.



**Right: A mascot worth stealing: England's World Cup Willy from 1966**





Pasadena 1994: Roberto Baggio makes the most famous miss in World Cup history. Right: Front page of the Pasadena Star-News.

Grabbing me in a bone-crunching hug, she smacks a boozy kiss on her “poor bambino,” and thrusts a half-empty bottle of hooch into my hands



We see neither. Nil-nil is the score after 90 minutes; nil-nil is the score after 30 more minutes of extra time. History is about to be made – the first-ever penalty shoot out in a World Cup final.

Both teams miss their first kick. Then Brazil score three in succession, while Italy net two. 3-2 to Brazil: Italy have to score to stay in the game. No problem. Up steps the country’s pony-tailed idol, Roberto Baggio. He’s *The Man*. He can’t miss . . .

Placing the ball on the spot, Baggio scowls, steps back a dozen paces, strides calmly to the ball and lets fly. Uh, oh. It balloons high over the crossbar. Arms on hips, he hangs his head in disbelief and despair.

Mama Mia, groan the Italian fans. The Brazilians go crazy. So do I, but not in celebration. I have to get back to my hotel, where a driver is waiting to take me to the newspaper production plant several miles away. And we are about to face LA’s biggest-ever traffic jam. I leap from my seat, flee headlong down the stairs and dash across the car park to the street, where I’m halted by a horde of jubilant Brazilian fans brandishing front pages of the *Star-News* proclaiming their team’s victory. (No fortune teller, the newspaper had

printed two sets of pages as soon as the game went into extra time and took them to the ground in anticipation of a sales bonanza).

I weave through the mob, then hit another wall of Brazilians, fronted by a buxom, scantily-dressed beauty who, seeing my blue shirt, takes pity. Grabbing me in a bone-crunching hug, she smacks a boozy kiss on her “poor bambino,” thrusts a half-empty bottle of hooch into my hand and invites me to join the party, saying, “We know how to cheer up a poor Italian.”

“Sorry, gotta go,” I yell as I untangle myself from her clutches and bolt back into the crowd, taunted by ringing laughter and a lingering, mocking cry, “Run home to your mamma . . .”

At that moment, like Roberto Baggio and every other Italian on the planet, I understand the pain, shame and humiliation of defeat.

**CT**

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*Tony Sutton is the editor of ColdType*

● The 2014 World Cup Finals run from June 12 to July 13 June in Brazil

# Pele said what?

**Dave Zirin** on the protests that could disrupt the major sporting spectacle of the year

**This belief that the lion's share of Cup expenditures are for foreign consumption, while the disruption and pain will be shouldered by Brazil's masses, is widespread**

**B**y criticizing the 2014 World Cup and the spending priorities of the Brazilian government, soccer legend Pelé has accomplished the rarest of feats in twenty-first-century sports media: he has shown the capacity to shock and surprise.

*"It's clear that politically speaking, the money spent to build the stadiums was a lot, and in some cases was more than it should have been,"* Pelé said during a lecture at Anahuac University in Mexico City. "Some of this money could have been invested in schools, in hospitals.... Brazil needs it. That's clear. On that point, I agree [with the protests]. But I lament what protesters are doing, which is breaking and burning everything. It's money that we will have to spend again."

*These comments are without question tepid given the scale of the assault taking place on Brazil's poor in the lead-up to the World Cup. It also ignores that much of the violence has been perpetrated by the Brazilian military police, who merit nary a dollop of criticism from the 73-year-old legend. What is remarkable is that Pelé said anything at all. There is a reason why Brazilian soccer star turned politician Romário once said of the soccer legend, "He is a poet when he does not speak." Romário said this because Pelé has never failed to plant himself on*

the wrong side of history. Pelé was there arm-in-arm with Brazil's former President Lula da Silva when Brazil secured the World Cup for 2014 and the Olympics for 2016. To hear him raising actual criticisms of how the money has been spent is akin to Michael Jordan taking a stand against labor abuses perpetrated by Nike.

*After all, this is Pelé: the first athlete to ever trademark his own name. This is Pelé, who as a brand and a blank-slate superstar athlete, was both ahead of his time and out of touch. This is Pelé, the person who said last year, as rubber bullets were flying and tear gas was being shot directly into the eyes of demonstrators and bystanders, that people should stop protesting and "think about the national team."* This is Pelé, who advised that demonstrations should be postponed until after the Cup and was roundly jeered.

*This is who Pelé is. It is also who Pelé has always been. In the 1960s, when "the revolt of the black athlete" was on everyone's lips, Pelé was criticizing Muhammad Ali for resisting the draft and refusing to fight in Vietnam. In an era where the rulers and rules of the world were being challenged, Pelé met and entertained European royalty. He allowed Brazil's dictatorship to use his image on postage*

stamps and went on “goodwill tours” to newly independent African republics on behalf of whichever of the rotating dictators happened to be in charge. He dressed in African garb, celebrating a Brazil in which the position of the Afro-Brazilian masses was dire.

It is not that Pelé was a hardline, heartless right-winger, as much as he was someone who chose to risk very little. The Brazilian government was, ultimately, his most important patron, and he sided with the ruling power in his country, right or wrong, time and again on the question of the widespread poverty that plagued Brazil for decades. Pelé’s stock answer was that God had made people poor and his function in their lives was to use his God-given athletic greatness to bring joy into their difficult lives.

After Brazil’s victory in the 1970 World Cup, the military dictatorship pulled out all the stops to bask in his glow. Pelé was no unconscious actor in this. When asked in 1972 about the autocracy, he responded, “There is no dictatorship in Brazil. Brazil is a liberal country, a land of happiness. We are a free people. Our leaders know what is best for [us], and govern [us] in a spirit of toleration and patriotism.” Keep in mind that when Pelé was saying this, 25-year-old Dilma Rousseff, now the country’s president, was being tortured in a military prison. One wonders if this has ever come up in conversation.

Pelé wanted to use this World Cup as his swan song on the international stage. He has released a book and is attempting to cash out while people are still paying at-



Food, not soccer. A wall cartoon sums up Brazil’s dilemma

ention. The fact that he feels compelled to actually speak out about the carnival of injustice FIFA and the Worker’s Party are creating with the 2014 World Cup only underscores just how deep the crisis remains throughout the country. When you spend billions to host a soccer tournament and people are putting up murals like this on the walls of the country, discontent will boil and steam. Now even Pelé is getting smoke in his eyes. **CT**

The calls for protest aim to highlight the pain as well as show the world who is behind the curtain, pulling the strings

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*Dave Zirin’s new book, “Brazil’s Dance with the Devil: The World Cup, the Olympics and the Fight for Democracy”, has just been published by Haymarket Books*

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# Last round in the battle against climate doom

It's delusion versus science in the battle for the survival of the planet, argues **Michael I. Niman**

**The father of the public relations industry, Edward Bernays, said in the 1920s that it's the job of a PR practitioner to create circumstances, in effect engineering perceptions of reality**

In this grand battle of the titans, Capitalism vs. the Environment, we're in the last round, with the Environment down for the count but still moving. At this 11th hour, scientists and bureaucrats are warning that it's a crap call whether or not civilization can live out the century. The scientific consensus is that, if we unite globally and take radical measures now, we can perhaps adapt to the climate change that has already happened and the changes that are already in motion and unstoppable while preventing the worst of what is barreling at us, thus saving human civilization. This is what passes as "hope." We've got to knock it off with consumerism, private automobiles, disposable disposables, and of course, the obscene excesses of the rich. Or we all die.

Of course there's another side to this story. While 97 percent of the scientific studies are in consensus that global warming is real and caused by humans (anthropogenic), there are another three percent, often creative fictions replete with pseudoscientific jargon, funded by the oil industry, written by misanthropes and consumed by sociopaths and hopeful morons.

In referring to most of the climate change denial "studies" as "scientific," I have surrendered to the doom lobby's bastardization of the language. "Science," for better or worse, refers to an empirical quest to solve questions using evidence and reason. I agree

with religious fundamentalists and other sorcerers that scientists are often too full of themselves and too certain of their unproven theories. But their quest for knowledge moves on, with earlier studies either proven or disproven by subsequent studies and, more importantly, lived experiences – what we call reality. The warnings about global warming that scientists issued in the 1950s and early 1960s were theories, albeit already backed up by evidence. The climate change that we've experienced since then is reality. The fact that 97 percent of scientific studies recognize this reality is what we call a "consensus." There is no denial here that rises to the definition of a "debate" or "controversy." We just have reality and delusion.

On the delusion side of the argument we don't have science – we have PR. The father of the public relations industry, Edward Bernays, said in the 1920s that it's the job of a PR practitioner to create circumstances, in effect engineering perceptions of reality. Sometimes the perception creates the reality. But that's not the case here. We're pigging out gluttonously at a picnic on the train tracks. We can't, however, ignore away the speed train about to decimate us. PR has its limits, and in the case of global warming, these limits will define the destiny of the planet. There's no escaping the consequences of our actions and inaction. But the oil titans still want us to party like it's 1955,

even if this means unleashing a destruction that their own children and grandchildren will not escape.

### **My magic Bloomberg decoder ring**

I often try to figure out capitalism by reading *Bloomberg Businessweek* while wearing my magic decoder ring. Global warming denial is what the doom lobbies serve up to their stooges – the useful idiots who watch Fox News. To be successful in business, however, means having to be in touch with reality. And for money in the know, climate doom presents a bonanza of opportunities both in destroying the world and in adapting to that destruction. A successful sociopath will make money both in extreme energy and resource extraction, and in rebuilding and adapting infrastructure and providing health services for places and people destroyed as a result of that extraction. Make your money coming and going, then at the last moment, when the tide is about to inundate Miami, get out and find your mountaintop survival bubble, stolen from its native inhabitants and sold to you by another successful adapter.

### **Getting rich**

Last time I perused *Bloomberg Businessweek* I came upon an ad for a new get-rich book entitled *Resource Revolution: How to Capture the Biggest Business Opportunity in a Century*. The “opportunity” here is what sane minds see as a death knell for the global environment: what the ad terms as the rise “of a new 2.5 billion-person middle class in Asia” that “will create an unprecedented demand for oil, steel, land, food, water, cement, and other commodities.” The book promises to teach wealthy enterprising sociopaths “how to turn a worldwide crisis into a game-changing opportunity.”

The authors revel in the triumph of the philosophy of Adam Smith over Thomas Robert Malthus, who warned that growing global population would lead to famine. Smith, by contrast, believed that produc-

tivity could increase faster than consumption, feeding and caring for the growing population, or, as it’s worked out two industrial revolutions later, at least its luckiest half. Resource Revolution, like eco-branded capitalism, wants to stay this course, continuing growth of all sorts which will magically be supported by a supposed leaner and greener consumerism. The idea is we can extend the cult of consumerism to 2.5 billion more adherents as we teeter on the verge of environmental catastrophe, as long as they all drive Teslas.

It’s called greenwashing, the art of eco-branding the consumer culture that’s killing us. Those who market us the instruments of our own destruction are well aware that most of us don’t watch Fox or read their sister publication, Rupert Murdoch’s *Wall Street Journal*. We’re actually worried about global warming. And we’re feeling a twinge of guilt over our participation in soiling our planet. For us, the doom industries produce 17-miles-per-gallon SUVs with Eco-Tec engines, so we can eco away our guilt as we eco up the planet.

Once consumers, as industry prefers to term us, admit to our global destruction problem, that problem can be rebranded as the solution to itself. Take the retail giant Target, for example. They are one of the country’s largest suppliers of the disposable plastic crap floating in our oceans, filling our landfills, and toxifying our garbage incinerators. Their environmental statement, however, argues that “from the way we build our stores to the products on our shelves, environmental sustainability is integrated throughout our business.” This sounds good, until you peruse their eco-products, like the Disney Cars Eco Potty Toppers, which are Disney themed disposable plastic toilet seat bibs for the germ-o-phobic.

Eco-branding is an industrial adaptation to the reality of global environmental destruction. With eco-branding we see not just the destruction of the planet, but language as well. One eco-branding agency, smartly

**The retail giant Target are one of the country’s largest suppliers of the disposable plastic crap floating in our oceans, filling our landfills, and toxifying our garbage incinerator**

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## CONSUMERISM KILLS

**There is no accommodation to be made with the beast that is killing us. Mr. Obama, these corporate climate criminals are not your friends**

named “Eco Branding,” explains their art: “Eco Branding provides public relations services designed to garner the attention of media, investors, partners and customers. We identify, create and leverage media opportunities to establish lasting brand credibility.” The path to “brand credibility” nirvana involves “thought leadership,” “product advocacy,” and “message positioning.” Ultimately, they explain, “Eco Branding facilitates custom marketing programs that utilize our cleantech expertise and expansive industry network.” Their clients seem groovy, ripped from the pages of Resource Revolution.

One of the highest profile current eco-branding campaigns is the rebranding of the “drill-baby-drill” Obama administration into some sort of Al Gore redux. Replacing the solar panels that Ronald Reagan removed from the White House in 1980, about 22 years after the scientific community first warned about global warming, was a good first step in the campaign to greenwash the White House and eco-brand the Obama administration, but that seems to be where their smarts derailed. Last month Obama announced the White House’s new focus on climate change. But he announced it at a press conference held in the aisle of the world’s largest retailer of disposable petroleum-based crap: Wal Mart. Perhaps the White House could have benefitted from some of Eco Branding’s “thought leadership.”

It gets worse. When you go to the White House website to read about their newfound eco-ego, under the heading of “Safe and Responsible Domestic Oil and Gas Production,” they boast, “Domestic oil and natural gas production has increased every year President Obama has been in office.” Specifically, they explain, “In 2012, domestic oil production climbed to the highest level in 15 years and natural gas production reached an all-time high.”

I’m sure it’s eco-green, red-white-and-blue, American-fracked oil and gas, but it’s not cool. Another botched roll-out.

### Who killed the hope meme?

The Obama plan to save the climate ignores the pleas of climate scientists to take drastic and immediate action. Instead the administration announced that it is partnering with 300 corporations, representing some of the worse climate criminals, to take a number of eco baby steps in what appears to be the largest cooperative eco co-branding initiative in the short history of eco-branding. This is the Resource Revolution. It’s also a throwback to early in the Obama administration when the White House’s strategy to save the economy was to bail out and partner with the financial crime syndicates that caused the economic collapse in the first place. This move seemed to kill off the hope meme and might have cost the Democrats a generation of newly energized voters.

The Obama administration certainly seems to understand the gravity of the environmental challenge we now face. The fact sheet they released last month reads like eco-doom porn. Their new climate initiative confronts this problem like someone trying to put out a raging wildfire with a squirt gun. If there is any chance of Democrats reinvigorating the lost-hope generation, we’ll need to see some real action, really fast, starting with a resounding “no” to the Keystone XL pipeline and the continuation of oil and coal subsidies. And this voice will have to continue getting louder and clearer for the next two years. There is no accommodation to be made with the beast that is killing us. Mr. Obama, these corporate climate criminals are not your friends. They will screw you, and all of us, the first chance they get. And time is too short to allow ourselves to be screwed. **CT**

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*Michael I. Niman is a professor of journalism and media studies at SUNY Buffalo State. His previous columns are at [artvoice.com](http://artvoice.com), archived at [www.mediastudy.com](http://www.mediastudy.com), and available globally through syndication.*

# Working class mini revolts of the 21st Century

**Jeremy Brecher** highlights some hard news stories that we never read

**F**orty years ago I published a study of peak periods of American labor conflict – what I dubbed periods of “mass strike” – called “Strike!” As I have updated the book for the fortieth anniversary edition, I have had the opportunity to review the strikes and labor struggles of the last 15 years in the context of 140 years of American labor history.

The start of the twenty-first century has seen a continuing decline in union membership and strikes. But it has also seen the emergence of unpredicted mini-revolts. Activists in the Battle of Seattle took over downtown Seattle, put an end to the millennium round of the World Trade Organization, and redefined the question of globalization for millions of Americans.

The 2006 immigrant-rights demonstrations, the largest ever in the world with nearly five million participants, brought millions of undocumented immigrants “out of the shadows” and made immigrant rights a pivot of American politics.

“When those in power perpetuate unsustainability, the world can only be put on a sustainable basis when people take control of their own activity and support each other to resist the authority of those in power.”

In the Wisconsin Uprising, the hundreds of thousands of participants occupied the state capital for a week, closed Madison schools, and rang the tocsin for struggles nationwide

against austerity and for labor rights.

Occupy Wall Street and the occupations and revolts it inspired in 600 US cities brought hundreds of thousands of Americans into nonviolent direct action, stimulated simultaneous demonstrations in more than a thousand cities in 82 countries, and put the inequality of wealth and power front and center in American political consciousness.

The struggle over public education in Chicago showed the power of a unified movement of workers and allies, made a nationwide issue of the corporate attack on the public sector, and showed a way to fight back.

Recent strikes of retail, fast food, and other low-wage workers represented the first tentative self-expression of a huge new sector of unorganized, low-paid, contingent workers and the projection of the growing social struggle over inequality into the workplace.

The scope and impact of these mini-revolts were rarely anticipated either by participants or by observers. They emerged from the previously unrecognized thoughts and feelings of millions of people. All were colored not just by immediate grievances but by concern about the future well-being and prospects for working people in general.

Each of the mini-revolts grew beyond expectation because of the interaction and mutual inspiration of different groups of

**The struggle over public education in Chicago showed the power of a unified movement of workers and allies, made a nationwide issue of the corporate attack on the public sector, and showed a way to fight back**

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## STRIKING BACK

**The Battle of Seattle protestors blocked downtown and halted the WTO. The 2006 immigrant rights demonstrations occupied public space with masses of people, many of whom were not even supposed to be in the country. The Occupy movement took over parks and other public spaces and refused to leave**

participants. The realization that very different people had parallel thoughts and feelings and were prepared to act on them collectively led to the rapid escalation of revolt.

Each of these mini-revolts, whether or not successful in realizing immediate objectives, succeeded in transforming the understanding of the world and of the possibilities for action for millions of people. The Battle of Seattle transformed the understanding of globalization.

The immigrant rights demonstrations brought millions of people out of the shadows into visibility. The Wisconsin Uprising revealed the mass opposition to dismantling worker rights and the public sector. Occupy Wall Street with its slogan “We are the 99%” put the inequality of wealth and power at the center of the American political conversation and crystallized a new class identity. The Chicago public education movement connected the dots between the needs of teachers as workers, the interests of parents and communities as consumers, and the role of government and business as shapers of social life. All made visible the pervasiveness of discontent and the possibility of collective action.

### **Beyond one-sided class war**

The Battle of Seattle and the 2006 immigrant rights protests were relatively isolated events. But starting with the Wisconsin Uprising of 2011, the cascading manifestations of revolt began to manifest, on a smaller scale, the tendency to “run together and run alongside each other, get in each other’s way, overlap with each other” that Rosa Luxemburg found characteristic of the mass strike. They represent the transcendence of the one-sided class war of the past forty years.

These mini-revolts have involved many forms of action but only occasionally strikes, and even where strikes have occurred they are usually less the withdrawal of labor power from individual employers than a form of social protest. In the era of globalization and neoliberalism, strikes by particular groups of workers have turned out to be less and less

successful at wresting gains from immediate employers. Instead, strikes have increasingly ended with contract concessions at best, if not the shutting down of workplaces or the hiring of permanent replacement workers. When employers can shut down their workplaces and produce elsewhere around the world, or receive government sanction for laying off an entire workforce, the power of the strike is greatly diminished.

The problems facing working people individually and collectively are also less amenable to solution by the action of individual employers. Even the best union contract can do little to rectify global recession, growing inequality, economic insecurity, the global race to the bottom, degradation of democracy, debt, war, ecological devastation, and deteriorating life prospects.

Meanwhile, the problems facing working people and society have only increased. Either people must acquiesce in those problems or develop new forms of action to contest them.

The mini-revolts of the early twenty-first century represent a series of experiments in developing such new forms. Those forms sometimes include strikes as an aspect of larger movements, but they are likely to be one element of a wider withdrawal of acquiescence and consent manifested in various forms of direct action and disobedience to authority.

Notwithstanding these differences, the mini-revolts of the early twenty-first century shared central characteristics with the periods of mass strike whose stories I recounted in “Strike!”

These mini-revolts, like past mass strikes, involved challenge to authority. People went places and did things that those in authority did not want them to do. The Battle of Seattle protestors blocked downtown and halted the WTO. The 2006 immigrant rights demonstrations occupied public space with masses of people, many of whom were not even supposed to be in the country. The Occupy movement took over parks and other



public spaces and refused to leave. Low-wage strikers, conversely, left the hot kitchens, stockrooms, and checkout counters where they were supposed to be to demonstrate and picket. These actions also challenged what those in power wanted to impose as the policies of the government and the thoughts of the people.

These mini-revolts also demonstrated the spreading solidarity that has been such a characteristic of past mass strikes. The immigrant rights demonstrations drew in unions, churches, students, legal immigrants, and the entire Latino community, as well as the legally undocumented immigrants themselves. In Wisconsin, public employees were supported by private sector workers, farmers, students, and a wide swath of the public. Occupy Wall Street initiated solidarity demonstrations on a global scale.

Finally, these mini-revolts have manifested self-organization and self-management on the part of their participants. These events did not happen because somebody gave orders for them to happen; they happened because people developed ways to collectively control their own activity. Seattle had its affinity groups; Occupy its General Assemblies. The anti-WTO protests, the Wisconsin Uprising, and Occupy Wall Street all improvised ways to provide food, shelter, medical care, sanitation, and other necessities.

### **Working-class revolts and a sustainable future**

The future tendency of these mini-revolts is difficult to predict. But the conditions that gave rise to them seem unlikely to go away. So some kind of popular response to those conditions is likely to continue. Such response could lead primarily to chronic internecine conflict and demoralization. It could lead to something like the Tea Party, a pressure group within the political party system. It could conceivably lead to some kind of insurrectionary climax—a “Tahrir moment” - followed perhaps by repression

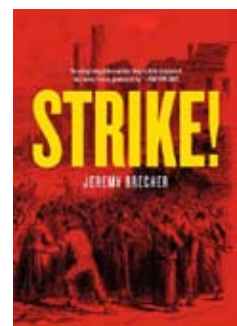
and authoritarian rule.

Alternatively, these mini-revolts might develop into low-level but ongoing nonviolent insurgencies. Movements like the fight for public education in Chicago might establish growing power within institutions like schools, communities, and eventually workplaces. These insurgencies might win victories that would improve people’s lives long before they were able to challenge more central institutions of power. They might make successful appeals for the minds and hearts of the 99%. Like Occupy Wall Street, these insurgencies might link up horizontally around the country and around the world. Eventually they might undermine some of the pillars of support for inequality and domination.

Working people, along with the rest of humanity, are faced with a future that is unsustainable economically, socially, and environmentally. It will take more than a revolt to put that future on a sustainable basis. Ultimately it will take a transformation of human civilization. But when those in power perpetuate unsustainability, the world can only be put on a sustainable basis when people take control of their own activity and support each other to resist the authority of those in power. Whatever may happen in the future, the heritage of worker self-organization will therefore continue to be a resource that we can draw on to construct collective responses to the problems we face. **CT**

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*Jeremy Brecher is a historian whose new book “Save the Humans? Common Preservation in Action”, published by Paradigm Publishers, addresses how social movements make social change. His previous books include “Strike!, Globalization from Below”, and, co-edited with Brendan Smith and Jill Cutler, “In the Name of Democracy: American War Crimes in Iraq and Beyond” (Metropolitan/Holt). He has received five regional Emmy Awards for his documentary film work. He currently works with the Labor Network for Sustainability*

**Working people, along with the rest of humanity, are faced with a future that is unsustainable economically, socially, and environmentally. It will take more than a revolt to put that future on a sustainable basis**



● The revised, expanded, and updated edition of “Strike!” is published this month in paperback, \$19.05

# The re-return of Karl Marx

**Alan Maas** explains how Karl Marx is proving to be as relevant as ever in explaining the chaos of capitalism – and the chasm between rich and poor

**Barring anything to hinder it, such as wars, economic depressions or a systematic political program of higher taxation, wealth under capitalism inevitably tends to become more concentrated in the hands of fewer people**

Once again,, Karl Marx and his critique of the capitalist system is haunting the ponderings of even the dustiest media outlets – with newspaper editors and economic commentators asking, and being asked, the question: Was Karl Marx right after all?

As on previous occasions when the question surfaced in the media, the answer from the system's defenders and even its moderate critics is: A little bit, maybe, but not really. Marx is grudgingly credited with recognizing some flaws in the functioning of the free market – before ultimately being dismissed as a failure because he “predicted” that capitalism would “inevitably” collapse, and look, it's still going, so he must have been mostly wrong.

And yet the nagging question keeps re-running.

The causes of the current re-return of Karl Marx are both general and specific.

The general cause: Just look around. Median annual household income in the US (adjusted for inflation) has started to rebound, but is still more than 6 percent below where it stood when the Great Recession began at the end of 2007. The unemployment rate is falling, but the US economy is millions of jobs away from making up for the losses of the recession, not to mention the jobs needed to keep up with the growth in the working-age population.

But for those at the top, things are going rather well. Since the recession hit its low point in 2008, the richest 1 percent of US households have captured 95 percent of the overall economic growth of the US economy. Go back 30 years, and it turns out the proverbial 1 Percent has doubled its share of the national income – while real wages stagnated or dropped for those on the bottom half of the income ladder.

Sure looks a lot like, as Marx put it, “capital [growing] in one place to a huge mass in a single hand, because it has in another place been lost by many.”

As for the specific cause of the current interest in Marx, it's an unlikely best-selling book called “Capital in the 21st Century” by French economist Thomas Piketty.

Its 600 pages – plus 165 more of technical data available online – analyze two centuries of economic history to reach the inescapable conclusion: Barring anything to hinder it, such as wars, economic depressions or a systematic political program of higher taxation, wealth under capitalism inevitably tends to become more concentrated in the hands of fewer people.

Piketty is far from radical, especially in his political conclusions, but that hasn't stopped conservatives from denouncing his book as “the new rallying cry of the redistributionists,” according to the Heritage Foundation's Stephen Moore. “If US politicians

are dumb enough to take Piketty's advice," Moore concludes gloomily, "a depression is just where the US economy is headed.

For free-market ideologues like Moore, there are two basic lines of attack when confronted with Piketty's undeniable evidence, as *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman points out.

The first is to dispute the statistics – or, more accurately, distort them.

One laughable example of this tactic appeared in the *Times*' online debate on "Was Marx Right?" among economics writers. There, Michael Strain of the American Enterprise Institute revealed that inequality isn't getting worse, it's getting better! "In 1970," Strain wrote, "26.8 percent of the world's population lived on less than \$1 per day. In 2006, only 5.4 percent did – an 80 percent drop in this extreme poverty measure in less than four decades."

Presto! Problem solved.

Only not so much. First, Strain was citing statistics from one extremely rosy study championed by – surprise, surprise – the American Enterprise Institute. The more sober World Bank put the percentage of people living in extreme poverty – at the threshold of \$1.25 a day – at 22 percent in 2010.

That percentage has declined in the last two decades – by almost half, though not 80 percent – mostly as a result of economic development in China, the world's most populous country. But if you go to the next threshold, more than 40 percent of the world's population lived on \$2 a day in 2010. That's 2.4 billion people – and that number has barely decreased in more than three decades, according to the World Bank.

Look at the world's accumulated wealth, rather than income, and the level of inequality is difficult to wrap your mind around. According to an Oxfam report issued earlier this year, the richest 85 people on the planet possess more wealth than the poorest half of the world's population combined.

Statistics like these aren't going to work

for the champions of capitalism, no matter how they're packaged. So there's argument number two: Inequality may be distasteful, but it works – without the rich, the poor would be even worse off.

"Piketty takes the evilness of inequality as a given," complains Michael Tanner of the Cato Institute, "ignoring the broader question of whether the same conditions that lead to growing wealth at the top of the pyramid also improve material well-being for those at the bottom. In other words, does it matter if some people become super-rich as long as we reduce poverty along the way?"

But here, too, the real world has produced an abundance of evidence that "growing wealth at the top" has not improved "material well-being for those at the bottom." To take just one example: In the US, corporate profits account for a larger share of national income than at any time in the last 60 years, while compensation for employees claims a smaller share than at any point in nearly as long.

It's pretty clear that more of one is the result of less of another.

### **Neo-religious faith**

Believing in capitalism requires a kind of religious faith, exemplified by Tanner, that the best and brightest and hardest-working are rewarded by the free market.

Among many other points, Piketty's book shreds that myth, too. The most obvious counter-example is to look at the source of wealth for the world's richest people. Piketty estimates that half of or more these fortunes are the product of inheritance – people whose millions and billions were assured from the moment they were born.

Like Jim Walton, who was lucky enough to be the son of Sam Walton, founder of Walmart. Jim Walton has never had to do a day of work in his life, yet he's worth more money right now than 1 million people making the federal minimum wage – and doing very hard work – will earn in a year.

**Piketty estimates that half of or more these fortunes are the product of inheritance – people whose millions and billions were assured from the moment they were born**

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## HISTORY'S LESSON

**Bill Gates and the class of people who rule in a capitalist society are wealthy and powerful not because of their work, but because they own**

In fact, those who have the most wealth under capitalism are typically the least deserving, based on anything they've done in their lives. That's obviously true of multi-billion-dollar heirs like Walton – and, just as obviously, of the parasites of Wall Street who accumulate vast sums of money not by doing anything productive or positive for society, but quite the opposite.

Consider Stephen Schwarzman, head of the Blackstone Group, a Wall Street investment firm, and number 54 on the Forbes 400 list of richest Americans. Blackstone is one of world's largest private equity firms – which means it specializes in mega-transactions to buy control of companies; restructure their operations, usually by slashing jobs and closing facilities; and then resell what's left, as a whole or in parts.

Blackstone's business model – which makes the firm extraordinary, obscene amounts of money – isn't to invest in new production or create jobs or develop innovative products. On the contrary, Schwarzman and Co. are traveling parasites, taking over existing companies, sucking the money out and getting rid of them as quickly as possible – regardless of how much economic wreckage they leave in their wake.

It's impossible to see how Schwarzman's multibillion-dollar fortune has anything to do with improving the “material well-being” of anyone except himself and his fellow parasites. From the point of view of anyone who wants to make the world a better place, this is money that has been stolen – wealth that ought to belong to the people who created it, which has been robbed for the “well-being” of the 1 Percent.

### **Owners, not workers**

Though it isn't as obvious, organized theft is a way of life for the tycoons who own companies that actually produce something. For example, Microsoft's Bill Gates, who this year regained the title of world's richest man, wasn't born with his first billion dollars socked away in a trust fund – he ac-

tually started the company that made him super-rich.

But what did he actually do to amass that fortune? In fact, his company gained control of a particular kind of computer software – developed by other people, not by him or the other heads of Microsoft – and successfully marketed it at the dawn of the era of personal computers. In other words, Bill Gates got lucky, too – just in a different way than Jim Walton.

Bill Gates and the class of people who rule in a capitalist society are wealthy and powerful not because of their work, but because they own.

They control what Karl Marx called the “means of production”: the factories and offices, the land, the machinery, means of transportation. These owners don't make anything themselves. They hire much larger numbers of people to do the actual work of producing or providing different goods or services. Without this labor of the many, the vast wealth of the few – including the enormous sums gambled back and forth between speculators on Wall Street – wouldn't exist.

For this labor, workers are supposed to get a “fair day's wage for a fair day's work.” But it isn't fair at all. Even workers who are paid relatively well don't get the full value of what they produce. What employers pay workers has nothing to do with how much those workers contribute to overall revenues – wages and benefits (when there are benefits) are only so high as they need to be to entice a qualified person to take the job and keep it, under the threat that they could be replaced by someone who will work for less.

Meanwhile, the owners get to keep what's left over after paying wages and other costs of production. Supposedly, this is their just reward for the “risk” of making an investment. But there's no inherent connection between reward and risk – which often isn't much of a risk at all; the capitalists prefer to bet on sure things – nor any necessary limit

on how big that reward can be.

No limit but for one thing – the class struggle.

Workers can organize collectively to demand their fair share – or something closer to their fair share. Sometimes, that fight comes over wages and working conditions at particular companies and industries; sometimes, it comes on a wider social level, over, for example, government funding, through taxation, of programs that benefit the working class.

Thus, for Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the driving force in any society – the chief factor in how that society is ordered and governed – is the class struggle between oppressor and oppressed.

And it's at this point – if not well before – where we Marxists have parted company with the liberals who are championing Thomas Piketty today.

On the same day that Paul Krugman wrote his *Times* column mentioned above that claimed vindication against his right-wing critics, he shared the op-ed page with journalist Timothy Egan, whose article “How to Kill the Minimum Wage Movement” warned about the dire implications of the Fight for 15 struggle in Seattle.

Of course, Egan agreed, “bottom-wage workers are long overdue for a raise.” But this must be done “gradually over many years,” he lectured – not with the passage of a referendum for a \$15 an hour minimum wage that would “force a 61 percent wage

increase...on everyone next year but a select group of small businesses and nonprofits.”

Well, we've heard that before, haven't we? Not just the alarmist freak-out about a 61 percent wage increases for “everyone” in Seattle, plagiarized from Chamber of Commerce propaganda. But the age-old scolding about the need to “wait” – which Martin Luther King taught us “has almost always meant ‘Never.’”

Thomas Piketty's book is valuable in exposing the myth that the free-market system produces prosperity and a better life for everyone. It's a meticulous researched vindication of Marx's 150-year-old critique of capitalism.

But the rest of Marxism is just as important. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were not just theorists, but agitators – interested in not only interpreting the world, but changing it. Their Communist Manifesto ended with a call to action for the workers of the world to unite – to, in the words of another great revolutionary, the poet Percy Shelley:

*Rise like lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number,  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you –  
Ye are many, they are few* **CT**

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

**For Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the driving force in any society – the chief factor in how that society is ordered and governed – is the class struggle between oppressor and oppressed**

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# Obama and humanity

Felicity Arbuthnot on the President's latest award

**Moments after being informed of the horrific death of Libyan Leader Colonel Muammar Quaddafi in October 2011, then Secretary of state Hillary Clinton chillingly laughed telling a television crew: "We came, we saw, he died"**

*"It is forbidden to kill; therefore all murderers are punished unless they kill in large numbers and to the sound of trumpets."*  
(Voltaire, 1694-1778.)

It is impossible not to gain the impression that the criteria for being awarded prestigious honors for services to "peace", "humanity" or "distinguished public service" is a candidate who is duplicitous, vicious, stone hearted and above all prepared to kill, plan killings or rejoice in killing on an industrial scale as brutally as can be devised.

Moments after being informed of the horrific death of Libyan Leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi in October 2011, then Secretary of state Hillary Clinton said "Wow!" then unforgettably and chillingly laughed telling a television crew: "We came, we saw, he died." Asked if her recent visit to Libya might have had anything to do with his death, she: "... rolled her eyes" and said: "I'm sure it did."

Six months later, in April 2012, Clinton received the Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service. The following month she received the Champions for Change Award for Leadership and in May 2013, the inaugural Warren Christopher Public Service Award.

Madeleine Albright's comment, when US Ambassador to the UN, on "60 Minutes" (12th May 1996) that the price of the lives

of half a million children who had died as a result of US-driven UN sanctions on Iraq, was: "a hard choice, but the price, we think the price is worth it", was no bar to her receiving, under two years later, the 1998 International Rescue Committee's Freedom Award:

"For extraordinary contributions to the cause of ... human freedom ... The list of those who have received the Freedom Award reveals the remarkable ability of an individual to shape history and change for the better a world moving toward freedom for all."

The "freedom of the grave" comes to mind.

Other recipients have been John McCain (2001) George H.W. Bush whose regime vowed to "reduce Iraq to a pre-industrial age" – and did, in 1991 – and Bill Clinton whose Presidency (1993-2001) in addition to several massive bombings and unending daily ones (all illegal) oversaw, manipulated and pressured the UN to continue to implement the most draconian embargo in the organization's history and ensure that children, the sick, went on dying in ever greater numbers every year of his Presidency. They were both honored in 2005.

In 2008 the Award went to Kofi Annan, during whose tenure as UN Secretary General (1997 – 2006) involved Iraq's tragedy

and “thirty four major armed conflicts.”

Annan was entrusted with oversight of international commitment to the UN’s fine founding pledge, “We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person ...” In the event he merely bleated mildly from time to time that some humanitarian holocaust was: “regrettable”, “unfortunate” or that he was “concerned.”

Moreover, Kofi Annan’s son, Kojo, had profited from the pitiful UN-Iraq “Oil for Food” deal as children were dying, with former US Federal Reserve Chairman, Paul Volcker saying, on behalf of a committee set up to investigate: “Our assignment has been to look for mis- or maladministration in the oil-for-food programme, and for evidence of corruption within the UN organization and by contractors. Unhappily, we found both.”

### **Political pigs’ ears**

These are minimal examples of how political pigs ears become polished silk purses. Now President Obama who, as Sherwood Ross has written: “has already bombed six countries (Libya, Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq) is risking a possible escalation of the Ukraine crisis he nurtured, into World War III against Russia”, was, on May 7, awarded the 2014 Ambassador for Humanity Award by the Shoah Foundation.

The Shoah Foundation was established by Steven Spielberg to document the Holocaust, but has since expanded to document other modern genocides. Their new ambassador’s actions should keep them occupied for a good while.

“President Obama’s commitment to democracy and human rights has long been felt”, Spielberg said in a statement. “As a constitutional scholar and as President, his interest in expanding justice and opportunity and all is remarkably evident.”

The timing of the award may outdo even

the other more farcical honors, since, as Ross points out, according to Russian expert, Professor Francis Boyle of the University of Illinois: “Obama now has broken the promise President George H.W. Bush gave to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev that if he agreed to the reunification of Germany, NATO would move no farther east, toward Russia’s boundaries. The Obama administration and NATO are maneuvering humanity into a reverse Cuban Missile Crisis right on the borders of Russia. Can World War III be far behind?”

NATO is planning larger number of combat forces in Eastern Europe, thus: “the dreaded Cold War, with all its staggering cost, with all its immeasurable weight of fear, begins again.”

But even the first year of the Obama Presidency marked a year zero for many. In 2009 at least seven hundred Pakistani civilians were obliterated in drone strikes. Those also killed, accused of terrorism, had no trial, no lawyer, no right of reply. They were simply executed under the US Commander in Chief’s personal policy.

According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism in January this year: “Since Obama’s inauguration in 2009, the CIA has launched 330 strikes on Pakistan – his predecessor, President George Bush, conducted 51 strikes in four years. And in Yemen, Obama has opened a new front in the secret drone war.

“Across Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, the Obama administration has launched more than 390 drone strikes (since 23rd January 2009) eight times as many as were launched in the entire Bush presidency. These strikes have killed more than 2,400 people ...”

In Yemen, under US drones: “Last year saw the highest civilian casualty rate since Obama first hit the country in 2009.”

It is not just drones. For example, look what happened a week to the day after Barack Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize: “On December 17 2009, a US Navy

**“The Obama administration and NATO are maneuvering humanity into a reverse Cuban Missile Crisis right on the borders of Russia. Can World War III be far behind?”**

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## WAR IS PEACE

**In his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech Obama defended the use of force as: “not only necessary, but morally justified”**

submarine launched a cluster bomb-laden cruise missile at a suspected militant camp in al Majala, southern Yemen.

“The missile hit a hamlet inhabited by one of the poorest tribes in Yemen. Shrapnel and fire left at least forty one civilians dead, including at least twenty one children and twelve women – five of whom were pregnant.”

In his Nobel acceptance speech, Obama defended the use of force as “not only necessary, but morally justified.” A constitutional lawyer who has, figuratively, burned his law books.

### **Weapons to terrorists**

But the President started as he continues. Three days after becoming Ambassador for Humanity, the US announced a “pilot programme” which is sending anti-tank weapons to terrorists in Syria. Lest it be forgotten, these groups have been videoing themselves crucifying, beheading, removing and eating the organs of victims, chopping off hands and dragging people behind moving vehicles. Under the Commander in Chief, aka Ambassador for Humanity, the “pilot project” is an experiment trying to establish whether the weapons will “fall into the wrong hands.” Nauseatingly farcical.

Gulag Guantanamo is still open with the untried, condemned to incarceration until time unknown and legally unaccounted for, another pre 2009 election pledge condemned to the trash bin of history..

Iraq’s citizens continue to be bombed with US missiles, under the US proxy Prime Minister.

At home, under this Presidency, the US has the highest first day of life infant mortality rate in the industrialized world, a survey released this week has found.

The US is in the top five countries with the world’s highest execution rates.

In 2011 Pew Research found that: “the median black household had about seven per cent of the wealth of its white counterpart, down from nine per cent in 1984, when a Census survey first began tracking this sort of data.”

“Change we can believe in?”

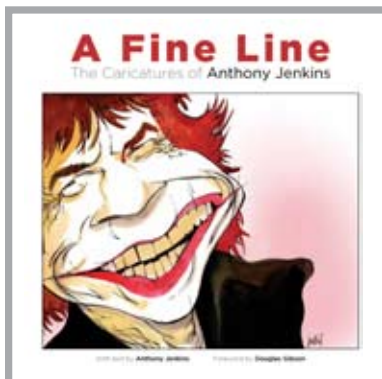
It has to be wondered whether President Obama pondered on this as he headed to California and his Award ceremony in Air Force One, costing \$228,288 per hour.

The prison population of America, at 2.4 million (2013 figures) is just the top of the iceberg, including: “around three thousand children locked up for things that aren’t crimes for adults, ‘such as running away, truancy and incorrigibility.’” See woeful details

Perhaps the Nobel Committee could lead the way in ending these outrageous Awards by rescinding a few of their own. It would be a start

**CT**

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*Felicity Arbuthnot is a London-based freelance writer*



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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# Rwanda's forgotten victims

**Andy Piascik** reflects on the aftermath of the genocide that killed hundreds of thousands of people in Africa

A solemn ceremony was held in Rwanda last month to mark the 20th anniversary of the mass killings in that country in 1994. Corporate media from the United States and the rest of the world covered the event in depth, underscoring the horrible deaths of hundreds of thousands killed by the state and Hutu civilians. Dignitaries and politicians from around the world, including several from the United States, attended a commemorative event that included an emotional reenactment of the bloodletting.

Entirely uncommented on was the sickening spectacle of Rwandan dictator Paul Kagame overseeing the event. Kagame, a long-time servant of US business interests and a mass killer in his own right, set in motion fighting that culminated in the terrible events of 1994 by invading Rwanda from neighboring Uganda in 1990. A Tutsi, Kagame was one of the elite class that went into exile rather than live under a government of the majority Hutus. Information published by a wide spectrum of researchers, most notably from the United Nations, has determined that Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Front killed tens of thousands of people from 1990-94 and several hundred thousand more during the period that has become known as the Rwandan Genocide. Because Kagame is supported by the United

States, however, those crimes have been buried with the dead and no public ceremony has been held in the last 24 years to honor those killed by the RPF.

Kagame's goal from the outset of his 1990 invasion was the overthrow of the government of Rwanda, and he continually violated ceasefire agreements to that end. In fact, it was the shooting down in April 1994 of a plane on which Rwandan dictator Juvenal Habyarimana was a passenger, with a preponderance of the evidence pointing to the RPF as the responsible party, that set in motion the 100 days of mass killings. Habyarimana was killed, as was fellow passenger Cyprien Ntaryamira, the president of Burundi, and ten others.

## **Not preventing the killings**

Much has been made since of the Clinton administration and the international community's failure to act. In reality, the US was proactive in preventing the UN and anyone else from taking measures that might have prevented much of the killing. Former United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros Gali, for one, has put the entire blame for what happened in Rwanda in the 1990's on the United States. And even though Kagame continues to claim, as he did in 1994, that his Tutsi ethnic group was targeted in a pre-planned act of the Rwan-

**Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Front killed tens of thousands of people from 1990-94 and several hundred thousand more during the period that has become known as the Rwandan Genocide**

**Kagame twice invaded the Congo not long after taking over Rwanda, launching what Edward Herman has described as his second act of genocide**

dan government, he also successfully opposed international efforts that might have curtailed the bloodshed. Further puncturing Kagame's claims is the fact that Rwanda and France, its primary international ally, supported international action to stop the killing. We can only surmise that the mass killing of Kagame's fellow Tutsis was acceptable to him and the US so long as the end result was his complete victory in the fighting and ascension to power. In addition, it's been well-documented that many of the Tutsis killed were killed not by Hutus or the Rwandan government but by Kagame's forces because Kagame considered fellow Tutsis who had remained in Rwanda as untrustworthy or collaborators.

Researchers Christian Davenport and Allan Stam are among those who have investigated the events of 1994. Under the auspices of USAID's International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Davenport and Stam, like many investigators from the West, began their project assuming that the Rwandan government and rampaging Hutu civilians were responsible for virtually all of the killing. As their investigation progressed, however, they discovered more and more evidence indicating the RPF was also responsible for a great deal of killing. When, during their investigation, they presented some of that evidence to a meeting that included high-ranking members of Kagame's government and military, some in the audience became enraged and one military man cut off their presentation and ordered Davenport and Stam removed by force. Kagame subsequently barred them from ever returning to Rwanda.

More instructive for how the US was determined to spin the story of exclusive Hutu responsibility and Kagame as the savior of the day was USAID's termination of Davenport and Stam's research project and refusal to publish or in any way make known their findings. UN investigations that produced similar results were likewise suppressed by the United States. As with the wars that

ravaged Yugoslavia in the 1990's and their aftermath, to cite just one concurrent example, the West and the US in particular were determined that no findings that reflected the responsibility of anyone but the designated bad guys would see the light of day. In both instances, mass killings and other crimes committed by US clients Kagame, Franjo Tudjman of Croatia, Alija Izetbegovic and Atif Dudakovic of Bosnia, the Kosovo Liberation Army and the United States itself were whitewashed. Crucial to the Rwandan story is the lie that April 1994 marks the beginning of the terrible events, as if Kagame's 1990 invasion and the intervening deaths of many thousands never happened.

For its part, the US was looking to supplant France, its chief imperial rival in Central Africa, and increase corporate investment in the area, especially in the bordering Congo, one of the world's most resource-rich nations. To that end, Kagame twice invaded the Congo not long after taking over Rwanda, launching what Edward Herman has described as his second act of genocide. As with the invasion of Rwanda, the invasions of the Congo came with crucial US military training, armaments and diplomatic support.

### **Plundering the Congo**

Western plunder of the Congo dates to the 19th century and the murderous rule of Belgian King Leopold II, whose insatiable lust for wealth was responsible for the deaths of up to 15 million Congolese. Revolutionary forces finally achieved independence in 1960 but it took Congolese reactionaries and their Belgian and CIA helpers all of three months to overthrow and eventually murder Patrice Lumumba, the nation's first elected Prime Minister.

When US puppet Mobutu Sese Soko was put in power, all semblance of independence vanished as Western investors once again took control, and they made Mobutu a multibillionaire for his efforts on their behalf. By the time Kagame invaded the Con-

go the first time, Mobutu had fallen out of favor. His dictatorial ways had become an international embarrassment, plus the US didn't like that he was keeping too much of the swag for himself. In addition, they had Kagame who, in his eagerness to be the US's new client, was as pliant as Mobutu had ever been.

US support of Kagame's invasions of the Congo has proven a remarkable success, as his wars of terror paved the way to a massive increase in American investments (and profits) in copper, cobalt, coltan and diamonds. During that time, the number of Congolese who have been killed in the fighting or died because of starvation, disease and other causes traced directly to Kagame's invasions is perhaps ten times as many as died during the Rwandan Genocide, and the dying goes on and on right up to this moment.

Yet Kagame has been hailed again and again by Bill Clinton, Madeline Albright, George Bush II, Samantha Power, Susan Rice and other flacks for US imperialism as a hero and "the man who ended the Rwandan Genocide."

The ruling class and their media stenographers have brought us through the looking class big-time: war is peace, lies are truth, and genocidists are liberators. They cannot entirely erase the truth, however, and information about what really happened in Rwanda as documented by Davenport, Stam and many others has become available. Kagame, meanwhile, is hard at work sending hit squads around the world to assassinate exiled opponents of his regime, his job of laying the groundwork for increased US corporate plunder done, and done very well. That is why he was allowed to oversee last month's ceremony and why virtually nothing was said in the mainstream about those who died by his hand to make Central Africa safe for US imperialism. It will be up to those who live in a future world free of Empire to honor them in the manner they deserve. **CT**

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*Andy Piascik is a long-time activist and award-winning author who writes for Z Magazine, The Independent, Counterpunch and many other publications and websites.*

**Kagame is hard at work sending hit squads around the world to assassinate exiled opponents of his regime**

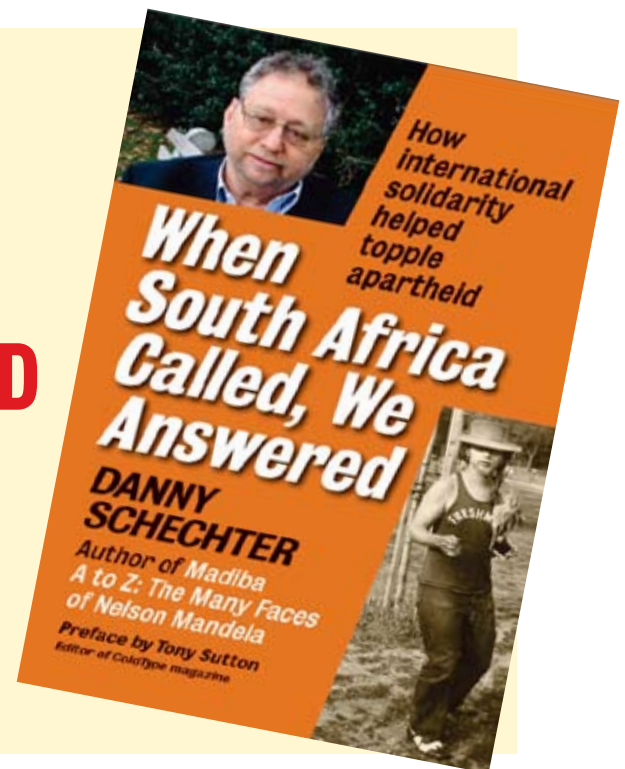
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# The art of satyagraha

David Swanson reviews the new book by Michael N. Nagler

**Nagler's first piece of advice is to avoid the airwaves, turn off the television, opt out of the relentless normalization of violence**

Michael Nagler has just published “The Nonviolence Handbook: A Guide for Practical Action”, a quick book to read and a long one to digest, a book that’s rich in a way that people of a very different inclination bizarrely imagine Sun Tzu’s to be. That is, rather than a collection of misguided platitudes, this book proposes what still remains a radically different way of thinking, a habit of living that is not in our air. In fact, Nagler’s first piece of advice is to avoid the airwaves, turn off the television, opt out of the relentless normalization of violence.

We don’t need the art of war applied to a peace movement. We need the art of satyagraha applied to the movement for a peaceful, just, free, and sustainable world. This means we have to stop trying to defeat the Military Industrial Complex (how’s that been working out?) and start working to replace it and to convert the people who make up its parts to new behaviors that are better for them as well as for us.

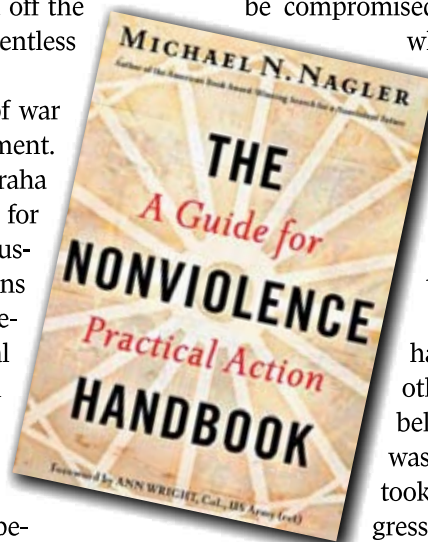
It can seem out of place to shift from a discussion of the world’s largest military to personal interactions. Surely giving John Kerry a

complete personality transplant would leave in place corrupt elections, war profiteering, complicit media outlets, and the assumption held by legions of career bureaucrats that war is the way to peace.

No doubt, but only by learning to think and live nonviolence can we build an activist movement with the greatest potential to transform our structures of government. Nagler’s examples highlight the importance of knowing what is negotiable, what should be compromised, and what must not be;

what is substantive and what symbolic; when a movement is ready to escalate its nonviolence and when it is too soon or too late; and when (always?) not to tack on new demands in the middle of a campaign.

TiananmenSquare should have been abandoned and other tactics pursued, Nagler believes. Holding the square was symbolic. When protesters took over the Ecuadorean Congress in 2000 one of their leaders was elected president. Why? Nagler points out that the Congress was a place of power, not just a symbol; the activists were strong enough to take power, not just ask for it; and the occupation was



**THE NON-VIOLENCE HANDBOOK**

Michael N. Nagler  
Berrett-Koehler Publishers  
\$12

part of a larger campaign that preceded and followed it.

Nagler has a lot of praise and hope for the Occupy movement, but also draws examples of failure from there. When a group of churches in one city offered to join with Occupy if everyone would stop cursing, Occupiers refused. Dumb decision. Not only is the point not to get to do every little thing we want, but we are not engaging in a struggle for power – rather, in a learning process and a process of building relationships, even with those we are organizing to challenge – and certainly with those who want to help us if we'll refrain from cursing. It can even be helpful, Nagler documents, to be accommodating to those we are challenging, when such steps are taken in friendship rather than subservience.

We are after the welfare of all parties, Nagler writes. Even those we want removed from office? Even those we want prosecuted for crimes? Is there restorative justice that can make an official who has launched a war see his or her removal from office and sanctioning as advantageous? Maybe. Maybe not. But seeking to remove people from office in order to uphold the rule of law and end injustices is very different from acting out of vengeance.

### **Seeking victories**

We should not seek out victories over others, Nagler advises. But doesn't the organizing of activists require informing the deeply victory-dependent of every partial success achieved? Maybe. But a victory need not be over someone; it can be with someone. Oil barons have grandchildren who will enjoy a livable planet as much as the rest of us.

Nagler outlines obstructive and constructive actions, citing Gandhi's efforts in India and the first Intifada as examples of combining the two. The Landless Worker Movement in Brazil uses constructive nonviolence, while the Arab Spring used obstructive. Ideally, Nagler thinks, a movement should begin with constructive projects and then add ob-

struction. The Occupy Movement has gone in the opposite direction, developing aid for storm victims and banking victims after protests were driven out of public squares. The potential for change, Nagler believes, lies in the possibility of Occupy or another movement combining the two approaches.

Nagler's sequential steps in a nonviolent action campaign include: 1. Conflict Resolution, 2. Satyagraha, 3. The Ultimate Sacrifice.

I imagine Nagler would agree with me that what we need as much as peaceful behavior by our government is Conflict Avoidance. So much is done to generate conflicts that need not be.

US troops in 175 countries, and drones in some of the remaining few, are known to generate hostility; yet that hostility is used to justify the stationing of more troops. While it's important to realize we'll never rid the world of conflict, I'm sure we could come a lot closer if we tried.

But Nagler is outlining a plan for a popular campaign, not for the State Department. His three stages are a guide for how we ought to be outlining our future course of action. Step 0.5, then, is not Conflict Avoidance but Infiltration of Corporate Media or Development of Alternative Means to Communicate. Or so it occurs to me.

Nagler sees growing success and even greater potential for nonviolent action done wisely and strategically, and points out the extent to which violence remains the default approach of our government. And the case Nagler makes is made strong and credible by his extensive knowledge of nonviolent campaigns engaged in around the world over the past several decades. Nagler looks helpfully at successes, failures, and partial successes to draw out the lessons we need moving forward. I'm tempted to write a review of this book nearly as long as or even longer than the book itself, but believe it might be most helpful simply to say this:

Trust me. Buy this book. Carry it with you. **CT**

**A victory need not be over someone; it can be with someone. Oil barons have grandchildren who will enjoy a livable planet as much as the rest of us**

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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>

# Night of the Hunter

**Chris Floyd** finds some strange family values in American foreign policy

**All in all, the Harken caper was pretty small beer when viewed against the Bush Family's mammoth record of corruption, going back many decades, mixing politics and private profit with a cheerful amorality**

The only article I ever had published in the *Nation* involved the offspring of a powerful politician trading on his White House connections to advance his private fortune. The piece was written 12 years ago, as the Enron scandal was breaking. (And boy, doesn't that seem several centuries ago now, looking back over the vast flooded plains of blood and ruin that our bipartisan elites have bequeathed us since then.)

It was a short article, dealing with the key role that the accounting firm Arthur Andersen had played both in the unfolding Enron morass in 2002 and the murky political machinations that kept George W. Bush from facing charges over what appeared to be a fairly flagrant – and highly profitable – bout of insider trading in 1990. That was when yet another Bush business was bailed out – yet again – by sugar daddies currying favor with his sour daddy in the White House; in this case, Harken Energy. Bush became a company director and member of the audit committee – then cashed out just weeks before Harken's stock took a deep dive.

The deal netted L'il Dub a cool \$800,000+, while ordinary investors in the company took an acid bath. The hijinks were so blatant the SEC was forced to investigate but in the end declined to take "enforcement action" against the president's son. However, as I noted in the article, the SEC made a point of declaring that

This [decision] "must in no way be construed as indicating that the party has been exonerated or that no action may ultimately result from the staff's investigation." (Of course, this has never stopped Bush from claiming that he was "exonerated" by the SEC.)

All in all, the Harken caper was pretty small beer when viewed against the Bush family's mammoth record of corruption, going back many decades, mixing politics and private profit with a cheerful amorality that easily encompassed mobsters, tyrants, gun-runners, drug dealers, religious extremists, spies and, yes, the Nazis.

I wrote a lot about this interesting history, and always found a ready audience on the left eager to see, rightly, the true face of American power – sleazy, greasy, brutal, cold – in the machinations of this clan of ruthless clowns. But I don't think we will see an equal eagerness to pursue a very similar story that broke this week about the offspring of a powerful politician trading on his White House connections to advance his private fortunes. And unlike the Harken deal (although not dissimilar from many other Bush Family deals, including the one with German fascists), this particular piece of elite corruption could have – or is already having – deadly international consequences.

We speak, of course, of the news that the son of the US Vice President, and the step-

son of the US Secretary of State, have been given lucrative positions with a Ukrainian energy firm whose future fortunes depend on the Kyiv coup regime's control of western Ukraine – where pro-Russian forces are in the ascendant. As Yahoo News reports:

In the span of a few weeks, an energy firm little-known inside the United States added two members to its board of directors – scoring connections to Secretary of State John Kerry and Vice President Joe Biden in the bargain.

On April 22, Cyprus-based Burisma announced that financier Devon Archer had joined its board. Archer, who shared a room in college with Kerry's stepson, Christopher Heinz, served as national finance co-chair for the former senator's 2004 presidential campaign.

Then, in mid-May, the firm announced that Biden's younger son, R. Hunter Biden, would join the board of directors.

Why would the company, which bills itself as Ukraine's largest private gas producer, need such powerful friends in Washington?

The answer might be the company's holdings in Ukraine. They include, according to the firm's website, permits to explore in the Dnieper-Donets Basin in the country's eastern regions, home to an armed pro-Russian separatist movement. They also include permits to explore in the Azov-Kuban Basin of the strategic Crimean peninsula, annexed earlier this year by Moscow.

So: a Ukrainian energy firm with holdings in pro-Russian Ukraine has just hired the son of the US Vice President – who has been Washington's point man in supporting the coup regime in Kyiv – to a prominent and no doubt well-remunerated position. At the same time, Washington has been fierce and forceful in its support for the Kyiv regime's violent efforts to quell the kind of opposition in Western Ukraine that it employed to take power in the capital; i.e., occupation of public spaces with the support of armed militias, with support from foreign entities (the Kremlin in eastern Ukraine; Washington

(and US oligarchs) in Kyiv).

America policy in Ukraine – securing control of eastern Ukraine by the Kyiv regime, and, if possible, the rollback of Russia's annexation of the Crimea – has now become directly tied to the personal family fortunes of the American Vice President and Secretary of State. In what way is this remotely differently from the corruption of the Bush Family that once stuck so painfully in “progressive” craws? And yet, is it even remotely conceivable that we will see the same angry attention to this blatant baksheesh that we saw back in those Bush Regime days of yore?

*UPDATE: It looks like L'il Hunter and Devon might be in high cotton. The New York Times reported that Rinat Akhmetov, Ukraine's richest man and once a major backer of Ukraine's ousted pro-Russian president, Victor Yanukovich, has now thrown his support and his money behind the American-backed Kyiv regime. According to the Times (which of course doesn't breathe a word of Akhmetov's unsavoury past), Akhmetov has ordered “his” workers onto the streets of Mariupol, Donetsk and other eastern Ukrainian cities to reassert the control of the Kyiv government. The pro-Russian forces have “melted away,” even in Donetsk, ground zero of the resistance, and oligarchical control is being re-established.*

*Of course, Akhmetov has long-standing ties to John McCain and his rightwing network, so it's not surprising to see him turning his ermine coat this way and that as the prevailing winds blow across Ukraine. The oligarchs are banding together on every side of the ostensible conflict – Ukrainian, Russian, Republican, Democrat – and the fix, as always, as ever, is in.*

*So good luck, Hunter! I expect we'll see you on a national ticket someday – maybe with Chelsea Clinton – running against one Bush or another, with Ukrainian oil money (suitably laundered) pouring into your campaign coffers – and into that future Bush campaign as well.*

**CT**

**So: a Ukrainian energy firm with holdings in pro-Russian Ukraine has just hired the son of the US Vice President – who has been Washington's point man in supporting the coup regime in Kyiv – to a prominent and no doubt well-remunerated position**

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**Chris Floyd**  
writes the Empire  
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# The Russians are coming – again!

In the latest round of world upheaval, it's hard to tell whose side the United States is actually on, writes **William Blum**

**My dear, and recently departed, Washington friend, John Judge, liked to say that if you want to call him a “conspiracy theorist” you have to call others “coincidence theorists”**

So, what do we have here? In Libya, in Syria, and elsewhere the United States has been on the same side as the al-Qaeda types. But not in Ukraine. That's the good news. The bad news is that in Ukraine the United States is on the same side as the neo-Nazi types, who – taking time off from parading around with their swastika-like symbols and calling for the death of Jews, Russians and Communists – on May 2 burned down a trade-union building in Odessa, killing scores of people and sending hundreds to hospital; many of the victims were beaten or shot when they tried to flee the flames and smoke; ambulances were blocked from reaching the wounded. Try and find an American mainstream media entity that has made a serious attempt to capture the horror.

And how did this latest example of American foreign-policy exceptionalism come to be? One starting point that can be considered is what former Secretary of Defense and CIA Director Robert Gates says in his recently published memoir: “When the Soviet Union was collapsing in late 1991, [Defense Secretary Dick Cheney] wanted to see the dismemberment not only of the Soviet Union and the Russian empire but of Russia itself, so it could never again be a threat to the rest of the world.” That can serve as an early marker for the new cold war while the corpse of the old one was still warm. Soon

thereafter, NATO began to surround Russia with military bases, missile sites, and NATO members, while yearning for perhaps the most important part needed to complete the circle – Ukraine.

In February of this year, US State Department officials, undiplomatically, joined anti-government protesters in the capital city of Kiev, handing out encouragement and food, from which emanated the infamous leaked audio tape between the US ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, and the State Department's Victoria Nuland, former US ambassador to NATO and former State Department spokesperson for Hillary Clinton. Their conversation dealt with who should be running the new Ukraine government after the government of Viktor Yanukovich was overthrown; their most favored for this position being one Arseniy Yatsenuk.

My dear, and recently departed, Washington friend, John Judge, liked to say that if you want to call him a “conspiracy theorist” you have to call others “coincidence theorists”. Thus it was by the most remarkable of coincidences that Arseniy Yatsenuk did indeed become the new prime minister. He could very soon be found in private meetings and public press conferences with the president of the United States and the Secretary-General of NATO, as well as meeting with the soon-to-be new owners of Ukraine, the World Bank and the International Monetary



Fund, preparing to impose their standard financial shock therapy. The current protesters in Ukraine don't need Phds in economics to know what this portends. They know about the impoverishment of Greece, Spain, et al. They also despise the new regime for its overthrow of their democratically-elected government, whatever its shortcomings. But the American media obscures these motivations by almost always referring to them simply as "pro-Russian".

An exception, albeit rather unemphasized, was the April 17 *Washington Post* which reported from Donetsk that many of the eastern Ukrainians whom the author interviewed said the unrest in their region was driven by fear of "economic hardship" and the IMF austerity plan that will make their lives even harder: "At a most dangerous and delicate time, just as it battles Moscow for hearts and minds across the east, the pro-Western government is set to initiate a shock therapy of economic measures to meet the demands of an emergency bailout from the International Monetary Fund."

Arseniy Yatsenuk, it should be noted, has something called the Arseniy Yatsenuk Foundation. If you go to the foundation's website you will see the logos of the foundation's "partners". Among these partners we find NATO, the National Endowment for Democracy, the US State Department, Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs in the UK), the German Marshall Fund (a think tank founded by the German government in honor of the US Marshall Plan), as well as a couple of international banks. Is any comment needed?

Getting away with supporting al-Qaeda and Nazi types may be giving US officials the idea that they can say or do anything they want in their foreign policy. In a May 2 press conference, President Obama, referring to Ukraine and the NATO Treaty, said: "We're united in our unwavering Article 5 commitment to the security of our NATO allies". (Article 5 states: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them ...

shall be considered an attack against them all.") Did the president forget that Ukraine is not (yet) a member of NATO? And in the same press conference, the president referred to the "duly elected government in Kyiv (Kiev)", when in fact it had come to power via a coup and then proceeded to establish a new regime in which the vice-premier, minister of defense, minister of agriculture, and minister of environment, all belonged to far-right neo-Nazi parties.

The pure awfulness of the Ukrainian right-wingers can scarcely be exaggerated. In early March, the leader of Pravy Sektor (Right Sector) called upon his comrades, the infamous Chechnyan terrorists, to carry out further terrorist actions in Russia.

There may be one important difference between the old Cold War and the new one. The American people, as well as the world, can not be as easily brainwashed as they were during the earlier period.

Over the course of a decade, in doing the research for my first books and articles on US foreign policy, one of the oddities to me of the Cold War was how often the Soviet Union seemed to know what the United States was really up to, even if the American people didn't. Every once in a while in the 1950s to 70s a careful reader would notice a two- or three-inch story in the *New York Times* on the bottom of some distant inside page, reporting that *Pravda* or *Izvestia* had claimed that a recent coup or political assassination in Africa or Asia or Latin America had been the work of the CIA; the *Times* might add that a US State Department official had labeled the story as "absurd". And that was that; no further details were provided; and none were needed, for how many American readers gave it a second thought? It was just more commie propaganda. Who did they think they were fooling? This ignorance/complicity on the part of the mainstream media allowed the United States to get away with all manner of international crimes and mischief.

It was only in the 1980s when I began to do

**There may be one important difference between the old Cold War and the new one. The American people, as well as the world, can not be as easily brainwashed as they were during the earlier period**

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## ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

**Barack Obama, like virtually all Americans, likely believes that the Soviet Union, with perhaps the sole exception of the Second World War, was consistently on the wrong side of history in its foreign policy as well as at home**

the serious research that resulted in my first book, which later became “Killing Hope”, that I was able to fill in the details and realize that the United States had indeed masterminded that particular coup or assassination, and many other coups and assassinations, not to mention countless bombings, chemical and biological warfare, perversion of elections, drug dealings, kidnappings, and much more that had not appeared in the American mainstream media or schoolbooks. (And a significant portion of which was apparently unknown to the Soviets as well.)

But there have been countless revelations about US crimes in the past two decades. Many Americans and much of the rest of the planet have become educated. They’re much more skeptical of American proclamations and the fawning media.

President Obama recently declared: “The strong condemnation that it’s received from around the world indicates the degree to which Russia is on the wrong side of history on this.” Marvelous ... coming from the man who partners with jihadists and Nazis and has waged war against seven nations. In the past half century is there any country whose foreign policy has received more bitter condemnation than the United States? If the United States is not on the wrong side of history, it may be only in the history books published by the United States.

Barack Obama, like virtually all Americans, likely believes that the Soviet Union, with perhaps the sole exception of the Second World War, was consistently on the wrong side of history in its foreign policy as well as at home. Yet, in a survey conducted by an independent Russian polling center this past January, and reported in the *Washington Post* in April, 86 percent of respondents older than 55 expressed regret for the Soviet Union’s collapse; 37 percent of those aged 25 to 39 did so. (Similar poll results have been reported regularly since the demise of the Soviet Union. This is from *USA Today* in 1999: “When the Berlin Wall crumbled, East Germans imagined a life of freedom where

consumer goods were abundant and hardships would fade. Ten years later, a remarkable 51% say they were happier with communism.”)

Or as the new Russian proverb put it: “Everything the Communists said about Communism was a lie, but everything they said about capitalism turned out to be the truth.”

A week before the above *Post* report in April the newspaper printed an article about happiness around the world, which contains the following charming lines: “Worldwide polls show that life seems better to older people – except in Russia.” ... “Essentially, life under President Vladimir Putin is one continuous downward spiral into despair.” ... “What’s going on in Russia is deep unhappiness.” ... “In Russia, the only thing to look forward to is death’s sweet embrace.”

No, I don’t think it was meant to be any kind of satire. It appears to be a scientific study, complete with graphs, but it reads like something straight out of the 1950s.

The views Americans hold of themselves and other societies are not necessarily more distorted than the views found amongst people elsewhere in the world, but the Americans’ distortion can lead to much more harm. Most Americans and members of Congress have convinced themselves that the US/NATO encirclement of Russia is benign – we are, after all, the Good Guys – and they don’t understand why Russia can’t see this.

The first Cold War, from Washington’s point of view, was often designated as one of “containment”, referring to the US policy of preventing the spread of communism around the world, trying to block the very idea of communism or socialism. There’s still some leftover from that – see Venezuela and Cuba, for example – but the new Cold War can be seen more in terms of a military strategy. Washington thinks in terms of who could pose a barrier to the ever-expanding empire adding to its bases and other military necessities.

Whatever the rationale, it’s imperative that the United States suppress any lingering

desire to bring Ukraine (and Georgia) into the NATO alliance. Nothing is more likely to bring large numbers of Russian boots onto the Ukrainian ground than the idea that Washington wants to have NATO troops right on the Russian border and in spitting distance of the country's historic Black Sea naval base in Crimea.

### **The myth of Soviet expansionism**

One still comes across references in the mainstream media to Russian "expansionism" and "the Soviet empire", in addition to that old favorite "the evil empire". These terms stem largely from erstwhile Soviet control of Eastern European states. But was the creation of these satellites following World War II an act of imperialism or expansionism? Or did the decisive impetus lie elsewhere?

Within the space of less than 25 years, Western powers had invaded Russia three times – the two world wars and the "Intervention" of 1918-20 – inflicting some 40 million casualties in the two wars alone. To carry out these invasions, the West had used Eastern Europe as a highway. Should it be any cause for wonder that after World War II the Soviets wanted to close this highway down? In almost any other context, Americans would have no problem in seeing this as an act of self defense. But in the context of the Cold War such thinking could not find a home in mainstream discourse.

The Baltic states of the Soviet Union – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – were not part of the highway and were frequently in the news because of their demands for more autonomy from Moscow, a story "natural" for the American media. These articles invariably reminded the reader that the "once independent" Baltic states were invaded in 1939 by the Soviet Union, incorporated as republics of the USSR, and had been "occupied" ever since. Another case of brutal Russian imperialism. Period. History etched in stone.

The three countries, it happens, were part of the Russian empire from 1721 up to

the Russian Revolution of 1917, in the midst of World War I. When the war ended in November 1918, and the Germans had been defeated, the victorious Allied nations (US, Great Britain, France, et al.) permitted/encouraged the German forces to remain in the Baltics for a full year to crush the spread of Bolshevism there; this, with ample military assistance from the Allied nations. In each of the three republics, the Germans installed collaborators in power who declared their independence from the new Bolshevik state which, by this time, was so devastated by the World War, the revolution, and the civil war prolonged by the Allies' intervention, that it had no choice but to accept the fait accompli. The rest of the fledgling Soviet Union had to be saved.

To at least win some propaganda points from this unfortunate state of affairs, the Soviets announced that they were relinquishing the Baltic republics "voluntarily" in line with their principles of anti-imperialism and self-determination. But it should not be surprising that the Soviets continued to regard the Baltics as a rightful part of their nation or that they waited until they were powerful enough to reclaim the territory.

Then we had Afghanistan. Surely this was an imperialist grab. But the Soviet Union had lived next door to Afghanistan for more than 60 years without gobbling it up. And when the Russians invaded in 1979, the key motivation was the United States involvement in a movement, largely Islamic, to topple the Afghan government, which was friendly to Moscow. The Soviets could not have been expected to tolerate a pro-US, anti-communist government on its border any more than the United States could have been expected to tolerate a pro-Soviet, communist government in Mexico.

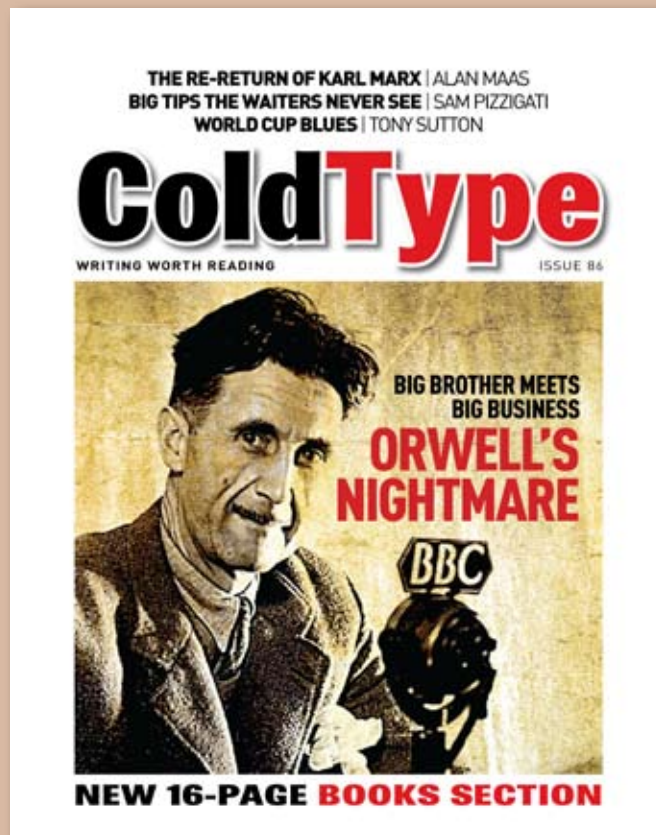
Moreover, if the rebel movement took power it likely would have set up a fundamentalist Islamic government, which would have been in a position to proselytize the numerous Muslims in the Soviet border republics.

**Within the space of less than 25 years, Western powers had invaded Russia three times – the two world wars and the "Intervention" of 1918-20 – inflicting some 40 million casualties in the two wars alone**

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**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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