

CANADA'S HEART OF DARKNESS | JIM MILES
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TOO MANY PRYING EYES | BILL BUCHANAN

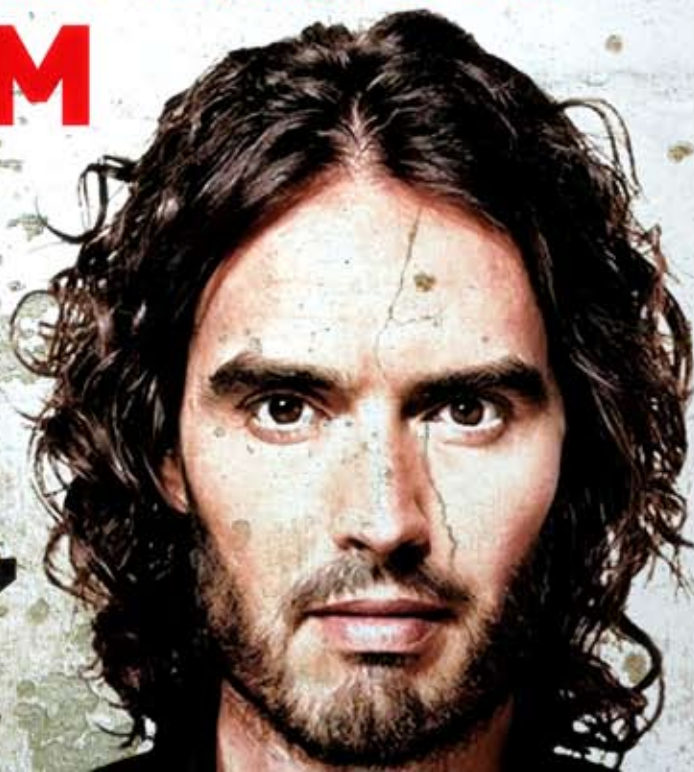
ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 91

RUSSELL BRAND, REVOLUTION AND THE MEDIA

**"TODAY HUMANITY
FACES A STARK
CHOICE: SAVE THE
PLANET AND DITCH
CAPITALISM
– OR SAVE
CAPITALISM
AND DITCH
THE PLANET"**





Cover Photo
from "Revolution"
by Russell Brand

ColdType

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Editor: Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net

Russell Brand's call for revolution

David Edwards discusses comedian Russell Brand's call for revolution and the British media's hysterical reaction

PART 1

The Fun Bus

On October 23, 2013, Russell Brand appeared to crash through the filter system protecting the public from dissident opinion.

His 10-minute interview with Jeremy Paxman on the BBC's *Newsnight* programme not only attracted millions of viewers – the YouTube hit-counter stands at 10.6 million – it won considerable praise and support from corporate journalists on Twitter. Brand was arguing for 'revolution' and yet was flavour of the month, cool to like. Something didn't add up.

The hook for the interview was Brand's guest-editing of *New Statesman* magazine, promoted by him in a video that featured editor Jason Cowley giggling excitedly in the background among besuited corporate journalists. Again, this seemed curious: why would a drab, 'left of centre' (i.e., corporate party political) magazine support someone calling for a 'Revolution of consciousness'?

The answer is perhaps easier to fathom now than it was then, for time has not been kind either to the *Newsnight* in-

terview or the *New Statesman* guest issue.

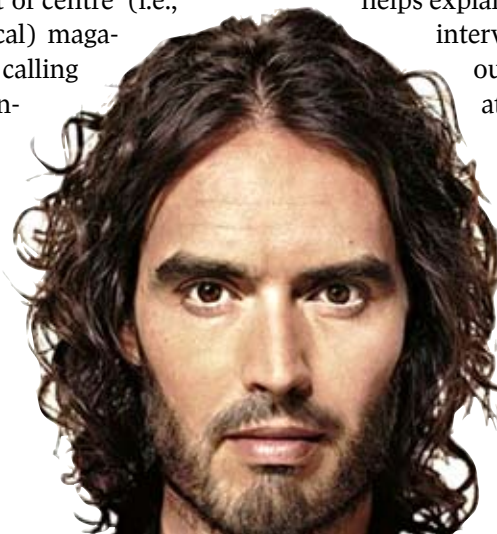
It is clear that an unprepared Brand was largely winging it with Paxman. In response to the predictable question of what political alternative he was proposing, Brand replied:

'Well, I've not invented it yet, Jeremy. I had to do a magazine last week. I had a lot on my plate. But here's the thing it shouldn't do. Shouldn't destroy the planet. Shouldn't create massive economic disparity. Shouldn't ignore the needs of the people. The burden of proof is on the people with the power, not people doing a magazine.'

In his new book, 'Revolution,' Brand recognises that the first part of this response 'ain't gonna butter no spuds on *Newsnight* or *Fox News*' (Brand, 'Revolution', Century, 2014, ebook, p.415) and he is clearly keen to move on from 'the policy-bare days of the Paxman interview' (p.417). On the other hand, the second part of Brand's answer

helps explain the huge impact of the interview – he was speaking out with a level of passionate sincerity and conviction that are just not seen in today's manufactured, conformist, marketing-led media. Brand looked real, human. He was telling the truth!

Brand was speaking out with a level of passionate sincerity and conviction that are just not seen in today's manufactured, conformist, marketing-led media



'A small minority cannot control an uncooperative majority, so they must be distracted, divided, tyrannised or anaesthetised into compliance . . . ' which means 'the colonisation of consciousness by corporations'

Similarly, the *New Statesman* guest edition was a curious hodgepodge, with good articles by Brand, Naomi Klein and Noam Chomsky alongside offerings from BBC sports presenter Gary Lineker, rock squib Noel Gallagher, actors Alec Baldwin and Rupert Everett, multi-millionaire entrepreneur Martha Lane-Fox, and even Russian media oligarch, Evgeny Lebedev. This was revolution as some kind of unscripted celebrity pantomime.

Brand's Newsnight performance, then, was an inspiring *cri de coeur*. But a 10-minute, impassioned, ill-formed demand for 'Change!' from a lone comedian is not a problem for the media's gatekeepers. It makes for great television, enhances the illusion that the media is open and inclusive, and can be quickly forgotten – no harm done.

Killing corporate power – humanity's stark choice

Brand's new book, 'Revolution,' is different – the focus is clear, specific and fiercely anti-corporate. As we will see in Part 2 of this essay, the media reaction is also different.

Brand begins by describing the grotesque levels of modern inequality:

'Oxfam say a bus with the eighty-five richest people in the world on it would contain more wealth than the collective assets of half the earth's population – that's three-and-a-half billion people.' (p.34)

And:

'The richest 1 per cent of British people have as much as the poorest 55 per cent.' (p.34)

But even these facts do not begin to describe the full scale of the current crisis:

'The same interests that benefit from this . . . need, in order to maintain it, to deplete the earth's resources so rapidly, violently and irresponsibly that our planet's ability to support human life is being threatened.' (p.36)

For example:

'Global warming is totally real, it has

been empirically proven, and the only people who tell you it's not real are, yes, people who make money from creating the conditions that cause it. (pp.539-540)

We are therefore at a crossroads:

' "Today humanity faces a stark choice: save the planet and ditch capitalism, or save capitalism and ditch the planet."

'The reason the occupants of the [elite] fun bus are so draconian in their defence of the economy is that they have decided to ditch the planet.' (p.345)

And so 'we require radical action fast, and that radical action will not come from the very interests that created and benefit from things being the way they are. The one place we cannot look for change is to the occupants of the bejewelled bus.' (p.42)

The problem, then, is that 'we live under a tyranny'. (p.550) The US, in particular, 'acts like an army that enforces the business interests of the corporations it is allied to'. (p.493)

But this is more than just a crude, Big Brother totalitarian state:

'A small minority cannot control an uncooperative majority, so they must be distracted, divided, tyrannised or anaesthetised into compliance . . . ' which means 'the colonisation of consciousness by corporations'. (p.165)

Brand notes that 70 per cent of the UK press is controlled by three companies, 90 per cent of the US press by six:

'The people that own the means for conveying information, who decide what knowledge enters our minds, are on the fun bus.' (p.592)

He even manages a swipe at the 'quality' liberal press:

'Remember, the people who tell you this can't work, in government, on Fox News or MSNBC, or in op-eds in the *Guardian* or the *Spectator*, or wherever, are people with a vested interest in things staying the same.' (p.514)

Thus, the 'political process' is a nonsense: 'voting is pointless, democracy a fa-

cade' (p.45): 'a bloke with a nice smile and an angle is swept into power after a more obviously despicable regime and then behaves more or less exactly like his predecessors'. (p.431)

The highly debatable merit of voting aside, anyone with an ounce of awareness will accept pretty much everything Brand has to say above. Put simply, he's right – this is the current state of people, planet and politics. A catastrophic environmental collapse is very rapidly approaching with nothing substantive being done to make it better and everything being done to make it worse.

Even if we disagree with everything else he has to say, every sane person has an interest in supporting Brand's call to action to stop this corporate genocide and biocide. A thought we might bear in mind when we subsequently turn to the corporate media reaction.

'Wow, I'd like to be him'

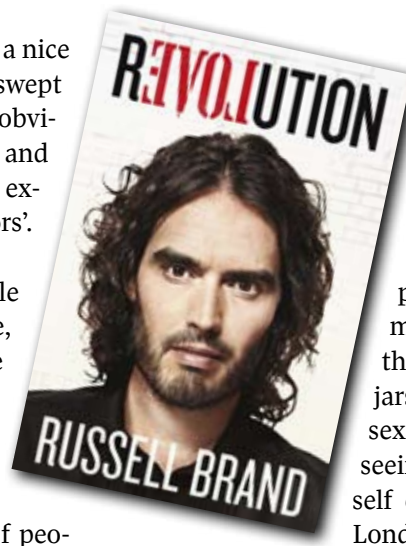
Even more astutely – and this is where he leaves most head-trapped leftists behind – Brand understands that progressive change is stifled by the shiny, silvery lures of corporate consumerism that hook into our desires and egos. He understands that focused awareness on the truth of our own personal experience is a key aspect of liberation from these iChains:

'Get money. I got money, I got the stuff on the other side of the glass and it didn't work.' (p.56)

And:

'I have seen what fame and fortune have to offer and I know it's not the answer. That doesn't diminish these arguments, it enhances them.' (p.202)

And:



REVOLUTION
Russell Brand
Ballantine Books
\$ US26

'We have been told that freedom is the ability to pursue petty, trivial desires when true freedom is freedom from these petty, trivial desires.' (p.66)

In a wonderfully candid passage – unthinkable from most leftists, who write as though they were brains in jars rather than flesh-and-blood sexual beings – Brand describes seeing a paparazzi photo of himself emerging from an exclusive London nightclub at 2 a.m with a beautiful woman on each arm:

'I can still be deceived into thinking, "Wow, I'd like to be him," then I remember that I was him.' (p.314)

Brand tells his millions of admirers and wannabe, girl-guzzling emulators:

'That night with those two immaculate girls . . . did not feel like it looked.' (p.315)

So how did it feel?

'Kisses are exchanged and lips get derivatively bitten, and I am unsmitten and unforgiven, and when they leave I sit broken and longing on the chaise.' (p.316)

The point, again:

'This looks how it's supposed to look but it doesn't feel how it's supposed to feel.' (p.186)

Exactly reversing the usual role of the 'celebrity' ('how I loathe the word' (p.191)) – Brand sets a demolition charge under one of the great delusions of our time: 'Fame after a while seems ordinary.' (p.189)

Everything, after a while, seems ordinary – external, material pleasures do not deliver on their promises.

So why are we destroying humanity and the planet for a vampiric corporate dream that enriches a tiny elite and brings alienation and dissatisfaction to all? The answer? Thought control:

'We are living in a zoo, or more accurately a farm, our collective consciousness,

Brand understands that progressive change is stifled by the shiny, silvery lures of corporate consumerism that hook into our desires and egos

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Brand argues for the rewriting of trade agreements to support the needs of people and planet through localised farming. He wants to cancel personal debt, for communities to use modern high tech communications to take control of politics

our individual consciousness, has been hijacked by a power structure that needs us to remain atomised and disconnected.’ (p.66)

And:

‘Incrementally indoctrinated, we have forgotten how to dream, we have forgotten who we are. We have abandoned our connection to wonder and placed our destiny in unclean hands.’ (p.600)

Again leaving most ‘mainstream’ and leftist thought far behind, Brand urges us to liberate ourselves from the marketised dreams of future happiness ‘out there’ – the fame, the indulgence, the wealth – to focus on a bliss that is available here, now, inside ourselves. What is he talking about? Is this just ‘mumbo-jumbo’, as critics claim? Far from it, this is a truth that is subtle, elusive, but real:

‘You never know when you will encounter magic. Some solitary moment in a park can suddenly burst open with a spray of pre-school children in high-vis vests, hand in hand; maybe the teacher will ask you for directions and the children will look at you curious and open, and you’ll see that they are perfect.’ (p.105)

Bliss is there in that tiny, fleeting instant when the mind, for once – for a moment! – stops its ceaseless chatter to make space for ‘another awareness. A distinct awareness. An awareness beyond, behind and around these thoughts’. (p.82)

This is brave and truthful; in fact, it is the central message of all the world’s spiritual traditions freed from their political, theistic and superstitious baggage.

Yes, the hard-headed Chomskys and Pilgers are of course right, the world is shackled by economic and political chains. But these hook into our most personal dreams and desires. Activism often does, and perhaps more often should, arise from the ultimate inactivism of sitting silently, doing nothing, thinking nothing, realising deeply that the bliss we seek ‘out there’ is an imposed illusion that obstructs an authentic bliss only available, in fact, ‘in here’.

This is the crucial, perennially-ignored link between spirituality and politics, between meditation and the ability to relinquish our dependence on corporate trinkets and ‘service’, and it has been made by far too few people in the history of Western thought.

If all of this wasn’t enough to earn Brand support and applause, he even challenges the taboo that associates seriousness with virtue: ‘people mistake solemnity for seriousness, [assuming] that by being all stern and joyless their ideas are somehow levitated’. (p.399)

And indeed leftist writers are almost universally angry, solemn and stern – seriousness is worn like a badge of sincerity by people who are supposed to abhor conformity and uniformity. Brand has the self-belief to joke and jape with childish abandon when discussing even the most serious subjects. Again, he is asserting the right to be whoever he chooses to be – an authentic, juicy human being, rather than a hard-boiled ‘intellectual’.

In the effort to escape from illusions, both political and personal, Brand throws all kinds of ideas for action at his readers. He argues for the rewriting of trade agreements to support the needs of people and planet through localised farming. He wants to cancel personal debt, for communities to use modern high tech communications to take control of politics. He wants to ‘kill’ particular corporations like General Motors, ‘sell them off and use the money to compensate victims and former workers, or we could collectivise it and run it as a worker-based cooperative’. (p.409) He wants genuinely participatory democracy along the lines of Porto Alegre in Brazil. Energy companies need to be stopped from wrecking the climate through oil refining and fracking, and so on.

All of this is courageous for another reason. Brand writes:

‘I know too with each word I type that I am building a bridge of words that leads

me back to the poverty I've come from, that by decrying this inequality, I will have to relinquish the benefits that this system has given me. I'd be lying if I said that didn't frighten me.' (p.62)

If by this he means that, in writing of the need for revolution, he will lose the support of the corporate media that lifted him to a place of prominence, he certainly has a point, as we will see.

PART 2

From Messiah to Monty Python

If Julian Assange was initially perceived by many as a controversial but respected, even heroic, figure challenging power, the corporate media worked hard to change that perception in the summer of 2012. After Assange requested political asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, the faux-feminists and corporate leftists of the 'quality' liberal press waged war on his reputation.

This comment from the *Guardian's* Deborah Orr summed up the press zeitgeist:

'It's hard to believe that, until fairly recently, Julian Assange was hailed not just as a radical thinker, but as a radical achiever, too.'

A sentiment echoed by Christina Patterson of the *Independent*:

'Quite a feat to move from Messiah to Monty Python, but good old Julian Assange seems to have managed it.'

The *Guardian's* Suzanne Moore expressed what many implied:

'He really is the most massive turd.'

The attacks did more than just criticise Assange; they presented him as a ridiculous, shameful figure. Readers were to understand that he was now completely and permanently discredited.

We are all, to some extent, herd animals. When we witness an individual being subjected to relentless mockery of this kind

from just about everyone across the media 'spectrum', it becomes a real challenge to continue taking that person seriously, let alone to continue supporting them. We know that doing so risks attracting the same abuse.

Below, we will see how many of the same corporate journalists are now directing a comparable campaign of abuse at Russell Brand in response to the publication of his book, 'Revolution'. The impact is perhaps indicated by the mild trepidation I experienced in tweeting this very reasonable comment from the book:

'Today humanity faces a stark choice: save the planet and ditch capitalism, or save capitalism and ditch the planet.' (p.345)

Sure enough, I immediately received this tweet in response:

'As a big supporter of your newsletters and books, I'm embarrassed by your promotion of Brand as some sort of visionary.'

Mark Steel explained in the *Independent*:

'This week, by law, I have to deride Russell Brand as a self-obsessed, annoying idiot. No article or comment on Twitter can legally be written now unless it does this ...'

Or as Boris Johnson noted, gleefully, in the *Telegraph*:

'Oh dear, what a fusillade of hatred against poor old Brandy Wandy. I have before me a slew of Sunday papers and in almost all there is a broadside against Russell Brand ...'

Once again, the *Guardian* gatekeepers have poured scorn. Suzanne Moore lampooned 'the winklepicked Jesus Clown who preaches revolution', repeating 'Jesus Clown' four times. Moore mocked:

'To see him being brought to heel by an ancient Sex Pistol definitely adds to the gaiety of the nation.'

After all: 'A lot of what he says is sub-Chomskyian [sic] woo.'

An earlier version of Moore's article was even more damning: 'A lot of what he says

The *Guardian's* Suzanne Moore lampooned 'the winklepicked Jesus Clown who preaches revolution', repeating 'Jesus Clown' four times

COVER STORY

There is a strong case for arguing that mindfulness – awareness of how we actually feel, as opposed to how corporate advertising tells us we should feel – can help deliver us from the shiny cage of passive consumerism

is ghostwritten sub-Chomskyian woo.’

This was corrected by the *Guardian* after Moore received a letter from Brand’s lawyers.

The *Guardian*’s Hadley Freeman imperiously dismissed Brand’s highly rational analysis of corporate psychopathology:

‘I’m not entirely sure where he thinks he’s going to go with this revolution idea because [SPOILER!] revolution is not going to happen. But all credit to the man for making politics seem sexy to teenagers. What he lacks, though – aside from specifics and an ability to listen to people other than himself – is judgment.’

Tanya Gold commented in the *Guardian*:

‘His narcissism is not strange: he is a comic by trade, and is used to drooling rooms of strangers.’

In the *Independent*, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown’s patronising judgement was clear from the title:

‘Russell Brand might seem like a sexy revolutionary worth getting behind, but he will only fail his fans – Politics needs to be cleaned up, not thrown into disarray by irresponsible populists’

Alibhai-Brown commented:

‘It is heartening to see him mobbed by teenagers and young people . . . Brand, I fear, will only fail them.’

Grace Dent of the *Independent* perceived little point in throwing yet more mud:

‘with the lack of a political colossus on the horizon like Tony Benn, we can make do with that guy from Get Him To The Greek who was once wed to Katy Perry. I shall resist pillorying Brand any further. He looks exhausted. I’m not entirely evil’.

Sarah Ditum sneered from the *New Statesman*:

‘Russell Brand, clown that he is, is taken seriously by an awful lot of young men who see any criticism of the cartoon messiah’s misogyny as a derail from “the real issues” (whatever they are).’

Brand fared little better among the male

commentators of the liberal press. The title of David Runciman’s *Guardian* review read:

‘His manifesto is heavy going, light on politics and, in places, beyond parody. Has the leader of the rebellion missed his moment?’

Runciman wrote:

‘This book is an uncomfortable mashup of the cosmic and the prosaic. Brand seems to believe they bolster each other. But really they just get in each other’s way. He borrows ideas from various radical or progressive thinkers like David Graeber and Thomas Piketty but undercuts them with talk about yogic meditation.’

As we saw in the first part of this alert, there is a strong case for arguing that mindfulness – awareness of how we actually feel, as opposed to how corporate advertising tells us we should feel – can help deliver us from the shiny cage of passive consumerism to progressive activism.

Alas, ‘too often he sounds like Gwyneth Paltrow without, er, the humour or the self-awareness. The worst of it is beyond parody . . . his revolution reads like soft-soap therapy where what’s needed is something with a harder edge’.

Also in the *Guardian*, Martin Kettle dismissed ‘the juvenile culture of Russell Brand’s narcissistic anti-politics’.

Hard-right ‘leftist’ warmonger Nick Cohen of the ‘left-of-centre’ hard-right *Observer* was appalled. Having accumulated 28,000 followers on Twitter after decades in the national press spotlight, Cohen mocked the communication skills of a writer with 8 million followers:

‘His writing is atrocious: long-winded, confused and smug; filled with references to books Brand has half read and thinkers he has half understood.’

This is completely false, as we saw; Brand has an extremely astute grasp of many of the key issues of our time.

As ever – think Assange, Greenwald, Snowden – dissidents are exposed as ego-

ists by corporate media altruists:

‘Brand is a religious narcissist, and if the British left falls for him, it will show itself to be beyond saving.’

Cohen strained so hard to cover Brand in ordure he splashed some on himself, commenting:

‘Brand says that he is qualified to lead a global transformation . . .’

Not quite. Brand writes in his book:

‘We don’t want to replace Cameron with another leader: the position of leader elevates a particular set of behaviours.’ (p.216)

And:

‘There is no heroic revolutionary figure in whom we can invest hope, except for ourselves as individuals together.’ (p.515)

Similarly, Cohen took the cheap shot of casually lampooning Brand’s ‘cranky’ focus on meditation:

‘Comrades, I am sure I do not need to tell you that no figure in the history of the left has seen Buddhism as a force for human emancipation.’

He tweeted in reply:

‘@NickCohen4 “no figure in the history of the left has seen Buddhism as a force for human emancipation”. Erich Fromm, for one.’

Cohen was so unimpressed by this response that he immediately blocked Medialens on Twitter.

Writing from that other powerhouse of corporate dissent, the oligarch-owned *Independent*, Steve Richards praised Brand’s style and decried the right-wing conformity of journalism, before providing an example of his own. He lamented Brand’s ‘vague banalities’ and ‘witty banalities’:

‘He is part of a disturbing phenomenon – the worship of unaccountable comedians who are not especially funny and who are limited in their perceptions . . . We await a revolutionary who plots what should happen as well as what is wrong.’

In the same newspaper, Howard Jacobson effortlessly won the prize for intellec-

tual snobbery:

‘When Russell Brand uses the word “hegemony” something dies in my soul.’

Oh dear, does he drop the ‘haitch’? For Jacobson, who studied English at Cambridge under the renowned literary critic F.R. Leavis, it was ‘a matter of regret’ that Brand didn’t ‘stick to clowning’. Why? Because it detracts from the enjoyment of a comedian’s efforts ‘to discover they are fools in earnest’. Brand, alas, has not ‘the first idea what serious thought is’. To read the book is to know just how utterly self-damning that last comment is.

James Bloodworth of the hard-right Left Foot Forward blog, commented in the *Independent*:

‘Russell Brand is one of those people who talks a lot without ever really saying much.’

Bloodworth clumsily sought to mock Brand’s clumsiness:

‘Well-intentioned, he can often come across like the precocious student we all know who talks in the way they think an educated person ought to talk – all clever-sounding adjectives and look-at-me vocabulary.’

Words like ‘hegemony’, perhaps. Or as Nick Cohen wrote in 2013: ‘He writes as if he is a precocious prepubescent rather than an adolescent . . .’

Bloodworth’s damning conclusion:

‘Millions of people may be fed up of the racket that is free market capitalism, but this really is Revolution as play, and in indulging it the left risks becoming a parody of itself.’

The Tory press – ‘a snort of derisive laughter’

If we dare turn to the more overtly right-wing press, in the *Sunday Times*, Camilla Long lamented:

‘Brand’s mincing tintinnabulations, his squawking convulsions, his constant garbling of words such as “autodidact” and “hegemony”’

Writing from that other powerhouse of corporate dissent, the oligarch-owned *Independent*, Steve Richards praised Brand’s style and decried the right-wing conformity of journalism, before providing an example of his own

It seems clear that some of the hatred directed at Brand by both male and female critics is rooted in something other than politic

That word again! Could the real problem be that a working class author has appropriated words reserved for his classically-educated betters? Wikipedia records of Long:

‘Descended from the aristocratic Clinton family (Henry Pelham-Clinton, 4th Duke of Newcastle . . . is an ancestor through her paternal grandmother), she was educated at Oxford High School and Corpus Christi College, Oxford.’

Again, any thought of discussion had to make way for mockery:

‘And what a mediocre, hypocritical, dancing, prancing and arrogant perm on a stick he is . . . I would be more comfortable with the former Spice Girl Geri Halliwell as a public intellectual.’

From the moral summit of Murdoch’s media Mount Doom, Perpetual Warmonger David Aaronovitch of *The Times* of course declared Brand’s book ‘uniquely worthless both as an exercise in writing and as a manifesto for social change – I feel able to dismiss Brand’s new self-ascriptions, both as self-taught man and revolutionary’. (Aaronovitch, ‘A unique Brand of dozy drivell’, *The Times*, November 1, 2014)

Again, as we saw in Part 1, this is just false. There may be much to debate, but in identifying the fundamental disaster of a corporate system subordinating people and planet to profit, Brand is exactly right.

Aaronovitch heard only ‘a wall of sound and words designed to drown out the possibility of thought’. But the wall of sound was coming from Aaronovitch’s own head, from the psychological investments that prevent him perceiving words that would make it impossible for him to continue the role he is playing.

For Aaronovitch, like Cohen, it was all ‘sub-Yoko mysticana that [has] been the “it’s really all about me” staple of pop stars, actors and princesses since the days of the Maharishi’.

So Brand just produces ‘sub-Yoko mysticana’, ‘sub-Chomskyan woo’ and, as Rob-

ert Colville noted in his review for the *Daily Telegraph*, ‘sub-undergraduate dross’.

Reviewing the book in the *Sunday Times*, Christopher Hart wrote:

‘There’s no doubt that Brand can sometimes articulate what a lot of people are feeling . . .’

As if panicked by the possibility that this might be thought to signify approval, Hart erupted:

‘But when the cry comes from someone who seems the epitome of a vapid, ill-informed, coke-frazzled, self-adoring and grossly hypocritical celeb, preaching to us from the back of his chauffeur-driven Merc, then the only response it deserves is a snort of derisive laughter.’

The bottom line:

‘Some of this stuff does indeed need saying, but Russell Brand is not the man to say it.’

Again, less a review, more a Soviet-style ‘personality disorder’ smear.

The Daily Mail really loathes Brand. For the journalist who for some odd reason describes himself as ‘The Hated Peter Hitchens’, Brand is a ‘Pied piper who peddles poison’. It seems clear that some of the hatred directed at Brand by both male and female critics is rooted in something other than politics. In a telling passage that reads like an outtake from a Carry On film, Hitchens observed:

‘But there’s also no doubt he has a potent effect on women – I watched him, in less than a minute, charm two pretty young Olympic medal winners into taking off their medals and draping them over his scrawny, naked chest.

‘The sad thing was that they acted as if they were the ones being honoured by the encounter.’

We can imagine that Hitchens would have been only too ‘honoured’ to meet the ‘two pretty young’ women and to admire the medals on their chests where they belonged.

In the same paper, Stephen Glover also

snorted derisively:

‘Why does anyone take this clown of a poseur seriously? . . . Russell Brand is a ludicrous charlatan.’

Glover, who had either not read, or not understood a word of the book, commented: ‘Revolution is one of the worst books I have ever read. It is repetitive, structureless, poorly argued (if it can be said to be argued at all) and boring . . . [from] our narcissistic hero . . . Why should we listen to this clown?’

Another *Daily Mail* altruist, Max Hastings, also perceived gross egotism at play:

‘Mr Brand is a strutting narcissist, who, despite having no idea what he is talking about . . .’

For the now thoroughly corporatised Piers Morgan in the *Mail*, Brand was a ‘bogus revolutionary . . . this whole “revolution” he’s trying to wage is a load of old sanctimonious hog-wash’. Morgan was happy to sign-off with a lazy dismissal:

‘Like most great revolutionaries, he’s quite happy wallowing in his own hypocrisy.’

The *Mail* quoted James Cleverly, Conservative London Assembly Member for Bexley and Bromley: ‘Why do the BBC give so much airtime to the vacuous, narcissistic drivel of Russell Brand?’

We tweeted Cleverly:

‘Exactly how often do you see a Brand-style, anti-corporate perspective on the BBC? Every day?’

Cleverly did not respond.

The *Mail* also noted that Conservative MP Philip Davies, a member of the Culture, Media and Sport select committee, had demanded that the corporation look again at its public service remit:

‘Why on earth are BBC giving so much air time to such an idiot is beyond me. Especially on such supposedly serious programmes.’

‘I just don’t think that’s what the BBC is there for. It is not there to give idiots like Russell Brand time to promote his book.’

Boris Johnson wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*:

‘Of course his manifesto is nonsense – as I am sure he would be only too happy, in private, to admit . . . Yes, it is bilge; but that is not the point. Who cares what he really means or what he really thinks?’

For this was ‘semi-religious pseudo-economic mumbo-jumbo’.

Again, another busy individual who had surely not troubled to seriously read the book.

As with Assange, the intent and effect of all this is to portray Brand as so ridiculous, so pitiable, that the public will feel ashamed to be associated with him and his cause.

The corporate media system, with its fraudulent ‘spectrum’ of opinion, is a hammer that falls with a unified, resounding crash on anyone who dares to challenge elite interests. It works relentlessly to beat down human imagination, creativity and hope, to smash the awareness, love and compassion that might otherwise terminate the ‘nightmare of history’. Is resistance futile? Will they always win?

Well, for once, we will give the corporate press the last word. On November 7, the *Daily Mail* reported that Brand’s new book ‘has enjoyed monumental sales – earning the star and his publishers a staggering £230,000 in just 11 days’. The *Mail*, no doubt reluctantly, cited a publishing expert:

‘It’s an awful lot of money to turnaround in such a short period.’

Unmentioned by the *Mail*, Brand has said that profits from the book will go towards a non-hierarchical, not-for-profit café and production company managed by the workforce ‘where recovering addicts like me can run a business based on the ideas in this book’. (p.593) **CT**

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

As with Assange, the intent and effect of all this is to portray Brand as so ridiculous, so pitiable, that the public will feel ashamed to be associated with him and his cause

The mystery of my arrest

Ray McGovern is surprised at what happened when he tried to listen to a talk by a retired and discredited US general in New York City

Many an aging male ego has been massaged by the attentions of someone like Paula Broadwell, and she seemed happy to do the massaging to expedite the research on “All In”, her biography of the fabled general

Why, I asked myself, would the New York City police arrest me and put me in The Tombs overnight, simply because a security officer at the 92nd Street Y told them I was “not welcome” and should be denied entry to a talk by retired General David Petraeus? In my hand was a ticket for which I had reluctantly shelled out \$50.

I had hoped to hear the photogenic but inept Petraeus explain why the Iraqi troops, which he claimed to have trained so well, had fled northern Iraq leaving their weapons behind at the first whiff of Islamic State militants earlier this year. I even harbored some slight hope that the advertised Q & A might afford hoi polloi like me the chance to ask him a real question.

However rare the opportunity to ask real questions has become, it can happen. Witness my extended (four-minute) questioning of then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in Atlanta on May 4, 2006. The exchange wasn't exactly the oh-so-polite give-and-take of the Sunday talk shows but it represented what Americans should expect of democracy, a chance to confront senior government officials when they engage in deception or demonstrate incompetence – especially on issues of war or peace.

It seems a safe guess that somebody wanted to protect Petraeus from even the possibility of such accountability on Oct. 30.

Also, let me make clear that I had no intention of embarrassing the retired four-star general and ex-CIA director with a question about his extramarital affair with his admiring biographer Paula Broadwell, which precipitated his CIA resignation in November 2012.

Many an aging male ego has been massaged by the attentions of someone like Broadwell, and she seemed happy to do the massaging to expedite the research on “All In”, her biography of the fabled general. I had decided to resist the temptation to refer to the Biblical admonition against entrusting large matters to those who cannot be faithful in small things.

The affair may not have been a small thing to Mrs. Petraeus, but it pales in significance when compared to the death and destruction resulting from Petraeus's self-aggrandizing disingenuousness and dissembling about prospects for eventual success in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Petraeus agonistes

Assuming that Petraeus's expertise in counterinsurgency warfare was more than mere pretense, he knew both expeditions were doomed to failure. And he certainly now knows the inevitable answer to the question he famously posed to journalist Rick Atkinson in 2003 as US forces troops began to get mired down in the sand of Iraq – “Tell

Me How This Ends.”

The twin conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq “ended” – if that’s the right word for these late-stage fiascos – with two additional stars pinned to Petraeus’s uniform and with some 6,700 gold stars sent to the wives, husbands, or parents of US troops killed, plus tens of thousands of purple hearts for those badly injured in both body and mind. A bad bargain for the American people and especially the dead and maimed US troops – not to mention the hundreds of thousands of dead and maimed Afghans and Iraqis – but a pretty successful career move for Petraeus, if not for his fateful extramarital affair.

Surely, in the grim light of all the bloodshed, L’Affaire Broadwell can be seen as a minor peccadillo, the least of Petraeus’s sins. But many of his ardent admirers view the sexual indiscretion as the only blot on his otherwise spotless dress uniform festooned with row after row of medals and ribbons.

It was my intent to put the spotlight, via a question or two, on Petraeus’s far more consequentially dishonest behavior. And this seemed particularly important at this point in time, as his starry-eyed emulator generals seem no less willing than Petraeus to throw a new wave of youth from a poverty draft into a fool’s-errand sequel in Iraq and Syria.

In any event, it seems reasonably clear why they did not let me enter the 92nd Street Y on Oct. 30. Someone thought that the thin-skinned ex-general might be discomforted by a less-than-admiring question. His speech was to be another moment for Petraeus to bathe in public adulation, not confront a citizen or two who might pose critical queries. [For more on Petraeus and his acolytes, see Consortiumnews.com’s “Petraeus Spared Ray McGovern’s Question.”]

Lingering mystery

But one mystery lingers. The “organs of state security” (the moniker that we in the CIA used to apply to the Soviet intelligence/security services) were lying in wait for me when I walked into the Y? Why? How on

earth did they know I was coming?

My initial reaction was that the culprit could be a lingering BOLO, the “Be on the Look-Out” warning that the State Department had issued against me earlier for my non-violent anti-war stances. In September, thanks to a civil rights lawsuit filed on my behalf by the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund (PCJF), the State Department rescinded that BOLO alert for me, under which State Department agents had been ordered to stop and question me on sight.

State Department documents acquired under the Freedom of Information Act showed that the damning evidence behind that draconian (and patently unconstitutional) order was “political activism, primarily anti-war.”

The proximate cause was my standing silently with my back to then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Feb. 15, 2011, to protest the unconscionably violent policies she had promoted, including her vote for the Bush-Cheney war of aggression against Iraq (which she thought politically smart at the time) and her infamous suggestion during her political campaign that we could “obliterate” Iran.

In response to my silent protest, I was roughed up, cuffed, arrested, and jailed as Clinton delivered a major speech at George Washington University admonishing foreign governments not to stifle dissent. Heedless of the irony, Clinton did not miss a syllable, much less a word, as she watched me snatched directly in front of her and brutally removed.

The charges were immediately dropped, since there were simply too many cameras recording what actually did happen to me. A State Department investigation into my background came up dry; but the words “political activism, primarily anti-war” were enough to get me BOLOed.

The State Department assured my pro bono lawyers at the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund that State not only had rescinded the BOLO but also had notified other law

In response to my silent protest, I was roughed up, cuffed, arrested, and jailed as Clinton delivered a major speech at George Washington University admonishing foreign governments not to stifle dissent

WHY WE PROTEST / 1

In recent years, many of my Catholic Worker friends have been arrested for protesting the use of drones to kill foreigners dubbed “militants,” most of whom don’t look like most of us

enforcement agencies that the BOLO was “non-operational.” But I remained suspicious that, while the State Department’s assurance may have been made in good faith, God only knows (and then only if God has the proper clearances) what other organs of state security had entered the “derogatory” information about the danger of my “political activism” into their data bases.

Had my “derog” been shared, perhaps, with the ever-proliferating number of “fusion centers” that were so effective in sharing information to track and thwart the activists of Occupy – including subversives like Quakers and Catholic Workers? However, as I reflected on the circumstances of my arrest on Oct. 30, I came to discount the possible role of the BOLO.

Taken by surprise

As I walked up the steps to the 92nd Street Y on Oct. 30, I had no idea there would be a reprise of the treatment accorded me three-and-a-half years ago at Hillary Clinton’s speech.

My friend and associate in Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) Bill Binney, a former Technical Director at the National Security Agency before he left in protest against NSA’s unconstitutional eavesdropping on Americans, long since advised me to assume that I am one of several thousands subjected to post-Fourth-Amendment surveillance.

So I had taken the precaution of asking a friend, who was in no way linked to me via email or phone records, to order the ticket for me, just on the off-chance the organs of state security might learn I intended to hear Petraeus speak at the 92nd Street Y and might do something to prevent my attending.

Actually, it was pure coincidence that I happened to be in New York on the day of the Petraeus event. Months before, I had committed to teaching classes at Manhattan and Fordham universities on Oct. 30. I learned of the Petraeus event much later.

At that point, I chose what I thought would be a safe way to purchase a ticket. But I apparently failed to practice the kind of “tradedcraft” in terms of limiting associations that is needed to function in today’s democratic society.

How did the organs of state security learn I was coming? It is more likely to have been guilt by association than the residue from a BOLO. In short, when I travel to New York to teach, I normally email my friend Martha at Maryhouse in the Bowery – the Catholic Worker house founded by her grandmother, Dorothy Day.

If there is a free bed, I gratefully receive Catholic Worker hospitality and have a chance to enjoy the company of those who have been placed at the margins of society, as well to witness the selfless kindness of those forming authentic relationships with them.

Here’s the catch. Catholic Workers are involved not only in extending hospitality but also in activism, trying, as Dorothy Day did, to make the world a less violent, more caring place. It is primarily the activism, of course, that brings scrutiny from the organs of security, but you might call it “political activism, primarily anti-war,” as the State Department did.

Moreover, the Catholic Worker Movement is an international organization widely looked upon as subversive of the Establishment, and this adds to the suspicion. In recent years, many of my Catholic Worker friends have been arrested for protesting the use of drones to kill foreigners dubbed “militants,” most of whom don’t look like most of us.

But the targets can now include American citizens, as President Barack Obama turns the Constitution upside down and takes it upon himself to act as judge, jury and executioner. Yes, the Fifth Amendment has gone the way of the Fourth, and the First has become an endangered species. Worth protesting before it too is extinct, would you not agree?

In a kind of poetic justice, it turns out my friend Martha has the same court date as I have – the morning of Dec. 8 at the New York City Criminal Court building (aka “The Tombs”) at 100 Centre Street in New York, where I spent the night/morning of Oct. 30/31. She was arrested with about 100 others at a Sept. 22 action dubbed “Flood Wall Street,” protesting the important role of the financial industry in facilitating air pollution and global warming.

In an aside, Martha told me that the police had as much trouble getting handcuffs on the “polar bear” sitting next to her that day as they did on Oct. 30 trying to bend my injured left shoulder back far enough to get the cuffs on me. I look forward to standing at the same dock where Martha will be defending her action which was very much in the tradition of “Grannie.”

My Catholic Worker friends comfort the afflicted, while in no way shying away from afflicting the comfortable, as the saying goes. And for that, they often pay a price, including being snooped upon, in violation of the Fourth Amendment, for exercising their rights under the First.

I am not making this up: In the fall of 2010, Justice Department Inspector General Glenn Fine criticized the FBI for conducting “anti-terrorism” spy operations against the Catholic Worker Movement and even the Thomas Merton Center in Pittsburgh. According to Fine, spies were sent into the Merton Center to “look for international terrorists.” One of the informers photographed a woman he thought was of “Middle Eastern descent” to have her checked out by “terrorism analysts.”

So my possible tradecraft lapse may have been contacting my Catholic Worker friends. On Oct. 26, I sent Martha an email with the innocuous title, “Room in the Inn?” It contained the usual request for simple lodging at the Catholic Worker together with details regarding my classes at Fordham and Manhattan and the Petraeus event.

While the title and other metadata ac-

companying that message might seem singularly unsuspecting, eavesdroppers covering Martha’s or my email addresses (or both) would have had no trouble ferreting out an email exchange following an earlier attempt to attend an event at the 92nd Street Y, three years ago.

On Sept. 8, 2011, a group of Catholic Workers, together with others – all of us with valid tickets – were summarily expelled, most of us 10 minutes before an event sponsored by the Jewish Policy Center. That event bore the title “9/11 a Decade Later: Lessons Learned and Future Challenges” and featured former Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, ex-Attorney General Michael Mukasey, and George W. Bush’s press spokesman Ari Fleisher. It was moderated by neoconservative talk show host Michael Medved.

Since I was not among those subjected to Y security’s preventive strike before the performance, I sat quietly for Medved’s opening rant about radical, fundamentalist Muslim terrorists, but then stood up in silent witness against the right-wing invective. I was unceremoniously, violently thrown out after a mere two minutes.

More relevant here: I still have in my email inbox a message of encouragement dated Sept. 12, 2011, in which Martha reminded me that every action, “successful” or not, is important; adding, “We of the Catholic Worker are ‘fools for Christ,’ as the saying goes.”

Only metadata

You are perhaps thinking that the National Security Agency stores only metadata; and, if so, you would be wrong. Content is saved. So if the government wants to access the content of emails from the past, no problem.

As Bill Binney reminded me, former FBI director Robert Mueller let that particular cat out of the bag three-and-a-half years ago. In his testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 30, 2011, Mueller bragged about having access to “past emails and future ones as they come in.”

I sat quietly for Michael Medved’s opening rant about radical, fundamentalist Muslim terrorists, but then stood up in silent witness against the right-wing invective. I was unceremoniously, violently thrown out after a mere two minutes

WHY WE PROTEST / 1

Substitute Americans for Germans, terrorists for Communists, September 11, 2001, for 1933, and give some thought to where we seem to be headed

.....
Ray McGovern
works for Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served as an Army officer and then a CIA analyst for a total of 30 years, including two tours in Germany. He now serves on the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)

Binney explains that the metadata is used to access the content. And, thanks to the documents provided by Edward Snowden, we know that under NSA's PRISM operation, data is routinely collected directly from Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, Facebook, PalTalk, AOL, Skype, YouTube, Apple (and God knows where else, again assuming God is cleared).

So my best guess is that I can blame the "subversive" activities of the Catholic Workers and the monitoring of them by the organs of state security, for my recent arrest and overnight accommodations in The Tombs.

The people at the World Can't Wait in New York, who were also aware of my plan to take in the Petraeus performance, are known to have been targets of eavesdropping, too. With the surfeit of people sorting through emails from suspicious folks, it may be that both the Catholic Workers and the World Can't Wait were both monitored – all to keep us safe, of course.

It seems the height of irony that it may have been NSA's eavesdropping that enabled the White House to get rid of Petraeus, when he was getting too big for his britches (and I allude here not only to his dalliance with Broadwell). To Bill Binney, it is clear as day that the President was ready to move against Petraeus right after Obama's re-election in November 2012.

A final, sad irony

A couple of days after my arrest and jailing, I received a sympathetic email from "George" in Germany, who described himself as a national security whistleblower in his own right. George strongly suggested I ditch my Gmail account.

"Before Edward Snowden's revelations last spring," he said, "I too was using Gmail as my primary address. I was dismayed to learn that Google was an NSA PRISM partner." George strongly suggested that I switch to a more trustworthy email provider outside the US and actually suggested one in

particular.

Why ironic? In the years after my birth in 1939, Germany was widely considered the cutting edge on matters of eavesdropping and enhanced interrogation techniques, and most Germans didn't challenge these forms of oppression even when it touched them personally. Perhaps saddest of all, those with some pretense to moral leadership – first and foremost the Catholic and Lutheran Churches – could not find their voice. Is that history repeating itself in the US?

In "Defying Hitler", Sebastian Haffner's journal of his life as a lawyer in training to become a judge in Berlin in the early 1930s, the author (whose real name was Raimund Pretzel) provides an eerily reminiscent account of what ensued after Berlin's equivalent of the attacks of 9/11 – the burning of the Reichstag.

"I do not see that one can blame the majority of Germans who, in 1933, believed that the Reichstag fire was the work of the Communists. What one can blame them for, and what shows their terrible collective weakness of character ... is that this settled the matter.

"With sheepish submissiveness, the German people accepted that, as a result of the fire, each one of them lost what little personal freedom and dignity was guaranteed by the constitution, as though it followed as a necessary consequence. If the Communists had burned down the Reichstag, it was perfectly in order that the government took 'decisive measures.' ... from now on, one's telephone would be tapped, one's letters opened, and one's desk might be broken into." (pp. 121-122).

Substitute Americans for Germans, terrorists for Communists, September 11, 2001, for 1933, and give some thought to where we seem to be headed. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. warned that "there is such a thing as being too late," a quotation that, ironically, President Obama is fond of citing. It would be a good thing if we Americans woke from our lethargy before it is too late. **CT**

Redefining 'imminent'

Brian Terrell tells how the US Department of Justice makes murder respectable, kills the innocent and jails their defenders

Political language can be used, George Orwell said in 1946, “to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.” In order to justify its global assassination program, the Obama administration has had to stretch words beyond their natural breaking points. For instance, any male 14 years or older found dead in a drone strike zone is a “combatant” unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving him innocent. We are also informed that the constitutional guarantee of “due process” does not imply that the government must precede an execution with a trial. I think the one word most degraded and twisted these days, to the goriest ends, is the word “imminent.”

Just what constitutes an “imminent” threat? Our government has long taken bold advantage of the American public’s willingness to support lavish spending on armaments and to accept civilian casualties in military adventures abroad and depletion of domestic programs at home, when told these are necessary responses to deflect precisely such threats. The government has vastly expanded the meaning of the word “imminent.” This new definition is crucial to the US drone program, designed for projecting lethal force throughout the world. It provides a legal and moral pretext for the annihilation of people far away who pose

no real threat to us at all.

The use of armed remotely controlled drones as the United States’ favored weapon in its “war on terror” is increasing exponentially in recent years, raising many disturbing questions. Wielding 500 pound bombs and Hellfire missiles, Predator and Reaper drones are not the precise and surgical instruments of war so effusively praised by President Obama for “narrowly targeting our action against those who want to kill us and not the people they hide among.” It is widely acknowledged that the majority of those killed in drone attacks are unintended, collateral victims. The deaths of the drones’ intended targets and how they are chosen should be no less troubling.

Those deliberately targeted by drones are often far from conflict zones, often they are in countries with whom the US is not at war and on some occasions have been US citizens. They are rarely “taken out” in the heat of battle or while engaged in hostile actions and are more likely to be killed (with anyone in their vicinity) at a wedding, at a funeral, at work, hoeing in the garden, driving down the highway or enjoying a meal with family and friends. These deaths are counted as something other than murder only for the curious insistence by the government’s lawyers that each of these victims represent an “imminent” threat to our lives and safety here at home in the US

Any male 14 years or older found dead in a drone strike zone is a “combatant” unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving him innocent

As far as the Justice Department is concerned, an “imminent” threat is now whomever an “informed high-level US government official” determines to be such, based on evidence known to that official alone, never to be made public or reviewed by any court

In February 2013, a US Department of Justice White Paper, “Lawfulness of a Lethal Operation Directed Against a US Citizen Who Is a Senior Operational Leader of Al-Qa’ida or an Associated Force,” was leaked by NBC News. This paper sheds some light on the legal justification for drone assassinations and explains the new and more flexible definition of the word “imminent.” “First,” it declares, “the condition that an operational leader present an ‘imminent’ threat of violent attack against the United States does not require the United States to have clear evidence that a specific attack on US persons and interests will take place in the immediate future.”

Before the Department of Justice lawyers got a hold of it, the meaning of the word “imminent” was unmistakably clear. Various dictionaries of the English language are all in agreement that the word “imminent” explicitly denotes something definite and immediate, “likely to occur at any moment,” “impending,” “ready to take place,” “looming,” “pending,” “threatening,” “around the corner.” Nor has the legal definition of the word left room for ambiguity. After World War II, the Nuremberg Tribunal reaffirmed a 19th-century formulation of customary international law written by Daniel Webster, which said that the necessity for preemptive use of force in self-defense must be “instant, overwhelming, and leaving no choice of means, and no moment for deliberation.” That was in the past. Now, any possible future threat – and any person on earth arguably might pose one – however remote, can satisfy the new definition. As far as the Justice Department is concerned, an “imminent” threat is now whomever an “informed high-level US government official” determines to be such, based on evidence known to that official alone, never to be made public or reviewed by any court.

The breadth of the government’s definition of “imminent” is murderous in its enormity. It is all the more ironic that the same Department of Justice will also regularly de-

fine the word so narrowly as to convict and imprison law abiding and responsible citizens who act to defend the innocent from genuinely imminent harm by the actions of the US government. On example especially relevant to the issue of killing by drone is the case of the “Creech 14.”

After the first act of nonviolent resistance to the lethal use of unmanned and remotely controlled drones in the United States took place at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada back in April, 2009, it took more than a year before the 14 of us accused of criminal trespass had our day in court. As this was the first opportunity for activists to “put drones on trial” at a time when few Americans were aware they even existed, we were especially diligent in preparing our case, to argue clearly and cogently, not in order to keep ourselves out of jail but for the sake of those who have died and those who live in fear of the drones. With coaching by some fine trial lawyers, our intention was to represent ourselves and drawing on humanitarian international law, to offer a strong defense of necessity, even while we were aware that there was little chance that the court would hear our arguments.

The defense of necessity, that one has not committed a crime if an act that is otherwise illegal was done to prevent a greater harm or crime from being perpetrated, is recognized by the Supreme Court as a part of the common law. It is not an exotic or even a particularly unusual defense. “The rationale behind the necessity defense is that sometimes, in a particular situation, a technical breach of the law is more advantageous to society than the consequence of strict adherence to the law,” says West’s Encyclopedia of American Law “The defense is often used successfully in cases that involve a Trespass on property to save a person’s life or property.” It might appear, then, that this defense is a natural one for minor infractions such as our alleged trespass, intended to stop the use of drones in a war of aggression, the crime against peace that the

Nuremberg Tribunal named “the supreme international crime.”

In reality, though, courts in the US almost never allow the necessity defense to be raised in cases like ours. Most of us were experienced enough not to be surprised when we finally got to the Justice Court in Las Vegas in September, 2010, and Judge Jensen ruled in lockstep with his judicial colleagues. He insisted at the onset of our case that he was having none of it. “Go ahead,” he said, allowing us to call our expert witnesses but sternly forbidding us from asking them any questions that matter. “Understand, it is only going to be limited to trespass, what knowledge he or she has, if any, whether you were or were not out at the base. We’re not getting into international laws; that’s not the issue. That’s not the issue. What the government is doing wrong, that’s not the issue. The issue is trespass.”

Our co-defendant Steve Kelly followed the judge’s instructions and questioned our first witness, former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark, about his firsthand knowledge of trespass laws from working at the Department of Justice during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Steve specifically guided the witness to speak of “the cases of trespass ... of lunch counter activities where laws stated you were not to sit at certain lunch counters” in the struggle for civil rights. Ramsey Clark acknowledged that those arrested for violating these laws had not committed crimes. Steve pushed his luck with the judge and offered the classic illustration of the necessity defense: “A situation where there is a ‘no trespassing’ sign and there is smoke coming out of a door or a window and a person is up on the upper floor in need of help. To enter that building, in a real narrow technical sense, would be trespass. Is there a possibility, in the long run, it wouldn’t be trespass to help the person upstairs?” Ramsey replied, “We would hope so, wouldn’t we? To have a baby burn to death or something, because of a ‘no

trespass’ sign would be poor public policy to put it mildly. Criminal.”

Judge Jensen by this time was obviously intrigued. His ruling to limit the testimony to trespass held, but as his fascination grew, so his interpretation of his own order grew more elastic. Over the repeated objections of the prosecution team, the judge allowed limited but powerful testimony from Ramsey and our other witnesses, retired US Army Colonel and former diplomat Ann Wright and Loyola Law School Professor Bill Quigley that put our alleged trespass into its context as an act to stop a heinous crime.

I had the honor of making the closing statement for the accused, which I ended with, “We 14 are the ones who are seeing the smoke from the burning house and we are not going to be stopped by a ‘no trespassing’ sign from going to the burning children.”

Our appreciation for a judge’s extraordinary attention to the facts of the case aside, we still expected nothing but an immediate conviction and sentencing. Judge Jensen surprised us: “I consider it more than just a plain trespass trial. A lot of serious issues are at stake here. So I’m going to take it under advisement and I will render a written decision. And it may take me two to three months to do so, because I want to make sure that I’m right on whatever I rule on.”

When we returned to Las Vegas in January, 2011, Judge Jensen read his decision that it was just a plain trespass trial, after all and we were guilty. Among several justifications for convicting us, the judge rejected what he called “the Defendants’ claim of necessity” because “first, the Defendants failed to show that their protest was designed to prevent ‘imminent’ harm.” He faulted our case for not presenting the court with “evidence that any military activities involving drones were being conducted or about to be conducted on the day of the Defendants’ arrest,” seeming to forget that he had ordered us not to submit any such evidence, even if we had it.

Judge Jensen’s verdict was amply sup-

Our appreciation for a judge’s extraordinary attention to the facts of the case aside, we still expected nothing but an immediate conviction and sentencing

WHY WE PROTEST / 2

Although the victims of drone violence on the day of our arrest were far away in Afghanistan and Iraq, those crimes were being committed by combatants sitting at computer screens in trailers not far from where we were apprehended by Air Force police

ported by the precedents he cited, including a 1991 appellate court ruling, *US v Schoon*, that concerned a protest aimed to “keep US tax dollars out of El Salvador” at an IRS office in Tucson. In this protest, the Ninth Circuit ruled, “the requisite imminence was lacking.” In other words, because the harm protested was taking place in El Salvador, a trespass in Tucson cannot be justified. So, Judge Jensen reasoned, burning children in a house in Afghanistan cannot excuse a trespass in Nevada.

The NBC leak of that Department of Justice White Paper wouldn’t happen for two more years (call it suppression of evidence?) and as far as Judge Jensen knew, the dictionary definition of “imminent” was still operant. Even so, had we been allowed to testify beyond the narrow confines set at trial, we would have shown that with new satellite technology, the lethal threat we were addressing there is always imminent by any reasonable definition of the word. Although the victims of drone violence on the day of our arrest were indeed far away in Afghanistan and Iraq, those crimes were actually being committed by combatants sitting at computer screens, engaged in real-time hostilities in trailers on the base, not so far at all from where we were apprehended by Air Force police.

The government does not believe that it needs to have “clear evidence that a specific attack on US persons and interests will take place in the immediate future” to establish an imminent threat and so carry out extrajudicial executions of human beings anywhere on the planet. Citizens who act to stop killing by drones, on the other hand, are required to have specific “evidence that any military activities involving drones were being conducted or about to be conducted,” in order to justify nonviolently entering into government property. The government’s position on this lacks coherence, at best. Even after the publication of its White Paper, the Department of Justice continues to block defendants ac-

cused of trespass from even mentioning the fact that they were arrested while responding to an imminent threat to innocent life, and the courts obligingly accept this contradiction.

The defense of necessity does not simply justify actions that technically violate the law. “Necessity,” says West’s Encyclopedia of American Law, is “a defense asserted by a criminal or civil defendant that he or she had no choice but to break the law.” As Ramsey Clark testified in a Las Vegas courtroom five years ago, “to have a baby burn to death because of a ‘no trespass sign’ would be poor public policy to put it mildly.” In a time of burning children, the “no trespassing” signs attached to the fences that protect the crimes executed with drones and other instruments of terror hold no potency and they do not command our obedience. The courts that do not recognize this reality allow themselves to be used as instruments of governmental malfeasance.

There have been many more trials since the Creech 14 and in the meanwhile, many more children have been incinerated by missiles fired from drones. On December 10, International Human Rights Day, Georgia Walker and Kathy Kelly will go to trial in US District Court in Jefferson City, Missouri, after they peacefully brought their grievance and a loaf of bread onto Whiteman Air Force Base, another in the growing number of stateside remote control killer drone centers.

Two years ago in that same court in a similar case, Judge Whitworth rejected the necessity defense offered by Ron Faust and me, subsequently sentencing Ron to five years of probation and sending me to prison for six months. It is to be hoped that Judge Whitworth will take advantage of this second chance that Kathy and Georgia courageously offer and exonerate himself and his profession. **CT**

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Brian Terrell is a co-coordinator for Voices for Creative Nonviolence – <http://vcnv.org>

Better dead than different

Our visions of the future are defined, like the film *Interstellar*, by technological optimism and political defeatism, writes **George Monbiot**

“It’s like we’ve forgotten who we are,” the hero of the film *Interstellar* complains. “Explorers, pioneers, not caretakers ... We’re not meant to save the world. We’re meant to leave it.” It could be the epigraph of our age.

Don’t get me wrong. *Interstellar* is a magnificent film, true to the richest traditions of science fiction, visually and auditorily astounding. See past the necessary silliness and you will find a moving exploration of parenthood, separation and ageing. It is also a classic exposition of two of the great themes of our age: technological optimism and political defeatism.

The Earth and its inhabitants are facing planetary catastrophe, caused by “six billion people, and every one of them trying to have it all”, which weirdly translates into a succession of blights, trashing the world’s crops and sucking the oxygen out of the atmosphere. (When your major receipts are in the US, you can’t afford to earn the hatred of the broadcast media by mentioning climate change. The blight, an obvious substitute, has probably averted millions of dollars of lost takings).

The civilisational collapse at the start of the film is intercut with interviews with veterans of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. Their worn faces prefigure the themes of ageing and loss. But they also remind us inadvertently of a world of political agency. Great follies were

committed but big, brave things were done to put them right: think of the New Deal and the Civilian Conservation Corps. That world is almost as different from our own as the planets visited by *Interstellar*’s astronauts.

They leave the Earth to find a place to which humans can escape or, if that fails, one in which a cargo of frozen embryos can be deposited. It takes an effort, when you emerge, to remember that such fantasies are taken seriously by millions of adults, who consider them a realistic alternative to addressing the problems we face on Earth.

NASA runs a website – <http://settlement.arc.nasa.gov> – devoted to the idea. It claims that gigantic spaceships, “could be wonderful places to live; about the size of a California beach town and endowed with weightless recreation, fantastic views, freedom, elbow-room in spades, and great wealth.” Of course, no one could leave, except to enter another spaceship, and the slightest malfunction would cause instant annihilation. But “settlements in earth orbit will have one of the most stunning views in our solar system – the living, ever-changing Earth.” We can look back and remember how beautiful it was.

And then there’s the money to be made. “Space colonization is, at its core, a real estate business. ... Those that colonize space will control vast lands, enormous amounts of electrical power, and nearly unlimited material resources. [This] will create wealth

It takes an effort to remember that such fantasies are taken seriously by millions of adults, who consider them a realistic alternative to addressing the problems we face on Earth

WHERE WE BELONG

Just as it is easier to pray for life after death than it is to confront oppression, this fantasy permits us to escape the complexities of life of Earth for a starlit wonderland beyond politics.

beyond our wildest imagination and wield power – hopefully for good rather than for ill.” In other words, we would leave not only the Earth behind but also ourselves.

That’s a common characteristic of such fantasies: their lack of imagination. Wild flights of technological fancy are accompanied by a stolid incapacity to picture the inner life of those who might inhabit such systems. People who would consider the idea of living in the Gobi Desert intolerable – where, an estate agent might point out, there is oxygen, radiation-screening, atmospheric pressure and 1g of gravity – rhapsodise about living on Mars. People who imagine that human life on Earth will end because of power and greed and oppression imagine we will escape these forces in pressure vessels controlled by technicians, in which we would be trapped like tadpoles in a jam jar.

If space colonisation is impossible today, when Richard Branson, for all his billions, cannot even propel people safely past the atmosphere, how will it look in a world that has fallen so far into disaster that leaving it for a lifeless, airless lump of rock would be perceived as a good option? We’d be lucky in these circumstances to possess the wherewithal to make bricks.

Only by understanding this as a religious impulse can we avoid the conclusion that those who gleefully await this future are insane. Just as it is easier to pray for life after death than it is to confront oppression, this fantasy permits us to escape the complexities of life of Earth for a starlit wonderland beyond politics. In *Interstellar*, as in many other versions of the story, space is heaven, overseen by a benign Technology, peopled by delivering angels with oxygen tanks.

Space colonisation is an extreme version of a common belief: that it is easier to adapt to our problems than to solve them. Earlier this year, the economist Andrew Lilico argued in the *Telegraph* that we can’t afford to prevent escalating climate change, so instead we must learn to live with it. He was challenged on Twitter to explain how people in

the tropics might adapt to a world in which four degrees of global warming had taken place. He replied: “I imagine tropics adapt to 4C world by being wastelands with few folk living in them. Why’s that not an option?”

Re-reading his article in the light of this comment, I realised that it hinged on the word “we”. When the headline maintained that “We have failed to prevent global warming, so we must adapt to it”, the “we” referred in these instances to different people. We in the rich world can brook no taxation to encourage green energy, or regulation to discourage the consumption of fossil fuels. We cannot adapt even to an extra penny of tax. But the other “we”, which turns out to mean “they” – the people of the tropics – can and must adapt to the loss of their homes, their land and their lives, as entire regions become wastelands. Why is that not an option?

The lives of the poor appear unimaginable to people in his position, like the lives of those who might move to another planet or a space station. So reducing the amount of energy we consume and replacing fossil fuels with other sources, simple and cheap as these are by comparison to all other options, is inconceivable and outrageous, while the mass abandonment of much of the inhabited surface of the world is a realistic and reasonable request. “It is not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger”, David Hume noted, and here we see his contemplation reified.

But at least Andrew Lilico could explain what he meant, by contrast to most of those who talk breezily about adapting to climate breakdown. Relocating cities to higher ground? Moving roads and railways, diverting rivers, depopulating nations, leaving the planet? Never mind the details. Technology, our interstellar god, will sort it out, some day, somehow.

Technological optimism and political defeatism: this is a formula for the deferment of hard choices to an ever-receding neverland of life after planetary death. No wonder it is popular. **CT**

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

After Cheney

Michael S. Rozoff looks back at the disastrous Cheney-Powell-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz Strategy for world domination

The US never demobilized after the Cold War ended. It constructed new missions for its military. It adopted a new post-Cold War strategy but kept its military forces intact.

Americans received no peace dividend. To the contrary, as the years have passed and America's wars have proliferated, Americans have expended enormous wealth.

The war policies of Barack Obama and George W. Bush grew out of defense plans of the George H.W. Bush and Clinton administrations. These plans maintained the Cold War mentality. This involved the US constantly being heavily armed against foes and enemies. The Defense Department planners transmuted "Global threats" of the Cold War into "regional challenges and opportunities." These plans retained a US military force structure suitable for a war-time situation, rather than the actual peacetime situation.

In order to keep the US on a military footing despite being at peace, these plans replaced the Soviet Union with an array of other justifications. They appealed to such goals as maintaining regional stability, being able to fight two wars, defending American overseas interests in natural resources, warding off foreign threats, fighting terrorism and preventing the emergence of rivals. The planners multiplied missions and magnified their importance.

In the past, no such goals had ever prevented the US from demobilizing and returning to a peacetime posture. None of these goals was ever serious enough or regarded as so serious as to require that the US be on a continuous war footing. The US had not before regarded itself as a sole superpower. It had not conceived itself as having these missions to fulfill, with the attendant military superiority and applications of force that they implied.

It is argued below that the defense policy plans were constructed so as to justify the military. The justifications and arguments they contained failed to reflect all sorts of realities. Consequently, when put into practice, they have failed miserably. They have not lived up to the aspirations of the planners.

In its planning, the US established missions for itself that relied on war and force. The missions were broad, open-ended, vague, and subject to interpretation. They opened up into new pro-active vistas. The language of the plans often sounded innocuous or even sensible and reasonable, but they were disturbing in many ways. Carrying over the Cold War mentality, they blithely referred to democracy as if it were a criterion of goodness and as if peace required its extension everywhere. American interests everywhere were taken for granted. The plans were global in scope. The seeds of

Carrying over the Cold War mentality, the US blithely referred to democracy as if it were a criterion of goodness and as if peace required its extension everywhere

PROPHETS OF DOOM

Any country that the US regarded as nondemocratic became an automatic threat, especially if its region contained resources that the US regarded as critical

pre-emptive warfare were planted.

In the January, 1993 document containing “Defense Strategy for the 1990s”, Dick Cheney would write

“Together with our allies, we must preclude hostile nondemocratic powers from dominating regions critical to our interests and otherwise work to build an international environment conducive to our values.”

Plans to extend NATO were in place:

“The second goal is to strengthen and extend the system of defense arrangements that binds democratic and like-minded nations together in common defense against aggression...”

The US planned full spectrum dominance everywhere. Any country that the US regarded as nondemocratic became an automatic threat, especially if its region contained resources that the US regarded as critical:

“The third goal is to preclude any hostile power from dominating a region critical to our interests, and also thereby to strengthen the barriers against the reemergence of a global threat to the interests of the United States and our allies. These regions include Europe, East Asia, the Middle East/Persian Gulf, and Latin America. Consolidated, non-democratic control of the resources of such a critical region could generate a significant threat to our security.”

Defense was redefined to include activities that involved social and political changes in foreign regions under the theory that doing this produced a good known as reduced regional instability. The US would spread democracy in its own defense. Under the umbrella of national security policy, the US would see fit to meddle in all sorts of ways and in all sorts of regions and countries:

“The fourth goal is to help preclude conflict by reducing sources of regional instability and to limit violence should conflict occur. Within the broader national security policy of encouraging the spread and consolidation of democratic government and

open economic systems, the Defense Department furthers these ends through efforts to counter terrorism, drug trafficking, and other threats to internal democratic order, assistance to peacekeeping efforts; the provision of humanitarian and security assistance; limits on the spread of militarily significant technology, particularly the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction along with the means to deliver them; and the use of defense-to-defense contacts to assist in strengthening civil-military institutions and encourage reductions in the economic burden of military spending.”

Pre-emption and spreading democracy became part of US doctrine:

“Our strategy is designed to preclude threats and to encourage trends that advance US security objectives in the future. This is not simply within our means; it is critical to our future security...If we and other leading democracies continue to build a democratic security community, a much safer world is likely to emerge.”

In 2002, David Armstrong identified some of the US defense planning and strategy documents that have guided major elements of US foreign policy for about the past 25 years. He identified the men directly responsible for drawing up these plans and strategies as Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Colin Powell and Donald Rumsfeld. As time went on, the plans and strategies evolved. In May of 1997, Defense Secretary William S. Cohen issued a new Quadrennial Defense Review.

In a journal article published in 2011, Alexandra Homolar writes that between 1989 and 1995, these formal defense reviews

“provided a medium for political bargaining between key actors in the defence policymaking community which enabled the maintenance of core elements of the status quo. This bargaining process led to a rearticulation of actors’ interests that in turn enabled a new strategic consensus to emerge that preserved many of the principal pillars of US Cold War defence policy,

the linchpin of which was a shared belief in the need to maintain an absolute superiority in US military power.”

She also identifies Powell, Cheney and Wolfowitz as key players. Les Aspin resisted the direction being taken, but Bill Clinton acceded. She concludes:

“...all major defence reviews in the post-Cold War era have underlined the US status as the sole military superpower and the will to persist as the world’s preeminent military power as well as the willingness to resort to the use of military force, despite a strategic environment where manifest military threats to US interests appeared to have declined substantially. In short, the maintenance of ‘unipolarity’ quickly became defined as a central objective of US defence policy in the post-Cold War era... At the same time, this reconfiguration of US strategic objectives served to avert radical changes within the US defence establishment.”

These defense plans that embody the Cheney-Powell-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz (CPRW) strategy would lead to the US war policies of the twenty-first century. They would lead to the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya among others. They would lead to the effort to oust Syria’s government, to sanctions on Iran and Russia, and to drone warfare in Yemen, Somalia and Pakistan. They would lead to the blowback of 9/11 and to the Islamic State. They would lead to the Department of Homeland Security, to the growth of the national security state, and to the TSA. They would lead to confrontation with Russia over Ukraine and to a Pacific “pivot” that confronts China. They would lead to AFRICOM.

The planners saw their plans as relevant for the next 100 years, and they have not yet been proven incorrect in their assessment. Even though these plans in practice have produced enormous failures that can be traced back to the false assumptions and mistaken ideas of the planners, the US government has yet to acknowledge its failures

much less alter its basic presumptions.

Under the Cheney-Powell-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz (CPRW) strategy, a huge military is kept alive and US policy is reshaped around that military force. The CPRW strategy creates a military force structure that’s not needed for maintaining peace or for security. This has major negative effects. For one thing, the US government then has options to apply military force throughout the world. The missions are so broad that the government has the option of making continuous war, but more importantly it has the option of making war at junctures that favor swaying domestic political outcomes. War at chosen junctures brings certain benefits to government officials, including a way to re-align domestic political opposition and a way to win elections. The result is wars being made for political purposes. Second, politicians who have their own personal reasons for making war have a ready-made tool to do so. Third, any group with the skill to work the levers of government power or convince officials can instigate wars for its own reasons. Project for a New American Century (PNAC) did just that. Cheney, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz were also associated with PNAC. These groups can mobilize important segments of the public in support of their aims. Fourth, even if war is avoided, the US government stands ready to intervene in almost any country for almost any reason. This meddling has very high costs. Beside being difficult to reverse, it ties the US into local and regional predicaments that the US cannot resolve. Where a regional hegemon might be able to keep order, the US cannot. Regional instability rises.

The CPRW strategy created a standing war-making machine, and a standing war-making machine is an invitation to the making of war. Consequently, the wrong wars in the wrong places and for the wrong reasons become more probable. Wars for non-rational reasons or without rational calculation of the war’s costs and benefits

The US missions are so broad that the government has the option of making continuous war, but more importantly it has the option of making war at junctures that favor swaying domestic political outcome

PROPHETS OF DOOM

The NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999 showed how wrong Cheney's thinking was. The role of NATO in the Libyan campaign provided a further instance. NATO's response to the Ukrainian conflict makes total hash out of his statement

become more likely. Because it provides the military means, the CPRW strategy encourages government and those who influence government to push other nations around and dominate them in the name of doing good. At the same time, the CPRW strategy reflects this aim to begin with.

A tremendous gulf divides the lofty CPRW strategy of the elite defense establishment from the results that have actually occurred on the ground when these plans were put into practice.

“But Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best-laid schemes o’ mice an’ men
Gang aft agley,
An’ lea’e us nought but grief an’ pain,
For promis’d joy!”

Instead of a safer world, the world is less safe. Cheney’s defense document contains one erroneous statement after another, which explains why his best-laid schemes went astray. For example, he wrote

“One of the primary tasks we face today in shaping the future is carrying long standing alliances into the new era, and turning old enmities into new cooperative relationships. If we and other leading democracies continue to build a democratic security community, a much safer world is likely to emerge.”

Extending NATO’s life and range to Russia’s borders didn’t make Russia more cooperative. How could it possibly do so? Withdrawing from the ABM treaty didn’t achieve that end either. How could it do anything but interfere with cooperation? The US built and extended its “democratic security community”, but that hasn’t made the world safer.

Cheney opined that:

“Our fundamental belief in democracy and human rights gives other nations confidence that our significant military power threatens no one’s aspirations for peaceful democratic progress.”

How believable is it that the US could grow in strength but others would not feel threatened? That might well be a first in human history, but Cheney thought that American exceptionalism (its “fundamental belief in democracy and human rights”) assured this result. How could other nations not feel threatened when the US in practice used its military power to violate human rights and to violate international law?

Cheney’s thinking in this 1993 document, which was US official doctrine, made this assertion:

“Similarly, NATO’s new strategy not only reflects an adjustment to the reduced threat environment in Europe but equally it reassures our former adversaries of the truly defensive nature of the NATO alliance.”

The NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999 showed how wrong his thinking was. The role of NATO in the Libyan campaign provided a further instance. NATO’s response to the Ukrainian conflict makes total hash out of this statement.

One last example of many that could be cited shows again that the US plans were shaped without sufficient regard to realities. The documents live in a rarified world of their own in which the writers seem to think that what they express about the world actually makes it so. It doesn’t. Their ignorance of everything involved is so vast that they could not help but go wrong. Cheney wrote

“Our ability to reduce sources of regional instability and to limit violence should conflict occur also is critical to shaping the environment This includes, for example, updating our strategy to counter the proliferation of militarily significant technology, particularly the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction along with the means to deliver them. Our traditional export control efforts must not only be updated and strengthened in this new era, but supplemented by political dissuasion, bilateral and multilateral negotiations, and inspection and destruction missions, as illustrated in the case of Iraq.”

There was a fixation on Iraq and weapons of mass destruction revealed here and elsewhere in the thought of American defense planners. They seem to have lost all sense of proportion. Accompanying this was the sense that it was up to the US to “reduce sources of regional instability”. Why? And could it be done? Cheney was intent on “shaping the environment”, another fixation. Why attempt this? Was this really necessary for security of Americans? Is it even feasible? Were Cheney and his planners even cognizant of the difficulties in doing so? He thought this was “critical”. Why? How much difference does it really make to Americans if various regions have changes or instability? Isn’t this as old as the hills?

Here we have Cheney piling up one erroneous, distorted or wild idea atop another.

Eventually these ideas would lead him and Bush to an attack on Iraq. These ideas could be made to sound sensible and logical by practitioners of the art of persuasion on talk shows, interviews and speeches; but they are all flawed and they led to disaster, it being widely thought, as is easy to document, that the decision to invade Iraq was a huge policy blunder.

The CPRW plans and strategy are official US policy to this date. They are a loser. **CT**

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Michael S. Rozeff [msroz@buffalo.edu] is a retired Professor of Finance living in East Amherst, New York. He is the author of the free e-book Essays on American Empire: Liberty vs. Domination and the free e-book The US Constitution and Money: Corruption and Decline.

Here we have Cheney piling up one erroneous, distorted or wild idea atop another

HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



Too many prying eyes

Bill Buchanan tells why the head of Britain's signals intelligence agency is upset at internet companies increasing security for their users

Now more connected, more mobile than ever, we carry our most sensitive data with us all the time: what was once protected by firewalls and physical security is now in our pocket

Robert Hannigan, the new head of British signals intelligence agency GCHQ, has accused technology companies of aiding terrorists and criminals by providing them secure communications through their products and networks.

Far from adopting a conciliatory tone following last year's revelations from documents leaked by Edward Snowden about government spying on citizens, the intelligence chief has doubled down, railing against companies like Microsoft, Google, Facebook, Yahoo and Apple for what some will see as trying to balance user privacy against the rapacious demands of the surveillance services.

Hannigan's statement is bound to rile some. Privacy, he says, has never been "an absolute right". Extremist groups are using the liberties granted them by the web: while some have been harboured by dark areas of the net in the past, ISIS instead uses the internet to openly "promote itself, intimidate people, and radicalise new recruits."

Apple recently released iOS 8, the latest version of its mobile phone and tablet operating system, with encryption for the phones contents enabled by default. This led to outcries from the FBI that it would make their work harder, while a Chicago police chief claimed the iPhone would become to "choice of phone for paedophiles".

The fifth version of Google's Android operating system, codenamed Lollipop, was released last month with similar security upgrades. Besieged by thefts and leaks of anything from intimate photos to financial data, users might legitimately ask why it has taken so long.

The protection for digital files on computers or phones provided by file attributes and content types has barely changed in decades, and is based on concepts of stand-alone computer systems, and with little thought on keeping things truly private. This works well from a corporate point of view, where we can keep backwards compatibility and allow IT department administrators to keep full control.

The firms creating mobile devices, however, have different issues, as their devices are on the move, and often stolen or mislaid. The internet itself is built from the protocols used in the days of mainframe computers and teletype terminals, with little thought given to protecting data as it is stored and transmitted. Now more connected, more mobile than ever, we carry our most sensitive data with us all the time: what was once protected by firewalls and physical security is now in our pocket.

With mobile phones increasingly integrated into our lives, the devices need to be more protected than our traditional desktop computers. So Apple and Google now find

themselves with consumers who will switch mobile devices to keep up to date, without many decades of previous operating systems and application software to maintain compatibility with – the ball and chain around Microsoft’s neck, particularly. With the power and speed of even mobile phone hardware now considerable and growing all the time, the days when a special maths chip was needed to perform complex cryptography are gone.

This tension between law enforcement and the right to privacy remains unresolved. The FBI currently sees the status quo, where major tech companies are persuaded or brow-beaten into cooperating with police and security agencies under the PATRIOT Act, as necessary to pursue criminals and terrorists.

In the UK the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) defines what information of citizens that law enforcement can

access, with the support of a warrant.

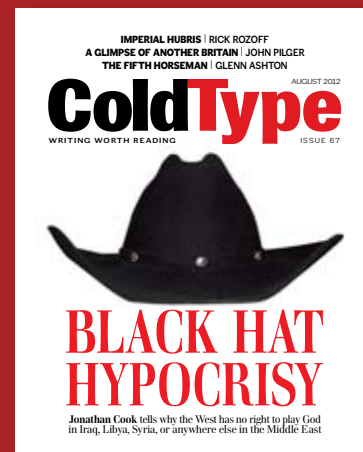
In both cases this will undoubtedly become harder with encryption-by-default, and the same tension exists with encrypted and anonymised “dark net” service Tor, where law enforcement are scared that crime can go un-noticed, whereas privacy advocates promote the privacy capabilities it offers.

But the introduction of improved security is a predictable response to a situation in which the agencies headed by Hannigan’s predecessors and fellow spooks have been seen to ease themselves past those safeguards to citizens’ information that remain.

CT

Bill Buchanan is the head of the Centre for Distributed Computing, Networks and Security at Edinburg Napier University.

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Propaganda, pride, art and nostalgia

Nate Robert visits Kyrgyzstan's decaying museum of communism where he is intrigued by the exhibits on display

The State History Museum in Bishkek is chock full of displays featuring Lenin, Marx, and the whole commie gang

Life back in the 80's was Saturday morning cartoons, Russian and American leaders on the news, Dead Kennedys and Beastie Boys on the boombox. An inevitable nuclear war was imminently about to rain down upon us, and give anyone who wasn't wearing 2 million-strength sunblock a really fucking bad day. Back then, to a teenager in the West, communism was just a bunch of poor nations where mono-browed men drove boxy cars, on the same muddy streets women wore scarves and lined up for bread.

No, I didn't experience communism. However, the outlandish communist propaganda murals on the ceiling of Kyrgyzstan's State History Museum forced the memories of my very Western upbringing to come flooding back. It's not always rational, but nostalgia can be exquisitely powerful.

Housed in a typically Soviet-era building, and formerly known as the "Museum of Lenin" (of course), the State History Museum in Bishkek is chock full of displays featuring Lenin, Marx, and the whole commie gang. Sure, there's a decent amount of Kyrgyzstan's non-Soviet cultural history





Goose-stepping guards on patrol outside the National Museum of History at Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.



Communism promotes peace while American presidents ride nuclear missiles and wear skeleton masks.

There's a lot of fire, brimstone, and skeletons, just to put a little fear into the mind of anyone doubting the party line

– however, the Soviet-era propaganda that fills most of the ceiling space is the main event. Images show just how swell life under communism is, capitalism is bad, the evil West is always out for war, communists have tractors and being a worker is so great so let's all drink wine, and all religions suck. And of course, there's a lot of fire, brimstone, and skeletons, just to put a little fear into the mind of anyone doubting the party line. Unfortunately, the beautifully painted murals are decaying, and either through lack of money or lack of will, the result will be the same – all of these communist murals will soon disappear.

Most contemporary governments would

like to forget that whole communist period. Around the world, any evidence of the communist/socialist-era is being actively destroyed, or passively left to quietly decay. From Macedonia removing any reference to the Socialist era of Tito and the former Yugoslavia, to Lenin statutes dropping like flies in the Ukraine, history is vanishing. Ironically, there is currently a huge interest in the history of the communist era, and it's not just from doe-eyed Western tourists.

There's a reason so many people in post-communist, post-socialist nations yearn to go back to the "good old days". It's not the bread-lines, or having to book a plumber fourteen months in advance. It's nostalgia.



Communism will save you from the Nazi's, especially if you're Jewish.



Throw your children in the air, like you just don't care. The joys of communism are depicted at the National Museum of History, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.



Destruction of royal families is one ideal of communism I'm actually more than OK with – National Museum of History, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.



That sailor, well, he's just fabulous. Not that there's anything wrong with that – National Museum of History, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Most westerners would be amazed at the number of people who yearn for a return of the communist era

That twisted happiness of pain and longing, reminding them of a time they can never return to. Time travel doesn't exist, but a fleeting jolt of nostalgia has the same effect. Whether communism made any sense or not, whether life was objectively better or worse during communism, is not the point. Most westerners would be amazed at the number of people who yearn for a return of the communist era. The emotional power of nostalgia allows people to travel back to a place that in their minds, was utopia. Perception is reality.

I know, not everyone is a fan of soviet-era communist propoganda art. And that, may

be the understatement of the year. However, it's more than likely that the imagery adorning the ceiling of the National History Museum in Bishkek is seeing its last days. So, I thought it would be a good idea to take a bunch of photos of the ceiling, just for posterity. I have a feeling these images will be floating around the internet for some time to come, being dug out whenever someone has a strange nostalgic twang for the good old days of communism.

Personally, I enjoyed the National History Museum so much, I've already visited twice.

I may have a problem.

CT



Flames, skulls, bullets, cannons, pretty blonde, an armless doll being stabbed by a gun – National Museum of History, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.



Don't doubt progress, little girl, for with communism we have Fordson tractors.



"We shall dig for bread, and young children will supply us with military uniforms in case of nuclear war."

The Syrian labyrinth

Conn Hallinan reviews *Inside Syria*, an important new book by Reese Erlich

The mainstream media generally considers history an afterthought, which explains why it does such an awful job reporting on the Middle East

Reese Erlich's informative and insightful book "Inside Syria" brings to mind the Greek myth of a vast maze under the palace at Knossos, with one exception: King Minos' labyrinth on Crete concealed a single Minotaur, Syria is teeming with the beasts.

Erlich has spent almost three decades reporting from the Middle East, and he brings his considerable knowledge of the region into this analysis of the Syrian civil war. A winner of the Peabody Award and the Society of Professional Journalists explanatory journalism award for "Inside the Syrian Revolution," Erlich combines on-the-ground reporting with an encyclopedic background in the region's history. It is a combination that is particularly useful for a subject as complex and nuanced as the current war, one that has gradually drawn Lebanon, Israel, Turkey, Iran, and the monarchies of the Persian Gulf, along with the US, France and Britain.

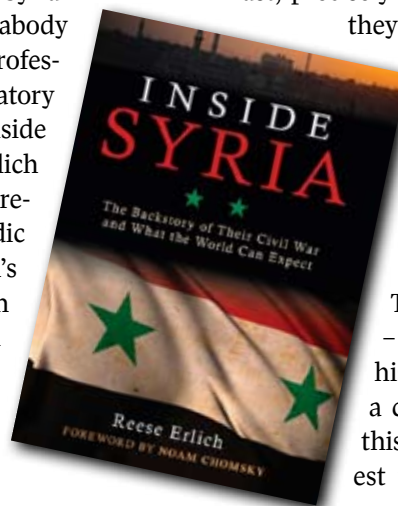
The mainstream media generally considers history an afterthought, which explains why it does such an awful job reporting on the Middle East. Journalists like

Erlich, Robert Fisk and Patrick Cockburn understand that the history of the region and current events are one and the same, a sort of paraphrase of William Faulkner's observation that history is as much the present as the past.

While understanding the historical context of a story is a pretty good rule of thumb for producing competent journalism in general, that is particularly so in the Middle East, precisely because many people think they know about that past. Didn't

they see "Lawrence of Arabia"? Read "Exodus"? Or – God help them – read the mainstream press or watch television news?

The book begins with the initial revolt – "The Uprising That Wasn't Supposed to Be" – and then backs into broader historical context, including a chapter on T.E. Lawrence (if this particular period is of interest to readers, they also might consider picking up Scott Anderson excellent book, "Lawrence In Arabia"). How Syria was created, and the imperial machinations of her architects, Britain and France, is essential to understanding not only the internal dynamics of the country, but its place in the re-



INSIDE SYRIA
Reese Erlich.
Forward by Noam Chomsky
Prometheus Press,
New York
\$25

gion. The current hostility between Turkey and Syria has roots that reach back almost a century. If you want to understand Lebanon – a key player in the Syrian civil war – knowing how it was created and the strategies of ethnic division that France employed to maintain its colonial grip on this small but strategically placed country is essential.

The book covers Syrian history without bogging the reader down. This is, after all, a report on the on-going civil war. But Erlich does not glide over the important details, including how the US camel first put its nose under the tent. Two chapters cover the period just after World War I, the impact of World War II, and the appearance of the Assads in 1970.

Erlich maintains that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's economic "reforms" helped impel the current uprising. Adopting neoliberal policies, Assad sold off state-owned enterprises – generally to regime allies and insiders – and opened the economy to outside competition. The result – aided by a long-running drought – was growing impoverishment and lots of unemployed youth. Joblessness and economic crisis is a volatile mix and needs only an "incident" to set it off. That happened in March 2011 in the southern city of Daraa, when Syrian security forces brutally attacked peaceful demonstrators.

After laying the historical groundwork for his reporting, Erlich follows with a detailed chapter on the 2011 uprising.

While Erlich has a clear point of view – he detests dictatorship and neo-colonialism in equal measure – he is a careful and thorough reporter. His discussion of the use of chemical weapons is a case in point. Erlich carefully unpacks the evidence that the Assad regime used Sarin gas and finds that some of it has been exaggerated or even possibly fabricated. Which doesn't mean the Damascus regime is innocent. His discussion weighs the charges on all sides and concludes that we really don't know. What we do know is that US intelligence didn't

think the evidence against Assad was a slam-dunk, a fact that the Obama administration deliberately obscured. It is a fascinating treatment of the subject – there were several incidents involving the use of chemical weapons, not just the most horrendous at Al-Ghouta that killed several hundred people – and a good example of Erlich's diligence as a reporter.

His chapters on "the Uprising begins," and "Who Supports Assad" are a must for anyone trying to figure out who is who in this complex tragedy. Erlich details the various factions, how they interlink and how they differ, and why the US policy of arming "moderate forces" is doomed to failure. These chapters are essential for understanding the internal dynamics of the two sides, which are more like a Rubik Cube than two opposing poles. The book includes an invaluable appendix on the groups involved, as well as a useful timeline of the current uprising.

Syria is part of a much larger picture, and its strategic placement – bordering Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, and Lebanon – means what happens in Damascus doesn't stay in Damascus. Why is Iran backing Assad? Is this all about religion? (Hint: nope). What will this mean for the 30 million or so Kurds trying to form their own country? Do all the Kurds want to form a country, and, if they do, what will moving that particular piece on the Middle East chessboard do? How might this affect the on-going fight by the Palestinians to form their own country?

The Syrian civil war has morphed into a proxy battle with Iran and Russia on one side, and the US, Gulf monarchies and some NATO members on the other. While the battle is not over religion per se, religion greases the movement of arms and aid. "To the pious go the guns," writes Erlich, which means that adherence to the reactionary brand of Islam favored by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf monarchies is a litmus test for whether you get arms and ammunition. It is not an atmosphere in which the American's

Erlich carefully unpacks the evidence that the Assad regime used Sarin gas and finds that some of it has been exaggerated or even possibly fabricated. Which doesn't mean the Damascus regime is innocent

BOOK REVIEW / 1

Because Erlich is one of those old-fashioned journalists who believes that you need to talk to the principals involved, the readers get an opportunity to listen to what Kurds and Palestinians have to say

avored “moderates” can thrive.

Erlich says the White House recognizes that the “ultra-right wing Islamic groups” like the ISIS, Al-Nusra, and the Islamic Front are growing at the expense of the less extreme or secular groups and at one point considered simply “re-defining” the extremist Islamic Front as “moderate” so it could send aid to that organization.

Because Erlich is one of those old-fashioned journalists who believes that you need to talk to the principals involved, the readers get an opportunity to listen to what Kurds and Palestinians have to say. This combination of street interviews, suite discussions – he beards the US State Department in Foggy Bottom – and historical background makes for a thoroughly engaging read. While he generally keeps his distance, Erlich injects himself when needed, or when he wants the reader to know that this is his opinion, not God’s. He also has a sense of humor. There is a wonderful moment when he gets off a bus in Gaza to be met by Hamas officials.

His final chapter – “US, Russia, and outside powers” – discusses the international dimensions of the civil war – virtually anything major that happens in the Middle East, with its enormous oil and gas reserves, has an international dimension – and what ought, and ought not, be done, to solve it.

The Obama administration is slipping into a quagmire that some have even compared to Vietnam. That analogy is probably

flawed, but it should still gives us pause – for one, Vietnam demonstrated that air wars don’t work unless you have reliable allies on the ground. Once again, the US is at war. Once again, the US is ignoring international law and choosing to use military force over diplomacy. Once again there is a logic at work here that leads to yet another dark tunnel of escalation.

In 1966 journalist Robert Scheer wrote a small book, “How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam,” that undercut the popular narrative about Communist aggression and toppling dominos. The book shattered the official paradigm and gave the infant anti-war movement ammunition for its confrontation with the administration of Lyndon Johnson. Erlich’s “Inside Syria” has similar heft and should be widely read, because we are once again at war without the slightest idea of where it leads or what its ultimate goals are. **CT**

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Conn M. Hallinan is a columnist for *Foreign Policy In Focus*, “A Think Tank Without Walls, and an independent journalist. He oversaw the journalism program at the University of California at Santa Cruz for 23 years, and won the UCSC Alumni Association’s Distinguished Teaching Award, as well as UCSC’s Innovations in Teaching Award, and Excellence in Teaching Award. He is a winner of a Project Censored “Real News Award,” and lives in Berkeley, California.

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World of fantasy

Eric Walberg reviews *Agent Storm*, by Morten Storm

Recruiting Muslims has not been easy for western ‘intelligence’. The New York Police Department has tried for decades to recruit Muslim immigrants, and was finally embarrassed by a 2013 ACLU lawsuit to disband its most public recruiting unit, which essentially blackmailed anyone with a Muslim name arrested on any pretext, including parking tickets.

The most successful double agent prior to Morten Storm was Omar Nasiri (b. 1960s), the pseudonym of a Moroccan spy who infiltrated al-Qaeda, attending training camps in Afghanistan and passing information to the UK and French intelligence services. He revealed all in his fascinating memoir, “Inside the Jihad: My Life with Al Qaeda A Spy’s Story,” in 2006.

Nasiri offered his services not so much for money (at least, so he claims) but to counter the descent into violence among Islamists following the military coup against the elected Islamist government in Algeria in 1992. “The GIA [the Algerian Armed Islamic Groups] was riddled from the start with spies from the Algerian secret service” and

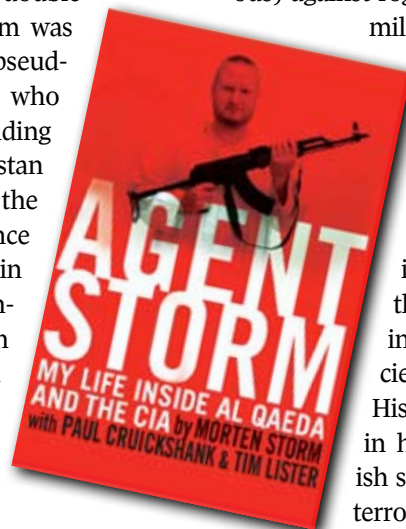
“agent provocateurs who by 1995 were deliberately shifting the campaign of violence into France, to try and draw Paris into the conflict in opposition to the Islamists and in support for the Algerian state.”

Nasiri realized the GIA was undermining the genuine Islamist struggle and he suddenly found that the French and British intelligence were his allies (however dubious) against rogue elements in the Algerian military dictatorship. Nasiri,

who seems to be a sincere Muslim, bitterly opposed to the Wahhabis and Salafis, did not prevent any spectacular terrorist attacks, but by monitoring the jihadist movement in Europe in the 1990s, was instrumental in helping intelligence agencies keep track of recruiting. His loudly proclaimed motive in helping the French and British security forces was to prevent terrorism, though he still wants imperialists out (and told his minders so to the end), and wants a dignified Muslim culture not modelled on the West.

“What I want more than anything is to save Islam from these terrible excesses and innovations.” The insurgents buying Israeli

Nasiri’s loudly proclaimed motive in helping the French and British security forces was to prevent terrorism, though he still wants imperialists out



AGENT STORM:
My Life Inside
Al Qaeda And The CIA

Morten Storm
with Tim Lister
& Paul Cruickshank
Atlantic Monthly Press
\$ 12.38

Storm became a street militant and martial-arts trainer in London, joining the inner circle of leading radical cleric Omar Bakri

Uzi machine guns was humiliating, but “now something much worse is happening: we’re fighting our wars using our enemies’ tactics. If we, as Muslims, let ourselves become like them – which is to say, like you – then there will be nothing left to fight for. This is my jihad.”

On BBC in 2006 he said that the UK intelligence services were warned in the mid-1990s about the threat posed by al-Qaeda, but failed to act quickly enough. He ended his covert activities by 2000, offered to renew them after 9/11 but was snubbed by the German intelligence. He now lives under a pseudonym. His memoirs are an indictment of both the West’s policies in the Middle East and the bureaucratic bungling of the intelligence agencies.

Morten Storm is a very different kettle of fish. Born in 1976 in a troubled (white) environment, he was abused as a child, joined the feared Bandidos gang, and became a criminal tough convicted of multiple armed robberies and violence, earning up to \$10,000 a week smuggling drugs through Europe. As a social outcast, he befriended Muslim immigrants, and converted to Islam in 1997 at the age of 21, inspired by a fellow prisoner Suleiman. A lost soul in search of meaning, he visited the (Salafi) Regent’s Park mosque, and was quickly recruited and offered a free study program in Yemen.

He adopted the Salafi Islamic package wholesale, even telling the head of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Yemen, Sheikh Abdul Majeed al-Zindani, that “you will lead me to hellfire,” since the MB are “innovators where it suited their political ends”, supporting the concept of democratic elections. (Zindani is no shrinking violet. Banned from the US since 2004 as a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist”, he was acquainted with Osama bin Laden and Anwar Awlaki.)

Storm became a street militant and martial-arts trainer in London, joining the inner circle of leading radical cleric Omar Bakri who was active in Hizb ut-Tahrir and Al-Muhajiroun in the UK (he was arrested in 2010 in Lebanon).

Storm’s dubious credibility, given his background, never seemed to have bothered his Salafi brothers. But his Islam soon proved to be skin-deep. He missed his cocaine, drinking and cavorting, and was successfully recruited by the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) in 2006, after a crisis of faith. He couldn’t accept the Salafi “drum-beat of jihadism ... moving on from the defence of Muslim lands towards a declaration of war against all disbelievers.”

He flitted back and forth from the UK and Denmark to Yemen, and befriended Anwar Awlaki, even arranging his final marriage – to a Croatian Muslim convert ‘Aminah’ (born Irena Horak) in 2010, for which the CIA paid him \$250,000 (his memoirs proudly include a picture of the suitcase full of US dollars). But his appetite proved equal to the talks, and he was soon cash-starved, so he agreed to help the CIA assassinate his friend Awlaki, hoping to pocket the \$5m reward. Awlaki was killed in September 2011, but the CIA never coughed up, and Storm decided to go public with a series of articles in the *Jyllands-Posten* newspaper (publisher of the notorious cartoons caricaturing the Prophet Muhammed in 2005), and publish his memoirs, which like Nasiri’s, show the ‘intelligence’ agencies in a shocking light.

But, unlike Nasiri, Storm is genuinely proud to be fighting Islam. “In a school project, my son Osama decided to make me his subject ... and wrote an essay entitled: ‘My Dad, the Hero.’” Storm has twinges of regret for murdering his bosom buddy (if his claims are to be believed). Nowhere in the memoir is Awlaki’s guilt for any terrorist operation actually shown without a doubt. He was rather always on the run, writing fiery tracts for *Inspire*, encrypting messages, and trying – mostly unsuccessfully – to get supplies of items that might or might not be for building bombs.

All this seems faintly irrelevant given IS’s success in the past six months. What formerly looked like a wildly optimistic long term plan on the part of al-Qaeda remains eerily on-

track despite the killing of thousands of “terrorists”, including Bin Laden and Awlaki.

What can we learn from these memoirs?

First, while Wahhabi-inspired Islam attracts some disillusioned westerners, their commitment is easily jettisoned. Its rote nature creates a rigid mindset conducive to both terrorism and corruption. For the past three decades thousands of Saudi youth have chosen death fighting the corrupt, pro-US monarchy, be it by fighting in Syria-Iraq or underground in Saudi Arabia. Uneducated westerners like Storm are easily seduced by a kind word from a Salafi imam, an offer of a free study course in Yemen, and the simplistic rote beliefs of Wahhabism, which dismiss the scholarly and peaceful activist tradition of the MB (let alone Shiism).

Storm’s most shocking revelation is his revelation of a letter from Saudi officials to Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi in 2011 proposing a deal: “They would pardon Wuhayshi and donate weapons and money if they stopped fighting the Saudis and the Americans and focused instead on fighting Shia rebels in northern Yemen.”

Clearly, for western converts to Islam, however well-meaning, secular consumerism is a heavy burden hard to shake. Despite admiring Islam for its truths and its great his-

tory, Storm was unable to shed his cultural baggage.

For a century now, since western secularism has taken hold, many disillusioned western youth have embraced eastern beliefs, including Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. But the first two stop short of trying to transform society through a political movement of reform. Islam does not shy away from politics; that is why spies like Nasiri keep the faith, while flotsam like Storm stumble into Wahhabism, which mimics the nihilism of western anarchism.

Some western strategists reach out to nonviolent Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood. In 2010, President Obama issued Presidential Study Directive 11 (PSD-11) advising a shift from support for dictators to working with “moderate” Islamic political movements (though his actions since then show how wobbly this commitment to peaceful evolution is). They are searching for ways other than war to deal with the now uncontrollable extremists, to stabilize Muslim society where the post-colonial neoliberal model has failed.

Other strategists, like Storm’s handlers, continue to live in a fantasy world of 007 and double agents, sure that if they can only kill that nasty Bin Laden, Awlaki, whomever, we will all live happily ever after. **CT**

Storm’s most shocking revelation is his revelation of a letter from Saudi officials to Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi in 2011 proposing a deal

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The history of blowback in one sentence

Want to know why your world is going to hell?
William Rivers Pitt has the answer

When you punch someone in the face, odds are very good that you're going to get punched back

Since you're probably wondering why the Canadian Parliament was shot up and your friendly neighborhood police officer is driving a tank and your savings account is a sad joke and your road is littered with potholes and you can't find a job and three of your friends who joined the Army to pay for college died in Iraq and Afghanistan and two others have brain trauma from IED explosions and won't ever be the same and your tap water is flammable and the ocean is coming for your home, well . . .

. . . let me introduce you to the concept of "blowback," which author Chalmers Johnson explained as "another way of saying that a nation reaps what it sows," which basically means that when you punch someone in the face, odds are very good that you're going to get punched back, and maybe they land that counterpunch, or maybe they don't, but that fist is going to come whistling at your face, count on it, and if it misses, there is always another fist, curled and hard and ready to fly . . .

. . . so let's talk about blowback, the story of which began seventy-three years ago at Pearl Harbor, when we were attacked by the Japanese Empire, and the United States entered the war in Europe and Asia simultaneously, and President Roosevelt endeavored to manufacture the Reich and the Empire out of existence, and placed the American

economy on a wartime footing to do so, and in the fullness of time, it worked, and the war was over . . .

. . . but actually, it never ended, because the manufacture of war materiel made the manufacturers rich beyond the dreams of avarice, and they began to exert influence over American politics, and then FDR died, and Harry Truman took the big chair, and then George Kennan, the American Ambassador to the Soviet Union, wrote what has come to be known as the "Long Telegram," in which he described the bedlam of Stalin and Soviet intentions, and Truman along with a bunch of other people read it, and it scared the cheese out of them, and so the National Security Act of 1947 was passed, making America's economic wartime footing a permanent thing that endures to this day, and thus the Cold War was born . . .

. . . which was bully news for the weapons manufacturers who got rich on WWII, because now they were indispensable as a matter of policy, "national security" assets, and before long, tank after tank and warship after warship and nuclear missile after nuclear missile and bullet after bullet and rifle after rifle and bomb after bomb rolled down the production lines, each and every one paid for with tax dollars collected from an American populace which was led to believe this was all vitally necessary because the readers of Kennan's telegram decided

the thing to do was to make sure everyone felt threatened because a fearful populace is easily controlled . . .

. . . and so the Cold War unfolded, and in the words of Stephen King, O my Lord how the money rolled in, because conflict for conflict's sake became the operational ethos in Vietnam and Laos and Cambodia and Africa and South America and Central America and especially in the Middle East for decades, and in the process of this multi-generational permanent state of conflict the weapons manufacturers became wealthier and wealthier, and more and more powerful, and exerted that power on the body politic of the United States to such a degree that they eventually began purchasing the news media brick by brick, so the people would hear day after day how the corporations who profit from war are actually keeping them safe and stuff . . .

. . . and this went on and on, growing and expanding, even to far-flung places like Afghanistan, where big brains like Zbigniew Brzezinski decided in 1978 to give the USSR its own Vietnam, and began a process that Reagan eventually took over to underwrite the Mujeheddin, who took on the Soviet Union and learned, with the help of American money and American weapons and a CIA ally named Osama bin Laden, how to take down a superpower, which they eventually did before metastasizing into the Taliban and al Qaeda . . .

. . . because Brzezinski's original plan was to arm, train and fund anti-Soviet fighters in Pakistani religious schools to destabilize Afghanistan and dare the Soviets to invade, and that plan was executed, and it worked, and the word "Taliban" when translated means "Religious student," so congratulations, Zbigniew, for kicking the pebble down the hill that turned into an avalanche which came in the fullness of time to deprive the New York City skyline of two very tall buildings and the thousands of people who were in them on a perfect blue Tuesday thirteen years ago . . .

. . . which led, of course, to another decade of war after all the other decades of war that came on the heels of Pearl Harbor and the National Security Act, which has in this brave new moment led to ISIS, as well as a dementedly paranoid United States that doesn't blink at cops dressed and armed like soldiers while driving tanks down Main Street because OMG TERRORISTS YOU GUYS . . .

. . . but when you stop and think about it, really think about it, when you attach thread to thread and event to event and actually put context to history, you realize that everything that has gone wrong and sideways in this country – the lack of money for roads and bridges and education and health care and old people and veterans and schools, the hyper-militarization of the police, the end of big dreams and the permanent establishment of big fears and eternal war . . .

. . . can be traced back to the process by which the United States stopped being a country and was transformed into a war-financed empire, an exporter and importer of violence, a creator of enemies it has to fight in order to feed the machine, which creates more enemies, which creates more reasons to fight, and all the while the weapons dealers sell their products as fast as they can, until we arrive at the present moment when American warplanes are dropping American armaments on American weapons in Iraq and Syria to the tune of billions of your taxpayer dollars and with wall-to-wall television coverage, again . . .

. . .so, when you sit in the darkness of your personal night and wonder what happened to your country, to your aspirations and dreams, to the potholed road you drive every day to the job that has no chance of letting you retire in comfort, to your barren savings account, when you turn on your television and see paid shills shriek about how and why you're about to die while your neighbor's kid comes home in a flag-draped box and you have to ask again where your

The Mujeheddin learned, with the help of American money and American weapons and a CIA ally named Osama bin Laden, how to take down a superpower, which they eventually did before metastasizing into the Taliban and al Qaeda

TAKING STOCK

Every lethal decision always comes knocking at your door someday

black suit is so you can go properly dressed to yet another funeral . . .

. . . remember that history exists, and actions have consequences, and this event is tied to that event is tied to the other event in a tapestry of escalating cascading fallout, which is called “blowback,” which always carries a dear price unless you’re getting paid for it, which is why you think very hard before making a lethal national decision, because every lethal decision always comes knocking at your door someday . . .

. . . which is why we as a people must absolutely endeavor to do better from here on out, because we are already in a deep hole, and The First Law Of Holes says, “When you’re in a hole, stop digging . . .”

. . . so, please, put down the shovel. **CT**

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William Rivers Pitt is senior editor and lead columnist at <http://truthout.org> where this essay was first published. Copyright, Truthout.org. Reprinted with permission.

BENDIBB'S WORLD

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The forgotten coup

John Pilger tells how and why America and Britain crushed the government of their 'ally', Australia

Across the political and media elite in Australia, a silence has descended on the memory of the great, reforming prime minister Gough Whitlam, who died on October 22. His achievements are recognised, if grudgingly, his mistakes noted in false sorrow. But a critical reason for his extraordinary political demise will, they hope, be buried with him.

Australia briefly became an independent state during the Whitlam years, 1972-75. An American commentator wrote that no country had “reversed its posture in international affairs so totally without going through a domestic revolution”. Whitlam ended his nation’s colonial servility. He abolished Royal patronage, moved Australia towards the Non-Aligned Movement, supported “zones of peace” and opposed nuclear weapons testing.

Although not regarded as on the left of the Labor Party, Whitlam was a maverick social democrat of principle, pride and propriety. He believed that a foreign power should not control his country’s resources and dictate its economic and foreign policies. He proposed to “buy back the farm”. In drafting the first Aboriginal lands rights legislation, his government raised the ghost of the greatest land grab in human history, Britain’s colonisation of Australia, and the question of who owned the island-continent’s vast natural wealth.

Latin Americans will recognise the audacity and danger of this “breaking free” in a country whose establishment was welded to great, external power. Australians had served every British imperial adventure since the Boxer rebellion was crushed in China. In the 1960s, Australia pleaded to join the US in its invasion of Vietnam, then provided “black teams” to be run by the CIA. US diplomatic cables published last year by WikiLeaks disclose the names of leading figures in both main parties, including a future prime minister and foreign minister, as Washington’s informants during the Whitlam years.

Whitlam knew the risk he was taking. The day after his election, he ordered that his staff should not be “vetted or harassed” by the Australian security organisation, ASIO – then, as now, tied to Anglo-American intelligence. When his ministers publicly condemned the US bombing of Vietnam as “corrupt and barbaric”, a CIA station officer in Saigon said: “We were told the Australians might as well be regarded as North Vietnamese collaborators.”

Whitlam demanded to know if and why the CIA was running a spy base at Pine Gap near Alice Springs, a giant vacuum cleaner which, as Edward Snowden revealed recently, allows the US to spy on everyone. “Try to screw us or bounce us,” the prime minister warned the US ambassador, “[and Pine Gap]

Whitlam demanded to know if and why the CIA was running a spy base at Pine Gap near Alice Springs, a giant vacuum cleaner which, as Edward Snowden revealed recently, allows the US to spy on everyone

POWER PLAY

The message from Theodore Shackley, head of the CIA's East Asia Division, who had helped run the coup against Salvador Allende in Chile two years earlier – was read to Whitlam. It said that the prime minister of Australia was a security risk in his own country

will become a matter of contention”.

Victor Marchetti, the CIA officer who had helped set up Pine Gap, later told me, “This threat to close Pine Gap caused apoplexy in the White House . . . a kind of Chile [coup] was set in motion.”

Pine Gap’s top-secret messages were decoded by a CIA contractor, TRW. One of the decoders was Christopher Boyce, a young man troubled by the “deception and betrayal of an ally”. Boyce revealed that the CIA had infiltrated the Australian political and trade union elite and referred to the Governor-General of Australia, Sir John Kerr, as “our man Kerr”.

Kerr was not only the Queen’s man, he had long-standing ties to Anglo-American intelligence. He was an enthusiastic member of the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom, described by Jonathan Kwitny of the Wall Street Journal in his book, ‘The Crimes of Patriots’, as, “an elite, invitation-only group . . . exposed in Congress as being founded, funded and generally run by the CIA”. The CIA “paid for Kerr’s travel, built his prestige . . . Kerr continued to go to the CIA for money”.

When Whitlam was re-elected for a second term, in 1974, the White House sent Marshall Green to Canberra as ambassador. Green was an imperious, sinister figure who worked in the shadows of America’s “deep state”. Known as the “coupmaster”, he had played a central role in the 1965 coup against President Sukarno in Indonesia – which cost up to a million lives. One of his first speeches in Australia was to the Australian Institute of Directors – described by an alarmed member of the audience as “an incitement to the country’s business leaders to rise against the government”.

The Americans and British worked together. In 1975, Whitlam discovered that Britain’s MI6 was operating against his government. “The Brits were actually decoding secret messages coming into my foreign affairs office,” he said later. One of his ministers, Clyde Cameron, told me, “We knew MI6 was bugging Cabinet meetings for the Americans.” In the 1980s, senior CIA officers revealed that the “Whitlam problem” had been discussed “with urgency” by the CIA’s director, William Colby, and the head of MI6, Sir Maurice Oldfield. A deputy director of the CIA said: “Kerr did what he was told to do.”

On 10 November, 1975, Whitlam was shown a top secret telex message sourced to Theodore Shackley, the notorious head of the CIA’s East Asia Division, who had helped run the coup against Salvador Allende in Chile two years earlier.

Shackley’s message was read to Whitlam. It said that the prime minister of Australia was a security risk in his own country. The day before, Kerr had visited the headquarters of the Defence Signals Directorate, Australia’s NSA where he was briefed on the “security crisis”.

On 11 November – the day Whitlam was to inform Parliament about the secret CIA presence in Australia – he was summoned by Kerr. Invoking archaic vice-regal “reserve powers”, Kerr sacked the democratically elected prime minister. The “Whitlam problem” was solved, and Australian politics never recovered, nor the nation its true independence. **CT**

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John Pilger’s new film, “Utopia”, has received glowing reviews in the UK and Australia

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The fix is in

Carol Osler tells how banks allegedly rigged the US \$5.3 trillion foreign exchange market

Suppose you're in the supermarket shopping for groceries. While you're strolling the aisle with your cart, a shadowy figure looms over your shoulder and changes the prices on the items you want to buy before you get a chance to pick them up.

As you reach for some vine tomatoes, you notice the price just jumped 20 cents. When you select some brie from among the cheeses, you witness the number on the sticker change right before your eyes. Ditto when you look for your favorite brand of granola.

This is the essence of what regulators learned might be happening in the foreign exchange market, where US\$5.3 trillion of dollars, euros and yen are traded every day. In June 2013, Bloomberg reported that traders at some of the world's biggest banks worked to manipulate key currency rates, racking up profits and costing investors – including your retirement fund – hundreds of millions of dollars globally.

They are accused of placing their own transactions ahead of trades requested by clients – known as front-running – which was the reason prices kept changing as people tried to make their own trades, like in the shopping analogy above. They bought euros or dollars, driving up the rate, and then profited by selling to other investors at a higher level.

This week six of the currency-dealers being investigated – including JP Morgan, Citigroup

and HSBC – agreed to pay a total of US\$4.3 billion to regulators in the US, UK and Switzerland to resolve the allegations. The deal is likely only the first in a series of settlements and other penalties that will emerge from the ongoing investigations.

The investors most concerned with the alleged manipulation are funds that invest internationally, such as hedge funds, the endowments of charitable or cultural institutions and insurance companies. But it also includes the mutual funds in which many of your 401K or IRA assets are likely invested.

When institutions like these need to buy or sell assets across borders, they call a dealer at one of the big banks, which provides what is basically a wholesale version of the cambio currency kiosks you see at the airport. The dealer quotes a buying price and a selling price, and the fund chooses whether to buy or sell. In addition to trading with customers, the dealers trade among themselves, sometimes to manage their inventory and sometimes hoping to make money by taking speculative positions for a few minutes or even seconds.

And that's how we arrive at the scandal. Every day at 4pm in London, the market sets special "fixing" exchange rates that are used to value the funds' international investments. The fixing price is set in a simple way: it's just the average of all prices paid among dealing banks during the 30 seconds before and after the clock strikes four.

Traders bought euros or dollars, driving up the rate, and then profited by selling to other investors at a higher level

MONEY-GO-ROUND

Losses to US investors from tiny fix-price distortions could be anything but tiny: we could collectively lose almost \$100 million per year

Many international fund managers prefer to trade currencies at exactly the fixing price because it's simpler and smarter to trade at the same price used to value your portfolio. To make these transactions happen, international funds often place large orders with dealers at major banks before the fix.

Suppose, for example, a pension fund with major investments in Europe knows it will receive a lot of new IRA money on November 30, when many US employees get paid. And suppose the fund plans to invest €100 million of that in European stocks. At 3:30pm that day the fund might instruct its bank to purchase €100 million at the fixing price. With this kind of advance order, the bank could book its own trades before the fund does, buying the euros it will later sell to the investor.

What the banks are accused of

The banks – or more accurately, specific dealers at specific banks – are accused of manipulating the fixing prices based on their knowledge of advance customer orders. In a nutshell, the accusation is that dealers from different banks got together before the fix and compared notes in chat rooms. Most currency trading is handled by 10 or so mega banks, so if just a few of them compared notes, they would have a good sense of whether the exchange rate would rise or fall during the fixing interval that day. The shadowy figure looking over your shoulder at the supermarket to see what you're going to buy next is like the banks comparing their customer orders before the fix.

To finish the supermarket analogy, we need to know how and why the dealing banks could raise the fixing rate to the disadvantage of international pension and mutual funds. Suppose once again that many customers have placed big orders to buy euros at the fix, and the banks figure the euro-dollar exchange rate will rise during the window. This would give them an incentive to buy a lot of euros before it's set (remember the golden rule of trading: buy low, sell high).

And they don't have to stop buying when

they have enough for their customers. They could buy a lot more euros for their own account, and then sell them at the higher fix price. If they could count on other banks doing the same thing, it becomes a lot less risky. That drives up the exchange rate ahead of the fix and means your pension fund has to pay more to buy those euros.

Why should you care? If your IRA fund manager pays more to buy euros and earns less when he sells them, your retirement account loses money to the traders, and your investments will suffer. And even though the price differences are minuscule, they quickly add up.

Suppose that just 1% of total investor trading happens at the fix and that the fixing price is just 0.005% distorted by manipulation. Those may sound like tiny numbers, but foreign exchange trading by US financial institutions is huge: roughly \$700 billion every day, according to the Bank for International Settlements. So losses to US investors from tiny fix-price distortions could be anything but tiny: we could collectively lose almost \$100 million per year!

Did this really go on? We don't know. The dealers did have chat rooms and they were reportedly given names like "The Bandits" and "The Cartel," so it's not a big stretch to imagine that they compared notes and manipulated prices. But dealers have other important reasons to work together around the fix. It's a very risky time to trade, since the exchange rate is unusually volatile, and dealers have to trade such large amounts for their customers. A dealer could easily end up buying euros at an exchange rate above the fix and then taking a loss by selling low (at the fix) to the pension fund.

Several regulators in the UK, US and Hong Kong continue to investigate the activities of the banks, which have all set aside large sums to pay any penalties that arise. JP Morgan alone has set aside US\$5.9 billion.

Even with the settlement announced this week, don't expect this issue to go away anytime soon.

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Carol Osler

is professor of business at Brandeis University.

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<http://theconversation.com>

Eight reasons to oppose Obama's latest war

Alan Maass & Eric Ruder make the case against a new Western war in the Middle East

Barack Obama claims his war on the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is necessary to stop the menace of terror and oppression. But lurking behind his rhetoric to justify the latest American military intervention are the same imperial motives – control of oil, geopolitical dominance in the Middle East, international rivalries – that we know from previous US wars.

Like those conflicts, the war on ISIS will make the world more violent, more oppressive and less safe. Here, we give you some of the reasons why you should oppose this new war – so you can speak out and make the case yourself.

ONE: Obama has declared war on ISIS to promote US imperial interests, not to confront tyranny and oppression.

The US government's new war in the Middle East, launched this summer, represents a dramatic escalation of violence by the world's most powerful military machine. As his first major statement after his party, the Democrats, suffered a drubbing in midterm elections, Barack Obama announced a "new phase" in the war, starting with the deployment of 1,500 more "advisers" to Iraq.

Obama insists the "advisers" won't participate in combat, but we've heard that promise before, dating back to the Vietnam War. A website documenting the "mission creep" of

the war on ISIS shows that the new deployment will nearly double the number of official US military personnel in Iraq.

Already, the US is carrying out intensive air strikes in Iraq, continuing a quarter-century of war that has reduced what was once a developing nation to one of the poorest on Earth, and in Syria, a country it hadn't got around to bombing before. As of mid-September, after just one month of the air war, US warplanes had already flown 2,750 sorties – an average of nearly 100 every single day.

The enemy in this new war is the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a reactionary military force and would-be state that grew powerful as a direct consequence of the disastrous US invasion and occupation of Iraq. Now, ISIS threatens to erase the borders of a Middle East where the US has been the dominant imperial power for half a century.

That's why Obama gave the order to drop bombs this summer. At stake for the US is control over Middle East oil – not because America needs imports, but because this control gives it leverage against international rivals like China and Russia, not to mention its allies in Europe. The point was summed up in a 1945 State Department report that called the region's oil resources "a stupendous source of strategic power and one of the greatest material prizes in world history."

The US also wants to rehabilitate its military machine after the disasters of the

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SAYING 'NO'

Most of the first US bombs were dropped several hundred miles away from where the Yazidis were besieged

“war on terror” decade – and ISIS provides the “perfect enemy” to win support. The stakes are high for all of us: If US imperialism emerges stronger by defeating ISIS, the war-makers in Washington will be in a better position to subdue resistance anywhere on the globe, including within the US

TWO: The US war won't save religious and ethnic minorities who are being persecuted by ISIS.

The first air strikes were accompanied by claims that the US wouldn't “turn a blind eye” to the plight of the Yazidis, a religious minority besieged by ISIS fighters. Obama had the gall to talk about these “innocent people” facing “violence on a horrific scale” after the US government's main ally in the Middle East, Israel, had spent the previous month terrorizing the people of Gaza with “violence on a horrific scale.”

Tellingly, most of the first US bombs were dropped several hundred miles away from where the Yazidis were besieged. The air strikes were concentrated around the city of Erbil, where ISIS was threatening to conquer the capital of the Iraqi Kurds, the US's most steadfast allies within Iraq during 25 years of war. Erbil is also – surprise, surprise – a key city for oil production in northern Iraq.

The US government's cynicism was further exposed when ISIS fighters launched a deadly offensive against Kobanê, a city in the region of northern Syria where most of the country's Kurdish minority lives.

At first, with the city on the verge of falling, US officials like Secretary of State John Kerry nevertheless lectured reporters that saving the Kurds of Kobanê wasn't part of the plan for this “humanitarian” intervention. Meanwhile, Turkey – a staunch US ally that has inflicted terrible oppression against its own Kurdish minority – refused to support the defense of Kobanê, just over its southern border, unless the Kurds agreed to certain conditions.

Against the odds, ISIS has so far been repelled in its invasion of Kobanê – in part be-

cause of stepped-up tactical air strikes by the US, but mostly because of the courageous defense of the city by outgunned Kurdish fighters who are fighting for their people and their rights.

In the aftermath, the Kurds should beware of the US government claiming it will “help” the Kurds in their struggle – because there will be strings attached. As the American socialist John Reed said, “Whoever takes Uncle Sam's promises at their face value will find himself obliged to pay for them with blood and sweat.”

THREE: US imperialism bears a lot of the responsibility for ISIS's rise. Escalating the US war is more likely to strengthen the reactionaries than weaken them.

To listen to Barack Obama talk about the “cancer of violent extremism,” you'd think the US government was uncompromising in its opposition to reactionary formations like ISIS.

But not if they can be used to further imperialist aims. In the 1980s, the US government financed and supplied Islamic fundamentalists fighting the former USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. The men who Ronald Reagan called “freedom fighters” later came together as al-Qaeda.

During the occupation of Iraq, US officials encouraged the sectarian division between Sunni and Shia Muslims – as a divide-and-conquer strategy against the threat of a united resistance targeting US forces. When this sectarian dynamic set off a bloody civil war, al-Qaeda in Iraq – the predecessor organization of ISIS – gained a foothold for the first time.

More recently, the US looked the other way while its allies among the authoritarian regimes of the region, especially Saudi Arabia, supported armed Islamic formations like ISIS – as a counter to the growing strength of Shia-dominated regimes across the region. Thus, the toxic sectarian conflict stoked by the US during the occupation of Iraq spread across the region – encouraged by the Amer-

ican empire.

ISIS now claims to rule over a huge area in Iraq and Syria – and over millions of people, including many Sunnis, who view its reactionary agenda and persecution of all dissent as abhorrent. But for now, ISIS still has the passive support of many Sunnis because it has defended their community from the repression of the Shia-dominated regime in Iraq, for one. Every time the US fires another missile, it drives Sunnis toward ISIS – as the only force that has been successful in defending them against violence and oppression.

FOUR: If the US can weaken or destroy ISIS, it will strengthen the network of dictatorships and reactionary monarchs that rule the Middle East.

The images from ISIS's videotaped beheadings of Western journalists have rightly horrified people everywhere. They are a barbaric emblem of its tyranny.

But the US has been joined in its air strikes against ISIS by Saudi Arabia, among other authoritarian regimes, which executes dozens of people by beheading in the infamous public plaza in Riyadh known as "Chop-Chop Square." Among the "crimes" punishable by beheading are adultery, sedition, sorcery and witchcraft.

The old order around the Middle East has reacted to the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011 by mobilizing the utmost violence against all dissent. When the island kingdom of Bahrain – home to the US Naval Forces Central Command – faced a pro-democracy uprising, the Saudi Arabian military invaded to crush the rebellion. In 2013, when Iraqi Sunnis organized a wave of largely nonviolent mass demonstrations, the Shia-dominated central government used all the weapons that the US had supplied it with to put down the dissenters.

Meanwhile, in Syria, the dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad has the most to gain from the US war on ISIS, though neither side will say so out loud. The Syrian regime and ISIS have cynically abided by a de facto cease-fire for

most of the last two years, while both trained their guns on different sections of the mass uprising against the dictatorship. Today, the regime can continue its murderous war on the revolution, knowing that its military will be well positioned to take advantage if the US air strikes weaken ISIS.

We want to see ISIS overthrown. But if it is accomplished by the US and its authoritarian allies, the forces of reaction in the Middle East will be strengthened.

FIVE: The violence of ISIS, as horrific as it is, pales in comparison to the violence of the US government.

For 25 years, the US has deployed the world's most deadly military against the people of Iraq. During the 1991 Gulf War, it fired 320 tons of depleted uranium munitions, littering the country with radioactive dust that has led to a dramatic spike in cancer rates and birth defects.

In 1996, Bill Clinton's Secretary of State Madeleine Albright famously told 60 Minutes that the deaths of half a million Iraqi children caused by US-led sanctions against Iraq were "a price worth paying" to isolate Saddam Hussein's regime. After Bush Jr.'s invasion in 2003, the esteemed Lancet medical journal estimated that the latest phase of the US war had caused another 600,000 Iraqi deaths as of 2006.

The US war and occupation also produced one of the world's largest refugee crises, with some 4 million Iraqis – more than 10 percent of the population – living abroad or internally displaced. And while US officials and media pundits decry the barbarism of ISIS's hostage-taking, the torture of detainees by US forces at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan is no less horrific.

All told, the US has killed well over 1 million Iraqis, fanned sectarian tensions that will take more lives in the years to come, and condemned millions more to a slow death from poverty, malnutrition and sickness. Why should we believe the outcome of a new

The US has been joined in its air strikes against ISIS by Saudi Arabia, among other authoritarian regimes, which executes dozens of people by beheading in the infamous public plaza in Riyadh known as "Chop-Chop Square"

SAYING 'NO'

Osama bin Laden infamously used images of emaciated and malnourished Iraqi children suffering under a regime of US-imposed sanctions to recruit fighters to al-Qaeda

war will be any less devastating for Iraq?

SIX: The US doesn't go to war for humanitarian reasons and never has.

The US hasn't spent trillions of dollars and shed untold amounts of blood in the Middle East to advance the spread of democracy and human rights, but to pursue its economic and strategic interests, from control of Middle East oil to military dominance over its rivals.

To carry out its wars, however, US politicians must count on at least passive support from the US population, which is unlikely to be persuaded by calls to secure the profits of multinational oil companies or cement US strategic influence. That's why US war planners invariably conceal their true aims with more noble-sounding justifications about "humanitarian intervention."

If the US were truly motivated by humanitarian concerns, it wouldn't count Saudi Arabia, one of the region's worst abusers of women's rights, as an ally. "There's no chance, however, of the US bombing Riyadh to end this evil," wrote socialist journalist Eamonn McCann. "The Saudi dictatorship is top of the list of regional allies the US needs onside for blitzing ISIS. Recently, the Obama administration distributed pictures of Secretary of State John Kerry in comfortable conversation with the leader of the Saudi beheaders, King Abdullah."

Nor would the US support apartheid Israel in its drive to ethnically cleanse Palestine of its indigenous inhabitants if it truly cared about confronting the "perpetrators of violent extremism." On the contrary, Israel remains the US government's most valued ally – under Democrats as well as Republicans – because it is committed to helping the US maintain its imperial control over the Middle East.

The US empire has always attempted to give a humanitarian cover to its military adventures. As SocialistWorker.org wrote in an editorial, even in the earliest days of US imperialism at the turn of the 20th century:

"[P]oliticians and the media invented crude provocations to justify intervention in the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico, where American forces carried out the wholesale slaughter of indigenous populations. All this was done, according to President William McKinley, "not as invaders or conquerors, but as friends, to protect the natives in their homes, in their employments, and in their personal and religious rights."

More than a century later, US political leaders are pretending to be friends to the people of the Middle East – but it is they who are paying the price for America's wars.

SEVEN: Obama's new war on ISIS won't make people in the US or anywhere else safer. On the contrary, it will make the world more dangerous.

One of the most taboo questions in US political culture is why the US was targeted on September 11. The truth is that the US has carried out the equivalent of thousands of 9/11s around the world, which is why it is feared and despised in every corner of the globe. Sometimes, that anger is directed against US targets – often people who have nothing to do with the US war machine, but who are victims of what US government officials openly call "blowback."

Osama bin Laden infamously used images of emaciated and malnourished Iraqi children suffering under a regime of US-imposed sanctions to recruit fighters to al-Qaeda.

Likewise, regimes around the world have pointed to the indefinite detention of Arab and Muslim detainees at the US prison camp at Guantánamo Bay – not to mention US officials' justification for using torture against them – to legitimize their own abuses. For this reason, a dozen Nobel Peace laureates have called on Obama to make "full disclosure to the American people of the extent and use of torture" by the US, a call which Obama is resisting.

The "war on terror" has also been used as justification by the NSA and other government agencies for their widespread viola-

tions of the right to privacy and other civil liberties .

EIGHT: Another war will waste money and resources that are desperately needed in every corner of the world, including the US

Earlier this year, Congress passed an \$8.7 billion cut in the food stamp program for the poor. Meanwhile, Obama's new war on ISIS will cost an estimated \$18 billion to \$22 billion each year. Last month, Obama asked the new Republican-dominated Congress for \$5.6 billion in additional funding – not to repair parts of the social safety net, but for the Pentagon and State Department as part of the war on ISIS.

As Middle East commentator Juan Cole wrote:

“The same people who have trouble justifying a safety net for the working poor and find it urgent to cut billions from the programs that keep us a civilized society rather than a predatory jungle – those same people have no difficulty authorizing billions for vague bombing campaigns that are unlikely

to be successful on any genuine metric.

US domination of the Middle East is also about speeding up the extraction and burning of fossil fuels – even though climate scientists are united in calling for fossil fuels to be left in the ground if the planet is to have a fighting chance maintaining the ecosystem.

From Iraq to Syria to the US, ordinary people won't benefit from another imperial adventure to keep money flowing into the already overflowing coffers of the world's most powerful and wealthy corporations.

Ultimately, it is the system of capitalism that drives nation states and corporations into an all-out struggle to defeat their rivals and dominate the planet. Only by uprooting this system and replacing it with a socialist society will the needs of people and the environment finally win out over the blind pursuit of profit.

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Alan Maas is the editor of Socialist Worker - <http://socialistworker.org> - where this article was first published. Eric Ruder is a writer in Chicago.



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America's secret police

John W. Rutherford tells of the similarity between the American police state and past totalitarian regimes such as that of Nazi Germany

In the US, it's the Federal Bureau of Investigation that does the dirty work of ensuring compliance, keeping tabs on potential dissidents, and punishing those who dare to challenge the status quo

"We want no Gestapo or secret police. The FBI is tending in that direction. They are dabbling in sex-life scandals and plain blackmail. J. Edgar Hoover would give his right eye to take over, and all congressmen and senators are afraid of him".

– President Harry S. Truman

Secret police. Secret courts. Secret government agencies. Surveillance. Intimidation tactics. Harassment. Torture. Brutality. Widespread corruption. Entrapment schemes.

These are the hallmarks of every authoritarian regime from the Roman Empire to modern-day America, yet it's the secret police – tasked with silencing dissidents, ensuring compliance, and maintaining a climate of fear – who sound the death knell for freedom in every age.

Every regime has its own name for its secret police: Mussolini's OVRA carried out phone surveillance on government officials. Stalin's NKVD carried out large-scale purges, terror and depopulation. Hitler's Gestapo went door to door ferreting out dissidents and other political "enemies" of the state. And in the US, it's the Federal Bureau of Investigation that does the dirty work of ensuring compliance, keeping tabs on potential dissidents, and punishing those who dare to challenge the status quo.

Whether the FBI is planting undercover agents in churches, synagogues and mosques; issuing fake emergency letters to gain access to Americans' phone records; using intimidation tactics to silence Americans who are critical of the government, or persuading impressionable individuals to plot acts of terror and then entrapping them, the overall impression of the nation's secret police force is that of a well-dressed thug, flexing its muscles and doing the boss's dirty work.

Indeed, a far cry from the glamorized G-men depicted in Hollywood film noirs and spy thrillers, the government's henchmen have become the embodiment of how power, once acquired, can be so easily corrupted and abused.

Case in point: the FBI is being sued after its agents, lacking sufficient evidence to acquire a search warrant, disabled a hotel's internet and then impersonated Internet repair technicians in order to gain access to a hotel suite and record the activities of the room's occupants. Justifying the warrantless search as part of a sting on internet gambling, FBI officials insisted that citizens should not expect the same right to privacy in the common room of a hotel suite as they would at home in their bedroom.

Far from being tough on crime, FBI agents are also among the nation's most

notorious lawbreakers. In fact, in addition to creating certain crimes in order to then “solve” them, the FBI also gives certain informants permission to break the law, “including everything from buying and selling illegal drugs to bribing government officials and plotting robberies,” in exchange for their cooperation on other fronts. *USA Today* estimates that agents have authorized criminals to engage in as many as 15 crimes a day. Some of these informants are getting paid astronomical sums: one particularly unsavory fellow, later arrested for attempting to run over a police officer, was actually paid \$85,000 for his help laying the trap for an entrapment scheme.

In a stunning development reported by the *Washington Post*, a probe into misconduct by an FBI agent has resulted in the release of at least a dozen convicted drug dealers from prison. Several suspects awaiting trial have also been freed, and more could be released as the unnamed agent’s caseload comes under scrutiny. As the *Post* reports: “The scope and type of alleged misconduct by the agent have not been revealed, but defense lawyers involved in the cases described the mass freeing of felons as virtually unprecedented – and an indication that convictions could be in jeopardy. Prosecutors are periodically faced with having to drop cases over police misconduct, but it is unusual to free those who have been found guilty.”

In addition to procedural misconduct, trespassing, enabling criminal activity, and damaging private property, the FBI’s laundry list of crimes against the American people includes surveillance, disinformation, blackmail, entrapment, intimidation tactics, and harassment.

For example, the Associated Press recently lodged a complaint with the Dept. of Justice after learning that FBI agents created a fake AP news story and emailed it, along with a clickable link, to a bomb threat suspect in order to implant tracking technology onto his computer and identify

his location. Lambasting the agency, AP attorney Karen Kaiser railed, “The FBI may have intended this false story as a trap for only one person. However, the individual could easily have reposted this story to social networks, distributing to thousands of people, under our name, what was essentially a piece of government disinformation.”

Then again, to those familiar with COINTELPRO, an FBI program created to “disrupt, misdirect, discredit, and neutralize” groups and individuals the government considers politically objectionable, it should come as no surprise that the agency has mastered the art of government disinformation.

The FBI has been particularly criticized in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks for targeting vulnerable individuals and not only luring them into fake terror plots but actually equipping them with the organization, money, weapons and motivation to carry out the plots – entrapment – and then jailing them for their so-called terrorist plotting. This is what the FBI characterizes as “forward leaning – preventative – prosecutions.”

Another fallout from 9/11, National Security Letters, one of the many illicit powers authorized by the USA Patriot Act, allows the FBI to secretly demand that banks, phone companies, and other businesses provide them with customer information and not disclose the demands. An internal audit of the agency found that the FBI practice of issuing tens of thousands of NSLs every year for sensitive information such as phone and financial records, often in non-emergency cases, is riddled with widespread violations.

The FBI’s surveillance capabilities, on a par with the National Security Agency, boast a nasty collection of spy tools ranging from Stingray devices that can track the location of cell phones to Triggerfish devices which allow agents to eavesdrop on phone calls. In one case, the FBI ac-

The FBI’s surveillance capabilities boast a nasty collection of spy tools ranging from Stingray devices that can track the location of cell phones to Triggerfish devices which allow agents to eavesdrop on phone calls

THE ENEMY WITHIN

The FBI has a long track record of abusing its extensive powers in order to blackmail politicians, spy on celebrities and high-ranking government officials, and intimidate dissidents of all stripes

tually managed to remotely reprogram a “suspect’s” wireless internet card so that it would send “real-time cell-site location data to Verizon, which forwarded the data to the FBI.”

Now the FBI is seeking to expand its already invasive hacking powers to allow agents to hack into any computer, anywhere in the world. As journalist Brett Wilkins warns:

“If the proposed rule change is approved, the FBI would have the power to unleash “network investigative techniques” against computers anywhere in the world, allowing the agency to secretly install malware and spyware on any computer, effectively allowing it to control that computer and all its stored information. The FBI could download all the computer’s digital contents, switch its camera or microphone on or off and even control other computers in its network.”

And then there’s James Comey, current director of the FBI, who knows enough to say all the right things about the need to abide by the Constitution, all the while his agency routinely discards it. Comey has this idea that the government’s powers shouldn’t be limited, especially when it comes to carrying out surveillance on American citizens. Responding to reports that Apple and Google are creating smart phones that will be more difficult to hack into, Comey has been lobbying Congress and the White House to force technology companies to keep providing the government with backdoor access to Americans’ cell phones.

It’s not all Comey’s fault, though. This transformation of the FBI into a secret police force can be traced back to the days of J. Edgar Hoover. As author Anthony S. Summers points out, it was Hoover who “built the first federal fingerprint bank, and his Identification Division would eventually offer instant access to the prints of 159 million people. His Crime Laboratory became the most advanced in the world.”

Eighty years after Hoover instituted the FBI’s first fingerprint “database” – catalogued on index cards, no less – the agency’s biometric database has grown to massive proportions, the largest in the world, encompassing everything from fingerprints, palm, face and iris scans to DNA, and is being increasingly shared between federal, state and local law enforcement agencies in an effort to target potential criminals long before they ever commit a crime. This is what’s known as pre-crime.

If it were just about fighting the “bad guys,” that would be one thing. But as countless documents make clear, the FBI has a long track record of abusing its extensive powers in order to blackmail politicians, spy on celebrities and high-ranking government officials, and intimidate dissidents of all stripes. It’s an old tactic, used effectively by former authoritarian regimes.

In fact, as historian Robert Gellately documents, the Nazi police state was repeatedly touted as a model for other nations to follow, so much so that Hoover actually sent one of his right-hand men, Edmund Patrick Coffey, to Berlin in January 1938 at the invitation of Germany’s secret police. As Gellately noted, “[A]fter five years of Hitler’s dictatorship, the Nazi police had won the FBI’s seal of approval.”

Indeed, so impressed was the FBI with the Nazi order that, as the *New York Times* recently revealed, in the decades after World War II, the FBI, along with other government agencies, aggressively recruited at least a thousand Nazis, including some of Hitler’s highest henchmen, brought them to America, hired them on as spies and informants, and then carried out a massive cover-up campaign to ensure that their true identities and ties to Hitler’s holocaust machine would remain unknown. Moreover, anyone who dared to blow the whistle on the FBI’s illicit Nazi ties found himself spied upon, intimidated, harassed and labeled a threat

to national security.

So not only have American taxpayers have been paying to keep ex-Nazis on the government payroll for decades but we've been subjected to the very same tactics used by the Third Reich: surveillance, militarized police, overcriminalization, and a government mindset that views itself as operating outside the bounds of the law.

Yet as I point out in my book "A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State", it's no coincidence that the similarities between the American police state and past totalitarian regimes such as Nazi Germany grow more pronounced with each passing day. This is how freedom falls, and tyrants come to power.

Suffice it to say that when and if a true history of the FBI is ever written, it will not only track the rise of the American po-

lice state but it will also chart the decline of freedom in America: how a nation that once abided by the rule of law and held the government accountable for its actions has steadily devolved into a police state where justice is one-sided, a corporate elite runs the show, representative government is a mockery, police are extensions of the military, surveillance is rampant, privacy is extinct, and the law is little more than a tool for the government to browbeat the people into compliance. **CT**

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

It's no coincidence that the similarities between the American police state and past totalitarian regimes such as Nazi Germany grow more pronounced with each passing day

A GOVERNMENT OF WOLVES
THE EMERGING AMERICAN POLICE STATE
JOHN W. WHITEHEAD

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GOVERNMENT OF WOLVES
THE EMERGING AMERICAN POLICE STATE
JOHN W. WHITEHEAD
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY RON PAUL

"John Whitehead is one of the most eloquent and knowledgeable defenders of liberty, and opponents of the growing American police state, writing today. I am pleased to recommend *A Government of Wolves* to anyone interested in learning how modern America increasingly resembles a dystopian science fiction film instead of a Constitutional Republic." —**RON PAUL**

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www.rutherford.org



March of a million masks

Anonymous, the hacktivist group, held its third annual "Million Mask March" in conjunction with Guy Fawkes Day in more than 400 cities worldwide on November 5. Here are scenes – via flickr.com – from some of those marches





**Above: Sydney,
Australia.
Photo Danijel James**

**Left: Chicago, USA.
Photo Michael Kappel**

**Far left: London.
Photo: BJPCorp**

IN THE FRAME



Above and right: London.
Photo:
BJPCorp

Centre, right:
Sydney,
Australia.
Photo:
Danijel James





Above:
washington
DC, USA.
Photo:
Joe Newman

Left: Sydney,
Australia.
Photo:
Danijel James

The imperative of revolt

Two of North America's leading political philosophers tell **Chris Hedges** why we have to fight the destruction of society by the corporate elite

If these corporate forces are able to use the security and surveillance apparatus and militarized police forces to criminalize dissent, how will change occur and what will it look like?

I met with Sheldon S. Wolin in Salem, Ore., and John Ralston Saul in Toronto and asked the two political philosophers the same question. If, as Saul has written, we have undergone a corporate coup d'état and now live under a species of corporate dictatorship that Wolin calls "inverted totalitarianism," if the internal mechanisms that once made piecemeal and incremental reform possible remain ineffective, if corporate power retains its chokehold on our economy and governance, including our legislative bodies, judiciary and systems of information, and if these corporate forces are able to use the security and surveillance apparatus and militarized police forces to criminalize dissent, how will change occur and what will it look like?

Wolin, who wrote the books "Politics and Vision" and "Democracy Incorporated," and Saul, who wrote "Voltaire's Bastards" and "The Unconscious Civilization," see democratic rituals and institutions, especially in the United States, as largely a facade for unchecked global corporate power. Wolin and Saul excoriate academics, intellectuals and journalists, charging they have abrogated their calling to expose abuses of power and give voice to social criticism; they instead function as echo chambers for elites, courtiers and corporate systems managers. Neither believes the current economic system is sustainable. And each calls for mass

movements willing to carry out repeated acts of civil disobedience to disrupt and delegitimize corporate power.

"If you continue to go down the wrong road, at a certain point something happens," Saul said during our meeting in Toronto, where he lives. "At a certain point when the financial system is wrong it falls apart. And it did. And it will fall apart again."

"The collapse started in 1973," Saul continued. "There were a series of sequential collapses afterwards. The fascinating thing is that between 1850 and 1970 we put in place all sorts of mechanisms to stop collapses which we can call liberalism, social democracy or Red Toryism. It was an understanding that we can't have boom-and-bust cycles. We can't have poverty-stricken people. We can't have starvation. The reason today's collapses are not leading to what happened in the 18th century and the 19th century is because all these safety nets, although under attack, are still in place. But each time we have a collapse we come out of it stripping more of the protection away. At a certain point we will find ourselves back in the pre-protection period. At that point we will get a collapse that will be incredibly dramatic. I have no idea what it will look like. A revolution from the left? A revolution from the right? Is it violence followed by state violence? Is it the collapse of the last meaningful edges of democracy?"

Is it a sudden decision by a critical mass of people that they are not going to take it anymore?”

This devolution of the economic system has been accompanied by corporations’ seizure of nearly all forms of political and social power. The corporate elite, through a puppet political class and compliant intellectuals, pundits and press, still employs the language of a capitalist democracy. But what has arisen is a new kind of control, inverted totalitarianism, which Wolin brilliantly dissects in his book “Democracy Incorporated.”

Inverted totalitarianism does not replicate past totalitarian structures, such as fascism and communism. It is therefore harder to immediately identify and understand. There is no blustering demagogue. There is no triumphant revolutionary party. There are no ideologically drenched and emotional mass political rallies. The old symbols, the old iconography and the old language of democracy are held up as virtuous. The old systems of governance – electoral politics, an independent judiciary, a free press and the Constitution – appear to be venerated. But, similar to what happened during the late Roman Empire, all the institutions that make democracy possible have been hollowed out and rendered impotent and ineffectual.

The corporate state, Wolin told me at his Oregon home, is “legitimated by elections it controls.” It exploits laws that once protected democracy to extinguish democracy; one example is allowing unlimited corporate campaign contributions in the name of our First Amendment right to free speech and our right to petition the government as citizens. “It perpetuates politics all the time,” Wolin said, “but a politics that is not political.” The endless election cycles, he said, are an example of politics without politics, driven not by substantive issues but manufactured political personalities and opinion polls. There is no national institution in the United States “that can be

described as democratic,” he said.

The mechanisms that once allowed the citizen to be a participant in power – from participating in elections to enjoying the rights of dissent and privacy – have been nullified. Money has replaced the vote, Wolin said, and corporations have garnered total power without using the cruder forms of traditional totalitarian control: concentration camps, enforced ideological conformity and the physical suppression of dissent. They will avoid such measures “as long as that dissent remains ineffectual,” he said. “The government does not need to stamp out dissent. The uniformity of imposed public opinion through the corporate media does a very effective job.”

The state has obliterated privacy through mass surveillance, a fundamental precondition for totalitarian rule, and in ways that are patently unconstitutional has stripped citizens of the rights to a living wage, benefits and job security. And it has destroyed institutions, such as labor unions, that once protected workers from corporate abuse.

Inverted totalitarianism, Wolin has written, is “only in part a state-centered phenomenon.” It also represents “the political coming of age of corporate power and the political demobilization of the citizenry.”

Corporate power works in secret. It is unseen by the public and largely anonymous. Politicians and citizens alike often seem blissfully unaware of the consequences of inverted totalitarianism, Wolin said in the interview. And because it is a new form of totalitarianism we do not recognize the radical change that has gradually taken place. Our failure to grasp the new configuration of power has permitted the corporate state to rob us through judicial fiat, a process that culminates in a disempowered population and omnipotent corporate rulers. Inverted totalitarianism, Wolin said, “projects power upwards.” It is “the antithesis of constitutional power.”

“Democracy has been turned upside down,” Wolin said. “It is supposed to be a

The state has obliterated privacy through mass surveillance, a fundamental precondition for totalitarian rule, and in ways that are patently unconstitutional has stripped citizens of the rights to a living wage, benefits and job security

MAKING CHOICES

There is no effective organized opposition to the rise of a neofeudalism dominated a tiny corporate oligarchy that exploits workers and the poor

government for the people, by the people. But it has become an organized form of government dominated by groups that are only vaguely, if at all, responsible or responsive to popular needs and popular demands. At the same time, it retains a patina of democracy. We still have elections. They are relatively free. We have a relatively free media. But what is missing is a crucial, continuous opposition that has a coherent position, that is not just saying no, no, no, that has an alternative and ongoing critique of what is wrong and what needs to be remedied.”

Wolin and Saul, echoing Karl Marx, view unfettered and unregulated capitalism as a revolutionary force that has within it the seeds of its own self-annihilation. It is and always has been deeply antagonistic to participatory democracy, they said. Democratic states must heavily regulate and control capitalism, for once capitalism is freed from outside restraint it seeks to snuff out democratic institutions and abolish democratic rights that are seen – often correctly – as an impediment to maximizing profit. The more ruthless and pronounced global corporate capitalism becomes, the greater the loss of democratic space.

“Capitalism is destructive because it has to eliminate customs, mores, political values, even institutions that present any kind of credible threat to the autonomy of the economy,” Wolin said. “That is where the battle lies. Capitalism wants an autonomous economy. It wants a political order subservient to the needs of the economy. The [capitalist’s] notion of an economy, while broadly based in the sense of a relatively free entrance and property that is relatively widely dispersed, is as elitist as any aristocratic system.”

Wolin and Saul said they expect the state, especially in an age of terminal economic decline, to employ more violent and draconian forms of control to keep restive populations in check. This coercion, they said, will fuel discontent and unrest, which will further increase state repression.

“People with power use the tools they have,” Saul said. “As the West has gradually lost its economic tool it has turned to what remains, which are military tools and violence. The West still has the most weaponry. Even if they are doing very badly economically in a global sense, they can use the weaponry to replace the economics or replace competition.”

“They decided that capitalism and the market was about the right to have the cheapest possible goods,” Saul said. “That is what competition meant. This is a lie. No capitalist philosopher ever said that. As you bring the prices down below the capacity to produce them in a middle-class country you commit suicide. As you commit suicide you have to ask, ‘How do we run this place?’ And you have to run it using these other methods – bread and circuses, armies, police and prisons.”

The liberal class – which has shriveled under the corporate onslaught and a Cold War ideology that held up national security as the highest good – once found a home in the Democratic Party, the press, labor unions and universities. It made reform possible. Now, because it is merely decorative, it compounds the political and economic crisis. There is no effective organized opposition to the rise of a neofeudalism dominated a tiny corporate oligarchy that exploits workers and the poor.

“The reform class, those who believe that reform is possible, those who believe in humanism, justice and inclusion, has become incredibly lazy over the last 30 or 40 years,” Saul said. “The last hurrah was really in the 1970s. Since then they think that getting a tenured position at Harvard and waiting to get a job in Washington is actually an action, as opposed to passivity.”

“One of the things we have seen over the last 30 or 40 years is a gradual silencing of people who are doctors or scientists,” Saul said. “They are silenced by the managerial methodology of contracts. You sign an employment contract that says everything you

know belongs to the people who hired you. You are not allowed to speak out. Take that [right] away and you have a gigantic educated group who has a great deal to say and do, but they are tied up. They don't know how to untie themselves. They come out with their Ph.D. They are deeply in debt. The only way they can get a job is to give up their intellectual freedom. They are prisoners."

Resistance, Wolin and Saul agreed, will begin locally, with communities organizing to form autonomous groups that practice direct democracy outside the formal power structures, including the two main political parties. These groups will have to address issues such as food security, education, local governance, economic cooperation and consumption. And they will have to sever themselves, as much as possible, from the corporate economy.

"Richard Rorty talked about how you take power," Saul said. "You go out and win the school board elections. You hold the school board. You reform the schools. Then you win the towns. And you stay there. And you hold it for 30 to 40 years. And gradually you bring in reforms that improve things. It isn't about three years in Washington on a contract. There has to be a critical mass of leaders willing to ruin their lives as part of a large group that figures out how to get power and hold power at all of these levels, gradually putting reforms in place."

I asked them if a professional revolutionary class, revolutionists dedicated solely to overthrowing the corporate state, was a prerequisite. Would we have to model any credible opposition after Vladimir Lenin's disciplined and rigidly controlled Bolsheviks or Machiavelli's republican conspirators? Wolin and Saul, while deeply critical of Lenin's ideology of state capitalism and state terror, agreed that creating a class devoted full time to radical change was essential to fomenting change. There must be people, they said, willing to dedicate their lives to confronting the corporate state

outside traditional institutions and parties. Revolt, for a few, must become a vocation. The alliance between mass movements and a professional revolutionary class, they said, offers the best chance for an overthrow of corporate power.

"It is extremely important that people are willing to go into the streets," Saul said. "Democracy has always been about the willingness of people to go into the streets. When the Occupy movement started I was pessimistic. I felt it could only go a certain distance. But the fact that a critical mass of people was willing to go into the streets and stay there, without being organized by a political party or a union, was a real statement. If you look at that, at what is happening in Canada, at the movements in Europe, the hundreds of thousands of people in Spain in the streets, you are seeing for the first time since the 19th century or early 20th century people coming into the streets in large numbers without a real political structure. These movements aren't going to take power. But they are a sign that power and the respect for power is falling apart. What happens next? It could be dribbled away. But I think there is the possibility of a new generation coming in and saying we won't accept this. That is how you get change. A new generation comes along and says no, no, no. They build their lives on the basis of that no."

But none of these mass mobilizations, Saul and Wolin emphasized, will work unless there is a core of professional organizers.

"Anarchy is a beautiful idea, but someone has to run the stuff," Saul said. "It has to be run over a long period of time. Look at the rise and fall of the Chinese empires. For thousands of years it has been about the rise and fall of the water systems. Somebody has to run the water system. Somebody [in modern times] has to keep the electricity going. Somebody has to make the hospitals work."

"You need a professional or elite class

"Anarchy is a beautiful idea, but someone has to run the stuff"

MAKING CHOICES

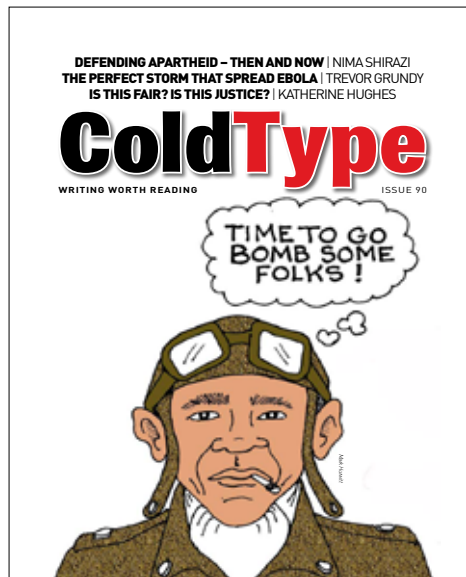
"If you don't understand power you get blown away by the guy who does"

devoted to profound change," Saul said. "If you want to get power you have to be able to hold it. And you have to be able to hold it long enough to change the direction. The neoconservatives understood this. They have always been Bolsheviks. They are the Bolsheviks of the right. Their methodology is the methodology of the Bolsheviks. They took over political parties by internal coups d'état. They worked out, scientifically, what things they needed to do and in what order to change the structures of power. They have done it stage by stage. And we are living the result of that. The liberals sat around writing incomprehensible laws and boring policy papers. They were unwilling

to engage in the real fight that was won by a minute group of extremists."

"You have to understand power to reform things," Saul said. "If you don't understand power you get blown away by the guy who does. We are missing people who believe in justice and at the same time understand how tough power and politics are, how to make real choices. And these choices are often quite ugly." **CT**

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Chris Hedges, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, writes a regular column for Truthdig every Monday. Hedges' most recent book, written with Joe Sacco, is "Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt"



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Canada's heart of darkness

Stephen Harper's Conservative government has changed the country from peacekeeper to warmonger, says **Jim Miles**

Once upon a time, Canada was able to create the illusion that it was the “peaceable kingdom”, an illusion accepted domestically and arguably by most of the rest of the world. This history has been well discredited with newer historical research outlining how Canada's position as a “peacekeeper,” generally under UN auspices, remained effectively within the realm of US foreign policy, just with a kinder gentler face.

Over the past decade, Canada has made a clear and distinct turn towards its inner ‘heart of darkness’, becoming much more overt about its right wing militarized alignment with the US empire and its demands. It has done so to the extent of front-running – or trying to out do – the hubris and arrogance of the US in its declamations of its self-righteousness concerning international affairs (with similar impacts on domestic affairs).

Much if not all of this is due to Canada's (neo)Conservative government under Stephen Harper. Harper himself has declared that Canada will be a different nation when he is finished with his reign of office. Harper's background is of a fundamentalist-dominionist Christian ideology that he himself hides reasonably well but which shows up quite frequently in his supporters and in caucus. He is determined to create a domestic order that is ruled by giving freedom to

corporations, in alliance with the banksters, to do as they require to harvest the wealth of the country for their own benefit.

The two recent attacks on uniformed Canadian soldiers by ‘lone wolf’ attackers are well known at least to those attending to western media. It was the latest incident on Parliament Hill with the murder of an Honour Guard at Ottawa's War Memorial that has created the most significant response.

The government response while rightly denouncing the violence of the actions highlights some of the double standards and the direction that the current government wants to go. Many of the comments used descriptors such as “unexpected,” “shocking,” “senseless,” and “we'll never be the same.”

What the comments truly highlight is the ignorance of the speakers concerning Canada's role in global affairs historically and within current events in the Middle East. Some kind of action like this was probably very much expected (otherwise, why a watch list of 90+ individuals?), and while the act of murder is a shock to those witnessing it and suffering from it, it is not a shock in the political usage of the word. Senseless, yes, for those not cognizant of the various psychological combinations of disempowerment, drugs, alienation, and religious dogma. But the ‘senselessness’ goes deeper into Canada's changing role in

While the act of murder is a shock to those witnessing it and suffering from it, it is not a shock in the political usage of the word

HARPER'S FOLLY

Sure, we all have a vote, but the real deals are made behind closed doors in secret meetings, a distinct lack of surveillance there

world affairs.

When Harper spoke to Parliament the day after the Ottawa killing, he spoke of the support he had received from other countries, mentioning by name the UK, Australia, the US and Israel. An interesting conglomeration – of settler colonial states birthed by the racist empire of the British. Perhaps this is taking it too far, but it is as only as far as Harper has gone with his more militant foreign policy.

Without qualification Harper supports Israel's ongoing use of warfare against the people of Gaza, supports the ideology of Israel's foundational myths, and supports its actions in the West Bank and Jerusalem. He supported the US in their role in destroying the government of Libya, to the extent of honouring the jet fighter pilots who bombed army units and infrastructure well beyond the intent of a 'no fly zone'. He has sided with the other minions of the western powers in demonizing Putin while supporting the neo-Nazis in the Ukraine who overthrew a duly – if corrupt – elected government.

Ironically he has supported the US in Syria by backing the Islamist militants trying to overthrow Assad, who have morphed into ISIS which is supported and supplied by Saudi Arabia and Qatar among other Arab countries who are our supposed allies. And these militants had morphed into shape from the US's obliteration of the Iraqi state, following its lack of success in Afghanistan. Turkey, a fellow NATO ally member, has until recently allowed ISIS to beat up on the Kurds as it plays out a triple game in the region without too much concern for which militant is the good guy or the bad guy.

These are Canada's actions in the world today. Backing the US in its increasing desperation to save its global hegemony, supporting autocratic monarchies (FYI – Saudi Arabia beheaded 26 people in August using only the authority of Wahhabi religious law to do so), supporting the attempts to revive the Cold War mythology of the evils of Rus-

sia and Putin, accusing them of threatening "NATO's doorstep" when it is NATO that has advanced 700 km towards the Russian border, and supporting the ongoing colonial-settler apartheid of Israel.

And then we wonder why Canada has suffered these attacks. The 'senseless' aspect of it all is Canada's role in global affairs. Various pundits in Canada are arguing about the significance of these events, in particular because the Harper regime was intending to introduce new legislation to give CSIS (Canada's security services) and the RCMP (its national police force) and other police more surveillance powers and more powers of pre-emptive interventions.

Current Justice Minister Peter MacKay has defended the idea of new legislation allowing greater surveillance for terrorists, adding that it also allows for more surveillance of undefined criminal acts. With the current governments mind-set that could easily become translated to mean people who are protesting against corporations, for the environment, against government initiatives in general. To the pundits credit on CBC, they agreed that the idea was far too open and intrusive.

One of the pundits argued that Canadians would normalize the surveillance as the US and the UK people had done, without changing the essence of democracy in those countries. It is easily arguable that true democracy does not exist in either of those countries as they are mainly controlled by the corporate-military-political elites. Sure, we all have a vote, but the real deals are made behind closed doors in secret meetings, a distinct lack of surveillance there.

One of the more ironic comments from a pundit returns to the idea of the violence of the people who committed these acts of terror. After mentioning briefly several violent acts by different people in the US and Canada, Muslim and Christian alike, he said it was the "willingness to use violence that unites them."

That sadly returns the argument back

to the countries that gave verbal sympathy to the Canadian government after the second killing. It is these very countries, on a much larger scale, that have an underlying violence that unites them. Violence used domestically during their years of formation, violence ongoing against subjugated racial/religious groups, violence against other countries who are made to appear as the evil 'other' and thus to be destroyed or violently contained.

Final picture, of Justice Minister MacKay wearing a t-shirt printed with a high powered automatic rifle at a Conservative fundraiser supported by the National Firearms Association.

Ironically, that same association does not want the surveillance bill, C-13, to pass, "We think that this is probably the most draconian step towards police interference in people's lives since George Orwell revealed

the potential for it when he wrote 1984."

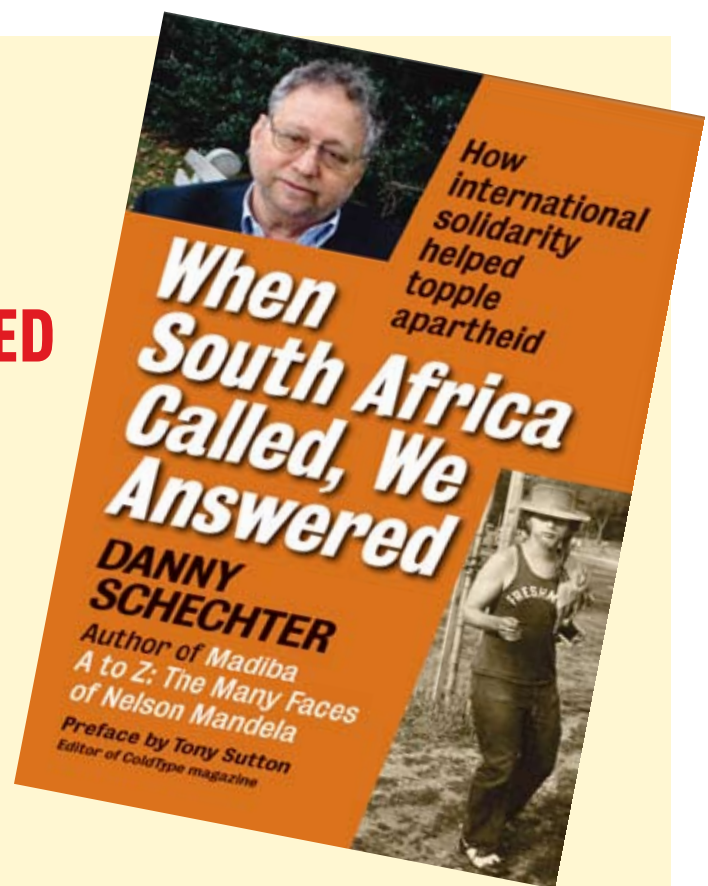
It comes full circle to the vanished illusion of the "peaceable kingdom." Canada's democracy and civility is a tarnished and cracked veneer disguising an underlying racial prejudice and fear of the 'other', a legacy of colonial-settler violence inherited from the British empire. Stephen Harper and his (neo) Conservative government have exposed these flaws in our supposedly democratic civilizational superiority with his violence towards the people of the world and the violence towards the land and people domestically. Our inner heart of darkness has been revealed. **CT**

Jim Miles is a Canadian educator and a regular contributor/columnist of opinion pieces and book reviews for The Palestine Chronicle – <http://palestinechronicle.com> – where this article was first published

Canada's democracy and civility is a tarnished and cracked veneer disguising an underlying racial prejudice and fear of the 'other'

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Turning Gaza into a super-max prison

Jonathan Cook tells how Israel's attempts to control the rebuilding of Gaza after the recent war are aimed at making the occupation more efficient

Where else in the world apart from the Palestinian territories would the international community stand by idly as so many people suffer

It is astonishing that the reconstruction of Gaza, bombed into the Stone Age according to the explicit goals of an Israeli military doctrine known as “Dahiya”, has tentatively only just begun two months after the end of the fighting.

According to the United Nations, 100,000 homes have been destroyed or damaged, leaving 600,000 Palestinians – nearly one in three of Gaza’s population – homeless or in urgent need of humanitarian help.

Roads, schools and the electricity plant to power water and sewerage systems are in ruins. The cold and wet of winter are approaching. Aid agency Oxfam warns that at the current rate of progress it may take 50 years to rebuild Gaza.

Where else in the world apart from the Palestinian territories would the international community stand by idly as so many people suffer – and not from a random act of God but willed by fellow humans?

The reason for the hold-up is, as ever, Israel’s “security needs”. Gaza can be rebuilt but only to the precise specifications laid down by Israeli officials.

We have been here before. Twelve years ago, Israeli bulldozers rolled into Jenin camp in the West Bank in the midst of the second intifada. Israel had just lost its largest number of soldiers in a single battle as the army struggled through a warren of narrow alleys. In scenes that shocked the world,

Israel turned hundreds of homes to rubble.

With residents living in tents, Israel insisted on the terms of Jenin camp’s rehabilitation. The alleys that assisted the Palestinian resistance in its ambushes had to go. In their place, streets were built wide enough for Israeli tanks to patrol.

In short, both the Palestinians’ humanitarian needs and their right in international law to resist their oppressor were sacrificed to satisfy Israel’s desire to make the enforcement of its occupation more efficient.

It is hard not to view the agreement reached in Cairo recently for Gaza’s reconstruction in similar terms.

Donors pledged \$5.4 billion – though, based on past experience, much of it won’t materialise. In addition, half will be immediately redirected to the distant West Bank to pay off the Palestinian Authority’s mounting debts. No one in the international community appears to have suggested that Israel, which has asset-stripped both the West Bank and Gaza in different ways, foot the bill.

The Cairo agreement has been widely welcomed, though the terms on which Gaza will be rebuilt have been only vaguely publicised. Leaks from worried insiders, however, have fleshed out the details.

One Israeli analyst has compared the proposed solution to transforming a third-world prison into a modern US super-max

incarceration facility. The more civilised exterior will simply obscure its real purpose: not to make life better for the Palestinian inmates, but to offer greater security to the Israeli guards.

Humanitarian concern is being harnessed to allow Israel to streamline an eight-year blockade that has barred many essential items, including those needed to rebuild Gaza after previous assaults.

The agreement passes nominal control over Gaza's borders and the transfer of reconstruction materials to the PA and UN in order to bypass and weaken Hamas. But the overseers – and true decision-makers – will be Israel. For example, it will get a veto over who supplies the massive quantities of cement needed. That means much of the donors' money will end up in the pockets of Israeli cement-makers and middlemen.

But the problem runs deeper than that. The system must satisfy Israel's desire to know where every bag of cement or steel rod ends up, to prevent Hamas rebuilding its home-made rockets and network of tunnels.

The tunnels, and element of surprise they offered, were the reason Israel lost so many soldiers. Without them, Israel will have a freer hand next time it wants to "mow the grass", as its commanders call Gaza's repeated destruction.

Last week Israel's defence minister Moshe Yaalon warned that rebuilding Gaza would be conditioned on Hamas's good behaviour. Israel wanted to be sure "the funds and equipment are not used for terrorism, therefore we are closely monitoring all of the developments".

The PA and UN will have to submit to a database reviewed by Israel the details of every home that needs rebuilding. Indica-

tions are that Israeli drones will watch every move on the ground.

Israel will be able to veto anyone it considers a militant – which means anyone with a connection to Hamas or Islamic Jihad. Presumably, Israel hopes this will dissuade most Palestinians from associating with the resistance movements.

Further, it is hard not to assume that the supervision system will provide Israel with the GPS co-ordinates of every home in Gaza, and the details of every family, consolidating its control when it next decides to attack. And Israel can hold the whole process to ransom, pulling the plug at any moment.

Sadly, the UN – desperate to see relief for Gaza's families – has agreed to conspire in this new version of the blockade, despite its violating international law and Palestinians' rights. Washington and its allies, it seems, are only too happy to see Hamas and Islamic Jihad deprived of the materials needed to resist Israel's next onslaught.

The *New York Times* summed up the concern: "What is the point of raising and spending many millions of dollars ... to rebuild the Gaza Strip just so it can be destroyed in the next war?"

For some donors exasperated by years of sinking money into a bottomless hole, upgrading Gaza to a super-max prison looks like a better return on their investment. **CT**

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

The system must satisfy Israel's desire to know where every bag of cement or steel rod ends up, to prevent Hamas rebuilding its home-made rockets and network of tunnels

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Exceptionalism rules

Israel and the US are like two peas in a pod when it comes to their arrogance, writes **Philip Giraldi**

In the absence of any serious consequences coming from Washington Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will do whatever he wants in the firm belief that there is no one who can force him to do otherwise

So Israel is building 2,610 new housing units in East Jerusalem and in contiguous areas on the West Bank at a time when international sentiment against its unending occupation of Palestine is growing, particularly among Europeans if one goes by recent developments in Sweden, Britain and in Ireland. The administration of President Barack Obama is reported to be “deeply concerned” and even seriously annoyed by the latest Israeli thumb inserted squarely in the American eye, but has not taken any action to pressure Tel Aviv into reversing course.

Pardon me while I yawn. In the absence of any serious consequences coming from Washington Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will do whatever he wants in the firm belief that there is no one who can force him to do otherwise. Israel owns Congress and the mainstream media while its proliferating think tanks and promoters in a score of major Jewish organizations continue to spew out self-serving nonsense. So who is going to say nay?

Obama’s mistake lies ultimately in his apparent belief that Israel is somehow a nation guided by tangible interests much like any other, which is particularly ironic as he shares the same type of delusion as the Israeli leadership. Both he and Netanyahu somehow believe that their respective countries are not bound by any internation-

ally accepted standards that determine how one should behave, Washington somehow having designated itself as “leader of the free world” while Tel Aviv defines itself as a chosen people living in a land granted by covenant from Yahweh himself.

Obama would be well served by considering how the majority belief that the United States is somehow exceptional, blessed and guided by God, has taken firm hold of the American psyche. Which makes it not so very different than Israel. Indeed the founding fathers of both nations were not particularly religious, more the products of the French enlightenment than the Bible or Torah, but it has been largely the successor generations in both nations who have rediscovered God in its most exclusive and retributive form. This has meant that tens of millions of the current generation of Americans are insisting on a need to return to their versions of Biblical morality while Israelis keep step by maintaining that Israel is an exclusively Jewish State .

Netanyahu believes that Israel has a manifest destiny to exercise complete control over the West Bank so any talk of a two state solution is only so much wind. Whether he believes that because of the argument that the historic state of Israel included that region as a gift from God or because he genuinely considers a Palestinian State to be a permanent security problem is somewhat

irrelevant. What is relevant is that many Israelis share the view that East Jerusalem and the West Bank are there to be colonized, a view expressed by Netanyahu when he challenged anyone to “To come and tell Jews not to live in Jerusalem – why?”

A majority in Israel believes that it is both fit and proper that Israel should be allowed to expand without regard for the native population, which they look down upon and by some accounts hardly consider human. The devil inevitably being in the details, the only real question becomes what to do with the pesky Palestinians who remain – kill them, force them to leave or permit powerless Bantustans that might easily be controlled by constructing walls and checkpoints while exploiting the inhabitants for cheap labor if for nothing else.

While the “moral majority” in the US exploits what it perceives to be the ethical high ground in its attacks on critics so too the friends of Israel promote two particular favorable narratives that permit their largely unprincipled behavior. They are first that Jews have always had a substantial presence in what is today’s Israel, which means that the creation of the country and its expanding borders is little more than a coming home, and second that Jewish suffering is unique and therefore justifies a free pass and plentiful reparations for the foreseeable future. Critics of the legitimacy of either narrative are routinely silenced by being called anti-Semites, which until recently denied to them any serious consideration or even civility, though the tag is currently losing its efficacy through overuse. Former Israeli government minister Shulamit Aloni once admitted regarding the anti-Semitism label that “It’s a trick. We always use it.”

The US media, in which friends of Israel are heavily overrepresented, generally toe the line on promoting Israeli national myths, just as they do regarding the American counterparts. It should surprise no one that even archeology is run by a department of the Israeli government in an effort to es-

tablish historical legitimacy and to demonstrate Jewish claims to the land that is currently part of the state as well as of those adjacent regions that it seeks to absorb. Per one critic, “archeology thus becomes a national tool through which Israelis can recover their roots in the ancient past and the ancient homeland.” Demonstrating continuity of significant Jewish presence and suppressing the evidence relating to other inhabitants supports the false belief that the first generation of Israelis settled a land that was largely empty.

Both the continuity and suffering narratives come together in a particularly odd article that appeared recently in Yahoo news. The article, entitled “Jewish revolt written in stone,” states that “Israeli archaeologists said Tuesday they have discovered a large stone with Latin engravings that lends credence to the theory that the reason Jews revolted against Roman rule nearly 2,000 ago was because of their harsh treatment. Israel’s Antiquities Authority said the stone bears the name of the Roman emperor Hadrian and the year of his visit to Jerusalem, a few years before the failed Bar Kochba revolt in the second century A.D. The inscription backs up historical accounts that Rome’s Tenth Legion was present in Jerusalem in the run-up to the revolt.”

The inscription is actually a dedication from the Tenth Legion, which had constituted the province’s military establishment at least since the time of Domitian in 83 AD, to commemorate a visit to Jerusalem by the Emperor Hadrian which took place in 130 AD. Hadrian famously was the first Roman Emperor to visit many of the provinces of the Roman Empire to celebrate the prosperity and peace that Rome had given to the Mediterranean world. Whatever Hadrian’s attitude towards the Judeans might have actually been, there is no suggestion anywhere in the inscription that there was any “harsh treatment” of anyone, but the author of the article relying on commentary from Israeli government archeologists made that

A majority in Israel believes that it is both fit and proper that Israel should be allowed to expand without regard for the native population, which they look down upon and by some accounts hardly consider human

EXCEPTIONALISM

Israel has no intention of ceding the West Bank to anyone because it believes in its own destiny and righteousness

the central theme relating to the discovery, combining Jewish presence (even though Jews are not mentioned) with unique historical suffering (also missing). Mission accomplished.

So President Obama is running head on against a rigorously pursued national myth about Israel and there is no reason why he should expect to be victorious. National myths are inevitably tricky things but they are ignored at one's peril. Israel has no intention of ceding the West Bank to anyone because it believes in its own destiny and righteousness. It will continue to expand at the expense of the Palestinians until the tide of history turns against it, a process that can be slowed by the protection afforded by its patrons in Washing-

ton but which nevertheless will eventually be completed. Reasonable voices in Israel argue that the country is on the wrong course and is facing disaster, but they are likely to be ignored just as their counterparts in the United States have been largely excluded from the debate on how to extricate the "exceptional" nation from an endless cycle of war and economic decline.

CT

Phil Giraldi is a former CIA Case Officer and Army Intelligence Officer who spent twenty years overseas in Europe and the Middle East working terrorism cases. He holds a BA with honors from the University of Chicago and an MA and PhD in Modern History from the University of London.



WORDS and PICTURES

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Ebola's link with Reaganonomics

The West's mistreatment of others, in the way of economic injustice, environmental injustice or just depraved indifference to human life, eventually impacts us all, says **Michael I. Niman**

In October we saw person to person Ebola transmission on three continents. And in a global culture obsessed with contagion themed apocalypse entertainment, we're seeing the beginning of a social media panic with the US, according to Twitter trending stats, leading the world in Ebola Tweets. And this is only the beginning. Or is it?

The Ebola story goes back almost four decades, to 1976, when the first two outbreaks occurred in the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Like Malaria, which kills millions around the world, Ebola found a sympathetic partner in a neo-liberal global economy that allocates resources based not on need, but on where corporate capital can find the easiest path to profits. Malaria, by nature, strikes tropical regions dominated by poor people. Ebola, by history, has only hit Africa. Medical research is expensive and usually driven by private investment, which is drawn to profit, not service. Hence, while Malaria continued to devastate the third world, and Ebola lay in hiding like a time bomb, the medical industry mostly ignored both, putting money into more profitable pursuits such as developing erectile dysfunction drugs for octogenarians.

With corporate research money heading toward more profitable products, fighting diseases like Ebola is left to the public sector. Across Africa, where colonialism plundered resources and neo-liberalism saddled gov-

ernments with structural debt, the public sector isn't too robust, often unable to provide basic infrastructure for potable water or education. Developing an advanced medical research sector ain't happening. This leaves the continent at the mercy of American and European philanthropy, which often seems drawn more to sexier or trending causes, like saving wildlife or hating the eminently hateable Joseph Kony.

First world apathy toward Ebola continued even as the current epidemic unfolded over the last six months, eventually spreading to seven countries, with Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea hit the hardest. In October, the World Health Organization's Assistant Director, General Bruce Aylward, declared that the Ebola epidemic has become a health crisis "unparalleled in modern times." That means, since the Black Death ravaged Europe and the holocaust of European diseases decimated native America.

Terry Pegula Could Have Saved the World

Aylward asked for one billion dollars to combat the epidemic. To put this number in perspective, that's \$400 million less than fracking magnate and uber sports fan Terry Pegula paid last month to buy the Buffalo Bills football team. Weeks went by with no real support from any first world nation, as hospitals in Liberia turned Ebola patients away, sending the infection back into

While Malaria continued to devastate the third world, and Ebola lay in hiding like a time bomb, the medical industry mostly ignored both, putting money into more profitable pursuits such as developing erectile dysfunction drugs for octogenarians

THE COST OF APATHY

What we saw in Ferguson wasn't just the deployment of inappropriate technology – it was also the deployment of an inappropriate attitude and strategy

crowded slums, while the disease jumped international borders and an ocean. To date, only poor and small Cuba took the threat seriously, initially sending the most medical aid to Africa, with about 450 health workers either on the ground or on their way. If we are to stem a global Ebola pandemic, however, tens of thousands of health care workers along with hundreds of new field hospitals are immediately needed in Africa.

The private sector won't supply the money, the personnel or the infrastructure needed to fight Ebola. That leaves the public sector, which in our country has been decimated by over three decades of funding cuts stemming from the "shrink government until it fits in your pocket" mentality of the Reagan era. The problem is that small government cannot meet big tasks. This argument comes most alarmingly from Dr. Francis Collins, who heads the National Institutes of Health, which is the agency tasked with developing a vaccine and other drugs to fight Ebola. A seemingly exasperated Collins told Huffington Post that the agency, in all likelihood, would have already developed, tested and produced an Ebola vaccine, "if we had not gone through our 10-year slide in research support." This would be due to the Reagan small government doctrine administered under the administrations of both George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

Collins explained that the agency didn't just start working on an Ebola response recently, but began its work 13 years ago. Even so, the timeline he lays out, with or without budget issues, is unacceptable, with the agency not taking serious action until 25 years after the first Ebola outbreak.

The Efficiency Virus

Another issue not getting much press is how state, federal and private health care cuts have served to decimate the surge capacity in our health care system. The old model provided extra beds, which almost always sat empty, but sure were and are

appreciated during health emergencies when resources are strained. The profit-driven health care model, combined with an almost sociopathic drive for "efficiency," eliminated the "wasted resources" essential to having a surge capacity able to provide care in a crisis. If Ebola arrives on our shores in any serious way, I'm sure we'll have the debate we should have been having over the past four decades, only we'll be having it too late.

In many developing nations, it wasn't the manic drive for "efficiency" in the private sector that decimated health care. It was the "structural adjustments" that lending agencies such as the World Bank forced upon nations, demanding that they limit or cut health care funding. We're also seeing the effect of this structural adjustment and austerity on the ground around the world as nations try to plan for dealing with a health crisis they now have no infrastructure to meet.

We're only talking about Ebola to the degree that we are now because an uninsured Ebola patient in Texas received minimal attention and was sent home with some useless pills, allowing the disease to gain strength in his body and threaten a continent. For 38 years we sat on our hands, thinking Ebola only affected Africa. And, quite frankly, call it racism, greed or just indifference, Americans didn't really give a shit about Africa. Once upon a time, such indifference would never have come home to roost. But the world is a lot smaller now. Our mistreatment of global others, be it in the way of economic injustice, environmental injustice or just depraved indifference to human life, eventually impacts us all. Ebola might be global neo-liberal capitalism's greatest test. **CT**

Michael I. Niman is a professor of journalism and media studies at SUNY Buffalo State. His previous columns are at artvoice.com, archived at www.mediastudy.com, and available globally through syndication.

An electronic 'Silent Spring'

Radiation from cell towers and the cell phone in your pocket could be killing us, so why do we ignore it? asks **Katie Singer**

This article is the text of a talk at the Techno-Utopianism and the Fate of the Earth Teach-In (www.ifg.org) at Cooper Union, New York City, on October 25, 201

In 1960, in a hospital a few miles uptown, my mother gave birth to me under bright, electric lights with an epidural that erased her pain and made her unconscious for my arrival. While my mother slept in a nearby room, nurses fed me commercial formula that I could not digest.

Compared to most humans born after World War II, there's nothing special about my techno-birth. Compared to most mammals, it's a recipe for abandonment and a life questioning, What is home?

Besides home, I'm looking for people who want to know technology's dangers and who'll practice self-regulation to protect nature and health. I figure I've come to the right place.

I'd like to spell out some troubling rules and studies about electronics, and some regulations we can implement ourselves. But first, let's go back a few billion years, before man-made laws or mobile phones, when this planet was a mass of gasses, water, dust and rock.

After a buildup of charge, lightning began to strike. A bombardment of lightning storms led to nucleic and amino acids, the building blocks of life. Early plants made

oxygen and paved the way for animals.

Plants and animals still function by electro-chemical signals. So do our brains and hearts. Even at rest, all cells have measurable voltage. In other words, without electromagnetic energy, none of us would be here.

By 1880, we humans figured out how to generate, store and transmit electrical energy over long distances. We got electric lights. We got motors and built refrigerators. We got radio and TV.

Since 1934, our Federal Communications Commission has said, go forth and invent electronics—as long as you don't create "harmful interference." This means we can't disrupt existing radio, TV and cellular broadcasts. "Harmful interference" at the FCC has never included biological harm.

Call this exclusion of nature.

In 1996, our FCC filled the head of a 200 pound plastic man with salty fluid. The engineers called him SAM, for Standard Anthropomorphic Man. They took SAM's temperature. They gave the dude a cell phone for six minutes, then they took his temperature again.

SAM's temp had changed by less than two degrees.

And so, the FCC determined that mobile devices are safe. Call this test insufficient.

Next, everybody got a cell phone. Then came smartphones, which also transmit Wi-

"Harmful interference" at the FCC has never included biological harm

A Swedish study found that people who begin using a digital cell phone as teenagers or younger have a 420% increased risk of brain cancer

Fi. Providers installed about 300,000 cell towers. In a few short years, we blanketed our environment with frequencies and amplitudes that do not exist in nature.

Some of us want to know the non-thermal, biological effects of exposure to electromagnetic radiation from wireless technologies.

We want to know the effects of long-term exposure. What happens if exposure begins in utero? What if a child can see a cell tower from her bedroom window? What if a utility company installs a microwave-transmitting “smart” meter on your breaker box and you’ve got a medical implant? How do wild-life react when around cell towers?

If the FCC has considered these questions, they’ve not made their studies public.

Many scientists have. For 1800 peer-reviewed studies about the biological effects of EMR exposure, please visit BioInitiative.org.

Most studies come from Europe, Turkey and the Middle East, because US telecom providers will not give subscribers’ usage data to epidemiologists. Another questionable situation

So what are the biological effects of exposure to EMR?

Fundamental things are affected, including the rate of calcium release from a cell’s membrane, the brain’s metabolic rate, the rate of DNA breakage, melatonin production, and decreased sperm production.

A Swedish study found that people who begin using a digital cell phone as teenagers or younger have a 420% increased risk of brain cancer.

South Korean teens now commonly have dementia. Their doctors think this comes from excessive screen time—and using only one side of their brains.

After Wi-Fi was installed in Los Angeles schools, some children began bleeding from their noses and ears.

A British toddler was admitted to an addiction treatment center because she would

not let go of an iPad. A 31-year-old man with Google Glass was admitted for Internet addiction disorder because he was online 18 hours a day.

When people with deep brain stimulators for Parkinson’s ride in a Prius and the car breaks and recharges its battery, pulsed magnetic fields from the car’s computers shut off the medical implant.

Men with erectile dysfunction are 2.6 times more likely to keep a cell phone in their front pants pocket. Now, we all want men to assume more responsibility with birth control; but I don’t think this qualifies.

Lots of folks just don’t feel well after they get Wi-Fi or a new mobile device or their utility installs smart meters or a cell tower goes up nearby. They don’t sleep. They get headaches and memory problems. Their eyes strain. They get nausea and strange rashes.

European and Russian studies since the 1960s associate these symptoms and many more with exposure to radiofrequency radiation from radar and now mobile devices, cell towers, Wi-Fi and smart meters.

As for wildlife, a Spanish biologist studied a common frog habitat 140 meters from a cell tower. He built a metal box around some frogs. Two months later, these shielded frogs had a mortality of 4.2%. The unshielded frogs had a mortality of 90%.

While white stork pairs tried to build nests near antennas, they often fought over sticks. Their sticks fell to the ground. The nests did not get built. Chicks frequently died. In a German study, 65% of bee colonies abandoned their hives when nearby cell towers went live. GMOs, pesticides and monocultures likely also play roles in colony collapse. But ill bees typically die in or near their hives. In this study, no ill bees were found.

Bees use cryptochromes, magnetically sensitive genes in their eyes, to sense the Earth’s electromagnetic energy fields and to navigate. Exposure to EMR emitted by cell

towers disrupts cryptochrome-based navigation.

Humans also have cryptochromes. They're involved in our sleep cycles.

Here's another red flag. Section 704 of the 1996 Telecommunications Act states that no health or environmental concern may interfere with the placement of telecom equipment as long as it complies with FCC emissions guidelines. Among other things, this means that even if you can prove that a cell phone caused brain cancer, you can't sue the provider.

So. Did Congress or AT&T know something they don't want us to know about how cell phones and towers affect health or wildlife?

And why doesn't the FCC employ even one person to routinely measure radiation emitted by those 300,000 cell towers?

Many people consider electronic technologies "green." But broadcasting data wirelessly takes much more energy than transmitting data on copper wire or optical fiber. A mobile call requires three times as much energy as a corded landline call. To keep air conditioned, data centers require the equivalent of 30 nuclear power plants. If data centers were a country, they would rank fifth in use of energy.

For the most part, modern technologies expand our use of energy. They do not curtail it.

In March of 2014, the CDC reported that one in 42 boys has autism. This number is up by nearly a third since 2012. We don't know the cause of autism nor of this alarming trend. But a Bay Area pediatrician now has a free protocol that includes turning Wi-Fi off at night, and keeping mobile devices away from children.

One family had a non-verbal ten-year-old who screamed from 10pm till 3am every night. Within three days of turning Wi-Fi off and unplugging cordless phones, this boy spoke a complete sentence. This family lived on a military base, but they kept reducing their own EMR emissions, and

Dr. Jelter prescribed therapeutic-grade fish oil. After three weeks, the boy's screaming stopped. He slept through the night. His mother's seizure disorder also decreased.

My report, "Calming Behavior in Children with Autism and ADHD," is at electronicsilentspring.com. And you don't need autism to try the protocol.

Please, let's get informed about the biological effects of electronics.

The smart grid aims to reduce our use of electricity and make delivery of it more efficient. But most "smart" meters are wireless. They emit EMR, create health hazards, violate security and waste energy. "Smart" meters are not necessary for a smart grid. "Smart" meters can transmit pulsed EMR every 15 seconds. They can shut off pacemakers. Like other wireless technologies, they're not UL certified, which means that if a smart meter fire damages your house, your home owner's insurance likely won't cover you.

Safer technology is available for an intelligent grid. Let your utility commissioners know.

Learn about transformers. Big transformers convert voltages on the grid. Smaller transformers—switch-mode power supplies—are used by devices like mobile phones, compact fluorescent lights and solar power inverters. Transformers can generate magnetic fields that apparently cause leukemia.

Solar power can operate safely. Thoroughly filtered inverters can deliver clean DC or AC electricity without harmonics.

Please be aware that broadband over powerlines and distributed antenna systems can blanket your town in electromagnetic rad

With new "green" ordinances, providers no longer need to prove that a new cell tower can withstand 130 mph winds for example. This is another red flag. Why would a legislator give up the permitting process when cell towers regularly collapse and catch fire?

Around the country, school systems have

Why doesn't the FCC employ even one person to routinely measure radiation emitted by those 300,000 cell towers?

TECHNO-FEAR

We might ignore that depending on a mobile phone gives technology and corporations control of our lives

issued iPads for every child. Last July, FCC Chair Tom Wheeler committed \$2 billion for high speed Wi-Fi in our schools. Call these risks to every child's health and mind.

At the conclusion of "Silent Spring", Rachel Carson called on pesticide users' humility. She asked pesticide users to acknowledge "the vast forces with which they tampered." Could we get humble and acknowledge that using wireless technologies tampers with vast forces?

Because of the extraordinary powers at our fingertips, we may lose sight of laws that value mobile devices more than our ecosystem or our health. We might ignore that depending on a mobile phone gives technology and corporations control of our lives. We may fail to notice that no app can steer us home.

Clearly, the FCC and telecom providers value profits more than our ecosystem and our health. If we value health and nature

more than an electronic device, then what is our responsibility?

I think we've got to start making limits. To begin, consider not using mobile devices around pregnant women or children.

Get cabled Internet access.

Think twice before using a mobile device in a moving car or train. At every mile, your phone connects to a new base station and goes to maximum power. EMR gets trapped in the car and bounces around. Not good.

Join others who've gotten "smart" meters removed and analog utility meters restored to their homes.

Guard building codes for safe installation of new and upgraded cell towers. **CT**

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***Katie Singer** is a medical journalist who works with the Electromagnetic Radiation Policy Institute, and the author of "An Electronic Silent Spring." Her web site is <http://www.electronicsilentspring.com>*

BIG MEDIA & INTERNET TITANS

Edited by Granville Williams

Published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

Price £9.99 ISBN 978-1-898240-07-5

Media pluralism must be put back on the political agenda. That is what a new book, just published by the media reform group, the UK-based Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, argues.

Big Media & Internet Titans highlights the democratic challenges posed by excessive media power, both in the hands of 'old media' but also through the emergence of the four giants of the internet age – Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon.

Never before have such global behemoths grown so fast or spread their tentacles so widely.

The book poses urgent questions about media ownership and throws down the democratic challenge for politicians to embrace policies which will promote diverse, democratic and accountable media.

You can order the book online at: www.cpbf.org.uk

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Russia invades Ukraine. Again, and again . . .

Religion, ignorance, corruption and injustice are the forces behind the recent violence in Africa's richest country, writes **Don North**

“Russia reinforced what Western and Ukrainian officials described as a stealth invasion on Wednesday [August 27], sending armored troops across the border as it expanded the conflict to a new section of Ukrainian territory. The latest incursion, which Ukraine’s military said included five armored personnel carriers, was at least the third movement of troops and weapons from Russia across the southeast part of the border this week.”

None of the photos accompanying this *New York Times* story online showed any of these Russian troops or armored vehicles.

“The Obama administration,” the story continued, “has asserted over the past week that the Russians had moved artillery, air-defense systems and armor to help the separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk. ‘These incursions indicate a Russian-directed counteroffensive is likely underway’, Jen Psaki, the State Department spokeswoman, said. At the department’s daily briefing in Washington, Ms. Psaki also criticized what she called the Russian government’s ‘unwillingness to tell the truth’ that its military had sent soldiers as deep as 30 miles inside Ukraine territory.”

Thirty miles inside Ukraine territory and not a single satellite photo, not a camera anywhere around, not even a one-minute video to show for it. “Ms. Psaki apparently [sic] was referring to videos of captured Rus-

sian soldiers, distributed by the Ukrainian government.” The *Times* apparently forgot to inform its readers where they could see these videos.

“The Russian aim, one Western official said, may possibly be to seize an outlet to the sea in the event that Russia tries to establish a separatist enclave in eastern Ukraine.”

This of course hasn’t taken place. So what happened to all these Russian soldiers 30 miles inside Ukraine? What happened to all the armored vehicles, weapons, and equipment?

“The United States has photographs that show the Russian artillery moved into Ukraine, American officials say. One photo dated last Thursday, shown to a *New York Times* reporter, shows Russian military units moving self-propelled artillery into Ukraine. Another photo, dated Saturday, shows the artillery in firing positions in Ukraine.”

Where are these photographs? And how will we know that these are Russian soldiers? And how will we know that the photos were taken in Ukraine? But most importantly, where are the fucking photographs?

Why am I so cynical? Because the Ukrainian and US governments have been feeding us these scare stories for eight months now, without clear visual or other evidence, often without even common sense. Here are a few of the many other examples, before and after the one above:

Where are these photographs? And how will we know that these are Russian soldiers? And how will we know that the photos were taken in Ukraine?

ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

Then there's the July 17 shutdown of Malaysia Flight MH17, over eastern Ukraine, taking 298 lives, which Washington would love to pin on Russia or the pro-Russian rebels. The US government – and therefore the US media, the EU, and NATO – want us all to believe it was the rebels and/or Russia behind it. The world is still waiting for any evidence.

The *Wall Street Journal* (March 28) reported: “Russian troops massing near Ukraine are actively concealing their positions and establishing supply lines that could be used in a prolonged deployment, ratcheting up concerns that Moscow is preparing for another [sic] major incursion and not conducting exercises as it claims, US officials said.”

“The Ukrainian government charged that the Russian military was not only approaching but had actually crossed the border into rebel-held regions.” (*Washington Post*, November 7)

“U.S. Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove told reporters in Bulgaria that NATO had observed Russian tanks, Russian artillery, Russian air defense systems and Russian combat troops enter Ukraine across a completely wide-open border with Russia in the previous two days.” (*Washington Post*, November 13)

“Ukraine accuses Russia of sending more soldiers and weapons to help rebels prepare for a new offensive. The Kremlin has repeatedly denied aiding the separatists.” (Reuters, November 16)

Since the February US-backed coup in Ukraine, the State Department has made one accusation after another about Russian military actions in Eastern Ukraine without presenting any kind of satellite imagery or other visual or documentary evidence; or they present something that's very unclear and wholly inconclusive, such as unmarked vehicles, or unsourced reports, or citing “social media”; what we're left with is often no more than just an accusation. The Ukrainian government has matched them.

On top of all this we should keep in mind that if Moscow decided to invade Ukraine they'd certainly provide air cover for their ground forces. There has been no mention of air cover.

This is all reminiscent of the numerous stories in the past three years of “Syrian planes bombing defenseless citizens”. Have you ever seen a photo or video of a Syrian

government plane dropping bombs? Or of the bombs exploding? When the source of the story is mentioned, it's almost invariably the rebels who are fighting against the Syrian government. Then there's the “chemical weapon” attacks by the same evil Assad government. When a photo or video has accompanied the story I've never once seen grieving loved ones or media present; not one person can be seen wearing a gas mask. Is it only children killed or suffering? No rebels?

And then there's the July 17 shutdown of Malaysia Flight MH17, over eastern Ukraine, taking 298 lives, which Washington would love to pin on Russia or the pro-Russian rebels. The US government – and therefore the US media, the EU, and NATO – want us all to believe it was the rebels and/or Russia behind it. The world is still waiting for any evidence. Or even a motivation. Anything at all. President Obama is not waiting. In a talk on November 15 in Australia, he spoke of “opposing Russia's aggression against Ukraine – which is a threat to the world, as we saw in the appalling shoot-down of MH17”. Based on my reading, I'd guess that it was the Ukrainian government behind the shutdown, mistaking it for Putin's plane that reportedly was in the area.

Can it be said with certainty that all the above accusations were lies? No, but the burden of proof is on the accusers, and the world is still waiting. The accusers would like to create the impression that there are two sides to each question without actually having to supply one of them.

The United States punishing Cuba

For years American political leaders and media were fond of labeling Cuba an “international pariah”. We haven't heard that for a very long time. Perhaps one reason is the annual vote in the United Nations General Assembly on the resolution which reads: “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba”.

This is how the vote has gone (not including abstentions):

Year	Votes (Yes-No)	No Votes
1992	59-2	US, Israel
1993	88-4	US, Israel, Albania, Paraguay
1994	101-2	US, Israel
1995	117-3	US, Israel, Uzbekistan
1996	138-3	US, Israel, Uzbekistan
1997	143-3	US, Israel, Uzbekistan
1998	157-2	US, Israel
1999	155-2	US, Israel
2000	167-3	US, Israel, Marshall Islands
2001	167-3	US, Israel, Marshall Islands
2002	173-3	US, Israel, Marshall Islands
2003	179-3	US, Israel, Marshall Islands
2004	179-4	US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau
2005	182-4	US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau
2006	183-4	US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau
2007	184-4	US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau
2008	185-3	US, Israel, Palau
2009	187-3	US, Israel, Palau
2010	187-2	US, Israel
2011	186-2	US, Israel
2012	188-3	US, Israel, Palau
2013	188-2	US, Israel
2014	188-2	US, Israel

This year Washington's policy may be subject to even more criticism than usual due to the widespread recognition of Cuba's response to the Ebola outbreak in Africa.

Each fall the UN vote is a welcome reminder that the world has not completely lost its senses and that the American empire does not completely control the opin-

ion of other governments.

Speaking before the General Assembly before last year's vote, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez declared: "The economic damages accumulated after half a century as a result of the implementation of the blockade amount to \$1.126 trillion." He added that the blockade "has been further tightened under President Obama's administration", some 30 US and foreign entities being hit with \$2.446 billion in fines due to their interaction with Cuba.

However, the American envoy, Ronald Godard, in an appeal to other countries to oppose the resolution, said:

"The international community ... cannot in good conscience ignore the ease and frequency with which the Cuban regime silences critics, disrupts peaceful assembly, impedes independent journalism and, despite positive reforms, continues to prevent some Cubans from leaving or returning to the island. The Cuban government continues its tactics of politically motivated detentions, harassment and police violence against Cuban citizens."

So there you have it. That is why Cuba must be punished. One can only guess what Mr. Godard would respond if told that more than 7,000 people were arrested in the United States during the Occupy Movement's first 8 months of protest in 2011-12 ; that many of them were physically abused by the police; and that their encampments were violently destroyed.

Does Mr. Godard have access to any news media? Hardly a day passes in America without a police officer shooting to death an unarmed person.

As to "independent journalism" – What would happen if Cuba announced that from now on anyone in the country could own any kind of media? How long would it be before CIA money – secret and unlimited CIA money financing all kinds of fronts in Cuba – would own or control most of the media worth owning or controlling?

The real reason for Washington's eter-

How long would it be before CIA money – secret and unlimited CIA money financing all kinds of fronts in Cuba – would own or control most of the media worth owning or controlling?

ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

The US sanctions mechanism is so effective and formidable that it strikes fear (of huge fines) into the hearts of banks and other private-sector organizations that might otherwise consider dealing with a listed state

nal hostility toward Cuba has not changed since the revolution in 1959 – The fear of a good example of an alternative to the capitalist model; a fear that has been validated repeatedly over the years as many Third World countries have expressed their adulation of Cuba.

How the embargo began: On April 6, 1960, Lester D. Mallory, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, wrote in an internal memorandum: “The majority of Cubans support Castro ... The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship. ... every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba.” Mallory proposed “a line of action which ... makes the greatest inroads in denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government.”

Later that year, the Eisenhower administration instituted its suffocating embargo against its everlasting enemy.

The United States judging and punishing the rest of the world

In addition to Cuba, Washington currently is imposing economic and other sanctions against Burma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, China, North Korea, South Korea, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Turkey, Germany, Malaysia, South Africa, Mexico, South Sudan, Sudan, Russia, Syria, Venezuela, India, and Zimbabwe. These are sanctions mainly against governments, but also against some private enterprises; there are also many other sanctions against individuals not included here.

Imbued with a sense of America’s moral superiority and “exceptionalism”, each year the State Department judges the world, issuing reports evaluating the behavior of all other nations, often accompanied by sanctions of one kind or another. There are different reports rating how each lesser nation

has performed in the previous year in areas such as religious freedom, human rights, the war on drugs, trafficking in persons, and sponsors of terrorism. The criteria used in these reports are often political. Cuba, for example, is always listed as a sponsor of terrorism whereas anti-Castro exile groups in Florida, which have committed literally hundreds of terrorist acts over the years, are not listed as terrorist groups or supporters of such.

Cuba, which has been on the sponsor-of-terrorism list longer (since 1982) than any other country, is one of the most glaring anomalies. The most recent State Department report on this matter, in 2012, states that there is “no indication that the Cuban government provided weapons or paramilitary training to terrorist groups.” There are, however, some retirees of Spain’s Basque terrorist group ETA (which appears on the verge of disbanding) in Cuba, but the report notes that the Cuban government evidently is trying to distance itself from them by denying them services such as travel documents. Some members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have been allowed into Cuba, but that was because Cuba was hosting peace talks between the FARC and the Colombian government, which the report notes.

The US sanctions mechanism is so effective and formidable that it strikes fear (of huge fines) into the hearts of banks and other private-sector organizations that might otherwise consider dealing with a listed state.

Some selected thoughts on American elections and democracy

“In politics, as on the sickbed, people toss from one side to the other, thinking they will be more comfortable.” – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

- 2012 presidential election: 223,389,800 eligible to vote 128,449,140 actually voted

Obama got 65,443,674 votes

Obama was thus supported by 29.3% of eligible voters

- There are 100 million adults in the United States who do not vote. This is a very large base from which an independent party can draw millions of new votes.

- If God had wanted more of us to vote in elections, he would give us better candidates.

- “The people can have anything they want. The trouble is, they do not want anything. At least they vote that way on election day.” – Eugene Debs, American socialist leader (1855-1926)

- “If persons over 60 are the only American age group voting at rates that begin to approximate European voting, it’s because they’re the only Americans who live in a welfare state – Medicare, Social Security, and earlier, GI loans, FHA loans.” – John Powers

- “The American political system is essentially a contract between the Republican and Democratic parties, enforced by federal and state two-party laws, all designed to guarantee the survival of both no matter how many people despise or ignore them.” – Richard Reeves (1936-)

- The American electoral system, once the object of much national and international pride, has slid inexorably from “one person, one vote”, to “one dollar, one vote”.

- Noam Chomsky: “It is important to bear in mind that political campaigns are designed by the same people who sell toothpaste and cars. Their professional concern in their regular vocation is not to provide information. Their goal, rather, is deceit.”

- If the Electoral College is such a good system, why don’t we have it for local and state elections?

- “All the props of a democracy remain intact - elections, legislatures, media - but they predominantly function at the service of the oligarchy.” – Richard Wolff

- The RepDem Party holds elections as if they were auctions; indeed, an outright

auction for the presidency would be more efficient. To make the auction more interesting we need a second party, which must at a minimum be granted two privileges: getting on the ballot in all 50 states and taking part in television debates.

- The US does in fact have two parties: the Ins and the Outs ... the evil of two lessers.

- Alexander Cockburn: “There was a time once when ‘lesser of two evils’ actually meant something momentous, like the choice between starving to death on a lifeboat, or eating the first mate.”

- Cornel West has suggested that it’s become difficult to even imagine what a free and democratic society, without great concentrations of corporate power, would look like, or how it would operate.

- The United States now resembles a police state punctuated by elections.

- How many voters does it take to change a light bulb? None. Because voters can’t change anything.

- H.L. Mencken (1880-1956): “As democracy is perfected, the office represents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. We move toward a lofty ideal. On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart’s desire at last, and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron.”

- “All elections are distractions. Nothing conceals tyranny better than elections.” – Joel Hirschhorn

- In 1941, one of the country’s more acerbic editors, a priest named Edward Dowling, commented: “The two greatest obstacles to democracy in the United States are, first, the widespread delusion among the poor that we have a democracy, and second, the chronic terror among the rich, lest we get it.”

- “Elections are a necessary, but certainly not a sufficient, condition for democracy. Political participation is not just a casting of votes. It is a way of life.” – UN Human Development Report, 1993

How many voters does it take to change a light bulb? None. Because voters can’t change anything

ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

fter going through the recent national, state and local elections, I am now convinced that taxation without representation would have been a much better system

● “If you don’t vote, you can’t complain!” I reply, “You have it backwards. If you DO vote, you can’t complain. You asked for it, and they’re going to give it to you, good and hard.”

● “How to get people to vote against their interests and to really think against their interests is very clever. It’s the cleverest ruling class that I have ever come across in history. It’s been 200 years at it. It’s superb.” – Gore Vidal

● We can’t use our democracy/our vote to change the way the economy functions. This is very anti-democratic.

● What does a majority vote mean other than that the sales campaign was successful?

● Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius: “The opinion of 10,000 men is of no value if none of them know anything about the subject.”

● We do have representative government. The question is: Who does our government represent?

● “On the day after the 2002 election I watched a crawl on the bottom of the CNN news screen. It said, ‘Proprietary software may make inspection of electronic voting systems impossible.’ It was the final and absolute coronation of corporate rights over democracy; of money over truth.” – Mike Ruppert, RIP

● “It’s not that voting is useless or stupid; rather, it’s the exaggeration of the power of voting that has drained the meaning from American politics.” – Michael Ventura

● After going through the recent national, state and local elections, I am now convinced that taxation without representation would have been a much better system.

● “Ever since the Constitution was illegally foisted on the American people we have lived in a blatant plutocracy. The Constitution was drafted in secret by a self-appointed elite committee, and it was designed to bring three kinds of power under control: Royalty, the Church, and the People. All were to be subjugated to the interests of a wealthy elite. That’s what republics were all

about. And that’s how they have functioned ever since.” – Richard K. Moore

● “As demonstrated in Russia and numerous other countries, when faced with a choice between democracy without capitalism or capitalism without democracy, Western elites unhesitatingly embrace the latter.” – Michael Parenti

● “The fact that a supposedly sophisticated electorate had been stampeded by the cynical propaganda of the day threw serious doubt on the validity of the assumptions underlying parliamentary democracy as a whole.” – British Superspy for the Soviets Kim Philby (1912-1988), explaining his reasons for becoming a Communist instead of turning to the Labour Party

● US Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis (1856-1941): “We may have democracy in this country, or we may have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both.”

● “We don’t need to run America like a business or like the military. We need to run America like a democracy.” – Jill Stein, Green Party presidential candidate 2012 **CT**

Notes

1. Democracy Now!, October 30, 2013
2. Huffingfton Post, May 3, 2012
3. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, Volume VI, Cuba (1991), p.885 (online here)
4. For the complete detailed list, see U.S. Department of State, Nonproliferation Sanctions
5. U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports on Terrorism 2012, Chapter 3: State Sponsors of Terrorism,” May 20, 2013

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William Blum is the author of “Killing Hope: US 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”

This is what democracy looks like ...

Jeff Nygaard looks at the reasons behind Eva Morales's overwhelming election win in Bolivia

On October 12th Evo Morales was elected overwhelmingly to a third term as President of Bolivia. Morales received 60% of the vote against 25% for cement magnate Samuel Doria Medina, the top vote-getter among four challengers, according to the *Washington Post*. The election was little noted in the US, and when it was Morales was generally referred to as “the former coca grower” who is “known internationally for his anti-imperialist and socialist rhetoric.” Morales and his socialist party, the MAS, keep winning elections, and it's fun to watch the bewildered hostility in the US media as they watch Bolivian democracy unfold.

The *New York Times* began and ended their coverage of the election by showing their sympathies fairly clearly. The headline read “President of Bolivia Claims Victory in Election,” implying that there was some doubt about the landslide victory. (There wasn't.) And the concluding sentence of the article was also revealing: “Like other leftist leaders in the region, Mr. Morales has been criticized for undermining democratic safeguards, like the independence of the judiciary.” The implication here is that “leftist leaders” have some kind of monopoly on anti-democratic behavior in the Western Hemisphere. In this Us-vs-Them world, anti-democratic right-wing US allies like Colombia, Guatemala, and Honduras seem

to disappear.

The explanation in the US media for Morales' win, when it was reported at all, was “the strength of the economic and political stability brought by his government.”

True, it's pretty stable, at least at the level of elections. The Organization of American States issued a statement about the recent election in Bolivia saying that the OAS “commends the citizenry for the high level of peaceful participation yesterday, betokening the country's democratic conviction.”

The “democratic conviction” of the people of Bolivia takes a very different form than it takes in the United States. Just a couple of weeks ago the Council Of Hemispheric Affairs in Washington DC published an article by analyst Ronn Pineo called “The Decline of United States Influence and the Rise of Evo Morales.” The article gives just a glimpse of how different Bolivian democracy seems to be, and a hint of how much we are missing when the US media fails to report on goings-on in Latin America, which the US has traditionally referred to as its “backyard.”

Pineo reminds readers that “Democracy in Bolivia will not fit into US-centric models of political parties, elections, and liberal representative government. As [Latin America scholars Benjamin Kohl and Rosalind Bresnahan] have noted, there is a strong “difference between Western-liberal-individualist

Morales and his socialist party, the MAS, keep winning elections, and it's fun to watch the bewildered hostility in the US media as they watch Bolivian democracy unfold

Democracy in Bolivia is the contestations, the testing of relative strength, of President Morales and the MAS, and social groups expressing their politics directly, on the streets, in protests, marches, in highway blockage

and communitarian indigenous (Andean) democracies.”

Kohl and Bresnahan, in a 2010 article in *Latin American Perspectives* explain that “Whereas Western[ers] ... have been socialized in a one-person, one-vote ideal of democracy, in many Andean communities democratic deliberations take place at the level of the community itself. Communal decision making of this type is commonly seen, for example, in decisions on land use. The ‘community’ – which is defined in different ways according to the setting – decides on how to rotate land, guarantee access to pastures, assign land in colonization zones, etc., through a consensual process. Thus it is not surprising for a similar community consensus to be reflected in voting behavior, especially among indigenous groups that see that the MAS will represent their interests.”

Morales’ political party is called the *Movimiento a Socialismo*, or MAS. In English, that’s the *Movement Toward Socialism*.

Back to Pineo: “The MAS is, as researcher Santiago Anria correctly notes, ‘a hybrid organization ... participating in representative institutions without abandoning non-electoral street politics.’ Bolivians like it this way. *Latinobarómetro* polling shows that popular satisfaction with democracy in Bolivia has risen from under a quarter of those surveyed in 2005 to more than half in 2009. President Morales has not given up his involvement in Bolivia’s social movements, and even now remains head of the coca growers union. He is often seen crossing over and joining the people protesting in the streets.”

“Democratic governance in Bolivia is more activist, inclusionary, direct, and participatory than that in the United States and the West. But above all politics in Bolivia are not so much about elections these days. At polling time the left sets aside its differences and votes for Morales and the MAS. But as we are seeing, it is between the elections that normal politics begin. The left

fractures, and communities and various associations begin to clamor for attention to their needs.

“In Bolivia, as in Ecuador and Venezuela as well, the right is in retreat. Indeed, the right is becoming, or has become, all but irrelevant as a political force. In Bolivia the violent overreach of the right in 2008 severely reduced its national political influence. The parties of the right have been reduced to rump voting clubs, the remnants of prior political configurations. Instead, democracy in Bolivia is the contestations, the testing of relative strength, of President Morales and the MAS, and social groups expressing their politics directly, on the streets, in protests, marches, in highway blockages. Between elections politics begin in earnest, as the cycle of left-wing pressure begins anew. This is what democracy looks like in Bolivia.”

And how does this kind of democracy work? Well, in early October the Center for Economic and Policy Research released a brief summary called “Bolivia’s Economy Under Evo in 10 Graphs.” The graphs, says CEPR, “help explain the strong support for his re-election.” I can’t reproduce the graphs here, but will summarize what they tell us (all the words below are from the CEPR study):

1. **Economic Growth:** Bolivia has grown much faster over the last 8 years under President Evo Morales than in any period over the past three-and-a-half decades.

2. **High Level of International Reserves:** International reserves act as a buffer against external shocks, preventing balance of payments crises. Bolivia’s international reserves are currently more than 48 percent of GDP, higher than even China; there is room for Bolivia to put these resources to greater productive use, for example in public investment.

3. **Nationalization Shifts Hydrocarbon Revenues to the Public Sector:** A referendum vote in mid-2004 indicated public support for a greater state role in the hydrocarbons sector, and in May 2006, newly-elected

president Evo Morales renationalized Bolivia's oil and gas industries. The increased tax revenue has allowed Bolivia to vastly increase its macroeconomic policy space. Some of this revenue went into reserves, as noted above, and Bolivia also increased public investment (below).

4. Highest Foreign Direct Investment in South America: While the business press consider nationalizations to be anathema to attracting international investment, Bolivia actually had the highest level of foreign direct investment, as a percent of GDP, in South America in 2013.

5. Public Investment is High and Increasing: Since 2006, Bolivia has made it a priority to increase public investment spending. Over the last 8 years, total public investment doubled as a percentage of GDP.

6. Poverty Reduced by 25 Percent, Extreme Poverty Reduced by 43 Percent: Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in South America, but poverty has been on a downward trend in recent years after stagnating at a very high level for almost a decade.

7. Economic Inequality Decreases: Bolivia has been praised by Alicia Barcena, the head of the Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), as being "one of the few countries that has reduced inequality ... the gap between rich and poor has been hugely narrowed." [The graph shows that] "the income of the poorer sectors of the population has grown much faster since 2006 than that of the higher-income households."

8. Large Increase in the Minimum Wage: One explanation for the decrease in poverty and inequality is that Bolivia has rapidly increased the real (inflation-adjusted) minimum wage. From 2005-2014, the real minimum wage increased by 87.7 percent.

9. Social Spending Increases Over 45 Percent In 7 Years: Public spending on health, education, pensions and poverty alleviation programs experienced a significant increase (of 45 percent) in real terms, but did not fully keep up with overall growth in the

economy.

10. Pursuing Alternatives to the Drug War: In 2008, the US added Bolivia to a short list of countries that had "failed demonstrably" to meet international counter-narcotics agreements. Bolivia has been on the list ever since, despite having reduced the amount of coca in cultivation. Outside the US, President Morales has received praise for his "Coca Yes, Cocaine No" policy that emphasizes protecting human rights, and recognizes traditional, legal uses for the coca plant.

The US media reports that Morales keeps getting elected because of the "economic and political stability brought by his government." But could there be a different story, one that is invisible to the agenda-setting media in this country, but that is hidden in plain sight? And might that story have to do with the fact that, in Bolivia, it is "between elections that politics begin in earnest"?

If it is true that the essence of democracy in Bolivia is found "on the streets, in protests, marches, in highway blockages," then we may have a clue as to why so many Bolivians are so much better off today than they were before Morales took office in 2006. And why most people in the United States are not.

I'm not interested in romanticizing Morales, nor Bolivian democracy. There are many ugly stories coming out of Bolivia to balance out the good news presented here. But what I am suggesting is that one possible explanation for Bolivia's "stability," as noted by the US media, may be the concrete improvement brought to people's lives by a movement toward socialism. Could it be that it is not just the rhetoric, but Bolivia's "anti-imperialist and socialist" policies – and the democratic processes that produce them – that keep Bolivia moving forward? **CT**

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Jeff Nygaard is the editor of Nygaard Notes - <http://nygaardnotes.org> - where this report was originally published

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