

THE WAR ON JULIAN ASSANGE | JOHN PILGER
THE GLOBALISATION OF MISERY | TOM ENGELHARDT
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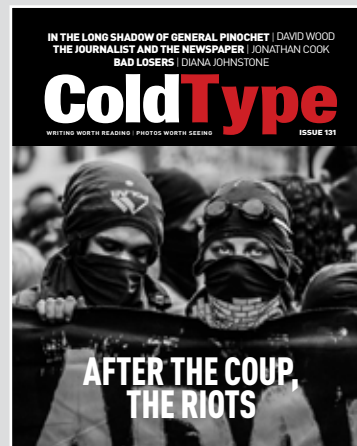
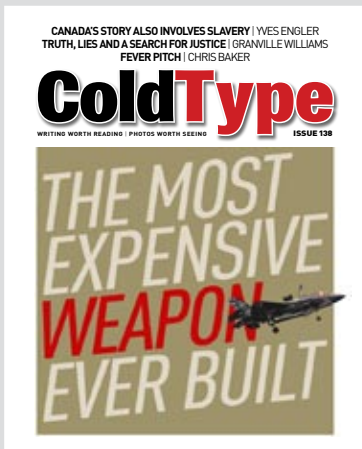
ISSUE 141



**ANGELS,
DEMONS,
SKULLS,
A CURSED FOX,
ASSORTED
FREAKS
– AND A
BUNNY IN A
GAS MASK!**

Daz Smith's ode to life
on the streets of an English city

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ColdType

7 Lewis Street
Georgetown
Ontario
Canada LG7 1E3

Telephone

905-702-8526

Contact ColdType

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the Editor, at
editor@coldtype.net

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The war on Julian Assange

John Pilger describes how the Swedish and British governments colluded with the United States in their persecution of the Wikileaks whistleblower

Threats of Assange's kidnapping and assassination became almost political and media currency in the US following then Vice-President Joe Biden's preposterous slur that the WikiLeaks founder was a "cyber-terrorist"

Julian Assange has been vindicated because the Swedish case against him was corrupt. The prosecutor, Marianne Ny, obstructed justice and should be prosecuted. Her obsession with Assange not only embarrassed her colleagues and the judiciary but exposed the Swedish state's collusion with the United States in its crimes of war and "rendition."

Had Assange not sought refuge in the Ecuadorean embassy in London, he would have been on his way to the kind of American torture pit Chelsea Manning had to endure. This prospect was obscured by the grim farce played out in Sweden. "It's a laughing stock," said James Catlin, one of Assange's Australian lawyers. "It is as if they make it up as they go along."

It may have seemed that way, but there was always serious purpose. In 2008, a secret Pentagon document prepared by the Cyber Counterintelligence Assessments Branch foretold a detailed plan to discredit WikiLeaks and smear Assange personally. The "mission" was to destroy the "trust" that was WikiLeaks' "centre of gravity." This would be achieved with threats of "exposure [and] criminal prosecution." Silencing and criminalising such an unpredictable source of truth-telling was the aim.

Perhaps this was understandable. WikiLeaks has exposed the way America dominates much of human affairs, including its

epic crimes, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq: the wholesale, often homicidal killing of civilians and the contempt for sovereignty and international law.

These disclosures are protected by the First Amendment of the US Constitution. As a presidential candidate in 2008, Barack Obama, a professor of constitutional law, lauded whistle blowers as "part of a healthy democracy [and they] must be protected from reprisal."

In 2012, the Obama campaign boasted on its website that Obama had prosecuted more whistleblowers in his first term than all other US presidents combined. Before Chelsea Manning had even received a trial, Obama had publicly pronounced her guilty. Few serious observers doubt that should the US get their hands on Assange, a similar fate awaits him. According to documents released by Edward Snowden, he is on a "Manhunt target list." Threats of his kidnapping and assassination became almost political and media currency in the US following then Vice-President Joe Biden's preposterous slur that the WikiLeaks founder was a "cyber-terrorist."

Hillary Clinton, the destroyer of Libya and, as WikiLeaks revealed last year, the secret supporter and personal beneficiary of forces underwriting ISIS, proposed her own expedient solution: "Can't we just drone this guy?"

According to Australian diplomatic cables, Washington's bid to get Assange is "un-



SAINT, NOT SINNER: Stenciled image of Julian Assange on a wall in Leipzig, Germany.

Photo: Herder3 – Wikimedia

precedented in scale and nature.” In Alexandria, Virginia, a secret grand jury has sought for almost seven years to contrive a crime for which Assange can be prosecuted. This is not easy.

First Amendment barrier

The First Amendment protects publishers, journalists and whistleblowers, whether it is the editor of the New York Times or the editor of WikiLeaks. The very notion of free speech is described as America’s “founding virtue” or, as Thomas Jefferson called it, “our currency.” Faced with this hurdle, the US Justice Department has contrived charges of “espionage,” “conspiracy to commit espionage,” “conversion” (theft of government

property), “computer fraud and abuse” (computer hacking) and general “conspiracy.” The favoured Espionage Act, which was meant to deter pacifists and conscientious objectors during World War One, has provisions for life imprisonment and the death penalty.

Assange’s ability to defend himself in such a Kafkaesque world has been severely limited by the US declaring his case a state secret. In 2015, a federal court in Washington blocked the release of all information about the “national security” investigation against WikiLeaks, because it was “active and ongoing” and would harm the “pending prosecution” of Assange. The judge, Barbara J. Rothstein, said it was necessary to show “appropriate

Assange’s ability to defend himself in such a Kafkaesque world has been severely limited by the US declaring his case a state secret

Confined

As soon as he had left the country, Swedish prosecutor Marianne Ny issued a European Arrest Warrant and an Interpol “red alert” normally used for terrorists and dangerous criminals

deference to the executive in matters of national security.” This is a kangaroo court.

For Assange, his trial has been trial by media. On August 20, 2010, when the Swedish police opened a “rape investigation,” they coordinated it, unlawfully, with the Stockholm tabloids. The front pages said Assange had been accused of the “rape of two women.” The word “rape” can have a very different legal meaning in Sweden than in Britain; a pernicious false reality became the news that went round the world.

Less than 24 hours later, the Stockholm Chief Prosecutor, Eva Finne, took over the investigation. She wasted no time in cancelling the arrest warrant, saying, “I don’t believe there is any reason to suspect that he has committed rape.” Four days later, she dismissed the rape investigation altogether, saying, “There is no suspicion of any crime whatsoever.”

Enter Claes Borgstrom, a highly contentious figure in the Social Democratic Party then standing as a candidate in Sweden’s imminent general election. Within days of the chief prosecutor’s dismissal of the case, Borgstrom, a lawyer, announced to the media that he was representing the two women and had sought a different prosecutor in Gothenberg. This was Marianne Ny, whom Borgstrom knew well, personally and politically.

On 30 August, Assange attended a police station in Stockholm voluntarily and answered the questions put to him. He understood that was the end of the matter. Two days later, Ny announced she was re-opening the case. At a press conference, Borgstrom was asked by a Swedish reporter why the case was proceeding when it had already been dismissed. The reporter cited one of the women as saying she had not been raped. He replied, “Ah, but she is not a lawyer.”

On the day that Marianne Ny reactivated the case, the head of Sweden’s military intelligence service – which has the acronym MUST – publicly denounced WikiLeaks in an article entitled “WikiLeaks [is] a threat to our soldiers [under US command in Afghanistan].”

Both the Swedish prime minister and foreign minister attacked Assange, who had been charged with no crime. Assange was warned that the Swedish intelligence service, SAPO, had been told by its US counterparts that US-Sweden intelligence-sharing arrangements would be “cut off” if Sweden sheltered him.

For five weeks, Assange waited in Sweden for the renewed “rape investigation” to take its course. The Guardian was then on the brink of publishing the Iraq “War Logs,” based on WikiLeaks’ disclosures, which Assange was to oversee in London.

Finally, he was allowed him to leave. As soon as he had left, Marianne Ny issued a European Arrest Warrant and an Interpol “red alert” normally used for terrorists and dangerous criminals. Assange attended a police station in London, was duly arrested and spent ten days in Wandsworth Prison, in solitary confinement. Released on £340,000 bail, he was electronically tagged, required to report to police daily and placed under virtual house arrest while his case began its long journey to the Supreme Court.

He still had not been charged with any offence. His lawyers repeated his offer to be questioned in London, by video or personally, pointing out that Marianne Ny had given him permission to leave Sweden. They suggested a special facility at Scotland Yard commonly used by the Swedish and other European authorities for that purpose. She refused.

Refused to question Assange

For almost seven years, while Sweden has questioned 44 people in the UK in connection with police investigations, Ny refused to question Assange and so advance her case. Writing in the Swedish press, a former Swedish prosecutor, Rolf Hillegren, accused Ny of losing all impartiality. He described her personal investment in the case as “abnormal” and demanded she be replaced.

Assange asked the Swedish authorities for a guarantee that he would not be “ren-

dered” to the US if he was extradited to Sweden. This was refused. In December 2010, the Independent revealed that the two governments had discussed his onward extradition to the US.

Contrary to its reputation as a bastion of liberal enlightenment, Sweden has drawn so close to Washington that it has allowed secret CIA “renditions” – including the illegal deportation of refugees. The rendition and subsequent torture of two Egyptian political refugees in 2001 was condemned by the UN Committee against Torture, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch; the complicity and duplicity of the Swedish state are documented in successful civil litigation and in WikiLeaks cables.

“Documents released by WikiLeaks since Assange moved to England,” wrote Al Burke, editor of the online Nordic News Network, an authority on the multiple twists and dangers that faced Assange, “clearly indicate that Sweden has consistently submitted to pressure from the United States in matters relating to civil rights. There is every reason for concern that if Assange were to be taken into custody by Swedish authorities, he could be turned over to the United States without due consideration of his legal rights.”

The war on Assange now intensified. Marianne Ny refused to allow his Swedish lawyers, and the Swedish courts, access to hundreds of SMS messages that the police had extracted from the phone of one of the two women involved in the “rape” allegations. Ny said she was not legally required to reveal this critical evidence until a formal charge was laid and she had questioned him. Then, why wouldn’t she question him? Catch-22.

When she announced in the middle of last month that she was dropping the Assange case, she made no mention of the evidence that would destroy it. One of the SMS messages makes clear that one of the women did not want any charges brought against Assange, “but the police were keen on getting a hold on him.” She was “shocked” when they arrested him because she only “wanted him

to take [an HIV] test.” She “did not want to accuse JA of anything,” and “it was the police who made up the charges.” In a witness statement, she is quoted as saying that she had been “railroaded by police and others around her.”

Women denied being raped

Neither woman claimed she had been raped. Indeed, both denied they were raped and one of them has since tweeted, “I have not been raped.” The women were manipulated by police – whatever their lawyers might say now. Certainly, they, too, are the victims of this sinister saga.

Katrin Axelsson and Lisa Longstaff, of Women Against Rape, wrote: “The allegations against [Assange] are a smokescreen behind which a number of governments are trying to clamp down on WikiLeaks for having audaciously revealed to the public their secret planning of wars and occupations with their attendant rape, murder and destruction. . . . The authorities care so little about violence against women that they manipulate rape allegations at will. [Assange] has made it clear he is available for questioning by the Swedish authorities, in Britain or via Skype. Why are they refusing this essential step in their investigation? What are they afraid of?”

Assange’s choice was stark: extradition to a country that had refused to say whether or not it would send him on to the US, or to seek what seemed his last opportunity for refuge and safety. Supported by most of Latin America, the government of tiny Ecuador granted him refugee status on the basis of documented evidence that he faced the prospect of cruel and unusual punishment in the US; that this threat violated his basic human rights; and that his own government in Australia had abandoned him and colluded with Washington.

The Labor government of the then prime minister, Julia Gillard, even threatened to take away his Australian passport – until it was pointed out that this would be unlawful.

Neither woman claimed she had been raped. Indeed, both denied they were raped and one of them has since tweeted, “I have not been raped”

Confined

With not a penny going to Assange or to WikiLeaks, a hyped Guardian book led to a lucrative Hollywood movie. The book's authors, Luke Harding and David Leigh, gratuitously described Assange as a "damaged personality" and "callous"

The renowned human rights lawyer, Gareth Peirce, who represents Assange in London, wrote to the then Australian foreign minister, Kevin Rudd: "Given the extent of the public discussion, frequently on the basis of entirely false assumptions . . . it is very hard to attempt to preserve for him any presumption of innocence. Mr Assange has now hanging over him not one but two Damocles swords, of potential extradition to two different jurisdictions in turn for two different alleged crimes, neither of which are crimes in his own country, and that his personal safety has become at risk in circumstances that are highly politically charged."

It was not until she contacted the Australian High Commission in London that Peirce received a response, which answered none of the pressing points she raised. In a meeting I attended with her, the Australian Consul-General, Ken Pascoe, made the astonishing claim that he knew "only what I read in the newspapers" about the details of the case.

Minister appalled – then silence

In 2011, in Sydney, I spent several hours with a conservative Member of Australia's Federal Parliament, Malcolm Turnbull. We discussed the threats to Assange and their wider implications for freedom of speech and justice, and why Australia was obliged to stand by him. Turnbull then had a reputation as a free speech advocate. He is now the prime minister of Australia. I gave him Gareth Peirce's letter about the threat to Assange's rights and life. He said the situation was clearly appalling and promised to take it up with the Gillard government. Only his silence followed.

For almost seven years, this epic miscarriage of justice has been drowned in a vituperative campaign against the WikiLeaks founder. There are few precedents. Deeply personal, petty, vicious and inhuman attacks have been aimed at a man not charged with any crime, yet subjected to treatment not even meted out to a defendant facing ex-

tradition on a charge of murdering his wife. That the US threat to Assange was a threat to all journalists, and to the principle of free speech, was lost in the sordid and the ambitious. I would call it anti-journalism.

Books were published, movie deals struck and media careers launched or kick-started on the back of WikiLeaks and an assumption that attacking Assange was fair game and he was too poor to sue. People have made money, often big money, while WikiLeaks has struggled to survive.

The previous editor of the Guardian, Alan Rusbridger, called the WikiLeaks disclosures, which his newspaper published, "one of the greatest journalistic scoops of the last 30 years." Yet no attempt was made to protect the Guardian's provider and source. Instead, the "scoop" became part of a marketing plan to raise the newspaper's cover price.

With not a penny going to Assange or to WikiLeaks, a hyped Guardian book led to a lucrative Hollywood movie. The book's authors, Luke Harding and David Leigh, gratuitously described Assange as a "damaged personality" and "callous." They also revealed the secret password he had given the paper in confidence, which was designed to protect a digital file containing the US embassy cables. With Assange now trapped in the Ecuadorean embassy, Harding, standing among the police outside, gloated on his blog that "Scotland Yard may get the last laugh."

Journalism students might well study this period to understand that the most ubiquitous source of "fake news" is from within a media self-ordained with a false respectability and an extension of the authority and power it claims to challenge but courts and protects.

The presumption of innocence was not a consideration in Kirsty Wark's memorable BBC live-on-air interrogation in 2010. "Why don't you just apologise to the women?" she demanded of Assange, followed by: "Do we have your word of honour that you won't abscond?"

On the BBC's Today programme, John

Humphrys bellowed: “Are you a sexual predator?” Assange replied that the suggestion was ridiculous, to which Humphrys demanded to know how many women he had slept with.

“Would even Fox News have descended to that level?” wondered the American historian William Blum. “I wish Assange had been raised in the streets of Brooklyn, as I was. He then would have known precisely how to reply to such a question: ‘You mean including your mother?’”

On BBC World News, the day Sweden announced it was dropping the case, I was interviewed by Geeta Guru-Murthy, who seemed to have little knowledge of the Assange case. She persisted in referring to the “charges” against him. She accused him of putting Trump in the White House; and she drew my attention to the “fact” that “leaders around the world” had condemned him. Among these “leaders” she included Trump’s CIA director. I asked her, “Are you a journalist?”

The injustice meted out to Assange is one of the reasons Parliament reformed the Extradition Act in 2014. “His case has been won lock, stock and barrel,” Gareth Peirce told me, “these changes in the law mean that the UK now recognises as correct everything that was argued in his case. Yet he does not benefit.” In other words, he would have won his case in the British courts and would not have been forced to take refuge.

Brave decision by Ecuador

Ecuador’s decision to protect Assange in 2012 was immensely brave. Even though the granting of asylum is a humanitarian act, and the power to do so is enjoyed by all states under international law, both Sweden and the United Kingdom refused to recognise the legitimacy of Ecuador’s decision.

Ecuador’s embassy in London was placed under police siege and its government abused. When William Hague’s Foreign Office threatened to violate the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, warning that it

would remove the diplomatic inviolability of the embassy and send the police in to get Assange, outrage across the world forced the government to back down.

During one night, police appeared at the windows of the embassy in an obvious attempt to intimidate Assange and his protectors. Since then, Assange has been confined to a small room without sunlight. He has been ill from time to time and refused safe passage to the diagnostic facilities of hospital. Yet, his resilience and dark humour remain quite remarkable in the circumstances. When asked how he put up with the confinement, he replied, “Sure beats a supermax.”

It is not over, but it is unravelling. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention – the tribunal that adjudicates and decides whether governments comply with their human rights obligations – last year ruled that Assange had been detained unlawfully by Britain and Sweden. This is international law at its apex. Both Britain and Sweden participated in the 16-month long UN investigation and submitted evidence and defended their position before the tribunal. In previous cases ruled upon by the Working Group – Aung Sang Suu Kyi in Burma, imprisoned opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim in Malaysia, detained Washington Post journalist Jason Rezaian in Iran – both Britain and Sweden gave full support to the tribunal. The difference now is that Assange’s persecution endures in the heart of London.

The Metropolitan Police say they still intend to arrest Assange for bail infringement should he leave the embassy. What then? A few months in prison while the US delivers its extradition request to the British courts?

If the British Government allows this to happen it will, in the eyes of the world, be shamed comprehensively and historically as an accessory to the crime of a war waged by rampant power against justice and freedom, and all of us. **CT**

“His case has been won lock, stock and barrel,” Gareth Peirce told me, “these changes in the law mean that the UK now recognises as correct everything that was argued in his case. Yet he does not benefit”

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John Pilger’s latest film is *The Coming War On China*. his website is www.johnpilger.com

Israel tutors its children in fear and loathing

Without educating for peace and reconciliation, the future looks very bleak for Israel and Palestine, writes **Jonathan Cook**

In Israel it is known as “confirming the kill.” Everywhere else it is called an extra-judicial execution or murder

A display of Israeli-style community policing before an audience of hundreds of young schoolchildren was captured on video last month. Were the 10-year-olds offered road safety tips, advice on what to do if they got lost, or how to report someone suspicion hanging around the school?

No. In Israel, they do things differently. The video shows four officers staging a mock anti-terror operation in a park close to Tel Aviv. The team roar in on motorbikes, firing their rifles at the “terrorist.”

As he lies badly wounded, the officers empty their magazines into him from close range. In Israel it is known as “confirming the kill.” Everywhere else it is called an extra-judicial execution or murder. The children can be heard clapping.

It was an uncomfortable reminder of a near-identical execution captured on film last year when a young army medic, Elor Azaria, was seen shooting a bullet into the head of an incapacitated Palestinian in Hebron. A military court sentenced him to 18 months for manslaughter in February.

There has been little sign of soul-searching since. Most Israelis, including government officials, call Azaria a hero. In the recent religious festival of Purim, dressing up as Azaria was a favourite among children.

There is plenty of evidence that Israel's security services are still regularly executing real Palestinians. The Israeli human rights

group B'Tselem denounced the killing last month of a 16-year-old Jerusalem schoolgirl, Fatima Hjeiji, in a hail of bullets. She had frozen to the spot after pulling out a knife some distance from a police checkpoint. She posed no threat, concluded B'Tselem, and did not need to be killed.

The police were unrepentant about their staged execution, calling it “a positive, empowering” demonstration for the youngsters. The event was hardly exceptional.

In communities across Israel last month, the army celebrated Israel's Independence Day by bringing along its usual “attractions” – tanks, guns and grenades – for children to play with, while families watched army dogs sicing yet more “terrorists.”

In a West Bank settlement, meanwhile, the army painted youngsters' arms and legs with shrapnel wounds. Blood-like liquid dripped convincingly from dummies with amputated limbs. The army said the event was a standard one that “many families enjoyed.”

The purpose of exposing children at an impressionable age to so much gore and killing is not hard to divine. It creates traumatised children, distrustful and fearful of anyone outside their tribe. That way they become more pliant soldiers, trigger-happy as they rule over Palestinians in the occupied territories. However, a few educators have started to sense they are complicit in

this emotional and mental abuse.

Holocaust Memorial Day, recently marked in Israeli schools, largely avoids universal messages, such as that we must recognise the humanity of others and stand up for the oppressed. Instead, pupils as young as three are told the Holocaust serves as a warning to be eternally vigilant – that Israel and its strong army are the only things preventing another genocide by non-Jews.

Last year, Zeev Degani, principal of one Israel's most prestigious schools, caused a furore when he announced his school would no longer send pupils on annual trips to Auschwitz, a rite of passage for Israeli pupils. He called the misuse of the Holocaust "pathological" and intended to "generate fear and hatred" to inculcate extreme nationalism.

It is not by accident that these trips – imparting the message that a strong army is vital to Israel's survival – take place just before teenagers begin a three-year military draft. Increasingly, they receive no alternative messages in school. Degani was among the few principals who had been inviting Breaking the Silence, a group of whistle-blowing soldiers, to discuss their part in committing war crimes.

In response, the education minister, Naf-tali Bennett, leader of the settlers' party, has barred dissident groups like Breaking the Silence. He has also banned books and theatre trips that might encourage greater empathy with those outside the tribe.

Polls show this is paying off. Schoolchil-

dren are even more ultra-nationalist than their parents. More than four-fifths think there is no hope of peace with the Palestinians.

But these cultivated attitudes don't just sabotage peacemaking. They also damage any chance of Israeli Jews living peacefully with the large minority of Palestinian citizens in their midst.

Half of Jewish schoolchildren believe these Palestinians, one in five of the population, should not be allowed to vote in elections. This month the defence minister, Avigdor Lieberman, called the minority's representatives in parliament "Nazis" and suggested they should share a similar fate.

This extreme chauvinism was translated last month into legislation that defines Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people around the world, not just its citizens. The Palestinian minority are effectively turned into little more than resident aliens in their own homeland.

Degani and others are losing the battle to educate for peace and reconciliation. If a society's future lies with its children, the outlook for Israelis and Palestinians is bleak indeed.

CT

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Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His books include "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

Pupils as young as three are told the Holocaust serves as a warning to be eternally vigilant – that Israel and its strong army are the only things preventing another genocide by non-Jews

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The globalisation of misery

Tom Engelgardt describes the reality of life on a “flattening” planet

Mosul had, according to New York Times reporters on the scene, been “spared the wholesale destruction inflicted on other Iraqi cities,” although those residents who hadn’t fled were “scratching out a primitive existence, deprived of electricity, running water and other essential city services”

The closest I ever got to Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, was 1,720.7 miles away – or so the Internet assures me. Although I’ve had a lifelong interest in history, I know next to nothing about Mosul’s, nor do I have more than a glancing sense of what it looks like, or more accurately what it looked like when all its buildings, including those in its “Old City,” were still standing. It has – or at least in better times had – a population of at least 1.8-million, not one of whom have I ever met and significant numbers of whom are now either dead, wounded, uprooted, or in desperate straits.

Consider what I never learned about Mosul my loss, a sign of my ignorance. Yet, in recent months, little as I know about the place, it’s been on my mind – in part because what’s now happening to that city will be the world’s loss as well as mine.

In mid-October 2016, the US-backed Iraqi army first launched an offensive to retake Mosul from the militants of the Islamic State. Relatively small numbers of ISIS fighters had captured it in mid-2014 when the previous version of the Iraqi military (into which the US had poured more than \$25-billion) collapsed ignominiously and fled, abandoning weaponry and even uniforms along the way. It was in Mosul’s Great Mosque that the existence of the Islamic State was first triumphantly proclaimed by

its “caliph,” Abu Bakr al-Bagdadi.

On the initial day of the offensive to recapture the city, the Pentagon was already congratulating the Iraqi military for being “ahead of schedule” in a campaign that was expected to “take weeks or even months.” Little did its planners – who had been announcing its prospective start for nearly a year – know. A week later, everything was still “proceeding according to our plan,” claimed then-US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter. By the end of January 2017, after 100 days of fierce fighting, the eastern part of that city, divided by the Tigris River, was more or less back in government hands and it had, according to New York Times reporters on the scene, been “spared the wholesale destruction inflicted on other Iraqi cities” like Ramadi and Fallujah, even though those residents who hadn’t fled were reportedly “scratching out a primitive existence, deprived of electricity, running water and other essential city services.”

And that was the good news. More than 100 days later, Iraqi troops continue to edge their way through embattled western Mosul, with parts of it, including the treacherous warren of streets in its Old City, still in the hands of ISIS militants amid continuing bitter building-to-building fighting. The Iraqi government and its generals still insist, however, that everything will be



INVADING FORCE?: Paratroopers from the 325th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, patrol the Al Sudeek district of Mosul, Iraq in January 2005. Photo: Specialist Adam Sanders, United States Army

over in mere weeks. An estimated 1,000 or so ISIS defenders (of the original 4,000-8,000 reportedly entrenched in the city) are still holding out and will assumedly fight to the death. US air power has repeatedly been called in big time, with civilian deaths soaring, and hundreds of thousands of its increasingly desperate and hungry inhabitants still living in battle-scarred Mosul as Islamic State fighters employ countless bomb-laden suicide vehicles and even small drones.

After seven months of unending battle in that single city, perhaps it shouldn't be surprising that Mosul has receded from the news in the West, even as civilian casualties grow, at least half a million Iraqis have been displaced, and the Iraqi military has suffered grievous losses.

Though there's been remarkably little

writing about it, here's what now seems obvious: when the fighting is finally over and the Islamic State defeated, the losses will be so much more widespread than that. Despite initial claims that the Iraqi military (and the US Air Force) were taking great care to avoid as much destruction as possible in an urban landscape filled with civilians, the rules of engagement have since changed and it's clear that, in the end, significant swathes of Iraq's second largest city will be left in ruins. In this, it will resemble so many other cities and towns in Iraq and Syria, from Fallujah to Ramadi, Homs to Aleppo.

The disappearance of Mosul

At a moment when Donald Trump makes headlines daily with almost any random thing he says, the fate of Mosul doesn't

After seven months of unending battle in that single city, perhaps it shouldn't be surprising that Mosul has receded from the news in the West, even as civilian casualties grow

Future Shock

How exactly do you imagine that things will turn out for the inhabitants of Mosul, or Ramadi, or Fallujah, or cities yet to be destroyed? What new movements, ethnic struggles, and terror outfits will emerge from such a nightmare?

even qualify as a major news story. What happens in that city, however, will be no minor thing. It will matter on this increasingly small planet of ours.

What's to come is also, unfortunately, reasonably predictable. Eight, nine, or more months after this offensive was launched, the grim Islamic State in Mosul will undoubtedly be destroyed, but so will much of the city in a region that continues to be – to invent a word – rubblised.

When Mosul is officially retaken, if not “ahead of schedule,” then at least “according to plan,” the proud announcements of “victory” in the war against ISIS will make headlines. Soon after, however, Mosul will once again disappear from our American world and worries. Yet that will undoubtedly only be the beginning of the story in a world in crisis. Fourteen years have passed since the US invaded Iraq and punched a hole in the oil heartlands of the Middle East. In the wake of that invasion, states have been crumbling or simply imploding and terror movements growing and spreading, while wars, ethnic slaughter, and all manner of atrocities have engulfed an ever-widening region. Millions of Iraqis, Syrians, Afghans, Yemenis, Libyans, and others have been uprooted, sent into exile in their own countries, or fled across borders to become refugees. In Mosul alone, untold numbers of people whose fathers, mothers, grandparents, children, friends, and relatives were slaughtered in the Iraqi Army's offensive or simply murdered by ISIS will be left homeless, often without possessions, jobs, or communities in the midst of once familiar places that have been transformed into rubble.

Mosul now lacks an airport, a railroad station, and a university – all destroyed in recent fighting. Initial estimates suggest that its rebuilding will cost billions of dollars over many years. And it's just one of many cities in such a state. The question is: Where exactly will the money to rebuild come from? After all, the price of oil is

presently below \$50 a barrel, the Iraqi and Syrian governments lack resources of every sort, and who can imagine a new Marshall Plan for the region coming from Donald Trump's America or, for that matter, anywhere else?

In other words, the Iraqis, the Syrians, the Yemenis, the Libyans, the Afghans, and others are likely, in the end, to find themselves alone in the ruins of their worlds with remarkably little recourse. With that in mind and given the record of those last 14 years, how exactly do you imagine that things will turn out for the inhabitants of Mosul, or Ramadi, or Fallujah, or cities yet to be destroyed? What new movements, ethnic struggles, and terror outfits will emerge from such a nightmare?

To put it another way, if you think that such a disaster will remain the possession of the Iraqis (Syrians, Yemenis, Libyans, and Afghans), then you haven't been paying much attention to the history of the 21st-century. You evidently haven't noticed that Donald J. Trump won the last presidential election in the United States, in part by playing on fears of a deluge of refugees from the Middle East and of Islamic terrorism; that the British voted to leave the European Union in part based on similar fears; and that across Europe pressures over refugees and terror attacks have helped to alter the political landscape.

Where is globalisation now that we need it?

To frame things slightly differently, let me ask another question entirely: In these last years, haven't you wondered what ever happened to “globalisation” and the endless media attention that was once paid to it? Not so very long ago we were being assured that this planet was binding itself into a remarkably tight knot of interconnectedness that was going to amaze us all. As Thomas Friedman of the New York Times put it in 1996, we were seeing “the integration of free markets, nation-states, and information technologies to a degree

never before witnessed, in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations, and countries to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper, and cheaper than ever.” All of this was to be fed and led by the United States, the last superpower standing, and as a result, the global “playing field” would miraculously “be levelled” on a planet becoming a mosaic of Pizza Huts, iMacs, and Lexuses.

Who of a certain age doesn’t remember those years after the Soviet Union imploded when we all suddenly found ourselves in a single superpower world? It was a moment when, thanks to vaunted technological advances, it seemed blindingly clear to the cognoscenti that this was going to be a single-everything planet. We were all about to be absorbed into a “single market for goods, capital, and commercial services” from which, despite the worries of naysayers, “almost everyone” stood “to gain.” In a world not of multiple superpowers but of multiple “supermarkets,” we were likely to become both more democratic and more capitalistic by the year as an interlocking set of transnational corporate players, nations, and peoples, unified by a singularly interwoven set of communication systems (representing nothing short of an information revolution), triumphed, while poverty, that eternal plague of humanity, stood to lose out big time. Everything would be connected on what was, for the first time, to be a single, “flattened” planet.

It won’t surprise you, I’m sure, to be told that that’s not exactly the planet we’re now on. Instead, whatever processes were at work, the result has been record numbers of billionaires, record levels of inequality, and refugees in numbers not seen since much of the world was in a state of collapse after World War II.

Still, don’t you ever wonder where, conceptually speaking, globalisation is now that we need it? I mean, did it really turn out that we weren’t living together on a single shrinking planet? Were the globalists

of that moment inhabiting another planet entirely in another solar system? Or could it be that globalisation is still the ruling paradigm here, but that what’s globalising isn’t (or isn’t just) Pizza Huts, iMacs, and Lexuses, but pressure points for the fracturing of our world?

The globalisation of misery doesn’t have the cachet of the globalisation of plenty. It doesn’t make for the same uplifting reading, nor does skyrocketing global economic inequality seem quite as thrilling as a levelling playing field (unless, of course, you happen to be a billionaire). And thanks significantly to the military efforts of the last superpower standing, the disintegration of significant regions of the planet doesn’t quite add up to what the globalists had in mind for the 21st-century. Failed states, spreading terror movements, all too many Mosuls, and the conditions for so much more of the same weren’t what globalization was supposed to be all about.

Perhaps, however, it’s time to begin reminding ourselves that we’re still on a globalising planet, even if one experiencing pressures of an unexpected sort, including from the disastrous never-ending American war on terror. It’s so much more convenient, of course, to throw the idea of globalisation overboard and imagine that Mosul is thousands of miles away in a universe that bears next to no relation to our own.

What it really means to be on a “flattening” planet

It’s true that in France last month extremist presidential candidate Marine Le Pen was defeated by a young, little known former investment banker and government minister, Emmanuel Macron, and the European Union preserved. As with an earlier election in Holland in which a similar right-wing candidate lost, this is being presented as potentially the high-water mark of what’s now commonly called “populism” in Europe (or the Brexit-style

it’s time to begin reminding ourselves that we’re still on a globalising planet, even if one experiencing pressures of an unexpected sort, including from the disastrous never-ending American war on terror

Future Shock

If you don't think that this is an ever-more connected planet still being "flattened" (even if in quite a different way than expected), and that sooner or later the destruction of Mosul will reverberate in our world, too, then you don't get our world

fragmentation of that continent). But I'd take such reassurances with a grain of salt, given the pressures likely to come. After all, in both Holland and France, two extreme nationalist parties garnered record votes based on anti-Islamic, anti-refugee sentiment and will, after the coming parliamentary elections in France, both be represented, again in record numbers, in their legislatures.

The rise of such "populism" – think of it as the authoritarian fragmentation of the planet – is already a global trend. So just imagine the situation four or potentially even eight years from now after Donald Trump's generals, already in the saddle, do their damndest in the Greater Middle East and Africa. There's no reason to believe that, under their direction, the smashing of key regions of the planet won't continue. There's no reason to doubt that, in an expanding world of Mosuls – the Syrian "capital" of the Islamic State, Raqqa, is undoubtedly the next city in line for such treatment – "victories" won't produce a planet of greater ethnic savagery, religious extremism, military destruction, and chaos. This, in turn, ensures a further spread of terror groups and an even more staggering uprooting of peoples. (It's worth noting, for instance, that since the death of Osama bin Laden at the hands of US Special Operations forces, al-Qaeda has grown, not shrunk, gaining yet more traction across the Greater Middle East.) So far, America's permanent "war on terror" has helped produce a planet of fear, refugees on an almost unimaginable scale, and ever more terror. What else would you imagine could arise from the rubble of so many Mosuls?

If you don't think that this is an ever-more connected planet still being "flattened" (even if in quite a different way than expected), and that sooner or later the destruction of Mosul will reverberate in our world, too, then you don't get our world. It's obvious, for instance, that fu-

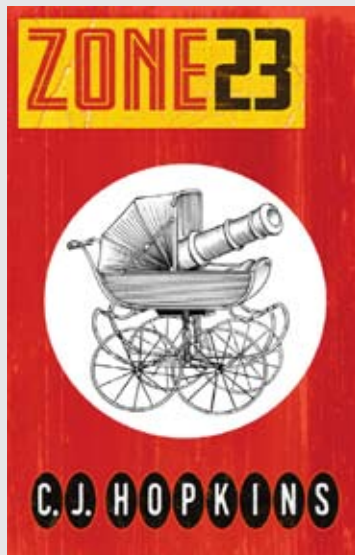
ture Mosuls will only produce more refugees, and you already know where that's led, from Brexit to Donald Trump. Destroy enough Mosuls and, even in the heartland of the planet's sole superpower, the fears of those who already feel they've been left in a ditch will only rise (and be fed further by demagogues ready to use that global flow of refugees for their own purposes).

Given the transformations of recent years, just think what it will mean to uproot ever vaster populations, to set the homeless, the desperate, the angry, the hurt, and the vengeful – millions of adults and children whose lives have been devastated or destroyed – in motion. Imagine, for instance, what those pressures will mean when it comes to Europe and its future politics.

Think about what's to come on this small planet of ours – and that's without even mentioning the force that has yet to fully reveal itself in all its fragmenting and globalising and levelling power. We now call it, mildly enough, "climate change" or "global warming." Just wait until, in the decades to come, rising sea levels and extreme weather events put human beings in motion in startling ways (particularly given that the planet's sole superpower is now run by men in violent denial of the very existence of such a force or the human sources of its power).

You want a shrinking planet? You want terror? You want globalisation? Think about that. And do you wonder why, these days, I have Mosul on my mind? **CT**

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Tom Engelhardt is a co-founder of the *American Empire Project* and the author of *The United States of Fear* as well as a history of the Cold War, *The End of Victory Culture*. His latest book is *Shadow Government: Surveillance, Secret Wars, and a Global Security State in a Single-Superpower World*. A fellow of the *Nation Institute*, he runs www.tomdispatch.com where this essay was first published.



ZONE 23

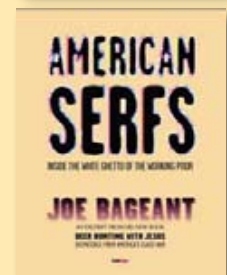
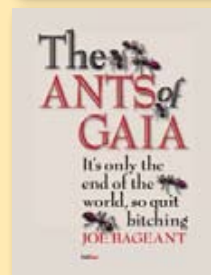
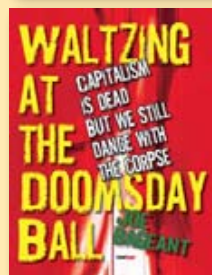
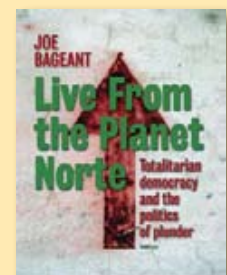
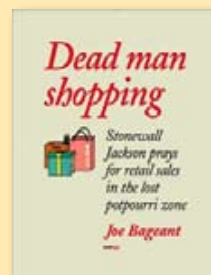
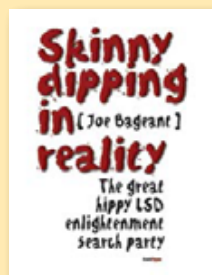
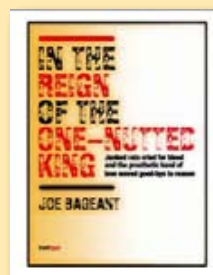
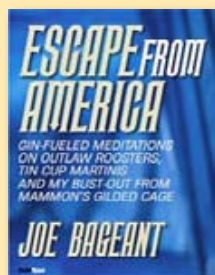
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Canada is no friend of Haiti or the Caribbean

Yves Engler looks at recent history to show why proposals that Haiti would be better off if governed by Canada should be ignored

No Haitian officials were invited to 2003's Ottawa Initiative on Haiti, where high-level US, Canadian and French officials decided that Haiti's elected president "must go" and that the country would be put under a Kosovo-like UN trusteeship

Can a cute Canadian Caribbean dream about enchanted islands come true? Or is reality more complicated and Canada a far less benign actor than we imagine ourselves to be?

In a recent Boston Globe opinion titled *Haiti Should Relinquish Its Sovereignty*, Boston College professor Richard Albert writes, "The new Haitian Constitution should do something virtually unprecedented: renounce the power of self-governance and assign it for a term of years, say 50, to a country that can be trusted to act in Haiti's long-term interests." According to the Canadian constitutional law professor, his native land, which Albert calls "one of Haiti's most loyal friends," should administer the Caribbean island nation.

Over the past 15 years, prominent Canadian voices have repeatedly promoted "protectorate status" for Haiti. On January 31 and February 1, 2003, Jean Chrétien's Liberal government organised the Ottawa Initiative on Haiti to discuss that country's future. No Haitian officials were invited to this assembly where high-level US, Canadian and French officials decided that Haiti's elected president "must go" and that the country would be put under a Kosovo-like UN trusteeship.

Four months after Ottawa helped overthrow Haiti's elected government Prime Minister Paul Martin reaffirmed his government's desire to keep Haiti under long-term foreign control. "Fragile states often require military

intervention to restore stability," said Martin at a private meeting of "media moguls" in Idaho. Bemoaning what he considered the short-term nature of a previous intervention, the prime minister declared "This time, we have got to stay [in Haiti] until the job is done properly."

A few months later a government-funded think tank, home to key Haiti policy strategists, elaborated a plan for foreigners to run the country. According to the Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) plan for Haiti's future, commissioned by Parliament's foreign affairs committee, the country's different ministries would fall under Canadian oversight. Québec's ministry of education, for instance, would oversee Haiti's education system. The FOCAL plan put Haiti's environment ministry under Canadian federal government supervision.

FOCAL's proposal was made after the 2004 US/France/Canada coup weakened Haiti's democratic institutions and social safety network, spurring thousands of violent deaths and a UN occupation that later introduced cholera to the country. Irrespective of the impact of foreign intervention, colonialists' solution to Haiti's problems is to further undermine Haitian sovereignty.

Haiti is but one piece of the Caribbean that Canadians have sought to rule. Earlier this year, New Democratic Party (NDP) MP Erin Weir asked if Canada should incorporate "the Turks and Caicos Islands into Confedera-

tion.” Weir echoed an idea promoted by NDP MP Max Saltzman in the 1970s, Conservative MP Peter Goldring through the 2000s, and an NDP riding association three years ago. A resolution submitted to the party’s 2014 convention noted, “New Democrats Believe in: Engaging with the peoples and government of Turks and Caicos Islands, and the British government to have the Turks and Caicos Islands become Canada’s 11th Province.” As I discuss in the current issue of Canadian Dimension magazine, leftists have long supported the expansion of Canadian power in the region.

In a 300-page thesis titled *Dreams of a Tropical Canada: Race, Nation, and Canadian Aspirations in the Caribbean Basin, 1883-1919*, Paula Pears Hastings outlines the campaign to annex territory in the region. “Canadians of varying backgrounds campaigned vigorously for Canada-West Indies union,” writes Hastings. “Their aspirations were very much inspired by a Canadian national project, a vision of a ‘Greater Canada’ that included the West Indies.”

Canada’s sizable financial sector in the region played an important part in these efforts. In *Towers of Gold, Feet of Clay: The Canadian Banks*, Walter Stewart notes: “The business was so profitable that in 1919 Canada seriously considered taking the Commonwealth Caribbean off mother England’s hands.”

At the end of World War I, Ottawa asked the Imperial War Cabinet if it could take pos-

session of the British West Indies as compensation for Canada’s defence of the empire. London balked. Ottawa was unsuccessful in securing the British Caribbean partly because the request did not find unanimous domestic support. Prime Minister Robert Borden was of two minds on the issue. From London he dispatched a cable noting, “the responsibilities of governing subject races would probably exercise a broadening influence upon our people as the dominion thus constituted would closely resemble in its problems and its duties the empire as a whole.” But, on the other hand, Borden feared that the Caribbean’s black population might want to vote. He remarked upon “the difficulty of dealing with the coloured population, who would probably be more restless under Canadian law than under British control and would desire and perhaps insist upon representation in Parliament.”

Proposing Canada acquire Turks and Caicos or rule Haiti may be outlandish, but it’s not benign. These suggestions ignore Caribbean history, foreign influence in the region and white-wash the harm Ottawa has caused there. Even worse, they enable politicians to pursue ever more aggressive policies in the region. **CT**

*Yves Engler is a Montreal-based activist and author. He has published eight books, the most recent being *Canada in Africa – 300 Years of Aid and Exploitation*. His web site is www.yvesengler.com*

Borden feared that the Caribbean’s black population might want to vote. He remarked upon “the difficulty of dealing with the coloured population, who would probably be more restless under Canadian law than under British control”

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Where did America's trade unions go?

In today's union-free environment, executives have the freedom to pay themselves salaries their predecessors would have thought unimaginable, writes **Sam Pizzigati**

In many major US metro areas outside the South, unions represented half or more of local workers. To compete for labour in these markets, non-union employers couldn't afford to ignore the gains unions were achieving

Anyone who turned on a car radio fifty years ago could count on routinely hearing something we almost never hear on the radio today: news about labour unions.

Unions made news back in those days all the time. The news breaks that radio stations then carried every hour were always updating the status of major contract negotiations in America's biggest industries, everything from auto to trucking.

Those negotiations mattered. They involved millions of workers across the nation. And the contracts that emerged out of these negotiations didn't just impact the union workers the new agreements covered. They impacted non-union workplaces as well.

Throughout the mid-20th-century, for instance, the giant retailer Sears kept itself largely non-union by trying to mirror the wages and benefits that nearby unions had negotiated. Companies like Sears had little wiggle room. In many major US metro areas outside the South, unions represented half or more of local workers. To compete for labour in these markets, non-union employers couldn't afford to ignore the gains unions were achieving.

And unions were achieving plenty. In the two decades right after World War II, the real wages of American workers doubled. The United States, over the course of these

years, became fundamentally more equal, and unions played a huge role in forging this greater equality.

But that forging didn't come easy. Unions had to struggle every step of the way. Contract negotiations frequently broke down. Strikes – big strikes – regularly filled news broadcasts.

How regularly? In 1967, the nation experienced 381 separate “work stoppages” that involved at least 1,000 workers. Nearly 2.2-million workers took part in these walkouts. Hundreds of thousands more participated in strikes at smaller workplaces.

Some perspective on these numbers: In 2016, the US Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported earlier this year, the nation saw only 15 strikes that involved at least 1,000 workers. Over the last decade, we've seen just 143 such strikes. In the decade that began back in 1967, by contrast, walkouts at large workplaces took place 20 times more often.

Top executives at major US corporations today simply face far less pressure than their predecessors faced a half-century ago. Our contemporary CEOs operate in what has largely become – to use the phrase conservatives so enjoy using – a “union-free” environment.

The real “freedom” in this environment extends only to top execs. They can freely push down on worker wages, water down

benefits, and even eliminate jobs and pensions. And best of all – for them – these executives can pay themselves much, much more than executives years ago ever dreamed they could make.

The AFL-CIO, America’s trade union centre, last month released the latest annual figures on average CEO and worker pay. Major corporate executives in 2016, labour’s PayWatch site details, took home 347 times more than average American workers. A half-century ago, in the mid-20th-century, top CEOs in the United States seldom made more than 30 times what workers took home.

Back then, in the 1950s and 1960s, over a third of private-sector workers nationwide belonged to unions. Today less than seven percent of private-sector workers carry union cards.

This steep crash in union representation,

political scientist Andrew Kolin makes clear in his new book, Political Economy of Labor Oppression in the United States, didn’t just happen. That crash reflects years of corporate manoeuvring to deny working people their right to organise and bargain collectively.

In the past, Kolin also makes clear, working people faced similar – and even worse – attacks on their basic rights. But they persevered and eventually ushered in the more equal United States of the mid-20th-century. For that more equal United States to return, we will need another labour comeback. **CT**

In the 1950s and 1960s, over a third of private-sector workers nationwide belonged to unions. Today less than seven percent of private-sector workers carry union cards

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Sam Pizzigati’s most recent book is *The Rich Don’t Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900–1970*. He is co-editor of www.inequality.org

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In The Picture

Angels , demons, skeletons, a cursed fox, assorted freaks – and a bunny in a gas mask!

Daz Smith's ode to life on the streets of an English city

English street photographer Daz Smith is being hailed as a star on the Flickr.com photo-sharing website, his startling images ratcheting more than four-million views over the past three years.

Based in the ancient south-eastern city of Bath, in Somerset, Smith, a graphic artist and web designer, says he fell in love with street photography after reading about the strange life of Chicago nanny-photographer Vivian Maier. “After her death in 2009, tens of thousands of her previously-unseen images, mainly taken in the streets of Chicago during the '50s to '70s, were found in a storage locker and published, turning her into an unlikely photo-hero. I had taken courses in black and white photography, so these images inspired my pursuit of street photography.

“For the last three years I have been like



Warning: Chain-smoking skeleton grins from the window of a tattoo parlour.



In The Picture



Study in contrasts: A malevolent stone gargoyle (above) glares at passersby, while a stone angel (below) looks on benignly.

a hunter on the streets of Bath, Bristol, and now London, seeking interesting people, events, and objects – I’m always on the look out for arcane and shocking images. I want to create image that make people say, ‘What the fuck?!’ I want drama. I don’t want nice. I want people to ask themselves, ‘Why on earth did he take that?’

“Street photography allows me to see the beauty – and the angst – of everyday life. The freaky images in this small selection from my portfolio show the strange world-within-a world that is ever-present in our lives. To enter it, we must allow our eyes to escape the hypnotic glare of our mobile phones and see the strange beauty that surrounds us.” **CT**





Disturbing vision: The Tethered Man performs at the Bath Fringe Festival.



Stone Face surveys the passing photographer.



Dr Macleod's travelling Freak Show is in town.



Ominous blessing: An angel stands guard in Bath's Parade Gardens.



Grinning skeleton waylays unsuspecting pedestrians.



Follow the sound in your head and you'll find a grey alien and his sax.



Cursed fox baby.



Masked Graffiti artist at the Upfresh 2016 Graffiti Art Festival.



Gas Mask Bunny, part of the Banksy Dismaland exhibition.



Metal skull leers from a shop window.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Daz Smith is a Bath-based designer, photographer and writer. See more of his street photography at www.flickr.com/photos/dazsmithpics

Don't go to the doctor: Snitching on students

Karma Nabulsi tells of the failings of Prevent, the British Government's 'wrong-headed' programme to stop students becoming terrorists

A college head refused the usual joint arrangements with a university centre for a lecture by a very distinguished European academic, whose work is on the politics of Islam. Special Branch had informed the college that a great deal of extra security would be required

A colleague at Oxford University was asked to see an undergraduate who was falling behind in her work. The student – a Muslim – explained that she had been suffering from depression and was being treated for it by her doctor. My colleague believed the student's explanation placed her under an obligation to ask the student whether she was being radicalised.

A young colleague, an Arab, told me that when he tried to book a room for a seminar, he was informed that this was no longer permitted on security grounds: he had to get a 'senior' academic to confirm the real purpose of the meeting.

Another young colleague was told that she had to carry out a security 'risk assessment' for a feminist seminar she was convening; she refused, and was repeatedly pressured to comply.

A librarian was asked for a reference by another university: "Are you completely satisfied," they wanted to know, "that the applicant is not involved in 'extremism' (being vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs)?"

Out of the blue, a college head refused the usual joint arrangements with a university centre for a lecture by a very distinguished European academic, whose work is on the politics of Islam. Special Branch had informed

the college that a great deal of extra security would be required.

An undergraduate who wears the hijab went to book a room at her college for someone who was coming to speak as part of Islam Awareness Week. She had booked rooms many times before without any problem. This time she was sent to the college dean, who asked a number of questions, including one about the kind of Islam the event would be promoting. "It made me feel like an outsider in my own university," she said.

A Sikh student was apparently overheard by cleaning staff reading prayers in her room in Punjabi. When she went out her room was searched. "I was told that the scouts were given specific instructions on 'signs to look out for,' in relation solely to my room," she wrote to the college authorities, "and that you did not enter any of the other rooms of the flat." Later, she wrote that she felt "unsafe in college but I am unable to speak up about what is happening."

A student asked the domestic bursar to sign off on a screening of a Palestinian film about refugees returning home. The domestic bursar said that because of legislation concerning "extremism," they would need to get the dean's approval.

A student society set up decades ago to represent a well-established immigrant community in the UK wanted to hold welcome drinks for new undergraduates at the beginning of

the academic year. The university told them to hand over the guest list 48 hours before the event. They explained that they had no way of knowing who would turn up, as the event was to welcome new members, but offered to check university IDs at the door, take names, or have a senior member in attendance – no, they couldn't hold the event, it was against the new rules. One of the organisers was sent an explanatory email: "The event was impossible without a guest list because of our legal duty to abide by Prevent. All colleges across the university must screen guest lists before they offer an event, for security purposes . . . our hands are simply tied on this one."

The British government's Prevent programme, aimed at keeping people from being "drawn into terrorism," was developed in 2003, after the invasion of Iraq, as part of the overarching counter-terrorism strategy known as Contest. Revised in 2008, 2011 and 2015, it consists of four workstreams: "**Pursue**: to stop terrorist attacks; **Prevent**: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism; **Protect**: to strengthen protection against a terrorist attack; and **Prepare**: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack."

Under the 2015 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, the latest incarnation of the Prevent programme imposes a legal duty on public bodies, and the people who work for them, to spot the early warning signs of terrorist sympathy in individuals, and report them. There is "statutory guidance" explaining what the signs could be. "Non-violent extremism," said to be the gateway to "violent extremism" and part of the "radicalisation process," is defined as "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces." According to the government's counter-terrorism strategy, 'extremist' ideology is the core problem, and terrorism its outcome, even though substantial research on radicalisation and extremism

suggests that a complex mix of social, psychological, political and strategic factors all have a role to play. Louise Richardson, Oxford's vice-chancellor and an expert on terrorism, has publicly described the Prevent strategy as "wrong-headed" – but the university is still legally bound to spend time hunting for proto-terrorists.

Prevent relies on two analogies to explain how individuals are drawn into "non-violent extremism" and then "radicalised" into terrorists. The first is the conveyor belt, or escalator hypothesis. Prevent aims to identify and catch people before they step onto the conveyor belt that will carry them from thinking bad thoughts to doing bad things – in other words, not only before any crime is committed, but before it is even dreamed up. The second is the iceberg hypothesis, first floated by Colonel Chuck Cardinal, the director of the US Army Pacific Command's inter-agency co-ordination group for counter-terrorism, who suggested that 'Islamic extremists' are like icebergs, floating, and mostly submerged, in a sea of "moderate Muslims." So how are we supposed to spot them?

There is no comprehensive list of possible indicators that someone is "vulnerable to terrorism," but the government has come up with a partial list in the official guidance that accompanies the primary legislation:

Identity Crisis – Distance from cultural/religious heritage and uncomfortable with their place in the society around them.

Personal Crisis – Family tensions; sense of isolation; adolescence; low self-esteem; disassociating from existing friendship group and becoming involved with a new and different group of friends; searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging.

Personal Circumstances – Migration; local community tensions; events affecting country or region of origin; alienation from UK values; having a sense of grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of government policy.

Unmet Aspirations – Perceptions of injustice; feeling of failure; rejection of civic life.

Prevent aims to identify and catch people before they step onto the conveyor belt that will carry them from thinking bad thoughts to doing bad things – in other words, not only before any crime is committed, but before it is even dreamed up

Chasing Shadows

Parents are often not told that their children are being investigated. Some are only told about the investigation after it ends, and many are suspects themselves

Criminality – Experiences of imprisonment; poor resettlement/reintegration; previous involvement with criminal groups.

“However,” it goes on, “this list is not exhaustive.”

If you are identified as “vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism,” you are reported – or “referred” – to the police. Referrals can come from teachers, council workers, social workers, doctors, university lecturers, nurses, librarians or opticians. Thousands of mostly Muslim men and boys, along with a few right-wing extremists, have been flagged “at risk,” and sent on courses under the so-called Channel programme. It is “voluntary”, and offers a range of social and psychological processes intended to deradicalise young British Muslims.

The latest figures, obtained via a Freedom of Information request to the National Police Chiefs’ Council, show a sharp jump in referrals to Channel after the 2015 Act. Sixty children are referred to Prevent every week. In the year to June 2016, there were 2311 referrals of under-18s – an increase of 83 per cent on the previous year – of whom 352 were aged nine or under. Referrals from schools climbed to 1121 from 537 the previous year. In a report for the Institute of Race Relations, Frances Webber wrote that “the context for Prevent” is an “increase in racist violence and extremely negative stereotypes of Muslims . . . Islamophobia and far right extremism have become more mainstream, with nearly one third of young children believing Muslims are taking over England and over a quarter believing that Islam encourages terrorism.”

One NGO website asks parents if their children have “become overly passionate in some of their viewpoints” or “refuse to listen to those who don’t share their views.” But parents are often not told that their children are being investigated. Some are only told about the investigation after it ends, and many are suspects themselves. Last year a friend told me about a Syrian refugee family recently arrived in his town. He and his wife, who had met them at the mosque, helped them to settle in.

At nursery, their son (who spoke almost no English) was constantly drawing pictures of planes dropping bombs. Rather than ensure the child received help to get over his traumatic experiences, the nursery staff called the police. The parents were visited by the local force, separated and questioned: “How many times a day do you pray? Do you support President Assad? Who do you support? What side are you on?” The police just shouted louder when the parents didn’t answer immediately (they didn’t always understand what they were being asked).

The application of the legislation is cumbersome and detailed. Prison officers, child-care workers, staff in hospitals, doctors’ surgeries, welfare services and town councils, higher education administrators and teachers are now deeply immersed in the daily chores necessary to demonstrate compliance with “the Prevent duty.” We have to fill out “risk assessment” templates that chart the measures to be taken. There are also lengthy “action” templates, to demonstrate progress at each stage, with “benchmarks,” training manuals, guides and slides, workshops, seminars and online courses, accompanied by conflicting and copious literature, official and unofficial guidance, published at regular intervals, with updates, new suggestions and more forms – all of which come attached with dark warnings of the trouble ahead if you don’t (or won’t) fill in the forms or carry out the suggested activities.

Non-compliance carries the risk of your institution losing its funding. The authorities require material proof that you have been on your guard throughout the year. There are spaces on the action templates where you have to demonstrate, in writing, exactly how you (and everyone you line-manage) have been looking out for extremist behaviour and views. You must offer concrete examples of how and when you have done this.

There is also “training” to help you spot extremists. By July 2016, more than half a million people working in the public sector had gone through Prevent training of some

kind – lasting 45 minutes to an hour, on average – much of it provided by private companies. The Home Office training manual lists the firms they recommend. A session costs between £30 and £150 per person. One company’s variation on the conveyor belt theory is an online game of snakes and ladders that takes you on the path from extremism to radicalisation. These private firms also offer courses to schools on “British values,” which depict respect for market capitalism as the bedrock of parliamentary democracy. In one higher education training programme recommended by the Home Office, the British value of freedom is explained to students as “the freedom to choose your course.”

None of the training material bothers to explain how radicalisation actually occurs, or acknowledges the role that Western foreign policy might play. Drone strikes, airstrikes, missile strikes and military incursions across the Middle East, Asia and East Africa are factors that might well motivate rage. Prevent training defines them merely as “perceived grievances,” then claims that expressing concern about such “perceived” problems is an indicator – indeed evidence – of extremism. York City Council included “anti-Israel/pro-Palestinian activity” in a list of “key risks.” Teachers have reported that during Prevent training police officers warned them to ‘keep an eye’ on pupils who went to demonstrations against the Israeli bombing of Gaza in 2014. One of the slides in an HEFCE-backed Prevent training session for universities a few months ago was captioned: “Palestine: Extreme, but Legal?”

During the latter part of 2015 and through 2016, as the effects of the Prevent duty began to be felt, the National Union of Students was overwhelmed by the number of members phoning for help and advice. The National Union of Teachers passed a remarkably strong motion at its annual conference, calling on the government “to withdraw the Prevent strategy in regard to schools and colleges and to involve the profession in developing alternative strategies to safeguard children and

identify risks posed to young people.”

Even on its own terms, Prevent is a failure, as well as being counterproductive. In early 2011, the Equality and Human Rights Commission reported that not only do the measures in many cases breach human rights law, but “counter-terrorism laws and policies are increasingly alienating Muslims, especially young people and students,” and ‘counter-terrorism measures may themselves feed and sustain terrorism.’ MI5 rejected the conveyor belt theory in 2008, in a report leaked to the Guardian. In 2010, the incoming coalition cabinet received a briefing (leaked to the Sunday Telegraph) that warned them not “to regard radicalisation in this country as a linear ‘conveyor belt,’ moving from grievance, through radicalisation, to violence . . . This thesis seems to both misread the radicalisation process, and to give undue weight to ideological factors.” The “vulnerability assessment framework” that the government relies on is based on a single study of a small number of people imprisoned for terrorist offences. That study is classified, but when the two authors explained their methodology in another, published article, a review by 19 other experts found it unsound.

In a position statement on “Counter-Terrorism and Psychiatry” published last September, the Royal College of Psychiatrists warned that thousands of Muslim men and women were being referred to Channel on the basis of questionable science, and demanded that the Home Office allow “data on evaluations of Prevent” to be made available for “peer review and scientific scrutiny”: “Public policy cannot be based on either no evidence or a lack of transparency about evidence.” The doctors warned that identifying refugees with the terrorism from which they have fled “could add to their trauma.” They also noted that “any assumption that there is a generally identifiable ‘path to radicalisation,’ to which some individuals will be psychologically vulnerable, needs to be treated with caution.”

Baroness Warsi, the former cabinet minister and co-chair of the Conservative Party who

None of the training material bothers to explain how radicalisation actually occurs, or acknowledges the role that Western foreign policy might play. Drone strikes, airstrikes, missile strikes and military incursions across the Middle East, Asia and East Africa are factors that might well motivate rage

Chasing Shadows

Growing a beard, wearing a hijab or mixing with those who believe Islam has a comprehensive political philosophy are key markers used to identify “potential” terrorism. This serves to reinforce a prejudicial worldview that perceives Islam to be a retrograde and oppressive religion that threatens the West

resigned in 2014 in protest at the government’s failure to condemn Israel’s attack on Gaza, has called on the government to rethink Prevent. In an interview with the Sunday Times, she described the strategy as a “broken brand.” In *The Enemy Within: A Tale of Muslim Britain*, she argues that Prevent has set back proper research into the causes of political violence, and will be remembered as ‘a textbook example of how to alienate absolutely everybody... A policy designed to spot terrorists and stop terrorism has become a policy which has put on ice genuine policy work to understand the varied and complex causes of terrorism.’[*] She also suggests that the UK is on its way to becoming a “paranoid state,” and that its “policy of disengagement” has undermined relations with British Muslim communities.

As Baroness Lister and more than two hundred other academics and activists wrote to the Independent last year,

Prevent remains fixated on ideology as the primary driver of terrorism. Inevitably, this has meant a focus on religious interaction and Islamic symbolism to assess radicalisation. For example, growing a beard, wearing a hijab or mixing with those who believe Islam has a comprehensive political philosophy are key markers used to identify “potential” terrorism. This serves to reinforce a prejudicial worldview that perceives Islam to be a retrograde and oppressive religion that threatens the West.

The UN special rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai, worried after a visit to the UK last April that “the lack of definitional clarity, combined with the encouragement of people to report suspicious activity, have created unease and uncertainty around what can legitimately be discussed in public.’ Prevent, he went on, ‘is having the opposite of its intended effect: by dividing, stigmatising and alienating segments of the population, Prevent could end up promoting extremism, rather than countering it.”

A Freedom of Information request to the police revealed that more than 80 per cent

of the reports on individuals suspected of extremism were dismissed as unfounded. This “over-reporting” by an army of officially empowered civilian informants, leading to the investigation of blameless British people by the police, has been defended as showing that Prevent is “working effectively.” What it really shows is how Prevent actually works: by encouraging, endorsing and institutionalising a set of conventions and values premised on fear, ignorance and suspicion of non-whites – immigrants, foreigners, racialised Muslims. Prevent has turned ordinary citizens and public sector workers into an auxiliary surveillance militia. Talking or texting in Arabic on a plane, speaking a foreign language in a doctor’s waiting room, wearing a hijab while walking down the street near your house, wearing a free Palestine badge at school – people doing all these things have been reported to police under the Prevent programme.

The legislation, clumsy and laughable on so many levels, is extraordinarily efficient on others. It divides Muslims (practising or not) from the rest of society; black or brown or immigrant or refugee from the white majority. Once you start seeing everyday behaviour as having the potential to draw people into terrorism, you’re inside the problem. A sizeable percentage of Britain’s population now live without freedoms enjoyed by the majority. But the majority don’t see this. They only see an individual black, brown or Muslim Brit – alone, bearded, on the Tube, taking his seat on a plane, waiting for the bus with bulky shopping between his feet. If he argues that there is a direct connection between Britain’s illegal war of aggression against Iraq and the increase in terrorism since 2003, or expresses views critical of British military conduct in Arab and Muslim countries, or criticises Israel for illegal and increasingly brutal practices that appear tied to its increasing impunity, he is suspect. These issues can no longer be discussed by him, because they are indicators of extremism.

The spaces where such matters can be

talked about are disappearing. Local libraries (where they haven't been closed), playgrounds and town halls are no longer democratic spaces, or even public spaces, for a British Arab, Sikh, Muslim or black Christian (like the man hauled off a plane for texting prayers to a WhatsApp group). One despondent man discussed the possible causes of his insomnia with his doctor: "It makes me so angry what is happening in Iraq, and Syria, and it makes me so depressed." Instead of treatment, he got a visit from the police.

Many of us don't speak of these things in public anymore. The situation of Palestinian refugees in Gaza or Syria or Jerusalem or Lebanon – a lively and daily topic of conversation in Muslim, Arab, ethnic minority and immigrant communities – is now discussed almost exclusively at home or in a friend's house. Many parents have stopped talking about these matters in front of their children, worried what they might repeat in the classroom or school corridor. Children warn their parents not to call goodbye to them in Urdu at the school gate. Last July, Rights Watch UK reported: "Our research has found that Muslim children across the United Kingdom are self-censoring for fear of being reported under Prevent. Their fear is not unwarranted. We have uncovered a number of instances where children have been referred to Prevent for legitimately exercising their right to freedom of expression in situations where they pose no threat to society whatsoever."

Prevent is a highly effective method of suppressing unwanted democratic discussion, dissent and debate, though its role in the evisceration of our previous uneasy and unwritten social contract is still only tangible to those affected by it. It also draws on some of Britain's other old, unspoken customs, and ways of maintaining order. The tradition of liberty for some – a classic "British value" – can be traced most vividly outside Great Britain, in the extensive engagements of empire. We also keep up, but rarely discuss, the tradition of counter-insurgency policies designed to monitor, coerce and repress a suspect (and

hostile) community, as developed over the centuries in Ireland, Scotland, India, Africa, China and the "Near East," up to and including Yemen and Oman in the 1970s. The importing of colonial policing practices into domestic British security and intelligence work has been painstakingly traced by historians (The Muslims are Coming! Islamophobia, Extremism and the Domestic War on Terror by Arun Kundhani is an impressive recent example).

Britain's seminal moment of foreign engagement outside this island is still widely believed to have been the Second World War. The relationship between the colonial past and present-day racism and prejudice remains largely concealed. University textbooks on globalisation refer to the enormous contribution the 18th-century shipping industry made to the 'expansion of international society', with no mention of the cargo. Nothing is taught in today's schools about Britain's role in regions that remain sites of colonial violence, or about how the past clings to our present. Under Prevent, everyone from Africa, Asia and the Middle East is lumped together and detached from their historical, political and national origins and relationships. As one British comedian, a second-generation immigrant, asked: "So we just go back to Muslimistan?"

The purpose of retrieving an erased and bloody colonial legacy is not to "diversify your curriculum," or to tick a box to show compliance with the equality duty, but to change things. There are reasons why the Arab and Muslim worlds remain the most active site of Western – particularly British – imperial military activity and colonial adventurism, and reasons why people are angry. And it isn't because they are "non-violent extremists" on the conveyor belt to terrorism. **GT**

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Karma Nabulsi teaches at Oxford University, where she is the director of undergraduate studies at the Department of Politics and International Relations. This essay originally appeared in the *London Review of Books* at www.lrb.co.uk

One despondent man discussed the possible causes of his insomnia with his doctor: "It makes me so angry what is happening in Iraq, and Syria, and it makes me so depressed." Instead of treatment, he got a visit from the police

After 30 years, the struggle still continues

Granville Williams on the long fight for truth and justice by Britain's mine workers after strikers were attacked by police during 1984-85 strike

Dozens of mounted officers, armed with long truncheons, charged up the field, followed by snatch squads in riot gear, armed with short shields and truncheons

On Saturday, June 17, people will assemble with their trade union banners and hand-made placards to remember events that occurred at the Orgreave, the English coal mine site, near Sheffield in South Yorkshire, on June 18, 1984. They will also re-affirm their support for the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign (OTJC) and its demand for a full public inquiry into what happened on that day.

Orgreave Coking Plant, now demolished (it's now the site of an Advanced Manufacturing Research facility linked to the University of Sheffield), supplied coke to the steel works at Scunthorpe 20 miles away. In March, 1984, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) launched a national strike in response to plans of the National Coal Board (NCB) to close a number of pits. The NCB claimed that it only wanted to close 20, but the NUM maintained – and subsequent events proved them right – that more than 70 pits were on the NCB's hit-list.

The NUM called for a mass picket outside the coking plant on June 18, 1984, aimed at disrupting the supply of coke to Scunthorpe. It followed a series of smaller demonstrations at the plant in May and early June of that year. Whereas in the first three months of the strike, police forces around the country had prevented pickets from reaching the

colliery where they planned to demonstrate, on this occasion the police guided miners to the site, in particular to the “topside,” a field to the south of the plant.

The “topside” was bounded at its foot by a cordon of police officers six and more deep blocking access to the plant; the two sides were patrolled by dog-handlers; and a steep railway embankment and railway lines marked the back of the field. The only escape route was over a narrow railway bridge at the top corner of the field, which led into Orgreave village.

In the lull that followed a number of ritual, but ineffective, pushes against the police lines, Assistant Chief Constable Clement, the officer in charge, ordered the police lines to open. Dozens of mounted officers, armed with long truncheons, charged up the field, followed by snatch squads in riot gear, armed with short shields and truncheons.

The miners fled up the hill towards the embankment and the railway bridge. Many of those who couldn't or wouldn't run were assaulted with batons, causing several serious injuries, and dragged back through the police lines to the temporary detention centre opposite the plant.

Several similar charges followed, forcing the miners into the village, where they tried to find refuge in gardens and in the yards





STILL FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE: UK Home Secretary Amber Rudd appears on a poster demanding an official inquiry into state violence at the Orgreave coal mine in 1984.

of the industrial units opposite. The police ran amok, clubbing and arresting miners indiscriminately. In one piece of TV footage, a senior officer can be heard shouting “bodies, not heads,” but the number of head injuries sustained by the miners meant he was largely ignored.

It was a miracle no-one was killed. One officer was seen on television straddling Russell Broomhead, a defenceless miner, who was lying on the ground, and battering him repeatedly about the head with his truncheon. Because the incident was witnessed by millions on TV, South Yorkshire Police interviewed the officer, PC Martin from the Northumbria force, two days later. PC Martin said: “It’s not a case of me going off half cock. The senior officers, supers and chief supers were there and getting stuck in, too – they were encouraging the lads and I think their attitude to the situation affected what we all did.” The papers were referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who advised that PC Martin should not be prosecuted. There is no record of him being disciplined, either.

Altogether, 55 miners were arrested at

the topside, all charged with riot, an offence which at that time carried a potential life sentence. Another 40 men were arrested at the bottom (Catcliffe) side and charged with unlawful assembly.

It was not until May 1985, almost a year later, that the case came to court. Fifteen of the miners charged with riot appeared at Sheffield Crown Court in what was intended by the prosecution to be the first of a series of trials. But the trial collapsed after 48 days when the prosecution abandoned the case after it became clear that many police officers had had large parts of their statements dictated to them, and that many of them had lied, claiming to have seen things they could not have seen, or that they had arrested someone they had not. One statement with a signature forged by a police officer disappeared from court during a lunchbreak, never to re-appear.

It also emerged during the trial that new and unlawful public order policing tactics set out in a secret police manual had been used for the first time at Orgreave.

At times, the trial descended into farce, before the prosecution dropped the cases

The trial collapsed after 48 days when the prosecution abandoned the case after it became clear that many police officers had had large parts of their statements dictated to them, and that many of them had lied, claiming to have seen things they could not have seen, or that they had arrested someone they had no

Miners Fight On

It is important that the truth is established, for many of the miners have been left with physical and psychological problems; many lost their jobs and marriages and were left haunted by a sense of grievance at their unjust treatment

against the remaining 80 miners. Afterwards, there was no investigation into the conduct of the police, either for assaulting, wrongfully arresting and falsely prosecuting so many miners, or for lying in evidence. Five years later, however, South Yorkshire Police (SYP) agreed to pay almost £500,000 to 39 of the miners, without admitting that they had done wrong. Orgreave involved serious wrongdoing by SYP, including assault, wrongful arrest, manipulation of evidence, false prosecutions of the miners and perjury in court. Junior police officers have come forward and said that parts of their statements, supposedly their own personal recollection of events, were dictated to them by senior officers. Analysis of their statements, first revealed in a BBC Inside Out programme in October 2012 (see ColdType issue 84, April 2014, pages 5-12), shows that many contain lengthy identical passages.

After Orgreave, the media, encouraged by the police, unfairly vilified the miners for provoking the violence. Orgreave represented a serious miscarriage of justice that has never been adequately addressed. It is important that the truth is established, for many of the miners have been left with physical and psychological problems; many lost their jobs and marriages and were left haunted by a sense of grievance at their unjust treatment. And now they are dying without seeing justice done.

Orgreave led to a massive breakdown of trust in the police in the former mining communities and this continues today among the children and grandchildren of the miners. It also marked a turning point in the policing of public protest, sending a message that they could employ violence and lie with impunity.

Staying Power

The Chumbawamba song 'Tubthumping' sums up the spirit of the OTJC:

*I get knocked down
But I get up again
You are never going to keep me down.*

Since it was set up four years ago the OTJC has had remarkable success in projecting its public profile, but success in its demand for a full public inquiry into the policing at Orgreave has been elusive. Each setback, however, seems to draw wider support and instil a greater resolve and resilience in the OTJC.

The first setback came when the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) produced its report on policing at Orgreave in June 2015, and concluded it didn't have the resources to conduct a full inquiry. However, its report included critical comments on the role of SYP. After a meeting with then-Home Secretary Theresa May in July that same year, the OTJC provided her with the legal case for a public inquiry in December 2015. After the EU referendum, May was appointed prime minister in July 2016, Amber Rudd became home secretary. She met a OTJC delegation last September, but on October 31, she said there would be no investigation as there had been no deaths, no convictions, no miscarriage of justice and there were no new lessons for current police forces to learn.

I have seen the file of letters which the OTJC treasurer, Chris Peace, has received, with donations of from £10-£250, and copies of well-argued letters sent to Amber Rudd by people outraged at her decision. Rudd's refusal also spurred widely-reported actions by the OTJC such as the Make Some Noise! protest outside the Home Office on March 13, when members of PCS, the civil service union at the Home Office, supported the demo and, to the displeasure of Home Office management, circulated its members with information about the OTJC action.

In the pursuit of justice, there are also the Orgreave files still to be released by Amber Rudd. SYP files are also being processed by Alan Cummings, an archivist employed by the South Police Commissioner. Recently the archives of the former Association of Chief Constables (ACPO) were also located. The truth will come out finally, and the OTJC will be there when it happens. **CT**

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Granville Williams
is a founder member
of the OTJC. His
most recent book
is *The Flame Still
Burns: The Creative
Power of Coal.*

Seventy years ago, on 1 January 1947, the UK coal industry was nationalised. It is difficult to believe that an industry which then employed nearly 700,000 miners in 970 pits is no more.

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THE FLAME STILL BURNS

The Creative Power of Coal

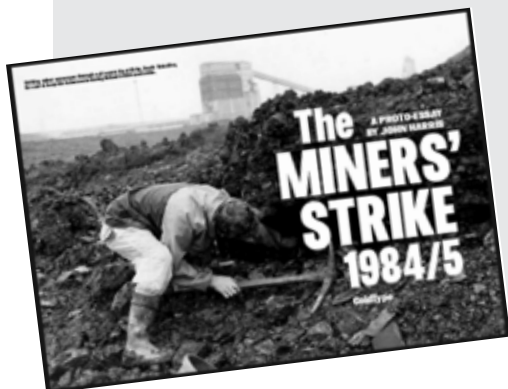
Edited by Granville Williams



BRITAIN'S DEFIANT MINERS

Download ColdType's special supplements on the 1984-85 British Mineworkers' Strike and its aftermath at

www.coldtype.net/Miners.html



Dark money is killing UK democracy

We urgently need new rules to prevent the capture of our politics by billionaires and corporations and their secretive funding, writes **George Monbiot**

A vast payment was made by Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist party (DUP) for a newspaper advertisement urging people to vote for Brexit. Remarkably, this ad was not circulated in Northern Ireland, but only in England and Scotland

How is this acceptable? A multimillionaire City asset manager has pledged to spend up to £700,000 on ousting Labour MPs who campaigned against Brexit. Jeremy Hosking will use his money to ensure that there is as little parliamentary opposition to a hard Brexit as possible. Why should multi-millionaires be allowed to try to buy political results?

Allowed? That's too soft a word. It is enabled by our pathetic, antiquated and anti-democratic rules on political spending. Hosking claims he wants to secure "the sovereign future of this independent-minded democracy." But there is no greater threat to sovereignty, independence or democracy than the power money wields over our politics.

There are three categories of concern here. The first is transparent political funding, such as Hosking's. Then there is opaque funding, that the Electoral Commission has so far failed to prevent: a shocking example has been uncovered by Peter Geoghegan and Adam Ramsay of openDemocracy (See *ColdType*, Issue 135, March 2017 – Pages 16-19).

We already know that a vast payment was made by Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist party (DUP) for a newspaper advertisement urging people to vote for Brexit. Remarkably, this ad was not circulated in Northern Ireland, but only in England and

Scotland.

This might suggest that someone was making use of Northern Ireland's secrecy regime. Political donations there remain hidden from view. Funders wishing to disguise their identities can use Northern Ireland as a back channel into UK politics. After sustained pressure, the DUP revealed that the money came from a donation of £425,622, passed through an organisation called the Constitutional Research Council.

But the original source remains a mystery. Though electoral law in Great Britain states that "a donation of more than £500 cannot be accepted . . . if the donation is from a source that cannot be identified," the DUP claims that it doesn't need to know who provided this money. All we know about the Constitutional Research Council is that it's run by a man called Richard Cook, who lives in a small house outside Glasgow. He seems unlikely to have been the original source. What else do we know about him? OpenDemocracy discovered that in 2013 he helped found a company called Five Star Investments, 75 percent of which was owned by Prince Nawwaf al-Saud, former head of Saudi Arabian intelligence. Nawwaf's son is currently the Saudi ambassador to the UK.

There is currently no known connection between these facts, and Cook has denied any foreign funding for the CRC. But he has not yet answered calls from openDemocra-

cy or the Guardian newspaper. Though the Electoral Commission was asked 11 months ago to investigate, it has done nothing.

This story resonates with the deeply troubling revelations by Carole Cadwalladr in the Observer newspaper, which suggest that US billionaire Robert Mercer may have played a questionable role in the EU referendum. Thanks to the Observer, the Electoral Commission is investigating. But if it discovers any breaches of the rules, the penalties are feeble. The monumental decision this country has taken, which may have been unduly influenced by the forces Cadwalladr describes, will not be reversed.

The third issue is political funding that operates in a different sphere. It's not illegal, it's worse than that: there are no effective rules of any kind. This is the use of dark money that seeks not to influence elections directly, but to change the broader political landscape. Dark money is funding used, without public knowledge, by front groups.

There are various ways in which it is spent. One of them is "astroturfing," the creation of fake grassroots movements. Pioneered by the tobacco companies, this later became a crucial strategy for fossil fuel companies trying to prevent action on climate change, and biotech firms trying to get their products on the market. It was a major component of the Tea Party movement in the United States, whose real members were coordinated by a group called Americans for Prosperity.

Another outlet for dark money is the organisations that call themselves "thinktanks," but look to me like covertly funded lobbyists. The less transparent they are, the greater their presence in the media.

The research group Transparify ranks these "thinktanks" by their openness about their funding. The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), the Adam Smith Institute and Policy Exchange, for example, are rated as "highly opaque:" they refuse to reveal any information about who sponsors them. But they are all over the BBC – the Today pro-

gramme, Question Time and the rest – and other media.

The industry whose funding we know most about, thanks to a legal settlement that forced open its archives, is tobacco. We now know, for example, that the IEA has been sponsored by tobacco companies since 1963. It has received regular payments from British American Tobacco, Imperial Tobacco, Japan Tobacco International and Philip Morris International, which has described the institute as one of the groups that would "establish an echo chamber for [Philip Morris] messages."

Last month, the IEA published a report inveighing against the UK's smoking ban and tobacco packaging law. This was picked up across the media, but with never a word about the institute's funding. Apart from the BBC's editorial guidelines, which are routinely flouted, there are no rules of any kind to prevent or reveal such conflicts of interest.

Is this democracy? Is this sovereignty? No. It's the replacement of informed political choice with an onslaught of corporate propaganda and fake facts, which, as we don't have 100 years between elections to check and refute, we have little chance of resisting.

Why has there been no effective action on climate change? Why are we choking on air pollution? Why is the junk food industry able to exploit our children? Because governments and their agencies have rolled over and let such people make a mockery of informed consent.

Now the whole democratic system is sliding, and the Electoral Commission is neither equipped nor willing to stop it. There's an urgent, un-met need for new laws to defend democracy.

CT

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George Monbiot's latest book, *How Did We Get Into This Mess?*, is published by Verso. This article was first published in the Guardian newspaper. Monbiot's web site is www.monbiot.com

Another outlet for dark money is the organisations that call themselves "thinktanks," but look to me like covertly funded lobbyists. The less transparent they are, the greater their presence in the media

Flight ban on laptops doesn't make sense

Cassandra Burke and **Irina D. Manta** explain why cabin ban will not make plane travel safer, but most likely more dangerous

Business travellers are concerned about the loss of productivity and the risk that a checked laptop with sensitive information could be damaged, stolen or subjected to intrusive search

Recent reports suggest that terrorists can now create bombs so thin that they cannot be detected by the current X-ray screening that our aircraft carry-on bags undergo. In an effort to protect against such threats, the US is considering banning laptops and other large electronic devices in the passenger cabins of airplanes flying between Europe and the United States. This would extend a ban already in place on flights from eight Middle Eastern countries.

Given the significant disruption such a policy would cause tens of thousands of passengers a day, a logical question any economist might ask is: Is it worth it? It is tempting to think that any level of cost and inconvenience is sensible if it reduces the risk of an attack even a little. But risks, inherent in flying and even driving, can never be avoided entirely. So when weighing policies that are designed to make us safer, it is important to consider both their costs and potential effectiveness.

Unfortunately, whether the benefits justify the costs is too often not the yardstick used by officials determining whether to pursue these types of policies. Instead, as law professors who have researched how the government's travel policies affect civil liberties, we have found that it is more likely that political considerations motivate the adoption of restrictive policies, which in the end actually do little to protect citizens' security.

The current laptop policy regarding some

flights from the Middle East was put in place in March, apparently as a result of intelligence that ISIS militants were training to get laptop bombs past security screeners and onto planes. The UK adopted a similar rule.

The Department of Homeland Security wants to extend that ban to transatlantic flights. This would cause major disruption and "logistical chaos." Approximately 65-million people a year fly between Europe and the United States. Business travellers are concerned about the loss of productivity and the risk that a checked laptop with sensitive information could be damaged, stolen or subjected to intrusive search. Families worry about travelling without electronic distractions to soothe tired and uncomfortable children. Airlines expect a loss of business as people opt out of transatlantic travel altogether.

Past policies such as limiting the liquids that can be carried on and requiring passengers to remove shoes are a case in point. They have increased burdens on both travellers, who must pay to check baggage and face added inconvenience, and taxpayers, who bear the costs of every policy change, while likely doing little to nothing to improve security.

Regulators throughout the government typically must rely on a cost-benefit analysis to determine levels of acceptable risk, weighing the potential safety gain of a new policy against its costs and added risks.

But when dealing with a fear of terrorism,

it is common to find policies that are not cost effective. And if we subjected the laptop bans (the original and expansion) to a cost-benefit analysis, they would likely fail. The costs are high, the potential security gains are small, and the policy adds hazards of its own.

To make its case, the government seems to be relying on several purported benefits of stowing laptops in the luggage hold. First, checked bags undergo additional screening for the presence of explosives. Second, it is possible that luggage in the cargo area could provide some insulation from an explosion. Finally, bombs placed in the cargo area require a sophisticated timing device, unlike simpler explosives that could be set off manually.

But these benefits appear dubious as support for a laptop ban. Carry-on luggage could go through expanded screening, for example, while the notion that checked luggage might make an explosion more survivable is speculative – and such gains might in any case be offset by the dangerous greater vibration found in cargo cabin. Lithium batteries have, after all, been forbidden from the cargo compartment for a reason – and must instead be carried on – to avoid the risk of fire. This does little to protect against the risk of an explosive device in the cargo cabin. It just moves the risk to an isolated area of the plane. Moving the devices to the hold could actually make such devices harder to detect if they slip past airport screening. The exploding lithium batteries in Samsung devices, for example, show how even ordinary fire risks can be greater when passengers are not there to notice a smoking battery in a bag in the overhead compartment.

Similarly, the presence of observant passengers can help thwart terrorist activity when it does occur, as happened with the underwear bomber. One should keep in mind that one of the greatest airline tragedies of all times, the attack on Pan Am flight 103 that exploded over Lockerbie and claimed 270 lives, was caused by a bomb that went off in a suitcase in the cargo hold.

On the economic side, the financial costs of the policy change would likely be very high.

Based on statistics from the US Department of Commerce, travel industry professionals estimate that the cost of lost productivity alone for business travellers unable to work on flights between the US and Europe is estimated to be as great as \$500-million a year.

The potential loss of tourism revenue may be even greater, as families avoid vacationing in the United States and business travellers choose to meet by teleconference instead of in person. So if the laptop ban would be ineffective – or worse yet, even make airline travel less safe – and be very costly, why would the government consider it?

The answer is likely politics. And that is because people overestimate the likelihood of being harmed by a terrorist attack, which lends extreme actions like the laptop ban public support, while they underestimate the risks of more ordinary occurrences such as car accidents or defective batteries.

From 1975 to 2015, fewer than 84 Americans a year died due to terrorism, and that includes the attacks on 9/11. Meanwhile, in 2015 alone, 38,300 people died in traffic-related accidents in the US. And lithium batteries have been blamed for dozens of aircraft fires and may have been what brought down Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which disappeared in 2014 with more than 200 passengers and crew.

At the same time, officials on whose watch an attack or other disaster occurs receive disproportionate blame, something that does not carry over to more ordinary risks. People fear terror attacks more than the common threats that are actually more likely to cause them harm. Politicians may respond to their voters' concerns, and may even share the same cognitive biases. As a result, government decision makers have an incentive to overvalue measures taken to prevent terror attacks, even at the expense of increasing more ordinary – yet more likely – safety risks.

While there may not be much we can do about Americans' misconceptions about the risk of terrorism, public policy on an issue as important as airline safety should not blindly follow them. **CT**

Lithium batteries have been forbidden from the cargo compartment for a reason – and must instead be carried on – to avoid the risk of fire

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Cassandra Burke

Robertson is professor of Law and Director of the Center for Professional Ethics at Case Western Reserve University. Irina D. Manta is professor of law and Director of the Center for Intellectual Property Law at Hofstra University. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com



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ColdType Insights

Black people and the legacy of Obama

Black people in the US are in a worst shape after Obama than for almost 50 years, writes **Herbert Dyer Jr**

“Barack Obama’s ascendancy to the presidency was a curse on black America’s political heritage.”
– Margaret Kimberley, *Black Agenda Report*

It is no secret that the folks over at Black Agenda Report have never cottoned much to ex-President Obama. It was, after all, BAR’s executive editor Glen Ford who, long before Obama’s 2008 election, and in reference to the great bulk of black elected officials throughout this nation-state, including most especially, the Congressional Black Caucus, coined the term “black misleadership class.” Once Obama actually took the oath of office in ’08, Ford promptly placed him at the head of that class. And, throughout the ensuing eight straight years, BAR’s senior columnist Margaret Kimberley has wielded an especially sharp pen against this country’s “First Black President” (a sobriquet Ford, Kimberley and co derisively employ

as a way of reminding us exactly who and what Obama is not). BAR’s post postmortems of Obama’s late presidency have been equally rough – and directly on point.

In her May 2nd column entitled *Obama Gets Paid*, Kimberley, as she routinely does, excoriates Obama apologists as they feverishly defend



Barack Obama

Photo: Pete Souza, US Government

his recent acceptance of a \$400,000 check for speaking to those Wall Street hedge fund managers and investment bankers – the self-same ones who helped crash the US (and damn near world) economy in ’08. Again, for eight solid years, Obama,

President Obama, steadfastly refused to prosecute nary a one of them. The principal defence deployed by Obama diehards is, basically, that “everybody does it,” especially everybody, that is, who’s ever been president. They point to the 1990 tour of Japan by then former President Ronald Reagan. St. Reagan (one of Obama’s two most favourite presidents) who collected a cool \$2-million for delivering a few stock speeches in the land of the rising sun over eight days.

Or, Obamaphiles remind us of ex-prez Bill Clinton’s apparently innate ability to still garner whopping speaker’s fees and honoraria from any venue anywhere even to this day – if and only if, of course, the price is right. According to CNN, since 2001, that proclivity has yielded both Bill and wife, ex-Secretary of State Hillary, a jaw-dropping \$153-million and counting.

Yes, it is now common practice among certain ex-presidents: Bush (I and II), even Nixon, eagerly embraced what St Reagan referred to as the “mashed potato” circuit. Yet, somehow Obama’s most ardent supporters conveniently skip over or ignore altogether former President Jimmy Carter. That may be because Carter has consistently refused to partake of either the mashed potatoes and/or rubber chickens. Instead, to this day, de-

Insights

spite brain cancer and his 90-plus years of life, ex-prez Carter devotes his entire ex-presidency to a wide array of ways and means of delivering real goods and real services to real people.

Obama was in Chicago the other day, fully refreshed from his three-month Hawaiian vacation, a \$65-million book deal, and, as noted, his \$400,000 oration. Obama was here to hobnob with Chicago's One Percent and to finalise plans for his presidential library, to be set in a 200,000 square foot space age building just south of his old employer's (University of Chicago) campus.

Obama also actually stopped in at the university itself where he mingled with a few star-struck students. And then he and Michelle dropped an unsolicited \$2-million on Chicago's summer jobs program. Why so generous? The purpose of this money, so sayeth Obama, is to "train the next generation of leadership . . . the Michelle Obamas of today and the Barack Obamas of today."

That money is certainly needed and much appreciated, especially given the fact that Chicago's mayor Rahm Emanuel, Obama's first presidential chief of staff, seems to miraculously find funds for any and everything except Chicago's South and West Sides – where the bulk of Chicago's one million black citizens just happen to reside.

The obvious question, which has many black Chicagoans (and black people nationwide) scratching their heads, is this: Where was all of this heartfelt concern, and more importantly, money and resources, for black folk when Obama for eight whole years reigned as this nation-

state's "First Black President"?

He and his blinkered supporters still argue that:

- The Big Bad Racists Republicans would not let Obama do anything to specifically help black people.

- That he is "president of all the people of America, not just black people." (But aren't we Americans, too?)

- That, as St. Reagan taught us, "a rising tide lifts all boats." Thus, programmes and policies which specifically and purposely benefit Hispanics, gays, white women, the "working class" and the poor naturally, automatically "trickle down" to black people.

- That, targeting black people would alienate those oh-so-sensitive and always aggrieved "white middle class" folk who see the world as a zero-sum proposition: If blacks win (at anything), they lose (everything).

Black resistance, black revolt and black struggle against white supremacy and white racism began when those very first Portuguese, Spanish, English, French and Dutch slave ships appeared off Africa's West Coast as far back as 1444. That freedom struggle continued unabated right up until 2008 when black people basically decided that having a putatively "black" man in the White House was more important than the freedom struggle itself. Before Obama's ascendancy, the standard that all presidents and presidential candidates had to meet as far as black people were concerned was this: What will he do for us as a people? At least, that is the standard I was taught as a child by my parents, who, until

John Kennedy came along in 1960, voted for both Democratic and Republican candidates at all levels of government based on this simple question.

After 2008, at family gatherings I was often persona non gratis because I dared to continue to ask this question. One of my elderly aunts actually stood up at the Thanksgiving table in 2014, pointed an accusatory finger at me, and said, "Blasphemy!" For her and millions like her, Obama's blackness was enough. He didn't really have to do anything for black people because just seeing him and his black family in the White House wiped away the 400-year-old still festering wounds that had been and continue to be inflicted upon black people as a whole. That is all Obama did for black people – get elected.

And now? Now that Obama is safely out of office and in no position to help anybody except (as detailed above) on a very occasional, very personal and very individual level, well . . . that is what his recent foray into Chicago means. Margaret Kimberley is absolutely right: Because of Obama, black people are in the worst shape they have been in since Dr. King was so brutally murdered 49 years ago.

Because of Obama, we must now contend with a straight up and open white supremacist/white racist in the once again lily white White House. But on a more optimistic note, we will survive Donald Trump. It's what we do best. **CT**

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Herbert Dyer, Jr. is a Chicago-based freelance writer. Find Black Agenda Report at www.blackagenda.com

Risk: A sad comedown for Laura Poitras

Thomas S. Harrington watches, but is unimpressed by, the new film on Julian Assange by Laura Poitras

A few nights ago, I went to see *Risk*, Laura Poitras' portrait – if you can really call it that – of Julian Assange.

I must say that I have been a huge admirer of Laura Poitras' work, running from *My Country, My Country* (2006), through a number of shorts, to the much-acclaimed *Citizen Four* (2014). My admiration for these superb and probing documentaries was only enhanced by a knowledge of the fortitude she demonstrated in the face of years of harassment by the US government, a story worthy of a brave documentary in and of itself.

I guess this is why my sense of disappointment with *Risk* feels so enormous. It is everything that Poitras' work has not – fortunately – been all about up until this time: self-involved, reachingly melodramatic and filled with unfounded innuendo.

In the film she plays upon – but without ever demonstrating the courage to fully explain, or for that matter, fully embrace – all the per-

sonalising memes that the US government and its domesticated corporate media have used to undercut the legitimacy of Assange's status, along with Snowden and Manning, as the greatest truth-teller of our time.

You know the story line: he's an egotist, control-freak, and sexual predator mostly interested in fame and notoriety. For example, she treats us to an excruciatingly long scene of Assange sitting with Lady Gaga in the Ecuadorian embassy that adds nothing to our understanding of the Australian dissident. . . . except, of course to suggest that, the egoist that he is, he will always take time out of his "important work" to be adored by unfathomably stupid celebrities.

There's another scene where he rails in a politically incorrect fashion against the women who, after willingly having sex with him in Sweden and sharing pleasant post-coital texts with him about it, decide, under intense police and prosecutorial pressure, to reframe it

all as a matter of sexual predation.

Gee, imagine being angry and voicing un-PC thought crimes about something like that! No way you or I would ever let something like that get under our skin. No, if you or I had been framed in a similar way, resulting in several years of life spent cooped up in a tiny room, we, of course, would always talk about the useful idiots who made it possible with cool equanimity. Right?

Then there's the attempt to slyly conflate these insinuations about Assange's *insensitivity* and *inappropriateness* (has the world ever been treated to a comparably endemic deployment of two more weasely rhetorical placeholders?) on such matters to the apparent temper issues that his sometime collaborator Jacob Applebaum appears to have with the women he sleeps with, one of whom just happens to be named Laura Poitras.

So, the implied reasoning goes, if Laura and other women had nasty break-ups with Jake where he was "abusive" (whatever the hell that actually means in educated/progressive circles in 2017), and Jake works with Julian, and both, as the film clearly demonstrates, have an extraordinary sense of intellectual and moral self-confidence, then the best thing to do is to be fundamentally distrustful of Julian.

And so it goes in this 91-minute

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train of poorly structured subjective mush. What you realise in the end is that it is precisely Assange's lack of a need to please people in conventional ways that most unnerves others, including Laura Poitras.

For a population now taught to believe, through Facebook and other social media, that getting "likes" is the be all and end all of human existence, someone who frontally eschews all that in the service of what he considers much loftier goals can indeed be quite confounding.

Does this probably make the guy a lot less fun and cuddly than the mass of other human beings serially seeking approval? No doubt about it. But, so friggin' what? By all reports, Gandhi could be a pretty callous guy on the personal level. But what would moral progress in the 20th-century without him?

It is a good thing social media, that hall of impressionistic and simplistically personalising mirrors, was not around then to shadow the Indian leader and render its snap judgments about his essential humanity.

If, however, it had existed then, you can be quite sure that the British colonial spymasters would have availed themselves of material produced within its confines by those with a compulsive need to nitpick his personal habits to spread memes aimed at undermining his work and moral example. **CT**

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*Thomas S. Harrington is a professor of Iberian Studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut and the author of the recently released *Living la Vida Barroca: American Culture in a Time of Imperial Orthodoxies*.*

sloppy mind of Steve Bannon, who claims that "We, the Judeo-Christian west," are inevitably destined for wars with both Islam and China. That's scary stuff, injected into the seats of power. When Anderson Cooper asked Trump about Islam, you could see his tiny brain pause, searching for whatever Bannon had told him, then say: "I think Islam hates us."

But Bannon, much demoted, was in Riyadh along with the rest of Trump's team, doing his silly version of the Saudi sword dance – showing how a whiff of power can vaporise even passionately constructed world views. Then he was whisked back to the US Trump, meanwhile, voiced no hostility to Islam, nor did he say anything enthusiastic about "spreading" democracy. His speech scaled back the menace to merely demonising Iran and rallying fundamentalist Arab monarchies against it, and against vaguely "evil" terrorists anywhere.

Why relief? This far more modest demonisation of a single country is less likely to lead to hysteria and global incineration than the scare-mongering threat of entire "civilizations."

Regrettably Iran, a more developed, pluralistic and democratic society than any Gulf monarchy – despite the theocracy also rooted there – will suffer as a result. They will, involuntarily, have to bear the burden for a somewhat less apocalyptic world. We should be duly grateful. **CT**

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Rick Salutin is a Toronto activist and author. This commentary was first published by the Toronto Star newspaper.

Trump avoids disaster in Riyadh!

President Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia was full of blather, but at least it wasn't a disaster, writes **Rick Salutin**

Donald Trump's speech in Riyadh in mid-May was normal foreign policy drivel, which came as a relief. It was no more preposterous than what Obama, either Clinton, or Trudeau deliver when they talk world issues. Foreign policy is a truth-free, fact-free zone. When leaders speak on domestic issues, citizens at least have points of reference to check them against. On foreign affairs they blather freely. What did the

Riyadh speech blessedly avoid?

The clash of civilizations, a dim notion that has sloshed around academic and policy circles. It was generated by Samuel Huntington as a substitute for Cold War, good-evil dualism, then targeted specifically at Islam by Bernard Lewis. The clique around George W. Bush embraced it, though in democratic (versus religious) terms, to justify their crusades – W's word – in the Mideast.

Trump's version came via the

Where there's cash, there's repression

Never forget what Britain's and America's wealth is based on – colonialism, imperialism, militarism, war, writes **Brian Mitchell**

“Thousands of our fellow subjects... are at this moment existing in a state of slavery more horrid than are the victims of that hellish system, colonial slavery... Thousands of little children... are daily compelled to labour from 6 o'clock in the morning to 7 o'clock in the evening with only – British, blush while you read it – with only 30 minutes allowed for eating and recreation.” – *Slavery in Yorkshire, Leeds Mercury, 1830.*

“We must find new lands from which we can easily obtain raw materials and at the same time exploit the cheap slave labor that is available from the natives of the colonies. The colonies would also provide a dumping ground for the surplus goods produced in our factories.” – *Cecil Rhodes, “founder” of Rhodesia.*

“I do not believe that anybody who has not seen with his own eyes, can begin to imagine the poverty in which so many of our fellow citizens of the Commonwealth are condemned to live.” – *James Griffiths, former British Colonial Secretary, Oct 1951.*

“The earth is a place on which England is found, And you find it however you twirl the globe round; For the spots are all red and the rest is all grey, And that is the meaning of Empire Day.” – *G.K. Chesterton.*

“Why does the sun never set on the British Empire? Because the

Lord doesn't trust the English in the dark.” – *Indian saying.*

“They are the best people in the world and above all the gentlest, they do not murder or steal, they love their neighbours as themselves ... They do not bear arms, and do not know them ... They would make fine servants... with fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want” – *Christopher Columbus, on Latin Americans, in his log.*

“Don't forget, there are two hundred million of us in a world of three billion. They want what we've got, and we're not going to give it to them!” – *US President Johnson.*

“The crimes of the US throughout the world have been systematic, constant, clinical, remorseless, and fully documented but nobody talks about them.” – *British playwright Harold Pinter*

“There is ...a huge tacit conspiracy between the US government, its agencies and its multinational corporations, on the one hand, and local business and military cliques in the Third World, on the other, to assume complete control of these countries and “develop” them on a joint venture basis. The military leaders of the Third World were carefully nurtured by the US security establishment to serve as the “enforcers” of this joint venture partnership, and they have

been duly supplied with machine guns and the latest data on methods of interrogation of subversives.” – *Edward S. Herman, US media and foreign policy critic.*

“When imperialism feels weak, it resorts to brute force.” – *Venezuelan socialist president Hugo Chavez.*

“If we have to use force, it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future, and we see the danger here to all of us.” – *US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, NBC Today, February 19 1998.*

“Throughout the world, on any given day, a man, woman or child is likely to be displaced, tortured, killed or “disappeared”, at the hands of governments or armed political groups. More often than not, the United States shares the blame.” – *Amnesty International, annual report on US military aid and human rights.*

“The illegal we do immediately. The unconstitutional takes a little longer.” – *Henry Kissinger, former US secretary of state.*

“If there ever was in the history of humanity an enemy who was truly universal, an enemy whose acts and moves trouble the entire world, threaten the entire world, attack the entire world in any way or another, that real and really universal enemy is precisely Yankee imperialism.” – *Cuban leader Fidel Castro*

“The sun never sets but the blood never dries on the British Empire.” – *Ernest Jones.*

Brian Mitchell is a London-based author and journalist. He is a former trade union organiser and teacher.

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