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HOW THE PENTAGON LOST \$21-TRILLION

“Getting important news about the corruption of our military-industrial complex from the mainstream media would be like getting a philosophy lesson from a strip-club dancer”

– **LEE CAMP** (PAGE 28)

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2

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January 2019 • Issue 175

ISSUES

4 THE 'ARE YOU SERIOUS?' AWARDS FOR 2019 – *Conn Hallinan*

8 BANISHING TRUTH – *Chris Hedges*

12 GATEWAY DRUGS TO THE FRINGE – *Joe Allen*

16 THE TRUTH ABOUT THOSE CORBYN SMEARS – *Jonathan Cook*

22 OUT OF SIGHT, ALMOST OUT OF MIND – *Lili Kobielski*

28 THE PENTAGON'S \$21-TRILLION AUDIT FAILURE – *Lee Camp*

31 MAKING A MOCKERY OF DEMOCRACY – *Rainer Mausfeld*

34 ROBOCOP IN THE TROPICS – *Matt Carr*

36 21 THOUGHTS ON THE TRIALS OF JULIAN ASSANGE – *Caitlin Johnstone*

39 THE YEAR OF NAZI-PUTIN PARANOIA – *CJ Hopkins*

42 MARVIN GAYE'S UNANSWERED QUESTION – *Stewart Maganga*

INSIGHTS

45 Supporting Trump's international thuggery – *Linda McQuaig*

46 How academia helps with thought control – *George Monbiot*

49 An end to austerity: Give everyone a pay rise – *Engelbert Stockhammer*

50 Apartheid Israel or US democracy? – *Ramzy Baroud*

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The ‘Are You Serious?’ Awards for 2018

Each year *Dispatches From The Edge* gives awards to individuals, companies and governments that makes reading the news a daily adventure. Here are the awards for 2018

4

THE GOLDEN SPROCKET WRENCH AWARD to Lockheed Martin, the world’s largest arms manufacturer, for its F-22 Raptor Stealth fighter, a fifth-generation interceptor said to be the best in the world. That is when it works, which is not often. When Hurricane Michael swept through Florida last fall, 17 Raptors – \$339-million apiece – were destroyed or badly damaged. How come the Air Force didn’t fly those F-22s out of harm’s way? Because the Raptor is a “hanger queen” – loves the machine shop. Less than 50 percent of the F-22 fleet is functional at any given moment. The planes couldn’t fly, so they got trashed at a cost to taxpayers of around \$5 -billion.

Lockheed Martin also gets an Oak Leaf Cluster for its F-35 Lightning II fighter, at \$1.5-trillion the most expensive weapon system in US history. Some 200 F-35s are not considered “combat capable,” and may never be, because the Pentagon would rather buy new planes than fix the ones it has. That may cost taxpayers \$40-billion.

The F-22s and F-35s also have problems with their oxygen systems, but no one can figure out why.

However, both planes did get into combat. According to Vice Admiral Scott Stearney, the F-35 achieved “tactical supremacy” over the Taliban (which doesn’t have an air force). The F-22, the most sophisticated stealth fighter in the world, took on Afghan drug dealers.

As for Lockheed Martin, the compa-

ny was just awarded an extra \$7-billion for F-22 “sustainment”.

THE GOLDEN PARENTING AWARD to the US State Department for trying to water down a resolution by the UN’s World Health Assembly encouraging breast feeding over infant formula. A Lancet study found that universal breast-feeding would prevent 800,000 infant deaths a year, decrease ear infections by 50 percent and gastrointestinal disease by 64 percent. It lowers the risk for Type 1 diabetes, two kinds of leukaemia, sudden infant death syndrome and asthma. It also makes for healthier mothers.

In contrast, infant formula – a \$70-billion industry dominated by a few American and European companies – is expensive and not nearly as healthy for children as breast milk.

When Ecuador tried to introduce the breast-feeding resolution, the US threatened it with aid cuts and trade barriers. Several other Latin American countries were also threatened and quickly withdrew their names from a list of endorsers.

Finally, Russia stepped in and introduced the resolution. The measure finally passed, but the US successfully lobbied to remove language urging the World Health Organisation to challenge “inappropriate promotion of foods for infants and young children”.

So apparently the White House is fine with silicon in breasts, just not milk.



Photo: Nestlé



WATERLOGGED: When Hurricane Michael swept through Florida last fall, 17 Lockheed Martin F-22 Raptor Stealth fighters – \$339 million apiece – were destroyed or badly damaged because they couldn’t fly out of harm’s way.

THE GOLDEN CUISINE AWARD to Ron Colburn, president of the US Border Patrol Foundation, who told Fox & Friends that the tear gas used on migrants at the US border was not harmful, because pepper spray was a “natural” product that “you could actually put on your nachos and eat it”.

THE MARIE ANTOINETTE AWARD has two winners this year:

- Nikki Haley, retiring US Ambassador to the UN, who blasted Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt) for supporting the UN’s Special Rapporteur report

on poverty in the US that found tens of millions of Americans suffer “massive levels of deprivation.” In a letter to Sanders, Haley said it was “patently ridiculous” for the UN to even look at poverty in the US, because it is “the wealthiest and freest country in the world”.

In a response, Sanders pointed out that while this country is indeed the wealthiest in the world, it is also one of the most unequal. “Some 40-million people still live in poverty, more than 30-million have no health insurance, over half of older workers have no retirement savings, 140-million Americans are struggling to pay for basic living expenses, 40 percent of Americans cannot afford

a \$400 emergency, and millions of Americans are leaving school deeply in debt”.

● US Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin, who expressed surprise that the people attending the World Economic Forum in the resort town of Davos, Switzerland were considered elite. “I didn’t realise it was the global elite”.

Basic membership in the Forum costs more than \$70,000, and getting to the event by helicopter or car is expensive, as are accommodations. There also numerous glittering parties hosted by celebrities like Bono and Leonardo DiCaprio. But those parties can have a sharp edge: one had attendees crawl on their hands and knees to feel what is like to flee an army.

THE GOLDEN MATTHEW 19:14 AWARD (“Suffer the little children”) to Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen for threatening to seize the children of poor people if parents commit crimes or fail to teach children “Danish values”. The parliament has designated 25 “ghetto” areas – Denmark’s term – which Muslim immigrants are crowded into. Families living in “ghettos” must send their children – starting at age one – to schools for 25 hours a week where they are taught about Christmas, Easter and the Danish language. Failure to do so can result in a welfare cutoff. Proposals are also being considered to double prison sentences for anyone from a “ghetto” convicted of a crime, and a four-year prison sentence for parents who send their children back to their home countries to learn about their cultures. The neo-fascist People’s Party, part of the governing coalition, proposed forcing all “ghetto” children to wear electronic ankle bracelets and be confined to their homes after 8 PM. The measure was tabled.

Runners up are:

● The British Home Office, which, according to a report by the House of Lords, is using children for undercover operations against drug dealers, terrorists and criminal gangs. “We are concerned that enabling a young person to participate in covert activity for an extended period of time may expose them to increased risk in their mental and physical welfare”, the Lord’s report concluded.

● The US Environmental Protection Agency for



An MIM-104 Patriot Missile is fired by members of US Btry. B, 8th Bn., 43rd Air Defense Artillery

placing Dr. Ruth Etzel, head of Children’s Health Protection, on administrative leave and derailing programmes aimed at reducing children’s exposure to lead, pesticides, mercury and smog. Etzel was pressing to tighten up regulations because children are more sensitive to pollutants than adults. A leader in children’s environmental health for more than 30 years, Etzel was asked for her badge, cell phone and keys and put on administrative leave.

THE GANG THAT COULDN’T SHOOT STRAIGHT AWARD to arms maker Raytheon (with a tip of the hat to contributors Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin) for its Patriot anti-missile that has downed exactly one missile in 28 years of use (and that was a clunky old Scud). An analysis of the missile interceptor system by Jeffrey Lewis of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, Ca., concluded that Patriot is “a lemon”. Writing in *Foreign Policy*, Lewis says, “I am deeply skeptical that Patriot has ever intercepted a long-range ballistic missile in combat”. But it sure sells well. Saudi Arabia forked over \$5.4-billion for Patriots in 2015, Romania \$4-billion in 2017, Poland \$4.5-billion in 2018, and Turkey \$3.5-billion this year.

THE GOLDEN “SAY WHAT?” AWARD has three winners:

● The US Department of Defense for cutting a deal in the Yemen civil war to allow al-Qaeda

Photo: Pictory.com

CONN HALLINAN

members – the organisation that brought us the Sept.11 attacks – to join with the Saudis and United Arab Emirates (UAE) in their fight against the Houthis. According to Associated Press, while the Saudis claim that their forces are driving al-Qaeda out of cities, in fact, the terrorist organisation’s members were allowed to leave with their weapons and looted cash. US drones gave them free passage. Why, you may ask? Because the Houthis are supported by Iran.

- Saudi Arabia and the UAE for bankrolling a series of racist and Islamophobic attacks on newly elected Muslim Congress members Ilhan Omar (D-Minn) and Rashid Tlaib (D-Mi) because the Gulf monarchy accuses both of being members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Neither is, but both are critical of the absolute monarchs of the Persian Gulf and are opposed to the Saudi-instigated war in Yemen.

- Israel, for selling weapons to the racist and antisemitic Azov Battalion in the Ukraine. On its YouTube channel, members of the militia showed off Israeli Tavor rifles, the primary weapon of the Israeli Special Forces. The Tavor is produced under licence by the Israel Weapons Industries. The unit’s commander and Ukraine’s Interior Minister, Arsen Avakov, met with Israel’s Interior Minister Aryeh Deri last year to discuss “fruitful cooperation”. Azov’s founder, Anriy Biletsky, now a Ukrainian parliament member, says his mission is “to restore the honour of the white race”. and lead “a crusade against the semite-led untermenschen”-

plies to North Korea. Drugs to fight malaria and tuberculosis have been held up, as have surgical equipment and soy milk for child care centres and orphanages. According to the UN, sanctions “are not intended to have adverse humanitarian consequences for the civilian population” of North Korea. The US position has come in for criticism by Sweden, France, Britain, Canada, and the International Red Cross.

THE LITTLE BO PEEP AWARD to the Pentagon for its recent audit indicating that some \$21-trillion (yes, that is a “t”) is unaccounted for. Sharing this honour is the US Air Force for losing a box of grenades, which apparently fell off a Humvee in North Dakota. The Air Forces says the weapons won’t go off without a special launcher. Right. What can possibly go wrong with grenades?

In Memory of Dr. Victor Sidel, a founding member of the Physicians for Social Responsibility and the Nobel Prize winning International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. Sidel, along with Dr. Barry S. Levy, wrote several important books including War and Public Health, and Social Justice and Public Health. In 1986 he was arrested, along with astronomer Carl Sagan, at the Mercury, Nevada nuclear test site. He once said, “The cost of one-half day of world arms spending could pay for the full immunization of all the children of the world against the common infectious diseases.” **CT**

THE BLUE MEANIE AWARD to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for blocking medical sup-

Conn Hallinan can be read at dispatchesfromtheedgeblog.wordpress.com and middleempireseries.wordpress.com



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CHRIS HEDGES

Banishing truth

A democracy, at best, tolerates investigative reporters like Seymour Hersh. However, when a failed democracy banishes them, it kills its press

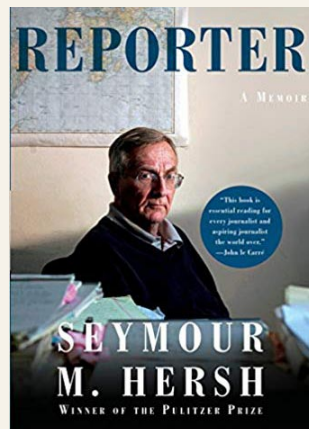
THE investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, in his memoir *Reporter*, describes a moment when as a young journalist he overheard a Chicago cop admit to murdering an African-American man. The murdered man had been falsely described by police as a robbery suspect who had been shot while trying to avoid arrest. Hersh frantically called his editor to ask what to do.

“The editor urged me to do nothing”, he writes. “It would be my word versus that of all the cops involved, and all would accuse me of lying. The message was clear: I did not have a story. But of course I did”. He describes himself as “full of despair at my weakness and the weakness of a profession that dealt so easily with compromise and self-censorship”.

Hersh, the greatest investigative reporter of his generation, uncovered the US military’s chemical weapons programme, which used thousands of soldiers and volunteers, including pacifists from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as unwitting human guinea pigs to measure the impact of biological agents including tularemia, yellow fever, Rift Valley fever and the plague. He broke the story of the My Lai massacre. He exposed Henry Kissinger’s wiretapping of his closest aides at the National

Security Council (NSC) and journalists, the CIA’s funding of violent extremist groups to overthrow the Chilean President Salvador Allende, the CIA’s spying on domestic dissidents within the United States, the sadistic torture practices at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq by American soldiers and contractors and the lies told by the Obama administration about the raid that killed Osama bin Laden. Yet he begins his memoir by the candid admission, familiar to any reporter, that there are crimes and events committed by the powerful you never write about, at least if you want to keep your job. One of his laments in the book is his decision not to follow up on a report he received that disgraced President Richard Nixon had hit his wife, Pat, and she had ended up in an emergency room in California.

Reporters embedded with military units in Iraq and Afghanistan routinely witness atrocities and often war crimes committed by the US military, yet they know that access is dependent on keeping quiet. This collusion between the press and the powerful is a fundamental feature of journalism, one that even someone as courageous as Hersh, at least a few times, was forced to accept. And yet, there comes a time when reporters, at least the good ones, decide to sacrifice their careers to tell the truth.



REPORTER: A MEMOIR

Seymour M. Hersh

Knopf

\$16.52 (Amazon)

CHRIS HEDGES



Photo: BBC Screen Grab

SEYMOUR HERSH writes about the death of investigative journalism, and its “transformation into a national reality TV show that subsists on gossip, invective, officially approved narratives, and leaks and entertainment”.

Hersh, relentlessly chronicling the crimes of the late empire, including the widespread use of torture, indiscriminate military strikes on civilian targets and targeted assassinations, has for this reason been virtually blacklisted in the American media. And the loss of his voice – he used to work for the *New York Times* and later the *New Yorker* – is evidence that the press, always flawed, has now been neutered by corporate power. Hersh’s memoir is as much about his remarkable career as it is about the death of investigative journalism and the transformation of news into a national reality television show that subsists on gossip, invective, officially approved narratives, and leaks and entertainment.

There comes a time when good reporters decide to sacrifice their careers to tell the truth

Investigative journalism depends not only on reporters such as Hersh, but as importantly on men and women inside the systems of power who have

the moral courage to expose lies and make public crimes. Writing off any institution, no matter how nefarious the activity, as filled with the irredeemable is a mistake. “There are many officers, including generals and admirals, who understood that the oath of office they took was a commitment to uphold and defend the Constitution and not the President, or an immediate superior”, he writes. “They deserve my respect and got it. Want to be a good military reporter? Find those officers”. One of the heroes in Hersh’s book is Ron Ridenhour, who served in a combat unit in Vietnam and who initiated the army’s investigation into the My Lai massacre and generously helped Hersh track down eyewitnesses and participants.

The government’s wholesale surveillance, however, has crippled the ability of those with a conscience, such as Chelsea Manning or Edward Snowden, to expose the crimes of state and remain undetected. The Obama administration charged eight people under the Espionage Act with leaking to the media – Thomas Drake, Shamai Leibowitz, Stephen Kim, Chelsea Manning, Donald

Sachtleben, Jeffrey Sterling, John Kiriakou and Edward Snowden – effectively ending the vital connection between investigative reporters and sources inside the government.

This government persecution has, by default, left the exposure of government lies, fraud and crimes to hackers. And this is the reason hackers, and those who publish their material such as Julian Assange at WikiLeaks, are relentlessly persecuted. The goal of the corporate state is to hermetically seal its activities, especially those that violate the law, from outside oversight or observation. And this goal is very far advanced.

Hersh notes throughout his memoir that, like all good reporters, he constantly battled his editors and fellow reporters as much as he did the government or corporations. There is a species of reporter you can see on most cable news programs and on the floor of the newsrooms at papers such as the *New York Times* who make their living as courtiers to the powerful. They will, at times, critique the excesses of power but never the virtues of the systems of power, including corporate capitalism or the motivations of the ruling elites. They detest reporters, like Hersh, whose reporting exposes their collusion.

The Bertrand Russell War Crimes Tribunal was held in 1967 in Europe during the Vietnam War. It included the testimony of three American soldiers who spoke of watching soldiers and Marines routinely pump indiscriminate rounds of ammunition into villages with no regard for civilian casualties. Most of the American press dismissed the findings of the tribunal. The *New York Times* foreign affairs columnist, CL Sulzberger, launched a venomous attack against the Noble Prize-winning philosopher and mathematician, who was then 94 years old. Sulzberger, a member of the family that owned the paper, wrote that Russell had “outlived his own conscious idea and become clay in unscrupulous hands”. The tribunal, Sulzberger went on, “cannot fairly be laid at the door of the wasted peer whose bodily endurance outpaced his brain”.

Hersh, however, tipped off by the testimony at the tribunal, eventually uncovered the My

Lai massacre. But no publication would touch it. Magazines such as *Life* and *Look* turned down the story. “I was devastated, and frightened by the extent of self-censorship I was encountering in my profession”, Hersh writes. He finally published the story with the obscure, anti-war *Dispatch News Service*. Major publications, including the *New York Times*, along with *Newsweek* and *Time*, ignored the report, but Hersh kept digging. More lurid facts about the massacre came to light. It became too big to dismiss, as hard as the mainstream media initially tried, and Hersh was awarded the 1970 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting. The only officer convicted of the war crime, which left 106 men, women and children dead, was Lt William Calley, who spent three months and 13 days in prison.

Hersh battled his editors and fellow reporters as much as he did the government or corporations

Papers like the *New York Times* pride themselves on their special access to the powerful, even if that access turns them into a public relations arm of the elites. This desire for access – which news organisations feel gives them prestige and an inside seat, although the information they are fed is usually lies or half-truths – pits conscientious reporters like Hersh against most editors and reporters in the newsroom. Hersh, who at the time was working for the *Times*, describes sitting across from another reporter, Bernard Gwertzman, who was covering Henry Kissinger and the NSC.

“There was a near-daily ritual involving Bernie that stunned me”, Hersh writes. “On far too many afternoons around 5:00, Max Frankel’s secretary would approach Bernie and tell him that Max [the *Times*’ bureau chief in Washington] was at that moment on the phone with ‘Henry’ and the call would soon he switched to him. Sure enough, in a few moments Bernie would avidly begin scratching notes as he listened to Kissinger – he listened far more than he talked – and the result was a foreign policy story that invariably led the paper the next morning, with quotes from an unnamed senior government official. After a week or two of observing the process, I asked the always affable

CHRIS HEDGES

and straightforward Bernie if he ever checked what Henry was telling him with Bill Rogers, the Secretary of State, or Mel Laird at the Pentagon. ‘Oh no’, he said. ‘If I did that, Henry wouldn’t speak to us.’”

The *Washington Post* broke the Watergate story, after operatives for the Nixon White House in June 1972 broke into the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate office complex in Washington while Hersh was at the *Times*. Kissinger’s assurances – Hersh writes that Kissinger “lied the way most people breathed” – that it was not an event of consequence saw the top editors at the *New York Times* initially ignore it. The paper, however, finally embarrassed by the revelations in the *Washington Post*, threw Hersh onto the story, although the paper’s executive editor, Abe Rosenthal, called Hersh with a mixture of affection and wariness “my little commie”.

It was one thing to go up against a public institution, but something else to take on a private institution

Hersh left the paper after a massive expose he and Jeff Gerth wrote about the corporation Gulf and Western, which carried out fraud, abuse, tax avoidance and had connections with the mob, was rewritten by cautious and timid editors. Charles Bluhdorn, the CEO of Gulf and Western, socialised with the publisher Arthur “Punch” Sulzberger. Bluhdorn used his connections at the paper to discredit Hersh and Gerth, as well as bombard the paper with accusatory letters and menacing phone calls. When Hersh filed his 15,000-word expose, the business editor, John Lee, and “his ass-kissing coterie of moronic editors”, perhaps fearful of being sued, neutered it. It was one thing, Hersh found, to go up against a public institution. It was something else to take on a private institution. He would never again work regularly for a newspaper.

“The experience was frustrating and enervating”, he writes. “Writing about corporate America had sapped my energy, disappointed the editors, and unnerved me. There would be no check on corporate America, I feared: Greed had won out. The ugly fight with Gulf and Western had rattled

the publisher and the editors to the point that the editors who ran the business pages had been allowed to vitiate and undercut the good work Jeff and I had done. ... The courage the *Times* had shown in confronting the wrath of a president and an attorney general in the crisis over the Pentagon Papers in 1971 was nowhere to be seen when confronted by a gaggle of corporate con men. ...”

His reporting, however, continued to relentlessly expose the falsifications in official narratives. The Navy intelligence official, Jonathan Pollard, for example, had been caught spying for Israel in 1985 and given a life sentence. Hersh found that Pollard primarily stole documents on how the United States spied on the Soviet Union. The Israeli government, Hersh suspected, “was trading Pollard’s information to Moscow in exchange for the emigration of Soviet Jews with skills and expertise needed by Israel”. Pollard was released, after heavy Israeli pressure, in 2015 and now lives in Israel.

The later part of Hersh’s career is the most distressing. He was writing for the *New Yorker* when Barack Obama was elected president. David Remnick, the magazine’s editor, socialised with Obama and was apparently wary of offending the president. When Hersh exposed the fictitious narrative spun out by the Obama administration about the killing of Bin Laden, the magazine killed the story, running instead a report about the raid, provided by the administration, from the point of view of one of the SEALs who was on the mission. Hersh resigned. He published the account of the raid in the *London Review of Books*, the beginning of his current exile to foreign publications. When we most urgently need Hersh and good investigative reporters like him, they have largely disappeared. A democracy, at best, tolerates them. A failed democracy, like ours, banishes them, and when it does, it kills its press. **CT**

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, a New York Times best-selling author. His latest book is America: The Farewell Tour. This article first appeared at www.newsdig.com

JOE ALLEN

Gateway drugs to the fringe

There's an "uncanny convergence of the radical left and dissident right"
in the latest books from Tucker Carlson and Chris Hedges

12

THE power elites," writes Chris Hedges, "attempt to discredit those who resist". They'll invent your confession for you, then condemn you for coming clean. Just look at how they talk about Tucker Carlson. The increasingly lucid Fox News host is being profiled as a gateway drug to white nationalism. All fans are now suspect. His clickbait accusers note that Carlson's talking points – from promoting strong border controls to pointing out the downsides of diversity – echo those of prominent race hustlers. These self-deputised thought police, who apparently drench themselves in white nationalist media, report that various robed wizards are applauding Carlson's black magic.

According to the prevailing mystical reasoning, if a public figure says anything resembling a villain's idea, they're priming the masses for a more villainous ideology. But what if Tucker Carlson is actually a gateway drug to the far left? What if he's priming right-wing trolls to march arm-in-arm with left-wing proles?

Carlson's latest book, *Ship of Fools: How a Selfish Ruling Class is Bringing America to the Brink of Revolution*, reveals more than just a healthy respect for his lefty opponents. As on his nightly show, Carlson readily adopts a progressive moral framework, if only to dominate the debate. Mass immigration hurts the poor. Foreign wars hurt the poor. Al Gore's carbon footprint hurts the poor.

Reading his book side-by-side with Chris Hedges' most recent effort, *America: The Farewell Tour*, I found an uncanny convergence of the radical left and dissident right. Hedges is hardly MAGA material. He's a former war correspondent who's dodged bullets and stared into the abyss. These days he writes for Truthdig and hosts RT's *On Contact*. He's a committed democratic socialist who rakes muck and quotes Marx. The mercurial Carlson, on the other hand, is a new school paleocon who thrashes libs for a living.

Yet both men use the same sinister term to identify the real problem: *elites*. Permutations of that word appear repeatedly in both books. The ruling *elite*. The power *elite*. The corporate *elite*. The global *elite*. You begin to imagine a diabolical *elite*. An evil *elite*. Perhaps a satanic *elite*.

Pull random quotes from Carlson and Hedges and sample them in a blind taste test. You'll struggle to tell who's who.

"At exactly the moment when America needed prudent, responsive leadership, the ruling class got dumber and more insular". (Carlson)

"The idiots take over in the final days of crumbling civilizations". (Hedges)

For Carlson and Hedges, the crisis is obvious and the consequences verge on the apocalyptic. Both write as if they're listening to the same deathfolk ditty:

"They're gorging on the ship's stores with such abandon it's obvious there won't be enough food left for you. You can't tell them this because they've banned acknowledgment

JOE ALLEN

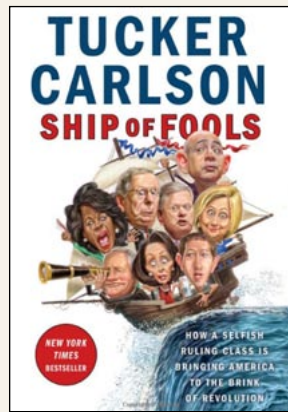
of physical reality. ... Facts threaten their fantasies. And so they continue as if what they're doing is working". (Carlson)
"Idiot generals wage endless, unwinnable wars that bankrupt the nation. ... Idiot journalists and public intellectuals pretend despotism is democracy. ... Idiot professors, 'experts,' and 'specialists' busy themselves with unintelligible jargon and arcane theory that buttresses the policies of the rulers. Idiot entertainers and producers create lurid spectacles of sex, gore, and fantasy". (Hedges)

Both authors agree that working Americans are being crushed under the shiny boots of corporate rulers. Both demand answers for stagnant wages, an atrophied middle class, and the resultant social pathology. Both lament rampant drug addiction, withering social trust, and increasingly hateful rhetoric from all sides. Both are horrified by reckless foreign wars and environmental degradation.

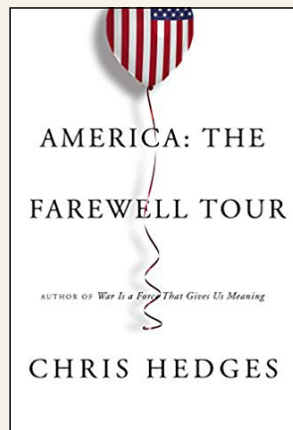
Neither offers a convincing solution.

Ultimately Tucker Carlson and Chris Hedges are struggling for the allegiance of working class Americans. Each hopes to win souls for his own side – or at least eyes for his own TV show. They advocate for political enfranchisement, living wages, and an end to pointless wars, and it's hard to argue with them. They call for spiritual renewal. They agitate for resistance to the elite.

If these authors set out to infuriate the working class, they've hit the bull square in the ojos. You can't get through either book without slamming your fist on the table and cursing those dirty



SHIP OF FOOLS
Tucker Carlson
Free Press
\$16.99 (Amazon)



AMERICA: THE FAREWELL TOUR
Chris Hedges
Simon & Schuster
\$12.36 (Amazon)

damn elites.

There are a few unexpected turns, such as when Carlson pushes for a more egalitarian economy, or when Hedges harshly condemns antifa violence. But when push comes to social collapse, one fellow is a fox and the other a hound, and they can't *both* lead the discontents to freedom.

Hedges is a revolutionary. His goal is to destroy capitalism and dismantle white supremacy. He wants to foment an international revolt, but one that leaves established cultures and indigenous identities intact – for the most part, anyway. Because he's a liberal Presbyterian minister, his aims amount to more than a political operation. It's a religious quest to lift up the underdog.

Carlson offers respectful nods across the aisle, but he's clearly nudging his conservative readership toward stronger families and hard nationalism. He's calling for open debate and self-protection. His opposition to foreign war is based on America's national interests. His warnings about the emerging technocracy stem from anxiety about social disruption. Even his environmental concerns sound like a man who just wants to keep things the way they are. *Ship of Fools* is a clever condemnation of the *elite* who threaten the exist-

ence of his beloved country.

More often than not, Carlson blames liberals for this desperate situation – but not for the reasons you'd expect. Turning their own moral code against them, he calls them out for not being liberal enough. He accuses them of rolling over for Wall Street and transhuman techno-monopolies like Facebook, Amazon, and Google. "Someone needs to fret about the excesses of capitalism," he writes. "When liberals stopped doing that, the

JOE ALLEN

country lost a needed counterbalance.”

Lobbing bombs from the far left, the hard-nosed Hedges agrees: “Self-identified liberals such as Bill and Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama mouthed the words of liberal democratic values while making war on these values in the service of corporate power.”

You have to respect the kind of leftist who’ll tell liberals they’re full of shit.

“The kleptocrats”, Hedges writes, “have no interest in the flowery words of inclusivity, multiculturalism, and democracy that a bankrupt liberal class used with great effectiveness for three decades to swindle the public on behalf of corporations”.

This rhetoric sounds suspiciously familiar. If Hedges didn’t fall back on dialectical materialism, you’d swear he was a gateway drug to the alt-right. Especially when you follow his economic line of reasoning to the effects of mass immigration.

Carlson devotes an entire chapter to the subject, entitled *Importing a Serf Class*. He correctly points out that, up until about two decades ago, immigration restriction was a key platform for union leaders on the left. He reminds old school heads that agricultural labor icon Cesar Chavez fought to protect wages from illegal competition pouring in from Mexico. Chavez even led goon squads to secure the border. Apparently, it wasn’t enough.

“In 1970”, Carlson writes, “less than 5 percent of America’s population were immigrants. By 2018, that number has risen to nearly 14 percent”. Why would the political elite allow that to happen? Tucker states the obvious: “Democrats know immigrants vote overwhelmingly for them.



ON THE RIGHT: Tucker Carlson



ON THE LEFT: Chris Hedges

... Republican donors want lower wages”.

Hedges barely touches the topic of immigration. When he does, it’s generally to defend the dignity of all working people regardless of their legal status. But his Marxist sensibilities and intellectual honesty force him to mention the economic effects of open borders:

“Manufacturing has been shipped overseas. ... The working class is forced to compete against labour pools of modern-day serfs. Industries such as construction, which once provided well-paying unionised jobs, are the domain of underpaid, non-unionised, often undocumented workers. Corporations import foreign engineers and software specialists who do professional work at one third of the normal salary. ...

Surplus labour, desperate for work and too frightened to challenge the bosses, is the bulwark of corporate capitalism.

Tucker crushes this red pill with a hammer, chops it into lines with a sickle, and holds the mirror up to the elephant’s trunk. Then he blames liberals.

“Capitalists push for what’s best for the market,” he writes, waxing nostalgic for the tuned in lefties of yore. “But what happens when nobody in power takes the opposing view?”

Free trade and open borders, apparently. The rich get richer while the poor get tacos.

At times Carlson sounds like a godless commie who reads white nationalist blogs to see if anyone’s mentioning his name. Every time he drops a word like “late-stage” or “capitalism,” I wonder if greybeard lefties are picking up on his dogwhis-

Photo: Wikipedia

Photo: YouTube Screen Grab

bles and salivating unconsciously.

If so, maybe Tucker Carlson is actually a gateway drug to more Fox News. One night, you're watching Tucker rip into some airhead on prime-time TV. Before you know it, you're staring at Fox and Friends every morning, catching Hannity every night, and badgering dinner guests about increasing tax rates and other people's abortions.

Or maybe it's the other way around. What if Chris Hedges is a gateway drug to Tucker Carlson, and from there, to Fox News and Klan rallies? Have the thought police thought of that yet?

Hedges goes so far left, he falls off the normative map. He demands "a huge reordering of our world", and delineates explicit, if unrealistic solutions to the current crisis. Full employment. Universal health care. Forgiven student loans. Benefits for all. A defanged military. Full citizenship for aliens. Renewable energy. Government-funded media.

In a shocking burst of empathy, he advocates for radical inclusion in this nonviolent revolution: "The white racists and neo-Nazis may be unsavoury, but they too are victims. They too lost jobs and often live in poverty in deindustrialised wastelands. ... They too often suffer from police abuse and mass incarceration. They too are often in despair and suffer from hopelessness".

No wonder antifa doxxed Hedges and sent him death threats. He's willing to treat racists like human beings. Anyone who'd entertain such a thought is himself barely human. Can someone slap a swastika on this guy and punch him in the face?

Unlike Hedges, Carlson provides his readers with even fewer solutions than he does citations for facts and figures. In fact, Carlson's epilogue

isn't aimed at his audience, but rather at the *elite* he's just eviscerated. In a couple of pages, almost as afterthought, he instructs the ruling class to respect the people they rule over, or else buckle up for the coming revolution.

Five years ago, the wild-eyed Ralph Nader argued that a political convergence of the left and right fringes would be "unstoppable". It would yield fewer wars, better schools, and cleaner air and water. In that generous spirit, Carlson and Hedges urge readers to embrace their counterparts on the other side of the aisle to take down the predatory mainstream.

"If we are to succeed", writes Hedges, "we will have to make alliances with people and groups whose professed political stances are different from our own and, at times, unpalatable to us. We will have to shed our ideological purity".

Both authors make it clear that the far left and far right, like matter and anti-matter, bear a striking resemblance to one another. But like matter and anti-matter, in-groups and outgroups tend to destroy each other. I want to believe "the people" will come together for the common good, but only a miracle can subvert the laws of nature.

Delusional as our elites may be, I suspect they don't believe in miracles. And so the ship sails onward with farewell handkerchiefs flapping in the breeze. The deck is crowded and folks are getting hostile. Has anyone counted the lifeboats?

CT

Joe Allen writes about race, robots, and religion. His work has appeared in The Federalist, Taki's Magazine, Disinformation, and Salvo Magazine.



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The truth about those Corbyn smears

Bombarded by disinformation campaigns, many British Jews are being misled into seeing Jeremy Corbyn as a threat rather than as the best hope of inoculating the country against the resurgence of rightwing antisemitic menace

END-OF-YEAR polls are always popular as a way to gauge significant social and political trends over the past year and predict where things are heading in the next.

But a recent poll of European Jews – the largest such survey in the world – is being used to paint a deeply misleading picture of British society and an apparent problem of a new, leftwing form of antisemitism.

The survey was conducted by the European Union’s agency on fundamental rights and was given great prominence in the liberal-left British daily the *Guardian*.

The newspaper highlighted one area of life in which Britain scored worse with Jews than any of the other 12 member states surveyed. 84 percent of Jews in the UK believe there is a major problem with antisemitism in British politics.

As a result, nearly a third say they have considered emigrating – presumably most of them to Israel, where the Law of Return offers an open-door policy to all Jews in the world.

Britain scored only slightly better on indices other than politics. Some 75 percent said they thought antisemitism was generally a problem in the UK, up from 48 percent in 2012. The average score in the 12 EU states with significant Jewish populations was 70 percent.

Jeremy Corbyn, head of the UK’s opposition Labour Party, has faced a barrage of criticism since he was elected leader more than three years ago for presiding over a supposedly endemic antisemitism problem in his party.

The *Guardian* has been at the forefront of framing Corbyn as either indifferent to, or actively assisting in, the supposed rise of antisemitism in Labour. Now the paper has a senior European politician echoing its claims.

Relating to the poll, Vera Jourova, the EU’s commissioner for justice, helpfully clarified what Britain’s terrible results in the political sphere signified.

The paper quoted her on Corbyn: “I always use the phrase ‘Let’s not play with fire’, let’s be aware of what happened in the past. And let’s not make the same mistake of tolerating it. It is not enough just to be silent ... I hope he [Corbyn] will pay attention to this survey”.

However, both Jourova’s warnings and an apparent perception among British Jews of an antisemitism problem fuelled by Corbyn fly in the face of real-world evidence.

Other surveys show that, when measured by objective criteria, the Labour Party scores relatively well: the percentage of members holding antisemitic views is substantially lower than in the ruling Conservative party and much the same as in Britain’s third party, the Liberal Democrats.

For example, twice as many Conservatives as Labour party members believe typically antisemitic stereotypes, such as that Jews chase money or that Jews are less loyal to Britain.

Even more significantly, the percentage of Labour party members who hold such prejudices has fallen dramatically across the board since Corbyn became leader.

JONATHAN COOK

That suggests that the new members who joined after Corbyn became leader – a massive influx has made his party the largest in Europe – are less likely to be antisemitic than those who joined under previous Labour leaders.

In other words, the evidence suggests very persuasively that Corbyn has been a force for eradicating, or at least diluting, existing and rather marginal anti-semitic views in the Labour party. More so even than the previous leader, Ed Miliband, who was Jewish.

But all of this, yet again, went unremarked by the *Guardian* and other British media, which have been loudly declaiming a specific “antisemitism problem” in Labour for three years without a shred of concrete evidence for it.

There are good grounds for Jews to feel threatened in much of Europe at the moment, with the return of ugly ethnic nationalisms that many assumed had been purged after the Second World War.

And Brexit – Britain’s planned exit from the European Union – does indeed appear to have unleashed or renewed nativist sentiment among a section of the UK population. But such prejudices dominate on the right, not the left. Certainly Corbyn, a lifelong and very prominent anti-racism activist, has not been stoking nativist attitudes.

The unexplored assumption by the *Guardian* and the rest of the corporate media, as well as by Jourova, is that the rise in British Jews’ concerns about antisemitism in politics refers exclusively to Corbyn rather than a very different problem: of a resurgent white nationalism on the right.

But let’s assume that they are correct that the poll solely registers Jewish worries about Corbyn.

A separate finding in the EU survey underscored how Jewish opinion on antisemitism and Corbyn may be far less straightforward than Jourova’s presentation suggests – and how pre-



ENEMY? Posters were placed on giant billboards throughout Hungary with the words, “Don’t let Soros have the last laugh”.

cisely the wrong conclusions are likely to be drawn from the results.

Buried in the *Guardian* report was a starkly anomalous finding – from Hungary, a country in which Jews and other minorities undoubtedly face a very pressing threat to their safety. Its ultra-nationalist prime minister, Viktor Orban, used the general election in April to whip up a frenzy of anti-Jewish sentiment.

He placed the Hungarian-born Jewish billionaire George Soros at the centre of his anti-immigration campaign, suggesting that the philanthropist was secretly pulling the strings of the opposition party to

flood the country with “foreigners”.

In the run-up to the election, his government erected giant posters and billboards all over the country showing a chuckling George Soros next to the words: “Don’t let Soros have the last laugh”.

Did Hungarian Jews express to EU pollsters heightened fears for their community’s safety?

Raiding the larder of virtually every historic antisemitic trope, Orban declared in an election speech: “We are fighting an enemy that is different from us. Not open, but hiding; not straightforward but crafty; not honest but base; not national but international; does not believe in working but speculates with money; does not have its own homeland but feels it owns the world”.

All of this should be seen in the context of Orban’s recent praise for Miklos Horthy, a former Hungarian leader who was an ally of Hitler’s. Orban has called him an “exceptional statesman”.

So did Hungarian Jews express to EU pollsters heightened fears for their community’s safety? Strangely, they did not. In fact, the percentage who regarded antisemitism as a problem in Hungary was only slightly above the EU average and far below the concerns expressed by French Jews.

Not only that, but the proportion of Hungarian

Jews fearful of antisemitism has actually dropped over the past six years. Some 77 percent see antisemitism as a problem today, compared to 89 percent in 2012, when the poll was last conducted.

So, the survey's results are more than a little confounding. On the one hand, at least according to the British media and the EU, British Jews are in a heightened state of fear about the UK Labour Party, where the evidence suggests an already marginal problem of antisemitism is actually in decline. And on the other, Hungarian Jews' fears of antisemitism are waning, even though the evidence suggests antisemitism there is on the rise and government-sanctioned.

There is, however, a way to explain this paradox – and it has nothing to do with antisemitism.

Corbyn's socialist-lite agenda faces a devastating array of opponents that include British business; the entire spectrum of the UK corporate media, including its supposedly liberal components; and, significantly in this case, the ultra-nationalist government of Israel, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu.

The British establishment fears Corbyn poses a challenge to the further entrenchment of neoliberal orthodoxy they benefit from.

Meanwhile, Israeli politicians loathe Corbyn because he has made support for the Palestinian people a key part of his platform, becoming the first European leader to prioritise a Palestinian right to justice over Israel's right to maintain its 51-year belligerent occupation.

Hungary's Viktor Orban, by contrast, is beloved of big business, as well as the country's mainstream media, and, again significantly, the Israeli government. Rather than distancing himself from Orban and his Jew-baiting electioneering in Hungary, Netanyahu has actually sanctioned it. He has called Orban a "true friend of Israel", thanked him for "defending Israel", and joined the Hungarian leader in denouncing Soros.

Netanyahu, like Orban, intensely dislikes Soros's liberalism and his support for open borders. Netanyahu shares Orban's fears that a flood of refugees will disrupt his efforts to make his state as ethnically pure as possible.

Earlier this year, for example, Netanyahu claimed that Soros had funded human rights

organisations to help African asylum seekers in Israel avoid a government programme to expel them.

Netanyahu has many practical and ideological reasons to support not only Orban but the new breed of ultra-nationalist leaders emerging in states like Poland, Italy, France and elsewhere.

Nativism in European states is primarily directed against Muslim and Arab immigrants arriving from the Middle East and north Africa, though domestic Jews could well become collateral damage in any future purge of "foreigners".

Europe's ultra-nationalist leaders are therefore more likely to sympathise with Israel and its own "Arab-Muslim problem", especially since Netanyahu and the Israeli right have proved adept at falsely presenting the Palestinians as immigrants rather than the region's native population.

Netanyahu would also like to see Europe paralysed by political differences, so it is incapable of lobbying for a two-state solution, as it has been doing ineffectively for many years; it is unable to agree on funding human rights activism designed to protect Palestinian rights; and it is too weak to move towards the adoption of sanctions against Israel.

Corbyn poses a challenge to the establishment's entrenchment of neoliberal orthodoxy

But most importantly, Netanyahu and the Israeli right can identify with the anti-semitic view of "the Jew" shared by Europe's hardline nationalists.

These far-right groups see Jews as outsiders, a discrete community that cannot be assimilated or exist peacefully among them, and one that has separate loyalties and should either be encouraged to leave or be sent elsewhere.

Netanyahu agrees. He also believes Jews are different, that they are a distinct and separate people, that their primary loyalties are tribal, to their own kind, and not to other states, and that they can only ever really be at home and properly Jewish in Israel, their true home.

Zsafia Kata Vincze, a professor of ethnology in Budapest, recently referred to the ideological affinity between Netanyahu's Zionism and Orban's Hungarian-Christian nativism: "They found a common language very easily. They kept talking about mutual values, which are nationalism, exclusivism ... Hungarian purity, Jewish purity ... against the Others".

In fact, Netanyahu's views are widely shared in Israel. A few years ago the celebrated liberal Israeli author AB Yehoshua outraged American Jews by saying they could only ever be what he called "partial Jews" outside Israel.

Speaking of the divide between them and Israeli Jews, he said: "In no way are we the same thing – we are total and they are partial". He called the refusal of all Jews to live in Israel and become "complete Jews ... a very deep failure of the Jewish people".

The high levels of racism among Israelis towards non-Jews is highlighted in every poll.

According to one last month, more than half of Israeli Jews – or those willing to admit it – believed that "most Jews are better than most non-Jews because they were born Jews". Only a fifth rejected the statement outright.

Some 74 per cent were disturbed by hearing Arabic, the mother tongue of the fifth of the country's population who are Palestinian citizens. And a further 88 percent did not want their son to befriend an Arab girl.

A separate poll this month found that, apart from Greeks, Israelis hold the most anti-immigrant views of 27 countries surveyed – more so even than Hungarians.

By immigrants, of course, Israelis mean non-Jews. They do not regard the millions of Jews who have arrived in Israel from Europe and the Americas over the past decades as immigrants. Instead they are viewed as olim, or those who "ascend" to Israel, supposedly returning to their Biblically ordained home.

It is this ideological affinity – between a European ultra-nationalism and the kind of Zionist ultra-nationalism dominant in Israel – that explains why the far-right in Europe venerates

Israel while despising Jews, and why so many Israelis prefer an Orban to a Soros.

And it also, of course, explains why Netanyahu and most Israelis detest Corbyn. Not only does Corbyn offer an inclusive domestic political agenda, unlike the Orbans of Europe, but, worse, he also refuses to shy away from confronting the legacy of European racism and colonialism.

The chief historic victims of that racism in Europe were Jews. But today that same European racism is channelled both into fervent support for Israel as a supposedly "safe haven" for Jews and into a general indifference – aside from hand-wringing – towards the Palestinians who for decades have been displaced and oppressed by Israel.

Corbyn represents a huge break with that tradition and is therefore a threat to Israel. That is why behind the scenes Israel has been seeking to redefine antisemitism in a way that tars anti-racists like Corbyn and his supporters in the Labour party.

I have documented before Israel's role in stoking the supposed "antisemitism crisis" in Labour and in cornering the party into adopting a new, convoluted definition of anti-semitism that for the first time makes criticism of Israel the benchmark of anti-semitic discourse.

Netanyahu recently made that conflation explicit in a video message to a conference in Vienna. While praising Orban, he averred: "Antisemitism and anti-Zionism, anti-Israeli policies – the idea that the Jewish people don't have the right for a state – that's the ultimate antisemitism of today."

But it is not just Netanyahu who is stoking the patently preposterous notion that anti-racists like Corbyn – those whose principles require that they reject Jewish privilege over Palestinians – are really secret Jew-haters.

If that were the case, the criticisms of Corbyn might not have as much traction with British Jews as this month's EU poll suggests.

The UK media have played a vital role in promoting a false image of Corbyn, as a survey by the Media Reform Coalition found in September when it analysed British coverage of the Labour party.

The coalition, which is led by academics, con-

cluded that there had been systematic “disinformation” from media outlets. Inaccurate and misleading reporting by the supposedly liberal *Guardian* was especially pronounced.

“Two thirds of the news segments on television contained at least one reporting error or substantive distortion”, its researchers also discovered.

These failures included “marked skews in sourcing, omission of essential context or right of reply, misquotation, and false assertions made either by journalists themselves or sources whose contentious claims were neither challenged nor countered”.

The group is reluctant to infer that these consistent media failures indicate an intention to smear Corbyn. But new revelations provide reason to believe that powerful interests in the UK are prepared to use dirty tricks to keep the Labour leader out of power.

According to hacked documents, a network of politicians, academics, journalists and military personnel in Britain and elsewhere have been engaged in covert propaganda to shore up pro-western narratives and smear dissidents through an organisation called Integrity Initiative.

In the UK, these operations have been overseen by an even more shadowy group called the Institute for Statecraft, with a fake address in Scotland. In fact, it is headquartered in London and staffed by former – and possibly current – military intelligence officers.

The UK government has been forced to admit that the institute has received substantial payments from the foreign office and defence ministry, and from the British army.

Much of what the Integrity Initiative is up to is unclear, but from public records – such as its Twitter history – it can be seen that it has repeatedly sought to damage Corbyn and his key advisers by implicating them in supposed Russian “disinformation” campaigns.

It is worth recalling that shortly after Corbyn was elected Labour leader in summer 2015 an unnamed British army general was given a platform in the establishment’s newspaper, the Rupert Murdoch-owned *Times*, to denounce Corbyn. He warned that the army would use “whatever means possible, fair or foul” to prevent the

Labour leader from becoming prime minister and being able to carry out his policies.

Certainly, the fingerprints of the British establishment now look all too visible on some of the recent efforts to malign Corbyn in the media.

Maybe not surprisingly, despite the huge implications of the story for British politics, it has been given only the barest reporting in that same media. At the time of writing, the *Guardian* had referred to the Integrity Initiative only in the most pro forma fashion – in the context of government denials of wrongdoing.

Is it credible that those covertly trying to paint Corbyn as a “Kremlin stooge” are not also seeking to exploit Israeli covert efforts to vilify the Labour leader as someone who encourages antisemitism in his own party?

There is a serious, if rarely explored ideological tension between Israeli-style Zionism and a progressive or liberal outlook, just as there is between Orbanism and liberalism.

In a political climate where European nativists are on the rise, the stark choice facing Europe’s Jews is to double-down on their traditional left-liberal worldview or abandon it entirely and throw their hat in with Israel’s own nativists. Corbyn represents the first choice, Netanyahu’s hardline Zionism the second.

Bombarded by disinformation campaigns, it looks like many British Jews are being misled into seeing Corbyn as a threat – of a confected “leftwing anti-semitism” – rather than as the best hope of inoculating Britain against the resurgence of a very real menace of rightwing anti-semitism.

Jewish emigration to Israel will make matters far worse. It will pander to the prejudices of Europe’s white nationalists, weaken the European left, and bolster an equally ugly Jewish nationalism that requires the oppression of Palestinians.

CT

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

ONE MAGAZINE'S 10-YEAR QUEST FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Before I wound up in Toronto and ColdType, I designed **Frontline** magazine, South Africa's top liberal-left magazine, for 10 years during the 1980s as it battled for justice and equality during the final years of Apartheid. Now, we're digitising Frontline, as a case study of prophecy and history. The first digital issues are now on line; more will follow each month.

– **Tony Sutton, Editor**



Read the digital editions of Frontline, exactly as they were published, free of charge, at

www.issuu.com/frontline.south

LILI KOBIELSKI

Dwayne: "I never in my life have been as dizzy as i am up here. My head be hurting real bad. I hate Chicago".



Out of sight, almost out of mind . . .

Inside Chicago's Cook County Jail, where a third of the 9,000 inmates
are being treated for mental illness



Cook County Jail, Chicago: 9,000 inmates, 35 percent of whom are mentally ill.

THE Cook County Department of Corrections in Chicago is one of the largest single-site pre-detention facilities in the world, with an average daily population hovering around 9,000 inmates. It is estimated that 35 percent of this population is mentally ill. Now more patients than ever are being treated in jail rather than at a mental health facility. Cook County Jail has become one of the largest, if not the largest, mental health care providers in the United States.

“According to a May 2015 report by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Illinois cut \$113.7

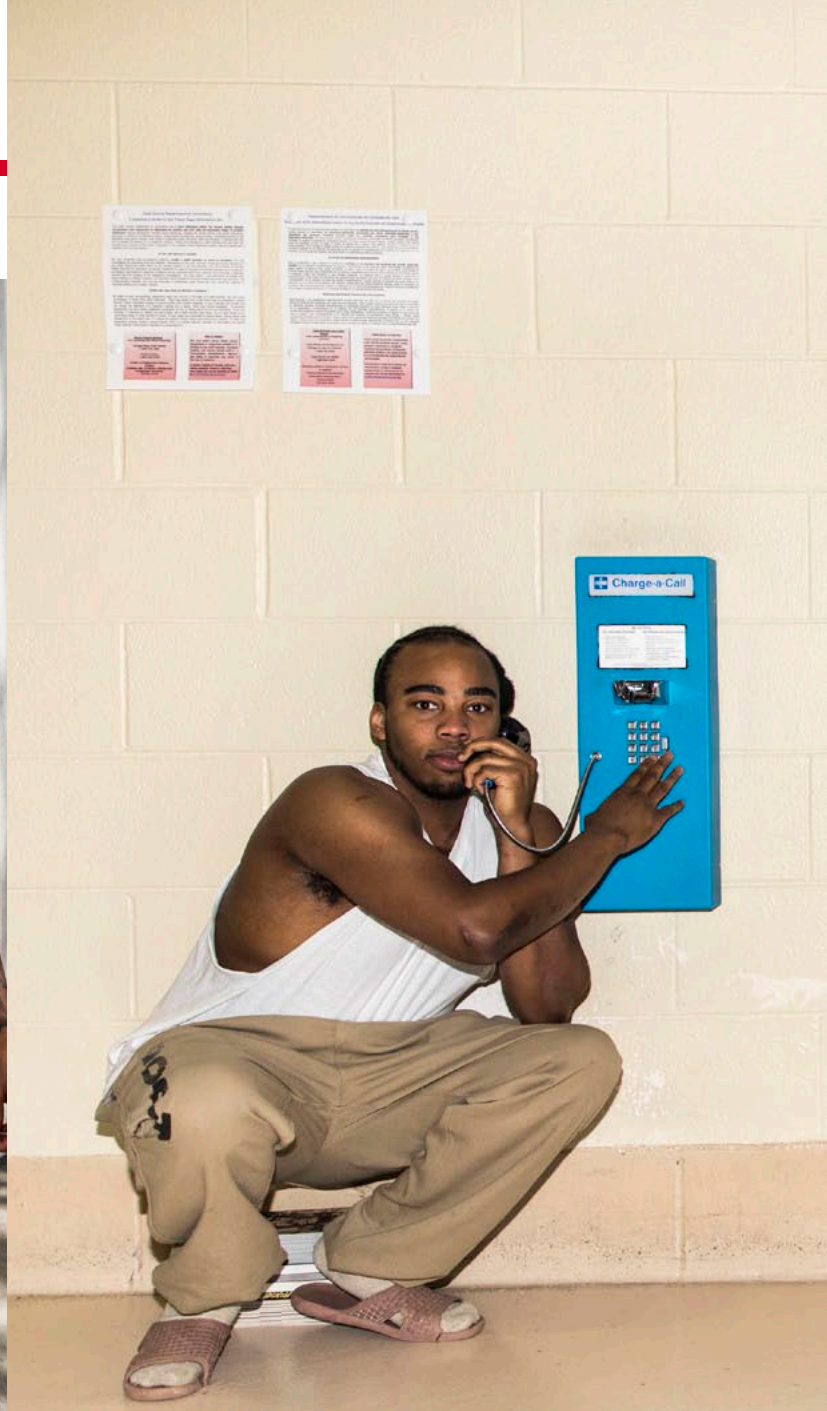
million in funding for mental health services between 2009 and 2012”, writes Lili Kobielski in the foreword to her enlightening new book, *I Refuse For the devil To Take My Soul*, published by New York’s powerHouse Books.

“As a result”, she adds, “two state-operated inpatient facilities and six City of Chicago mental health clinics have shut down since 2009. Emergency room visits for patients having a psychiatric crisis increased by 19 percent from 2009 to 2012, and a 2013 report by Thresholds found that the increase in ER visits and hospi-

Photographs: Lili Kobielski

LILI KOBIELSKI

Awaiting treatment:
Inmates
at Cook County Jail



talizations resulting from the budget cuts cost Illinois \$131-million – almost \$18-million more than the original “savings”.

Kobielski goes on to indict Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner’s refusal to pass a budget for more than two years, an action that, she says, “has caused more than 80,000 people in Illinois to lose access to mental health care. Two-thirds of nonprofit mental health care agencies in Illinois have reduced or eliminated programs, and a third of Chicago’s mental health organisations have had to reduce the number of people they serve”.

“In 2011”, adds Kobielski, “the Cook County

Sheriff’s Office estimated that it costs \$143 a day to house a general population inmate. But when taking into account the treatment, medication, and security required to incarcerate a mentally ill person, the daily cost doubles or even triples – yet now more patients than ever are being treated in jail rather than at a mental health facility”.

The photographs and interviews with Cook County Jail inmates as well as jail social workers and psychologists that are included in *I Refuse For The Devil To Take My Soul* provide a glimpse of living with mental illness behind bars.

“Each portrait is collaborative – I asked ‘How would you like to be photographed?’, and then we



Voices that must be heard: Inside Cook County Jail.

worked on making the portrait together. I chose to transcribe our interviews exactly as they were spoken, as I believe that these are voices that must be heard”, says Kobielski.

The resulting volume is a stark indictment of a US that dithers between the simple-minded ideals of lock-em-away vote-pandering politicians busily chasing short-term expediency and the liberal consensus that mental illness is best treated inside society – but often with the whispered proviso, “provided that it’s not in our own backyard”. Out of sight, almost out of mind . . .

The book tells traumatic, angry, tales of deprivation, violence, and drug abuse. But rooted in these stories are glimmers of hope: an acceptance and acknowledgement of the bad decisions that led to incarceration, a desire to change self-harming lifestyles, and a need to reconcile with the world outside. A trio of examples:

Cicely Bailey, supervisor, Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC), Court and Probation Services, Cook County Jail: “Typically, a lot of mental illness is undiagnosed. Sometimes, we are lucky enough to catch them and persuade them to get the mental health evaluation, and then stabilise them in every way that

Photographs: Lili Kobielski

LILI KOBIELSKI

Behind bars, but there's still hope for inmates at Cook County Jail.



Marshun: "There's a link between my illness and my crimes".

we can. But a lot of mental health problems they self-medicate with drugs.

"They need mental health care facilities in place. Otherwise, everything is going to peak, as far as crime – recidivists, they're going to go back to jail – all those things are going to peak again because these people are going to be without care. I'm just scared. I'm scared. I don't know what's going to happen, but I foresee a lot of problems".

Lance, inmate: "I've been here almost 16 months and I'm part of a programme called behavioural modification. We have ways to manage our anger, coping skills, education, your vocabulary, your respect, your ego, and we prac-

tice those things on a daily basis . . . One of the key things we work on is not just getting out of jail but staying out. And it's a lot of people that won't make it home, and for those that are going to prison they gotta keep the tools they learned here and try to be content instead of going to prison and losing your mind and becoming an angry or uncivilised person."

Samantha, inmate: I've been taking medication here. I feel a lot better. More stable, too. The therapy and the medication are definitely helping, but I still experience depression episodes and I feel them coming and I try not to dive too deep into it. The counsellors and the therapists are great here. You can talk to



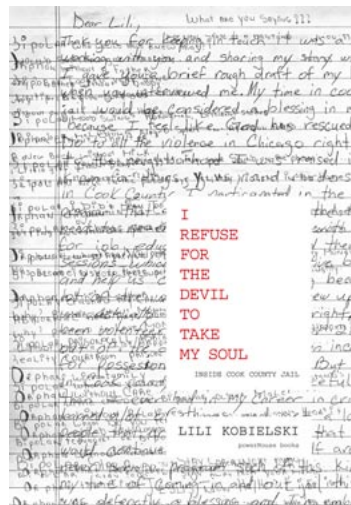
Recover or die: An inmate's stark choice.

them about everything.

“I want to get my son back. It hurts me because both of his parents are in jail. I feel like I need to learn how to be a good mother and to get back on my feet. I miss him. I don’t want him to come here because at the end of the day I have to say goodbye, and I can’t deal with that”

Whatever your feelings after reading these stories, the words of Mary Crowley, of the Vera Institute of Justice, ring out, large and clear and inarguable: “Look into the eyes of the people Lili brings to us; listen to what they tell us. This is not what justice in America should look like. This is what we need to change”.

– Tony Sutton



I REFUSE FOR THE DEVIL TO TAKE MY SOUL

Inside Cook County Jail

by Lili Kobielski

Published by powerHouse Books
www.powerhousebooks.com

\$40

Photographs: Lili Kobielski

LEE CAMP

The Pentagon's \$21-trillion audit failure

The corporate media puppets are trying to make sure you think, "It's just a few accounting errors. Pay no mind to the fact that it amounts to the largest theft ever perpetrated against the American people"

NEW York Congresswoman-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was ruthlessly attacked recently, and I feel a bit responsible. I might have accidentally tainted her Twitter feed with truth serum.

But that sounds weird – so let me back up. Several months ago (see *ColdType Issue 161, June 2019*), I covered the story of the \$21-trillion that has gone unaccounted for at the Pentagon. That's right – trillion – an amount of money you can't possibly come to terms with, so stop trying. Seriously, stop. It's like trying to comprehend the age of the earth.

(The earth is 4.5-billion years old. To put that into context, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says we have 11 years left to completely change our ways or climate change will make the earth uninhabitable. If you were to take the age of the earth and lay it out on the span of a calendar year, this means we would have less than a millisecond left on December 31 to utterly change our ways or all is lost.)

Anyway, the \$21-trillion includes \$6.5-trillion unaccounted for at the Pentagon in 2015 ALONE. When I covered all this last June, very few people were talking about it. David Degraw investigated it for his website (which has since been destroyed by hackers), and Mark Skidmore, the economist who discovered the unaccounted adjustments, co-authored a single *Forbes* article on

the subject. And by "discovered," I don't mean that Skidmore found a dusty shoebox in Donald Rumsfeld's desk underneath the standard pile of baby skeletons. I mean that he took a minute to look at the Defense Department's own inspector general's report. So really he just bothered to look at the thing that was designed for the public to look at.

My column on this topic went viral, as did the *Forbes* article, each garnering hundreds of thousands of views. Yet, despite all that, still not a word from Congress, and not a word from the hacks at your mainstream media outlets. But then again, getting important news about the corruption of our military-industrial complex from the mainstream media would be like getting a philosophy lesson from a strip-club dancer (in that it would be most unexpected, and it's not really why you're there).

But just a few weeks ago,



something significant happened. It took place in a quiet news dump during a Pentagon press conference that TRULY began like this:

Deputy Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan: “So you guys know why I came down here today?”

Reporter: “To see if we ate the donuts?”

Yes, Pentagon press conferences apparently begin in much the same manner as a *Three Stooges* sketch. (Unfortunately, the subsequent bonks on the head usually involve Tomahawk missiles.)

During that wacky press conference, the deputy secretary of defense casually mentioned half-way through that the Pentagon had failed its first-ever audit. This is the first time the Pentagon has ever been audited, even though it has been legally required to do so since the early 1990s. Don’t you wish you could put off your tax returns for 20 years? (I once put them off for two years, but it wasn’t a conscious decision. It was simply the period of my life when I discovered that Netflix had every episode of *The West Wing*.)

After Shanahan dropped this bombshell, here was what followed:

Reporter: “What part did the Pentagon fail in the audit?”

Shanahan: “How about I give you, like, the technical version of that – there are a considerable number of areas where we kind of had a pass, then there’s some other ones where they went through and they said we went into your inventory system and we didn’t find these things; therefore that’s a finding, so you don’t have a clean assessment. So – and – in a lot of these audits, it’s the type of finding that matters”.

Yes, the Pentagon’s official response to why it failed its audit is a word salad after it has gone through an industrial-grade militarised Slap Chop. It’s the type of response you get when a fraud has been filtered through a cover-up, then filtered through a publicist, then filtered through a public official who probably doesn’t know that much to begin with. It’s the corrupt feeding the blind feeding the stupid feeding the disingenuous.

And yet even THAT didn’t get much press coverage. As far as I can tell, the *New York Times* didn’t report on the audit failure until two weeks later, and even that column contained this caveat:

“But audits are hard work; most defence officials aren’t business experts; and to some, bookkeeping and other management operations just aren’t a priority in wartime, which since September 11, 2001, has been a permanent state”.

In the *Times*’s defense, there are different genres of reporting, and in this case, journalists were working in the genre of “shit reporting”. So should we really be surprised? If they want to learn what real reporting looks like on this same topic, they can read the *Nation*’s investigative exposé. That article stated: “For decades, the DoD’s leaders and accountants have been perpetrating a gigantic, unconstitutional accounting fraud, deliberately cooking the books to mislead the Congress and drive the DoD’s budgets ever higher. ... DoD has literally been making up numbers in its annual financial reports to Congress – representing trillions of dollars’ worth of seemingly nonexistent transactions ... according to government records and interviews with current and former DoD officials, congressional sources, and independent experts”. It doesn’t get much clearer than that. (The following page in the magazine was simply an image of a hand dropping a mic.)

So here’s how this fraud works: Every year, the Pentagon tells Congress how much money it needs. It submits the financial reports from the year before, filled to the brim with heaping, steaming bullshit. Trillions of gallons of bullshit, called “adjustments”. Those adjustments cover up the fact that it didn’t necessarily spend all the money the year before.

“However, instead of returning such unspent funds to the US Treasury, as the law requires, the Pentagon sometimes launders and shifts such moneys to other parts of the DoD’s budget”, the *Nation*’s *Dave Lindorff* wrote.

And this is no mistake. This is straight-up fraud. How do you know when something is fraud? Well, one way is when the paper trail is covered up, as Lindorff noted: “Indeed, more than 16,000 records that might reveal either the source or the destination of some of that \$6.5-trillion had been ‘removed’, the inspector general’s office reported”.

Sixteen thousand records! By my calculations, such a cover-up would require multiple shredder operators working in shifts, only stopping once every five hours to use the bathroom and briefly giggle at their villainy.

One congressional staffer [said] ... “We don’t know how the Pentagon’s money is being spent. ... We don’t know how much of that funding gets spent on the intended programmes, what things actually cost, whether payments are going to the proper accounts. If this kind of stuff were happening in the private sector, people would be fired and prosecuted.”

Here’s more analysis from the *Nation*: “The Pentagon’s accounting fraud diverts many billions of dollars that could be devoted to other national needs: health care, education, job creation, climate action, infrastructure modernisation, and more. Indeed, the Pentagon’s accounting fraud amounts to theft on a grand scale – theft not only from America’s taxpayers, but also from the nation’s well-being and its future”.

But apparently, disappearing at least 16,000 documents wasn’t enough. Somebody might still connect the dots. So the Pentagon took the next step: “[T]he most recent report for the DoD on the OIG website ... summarises unsupported adjustments for fiscal year 2017. However, this document differs from all previous reports in that all the numbers relating to the unsupported adjustments were redacted. That is, all the relevant information was blacked out”.

Right after the *Nation* article came out, Ocasio-Cortez tweeted about it – basically saying that these unaccounted trillions at the Pentagon could help pay for “Medicare for all”.

Clearly things are ramping up. People are finding out about the \$21-trillion, and that means it is now time for the true hacks – the military-industrial complex defenders – to jump in and chastise anyone who dares speak out about this fraud. Enter *Vox* – which, if you’re unfamiliar, is a cross between HuffPost and an NPR tote bag filled with rotting raccoon carcasses.

Vox ran an article titled, *The \$21-trillion accounting error that can’t pay for Medicare-for-all*,

Watch Lee Camp’s new comedy special

If you’d like to hear Lee Camp’s other latest predictions, check out his brand new stand-up comedy special “Super Patriotic Very Uncle Sam Comedy Special Not Allowed On American TV.” It’s only available at

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explained. You know how to tell for sure that you’re a nitwit spraying idiocy like a Super Soaker? When you find yourself saying the phrase “\$21-trillion accounting ERROR.” Error?! Yeah, and Timothy McVeigh just had a faulty carburetor.

Vox “journalist” Matthew Yglesias tried to push this idiotic justification: “The Pentagon’s accounting errors are genuinely enormous, but they’re also just accounting errors – they don’t represent actual money that can be spent on something else”.

Sorry, but no. These are not “accounting errors”. It’s impossible to have trillions of dollars of “accounting errors”. Since I have now saturated my keyboard with my anger-saliva, I’ll let Laurence Kotlikoff at *Forbes* answer this: “Let’s recall that this is not simply a matter of boring accounting. Trillions in unaccounted outlays, if that’s what’s involved here, is trillions of our tax dollars being spent without our knowledge. If that’s the case, we’re talking about the biggest government financial deception in the history of the country”.

Long story short, this \$21-trillion story is starting to gain traction. People can finally see the truth. And right now, it is the corporate media puppets who are trying to make sure you think, “It’s just a few accounting errors. Pay no mind to the fact that it amounts to the largest theft ever perpetrated against the American people”. **CT**

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Making a mockery of democracy

"Real democracy has been replaced by the illusion of democracy; free public debate has been replaced by opinion- and outrage-management"

The citizens are disenfranchised and conditioned to be politically apathetic consumers. In recent decades, democracy has been replaced by the illusion of democracy. New forms of organization of power and psychological methods for manipulation of our consciousness protect the powerful against the risks of democratic empowerment and strengthen their position.



DEMOCRACY and freedom. Two words that are charged with unheard-of social promises and that can release tremendous energies of change to achieve them. Today, hardly more than a shadow remains of the hopes originally associated with them. What happened? Never before have two words, to which such passionate hopes were attached, been emptied of their original meaning in such a socially far-reaching way. They have been falsified, abused, and turned against those whose thoughts and actions are inspired by them.

Democracy today really means an elected oligarchy of economic and political elites, in which central areas of society, especially the economy, are fundamentally removed from any democratic control and accountability; at the same time, large parts of the social organisation of our own life lie outside the democratic sphere. And freedom today means above all the freedom of the economically powerful.

With this Orwellian reinterpretation, these

two words now have a special place in the endless dictionary of falsified words throughout history. With the poisoning of these two words, our hopes for a more humane society and a containment of violent ways of solving things are confused, clouded, broken and almost wiped out from the collective memory. The loss of the civilising dreams associated with these two concepts makes it hard for us today to politically articulate an attractive, decent alternative to the prevailing power relations, or even worse, think of any at all.

Democracy, which was originally associated with great hopes for political self-determination and a safeguarding of internal and external peace, is left only as a formal shell in the real structure of society. Democracy has been reduced to a staged spectacle of periodical elections, where the population can choose from a given "elite spectrum". Real democracy has been replaced by the illusion of democracy; free public debate has been replaced by opinion- and outrage-management. The guiding principle of the responsible citizen has been replaced by the neoliberal ideal of the politically apathetic consumer.

Of the hopes associated with the concepts of democracy and freedom, only the empty words of a false promise have been retained by the powerful; with these words it is possible to effectively manipulate the consciousness of the subjugated majority.

International law has also today largely devel-

oped into an instrument of undisguised power politics. The self-declared ‘Western community of values’ has openly reverted to its almost religious belief in the effectiveness of violence, the wholesomeness of bombs and destruction, drone killings and torture, support for terrorist groups, economic strangulation, and other forms of violence that serve their purposes. This is a political fetishisation of violence, whose effects can be seen all over the globe.

Hardly more than a historical memory is left of the great hopes originally associated with democracy and international law, namely, the hopes that civilisation could contain power and violence. The populace is all the more being forcefully convinced of the political rhetoric of democracy and international law, with which the economically or militarily strong seek to win the consent or tolerance of the populace for their actual practice of a violent realpolitik. In today’s realpolitik, the right of the strongest has again long been accepted.

Two hundred years after the Enlightenment, which we praise so much our political rhetoric, we live in a time of radical counter-enlightenment. At the same time, when it serves their power interests, the powerful like to refer to the Enlightenment in order to affirm their claimed civilisational superiority over those they consider to be their enemies.

The power elite are dependent on securing themselves against democratic aspirations

An elitist democracy is a contradiction in terms. While there are formal democratic elements in an elitist democracy, they are structurally kept to a minimum. Despite this minimalistic democracy, from the point of view of the actual economic and political centres of power, democratic elements are not necessarily as risk-free as they would like.

So in order for the present power elite to secure their status, they are dependent on securing themselves against democratic aspirations.

The weak point is now the public debate space, which – especially in the

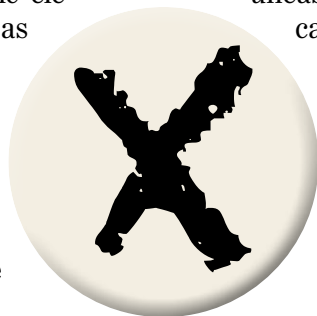
periodic elections – could potentially become a risk against stability. How can this be controlled in an elitist democracy? How can the risk that democracy potentially poses be kept as low as possible? If the remaining democratic residual elements were removed, it would no longer be possible to maintain the democratic rhetoric useful for preventing revolution; for public debate and periodic elections are indispensable even for the mere illusion of democracy. So if the real centres of power want to keep these formalities, they need appropriate ways to build stability that can make democracy risk-free for them.

Over the past few decades, the powerful have made great efforts to develop new ways of securing such stability, in order to protect the democratic residual elements remaining in elitist democracy from the risks posed by democratic empowerment.

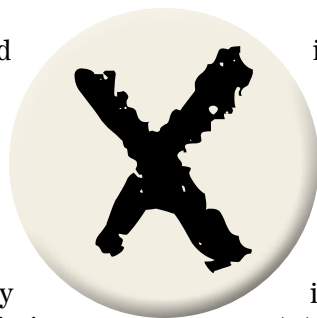
These include, in particular, novel structural forms of organising power, as well as psychological methods for manipulating our consciousness. Of course, the roots of these developments go much further back, but these developments have accelerated rapidly and become institutionally solidified in recent decades. The social transformation process associated with these things is similar to the effects of a «revolution from above», ie a revolution that represents a project of the economic elites and serves to expand and consolidate their interests. The transformation process that accompanies this revolution essentially rests on two pillars.

The first pillar of this transformation process is that the organisational forms of power are designed more abstractly and with a purposeful diffusion of social responsibility, so that the unease, indignation or anger of those ruled can find no concrete, ie politically effective, targets. Thus a will for change in the population can no longer find expression among the actual decision-makers.

This process of transformation consists of a creeping – and for the populace as invisible as possible –



RAINER MAUSFELD



creation of suitable institutional and constitutional structures. With these structures, power relations can be stabilised and the redistribution processes permanently removed from democratic access, and thereby be made largely irreversible. For this, the democratic structures historically won after hard struggles must be eliminated or eroded, so that their effectiveness is neutralised.

In addition, domestic and international law must be 'developed' in such a way that the centres of economic and political power can legally enforce their interests authoritatively in the legal framework thus created. In particular, a legal framework must be created to enable the transformation of economic power into political power, and to provide a legal framework for the desired or already established upwards redistributive mechanisms, so that the minimum remaining democratic possibilities cannot undo them.

The organised crime of the propertied class is not only legalised by such lawmaking, but also protected for the future and sealed against possible democratic interventions.

The most important goal is to neutralise any social will to change in the population

The second pillar is the development of sophisticated and highly effective techniques that can in a targeted way manipulate the consciousness of the ruled. Ideally, those who are ruled should not even know that there are centres of power behind the political surface, presented by the media, of seemingly democratically controlled power. The most important goal is to neutralise any social will to change in the population or divert their attention to politically insignificant goals.

To achieve this in the most robust and consistent way possible, manipulation techniques aim for much more than just political opinions. They aim at a purposeful shaping of all aspects that affect our political, social and cultural life as well as our individual ways of life. They aim, as it were, at the creation of a 'new human being' whose social life

is absorbed in the role of the politically apathetic consumer.

In this sense, they are totalitarian, so that the great democracy theorist Sheldon Wolin rightly speaks of an 'inverted totalitarianism', a new form of totalitarianism, which is not perceived by the population as totalitarianism. The techniques for this

have been and are being developed for about 100 years, at great expense and with substantial involvement from the social sciences, whose importance in society is closely linked to the provision of methods of social control.

A central element of these techniques for manipulating the consciousness of the population is the creation of appropriate ideologies that are largely invisible to the population as ideologies and thus provide a barely questionable framework that gives meaning to all the individual's social experiences.

The core of these ideologies, culminating in neo-liberal ideology in recent decades, is the ideology of an expertocratic 'capitalist elite democracy', in which competent and well-committed elites should direct the fate of society in the most efficient manner possible.

Both developments serve to make power unidentifiable and therefore invisible, in order to undermine our natural mental defence mechanisms against being ruled by others. Both are characteristic of the modern forms of contemporary capitalist elite democracies.

We can only develop promising strategies of resistance to the current order based on power and violence if we sufficiently understand these new organisational forms of power. The same applies to the manipulation techniques, through which specific properties of our mind can be exploited for political purposes. **CT**

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Robocop in the Tropics

"If some innocent people die, that's fine" . . . Jair Bolsonaro rises from the far-right political margins to become Brazil's new president

NOT many people outside Brazil will be familiar with the name Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra. As commander at the Brazilian army's Department of Information Operations, known as DOI-CODI, in São Paulo, from 1970 to 1974, the man known as 'Colonel Ustra' was one of the most notorious torturers under Brazil's military dictatorship, which ruled the country from 1964 to 1985.

Ustra introduced and oversaw a range of procedures against leftwing militants that included inserting rats in women's vaginas and forcing young children to watch their parents being tortured. One of the thousands of people tortured by the regime was the future president of Brazil Dilma Rousseff, then a member of an obscure urban guerrilla organisation known as the National Liberation Command.

In 2015 Ustra died of cancer. The following year Jair Bolsonaro, then a congressman, voted in favour of Rousseff's impeachment, declaring "In memory of Col. Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, the terror of Dilma Rousseff ... I vote YES".

Such crass viciousness is characteristic of a former army officer who has consistently praised the dictatorship, who revels in talk of blood and violence, and who once declared. "I am in favour of torture – you know that. And the people are in favour of it, too".

Bolsonaro is not just in favour of torture. In a 1999 interview he claimed that elections were incapable of solving Brazil's problems and that it was necessary for a future government to "do

the job that the military regime didn't do: killing 30,000. If some innocent people die, that's fine. In every war, innocent people die. I will even be happy if I die as long as 30,000 others go with me".

There was a time when such views confined Bolsonaro to the political margins in a democratizing continent that seemed to be shifting leftwards, and turning away from the murderous dictatorships that dominated Latin America during the Cold War.

But, as we have all learned to our cost these last few years, such shifts are not necessarily permanent, and the margins have now become mainstream.

On January 1, Bolsonaro was inaugurated president of the fourth largest democracy in the world, becoming yet another of the new breed of authoritarian 'populist' leaders who have come to power across the world in Europe, Turkey, the Philippines and the United States.

All these leaders share certain things in common, but each of them have emerged in a very specific national context. Though Bolsonaro prattled on about Brazil's 'Judeo-Christian' identity at his inauguration, it is clear that Brazilians voted for him out of more pressing concerns over corruption, economic stagnation and rampant criminality and insecurity, with 63,880 homicides in 2017 alone.

Bolsonaro's solutions to these problems include the use of torture, allowing cops to kill with impunity, reinstating the death penalty and es-

MATT CARR

Photo: Wikipedia



RIGHT IS MIGHT?: Jair Bolsonaro, the new Brazilian ultra rightwing president.

establishing vigilante groups. This quasi-military response to Brazil's drug problem places him closer to Rodrigo Duterte than Victor Orbán, but it also has grim precedents in the history of Brazil and Latin America.

It was in 1964 – the same year that the Brazilian military, with political support from the US, overthrew the left-leaning government of Joao Goulart – the first Latin American death squads' emerged in Sao Paulo, when the city's militarised police began killing criminals who they believed had escaped justice.

By the time these groups became the 'rogue cop' model for Clint Eastwood's *Magnum Force* in 1973, some of their leading members, such as the Sao Paulo policeman Sergio Fleury, had already begun to export their methods to neighbouring countries, providing expertise in extra-judicial killings and torture to military regimes in Argentina, Uruguay and other countries.

Bolsonaro was correct that the Brazilian dictatorship tortured more people than it killed, but Brazil was the seedbed for far more murderous regimes on the continent. Even following Brazil's

democratic transition, Brazil's police tend to act like a paramilitary force engaged in war in their confrontations with the country's drug gangs.

The Brazilian police already kill an incredible six people per day, most of whom are young black males from the favelas. As the Brookings Foundation notes: "Brazil's police are already notorious for being one of the world's deadliest in the use of force. In many favelas, Brazil's retired and current police officers operate illegal militias that extort and control local communities, murdering those who oppose them and engaging in warfare with Brazil's highly-violent gangs and in social cleansing. Bolsonaro is simply threatening to turn the rest of the police into state-sanctioned thugs".

In effect, Bolsonaro is embracing the methods celebrated in José Padilha's film *Elite Squad*, whose fascistic glorification of the Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais (BOPE) or Special Police, made it the biggest earner in Brazilian cinema.

Now, it seems, the Brazilian electorate, has endorsed these methods. If Bolsonaro stays true to his word, an-already violent police force will be given carte blanche to 'solve' Brazil's problems by intensifying a drugs war that has already failed in country after country.

As in the Philippines, many people will die. In Brazil most of them will be poor and black.

Brazilian society may draw some comfort from that for a while. But problems rooted in structural inequalities, racism, and political and economic dysfunction cannot usually be solved with bullets and the torture chamber.

Societies that bring embrace such methods often find themselves suffocated and contaminated by them, as Brazil was in the 1960s, and many Brazilians may find that it was easier to bring Robocop into power than it is to get rid of him.

CT

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21 thoughts on the trials of Julian Assange

He is not hiding from justice in the Ecuadorian embassy.
He is hiding from injustice

36

1 I write a lot about the plight of Julian Assange for the same reason I write a lot about the Iraq invasion: his persecution, when sincerely examined, exposes undeniable proof that we are ruled by a transnational power establishment that is immoral and dishonest to its core.

2 Assange started a leak outlet on the premise that corrupt and unaccountable power is a problem in our world, and that the problem can be fought with the light of truth. Corrupt and unaccountable power has responded by detaining, silencing and smearing him. The persecution of Assange has proved his thesis absolutely correct.

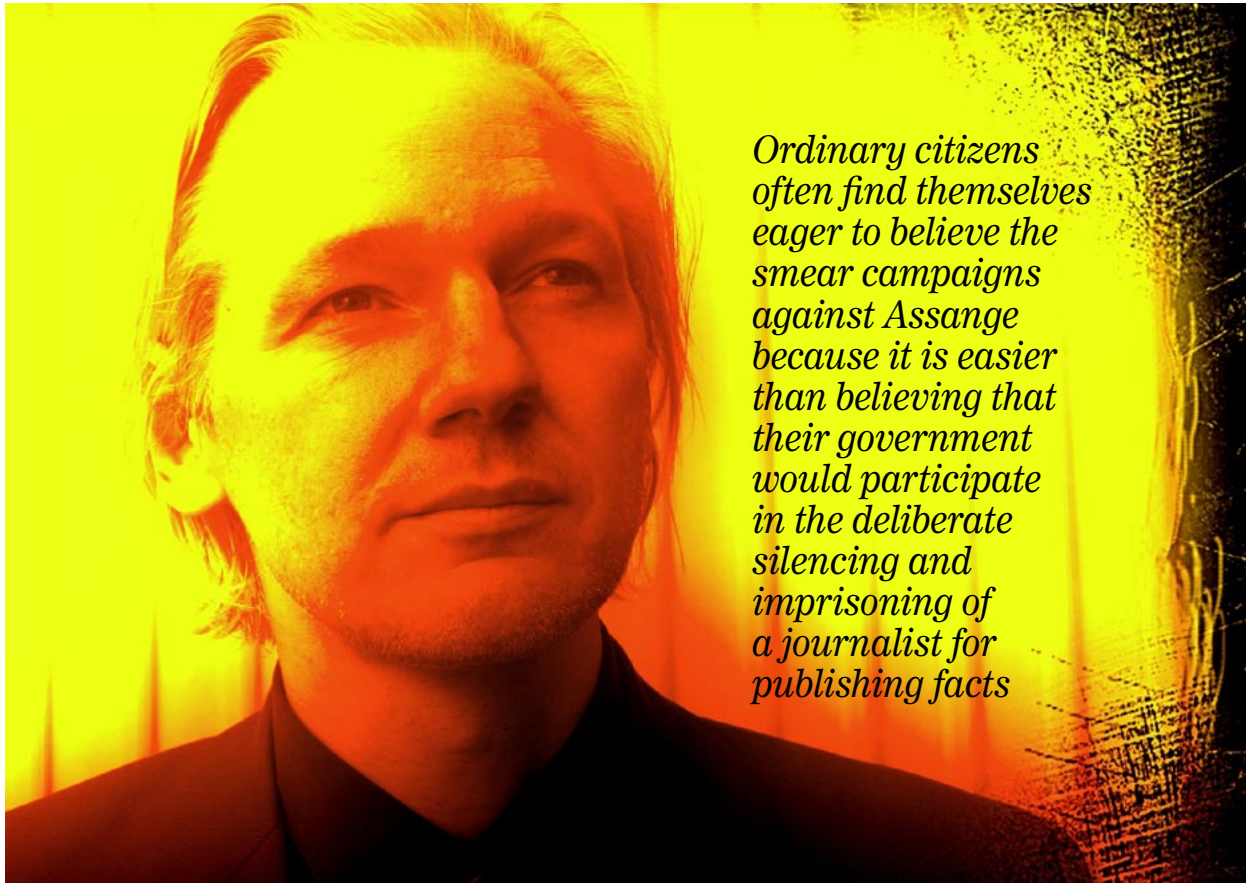
3 Anyone who offends the US-centralised empire will find themselves subject to trial by media, which are owned by the same plutocratic class which owns the empire. To believe what mass media news outlets tell you about those who stand up to imperial power is to ignore reality.

4 Corrupt and unaccountable power uses its political and media influence to smear Assange because, as far as the interests of corrupt and unaccountable power are concerned, killing his reputation is as good as killing him. If everyone can be paced into viewing him with hatred and revulsion, they'll be far less likely to take WikiLeaks publications seriously, and they'll be far more likely to consent to Assange's silencing and imprisonment. Someone can be speaking 100 percent truth to you, but if you're suspicious of him you won't

believe anything he's saying. If they can manufacture that suspicion with total or near-total credence, then as far as our rulers are concerned it's as good as putting a bullet in his head.

5 The fact that the mass media can keep saying day after day, "Hey, you know that bloke at the embassy who shares embarrassing truths about very powerful people? He's a stinky Nazi rapist Russian spy who mistreats his cat", without raising suspicion shows you how propagandised the public already is. A normal worldview unmolested by corrupt narrative control would see someone who circulates inconvenient facts about the powerful being called pretty much all the worst things in the world and know immediately that that person is being lied about by those in power.

6 Relentless smear campaigns against Assange have given the unelected power establishment the ability to publicly make an example of a journalist who published uncomfortable truths without provoking the wrath of the masses. It's a town square flogging that the crowd has been manipulated into cheering for. Narrative control has enabled them to have their cake and eat it too: they get to act like medieval lords and inflict draconian punishment against a speaker of undeniable facts and leave his head on a spike in the town square as a warning to other would-be truth tellers, and have the public believe that such a bizarre violation of modern human rights is perfectly fine and acceptable.



Ordinary citizens often find themselves eager to believe the smear campaigns against Assange because it is easier than believing that their government would participate in the deliberate silencing and imprisoning of a journalist for publishing facts

7 There are people who worked really hard to get journalism degrees, toiled long hours to earn the esteemed privilege of appearing on the front pages of a major publication, only to find themselves writing articles with headlines like *Julian Assange is a stinky, stinky stink man*.

8 Ordinary citizens often find themselves eager to believe the smear campaigns against Assange because it is easier than believing that their government would participate in the deliberate silencing and imprisoning of a journalist for publishing facts.

9 And yes, Julian Assange is a journalist. Publishing important information about what's going on in the world so the public can inform themselves is precisely the thing that journalism is. There is no conventional definition of journalism which differs from this. Anyone who says Assange is not a journalist is telling a lie that they

may or may not actually believe in order to justify his persecution and their support for it.

10 Another reason people can find themselves eager to believe smears about Assange is that the raw facts revealed by WikiLeaks punch giant holes in the stories about the kind of world, nation and society that most people have been taught to believe they live in since school age. These kinds of beliefs are interwoven with people's entire egoic structures, with their sense of self and who they are as a person, so narratives which threaten to tear them apart can feel the same as a personal attack. This is why you'll hear ordinary citizens talking about Assange as though he attacked them personally; all he did was publish facts about the powerful, but since those facts conflict with tightly held identity constructs.

11 We live in a reality where unfathomably powerful world-dominating government

CAITLIN JOHNSTONE

agencies are scrutinised and criticised far, far less than a guy trapped in an embassy who published inconvenient facts about those agencies.

12 Assange disrupts establishment narratives even in his persecution. Liberal establishment loyalists in America still haven't found a rational answer to criticisms that in supporting Assange's criminal prosecution they are supporting a Trump administration agenda. You now have the same people who've been screaming that Trump is Hitler and that he's attacking the free press cheering for the possibility of that same administration imprisoning a journalist for publishing facts.

13 The precedent that would be set by the US prosecuting a foreign journalist for publishing factual information would constitute a greater leap in the direction of Orwellian dystopia than the Patriot Act, for America and for the entire world.

14 The billionaire media has invalidated itself with its refusal to defend Assange. They know the precedent set by his prosecution for WikiLeaks publications would kill the ability of the press to hold power to account, but they don't care because they know they never do that. For all their crying about Jamal Khashoggi and Jim Acosta's hurt feelings, they do not actually care about journalism or "the free press" in any meaningful way.

15 Whenever I see a blue checkmark account on Twitter bashing Assange I mentally translate whatever they're saying into "There is nothing I won't do to advance my career in corporate media. If you're in a position to promote me I will literally get down on my knees right this very second and let you do whatever you want to my body".

16 I sometimes feel like I respect professional propagandists who smear Assange more than I respect ordinary citizens who go around smearing him for free. What do these people think they'll get as a reward for their work as pro bono CIA propagandists? A gold star from Big Brother? They're like slaves who beat and betray other slaves that fall out of line in order to win favour with the master, except they're not even achieving that. The

professional manipulators are at least cheering for their own class to continue to have its leadership's interests advanced; ordinary people who do it are cheering for their own oppression.

17 Even lower in my view are the self-proclaimed leftists and anarchists who view themselves as oppositional to the establishment but still help advance this smear campaign. It is impossible to attack Assange without supporting the Orwellian empire which is persecuting him. I don't care what mental gymnastics you're doing to justify your pathetic cronyism; what you are doing benefits the most powerful and depraved people on this planet.

18 Anyone who participates in the ongoing smear campaign against Assange and WikiLeaks is basically just saying "Extremely powerful people should be able to lie to us without any difficulty or opposition at all".

19 Everyone should always be extremely suspicious of anyone who defends the powerful from the less powerful. It's amazing that this isn't more obvious to more people.

20 Contrary to the narratives promoted by establishment smear merchants, Julian Assange is not hiding from justice in the Ecuadorian embassy. He is hiding from injustice. Everyone who knows anything about the US government's prosecution of leakers and whistleblowers knows he has no shot at a fair trial.

21 The persecution of Assange is essentially a question that mankind is asking itself: do we want to (a) continue down the path of omnicidal, ecocidal Orwellian dystopia, or do we want to (b) pull up and away from that trajectory and shrug off the oppressive power establishment which is driving us toward either total extinction or total enslavement? So far, (a) is the answer we've been giving ourselves to that question. But, as long as we switch before it's too late, we can always change our answer. **CT**

Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian-based blogger. Follow her at www.caitlinjohnstone.com

The year of Putin-Nazi paranoia

Will it all get worse in 2019? I'm looking forward to discovering how batshit crazy things can get ... I have a feeling we ain't seen nothing yet

AS my regular readers will probably recall, according to my personal, pseudo-Chinese zodiac, 2017 was *The Year of the Headless Liberal Chicken*. This year, having given it considerable thought, and having consulted the *I Ching*, and assorted other oracles, I'm designating 2018 *The Year of Putin-Nazi Paranoia*. It started with the Internet companies that control the flow of information that most of us now perceive as "reality" launching an all-out War on Dissent, purportedly to protect the public from "divisive" and "confusing" content, and other forms of Russian "influencing".

Twitter started warning customers that there was "reason to believe" that they had "followed", "retweeted", or "liked the content of" accounts "connected to a propaganda effort by a Russian government-linked organisation". Facebook launched its own Ministry of Truth, manned by "a dedicated counter-terrorism team" of "former intelligence and law-enforcement officials" (also known as the Atlantic Council, NATO's unofficial propaganda wing). Google stepped up its covert de-ranking of insufficiently Russia-hating and other "non-authoritative" websites.

This Orwellian corporate censorship campaign was enthusiastically welcomed by liberals and other Russia-and-Trump-obsessives, who by this time were already completely convinced that secret Russian Facebook agents were conspiring to transform the Western masses into zombified, Russia-loving neo-Nazis by means of some sort of irresistible Putin-Nazi hypno-technology that

would melt their brains to oatmeal the second they clicked on one of those dancing cat GIFs.

But the paranoia was just getting started. By the Spring, professional Putin-Naziologists were warnings that anyone using words like "globalist", "globalism", or "global capitalism", was an antisemite. There was no such thing as "globalism", they told us. "Globalist" was just Nazi codespeak for "JEW!" Moreover, anyone criticising "the media", or mentioning "banks", "Wall Street", or "Hollywood", or making fun of "George Soros", was clearly a Russia-loving, Sieg-heiling Nazi.

Meanwhile, in London, Blairites were combing through six-year-old Facebook posts in an effort to prove that Jeremy Corbyn had transformed the British Labour Party into his personal Putin-Nazi death cult. The *Guardian* published more than 100 articles smearing Corbyn as an antisemite and "linking" Labour to antisemitism. The BBC jacked up the Russia paranoia, doctoring Corbyn's hat on TV to make it appear more insidiously Slavic. *Guardian* columnist Owen Jones sprang to Corbyn's defence, explaining that, yes, the Labour Party was a disgusting hive of antisemites, but they were doing their utmost to root out the Nazis, ban all criticism of the IDF, and reverse the mass exodus of Jews from London.

All this was happening in the wake of the notorious Novichok Porridge and Perfume Attacks, allegedly perpetrated by two incompetent, pot-



PROPAGANDA? Screen grab from BBC Newsnight shows Jeremy Corbyn "depicted in a huge studio backdrop using an image that seemed to be deliberately manipulated to make him look embedded in the Kremlin".

40

smoking, prostitute-banging "assassins" that Putin personally dispatched to Salisbury to miserably fail to take out their target and then waltz around getting photographed by every CCTV camera in Great Britain. According to the corporate media, Putin tried to cover the crimes of these Jason Bourne-like GRU assassins by ordering his network of Putin-Nazi Twitter bots to flood the Internet with disinformation. Sky News captured and mercilessly interrogated one of these alleged "Twitter bots", who it turned out was just a feisty British pensioner by the name of Ian, or at least that's what Putin wants us to believe!

Back in America, millions of liberals and other Russia-and-Trump-obsessives were awaiting the Putin-Nazi Apocalypse. The corporate media were speculating that Putin's latest "secret scheme" was for Trump to destroy the Atlantic alliance by arriving late for the G7 meeting. Or maybe Putin's secret scheme was to order Trump to sadistically lock up a bunch of migrants in metal cages, exactly as Obama had done before him ... but these were special Nazi cages! And Trump was separating mothers and children, which, as General Michael Hayden reminded us, was more or less exactly the same as Auschwitz! Paul Krugman was running around the offices of the *New York Times* shrieking that "America as we know

it is finished!" Soros had been smuggled back into Europe to thwart the Putin-Nazi plot to "dominate the West", which he planned to do by cancelling Brexit (which Putin had obviously orchestrated) and overthrowing the government of Italy (which, according to Soros, was a Putin-Nazi front).

As if that wasn't paranoia-inducing enough, suddenly, Trump flew off to Helsinki to personally meet with the Devil Himself. The neoliberal establishment went totally apeshit. A columnist for the *New York Times* predicted that Trump, Putin, Le Pen, the AfD, and other such Nazis were secretly forming something called "the Alliance of Authoritarian and Reactionary States", and intended to disband the European Union, and NATO, and impose international martial law and start ethnically cleansing the West of migrants. That, or Trump and Putin were using the summit as cover to attend some Nazi-equestrian homosexual orgy, which the *Times* took pains to illustrate by creating a little animated film depicting Trump and Putin as lovers. In any event, Jonathan Chait was certain that Trump had been a "Russian intelligence asset" since at least as early as 1987, and was going to Helsinki to "meet his handler".

In the wake of the summit, the neoliberal Resistance started spastically jabbering about "treason" and "traitors", and more or less demanding

that Trump be tried, and taken out and shot on the White House lawn. A frenzy of neo-McCarthyism followed. Liberals started accusing people of being “traitorous agents of Trump and Moscow”, and openly calling for a CIA coup, because we were “facing a national security emergency!” A devastating Russian cyber-attack was due to begin at any moment. National Intelligence Director Dan Coats personally assured the Associated Press that the little “Imminent Russia Attack” lights he had on his desk were “blinking red”.

Into this maelstrom of monomania boldly slunk the Charlottesville Nazis, who had resolved to reenact their infamous national white supremacist tikki torch conclave right across the street from the White House. The Resistance and Antifa had been promoting this event as the long anticipated Putin-Nazi uprising, and Kristallnacht II, so it was a bit of a letdown when only 20 or 30 timid Nazis turned up.

It felt like maybe the Great Nazi Panic of 2018 was finally over. But, no, of course it wasn't. The Nazis had just gone underground. Weeks later, right there on national television, a Jewish-Mexican-American Nazi was spotted transmitting secret Nazi hand signals to her co-conspirators. One of them, a US Coast Guard member, then relayed the secret Nazi signal to ... well, it wasn't entirely clear, perhaps the Underground Putin-Nazi Navy, which was steaming toward the Florida coast hidden in the eye of Hurricane Florence.

By the Autumn, with the midterm elections approaching, the Putin-Nazi terrorists struck. It became clear that those secret hand signs were just parts of a much larger Trumpian conspiracy to “embolden” a couple of totally psychotic wackos to unleash their hatred on the public. Wacko Number One accomplished this by mailing a series of non-exploding explosive devices to various prominent members of the neoliberal Resistance. Wacko Number Two stormed into a synagogue in Pittsburgh and murdered a lot of people. While the corporate media were unable to prove that Trump, Putin, or possibly Jeremy Corbyn, had personally “emboldened” these wackos, clearly, they had been “emboldened” by somebody, and

thus were definitely domestic Putin-Nazi “terrorists,” and not just mentally disturbed individuals ... like all the other mentally-disturbed individuals who go around murdering people all the time.

In November the tide began to turn. Despite the relentless “chaos campaign to undermine faith in American democracy” that the Russian bots and Nazis were waging, the Democrats managed to win back the House and rescue America from “the brink of fascism”. Apparently, the War on Dissent was working, because the millions of black people that the Russians had brainwashed into not voting for Clinton in 2016 with those Jesus-doesn't-like-masturbation memes had all miraculously been deprogrammed.

Liberals celebrated by singing hymns to Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller and compiling lists of people to subpoena to testify before congressional committees in what will someday be known as “the Hitlergate Hearings”. The *New York Times* even published a “roadmap” that Mueller and his team can follow to “send incriminating evidence directly to Congress”, thus protecting this “evidence” from the Justice Department, which is totally infested with Russians and Nazis!

But it's not quite time for liberals to break out the vuvuzelas and Trump effigies yet ... or to let up on the paranoia. The Putin-Nazi menace is still out there! And the Russian bots have brainwashed the French into staging these unruly Yellow Vest protests, and the Putin-Nazis have “weaponised” humour, and the economy, and religion, and Brexit, and Wikileaks, and pretty much everything else you can imagine. So this is no time to switch off the television, and log off the Internet, and start thinking critically ... or to forget for one moment that THE NAZIS ARE COMING, and that A DEVASTATING RUSSIAN ATTACK IS IMMINENT!

So here's wishing my Russia-and-Trump-obsessed readers a somewhat mentally-healthier 2019! Me, I'm looking forward to discovering how batshit crazy things can get ... I have a feeling we ain't seen nothing yet. **CT**

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CJ Hopkins is an American playwright, novelist and political satirist based in Berlin. His debut novel, ZONE 23, is published by Snoggswothy, Swaine & Cormorant.

Marvin Gaye's unanswered question

His song *What's Going On?*, recorded in 1971 at the height of the Vietnam War, became one of the great anti-war anthems

MANY protest songs are historical artifacts: they're about a specific time, event, movement or person, often without longevity, and make sense only within a specific context. There are a few exceptions. American soul singer Marvin Gaye's title track from his 1971 album *What's Going On* is a glowing example.

It was released on Motown Records, which had on its roster legendary artists such as Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson, Diana Ross, the Temptations and the Jackson Five. But the album was the first-ever soul concept album, with the entire record based around protest songs.

Although the old song was written 48 years ago at the height of the Vietnam and Cold Wars, and ultimately viewed as an American social anthem of the time, it does not detract from the fact that the issues underlying it remain as relevant today as they were back in the time Gaye, along with Motown colleagues, Renaldo "Obie" Benson and Al Cleveland, wrote the song. It perhaps as relevant today as when it was released on January 20, 1971.

Not only is *What's Going On* a universal anthem about the state of the world, it has inspired a number of popular mainstream artists such as like Beyoncé, Kendrick Lamar and Jay-Z to use their music as social commentary.

Co-composer Obie Benson was a member of the Motown vocal act, the Four Tops. In May 1969 their tour bus arrived in San Francisco where he saw police attacking a crowd of hippies over a dis-

used urban lot called People's Park. He described the incident to music writer Ben Edmonds in the 2001 book, *What's Going On: Marvin Gaye and the Last Days of The Motown Sound*: "The police was beatin' on them, but they weren't bothering anybody. I saw this, and started wondering what the fuck was going on. What is happening here? One question leads to another. Why are they sending kids so far away from their families overseas? Why are they attacking their own children in the streets here?"

Those questions translated into a song Benson wrote with Cleveland, an in-house Motown composer. But his fellow members in the Four Tops weren't interested in protest music. Fortunately, Gaye was very keen. Benson said: "Marvin already felt like this. He was a rebel, and a real spiritual guy".

Inspired by the harrowing stories told to him by his younger brother Frankie over his Vietnam war experiences, Gaye would eventually make the song his own. He added lyrics and, according to Benson: "When you heard that song, you could see the people and feel the hurt and pain. We measured him for the suit and he tailored the hell out of it".

But *What's Going On* was almost never released. This was a time when Motown was cautious of promoting songs of a political nature. The label's boss, Berry Gordy, was on holiday in the Bahamas when an excited Gaye phoned him about the new protest song. As music writer Dorian Lynskey described it in his excellent book on protest music, *33 Revolutions per Minute*: "Gordy responded like

STEWART MAGANGA



Photo: Wikipedia

WAR PROTEST: Marvin Gaye co-wrote *What's Going On*, one of the great anti-war songs of the 1970s.

a father whose favourite son had just rejected an Ivy League scholarship to become a Yippie. ‘Marvin, don’t be ridiculous. That’s taking things too far.’”

When Gordy heard the song he called it “the worst thing I’ve ever heard in my life”. However, Motown was desperate for new music from Gaye and released it to massive acclaim.

Born in Washington DC, on April 2, 1939, Marvin Pentz Gay Jr grew up in a religious household. His father, Marvin Sr served as a church minister of a Pentecostal church. His mother, Alberta, was a domestic worker. He didn’t have a happy childhood. He was constantly beaten by his abusive father. As a way of escape, he would find solace in singing, going on to become one of popular music’s most admired singers and songwriters. His life came to a sad end on April 1, 1984, a day before his 45th birthday, when he was shot and killed by his father after an argument.

What’s Going On was released while the Vietnam War was still raging in 1971. Three years

before, the black civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr had been assassinated. America was in a state of turmoil – protests against the Vietnam War resulted in widespread violence and police brutality. The song was a response to a war that claimed the lives of more than three-million people – half of them Vietnamese civilians. But it not only called for an end to the war, but also served as a critique of 1970s America. Drugs, racism and poverty were crippling most inner cities.

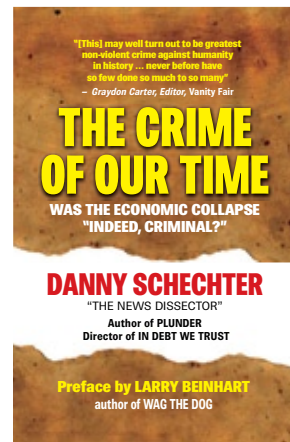
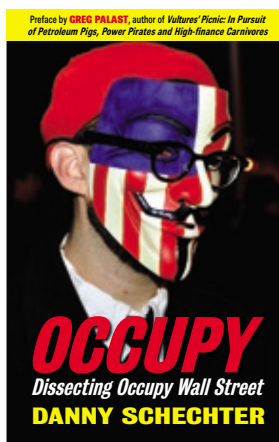
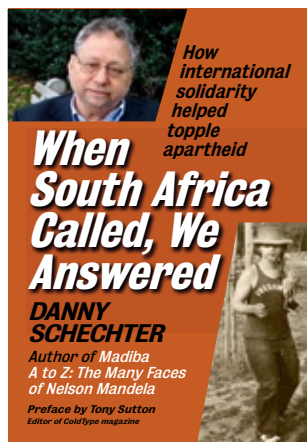
What’s Going On remains relevant today. Its lyrics speak eloquently about a post-9/11 world that’s upside down, with sabre-rattling leaders grabbing the headlines, and where regional wars continue to claim countless lives and force millions to flee their homes. It allows us to think – yet again – about whether war is necessary:

*We don’t need to escalate
You see, war is not the answer
For only love can conquer hate.*

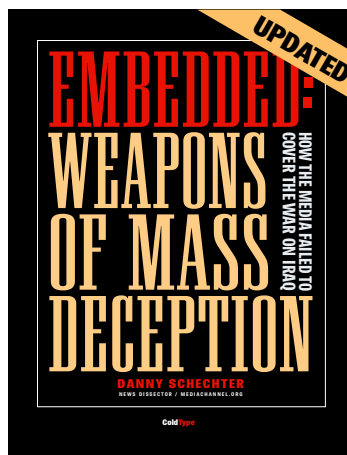
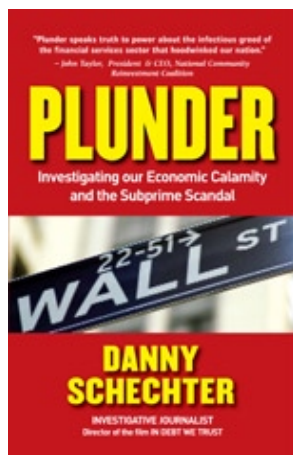
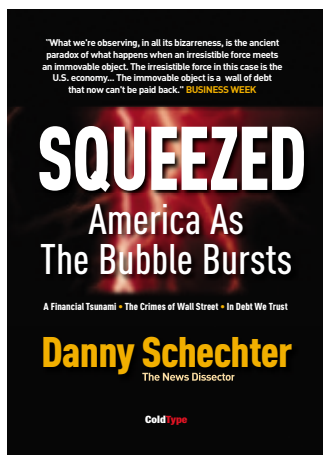
CT

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REMEMBERING DANNY SCHECHTER 1942 - 2015



44



Danny Schechter, the NewsDissector, was acclaimed as one of the most politically astute journalists in recent memory. As a tribute to him and an appreciation of his work with ColdType, we are giving away free downloads of these seven books, all published in association with ColdType.net. Download them at:

<http://coldtype.net/SchechterBooks.html>

Supporting Trump's international thuggery

Canada was wrong to co-operate with US detention request for Huawei executive, writes **Linda McQuaig**

THE phrase “rule of law” has a nice, lofty ring to it, so it’s not surprising that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is invoking it to defend Canada’s detention of a Chinese business executive.

But while one can imagine many reasons why Canada decided to co-operate with the US request to extradite Meng Wanzhou, it’s doubtful that the desire to uphold the “rule of law” was one of them.

In fact, what Canada is really doing is lending support to rogue and reckless behaviour by the Trump administration.

The US extradition case is based on allegations that Meng, a senior executive with China’s technology giant Huawei, committed fraud as part of a scheme to violate US trade sanctions against Iran.

But Washington’s efforts to punish Huawei for trading with Iran are of dubious legality.

The UN Security Council (in Resolution 2231) called on all countries to drop sanc-

tions against Iran as part of the 2015 treaty aimed at limiting Iran from developing nuclear weapons – a treaty that was welcomed around the world as a chance to reduce the risk of nuclear war.

That treaty, negotiated by the Obama administration, quickly became a target of US Republicans, who were more interested in destroying Iran than in making the world a less perilous place. The treaty was particularly annoying to the



HUAWEI

wildly insecure Donald Trump who, as president, was keen to take a baseball bat to anything that could be seen as an accomplishment of his predecessor.

In addition to withdrawing from this important nuclear treaty – which had been endorsed by the UN Security Council as well as Germany and the EU – the Trump administration decided it has the right to unilaterally punish foreign countries, companies and individuals doing business with Iran (even though the UN treaty permits them to do so).

Washington’s actions amount to a kind of international thuggery. US economist Jeffrey Sachs argues they pose a threat to the international rule of law. “The US would certainly not tolerate China or any other country telling American companies with whom they can or cannot trade”, he maintains. **45**

Another apparent motive behind the Meng extradition request was Washington’s interest in heating up its economic war against China by blocking Huawei from making further inroads into Western markets, where it already threatens the dominance of US technology giants.

Given the questionable lawfulness and suspect motives of the US extradition request, the appropriate Canadian response

might have been to simply avoid making the arrest, by resorting to some “creative incompetence”, as former Foreign Affairs minister John Manley has suggested.

For that matter, we are not obliged to extradite Meng.

Robert J. Currie, a professor at Dalhousie University’s Schulich School of Law, writes that under Canada’s Extradition Act, the decision whether to extradite in a case like this “is made not by the courts, but by the federal Minister of Justice”. In other words, it’s not strictly a legal matter but ultimately a political decision to be made by the Trudeau government.

Currie also points out that Canada has a long history of co-operating with US extradition requests “because such neighbourliness makes for smooth relations”.

Now we’re getting to the nub of the matter. Trudeau’s keenness to co-operate is likely rooted in his desire to try to restore some semblance of neighbourly relations, after the petulant US president went out of his way last June to pick a fight with us.

There’s nothing wrong with trying to restore neighbourly feelings – except that in this case there are a lot of extremely negative consequences, such as China’s retaliatory detention of three innocent Canadians, and the major tensions that have now needlessly developed between China and Canada.

At least, Trudeau should drop the pretence that his compliance

with the US extradition request springs from a deep commitment to the “rule of law”.

If he really cared about that principle he’d be speaking up in defence of the UN treaty, not knuckling under to an administration that recently showed its concept of the “rule of law” by flashing a wink and a nod at the Saudi crown prince after he silenced an outspoken journalist

with a bone-saw. **CT**

*Linda McQuaig is a journalist and author. Her book *Shooting the Hippo: Death by Deficit and Other Canadian Myths* was among the books selected by the *Literary Review of Canada* as the “25 most influential Canadian books of the past 25 years.” This column originally appeared in the *Toronto Star*.*

How academia helps with thought control

By abetting the ad industry, universities are leading us into temptation, writes **George Monbiot**

46

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To what extent do we decide? We tell ourselves we choose our own life course, but is this ever true? If you or I had lived 500 years ago, our worldview, and the decisions we made as a result, would have been utterly different. Our minds are shaped by our social environment, in particular the belief systems projected by those in power: monarchs, aristocrats and theologians then; corporations, billionaires and the media today.

Humans, the supremely social mammals, are ethical and intellectual sponges. We unconsciously absorb, for good or ill, the influences that surround us. Indeed, the very notion that we might form our own minds is a received idea that would have been quite alien to most people

five centuries ago. This is not to suggest we have no capacity for independent thought. But to exercise it, we must – consciously and with great effort – swim against the social current that sweeps us along, mostly without our knowledge.

Surely, though, even if we are broadly shaped by the social environment, we control the small decisions we make? Sometimes. Perhaps. But here, too, we are subject to constant influence, some of which we see, much of which we don’t. And there is one major industry that seeks to decide on our behalf. Its techniques get more sophisticated every year, drawing on the latest findings in neuroscience and psychology. It is called advertising.

Every month, new books on the subject are published with

Insights

titles like *The Persuasion Code: How Neuromarketing Can Help You Persuade Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime*. While many are doubtless overhyped, they describe a discipline that is rapidly closing in on our minds, making independent thought ever harder. More sophisticated advertising meshes with digital technologies designed to eliminate agency.

Early last year, the child psychologist Richard Freed explained how new psychological research has been used to develop social media, computer games and phones with genuinely addictive qualities. He quoted a technologist who boasts, with apparent justification: “We have the ability to twiddle some knobs in a machine learning dashboard we build, and around the world hundreds of thousands of people are going to quietly change their behaviour in ways that, unbeknownst to them, feel second-nature but are really by design”.

The purpose of this brain hacking is to create more effective platforms for advertising. But the effort is wasted if we retain our ability to resist it. Facebook, according to a leaked report, carried out research – shared with an advertiser – to determine when teenagers using its network feel insecure, worthless or stressed. These appear to be the optimum moments for hitting them with a micro-targeted promotion. Facebook denied that it offered “tools to target people based on their emotional state”.

We can expect commercial enterprises to attempt whatever

lawful ruses they can pull off. It is up to society, represented by government, to stop them, through the kind of regulation that has so far been lacking. But what puzzles and disgusts me even more than this failure is the willingness of universities to host research that helps advertisers hack our minds. The Enlightenment ideal, which all universities claim to endorse, is that everyone should think for themselves. So why do they run departments in which researchers explore new means of blocking this capacity?

I ask because, while considering the frenzy of consumerism that rises beyond its usual planet-trashing levels at this time of year, I recently stumbled across a paper that astonished me. It was written by academics at public universities in the Netherlands and the US. Their purpose seemed to me starkly at odds with the public interest. They sought to identify “the different ways in which consumers resist advertising, and the tactics that can be used to counter or avoid such resistance”.

Among the “neutralising” techniques it highlighted were “disguising the persuasive intent of the message”; distracting our attention by using confusing phrases that make it harder to focus on the advertiser’s intentions; and “using cognitive depletion as a tactic for reducing consumers’ ability to contest messages”. This means hitting us with enough advertisements to exhaust our mental resources,

breaking down our capacity to think.

Intrigued, I started looking for other academic papers on the same theme, and found an entire literature. There were articles on every imaginable aspect of resistance, and helpful tips on overcoming it. For example, I came across a paper that counsels advertisers on how to rebuild public trust when the celebrity they work with gets into trouble. Rather than dumping this lucrative asset, the researchers advised that the best means to enhance “the authentic persuasive appeal of a celebrity endorser” whose standing has slipped is to get them to display “a Duchenne smile”, otherwise known as “a genuine smile”. It precisely anatomised such smiles, showed how to spot them, and discussed the “construction” of sincerity and “genuineness”: a magnificent exercise in inauthentic authenticity.

Another paper considered how to persuade sceptical people to accept a company’s corporate social responsibility claims, especially when these claims conflict with the company’s overall objectives. (An obvious example is ExxonMobil’s attempts to convince people that it is environmentally responsible, because it is researching algal fuels that could one day reduce CO2 – even as it continues to pump millions of barrels of fossil oil a day). I hoped the paper would recommend that the best means of persuading people is for a company to change its practices. Instead, the authors’

47

Insights

research showed how images and statements could be cleverly combined to “minimise stakeholder scepticism”.

A further paper discussed advertisements that work by stimulating Fomo – fear of missing out. It noted that such ads work through “controlled motivation”, which is “anathema to wellbeing”. Fomo ads, the paper explained, tend to cause significant discomfort to those who notice them. It then went on to show how an improved understanding of people’s responses “provides the opportunity to

enhance the effectiveness of Fomo as a purchase trigger”. One tactic it proposed is to keep stimulating the fear of missing out, during and after the decision to buy. This, it suggested, will make people more susceptible to further ads on the same lines.

Yes, I know: I work in an industry that receives most of its income from advertising, so I am complicit in this too. But so are we all. Advertising – with its destructive impacts on the living planet, our peace of mind and our free will – sits at the heart of our growth-based economy. This

gives us all the more reason to challenge it. Among the places in which the challenge should begin are universities, and the academic societies that are supposed to set and uphold ethical standards. If they cannot swim against the currents of constructed desire and constructed thought, who can? **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*. Monbiot's web site is www.monbiot.com

BENDIB'S WORLD

Khalil Bendib / www.otherwords.org

48



An end to austerity: Give everyone a pay rise

And, while we're at it, let's enforce stricter regulation of the financial sector, writes **Englbert Stockhammer**

In 2018 real earnings were four percent below what they were in 2008 in the UK. The decade since the global financial crisis was a lost decade for British workers; their living standards have stagnated. Wages have not even kept up with inflation.

This is in sharp contrast to numerous decades before 2008. For example, from 1998 to 2008 wages, adjusted for inflation, grew by 25 percent. For most households, wages are the most important source of income, so they can only spend more if they run into debt. This creates a squeeze on living standards for workers and a skewed and unstable economy.

People cannot keep up their spending if their wages are not growing – unless they resort to borrowing. And this is what is happening in Britain. The UK household debt to income ratio is more than 150 percent. On average people's debt exceeds their yearly income. Recently, the UK's national statistics office reported, on average, each UK household spent around £900 more than they received in income in 2017. That amounts to almost £25-billion in deficit for households across the country.

Already before the 2007-08

financial crisis, British growth was based on debt. At that time, growth was fuelled by a house price boom and ballooning mortgage debt.

Since the crisis things have changed, but not fundamentally. In fact, mortgage debt has been declining since the crisis, but now consumer credit is expanding fast. Economists speak of debt-driven growth. This is where people need to borrow to get by. It is a reflection of falling wages, and the UK remains addicted to debt.

The basic point is that households can't spend on basic necessities (let alone luxury items) unless their wages are growing in line with economic growth. This is the essence of the idea of wage-led growth: wages should grow at least with inflation and average productivity growth. Today that would correspond to about four percent. In fact, wage growth is only half of that.

Higher wage growth is good for workers, but under current circumstances it is also healthy for the economy overall. Britain needs to be weaned off its addiction to debt. For that to happen people's incomes have to grow, and so wages have to grow. Higher wage growth will boost spending as most of people's

wages is spent in the form of consumption.

Plus, higher wage growth creates incentives for companies to upgrade their production processes because higher wage costs motivate firms to modernise machinery. Wage growth speeds up technological progress. A 10percent wage increase typically leads to 3-4 percent higher productivity.

There are many factors behind weak wage growth. Some of these are global: manufacturing firms can move production abroad where workers cost less. But much of it is homemade and a result of government policy and austerity, like weakening trade unions and allowing zero-hour contracts to spread.

The key to establishing a wage-led growth model is strengthening collective bargaining, labour unions and the rights of workers:

- Extend collective bargaining agreements to non-unionised firms.
- Encourage collective bargaining agreements in various sectors.
- Strengthen the right to strike for trade unions.
- Strengthen worker rights in the gig economy.
- End zero-hours contracts.
- Increase the minimum wage to keep pace with inflation and productivity growth.
- Link the pay of managers to their firm's performance and keep it in line with average wage growth.

Businesses might initially object, but employers will benefit

from the stable growth that this approach offers, even if in the short term they are reluctant to raise wages. Importantly, they stand to benefit the most from a coordinated pay rise across the economy because of the boost it brings to both productivity and demand. This also strengthens the case for the state to take the lead in coordinating – and even subsidising – wage-led growth. It could also lead by example by lifting the public sector pay freeze.

Wages going up for the working population is an effective way to end austerity and boost economic growth. But, for

austerity to end in the long term there must also be stricter regulation of the financial sector.

Only this will stop the underlying dependence on the debt-led growth model. **CT**

Engelbert Stockhammer is Professor of International Political Economy at King's College London. This article, which was first published by www.theconversation.com is part of a series published in conjunction with the Progressive Economy Forum, in which economists put forward viable alternatives to austerity.

unacceptable even the boycott of businesses operating in the illegal Jewish settlements in the Occupied West Bank puts it at odds with international law, and, subsequently with the vast majority of the international community.

But don't rush to judgement yet, condemning Texas for being the infamous and stereotypical "wild west", as portrayed even in the United States' own media. Indeed, Texas is but a small facet in a massive American government campaign aimed at stifling freedom of speech as enshrined in its country's own constitution.

25 US states have already passed anti-boycott of Israel legislation, or have issued executive orders targeting the boycott support networks, while other states are in the process of following suit. At a federal government level, the Congressional Israel Anti-boycott Act, which is being received with enthusiasm among US legislators, vows to fine and imprison those who boycott Israel.

While there is strong civil society opposition to such obvious violations of the basic tenets of freedom of speech, the pro-Israel campaigners are unhinged.

Texas – which has passed and enacted laws criminalising support for the boycott of Israel, as championed by the Palestinian Civil Society Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) – continues to lead the way for other states.

In the Texan town of Dickinson, which was devastated

50 Apartheid Israel or US democracy?

Is protecting Israeli Apartheid more important than preserving America's own democracy?, asks Ramzy Baroud

BAHIA Amawai is a US citizen and Texas-based language specialist who helps autistic and speech-impaired children overcome their impairment. Despite the essential nature of her work, she was fired by the Pflugerville Independent School District, which serves the Austin area.

Every year, Amawai signs an annual contract that allows her to carry on with her tasks uninterrupted. This year however, something changed.

Shockingly, the school district has decided to add a clause to the contract that requires

teachers and other employees to pledge not to boycott Israel "during the term of their contract".

The "oath" is now part of Section 2270.001 of the Texas Government Code, and it is stated in the contract:

"'Boycott Israel' means refusing to deal with, terminating business activities with, or otherwise taking any action that is intended to penalise, inflict economic harm on, or limit commercial relations specifically with Israel, or with a person or entity doing business in Israel or in Israeli-controlled territory...".

The fact that Texas considers

Insights

by Hurricane Harvey last year, hurricane victims were asked to sign a pledge not to boycott Israel in exchange for life-saving humanitarian aid.

It must have been a shock for displaced residents of the town to learn that the meager supplies they were about to receive hinged on their support of the far-right government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. But this is the sad state of democracy in the US at the moment, where the interests of a relatively small, distant country are made the centrepiece of US government policies, at home or abroad.

Israel's wealthy supporters are working with Israel's influential lobby groups in Washington DC, but also at state, and even city levels to make the boycott of Israel punishable by law. Many US politicians are answering the unreasonable lobby call of criminalising political dissent throughout the country. While many of them couldn't care less or even truly understand the nature of the debate concerning BDS, they are willing to go the extra mile (as in violating the sanctity of their own democratic system) to win lobby favours, or to, at least avoid their wrath.

The anti-BDS campaign started in the US in earnest a few years ago, and, unlike BDS's own tactics, it avoided grass-root efforts, focusing instead on quickly creating an official body of legal work that places boycotters of Israel in the dock.

Although the hastily composed legal language has been bravely challenged, and, at

times, reversed altogether by civil society lawyers and organizations, the Israeli strategy has managed to place BDS supporters on the defensive.

That limited success can be accredited to powerful friends of Israel who responded to Tel Aviv's war drums.

Las Vegas gambling mogul, Sheldon Adelson, took the helm of leadership. He moved into action, establishing the "Maccabee Task Force", which raised millions of dollars to fight against what Israeli officials define as an existential threat to Israel and the delegitimation of the country as a "Jewish state". A major strategy that the Israeli camp has advanced in the discussion is the misleading notion that BDS calls for the boycott of Jews, as opposed to the boycott of Israel as a state that violates international law and numerous United Nations resolutions.

A country that practices racism as a matter of course, defends racial segregation and builds Apartheid walls deserves nothing but complete boycott. That is the minimal degree of moral, political and legal accountability considering that the US, as other countries are obligated to honour and respect international law in that regard.

The US however, encouraged by the lack of accountability, continues to behave in the same manner as countries that Washington relentlessly attacks for their undemocratic behaviour and violation of human rights.

If such bizarre happenings – firing teachers and conditioning

aid on taking a political stance – took place in China, for example, Washington would have led an international campaign condemning Beijing's intransigence and violation of human rights.

Many Americans are yet to fathom how the United States' submission to Israel's political will is affecting their everyday life. But with more and more such legal restrictions, even ordinary Americans will soon find themselves fighting for basic political rights that, like Bahia Amawai, they have always taken for granted.

Sure, Israel may have succeeded in coercing some people not to openly vow support of BDS, but it will eventually lose this battle as well. Muffling the voices of civil society rarely works over long periods of time, and the anti-BDS campaign, now penetrating the very heart of US government, is bound to eventually resurrect a nationwide conversation.

Is protecting Israeli Apartheid more important to Americans than preserving the fundamental nature of their own democracy? That is a question that every American, regardless how they feel about a supposedly distant Middle Eastern conflict, must answer, and urgently so. **CT**

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