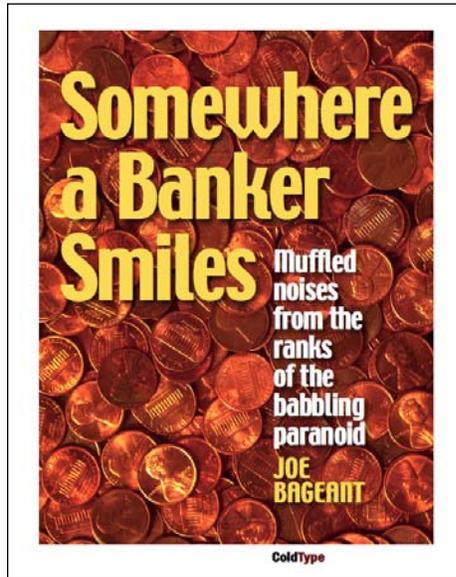


Somewhere a Banker Smiles

Muffled
noises
from the
ranks
of the
babbling
paranoid

**JOE
BAGEANT**

ColdType



Joe Bageant is the author of the forthcoming book, **Deer Hunting With Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War** from Random House Crown on working class America, to be released on April 24, 2007.

A complete archive of his online work, along with the thoughts of many working class Americans on the subject of class may be found at www.joebageant.com.

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JOE BAGEANT: SOMEWHERE A BANKER SMILES

IT'S HARD AS HELL to keep conspiracy theories out of one's mind these days. And I'm not talking about "Who really brought down the Twin Towers? or the "Are Zionists behind the Iraq War?" kind of stuff. The booger stalking my ragged old mind these days puts both of those in the shade. And it runs like this: Is the consumerist totalization of this country and the world really a conscious plot by a handful of powerful corporate and financial masters? If we answer "yes" we find ourselves trundled off toward the babbling ranks of the paranoid. Still though, it's easy enough to name those who would piss themselves with joy over the prospect of a One World corporate state, with billions of people begging to work for their 1,500 calories a day and an xBox chip in their necks. It's too bad our news media quit hunting with live ammo decades ago, leaving us with no one to track the activities and progress of what sure as hell seem to be global elites, judging from the financial spoor we find along every pathway of modern life.

In our saner moments we can also see that it does not take dark super-centralized plotting to pull off what appears to have been accomplished. Even without working in overt concert, a few thousands of dedicated individual corporate and financial interests can constitute a unified pathogenic whole, much the same as individual cells create a viable dominant colony of malignant organisms – malignant simply by their anti-human, anti-societal nature. We don't see GM, Halliburton, Burger King and CitiBank lobbying the state for universal health or clean rivers, do we? But mention unions or living wages, and the financial colony within our national Petri dish shifts into a Gila monster and squirts venom on the idea and shits money all over Capitol Hill. I looked at all this as coincidence for years until the proposition finally strained credulity so much that I threw in the towel and said, "Fuck it. There is only so much coincidence to go around in this world."

Put another way, the global decision makers, international planners, financial institutions, political parties, media conglomerates, corporations and banks is a hegemonic, accumulative bloc that is working in concert to coordinate the extraction of

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wealth from first and third world alike. A series of privately held international institutions to which and from which money can be moved to leverage nations and populations according to their needs is probably gonna do just that because they can. National territory doesn't mean shit to such people, and those who govern said territory mean even less, except to the extent they can obstruct or incite resistance: People like Castro and Chavez. But even they are they are just the thorn in the lion's paw.

Consider this: The war in Iraq has been immensely profitable for the people who make weapons, and for the contractors who supposedly rebuild what the weapons destroy. They profit in either case. And the longer war goes on the more they will make.

Meanwhile, the money for both is obtained through extraction practiced upon the world's laboring poor. But the big money, the "juice" as street people used to say, comes from squeezing the orange of American society for more work, more production and more tax money. Some of us older oranges are feeling pretty wrung out these days and are getting hard as hell to get along with. Yet, the squeeze doesn't seem to bother most Americans at all. The pressure has been so great and so constant that no one any longer feels it. It has become so pervasive as to be incomprehensible to ordinary people. For example, seventy cents of every income-tax dollar goes to pay for past, present, and future wars. Education gets two cents. As Michael Parenti has pointed out, the cost of military aircraft parts and ammunition kept in storage by the Pentagon is greater than the combined federal spending on pollution control, conservation, community development, housing, occupational safety, and mass transportation put together. And the US Navy spends more money in its never ending development of a submarine rescue vehicle than is spent for public libraries, occupational safety, and daycare centers combined.

Collectively, these financial super-elites, who either do or do not exist, must be at least somewhat aware that they are managing the world. Otherwise, why would we have Davos conferences and such? Are global financial conferences where the likes of Bill Clinton and Al Gore and John Kerry are merely the entertainment, mere proof of the attendants' prestige? Can it be true that the world's real players practically yawned at Alan Greenspan's cryptic little speeches while waiting for the backstage action with the real movers and shakers from Goldman, Citibank and others, none of whom we have ever heard of but never the less are said to account for the drop

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in gas prices in the U.S. just prior to the 2006 mid-term elections? Word has it that they changed the index last July so oil futures holders would be forced to dump in October and November, creating a mild glut during the elections. If that is true, then we can probably thank them for that recent Dow 12,000, too.

Meanwhile, back in Camp Davos, the lustful, pathologically approval seeking, bright student teddy bear from Hope, Arkansas expounds and entertains the new global elites. And everyone has Beluga caviar and chopped hardboiled quail eggs afterward, even as more than one billion people live on less than one dollar a day. “And have you tried the unborn calf veal poached in Peruvian sheep’s milk at the Swiss bank suite? It’s to die for!” Nobody is remotely worried about blowback from that billion people eating moldy cassava or rice polluted with rat urine, because poverty, well, poverty is not a threat, is it? Just a source of cheaper labor. “Now, about the oil crude taps and NYMEX . . . “

Personally, I’ve decided they are real and that they constitute an unseen class, and that they are mid-stage in becoming the most powerful class the earth has ever seen. One that American politicians not only refuse to publicly acknowledge, but when pressed, flatly swear does not exist. Show me the Republican or Democratic leader who says, “Politics is economics by other means, and our own Federal Reserve Bank is a privately held institution, not a governmental one, and is an interlocking part of the global financial network which owes allegiance to no country or ordinary citizens, regardless of nationality.” Or, “My corporate campaign contributions come from people whose every action is directed at extracting two things from you, my dear voter: Your money and the cheapest possible labor you can be driven to provide. The absolute cheapest possible payment to you for the hours of your life consumed by work, which, depending upon the degree of your delusion, is called either a job or an exciting career.”

No American politician is going to admit that. You must go to Venezuela or the smoldering dumps of Manilla or fields of Chiapas to hear that sort of truth.

Admittedly, there is at least some reason for fear among these elites. The US economy, the real material economy, is dreadfully weak, having been so gutted by parasitic speculation. The only source of strength left here is the military, which is currently at play in an effort to gain control of the world’s energy supply, and make damned sure no one gets any funny ideas about using anything but dollars in trading oil. But the real players say, “Well then, let the Americans keep it if they can! If

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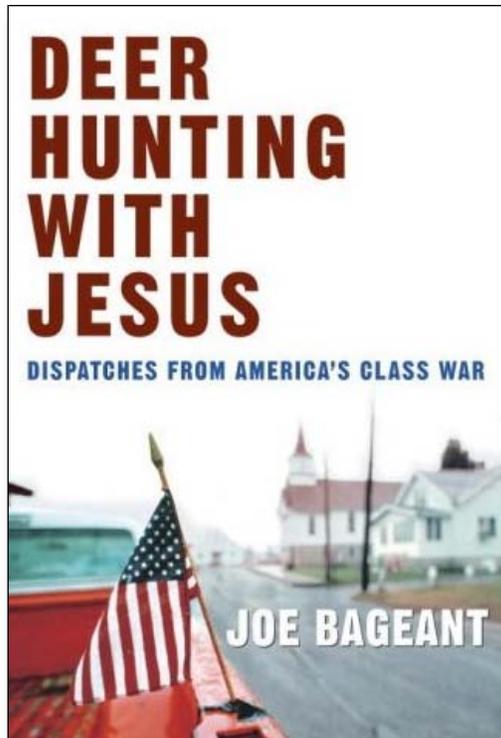
the U.S. loses, then someone else wins. No matter. We can leverage our position from any emerging market point on the globe. And doesn't China look like a real comer, old boy! History is long. The Chinese understand that." Thus we find the Chinese creating joint American holding companies to buy up commercial US real estate at bottom dollar after the crash. At some future point it could neatly offset their current loans to US for more consumption of Chinese goods. And if the Americans get too pissy, the Chinese can always turn off the money spigot.

On the other hand, this monstrous class of parasites has not yet won over the entire world. America seems to be their only complete victory, and that one will hold only as long as superheated consumption can be sustained. They have only been at it for maybe forty years, and are still pouring the foundation for the global gulag, setting the rules as they go. And they are hitting at least a few speed bumps: "Why is Castro still stinking up the joint, fer godzsake? And now we've got that friggin mexi-nigger dwarf Evo Morales in his goddamned stinky little dime store sweater strutting around like he was president or something. And why inna hell hasn't somebody smoked these bastards? Doesn't the CIA do anything for their paychecks anymore?"

Probably not. Last we heard the CIA was sidelined, sent to the benches until they come up with those goddamned weapons of mass destruction.

Meanwhile, a Chinese economist calculates the US trade deficit. A Swisse Bank exec orders another bottle of wine, and a Shia youth receives instruction in how to blow up an oil pipeline.

Only the Chinaman and the bank exec are smiling.



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