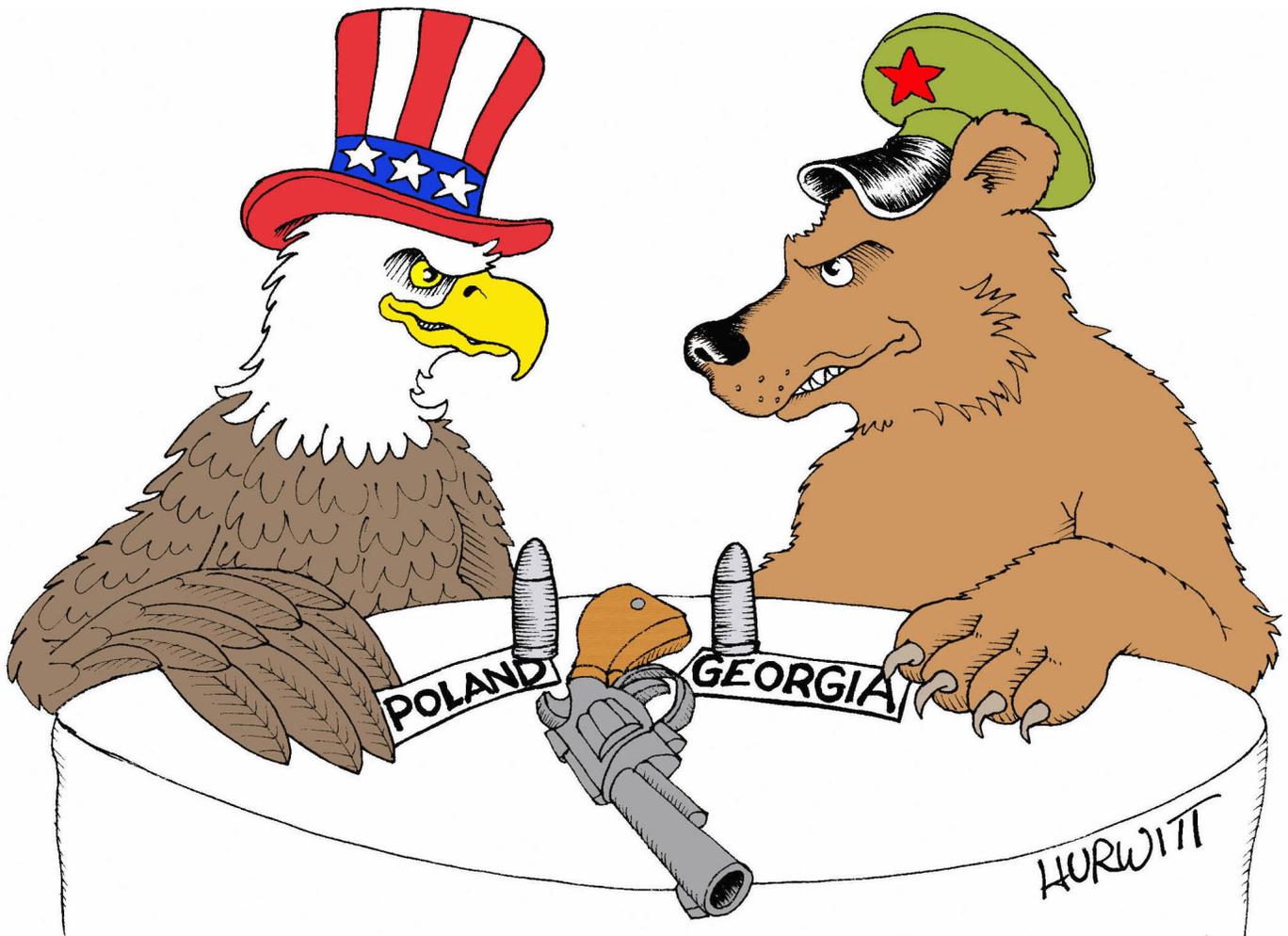


INSIDE: BOATLOADS OF TROUBLE ● WHEN THE ROBOCOPS TAKE OVER ● FEARING THE FIST ● THE MAGIC PUDDING ● TOWNSHIP PATROL

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Russian Roulette

Commentary by **David Michael Green**, **George Monbiot** and **William Blum**

The ColdType READER



Editor: Tony Sutton
(editor@coldtype.net)

Cover: Mark Hurwitt

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ISSUE 30 | SEPTEMBER 2008

- | | | |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 3. | DOCTRINE MEETS REALITY; REALITY WINS | David Michael Green |
| 8. | EVERY MOVE YOU MAKE | Chellis Glendinning |
| 10. | MURDEROUS THEATRE OF THE ABSURD | John Pilger |
| 12. | TOWNSHIP PATROL | Kenichi Serino |
| 15. | BOATLOADS OF TROUBLE | Stan Cox |
| 20. | ENGELS AND THE WHO REPORT | Susan Rosenthal |
| 26. | HURWITT'S EYE | Mark Hurwitt |
| 27. | BAGHDAD ON THE MISSISSIPPI | Ray McGovern |
| 31. | HOMER SIMPSON WITHOUT THE DONUT | Greg Palast |
| 33. | WHEN THE ROBOCOPS TAKE OVER | William John Cox |
| 42. | ONLY IN AMERICA | Rory O'Connor |
| 42. | FEARING THE FIST | Dave Zirin |
| 47. | OBAMA-BIDEN, OSAMA BIN LADEN | William Blum |
| 53. | THE MAGIC PUDDING | George Monbiot |
| 56. | TWO LITTLE BOYS, UNITED IN MISERY | Ramzy Baroud |
| 58. | OUTPOSTS SEAL DEATH OF PALESTINIAN STATE | Jonathan Cook |
| 61. | AMERICA'S WAR MOVES TO PAKISTAN | Tariq Ali |
| 64. | 10 STUPID THINGS ABOUT THE ELECTION | Allan Uthman |

Doctrine meets reality; reality wins

My army went to Iraq and all I got was this lousy airlift,
writes **David Michael Green**

The thing about Katrina was that you could see the results right away, so that even famously ignorant and deluded Americans finally began the process of understanding their president.

The thing about Iraq is that it's taken a bit longer.

True, some of it began to be painfully obvious, even relatively early on. For example, when an absurdly arrogant president, whose preening was matched only by his gross incompetence, stood on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln to declare victory in a war which essentially hadn't even begun yet. It wasn't long before people began to notice that the mission wasn't exactly, er, accomplished.

But even today, five years later, we are only beginning to take stock of the consequences of neocon hubris. For anyone paying sufficient attention to make the connections, we got a whopping dose of that reality in August as Maximum Leader Putin did his Vlad the Impaler trick on the tiny neighboring republic of Georgia.

Surely this will be seen by almost everyone as a wholly separate affair from the Iraq invasion. And, indeed, idiotic neocon commentators – the same people, mind you, who brought us the Iraq debacle – are already haplessly foaming at the mouth about Russian aggression in the

Caucuses, demonstrating as always, but now more emphatically than ever, how irony and hypocrisy coexist so comfortably in the (puffed out) regressive chest.

In fact, Iraq and the Georgia war are joined at the hip in too many ways to recount, and must be understood as just such. Altogether, we are now beginning to see the consequences of the Bush Doctrine of foreign policy in all its full glory. And if you liked Katrina, you're really gonna dig this.

It was, to start with, remarkably jaw-dropping to see the buffoon-in-chief fulminating this week about Russia's transgressions in violating the prime directive of modern international law and politics: Thou shalt not invade another sovereign state's territory. Um, excuse me? Are you freaking joking? Do you mean like, Iraq, for instance? Only George W. Bush could be so practiced in the art of deception so as to say this with a straight face. It's not clear that he any longer even knows when he's lying these days, so routine has it become.

In fact, the two incidents are nearly identical in concept, with the minor exception that Putin's war was slightly more justified by the semi-reckless quasi-provocations of Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, who was likely egged on by the Bush loonies and other neocons, in-

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LORDS OF WAR

Now America learns that there is a cost to playing the game of international politics unilaterally, and with contempt for other countries. That cost is that they will return the favor

cluding one of John McCain's top advisors. Iraq, alas, was even more of a false pretext. The country had no weapons of mass destruction (and so what if they did, anyhow? – dozens of countries possess these), Bush knew they didn't, knew that the case for war was "thin", knew that Saddam had not attacked nor threatened us, and therefore just plain lied the US into the war.

Your average American is going to have a hard time seeing the Iraq war as morally equivalent to the one in Georgia (let alone even less justified), but that is simply because he or she is American. The rest of the world has no such problem, and never has. An invasion of a sovereign state is an invasion of a sovereign state, pure and simple.

It was just that when Hitler invaded Poland and France, when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, when Saddam invaded Iran (with US encouragement and assistance) and Kuwait, when Bush invaded Iraq, and when Putin invaded Georgia. Of course aggressors are going to make up some bullshit about terrorism or WMD or democracy! My god, what would we expect them to say? Everyone understands that you can't say you're going in for oil or money or real estate anymore. Especially when you are in fact going in for oil or money or real estate.

Neoccon lies

What the Georgia invasion has demonstrated is how much moral authority has been sacrificed on the altar of neoccon lies and state-sponsored violence in Iraq. Today, when such soft power might have the capacity to make a difference in leading a global response to Russian aggression, Bush would be lucky to have zero credits in his account. In fact, there's about as much in there as there is in the national treasury, now rapidly approaching \$10 trillion in the red (a doubling, by the way, during the Bush years, of all the

debt accrued by all 42 of his predecessors – combined – over more than two centuries). All that is over and kaput, at least until America gets a new president and, hopefully, as well, the kind graces of an international society that has every right to be outraged at our violent petulance.

Even if we get that lucky, what has been lost in the normative sense is far larger than just American respect and soft power influence.

For the decade or two following the end of the Cold War, people might have been excused for believing that a new phase in the evolution of the international political system had been realized, one in which, while plenty of injustices would remain, at least the worst excesses of great power aggression seemed a vestige of twentieth century practice and eighteenth century mentality. That fantasy has now been put violently to rest, as the two greatest powers on the planet have returned to playing the great game with a vengeance, preying on lesser powers in pursuit of resources, strategic positioning or just plain national pride.

Now America learns that there is a cost to playing the game of international politics unilaterally, and with contempt for other countries. That cost is that they will return the favor. When you want help as your military bogs down in some insane quagmire, you find that they tend to remember when you yourself simply blew off the Security Council because you couldn't get the votes. When you're seeking to uphold a general principle such as nonaggression, you shouldn't be surprised that they remember you calling them all "cheese-eating surrender monkeys" when they were busy trying to block your aggression.

But it's not just soft power that has been squandered either. Theoretically, the US and its allies could be checking Russian aggression and its breach of the peace and of international law right now by deploying forces to defend one of

America's (or at least Bush's) most devoted allies, and a rare outpost of something approximating democracy in that part of the world.

Theoretically, American forces could be defending George W. Bush Boulevard in downtown Tbilisi from the invading northern armies right now. Theoretically.

In the cold, hard reality of the real world, no such forces exist. Now we find out that those who argued that putting 160,000 American soldiers in a completely unnecessary war in Iraq, while already fighting a tenacious enemy in Afghanistan would, among other grave concerns, potentially diminish American and world security should a real emergency come along, weren't just making it up. In fact, it's very likely that this disastrous scenario goes considerably deeper than that.

Bush didn't just create a power vacuum that would be there in the event some sort of spontaneous emergency might simultaneously occur. Very likely, the American military impotence which emerged from his grand blunder in Mesopotamia may well have actually invited just such an episode.

Running wild

It's hard to imagine that it didn't occur to Putin, presiding over a renascent Russia, that he could run wild wherever he wanted while the world's only superpower was tied down in a useless war, and its public exhausted with the prospect of taking on any other such projects. It's equally hard to imagine that Putin was quaking in his boots when the pathetic excuse for an American Secretary of State tried to lecture him by announcing that "This is not 1968 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia where Russia can threaten a neighbor, occupy a capital, overthrow a government and get away with it. Things have changed."

My guess is that he thought to himself, "Da. Things have indeed changed, Condoleeza Phukupalot. You Yankees

have foolishly squandered your military power in Iraq and now I can do whatever I want with total impunity." Yo, Condi – have you heard? The road to Tbilisi runs right through Baghdad.

Certainly the Georgians appreciate this. They had more troops in Iraq supporting Bush's Folly than any country besides the US and the UK. The administration at least had the good graces to airlift these forces back to somewhere where there was a real war going on, over real security issues, where their presence would really matter.

But pity the poor Georgians, nevertheless, who bet on the wrong horse. They could have learned a lot by talking to the Kurds and Shiites of Iraq, who rose up on the instructions of the last Bush in the White House, only to be slaughtered by Saddam while American forces literally stood by watching, under command from the White House not to save those chess pieces, er, I mean, lives.

And, quite possibly, Georgia is just the beginning. Russia is now feeling its oats, just as the toxic combination of nationalist pride and rage at perceived prior humiliation goes coursing through its veins. What do you suppose they're thinking in Ukraine or Kazakhstan or the Baltic states right now? I don't know, but I'd bet it's not dissimilar to what the Poles were thinking when Hitler swallowed up Czechoslovakia.

There is no disincentive now on the table to prevent the Russians from reannexing their 'near abroad', and there will be no American rescue if they do, just as there wasn't for Poland.

In this respect, it was only slightly less laughable and slightly less ironic to hear neocon par excellence and Iraq war architect Robert Kagan on the radio this week arguing for punishing the Russians by tossing them out of the meaningless G-8 talk shop and the similarly nearly worthless cooperative institutions set-up for Russian relations with NATO and

Now we find out that those who argued that putting 160,000 American soldiers in a completely unnecessary war in Iraq, while already fighting a tenacious enemy in Afghanistan would, among other grave concerns, potentially diminish American and world security should a real emergency come along, weren't just making it up

LORDS OF WAR

These are the same sort of people, mind you, who derided the conservative ‘realists’ of the previous century for their timidity in merely containing the Russian bear, rather than launching World War III in order to roll back Soviet territorial gains in Eastern Europe and beyond

the EU. Wow, Bobby, that will really peel them back, won't it? That's right, Bro – ya gotta sting 'em hard, man! How about a ban on caviar next, eh? Let's hit 'em where it really hurts!

If you ever needed a sign of how far the US has fallen under neocon stewardship, this is it. Kagan was one of the principals in the now (very) defunct Project for a New American Century, an organization whose name tells you just about everything you ever needed to know about these clowns.

Why they didn't just go with Project for Imperial Sickness and Subjugation, I'll never know, but maybe the resulting acronym would have been too obnoxious even for these walking personifications of Yankee arrogance. Anyhow, PNAC was an attempt to demonstrate just how bullying America could be, by advocating for the invasion of Iraq, going all the way back to the Clinton era. Once they finally found a president who would actually do the deed, it then became a successful attempt at demonstrating how stupid the country could be, as well.

Of course, people like this absolutely never admit to being wrong, even (especially?) when they are at their most egregiously erroneous, and it probably doesn't help that the American media continues to feature them on broadcasts as experts of some sort, as if they have any clue whatsoever of what they're talking about.

Damaged US power

But the truth is that the Georgia episode demonstrates nothing more clearly than just how seriously these hypernationalists have actually damaged American military power and world security. These are the same sort of people, mind you, who derided the conservative 'realists' of the previous century for their timidity in merely containing the Russian bear, rather than launching World War III in order to roll back Soviet territorial gains

in Eastern Europe and beyond. The kind of folks who thought they were hot shit because they got Reagan to 'liberate' Grenada, that vast and strategically crucial chunk of the Soviet empire. The kind of people who don't have to bother doing their homework because they just govern from the gut, allowing them to look into someone's eyes and see right down to his soul.

Now look what they've wrought. Iraq is an open wound that shows little sign of healing anytime soon. It was supposed to be a kick-ass little blowout that would easily secure a slew of bases in the region, buckets of oil, Bush's domestic agenda (along the lines of selling off Social Security, etc.), and put the fear of a real god into the hearts of heathen Iranians, Syrians and Palestinians, as well as perhaps your odd Cuban or Venezuelan to boot. Instead, Colin Powell has described the US Army as "broken", and that was years ago.

It's certainly that, plus stuck, plus completely maxed-out, short of a draft, which neither Bush nor McCain would dare attempt. American soft power – the ability to lead, to persuade, to appeal to higher moral convictions of others – is now similarly in the toilet. And thus it is that the neocons of the world have traded a disaster in Iraq for the inability to even do that which they once derided as inappropriately minimalist in the past – protect allies from Russian imperialism.

Of course, that's only the beginning of the stupidity. How is it, by the by, that Russia went from being a former superpower on the way toward becoming a third world country – so severely flattened that the very life span of its citizens had decreased by some ten years or so – to now racing back toward becoming a global great power again, and a very pissed off one at that?

Well, one good explanation would certainly have to do with how the US reacted as the country was imploding in

the 1990s. Rather than reaching out with Marshall Plan type assistance, we sent an army of right-wing economists instead, who advised privatizing everything in sight. Which they largely did, and largely to disastrous consequences. One of Putin's achievements has been to regain the primacy of the state, and bring the hammer down on the latter-day robber barons who were formerly carting it off, piece by petro piece. In doing so, he has restored a measure of Russian dignity following the humiliation of the triumphalist US fire-sale treatment, and along with that comes no small degree of national pride at humbling exploitive and supremely arrogant Americans.

These sentiments were only further exacerbated by the expansion of NATO deep into the traditional Russian sphere of influence, and the unilateral American scrapping of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in order to pursue the military-industrial complex's greatest boondoggle ever, a missile 'defense' system, now being deployed in Eastern Europe.

Lastly, as if antagonizing a potential enemy wasn't stupid enough, the bright candles in charge of American foreign policy have done so while completely failing to significantly wean the country off of our petroleum addiction, all while driving up prices dramatically. Hey, guess who's got a whole ocean of oil at their disposal? Guess which country is growing rich and powerful because of that? Guess who is able to throw its political weight around based on this economic power?

If you were wondering a few weeks

ago how the buffoons in charge of American foreign policy could possibly screw it up any worse than they already had, now you know. If you were pondering whether the results of America's invasion of Iraq could conceivably get more disastrous than they have been for the last five and a half years, look no further.

For the neocon fantasy has now not only wrecked Iraq and wrecked America and wrecked US relations with longtime allies and destroyed the reputation of America abroad. It has also torn a gaping hole in the power and significance of international law and the hopeful notion that wars of territorial acquisition were a thing of the past.

And it opened the door for the Russians to do precisely the same thing, further exacerbating those tendencies. The post-Cold War moment of hopefulness regarding a more peaceful world has now been crushed, and it wasn't the supposed black hats who originally kicked down that door. It was us nice, peace-loving, god-fearing, law-abiding folks here in good old 'Murica who did it.

With apologies to Churchill (who owes an apology or two of his own), it may be said of our time, and of the those in charge of running the world's only superpower, that never have so many been so damaged by the insanely stupid actions of so few. **CT**

David Michael Green is a professor of political science at Hofstra University in New York. More of his work can be found at his website www.regressiveantidote.net and at www.coldtype.net/green.html

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Read the best of
DAVID MICHAEL GREEN
<http://coldtype.net/green.html>

Every move you make

Chellis Glendinning looks at the effects of increasing use of surveillance technology in our lives

The system has quickly lunged beyond its less-than-democratic agrarian roots to become a mass urban society that, with distinct 1984 flavorings, could be called techno-fascism

Surveillance of private calls and emails. Cameras documenting every move. No habeas corpus. Unimpeded entry into personal financial records. Voting machines changing election outcomes with the flick of a switch. Protest defined as terrorism. Many people hope that the loss of civil rights Americans have endured since the onslaughts mounted by Bush Administration II is a political reality that can be reversed through electoral will.

Established mechanisms of political power are, of course, the immediately available means for attempting change. Notions of citizens' rights, freedom, and democratic participation are compelling paradigms that have consistently stirred the bravery of U.S. citizens – and yet elder political scientist Sheldon Wolin, who taught the philosophy of democracy for five decades, sees the current predicament of corporate-government hegemony as something more endemic.

“Inverted totalitarianism,” as he calls it in his recent *Democracy Incorporated*, “lies in wielding total power without appearing to, without establishing concentration camps, or enforcing ideological uniformity, or forcibly suppressing dissident elements so long as they remain ineffectual.” To Wolin, such a form of political power makes the United States

“the showcase of how democracy can be managed without appearing to be suppressed.”

Wolin rightfully points out that the origins of U.S. governance were “born with a bias against democracy,” and yet the system has quickly lunged beyond its less-than-democratic agrarian roots to become a mass urban society that, with distinct 1984 flavorings, could be called techno-fascism. The role of technology is the overlooked piece of the puzzle of the contemporary political conundrum.

What are its mechanisms of control? The use of telecommunications technologies for surveillance is obvious. So are willful alteration of computer data for public reportage, manipulation of television news for opinion-shaping, and use of microwave-emitting weapons for crowd control. Less obvious are what could be called “inverted mechanization” whereby citizens blindly accept the march of technological development as an expression of a very inexact, some would say erroneous, concept of “progress.”

One mechanism propagating such blindness is the U.S. government's invisible role as regulatory handmaiden to industry, offering little-to-no means for citizen determination of what technologies are disseminated; instead we get whatever GMOs and nuclear plants cor-

porations dish out.

A glaring example is the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that, seeking to not repeat the “errors” of the nuclear industry, offers zero public input as to health or environmental impacts of its antennae, towers, and satellites – the result being that the public has not a clue about the very real biological effects of electromagnetic radiation. Inverted mechanization is thrust forward as well by unequal access to resources: corporations lavishly crafting public opinion and mounting limitless legal defenses versus citizen groups who may be dying from exposure to a dangerous technology but whose funds trickle in from bake sales.

In his *Autonomous Technology: Technics-Out-Of-Control as a Theme in Political Thought*, political scientist Langdon Winner points out that, to boot, the artifacts themselves have grown to such magnitude and complexity that they define popular conception of necessity. Witness the “need” to get to distant locales in a few hours or enjoy instantaneous communication.

Even less obvious a mechanism of public control is the technological inversion that results from the fact that, as filmmaker Godfrey Reggio puts it, “We don’t use technology, we live it.” Like fish in water we cannot consider modern artifacts as separate from ourselves and so cannot admit that they exist.

Social critic Lewis Mumford was among the first to make sense of the systemic nature of technology. In *The Pentagon of Power*, he identified the underlying metaphor of mass civilizations as the megamachine. The assembly line – of factory, home, education, agriculture, medicine, consumerism, entertainment. The machine – centralizing decision-making and control. The mechanical – fragmenting every act until its relationship to the whole is lost; insisting upon the pre-determined role of each region, each community, each individual.

Mumford deftly peels away false hope from a social reality based on principles of centralization, control, and efficiency. In 1962 he peered into the future and saw the pentagon of power incarnate: “a more voluminous productivity, augmented by almost omniscient computers and a wider range of antibiotics and inoculations, with a greater control over our genetic inheritance, with more complex surgical operations and transplants, with an extension of automation to every form of human activity.”

Inverted totalitarianism is both inverted and totalitarian because of the power of modern mass technological systems to shape and control social realities, just as they shape and control individual understandings of those realities. Its contemporary existence is most definitely the result of the efforts of a group of right-wing fundamentalists who hurled themselves into power through devious means – but today’s desperate social inequities, dire ecological predicament, and fascist politics are the offspring of long-evolving technological centralization and control as well.

The challenge is to see the whole and all its parts, not just the shiny new device that purports to make one’s individual life easier or sexier – which in itself is a contributor to the making of political disengagement. The whole is a megamachine, with you and your liquid TV, Blackberry, and Prius necessary cogs.

Forging a survivable world is indeed going to take a change of administration – for starters. The terrifying reality that is mass technological society suggests more: radical techno-socio-economic reorganization, and to that end spring visions informed by the indigenous worlds we all hail from, the regionalism of Mumford’s day, and today’s bioregionalism. Or visions of the forced localization that Peak Oil, economic collapse, climate change, and ecological devastation propose.

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Chellis Glendinning is the author of six books, including *Off the Map: An Expedition Deep into Empire and the Global Economy*; *My Name Is Chellis and I’m in Recovery from Western Civilization*; and the forthcoming *Luddite.com: A Personal History of Technology*

CT

Murderous theatre of the absurd

John Pilger examines news as parody as the British media seek to justify the official versions of the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan

Last month, “our” aircraft slaughtered nearly 100 civilians, two-thirds of them children between the ages of three months and 16 years, while they slept, according to eyewitnesses

Try to laugh, please. The news is now officially parody and a game for all the family to play. First question: Why are “we” in Afghanistan? Answer: “To try to help in the country’s rebuilding programme.” Who says so? Huw Edwards, the BBC’s principal newsreader. What wags the Welsh are.

Second question: Why are “we” in Iraq? Answer: To “plant a western-style open democracy”. Who says so? Paul Wood, the former BBC defence correspondent, and his boss Helen Boaden, director of BBC News. To prove her point, Boaden supplied Medialens.org with 2,700 words of quotations from Tony Blair and George W Bush. Irony? No, she meant it.

Take Andrew Martin, divisional adviser at BBC Complaints, who has been researching Bush’s speeches for “evidence” of noble democratic reasons for laying to waste an ancient civilisation. Says he: “The ‘D’ word is not there, but the phrase ‘united, stable and free’ [is] clearly an allusion to it.” After all, he says, the invasion of Iraq “was launched as ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom’”. Moreover, says the BBC man, “in Bush’s 1 May 2003 speech (the one on the aircraft carrier) he talked repeatedly about freedom and explicitly about the Iraqi transition to democracy .

.. These examples show that these were on Bush’s mind before, during and after the invasion.”

Try to laugh, please.

Laughing may be difficult, I agree, given the slaughter of civilians in Afghanistan by “coalition” aircraft, including those directed by British forces engaged in “the country’s rebuilding programme”. The bombing of civilian areas has doubled, along with the deaths of civilians, says Human Rights Watch. Last month, “our” aircraft slaughtered nearly 100 civilians, two-thirds of them children between the ages of three months and 16 years, while they slept, according to eyewitnesses. BBC television news initially devoted nine seconds to the Human Rights Watch report, and nothing to the fact that “less than peanuts” (according to an aid worker) is being spent on rebuilding anything in Afghanistan.

As for the notion of a “united, stable and free” Iraq, consider the no-bid contracts handed to the major western oil companies for ownership of Iraq’s oil. “Theft” is a more truthful word. Written by the companies themselves and US officials, the contracts have been signed off by Bush and Nouri al-Maliki, “prime minister” of Iraq’s “democratic” government that resides in an air-conditioned American fortress. This is not news.

Try to laugh, please, while you consider the devastation of Iraq's health, once the best in the Middle East, by the ubiquitous dust from British and US depleted uranium weapons. A World Health Organisation study reporting a cancer epidemic has been suppressed, says its principal author. This has been reported in Britain only in the Glasgow *Sunday Herald* and the [Communist] *Morning Star*. According to a study last year by Basra University Medical College, almost half of all deaths in the contaminated southern provinces were caused by cancer.

Clap-happy Nurembergs

Try to laugh, please, at the recent happy-clappy Nurembergs from which will come the next president of the United States. Those paid to keep the record straight have strained to present a spectacle of choice. Barack Obama, the man of "change", wants to "build a 21st-century military . . . to stay on the offensive everywhere". Here comes the new Cold War, with promises of more bombs, more of the militarised society with its 730 bases worldwide, on which Americans spend 42 cents of every tax dollar.

At home, Obama offers no authentic measure that might ease America's gro-

tesque inequality, such as basic health care. John McCain, his Republican opponent, may well be a media cartoon figure – the fake "war hero" now joined with a Shakespeare-banning, gun-loving, religious fanatic – yet his true significance is that he and Obama share essentially the same dangerous prescriptions.

Thousands of decent Americans came to the two nominating conventions to express the dissenting opinion of millions of their compatriots who believe, with good cause, that their democracy is evaporating. They were intimidated, arrested, beaten, pepper-gassed; and they were patronised or ignored by those paid to keep the record straight.

In the meantime, Justin Webb, the BBC's North America editor, has launched a book about America, his "city on a hill". It is a sort of Mills & Boon view of the rapacious system he admires with such obsequiousness. The book is called *Have a Nice Day*.

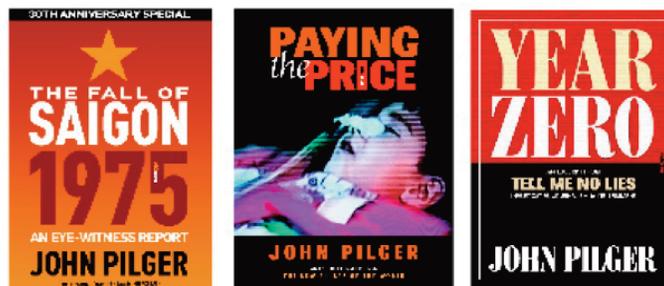
Try to laugh, please.

CT

John Pilger's latest book, Freedom Next Time, is now out in paperback. His new movie is The War on Democracy. This essay first appeared in the New Statesman

Here comes the new Cold War, with promises of more bombs, more of the militarised society with its 730 bases worldwide, on which Americans spend 42 cents of every tax dollar

READ THE BEST OF JOHN PILGER



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

Township patrol

In a note to friends back home in the United States, **Kenichi Serino** provides a frightening glimpse into recent attacks against foreigners in South Africa's townships

In addition to the whipping, the police fired rubber bullets seemingly at random. I couldn't tell you why they might shoot at two women in a blanket but allowed middle-age man to pass

After reading reports of xenophobic mobs looting, burning and killing, some of you have inquired about my safety and the general state of Johannesburg. The past week has been one of normalcy and violence, and normalcy in violence. I apologize in advance if this note seems formless or contradictory. It's just my state of mind and the hasty manner in which I wrote.

Last Thursday I was meant to get a lift from my friend Natasha. When I met her at my university she told me that there would be a change of plans. She and Merel, a Dutch journalism intern, would be going to a township called Diepsloot where xenophobic violence was occurring. They were going alone and against their editor's wishes. Merel was particularly keen as covering violence and mayhem was, I believe, part of her motivation for visiting South Africa.

I could go with them or they would drop me at home. Of course I opted to go, while asking myself whether I was acting as a journalist or a 'danger tourist'. I rationalized that I'd find something after I got there. Diepsloot is Afrikaans for 'Deep standing water'. It's extremely poor, even by township standards, often floods and hosts a population that tends to be transient. Particularly immigrants.

We parked near the police station and caught a ride in a van into Diepsloot ext. 7 with the police. Merel had suggested that we ask for bulletproofs but there wasn't time for that. The previous two days had seen clashes between the mobs and police in Alexandra township. Rocks and live ammunition on one side and rubber bullets on the other. The police weren't taking any chances in Diepsloot. As the van moved into the township, it would occasionally stop and a cop jump out to whip some passer-by.

An actual fucking whip.

Who issues whips as police equipment?

In addition to the whipping, the police fired rubber bullets seemingly at random. I couldn't tell you why they might shoot at two women in a blanket but allowed a middle-age man to pass. The police would only say that they were shooting 'criminals'.

"How do you know those are criminals?"

"Because they have been looting."

"How do you know they have been looting?"

"They are criminals."

He wasn't being entirely disingenuous. Many of the best targets for criminals are the prosperous shop owners who tend to be foreigners, particularly Somalis.

Doubtless, there was some taking advantage of xenophobia for the purposes of simple looting. At any rate, the police response was the same.

It seemed that their strategy was to terrorize residents into staying into their homes, something they were largely successful at. As the night wore on, the cops began searching out for a gang that was looting and burning. We were told the gang was using live ammunition. I don't know whether I heard any or whether I was hearing the echo of the rubber bullets. But, intoxicated by the possibility of danger, I convinced myself there were bullets.

When you're following the police, possibly getting shot at, into a cramped, unlit township that even in the best of times is rife with violent crime, an odd calculus takes hold of you. Staying too close to the cops seems suicidal. After all, aren't they the targets? Standing too far back and away from their protection seems foolish. After all, isn't this the township?

I was determined to do interviews, and so I, with Natasha, left the safety of the police to speak to the few residents who had come out of hiding. They didn't know who was doing the attacks. They didn't hear gunfire, except for the police. Natasha and I walked back to the rendezvous point, forcing conversation along the way. We could feel eyes on us and knew we were out of place but neither of us mentioned this. It was as though speaking it would invite misfortune.

Throughout the night, the cops played a game of cat and mouse with the gangs. We crossed barricades made of massive garbage bins and burning garbage and heard singing, cheering and the occasional (real)gun shot ahead of us. But where were they? Running from barricade to barricade we were only rewarded with empty lots. The phantoms were gone, but not far. Anytime we left one area, an unseen gang member would whistle and bang on sheet metal, signalling his

compatriots. The police were reduced to firing rubber bullets at a whistle in the dark and arresting any young man unfortunate enough to be walking the dirt paths of the township.

I saw one of these young men get handcuffed. Then slapped by the police repeatedly. Every blow sounded like more gunshots. I told myself I was doing enough merely by being there I needn't say anything to the officer and intervention isn't my job as a journalist. True enough. But it's not only truth. I was afraid to confront the cop. I was afraid to be drawn any further into the madness of the situation. And most of all, afraid to alienate the police on whom my own safety depended. So this kid who was in the wrong place at the wrong got beat. And I just watched.

As Natasha, Merel and I were leaving Diepsloot, an odd comfort bordering on haughtiness took me. Of course I went, what was there to fear? I was going away from the craziness of the township to the familiarity of my home.

Violence comes home

I live in a Johannesburg neighbourhood called Yeoville. It's a poor, slightly unsafe place filled to the brim with immigrants. Many squat in flats that have been abandoned by their previous, affluent owners over the past 15 years. Little children in neat school uniforms brushing their teeth from broken pipes have been a usual sight in my morning commute. On Sunday I did my grocery shopping, had a drink with some rastas and discussed, earnestly, how badly we felt about the xenophobia wracking communities less tolerant than ours.

That night the mobs formed in Yeoville. Finding foreigners on the street to assault wasn't enough for them. They went into apartment blocks and dragged people out of their flats. They beat and looted along the way.

I was told all this by Norman, a local

I was afraid to confront the cop. I was afraid to be drawn any further into the madness of the situation. And most of all, afraid to alienate the police on whom my own safety depended. So this kid who was in the wrong place at the wrong got beat. And I just watched

HUNTING FOREIGNERS

I drank a glass of scotch and read last week's newspaper. In a phrase, I stuck my head in the sand

kid who lives in the same house as me. I didn't leave my home. As much as it's possible to be comfortable with a xenophobic rampage, I could accommodate the idea of it when it happened in the townships, 'over there'. Now that it was on my doorstep, I didn't want to think about it. I drank a glass of scotch and read last week's newspaper. In a phrase, I stuck my head in the sand.

Next target: Chinese

On Tuesday morning I took the minibus to the university. It carried a Somali, two central Africans and two South Africans. It was a normal commute until we got to a street called Noord. Ordinarily, Noord is filled with informal hawkers, mostly foreigners, working stands. That day almost half of them were empty. At Noord, the Somali and central Africans got out, I was left with the two South Africans. They looked out at the empty stalls and chatted in Zulu. One, a young woman, smiled softly. She said something that ended with the word 'amaChina' (Chinese people). The man replied, 'Next target'.

I'm not Chinese. But because of my features, I'm often mistaken as one. Random people will greet me with 'Ni hao'.

I wonder what will happen if the wrong person decides I'm Chinese.

It's hard to decide what's a threat and what's imagined. There are many things that I couldn't have imagined possible that have already happened. I feel like the safest bet is to be a bit jaded and not to be surprised by anything, but doing this feels like selling out a valuable part of me. The part that can be shocked and disappointed both in events and myself.

The violence continues to grind on. Yeoville has been mostly quiet as have Alex and Diepsloot and other areas that had seen violence. It almost seems like their anger is spent. But it's not the case, the anger is endless. While I write this the violence has now spread beyond Jo'burg and I've just been told that the government has deployed the army. I don't know where this is going to end. I'm just going to go home. My neighborhood and I ought to look each other in the face.

CT

Based in Johannesburg, South Africa, Kenichi Serino is a freelance journalist and a (very) occasional academic. Like many in South Africa, he's a foreigner. Unlike so many others, that he is not an African foreigner spared him from becoming a victim of xenophobic violence

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Boatloads of trouble

Stan Cox shows how the US is importing its way to destruction

Nineteen hundred miles of railroad track separate Gardner, Kansas, from the seaports of Southern California. But through the miracle of global trade, Gardner will soon be transformed into a Los Angeles suburb.

Over the next decade, an “intermodal and logistics park” will be built on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railway at the southern edge of Gardner. It’s needed to handle goods imported from Asia via the Los Angeles and Long Beach seaports. Gardner could eventually find itself playing host to as many as 30 freight trains per day, each a mile and a half long, along with thousands of big-rig trucks.

The community of 16,000, just across the state line from Kansas City, Mo., will eventually be sandwiched between 7 million square feet of warehouses in the logistics park to the south and 4 million to 5 million square feet in an industrial park to the north. The total warehouse floor space easily exceeds that of all the housing in Gardner.

And Claud Hobby, who will be living about three-fourths of a mile from the new facility, can already feel the burn of diesel fumes in his nostrils. The pollution will be growing thicker over his neighborhood with each passing year, but he’s trying to keep his sense of humor. He

says, “They talk about making Kansas a smoke-free state, but it looks like Gardner’s going to be the designated smoking section.”

With environmentalists devoting most of their efforts in recent years to sounding the alarm on global climate change, local pollution isn’t always getting the attention it deserves. But if you share your neighborhood with the sprawling – and growing – infrastructure that moves imported goods from seaports to retailers, you can’t help but pay attention. You don’t need to be reminded that air pollutants, even when they’re not warming the planet, can threaten your health and even your life.

Along the cancer trail

Economists, bureaucrats and investors rejoiced late last month when the Commerce Department announced that U.S. exports in June were up sharply, \$28.8 billion higher than in June 2007. The department made less noise about the rising tide of imports, which were up \$26.4 billion.

Leaving aside that portion of the increased import bill that was due to rising oil prices, the nation’s seaports, airports, railways and highways were still faced with moving an additional \$40 billion worth of stuff in and out across our bor-

Claud Hobby, who will be living about three-fourths of a mile from the new facility, can already feel the burn of diesel fumes in his nostrils. The pollution will be growing thicker over his neighborhood with each passing year

WAREHOUSE HELL

Ocean-going ships burn the lowest of low-quality diesel oil, and the fuel used by locomotives isn't much better. Trucks burn a greater quantity of fuel per ton hauled, with correspondingly high emissions

ders, on top of the \$330 billion worth of stuff that's already going in and out each month.

Imports – mostly consumer and industrial goods, not oil – continue to dominate over exports in America's trade equation. Hunger for imports keeps rising, and the nation's capacity to manufacture those products keeps shrinking. So hauling, sorting and delivering foreign-made goods has evolved into a fast-growing, high-tech, high-profit industry.

The American Association of Port Authorities says the nation's seaports are now handling 1.4 billion tons of goods annually and that waterborne container traffic will double by 2020. These days, as every shopper knows, a big share of that traffic is coming across the Pacific from Asia.

Seattle and Oakland handle some of those Asian goods, but most enter the United States through the twin seaports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. Together, they comprise the third-largest container-handling facility in the world, receiving 40 percent of all imports entering the country. Traffic through the two ports is expected to triple within 15 years.

At those cargo bottlenecks where ships, trains and trucks converge, the air can kill you. Ocean-going ships burn the lowest of low-quality diesel oil, and the fuel used by locomotives isn't much better. Trucks burn a greater quantity of fuel per ton hauled, with correspondingly high emissions.

According to Los Angeles and Long Beach authorities, the movement of cargo through their ports was responsible in 2005 for emissions laden with 6,000 tons of particle matter – soot, smoke, dust, organic matter and other microscopic flecks that can invade deep into the lungs – and more than 46,000 tons of nitrogen and sulfur oxides.

In and near the world's ports and coastal sea lanes, emissions from ocean-going vessels caused 60,000 premature

deaths in 2002. With increasing trade, the number of such deaths is projected to rise 40 percent by 2012. Ships' crews, dock workers, truckers, other port personnel and local residents are all vulnerable.

The particulate matter produced by burning diesel has been associated with lung cancer, asthma, chronic bronchitis, cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease, decreased lung function in children and infant mortality.

Currently, according to the California Air Resources Board (CARB), a relatively small community of 50,000 people living on the fringes of the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports suffers 25 new cases of cancer each year because of diesel pollution from ships, trucks and dock equipment. Similar cancer risks were found for people living near rail yards. Within a "several mile" radius of the ports, estimates CARB, the air pollutants kill about 75 people per year.

The great indoors

Given the rate at which shiploads, trainloads, truckloads and planeloads of goods have been arriving from abroad in the past eight months, 2008 is on track to set an all-time record for imports, topping \$2 trillion for the first time. (Not counting oil, imports will amount to more than \$1.8 trillion, also a record). Clearly, recent economic pain and soaring diesel fuel prices have not diminished Americans' appetite for imported merchandise.

That merchandise never sits in one place for long. It is moved out of the ports, sorted at sophisticated warehouse complexes known as "logistics facilities," and distributed throughout the country as quickly as possible. In recent years, California's Inland Empire, lying east of Los Angeles in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, has already seen construction of logistics warehouses covering 330 million square feet.

To get a mental picture of the mas-

sive extent of roofing and concrete that requires, imagine 7,300 football fields paved and enclosed (or have a look at these images.) Similarly vast acreages surrounding the warehouses are paved as well. And remember, goods traffic in the area could triple in coming decades.

In a 2006 commentary, Andrea Hricko, associate professor at the University of Southern California's Keck School of Medicine, cited an example of a doll, made in an Asian sweatshop and destined to sell for \$9.97 at one of Chicago's big-box discount stores. By the time the doll reaches Chicago, notes Hricko, "she has traveled more than 8,000 miles – on diesel-burning conveyances the whole way." And she will have left a dark trail of pollution in the ports and communities she passed through.

Hricko's doll, more than likely, arrives at the Los Angeles or Long Beach port and rides the Burlington Northern railway to the Elwood, Ill., intermodal terminal outside Chicago, where it is transferred to a truck. Once the intermodal facility in Gardner, Kan., goes into operation, the doll may end its train journey there and, after a quick rest in a warehouse, take a truck ride past Hobby's house on its way to Wal-Mart somewhere in the nation's midsection. From there, it will land in a child's bedroom for a while before going to the basement or garage and, eventually, a landfill.

Hobby visited Elwood last year to get a glimpse of his own future, and it wasn't pleasant: "With so many trucks in the area, they had three police officers on the roads directing traffic, and it still took me 30 minutes to drive one mile."

With a rising tide of imports from China and other countries choking the ports of Southern California and the roads around Chicago, the goods-transport system is looking for alternate routes, and Mexico stands ready to help. In contrast to the mythical "NAFTA superhighway," the rail lines from Mexico are very real,

and they're humming. Month by month, more Asian goods are making landfall at the port of Lazaro Cardenas on southern Mexico's Pacific coast and riding the Kansas City Southern railway northeast for 2,200 miles.

To unload merchandise at the other end, the railway and its corporate partners will be developing yet another intermodal hub, south of Kansas City and east of Gardner. It will have the potential for 23 million square feet of warehouse space on its 970 acres of land.

The Kansas City Star reported in March that the developments at the intermodal hub are "all part of the railroad's strategy to encourage companies and ocean carriers to ship goods from Asia to Lazaro Cardenas and on into the United States." According to a transportation analyst quoted by the paper, "More than two-thirds of intermodal shipments are consumer goods. They (Kansas City Southern) have to convince the Wal-Marts, the J.C. Penneys and Home Depots to use the Mexico-U.S. corridor. ... The longer the haul, the better the margins and the greater the revenues (for the railway)."

Constitutional chicanery

The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach have announced a "Clean Air Action Plan," characterized as "the most comprehensive strategy to cut air pollution and reduce health risks ever produced for a global seaport complex." The goal is to reduce emissions of diesel pollutants by almost 50 percent in five years.

As part of the program, starting Oct. 1, trucks entering either of two big Southern California ports will have to comply with new rules on emissions and safety, and older trucks with poorer pollution controls will be banned. On top of that, the Los Angeles port has decreed that only drivers who are employees of trucking firms, not independent contractors, will be allowed to enter the port. American Trucking Associations (ATA), which

"With so many trucks in the area, they had three police officers on the roads directing traffic, and it still took me 30 minutes to drive one mile"

WAREHOUSE HELL

Ninety percent of the bunker-fuel-burning, fume-belching vessels coming into the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports are foreign-owned and flagged

represents most of the nation's trucking companies, has sued to block the new rules. The lever the ATA is employing in its effort to overturn the Clean Air Action Plan is the interstate commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution. That clause, it is claimed, prohibits states and localities from interfering with interstate trade. Economist John Husing of Redlands, Calif., who has done analyses of the region's goods-transport industry under contracts with the ports and the Southern California Association of Governments, believes that the industry's constitutional argument will succeed.

Says Husing: "The trucking companies don't want every Podunk city in America to be able to say, 'You can't drive through our town,' and the courts will agree."

The commerce clause is also having an impact in Gardner, Kan., where a city clean-air ordinance prohibits truck drivers from letting their engines idle for more than 10 minutes. "But that's just window dressing," says Hobby. "We can't do anything about trucks on railroad property (in the intermodal park)." There, the commerce clause rules, and Gardner residents will just have to live with the drifting smog.

Nevertheless, says Jane Anne Morris, author of *Gaveling Down the Rabble: How Free Trade is Stealing Our Democracy*, it is important to challenge all attempts by corporations and the federal courts to use the clause as a weapon against environmentally essential laws. "We would not have the problems we have now if thousands of good, promising, strong laws had not been declared unconstitutional under the commerce clause since 1879," she says.

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), with headquarters in Washington, D.C., and an office in Los Angeles, has filed a "motion to intervene" in opposition to ATA's lawsuit. Other groups, including the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the Owner-Operator

Independent Drivers Association, are part of a coalition with NRDC to support the new environmental regulations at the Southern California ports.

NRDC spokesperson Jessica Lass makes the case this way: "We support the plan because more management oversight is needed at the ports, to improve efficiency. Trucks need to be fully loaded, to minimize the number of trips in and out. And we need to be sure they are fuel-efficient and well maintained."

Controlling pollution from oceangoing ships will be even more difficult than regulating trucks. Ninety percent of the bunker-fuel-burning, fume-belching vessels coming into the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports are foreign-owned and flagged. "Ships are under international control, and that's the hardest problem to solve," laments Husing.

The Environmental Protection Agency has a voluntary program under which some ships will use better grades of fuel in their auxiliary engines (which they switch to when they're in and around ports), reduce their speed near ports, and plug into shore-based power sources when at dock. NRDC hails the program as a step forward, but Husing doesn't see it going very far: "We regard EPA as useless. What they are doing is lame at best."

The purchase-driven life

The sheer volume of imports, growing by the day, threatens to overwhelm all attempts to clean up the environment along trade routes. The value of goods being imported nationwide has risen 68 percent just in the past decade; that's after adjustments for inflation, and it excludes oil imports.

Halting that growth or even making deep cuts in imports would not only help clear the air, it would make it easier to clean up the toxic water pollution that accumulates in sea lanes and ports; it would curb the noise pollution that can

do serious damage to human health and interfere with communications among marine mammals; and it would stop the headlong rush to pave more land for logistics parks.

Slashing imports would address those and a host of other environmental and human-rights problems created by overproduction and overconsumption. But with an increasingly fragile economy that depends so heavily on consumer spending, politicians and economists continue to call for more trade, not less.

That's certainly the case on the 2008 campaign trail. The presidential candidates express concern over imports only when urging "independence from foreign oil." Republican John McCain, a committed free-trader, saluted June's strong trade report, saying that it "provided an important reminder of the role that exports play in our economy."

Democratic candidate Barack Obama's campaign Web site says, "Obama believes that trade with foreign nations should strengthen the American economy and create more American jobs." In practice, he appears to vacillate between advocating mild trade regulations (for which critics repeatedly brand him as a "protectionist") and flirting with "strong dollar" policies that would bring in even higher volumes of imports. Some of the flow through our ports seems almost circular — trade for the sake of trade. In some of the categories that the U.S. Census Bureau uses to tally trade, such as "pleasure boats and motors," "toiletries and cosmetics" and "medicinal equipment," the dollar values of goods coming in and going out are strikingly similar.

Husing, in his economic analysis of goods traffic in California, urged aggressive expansion of the industry as the only viable job-creation strategy. He explains, "In this region, 44 percent of the population has a high school education or less. People need blue-collar jobs without barriers to entry. Manufacturing is in decline.

Construction is in the toilet. But logistics and distribution is growing fast. With tracking technology, it's an information-intensive sector and pays at least as well as manufacturing, better than construction."

Says Husing, "For a while there I was Public Enemy Number One in the environmental movement's eyes. They are concerned about people's health. I argued that poverty is a public health issue, and they didn't like that. But they seem to be coming around."

On the issue of ports and distribution centers, environmentalists are focusing on pollution control, while assuming that consumption of imported goods will continue to grow. Asked if the root of the problem is simply that we're importing too much stuff, NRDC's Lass changed the subject back to efficiency: "We don't want to stand in the way of progress. We need a way to expand our ports in an environmentally sustainable manner and create more jobs."

In Kansas, too, the debate is over how to deal with the surge of imported goods, not how to curtail it. Hobby says that the Burlington Northern facility should be built in an area 14 miles farther south of Gardner, where there's plenty of open land: "We've had this thing thrown into our backyard. Instead, they should put it where growth can move toward it. Then any people or companies who don't mind being near this thing can buy land and move in around it."

A deep recession or depression could disrupt the "purchase-driven life" that fuels the American economy. Until then, it appears, the quest for more efficient methods of importing ever-greater tonnages will continue. A clean-running economy that can thrive on less production and less importation of consumer goods would look very different from today's economy. It may be out there somewhere in the future, but it's hard to see through the clouds of diesel exhaust. **CT**

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Stan Cox is a plant breeder and writer in Salina, Kan. His book, *Sick Planet: Corporate Food and Medicine*, is published by Pluto Press (2008)

Engels and the WHO report

Susan Rosenthal uses a fictional interview with Frederick Engels, to highlight the troubling link between class and health

It confirmed that the poor are worse off than those less deprived, the less deprived are worse off than those with average incomes, and so on, up the social hierarchy

On August 28, with the pronouncement, “INEQUALITIES ARE KILLING PEOPLE ON A GRAND SCALE,” the World Health Organization’s Commission on the Social Determinants of Health released its report, *Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health Equity through Action on the Social Determinants of Health*. (<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2008/pr29/en/index.html>)

The Commission confirmed previous reports of health inequities between nations as well as “health gradients” within them. It confirmed that the poor are worse off than those less deprived, the less deprived are worse off than those with average incomes, and so on, up the social hierarchy. It confirmed that this health gradient exists in all nations, including the richest. It also confirmed that health equality cannot be achieved by medical systems alone.

“Water-borne diseases are not caused by a lack of antibiotics but by dirty water, and by the political, social, and economic forces that fail to make clean water available to all; heart disease is caused not by a lack of coronary care units but by the lives people lead, which are shaped by the environments in which they live; obesity is not caused by moral failure on the part of individuals but by the excess

availability of high-fat and high-sugar foods.”

None of these findings is new. Studies of health inequity date back to the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century and spurred the development of the public health movement.

The founder of Social Medicine is generally considered to be Rudolf Virchow (1821 - 1902), a liberal physician and public health activist. However, I think that title properly belongs to Frederick Engels (1820 - 1895), Karl Marx’s comrade and collaborator. Engels was the first to connect a broad number of medical and social problems to the way capitalism is organized.

Between September 1844 and March 1845, Engels documented the human impact of the industrial revolution in England. He published his findings in *The Condition of The Working Class in England: From Personal Observation and Authentic Sources*.

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/condition-working-class/>

Over the past 163 years, much has changed. The United States has replaced England as the center of the industrial world. Higher living standards have lengthened life-spans and lowered child death rates in many nations. Yet much remains the same, and some things are worse.

As the WHO report documents, health inequities continue to follow income inequities, *and both are increasing*. In 1980, the richest countries had a gross national income 60 times that of the poorest countries. By 2005, this difference had more than doubled. The global population now suffers many of the same health and social problems that Engels documented in England: extreme poverty, environmental pollution, lack of sanitation, contaminated food, preventable diseases and premature deaths. As I read the WHO report, I wondered what Engels would think of it. So I constructed a fictional interview for the purpose of comparing his findings with current conditions. His words (taken from his book) are in italics. I am responsible for the rest of this imaginary conversation.

Class and Health

SR: Your book documents a strong link between class and health in, what was in your time, the wealthiest nation in the world.

Engels: Yes. *In Liverpool, in 1840, the average longevity of the upper classes, gentry, professional men, etc., was 35 years; that of the business men and better-placed handicraftsmen, 22 years; and that of the operatives, day-laborers, and serviceable class in general, only 15 years.*

SR: In the United States, currently the world's richest nation, death rates are not recorded by class. However, the nation's poorest adults are nearly five times more likely to be in "poor or fair" health than the richest, and at every income level the wealthier group is healthier than the one below it. This health gradient exists in all racial groupings.

Engels: *There is a heavy mortality among young children in the working-class. The tender frame of a child is least able to with-*

stand the unfavorable influences of an inferior lot in life; the neglect to which they are often subjected, when both parents work or one is dead, avenges itself promptly, and no one need wonder that, in Manchester, more than 57 per cent of the children of the working-class perish before the fifth year, while but 20 per cent of the children of the higher classes, and not quite 32 per cent of the children of all classes in the country die under five years of age.

SR: America's infant deaths are recorded by location and race, which are loosely related to class. In poorer states, like Mississippi, infant death rates are more than double what they are in richer states like Vermont. And the overall death rate for Black babies is two-and-a-half times higher than it is for White babies. You found a report of differing mortality rates on different streets.

Engels: Yes. *Dr. P. H. Holland studied a suburb of Manchester. He divided the houses and streets into three classes each, and found that the mortality in the streets of the second class is 18 per cent greater, and in the streets of the third class 68 per cent greater than in those of the first class; that the mortality in the houses of the second class is 31 per cent greater, and in the third class 78 per cent greater than in those of the first class; that the mortality in those bad streets which were improved, decreased 25 per cent. Holland concluded his report with this unusually frank remark:*

"When we find the rate of mortality four times as high in some streets as in others, and twice as high in whole classes of streets as in other classes, and further find that it is all but invariably high in those streets which are in bad condition, and almost invariably low in those whose condition is good, we cannot resist the conclusion that multitudes of our fellow-creatures, hundreds of our immediate neighbors, are annually destroyed for want of the most evident precautions."

In poorer states, like Mississippi, infant death rates are more than double what they are in richer states like Vermont. And the overall death rate for Black babies is two-and-a-half times higher than it is for White babies.

SOCIALIST SOLUTION?

In one case, fifty-four stuffed Christmas geese were seized which had proved unsaleable in Liverpool, and had been forwarded to Manchester, where they were brought to market foul and rotten

SR: Such detailed studies are rarely done here, but I suspect the results would be comparable.

Bad Food

SR: You document the poor quality of food consumed by the working class.

Engels: *In the great towns of England the best food can be found, but it costs money; and the workman, who must keep house on a couple of pence, cannot afford much expense. The potatoes which the workers buy are usually poor, the vegetables wilted, the cheese old and of poor quality, the bacon rancid, the meat lean, tough, taken from old, often diseased, cattle, or such as have died a natural death, and not fresh even then, often half decayed.*

On the 6th of January, 1844 (if I am not greatly mistaken) in Manchester, eleven meat-sellers were fined for having sold tainted meat. Each of them had a whole ox or pig, or several sheep, or from fifty to sixty pounds of meat, which were all confiscated in a tainted condition. In one case, fifty-four stuffed Christmas geese were seized which had proved unsaleable in Liverpool, and had been forwarded to Manchester, where they were brought to market foul and rotten. But these are by no means all the cases; they do not even form a fair average.

SR: We continue to suffer from contaminated meat and vegetable produce. In Britain in 1986, a deadly brain disease (BSE) was caused by feeding diseased animal parts to cows that were later consumed by human beings. Over a hundred people died and many more were infected. The victims were mostly workers who ate cheap ground beef, which is mass produced by pooling many carcasses.

Today, food is produced and distributed on a much larger scale than it was in your time, which makes the problem of contamination much more serious. In 2003, the first infected cow surfaced in

the U.S., and before the diagnosis could be confirmed, meat from the infected animal had been distributed to more than eight states, and the cow's infected spinal cord had been incorporated into food for pets, pigs, and poultry.

Engels: And when one reflects upon the many cases *that escape detection under the slender supervision of the market inspectors – when one considers how great the temptation must be, in view of the incomprehensibly small fines mentioned in the foregoing cases; when one reflects what condition a piece of meat must have reached to be seized by the inspectors, it is impossible to believe that the workers obtain good and nourishing meat as a usual thing.*

SR: We have many more regulations to protect the food supply, but they are poorly enforced. Companies are “trusted” to regulate themselves. When problems arise, the government's first concern is to protect industry profits. After the first infected cow was found, the Department of Agriculture reassured us that “the food supply is fully protected and consumers should feel fully confident that the beef supply in this country is very safe to eat.” When more diseased cows were identified, the DA announced that it was reducing testing for BSE. Less testing lowers the risk of identifying sick animals.

Engels: *The capitalists have made progress in the art of hiding the distress of the working-class.*

SR: You also describe extensive food adulteration.

Engels: *Dealers and manufacturers adulterate all kinds of provisions in an atrocious manner, and without the slightest regard to the health of the consumers. But don't take my word for it. Let us hear from the Liverpool Mercury (I delight in the testimony of my opponents):*

“Salt butter is molded into the form of pounds of fresh butter, and cased over with fresh. In other instances a pound of fresh is conspicuously placed to be tasted; but that pound is not sold; and in other instances salt butter, washed, is molded and sold as fresh.... Pounded rice and other cheap materials are mixed in sugar, and sold at full monopoly price. A chemical substance – the refuse of the soap factories – is also mixed with other substances and sold as sugar.... Cocoa is extensively adulterated with fine brown earth, wrought up with mutton fat....Nasty things of all sorts are mixed with tobacco in all its manufactured forms.”

SR: It’s no different today. The better-off can afford a wholesome, organic diet, while the workers’ food continues to be adulterated. It’s almost impossible to find cheap food that does not contain a long list of additives to enhance color, flavor, texture and shelf-life. Many of these additives are indigestible or harmful, but they make cheap food very profitable. These adulterated foods fill the bellies of the working class, generating digestive disorders, malnutrition, obesity and diabetes.

Child Drugging

SR: You condemn “the custom of giving young children spirits, and even opium” to keep them quiet.

Engels: One of the most injurious patent medicines is a drink prepared with opiates, chiefly laudanum, under the name Godfrey’s Cordial. Women who work at home, and have their own and other people’s children to take care of, give them this drink to keep them quiet, and, as many believe, to strengthen them. They often begin to give this medicine to newly born children, and continue, without knowing the effects of this “heart’s-ease”, until the children die. The less susceptible the child’s system

to the action of the opium, the greater the quantities administered. When the cordial ceases to act, laudanum alone is given, often to the extent of fifteen to twenty drops at a dose. The effects upon the children so treated may be readily imagined. They are pale, feeble, wilted, and usually die before completing the second year. The use of this cordial is very extensive in all great towns and industrial districts in the kingdom.

SR: Today, child drugging has reached epidemic proportions, with millions of youngsters being prescribed addictive substances to keep them quiet and compliant. Despite the many parallels, conditions for workers in the industrial nations are generally better then they were in your time. You acknowledge this in the 1892 preface to your book when you wrote, “the most crying abuses described in this book have either disappeared or have been made less conspicuous.”

Engels: The state of things described in my book belongs, in many respects, to the past, as far as England is concerned. Repeated visitations of cholera, typhus, small-pox, and other epidemics have shown the British bourgeois the urgent necessity of sanitation in his towns and cities, if he wishes to save himself and family from falling victims to such diseases. Moreover, the capitalists were learning, more and more, that they could never obtain full social and political power over the nation except by the help of the working-class. So they accepted reforms that raised the workers’ standard of living.

SR: The worst problems you describe can now be found in the poorer nations. Even so, contaminated air, food and water continue to plague even the richest ones. We have the science and technology required to protect health, but the drive for profit prevents us from using it effectively. Your book covers much more ground, and there’s so much more we could discuss, but let’s proceed to the

It’s almost impossible to find cheap food that does not contain a long list of additives to enhance color, flavor, texture and shelf-life. Many of these additives are indigestible or harmful, but they make cheap food very profitable

SOCIALIST SOLUTION?

We now have a mountain of reports on the condition of the working class, but none indict capitalism for the problems they document. All call for the State to curb the greed of the capitalist class through regulation

matter of solutions.

What Must Be Done?

SR: To reduce health inequality, the WHO report recommends improving living and working conditions; and distributing power, money, and resources more equitably. And in a series of “What Must Be Done” boxes, it makes specific suggestions, including:

- Invest in early childhood development and in the education of women.
- Remove the barriers to girls and boys enrolling and staying in school
- Provide clean water, sanitation systems and electricity for all.
- Ensure safe, secure, and fairly-paid work, year-round work opportunities, and healthy work–life balance for all.
- Ensure a healthy standard of living below which nobody should fall due to circumstances beyond his or her control
- Provide universal access to quality health-care services.
-

Engels: How will they implement these measures?

SR: The Commission emphasizes “the primary role of the state in the provision of basic services essential to health (such as water/sanitation) and the regulation of goods and services with a major impact on health (such as tobacco, alcohol, and food).”

Engels: Has the capitalist class ever paid any serious attention to social grievances? Have they done more than pay the expenses of half-a-dozen commissions of inquiry, whose voluminous reports are damned to everlasting slumber among heaps of waste paper on government shelves? Have they even done as much as to compile from those

rotting blue-books a single readable book from which everybody might easily get some information on the condition of the great majority. No indeed, those are things they do not like to speak of.

SR: As you said, the capitalists need the cooperation of the working class to stay in power, and health inequity has become so serious and so global that it cannot be ignored. We now have a mountain of reports on the condition of the working class, but none indict capitalism for the problems they document. All call for the State to curb the greed of the capitalist class through regulation.

Engels: *Regulations are as plentiful as blackberries; but they only contain the distress of the workers, they cannot remove it. Must I remind you that the capitalist class can exist only by depriving the working class of what it creates? That is the basis of the system which tends more and more to split society into a few Rothschilds and Vanderbilts, the owners of all the means of production and subsistence, on the one hand, and an immense number of wage-workers, the owners of nothing but their labor-force, on the other. So that inequality of all kinds is caused, not by this or that secondary grievance, but by the system itself – this fact has been brought out in bold relief by the development of capitalism.*

SR: The WHO report disagrees, assuring us that “the private sector has much to offer that could enhance health and well-being,” in particular, by improving working conditions. It also recommends that “private sector activities and services (such as production and patenting of life-saving medicines, provision of health insurance schemes) contribute to and do not undermine health equity.” Yet none of these measures is profitable. On the contrary, they would all cut into profits. This is like asking the fox not to eat the chicken, but to safeguard its health instead.

Engels: When one individual inflicts bodily injury upon another such injury that death results, we call the deed manslaughter; when the assailant knew in advance that the injury would be fatal, we call his deed murder.

When society places workers in such a position that they inevitably meet a too early and an unnatural death, one which is quite as much a death by violence as that by the sword or bullet; when it deprives thousands of the necessities of life, places them under conditions in which they cannot live – forces them, through the strong arm of the law, to remain in such conditions until that death ensues which is the inevitable consequence – knows that these thousands of victims must perish, and yet permits these conditions to remain, its deed is murder just as surely as the deed of the single individual; disguised, malicious murder, murder against which none can defend himself, which does not seem what it is, because no man sees the murderer, because the death of the victim seems a natural one, since the offence is more one of omission than of commission. But murder it remains.

Capitalism daily and hourly commits social murder. It has placed the workers under conditions in which they can neither retain health nor live long; it undermines the vital force of these workers gradually, little by little, and so hurries them to the grave before their time. The capitalist class knows how injurious such conditions are to the health and the life of the workers, and yet does nothing to improve these conditions.

SR: Your book calls on the capitalist class “either to continue its rule under the unanswerable charge of murder and in spite of this charge, or to abdicate in favor of the laboring-class. Hitherto it has chosen the former course.” Did you really expect them to abdicate their rule?

Engels: I confess that I was only 24 when

I wrote the book and *politically immature when I stressed that socialism is a question of humanity and not of the workers alone. This is true enough in the abstract, but absolutely useless, and sometimes worse, in practice. So long as the wealthy classes not only do not feel the want of any emancipation, but strenuously oppose the self-emancipation of the working-class, so long the social revolution will have to be prepared and fought out by the working-class alone.*

And today, those who, from the “impartiality” of their superior standpoint, preach to the workers a Socialism soaring high above their class interests and class struggles, and tending to reconcile in a higher humanity the interests of both the contending classes – these people are either naive, with much to learn, or they are the worst enemies of the workers – wolves in sheep’s clothing. I explain this more fully in *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*.

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/index.htm>

SR: I can see why the capitalists don’t want to acknowledge you as the founder Social Medicine. They still recoil at your insistence that the only way to improve health and eliminate health inequity is to abolish class divisions. And yet, the evidence continues to prove you right.

A 1998 study of American cities found that the greater the difference in income, the more the death rate rose for all income levels, not just for the poor. Reducing income inequality to the lowest level found in the United States would save as many lives as would be saved by eradicating heart disease or preventing all deaths from lung cancer, diabetes, motor vehicle crashes, HIV infection, suicide and homicide combined

Moreover, the WHO report calculated that, if racism were abolished so that mortality rates between White and Black Americans were the same, 886,202 deaths would have been avoided between

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SOCIALIST SOLUTION?

Until workers fight back as a class, there can be no progress

1991 and 2000. Over the same period, only 176,633 lives were saved by medical advances. And many millions would be saved by raising living standards in the poorer nations.

Engels: Clearly, the need is greater than ever. But until workers fight back as a class, there can be no progress.

SR: That's so true. The WHO report starts with a bang – INEQUALITIES ARE KILLING PEOPLE ON A GRAND SCALE – and ends with a whimper, with

a plea for the “political will” to make change. Thank you for taking the time to talk with us.

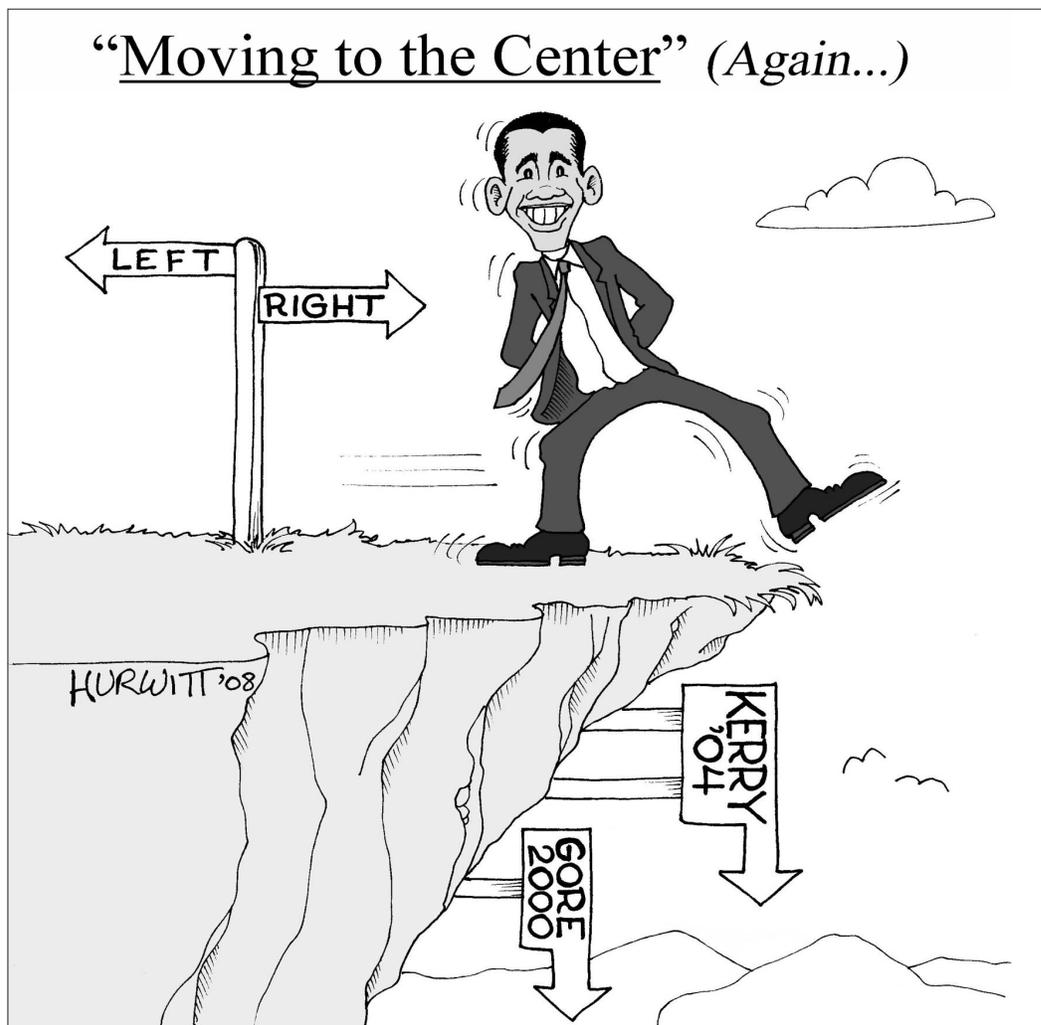
Engels: Don't thank me. *Organize!* **CT**

*Susan Rosenthal is a practicing physician and the author of **Striking Flint** (1996), **POWER and Powerlessness** (2006) and **Class, Health and Health Care** (2008). She is a founding member of International Health Workers for People Over Profit. She can be reached through her website: www.susanrosenthal.com*



HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitz



Baghdad on the Mississippi

Ray McGovern travels to the Republican Party Convention and is not impressed by the media or the police

A few weeks ago, ago, as the nation focused attention on the hurricane nearing the Mississippi delta, another storm was brewing far upstream in St. Paul, Minnesota – a storm far more dangerous, it turned out, but one by and large overlooked by the Fawning Corporate Media (FCM).

When I flew into St. Paul on Saturday evening, August 30, I encountered a din in local media about “preemptive strikes” on those already congregating there to demonstrate against the Iraq war and injustice against the poor in our country. St. Paul’s *Pioneer Press* expressed surprise that “despite preemptive police searches” and arrests, a group calling itself “the RNC Welcoming Committee” was still intent on “disrupting the convention.”

A headline screamed, “Preemptive Arrests of Protesters in Twin Cities.” But it was the article’s lead that hit home: “Borrowing from the Bush administration’s ‘preemptive war’ playbook, police agencies in the Twin Cities have made ‘preemptive strikes’ against organizations planning to protest at the Republican National Convention.”

In the following days I was to see, up close and personal, a massive and totally unnecessary display of ruthlessness.

What struck a bell was that this domestic application of the dubious doctrine

of “preemption” was totally predictable – indeed, predicted by those courageous enough to speak out before the U.S. “preemptive” attack on Iraq. Ironically, it was FBI Special Agent Coleen Rowley, living in the St. Paul area, who warned of precisely that in her hard-hitting letter to FBI Director Robert Mueller three weeks before the attack on Iraq

Confronting Mueller on a number of key issues (like “What is the FBI’s evidence with respect to the claimed connection between al-Qaeda and Iraq?”), Rowley warned of the trickle-down effect of “the administration’s new policy of ‘preemptive strikes’”: “I believe it would be prudent to be on guard against the possibility that the looser ‘preemptive strike’ rationale being applied to situations abroad could migrate back home, fostering a more permissive attitude on the part of law enforcement officers in this country.”

Rowley called Mueller’s attention to the abuses of civil rights that had already occurred since 9/11, and pointedly warned “particular vigilance may be required to head off undue pressure (including subtle encouragement) to detain or ‘round up’ suspects.”

Transforming the police

While in St. Paul, I got in touch with

Ironically, it was FBI Special Agent Coleen Rowley, living in the St. Paul area, who warned of precisely that in her hard-hitting letter to FBI Director Robert Mueller three weeks before the attack on Iraq

ON THE BEAT

“The cops stole all the computers and other electronic devices in the house, and core members of the Welcoming Committee sleeping there were arrested. It being a holiday weekend, those arrested for alleged crimes could not arrive in court until Wednesday, at the earliest”w

Rowley, who has been politically active in the Twin City area, and asked for her reaction to St. Paul’s version of preemption. This was hardly her first chance to say I-told-you-so, but she called no attention to her right-on prophesy five and a half years ago.

Shaking her head, Rowley simply be-moaned how easily the artificial stoking of fear had succeeded in causing the “otherwise wonderful community police officers of St. Paul to turn on their own peaceful citizens (the surreal insanity we witnessed during the RNC).” She added that, once the Feds, the fusion centers, the contractors get into the act, “all the rules go up in smoke.”

The “preemption” began on Friday, August 29, well before the RNC began on Sept. 1.

An academic doing research on social movement organizations, who for several months has been observing the main protesters – the RNC Welcoming Committee, the Coalition to March on the RNC and End the War, and the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign – provided this account:

“On Friday evening the space in St. Paul that was being rented by the Welcoming Committee was raided by riot police, who knocked in the door with automatic weapons drawn, forced the 60-70 activists inside onto the floor, handcuffed them, then proceeded to confiscate all the banner-making supplies and movement literature.

“Over the course of several hours the cops interrogated, photographed, ran warrant checks, and eventually, released everyone one by one. Then they closed down the space for a code violation. The next morning a city code inspector arrived and found no basis for closing the space.

“Saturday morning was one of escalation and terror. The Ramsey County Sheriff Department, together with the St. Paul police, Homeland Security, and the

FBI raided four private houses. At 8:00 AM, dozens of cops in SWAT gear broke down the door of one house where about a dozen activists were staying. They were awakened with rifle barrels in their faces and forced to lie face down for more than an hour.

“The cops stole all the computers and other electronic devices in the house, and core members of the Welcoming Committee sleeping there were arrested. It being a holiday weekend, those arrested for alleged crimes could not arrive in court until Wednesday, at the earliest. Thus, those trying to organize demonstrations will be in jail for the entire time the RNC is going on. Four other houses were raided and dozens of activists were detained.”

The academic who wrote the report appealed to those concerned over “this enormous police over-kill” to contact the Twin Cities’ mayors and demand an end to the “witch hunt.”

He added, “The people who were arrested were some of the gentlest, most dedicated activists I’ve ever met.” A far cry from the “criminal enterprise” described by notorious Ramsey County Sheriff Bob Fletcher.

Nanette Echols, a resident of St. Paul who had been extending hospitality to the visiting protesters, insisted they had done nothing wrong. “In the place they raided on Friday night they were showing documentary movies to twenty-somethings in a clean, alcohol-free zone after dinner,” she said.

Caving In to the Feds

The St. Paul City Council? Only one member had the courage to speak out – Councilman Dave Thune, who was particularly enraged that Sheriff Fletcher took action within St. Paul city limits:

“This is not the way to start things off...I’m really ticked off...the city is perfectly capable of taking care of such things...This is all about free speech. It’s what my father fought for in the war.

To me this smacks of preemptive strike against free speech.”

Thune objected in particular to Fletcher’s deputies using battering rams to knock down doors, then entering with guns drawn, and forcing people to the ground, as they did on Friday night.

This was the unsettling backdrop as I flew into St. Paul on Saturday evening, to speak at the Masses at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church on Sunday morning.

On Monday, I joined some 10,000 on a peaceful march from the Capitol to the Berlin wall of fences and the “organs of public safety” arrayed before the RNC convention hall. On the fringes there was some property damage and further arrests. What violence there was bore the earmarks of provocation by the likes of Sheriff Fletcher and his Homeland Security, FBI, and, according to one well-sourced report, Blackwater buddies.

That’s right. Agent provocateurs.

Primary targets of the repression were the alternative media, including any and all those who might have a camera to record the brutality – as was successfully done at the RNC in New York four years ago. The manner in which Amy Goodman and the two producers of “Democracy Now!” were deliberately mistreated was clearly aimed to serve as a warning that the rules had indeed gone up in smoke – the First Amendment be damned.

Tuesday evening, after speaking at the “Free Speech Zone,” a fenced-off area surrounded by the organs of public safety, I joined the Poor People’s march up to the fences before the RNC. I observed no violence at all; yet, the police/FBI/national guard/and who-knows-who-else decided they needed to clear the streets. My friends and I narrowly escaped being tear-gassed, pepper-sprayed, or worse. It was an overwhelming show of force – not to protect, but to intimidate.

After speaking at a conference at Concordia University in St. Paul on Wednesday, I was more eager to watch the Repub-

lican vice-presidential candidate, Sarah Palin, deliver her acceptance speech than to risk the tear gas and pepper spray.

The way she dissed community organizers was hard to take. But that would pale in significance, so to speak, compared to the way the governor of Alaska proceeded to ridicule the notion of reading people their rights. I had thought that despite the distance between Alaska and Washington, the reach of the U.S. Constitution and statutes extended that far.

Friends tell me I should not have been surprised. But, really! After the widespread kidnapping, torture, indefinite imprisonment, and our cowardly Congress’ empowerment of the president to imprison *sine die* anyone he might designate an “enemy combatant” – after all that...well, it seems to me that reading a person his/her rights takes on more, not less, importance.

Not to mention the massive repression then under way right outside the convention hall.

It was, it is, a scary juxtaposition. The following day Col. Ann Wright, other members of Code Pink, and I went to the jail to offer support to the young people who had been brutalized and then released. They had not been read their rights. Many were camped out on the sidewalk, refusing to leave until their friends still inside were also released.

Out of the jail came Jason, a well-built young man of about twenty years, who needed help in walking. We talked to Jason a while, and he showed us the seven, yes seven, taser wounds on his body. One, on his left buttock, had released considerable blood, creating a large stain on the seat of his pants.

Resourcefulness

The young protesters had some success in exposing infiltrators in their ranks. During confrontations, members of the Welcoming Committee, in particular, took copious photos of law enforcement offi-

What violence there was bore the earmarks of provocation by the likes of Sheriff Fletcher and his Homeland Security, FBI, and, according to one well-sourced report, Blackwater buddies

ON THE BEAT

It is a safe bet that in the coming weeks lots of unwelcome photos will be exposing various agents provocateurs, including over-the-hill flat-feet in unmarked cars, as well as young Republicans with unmarked tennis shoes

cers and then memorized the faces. This tactic worked like a charm in one of the St. Paul parks, when a man who looked like a protester – dark clothes, backpack, a bit disheveled – walked by.

One of the protesters recognized the man's face and searched through her camera until she found a photo of the man actually performing the raid on the Welcoming Committee's headquarters on Friday night. The young protesters asked the man, and two associates, to leave the park, at which point the three hustled into a nearby unmarked sedan.

The license plate, observed by a *Pioneer Press* reporter, traced back to the detective unit of the Hennepin County sheriff's office, according to the county's Central Mobile Equipment Division.

Protesters later drove two other men out of the day's planned march – one because he was wearing brand-new tennis shoes. The two left without indicating whether they were with the organs of public safety.

So there is hope. Young people are

smarter than old ones. It is a safe bet that in the coming weeks lots of unwelcome photos will be exposing various agents provocateurs, including over-the-hill flat-feet in unmarked cars, as well as young Republicans with unmarked tennis shoes. If those are the kind of "sources" upon which the police, FBI, etc. have been relying...well, that would be like having Shia reporting on Sunni, or vice versa.

The organs of public safety are probably not quite so dumb as to be unaware that one cannot expect valid "intelligence" from such amateurish antics. More likely, the attitude is that any kind of "intelligence" will do for the purposes of local law enforcement and timid public officials cowed by the Feds. **CT**

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, the publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He is also with Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS), as are Coleen Rowley and Ann Wright.

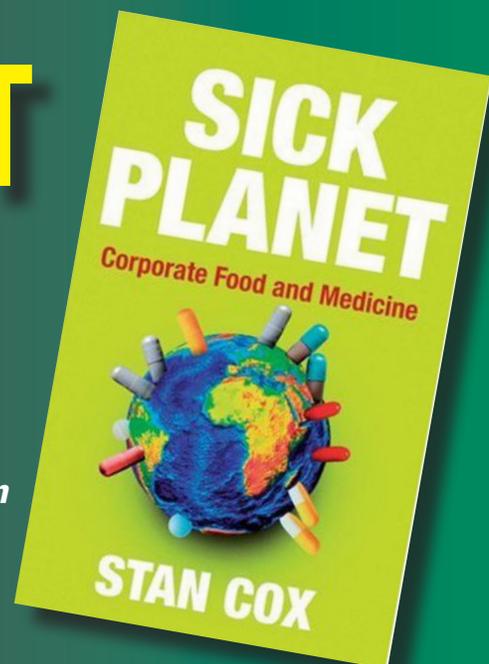
SICK PLANET

Corporate Food and Medicine

STAN COX

"A radical treatment proposal, to be sure, but the diagnosis is sobering" – *The Guardian*

"Cox's revelatory book is a *Silent Spring* for the 21st century" – Jeffrey St Clair



Homer Simpson without the donut

Greg Palast says building new nuclear power plants when we don't know what to do with spent fuel is like building massive hotels without toilets

I'm guessing it was excessive exposure to either radiation or George Bush, but Senator John McCain's comments from inside a nuclear power plant in Michigan are so cracked-brained that I fear some loose gamma rays are doing to McCain's gray matter what they did to Homer Simpson's.

In early August, the presumptive Republican candidate descended into the colon of a nuke to declare we need to build 45 new nuclear plants – that this is the way out of our energy crisis. Nuclear power, declared the senator, is a “safe, efficient [and] inexpensive” alternative to oil.

Really? We can argue all day about whether nuclear plants are safe (they aren't – period). But there can be no argument whatsoever that these giant radioactive tea-kettles are breathtakingly expensive.

Nuclear plants are cheap until you actually try to build one. Not one of the last 49 nuclear plants cost less than \$2 billion apiece. I'm looking down the road at the remainders of the Shoreham nuclear plant which took nearly 20 years to build at a cost of \$8 billion – or close to \$7,000 per customer it was supposed to supply. When I say “supposed to,” it was closed for safety reasons after operating just one single day.

We're told that the new generation of plants will be different. Just like an alcoholic child-beater, the nuclear plant builders promise us that, “This time it will be different.” Sure. And McCain believes them.

I don't. Maybe that's because I headed the government racketeering investigation of the Shoreham nuclear plant's builders. Stone & Webster Engineering and its partner paid hundreds of millions of dollars to settle the civil racketeering claim over the evidence we found of fraud and perjury. Now Stone & Webster will cash in big-time under Plan McCain.

The other big builder which will hit the jackpot under the McCain scheme is KBR, the one-time subsidiary of Halliburton, whose best known project is the rebuilding of Iraq. (Halliburton dumped KBR last year. Can't blame them.) KBR has built many nukes – not one within a mile of its promised cost.

But that doesn't bother McCain. So who is McCain getting his energy advice from? I'm looking at a photo of the perplexed senator inside the control room, looking like Homer without a donut, getting a lecture on the wonders of nuclear energy from a power company CEO, one Tony Early. Early is the former President of LILCO, the very corporation the Feds and State of New York charged with civil

I'm looking down the road at the remainders of the Shoreham nuclear plant which took nearly 20 years to build at a cost of \$8 billion – or close to \$7,000 per customer it was supposed to supply. When I say “supposed to,” it was closed for safety reasons after operating just one single day

NUKE THIS

McCain's plan to spend endless billions on nuclear plants without a waste disposal system in place is like building a massive hotel without toilets

racketeering. (We did not name Early as a co-conspirator. When the government got him on the witness stand, it was clear the guy was too clueless to recognize he was in the midst of a billion-dollar swindle. McCain's got quite some team.)

Now, you Obamaniacs might not want to read this next paragraph:

While McCain is pushing nuclear power, a Senator from Illinois who shall remain nameless (skinny, just gave up smokes), was already embracing radiation as the solution to pollution. This Senator voted for George Bush's energy bill, a law which contained massive giveaways to nuclear energy, legislation which disses and dismisses conservation. Indeed, the presumptive Democratic presidential candidate has been derided as the "Senator from Commonwealth Edison," the Chicago company which is the nation's largest operator of nuclear plants – and whose executives were the money backbone to his early presidential campaign.

So, we've got both candidates hawking the nuclear snake oil. But there is one difference between them. A big big BIG difference. McCain's ready to spend a hundred billion dollars on nuclear power, no questions asked. But Barack Obama puts a crucial condition on his approval for building new nukes: an affordable method of disposing the new plants' radioactive waste.

That's not small stuff. While the *New York Times* reporters following McCain repeated his line about "inexpensive"

nuclear power without question, a buried wire story on the same day noted that the Energy Department is putting the unfunded bill for disposing nuclear plant waste at \$96.2 billion – nearly a billion dollars per plant operating today. And no one even knows exactly how to do it, or where. Obama has the audacity to ask about the nuclear waste's cost. "Can we deal with the expense?" he said on Meet the Press.

McCain's plan to spend endless billions on nuclear plants without a waste disposal system in place is like building a massive hotel without toilets. I suppose you can always tell the guests to poop in buckets until someone comes up with a plan for plumbing. But the stuff piles up. And unlike the fecal droppings of tourists, nuclear waste will stay hot and dangerous for a thousand generations.

So there you have our election in a nutshell. We have two candidates who rise above their parties – only to agree on a ludicrous pro-nukes energy plan.

But at least Senator Obama, when confronted with an economic question, doesn't have to take off his shoes to add up the facts. **CT**

*Greg Palast is the author of the New York Times bestsellers, **The Best Democracy Money Can Buy** and **Armed Madhouse: Sordid Secrets and Strange Tales of a White House Gone Wild**.*

*Three excerpts from **Armed Madhouse**, in downloadable pdf format, are available at www.coldtype.net/gregpalast.html*

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When the robocops take over

William John Cox traces the increasing militarism of the US police, which seems to be moving away from a philosophy of serving and protecting citizens to harrassing and oppressing them

Hundreds of protesters in St. Paul were arrested outside the Republican National Convention in early September by helmeted police officers wearing black uniforms and full body armor reminiscent of scenes from the 1987 movie, RoboCop featuring: “Part man. Part machine. All Cop. The future of law enforcement.”

In an operation supervised by federal agents, informants were recruited and paid to infiltrate media and protest groups. Preemptive search warrants were served on their gathering places by masked officers in riot gear armed with assault rifles, and video cameras, computers, journals and political pamphlets were seized.

Officers marching in formations and shouting military chants used pepper spray, rubber bullets, concussion grenades, smoke bombs and excessive force against predominately peaceful demonstrators. Specifically targeted, independent and credentialed journalists covering the protests were arrested, violently detained and charged with felony rioting.

The present encroachment by the federal government into matters of local law enforcement results in part from powers seized by President Bush following 9-11. He recently reaffirmed: “Consistent with

... the National Emergencies Act ..., I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency I declared on September 14, 2001, ... with respect to ... the continuing and immediate threat of further attacks on the United States. Because the terrorist threat continues, the national emergency ... and the powers and authorities adopted to deal with that emergency, must continue in effect beyond September 14, 2008.”

President Bush has appointed himself to ensure our “continuity of government”; however, the actual limits on his “powers and authorities” remain secret, even from Congress. Any “Enduring Constitutional Government” will be run by the president alone, and any “cooperative” role played by Congress or the Supreme Court will be at his pleasure as a “matter of comity.”

Watching these events unfold, and reflecting back upon the experiences and observations of a 45-year career in America’s justice system, I have concluded that while law enforcement may have improved as a profession, police officers have become less conscious of who it is they are sworn to protect and to serve.

Flashback

In the summer of 1968, I transferred to the Los Angeles Police Department after

While law enforcement may have improved as a profession, police officers have become less conscious of who it is they are sworn to protect and to serve

PART MAN, PART MACHINE

Other than for helmets, we received no protective gear and our faces were uncovered. We were in gabardine uniforms, with ties, badges and name plates

having worked for five years as a police officer at a small department in San Diego County. Many of us at the time considered ourselves to be a “new breed” of police officers dedicated to developing law enforcement into a true profession.

I had served as president of the San Diego County Chapter of the statewide police organization responsible for the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics and for California becoming the first state to adopt a Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) program. The 1967 President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice had just recommended that all states establish POST Commissions.

Race-related riots were exploding in many cities throughout the Sixties, with major conflicts occurring in New York City, Rochester, Jersey City, Paterson, Elizabeth, Chicago and Philadelphia in 1964, the Watts Riot in 1965, Cleveland, San Francisco, and Atlanta in 1966, and Boston, Tampa, Buffalo, Memphis, Newark, Plainfield, Detroit and Milwaukee in 1967.

Widespread discontent

Although there had been no riots in San Diego County, it was a time of widespread discontent about the Vietnam War, and there had been a violent clash in June 1967 between LAPD officers and 10,000 antiwar protestors outside the Century Plaza Hotel where President Johnson was attending a fund-raising dinner.

With a large military presence in the County, our administrators thought it prudent to get prepared. Many of us received training provided by the FBI in which we were issued long batons and taught to maintain wedge formations and skirmish lines to force protestors and rioters to disburse.

Other than for helmets, we received no protective gear and our faces were uncovered. We were in gabardine uniforms, with ties, badges and name plates.

Following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968, riots immediately erupted all over the country. At least 125 cities suffered violence and destruction and more than 56,000 federal and National Guard troops were mobilized in 18 states and 36 cities. The worst riots were in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Chicago, Boston, Detroit, Kansas City and Newark. In Chicago, Mayor Daley ordered the police, who had received no civil disorder training, to shoot to kill. More than 700 fires raged in Washington, D.C. and the White House was turned into a “fortress.”

After graduating from the Los Angeles Police Academy and completing my one-year probation, I commenced evening law school. During the day and for the next two years, I researched and wrote the Department’s Policy Manual establishing the principles and philosophy governing policing in the city, including the meaning of “To Protect and To Serve.” Policies were established for the use of force, including firearms, and the Department’s response to riots.

During “unusual occurrences,” I was also assigned to temporarily staff the Emergency Control Center where I served as the Situation Report Officer compiling all information and intelligence into hourly and daily reports for commanding officers and political leaders. Major events included the all-day shootout on December 8, 1969 between the LAPD and barricaded Black Panthers on South Central Avenue and the East LA riots in August and September 1970, during which Times columnist Rubén Salazar was killed by sheriff deputies and a bomb was exploded in the federal building next door to the LA police headquarters.

There were many other less publicized acts of violence in LA during the late Sixties and early Seventies: In 1968, the employment office at Cal State Northridge was firebombed because of defense contracts; a shrapnel bomb exploded at the

PART MAN, PART MACHINE

Hollywood Selective Service office; five heavy-duty Army trucks were dynamited in Van Nuys; and students occupied the administration building at Cal State Northridge and held the president and other administrators at knife point for four hours. The following year, a pipe bomb exploded at a Navy and Marine Corps Training Center in Compton and an airplane dropped an incendiary device outside a military installation. In 1970, two Selective Service offices sustained heavy damage during bombings; two men were arrested as they attempted to firebomb the National Guard armory in San Pedro; and an explosion and fire caused \$10,000 damage at UCLA's ROTC facility.

Los Angeles was not alone in experiencing public disorder and violence during this era as rage against the war and racial discrimination resulted in riots and civil disorder across the country. In addition to the widespread riots following the murder of Dr. King and in Chicago during the Democratic National Convention, riots in 1968 also occurred in New York City, Orangeburg, South Carolina, Baltimore, Kansas City, Salisbury, Maryland, and Louisville.

New York City was again stuck by rioting in 1969 followed by a riot in York, Pennsylvania. During the "Days of Rage," the Weathermen, a militant offshoot of the Students for a Democratic Society, violently confronted the police in response to the trial of the "Chicago Eight."

In March 1970, three Weathermen died during a failed attempt to construct a bomb in Greenwich Village, and four students were shot by National Guardsmen during a demonstration at Kent State in May. Several days later, construction workers wearing hard hats attacked a student antiwar demonstration in Wall Street injuring 70 and stormed City Hall to demand raising the flag which had been lowered in mourning for the Kent State students.

Continuing in 1970, there were riots in Augusta and Asbury Park. Bombs exploded at: the Army Mathematics Research Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; a courtroom in San Rafael, California; an armory in Santa Barbara; the ROTC building at the University of Washington, the University of California, Berkeley in October; and a replica of the Liberty Bell in Portland.

Violence continued in 1971 when the "Weather Underground" exploded a bomb causing \$300,000 damage at the U.S. Capitol building to protest the invasion of Laos; there were prison riots at Attica and San Quentin; a Black Muslim riot in Baton Rouge; May Day protests in Washington, D.C. and a riot in Camden, New Jersey.

Nixon's commission

As a result of the widespread violence sweeping the country and coincident with his presidential campaign, President Nixon appointed a National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals in 1972. Although I was still attending law school and employed by the LAPD, I was placed on loan to the Commission to work on the staff of the Police Task Force. My assignment over the next year was to write the introductory chapters defining the role of police officers in America and their relationship with the communities they serve.

The Commission published its initial reports in 1973, including specific recommendations to upgrade the quality of police personnel by improved recruitment and selection processes and for mandatory and extensive basic and in-service training requirements. Most basically, the Commission recommended continuance of primary local and state – versus federal – responsibility for domestic law enforcement. To the greatest extent possible, policing was to be community based.

Having completed law school, I was employed by the Law Enforcement As-

A pipe bomb exploded at a Navy and Marine Corps Training Center in Compton and an airplane dropped an incendiary device outside a military installation

PART MAN, PART MACHINE

After peaking in 1991, the crime rate began to dramatically drop. While some of the reduction can be traced to the aging of the baby boomers, improved police administration and practices certainly made a substantial contribution

sistance Administration (LEAA) in 1973 to work on the implementation of national standards and goals. After a year in Washington, D.C., I was appointed as a Deputy District Attorney in Los Angeles and prosecuted criminal cases for the next three years. I then opened a public interest law practice in the City of Long Beach in which I primarily represented juveniles accused of serious crimes and undertook a variety of pro bono cases that attracted my interest.

Some of the last battles in America's urban war were fought by the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) formed in 1973 to engage in guerrilla warfare against "the fascist insect that preys upon the life of the people." Following the murder of the Oakland Schools superintendent for requiring students to carry identification, the SLA kidnapped newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst and committed a bank robbery in which a customer was killed. The LAPD closed in on the SLA in May 1974 and six heavily armed members died in a shootout and fire. In August of the next year, surviving SLA members attempted to bomb several LAPD patrol cars.

The National Advisory Commission released its final report by the Task Force on Disorders and Terrorism in 1976. The report differentiated civil disorders from terrorism in finding that civil disorders are "manifestations of exuberance, discontent, or disapproval on the part of a substantial segment of the community." Terrorism was defined as "the deliberately planned work of a small number of malcontents or dissidents who threaten the security of the entire community."

The Task Force observed that "very little American violence has been insurrectionary. Mass protest in this country has been directed at modifying our system of government, not overthrowing it. Terrorism in this country has been limited, unpopular, and disorganized."

The Task Force concluded that "the

nature of American society enables it to absorb a considerable amount of violence without damaging its political structure." Finally, the Task Force predicted that "terrorist activities will increase and intensify. In contrast, civil disturbances appear to be cyclical and are the products of local, social and political conditions."

A mellowing of discontent

Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Food Stamp Act of 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the Higher Education Act of 1965, the Social Security Act of 1965, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 brought an end to many of the institutionalized causes of racial segregation and discrimination in America. Combined with a generalized increase in the standard of living for most people, many of the root causes for violent protests by minorities were removed.

The antiwar movement sputtered out following America's withdrawal from Vietnam, and the country experienced a significant reduction in violent political protests during the Eighties and Nineties. Law enforcement continued to improve as a profession with all states adopting POST programs and a significant portion of police officers obtained college degrees. After peaking in 1991, the crime rate began to dramatically drop. While some of the reduction can be traced to the aging of the baby boomers, improved police administration and practices certainly made a substantial contribution.

As a part of the continuing professionalization of law enforcement, I was recruited by two former LAPD commanding officers in 1984 to serve as general counsel and operations officer for a high-level private security consulting and investigation company they had established. Primarily deploying operatives with law enforcement backgrounds, our clients included a number of major Fortune 500 corporations, including several

that operated nuclear weapons sites for the U.S. Department of Energy. When my principals sold their business in 1988, I reopened my law practice in Long Beach and concentrated on investigative law.

The bombings of the World Trade Center in February 1993 and the Oklahoma City federal building in April 1995 were pure mass-casualty terrorist attacks and were unrelated to any domestic protest movement.

There were only two major urban riots during the Eighties and Nineties and both shared similar causation. The Miami riot in 1980 resulted from the acquittal of five white police officers accused of beating an African-American insurance salesman to death after he attempted to surrender. The Liberty City area erupted in two days of rioting in which 150 fires were set, 17 people died, 1,300 were arrested and there was \$50 million in property damage.

Twelve years later, in April 1992, four white Los Angeles police officers were acquitted by a jury of charges they had used excessive force while arresting an African-American driver after a high-speed chase. The beating was videotaped by a bystander and the film was widely shown on television. Following the verdict, a white truck driver was dragged from his truck and was beaten by African-American youths as the assault was broadcast live from a television station news helicopter.

Rioting immediately spread throughout Los Angeles and adjoining cities violence and destruction prevailed for three days, until the National Guard was able to restore order. Fifty-two people died during the rioting, 2,499 were injured and 6,559 were arrested for riot-related crimes; 1,120 buildings suffered more than \$446 in damage and 377 were totally destroyed.

The primary difference between the 1992 riot and all other previous urban riots was that it spread throughout the

metropolitan area and rioters represented all socioeconomic and racial groups.

The emergence of RoboCops

One of the more unsettling trends in recent years has been the increasing militarization of local police forces in response to protest activities unrelated to terrorism. While we have become accustomed to seeing specialized units, such as SWAT teams outfitted in black coveralls and other combat gear, police officers are now appearing as “RoboCops” with military weapons at political demonstrations, such as the anti-globalization protests in 1999 in Seattle against the World Trade Organization.

The Department of Homeland Security was created in November 2002 to supervise, fund and coordinate “local first responders.” Since then, billions have been spent to equip and train police, fire and medical personnel to respond to high consequence-low probability terrorist events.

Homeland Security has provided local law enforcement agencies with almost unlimited funds to purchase militaristic equipment to fight the war against terrorism. Once agencies equip every officer with black tactical suits, full body armor, dark-visored helmets and assault weapons and train them to respond to highly unlikely terrorist events, police administrators are much more likely to deploy overwhelming force against political protesters, who usually constitute a pain in the ass rather than a real threat to public order.

Acting under the aegis of the Department of Homeland Security, as many as 40 different law enforcement agencies blanketed Miami in November 2003 during meetings relating to the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Protest groups were infiltrated by the police, and the corporate media was “embedded” with law enforcement.

In what has become known as the

One of the more unsettling trends in recent years has been the increasing militarization of local police forces in response to protest activities unrelated to terrorism

PART MAN, PART MACHINE

The governor declared a month-long state of emergency along the coast and more than 25,000 local, state and federal police officers and military units in armored assault vehicles were deployed in or near the small coastal town, which only has a population of 15,000 residents

“Miami Model,” an aggressive police deployment is characterized by mass preventive arrests, a violent police response to nonviolent demonstrators, and the arrest and harassment of independent journalists working among the protestors. In addition, Miami deployed unidentifiable police “extraction teams” wearing full body armor and ski masks in unmarked vans to haul away protestors.

Adopting a “zero tolerance” of protest, the New York City police department used “Miami” tactics in 2004 at the Republican National Convention. Hundreds of peaceful demonstrators and innocent bystanders were illegally arrested, fingerprinted, photographed, and subjected to prolonged detention in wire cages before being released without prosecution.

Repressive tactics were also used the same year as a counter-terrorism measure at the Democratic National Convention, where Boston police established a designated fenced enclosure topped by razor wire as the “free speech zone.” Protestors could only demonstrate in the “zone,” which was well away from the convention and beyond the view of participants and the news media.

Another full-court press against protest occurred in 2004 at the G8 Summit on Sea Island just off the coast from Brunswick, Georgia. The governor declared a month-long state of emergency along the coast and more than 25,000 local, state and federal police officers and military units in armored assault vehicles were deployed in or near the small coastal town, which only has a population of 15,000 residents.

Local businesses closed up for the week and boarded up their windows, and the federal government spent more than \$25 million to protect the summit against terrorism; however, less than 250 activists showed up to demonstrate, including three who protested that the local pigeons had more freedom than they did.

The 2008 National Political Conventions

Approximately 150 demonstrators were arrested by law enforcement officers in Denver during the 2008 Democratic National Convention; however, many were released without charges and the others were primarily charged with offenses including obstruction, throwing stones, assault, illegal dumping and possession of drugs and illegal weapons. Most pled guilty and were fined \$100 plus court costs and given a five-day suspended sentence.

Other than for authorized marches, protesters were required to remain in a “Freedom Cage” separated from the Denver convention center by metal fences on top of concrete barricades. Although some officers turned out in riot gear, they all had badges and identification numbers displayed on their chests and the use of force was mainly restricted to the defensive use of pepper spray. It appears that both protesters and the police considered the gathering to be a political protest, rather than a terrorist activity, and there was a determined effort by both sides to avoid violent confrontations.

It was a different story during the Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minnesota. Early on, the police department promised protest organizers that the entire city of St. Paul would be a “free speech zone,” police officers would not infiltrate protest organizations, officers would wear uniforms rather than tactical gear, and the local police would be in charge of policing rather than federal authorities. None of these promises were kept. Instead, the police relied upon the classic Miami Model to control and oppress political dissent.

Prior to the Republican Convention, the FBI-directed Minneapolis Joint Terrorist Task force recruited paid “moles” to infiltrate protest groups and to report on their plans and activities. In the week before the convention, local authorities

PART MAN, PART MACHINE

supervised by the FBI and aided by informants conducted a series of preemptive raids leading to seizures of video cameras, computers, journals and political materials.

Teams of 25-30 RoboCops waving assault rifles and shotguns entered homes of protesters forcing everyone present to the floor and to be handcuffed and photographed. Even attorneys on the scene to represent detainees were handcuffed.

Full body armor

More than 10,000 protesters gathered to demonstrate during the convention. Officers responded wearing helmets with face shields and full body armor without badges or any form of personal identification. They marched about in formation shouting military chants. Officers used pepper spray, rubber bullets, smoke bombs, concussion grenades and excessive force to arrest more than 800 protesters, including a 78-year-old Catholic nun. Many of those arrested were overcharged with felony rioting making it more difficult for them to be released from custody.

Journalists were specifically targeted for harassment and arrest. Two independent photojournalist groups were subjected to preemptive searches, and journalists who were present were detained at gunpoint. Video equipment and computers were seized from “I-Witness Video,” a media watchdog group that monitors law enforcement to protect civil liberties, and the “Glass Bead Collective,” another video documentary group.

Associated Press photographer Matt Rourke was arrested while on assignment after police encircled the demonstrators he was photographing. Even though he displayed convention credentials, Rourke was kicked to the ground, arrested, and his camera was seized. Subsequently several other members of the media, including AP reporters Amy Forliti and Jon Krawczynski were trapped with protest-

ers on a bridge. They were forced to sit with their hands over their heads until being led away for processing. They were cited for unlawful assembly and were released. Two student photographers and their faculty advisor were also held without charges for 36 hours.

At least 19 journalists were detained during the convention; however, the most sensational arrest was of prominent broadcast journalist Amy Goodman of “Democracy Now!”, who was arrested for attempting to speak to a police commanding officer about the arrest of two accredited coworkers. Within seconds, she was grabbed and pulled behind the police line. Her arms were forcibly twisted behind her back and her wrists were tightly bound with rigid plastic cuffs. When she repeated that she was an accredited journalist, an unidentified Secret Service agent walked up and said, “Oh really?” and ripped her convention credential from her neck.

Goodman’s producers, Sharif Abdel Kouddous and Nicole Salazar, had been arrested after being forced into a parking lot along with protesters and surrounded by police officers. Salazar was trapped between parked cars and thrown to the ground; her face was smashed into the pavement and she was bleeding from the nose. One officer had a boot or knee on her back and another officer was pulling on her leg. Sharif was thrown against a wall and kicked in the chest. He was bleeding from his arm.

Both “Democracy Now!” producers were charged with suspicion of felony rioting, and Amy Goodman was charged with obstruction of a police officer. She said, “There’s a reason our profession is explicitly protected by the Constitution – because we’re the check and balance on power, the eyes and ears. And when the eyes and ears are closed, it’s very dangerous for democratic society.”

St. Paul Police Chief John Harrington says his officers “did not overreact” and

Officers responded wearing helmets with face shields and full body armor without badges or any form of personal identification. They marched about in formation shouting military chants. Officers used pepper spray, rubber bullets, smoke bombs, concussion grenades and excessive force to arrest more than 800 protesters, including a 78-year-old Catholic nun

PART MAN, PART MACHINE

Reporters not only have a right to be present at such events, but they have a duty to mix with participants and to inform the public of their observations, especially how they are treated by those who have taken an oath to protect and to serve the public

that they “responded appropriately” in dealing with demonstrators: “If a reporter is committing crimes while they’re under their credentials, I think they become regular citizens.”

Although the era of Internet journalism makes it more difficult for law enforcement officers to identify legitimate media representatives, the Constitution makes no distinction between those who are “accredited” and those who are not. The First Amendment protects the rights of all journalists to do their jobs, especially at political events and public protests. Reporters not only have a right to be present at such events, but they have a duty to mix with participants and to inform the public of their observations, especially how they are treated by those who have taken an oath to protect and to serve the public.

What now?

I ended the last phase of my career in the justice system last year as a prosecutor for the State Bar of California, essentially policing the legal profession. I have now retired and have dedicated my remaining years to writing in an attempt to bring about a more peaceful and representative government; however, I fear for the future of the American people.

There are two things for certain: First, if the violent protest events of the Sixties and Seventies were to occur today, the Constitution would be suspended and all of us would be living under martial law. Second, things will get worse before they get better! Not only are we in a severe recession in which hundreds of thousands of us are losing our jobs, homes, health and our way of life, but the absolute risk of mass-casualty terrorism has not been diminished by the “War on Terrorism” – indeed it has been made much more likely by the manner in which it has been conducted.

The thing I fear most is the class war

being waged on the working and middle class by the political and economic elites of America. They have seized most of the wealth, income and political power and they control the corporate media and the ability to shape our opinions, beliefs and attitudes. At some point we have to fight back and we will not win unless those who enforce the laws do so on our behalf.

Today, there is little difference between the two main political parties and irrespective of who will be president during the next four years of turmoil, I fear his or her use of the extraordinary and secret powers that have been aggrandized to the presidency, as we begin to increasingly protest our loss of freedoms, rights, and livelihoods.

I continue to respect and to identify with those professional police officers who wear the badges we issue them and who form the thin blue line between peaceful political protest and the violence of terrorism, but my faith in our ability to survive the difficulties we confront together is fading fast.

Just as police officers must recognize that our political protests are not acts of terrorism, we must be able to see their faces, to know who they are, to trust that they are on our side, and that they will act as professionals.

Contrary to the propaganda of those who seek unlimited power over us, the law enforcement model has worked well for more than 200 years to protect the security and freedoms of Americans. We must resist with all of our might the use and deployment of the military and federal agents within this country to enforce our local laws. We must trust our local police to protect us and our right to dissent.

Years ago as a brash young man I attempted to define the meaning of the motto, “To Protect and To Serve,” painted on the side of LAPD patrol cars. Today, as

PART MAN, PART MACHINE

a much older and hopefully wiser man, I believe the motto should be, “The People and Their Police – Peers for Peace.” It speaks for itself.

William John Cox is a retired supervising prosecutor for the State Bar of California. Acting as a public interest, pro bono, attorney, he filed a class action lawsuit in 1979 on behalf of every citizen of the United States petitioning the Supreme Court to order the other two branches of the federal government to conduct

*a National Policy Referendum; he investigated and successfully sued a group of radical right-wing organizations in 1981 that denied the Holocaust; and he arranged in 1991 for publication of the suppressed Dead Sea Scrolls. His 2004 book, **You're Not Stupid! Get the Truth: A Brief on the Bush Presidency** is reviewed at <http://www.yourenotstupid.com>, and he is currently working on a fact-based fictional political philosophy. His writings are collected at www.thevoters.org*

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Only in America

Rory O'Connor says that only in America could a two-faced creature like John McCain attain such media status

Welcome to America, land of opportunity, where every politician is a self-styled “change agent” – yet little ever seems to change

Only in America could a man who has been in office for decades run as an “outsider” against the entrenched interests in Washington.

Only in America could a man who is a longtime Republican stalwart run against his own party, which has governed while controlling most of the institutional levers of power – the presidency, the Supreme Court and the Congress – for much of the past eight years.

And only in America could a man who has called the corporatized, in-the-tank, mainstream media his “base” – the media that made him its darling and hailed him for his supposed “straight talk” – run against that very same media, bashing it figuratively while “peace officers” were doing so quite literally to journalists in the streets of St. Paul, in a manner unseen since the ‘60s and the Chicago days of Richard Daley and the subsequent Nixonian “nattering nabobs of negativity” era.

Yes, welcome to America, land of opportunity, where every politician is a self-styled “change agent” – yet little ever seems to change.

Running hard against the elite, effete (or as Bill O'Reilly concisely puts it, the “sniveling, left-wing, wine-drinking, brie-eating”) media establishment – while

simultaneously chewing on pork rinds, downing shots of Crown Royal with beer chasers, and quadrennially cozying up to Soccer and Hockey Moms and Nascar Dads – is of course a time-honored tradition among political practitioners within both the Republican and the Democratic wings of America's ruling Property Party. Yet few since the days of Tricky Dick and his attack dog Spiro Agnew have taken the obligatory attacks on the media to such heights – or depths, really – as the McCain-Palin campaign, now effectively run by the bullet-headed attack dog Steve Schmidt and other acolytes of Karl Rove and the band of merry miscreants most responsible for the debacle formerly known as the Bush administration.

One after another, speakers at the Republican National Convention unleashed a barrage of attacks on the news media, as the trade journal *Broadcasting & Cable* reported:

“As the GOP convention hit its stride Tuesday, after its opening was overshadowed by Hurricane Gustav, the press became almost as big a target as Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), with speech after speech tarring the media as liberal and elitist.

“Fred Thompson, the senator-turned-actor whose own campaign for the Republican nomination ended early, fired the first broadside in his speech Tuesday.

On Wednesday, former Republican presidential candidates Mike Huckabee and Rudy Giuliani joined in before Palin herself took aim.

“I’m not a member of the permanent political establishment,’ Palin said in her speech accepting the nomination. ‘And I’ve learned quickly these past few days that if you’re not a member in good standing of the Washington elite, then some in the media consider a candidate unqualified for that reason alone.’

“This prompted sustained boos from the audience at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul, Minneapolis.”

Marketing ploy

Meanwhile, beleaguered Big Media news executives struggled against the unmitigated assaults to defend their coverage. “It’s a time-honored marketing ploy, and every time they bash the media, it means they’re not talking about a vision or a plan,” CNN President Jon Klein said, while also predictably trotting out his usual assault on the blogosphere as a sort of arms-length apology: “This onslaught about the mainstream media seems woefully time-worn and out of step, considering how new media have become the source of the scurrilous rumor-mongering on both the Right and the Left. If they want to pick a target, let them pick irresponsible bloggers who are reporting rumors promiscuously.”

From literally beating the press outside in the streets (and even threatening them inside their offices) to verbally bashing reporters and executives alike

everywhere from the convention podium to select media outlets they favor, John McChange and his lipsticked pit bull Sarah Palin are counting on the fact we as a culture have developed such a severe case of ADD that we can no longer ADD one and one and get two!

Is there a problem in Washington? Forget the fact that the Republicans have been running everything there for years – and elect a Republican “change agent!” Is there a problem with the ongoing war and occupation of Iraq? Forget the fact that the Republicans have been waging a war there for years – and elect a Republican “change agent!” Is there a problem with our media being complicit with those in power and concealing the truth from the American people? Forget the fact that the Republican candidate for president has benefited from a cozy relationship with his media “base” for years – and yes, elect a Republican “change agent,” who will then, unchanged, crawl right back into bed with that same elite, effete crowd the minute he sets foot in the Oval Office!

Only in America, Land of Opportunity, is everyone free to start over – and over and over – endlessly reinventing themselves. Here, as the poet Allen Ginsberg once noted, “yesterday’s newspaper is amnesia.” **CT**

*Filmmaker and journalist Rory O’Connor is the author of **Shock Jocks: Hate Speech and Talk Radio** (AlterNet Books, 2008), excerpted in July’s ColdType. O’Connor also writes the *Media Is a Plural* blog.*

John McChange and his lipsticked pit bull Sarah Palin are counting on the fact we as a culture have developed such a severe case of ADD that we can no longer ADD one and one and get two!

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Fearing the fist

Dave Zirin on an attack by a right wing columnist on 1968 Olympic protesters Tommie Smith and John Carlos

Note that Goldberg doesn't mention a word about why Smith and Carlos made their stand and why his intellectual forbearers "must dine on their denunciations"

Jonah Goldberg's regular column in the *LA Times* is usually an awkward grab bag of right wing talking points backed by knowledge of history that would shame a poodle, although a poodle would never be so pompous. Goldberg stepped on to my beat recently with a column about the 1968 Olympic protesters, Tommie Smith and John Carlos. His piece was such a cheap, dishonest scribble, I feel compelled to respond. The column's starting point was the Arthur Ashe Courage Award, given to Smith and Carlos at the recent 2008 ESPY Awards. Lest you had any doubt about Goldberg's take, the headline blares, "'68 Olympics salute deserves no honor: ESPN ignored the violent extremism behind the black power salute given by two medalists at the Mexico City Games.'"

One could tell right away that Goldberg didn't read a book, an article, even a fortune cookie, about the 1968 Olympics before whipping out his laptop. I know, research is hard ... and who needs facts when you have dogma? – but Smith and Carlos never advocated any kind of violence. Furthermore, they saw their symbol as a sign of resistance that would connect broadly across ethnicities, not a narrow expression of "black power".

But the title turns out to be the intellectual summit of the piece.

Goldberg writes, "The stench of self-congratulation surrounding ESPN's decision [to honor Smith and Carlos] is thicker than the air in a locker room after double overtime. The argument that Smith's and Carlos' critics must dine on their denunciations rests on an inch-deep nostalgia and the triumph of celebrity culture."

Note that Goldberg doesn't mention a word about why Smith and Carlos made their stand and why his intellectual forbearers "must dine on their denunciations." Smith and Carlos wanted South Africa and Rhodesia banned from the 1968 Games because of their apartheid politics. They demanded more black coaches in sports. They sought to hold Avery Brundage, president of the International Olympic Committee, accountable for what many black athletes thought to be a barely concealed racism. They wanted Muhammad Ali to have his heavyweight boxing title restored after it was stripped because of Ali's refusal to fight in Vietnam. Goldberg never makes clear if he even knows this history. I'm guessing no.

And yet he continues: "In today's culture, is it even worth trying to remind people that the black power salute was, for those who brandished it most seriously, a symbol of violence – rhetorical, political and literal – against the United

States? It was the high-sign for a racist militia, the Black Panthers, which orchestrated the murder of innocents and allied itself with America's enemies."

This is little more than an ugly screed against the Black Panthers. They were popular in their day not because they were a "racist militia" but because they were seen as standing up to racism. They armed themselves to challenge police brutality. They set up breakfast programs and health clinics in neighborhoods dying of neglect. They were popular enough that J. Edgar Hoover called them "public enemy number 1" and set out a plan to kill their leaders and destroy their organization. There are many reasons to raise criticisms of the Panthers but not by someone who seems to have done little more than read the David Horowitz Cliff Notes on the subject. And I have to ask, what the hell is a "high sign"? Is that Goldberg trying to be "down"? I'd love to see a reality show where he is dropped in South East DC and has to find his way home. I think he'd starve to death

Jonah continues: "But even a more benign view of the salute shouldn't obscure the intense contradictions of ESPN's decision to honor Carlos and Smith. Both men were members of the Olympic Committee for Human Rights, which wanted a complete black boycott of the '68 Olympics. The committee considered an entire generation of heroic black athletes – including Jesse Owens and Jackie Robinson – to be Uncle Toms."

Here we have an error followed by a lie. Their organization was called the Olympic PROJECT for Human Rights, not the "committee." (A Google search would have cleared that up. Once again, research is hard.) And it is a lie is that they called out Jackie Robinson as an Uncle Tom. The truth is that Robinson supported OPHR.

As Robinson said, "I do support the individuals who decided to make the sacrifice by giving up the chance to win

an Olympic medal. I respect their courage. We need to understand the reason and frustration behind these protests... it was different in my day perhaps we lacked courage."

As for Jesse Owens, they 1968 Olympians were angry with him because he worked with Avery Brundage to undermine their protest both publicly and privately. Owens came to regret his actions this, writing an entire book in 1972 called *I Have Changed*.

But let's turn back to Jonah. It gets "better."

"Another important distinction that should matter is that this was 1968, not 1938. By the end of the 1960s, the United States had seen two decades of steady – if too slow – racial progress. The black power vision of an irredeemably "racist Amerikkka" was all but blind to the desegregation of the military, the accomplishments of Owens and Robinson, and the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, 1964 and even 1968. One hopes ESPN disagrees with those views as well."

It's as if Dan Quayle learned how to type. Does Goldberg have even a basic knowledge of American history? Does he really think black people were feeling good about the USA in 1968? Did he hear about that guy who got shot in Memphis that year? Dr. Martin Luther Somebody? And when he was shot how there were riots in every major city in the country? Did he know that Smith and Carlos were profoundly affected by this, wondering how they could represent a country that could breed such hate? Where did Goldberg grow up? Mayberry?

Jonah concludes, "But the question is not, and never has been, whether the Olympic ideal can be achieved but whether it should be pursued. By embracing those who spat on that idea, it seems ESPN thinks the answer is no."

Sigh. Smith and Carlos weren't spitting on anything. They were challenging the hypocritical ideals of an Olympics

Does Goldberg have even a basic knowledge of American history? Does he really think black people were feeling good about the USA in 1968? Did he hear about that guy who got shot in Memphis that year? Dr. Martin Luther Somebody?

IT'S NOT SPORT

The audacious gesture of Tommie Smith and John Carlos still holds the power to upset the bullies, the dullards, and the scoundrels

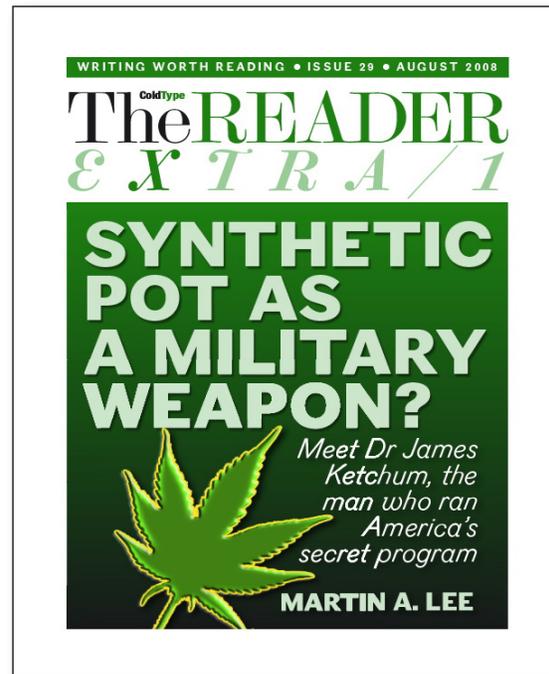
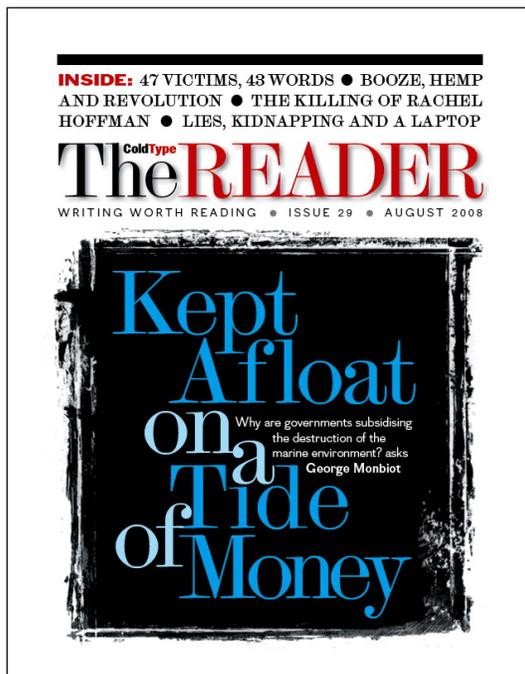
that welcomed apartheid nations, employed a paucity of African American coaches, and had an open white supremacist, Avery Brundage, at its helm. Once again, Goldberg simply makes no effort to engage with the actuality of that moment. He never mentions the flood of hatred and death threats Smith and Carlos brought upon themselves. He could care less about the toll it took on their families, their friends, and their pocket books. Jonah Goldberg, like some kind of dull-witted, dime store propagandist, can only unleash a one-dimensional hateful

diatribe on a period and moment that he simply doesn't understand.

But I have to admit there is a small part of me that took great satisfaction in seeing this column. It demonstrates that after 40 years, the audacious gesture of Tommie Smith and John Carlos still holds the power to upset the bullies, the dullards, and the scoundrels. It still holds the power to upset all the right people. **CT**

*Dave Zirin's latest book, published by Haymarket, is **A People's History of Sports in the United States***

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Obama-Biden, Osama bin Laden

William Blum knows who to blame if presidential candidate John McCain had a role in the Georgian invasion of Ossetia

I'm sorry to say that I think that John McCain is going to be the next president of the United States. After the long night of Bush horror any Democrat should easily win, but the Dems are screwing it up and McCain has been running more-or-less even with Barack Obama in the polls. The Democrats should run on the slogan "If you liked Bush, you'll love McCain", but that would be too outspoken, too direct for the spineless Nancy Pelosi and her spineless party. Or, "If you liked Iraq, you'll love Iran." But the Democrat leadership is not on record as categorically opposing either conflict.

Nor, it seems, do the Democrats have the courage to raise the issue of McCain not having been born in the United States as the Constitution requires. Nor questioning him about accusations by his fellow American prisoners about his considerable collaboration with his Vietnamese captors. Nor a word about McCain's highly possible role in the brutal Georgian invasion of South Ossetia on August 7. (More on this last below.)

Obama has lost much of the sizable liberal/progressive vote because of his move to the center-right (or his exposure as a center-rightist), and he now may have lost even his selling point of being more strongly against the war than Mc-

Cain – if in fact he actually is – by appointing Joe Biden as his running mate. Biden has long been a hawk on Iraq (as well as the rest of US foreign policy), calling for an invasion as far back as 1998.[1] In April, 2007, when pressed in an interview about his vote for the war in 2003, Biden said: "It was a mistake. I regret my vote. ... because I learned more, like everybody else learned, about what, in fact, we were told." [2]

This has been a common excuse of war supporters in recent years when the tide of public opinion turned against them. But why did millions and millions of Americans march against the war in the fall of 2002 and early 2003, before it began? What did they know that Joe Biden didn't know?

It was clear to the protesters that George W. Bush and Dick Cheney were habitual liars, that they couldn't care less about the people of Iraq, that the defenseless people of that ancient civilization were going to be bombed to hell; the protesters knew something about the bombings of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Panama, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan; they knew about napalm, cluster bombs, depleted uranium. ... Didn't Biden know about any of these things? Those who marched knew that the impending war was something a moral person could not

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ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

Almost as soon as the fighting began, Dick Cheney announced: “Russian aggression must not go unanswered. The media needed no further instructions. Yes, that’s actually the way it works. (See Cuba, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Iran, Bolivia, etc., etc.)

support; and that it was totally illegal, a textbook case of a “war of aggression”; one didn’t have to be an expert in international law to know this. Did Joe Biden think about any of this?

If McCain had a role in the Georgian invasion of breakaway-region Ossetia it would have been arranged with the help of Randy Scheunemann, McCain’s top foreign policy adviser and until recently Georgia’s principal lobbyist in Washington.

As head of the neo-conservative Committee for the Liberation of Iraq in 2002, Scheunemann was one of America’s leading advocates for invading Iraq. One of McCain’s primary campaign sales pitches has been to emphasize his supposed superior experience in foreign policy matters, which – again supposedly – means something in this world. McCain consistently leads Obama in the opinion polls on “readiness to be commander-in-chief”, or similar nonsense.

The Georgia-Russia hostilities raise – in the mass media and the mass mind – the issue of the United States needing an experienced foreign policy person to handle such a “crisis”, and, standard in every crisis – an enemy bad guy.

Typical of the media was the *Chicago Tribune* praising McCain for his statesmanlike views on Iraq and stating: “What Russia’s invasion of Georgia showed was that the world is still a very dangerous place,” and Russia is a “looming threat”. In addition to using the expression “Russia’s invasion of Georgia”, the *Tribune* article also referred to “Russia’s invasion of South Ossetia”. No mention of Georgia’s invasion of South Ossetia which began the warfare.[3]

In a feature story in the *Washington Post* on the Georgia events the second sentence was: “The war had started, Russian jets had just bombed the outskirts of Tbilisi [Georgian capital].” The article then speaks of “the horror” of “the Russian invasion”. Not the slightest

hint of any Georgian military action can be found in the story.[4] One of course can find a media report here or there that mentions or at least implies in passing that an invasion from Georgia is what instigated the mayhem. But I’ve yet to come upon one report in the American mass media that actually emphasizes this point, and certainly none that put it in the headline. The result is that if a poll were taken amongst Americans today, I’m sure the majority of those who have any opinion would be convinced that the nasty Russians began it all.[5]

What we have here in the American media is simply standard operating procedure for an ODE (Officially Designated Enemy). Almost as soon as the fighting began, Dick Cheney announced: “Russian aggression must not go unanswered.”[6] The media needed no further instructions. Yes, that’s actually the way it works. (See Cuba, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Iran, Bolivia, etc., etc.)

The president of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, is an American poodle to an extent that would embarrass Tony Blair. Until their 2,000 troops were called home for this emergency, the Georgian contingent in Iraq was the largest after the US and UK. The Georgian president prattles on about freedom and democracy and the Cold War like George W., declaring that the current conflict “is not about Georgia anymore. It is about America, its values,”. [7] (I must confess that until Saakashvili pointed it out I hadn’t realized that “American values” were involved in the fighting.) His government recently ran a full-page ad in the *Washington Post*. The entire text, written vertically, was: “Lenin ... Stalin ... Putin ... Give in? Enough is enough. Support Georgia. ... sosgeorgia.org”[8]

UK prime minister Gordon Brown asserted that Russia’s recognition of the independence of Georgia’s two breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia was “dangerous and unacceptable.”[9]

Earlier this year when Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia, the UK, along with the US and other allied countries quickly recognized it despite widespread warnings that legitimating the Kosovo action might lead to a number of other regions in the world declaring their independence.

Brown's hypocrisy appears as merely the routine stuff of politicians compared to that of John McCain and George W. re the Georgia fighting: "I'm interested in good relations between the United States and Russia, but in the 21st century, nations don't invade other nations," said McCain [10], the staunch supporter of US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and leading champion of an invasion of Iran.

And here is Mahatma Gandhi Bush meditating on the subject: "Bullying and intimidation are not acceptable ways to conduct foreign policy in the 21st century." [11]

Hypocrisy of this magnitude has to be respected. It compares favorably with the motto on automobile license plates of the state of New Hampshire made by prisoners: "Live Free or Die".

Our beloved president was also moved to affirm that the Russian recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia: was an "irresponsible decision". "Russia's action only exacerbates tensions and complicates diplomatic negotiations," he said. [12] Belgrade, are you listening?

It should be noted that linguistically and historically- distinct South Ossetia and Abkhazia had been autonomous Russian/Soviet protectorates or regions from early in the 19th century to 1991, when the Georgian government abolished their autonomy.

So what then was the purpose of the Georgian invasion of Ossetia if not to serve the electoral campaign of John McCain, a man who might be the next US president and be thus very obligated to the Georgian president? Saakashvili

could have wanted to overthrow the Ossetian government to incorporate it back into Georgia, at the same time hopefully advancing the cause of Georgia's petition to become a member of NATO, which looks askance upon new members with territories in dispute or with military facilities belonging to a nonmember state such as Russia. But the nature of the Georgian invasion does not fit this thesis. The Georgians did none of the things that those staging a coup have traditionally found indispensable. They did not take over a TV or radio station, or the airport, or important government buildings, or military or police installations. They didn't take into custody key members of the government. All the US/Israeli-armed and trained Georgia military did was bomb and kill, civilians and Russian peacekeeper soldiers, the latter legally there for 16 years under an international agreement. For what purpose all this if not to incite a Russian intervention?

The only reason the United States did not itself strongly attack the Russian forces is that it's a pre-eminent principle of American military interventions to not pick on anyone capable of really defending themselves.

Unreconstructed cold warriors now fret about Russian expansionism, warning that Ukraine might be next. But of the numerous myths surrounding the Cold War, "communist expansionism" was certainly one of the biggest. We have to remember that within the space of 25 years, Western powers invaded Russia three times – World War I, the "intervention" of 1918-20, and World War II, inflicting some 40 million casualties in the two world wars alone. (The Soviet Union lost considerably more people to international warfare on its own land than it did abroad. There are not too many great powers who can say that.) To carry out these invasions, the West used Eastern Europe as a highway. Should it be any cause for wonder that after World War

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ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

Afghanistan lived alongside the Soviet Union for more than 60 years with no Soviet military intrusion. It's only when the United States intervened in Afghanistan to replace a government friendly to Moscow with one militantly anti-communist that the Russians invaded to do battle with the US-supported Islamic jihadists

If the Soviets were determined to close down this highway? Minus the Cold War atmosphere and indoctrination, most people would have no problem in seeing the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe as an act of self defense. Neither does the case of Afghanistan support the idea of "expansionism". Afghanistan lived alongside the Soviet Union for more than 60 years with no Soviet military intrusion. It's only when the United States intervened in Afghanistan to replace a government friendly to Moscow with one militantly anti-communist that the Russians invaded to do battle with the US-supported Islamic jihadists.

During the Cold War, before undertaking a new military intervention, American officials usually had to consider how the Soviet Union would react. That restraint was removed with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. We may now, however, be witnessing the beginning of a new kind of polarization in the world. An increasing number of countries in the Third World – with Latin America as a prime example – have more fraternal relations with Moscow and/or Beijing than with Washington. Singapore's former UN ambassador observed: "Most of the world is bemused by western moralising on Georgia" ... While the western view is that the world "should support the underdog, Georgia, against Russia ... most support Russia against the bullying west. The gap between the western narrative and the rest of the world could not be clearer."^[13] And the *Washington Post* reported: "Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi's influential son, echoed the delight expressed in much of the Arab news media. 'What happened in Georgia is a good sign, one that means America is no longer the sole world power setting the rules of the game ... there is a balance in the world now. Russia is resurging, which is good for us, for the entire Middle East.'^[14]

Scheming at the convention?

Am I the only one to be a bit suspicious about what happened at the Democratic Convention on August 27? Why did Hillary Clinton call for a suspension of the roll call when it reached New York and ask that Barack Obama be selected by the convention by acclamation? Many delegates had worked very hard to get the vote out at their primaries and wanted the opportunity to publicly announce the delegate count. What harm would there have been to allow every state to vote?

And why, after Clinton's motion, did House Speaker Nancy Pelosi immediately cry: "All those in favor, say Aye", followed by a large roar, and she then cried: "All those opposed say Nay." It is impossible to say how strong the Nay vote was because the time elapse between Pelosi calling for it and her declaring that "The measure is approved" was no more than one or two nanoseconds. She literally did not allow a Nay vote to be heard.

I also can not find a record of the vote that took place before it reached New York.

Does anyone else find anything strange about all this?

All consciences are equal, except that some consciences are more equal than others

The Bush administration has proposed stronger job protections for doctors and other health care workers who refuse to participate in abortions because of religious or moral objections. Both supporters and critics say that the new regulations are broad enough to allow pharmacists, doctors, nurses and others to refuse to provide birth control pills, Plan B emergency contraception, and other forms of contraception, while explicitly allowing employees to withhold information about such services and refuse to refer patients elsewhere. "People should not be forced to say or do things they

believe are morally wrong,” Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt said. “Health-care workers should not be forced to provide services that violate their own conscience.”[15]

It’s difficult to argue against such a philosophy. It’s also difficult to be consistent about it. Do Leavitt and others in the Bush administration extend this concept to those in the military? If a soldier in Iraq or Afghanistan is deeply repulsed by his/her involvement in carrying out the daily horror of the American occupation and asks to be discharged from the military as a conscientious objector, will the Pentagon honor his request because “people should not be forced to do things they believe are morally wrong”? The fact that the soldier voluntarily enlisted has no bearing on the question. A person’s conscience develops from life experiences and continual reflection. Who’s to say at what precise point in time a person’s conscience must rebel against committing war crimes for the objection to be considered legally or morally valid? Signing a contract is no reason to be forced to kill people.

Can a health-care worker strongly opposed to America’s brutal wars refuse to care for a wounded soldier who has been directly involved in the brutality? Can a civilian doctor, pharmacist, or psychologist in the US refuse to treat a soldier on the grounds that if they help to restore his health he’ll be sent back to the war front to continue his killing?

Can peace activists be allowed to withhold the portion of their income taxes that supports the military? They’ve been trying to do this for decades without any government support.

National Pentagon Radio

WAMU, the Washington, DC National Public Radio (NPR) station asked its listeners to write them and tell them what they used the station as a source for. Some of those who replied were invited

in for a recorded interview, and a tape of part of the interview was played on the air. I sent them the following email:

June 13, 2008

To mysource@wamu.org

Dear People,

I use WAMU to listen to All Things Considered. I use All Things Considered to get the Pentagon point of view on US foreign policy. It’s great hearing retired generals explain why the US has just bombed or invaded another country. I’m not bothered by any naive anti-war protesters. I get the official truth right from the horse’s mouth. Is this a great country, or what? I hope you’re lining up some more great retired generals to tell me why we had to bomb Iran and kill thousands more people. Just make sure you don’t make me listen to anyone on the left.

Sincerely,

William Blum,

who should be on Diane Rehm, but never will be asked [followed by some information about my books]

I had no expectation of any kind of positive reply. I figured that if my letter didn’t do it, then surely the titles of my books would reveal that I’m not actually a lover of the American military or their wars. But I don’t really want to believe the worst about the mainstream media. That’s too discouraging. So it was a pleasant surprise when someone at the station invited me to come in for an interview. It lasted more than half an hour and went very well. I expressed many of my misgivings about NPR’s coverage of US foreign policy in no uncertain terms. The interviewer said he was very pleased. He expected this was going to be an interesting piece for the station to broadcast. But as it turned out, that was the end of the matter. I never heard from the station again, and my interview was never broadcast.

About two months later I sent an email to the interviewer asking if the interview

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ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

They view the “alternative media”, with a style rather different from what they’re accustomed to, as not being objective enough, therefore suspect

would be aired. I could verify that he received it, but I got no reply. I think the interviewer had been sincere, which is why I’m not mentioning his name. Someone above him must have listened to the tape, remembered where “public” radio’s real loyalty lay (to its primary funder, Congress), and vetoed the whole thing. My (lack of) faith in American mass media has not been challenged. And those who work in the mass media will continue to believe in what they practice, something they call “objectivity”, while I will continue to believe that objectivity is no substitute for honesty.

The audience contributes its share to the syndrome. Consumers of news, if fed American-exceptionalism junk food long enough come to feel at home with it, equate it with objectivity, and equate objectivity with getting a full and balanced picture, or the “truth”; it appears neutral and unbiased, like the living room sofa they’re sitting on as they watch NBC or CNN.

They view the “alternative media”, with a style rather different from what they’re accustomed to, as not being objective enough, therefore suspect.

The president of NPR, incidentally, is a gentleman named Kevin Klose. Previously he helped coordinate all US-funded international broadcasting: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Central Europe and the Soviet Union), Voice of America, Radio Free Asia, Radio/TV Marti (Cuba), Worldnet Television (Africa and elsewhere); all created specifically to disseminate world news to a target audience through the prism of US foreign policy beliefs and goals.

He also served as president of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Would it be unfair to say that Americans then became his newest target audience? All unconscious of course; that’s what makes the mass media so effective; they really believe in their own objectivity. Not to mention the conscious propaganda.

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- [6] *Reuters*, August 10, 2008
- [7] *Washington Post*, August 9, 2008. p.1
- [8] *Washington Post*, August 28, 2008, repeated September 1.
- [9] *The Guardian* (London), September 1, 2008
- [10] See and hear these actual words actually coming out of the actual mouth of the man – <http://blog.indecision2008.com/2008/08/13/john-mccain-maybe-doesnt-know-what-the-word-invade-means/>
- [11] *National Public Radio* (NPR), August 15, 2008
- [12] *Associated Press*, August 27, 2008
- [13] *The Guardian* (London), August 28, 2008, column by Seumas Milne, quoting from ambassador Kishore Mahbubani’s interview in the *Financial Times* (London) of August 21
- [14] *Washington Post*, August 30, 2008, p.18
- [15] *Associated Press*, August 21, 2008, *Washington Post*, August 22, 2008

William Blum is the author of:
Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2, Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower, West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir, and Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire

The magic pudding

Why is the US government still pouring billions into missile defence? asks **George Monbiot**

It's a novel way to commit suicide. Just as Russia demonstrates what happens to former minions which annoy it, Poland agrees to host a US missile defence base. The Russians, as Poland expected, respond to this proposal by kindly offering to turn the country into a parking lot. This proves that the missile defence system is necessary after all: it will stop the missiles Russia will now aim at Poland, the Czech Republic and the UK in response to, er, their involvement in the missile defence system.

The US government insists that the interceptors, which will be stationed on the Baltic coast, have nothing to do with Russia: their purpose is to defend Europe and the United States against the intercontinental ballistic missiles Iran and North Korea don't possess. This is why they are being placed in Poland, which, as every geography student in Texas knows, shares a border with both rogue states.

They permit us to look forward to a glowing future, in which missile defence, according to the Pentagon, will "protect our homeland ... and our friends and allies from ballistic missile attack"(1); as long as the Russians wait until it's working before they nuke us. The good news is that, at the current rate of progress, reliable missile defence is only 50 years away. The bad news is that it has been 50

years away for the past six decades.

The system has been in development since 1946, and so far it has achieved a grand total of nothing. You wouldn't know it if you read the press releases published by the Pentagon's Missile Defence Agency: the word "success" features more often than any other noun(2). It is true that the programme has managed to hit two out of the five missiles fired over the past five years during tests of its main component, the Ground-based Midcourse Missile Defense (GMD) system(3). But sadly these tests bear no relation to anything resembling a real nuclear strike.

Rigged trials

All the trials run so far – successful or otherwise – have been rigged. The target, its type, trajectory and destination, are known before the test begins. Only one enemy missile is used, as the system doesn't have a hope in hell of knocking down two or more. If decoy missiles are deployed, they bear no resemblance to the target and they are identified as decoys in advance. In order to try to enhance the appearance of success, recent flight tests have become even less realistic: the agency has now stopped using decoys altogether when testing its GMD system.

This points to one of the intractable

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UNFRIENDLY SKIES

So why commit endless billions to a programme that is bound to fail? I'll give you a clue: the answer is in the question. The programme persists because it doesn't work

weaknesses of missile defence: it is hard to see how the interceptors could ever outwit enemy attempts to confuse them. As Philip Coyle - formerly a senior official at the Pentagon with responsibility for missile defence - points out, there are endless means by which another state could fool the system(4).

For every real missile it launched, it could dispatch a host of dummies, with the same radar and infra-red signatures. Even balloons or bits of metal foil would render anything resembling the current system inoperable. You can reduce a missile's susceptibility to laser penetration by 90% by painting it white(5). This sophisticated avoidance technology, available from your local hardware shop, makes another multibillion component of the programme obsolete.

Or you could simply forget about ballistic missiles and attack using cruise missiles, against which the system is useless.

Missile defence is so expensive and the measures required to evade it so cheap that if the US government were serious about making the system work it would bankrupt the country, just as the arms race helped to bring the Soviet Union down. By spending a couple of billion dollars on decoy technologies, Russia would commit the US to trillions of dollars of counter-measures. The cost ratios are such that even Iran could outspend the United States.

Accelerating costs

The US has spent between \$120bn and \$150bn on the programme since Ronald Reagan relaunched it in 1983(6). Under Bush the costs have accelerated. The Pentagon has requested \$62bn for the next five year tranche, which means that the total cost between 2003 and 2013 will be \$110bn. Yet there are no clear criteria for success. As a recent paper in the journal *Defense and Security Analysis* shows, the Pentagon invented a new funding system

in order to allow the missile defence programme to evade the government's usual accounting standards(7). It's called spiral development, which is quite appropriate, because it ensures that the costs spiral out of control.

Spiral development means, in the words of a Pentagon directive, that "the end-state requirements are not known at program initiation"(8). Instead the system is allowed to develop however officials think fit. The result is that no one has the faintest idea what it is supposed to achieve or whether it has achieved it. There are no fixed dates, no fixed costs for any component of the programme, no penalties for slippage or failure, no standards of any kind against which the system can be judged. And this monstrous scheme is still incapable of achieving what a few hundred dollars' worth of diplomacy could do in an afternoon.

So why commit endless billions to a programme that is bound to fail? I'll give you a clue: the answer is in the question. The programme persists because it doesn't work.

US politics, because of the failure by both Republicans and Democrats to deal with the problems of campaign finance, is rotten from head to toe. But under Bush the corruption has acquired Nigerian qualities. Federal government is a vast corporate welfare programme, rewarding the industries which give millions in political donations with contracts worth billions.

Missile defence is the biggest pork barrel of all, the magic pudding which won't run out however much you eat. The funds channelled to defence, aerospace and other manufacturing and service companies will never run dry because the system will never work.

To keep the pudding flowing, the administration must exaggerate the threats from nations which have no means of nuking it and ignore the likely responses

of those which do. Russia is not without its own corrupting influences. You could see the grim delight of the Russian generals and defence officials last week, who have found in this new deployment an excuse to enhance their power and demand bigger budgets. Poor old Poland, like the Czech Republic and the UK, gets strong-armed into becoming America's groundbait.

If we seek to understand US foreign policy in terms of a rational engagement with international problems, or even as an effective means of projecting power, we are looking in the wrong place. The government's interests have always been provincial. It seeks to appease lobbyists, shift public opinion at key stages of the political cycle, accommodate crazy Christian fantasies and pander to television companies run by eccentric billionaires. The US does not really have a foreign policy. It has a series of domestic policies which it projects beyond its borders. That they threaten the world with 57 varieties of destruction is of no concern to the current administration. The only question of interest is who gets paid and what the political kickbacks will be. **CT**

*George Monbiot's latest book is **Bring On The Apocalypse**. This essay originally appeared in the Guardian newspaper*

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The US does not really have a foreign policy. It has a series of domestic policies which it projects beyond its borders. That they threaten the world with 57 varieties of destruction is of no concern to the current administration

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Two little boys, united in misery

When will someone do something to help the people of Gaza? asks **Ramsey Baroud**

He is one of hundreds of Palestinian children killed by Israeli soldiers in recent years in a consistent pattern of deliberately targeting children

Ahmed Moussa was a 12-year-old Palestinian boy from the West Bank village of Nilin, near Ramallah. Mohamed Bahloul is a 12-year-old Palestinian boy from Gaza City. The former was shot and killed on 29 July by Israeli forces following a peaceful protest against the Israeli apartheid wall. The latter is awaiting death in a dilapidated hospital in Gaza.

Reports on Moussa's death vary. The Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign's report said that the boy was "sitting under a tree with his friends when a military jeep drove up and the army shot him – a live bullet pierced his head. The boy died immediately."

Agency France Press's report, the day following his death, confirmed the nature of the death but said that the boy was killed during the demonstration. Nilin, one of the numerous villages losing land to the Israeli wall – deemed illegal according to the International Court of Justice in 2004 – holds regular protests against the confiscation and destruction of the village's farms. It's part of a sustained non-violent campaign that brings together Israeli, Palestinian and international peace activists.

The fact is, a young boy who should be at home enjoying the company of his family and friends, or attending a sum-

mer camp, or playing in the sunshine, is now dead. He is one of hundreds of Palestinian children killed by Israeli soldiers in recent years in a consistent pattern of deliberately targeting children. Trying to make sense out of his tragedy, the father had this to say: "God gave me my son Ahmed, and he took him as a martyr."

Not an hour and a half drive away from Nilin, Bahloul is suffering from kidney failure. He is hooked up to a pitiable looking dialysis machine in a Gaza hospital. Aljazeera.net reported on Bahloul's case: for three months, said his mother, Nadia, he received no medication and no vitamins to strengthen his sickly body. "There isn't one door I didn't knock on, hoping to find medicine for Mohamed," said Nadia. In a place similar in many respects to a concentration camp, where 1.5 million people are subject to the most inhumane conditions, Bahloul's case is hardly the exception.

Despite the ceasefire between the Hamas government in Gaza and Israel that ensured that homemade Palestinian rockets are no longer fired at southern Israeli towns, there is no respite from poverty and siege in Gaza. UNRWA's head of Gaza operations, John Ging, said that the situation is getting "worse and worse" for the people in Gaza, who are largely aid-dependant. He promised that his office

HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE

would do all it can to help “those poor people, as they continue to get poorer and poorer.”

The extent of the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza has already passed many thresholds as poverty has rendered most Gazans dependant on food aid for survival. Hospitals are lacking equipment and medicine, and neither Israel nor Egypt allows Palestinians from Gaza suffering from life threatening illnesses to travel freely, and on a regular basis. Now even water in Gaza is polluted beyond foreseeable remedy.

The *Christian Science Monitor* reported 21 July that only one-sixth of Gaza’s daily sewage – estimated at up to 120 million litres a day – is fully treated. The massive amount of untreated sewage finds its way into the sea, and into the Strip’s water supply. “If there is a stronger word than catastrophe, I would use that word,” said Nader Al-Khateeb, the Palestinian director of Friends of the Earth Middle East. The catastrophe is a “result of Gaza’s dilapidated water and sewage infrastructure undermined by [Israeli] attacks and fuel blockades.”

According to Monther Shoblak, director of the Gaza Emergency Waste Project funded by the World Bank, due to sewage seeping into the ground, the aquifer beneath Gaza, which provides water for drinking and washing, is now so polluted with nitrates that only 10 per cent currently meets World Health Organisation standards for safety. As a result, water-related diseases in Gaza are rife.

Gaza is experiencing devastation on so many levels that it is impossible to locate any positive health or economic indicators. Bahloul’s mother’s search for medicine to save her son is compounded by her husband having lost his job due to the Israeli siege and while there are other mouths to feed. Unemployment in Gaza is skyrocketing and children are often forced out of school to help bolster the meagre incomes of poor families. Selling

tea in the street from giant teapots hauled by children often not old enough to enrol in school is a growing profession.

While Palestinian villagers in the West Bank are fighting eviction notices from their homes and lands to make space for Israel’s projected 723 kilometre (454 miles) long wall, of which 57 per cent is already complete, Palestinians in Gaza are fighting for bare survival. Their plight is dreadfully similar. Despite the fact that the West Bank and Gaza were divided by occupation and self-seeking and wealthy politicians, they are united by grief, and by their common struggle.

Serious abuses

Meanwhile, in a report released 30 July, Human Rights Watch claims that Hamas and Fatah have both carried out serious human rights abuses, including torture, against members of the opposing group. While Hamas is regularly derided for human rights violations reported in Gaza, which have been used to retrospectively justify the lethal siege, Mahmoud Abbas’s party hardly receives any reprimand. The report faulted “the United States and other donors, which have bankrolled President Mahmoud Abbas’s Palestinian Authority and Fatah-dominated security agencies”, for “not paying adequate attention to the systematic abuses by those forces,” reported Al-Bawaba in Jordan.

Media reports with titles such as “Palestinians torture Palestinians” quickly flooded newspapers. Hamas and Fatah members screamed obscenities at each other and the arrests and torture campaign, reportedly continued. The conflict seemed for a moment entirely Palestinian, with Israel an innocent observer.

Meanwhile, Mouwssa’s father continues to seek “God’s mercy” for his son’s soul. Prayer and supplication are his only resort. In Gaza, death continues to hover over Bahloul’s household.

There is something utterly cruel about all of this, utterly inhumane. **CT**

The conflict seemed for a moment entirely Palestinian, with Israel an innocent observer

Ramzy Baroud (www.ramzybaroud.net) is editor of *PalestineChronicle.com*. His latest book is ***The Second Intifada: A Chronicle of a People’s Struggle*** (Pluto Press, London)

Outposts seal death of Palestinian state

Jonathan Cook reports on the latest, worrying, developments in Israel's West Bank settlements

The settlements – though illegal under international law – are integrated into Israel through a sophisticated system of roads that make it easy for the settlers to forget they are in occupied territory surrounded by Palestinians

Yehudit Genuid hardly feels she is on the frontier of Israel's settlement project, although the huddle of mobile homes on a wind-swept West Bank hilltop she calls home is controversial even by Israeli standards.

Despite the size and isolation of Migron, a settlement of about 45 religious families on a ridge next to the Palestinian city of Ramallah, Mrs Genuid's job as a social worker in West Jerusalem is a 25-minute drive away on a well-paved road.

Mrs Genuid, 28, pregnant with her first child, points out that Migron has parks, children's playgrounds, a kindergarten, a daycare centre and a synagogue, all paid for by the government – even if the buildings are enclosed by razor-wire fence, and her husband, Roni, has to put in overtime as the settlement's security guard.

From her trailer, she also has panoramic views not only of Ramallah but of the many communities hugging the slopes that gently fall away to the Jordan Valley.

Long-established Palestinian villages are instantly identifiable by their homes' flat roofs and the prominence of the tall minarets of the local mosques. Interspersed among them, however, are a growing number of much newer, fortified communities of luxury villas topped by

distinctive red-tiled roofs.

These are the Jewish settlements that now form an almost complete ring around Palestinian East Jerusalem, cutting it off from the rest of the West Bank and destroying any hope that the city will one day become the capital of a Palestinian state.

"These settlements are supposed to be the nail in the coffin of any future peace agreement with the Palestinians," said Dror Etkes, a veteran observer of the settlements who works for the Israeli human rights group Yesh Din. "Their purpose is to make a Palestinian state unviable."

The majority of the half a million settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, according to Mr Etkes, are "economic opportunists", drawn to life in the occupied territories less by ideological or religious convictions than economic incentives. The homes, municipal services and schools there are heavily subsidised by the government.

In addition, the settlements – though illegal under international law – are integrated into Israel through a sophisticated system of roads that make it easy for the settlers to forget they are in occupied territory surrounded by Palestinians.

But Migron, with its supposed links to the Biblical site where King Saul based himself during his fight against the Phi-

listines, attracts a different kind of inhabitant.

“This place is holy to the Jewish people and we have a duty to be here,” Mrs Genud said. “The whole land of Israel belongs to us and we should not be afraid to live wherever we want to. The Arabs must accept that.”

Unlike the 150 or so official settlements dotted across the West Bank, Migron is an example of what the Israeli government refers to as an “illegal outpost”, often an unauthorised outgrowth from one of the main settlements. Today there are more than 100 such outposts, housing several thousand extremist settlers.

Mrs Genud, however, argues that Israel’s refusal to turn Migron into an authorised settlement, as it has done with many other established outposts, reflects pressure from Washington.

Back in 2003, Israel committed itself to dismantling the more recent outposts under the terms of the Road Map, a US-sponsored plan for reviving the peace process and creating a Palestinian state. Two years later the cabinet approved the removal of 24 outposts, although barely any progress has been made on dismantling them. Israel confirmed its pledge again in January when George W Bush, the US president, visited.

Established six years ago by a group from the nearby settlement of Ofra, Migron is now the largest of the outposts. Two residents – Itai Halevi, the community’s rabbi, and Itai Harel, the son of Israel Harel, a well-known settler leader – have demonstrated their confidence in Migron’s future by each building permanent homes.

“We are connected to the water grid, we have phone lines from the national company Bezeq, we have been hooked up by the electricity company and have street lighting,” Mrs Genud said. “We also have a kindergarten paid for by the state and a group of soldiers stationed here to protect us. How can we be ‘illegal’?”

Daniella Wiess, a leader of the most extreme wing of the settlers, agreed. Like the inhabitants of Migron, she said the outpost was first suggested by Ariel Sharon when he was housing minister in the 1990s. It was also among the first outposts to be set up after he became prime minister in 2002.

An official report published in 2005 found that more than \$4 million was invested in Migron in its first years, with the money channelled through at least six different ministries.

There is good reason for official complicity in such outposts as Migron. “This place is very strategic,” Mrs Genud said. It looks down on Route 60, once the main road serving Palestinians between Jerusalem and Jenin in the northern West Bank.

Under threat

Today, even those Palestinians who can get a permit to travel the road find regular sections obstructed by checkpoints or closed for the protection of neighbouring settlements.

“We can also see all the Arabs from here and keep an eye on what they are doing,” she said referring to her Palestinian neighbours. “And in addition, we can see the other settlements and check on their safety.”

But despite its significance to the settlement drive, Migron is under threat. Recently, the Israeli government agreed that the outpost must be destroyed, although it was tight-lipped about when. Few are expecting such a reversal to happen soon. The government’s decision was largely foisted upon it by a series of unforeseen events.

In 2006, several West Bank Palestinians, backed by Israeli peace groups, petitioned Israel’s supreme court claiming that Migron had been built on their private land.

Over the past four decades, Israel has declared nearly two-thirds of the West

Today, even those Palestinians who can get a permit to travel the road find regular sections obstructed by checkpoints or closed for the protection of neighbouring settlements.

SETTLING IN

In a show of defiance, they moved another mobile home into the outpost last week. For several months the residents have also been erecting a large stone building close by the outpost that will become a winery

Bank as “state land”, seizing it on a variety of pretexts and transferring much of it to the jurisdiction of settler councils. According to the figures of the Israeli group Peace Now, the settlers are in direct control of more than 40 per cent of the West Bank.

Land belonging to Palestinians who hold the title deeds, however, has been harder to confiscate. As a result, a dubious industry of front companies both inside Israel and in the occupied territories has been spawned to transfer private Palestinian land to the settlers.

One such company appears to be behind the sale of the land on which Migron was built. A police investigation has revealed that one of the Palestinian owners, Abdel Latif Hassan Sumarin, signed over his power of attorney to an Israeli real estate company in 2004, even though he died in the United States in 1961.

During the court hearings, Israel has been dragging its feet. According to its own figures, there are a dozen outposts built entirely or partially on private Palestinian land – and the true number may be higher still.

The settlers believe that the decision to destroy Migron, if carried out, would set a dangerous precedent. “They are very afraid that this will become simply the first of many settlements to fall,” Mr Etkes said.

Last week, faced with another hearing before the court, the government finally conceded on Migron – but only after striking a deal with the main settlement lobby group, the Yesha council. Israel promised that the outpost would go, but not before new homes had been built for Migron’s settlers and they had been relocated en masse to a newly created – and authorised – settlement. According to reports in the local media, Migron’s families may be moved only a few hundred metres from their current location to an area of the West Bank designated as “state land”.

“The settlers know that preparation of an alternative site could take years,” said Yariv Oppenheimer, the head of Peace Now, fearful that this was simply a delaying tactic.

Others believe that relocating Migron may, in fact, set back the struggle against the settlements. There is already talk of moving the settlers to the jurisdiction of a neighbouring settlement, Adam.

“The danger is that Migron will be destroyed only to be resurrected in ‘legalised’ form by the government as a new settlement close by Adam,” Mr Etkes said.

Such a suspicion is confirmed by the main settler council, Yesha, which issued a statement last week: “We believe it is possible to find a solution for the outposts that will strengthen the settlements.”

Nonetheless, the residents of Migron, backed by hardline settler groups, are talking and acting tough for the time being. In a show of defiance, they moved another mobile home into the outpost last week. For several months the residents have also been erecting a large stone building close by the outpost that will become a winery.

The settlers’ rabbinical council denounced the threatened loss of the outpost, as did settler leader Gershon Masiaka, who warned of a bloody confrontation to save it.

Mrs Genud is not sure what she will do if the crunch comes and she has to give up her home and life in Migron. “All of this land is Jewish,” she said. “It would be a big mistake if we give up what is rightfully ours.” **CT**

*Jonathan Cook is a journalist and writer living in Nazareth, Israel. His latest books are **Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East** (Pluto Press) and **Disappearing Palestine: Israel’s Experiments in Human Despair** (Zed Books). His website is www.jkcook.net*

America's war moves to Pakistan

Tariq Ali on the dangerous widening of Bush's war

The decision to make public a presidential order of last July authorizing American strikes inside Pakistan without seeking the approval of the Pakistani government ends a long debate within, and on the periphery of, the Bush administration. Senator Barack Obama, aware of this ongoing debate during his own long battle with Hillary Clinton, tried to outflank her by supporting a policy of U.S. strikes into Pakistan. Senator John McCain and Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin have now echoed this view and so it has become, by consensus, official U.S. policy.

Its effects on Pakistan could be catastrophic, creating a severe crisis within the army and in the country at large. The overwhelming majority of Pakistanis are opposed to the U.S. presence in the region, viewing it as the most serious threat to peace.

Why, then, has the U.S. decided to destabilize a crucial ally? Within Pakistan, some analysts argue that this is a carefully coordinated move to weaken the Pakistani state yet further by creating a crisis that extends way beyond the badlands on the frontier with Afghanistan. Its ultimate aim, they claim, would be the extraction of the Pakistani military's nuclear fangs. If this were the case, it would imply that Washington was indeed de-

termined to break up the Pakistani state, since the country would very simply not survive a disaster on that scale.

In my view, however, the expansion of the war relates far more to the Bush administration's disastrous occupation in Afghanistan. It is hardly a secret that the regime of President Hamid Karzai is becoming more isolated with each passing day, as Taliban guerrillas move ever closer to Kabul.

When in doubt, escalate the war is an old imperial motto. The strikes against Pakistan represent -- like the decisions of President Richard Nixon and his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger to bomb and then invade Cambodia (acts that, in the end, empowered Pol Pot and his monsters) -- a desperate bid to salvage a war that was never good, but has now gone badly wrong.

It is true that those resisting the NATO occupation cross the Pakistan-Afghan border with ease. However, the U.S. has often engaged in quiet negotiations with them. Several feelers have been put out to the Taliban in Pakistan, while U.S. intelligence experts regularly check into the Serena Hotel in Swat to discuss possibilities with Mullah Fazlullah, a local pro-Taliban leader. The same is true inside Afghanistan.

After the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan

Some analysts argue that this is a carefully coordinated move to weaken the Pakistani state yet further by creating a crisis that extends way beyond the badlands on the frontier with Afghanistan.

WITH FRIENDS LIKE . . .

The neo-Taliban have said that they will not join any government until “the foreigners” have left their country, which raises the question of the strategic aims of the United States

in 2001, a whole layer of the Taliban’s middle-level leadership crossed the border into Pakistan to regroup and plan for what lay ahead. By 2003, their guerrilla factions were starting to harass the occupying forces in Afghanistan and, during 2004, they began to be joined by a new generation of local recruits, by no means all jihadists, who were being radicalized by the occupation itself.

Though, in the world of the Western media, the Taliban has been entirely conflated with al-Qaeda, most of their supporters are, in fact, driven by quite local concerns. If NATO and the U.S. were to leave Afghanistan, their political evolution would most likely parallel that of Pakistan’s domesticated Islamists.

Significant support

The neo-Taliban now control at least twenty Afghan districts in Kandahar, Helmand, and Uruzgan provinces. It is hardly a secret that many officials in these zones are closet supporters of the guerrilla fighters. Though often characterized as a rural *jacquerie* they have won significant support in southern towns and they even led a Tet-style offensive in Kandahar in 2006. Elsewhere, mullahs who had initially supported President Karzai’s allies are now railing against the foreigners and the government in Kabul. For the first time, calls for jihad against the occupation are even being heard in the non-Pashtun northeast border provinces of Takhar and Badakhshan.

The neo-Taliban have said that they will not join any government until “the foreigners” have left their country, which raises the question of the strategic aims of the United States. Is it the case, as NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer suggested to an audience at the Brookings Institution earlier this year, that the war in Afghanistan has little to do with spreading good governance in Afghanistan or even destroying the remnants of al-Qaeda? Is it part of a master plan, as

outlined by a strategist in NATO Review in the Winter of 2005, to expand the focus of NATO from the Euro-Atlantic zone, because “in the 21st century NATO must become an alliance . . . designed to project systemic stability beyond its borders”?

As that strategist went on to write:

“The centre of gravity of power on this planet is moving inexorably eastward. As it does, the nature of power itself is changing. The Asia-Pacific region brings much that is dynamic and positive to this world, but as yet the rapid change therein is neither stable nor embedded in stable institutions. Until this is achieved, it is the strategic responsibility of Europeans and North Americans, and the institutions they have built, to lead the way . . . [S]ecurity effectiveness in such a world is impossible without both legitimacy and capability.”

Such a strategy implies a permanent military presence on the borders of both China and Iran. Given that this is unacceptable to most Pakistanis and Afghans, it will only create a state of permanent mayhem in the region, resulting in ever more violence and terror, as well as heightened support for jihadi extremism, which, in turn, will but further stretch an already over-extended empire.

Globalizers often speak as though U.S. hegemony and the spread of capitalism were the same thing. This was certainly the case during the Cold War, but the twin aims of yesteryear now stand in something closer to an inverse relationship. For, in certain ways, it is the very spread of capitalism that is gradually eroding U.S. hegemony in the world. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin’s triumph in Georgia was a dramatic signal of this fact. The American push into the Greater Middle East in recent years, designed to demonstrate Washington’s primacy over the Eurasian powers, has descended into remarkable chaos, necessitating support from the very powers it was meant to put on notice.

Pakistan's new, indirectly elected President, Asif Zardari, the husband of the assassinated Benazir Bhutto and a Pakistani "godfather" of the first order, indicated his support for U.S. strategy by inviting Afghanistan's Hamid Karzai to attend his inauguration, the only foreign leader to do so. Twinning himself with a discredited satrap in Kabul may have impressed some in Washington, but it only further decreased support for the widower Bhutto in his own country.

The key in Pakistan, as always, is the army. If the already heightened U.S. raids inside the country continue to escalate, the much-vaunted unity of the military High Command might come under real strain. At a meeting of corps commanders in Rawalpindi on September 12th, Pakistani Chief of Staff General Ashfaq Kayani received unanimous support for his relatively mild public denunciation of the recent U.S. strikes inside Pakistan in which he said the country's borders and sovereignty would be defended "at all cost."

Saying, however, that the Army will safeguard the country's sovereignty is different from doing so in practice. This is the heart of the contradiction. Perhaps the attacks will cease on November 4th. Perhaps pigs (with or without lipstick) will fly.

What is really required in the region is an American/NATO exit strategy from Afghanistan, which should entail a regional solution involving Pakistan, Iran, India, and Russia. These four states could guarantee a national government and massive social reconstruction in that country. No matter what, NATO and the Americans have failed abysmally. **CT**

*Tariq Ali, writer, journalist, filmmaker, contributes regularly to a range of publications including the Guardian, the Nation, and the London Review of Books. His most recent book, just published, is **The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power** (Scribner, 2008) This essay was originally published at www.tomdispatch.com*

If the already heightened U.S. raids inside the country continue to escalate, the much-vaunted unity of the military High Command might come under real strain

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10 stupid things about the election

Uh, oh, **Allan Uthman** takes a peek behind the political curtain and finds a whole bunch of lies waiting for the limelight

In fact, if Bush had eschewed the surge, and instead sent the equivalent amount of money for bribes and salaries, it would have been much more effective

1. The Surge: Working Overtime

“The surge is working.” It’s an incessant mantra, forever on the lips of politicians and “journalists” these days. It’s as if they can simply will it into truth. Yes, there has been a reduction in violence in Iraq, if the statistics are to be believed. But it’s a mistake to think that’s primarily due to an increase in troop strength.

What is working in Iraq is the Awakening, a movement of Sunni tribes against al Qaeda in Iraq (which, while a franchisee of the al Qaeda trademark, is really an entirely separate group). Essentially what has happened is that the Sunni Arabs have grown weary of al Qaeda’s tendency to wantonly murder their own people, and to start civil wars and stuff like that. So they’ve started taking money from the Pentagon instead of bin Laden, and things have quieted down somewhat.

This change was bound to occur, and preceded the surge. In fact, if Bush had eschewed the surge, and instead sent the equivalent amount of money for bribes and salaries, it would have been much more effective.

What seems long forgotten is the original rationale for the surge, which was not simply to quell violence but to establish Iraq’s ability to govern itself, setting the stage for American withdrawal.

That would constitute true “success,” although leaving has already been designated “surrender” by both Bush and McCain. But the real reason for the surge has always been to indefinitely prolong the conversation about withdrawal that was made inevitable by the 2006 elections. And in that sense, the surge has been an unparalleled success.

2. Shilling and Drilling

It’s amazing what the PR industry can do to divert an issue. While the truth that carbon emissions are going to alter our planet in unpleasant ways in the near future is more and more well established, somehow the topic has been changed from reducing the use of fossil fuels to “independence from foreign oil.”

So now, after a few-week push, Americans are ready to start drilling offshore and in Alaska. You’ve gotta hand it to the oil industry leaders: Only they could take multiple crises for which they are responsible and turn them into a win for their agenda.

Never mind that it will take years to have what will ultimately be a negligible effect on the price of oil. Gas is expensive, and people are easy to fool, especially if you play to their moronic fears of all things foreign. Meanwhile, it turns out that American oil burns just as dirty as it

does anywhere else, and no meaningful emissions regulation is on the horizon. Get yourself some flood insurance.

3. Gramm: Crackers?

Comments by John McCain's recently fired principal economic adviser, Phil Gramm, about America being a "nation of whiners" in a "mental recession" are worthy of forced drowning.

This golden asshole, drafter of the Enron loophole, vice president at the disgraced and near-defunct Swiss bank UBS, and emitter of similarly foul, wealth-arrogant quotations about not feeling sorry for destitute 80-year-olds ("Most people don't have the luxury of living to be 80 years old, so it's hard for me to feel sorry for them"), thinks the economic downturn is all in your head and has nothing to do with the collapse of the mortgage and credit industries or the unsound practices that were encouraged by an anarchist regulatory philosophy of which Gramm himself is a huge proponent. McCain and Gramm have been tight for years, and although he had no choice but to dump Gramm for the duration of the campaign, fellow money-saturated dickhead Steve Forbes assures us Gramm will be back, to help combat the whining poor and their paranoid delusions about hunger and homelessness.

4. We're Winning What Now?

McCain and Bush continually iterate their will to "win" in Iraq. But what is winning in this context? After all, we are not looking to colonize Iraq, at least not officially. In other words, there is no winning or losing in Iraq – only staying or leaving. Neither constitutes victory, but one is a hell of a lot cheaper.

5. Penniless Elitists

A common complaint among Democrats is that it makes no sense to label Obama (or whatever politician is the target du jour) an "elitist," since so many Repub-

licans, including McCain and Bush, are children of wealth and power and have considerably more money than Obama, while both Obama and his wife come from humble origins and attained their status through their own hard work. On the surface, this seems to make sense, but it's a misapprehension of what the elitist label has truly come to signify: education and intellect.

McCain and Bush may be of the upper crust, but it's clear to all who observe them that they're not very bright. Obama, on the other hand, clearly was paying attention at Harvard. That's why the label sticks to him. Excessive intelligence is a liability in American political campaigns; there can be no doubt of that, and when people speak of Obama as "not one of us," that is, at least in part, what they're talking about.

It's anti-intellectualism that brought us eight years of Bush, as well as eight years of Reagan. Americans love a simple-talkin' good ol' boy, even if he does lower their wages and spend their retirement. Luckily for Obama, McCain is such a stiff that this factor will be somewhat mitigated.

6. Soundbitten

Take a moment to recall Wesley Clark's supposed slander against McCain's military service a few weeks ago. Here's how the exchange went on "Face the Nation":

Schieffer: "I have to say, Barack Obama has not had any of those experiences either, nor has he ridden in a fighter plane and gotten shot down. I mean ..."

Gen. Clark: "Well, I don't think riding in a fighter plane and getting shot down is a qualification to be president."

Of course, virtually none of the abundant, breathless stories that ensued bothered to mention that the "getting shot down" construct was Bob Schieffer's, and that Clark was merely repeating it. Nope, the story was that Clark said, "I don't

only staying or leaving. Neither constitutes victory, but one is a hell of a lot cheaper

LAST WORDS

Iran is not like Iraq in one way, though: They have a real military, and they will not be content to just let us in and take occasional potshots at us. They will fight back

think getting in a fighter plane and getting shot down is a qualification to become president.” Obviously, this sounds much worse, as if Clark is criticizing McCain’s piloting skills. I don’t love Wesley Clark, but it seems pretty damn unfair to put words in his mouth like this and then pretend the phrase was his own invention. Now, this doesn’t mean the press is on McCain’s side; they just know a sensational story when they see it, and this one was much more outrageous when amputated from the context of Schieffer’s preceding statement.

This is something to remember when you see unfair coverage of either candidate: The media bias isn’t usually left or right; the bias is toward profit. If a half-assed story is more appealing than a full examination, then half-assed it’ll be. If, on the other hand, a news source risks alienating its audience – by, say, questioning McCain’s POW narrative a la the Packers/Steelers gaffe, they’ll shy away.

7. Irreconcilable Deferences

It turns out white Americans don’t like Michelle Obama as much as they like her husband. Why? A big factor in Mrs. Obama’s unpopularity is that, unlike her husband, she is culturally African-American. She reminds whites of stereotypes that are specific to black women: too loud, too rude, too pushy – not dainty at all. They much prefer a dead-eyed robo-spouse like Laura Bush or Cindy McCain, because it implies a domineering, controlling, in-charge man, just the type they imagine to be suited to running a global empire.

If Obama is deferential to his wife, how will he handle the Iranians? And what kind of table settings will she pick out for dinner with the Putins? I hear grown women expressing their distaste for enduring eight years with “that woman” in the White House, as if her skin color will rub off on the walls. It’s goddamn revolting, but that’s America.

8. Bomb Bomb Iran

Even as we discuss ways of extracting ourselves from the disaster we’ve created in Iraq, we find ourselves moving inexorably closer to attacking Iran, or at least supporting an Israeli attack on Iran. Amazingly, we hear the same bullshit WMD justifications coming from the same people who so expertly fooled us into invading Iraq, and even more amazingly, it seems to be working again.

Personally, I never understood how Iraq hawks like Bill Kristol and Charles Krauthammer were ever able to find work after the WMD hoax ran its course, but they are more prominent than ever somehow.

It’s almost as if they were being rewarded for playing their roles convincingly. But even now, after rejecting the idea that weapons inspectors should complete their work in Iraq sealed our fate there, the very idea that Obama might go so far as to talk to the Iranians before bombing the crap out of them is seen as naive.

Iran is not like Iraq in one way, though: They have a real military, and they will not be content to just let us in and take occasional potshots at us. They will fight back. And we will once again find ourselves overextended in a war we didn’t really want, but were convinced by known liars to start. And then we will ... probably still not learn our lesson.

9. The New Yorker Cover

This was really one of the strangest cartoon controversies yet, revealing just how humor-challenged people really are. Admittedly, if the same cover had been on the *Weekly Standard*, it might have pissed me off too, but context is everything. What I find most alarming is the apparently widespread notion that satirists are required to present only jokes that are immediately obvious to every gump alive and couldn’t possibly be subject to mis-

interpretation. That's the death of comedy, right there. The rush to condemn the cover came at least in part because it didn't take seriously enough the smears against Obama that it mocked. It rightly said, "Look at this. Isn't this fucking ridiculous?" And it is. It is ridiculous, and it is fit to be ridiculed. But to see the *New Yorker* maligned as a "right wing rag" by pea-brained bloggers was probably the funniest thing about this whole controversy.

10. McCain's War on Reality

The guy has referred to "Czechoslovakia" at least four times this year, after it was already a minor gaffe for him in 2000. He's called the Sudan "Somalia." He's referred to "President Putin of Germany." He's worried about the "Iraq/Pakistan border" – perhaps an oblique reference to Iran? He doesn't know Shiite from Sunnis, and he thinks the Iranians are helping al Qaeda.

He thinks the surge caused the Awakening. All of these mistakes would be deeply damaging to a less coddled candidate. But McCain is an elderly war hero, and there is a natural tendency to hold back on blasting him for his poor information retention.

But what about the football story? McCain has been telling a story, at least since he wrote it in *Faith of My Fathers* in 2000, of substituting the names of the Green Bay Packers defensive line for his

squadron mates when pressed by Vietnamese interrogators. It's a great story, as All-American as can be.

He discussed it in 2005, when A&E did a movie version of the book, including the inspirational scene. Again in 2005, McCain used the story to illustrate how torture yields bad information. On July 9, McCain told the story again at a press conference in Pittsburgh – only this time it was the Steelers defensive line.

Setting aside the rank stupidity of destroying a great piece of image work for a cheap hometown shout-out to a regional media market, this fib stabs at the heart of McCain's straight-talking war hero mythology. It's a breathtakingly brazen and completely unnecessary lie, at least as bewildering as Hillary Clinton's "sniper fire" silliness, except that Hillary wasn't running as a special forces agent. It calls into question every unconfirmed detail about McCain's POW years – how many other stories is he just making up? And what kind of man would sully his service with such pointless embellishments?

But, unlike Hillary's sniper snafu, McCain's Packers/Steelers switcheroo slid by largely unnoticed, chuckled at by the media momentarily and tossed away. And they're in the tank for Obama? **CT**

*Allan Uthman is the editor of the **Buffalo Beast**, an alternative newspaper in New York State, where this article was first published.*

McCain is an elderly war hero, and there is a natural tendency to hold back on blasting him for his poor information retention

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