

**INSIDE:** BLOODY SUNDAY: THE TRUTH ● WORLD CUP DOMINATION ● WITNESSING AGAINST TORTURE ● BROTHERS-IN-ARMS ● BP'S DUMB INVESTORS

# The <sup>ColdType</sup> READER

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PHOTO: RICHARD GOTTARDO

# WELCOME TO TORONTO

**A TALE OF A BILLION DOLLARS, 20,000 POLICE AND 400 ANARCHISTS**

# The <sup>ColdType</sup> READER



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# Brothers-in-arms

David Cromwell discusses the role of corporate media in propping up an unjust financial and economic system

An essential role of corporate journalism is to shore up public confidence in an unjust, crisis-riven financial and economic system. Although plenty of gloom and doom is permitted, especially in the face of obvious crisis, the legitimacy of the system is rarely questioned.

For example, a recent *Sunday Times* article cited approvingly the views of Jim O'Neill, chief economist at Goldman Sachs. In a note to clients, titled 'Why the World is Better Than You Think', O'Neill tried to allay fears that the collapse of financial markets had made the world seem a "scary place". It is not so bad; indeed, "global recovery" was underway.

The *Sunday Times* piece then quoted a hedge fund manager proclaiming "massively good profits in the US", and beaming that "emerging markets [in Brazil, India and elsewhere] are still booming." The article conceded "it could be a very nervous summer". But for whom? The journalists weren't focusing on the concerns of the general population – jobs, pensions, student loans. Instead, the principal "worry" was financial uncertainty "spooking the markets". But despite the modicum of caution, the article's message boiled down to "positive fundamentals for the global economy." (David Smith, Kate Walsh and Michael Woodhead, 'Merkel's stab in the dark', *Sunday Times*, May 23, 2010)

In the *Financial Times*, chief political commentator Philip Stephens was candid enough to warn of "austerity" and even a "ferocious fiscal squeeze" that "will bear down more heavily on those lower down the income scale." (Philip Stephens, 'Say goodbye to the politics of golly-gosh', *Financial Times*, May 24 2010). But he took at face value political claims of moves towards "repairing the public finances", a key propaganda message throughout the corporate media.

In reality, politicians have misappropriated public money to prop up a corrupt and inherently unstable financial system. As George Monbiot reported in the *Guardian* last September, the most recent figures available from the Office for National Statistics showed that the government's interventions in the financial markets had already added £141 billion to public sector net debt. (George Monbiot, 'One financial meltdown is, it seems, just not enough for Gordon Brown', *Guardian.co.uk*, Sept 7, 2009).

Stephens then made the absurd claim that "Mr Cameron has turned his party's failure to win the election to the nation's advantage." The coalition government "looks as sensible and stable as most people could have hoped". Cameron, we were told, was heroically "wrenching the Tories on to the centre ground." The centre ground, presumably, is the very same "level playing field" promoted by the previous New Labour ad-

**In reality, politicians have misappropriated public money to prop up a corrupt and inherently unstable financial system**

## ECONOMIC PROPAGANDA

**The dominant theme is that, although markets are “uncertain” and thus “tough” economic decisions lie ahead, the system itself can and will be stabilised; always with the presumption of such measures being for the benefit of all**

ministration that saw corporate interests and financial elites prosper at the expense of almost everyone else; along with inflicting irreparable damage on ecosystems, species and climate stability. Policies enacted on this “centre ground” are supposedly “to the nation’s advantage”.

Meanwhile, the famously “impartial” BBC is relaying news that the Office for Budget Responsibility, the new UK fiscal watchdog, predicts a lower growth rate for the economy in 2011 than had been estimated in Labour’s last Budget:

“The lower figure will likely increase the impetus of the coalition government to cut public spending, as lower growth means fewer tax revenues.” (BBC news online, ‘Fiscal watchdog downgrades UK growth forecast’, 14 June 2010)

The warning was delivered ahead of Chancellor George Osborne’s “emergency budget” in which he “pledged to cut public spending to reduce the deficit”. In her “Stephanomics” blog, the BBC’s economics editor Stephanie Flanders stayed on-message, pontificating with gravitas on percentage points, central forecasts, structural borrowing, trend growth and spare capacity. (BBC News blogs, ‘OBR UK growth forecast downgraded’, 14 June, 2011). The approach is technocratic, and seemingly blind to the very real suffering imposed by a crushing system of economics that rewards a small minority.

These are but samples of media coverage on the economic crisis. The dominant theme is that, although markets are “uncertain” and thus “tough” economic decisions lie ahead, the system itself can and will be stabilised; always with the presumption of such measures being for the benefit of all. By contrast, those analysts who point to the systemic instability of capitalism, and the fundamental inequalities of corporate globalisation, constantly struggle to get their views across to the public.

### **Beyond Corporate Propaganda**

In his latest excellent book, *Beyond the Profits System*, the British economist Harry Shutt observes that one of the most striking fea-

tures of the financial crisis has been:

“... the uniformly superficial nature of the analysis of its causes presented by mainstream observers, whether government officials, academics or business representatives. Thus it is commonly stated that the crisis was caused by a combination of imprudent investment by bankers and others [...] and unduly lax official regulation and supervision of markets. Yet the obvious question begged by such explanations – of how or why such a dysfunctional climate came to be created – is never addressed in any serious fashion.”

Shutt continues:

“The inescapable conclusion [...] is that the crisis was the product of a conscious process of facilitating ever greater risk of massive systemic failure.” (Harry Shutt, *Beyond the Profits System: Possibilities for a Post-Capitalist Era*, Zed Books, London, 2010, p.6)

In several books and articles, David Harvey, a social theorist at the City University of New York, has cogently written of how capitalism has shaped western society, risking and even destroying nations, populations and ecosystems. Not only are periodic episodes of “meltdown” inevitable, but they are crucial to capitalism’s very survival. The essence of capitalism is self-interest; and any talk of reforming it through regulation or by imposing morality – a kinder, gentler capitalism – is both irrational and deceitful.

The bankruptcy of investment bank Lehman Brothers in September 2008 triggered the latest crisis of capitalism. Drastic action was required to save the system. And so, observes Harvey, a few US Treasury officials and bankers including the Treasury Secretary himself, a past president of Goldman Sachs and the present Chief Executive of Goldman, “emerged from a conference room with a three-page document demanding a \$700 billion bail-out of the banking system while threatening Armageddon in the markets.”

Harvey continues:

“It seemed like Wall Street had launched a financial coup against the government and the people of the United States. A few weeks later, with caveats here and there and a lot of

rhetoric, Congress and then President George Bush caved in and the money was sent flooding off, without any controls whatsoever, to all those financial institutions deemed ‘too big to fail.’” (David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital: And the Crises of Capitalism*, Profile Books, London, 2010, p. 5)

Shutt translates “too big to fail”, that over-used defence employed by capitalists and their cheerleaders, as meaning that a tiny super-wealthy clique recognised that they risked losing vast fortunes if the markets were allowed to take their course free of intervention from the state. Wholesale nationalisation of insolvent banks would have posed an existential threat to elite power; or even led to the collapse of the capitalist profits system in its entirety. Rather than accept such a fate, rich investors tried to ensure that their toxic assets be “largely transferred to the state, thereby adding unimaginable sums – officially estimated at \$18 trillion worldwide – to already excessive public debt.” (Shutt, op. cit., p. 36)

As ever, the public were made to pay the price for private greed. In simple terms: it’s socialism for the rich, and capitalism for the rest of us.

### **We’re Not Students Anymore**

I wrote to David Smith, economics editor of the *Sunday Times*, and lead author of the gung-ho-capitalist article highlighted at the beginning of this article:

“Thanks for your articles in the *Sunday Times*; but your perspective is too limited, too skewed. For instance, why give such prominence to the views of Jim O’Neill, chief economist at Goldman Sachs – a major architect of the recent financial collapse? How about taking on board some of the arguments made by, for example, David Harvey in *The Enigma of Capital*?

“1. The endemic problems of instability arising from financialisation, leveraging and surplus liquidity.

“2. Repeating systemic cycles of crises.

“3. Capitalism feeding off wars and conflict.

“4. Inevitable victims: billions of the world’s population, ecosystems and climate stability.

“Food for thought, and newspaper columns aplenty?” (Email, David Cromwell to David Smith, May 24, 2010)

Two days later, Smith wrote back, adroitly dodging the question:

“Jim O’Neill is a good economist, irrespective of whether you like the company he keeps. David Harvey is not alone in seeing periodic crises for capitalism. So do the Austrian School or any number of economists brought up in the Keynesian tradition. What was interesting, to me, was Harvey’s rather despairing conclusion, which appeared to be a tribute to capitalism’s great resilience. He wrote:

“Capitalism will never fall on its own. It will have to be pushed. The accumulation of capital will never cease. It will have to be stopped. The capitalist class will never willingly surrender its power. It will have to be dispossessed.” (David Smith, email, May 28, 2010)

But David Harvey is surely right. We might even recast the observation to make the same point about journalists in the profit-led media:

“The journalists of capitalism will never tell the truth on their own. They will have to be pushed.”

And although the *Sunday Times* journalist’s point about the resilience of capitalism is accurate, it is a red herring. I wrote back:

“But you’ve evaded my central question – why do you rarely, if ever, address the issues I put to you?”

His response was a lofty dismissal:

“Most of us get these things out of our system when we are students.” (David Smith, email, May 28, 2010)

And so when students graduate, they are supposedly mature enough to ignore capitalism’s victims and to be content with an appallingly unjust system of destruction and exploitation! This is the cold, heartless logic that seeps out from the symbiosis of capitalism and corporate journalism. **CT**

**Wholesale nationalisation of insolvent banks would have posed an existential threat to elite power; or even led to the collapse of the capitalist profits system in its entirety**

**David Cromwell** is co-editor of *Medialens* – [www.medialens.org](http://www.medialens.org) – the British media watchdog. His latest book, written with *Medialens* co-editor David Edwards is ***Newspeak In The 21st Century*** (Pluto Book)

# The other World Cup winners

**Nima Shirazi** finds a number of non-sporting events that link the USA and the soccer World Cup finalists

**That there are US troops stationed in over 175 countries around the world is a stunning fact in itself – although well-known by now if you’ve been paying attention at all for the past decade**

*“Our situation is like a football match. The superpower countries are the players, and we are just the ball to be kicked around.” – A young Pakistani civilian, North Waziristan*

**T**he Great Game is indeed alive and thriving. This summer’s World Cup tournament is providing yet another way for the United States to project its power across the globe, though not as a result of the American national team’s action on the pitch. Rather, this year, the subjugation will be televised.

While the presence of U.S. Marine Corps recruiting advertisements at each and every commercial break is perhaps mundane at this point, far more surprising is the frequent, scripted announcement by various British and Scottish play-by-play commentators calling the games for ESPN that “we’d like to welcome our men and women in uniform, serving in over 175 countries and territories, watching today’s 2010 FIFA World Cup match on AFN, the American Forces Network.” Other various comments have also been made about how proud the ESPN color men are of the American troops, what a fine job they are doing, and that the commentators “sincerely hope [the soldiers] are enjoying the broadcast.”

Beyond the surreal fact that announcers from the UK, like Adrian Healey, Martin Tyler, and Ian Darke, are eagerly praising

American soldiers and sailors during the broadcast as their own (“our brave men and women...”), how can the rest be said with a straight face or without the most shameful sense of hypocrisy? That there are US troops stationed in over 175 countries around the world is a stunning fact in itself – although well-known by now if you’ve been paying attention at all for the past decade. At this point, there’s probably an ‘App’ for that.

But again, this is the World Cup, and overseas ESPN announcers are lauding the attention, entertainment, and service of U.S. world domination forces, a military that has invaded, occupied, overthrown, exploited, bombed, blasted, burned, and reduced to rubble many – if not most – of the countries that now vie for the cup of all cups.

The same Armed Force that now gets to enjoy the harmonious excitement of the ‘beautiful game’ in all its High Def glory has stoked tension and supported instability (to say the least) in countries like Greece (1947-49, over 500 U.S. armed forces military advisers sent to administer hundreds of millions of dollars in their civil war), Brazil (1964, U.S. backs a coup d’etat to overthrow popular president João Goulart), Chile (1973, U.S.-supported military coup overthrows – and murders – democratically-elected president Salvador Allende and brings dictatorship of Pinochet to power), Uruguay (1973, U.S.-backed coup brings military dictator-

ship to power), Argentina (1976, military junta deposes government of Isabel Perón with U.S. knowledge and support), Honduras (besides past interventions in 1905, 1907, 1911, and 1943, in 1983 over 1000 troops and National Guard members were deployed to help the contra fight against Nicaragua, not to mention the U.S. support for last year's coup), Slovenia and Serbia (1992-6, U.S. Navy joins in a naval blockade of Yugoslavia in Adriatic waters; 1999, U.S. participated in months of air bombing and cruise missile strikes in Kosovo 'war').

The U.S. military is essentially still occupying Germany (52,440 troops in over 50 installations), Japan (35,688 troops with an additional 5,500 American civilians employed by the DoD – oh yeah, and Japan pays about \$2 billion each year for the US to be there as part of the 'Omoiyari Yosan,' or 'compassion budget'), and South Korea (28,500 U.S. troops). There are 9,660 U.S. troops still stationed in Italy, 9,015 in the United Kingdom, over 1,300 in Serbia and over 1,200 in Spain.

Furthermore, Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, France, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, Algeria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, and Uruguay all suffer the presence of at least a few American soldiers who are officially stationed there (some of these countries are forced to host 400-800 US troops).

#### **International force**

All told, there are about 78,000 American military personnel in Europe, along with approximately 47,240 in East Asia and the Pacific, 3,360 in North Africa, the Near East, and South Asia (obviously not including the 92,000 troops in Iraq and about 100,000 in Afghanistan and Pakistan), 1,355 in sub-Saharan Africa, and an additional 1,940 in the Western Hemisphere outside the United States itself.

Literally, the only country in this year's World Cup proceedings without any sort of

token or actual United States military presence is – surprise surprise – North Korea. And even this might change if Obama gets his way. That would put American troops in every single one of the 32 countries currently competing in South Africa, along with over 140 others.

A press release distributed by U.S. Africa Command (US AFRICOM) excitedly reports, "Through the cooperation of a host of international television licensees, the American Forces Network Broadcast Center (AFN-BC) has been granted permission by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) to distribute the full complement of matches of the 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa."

A recent article in *Stars and Stripes*, quotes Lt. Col. Steve Berger, an intelligence planner with U.S. Army Africa stationed in Vicenza, Italy, as saying, "It's really great for the soldiers to see, especially for an emerging sport in the U.S." (And especially so that they can get a glimpse of the kinds of people they'll be ordered to kill next!) Even more exciting is the fact that, "Because AFN doesn't pay for programming, it was important that it receive the rights to the World Cup for free, AFN chief of affiliate relations Larry Sichtler said."

Apparently, the U.S. military can invade your country and station troops there indefinitely, but it sure as hell won't pay for television broadcasting! Especially not with the \$531 billion allocated this fiscal year for U.S. military spending (a total which is expected to rise by \$18 billion next year along with an additional \$272 billion for the ongoing occupation of Iraq, the escalation in Afghanistan, the illegal predator drone bombings in Pakistan, and rebuilding and updating a nuclear arsenal in clear violation of the requirements of the NPT). The U.S. armed forces just can't spare a square.

FIFA probably had no choice but to comply with the requests of the U.S. military for fear of having their offices occupied or blown to pieces. What a relief a deal was struck! How global! How peaceful! How

**Apparently, the U.S. military can invade your country and station troops there indefinitely, but it sure as hell won't pay for television broadcasting!**

## THE GREAT GAME

**These brave men and women in uniform could – and should – be watching these 64 soccer games from the comfort of their own homes in the United States, on the couch with their families**

imperial! How obvious, unsurprising, and embarrassing.

“Having the most-watched sports event on the planet play out on AFN is a real feather in our cap,” notes Jeff White, Executive Director of AFN-BC, in the text of the military press release filed from Riverdale, CA via Stuttgart, Germany. “But more importantly,” White continues, “we’ll be able to deliver the entire compliment of matches to the side that means the most – our brave men and women in uniform serving their country overseas and in harm’s way. It doesn’t get any better than this.”

### View from afar

That, out of the planetary pride, representation, and unification that the World Cup is supposed to be all about, the U.S. military would be “the side that means the most” is in itself upsetting – but hey, it’s a military press release and the guy’s name is White after all.

But White is wholly wrong about “it” not getting “any better than this.” There is

a very simple way for things to be much, much better. If the U.S. reduced its dominating and destructive presence and aggressive involvement around the world and dismantled the hundreds of foreign installations that keep the rest of the world in submissive subjugation and under American occupation, these brave men and women in uniform could – and should – be watching these 64 soccer games from the comfort of their own homes in the United States, on the couch with their families.

For the sake of the entire world, it truly wouldn’t get any better than that. **CT**

*Nima Shirazi is a writer and musician.*

*He is a contributing columnist for Foreign Policy Journal and Palestine Think Tank. His analysis of United States policy and Middle East issues, particularly with reference to current events in Palestine and Iran, can be found in numerous other online and print publications. He currently lives in Brooklyn, NY, with his wife and books. Visit his website at: [www.wideasleepinamerica.com](http://www.wideasleepinamerica.com).*

## LOSING OUR COOL

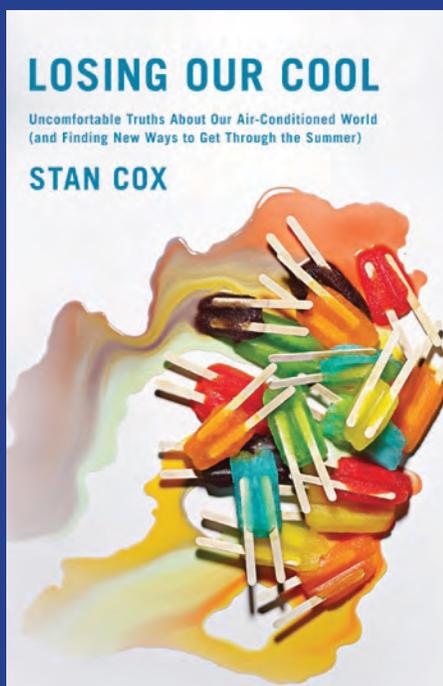
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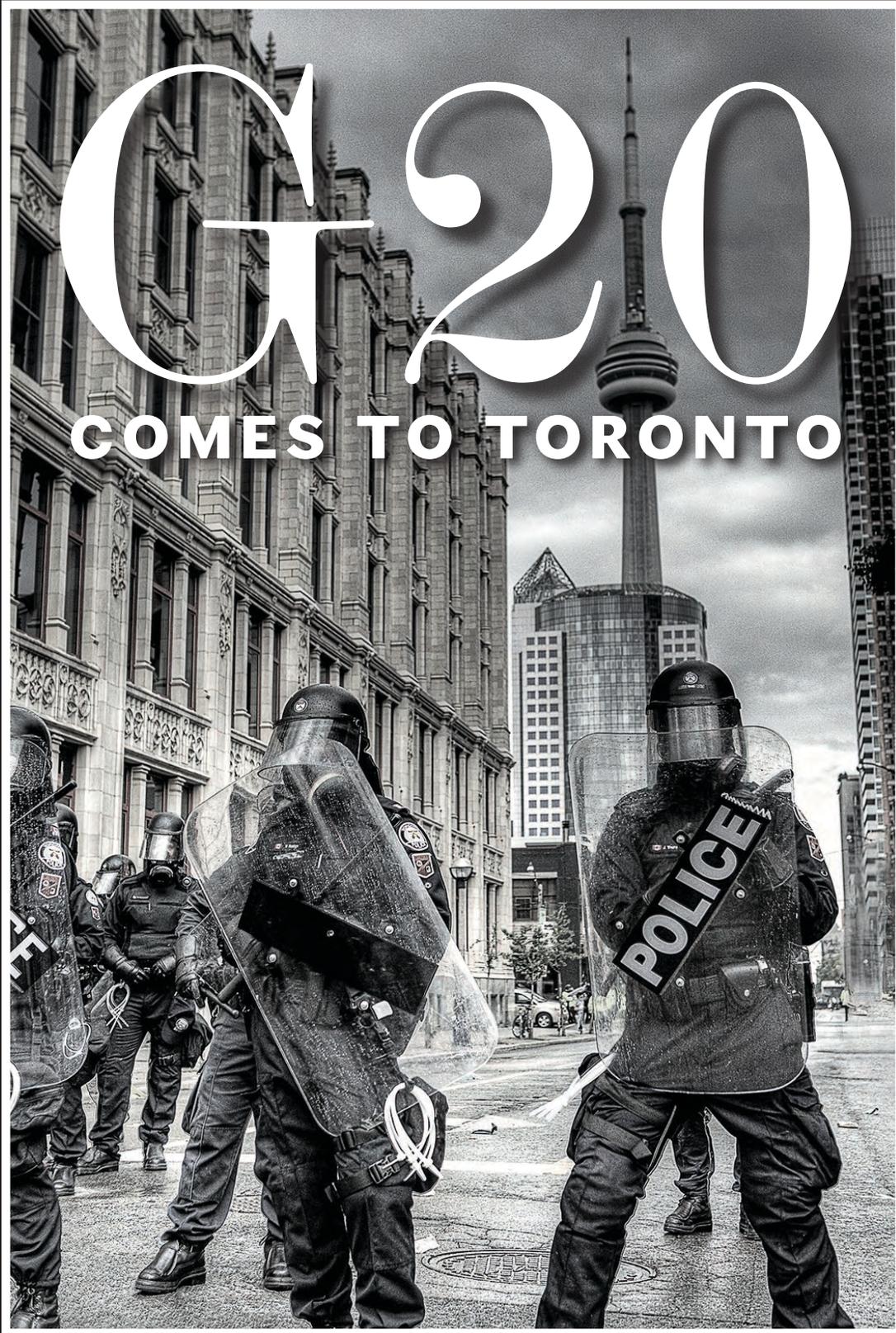
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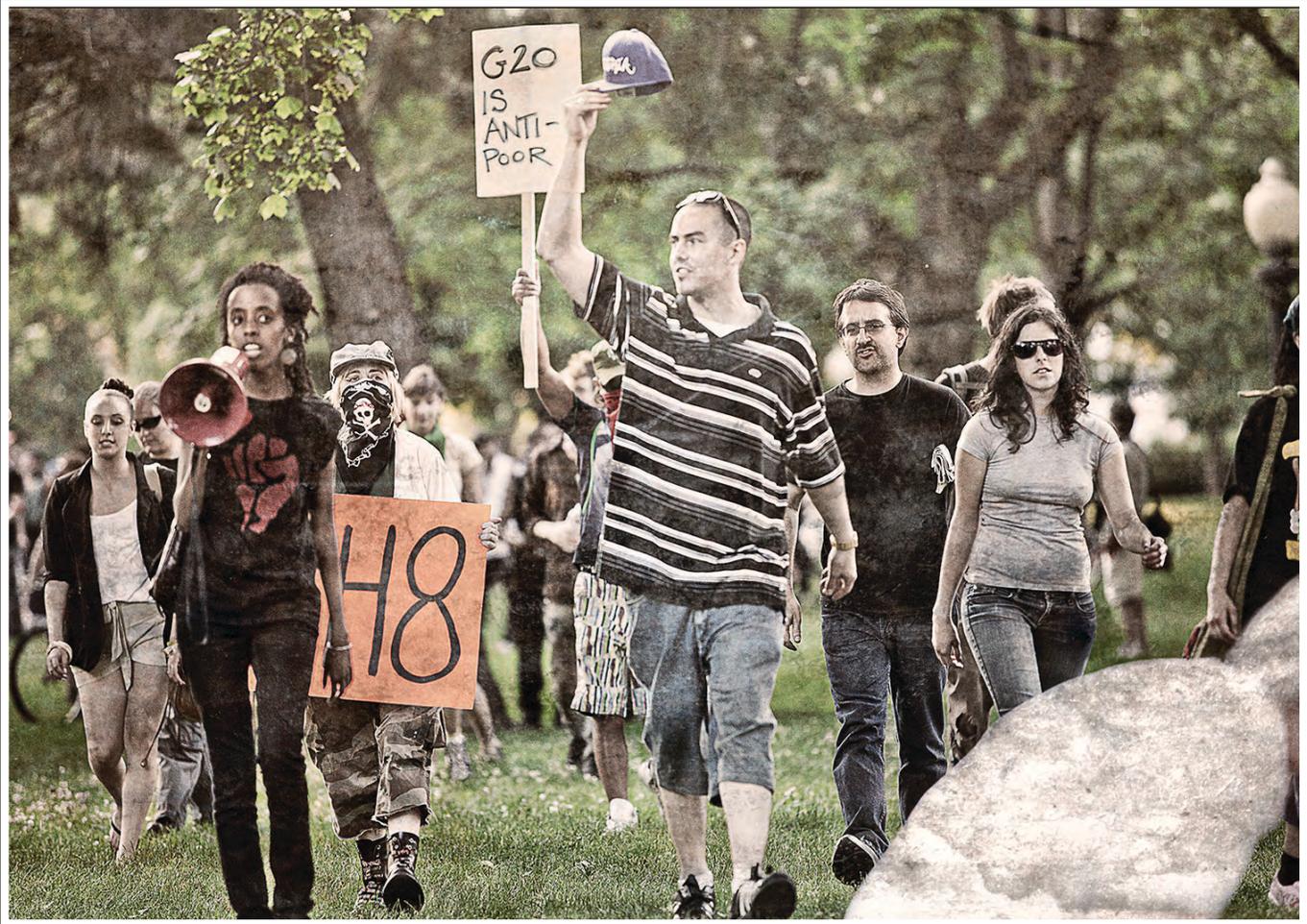




# G20

COMES TO TORONTO

PHOTOS: RICHARD GOTTARDO. WORDS: TONY SUTTON



# Welcome to Toronto

**T**hey were dressed in black. They were ready for a fight. And they created mayhem in downtown Toronto on the weekend of June 26 and 27.

On one side were thousands of black-clad riot police, sweltering beneath bullet-proof vests, weighed down by guns, walkie talkies, Plexiglass shields, batons and heavy boots. On the other were several hundred fleet-footed 'Black Bloc anarchists' decked out in black



sweatsuits and trainers, faces anonymous behind bandanas, armed with sticks and stones.

At the edge of the action were the media, TV crews, hairsprayed anchors and on-air reporters, short on analysis, long on wind, desperately filling time as they



waited for the antagonists to produce the violence that would drag viewers' eyes from the other big weekend sporting event, live World Cup soccer action.

Mingling with the men (and women) in black and their media courtiers were thrill-hunting sightseers toting

cameras to record the action for personal posterity, and 10,000 banner-waving protesters who were quickly marginalised as the media focus shifted from their legitimate, non-violent (and therefore unsexy) anti-G20 march to wallow in the thrill of broken windows and



savour the tear-smoke drifting through the air further down the road.

The 'security' cost of the G20 charade – including a smaller G8 event a few miles up the road a day earlier, – added up to \$1.2 billion and involved erecting miles of high steel fencing around the G20 conference site, mobilising 20,000 police and the virtual lockdown of downtown Toronto for the weekend. Cops don't work for nothing, you know.

Duly protected from the restless proles, the leaders of the free world and their entourage enjoyed self-congratulatory speeches and gourmet meals inside their gilded cage. Meanwhile, more than a thousand protesters and dazed and confused passers-by spent their evening, night and much of the following day under arrest, locked inside less-spacious metal cages hastily brought into an abandoned film factory.

And what happened to journalists caught up for hours by a police 'kettling' operation during a torrential thunderstorm on the second day of the protest? Depends who they were. Hacks from the mainstream media were released immediately, immunity from arrest guaranteed by their 'official' badges. Their comrades from the alternative press, denied the all-important 'get-out-of-custody' passes, were arrested, 'cuffed and dispatched, along with dozens of Sunday strollers, to spend the night in police custody

At the end of it all, US president Barrack Obama unconsciously highlighted the desperate chasm between rulers and ruled, when he cheerfully declared before leaving the shell-shocked city that the 'success' of the summits was "a tribute to Canadian leadership."

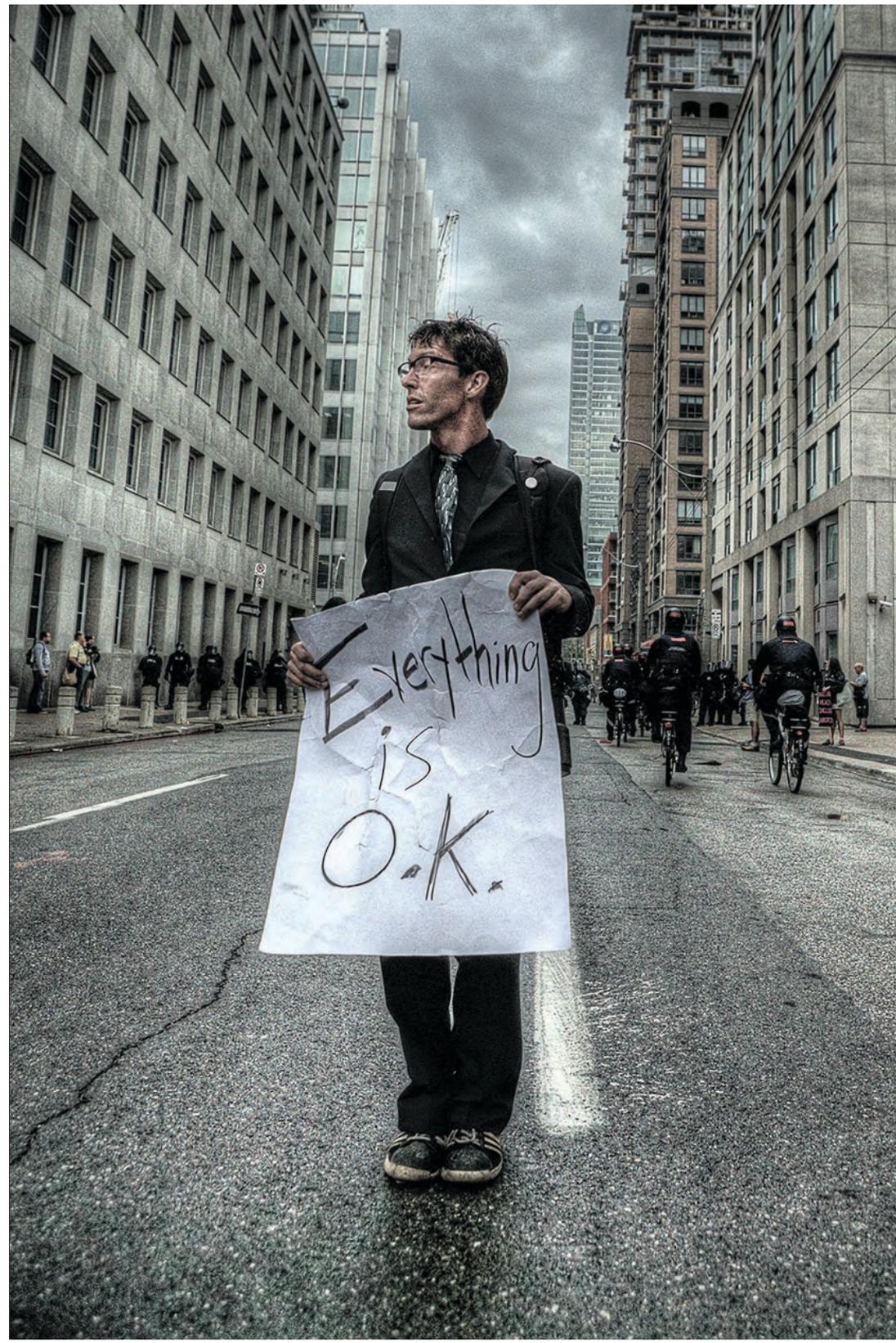
Oh Canada!

CT

**Richard Gottardo** is a Toronto photographer who fully embraces the creative potential the digital revolution has had on photography. His distinctly modern style is attained through the merging of multiple copies of a single image to produce a picture which has a greatly increased tonal range.

More of his work and contact information may be found at [www.RichardGottardo.com](http://www.RichardGottardo.com)

**Tony Sutton** is editor of The Reader.



# Police and bankers exempt from austerity

What does the G20 bring the world? Austerity, bail-outs and citizens locked up in cages, writes **Linda McQuaig**

**The Prime Minister appears determined to smother dissent at any cost, with little regard for their legal or civil rights**

**T**he violence of the mob was considerable, with hooligans smashing windows, looting stores and setting police cars ablaze.

I'm referring, of course, to the hockey riots in Montreal in April 2008, after the Montreal Canadiens' playoff victory over the Boston Bruins.

If you don't remember this thuggery – or similar Montreal riots a month ago following another hockey victory – it's probably because that violence wasn't used as an excuse to justify a massive police clampdown on a city.

What went on in Toronto on the last weekend of June – as this usually vibrant city was put under virtual police lockdown – went far beyond any necessary measures to preserve public order and protect world leaders at the G20 summit.

Could this massive display of force be an example of Stephen Harper's intense desire to control things, from the PMO right down to street protestors?

Certainly, when it comes to those who openly protest his policies, the Prime Minister appears determined to smother dissent at any cost, with little regard for protesters' legal or civil rights.

Before the summit even began, Harper was clearly gearing up for a crackdown, with plans to spend \$930 million on 19,000 police for the G20 (and smaller G8 summit

in Huntsville, Ontario).

This was stunningly out of line with how other big cities have handled G20 summits. Britain spent \$28.6 million on 5,000 police to host the G20 in London in April 2009, while the US spent a paltry \$12.2 million on 4,000 police for the Pittsburgh G20 summit last September. Yet no world leaders were roughed up in London or Pittsburgh.

With Torontonians enraged by the exorbitant cost of arming their city to the teeth, the Harper government seemed determined to make it look necessary.

On Saturday afternoon, a number of black-clad hooligans broke from the peaceful march and began an outrageous rampage of vandalism through downtown Toronto. Despite a massive presence of police in the city core, hoodlums were able to smash shop windows unimpeded and leave police cars burning in front of TV cameras, creating the impression the city was dangerously under siege.

Police then moved forcefully, swooping up hundreds of people – many of whom were obviously peaceful protestors, including some singing the national anthem *O Canada* – and holding them in deplorable conditions in cages at a makeshift detention centre.

As the *Toronto Star* reported, a veterinarian was woken at 4 a.m. by police pointing a gun at him in his High Park bedroom, as

they searched for a protest organizer.

And on Sunday evening, dozens of people who weren't even protesting – including some whose apparent crime was waiting for a bus at Spadina and Queen Streets – were detained on the street for four hours, much of it during a torrential downpour.

Meanwhile, even as his government hemorrhaged close to a billion dollars on “security” over the weekend, Harper pushed an agenda of austerity and deficit cutting at the G20. This will mean brutal belt-tightening around the world, even though the deficits are clearly the result of the global recession triggered by the 2008

Wall Street meltdown. This connection is not lost on the G20 protestors, who see great injustice in the world's people being made to tighten their belts because of Wall Street's financial speculation.

With the top 25 hedge fund managers earning a combined \$25.3 billion last year, Wall Street's bailed-out financiers are clearly back in their private jets – while peaceful citizens protesting such injustice are locked up in cages. **CT**

*Linda McQuaig is a columnist for the Toronto Star, where this article first appeared. her latest book is **Holding The Bully's Coat: Canada And The US Empire***

**Dozens of people who weren't even protesting – including some whose apparent crime was waiting for a bus – were detained on the street for four hours, much of it during a torrential downpour**

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## HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



# BPs dumb investors demand their dividends

BP investors should stop whining about reduced payments following the Gulf disaster, says **Michael I. Niman**

**BP's shareholders epitomize the concept of "entitlement mentality." They expect to receive dividends because they always have**

**T**here's mounting anger in Britain, where pundits and politicians are charging President Barack Obama with xenophobia and anti-British prejudice. The smoking gun behind this charge is an incident in which Obama referred to BP as "British Petroleum."

For the record, "BP" stands for "British Petroleum," a name Britain's largest corporation adopted in 1954. In 2000, they had a KFC moment and formally changed their name from British Petroleum to simply "BP," which apparently we're now supposed to believe stands for nothing. Shortly after the name change, BP launched a greenwashing campaign using the catchphrase "Beyond Petroleum," though their investments in petroleum alternatives are relatively miniscule.

So no, it's not xenophobic to refer to the company as "British Petroleum." "The criminal enterprise formally known as British Petroleum but now known simply as BP which does not stand for British Petroleum" just doesn't roll easily off the tongue.

This whole issue is just a smokescreen. Many in Britain are simply outraged that Obama suggested that BP may not have the money to pay out dividends to shareholders this quarter. Not being able to pay out dividends, as in not making a profit, is a gross understatement. A month ago I wrote that BP, as a corporation, is financially upside down, with liabilities far exceeding its gross

worth. Put simply, their financial liability for ending life as we knew it in and around the Gulf of Mexico, idling and potentially destroying a quarter of the US fishing industry, decimating tourism and real estate values along nearly 2,000 miles of coastline, causing the extinctions of multiple species and initiating what could be a global domino effect of aquatic die-offs might, perhaps, mean that those folks who own this company might not expect a profit dividend anytime soon – or ever. Pointing this out is not xenophobic. It's reality.

BP's shareholders epitomize the concept of "entitlement mentality." They expect to receive dividends because they always have. They believe that the current model – volunteers combing the sands of Pensacola Beach for tar balls and investors simultaneously receiving their dividends – must be preserved. And like most corporate investors, they probably don't want to know how they earned this money. They just have a right to it. Let's call it "class privilege," a capitalist entitlement mentality.

The corporation is a sociopathological construction existing for one purpose – to accumulate wealth, unconstrained by personal liability, social conscience, respect for life, or any moral barometer. BP personifies this sociopathic profile. It's a serial felon that kills without remorse. If it were human, it would be locked away forever, infamous as Ted

Bundy, who we'd probably still know as "Ted Bundy" even if he change his name to "TB" and advertised himself as "Tony Bennett."

If forced to pay compensation for even a fraction of the damage it has caused, BP will likely go bankrupt. However, BP's shareholders, investors who benefited from years of dividends financed by the same criminal recklessness that sunk the Deepwater Horizon, won't be personally responsible for any of this liability, beyond the loss of their dividends and stock value. That's the magic of the corporation. It's like investing in a real-life Tony Soprano, sharing in his booty, but remaining respectable and legally untouchable should his criminal enterprise come tumbling down.

If I'm not being clear enough here, let me put it this way: BP's investors, the same wankers whining about their dividends, share a collective sociopathology. As individuals and fund managers, they knew their money was invested in a criminal enterprise with a notorious history of felony convictions for doing the very stuff that caused the current catastrophe that's ruining the Gulf of Mexico. But few of them divested. All that mattered was that this mafia reliably paid its quarterly dividends.

Any such dividend payment now, however, amounts to a theft from the people of the Gulf Coast whose livelihoods have been destroyed by BP's actions. Paying dividends now constitutes a mechanism to siphon funds out of the corporation prior to its bankruptcy and accountability. The US Justice Department should demand that all of BP's global assets immediately be frozen in order to prevent BP's owners from pocketing funds that should be going toward paying BP's debt in the Gulf.

Let's look more closely at BP's depraved indifference to life. Most noticeable is the fact that they had no plan for dealing with the sort of predictable catastrophe they caused in the Gulf. To understand what we're dealing with here, imaging a five-gallon bucket filled with water. It's heavy. Some might say very heavy. Now imaging lifting it atop your

head. That's about 24 inches of water above you. Now imagine that bucket extending upward for a mile. That's the type of water pressure at the leaking Deepwater Horizon well head. Now imagine the sea, and another mile of seabed, pressing down on the oil-field, which shoots up through the wellhead. That's the kind of pressure pushing the oil out and up into the Gulf. How to work in this environment, a mile under the sea, and how to cap this sort of pressure in so hostile an environment, the last two months of catastrophic leakage has shown us, is anyone's guess. There was no plan.

This is "Drill, baby, drill." Pump the oil out of the sea, life be damned. It's another Bush administration legacy – to render regulating agencies impotent and to allow the oil industry to regulate itself. We're a year and a half into the Obama presidency, and I guess he should have shut down the deep-water drilling platforms upon inauguration, at least until his government could establish an honest, diligent regulating regimen to oversee this incredibly dangerous industry. But let's be realistic. If Obama tried this, he'd probably no longer be president. And recent Supreme Court decisions pave the way for BP to buy a candidate to run against him, should he survive until reelection time.

Ironically, the Gulf region Republican political establishment, the folks now blaming Obama for responding to the spill too slowly, was only recently giddily chanting the McCain-Palin mantra of "Drill, baby, drill." The hypocrisy is grotesque.

And with the exception of Florida, the Gulf region electorate overwhelmingly voted for the "Drill, baby, drill" ticket in the 2008 election. Obama's "fuck 'em" response was to give them what they wanted, opening up red states for reckless offshore drilling, while keeping bans in place in blue states that voted for the president. Unfortunately, however, politics is often simpler than reality. We all, it turns out, live on the same planet – unfortunately. While I've never in my life voted for a Republican, I've walked the shoreline in every Gulf state, and like a Republican-voting

**As individuals and fund managers, they knew their money was invested in a criminal enterprise with a notorious history of felony convictions for doing the very stuff that caused the current catastrophe that's ruining the Gulf of Mexico**

## ENTITLEMENT MENTALITY

**Poking holes deep into the seabed, one mile down, with absolutely no plan in place to deal with an accident, is what BP does**

Mississippi fisherman, I too love the Gulf of Mexico and mourn the unspeakable death that has befallen it. “Fuck ’em” fucks us all.

So back to BP’s idea of an emergency plan. Their boilerplate filing for what to do in the case of an emergency cites, for example, the threat to walrus should the Deepwater Horizon spill oil into the Gulf of Mexico. Well, I guess the plan worked, as no walrus were killed. That’s because the spill hasn’t reached the New Orleans Zoo. Walrus are an Arctic species. It’s good to see that government regulators were on their toes.

BP is not in business to cap leaking wells. They’re in business to take risks. Poking holes deep into the seabed, one mile down, with absolutely no plan in place to deal with an accident, is what BP does. If the government, which exists to protect the commons from such plunder and desecration, allows oil companies to take such risks, than it’s the government, in whatever country that allows such risks, that has to be ready to step up to the plate and deal with the consequences of their decisions.

By comparison, buildings burn, hence governments maintain fire departments. Off-shore wells spill – 175 times or so in the last 10 years – but instead of having the equivalent of a fire department, we practice a *laissez-faire* response. Picture property owners in, say, New York City, deciding they didn’t want to pay taxes to support a fire department. That’s the case here. There’s no rescue equipment on hand adequate to deal with the problem. That’s because oil companies didn’t want to pay a tax to support one. In essence, there’s no government, a la Ron Paul. The corporations can regulate themselves, policed by risk factors in the magic free market. Only, in this case, BP got a bit giddy with their hand, and can’t cover their bet. This is casino capitalism, on a rare day when the house loses and burns down, with no fire-fighters or other big-government interferers on hand to quell the flames.

The entitlement wankers are crying that BP, the world’s fourth-largest publically held corporation, is just too big to die. The eco-

nomie fallout from sociopaths not getting their dividends would be too much. But the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem is also too big to die, and I dare say, a hell of a lot more important to the world than BP. But it’s dying in front of us. And the free-market model we’ve been using says BP is going to pay.

Before going off on an anti-British tirade, however, we need to critically examine the neo-colonial relationship we’re accusing the Brits of practicing here. Sure, a London-based corporation is recklessly extracting resources in the US, despoiling our environment, and selling us back our own oil. It sure smells like colonialism. And the stench of colonialism isn’t dampened by British Member of Parliament Richard Ottaway, who recently told the BBC, “We do have to ask ourselves: Is it for the US president to interfere in the operations of an international overseas company?” The fact that these are our former colonial masters just adds salt to the wound.

But the situation is no different than that of American multi-national energy giant, Chevron, and their murderous history of ecocide in Nigeria and Ecuador. It’s a similar story with similar arrogance, involving communities poisoned and destroyed by a corporation operating with a depraved indifference to life. Chevron, like BP, can’t go to jail. And as with BP, its investors want their dividends – and don’t care where they come from.

But unlike the case in the Gulf, the injured populations in Ecuador and Nigeria don’t have the same voice as that of a first-world population, and hence, the Chevron horror story goes on and on, under the global media radar. It seems American shareholders, like their British counterparts, have an entitlement mentality as well. It makes sense. Americans own almost of much BP stock as the British. There are wankers on both sides of the ocean. As the criminal enterprises they invest in destroy more and more ecosystems, they’ll soon be forced to come to terms with the real bankruptcy brought on by an out of control corporate system. You just can’t eat your dividends. **CT**

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# Echoing the Pentagon Papers

There was a time when the media supported whistleblowers who exposed government wrongs. Now they seem to have switched sides, according to **Colleen Rowley and Robert Parry**

**A**lmost four decades after Defense Department insider Daniel Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon Papers – thus exposing the lies that led the United States into the Vietnam War – another courageous “national security leaker” has stepped forward and now is facing retaliation similar to what the US government tried to inflict on Ellsberg.

Army Intelligence Specialist Bradley Manning is alleged to have turned over a large volume of classified material about the Iraq and Afghanistan wars to Wikileaks.org, including the recently posted US military video showing American helicopters gunning down two Reuters journalists and about 10 other Iraqi men in 2007. Two children were also injured.

The 22-year-old Manning was turned in by a convicted computer hacker named Adrian Lamo, who befriended Manning over the Internet and then betrayed him, supposedly out of concern that disclosure of the classified material might put US military personnel in danger. Manning is now in US military custody in Kuwait awaiting charges.

Though there are historic parallels between the actions of Manning today and those of Ellsberg in 1971, a major difference is the attitude of the mainstream US news media, which then fought to publish Ellsberg's secret history but now is behav-

ing more like what former CIA analyst Ray McGovern calls the “fawning corporate media” or FCM.

In the Ellsberg case, the first Pentagon Papers article was published by the *New York Times* – and when President Richard Nixon blocked the *Times* from printing other stories – the *Washington Post* and 17 other newspapers picked up the torch and kept publishing articles based on Ellsberg's material until Nixon's obstruction was made meaningless, and ultimately was repudiated by the US Supreme Court.

Today, the major response of the *Times*, *Post* and other tribunes of the FCM has been to write articles disparaging Manning, while treating Lamo as something of a patriotic hero.

The *Washington Post* depicted Manning as a troubled soldier, “slight” of build, a loser who “had just gone through a breakup,” who had been “demoted a rank in the Army after striking a fellow soldier,” and who “felt he had no future.”

The *Post* even trivialized Manning's motive for leaking the material, suggesting that he was driven by his despair, thinking “that by sharing classified information about his government's foreign policy, he might ‘actually change something.’”

Lamo also was quoted, speculating on what prompted Manning's actions. “I think it was a confluence of things – - being a thin,

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## WHO'S THE HERO?

**The US military has argued that videos like the Baghdad helicopter attack and photographs of American troops mistreating Iraqi and Afghan detainees must be kept secret to avoid enflaming local populations and putting US soldiers in greater danger**

nerdy, geeky type in an Army culture of machismo, of seeing injustice,” Lamo told the *Post*.

Meanwhile, the *New York Times* put Lamo's motives in the most favorable light.

“Mr. Lamo said he had contacted the Army about Specialist Manning's instant messages because he was worried that disclosure of the information would put people's lives in danger,” the *Times* reported. “He said that Army investigators were particularly concerned about one sensitive piece of information that Specialist Manning possessed that Mr. Lamo would not discuss in more detail.”

The *Times* quoted Lamo as saying: “I thought to myself, ‘What if somebody dies because this information is leaked?’ ”

According to the *Times*, Lamo elaborated on his moral dilemma in a Twitter message. “I outed Brad Manning as an alleged leaker out of duty,” Lamo said. “I would never (and have never) outed an Ordinary Decent Criminal. There's a difference.”

In other words, the *Times* and the *Post* – two heroes of the Ellsberg case – seemed more interested in making the case against Manning (and sticking up for his betrayer) than in taking the side of a whistleblower who had put his future and his freedom on the line to inform the American people how the Iraq (and Afghan) wars are being fought.

There has been little suggestion by either the *Post* or the *Times* that Manning had done a patriotic service by helping to expose wartime wrongdoing.

The FCM also has shown little interest in the US government's apparent attempts to hunt down Julian Assange, the Australian-born founder of Wikileaks.org which decrypted the video of the Iraq helicopter attack and posted it on the Internet under the title, “Collateral Murder.”

The Pentagon (undoubtedly with the help of the CIA and the National Security Agency) is reportedly conducting a man-hunt for Assange, who is known to travel around the globe staying at the homes of

friends and doing what he can to evade government notice.

The US military has argued that videos like the Baghdad helicopter attack and photographs of American troops mistreating Iraqi and Afghan detainees must be kept secret to avoid enflaming local populations and putting US soldiers in greater danger. President Barack Obama adopted that argument last year in overturning a court-ordered release of a new batch of photos showing US soldiers committing abuses.

However, there is nothing classically classifiable about the helicopter videos or the other photographic evidence that has leaked out, such as the sordid pictures of naked Iraqi men being humiliated at Abu Ghraib prison. Under US law, the government's classification powers are not to be used to conceal evidence of crimes.

### **‘Most Dangerous Man’**

Yet, except for the changed role of the big newspapers, history does appear to be repeating itself, with the emergence of another “Most Dangerous Man,” the appellation that Nixon's aide Henry Kissinger gave to Ellsberg during the Pentagon Papers case.

If you haven't, you need to quickly watch the Academy Award-nominated documentary, *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers*, to brush up on your history. You'll quickly understand how Manning's recent arrest and the Pentagon's hunt to neutralize Assange jibe with the story of the copying and publishing of the Pentagon Papers during the Vietnam War.

It should also be kept in mind that Ellsberg wasn't the only “dangerous man” who helped undo the culture of secrecy surrounding the Nixon presidency. When Nixon responded to the Ellsberg case by organizing a special “plumbers” unit, which then spied on the Democrats at their Watergate headquarters, other whistleblowers, like “Deep Throat” (FBI official Mark Felt), helped journalists expose the wrongdoing.

Poor Nixon, in his vain attempt to keep

control and power, he just had to keep expanding his “enemy list.”

A very similar crisis of conscience exists now. Power politics, and especially the politics of war, corrupt policymakers who deal with intelligence and security issues – and that leads to secrecy expanding exponentially to cover up bloody mistakes and shocking crimes.

For eight years, George W. Bush and Dick Cheney ran a highly politicized administration that took these inherent problems to new heights. And Obama, for many reasons, has thus far chosen to “look forward, not backward,” and has thus fallen way short of his singular campaign promise of CHANGE.

Despite his assurances of greater government openness, Obama has surely not given support to government whistleblowers. Quite the opposite, Obama has expanded on Bush's methods, such as claims of the “state secrets” defense to block court challenges to government actions.

The Obama Administration has even instituted criminal prosecution of government employees who blew the whistle on prior unlawful actions of the Bush regime by daring to reveal, for instance, that Bush's NSA was warrantlessly monitoring American citizens.

The final step in the US government's continuing foray to the “dark side” has been Obama's signing off on the proposed targeted assassination of an American citizen – who had been linked to support for Islamic terrorism – without any judicial due process.

### **Imperial President**

Another major similarity between the Ellsberg era and today is that the United States is again witnessing the accrual of excessive “War Presidency” powers by the Executive Branch to the detriment and weakening of the legislative and judicial branches, not to mention significant damage to the legitimate function of the Fourth Estate, the press.

Crude attempts to avoid accountability

(as well as the constitutional checks and balances) by shredding documents and other evidence to prevent judicial accountability even seem to have succeeded. For instance, CIA officials learned the lessons of the Abu Ghraib photographic evidence by brazenly destroying 92 videotapes of terrorism suspects being interrogated with waterboarding and other brutal methods.

While no legal action has as yet been taken against the CIA officials involved, government whistleblowers and even journalists who helped expose Bush-era wrongdoing may not be so lucky. The Obama Administration is said to be threatening to not only prosecute government whistleblowers but to jail a *New York Times* reporter for not giving up his sources for stories that revealed Bush's illegal warrantless monitoring.

No wonder many news executives privately admit that in the current environment, they would never have the guts to publish something like the “Pentagon Papers” even though the Supreme Court upheld their prior brave actions in a landmark decision bolstering freedom of the press.

The current crippling of the US domestic press makes it impossible for a singular Ellsberg-type insider to rely on the press as a last resort to get important information to the public. (Ellsberg had first taken his documents to members of Congress responsible for Executive Branch oversight, but they didn't act.)

Given the fracturing and weakening of the US press – its transformation into the FCM – a government “whistleblower” is more often like a tree falling in the forest with no one to hear it. (Witness the BP disaster in the Gulf and the prior unheeded warnings of whistleblowers who warned of safety problems and potential spills.)

Having been one of the very few government officials publicly identified in a positive way for “whistleblowing,” Coleen Rowley has often been asked if there's a “right way” to do it and also “what should and can a loyal and patriotic government employee who has sworn to uphold the Constitution

**The current crippling of the US domestic press makes it impossible for a singular Ellsberg-type insider to rely on the press as a last resort to get important information to the public.**

## WHO'S THE HERO?

**If the story of the Pentagon Papers is again playing out, the attempt to punish Manning and neutralize Wikileaks.org could be of similar magnitude to the effort employed against Ellsberg and the newspapers that received his photocopied documents**

do after witnessing such fraud, waste, abuse, illegality, or a serious public safety issue?"

The hard truth is that there are no good answers. There is no effective whistleblower protection in attempting to disclose within the chain of command and/or to warn one's Inspector General. (Even some of the IGs who stood up and tried to investigate have been retaliated against or stifled.)

There is no protection for whistleblowers as well from the Office of Special Counsel. (Indeed Bush's former Director of the Office of Special Counsel himself has faced accusations of ethical breaches.)

In 2006, the Supreme Court ruled that there is no protection under the First Amendment for government employees making disclosures even if they are privy to and blow the whistle on outright illegal activity. The government insider who witnesses fraud, waste, abuse, illegality or a risk of serious public safety faces certain retaliation or firing if he attempts to disclose internally. Moreover, his/her warnings will undoubtedly be swept under the rug.

It's easy therefore to argue that less-compromised international press outlets and Web sites, like Wikileaks.org, may offer a better hope for getting out the truth. As Wikileaks.org's founder Julian Assange has said about the possibility of more news sites releasing sensitive information: "Courage is contagious."

If the story of the Pentagon Papers is again playing out, the attempt to punish Manning and neutralize Wikileaks.org could be of similar magnitude to the effort employed against Ellsberg and the newspapers that received his photocopied documents. (The criminal case against Ellsberg ultimately collapsed after the disclosure of Nixon's illegal spying operations, including a break-in at the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist.)

There is one possible answer, however. Every decent reporter and journalist as well as every honest government employee and citizen who cares about democracy and freedom of the press could unite to do the Paul Revere thing and sound the alarm.

The little bit of integrity and conscience left in the mainstream media needs to be immediately reminded of the Nixon-Watergate-Pentagon Papers history and awakened to the dangerous consequences that otherwise flow from "war empowered" Presidents, from their well-oiled military machine and covert intelligence apparatus.

The Fourth Estate needs to go back to work battling the undue secrecy and covert perception management which will ultimately be used against them all and the US citizenry. (Those who would have you believe that what you don't know can't hurt you must like the BP oil executives downplaying their oil spill.)

It's quite possible that the future of accountable government is teetering on the brink with the arrest of the 22-year-old Army intelligence specialist and the fugitive manhunt for the WikiLeaks founder. History does repeat itself, but not necessarily with the same positive ending. This time, it could go either way. The choice now is whether to move toward more militarism (and the secrecy that protects it) or toward more openness and honesty – and possibly a more democratic future. **CT**

***Coleen Rowley** is a former FBI Agent. She holds a law degree, and served in Minneapolis as Chief Division Counsel, a position which included oversight of Freedom of Information, as well as providing regular legal and ethics training to FBI Agents. In 2002, Coleen brought some of the pre 9/11 lapses to light and testified to the Senate Judiciary Committee about some of the endemic problems facing the FBI and the intelligence community. Today she is active in civil liberties, and peace and justice issues.*

***Robert Parry** broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at [neckdeepbook.com](http://neckdeepbook.com)*

# Some thoughts on patriotism

**William Blum** shares his dislike of nationalism

**M**ost important thought: I'm sick and tired of this thing called "patriotism".

The Japanese pilots who bombed Pearl Harbor were being patriotic. The German people who supported Hitler and his conquests were being patriotic, fighting for the Fatherland. All the Latin American military dictators who overthrew democratically-elected governments and routinely tortured people were being patriotic – saving their beloved country from "communism".

General Augusto Pinochet of Chile, mass murderer and torturer: "I would like to be remembered as a man who served his country."

P.W. Botha, former president of apartheid South Africa: "I am not going to repent. I am not going to ask for favours. What I did, I did for my country."

Pol Pot, mass murderer of Cambodia: "I want you to know that everything I did, I did for my country."

Tony Blair, former British prime minister, defending his role in the murder of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis: "I did what I thought was right for our country."

At the end of World War II, the United States gave moral lectures to their German prisoners and to the German people on the inadmissibility of pleading that their participation in the holocaust was in obedience to their legitimate government. To prove

to them how legally and morally inadmissible this defense was, the World War II allies hanged the leading examples of such patriotic loyalty.

I was once asked after a talk: "Do you love America?" I answered: "No". After pausing for a few seconds to let that sink in amidst several nervous giggles in the audience, I continued with: "I don't love any country. I'm a citizen of the world. I love certain principles, like human rights, civil liberties, democracy, an economy which puts people before profits."

I don't make much of a distinction between patriotism and nationalism. Some people equate patriotism with allegiance to one's country and government or the noble principles they supposedly stand for, while defining nationalism as sentiments of ethno-national superiority. However defined, in practice the psychological and behavioral manifestations of nationalism and patriotism are not easily distinguishable, indeed feeding upon each other.

Howard Zinn called nationalism "a set of beliefs taught to each generation in which the Motherland or the Fatherland is an object of veneration and becomes a burning cause for which one becomes willing to kill the children of other Motherlands or Fatherlands. ... Patriotism is used to create the illusion of a common interest that everybody in the country has."

**Some people equate patriotism with allegiance to one's country and government or the noble principles they supposedly stand for, while defining nationalism as sentiments of ethno-national superiority**

## ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

**Hitler criticized German Jews and Communists for their internationalism and lack of national patriotism, demanding that “true patriots” publicly vow and display their allegiance to the fatherland**

Strong feelings of patriotism lie near the surface in the great majority of Americans. They're buried deeper in the more “liberal” and “sophisticated”, but are almost always reachable, and ignitable.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the mid-19th century French historian, commented about his long stay in the United States: “It is impossible to conceive a more troublesome or more garrulous patriotism; it wearies even those who are disposed to respect it.”

George Bush Sr., pardoning former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and five others in connection with the Iran-Contra arms-for-hostages scandal, said: “First, the common denominator of their motivation – whether their actions were right or wrong – was patriotism.”

What a primitive underbelly there is to this rational society. The US is the most patriotic, as well as the most religious, country of the so-called developed world. The entire American patriotism thing may be best understood as the biggest case of mass hysteria in history, whereby the crowd adores its own power as troopers of the world's only superpower, a substitute for the lack of power in the rest of their lives. Patriotism, like religion, meets people's need for something greater to which their individual lives can be anchored.

So this July 4, my dear fellow Americans, some of you will raise your fists and yell: “U! S! A! ... U! S! A!”. And you'll parade with your flags and your images of the Statue of Liberty. But do you know that the sculptor copied his mother's face for the statue, a domineering and intolerant woman who had forbidden another child to marry a Jew?

“Patriotism,” Dr. Samuel Johnson famously said, “is the last refuge of a scoundrel.” American writer Ambrose Bierce begged to differ – It is, he said, the first.

“Patriotism is the conviction that this country is superior to all other countries because you were born in it.” – George Bernard Shaw

“Actions are held to be good or bad, not on their own merits but according to who does

them, and there is almost no kind of outrage – torture, the use of hostages, forced labour, mass deportations, imprisonment without trial, forgery, assassination, the bombing of civilians – which does not change its moral colour when it is committed by ‘our’ side. ... The nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, but he has a remarkable capacity for not even hearing about them.” – George Orwell

“Pledges of allegiance are marks of totalitarian states, not democracies,” says David Kertzer, a Brown University anthropologist who specializes in political rituals. “I can't think of a single democracy except the United States that has a pledge of allegiance.” Or, he might have added, that insists that its politicians display their patriotism by wearing a flag pin. Hitler criticized German Jews and Communists for their internationalism and lack of national patriotism, demanding that “true patriots” publicly vow and display their allegiance to the fatherland. In reaction to this, postwar Germany has made a conscious and strong effort to minimize public displays of patriotism.

Oddly enough, the American Pledge of Allegiance was written by Francis Bellamy, a founding member, in 1889, of the Society of Christian Socialists, a group of Protestant ministers who asserted that “the teachings of Jesus Christ lead directly to some form or forms of socialism.” Tell that to the next Tea-party ignoramus who angrily accuses President Obama of being a “socialist”.

Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, we could read that there's “now a high degree of patriotism in the Soviet Union because Moscow acted with impunity in Afghanistan and thus underscored who the real power in that part of the world is.”

“Throughout the nineteenth century, and particularly throughout its latter half, there had been a great working up of this nationalism in the world. ... Nationalism was taught in schools, emphasized by newspapers, preached and mocked and sung into men. It became a monstrous cant which darkened all human affairs. Men were brought to feel

that they were as improper without a nationality as without their clothes in a crowded assembly. Oriental peoples, who had never heard of nationality before, took to it as they took to the cigarettes and bowler hats of the West.” – H.G. Wells, British writer

“The very existence of the state demands that there be some privileged class vitally interested in maintaining that existence. And it is precisely the group interests of that class that are called patriotism.” – Mikhail Bakunin, Russian anarchist

“To me, it seems a dreadful indignity to have a soul controlled by geography.” – George Santayana, American educator and philosopher

**Another thing Americans have to be thankful for on July 4**

The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has a new feature on their website called “Find Insurance Options”. You just provide certain information about your family size, your age, your employment situation, your financial situation, whether you have certain disabilities or diseases, whether you now have Medicare or some other health insurance, or how long you have not had health insurance, whether you have been denied insurance, whether you are someone’s dependent, a veteran? an American Indian? an Alaskan Native? etc., etc., etc. ... and the site gives you suggestions as to where and how you might find health insurance that might suit your particular needs. The head of HHS, Kathleen Sebelius, tells us “This is an incredibly impressive consumer tool,” adding that the site is capable of providing tailored responses to about 3 billion [sic] individual scenarios. “This information can give folks choices that they just didn’t have any idea they had available to them.”

Isn’t that remarkable? Where else but in America could one have such choice? Certainly not in Communist Cuba. There it’s only one scenario, one size fits all – you’re sick, you go to a doctor or to a hospital, and you get taken care of to the best of their abilities; no charge; doesn’t matter what your medical

problem is, doesn’t matter what your financial situation is, doesn’t matter what your employment situation is, there’s no charge. No one has health insurance. No one needs health insurance. Isn’t that boring? Communist regimentation!

**Separation of oil and state?**

On May 19, in a congressional hearing, Rep. Jason Altmire (D-Pa.) asked BP America President Lamar McKay: “Is there any technology that exists that you know of that could have prevented this from happening?”

“I don’t know of a piece of technology that could have prevented it,” replied McKay.

Given the extremely grave consequences of a deepwater oil-drilling accident that’s a pretty good argument that such operations are too risky and dangerous to be permitted, is it not?

Moreover, if it could have been prevented if BP had not been so negligent and reckless to save money, can we count on all oil companies in the future to never put profits before safety? I think not. And if an accident happens can we count on the company being able to rectify the damage quickly and efficiently? Apparently not.

So, will those who serve corporate America learn a lesson from the BP Gulf of Mexico disaster? Well, consider the following: Oil companies – even as you read this – are busy making plans for further Gulf drilling; in June the Mineral Management Service of the US Interior Department was continuing to issue waivers to these companies which exempt them from submitting a detailed analysis of the environmental impact of their plans, not at the moment for drilling new wells but to modify their existing projects in the Gulf; one waiver was to a British company called BP. ... Here’s the District Manager for Louisiana of the Mineral Management Service: “Obviously, we’re all oil industry. Almost all of our inspectors have worked for oil companies and on these same [oil drilling] platforms.” ... A financial analyst at the preeminent bank J.P. Morgan Chase announced some good news for us – the US

sn’t that remarkable?  
Where else but in America could one have such choice?  
Certainly not in Communist Cuba

## ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

**As president, I would take the admittedly controversial step of abolishing the United States military. The total savings, including the mammoth reduction in oil consumption, would be more than a trillion dollars a year**

Gross Domestic Product could gain slightly from all the expenditures for cleaning up the mess, adding that “the magnitude of these setbacks looks dwarfed by the scale of the US macroeconomy”. ... And three leading congressional Republicans recently referred to the spill as a “natural” disaster.

If I were the president I would in fact prohibit all underwater drilling for oil, permanently. President Obama announced a six-month prohibition and has run into a brick wall of oil companies, politicians, and the courts. He’ll cave in, as usual, but I wouldn’t. How would I make up for the loss of this oil? Not by importing more oil, but sharply reducing our usage. Here are two suggestions to begin with:

The US Department of Defense is not only the leading consumer of oil in the United States, it is the leading oil consumer in the entire world. A 2007 report by a defense contractor posits that the Pentagon in its foreign wars and worldwide military support operations (such as maintaining thousands of bases at home and abroad) might consume as much as 340,000 barrels (14 million gallons) every day, a quantity greater than the total national consumption of Sweden or Switzerland.<sup>19</sup> This is taken from an article with the title: “How Wars of the Future May Be Fought Just to Run the Machines That Fight Them”. If the American defense industry is added in, the military-industrial complex would be 12th in the world in oil consumption, more than India.

Accordingly, as president, I would take the admittedly controversial step of abolishing the United States military. The total savings, including the mammoth reduction in oil consumption, would be more than a trillion dollars a year.

Class assignment:

Try and think of the things that would improve the quality of life in American society, things that money could bring about, that would not be covered by a trillion dollars. If you believe that having no military would

open the United States to foreign invasion, who would invade; why they would do so; how many soldiers they would need to occupy a nation of more than 300 million people. List the dozen wars the United States has been involved in since the 1980s and specify which of them you are glad and proud of. On October 28, 2002, five men were murdered by a mob in India because they had killed a (sacred) cow.<sup>20</sup> On the very same day the United States was actively engaged in preparing to invade Iraq and kill thousands of people for control of their oil. Discuss which society was more insane.

Second suggestion to reduce oil usage: Public transportation would be nationalized so as to reduce prices to levels very easily affordable for virtually the entire population, resulting in a huge reduction of private automobile and gasoline usage. This public transportation system would not be required to show a profit. Like the military now.

### **Choosing a warlord**

The media have been rather preoccupied by the replacement of General Stanley McChrystal by General David Petraeus in Afghanistan; it’s been like gossip-column material, or a sporting event, or the Oscars; “Petraeus for president” some clamor, lots of letters to the editor, all over the Internet. Some journalists have discussed which general would be better for the war effort. To me, this is tantamount to asking “Which Doctor Strangelove do you prefer to be in charge of our international psychotic mass murdering?” Hmm ... let’s see ... hmm ... ah, here’s the answer: Who gives a fuck? **CT**

**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* *Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire*. Portions of the books can be read, and signed copies purchased, at [www.killinghope.org](http://www.killinghope.org)

# Bogus, misdirected and effective

The Tea Party is steeped in misinformation and denial. But it has a lot to teach the left, writes **George Monbiot**

**I**n the Netherlands a movement based on paranoia and the fleecing of the poor looks set to join the government. In the USA one of the biggest exercises in false consciousness the world has ever seen – people gathering in their millions to lobby unwittingly for a smaller share of the nation’s wealth – has become the playmaker in Republican primaries. The radical right is seizing its chance. But where is the radical left?

Both the Freedom Party in the Netherlands and the Tea Party in the US base their political programmes on misinformation and denial. But as political forces they are devastatingly effective. The contrast to recent leftwing meetings I’ve attended couldn’t be starker. They are cerebral, cogent, realistic – and little of substance has emerged from them.

The rightwing movements thrive on their contradictions, the leftwing movements drown in them. Tea Party members who proclaim their rugged individualism will follow a bucket on a broomstick if it has the right label, and engage in the herd behaviour they claim to deplore. The left, by contrast, talks of collective action but indulges instead in possessive individualism. Instead of coming together to fight common causes, leftwing meetings today consist of dozens of people promoting their own ideas, and proposing that everyone else should adopt them.

It would be wrong to characterise the Tea Party movement as being mostly work-

ing class. The polls suggest that its followers have an income and college education rate slightly above the national mean. But it is the only rising political movement in the US which enjoys major working class support. It voices the resentments of those who sense that they have been shut out of American life. Yet it campaigns for policies that threaten to exclude them further. The Contract from America for which Tea Party members voted demands that the US adopt a single-rate tax system, repeal Obama’s health care legislation and sustain George W Bush’s reductions in income tax, capital gains tax and inheritance tax. The beneficiaries of these policies are corporations and the ultra-wealthy. Those who will be hurt by them are angrily converging on state capitals to demand that they are implemented.

The Tea Party protests began after business journalist Rick Santelli broadcast an attack from the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange on government plan to help impoverished people whose mortgages had fallen into arrears. To cheers from traders at the exchange, he proposed that they should hold a tea party to dump derivative securities in Lake Michigan in protest at Obama’s intention – in Santelli’s words – to “subsidise the losers”. (I urge you to watch the broadcast – it is the most alarming example of cheap demagoguery you are likely to have seen. It continues to be promoted by Santelli’s employer, CNBC).

**Tea Party members who proclaim their rugged individualism will follow a bucket on a broomstick if it has the right label, and engage in the herd behaviour they claim to deplore**

## LOST LEADERS

**Its corporate backers wrap themselves in the complaints of the downtrodden: they are 21st Century Marie-Antoinettes, who dress up as dairymaids and propose that the poor subsist on a diet of laissez-faire**

The protests which claim to defend the interests of the working class began, in other words, with a call for a bankers' revolt against the undeserving poor. They have been promoted by Fox News, owned by that champion of the underdog Rupert Murdoch, and lavishly funded by other billionaires. Its corporate backers wrap themselves in the complaints of the downtrodden: they are 21st Century Marie-Antoinettes, who dress up as dairymaids and propose that the poor subsist on a diet of laissez-faire.

Before this movement had a name, its contradictions were explored in Thomas Frank's seminal book *What's the Matter with Kansas?* The genius of the new conservatism, Frank argues, is its "systematic erasure of the economic". It blames the troubles of the poor not on economic forces – corporate and class power, wage cuts, tax cuts, outsourcing – but on cultural forces. The backlashers could believe that George W Bush was a man of the people by ignoring his family's wealth. They can believe that the media is a liberal conspiracy only by forgetting about the corporations (CNBC, Fox etc) and the conservative billionaires who run it. T

he movement depends on people never making the connection between, for example, "mass culture, most of which conservatives hate, and laissez-faire capitalism, which they adore" or "the small towns they profess to love and the market forces that are slowly grinding those small towns back into the red-state dust."

The anger of the excluded is aimed instead at gay marriage, abortion, swearing on television and latte-drinking, French-speaking liberals. The working class American right votes for candidates who rail against cultural degradation, but what it gets when they take power is a transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich. In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders's Freedom Party performs a similar conjuring trick, persuading working and middle class voters that their real enemies are Muslims, while demanding tax cuts, abolition of the minimum wage and reductions in child benefits. It is only because of the general political dozi-

ness of the British electorate that such movements – despite the UK Independence Party's best efforts – have not yet taken off here. Give them time.

Though most of what they claim is false, one of the accusations levelled by both the Freedom Party and the Tea Party rings true: the left is effete. This highlights another contradiction in their philosophy: liberals are weak and spineless; liberals are ruthless and all-powerful. But never mind that: the left on both sides of the Atlantic has proved to be tongue-tied, embarrassed, unable to state simple economic truths, unable to name and confront the powers that oppress the working class. It has left the field wide open to right-wing demagogues.

The great progressive cringe is only part of the problem; we have also abandoned movement building in favour of Facebook politics. We don't want to pursue a common purpose any more, instead we want our own ideas and identity to be applauded. Where are the mass mobilisations in this country against the cuts, against the banks, against BP, unemployment, the lack of social housing, the endless war in Afghanistan? In the US the radical right is swiftly acquiring ownership of the Republican party. In the UK the left is scarcely attempting a reclamation of the Labour Party, even as opportunity knocks.

Bogus and misdirected as the Tea Party movement is, in one respect it has an authenticity that the left lacks: it is angry and it's prepared to translate that anger into action. It is marching, recruiting, unseating, replacing. We talk, they act. It strikes me that in the US the greater opportunities lie not in confronting the Tea Party movement but in turning it. As its mixed responses to Sarah Palin and Ron Paul show, it remains fluid and volatile. There's an opening here for trades unionists to move in and agree that an elite is indeed depriving working people of their rights, but it is not an intellectual elite or a cultural elite or a liberal elite: it is an economic elite. The radical right has something to teach us on this side of the Atlantic as well: the world is run by those who turn up. **CT**

**George Monbiot's latest book is *Bring On The Apocalypse***

# Project for pitiless centuries

**Felicity Arbuthnot** reminds us of the real victims of the West's misguided and immoral economic sanctions in the Middle East

*"I listen to the blackbird. A song for those who died. Now it is still all left to do. So as not to lose sight of the goal, which is to lift the brutal blockade of Gaza. That will happen. Beyond that goal, others are waiting. Demolishing a system of apartheid takes time. But not an eternity."*

– Swedish Author, Henning Menkel,  
Mavi Marmara survivor, diary entry,  
June 2 2010

In 1990, in arguably some of the most chilling lines written in recent history, Gary Clyde Hufbauer, et al., wrote, regarding embargoes, in an advisory document for the George H.W. Bush Administration: "... we present our short list of 'do's and don'ts' for the architects of a sanctions policy designed to change the politics of the target country: Do pick on the weak and helpless; Do impose the maximum cost on your target." On Hiroshima Day 1990, the most comprehensive embargo ever imposed by the UN., was imposed on Iraq.

This silent, comprehensive weapon of mass destruction is increasingly used as a method of warfare, often under a supine United Nations, arm-twisted by the US, or on behalf of the friends it has left. The men, women and children who are victims of this unique deprivation, denying, or debilitating all life's norms, are thus targeted by a United Nations established to:

"... reaffirm human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small ...

"to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom ... the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples ..."

As Hufbauer pointed out, 170 cases of economic sanctions have been imposed since World War 1. Fifty of these cases were launched in the 1990's.

Since might is, as ever, right, only target countries are required to scrupulously observe international legalities. In reality, what is demanded of them is a bewildering array of moving goalposts. One demand is complied with, only for another, formerly unmentioned, to hove in to view. The marauding powerful, however, ride roughshod over all.

Geneva Protocol 1, Article 54, is unequivocal as to the illegitimacy of laying siege to populations:

1. Starvation as a method of warfare is prohibited.

2. It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the civilian population ... foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population.

**This silent, comprehensive weapon of mass destruction is increasingly used as a method of warfare, often under a supine United Nations, arm-twisted by the US, or on behalf of the friends it has left**

## SANCTIONS

**Comparing the blockade of Gaza, by Israel, with that of Iraq, similarities are chillingly stark**

Iraqis, as the relentless, embargoed years ground on, blamed Israel. "Israel is behind this ..." was the repeated refrain. Since Israel is blamed for near all the Middle East's woes, it was a claim I, as other correspondents and visitors, dismissed repeatedly, as a conspiracy too far, to be met with a pitying look, which translated: "There's stupid and there's really stupid."

Less than four years after imposition of the Iraq embargo, in Kuala Lumpur, in May 1994, The Malaysian Conference against Economic Sanctions on Iraq, issued a resolution which noted that the "severest economic sanctions ever witnessed in (UN) history" had been imposed "on Iraq."

The resolution continued:

"... these murderous economic sanctions against Iraq already claimed at least 400,000 lives, many of them children and women, while hundreds of thousands of others suffer from malnutrition, disease and hunger, brought about by inadequate medical facilities and rapidly deteriorating health conditions." Hufbauer's "weak and helpless" were paying the "maximum cost", at the rate of over 100,000 a year, in the name of, "We the people of the United Nations."

The Kuala Lumpur Conference also recorded, that Iraq (as Palestine now) was "deprived of scientific, medical, educational and cultural materials." Further, despite "Iraq's compliance with all relevant Security Council Resolutions (sanctions continued) under the influence of the United States and its ally Great Britain ..." and that the real aim of the embargo was: "... to control the immense oil wealth of Iraq and the Gulf region (and to bring about) "a power structure in the region which favours the United States, the West and Israel ..."

Exactly two years later, in May 1996, Madeleine Albright, then US., Ambassador to the the UN., was asked (on "60 Minutes" ) by Lesley Stahl: "We have heard that more than half a million children have died ... more children than died in Hiroshima ... and you know, is the price worth it?"

In unhesitating, pitiless, words, Albright, herself a grandmother, unforgettably replied, "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price, we think the price is worth it."

Comparing the blockade of Gaza, by Israel, with that of Iraq, similarities are chillingly stark. Iraq, 70 percent reliant on imports from fertilizer to pharmaceuticals, building materials, to medical maintenance, was bombed back "to a pre-industrial age" in 1991. All wherewithal, not only for rebuilding was denied, but foods, soft drinks, paper, books, newspapers, toiletries, pens, pencils, blackboards, toys, musical instruments, sheet music, trade and professional literature (including the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Lancet*) ping pong balls. Items hardly "dual use" to morph in to weapons of mass destruction – or even play-yard destruction.

The schools for blind and deaf children closed – specially adapted items for their needs, such as as braille books were also vetoed.

Requests for ambulances, bombed in 1991, or collapsed for want of spare parts, were also refused. When, after a decade, a few were allowed in, the usual built-in means of communication were denied – in case they were diverted for "military use." The weakest and most helpless were indeed targeted, at the maximum cost. Mr Hufbauer's words were followed to – and beyond – the letter.

In Gaza, largely destroyed in December-January 2008/9 by Israeli bombardment, goods blocked by Israel include all rebuilding materials (cement, iron, wood, tar, plaster) tea, coffee, sage, cardamom, cumin, coriander, ginger, jam, halva, vinegar, nutmeg, sweets, chocolate, fruit preserves, seeds, sage, cardamom, cumin, coriander, ginger, jam, halva, vinegar, nutmeg, chocolate, fruit preserves, seeds and nuts, biscuits and sweets, potato chips, gas for soft drinks, dried fruit, fresh meat, plaster, tar, wood for construction, cement, iron, glucose, industrial salt, plastic/glass/metal containers, industrial margarine, tarpaulin sheets for

huts, fabric for clothing, light bulbs, shoes, sheets, toys, crayons, mattresses, blankets, shampoo, conditioner. All, in fact, items formerly vetoed for Iraq.

As with Iraq, musical instruments and strings for them are also banned. Are Brahms and Beethoven, the haunting, or joyous sound of the piano, violin, flute, lute and its Middle East musical relative, the oud, now a terrorist act?

Hearing aids and batteries for the children at the school for the deaf are denied. As with Iraq, water remains a biological weapon through lack of purifying chemicals and parts to repair. Schools, hospitals, sewage plants, mosques and homes continue to lie in ruins for want of construction materials.

The Israeli Human Rights organization, B'tselem in a 45 page report released recently, notes: 95% of factories are closed and 93% of water is polluted. Article 54 of the Geneva Convention, like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, lies on history's bonfire.

The majority of Iraq's livestock was killed in the bombing, with all commercial chicken production targeted and destroyed. Importation of livestock was vetoed. In Palestine, denied importation are: horses, donkeys, goats, cattle, chickens – and heaters for commercial chicken production. Along with planters for saplings. If fishermen are not shot by Israeli patrol boats, they are anyway denied fishing nets and fishing rods – as was Iraq.

In Iraq, US and British 'planes, (illegally) patrolling the farcically named (by them) "safe havens" of the north and south (1992-2003) routinely dropped flares on harvested wheat and barley, incinerating the precious crops. In Palestine, women harvesting wheat have been attacked by Israeli forces, using live ammunition. Destruction of Palestinian farms, olive and citrus groves, commercial flower fields, vegetables and apricot groves, are repeatedly recorded.

Surgeon David Halpin, founder of UK Charity, Dove and Dolphin ([www.doveanddolphin.org.uk](http://www.doveanddolphin.org.uk))

explains the condition goods arrive in from the port of Ashdod, when finally delivered to Gaza. One Dove and Dolphin consignment, taken by ship via Cyprus, included numerous boxes of donated clothes, carefully laundered, ironed by his wife – and packed by them both over many weeks – medical catheters, computers, sewing and knitting machines, basis for the genesis of a few home businesses.

They sat on the docks at Ashdod from August until December. When finally delivered the plastic catheters had perished, and none of the computers, sewing and knitting machines worked. The several dozen boxes containing the lovingly laundered, folded, clothes, had been opened by the Israeli authorities with box cutters, shredding many of them beyond repair.

Wheelchairs are finally delivered – without the batteries to operate them. Machiavellian mendacity.

Since the 31st May attack on the Mavi Marmara, Israel announced an "easing" of the Gaza blockade. Were Gaza's plight not a gaping wound on the face of humanity, this pathetic attempt at international public relations would be comical. The territory, in need of intensive care, can now import such luxuries as shaving cream, jam – and potato chips. Rebuilding materials to begin repair of last year's blitz, still blocked, as they might be used "... to build bunkers." Whether true or not, the sane would think they may well need them. Ironically, as David Halpin points out, Palestinians with an (Israel granted) permit by to live in Jerusalem, are required by law, to build a bunker in their homes, at a sum of around \$20,000 – a regional fortune.

The catch-all phrase, that building materials "might be used for military purposes", is also straight out of the siege of Iraq handbook, as is "Israel's blockade of Gaza, includes a complex and ever changing list of goods ..."

The world, arguably, is regressing. Geoff Simons, writes that the "... most celebrated early (blockade) example ... was the Me-

**Wheelchairs are finally delivered – without the batteries to operate them. Machiavellian mendacity**

## SANCTIONS

**“The myth of the brave and utterly infallible Israeli soldier is shattered. Now we can add: they are common thieves**

grarian decree in ancient Greece, enacted by Pericles, in 432 BC., (responding) to the kidnapping of three Aspasian women.”

The Megrarians “.. denied the necessities of life ... were spurned (and it was declared) they will not be on our land, in our market, on the sea ..” The disputed facts regarding the alleged taking, by Hamas, of IDF soldier, Gilad Shilat, nearly two and a half millenia later, is a given reason for Gaza’s peoples collective punishment.

Simons’ further analogy, related to Iraq, is of a twelfth century English siege, when, if water running out did not result in capitulation, “... cutting off supplies and starving the garrison ...” became the option. In the case of Iraq, as with Gaza, the “garrison”, becomes the country.

Two final comparisons are worth noting. In 1996, Iraq’s population had hit a humanitarian low of enormity. The so called UN “Oil for Food” deal, had been agreed a year earlier, thus aid agencies had withdrawn, but as UN games continued, no money came though. With Iraq’s bank accounts frozen worldwide, deprivation ruled – in a country sitting on oil reserves which some experts still maintain are possibly the world’s greatest.

The Iraqi authorities gave permission for a flight of humanitarian provision offered by USAID. On returning to the United States, media outlets were regaled with stories of how these “aid givers” had found stories of the embargo’s deprivations false, Iraq awash with money and goods, and a joyous population, which largely partied in expensive night spots, until the early hours.

Last month, Israel, under pressure after the flotilla bloodbath and an international population increasingly checking that the bar codes on items in their shopping do not include “729”, that of Israel, produced for the world’s media, “menus” from Gaza restaurants, mouth watering, delicious fare, which proved the siege of Gaza was a non-happening.

As women continue to give birth at Israeli manned check-points, and normality

denied, farcically, promoter Shuki Weiss, declared the pulling out of a number of international acts, from appearances in Israel, in protest at Gaza’s treatment, “cultural terrorism.”

“I am full of both sorrow and pain in light of the fact that our repeated attempts to present quality acts and festivals in Israel have increasingly been falling victim to what I can only describe as a form of cultural terrorism which is targeting Israel ...” he wrote.

Has some dreadful psychological ague struck a country in which such hopes of their own safe haven lay? Sometimes the smaller actions speak louder than the near incomprehensible.

When author Henning Menkel, having survived the Mavi Marmara, finally boarded a flight home, he wrote:

“On board the plane, the air hostess gives me a pair of socks. Because mine were stolen by one of the commandos who attacked the boat I was on.

“The myth of the brave and utterly infallible Israeli soldier is shattered. Now we can add: they are common thieves. For I was not the only one to be robbed of my money, credit card, clothes, MP3 player, laptop; the same happened to many others on the same ship as me, which was attacked early one morning by masked Israeli soldiers, who were, thus, in fact nothing other than lying pirates.”

Gaza has natural gas, Iraq oil. Perhaps it is not alone socks and personal belongings which fall prey to “piracy”, but, as further sanctions are slammed on another oil rich state, Iran, within the past month, countries fall prey to political piracy as well. **CT**

*Felicity Artbuthnot is a journalist and activist who has visited the Arab and Muslim world on numerous occasions. She has written and broadcast on Iraq, her coverage of which was nominated for several awards. She was also senior researcher for John Pilger’s award-winning documentary “Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq”*

# Hold the front page!

**Yvonne Ridley** contrasts the White House press corps's anger at Helen Thomas with its silence over the treatment of journalists attacked by Israeli forces on the Gaza-bound Freedom Flotilla

**T**he docile White House Press Corp has got steamed up about something and finally taken a scalp as a result. It seems the Capitol Hill cocktail set who usually sit and preen themselves like pampered Pomeranians while asking pre-screened, pre-approved, Obama-friendly questions have forced a resignation.

So what provoked them and who were they gunning for? Was it one of Obama's aids caught lying – may be some political sleaze or even another Watergate in the making? Could they have been making a final stand for journalistic integrity and freedom over the Administration's plans to prosecute and imprison investigative reporters who refuse to reveal their sources?

Well sorry to disappoint – it was none of the above.

It seems the most famous gaggle of journalists in the world finally got steamed up about a comment made by one of their own ... against Israel.

And their target just happens to be an 89-year-old columnist who has nailed more US Presidents with her hammer-blow questions than any other member of the White House Press Corps.

The formidable grand dame of the WHPC has now been forced to quit her much coveted front row seat – from where she made no less than 10 US Presidents sweat with her

probing questions.

Helen Thomas resigned just before the White House Correspondents Association announced it was considering stripping her of her prime position.

No doubt some of these are the same gutless scribes who gave President George W Bush such an easy ride over Iraq, Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, torture, waterboarding etc.

Now had Helen Thomas blasted: "Palestinians should get the hell out of Israel," she would have been feted.

Instead, what the redoubtable Ms Thomas, a lifelong critic of Zionism said, was that Israeli Jews should "get the hell out of Palestine" and return to Germany and Poland "or wherever they came from."

Ms Thomas, a columnist for Hearst Newspapers apologized almost immediately for her off-the-cuff comments she made to a rabbi who was conducting a video interview with her outside the White House during a recent celebration of Jewish heritage.

Now the decision to retire her, with immediate effect, was announced by Hearst Newspapers, which syndicates her column. The announcement was made just weeks ahead of her 90th birthday on August 4.

The board of the correspondents association which recently gathered to consider how to respond to her controversial remarks, issued this very wordy statement:

**Had Helen Thomas blasted: "Palestinians should get the hell out of Israel," she would have been feted.**

## TARGETING HELEN

**Was there one word of anger, one word of recrimination, or a statement released about the treatment of fellow journalists who were on board a series of ships which were attacked in international waters?**

"Helen Thomas' comments were indefensible and the White House Correspondents Association board firmly dissociates itself from them. Many in our profession who have known Helen for years were saddened by the comments, which were especially unfortunate in light of her role as a trail blazer on the White House beat. While Helen has not been a member of the WHCA for many years, her special status in the briefing room has helped solidify her as the dean of the White House press corps so we feel the need to speak out strongly on this matter.

"We want to emphasize that the role of the WHCA is to represent the White House press corps in its dealings with the White House on coverage-related issues. We do not police the speech of our members or colleagues. We are not involved at all in issuing White House credentials, that is the purview of the White House itself. But the incident does revive the issue of whether it is appropriate for an opinion columnist to have a front row seat in the WH briefing room. That is an issue under the jurisdiction of this board. We are actively seeking input from our association members on this important matter, and we have scheduled a special meeting of the WHCA board on Thursday to decide on the seating issue".

What a gutless, feckless collective of cabestros\*.

Just a few days ago no less than 60 journalists on board the Gaza-bound Freedom Flotilla were shot at, abused, beaten up and

robbed by the military representing the Zionist State of Israel.

Was there one word of anger, one word of recrimination, or a statement released about the treatment of fellow journalists who were on board a series of ships which were attacked in international waters?

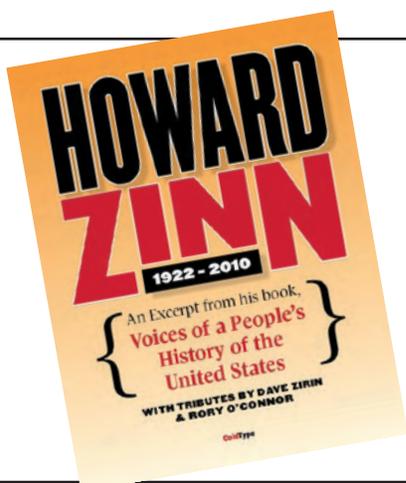
Israeli soldiers destroyed and stole their cell phones, confiscating video footage and photographic equipment. The later unauthorized use of journalists' footage shows the contempt that the Israeli authorities have for journalism. By showing old photographs and edited footage there was a clear violation of journalist ethics.

Such blatant attempts at control of news coverage are nothing new. The same strategy was carried out during Israel's last invasion of Gaza. But what do these Washington scribes know?

However, what they have proved by their swift action against Helen Thomas is that while Israel conducts a military occupation in Palestine it is conducting a political occupation of The White House Corps. **CT**

*\* The castrated bullocks that accompany fighting bulls to keep them docile.*

*Yvonne Ridley is a founder member of Women In Journalism and has been a member of Britain's National Union of Journalists for 34 years. She presents two political shows The Agenda and Rattansi & Ridley for Press TV*



## PAYING TRIBUTE TO HOWARD ZINN

Download an excerpt from Zinn's book, **Voices of a People's History Of the United States**, together with tributes from Dave Zirin and Rory O'Connor at [www.coldtype.net/index.mar10.html](http://www.coldtype.net/index.mar10.html)

# Egg on their faces – again!

**Arun Gupta** shows how the US corporate media got the Israeli flotilla catastrophe so wrong

**A**mid the continuing fallout over the deadly confrontation aboard the Gaza aid ship, Mavi Marmara, there is a critical historical lesson: There is only one real victim, and that is Israel. Sure, the “small, isolated” nation may appear to have been the aggressor, having surrounded a humanitarian convoy in international waters with naval assault boats and helicopters before storming in with heavily armed elite forces killing and wounding dozens of civilians, but it was acting in self-defense.

Appearances are deceiving because understanding Israel’s eternal victimhood requires the proper mindset. And once you have the proper mindset, there is no need for facts. *Atlantic Monthly’s* Jeffrey Goldberg, who has been hanging “around a lot of Israeli generals lately,” kindly advises us that there should be “no particular pain felt for the dead on the boat.” On the other hand, “There’s real pain in Israel ... pain at the humiliation of the flotilla raid, pain on behalf of the injured soldiers, and pain that the geniuses who run this country could not figure out a way to outsmart a bunch of Turkish Islamists and their useful idiot fellow travelers.”

Some might ask if we should feel “no particular pain” for the dead of Sept. 11. Or perhaps we should follow the lead of the White House – which sees no point in condemning

Israel’s killing of civilians in the flotilla because “Nothing can bring them back” – and not condemn the architects of Sept. 11 or the Madrid and London bombings because that won’t bring back the dead. But that is the thinking of “idiot fellow travelers.”

Hillary Clinton provides further insight, explaining how benighted Arabs who “are not sure what democracy means” should look to Israel – “a beacon of democracy” – as an example. We can now draw the first conclusion: only Israelis experience pain, while Arabs are not evolved enough to grasp the concept of democracy, Israelis are the only true humans worthy of our sympathy. A point the *Washington Post* understands, stating, “We have no sympathy for the motives of the participants in the flotilla.”

A second principle, Clinton explains, is that only Israel has “legitimate security needs,” whereas Palestinians’ “legitimate needs” are limited to “sustained humanitarian assistance and regular access to reconstruction materials.” Because Palestinians “are not sure what democracy means,” their needs do not include an end to the siege, basic human rights or a viable state.

We should also assume Israel is a “peace-loving society” that offered to escort the flotilla of “naiveté and malice” to the Ashdod Port and arrange for the delivery of their supplies to Gaza, after security checks, over land.” It was just trying to prevent “the flow

**Because Palestinians “are not sure what democracy means,” their needs do not include an end to the siege, basic human rights or a viable state**

## NAMING THE VICTIM

**If you've been paying attention, you can see that if Israel let the flotilla deliver food and medicine to Gaza, it would inevitably result in a second Holocaust**

of seaborne military supplies to Hamas," the Israeli ambassador wrote in the *New York Times*. The *New Republic* reveals another conclusion: The incident involved "a ship of terrorists" attempting "to open an arms importation route to Gaza." Once again, the *Washington Post* provides the only context we need to consider, "So far there's been no indication the boats carried missiles or other arms for Hamas." One could add that so far there's been no indication the boats carried chemical, biological or nuclear weapons for Hamas.

One can never be sure because Israel's enemies are so sinister that *Washington Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer alone comprehends that "the point understood by the blockade-busting flotilla of useful idiots and terror sympathizers ... is to deprive Israel of any legitimate form of self-defense." Krauthammer deduces brilliantly, "The world is tired of these troublesome Jews, 6 million – that number again – hard by the Mediterranean, refusing every invitation to national suicide. For which they are relentlessly demonized, ghettoized and constrained from defending themselves, even as the more committed anti-Zionists – Iranian in particular – openly prepare a more final solution."

If you've been paying attention, you can see that if Israel let the flotilla deliver food and medicine to Gaza, it would inevitably result in a second Holocaust.

Israel was only asking to search the flotilla's cargo for banned "war material" such as coriander, ginger, nutmeg, dried fruit, fabric for clothing, nuts, musical instruments, chickens, donkeys, horses, fishing rods and newspapers.

Reports about Israel's years-long siege of Gaza – where "more than 60 percent of families do not have enough food to eat, there are daily electricity cuts and the water network is operating far below capacity," or how Israel allowed in less than 25 trucks of supplies a day on average until recently whereas "Gaza requires a minimum of 400 trucks a day to meet basic nutritional needs"

– are irrelevant. Sure, Israeli policy may be to "put the Palestinians on a diet," fulfilling Army chief Gen. Rafeal Eitan's longing to turn Arabs into "drugged cockroaches in a bottle," but the "humanitarian situation in Gaza is good and stable" and people there dine out on "beef stroganoff and cream of spinach soup." Providing added confirmation, the *New York Times* observes that in Gaza "daily life, while troubled, often has the staggering quality of the very ordinary," a quality that would have applied to Soviet gulags, Japanese internment camps, the Warsaw Ghetto, South Africa's Bantustans and South Vietnam's strategic hamlets.

### **Primitive needs**

Still, we should not lose sight of the fact that the Palestinians of Gaza are such a primitive species that Israel has determined they need only 100 items on a "complex and ever-changing list of goods" for a "good and stable" life as opposed to the 4,000 types of goods allowed in before the severe blockade imposed in June 2007 or the 10,000-15,000 items that can be found in a large Israeli supermarket.

In any case, "concern for Gaza and Israel's blockade is so out of balance," counsels Thomas Friedman, who excels in his role as the third grader explaining how the world works at the second-grade lunch table. He suggests we focus concern instead on the bombings of mosques of an Islamic sect in Pakistan, the killings of activists in Iran and the trashing of a children's summer camp in Gaza.

But noble-minded Israel still shows concern. Just as it is always seeking peace with hostile Arab neighbors bent on annihilating it, Israel was willing to deliver supplies that are in abundance in Gaza in spite of the "Gazan terrorists [in charge] who proclaim their goal is to destroy Israel." So "if anyone goes without food, shelter or medicine, that is by the choice of the Hamas government." "The likely outcome" will be that the people of Gaza "will be abandoned. ... to be ruled by the ruthless and undemocratic Hamas

regime without the international community's protests or objections." Therefore, we can see how the aid flotilla will make things worse for the people of Gaza – whom Israel is trying to help – by leaving them in the hands of the “ruthless” terrorists.

It's another example of how Israel is victimized, like when it selflessly disengaged from Gaza in 2005. But Israel's generosity, including firing more than 7,700 artillery shells into northern Gaza in less than a year after its withdrawal, was met with Hamas rockets, which is why one senior Israeli official had to threaten Palestinians with a “bigger shoah.” Some claim “Israel remains the occupying Power as technological developments have made it possible for Israel to assert control over the people of Gaza without a permanent military presence,” but this is the view of terrorist sympathizers like former U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories John Dugard.

Then there are “ Hamas sympathizers” who ask why, if Israel disengaged from Gaza, does it still control its coast, airspace, borders, commerce, fuel, water and electricity; why have Israel and the United States rejected Palestinian and Arab offers of a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders for some 40 years; and why has Israel sabotaged virtually every ceasefire Fatah and Hamas have agreed to in recent years, even unilateral ones.

#### **“Acts of terror”**

These misperceptions persist because they fail to grasp the postulate that Israel only “responds” to attacks from the sub-human Arabs. Dugard and his ilk claim, “History is replete with examples of military occupation that have been resisted by violence – acts of terror,” and while “such acts cannot be justified, they must be understood as being a painful but inevitable consequence of colonialism, apartheid or occupation.”

The Hamas apologists even include current Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, who once said, “If I were a Palestinian, I

would join a terror organization.” This talk should not lull us into seeing the Palestinians as victims because they do have rights. They “have the right to remain silent while Israel starves them, kills them and continues to violently colonize their land.”

Now we can correctly perceive the confrontation between Israel and the “hateful terrorist sympathizer[s]”. Because the U.S. and U.K. understand the issue is Israel's right to defend itself, the question we should be asking is how naïve, little Israel was outsmarted by “Islamists and their useful idiot fellow travelers,” who were responsible for and welcomed the bloodshed. The flotilla “aimed to provoke a confrontation” and was intended “to break’ Israel's blockade of Gaza,” noted Leslie Gelb, the dean of the U.S. foreign policy establishment, echoing the line from Fox News to the *Washington Post*. The paper of record indicated that organizers wanted to provoke a “violent response from Israel,” agreeing with the *Jerusalem Post*, which stated the “‘peace militants’ ... attacked the soldiers who boarded the ship with guns, iron bars and knives and led to the dire results they were looking for.” This fact did not escape the Obama White House, with one “senior” official saying, “the organizers of the flotilla were clearly seeking a confrontation – and tragically they got one.”

Ever restrained, the *Jerusalem Post* connects the dots. Because the “peace militants ... hatred towards Israel knows no bounds,” and “wanted to cause some damage, no matter the cost for them,” they are like suicide bombers because “the aim justifies the means.” If the lesson is still unclear, Max Boot, Leslie Gelb's colleague on the Council of Foreign Relations, spells it out in the *Wall Street Journal*. The “blood was on the hand of the pro-Hamas activists” because “Israel, like the United States and other democratic nations, is at a severe disadvantage trying to combat a ruthless foe willing to sacrifice its own people to score propaganda points.” Boot may be too generous in calling the activists “pro-Hamas,” however. The

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## NAMING THE VICTIM

**If it seems curious that prominent media all conclude that golden-hearted Israel was duped, such is the “blatant double standard” applied to the “small, isolated” nation that “is destined and compelled, like a puppet on a string, to react the way it did”**

Israeli ambassador reveals they are actually Hamas’ “sponsors [who] cower behind shipments of seemingly innocent aid.”

Passengers may have included European legislators, U.S. diplomats, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Israelis, artists, historians, doctors, clergy and journalists from around the world. But Israel was not battling civilians on a “mission of mercy,” writes the great humanitarian Marty Peretz. In fact, the Turkish sponsor, the Humanitarian Relief Fund, “is said to have ties to Al Qaeda. Which would be logical since Al Qaeda is an ally of Hamas.” Furthermore, Peretz illuminates, Hamas is the “Gazan outpost of the global jihad” and “second cousin once-removed of Hezbollah.” Thus, in stopping the aid flotilla, Israel was really battling a branch of the devious global jihad that hates the West irrationally. (Hamas is also “an Iranian pawn,” which may seem confusing because Iran and Al Qaeda are fierce enemies, as are Hamas and Al Qaeda, but such are the complexities of the Middle East that only experts like Peretz can divine.)

### **Warnings and traps**

Prior to the deadly attack, there were eight previous attempts to deliver aid by sea, including ships that Israel chose not to confront and which delivered goods to Gaza without incident. This time, the Israeli navy spent “many weeks ... preparing to meet the flotilla,” the military admitted three days before the raid that it planned to use violence, and the Israelis warned the captains of each ship while in international waters that “lethal force would be used if they persisted.” Despite all this, we learn from the *Wall Street Journal*, *Israel* “walked into a trap set by a flotilla of Hamas sympathizers;” from the *New York Times*, it “blundered” into a trap; from the *L.A. Times*, it “fell into a trap;” from the *Financial Times*, it “sail[ed] into a Turkish trap; and from the *Guardian*, it was “lure[d] ... into a trap.”

If it seems curious that prominent media all conclude that golden-hearted Israel was duped, such is the “blatant double stan-

dard” applied to the “small, isolated” nation that “is destined and compelled, like a puppet on a string, to react the way it did.” That double standard also requires that the Israeli ambassador, counsel generals, embassy officials, academics, novelists, and journalists, and their American supporters, be given a largely unchallenged platform in the mainstream media.

The task at this point would appear to be disentangling what happened during the actual raid. For instance, why were the “out-numbered, under-equipped and incorrectly prepared commandos” – who also happen to be “the best trained and most effective in the world” – “taken off guard by a group of Arabic-speaking men”? Why has one journalist, Max Blumenthal, been able to force Israeli officials to admit they doctored photos and audio clips released after raid or show they falsely claimed five passengers were “active terror operatives”?

Why have eyewitnesses on the Mavi Marmara said “live ammunition was fired before any Israeli soldier was on deck,” and “The Israeli navy fired on the ships five minutes before commandos descended from ropes that dangled from helicopters”?

There are also the questions that Uri Avnery has compiled, such as why is Israel claiming Gaza’s territorial waters are part of Israel’s territorial waters when it has “separated” from it; why were five people on the Mavi Marmara shot in the back; “What is the source of the lie that the Turks called out ‘Go back to Auschwitz’”; and “Who invented the story that the activists had brought with them deadly weapons”?

All these questions miss the point. Israel is still the victim, even if it’s a “self-inflicted wound,” so say the *Times* from New York to L.A. You see, Israel made the mistake of trying to justify its actions with evidence. It forgot that reality has a well-known terrorist bias.

When the facts sympathize with Hamas, terrorists and drugged cockroaches, Israel needs to dispense with the facts. Because we know Israel is the eternal victim that is

## NAMING THE VICTIM

all we need to know. All that matters is how Israel says it perceives the situation.

Arie (Lova) Eliav, one of the “granddaddies of the Israeli Left” and a founder of Labor Party, who died literally hours before the raid on the flotilla, put it best in an interview six years ago, saying, “We acted as they would have done to us.” While he was speaking about Israel’s founding war of aggression, the statement justifies every actual Israeli atrocity since 1947 and any future one.

Since Israel is confronting “ruthless, indiscriminate animals” its response is only limited by the imagination. After all, according to the Obama administration, “the president has always said it will be much easier for Israel to make peace if Israel feels

secure.” And how does Israel feel? “Israel has long seen itself as the Alamo, a fortress under the siege,” a former U.S. ambassador to Israel explains.

The next time there is news about Israel killing activists, massacring children, bombing a refugee camp or perhaps obliterating an entire country, there is no need to pay attention to the facts. All you need to know is Israel, the eternal victim that says it will never feel secure, is just responding to some terrorist. And once the last ruthless animal is exterminated, there will be “peace.” **CT**

*Arun Gupta is a founding editor of New York City's Independent newspaper. This essay originally appeared at [www.alternet.org](http://www.alternet.org)*

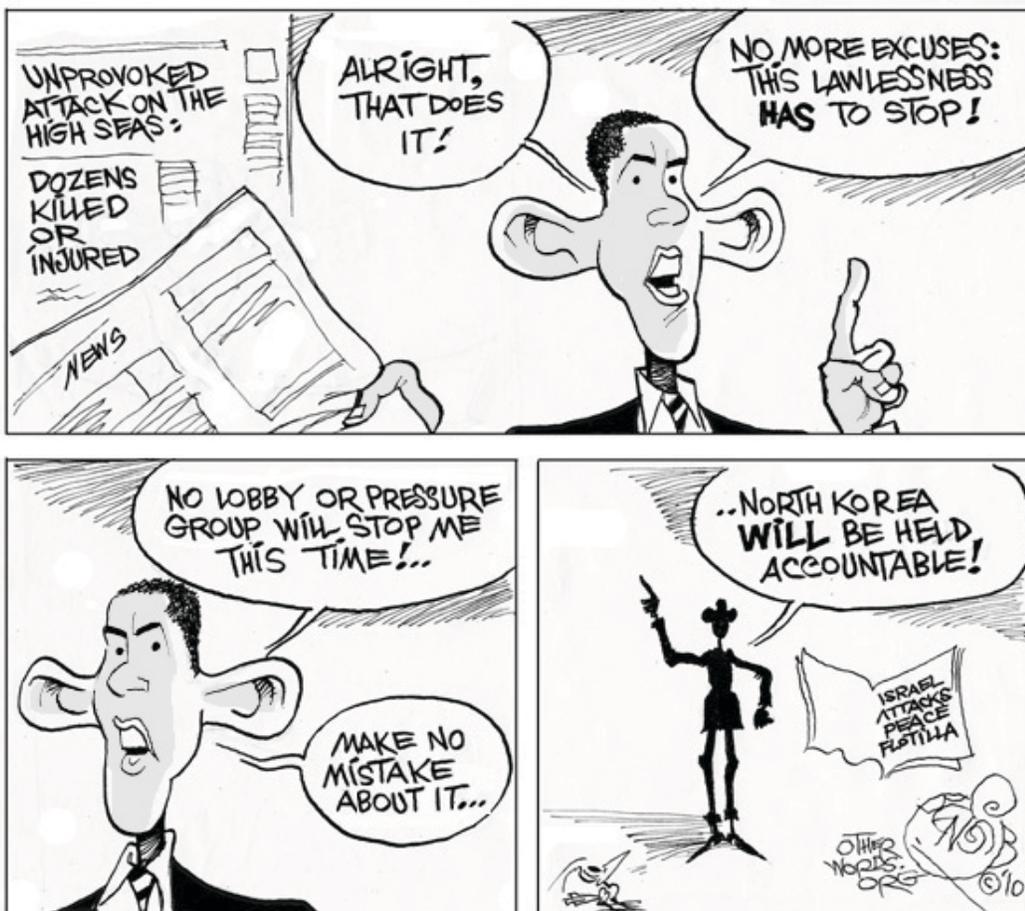
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## BENDIB'S WORLD

Khalil Bendib



# Bloody Sunday: Now they have the truth

Barrister **Richard Harvey's** observations on Britain's Saville report into the Bloody Sunday killings of January 30, 1972

**The alleyway through which he'd tried to escape is blocked off now but the kerb where he lay shot and paralysed, trying to lift his upper body only to be shot again at close range – that's still there**

*On 30 January 1972, the British Army's notorious Parachute Regiment was set loose in the nationalist Bogside enclave of Derry in response to a civil rights parade that day through the city. The marchers were demanding an end to internment without trial – introduced the previous August and targeting nationalists – and protesting a rotten system of government which gave the unionist minority in Derry power over the nationalist minority. 13 innocent protesters were shot dead by the Paras, a 14th died later, in what became known as Bloody Sunday. The earlier Widgery Report commissioned by the British Government whitewashed the killings, branded the dead as terrorists, compounding the injustice. For 38 years, the families of the victims fought for the truth about that dark day. They finally got that truth with the Saville Report published last month*

**T**he families have campaigned for justice and truth these 38 years, five months and sixteen days. Now they feel they have the truth at last.

The tension in the Bogside when I arrived on Friday night felt taut as a silent fiddle string. It could snap, or it could sing. Saturday morning, a little fragile after a long evening with old friends, I make my way to Glenfada Park, past the places where my

mind's eye sees bodies lying still. All the photographs we studied those four years, peering through magnifying glasses at the rubble barricade, the army Pig vehicles, the fleeing figures. They squat in the back of your mind as if you'd been the camera yourself.

Jim Wray's grandparents' house is gone. In its place, the Bloody Sunday museum. The alleyway through which he'd tried to escape is blocked off now but the kerb where he lay shot and paralysed, trying to lift his upper body only to be shot again at close range – that's still there. I suppose it's only natural I should feel his death more deeply because it's his family's fight I've been engaged in for a whole decade now. But pausing at the memorial, it's the numbers and, for the most part, the youthfulness of the murdered – I don't much care for the word 'victim' in its modern sense – that strikes you.

The Free Derry Wall and nearby murals are powerful icons of resistance. As I enter The People's Gallery on what the army used to call Aggro Corner, a troupe of American teenagers is getting a talk from Tom Kelly, one of the three Bogside muralists who continue to use their healing arts for the benefit of resident and visitor. The teenagers are attentive, thoughtful, perhaps a bit baffled. He makes the links with Martin Luther King's non-violent protests and how

they inspired the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association but as I look into their pale mid-western faces, I'm not sure how much more that means to them than a day off school every January. Perhaps, as King inspired Derry four decades ago, this lesson may inspire them to find out more of their own heritage.

I walked on to An Culturán, the stunning new cultural centre on Morsraid Seamas (Great James Street to the likes of me). I'd been looking for the Fáilte, the Irish language coffee shop where I used to have my morning cup on the way to the Guildhall. In its place is a building that is attracting architects the world over to marvel at its angular brilliance. Not a rectangular corner anywhere, it zigzags from floor to floor, shafting spears of light down into its atrium and providing facilities for music workshops, performance artists, students of Gaelic and the recovery and revitalising of Ireland's rich culture. The coffee's not great but they're working on it.

Eileen (and I know that can't be the right spelling) recognises me even though we haven't seen each other for seven years but embrace like it was only a week. She proudly shows me round. Even the board room has a table cut on the bias. The whole building feels like subversion set in concrete, its jagged-angled walls imprinted with wood grain like fossilised planks, mirroring the (Welsh) oak floors in the Oak Grove City of Doire. An architect from Belfast joins our tour, beaming ecstatically with just a hint of jealous joy.

I spend the weekend with friends in Donegal, relishing its wild peace, golden sands and stark beauty, and resisting the urge to take every last remaining ounce of paramilitary semtex and put it to good use by removing the eye-affronting ticky-tacky identical holiday homes that blight the landscape.

*Back home in Derry.* The song plays like a looped tape around my brain the whole time I'm here. Tony Gifford, Greg McCartney and I drive up to Liam and Doreen

Wray's on Monday evening for a last family meeting before the report is out. Liam says he's surprised how on edge he feels in these final hours of waiting. I'm not. Brothers John, Raymond and Alex are there as well as Liam's daughter Kiera (again, don't trust my spelling). Margaret, their sister arrives breathless, flying in from her first ever visit to Paris, where she has spent the weekend teaching Irish dancing.

#### **Awaiting the report**

We all talk about tomorrow's arrangements. Tony and Greg are allowed into the Guildhall at 8am and at 8.30 they will be provided with the hard copies of the 5,000-page report as well as the 60-page summary and the whole thing on CD-ROM. Surrender your mobile phones at the door please; forego all communication with the outside world. Liam and Margaret will then be allowed in at 10.30 under the same conditions. Tony and Greg will brief them on what they've read so far and continue their analysis. The rest of the family and their special guests (including me) are permitted entry at 1.30 for an hour and a half of mild torture, during which we will wait in the elegant sugar-icing ceilinged council chamber, munching white-bread sandwiches and slurping stewed tea until they are united at 3pm with those upstairs to learn what the report says about their loved ones.

I squat on the floor with Bishop Edward Daly, whose famous photograph now forms one of the Bogside murals, waving his bloodstained handkerchief at the firing soldiers as he helps others carry the dying 17-year-old Jackie Duddy in their desperate search for medical help. The gentlest of open-hearted men, he is now 'retired' and working anything up to seven days a week at the Foyle hospice, still comforting the dying. Work which he says brings him much peace and comfort.

Eamon McCann is bubbling over with excitement as he orchestrates the day's events inside the Guildhall and out in the Square from which the crowd can be heard

**I squat on the floor with Bishop Edward Daly, whose famous photograph now forms one of the Bogside murals, waving his bloodstained handkerchief at the firing soldiers as he helps others carry the dying 17-year-old Jackie Duddy in their desperate search for medical help**

**Unarmed, they were fleeing from soldiers who later lied to Widgery and, the report concluded, lied again to Saville in claiming they only shot at people armed with rifles or nail bombs**

cheering. Downstairs we don't know why, but through the half-opened stained glass windows of the upstairs chamber where we sat for so many years, those already in the know have squeezed their fists through the bars and those massed outside on the wall between Shipquay Gate and Magazine Gate and in the square below can all see the thumbs-up signs. They know already that it's good news, at least of sorts.

Finally, the families are reunited as the administration gives way and lets us upstairs ten minutes earlier than promised. I reach the top of the marble staircase to find Margaret, eyes shining and crying out: "It's murder, murder!" Not normally an expression shouted in joy, of course, but in the context of the Saville report's verdict (though couched there in more cautious language) there is no other word in UK law that fits. We hug tightly as she says: "Where's me brothers, where's me brothers?" Eventually they arrive, bringing up the rear of surging relatives and the hugs and tears go on and on.

#### **Soldiers lied**

In the back room, Tony briefs us. The good news: all those shot, whether killed or wounded, were doing nothing to threaten death or serious injury to anyone. In other words, their killing was unlawful. Unarmed, they were fleeing from soldiers who later lied to Widgery and, the report concluded, lied again to Saville in claiming they only shot at people armed with rifles or nail bombs. In other words, the soldiers had committed perjury. And in Jim Wray's case, he was shot twice, the second shot probably while he was lying on the ground already mortally wounded. In other words, cold, calculated execution. The concluding sentence of the report's summary summed up so much: "Bloody Sunday was a tragedy for the bereaved and the wounded, and a catastrophe for the people of Northern Ireland."

As lawyers, we felt particular disappointment that the criticism of Colonel Wilford, commander of the Paratroop Regiment, was not nearly as strong as the evidence justi-

fied. We were further disappointed, though not shocked, that the report managed to exonerate completely the bloodthirsty general who ordered the Paras to Derry, the Commander of Land Forces, General Sir Robert Ford. Given that, we were unsurprised that our cogent submissions about the responsibility of politicians in Westminster and Stormont, particularly Edward Heath and Brian Faulkner, were also dismissed as groundless.

But this was the families' day. Not a day for legal cavilling. Prime Minister Cameron's address to the House of Commons was beamed onto a huge screen in Guildhall Square as it was also to us still closeted inside. The very idea that a British Prime Minister could be cheered to the Guildhall rafters, and a Tory PM at that – well, "unprecedented", "unthinkable", don't even begin to describe the reaction to what was a very strong, forthright acknowledgement of the crime of Bloody Sunday and its consequences. As with Saville's report itself, there was plenty to disagree with in Cameron's statement, most notably his assertion that: "Bloody Sunday is not the defining story of the service the British Army gave in Northern Ireland from 1969 – 2007." But it was, for all that, an appropriate – even a statesmanlike – response. (Phew, that was hard to admit).

And then it was out into Guildhall Square sunshine for the families to take the stage and one after one proclaim Saville's verdict to the thunderous crowd. "We have always known they were innocent, now the world knows it too," they said over and over again. I confess to feeling slightly squeamish at the word "innocent," implying as it does that anyone but the Paras could ever have been thought guilty. But again, we have to remember the 38 year stain that has blighted all of Derry and haunted these families daily. The blood of innocents and the finding of innocence have a powerful effect on the psyche of the whole community so, again, shut up Harvey, it's not for me to say what words are most appropriate to the day.

Half in a daze, I stroll around the square bumping into Simon Winchester, whom I know from New York and who was himself shot at on Bloody Sunday while covering the day for the *Guardian*. They have brought him back again and next day he had an excellent front page piece on Derry's reactions to Saville 38 years on. As we talk, Sinn Fein councillor and former client Gerry McLaughlin comes up and shakes hands delightedly. Feeling almost drunk with stunned elation, I turn back toward the City Hotel where the lawyers regroup, watch the TV reports and share the feelings of huge relief and mild uselessness that come over you after a jury has delivered a Not Guilty verdict. Only here, on a scale magnified to deafening proportions.

Tony and I dine together and then head up with Greg to the Wrays' house for a final festive farewell. Liam and Margaret appear on TV, interviewed alongside each other on Derry's city wall. It's the first time Margaret has spoken publicly. Ever. She is tearful and brilliant and Liam, a seasoned public speaker, is articulate as ever but still choked with emotion. I had spent my morning of anticipation writing a poem to Jim and had handed it to them in the Guildhall. It went round all the twenty-plus family members

one by one and each of them was crying by the end of it. So, up at the house, they all berated me as only Derry people who love you can. And then they all demanded copies, so it can't have been all bad.

We laughed, cried, drank and Margaret made a wonderful speech to our legal team. We hugged and cried some more and said our farewells promising to see each other soon. No need to explain how the rest of the evening was spent.

But the following morning I headed to Belfast to meet with the families of some of the Ballymurphy Nine, shot dead six months before Bloody Sunday by some of the same Paratroopers. Of course, there was no way General Ford could have known he was bringing a death squad to Derry. After all, nobody was ever disciplined, let alone prosecuted, for those murders in Belfast, which included a priest trying to administer the last rites to a man the Paras had already shot.

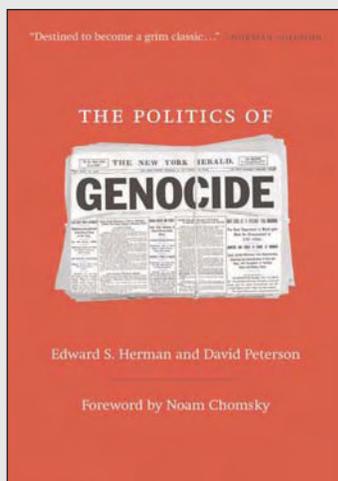
The struggle continues but a significant measure of victory has been won by the families who refused to go away. **CT**

*Richard Harvey is a barrister who represented families of the Bloody Sunday victims*

**Nobody was ever disciplined, let alone prosecuted, for those murders in Belfast, which included a priest trying to administer the last rites to a man the Paras had already shot**

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# Letting the guilty off the hook

**Eamonn McCann**, who helped organize the demonstration that was attacked by British troops on Bloody Sunday in 1972, looks at the report issued by the British government that finds fault only with low-level soldiers

**It was foreseeable that their deployment would lead, at the least, to unacceptable violence against the anti-internment marchers, with potentially disastrous consequences for politics in Derry and beyond**

**I**s that it, then? After 38 years, a 12-year inquiry and a 5,000-page report, is that it? A bunch of squaddies and a battalion commander are unmasked as the culprits. No one else involved.

This version, that a dozen no-marks did it all, made it easy enough for David Cameron to denounce the guilty men in ringing terms and apologize unequivocally to the relatives of their victims.

It is they, of course, the Bloody Sunday families, who matter most. Their elation at the report's findings was unbounded. The frenzy of hugs inside the Guildhall and joy in the square outside was bliss to behold and be part of, a dizzying high that still shimmers in the soul.

At the heart of the epic Bloody Sunday campaign had been the implacable determination of the families that the wrong of the Widgery report should be put right and their loved ones vindicated as innocent people unjustifiably done to death.

Saville struck Widgery down and delivered for the families in full measure. But he delivered in large measure, too, for the British army and political establishment. And didn't make life difficult, either, for any key political interest in Ireland. All could embrace in the warm glow of the families' jubilation.

But what if Saville had laid a chunk of the blame on the shoulders of, for example,

the commander of land forces in the north, Major Gen. Robert Ford? Or castigated the behavior of Capt. Michael Jackson, second in command of 1 Para on the day? In that circumstance, would Cameron have been able to disown all involved and say that what had happened had brought disgrace?

The decision to send the paras to Derry was taken by Ford six days before the killings. It was foreseeable that their deployment would lead, at the least, to unacceptable violence against the anti-internment marchers, with potentially disastrous consequences for politics in Derry and beyond.

We know it was foreseeable because it was foreseen--most significantly, by senior officers garrisoned in Derry. One felt so strongly that he phoned a friend from military college, David Ramsbotham, then military assistant to Britain's number one soldier, the chief of the general staff, Sir Michael Carver, to ask him to use what offices he had to convey his concerns.

But Ford pressed on with the plan, and traveled to Derry on the day--although he had no operational role, no military reason for being there--to be on the spot, shouting encouragement to the paras as they went in. Saville attaches no responsibility to him for what ensued, even to the extent of suggesting an error in judgment.

Jackson gave evidence to the Inquiry twice, in April and then in October 2003.

He was recalled because, in the interim, a document in his handwriting had come to light, purporting to list and map-reference the exact firing positions and targets of every shot.

In Jackson's list, all the targets were identified as gunmen, nail-bombers and petrol-bombers. Jackson testified that the reason he hadn't mentioned the shot-list in April was that he had forgotten all about it and had only retrieved a "vague memory" since learning of its discovery.

The shot-list had been used by an army spokesman the morning after Bloody Sunday as the authoritative account of events and had formed the basis of the explanation given to the Commons by Lord Balniel the following day.

Saville finds that none of the shots described in the list conformed to any of the shots actually fired. Some of them went through walls. It also emerged that Jackson had written out in his own hand the personal accounts of their experiences on the day of Wilford, the commanders of the three para companies present and the battalion intelligence officer. Jackson's efforts to explain the purpose of this strange exercise was hampered by poor memory.

On more than 20 occasions during his evidence, he used phrases along the lines

of, "I cannot remember," "I do not recall," "I have only a very vague memory." Saville rejected suggestions from the families' lawyers that "the list played some part in a cover-up to conceal the emerging truth that some innocent civilians had been shot and killed by soldiers of 1 Para."

This wasn't the only conclusion which might reasonably have been drawn. Jackson was a mere captain on Bloody Sunday. But he rose rapidly thereafter, was NATO commander in the Balkans and, in 2003, the year of his evidence to Saville, reached the pinnacle of the army hierarchy when appointed chief of the general staff.

Had Saville drawn conclusions which reflected harshly on Jackson, Cameron might have found it difficult to damn all involved in Bloody Sunday as scoundrels that no decent army would welcome in its ranks. The families have won what they wanted, and that's the most of it.

But by insulating from blame everyone other than a bunch of disposable miscreants at the bottom, Saville ensured, too, that there are others who will have greeted his report if not with ecstatic delight, then at least with deep sighs of relief. **CT**

*Eamonn McCann was one of the organisers of the Bloody Sunday demonstration in 1972.*

**Jackson was a mere captain on Bloody Sunday. But he rose rapidly thereafter, was NATO commander in the Balkans and, in 2003, the year of his evidence to Saville, reached the pinnacle of the army hierarchy when appointed chief of the general staff**

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# The collapsing Western way of life

The greatest threat to the future of mankind is our life style, writes **John Kozy**

**Cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, droughts, floods are apparently not serious enough to command human attention. These problems, apparently, have to be supplemented by self-made catastrophes to keep our minds engaged**

**T**hat human beings seem unable to solve their most pressing problems is too obvious and well known to deserve much mention; that most of the problems that human beings seem unable to solve are caused by human beings themselves deserves mention but rarely is.

Human beings act as though having to deal with problems whose causes are beyond human control is not enough. Cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, droughts, floods are apparently not serious enough to command human attention. These problems, apparently, have to be supplemented by self-made catastrophes to keep our minds engaged. But most man-made problems could be avoided by careful and complete analysis of the ideas that, when implemented, have dire results.

Time-tested and effective ways of analyzing problems have been known for centuries. Rene Descartes published his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* around 1627 and the *Discourse on Method* in 1637. John Stuart Mill published his *Methods in his System of Logic* in 1843. The mathematical method known as *reductio ad absurdum* has been employed throughout the history of mathematics and philosophy from classical antiquity onwards, as has the method known as counterexample. And root cause analysis is a highly developed method often used in

information science and other places. Oddly enough, however, even most well educated Americans seem to be unaware of any of these analytical techniques, and when attempts are made to analyze ideas, these attempts are rarely carried out logically or all the way to their ultimate ends. Americans rarely “follow the argument wherever it leads;” even those good at analysis often stop when they come across something that looks appealing.

John B. Judis recently published a piece in the *New Republic* in which he summarized some claims made by Robert Brenner, a UCLA economic historian. Judis writes:

“Brenner’s analysis of the current downturn can be boiled down to a fairly simple point: that the underlying cause of the current downturn lies in the “real” economy of private goods and service production rather than in the financial sector, and that the current remedies – from government spending and tax cuts to financial regulation – will not lead to the kind of robust growth and employment that the United States enjoyed after World War II and fleetingly in the late 1990s. These remedies won’t succeed because they won’t get at what has caused the slowdown in the real economy: global overcapacity in tradeable (sic) goods production. Global overcapacity means that the world’s industries are capable of producing far more steel, shoes, cell phones,

computer chips, and automobiles (among other things) than the world's consumers are able and willing to consume."

Why this is worth mentioning is difficult to fathom. Overproduction has always been associated with economic busts, and such busts have happened with such regularity that economists have even incorporated them into theory by euphemistically calling booms and busts the "business cycle." The question that must be asked is, "What causes overproduction?" And the answer is industrialization.

The Industrial Revolution began in England around 1780. It transformed England from a manual-labour and draft-animal economy into a machine-based one. But this change in the primary mode of economic activity was not merely economic; it changed the entire culture, not clearly for the better. Almost every aspect of life was changed in some way.

Many cite increased per capita GDP as evidence of the revolution's benefits, but GDP is a poor measure of benefits. It merely measures the sum total of economic transactions in terms of the culture's money, neglecting the effects of economic activity on the quality of human life.

### Modern cities

The Industrial Revolution is largely responsible for the rise of modern cities, as large numbers of people migrated to them in search of jobs. These people were mainly housed in slums where diseases, especially cholera, typhoid, tuberculosis, and smallpox, were spread by contaminated water and other means. Respiratory diseases contracted by miners became common. Accidents in factories were regular. In 1788, two-thirds of the workers in cotton mills were children; they were also employed in coal mines. Henry Phelps Brown and Sheila V. Hopkins argue that the bulk of the population suffered severe reductions in their living standards. Although life in pre-industrial England was not easy, for many it was better than laboring in factories and coal mines.

Other consequences of the revolution are worse – craft workers lost their jobs. The Industrial Revolution concentrated labour into mills, factories, and mines, but industrial workers could never experience the sense of satisfaction and pride that craftsmen derived from their creations. Working a craft is a mentally stimulating and creative activity; operating a machine is not. The best craftsmen were renowned as artists. Some are still renowned today: Thomas Chippendale and George Hepplewhite, for example. The integral strength of Windsor chairs has never been duplicated in a factory. Handmade textiles, Persian rugs, even handcrafted toys are renowned for their artistry. Today that pride and satisfaction accrues only to hobbyists, such as quilters, but never to industrial workers. The Industrial Revolution degraded human life to the status of coal. People became fuel for machines. Bought cheap, people are used until unneeded and then discarded like mining slag. Individuality, talent, imagination, originality – the best attributes of human beings – are suppressed to the point of extinction. The Industrial Revolution sucked the humanity out of the human race; people became things.

But the revolution gave England a temporary economic advantage as that is measured by economists. Excess production, that is, production not consumed domestically, could be exported, and England's wealth could be increased by buying (importing) cheap and selling (exporting) dear. This worked – for a while, but never smoothly.

The Industrial Revolution quickly spread to Belgium, France, the United States, Japan, the Alpine countries, Italy, and other places. As it spread, the amount of excess products that needed to be exported grew and grew, and the number of prospective foreign consumers shrank and shrank. Because there is little economic advantage (as economists measure it) in trading exports for imports of equal value, the international economy necessarily divides into net exporting nations which are enriched and net importing

**The Industrial Revolution concentrated labour into mills, factories, and mines, but industrial workers could never experience the sense of satisfaction and pride that craftsmen derived from their creations**

**In less than 60 years, less than a mere three tenths of one percent of the time people have inhabited the Earth, the industrial nations have put so much junk into near outer space that the junk now endangers the functionality of operational satellites**

countries which are impoverished and less and less able to afford imports. The system has to be patched or the machines would grind to a halt. Most of the work of economists since the middle of the nineteenth century consists of developing patches for this collapsing system. Comparative advantage, creative destruction, free trade, Keynesian stimuli, and even social programs (which would be unnecessary if the economy provided for the needs of people) are merely attempts to patch the system, to keep the machines running.

Industrialists soon realized that if they reduced the quality of their products, their lifecycles would be shortened which would require people to replace them more often thereby increasing consumption. Manufacturers have been steadily reducing the quality of products ever since. An essential part in a device is made of an inferior material so the device fails far before its time and becomes junk, batteries in devices are soldered to their circuit boards so that when the batteries die, the products becomes junk, one fewer olive in every jar means more jars are sold, and the jars become junk. Economists like to claim that the system produces the best products at the lowest cost, but in reality it produces the exact opposite. As more and more products must be discarded and replaced, the discarded junk is hauled to landfills or dumped in oceans. But as landfills grow larger and larger, another patch is required – recycling. But it too is ineffective. Batteries soldered to circuit boards cannot be recycled, every half-filled can of paint cannot be taken to a recycling center, separating useful elements from the useless ones is often a hazardous task. The system produces junk!

Humans originated about 200,000 years ago. The Soviet Union launched the first Sputnik into space in 1957. In less than 60 years, less than a mere three tenths of one percent of the time people have inhabited the Earth, the industrial nations have put so much junk into near outer space that the junk now endangers the functionality of

operational satellites. Abandoned industrial sites are often highly toxic which often require cleanup – another patch. Often complete cleanup is impossible. Toxic residues are a species of junk. Keeping the machines running necessitates the production of it.

### **Descent into collapse**

Global industrial capitalism will continue on the gradual downward descent to collapse. The Golden Age of industrial capitalism that lasted from 1945 to 1970 cannot be recreated merely by applying the right mixture of spending, subsidies, re-regulation, and international agreements. Because the economic advantages of industrialization rely on the two ingredients mentioned above, overproduction and profit, balanced trade is impossible if the advantage is to be preserved; it entails no economic profit. Ultimately too many nations will be too poor to be importers, and the machines in the exporting countries will cease to function. Industrialism is a Hegelian synthesis which embodies the forces for its own destruction. The greatest threat to the Western Way of Life is the Western Way of Life itself. Patches may prolong it, but they cannot remove its contradictions.

Chandran Nair writes,

“The 20th century’s triumph of consumption-based capitalism has created the crisis of the 21st century: looming catastrophic climate change, massive environmental damage and significant depletion of natural resources. . . . The western economic model, which defines success as consumption-driven growth, must be challenged . . . Advocates of the western model tend to play down its dramatic effects on natural resources and the environment. They refuse to acknowledge that their advice runs counter to scientific consensus about limits and the need for stringent rules on resource management. Instead, they argue that human ingenuity aided by innovations in the markets will find solutions. This is rooted in an irrational belief that we can have everything: ever-growing material wealth and a

healthy natural environment. The stark evidence . . . should be proof enough that this is not possible.”

No, it's not possible, but the impossibility lies in the system's logic, not in its effects. To use the preferred diction of economists, the system is unsustainable. Since the collapse of the industrial system is inevitable, a fundamental rethinking of the way the economy works is the only alternative. It has always been the only alternative. But even that leaves humanity soaking in the pickle.

When the economic advantages of industrialization have dissipated, humanity will still be stuck in a world filled with biodegradable junk, hazardous sites, raped environments, the unending consequences of the often accidental importation of alien species, polluted air and water, and numerous other consequences, the costs of which economists have never taken into consideration. And the progeny of both the rich and the poor alike will have to live with them. The pockets full of money that the rich have won't prevent their children and grandchildren from breathing bad air or drinking bad water or dealing with environmental degradation. These children and grandchildren may someday curse the days their fathers and grandfathers were born. Capitalism, as we know it, is reaching its endgame. The meek who inherit the earth will find it to be worthless.

The human brain has enabled mankind to discover and create wondrous things; it has also been used to inflict horrendous suffering and destruction. In fact, it would be difficult to design an economic system

more destructive, wasteful, and dehumanizing than the industrial, and much of the destruction it has wrought may be irreparable. Industrialization does not efficiently allocate resources; it squanders them.

So, is mankind smart? Of course, but that is not the question. The ultimate question is, Is mankind smart enough to keep from outsmarting itself? The answer appears to be no!

The Age of Enlightenment was born sometime around the beginning of the eighteenth century. A mere three-quarters of a century later, industrialization ushered in the Age of Endarkenment, and human life has grown more and more perilous ever since. Natural disasters can be catastrophic, but their destructiveness is usually limited, and the really horrendous ones are rare. Man-made disasters are ubiquitous, very extensive, and difficult, perhaps impossible, to repair. Had mankind been wise rather than merely smart, most manmade calamities could have been avoided. *Que Sera Sera!* Whatever will be will be will be. The future is plain to see, and it's not pretty. **CT**

*John Kozy is a retired professor of philosophy and logic who blogs on social, political, and economic issues. After serving in the US Army during the Korean War, he spent 20 years as a university professor and another 20 years working as a writer. He has published a textbook in formal logic commercially, in academic journals and a small number of commercial magazines, and has written a number of guest editorials for newspapers. His on-line pieces can be found on [www.jkozy.com](http://www.jkozy.com)*

**The Age of Enlightenment was born sometime around the beginning of the eighteenth century. A mere three-quarters of a century later, industrialization ushered in the Age of Endarkenment**

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# The case for human extinction

How do you start an asteroid strike, wonders **Fred Reed**

**We breed incontinently as flies, spread like impetigo, and burn and cut and poison and bulldoze. To what end?**

I have walked by night on the wild empty beaches of Michoacan when the moon, at its full, aimed a silver path at me over the restless waters, as the wind blew chill and strong from the sea, and the waves, come from China perhaps, rose and roared and crashed and ran up the sands, over and over, over and over, and I have thought, do we know what the fuck we are doing? Is there nothing our sorry species, dirty as monkeys, will not make worse?

I wonder whether we are not on the earth by accident. We have no love of it, no reverence, no restraint before things we do not understand. I do not think we belong here.

The wind has always enchanted me. I hear in it...I hear in it...what? Something larger, older, apart, something that does not care about us, pro or con. How does one say this to a thoughtless rabble twiddling video games? To them the beach is prime real estate for development into tee-shirt emporia, boardwalks, and jet-ski rentals for ill-mannered adolescents.

What is this? We live, we die. We destroy, we strut and fret, we burn, we live apart from the world. We are fools, imbecile children, a disease on the earth, a brief noise. We do not belong here.

Others belong. On the porch in the outskirts of our small Mexican town, La Coyota sleeps. She is a street dog, a starveling puppy

when we took her in. She flourished, grew deep of chest and long-legged and when opportunity arose took to the dry brown hills that rise a hundred yards from our door. She is domestic because it suits her, ours because she wants to be, but there is a savage streak in her. She is the color of the parched earth, fast, well fanged. She doesn't need us. By night she runs through the matorral and broken rock, content in the darkness, fearless, for it is her world, scenting on the wind things closed to our dull senses, hearing wisps and traces of sound beyond the high edge of our hearing. She does not wear shoes, need spectacles, require packaged food from a market. She belongs in the world. We force ourselves upon it.

Soon she will not run in the hills. They are putting a road through to relieve the pressure of population. It is thought urgent that people be quickly able to get to CostCo, which is in a large parking lot where one may buy crates of tomato catsup for bargain prices.

I do not understand. We breed incontinently as flies, spread like impetigo, and burn and cut and poison and bulldoze. To what end? Why is a lake, solitary and wild, made better by a subdivision of six thousand units, with unnecessary children littering the pavement with plastic bottles while their parents gawp at televisions? Yes, I know. It is Progress. I just don't see why it is.

I wonder what the world must have been a million years ago, before our sordid race of moralizing apes arose to invent the sewage outfall, before we learned to perforate the floor of the floor of oceans and poison whole seas with the bile of the inner earth. Yes, I know of property rights and the desperate need for the economy to grow, though to what end I cannot imagine. It seems to me that we should strive to shrink the economy. Pelicans and seals do not grow their economies and, I think, seldom use bulldozers. Yet they prosper.

We lack respect. There is more to the world than parking lots, much that would inspire reverence in a race less boorish. There are things in heaven and earth. But how does one explain this to a corporate magnate who believes that we must increase the birth rate to compete with the Chinese?

I have dived 120 feet below the tropic seas, where light fades to wan blue and color dies, myself an alien creature depending on tanks of air, and seen the rays. Oh yes, the rays. As we finned along a deep wall, encrusted with nightmare shapes of mushrooms that were not mushrooms, tangled wires that were not wires, in a realm not ours yet not hostile, just not interested in us, the rays winged by. There were four, almost in formation, chill wings rising and falling, fast, at home in the depths. I wondered where they were going.

A million years ago they did this, and a million years hence they will again, unless we poison them. Above us our bubbles rose and broke, rising and rising. We did not belong there.

Everywhere we are tourists in the world, collegiate vandals trashing an ancient Lauderdale. We have grown large upon the

earth, but we do not belong here. We do not know how to behave.

The immense beingness of a dark forest, the tens of millions of things – winged things, crawling things, hunting things, plants and moss and mold, soft hungry things in decomposing logs, ants, moths with huge spectral eyes, all in the intricate endless dance of life – these we do not know; we say chitinous exoskeleton and Gibb's free energy and adenosine triphosphate and Darwin, and believe we understand when we understand nothing, not whence nor whither now why nor how. In university I knew a white mouse, escaped from the biology people, that lived in the computer lab. Perhaps it thought it understood where it was because it could find the crumbs of potato chips left by students and the warm spot under the power supply. So with us. We can just about find the warm spots.

A hazard of being the most intelligent creature in the neighborhood is that it fosters an illusion of omniscience. Today we prostrate ourselves before the sciences, which tell us tales of origin and destiny, about which they know nothing and can guess less than the most minor of poets. But we have no poets, and so accept the solemn narrow twaddle of the laboratories. Oh well. Perhaps the best that can be said of scientists is that the brightest of a large number of hamsters is still a hamster.

The rumble and growl of bulldozers begins in the hills. I need a drink. **CT**

*Fred Reed has worked on staff for Army Times, The Washingtonian, Soldier of Fortune, Federal Computer Week, and The Washington Times. His web site is [www.fredoneverything.net](http://www.fredoneverything.net)*

**Pelicans and seals do not grow their economies and, I think, seldom use bulldozers. Yet they prosper**

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# Looking for change; finding desperation

**Trevor Grundy** reviews an insider's account of the failure of Zimbabwe's democratic election of 2008

**Had the four million Zimbabweans who comprise the diaspora in South Africa, Botswana, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and several European Union countries been given the vote that year Robert Mugabe would today be in Lenin's dustbin of history**

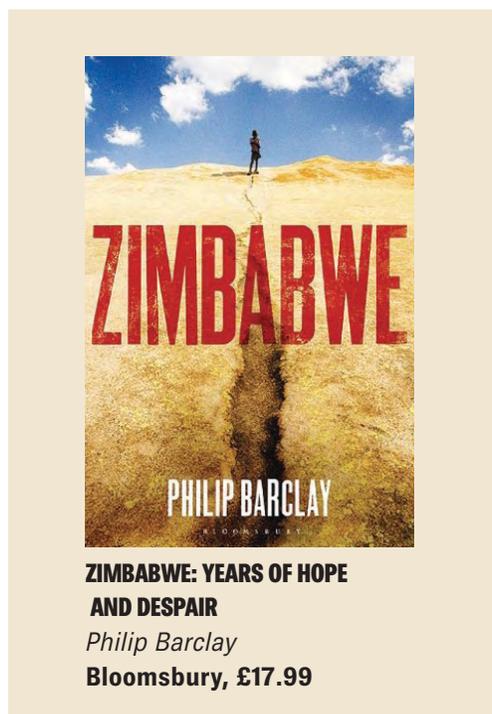
**P**hilip Barclay's book about the important three years (2006-2009) he spent in Zimbabwe working as a diplomat at the British Embassy in Harare as an officially approved 'off-message' blogger and now and again correspondent for the *Sunday Times* comes with a health warning. "Responsibility for the contents of this book," he says with telling honesty in line one of the Preface, "is entirely mine. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foreign Office."

I like this new man a lot.

He tells us where he comes from and is remarkably un-pompous saying, in so many words, that here is a book that any intelligent man or woman with an ear to the African ground could have written.

I read it twice from the (perhaps) vantage point of having lived and worked in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa from 1966-1996. I'm grateful for being told by an author/writer with both insight and honesty about what happened in a land I love, where I was married, where one of my sons went to school and where I enjoyed some of the happiest days of my life but which I left four years before Mugabe, the one time Marxist pin-up of the Western World, went politically and economically insane.

The heart of this refreshingly short book deals with the 2008 election in which, against the odds, Morgan Tsvangirai's Move-



ment for Democratic Change (MDC) won at both the parliamentary and presidential levels but which resulted in a coalition between the MDC and the aging villains who make up Mugabe's ZANU (PF).

Had the four million Zimbabweans who comprise the diaspora in South Africa, Botswana, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and several European Union countries been given the vote that year Robert Mugabe would today be in Lenin's dustbin of history.

Sadly, I think, this is a book far too short on history but long on the tragic tale of how ruthless Mugabe is in his old age.

Barclay writes clearly and sometimes chillingly about the mass murder, torture and beatings inflicted on his opponents during the time when Africa's Great Dictator felt most insecure, lashing out (as he did so often) against former friends, notably Britain, Tony Blair and his "gay gangsters" over the land "reform" issue.

And who will ever forget the face of opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai with his eyes closed and his skull split wide open after hours of beatings and torture by the police in March 2007?

Yet what happened to the MDC's most militant members between 2006-2009 pales into insignificance compared to what was done to hundreds of thousands of Ndebeles in Zimbabwe's Western Province (Matabeleland) and the Midlands between 1982-1987 when the dictator's North Korean trained Fifth Brigade of the National Army were let off the leash.

The result was one of the Commonwealth's great under-publicised acts of ethnic cleansing – the slaughter of at least 20,000 men, women and children. To their eternal disgrace, British diplomats looked the other way and continued smiling at the madman in State House, Harare.

Barclay's encounter with two members of Mugabe's Stasi-trained Central Intelligence Office (CIO) goons sent shivers up and down my back. What vile monsters they are and any of the journalists who left Harare to cover stories where the tarmac ends knows what Barclay is talking about.

This author is refreshingly honest. Cynics might say naive. Diplomats and politicians who write about Africa are usually an unbearably stuffy lot whose main specialty is not telling anyone the full story. They appear to have been tutored by the late Ber-

nard Shaw said you don't have to lie to mislead the public. All you have to do is leave out the truth.

Philip Barclay makes no attempt to present himself as an academic. On the contrary – "I had joined the Diplomatic Service as a humble third secretary in 1999. I had previously spent ten enjoyable years working for London transport, as a temp in Sydney and as a market researcher in Bangkok; but when I turned thirty I felt it was time to get a proper job. Using a series of sharp-elbowed and duplicitous manoeuvres I was able to become a first secretary by 2001. I worked at that level in London and then from 2002 for three years in Poland."

At the end of this, the latest piece that will make-up the far from completed Zimbabwean jig-saw puzzle, I wondered if Philip Barclay represents the communicator about Africa of the future – a person with access to official documents and who at an embassy or high commission blogs and writes for newspapers with the permission of the Foreign Office.

Over the decades we've had more than enough spin and lies from British embassies, British High Commissions and the Foreign Office about their dealings with Africa and Africans – so I hope I'm wrong for Barclay's sake as a writer and for my own, as a reader.

**Note:** Hopefully, however, if this worthwhile book becomes a paperback next year the publishers will make a correction to the name of the British High Commissioner in Zimbabwe during those days. It was Sir Martin Evans and not Evans. **CT**

*Trevor Grundy worked as a journalist in central, eastern and southern Africa from 1966-1996. In Zimbabwe, where he worked from 1978 to 1996, he was a correspondent for Time, the Scotsman, Beeld, Deutsche Welle and the SABC.*

**Barclay's encounter with two members of Mugabe's Stasi-trained Central Intelligence Office (CIO) goons sent shivers up and down my back**

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# Under siege, but unbeaten

A new book of letters shows the strength of character of a besieged nation, writes **Stuart Littlewood**

**“Despite the occupation, Palestinians still remain some of the most educated people in the Arab world. They sit at the checkpoint if they can’t make it to school and read their books, or have class right there if their teacher happens to be around...”**

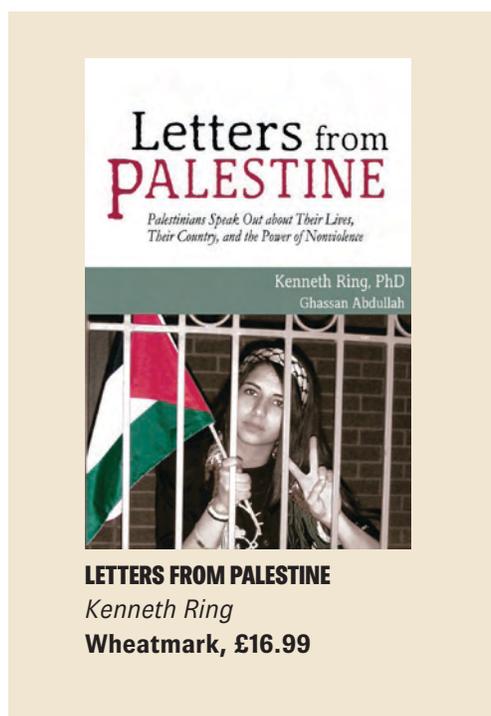
I seldom read books from cover to cover. But when Kenneth Ring sent me his *Letters from Palestine* with a note saying “Here’s my baby,” I couldn’t put it down.

Ken presents a collection of personal stories from Palestinians, inside and outside the occupied territories, that provide penetrating insights – sometimes harrowing, sometimes funny, always fascinating – into their daily lives and thoughts. It would not surprise me if, in time, these accounts became inscribed in Palestinian folklore.

They reveal the Palestinians’ strength of character so well. For these are among the world’s most civilised and sophisticated people. They have withstood 90 years of betrayal and humiliation, and still they bubble with humour and friendship, thanks to their resilience and a gritty determination to overcome the collective and individual tragedies inflicted on them.

The thirty whose voices are heard in the letters they write to their American friend, are a wonderfully varied group.

One young lady says that, for her, the *ad-eyat phalastin* (question of Palestine) is the ultimate fight for humanity and justice. “And being Palestinian reminds me every day that justice and human rights can never be taken for granted. Because, in theory, every person is entitled to equality and his or her rights. In reality they are a privilege a select few



enjoy.”

A young Palestinian-American woman visiting family members in Birzeit comments: “Despite the occupation, Palestinians still remain some of the most educated people in the Arab world. They sit at the checkpoint if they can’t make it to school and read their books, or have class right there if their teacher happens to be around...”

She tells how “the majority of the students I worked with at the camp had a parent or a sibling in jail. One boy’s father was

shot by Israeli soldiers right in front of his eyes. Many of the children wore pictures of dead loved ones or of martyrs around their necks or on their shirts. It was a constant part of their lives.”

Fareed, a peace activist, challenges Israel’s claims that the clamp-down on Palestinian movement is in response to the new Hamas-led government. “The reality is that Israel first established its system of permits and closures in 1991, and we have been living under these difficult conditions ever since.”

The first-hand accounts of terrified families trying to survive the horror and devastation unleashed by Israel on the Gaza Strip in December 2008 are very powerful indeed. As Ken himself reminds us, “by the time it was over nearly seven thousand Gazans had either been killed or wounded, and Gaza itself had been largely reduced to smoke, burning phosphorous, and rubble”.

The book’s hard message is softened by the many threads of humour. “In spite of the terrible hardship, you still won’t find people sleeping on pavements like in New York or London,” says Ghassan. “So we guess we still have a long way to go before we become an advanced society.”

He observes that Israel is losing the demographic war with the Palestinians. “What do you expect people locked up in their homes to do, especially when the power is cut off by the Israeli Army and no TV?”

I laughed out loud at Ghassan’s pithy jokes and found myself cheering Manar’s exploits, which she reported to her university chums back home in the US. But then I was brought down to earth with a jolt by Ramzy Baraud’s heartbreaking account of how his freedom-fighter father, ill and prevented by the Israelis from leaving Gaza for treatment, died there alone, cut off from his family.

Discovering that two of Ken’s contributors were friends of mine was a wonderful surprise. Jiries Canavati (I call him George) was a survivor of the infamous 40-day siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in 2002. It is a gripping story of great courage. In the end they had to surrender, but

the eyes of the world were on the Church by then.

George was lucky. Many who came out of the Church alive were deported. The Israelis put him on a blacklist. “So I can’t leave Bethlehem now. I can’t move anywhere. Bethlehem is like a big jail, and that’s it... I am a Christian, but there were both Muslims and Christians together in the siege. The relationship became very friendly. We respect ourselves, we respect each other, and we love each other. And they said, now the Church of the Nativity is the most important place and very special for us because this place protected all of us.”

George has very recently set up an organisation called Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans, which promotes small craft workshops. Ken won’t mind, I’m sure, if I give this brave man’s new venture a plug by mentioning the link, [www.bethlehem-artisans.com](http://www.bethlehem-artisans.com).

The second courageous friend is that young Gazan photo-journalist Mohammed Omer. Sheer professionalism, and a determination to tell the unvarnished truth about Gaza to the western world, earned him the coveted Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism in 2008 while he was still only 23. He received the award in London and went on a speaking tour of European capitals. On the way home to his family in Gaza he was detained and brutally beaten up by Israeli border and security thugs at the Allenby Bridge crossing from Jordan, and hospitalized with severe injuries. In the book Mo tells the shocking story in his own words.

Perhaps Mo’s darkest hour – and he must have had many in his young life – was in January 2009 at the height of Israel’s vicious *blitzkrieg* on Gaza’s civilians. He wrote to me: “I have been in Holland the past few weeks in hospital, with high fever and following up Gaza’s appalling situations. My family have been under very awful situations, but today I managed to get hold of them finally and they are all alive. Some damages around, but that doesn’t matter as long as they are alive. I have been so worried and also sad to lose some of my friends who are journalists and

**He observes that Israel is losing the demographic war with the Palestinians. “What do you expect people locked up in their homes to do, especially when the power is cut off by the Israeli Army and no TV?”**

## BOOK REVIEW

The picture painted by Kenneth Ring and his friends is, of course, seriously at odds with the one invented and broadcast by the propagandists in Tel Aviv and their hirelings in the US and British governments

others were injured... shame on the international community to allow this to happen.”

Yes indeed, shame on the international community which, 18 months later, has still done nothing to resolve the situation and actually rewards the lawless Israeli regime while it continues air strikes and threatens to repeat the atrocities.

Ken writes from a humanistic standpoint, as befits a professor of psychology. He treats those he meets with sensitivity and respect. His great affection for them shines through at all times.

And I like the way he came to the task almost by accident, as I did, after reading a book by a remarkable peace activist. It changed his life completely, he says.

Palestinians have been stripped of nearly everything – their lands, water resources, possessions, dignity, quality of life – and are left with only their education (which the Israelis do their damndest to disrupt) and their culture. Women value education, pursue it energetically and hold down responsible jobs. I think their influence would surprise westerners.

This is not to say that the menfolk neglect their education. On the contrary. Palestine's strangulated economy is full of well-qualified men. But it is right that many of Ken's contributors are female. Despite decades of deprivation and hardship the rich Palestinian-Arab culture survives. The women, with their resourcefulness and strong sense of family, have seen to it and injected it with an

indomitable spirit.

*Letters from Palestine* will put you through the emotional wringer – you'll share the laughter, pride, helplessness, despair, anger and even the camaraderie. It is written with a pleasant light touch while providing an accurate portrayal of the plight of the Palestinians.

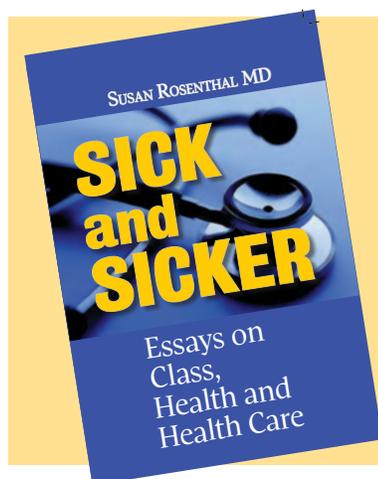
The picture painted by Kenneth Ring and his friends is, of course, seriously at odds with the one invented and broadcast by the propagandists in Tel Aviv and their hirelings in the US and British governments. Anyone who has been to the occupied Holy Land knows that *Letters from Palestine* speaks the truth.

And Ken's being Jewish makes the book all the more remarkable. I see it as one of the few beacons of decency in a swamp of deceit, and I would like one day to shake him by the hand.

I understand that proceeds from the book are to be split between the Atfaluna School for the Deaf in Gaza, where Ken sponsors a child, and civil society NGOs in the West Bank with which co-author Ghassan Abdulah is associated.

God and Allah bless you, Kenneth Ring, for your gift to better understanding. **CT**

*Stuart Littlewood* is author of the book *Radio Free Palestine*, which tells the plight of the Palestinians under occupation. For further information please visit [www.radiofreepalestine.co.uk](http://www.radiofreepalestine.co.uk)



“Reducing income inequality in the US would save as many lives as would be saved by eradicating heart disease or by preventing all deaths from lung cancer, diabetes, HIV, motor vehicle crashes, homicide and suicide combined”

## SICK AND SICKER

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# Witnessing against torture: why we must act

**Kathy Kelly** was arresting for her protest against torture. Here she explains why we must make our voices heard against state brutality

*Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.* – US Constitution Amendment I

**A**n old cliché says that anyone who has herself for a lawyer has a fool for a client. Nevertheless, going to trial in Washington, D.C., on June 14, I and 23 other defendants prepared a *pro se* defense. Acting as our own lawyers in court, we aimed to defend a population that finds little voice in our society at all, and to bring a sort of prosecution against their persecutors.

Months earlier, on January 21st, we had held a memorial vigil for three innocent Guantanamo prisoners, recently revealed to have been in all probability tortured to death by our government with what would turn out to be utter impunity – and because we had wished the culpable parties to take notice, we’d staged a vigil where they worked, specifically on the Capitol Steps and in the Rotunda of the US Capitol Building. We had been charged with causing a “breach of the peace,” a technical legal term for a situation that might risk inciting people to violence. In abetting Administration use of torture, Congress had been inciting others to horrendous violence, and we’d been protesting perhaps one of the gravest imaginable breaches of

the peace. Now we were making our small attempt to take these crimes to court, in the course of defending ourselves against what we felt to be a misdirected charge.

At the time of our arrest, we were on the final day of a 12-day fast organized by Witness Against Torture, aiming to help end the US practice of torturing prisoners. Calling for the long-promised and long-delayed closure of Guantanamo, release of all detainees held without charge there, and an actual end to US usage of torture, we had considered it our duty under international law, and our right under the Constitution, to assemble peaceably at the seat of government for redress of extremely serious grievances.

“And what were those grievances,” Ed Kinane asked me, as we teamed up for a “dress rehearsal” in preparation for our trial. Ed, my fellow *pro se* defendant, planned to question me, as a witness, about our actions.

I recited our reasons for taking action on January 21st:

“We harbored a grievance against the US government for violating the rights of detainees held in Guantanamo, some of whom have been detained for over eight years without charge; still others are being held even though there has been a US court order for their release. On October 7, 2008, a US federal judge ordered the release of 17 prisoners held in Guantanamo. They still have not been freed.

**At the time of our arrest, we were on the final day of a 12-day fast organized by Witness Against Torture, aiming to help end the US practice of torturing prisoners**

## IN THE DOCK

**We were also keenly aware of three men who supposedly had committed suicide in Guantanamo**

“We harbored a grievance on behalf of three men whom US military officials claimed committed suicide in an exercise of “asymmetrical warfare,” but who may well have been murdered in custody. In light of credible evidence that has yet to be analyzed in a court of law, they may have been tortured to death.”

Ed had designed his questions so that I could deliver as much information as possible regarding our motives for being in the Capitol.

Each of us, when introducing ourselves to the court, would speak our own name and then give the name of a particular Guantanamo detainee on whose behalf we were speaking. Ed, (speaking for Fahmi Salem Said Al-sani), asked me to tell the court something about the man whom I was representing.

“Ahmed Mohamed is a 32-year-old citizen of China,” I said. “He was captured near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in December 2001. As of June 11, 2010, he has been held at Guantanamo for eight years and one month. He is a detainee from the Uighur Muslim minority in western China and is one of 17 Uighurs who were approved for release from Guantanamo on October 7, 2008. However, a federal appeals court stayed the order after the US government appealed.”

We were also keenly aware of three men who supposedly had committed suicide in Guantanamo. Two days before going to the Rotunda to protest the Guantanamo nightmare, we had read, on the *Harper's* magazine website, a January 18, 2010 article “The Guantanamo ‘Suicides’: A Camp Delta Sergeant Blows the Whistle.”

In this article, investigative journalist Scott Horton reports on interviews with Army Staff Sgt. Joe Hickman and Specialist Tony Davila, both of whom had been deployed to Guantanamo, and establishes a strong case that three men reported as having committed suicide, – 37-year-old Salah Ahmed al-Salami, 30-year-old Mani Shaman al-Utaybe, and 22-year-old Yasser Talal al-Zahrani – were suffocated to death in the interrogation chair. In 2006, these three prisoners had

been brought, dead, to the medical clinic at Guantanamo, and a Navy medical corpsman had told Hickman that the men, one of them severely bruised, had died from having had rags stuffed down their throats.

At our trial rehearsal, I told Ed that I'd believed I had a responsibility and a duty to demand an accounting for what had happened to these men. I believed that no US citizen, whatever the consequences, should choose the convenience of political silence in the face of grievous crimes against humanity still being committed at Guantanamo, Bagram and other US detention sites.

In the Rotunda, Jerica Arents, (speaking for Saaid Fahri), now one of our co-defendants, had entered into the area where a recently deceased President's body is laid in state, an area marked by a white circle, and silently placed a mourning cloth upon that spot, bearing the names of Mr. Al-Salami, Mr. Al-Utaybe and Mr. Al-Zahrani. Our co-defendant, Carmen Trotta, speaking for Shaker Aamer, had explained the purpose of our action to onlookers, after assuring the nearby Capitol guard that we were raising important questions. Other members of our group, myself included, had poured different colored rose petals over the banner bearing these names.

We had knelt to express our remorse. We had recited brief biographies of each of the three victims. Then we had sung the verses to a song that had been sung by South African prisoners under Apartheid, when other prisoners were being taken away for interrogation, torture or execution. We had, however, adapted the song to embrace our brothers and sisters in US bondage:

*“Courage, Muslim brothers, you do not walk alone. We will walk with you, and sing your spirit home.”*

Many people come to the capitol every day of the year. They are free to ask questions and to make comments. But, if you raise questions and comments of a political nature, police officials believe they must enforce a law to restrict your enactment of this right, even though the Constitution insists

that Congress shall make no law to abridge the right of people to assemble peaceably for redress of grievance. We believed that expression of grief and remorse for the lost lives of these three men should properly happen in a place where US people mourn the loss of a president's life. While a US president possesses near-unimaginable power, the men whom we mourned suffered from unimaginable powerlessness. Earnest mourning of these lost lives was crucial for truthful recognition that the US government has used torture as a means of punishment, possibly even lethal punishment, in violation of international law and basic human rights.

The prosecution claimed that those who had assembled in the center of the Rotunda were "noisy and boisterous," yelling prayers and hymns. Officers who arrested other defendants on the capitol steps, claimed that a group of people were shouting in a way that tried to "imitate an Arabic dialect." In cross-examination, Clare Grady and Malachy Kilbride, both co-defendants, helped clarify that these defendants were reading the names of people imprisoned in Guantanamo and Bagram. By mid-afternoon, the prosecution rested its case.

Judge Russell Canan had asked the prosecutors several times to help him understand how our actions at the Capitol building would have been likely to produce violence on the part of others. At one point, he cautioned all present that he wouldn't tolerate any noisy outbursts in the courtroom. Ed and I exchanged surprised glances. "He's going to acquit us," I murmured. About ten minutes later, Judge Canan granted our motion for acquittal, and the trial was abruptly over.

Of course we are not, in good conscience, acquitted from our duty to stop the Pentagon from engaging in further war crimes at Guantanamo, Bagram and other places where the US military is holding people without charge, places where torture has been routinely practiced – and may still be. We still bear responsibility, every day, to fulfill our duties under international law and expose the practices, at Guantanamo and Bagram,

which constitute a horrendous breach of the peace and are likely to produce even more violence. Understanding the difference between law and justice, we must try to narrow the gap between justice and the enforcement of US laws.

"If you act like there is no possibility of change," Bill Quigley, one of our attorney-resource people, told the court, "you guarantee there will be none. These people have acted like there is a possibility for change and they are trying to bring about that change." Bill, who is the Center for Constitutional Right's Legal Director, said that those who won't adjust to injustice bring hope into the world. He quoted the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's "Beyond Viet Nam speech, delivered in April, 1967, at the Riverside Church: "We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision. For we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us."

Dr. King's Riverside church speech will guide us, as we plan our next action. *We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation, for those it calls 'enemy.' For no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers. I think of them, too, because it is clear to me that there will be no meaningful solution until some attempt is made to know them and hear their broken cries. We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence, or violent co-annihilation. We must move past indecision to action. If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.*

We hope Dr. King's words can help convey our remorse and sorrow to the families and friends of detainees imprisoned, tortured and in some cases killed because we have not yet succeeded in ending US practices of torture and illegal detention.

We long to acquit ourselves justly by closing not only Guantanamo, but every military base that prolongs the foolish agony of war in our world.

**We still bear responsibility, every day, to fulfill our duties under international law and expose the practices, at Guantanamo and Bagram, which constitute a horrendous breach of the peace and are likely to produce even more violence**

**Kathy Kelly** (Kathy@vcnv.org) is a co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence (www.vcnv.org) and a participant in the Witness Against Torture campaign (www.witnesstorture.org)

**CT**

# Mission accomplished

David Michael Green on the Reagan occupation and the continuing destruction of the American middle class

**The Eisenhower administration was the first chance after twenty years of the New Deal to dismantle the newly created American welfare state, and Ike not only refused to take that opportunity, but famously labeled those in his party who wanted to as “stupid”**

**E**ighty years ago, something occurred in America that was never supposed to happen. An aristocrat came to the presidency and engineered a policy revolution that created a broad and prosperous middle class where it had not existed as such before.

To do this, Franklin Roosevelt and his party had to rewrite the existing rules of wealth redistribution in the United States such that the traditionally fantastically wealthy overclass (which had grown even fatter as the industrialism of the prior century concentrated wealth yet further) would become merely tremendously wealthy from that point forward, in order to leave enough for others to live a decent life.

Needless to say, this rankled the country club set, but, remarkably, they more or less made peace with this development during the early decades of the post-war era, and largely cooperated with the new economic order. So did their political representatives. The Eisenhower administration was the first chance after twenty years of the New Deal to dismantle the newly created American welfare state, and Ike not only refused to take that opportunity, but famously labeled those in his party who wanted to as “stupid”.

If Eisenhower, in his gray suit, black-and-white photos and de rigueur businessman’s hat from the era seems quaint today, so does his political restraint. By the 1980s that was

ancient history, and remains so to this day, including through (and via) two Democratic presidencies now.

If Americans understood the real ambitions of Ronald Reagan and his puppeteers, and if they knew the degree to which the supposed patriotism of those folks extended beyond falsity and into the far darker waters of being an irritating irrelevance put on purely for show, then they would not only stop seeing Reagan as some sort of national hero, but would also understand that he instead launched a process far more equivalent to an invasion and occupation of this country.

## **Vast sums of wealth**

The goal of the right – which cares about America about as much as it does about Burkina Faso – has been to restore the economic order last seen under Herbert Hoover, in which a tiny minority possess vast sums of wealth and there is (therefore) essentially no remaining middle class. It is nothing short of a breathtaking display of a world class greed, worthy of the ages.

It has also been a work of strategic genius (in much the same way one might appreciate the Germans’ engineering prowess in figuring out the logistics of how to mass murder ten or twelve million civilians in a year or two), one which has drawn upon deep psychological insights, absolutely sociopathic amorality, and clever tactics that have all si-

multaneously pushed in the same direction. In plain English, they hired some politicians of hit-man level moral integrity, who then marshaled fear, insecurity, hate and deceit into a witch's brew of self-destruction that would prove highly attractive to a large segment of the population already sinking from the effects of a global economic order rebalancing after decades of post-war American dominance.

Of course, you couldn't just come right out and say, "Vote for me and I'll give your money to people so rich they can't even imagine what they'll do with it, but they still demand to have it anyhow", so slightly more subtle tactics had to be employed. It is telling that the most honest thing Barack Obama ever said was when he thought there were no microphones in the room. But he was right when, at a presidential fundraiser in San Francisco he told the wine and cheese set that the right uses guns, god and gays (I would add Gaddafis) to scare people out of their money. I'll believe that Republicans are serious about protecting heterosexual marriage on the day that you can't find half of them prowling the gay bars of DC every night (and you don't even want to know what the other half are into).

This bait-and-switch tactic worked perfectly well whenever it was applied. It didn't hurt that the regressive Billy-Bobs who vote for these folks are as dumb as a tree. With bags of hammers for leaves. But stupid is really only the facilitating quality, and often one that is neither present nor required. What really drives this stuff is fear. If you can turn that into a loathing of fur'ners, fags, bitches, blackies and brownies, you got their vote. Then you can do what you really set out to accomplish in the first place. George W. Bush's 2004 campaign was the paradigmatic example. All year he talked about jamming through a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. Big priority. Urgent national issue. The religitardeed across America just about peed themselves, they were so excited. Then he gets elected and is brazen enough to announce that there'll be no such effort,

after all, and that his signature legislative initiative will be an attempt to hand over the fat Social Security pot of money to Goldman Sachs. The redneck dolts with their Bush/Cheney '04 bumper-stickers didn't know what to think. So, of course, they just didn't.

#### **Kleptomaniac revolution**

Meanwhile, to say that this kleptocratic revolution worked really well is only untrue by means of the verb tense employed. It is still working really well. And the final leg of Reagan's March to the Sea is now upon us. Chunks of middle class body parts have been hacked off, bit by bit, over the decades, 'til there's little remaining anymore.

Remember how they told us that 'free trade' wouldn't decimate our jobs, our unions and our bargaining power? Is that why little old ladies serve Happy Meals at McDonald's all across the country, assuming they're lucky enough to get that job? Remember how they said that massive tax cuts for the wealthy would be 'revenue neutral' and would jumpstart the economy? Which is confusing since the national debt doubled under George W. Bush, and then he proceeded to hand us the worst economy since the Great Depression.

Remember how they told us that we needed to slash wasteful government spending on benefits? Now that we've become the ones who need those, they're gone. Remember when they said that government is our enemy and corporations should be free to do whatever they want? You know, like spill oil or trade derivatives?

There's another little trick that is about to become especially prominent in the coming years. When Reagan came to office and began his "voodoo economics" project of nearly quadrupling the national debt, after having promised to cut it instead, many people were puzzled by this. Personally, I figured that they just did the math and realized that in the real world (where governments sometimes live but campaigns rarely do) something simply had to give. If you slash tax revenues and massively increase military spending, guess what's gonna happen to your budget?

**Remember how they told us that 'free trade' wouldn't decimate our jobs, our unions and our bargaining power? Is that why little old ladies serve Happy Meals at McDonald's all across the country, assuming they're lucky enough to get that job?**

## A NATION ROBBED

**How long can it be before Medicare and Social Security are put on the chopping block? And why? Because we have our priorities good and straight, pal: a morbidly bloated military and pathetically low tax rates for the wealthiest among us comes first**

Others, however, saw a more nefarious game being played, and perhaps they were right. This is the idea that they intentionally ran up deficits so large that the national government would be forced to do what it otherwise would not, which is to slash spending on popular entitlements and other social programs.

Whether or not the conspiracy was real, it is the case that the federal government is running humongous deficits every year, which pile up further on the massive national debt. And it is also the case that we are now hearing a rising chorus on the right – especially from the tea party know-nothings – about slashing government spending as the top priority for Washington. Even though, according to the principles of Keynesian economics, this is the last thing we should be doing during a recession.

And, of course, something tells me that as the pinch is increasingly felt, the call for cuts won't be in the domain of military spending, even though our allocation there is obscenely out of proportion to any imaginable threat in the world, and is roughly equal to what almost the entire rest of the world spends on defense – that's one country equal to almost two hundred others, combined. I'm also guessing that we won't be raising taxes on the wealthiest Americans either, even though they pay far less than they did in the pre-Reagan era, when the country was generally very prosperous, and even though they often pay a lower percentage in taxes than the secretaries and janitors who work for them. No, we can't touch those folks.

Instead, the intense pressure now will be to finish the job of eviscerating the middle class and transferring every last nickel of their wealth to the oligarchs who fancy themselves masters of the universe. Unemployment insurance, for example. Never mind that we have ten percent official unemployment and closer to twenty percent in reality, or that whole cities like Detroit are being wiped out.

The Republican minority in the Senate, along with the Democratic “moderates”

there, are now refusing to extend expiring unemployment benefits (which are already a pittance when they exist). Nine hundred thousand laid-off workers have thus lost their meager sub-subsistence benefits, and that number will grow to more than a million-and-a-half in a few days now.

Guess why. Because regressive senators – including John Kerry and Maria Cantwell – are holding unemployment insurance extensions hostage to protecting a loophole that allows wealthy fund managers to be taxed on their profits at an obscenely low percentage rate. How's that for national priorities? How's that for compassionate conservatism?

### **Slashing entitlements**

Next, inevitably, will come entitlements. Indeed, most of the states in the union are already heading that way, cutting pensions for employees. Not to mention certain low priority areas like education, which is getting slashed from California to New York. How long can it be before Medicare and Social Security are put on the chopping block? And why? Because we have our priorities good and straight, pal: a morbidly bloated military and pathetically low tax rates for the wealthiest among us comes first. Then, if we could somehow do it for free I suppose we could allow decent education, or health care, or retirement with dignity for our elders. But, of course, since that can't be done without cost, those things must go.

The other strategic initiative now reaching fruition during the right's three decade-long campaign to massively redistribute wealth in this country – literally, the crime of the century – is the evisceration of the state. This must be done (or, more accurately, it must be done in some respects but absolutely not in others) because the state is the only force capable of standing up to the power of concentrated wealth, and because the state sets the very rules by which such wealth either is or isn't concentrated. It also must be done because the state nominally speaks for the public and the public interest, as against the private interest.

Since Reagan, regressive puppet politicians have been spouting anti-state rhetoric and sarcastic venom with increasing intensity. Saint Ron of Hypocrisy told us that government was the problem, not the solution, seemingly without noticing the irony of his massive military build-up or the government-enforced restrictions the right favors on everything from abortion to gay marriage to euthanasia.

#### **Government incompetence?**

Now, as gutted and corrupted regulatory institutions have permitted massively harmful meltdowns ranging from Wall Street to coal mines to oil wells, we are forced to listen to sermons from those on the right about the incompetence of government. Well, yeah. If in fact you staff government regulatory bodies with industry shills who are explicitly ordered not to actually, er, regulate, and if you legislate away their power to effectively do so anyhow, and if you pulverize conscientious whistleblowers to within an inch of their lives, then guess what? That little bit of government will in fact be incompetent. In fact, it will be nearly as bad at the competence thing as, say, all the big banks on Wall Street (which had to be rescued by the, uh, government), or all the big auto companies in Detroit (ditto), or British Petroleum, or Enron, or the savings-and-loan industry, or...

And so, despite the astonishing illogic of it all, the American people now clamor for more harm to be brought upon themselves and more of their money to be looted for the further enrichment of the wealthiest one-tenth of one percent of the population. It certainly doesn't help that the supposed "party

of the people" is every bit as much a part of the problem as anyone else, and arguably far more so given the extra measure of disingenuousness involved. From NAFTA to WTO to welfare 'reform' to the Telecommunications Bill, Wall Street never had better friend in the White House than Bill Clinton. That is, until Barack Obama simply outright changed the address of Goldman Sachs' headquarters to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

As we speak, the president and his party in Congress are busy gutting meaningful 'reform' of the shamelessly gluttonous finance industry, just as their masters have ordered them to do. And if you think Obama's bad now, wait until after November. Like Clinton in 1994, he will take the trouncing he's about to receive in the election as a signal to move even further to the right.

And thus the Reagan Occupation inches closer yet to a full-blown "mission accomplished". The middle class is on its knees and shrinking fast. Unions have been broken into irrelevance. Government, supposedly an agent of the public interest, has become a complete tool of those it is meant to monitor. Both political parties are fully owned by the oligarchy. The public has been brainwashed into seeing its allies as enemies and its enemies as allies. We have been drained of hope that any actor on the horizon can come to our rescue.

Bad policy choices by self-serving politicians? Would that 'twere only thus.

We are occupied.

**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](http://www.regressiveantidote.net)*

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