

MANUFACTURING FAILED STATES | EDWARD S. HERMAN  
WHO KILLED DAG HAMMARSKJOLD? | TREVOR GRUNDY  
LYNCHING BY LAPTOP | GREG PALAST

SEPTEMBER 2012

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 68



## THE INTERNMENT OF MARIAN PRICE

Eamonn McCann on the strange affair of the British government, a lost piece of paper and the detention of a pardoned IRA bomber



**Cover Photo:**  
Belfast street  
mural, 2012  
(Photo: Tony Sutton)

# ColdType

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# The internment of Marian Price

**Eamonn McCann** on the strange affair of the British government, a lost piece of paper and the detention of a pardoned IRA bomber

**M**arian Price was arrested on 13 May 2011 and charged with encouraging support for an illegal organisation. The charge arose from an Easter Rising commemoration in Derry city cemetery in Northern Ireland the previous month.

On a blustery day, she had reached up and held the script from which a masked man was reading the Real IRA's "Easter Message". Three days later, Marian appeared in court in Derry where, despite strenuous prosecution objections, she was granted bail.

However, she was re-arrested as she emerged from the courthouse on the basis of a document signed the previous evening by Northern Ireland secretary of state Owen Paterson and taken to Maghaberry high-security prison.

She has since been transferred to a secure ward – armed guards, barred windows, bolted doors, constant surveillance – in a Belfast hospital. She is gravely ill. She could be held for the rest of her life.

Paterson had concocted a scheme to trump the bail decision if it went against the state. The court hearing had been made a meaningless charade. Marian's continued

imprisonment reveals a similar contempt for justice and due process.

Paterson's document, reversing Marian's release from a life sentence in 1980, was based on "intelligence" – information from MI5 or MI6 which cannot be made public, on the grounds of "national security".

In Maghaberry in July, Marian was further charged with "providing property for the purposes of terrorism". The reference was to her allegedly having bought a phone which the authorities believed had subsequently been used in connection with the killing of two soldiers outside Massereene barracks in Antrim in March 2009.

## Questioned

Marian had been held for two days and questioned about this allegation in November 2009 before being released without charge. No evidence unearthed in the interim was offered in court. She was again granted bail. But, again, Paterson's order took precedence.

Marian's supporters believe that the Massereene charge was designed to associate her with a notorious crime that the authorities had been unable to connect her with.

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**The court hearing had been made a meaningless charade. Marian's continued imprisonment reveals a similar contempt for justice and due process**  
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**Marion and her sister were force-fed three times a day for the last 167 of the 200 days – forcibly restrained and a tube thrust through the throat into the stomach and liquid nutrition poured down**  
.....

They wanted to stymie a campaign for her release which was attracting support from a wide range of people who found it difficult to see what crime had actually been committed at the Easter Commemoration.

On 10 May this year, almost exactly a year from her original arrest, the charges relating to the commemoration were thrown out at Derry court.

Told that preliminary papers were still not ready, Judge McElholm declared that every citizen was entitled to a fair trial within a reasonable period and that the prosecution hadn't met this condition.

But Marian's imprisonment was still underwritten by Paterson's signature. This was the third time a court had ordered her release, and the third time the Tory minister said no.

Marian's frail condition prevented her from travelling to Derry for the hearing. Neither was she able to walk to the video suite at Hydebank Prison where she was now being held to follow the proceedings on screen.

Since then, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez, and two of the North's leading criminologists, Dr Phil Scraton of Queen's University and Dr Linda Moore of the University of Ulster, have visited Marian.

All three have called for her release, either on ground of civil rights and due process or for humanitarian reasons to do with her health.

The two academics, authors of a number of official reports into prisons in the North, concluded: "Given the concerns expressed locally and internationally regarding [her] continued detention and declining health, we urge you to release her on humanitarian grounds."

They added: "Marian Price has been imprisoned...without trial in circumstances which may amount to administrative internment and which we believe to be in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights."

Paterson turned a deaf ear. Marian remains imprisoned without a release date or a date when she can apply for release.

Marian Price, then 19, was one of nine members of the Provisional IRA convicted of planting four bombs in London, including one at the Old Bailey, in March 1973. Around 180 people were injured in the attack, mainly by flying glass. One man died from a heart attack.

The bombers included Gerry Kelly, now a Sinn Fein minister at Stormont, and Price's older sister, Dolours. Convicted on two counts of planting bombs and one of conspiracy to cause explosions, they were each given two life sentences and a determinate sentence of 20 years.

.....  
**Hunger**

Marian was freed in 1980, suffering from tuberculosis and anorexia and weighing around five stone. She and Dolours had spent 200 days on hunger strike demanding a transfer to Northern Ireland, where Republican prisoners had political status.

They were force-fed three times a day for the last 167 of the 200 days – forcibly restrained and a tube thrust through the throat into the stomach and liquid nutrition poured down. The resultant trauma was a major factor in the anorexia which led to the 1980 pardon.

From the moment she was arrested in May last year, Marian insisted that she had been released in 1980 on the basis of a Royal Prerogative of Mercy (RPM) which Paterson didn't have authority to override. Paterson claimed that the terms of the pardon did allow his intervention.

Marian's lawyers repeatedly asked for production of the pardon so its terms could be checked. They were eventually informed that the sole copy couldn't be found, had probably been shredded and at any rate had disappeared during 2010.

It is not necessary to be cynical to suspect that the document was disappeared af-

ter Marian's detention when the authorities realised that it gave Paterson no power to put her back into prison.

After her release in 1980, Marian didn't come to prominent public notice again until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, when she emerged as one of the sharpest critics of Sinn Fein leaders who had signed up to the deal.

Her Republican credentials made her a formidable advocate. Logically enough, the Northern Ireland Office will have wanted her out of the way.

Initially, parole commissioners ordered Paterson to produce the pardon. Instead, on 16 December last, his lawyers argued that inferences could be drawn from other material from the period.

Marian's representatives countered that any decision to deprive a citizen of liberty "must be properly authorised [and] is not a matter for inference and speculation".

On 30 January, the commissioners declared: "The issue is a simple one. Did the RPM cover only the 20-year determinate sentence or did it also cover the two life sentences ... The difficulty is that the secretary of state has informed the panel that the RPM cannot be located; it has either been lost or destroyed." The panel added that losing the document was "to use as neutral a word as possible... unfortunate".

They went on to say that, "There is no contemporary material exhibited... to confirm or support [Marian's] claims concerning the scope of the RPM."

But the only piece of contemporary material which could have confirmed Marian's claim was the document which Paterson insisted his department had mislaid or destroyed. Bizarrely, the commissioners "urged] the secretary of state to continue the search for the RPM."

The alternative explanation, that Paterson conspired to deprive a citizen of due process and imprison her indefinitely, will have struck the commissioners, drawn from the great and good, as utterly far-fetched

– rather than the most obvious and reasonable conclusion to be drawn from the facts.

#### When 'national security' means no evidence

The issues arising from Marian's case are not specific to Northern Ireland. In the same week that Paterson rejected the court decision to strike out the Derry charge, the coalition announced a Bill giving ministers power to order the use of secret evidence – "Closed Material Procedures" – in civil cases. This was in response to cases arising from MI5 and MI6 involvement in the "war on terror". Ministers explained that evidence in such cases couldn't be produced in open court, for fear of endangering "national security".

In April 2012, the NI Conference of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions passed by a large majority a resolution calling for Marian's release: "The trades union movement has led opposition to political violence over the past 40 years. We have repeatedly mobilised our members in protest against atrocities, whether perpetrated by Loyalist or Republican paramilitary organisations or by state forces.

"We continue to urge the use of peaceful means only to remedy the grievances which persist in our society and which impact most damagingly on the working class communities whose interests trades unions strive to represent...

"The cause of peace is never served by the denial of justice. No good cause is served by keeping Marian Price in Maghaberry prison. We call on the secretary of state to free her now." **CT**

*Eamonn McCann is a journalist and socialist activist in Derry. His web site is [eamonnmccann.com](http://eamonnmccann.com)*

*This essay was originally published in the *British Socialist Worker* –*

*<http://socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=29473>*

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 .....

# Iran and everything else

Michael Parenti on the demonisation of a nation and the West's never-ending march to war against countries that resist free-market capitalist takeover

.....  
**One must allow for a division of labor and cannot hope to fight every fight**  
.....

Occasionally individuals complain that I fail to address one subject or another. One Berkeley denizen got in my face and announced: "You leftists ought to become aware of the ecological crisis." In fact, I had written a number of things about the ecological crisis, including one called "Eco-Apocalypse." His lack of familiarity with my work did not get in the way of his presumption.

Years ago when I spoke before the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in New York, the moderator announced that she could not understand why I had "remained silent" about the attempt to defund UNESCO. Whatever else I might have been struggling with, she was convinced I should have joined with her in trying to save UNESCO (which itself really was a worthy cause).

People give me marching orders all the time. Among the most furiously insistent are those fixed on 9/11. Why haven't I said anything about 9/11? Why am I "a 9/11 denier." In fact, I have written about 9/11 and even spoke at two 9/11 conferences (Santa Cruz and New York), raising questions of my own.

Other people have been "disappointed" or "astonished" or "puzzled" that I have failed to pronounce on whatever is the issue du jour. No attention is given by such complainers to my many books, articles,

talks, and interviews that treat hundreds of subjects pertaining to political economy, culture, ideology, media, fascism, communism, capitalism, imperialism, media, ecology, political protest, history, religion, race, gender, homophobia, and other topics far too numerous to list. (For starters, visit my website: [www.michaelparenti.org](http://www.michaelparenti.org))

But one's own energy, no matter how substantial, is always finite. One must allow for a division of labor and cannot hope to fight every fight.

.....  
**Paying attention**

Recently someone asked when was I going to "pay some attention" to Iran. Actually I have spoken about Iran in a number of interviews and talks –not to satisfy demands made by others but because I myself was moved to do so. In the last decade, over a five year period, I was repeatedly interviewed by English Radio Tehran. My concern about Iran goes back many years. Just the other day, while clearing out some old files, I came across a letter I had published over 33 years ago in the *New York Times* (10 May 1979), reproduced here exactly as it appeared in the *Times*:

**To the Editor of the New York Times:**

*For 25 years the Shah of Iran tortured and murdered many thousands of dissident workers, students, peasants and intellectuals. For*

the most part, the US press ignored these dreadful happenings and portrayed the Shah as a citadel of stability and an enlightened modernizer.

Thousands more were killed by the Shah's police and military during the popular uprisings of this past year. Yet these casualties received only passing mention even though Iran was front-page news for several months. And from 1953 to 1978 millions of other Iranians suffered the silent oppression of poverty and malnutrition while the Shah, his family, and his generals grew ever richer.

Now the furies of revolution have lashed back, thus far executing about 200 of the Shah's henchmen – less than what the Savak would arrest and torture on a slow weekend. And now the US press has suddenly become acutely concerned, keeping a careful account of the “victims,” printing photos of firing squads and making repeated references to the “repulsion” and “outrage” felt by anonymous “middle-class” Iranians who apparently are endowed with finer sensibilities than the mass of ordinary people who bore the brunt of the Shah's repression. At the same time, American commentators are quick to observe that the new regime is merely replacing one repression with another.

So it has always been with the recording of revolutions: the mass of nameless innocents victimized by the ancien régime go uncounted and unnoticed, but when the not-so-innocent murderers are brought to revolutionary justice, the business-owned press is suddenly filled with references to “brutality” and “cruelty.”

That anyone could equate the horrors of the Shah's regime with the ferment, change and struggle that is going on in Iran today is a tribute to the biases of the US press, a press that has learned to treat the atrocities of the US-supported right-wing regimes with benign neglect while casting a stern self-righteous eye on the popular revolutions that challenge such regimes.

**Michael Parenti**  
Washington, D.C.

There is one glaring omission in this mis-  
sive: I focused only on the press without  
mentioning how the White House and lead-  
ing members of Congress repeatedly had  
hailed the Shah as America's sturdy ally –  
while US oil companies merrily plundered  
Iran's oil (with a good slice of the spoils go-  
ing to the Shah and his henchmen).

A few years before the 1979 upheaval, I  
was teaching a graduate course at Cornell  
University. There I met several Iranian grad-  
uate students who spoke with utter rage  
about the Shah and his US-supported Savak  
secret police. They told of friends being tor-  
tured and disappeared. They could not find  
enough damning words to vent their fury.  
These students came from the kind of well-  
off Persian families one would have expect-  
ed to support the Shah. (You don't make  
it from Tehran to Cornell graduate school  
without some money in the family.)

All I knew about the Shah at that time  
came from the US mainstream media. But  
after listening to these students I began to  
think that this Shah fellow was not the ad-  
mirably benign leader and modernizer ev-  
eryone was portraying in the news.

**Revolution betrayed**

The Shah's subsequent overthrow in the  
1979 revolution was something to celebrate.  
Unfortunately the revolution soon was be-  
trayed by the theocratic militants who took  
hold of events and created their Islamic Re-  
public of Iran. These religious reactionaries  
set about to torture and eradicate thousands  
of young Iranian radicals. They made war  
upon secular leftists and “decadent” West-  
ern lifestyles, as they set about establishing  
a grim and corrupt theocracy.

US leaders and media had no critical  
words about the slaughter of leftist rev-  
olutionaries in Iran. If anything, they were  
quietly pleased. However, they remained  
hostile toward the Islamic regime. Why so?  
Regimes that kill revolutionaries and egal-  
itarian reformists do not usually incite dis-

.....  
**After listening to  
these students  
I began to think  
that this Shah  
fellow was not  
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**To strike enough fear into the public, our leaders tell us that, like Iraq, Iran “might” develop weapons of mass destruction. And like Iraq, Iran is lead by people who hate America and want to destroy us and Israel**  
.....

pleasure from the White House. If anything, the CIA and the Pentagon and the other imperial operatives who make the world safe for the Fortune 500 look most approvingly upon those who torture and murder Marxists and other leftists. Indeed, such counter-revolutionaries swiftly become the recipients of generous amounts of US aid.

Why then did US leaders denounce and threaten Iran and continue to do so to this day? The answer is: Iran’s Islamic Republic has other features that did not sit well with the western imperialists. Iran was – and still is – a “dangerously” independent nation, unwilling to become a satellite to the US global empire, unlike more compliant countries. Like Iraq under Saddam Hussein, Iran, with boundless audacity, gave every impression of wanting to use its land, labor, markets, and capital as it saw fit. Like Iraq – and Libya and Syria – Iran was committing the sin of economic nationalism. And like Iraq, Iran remained unwilling to establish cozy relations with Israel.

But this isn’t what we ordinary Americans are told. When talking to us, a different tact is taken by US opinion-makers and policymakers. To strike enough fear into the public, our leaders tell us that, like Iraq, Iran “might” develop weapons of mass destruction. And like Iraq, Iran is lead by people who hate America and want to destroy us and Israel.

And like Iraq, Iran “might” develop into a regional power leading other nations in the Middle East down the “Hate America” path. So our leaders conclude for us: it might be necessary to destroy Iran in an all-out aerial war.

.....  
**Axis of Evil**

It was President George W. Bush who in January 2002 cited Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as an “axis of evil.” Iran exports terrorism and “pursues” weapons of mass destruction. Sooner or later this axis would have to be dealt with in the severest way,

Bush insisted.

These official threats and jeremiads are intended to leave us with the impression that Iran is not ruled by “good Muslims.” The “good Muslims” – as defined by the White House and the State Department – are the reactionary extremists and feudal tyrants who ride high in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirate, Bahrain, and other countries that provide the United States with military bases, buy large shipments of US arms, vote as Washington wants in the United Nations, enter free trade agreements with the Western capitalist nations, and propagate a wide-open deregulated free-market economy.

The “good Muslims” invite the IMF and the western corporations to come in and help themselves to the country’s land, labor, markets, industry, natural resources and anything else the international plutocracy might desire.

Unlike the “good Muslims,” the “bad Muslims” of Iran take an anti-imperialist stance. They try to get out from under the clutches of the US global imperium. For this, Iran may yet pay a heavy price. Think of what has been happening to Iraq, Libya, and now Syria.

For its unwillingness to throw itself open to Western corporate pillage, Iran is already being subjected to heavy sanctions imposed by the United States and its allies. Sanctions hurt the ordinary population most of all. Unemployment and poverty increase. The government is unable to maintain human services. The public infrastructure begins to deteriorate and evaporate: privatization by attrition.

Iran has pursued an enriched uranium program, same as any nation has the right to do. The enrichment has been low-level for peaceful use, not the kind necessary for nuclear bombs. Iranian leaders, both secular and theocratic have been explicit about the useless horrors of nuclear weaponry and nuclear war.

Appearing on the Charlie Rose show

when he was visiting the USA, Iranian president Ahmadinejad pointed out that nuclear weapons have never saved anyone. The Soviet Union had nuclear weapons; was it saved? he asked. India and Pakistan have nuclear weapons; have they found peace and security? Israel has nuclear weapons: has it found peace and security? And the United States itself has nuclear weapons and nuclear fleets patrolling the world and it seems obsessively preoccupied with being targeted by real or imagined enemies. Ahmadinejad, the wicked one, sounded so much more rational and humane than Hillary Clinton snarling her tough-guy threats at this or that noncompliant nation.

(Parenthetically, we should note that the Iranians possibly might try to develop a nuclear strike force – not to engage in a nuclear war that would destroy Iran but to develop a deterrent against aerial destruction from the west. The Iranians, like the North Koreans, know that the western nuclear powers have never attacked any country that is armed with nuclear weapons.)

.....  
**Impossible task**

I once heard some Russian commentators say that Iran is twice as large as Iraq, both in geography and in population; it would take hundreds of thousands of NATO troops and great cost in casualties and enormous sums of money to invade and try to subdue such a large country, an impossible task and certain disaster for the United States.

But the plan is not to invade, just to destroy the country and its infrastructure through aerial warfare. The US Air Force eagerly announced that it has 10,000 targets in Iran pinpointed for attack and destruction. Yugoslavia is cited as an example of a nation that was destroyed by unanswerable aerial attacks, without the loss of a single US soldier.

I saw the destruction in Serbia shortly after the NATO bombings stopped: bridges, utilities, rail depots, factories, schools, tele-

vision and radio stations, government-built hotels, hospitals, and housing projects – a destruction carried out with utter impunity, all this against a social democracy that refused to submit to a free-market capitalist takeover.

The message is clear. It has already been delivered to Yugoslavia, Libya, Syria, and many other countries around the world: overthrow your reform-minded, independent, communitarian government; become a satellite to the global corporate free-market system, or we will pound you to death and reduce you to a severe level of privatization and poverty.

Not all the US military is of one mind regarding war with Iran. While the Air Force can hardly contain itself, the Army and Navy seem lukewarm. Former Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, actually denounced the idea of waging destruction upon “80 million Iranians, all different individuals.”

The future does not look good for Iran. That country is slated for an attack of serious dimensions, supposedly in the name of democracy, “humanitarian war,” the struggle against terrorism, and the need to protect America and Israel from some future nuclear threat.

Sometimes it seems as if US ruling interests perpetrate crimes and deceptions of all sorts with a frequency greater than we can document and expose. So if I don’t write or speak about one or another issue, keep in mind, it may be because I am occupied with other things, or I simply have neither the energy nor the resources. Sometimes too, I think, it is because I get too heavy of heart.

**CT**

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*Michael Parenti is an internationally known award-winning author and lecturer. He is one of the nation's leading progressive political analysts. His highly informative and entertaining books and talks have reached a wide range of audiences in North America and abroad. <http://www.michaelparenti.org>*

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**The message is clear. It has already been delivered to Yugoslavia, Libya, Syria, and many other countries around the world**  
 .....

# Israel rewarded for obstructing peace

Europe seems to be rewarding Israel for its belligerence, writes **Jonathan Cook**

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**Europe's turnabout was revealed the same day that Israel announced it was planning to destroy eight villages in the West Bank**  
.....

**I**srael has barely put a foot right with the international community since its attack on Gaza more than three years ago provoked global revulsion.

The right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu has serially defied and insulted foreign leaders, including US President Barack Obama; given the settlers virtual free rein; blocked peace talks with the Palestinians; intimidated and marginalised human rights groups, UN agencies and even the Israeli courts; and fuelled a popular wave of Jewish ethnic and religious chauvinism against the country's Palestinian minority, foreign workers and asylum seekers.

No wonder, then, that in poll after poll Israel ranks as one of the countries with the most negative influence on international affairs.

And yet, the lower Israel sinks in public estimation, the more generous western leaders are in handing out aid and special favours to their wayward ally. The past few weeks have been particularly shameless.

It was revealed recently that the European Union had approved a massive upgrade in Israel's special trading status, strengthening economic ties in dozens of different fields. The decision was a reversal of a freeze imposed in the wake of the Gaza attack of winter 2008.

Amnesty International pointed out that the EU was violating its own commitments

in the European Neighbourhood Policy, which requires that, as a preferred trading partner, Israel respect international human rights, democratic values and its humanitarian obligations. Equally troubling, the EU is apparently preparing to upend what had looked like an emerging consensus in favour of banning settlement products – the only meaningful punishment the EU has threatened to inflict on Israel.

With some irony, Europe's turnabout was revealed the same day that Israel announced it was planning to destroy eight villages in the West Bank, expelling their 1,500 Palestinian inhabitants, to make way for a military firing zone. Four more villages are also under threat.

The villagers' expulsion was further confirmation that Israel is conducting a "forced transfer" of Palestinians, as recent EU reports have warned, from the nearly two-thirds of the West Bank under its control.

Europe's only real leverage over Israel is economic: business between the two already accounts for about 60 per cent of Israeli trade, worth nearly 30 billion euros. But rather than penalising Israel for repeatedly stomping over the flimsiest prospects for a two-state solution, the EU is handsomely rewarding it.

It is not alone. The United States is also showering economic benefits and military goodies on Israel, in addition to the billions

of dollars in aid it hands over every year.

President Obama has signed a new law greatly expanding military cooperation with Israel and awarded \$70 million – on top of an existing \$210 million donation – for it to develop the Iron Dome missile defence system; the Pentagon arm-twisted Lockheed Martin into collaborating with Israeli firms in revamping the new F-35 fighter jet; and Congress approved a four-year extension of US loan guarantees to make it cheaper for Israel to borrow money on the international markets.

**Too miserly**

Meanwhile, Obama’s rival for the presidency, Mitt Romney, has criticised Obama for being too miserly towards Israel. As he stood shoulder to shoulder with Netanyahu in Jerusalem, Romney issued a press release suggesting that his administration would spend even more US taxpayers’ dollars on Israel’s missile defence system.

All this munificence is coming from the two dominant parties to the Quartet – the international group comprising the US, the EU, the United Nations and Russia. The Quartet’s role is to champion the very two-state solution Israel is striving so strenuously to destroy.

In a further irony, the World Bank issued its latest report on the state of the Palestinian economy, concluding that its situation was so dire the Palestinian government-in-waiting, the Palestinian Authority, could not be considered ready for independent statehood. The report noted that the Palestinians were heavily reliant on foreign donors and that local private businesses, agriculture and manufacturing were all in decline.

With feigned obtuseness, the World Bank recommended that the PA increase exports to foreign markets, glossing over the biggest impediment to such trade: the severe restrictions imposed by Israel on the movement of people and goods into and out of Palestinian territory.

As the Quartet has grown ever more silent in the face of Israeli transgressions, US politicians have stepped in with cynical manoeuvres to shore up Israel’s intransigence and destroy any hopes of a peaceful solution.

Last week, for example, US lawmakers were reported to have put their names to a congressional resolution recognising the recent report of Israel’s controversial Levy Committee. The report concluded that Israel was not occupying the West Bank and that consequently the settlements there are legal.

The topsy-turvy character of international diplomacy was acknowledged by a recently retired British ambassador to the Middle East. Tom Philips, who served in Israel and Saudi Arabia, writes in the latest edition of *Prospect* magazine that Europe and the US need to use “big carrots and big sticks” if there is to be any hope of reviving the peace process.

But Mr Philips believes the US is “genetically indisposed” to forcing change on Israel. He proposes instead choking off donor money to the PA so as “to put the full weight of the occupation on Israel, a burden I do not think they would be able to endure”.

In another of the rich ironies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it now seems even some diplomats are concluding that the Palestinians will be best served by destroying the fledgling government that was supposed to be the harbinger of their independence.

The real obstacles to peace – Israel, its occupation and western complicity – might then be laid bare for all to see. **CT**

*Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His latest books are “Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East” (Pluto Press) and “Disappearing Palestine: Israel’s Experiments in Human Despair” (Zed Books). His website is [www.jkcook.net](http://www.jkcook.net)*

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**Obama’s rival for the presidency, Mitt Romney, has criticised Obama for being too miserly towards Israel**  
 .....

# Who killed Dag Hammarskjöld?

Archbishop claims UN secretary general was murdered in mysterious air crash in Zambia in 1961, writes **Trevor Grundy**

.....  
**They believed they had seen Dag Hammarskjöld's plane being shot at in the sky**  
.....

**T**he former head of the Church of Sweden, Archbishop Karl Gustav Hammar, is convinced that the Secretary General of the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld did not die in an air accident on the night of 18 September 1961 a few miles outside Ndola Airport in the then northern Rhodesia but that he was murdered.

“He was murdered! The rumours have been there from the beginning, but have been dismissed as sheer conspiracy theories associated with accidents involving important persons,” he told me.

This contentious assertion from one of Europe’s best respected theologians came as an enabling committee chaired by the former trade union leader Lord Lea of Crondall (the committee includes the former Secretary General of the Commonwealth, HE Chief Emeka Anyaoku) announced the setting up of a commission of jurists to inquire into the cause of the death of Hammarskjöld, the second UN Secretary-General from 1953 until his tragic death on 18 September 1961.

The members of the commission of jurists include Sir Stephen Sedley of the UK (Chair): Ambassador Hans Corell of Sweden: Justice Richard Goldstone of South Africa and Judge Wilhelmina Thomassen of The Netherlands. It is proposed that the commission of jurists should review all the new evidence that has emerged about Hammarskjöld’s death to determine whether there is a case for re-open-



ing the United Nations inquiry of 1961-1962. **The late Dag Hammarskjöld - his memory (and death) won't go away. (Courtesy of the Hammarskjöld Foundation, Sweden)**

If evidence is found to warrant re-opening the UN Inquiry, it will be presented to the UN, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 1759 (XV11) which requests the secretary general to inform the General Assembly of “any new evidence that many come to his attention.”

“Work has already started,” Lord Lea told me. “I don’t want to speculate what this will cost. We hope it will be funded by a chari-



Damaged trees show the descent angle of The Albertina as it crashed. Had it been shot down it would most likely have plunged into the ground rather than the apparent controlled descent apparent from this photo (Picture: Adrian Begg)/

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Why was a playing card, said to be the Ace of Spades, found tucked into the dead secretary-general's collar?  
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Lord (Douglas Hurd, the former British Foreign Secretary. He said that the British and French regarded Dag Hammarskjold as “a safe pair of hands.” (Picture: Trevor Grundy).

table organization. It is obviously a very important undertaking.”

Added HE Chief Anyaoku: “I think it would be of very great interest to many in the Commonwealth (54 countries, most of them once part of the now defunct British Empire) to clear the air on this question, which has been in the background for such a long time, with such a distinguished commission of jurists.”

And Archbishop Hammar – he spent a week in Zambia last December speaking to people who said they witnessed what took place on the night of 17 September 1961 outside Ndola and who told him they believed they had seen Dag Hammarskjold’s plane being shot at in the sky – told me: “I think it is finally time to clear this matter up.”

Flying on a UN mission to try and bring peace to the war-ravaged Congo soon after its independence from Belgium in 1960, Dag Hammarskjold’s Swedish-owned plane crashed near Ndola Airport in the British Protectorate of Northern Rhodesia in the early hours of Monday 18 September, 1961. All but one of the passengers and crew were killed. The lone survivor later died in hospital. Eight months earlier, the Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba had been assassinated in Katanga, on the other side of the Zambian border, which had illegally declared its secession from the freshly-independent Congo.

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**Vital questions**

Questions were immediately asked about the crash and included:

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## A DEATH IN AFRICA

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**Not everyone believes there was a conspiracy or a cover up – just one more tragic, unsolved death in Africa**  
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- Why did the sole survivor say the plane blew up before it cashed?

- Why did some local residents report seeing a smaller second plane attack a larger one that night?

- Why was the wreckage not found officially for 15 hours though only 8 miles from the airport?

- Why was a playing card, said to be the Ace of Spades, found tucked into the dead secretary-general's collar?

- Why did the authorities only arrive (officially) at the crash site after 15:00 on the 18th September?

In the view of the enabling committee, which includes the British academic Susan Williams who spent her early years in Zambia and who is the author of the book *Who Killed Hammar skjold? The UN, the Cold War and White Supremacy in Africa* (Hurst & Company, London 2011) these questions have never been successfully answered, despite two investigations held in the British-run Central African Federation (CAF) and a UN Commission of Inquiry in 1961-1962 which reached an open verdict about the cause of the statesman's death.

Explaining the reasons why the commission had been set up and why it is timely, Lord Lea said that there is prima facie evidence from Williams's book, and from other sources, that there is new information about the events leading to the crash and the crash itself that ought to be evaluated. He asked, "Why are we doing this?" and answered, "Because we believe that the whole of the truth, in significant respects, has yet to be told. There is now, I think, a following wind behind us is setting up the Commission at this time."

Dr Hammar told me that during a visit to Zambia last December he spoke to several people who witnessed the crash.

"I was introduced to people who were eye witnesses to what took place on the night of 17-18 September in Ndola. One of them was Johnny Ngongo, working as a charcoal burner close to the crash site. He told me

that together with a friend he saw a burning plane slanting heavily before hitting the ground with one of the wings on fire. He believed that even though he didn't witness what caused the plane to crash itself, the plane was burning because it was shot down. The second witness, Safeli Mulenga, saw the plane catch fire in mid air while circling over Ndola for the third time. Mme. Kamkasa, the third witness I spoke to, told me that her late husband had called her out of their house after seeing a big plane being shot at. She saw for herself two planes returning to Ndola airport."

Hammar said he never believed the theory that it was an ordinary air accident caused by pilot error. "Too many stakeholders in the on-going Congo crises hated Hammar skjold and wanted him dead. This was during the Cold War and the American CIA and the British M16, together with their counterpart in the Soviet Union, had a powerful presence. This was also the era of de-colonization, in which former colonies in Africa gained independence while eastern and western powers were seeking new ways of influencing the new African states. It was also about the Belgian, French and British struggle to maintain economic influence over the rich natural resources in the former colonies, with the help of mercenaries. Last, but not least, it was about the racist white minority in the Central African Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland who tried to create an apartheid state similar to South Africa. It was this regime that controlled Ndola Airport and wanted to see an independent Katanga, which was the main issue in the Congo crisis, only 10 kms away from its border. It was those who hated Hammar skjold the most for his support to African independence and his resistance against sustained European economical power in Africa."

Henning Melber, Executive Director of The Dag Hammar skjold Foundation in Uppsala, Sweden, told me, "Susan's book was very important to this new initiative. While the title promises something the book does

not answer, it presents sufficient evidence which merits further investigation. The aim (of the judicial inquiry) is to have another – maybe final – effort to find out what really happened. It might be too late, but better late than never. For too long the matter and all the disturbing evidence had been swept under the carpet. It is overdue to have another look.”

Last September, historians from America, Belgium India and Britain met at London University for a one-day conference organized by the Institute of Commonwealth Studies to discuss the death of Hammarskjold. Like Susan Williams, none of the academics was able to give a convincing answer about whether his death was an accident or the result of Cold War intrigue in the mineral rich Congo.

During four years of research, Williams, who is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, examined previously classified documents. In Zambia, she interviewed African witnesses who said that they definitely saw a second plane in the sky shortly before Hammarskjold’s plane crashed – evidence that was discounted by the original Rhodesian Commission of Inquiry. She also found evidence that post mortem photographs may have been doctored and she interviewed a former American intelligence officer (based in Cyprus in 1961) who said he heard a recording of a pilot shooting down Hammarskjold’s plane.

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**Hated by settlers**

In a review of Williams’s book which I wrote for Scotland’s *Sunday Herald*, I wrote, “Hammarskjold was hated by European settlers in Central and Southern Africa because of the UN’s support for the newly – independent, quasi communistic Congolese government based in Leopoldville. Separatists, led by Moise Tshombe in the copper-rich Katanga province, had revolted against central government with the help of Belgian, South African, American and British mining in-

terests. As a result the Congolese asked the Russians for help. Political tinkers, financial tailors, mercenary soldiers and spies in their hundreds descended on Central Africa.”

During a radio talk on the BBC last year, the writer John le Carre (author of *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* and *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*) said that a new generation of readers around the world has an insatiable appetite for what took place in Africa and elsewhere during the Cold War.

“We have,” he said, “an audience that knew the Cold War and wants to revisit it. Then we have the new audience that knows nothing about the Cold War. Then there is the third general audience that is deeply dismayed by the performance of our intelligence service which feels alienated both from government policy and foreign policy.” I believe the same separate but inter-related audiences should read Susan Williams’s book which seeks an answer to perhaps an unanswerable question – who or what killed Hammarskjold?

But not everyone believes there was a conspiracy or a cover up – just one more tragic, unsolved death in Africa.

The distinguished South African historian JRT Wood (author of *The Welensky Papers, So Far and No Further and A Matter of Weeks Rather than Months*) told me, “I do not know of anything to dispute the original finding that the aircraft was flying too low and crashed in line with the runway but seven miles out. The reason for the wreck not being found was because the tower had assumed at midnight that it had gone back to the Congo. The aircraft crew had over-flown their hours and were flying in radio silence and without lights. Intercepting the aircraft on a dark night without radar would have been so difficult that it can be ruled out. Sergeant Julian, the survivor, was so badly burnt that he was incoherent. There were expended bullets found but they had not been fired from a weapon. They were pistol rounds which had cooked off in the heat. I believe that the enquiry is simply a waste of

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**The plan was for “rebel” Katanga leader Tshombe to hold private talks with Dag Hammarskjold with a view to returning the copper-rich province to central Congolese government control**  
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“My view about the crash is still that it was a tragic case of pilot error but I’m open to persuasion if new evidence shows otherwise”  
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time but for some reason conspiracy theories never lack oxygen.”

Following the publication of *Who Killed Hammarskjold*, several new and important findings relating to the crash have been brought into the light of day. They include colour photographs of the crash site that were taken by Adrian Begg, who in 1961 was a 20-year old officer in the Northern Rhodesia Police. I worked alongside Begg at the *Standard* in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania where we were employed as feature writers. Begg lives in Australia and he recently wrote a fascinating account of his role in the discovery of Dag Hammarskjold’s body.

He said that 17 September 1961 started as a normal, quiet Sunday shift at Ndola’s Central Police Station. But, “it soon became obvious that there was something big on the go. Officers were being called in from home and in the early afternoon I was sent with a squad of other officers to secure Ndola Airport and put in security lockdown in readiness for VIP arrivals. The word quickly spread among us that Dag Hammarskjold was expected.”

He went on: “My job was to ensure the airport car park, outside the perimeter fence, and at one point I was ordered to stop the waiting media posse from following Katanga’s rebel leader Moise Tshombe, who was being taken to a nearby government residence to await Hammarskjold’s arrival.”

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**Meeting rebel leader**

The plan was for “rebel” Katanga leader Tshombe to hold private talks with Dag Hammarskjold with a view to returning the copper-rich province to central Congolese government control. The meeting would have been between the two men with no interference from leaders of the white-run Central African Federation or the British Government in charge of CAF since its formation in 1953.

Begg continued, “As Tshombe’s car swept past, I used the simple tactic of driving a po-

lice Land Rover across the road, forming an effective blockade which brought the media convoy to a screeching halt. It wasn’t a popular move – a couple of the journalists were mates of mine. It was a long boring wait. Nobody seemed to have any idea what time Hammarskjold was due, and very little information was filtering through to those of us on the ground. A plane landed that we thought must be his but we learned that it was the British politician, Lord Lansdowne, who had also (like Tshombe) come from Leopoldville.

“Then, around midnight local time, another plane arrived over the airport. From where I was standing near the boundary fence, parallel with the runway, it was low enough to see the cabin and the navigation lights all of which were on. It headed away towards the west. Some time later the runway lights were turned off and a senior officer, Supt. Bob Read, came out of the airport building to tell the police on duty outside that we could stand down. We asked him why the plane hadn’t landed and he just shrugged and said that apparently Hammarskjold had changed his mind and gone elsewhere which, we learned later, was the official line set by Lord Alport, the British High Commissioner (based in Salisbury, southern Rhodesia) who had taken charge of the arrangements that day.”

Begg returned to the Ndola Central Police Station and discussed the day’s events with police colleagues. “Marius van Wyk, who had been on security duty at the house where Tshombe was staying, arrived somewhat excited about what he had seen – a bright flash that lit up the sky soon after Hammarskjold’s plane flew over. This started us speculating that something had happened to the plane.”

Begg rang Ndola Airport to report what had been seen. “When I failed to get through, another officer, Keith Pennock and I drove to the airport which was then in darkness and apparently deserted (it was after 3 am). We went to the control tower, which was open, and found the radio operator asleep. We

woke him, told him of our concerns and he said we should tell John Williams, the airport manager, who had just returned from an overseas holiday and was staying at the Rhodes Hotel in Ndola. We rang the hotel but got no answer, so Pennock and I then drove there. Williams wasn't overjoyed at being woken up and I still recall his exact words when we told him what had been seen, and our concern that this might mean that the plane had crashed: 'That just doesn't happen. VIP planes don't crash.' He told us nothing could be done in the middle of the night and there would be no point ordering an air search before first light.

"Did Williams know more than he was letting on that night? I don't think so. Obviously he was irritable at being roused from his bed by two very junior police officers, but my memory is of a man grappling with a situation that was spiraling out of his control. I believe he genuinely wanted to believe, as he told Keith Pennock and me, that the plane would turn up safely on the ground somewhere in the morning."

Begg wasn't happy and phoned the police in nearby Mufalira (on the Zambian Copperbelt). He suggested the station there send out a road patrol to search. "Then we phoned one of our senior officers to report developments and to get his permission for Ndola police also to send out a road patrol. Between them, the patrols would cover the road between Ndola and Mufalira and hopefully, might be able to spot burning wreckage."

**Junior officers**

It should be remembered that Adrian Begg and Keith Pennock were very junior officers, "so we were taking quite a lot on ourselves in going against the advice of an experienced airport manager that there was no cause to concern."

To this day, Begg says that he regrets police patrols failed to find the crash site that night "as we might have been able to save

the life of Harold Julian (the sole survivor) who was still alive at that time and perhaps even Hammarskjold himself, who according to some sources, may have survived for a short time after the crash."

Asked if he thought the new inquiry would reveal – as Archbishop Hammar believes that Hammarskjold was murdered – Begg told me, "My view about the crash is still that it was a tragic case of pilot error but I'm open to persuasion if new evidence shows otherwise. I can't accept the theory that there was an attempt to hijack the plane or divert it to Kolwezi – even a dumb bunch of mercenaries and copper miners should have been able to work out that any 'agreement' made with the Secretary-General under duress while he was being held as a kidnap victim would hardly have had any validity! As for the "second aircraft" the most likely explanation remains that what people saw was the high tail light on the DC6 which would have appeared to be following the plane. The departure of Lansdowne's plane a few minutes earlier was also, I think, the cause of some confusion. But all that aside, here are still a lot of unanswered questions which perhaps a new inquiry could find answers for."

These clear memories from a respected journalist are of value in any new UN inquiry into the Swedish diplomat's death/assassination/murder.

**Not talking**

I asked Lord Lea to talk about some of the evidence that had come to light since 1961 but he didn't want to talk about that. I asked if it would cost British taxpayers anything. He said it would not. He hoped a suitable charitable organization could be found to meet travelling expenses etc.

Our short "interview" ended, leaving me wondering if JRT Wood could be right – Conspiracy theories never lack oxygen.

But . . . In 1998 during the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, Reuters reported that Chair-

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**The writer went on to say that the most "damning report" refers to a meeting between M15, Special Operations Executive, the CIA and SAIMR**  
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## A DEATH IN AFRICA

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**The British Foreign Office denies that London was involved in any plot to kill the Swedish diplomat**  
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man Archbishop Desmond Tutu released documents which suggested a “Western plot” behind Hammarskjold’s death. The senior Anglican cleric decided to release the documents, although he could not verify their authenticity.

Marlene Burger, writing in the Johannesburg-based *Mail & Guardian* breathed a sigh of relief. “For once, “she wrote under a headline CIA and M15 linked to Hammarskjold’s death, “apartheid’s dirty tricks brigade appears to have been falsely accused of involvement in the murder.”

The story is worth telling at some length.

It was first reported by Reuters. A year later, there appeared in the USA magazine *Probe* (March –April 1999 Vol 6 No3) an article by Lisa Pease entitled “Midnight in the Congo”. More recently, the London *Progressive Journal*’s John Green brought Operation Celeste to life again in an article called CIA and M15 linked to assassination in the Congo in Sixties.

Burger’s report begins, “Documents the Truth Commission stumbled across linking South African agents to the airline death of UN Chief Dag Hammarskjold, also reveal that the project was hatched at the highest levels of the CIA and M15. The alleged plot to assassinate United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold 37 years ago was the brainchild of at least two British security agencies – M15 and the Special Operations Executive – and the CIA, top secret documents show. For once, apartheid’s dirty tricks brigade appears to have been falsely accused of involvement in the murder. “

The writer told how a series of messages between a commodore and a captain, whose names had been expunged by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, point to a plot hatched on South African soil by a group which had access to vast amounts of money and the ability to muster mercenary forces to protect international investment in turbulent post-colonial Africa.

The messages, said Burger, all on letterheads of the South African Institute for Mari-

time Research (SAIMR), cover the period from July 1960 to September 17 1961 – the day on which Hammarskjold’s aircraft crashed while approaching the airport at Ndola.

In addition to outlining Operation Celeste (as it was called in the communications) the documents implicate the SAIMR and international intelligence agencies in the death of Patrice Lumumba, the Congolese nationalist who was dubbed by London, Brussels and Washington a rabid communist. Lumumba was deposed in September 1960 and shot dead while escaping from custody in the breakaway Congolese Province of Katanga in 1961.

She wrote: “The documents, found by a (unnamed) truth commission researcher investigating an apparently unrelated matter, implicate the then CIA Chief Allen Dulles in Operation Celeste. They also claim that the explosives used for the bomb that downed the aircraft were supplied by a Belgium mining conglomerate, Union Miniere. The company had extensive interests in copper-rich Katanga and is known to have backed Tshombe’s use of mercenaries, including the group led by South Africa’s Colonel “Mad Mike“ Hoare.”

The writer went on to say that the most “damning report” refers to a meeting between M15, Special Operations Executive, the CIA and SAIMR at which it was recorded that Dulles “agrees . . . Dag is becoming troublesome and . . . should be removed.” According to the documents, Dulles “has promised full co-operation from his people . . . Dag will be in Leopoldville on or about 12/9?61. The aircraft ferrying him will be a DC6 in the livery of (Swedish company) Transair.”

Then this.

“The captain is ordered to ‘see that Leo airport (Leopoldville, (now Kinshasa) as well as Elizabethville (now Lubumbashi) is covered by your people, as I want his removal to be handled more efficiently than was Patrice (Lumumba).’ ”

Burger’s report continues, “The first message is dated July 12, 1960, less than two

weeks after the Congo became independent: 'Head Office is rather concerned with developments in the Congo, particularly the Haute Katanga, where it appears the local strongman Moïse Tshombe, supported by Union Minière, is planning a secession.'

The writer claims to "have it on good authority that the UNO (United Nations Organisation) will want to get its greedy paws on the province." He says he has been instructed to ask the captain "to send as many agents as you think would be needed to bolster Congo red's unit in case of future problems?"

She does not explain what "Congo red's unit" is or what it refers to. And what does this mean - "The writer claims to have it on good authority that the UNO will want to get its greedy paws on the province?"

Civil war broke out in the Congo four days after independence and Tshombe announced Katanga's secession of July 11. The commodore records this in his next message, sent on July 15, the day UN troops arrived at Lumumba's request. The next section reads like an extract from Frederick Forsyth's book, *The Day of the Jackal*.

"The next orders inform the captain: 'Your contact with CIA is Dwight. He will be residing at Hotel Leopold 11 in Elizabethville from now until November 1, 1961. The password is: How is Celeste these days? His response should be: She's recovering nicely apart from the cough.'"

Burger's report continues, "Hammar-skjold's death appears to have been part of an attempt to prevent Katanga's mineral wealth from falling under communist control."

**Dismissed by CIA and MI5**

Burger points out that all of these "stumbled across" documents had been dismissed by the CIA and MI5. And where are they now, these documents that lay blame for a great man's death at the door of two of the world's most important secret service agencies - the CIA and MI5? A BBC report (August 19, 1998) said that the documents pertaining to

Operation Celeste had been turned over to Nelson Mandela and the (then) South African Justice Minister, Dullah Omar "who will," said the report, "decide what further action should be taken."

What action was taken? Who has the documents? Mandela is 94. What will happen to them when he dies - given that he actually has them? Why the secrecy?

The British Foreign Office denies that London was involved in any plot to kill the Swedish diplomat. And while Susan Williams is unable to point to anyone with a smoking gun in his/her hand, she leaves readers of her book with the distinct feeling that mercenaries in the employ of Union Minière and white politicians hoping to extend for several decades white rule in central Africa were behind the plot to kill Hammar-skjold.

**Foreign secretary speaks**

At a London conference held on 2 September 2011 to mark the 50th anniversary of Hammar-skjold's death, a former British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd (now Baron Hurd of Westwell), painted an interesting verbal portrait of the UN Secretary General whom he met several times. In the 1950s after the Suez Crisis, Hurd said that at the time of Hammar-skjold's appointment at UN Secretary general in 1953 he was regarded by the British and the French as a safe pair of hands." He was expected to be a calming influence on the organization - "a calming, intelligent influence as one would expect from a senior Swedish diplomat."

But something happened to the man. He became a strong supporter of African nationalism and an enemy of what Kwame Nkrumah used to call "neo-colonialism, the last stage of imperialism" which saw black leaders replace white leaders in former colonies but to what long-lasting benefit to Africa, what advantage to filthy poor indigenous peoples?

Hurd told an audience made up of academics and men and women once closely

**Key questions about Hammar-skjold's death have never been satisfactorily resolved, despite several inquiries including a UN Commission of Inquiry in 1961-1962 which reached an open verdict**

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## A DEATH IN AFRICA

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**If ever the  
Hammar skjold  
saga is turned  
into a Hollywood  
blockbuster, the  
opening scene  
could be chilling**  
.....

associated with Africa, that after a while “it became clear that another aspect of his (Hammar skjold’s) character was coming to the fore. I remember my boss Pierson Dixon making a comparison which often people made in those days where he talked about Hammar skjold as having a pontifical manner. And that was not a word chosen at random. It was a suggestion that the Secretary General of the United Nations was gradually working himself into the position of a pope. That is to say he was gradually assuming, not precisely infallibility, but an assumption in his own mind that he had a mission: and the mission was to uphold the role and importance and integrity of the United Nations and the secretary general was the high priest.”

He said:, “He had that sort of inner strength which comes to people who have a conviction that they have heard voices as Joan of Arc did. They are inspired. They have a mission. They have a vocation. He was determined to make the office of Secretary General something more important and more interesting, more than his predecessor Trygve Halvdan Lie (1945-1952) had sought to do. Hammar skjold persuaded himself that he had a particular mission and that rather altered the way in which you handled him. Because if you are talking to a high priest you have a different tone of voice from if you were talking to any old diplomat.”

Asked for his view on who or what killed Hammar skjold, Adrian Begg told me: “As someone who for many years was a journalist and who, during a brief career as a policeman had a very minor role on the fringes of this tragic and momentous event, I’m tempted by the theory of Ockham’s Razor. This tells us that where there are many competing hypotheses, the simplest explanation is usually the most reliable.”

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**Movie scenario**  
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If ever the Hammar skjold saga is turned into a Hollywood blockbuster, the opening scene could be chilling – the dead UN Secretary

General propped up against an ant hill, having (supposedly) crawled out of a plane in flames before breathing his last. And then a close up of a playing card that survived the flames (or which had been stuck into his collar by someone after the crash) – the Ace of Spades, the so-called Death Card used by the Mafia after gangland slayings.

The man who led the investigating into Hammar skjold’s death in 1961 was the late Julian (Jerry) Day. Until the day he died, this senior southern Rhodesian intelligence officer insisted that the pilot had confused Ndola’s altitude with sea level and that Dag Hammar skjold’s body was found with an ace of spaces stuck in his collar. Why? No-one knows.

Will the truth emerge from a new inquiry that could lead to the re-opening of a UN inquiry?

In the view of the Enabling Committee chaired by Lord Lea, key questions about Hammar skjold’s death have never been satisfactorily resolved, despite several inquiries including a UN Commission of Inquiry in 1961-1962 which reached an open verdict.

If fresh evidence is found to warrant re-opening the UN Inquiry – and surely it must include accusations that the CIA and M15 could have been involved in a plot to kill Hammar skjold – it will be presented to the United Nations pursuant to general Assembly resolution 1759 (XV11) which requests the Secretary General to inform the General Assembly of ‘any new evidence which may come to his attention’ (1962).

But fresh evidence gleaned from the memories of men and women who saw flashes in the sky over Ndola Airport over half a century ago?

The words of the American poet, Robert Penn Warren remind us just how hard it is to track down the truth after the passing of a long period of time. He wrote -

*The answer is in the back of the book  
But the page is gone  
And grandma told you the truth  
But she is dead.*

**CT**

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**Trevor Grundy is  
a British journalist  
who lived and  
worked in central,  
eastern and  
southern Africa  
from 1966-1996.**  
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# Soldiers who refuse to kill

David Swanson is impressed by veterans who refused to participate in war

One of the most inspiring events thus far at the Veterans For Peace National Convention recently held in Miami was a presentation by several veterans who have refused to participate in war. Typically, they have done this at the risk of significant time in prison, or worse. In most cases these resisters avoided doing any time. Even when they did go behind bars, they did so with a feeling of liberation.

Gerry Condon refused to deploy to Vietnam, was sentenced to 10 years in prison, escaped from Fort Bragg, left the country, and came back campaigning for amnesty. President Jimmy Carter pardoned resisters as his first act in office. Condon never “served” a day, in either the military “service” or prison.

Jeff Paterson of Courage to Resist refused to fly to Iraq, choosing instead to sit down on the tarmac. Ben Griffin from VFP’s new chapter in the U.K. refused to participate in our nations’ wars and has been issued a gag order. He’s not permitted to speak, and yet he speaks so well. Mike Prysner of March Forward and Camilo Mejia of VFP in Miami described their acts of resistance.

Mejia did us all the enormous favor some years back of putting his story down in a book – an extreme rarity, sadly, for peace activists with great stories to tell. Mejia’s book “Road From Ar Ramadi” is a terrific intro-

duction for anyone wondering why someone would sign up for the military and then refuse to kill people. Mejia, who now works on domestic civil rights issues in Miami while remaining part of the antiwar movement (another rarity), was a co-convenor of the VFP convention.

## Refused to fight

In October 2003, Mejia was the first US soldier to publicly refuse to fight in Iraq. At that time only 22 members of the US military had gone AWOL from that war, a number that would quickly climb into the thousands as the war worsened and as belief in the various rationales offered for the war evaporated. Soldiers also began to refuse particular missions that would be likely to kill civilians or to put themselves at risk for no purpose other than the advancement of a commander’s career – a commander safely giving orders from a base. Veterans of the Iraq War would soon work with Veterans For Peace to form a new organization, Iraq Veterans Against the War. But at the time of Mejia’s refusal to fight he stood virtually alone.

Mejia joined the military largely for the very same reason most Americans do: the lack of other options. He had worked his way through high school and community college. But the government cut off his fi-

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**Mejia did us all the enormous favor some years back of putting his story down in a book – an extreme rarity, sadly, for peace activists with great stories to tell**  
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**Dead bodies were mistreated by joking soldiers snapping photos with their prize pieces of flesh**  
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nancial aid, and he couldn't afford the college bills. The Army offered him college tuition and financial security. That was enough. This son of Sandinista revolutionaries headed off to Fort Benning, the home of the School of the Americas, where he would train to kill for the US empire.

Mejia learned to dislike the military. His commitment was due to end in May 2003. But in January 2003, the Florida National Guard shipped off to begin the invasion of Iraq that President Bush was publicly pretending to try to avoid and privately concocting harebrained schemes to get started. Mejia's contract was extended to 2031 (not a typo), and he was sent to Jordan. He was neither for nor against the military or the war in any simple sense. He was aware of the massive peace demonstrations around the world. He disliked many things about the military and about this particular war, which he believed was a war for oil. But he was loyal and obedient, not yet convinced of the extreme immorality of the operation in which he was playing a part.

Mejia's first experience in Iraq involved the abuse of prisoners. He disliked these practices but did not resist. Mentally he tried to brush them aside as the work of "a few bad apples." Or he tried to justify doing what he was doing out of loyalty to the soldiers around him.

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**Ending occupation**

Mejia gradually became aware of Iraqis' desire that the occupation end, but he believed it would end very quickly. During an Iraqi protest, a young Iraqi man was about to toss a grenade, and Mejia aimed and fired – as did others around him. The young man died instantly, but the trouble the incident aroused in Mejia's soul did not.

Mejia was troubled by his fellow soldiers' racist hatred of all Iraqis. Innocent Iraqis were imprisoned and interrogated, when they weren't shot. Their dead bodies were mistreated by joking soldiers snapping pho-

tos with their prize pieces of flesh. "It occurred to me," Mejia writes of some Iraqis who observed such actions, "how upsetting it must have been for them to see their relative in the dirt, half naked and covered in blood, being laughed at and humiliated even in death."

The beginnings of resistance among the troops arose out of their growing awareness that their commanders were using them in a competition for the most fire fights, the most kills, and the most prisoners. The needs of this competition outweighed justice or even strategy. Returning to base with innocent prisoners was far preferable to returning empty-handed. There was no grander goal driving any operations, as far as the soldiers could see. They went on patrols the entire purpose of which was to guard themselves as they patrolled.

As Iraqi resistance grew, so did US fear, to the point where troops would fire even on unarmed children if the soldiers couldn't be certain that the children posed no danger. Mejia understood both points of view, and came to realize that in war the choices are bad or horrendous. The only good choice, he began to see, is to not cooperate with war at all.

At one point Mejia tried to explain to some Iraqis something he barely believed any longer himself, that the war was aimed at bringing "freedom" to the people of Iraq. One of the Iraqis who knew something about Mejia's situation pointed out that Mejia wished to leave the military and could not. "So how," this Iraqi asked, "can you bring freedom to us, when you don't have freedom for yourselves?" When Mejia took part in raids of Iraqi houses, he viewed the terror the Iraqis showed of US capture and "detention" as misguided. Surely prisoners would all be fairly tried and released if innocent, he told himself. "As it turned out," Mejia admits, "the families . . . knew my own army much better than I did."

Yet the troops that left the bases knew more than the commanders who didn't. The

latter, falsely believing that resistance was coming from outside the local area, ordered all the wrong roads blockaded to no purpose. The soldiers who knew such decisions were wrong dared not say anything for fear of what challenging a “superior” can do to your career.

Mejia was able to return to the United States for two weeks’ leave. He went AWOL with assistance from peace groups, and turned himself in to face possible imprisonment. He’d “served” more than the eight years he’d agreed to. And he believed the

war was killing human beings for no useful purpose whatsoever.

A mockery of a charade of a pretense of a trial convicted Mejia and sentenced him to 1 year in jail. “That day,” as he went to jail, Mejia recalls, “I was free, in a way I had never been before.” **CT**

.....  
*David Swanson’s books include “War Is A Lie” He blogs at <http://davidswanson.org> and <http://warisacrime.org> and works as Campaign Coordinator for the online activist organization – <http://rootsaction.org>*

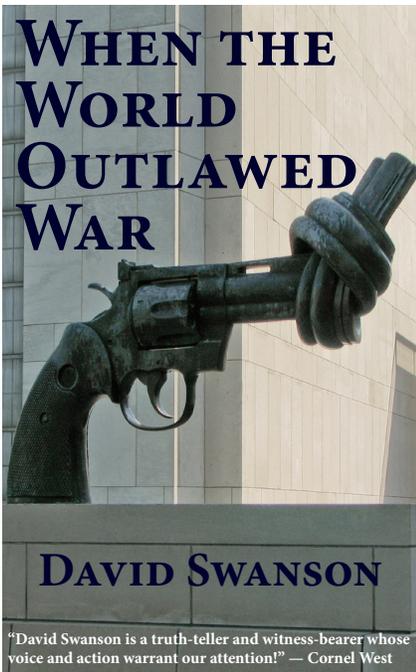
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“David Swanson is a truth-teller and witness-bearer whose voice and action warrant our attention!” — Cornel West

# Recipe for a disaster

Susan Rosenthal looks at the economic background to the South African police massacre of miners at Marikana

.....  
**While South Africa's mining corporations make billions of dollars, their workers suffer extreme poverty, toxic environments and early death**  
.....

**O**n August 16, police fired into a crowd of protesting workers at South Africa's Marikana platinum mine. More than 35 miners were killed, and more than 75 were injured. The mine is owned by U.K.-based Lonmin corporation.

The scale of this massacre compares with the police slaughter of protesters during the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, the 1976 Soweto uprising and throughout the anti-apartheid struggles of the 1980s.

As shocking as it was, this massacre was inevitable, and it will be followed by more such tragedies, and not only in South Africa.

Capitalism has become so desperate for profit that it must grind workers' conditions into the dirt, even as these workers produce record wealth. While South Africa's mining corporations make billions of dollars, their workers suffer extreme poverty, toxic environments and early death.

To maintain this inequality, capitalists use every possible means of divide and rule: seducing union leaders; funding inter-union rivalry; importing temporary contract labor; cultivating strike-breakers; beefing up security forces, bribing public officials, funding political parties, and so on.

These methods succeed because capitalism breeds opportunists who are eager to advance themselves by betraying those they

supposedly represent.

## Opportunists

One such opportunist is Cyril Ramaphosa, who helped build South Africa's National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) into a fighting force against apartheid. Once apartheid ended, Ramaphosa joined the emerging Black-African capitalist class. He currently heads a major investment group, sits on the board of directors of Coca-Cola and is one of South Africa's wealthiest citizens. Yet he still claims to be a socialist.

Then there's the current NUM, whose leaders are paid extravagantly more than their members and who view any challenge to their leadership (and their gravy train) as criminal. The NUM supported the African National Congress (ANC) before it came to power, and it continues to befriend the ANC as a capitalist government, even as it promotes worker exploitation.

Add the Association of Mine Workers and Construction Unions (AMCU), launched by two former NUM members, and allegedly funded by a multinational mining, oil and gas company (BHP Billiton corporation) to undermine the NUM. If the AMCU is exploiting the discontent of NUM members to advance itself, then it could succeed only because of the NUM's failure to properly represent its members interests.

The NUM has colossally failed its members by allowing corporations to use sub-

contracted labor, which pulls down wages for all workers. In Lonmin's Marikana mines, nearly one-third of the work-force is sub-contracted.

What should be done? Most answers have been pathetic, calling on the same forces that created the massacre to restore (capitalist) order.

South African President Jacob Zuma called for calm and announced a commission of inquiry into the tragedy.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) "calls on Lonmin to initiate a full investigation into the violence. We also call on law enforcement agencies to leave no stone unturned and bring the culprits to justice."

*Amandla* titled its editorial, "A Brutal Tragedy That Should Never Have Happened," and blamed all the parties who contributed to the massacre for not being more responsible.

Proving its utter irrelevance, the AFL-CIO denounced the tragedy as "a completely avoidable industrial conflict" and called

on the Lonmin corporation "to ensure calm and safety is restored so that miners can return to work."

The youth league of the ANC came closest to seeing the world as it truly is when it indicted "South Africa's exploitative mining regime, capitalist greed and the poverty of our people" as the cause of the massacre. While its call to nationalize the mines might be a step forward, it would not end the exploitation and oppression of mine workers.

We don't know what workers think; they have not yet found their collective voice – the first step towards a real solution, the first ingredient in the recipe for socialist revolution.

**CT**

*Susan Rosenthal is a practicing physician, the author of "Power and Powerlessness" and "Sick And Sicker: Essays on Class, Health and Health Care". She is also the editor of People First!, the monthly newsletter of International Health Workers for People Over Profit (IHWPOP) www.healthworkersinternational.org*

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# Lynching by laptop

An excerpt from Greg Palast's new book, *Billionaires And Ballot Bandits: How To Steal An Election In 9 Easy Steps*

.....  
 Since 2006, over 100,000 have been removed from the rolls – and that's just in Arizona – for voters' failure to prove their citizenship. The fact that every one of these Americans are citizens, well, hey  
 .....

**P**aul Maez, a.k.a. Pecos Paul, found his name missing from the voter rolls of San Miguel, New Mexico. How did that happen? Pecos told me, "Don't know for certain, and I'm the elections supervisor."

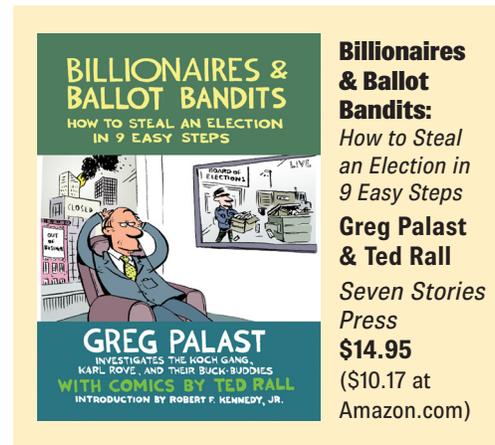
In one Chicano precinct in New Mexico, no one chose a president. Hundreds voted, but every ballot was blank.

In 2004 in New Mexico, there were a total of nineteen thousand blank and oddly ruined ballots. Here's the weird part: 89 percent, nine out of ten votes destroyed, were cast by Hispanics like Maez or African Americans or Native Americans. George Bush won the state by fewer than six thousand votes.

In response to the exposure of Katherine Harris's mass purge of innocent voters as "felons," George W. Bush, elected president by this purge-gone-wild, announced that he would "reform" the voting system. The result: the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), crafted by Bush's Senior Counselor Karl Rove. When Rove tells you he wants to "help" you vote, look out.

(Rove had help from the bill's chief sponsor, Congressman Bob Ney, and his friend, Jack Abramoff. Because they added a few goodies for Abramoff's clients into the law, Abramoff and Representative Ney were imprisoned. Rove is still at large.)

The "reform"? Help America Vote now



**Billionaires & Ballot Bandits:**

*How to Steal an Election in 9 Easy Steps*

**Greg Palast & Ted Rall**

Seven Stories Press

**\$14.95**

(\$10.17 at Amazon.com)

requires every secretary of state to do a Katherine Harris: centralize and computerize voter lists, then "maintain" the list; that is, use the same suspect software algorithms to hunt down, purge, block, erase, and disappear "illegal" voters.

It doesn't matter that the number of "illegal" votes cast in America is statistically nonexistent. "You're more likely to be struck by lightning than cast a vote illegally," expert Dr. Tova Wang told me. Sixty times more likely to be struck by lightning (I checked).

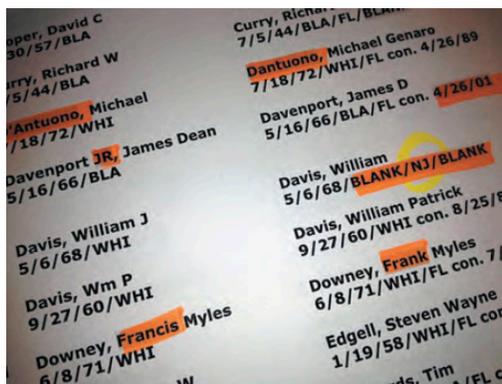
Since 2006, over 100,000 have been removed from the rolls – and that's just in Arizona – for voters' failure to prove their citizenship. The fact that every one of these Americans are citizens, well, hey. In 2012, the Hopi Tribal Council sued because they've

been citizens of America before there was America, so not many have some kind of proof except ancient arrowheads. Can you guess the probability you get booted from polling stations in Arizona if you're Hispanic? If you said 500 percent higher than white folk, you win a hanging chad. (The winner is Chief US District Court Judge Roslyn Silver, who made that finding before reading the Constitution to Arizona officials. However, the "Brown-out" continues.)

In Colorado, another electoral swing state, the Republican secretary of state used new HAVA powers to wipe away one in five voters (19.4 percent) off the state's voter rolls, double Barack Obama's 2008 victory margin. Why? Don't know. Notably, the names were overwhelmingly Hispanic. For BBC, I flew to Colorado to find out, but the secretary of state locked me out of his office and refused our calls.

Back in Florida, Bobbie Moore had been removed from the 2008 voter rolls because she was convicted of a felony crime in the year 2014. I've found hundreds of Criminals of the Future purged from Florida voter rolls. Interesting,

Ms. Bobbie Moore was matched with the felon "Robert Moore." Apparently, before she commits her crime, she will have a sex-change operation. Of course, the one thing she/he won't change: her race. Next to Moore's name(s) on the voter scrub list: BLA. Black, like the majority who wrongly lost their votes. Here's a typical detail from the Florida purge list we got our hands on:



If you think things have improved since we outed Katherine Harris's tactics in 2000, think again: GOP officials ginned up this purge sheet long after Harris departed. The sheets that Florida and Georgia and Colorado are using in 2012 are more effective in purging the registrations of legal black voters than the sheets used by the Ku Klux Klan.

Only nineteen of one hundred Hispanics are registered in the USA. But not for lack of trying. Example: 42 percent of voters who registered in California, or thought they registered, had their forms rejected by the Republican Secretary of State and his Democratic successor Debra Bowen, who told us the Rejected Americans were mostly people with "unusual names" – Vietnamese, Hispanic, Filipino – that is, "unusual" for Republicans.

The chance you will be allowed to register to vote, to cast a vote, and to have that vote counted is directly proportional to the melanin in the skin of your ancestors. It took a Civil War to amend the US Constitution to ban restrictions on voting by race (the Fifteenth Amendment, ratified 1870). It took almost no time to overturn the results of the Civil War and virtually eliminate voters of color through a range of "voter integrity" measures designed by the Ku Klux Klan and the Democratic Party. Another Civil War, less bloody but not without martyrs, fought in the 1960s, again attempted to end America's apartheid voting system.

Now, in the twenty-first century, the Grand Wizards are back again to stand in the polling station doorways, to overturn the civil rights movement, but this time with spreadsheets, not white sheets. Voters are lynched by laptop.

In 2012, Karl Rove is building the largest database ever conceived, called DataTrust, under contract with the Republican National Committee, containing every US voter and potential voter.

.....  
**The chance you will be allowed to register to vote, to cast a vote, and to have that vote counted is directly proportional to the melanin in the skin of your ancestors**  
 .....

.....  
**The half-billion-dollar pokey put together by Rove and the Koch Oil Brothers is the down payment on a new uncivil, antirights movement**  
.....

To win an election, you need votes. Or, just as good, you need to take away the votes of your opponent. While winning votes costs money, so does getting votes to disappear. Purging and blocking voters on a grand scale – thousands and millions of registrations and ballots – isn’t checkers. It’s complex and very, very expensive.

Rove’s Crossroads is collecting a quarter-billion dollars for its computerized Jim Crow machine.

Look, if Karl wants to pimp out his computers with profiling programs that would make the KGB envious, for the purpose of targeting voters for a spiel to win their votes, well, bless’em, that’s democracy.

But given Rove’s history (we’ll get to those sordid stories shortly), you’d have to be a fool or a tool to believe that such data mining would not be applied to Rove’s cause of saving America from fraudulent voters by identifying and challenging “suspect” ones. And the voters Rove most suspects are not too white nor too rich.

It’s more than troubling that the first funder of the Rove-bot database and campaign operation was, within days of the *Citizens United* decision, billionaire Ken Langone. Langone knows all about databases. It was the database firm funded by Langone, ChoicePoint Inc., which crafted the faux “felon” list used by Katherine Harris to scrub innocent black voters in 2000.<sup>1</sup>

Now Big Brother Rove has some fierce, if friendly, competition from Bigger Brothers, Charles and David Koch, who have crafted a data-mining operation called Themis.

To make use of Themis, the Kochs are putting together their own quarter-billion-dollar operation, Americans for Prosperity.

The Democrats? They’re still playing with their floppy disks.

The half-billion-dollar pokey put together by Rove and the Koch Oil Brothers is the down payment on a new uncivil, antirights movement. America’s voting apartheid is now digitized. In all, we can expect over five million voters to be convicted of the crime

of fraudulent voting and sentenced to losing their right of enfranchisement in 2012 by the coordinated operations of private-funded and state-funded Jim Crow software. They’re not guilty; the software is.

Technically, the super-PACs and “social welfare” organizations are independent of the candidates. Think of them as the unacknowledged armed wings of the campaigns. (And indeed, the candidates really don’t control the PAC-men; the PAC-men control the candidates.)

In June 2012, the Democratic Party and desperate allies in organized labor got their clocks cleaned. Republican Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, despite late polls showing a tight race, crushed his Democratic opponent in a special “recall” election. While Walker’s campaign officially outspent the Democrat eight dollars to one, this was only the tip of the cash-berg. Those semi-billion-dollar babies, DataTrust and Themis, went for a test drive.

Weirdly, Wisconsin voter registrations show a drop of 107,000 in the first six months of 2011, even before a mass attack on the list by the GOP-controlled legislature. Despite the fact that Wisconsin has no known history of fictional or dead people actually voting, the cost to real, live voters is devastating. The “matching” rules that knocked out 42 percent of registrants in California are far more severe in Wisconsin; and in Wisconsin, first-time registrants must mail in ID (as must first-time voters). The result is that only a *third* of Hispanic citizens in Wisconsin

are registered to vote. And students? Forget it: using a formula from the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University Law School, we can calculate that about 97,850 Wisconsin voters under the age of twenty-nine lost their rights due to the new ID law.

The difference between the last polls and the official count indicates several thousand ballots were ultimately challenged and rejected. Wisconsin state officials are with-

holding the exact numbers.

And Rove is crowing:

“In Florida and Iowa, Democratic registrations are down from their 2010 levels while Republican numbers are up. For example, nearly 29,000 Democrats have disappeared from the Iowa registration rolls since January 2011. . . . In Arizona, Democrats are down 58,000 . . . and there are now 176,000 fewer Democrats registered in Pennsylvania than in November 2010.”

Wisconsin in June is America in November. Wisconsin wasn't a “dry run” for the November race. It was a very wet, drown-the-kittens-in-the-tub test run.

The *Wall Street Journal* attributes the drop of two million black and Hispanic registrants to African-Americans’ “disappointment” in Obama. They're so disappointed that, if the *Journal* is right, several million called their secretary of state and demanded their names be removed from the voter rolls.

Am I suggesting that Rove would use his database to challenge voters of color in Wis-

consin, or anywhere? I don't read minds, nor can I predict into the future, but I do read “caging” files (see Chapter 15, “Karl Rove Confidential”), which I know Rove's op did use in Wisconsin in 2004.

**Note**

1. Langone had little financial interest in database management, but major financial interest in eliminating the rules against insider trading and stock market manipulation. New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer charged Langone with market manipulation in a civil action. It appears that Mr. Langone was behind obtaining information on Spitzer's late-night snacking. See “Eliot's Mess” at [www.BallotBandits.org](http://www.BallotBandits.org). **CT**

*Greg Palast's* most recent book is “Vulture's Picnic: In Pursuit of Petroleum Pigs, Power Pirates and High-Finance Carnivores”.  
 Ted Rall's latest is “The Book of Obama: From Hope And Change To The Age Of Revolt”

Wisconsin wasn't a “dry run” for the November race. It was a very wet, drown-the-kittens-in-the-tub test run

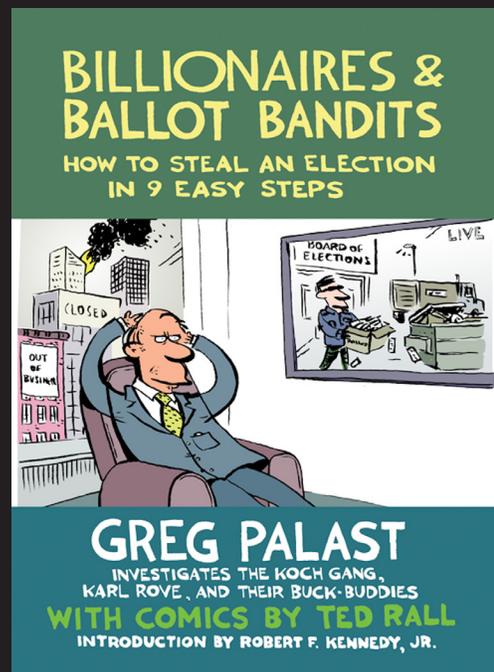
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Seven Stories Press



# Five facts about drugs the media won't tell you

Paul Armentano highlights recent scientific studies that contradict propaganda about the dangerous effects of cannabis

.....  
Mainstream media outlets often turn a blind eye to scientific studies refuting the notion that pot causes psychosis or in any way exacerbates mental illness  
.....

While studies touting the purported dangers of cannabis are frequently pushed by the federal government and, therefore, all but assured mainstream media coverage, scientific conclusions rebutting pot propaganda or demonstrating potential positive aspects of the herb often tend to go unnoticed. Here are five recent examples of scientific findings about pot that the mainstream media (and the Feds) don't want you to know about.

.....  
**1. Cannabis use is associated with lower mortality risk in patients with psychotic disorders**

In the years immediately prior to the passage of the federal Marihuana Tax Act of 1937, exploitation journalists routinely, yet unfoundedly, claimed that cannabis use triggered psychotic and violent behavior. For example, a news story from the July 6, 1927 edition of the *New York Times* pronounced, "A widow and her four children have been driven insane by eating the Marihuana plant, according to doctors, who say there is no hope of saving the children's lives and that the mother will be insane for the rest of her life." While virtually every American readily dismisses such absurd claims today, nonetheless, decades later many of these same sensationalistic contentions contin-

ue to make their way into the mainstream press. A case in point: within hours after the movie theater massacre in Aurora, Colorado, ABC News Philadelphia reported that shooter James Holmes' rampage was likely brought on by smoking marijuana. Similarly, weeks earlier, various media outlets speculated that cannabis may have motivated the unfathomable actions of Rudy Eugene, the so-called "Miami Cannibal," after toxicology reports found trace levels of marijuana by products in his system.

Conversely, mainstream media outlets often turn a blind eye to scientific studies refuting the notion that pot causes psychosis or in any way exacerbates mental illness, such as a 2009 Keele University Medical School study which found that increased levels of cannabis use by the general public is not associated with proportionally rising incidences of schizophrenia or other psychotic disorders. This was the case, again, in May when an international team of investigators from the University of Maryland School of Medicine and Inje University in South Korea determined that the use of cannabis is associated with lower mortality risk in patients with schizophrenia and related psychotic disorders.

Writing in the *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, investigators assessed the impact of a lifetime history of substance use on mortality in 762 subjects with schizophrenia or

related disorders. Researchers “observed a lower mortality risk-adjusted variable in cannabis-users compared to cannabis non-users despite subjects having similar symptoms and antipsychotic treatments.” They speculated that this association between marijuana use and decreased mortality risk may be because “cannabis users may (be) higher functioning” and because “cannabis itself may have some health benefits.”

“To our knowledge, this is one of the first studies to examine the risk of mortality with cannabis and alcohol in people with PD (psychotic disorders),” the study’s authors concluded. “This interesting finding of decreased mortality risk ... in cannabis users is a novel finding and one that will need replication in larger epidemiological studies.”

A ‘novel’ and ‘interesting’ finding indeed; too bad no one in the corporate media cared enough to report it.

**2. The enactment of statewide medical marijuana laws is associated with fewer incidences of suicides**

Can cannabis use quell thoughts of suicide? Not a chance, claim the mainstream media and the Drug Czar. But a little-noticed discussion paper published this past February by the Institute for the Study of Labor in Bonn, Germany provides dramatic evidence to the contrary.

Researchers at Montana State University, the University of Colorado, and San Diego State University assessed rates of suicide in the years before and after the passage of statewide medical marijuana laws. Authors found, “The total suicide rate falls smoothly during the pre-legalization period in both MML (medical marijuana law) and non-MML states. However, beginning in year zero, the trends diverge: the suicide rate in MML states continues to fall, while the suicide rate in states that never legalized medical marijuana begins to climb gradually.”

They reported that this downward trend

in suicides in states post med-pot legalization was especially pronounced in males. “Our results suggest that the passage of a medical marijuana law is associated with an almost 5 percent reduction in the total suicide rate, an 11 percent reduction in the suicide rate of 20- through 29-year-old males, and a 9 percent reduction in the suicide rate of 30- through 39-year-old males,” they determined.

Authors theorized that the limited legalization of cannabis may “lead to an improvement in the psychological well-being of young adult males, an improvement that is reflected in fewer suicides.” They further speculated, “The strong association between alcohol consumption and suicide-related outcomes found by previous researchers raises the possibility that medical marijuana laws reduce the risk of suicide by decreasing alcohol consumption.”

They concluded: “Policymakers weighing the pros and cons of legalization should consider the possibility that medical marijuana laws may lead to fewer suicides among young adult males.”

Predictably, no federal policymakers – many of whom recently voted in support of the Justice Department’s efforts to aggressively undermine existing state medicinal marijuana laws – have yet to comment on the study’s findings.

**3. The effects of cannabis smoke on the lungs are far less problematic than those associated with tobacco**

Inhaling any type of smoke is never particularly advisable. That said, when it comes to the purported effects of pot smoke on health, the corporate press can’t help but become hysterical. Such was the case not long when Reuters declared, ‘Cannabis is a bigger cancer risk than cigarettes.’ In a story carried internationally in hundreds of mainstream news outlets, the news wire pronounced, “Smoking a joint is equivalent to 20 cigarettes in terms of lung cancer risk,

When it comes to the purported effects of pot smoke on health, the corporate press can’t help but become hysterical

After the author adjusted for publication bias, the study found that cannabis was associated with minor, but not significantly increased odds of traffic injury) or fatal accident

before concluding that “an ‘epidemic’ of lung cancers linked to cannabis” was on the horizon.

Or not.

This past January, investigators writing in the prestigious *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* reported that exposure to moderate levels of cannabis smoke, even over the long-term, is not associated with adverse effects on pulmonary function.

Investigators at the University of California, San Francisco analyzed the association between marijuana exposure and pulmonary function over a 20-year period in a cohort of 5,115 men and women in four US cities. The study’s researchers “confirmed the expected reductions in FEV<sub>1</sub> (forced expiratory volume in the first second of expiration) and FVC (forced vital capacity)” in tobacco smokers. The effect of cannabis smoke on the lungs, however, was a very different story. Investigators found: “Marijuana use was associated with higher FEV<sub>1</sub> and FVC at the low levels of exposure typical for most marijuana users. With up to 7 joint-years of lifetime exposure (e.g., 1 joint/d for 7 years or 1 joint/wk for 49 years), we found no evidence that increasing exposure to marijuana adversely affects pulmonary function.”

The UCSF researchers concluded, “Our findings suggest that occasional use of marijuana ... may not be associated with adverse consequences on pulmonary function.”

The study’s results were consistent with previous, yet equally underreported scientific findings determining no demonstrable decrease in pulmonary function associated with moderate cannabis smoke exposure. Notably, a 2007 literature review by researchers at the Yale University School of Medicine and published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, reported that pot smoking is not associated with airflow obstruction (emphysema), as measured by airway hyper reactivity, forced expiratory volume, or other measures.

And what about Reuters’ similarly specious claim of a coming cannabis-induced cancer epidemic? Bullshit, says the results of the largest case-controlled study ever to investigate the respiratory effects of marijuana smoking, which concluded that cannabis use was not associated with lung-related cancers, even among subjects who reported smoking more than 22,000 joints over their lifetime.

#### 4. Cannabis use is associated with only marginal increases in traffic accident risk

“Cannabis drivers ‘twice as likely to cause car crash.’” So declared a BBC News headline in February, following the publication of a meta-analysis of nine studies assessing drug use in drivers involved in auto accidents. But a more thorough systematic review and meta-analysis of additional traffic injury studies published in July in the journal *Accident Analysis and Prevention* reached a different conclusion.

An investigator from Aalborg University and the Institute of Transport Economics in Oslo assessed the risk of road accident associated with drivers’ use of licit and illicit drugs, including amphetamines, analgesics, anti-asthmatics, anti-depressives, anti-histamines, benzodiazepines, cannabis, cocaine, opiates, penicillin and zopiclone (a sleeping pill). His study reviewed data from 66 separate studies evaluating the use of illicit or prescribed drugs on accident risk.

After the author adjusted for publication bias (editors’ tendency not to publish studies that fail to show significant risks), the study found that cannabis was associated with minor, but not significantly increased odds of traffic injury (1.06) or fatal accident (1.25).

By comparison, opiates (1.44), benzodiazepine tranquilizers (2.30), anti-depressants (1.32), cocaine (2.96), amphetamines (4.46), and the sleeping aid zopiclone (2.60) were all associated with a greater risk of fatal accident than cannabis. Anti-histamines (1.12) and penicillin (1.12) were associated

with comparable odds to cannabis.

The study concluded: “By and large, the increase in the risk of accident involvement associated with the use of drugs must be regarded as modest. ... Compared to the huge increase in accident risk associated with alcohol, as well as the high accident rate among young drivers, the increases in risk associated with the use of drugs are surprisingly small.”

Although the previous review, which appeared in the *British Medical Journal*, garnered worldwide, screaming headlines, to date no mainstream media markets have reported on the more recent, contradictory findings published in AAP.

.....  
**5. The schedule I classification of cannabis is a lie; the science says so**

Congress’ present classification of cannabis and its organic constituents as Schedule I substances under federal law, which defines said substances as lacking any therapeutic value and possessing health risks on par with those of heroin, is no longer a subject of legitimate debate. It is scientifically inaccurate and untenable. Those were the conclusions drawn from a multi-million dollar series of FDA-approved, gold-standard clinical trials, conducted over a 12-year period at the University of California Center for Medicinal Cannabis Research, which reported, “[S]moked and vaporized marijuana, as well as other botanical extracts indicate the likelihood that the cannabinoids can be useful in the management of neuropathic pain,

spasticity due to multiple sclerosis, and possibly other indications.”

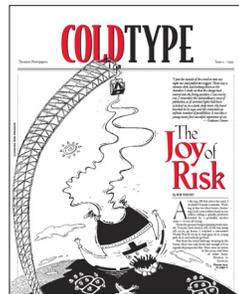
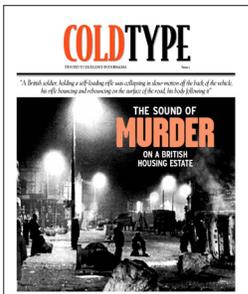
Summarizing this body of research in May in the *Open Neurology Journal*, the program’s director, Dr. Igor Grant of UC San Diego concluded: “Based on evidence currently available, the (federal) Schedule I classification (of cannabis) is not tenable; it is not accurate that cannabis has no medical value, or that information on safety is lacking.”

In particular, the CMCR’s findings rebuffed the Obama administration’s recent rejection of an administrative petition filed by NORML and others that sought federal hearings regarding the present classification of cannabis. In its rejection, the administration alleged, “The drug’s chemistry is not known and reproducible; there are no adequate safety studies; there are no adequate and well-controlled studies proving efficacy; the drug is not accepted by qualified experts; and the scientific evidence is not widely available.” None of the Obama administration’s justifications hold any merit in light of the CMCR’s scientific findings.

Nevertheless, the corporate media have by and large responded to the CMCR data, and its obvious implications on federal marijuana policy, with little more than a collective yawn. By now, why would we expect much else? **CT**

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*Paul Armentano is the Deputy Director of NORML (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws) and the NORML Foundation - <http://norml.org>*

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**“Compared to the huge increase in accident risk associated with alcohol, as well as the high accident rate among young drivers, the increases in risk associated with the use of drugs are surprisingly small”**  
 .....



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# The ignorance of intelligence

Danny Schechter's brain cells are melting after listening to National Public Radio

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**So much money is invested in covert media operations that spin and distort reality that the people inside the "deception machine" believe the news that they themselves plant and fabricate**  
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**S**ome years ago, I meet a major in American intelligence, a member of the "Red Cell Unit."

As he explained it to me, his unit was actually charged with assessing other spy shops by offering other views, critiquing intelligence estimates and perhaps even evaluating security systems like the specialists who test airport systems by probing for their soft spots and vulnerabilities, and seeing if they can beat them.

This soldier had been sent as one more gung ho officer into the war in Iraq only to return, like many, if not disillusioned, aware that all was not working well. He was actually involved in guarding so-called HVT's (High Value Prisoners) including Saddam Hussein himself, who he came to respect for his intelligence, before his untimely demise with a rope around his neck.

Saddam's many crimes and errors were often dwarfed by our own.

The United States today has a vast intelligence apparatus, on the ground, in the sky and even in space. Technically it puts the old Soviet Union to shame, and sucks up millions of terabytes of data daily.

But, that doesn't mean that what is reported is understood. The analysts seek to make sense of it but the policy makers are often so locked into templates of action and pre-formulated strategies that ensure the input doesn't lead to course corrections or

changes in direction. They operate with a kind of intellectual "locked-in" disease that freezes out new ideas.

The system is manned by ideologists and choked with ideology, constantly leading to so-called intelligence 'failures' that fill many library shelves. Yet even when post mortems are filed, few in the commanding heights of our national security apparatus are willing to look back and draw lessons. They are too busy, lazy or just hacks (as opposed to hackers.)

One reason: so much money is invested in covert media operations that spin and distort reality that the people inside the "deception machine" believe the news that they themselves plant and fabricate. Perception guides reality more than reality guiding perception.

Media institutions play a big role in echoing embellished government claims often relying on leaks and plants that come from disinformation bureaucracies and their media assets,

The "uprisings by the 'rebels'" in Syria and Libya are cases in point. In both countries, discontent was mined, military units were recruited, trained, armed and deployed by foreign interests. Some are even working with the very Jihadis we have been denouncing.

The United States and Britain took the lead with an assist from the French and

NATO. Countries like Qatar and Saudi Arabia recycled some of their oil profits to fund these interventions while trying to keep a public distance. Ironically, some of the people they armed are in Al Qaeda-linked terror groups who have always been described as our “enemy.” So much for consistency!

Years later, government hacks and historians write about these events, usually rationalizing the policy choices that drove US policy but sometimes critiquing it especially when it imploded. No-one in this world has yet to adequately explain Washington’s biggest failure of all: how they “missed” the Iranian Revolution.

National Public Radio recently interviewed one such government historian, David Crist, who has written a book called *The Twilight War*, detailing the “secret history” of America’s 30-year conflict with Iran.

NPR Reports, “The book, based on interviews with hundreds of officials as well as classified military archives, details how the covert war has spanned five American presidential terms and repeatedly threatened to bring the two nations into open warfare.”

Crist is no Daniel Ellsberg. He is still a believer in America’s crusade against Iran and advocates tougher action.

He tells about a close call between American and Iranian naval vessels in 2003, when he was a member of special operations forces.

“We were about an hour into the mission when all of a sudden, three Iranian Revolutionary Guard boats come streaming across from the other side of the river, stop just in front of us, unmask their guns and point them straight at us and then proceeded to bombard us with a hail of choice American obscenities,” he says. “Our commander at the time was a Navy Seal who had lived in Tehran until he was 16 and he tried to talk with them. He even rigged an Italian flag turned sideways – which looked liked an Iranian flag – to show we had no hostile intent. We unmasked our guns, we called for our air power and I thought we were on the

absolute brink of a major shooting war with Iran.”

Crist and his fellow troops were ordered to withdraw and not antagonize the Iranians by high-level military officials.

“So we pulled back with the Iranians trailing us, and what I didn’t realize at the time was that that was a pretty significant mistake,” he says. “By doing so, we surrendered that entire waterway to the Iranians and they were in the process of the counter-invasion of Iraq. And they were flooding southern Iraq with forces [and arming the Shiite militias]. And what these three boats were doing was trying to prevent us from interfering with that counter-invasion.”

Crist says the US should have stopped the Iranians – or made a more concerted effort to stop the Iranians. His animus towards Iran is unconcealed. His bias is blatant!

“By backing down, we acquiesced to them,” he says. “And it goes far beyond this one boat incident. ... We missed an opportunity, I think, for reducing the amount of influence Iran was going to have in Iraq afterwards.”

The more you read his account the weirder and more uniformed it becomes, but because of his intelligence connections, media outlets like NPR assume Crist is an intelligent “expert” and give him air time.

Here’s another snatch of the interview conducted by Terry Gross on the show *Fresh Air*:

**GROSS:** The US has had several secret war plans to attack Iran. What’s the earliest one that you came across?

**CRIST:** The earliest one was actually in the very early 1980s, about 1980. And oddly enough, it really wasn’t geared towards Iran. It was geared towards the Soviet Union. Iran was actually the chessboard on which the US and Soviet Union were going to play. And the amazing thing is through the plan, as the US was discussing ways to counter a Soviet invasion of Iran, which was going to be a precursor to seizing Persian Gulf oil, the whole role and attitude of the Iranians

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**Crist’s animus towards Iran is unconcealed. His bias is blatant!**  
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**This is the drivel that passes for in-depth news analysis. Intelligence “experts” with nothing to say, or, probably, not allowed to say what they know**  
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never even figured into the plan.

**GROSS:** What do you mean the role of the Iranians never figured into the plan?

**CRIST:** There was no thought about how the Iranians were going to react to either the US or the Soviet invasion. It was if they were sort of a neutral territory, which we’re going to play a war on. It’s not until about three years later that the United States starts taking a hard look at, you know, the Iranians really don’t like either us or the Soviet Union. How do we know they’re going to welcome us with open arms if we try to invade them on the precursor that it’s to try to stop the Soviets?

**GROSS:** So this war plan was to invade Iran if the Soviets had invaded or to prevent an imminent Soviet invasion during the Cold War?

**CRIST:** That’s absolutely correct.

His view is accepted as expressed. No one who is critical of US policy is on the show. No one in the know challenges him.

Is this some big revelation? Not really. But that’s not all, Christ later admits no one reads his work, and he is not even allowed to make what he knows of current history public.

**CRIST:** I’ve also been an advisor recently to senior leadership. So, yeah, there’s a lot I know that I can’t have in this book.

**GROSS:** So you’re writing books for the Defense Department that end up in vaults. When do they – when do those vaults end up getting opened?

**CRIST:** Well, we’re just now – my office is just now getting, I think, the Ford administration reviewed for declassification. So

you’re about 30 years behind the times. So it’s a good long time to let the sensitivity of a lot of the issues drop off and also it’s long enough that you can then go back and re-look at an issue with sort of a more objective eye than you might have had writing about an essentially current event.

**GROSS:** And the histories you’re writing about are based on classified documents?

**CRIST:** Yes.

**GROSS:** What an unusual and interesting job.

**CRIST:** Oh, it’s fascinating. It’s the best job for a historian, in my view.

**GROSS:** Better if you had readers, though, right?

**CRIST:** I’m sorry?

**GROSS:** It would be better if you had readers.

**CRIST:** It is much better. Nobody reads this.

And it goes on. This is the drivel that passes for in-depth news analysis. Intelligence “experts” with nothing to say, or, probably, not allowed to say what they know.

Is it any wonder that Americans are so uninformed about US-Iranian relations? Is this really “interesting” (Gross) or “fascinating?” (Crist?)

It’s time to call the Red Cell Unit, because my brain cells are melting. **CT**

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*Danny Schechter* blogs at *Newsdissector.net*. His latest books are “*Occupy: Dissecting Occupy Wall Street*,” and “*Blogothon*” (Cosimo Books.)

He hosts a show on

*ProgressiveRadioNetwork.com* (PRN.fm)

Comments to [dissector@mediachannel.org](mailto:dissector@mediachannel.org)

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# Decent men versus strutting ogres

**Linh Dinh** applauds Ecuador's 'beautiful' gesture in granting political asylum to Julian Assange

**B**ravo, Ecuador, for its noble, just and beautiful gesture in granting Julian Assange political asylum! In an era where just about every politician routinely breaks every promise, the Ecuadorian President keeps his to Assange, though doing so puts him in the crosshairs of the most powerful empire, so a salute to Rafael Correa, also, for you show that it's still possible to be a honorable statesman.

Just days after the London Olympics, where John Lennon's "Imagine," with its message of universal peace, justice and brotherhood was sang, the UK government revealed, once again, its vicious true face when it threatened to storm the Ecuadorian Embassy to arrest Assange, then refused to let him leave the UK after he was granted asylum. Like the US, Great Britain is a world power that's acting like a street corner hoodlum, petty and vindictive, in contrast to tiny Ecuador, with its principled stance, so who's really great here?

Going after its political enemies, America has often disgraced itself. In 1992, the US indicted Bobby Fischer for playing competitive chess in Yugoslavia, in violation of US sanctions against that country, but it wasn't until 2004 when Fischer was arrested, by Japanese authorities under US order. In the intervening years, Fischer had amped up his incendiary attacks against the American ruling elite, and also Jews, though Fischer himself was a Jew. Free speech is free speech, but forget about

its application here, since America was clearly infuriated at its loud critic, and an ex-favorite son, no less, once credited for single-handedly embarrassing the Soviet Union, its arch enemy. Cornered by the empire, Fischer was offered asylum by tiny Iceland, and, unlike the Brits in the sordid Assange case, the Japanese decided to let him go. Once more, we saw a small nation acting big, while a much bigger one behaved ridiculously. In 2011, the UK also harassed Iceland to compensate British customers of a failed Icelandic bank, but Iceland, to its credit, refused. After all, have British (and American) banks compensated anybody for the enormous losses they've inflicted on the whole world?

Flaunting big sticks, big boys will strut, though contemptuous glances and thoughts are constantly cast in their direction. These ogres are also vain, however, as evidenced by their endless efforts to aggrandize themselves, as with the London Olympics. Somalia-born Mo Farah's two gold medals were cheered as proof of Islamic integration and success in England, but what's ignored is the UK's more than a century-long history of colonizing, bombing, subversion and exploitation of numerous Islamic countries, with Iraq, Libya and Syria just the latest examples.

As for the United States, it is a tireless crafter of its own fun-loving and sexy image, to be exported worldwide into the most obscure teahouse, hut, yurt, igloo or cave of every last

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**Taking their cues from the American military, our mass murderers also dress up in fatigues to mow down unarmed civilians**  
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province of every country. American tanks, planes and bombs are painted with cartoon characters, and American pilots sing, “Bye, bye, Miss American pie,” as they zap your families from the sky. After foreigners are bombed as they listen to Lady Gaga or Britney Spears, the adult corpses can be wrapped in New York Yankees or Dallas Cowboys blankets, while their dead children can be interred in Mickey Mouse or SpongeBob SquarePants comforters. It’s all good.

Taking their cues from the American military, our mass murderers also dress up in fatigues to suddenly mow down unarmed civilians, for if a pilot strafing an Afghan wedding party is deemed a hero, why not some fool shooting up a movie theater? Having unleashed evil all over the globe, why should we be surprised to find it flaring up all over the States? Until we stop massacring foreigners, we’ll shoot each other into an early grave.

Done with making anything useful, the United States is the world’s leading producer of weapons and illusions, mostly of itself. Even as he shoots you up and steals your wallet, Uncle Sam pimps American porn, and by you, I also mean average Americans, not just foreigners. America’s obsessive crafting of its own image, all the while behaving atrociously and criminally, brings to mind the case of Joe Paterno. Erasing his players’ names from their jerseys, Joe kept his front and center, because Joe was all about Joe. No longer able to lead from the sideline, Paterno retreated to the press box and stayed coach in name, just so he could achieve the all-time win record. With so much at stake, and so much cash besides, Joe couldn’t let his legacy be derailed by the appalling fact that small boys were being raped under his watch. In fact, Joe and other top Penn State honchos allowed Jerry Sandusky to rape children for another decade! It is telling that, when everything fell apart, and Paterno was finally fired, he said, as quoted by journalist Joe Posnanski, “I have spent my whole life trying to make that name mean something. And now it’s gone.” Joe Pa didn’t weep for the raped children, but for the loss

of his good name, fraudulently maintained all these years.

Quantifiable achievements, most this, most that, can be cheapened or even rendered null by an absence of virtues such as probity, character or courage, so a “great man” like Paterno has been reduced to nothing, while a lowly Army specialist like Bradley Manning became magnificent by doing what was right, though he did it without fanfare or considerations of personal gains. A small man, literally, Manning had the enormous courage to butt heads with the empire, and it has retaliated by imprisoning him in humiliating conditions. In Abu Ghraib and elsewhere, the American military revealed its sexually sadistic impulses, and it has shown this perverted aspect again by forcing Manning to be naked for hours at a time. We’re not just cruel, we’re sick, but we don’t give a damn, because we’re number one!

Worshiping the relentless actions of speed and aggression, the piston, the one-hundred-meter dash, the slam dunk multiplied by instant replays, we devalue simple decency, nuanced beauty or just subtlety of any kind. We ooh and ah, but don’t reflect, because the next spectacle is already on. It’s mostly bombast, most the time, with brief interludes of kitsch. Most this, most that, but a big zero where it really matters, just like Paterno, and unlike Bradley Manning or Rafael Correa.

In his insatiable quest for self-aggrandizement and enrichment, Uncle Sam also doesn’t care about the many lives he has wrecked. He’s a Joe Paterno times a billion, at least, and he’s still basking in his own self-praise, even as the entire world looks on in disgust. To best admire himself, Uncle Sam has created an elaborate house of mirrors that reflects nothing but his own wrinkled, bulging or sagging vanity, carefully caked over with lots of makeup, but this glass house is showing serious cracks all over. Kicking in all directions, he risks being buried beneath its shards. **CT**

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*Linh Dinh tracks our deteriorating socialscape through his frequently updated photo blog, State of the Union.*

# Alexander Cockburn: Modern-day muckraker

No writer was better at nailing the dishonesty and hypocrisy of the powerful, writes **Alan Maas**

**T**he radical media lost one of its most powerful voices when Alexander Cockburn died on July 20 after a battle with cancer.

For more than four decades since his move to the US from Britain in 1972, Cockburn's writing was a constant presence for anyone on the left in the US

And I mean constant. All told, Cockburn lived and worked in the US for something over 2,000 weeks – and if more than a few dozen of those weeks went by without a new article from him, I'd be surprised. His voice was never silent and he never went unpublished – in spite of the fact that the gatekeepers of the mainstream media had almost as much contempt for him as he had for them.

Cockburn was born in Scotland, grew up in Ireland and went to school in England. His parents came from upper-class families, but his father, journalist Claud Cockburn, was a member of the British Communist Party who wrote for the *Daily Worker*, among other left and mainstream publications. As a student and then a journalist himself in 1960s Britain, Alex gravitated to left-wing politics and publications such as *New Left Review*. By the early 1970s, he had moved to the US

I first started reading Cockburn at the beginning of the 1980s while he was writing

a media criticism column for the New York City alternative weekly, the *Village Voice*. The Voice was home to great investigative journalists like James Ridgeway, too – but Alex was the reason I knew what newsstands and bookstores in Chicago sold the *Voice*.

No one was better at nailing the dishonesty and hypocrisy of the powerful, demolishing their lame arguments or just plain spitting venom at a hated target. Open his book *Corruptions of Empire*, a collection of journalism from this era, to random pages, and you find one gem after another. Like this from a 1985 article about press baron Rupert Murdoch and his troubles with the Federal Communications Commission: "It's hard to believe that Rupert Murdoch truly intends to sell the *New York Post*. It would be like Dracula selling his coffin."

Or, in 1981, a comparison of the US media's coverage of the strike of PATCO air traffic controllers, declared illegal by the Reagan administration, and the strikes of the Solidarnosc union movement in Stalinist Poland, a satellite of Washington's arch-enemy, the USSR:

*'Washington Post, Union-Busting Edition:* "The air traffic controllers strike is a wildly misconceived venture that deserves the government's extraordinary severe response. A strike against an essential public service is

.....  
**No one was better at nailing the dishonesty and hypocrisy of the powerful, demolishing their lame arguments or just plain spitting venom at a hated target**  
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Cockburn provided exhaustive commentary on the covert and not-so-covert war on left-wing struggles in Central America and the US government's support for death squads and dictators

always wrong in principle.”

‘Washington Post, Freedom-Loving Edition: “The Polish shipworkers strike is an extraordinarily gallant venture, and that makes the Polish government’s fierce response all the more heavy-handed and abhorrent to all friends of freedom. The right to strike is one of the inalienable attributes of a democratic society.”’

Support for Palestine

Cockburn got the boot from the Voice in 1983. The paper claimed it was because he took a \$10,000 fellowship to write a book, a journalistic conflict of interest. Cockburn argued persuasively that the real problem was the fellowship came from the Institute of Arab Studies – and that his uncompromising support for the Palestinian cause against Israel’s apartheid offended the pro-Zionist management at the Voice.

Much of Cockburn’s writing at this time was about US imperialism, as the Reagan administration attempted to reassert Washington’s power a decade after the American defeat in Vietnam. Cockburn provided exhaustive commentary on the covert and not-so-covert war on left-wing struggles in Central America and the US government’s support for death squads and dictators.

But he really stood apart in his outspoken opposition to the Israeli regime. This was still an era of knee-jerk loyalty to Israel – from the US government, of course, but also from US liberals and even some who considered themselves on the left. Cockburn tolerated none of it – his writings gave no quarter when it came to Palestine.

At this point, the broadcast media had yet to be transformed by 24-hour cable TV news, so network shows like ABC News’ Nightline, hosted by Ted Koppel, were still required viewing for anyone who cared about politics.

Cockburn wrote brilliantly about how the for-and-against format of Nightline or PBS’s MacNeil Lehrer News Hour hid the fact that

the range of political views tolerated in the mainstream media was incredibly narrow. But he was also so skilled as a journalist that he was occasionally asked to appear.

I remember Alex on one of Nightline’s featured town-hall discussions. Unlike the respectable guests who were live in the auditorium, he was consigned to a remote hookup, so he could speak only when spoken to by Koppel. Yet with a fraction of the time that the establishment windbags took to speak, Alex still won the debate hands down.

After the Voice, Cockburn took a featured column at the Nation magazine, which he wrote until his death.

But the Nation was never his political home. Cockburn was constantly at war with the pro-Democratic Party liberalism found regularly in its pages.

He saw himself as an enemy of Democrats as much as Republicans because the two parties – whatever their “dime’s worth of difference,” in the phrase that later served him as a book title – were bound together by their role in a bipartisan political establishment responsible for war, poverty and oppression. Time and again, Cockburn would investigate the Democratic heroes celebrated in places like the Nation and uncover their scandalous betrayals.

A lot of that dirt on the Democrats made it into my favorite of Cockburn’s many books, Washington Babylon, co-written with Ken Silverstein and published in the midst of the Clinton years.

A playful take on the trashy Hollywood Babylon, the Cockburn and Silverstein version was an encyclopedia of political sleaze – and plundered many a time for Socialist Worker articles, I don’t mind admitting. There were indispensable dossiers on the powerbrokers of both parties, plus the unelected bureaucrats, lobbyists and think-tank blowhards who shape government policy as much as elected officeholders – and, of course, the lapdogs of the establishment press.

A few years before, Cockburn and Silverstein had started collaborating on a political newsletter called *CounterPunch*. The aim was to give the editors – Jeffrey St. Clair later took over for Silverstein – and a few select contributors a forum to write what they wanted, without the compromises for commercial or political considerations at publications like the *Nation*.

The newsletter was popular among its subscribers, but *CounterPunch* later became much more important.

As a website, *CounterPunch.org* didn't have the space constraints imposed by the newsletter's six- or eight-page length, and it could publish every day, without worrying about how to pay for printing or postage. With dozens of writers contributing – SW's among them – *CounterPunch* became the main website of the US radical left, with many tens of thousands of readers every day.

*CounterPunch* was an important part of a fundamental shift in the media terrain, as Cockburn and St. Clair wrote in a 2007 collection of articles:

“[T]he old David vs. Goliath struggle of the left pamphleteers battling the vast print combines of the news barons has equaled up...Thirty years ago, many of these pieces, challenging the official nonsense peddled in the mass-market media, would have been doomed to small-circulation magazines, or a 30-second précis on Pacifica radio...Not any more. We can get a news story from a *CounterPuncher* in Gaza or Ramallah or Oaxaca or Vidharba, and have it out to a world audience in a matter of hours.”

.....

**Sharp disagreements**

I think Alex would have hated a reverential tribute that skipped over the points where we at *Socialist Worker* disagreed with him, sometimes very sharply. There were a few of them – more so in the last 10 years, or so it seemed to me.

In the middle of the 2000s, Cockburn

stunned *CounterPunch* readers with a furious denunciation of the science of global warming. As I heard the story, a climate change denier got his ear on a *Nation* magazine cruise, and from that point on, he never turned back. Global warming was a hoax perpetrated by mainstream environmental groups to raise money, and nothing anyone wrote in response – not even his *CounterPunch* coeditor, Jeffrey St. Clair, every bit as good a muckraker as Cockburn – could shift him.

On questions of women's oppression, Cockburn's writings ranged from adequate to weak to awful. One ugly low point was a 2009 *CounterPunch* feature in which he suggested that the right-wing dingbats complaining about alleged death panels set up by Barack Obama's health care law had a point – since “the major preoccupation of liberals for 30 years has been the right to kill embryos.” Abortion, Cockburn wrote, “is now widening in its function as a eugenic device.” It was impossible to read without wanting to break things.

Cockburn always seemed to reserve his deepest contempt for those who claimed in words to stand for justice or freedom, but who compromised to curry favor with business or stay in the good graces of the Democratic Party. This scorn served him well in unmasking the establishment liberals. But he seemed to conclude from this that right-wingers – particularly of the libertarian variety – were the more genuine allies.

Thus, for example, during the 2008 presidential campaign, several *CounterPunch* writers championed Republican Ron Paul as the only real antiwar presidential candidate in either party. Paul was against the US “war on terror” – though on the basis of isolationism, not for the same reasons as the left. But he was also a racist, anti-immigrant, anti-union, anti-choice bigot who wanted to dismantle the federal government. It was hard to understand how *CounterPunchers* who wrote passionately against immigrant-bashing or the bipartisan budget-cutters

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**On questions of women's oppression, Cockburn's writings ranged from adequate to weak to awful**  
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PAYING TRIBUTE

Cockburn refused to ever accept any sign of compromise or retreat

could overlook all this and focus only on his antiwar position.

The list of differences with Cockburn could go on. I think maybe one reason they remain stingingly fresh in mind is because he argued just as hard on these questions as any other. Alex never wrote anything half-way - he never met a political debate that he didn't wade into, guns blazing.

But that was also a source of his contribution to the US left. Especially in difficult or politically murky times - the turn to the right under Reagan and the rehabilitation of US imperialism, the collapse of a liberal

opposition during the Clinton years, the stampede to the right after September 11 and the launching of the "war on terror" - Cockburn refused to ever accept any sign of compromise or retreat.

He never stopped speaking truth to power - and the left we need to build for the struggles of tomorrow will be stronger for the battles of the past that he helped to define and crystallize with his writing. CT

Alan Maas is the editor of Socialist Worker, where this essay was originally published at http://socialistworker.org

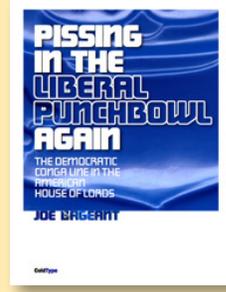
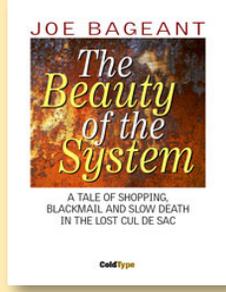
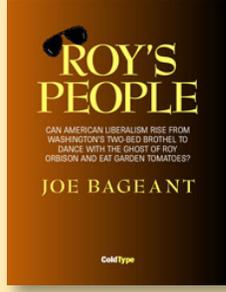
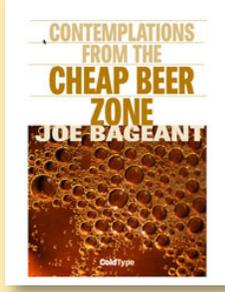
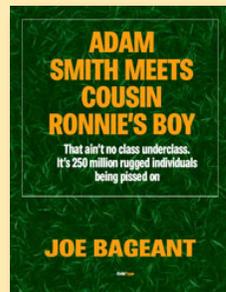
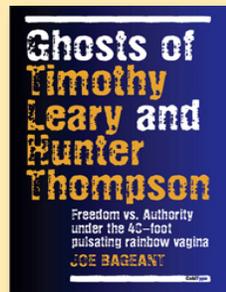
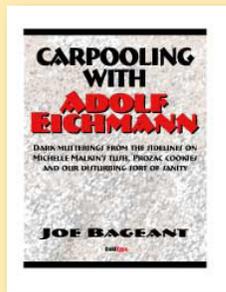
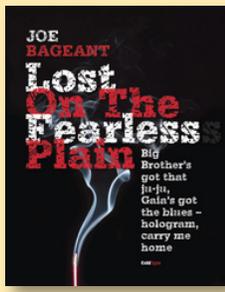
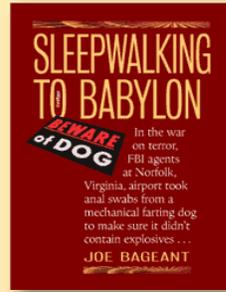
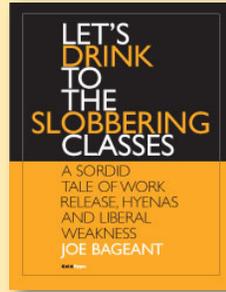
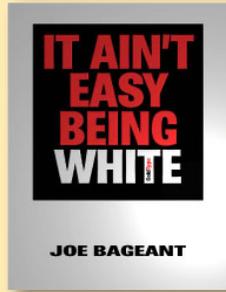
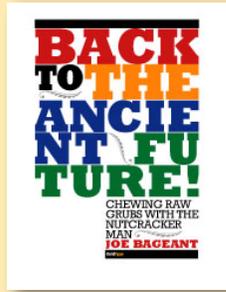
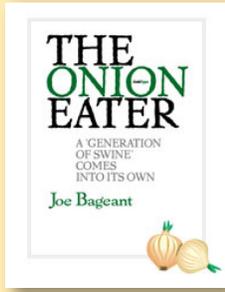
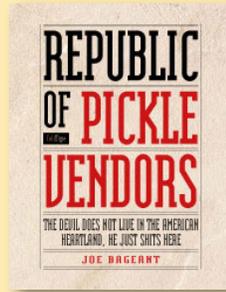
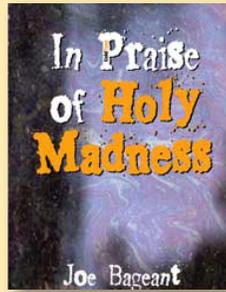
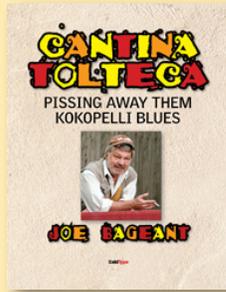
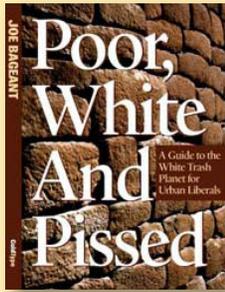
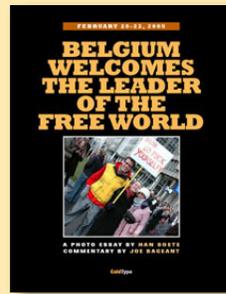
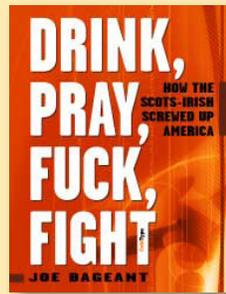
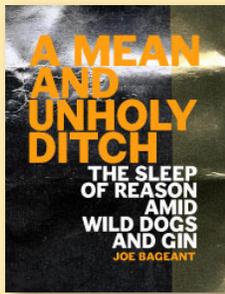


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# Convenient myths and liberal imperialism

The liberal way to run the world, says **John Pilger** is ‘improve or we’ll kill you’

.....  
“If we have to use force,” said Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State in the liberal administration of Bill Clinton, “it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further into the future”  
.....

**W**hat is the world’s most powerful and violent “ism”? The question will summon the usual demons, such as Islamism, now that communism has left the stage. The answer, wrote Harold Pinter, is only “superficially recorded, let alone documented, let alone acknowledged,” because only one ideology claims to be non-ideological, neither left nor right, the supreme way. This is liberalism.

In his 1859 essay, *On Liberty*, to which modern liberals pay homage, John Stuart Mills described the power of empire. “Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians,” he wrote, “provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end.” The “barbarians” were large sections of humanity of whom “implicit obedience” was required. The French liberal Alexis de Tocqueville also believed in the bloody conquest of others as “a triumph of Christianity and civilization” that was “clearly pre-ordained in the sight of Providence.”

“It’s a nice and convenient myth that liberals are the peacemakers and conservatives the warmongers,” wrote the historian Hywel Williams in 2001, “but the imperialism of the liberal way may be more dangerous because of its open-ended nature — its conviction that it represents a superior form of life [while denying its] self-righteous fa-

naticism.” He had in mind a speech by Tony Blair in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks, in which Blair promised to “reorder this world around us” according to his “moral values.” At least a million dead later – in Iraq alone – this tribune of liberalism is today employed by the tyranny in Kazakhstan for a fee of \$13 million.

Blair’s crimes are not unusual. Since 1945, more than a third of the membership of the United Nations – 69 countries – have suffered some or all of the following. They have been invaded, their governments overthrown, their popular movements suppressed, their elections subverted and their people bombed. The historian Mark Curtis estimates the death toll in the millions.

This has been principally the project of the liberal flame carrier, the United States, whose celebrated “progressive” president John F. Kennedy, according to new research, authorized the bombing of Moscow during the Cuban crisis in 1962. “If we have to use force,” said Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State in the liberal administration of Bill Clinton, “it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further into the future.” How succinctly she defines modern, violent liberalism.

Syria is an enduring project. This is a leaked joint US-UK intelligence file:

“In order to facilitate the action of libera-

tive [sic] forces ... a special effort should be made to eliminate certain key individuals [and] to proceed with internal disturbances in Syria. CIA is prepared, and SIS (MI6) will attempt to mount minor sabotage and coup d'état [sic] incidents within Syria, working through contacts with individuals ... a necessary degree of fear ... frontier and [staged] border clashes [will] provide a pretext for intervention ... the CIA and SIS should use ... capabilities in both psychological and action fields to augment tension."

That was written in 1957, though it might have come from a recent report by the Royal United Services Institute, *A Collision Course for Intervention*, whose author says, with witty understatement, "It is highly likely that some western special forces and intelligence sources have been in Syria for a considerable time."

**The west's violent creation**

And so a world war beckons in Syria and Iran. Israel, the west's violent creation, already occupies part of Syria. This is not news. Israelis take picnics to the Golan Heights to watch a civil war directed by western intelligence from Turkey and bankrolled and armed by the medievalists in Saudi Arabia.

Having stolen most of Palestine, viciously attacked Lebanon, starved the people of Gaza and built an illegal nuclear arsenal, Israel is exempt from the current disinformation campaign aimed at installing western clients in Damascus and Tehran.

On 21 July, the *Guardian* commentator Jonathan Freedland warned that "the west will not stay aloof for long ... Both the US and Israel are also anxiously eyeing Syria's supply of chemical and nuclear weapons, now said to be unlocked and on the move, fearing Assad may choose to go down in a lethal blaze of glory." Said by whom? The usual "experts" and spooks.

Like them, Freedland desires "a revolution without the full-blown intervention required in Libya." According to its own

records, NATO launched 9,700 "strike sorties" against Libya, of which more than a third were civilian targets. These included missiles with uranium warheads. Look at the photographs of the rubble of Misurata and Sirte, and the mass graves identified by the Red Cross. Read the UICEF report on the children killed, "most [of them] under the age of ten." Like the destruction of the Iraqi city of Fallujah, these crimes were not news, because news as disinformation is a fully integrated weapon of attack.

On 14 July, the Libyan Observatory for Human Rights, which opposed the Gaddafi regime, reported, "The human rights situation in Libya now is far worse than under Gaddafi." Ethnic cleansing is rife. According to Amnesty, the entire population of the town of Tawargha "are still barred from returning [while] their homes have been looted and burned down."

In Anglo-American scholarship, influential theorists known as "liberal realists" have long taught that liberal imperialists – a term they never use – are the world's peace-brokers and crisis managers, rather than the cause of a crisis. They have taken the humanity out of the study of nations and congealed it with a jargon that serves warmongering power. Laying out whole nations for autopsy, they have identified "failed states" (nations difficult to exploit) and "rogue states" (nations resistant to western dominance).

Whether or not the regime is a democracy or dictatorship is irrelevant. The same is true of those contracted to do the dirty work. In the Middle East, from Nasser's time to Syria today, western liberalism's collaborators have been Islamists, lately al-Qaeda, while long discredited notions of democracy and human rights serve as rhetorical cover for conquest, "as required." **Plus ça change...**

**CT**

*John Pilger's documentaries have won academy awards in both the UK and the US. His website is <http://johnpilger.com>*

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**Israelis take picnics to the Golan Heights to watch a civil war directed by western intelligence from Turkey and bankrolled and armed by the medievalists in Saudi Arabia**  
 .....

# I am not a number . . .

**John W. Whitehead** looks back at prophetic TV series to remind us how we're prisoners in a world where entertainment is more important than knowledge

.....  
**If people cannot read, or if they simply will not, the safeguard of a democracy – an educated and informed citizenry – is in peril**  
.....

*“What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared we would become a captive audience. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared that we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the feelies, the orgy porgy, and the centrifugal bumblepuppy. As Huxley remarked in *Brave New World Revisited*, the civil libertarians and rationalists who are ever on the alert to oppose tyranny “failed to take into account man’s almost infinite appetite for distractions.” In *Brave New World*, they are controlled by inflicting pleasure. In short, Orwell feared that what we hate would ruin us. Huxley feared that what we love will ruin us.”* – Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985)

**T**hus goes the strain of thought in two of the great prophetic minds of literature, not so much opposed in their rationale as intertwined like the serpentine strands of DNA. The relevance of Aldous Huxley and George Orwell lies in their fears, which in recent years are

being actualized at an accelerated pace.

Like the automatons of Orwell’s 1984, our glazed eyes have melted into the television screen. Recent statistics, for example, indicate that approximately 1 in 7 or 42 million Americans cannot read a newspaper or even the instructions on a pill bottle.

If people cannot read, or if they simply will not, the safeguard of a democracy – an educated and informed citizenry – is in peril. The importance of an educated citizenry, as envisioned by the architects of the American scheme of government, is that they have the analytical and intellectual wherewithal to recognize and challenge the inevitable corruption of government. Without such an education, inevitably, the people become pawns in the hands of unscrupulous government bureaucrats.

Have we become pawns manipulated by a government-entertainment complex? This was the question debated in seventeen episodes of *The Prisoner*, the British television series that baffled and confused a generation and still intrigues viewers today.

Regarded by many as the finest dramatic television series ever broadcast, *The Prisoner* first aired in Great Britain 45 years ago. The subsequent summer of 1968, a summer of dissidence and unrest, sixteen of the seventeen episodes were broadcast in the United States (and reprised in the summer of 1969). The strength of this enigmatic se-

ries rode on the heels of Patrick McGoohan, who had built a reputation as the spy John Drake in the Secret Agent television series. After tiring of the Drake role, McGoohan immediately fell headlong into *The Prisoner* as he wrote, directed and otherwise hovered over the series.

#### Relevant today

The themes of *The Prisoner* are still relevant today – the rise of a police state, the freedom of the individual, the perversion of science and the nature of man – and they in part account for the series’ cult following.

“I am not a number. I am a free man,” was the mantra chanted on each episode of *The Prisoner*. Perhaps the best visual debate ever on individuality and freedom, the story centers around McGoohan, a man who finds himself living in a mysterious, self-contained, cosmopolitan community known as The Village. The Village’s inhabitants are known merely by numbers, and McGoohan is Number 6.

In the opening episode (“The Arrival”), Number 6 meets Number 2, who explains to him that he is in The Village because information stored “inside” his head has made him too valuable “outside.” Number 6 chooses not to give in to Village authorities but struggles to maintain his own identity. “I will not make any deals with you,” he pointedly remarks to Number 2. “I’ve resigned. I will not be pushed, filed, stamped, indexed, debriefed or numbered. My life is my own.” Thus, Number 6 remains a prisoner, although his captivity is spent in an idyllic setting with parks and green fields, recreational activities and even a butler.

Number 6 seeks to preserve his individuality as a “free man” as he tries to escape from The Village or learn the identity of Number 1, the person presumed to run The Village. But Number 6 is watched continually by surveillance cameras and other devices, and his escapes are thwarted by ominous white balloon-like spheres known as

“rovers.” In the final episode (“Fall Out”), Number 6 overcomes his overseers and discovers that he was Number 1 all along.

Although esoteric, *The Prisoner* was McGoohan’s vehicle for translating some very definite viewpoints to the screen. As he stated in a 1982 interview:

“It was about the most evil human being, human essence, and that is ourselves. It is within each of us. That is the most dangerous thing on the Earth, what is within us. So, therefore, that is what I made Number 1 – oneself – an image of oneself which he was trying to beat.

“The most pernicious element of this evil essence is the domination and annihilation of individuality and freedom, which are essential to human nature. Thus, initially the struggle for freedom is against oneself.”

Fundamentally, however, *The Prisoner* is an epistemological exercise that focuses on the concept of reality, both in the subjective and objective sense – that is, can we really know anything about anything? Is reality a mere social construct? Since society creates any knowledge that people may possess, does this mean that human beings are simply products of the given social setting from which they are manufactured?

As Steven Paul Davies notes in *The Prisoner Handbook* (2002): “Thinking for yourself is not necessarily thinking by yourself.” And as Number 2 warns Number 6 in the episode entitled “Once upon a Time”:

“Society is the place where people exist together. That is civilization. The lone wolf belongs to the wilderness. You must not grow up to be a lone wolf.”

Therefore, the ultimate goal of those in power is conformity to the constructs of society. This means both figuratively and literally eliminating the lone wolf, the individual. Modern psychiatry defines “normality” as conformity. This “measuring of the human psyche by psychologists,” as Davies puts it, has seriously affected how we live our lives and how we view nonconformists. Media representations of “normality” have

The themes of *The Prisoner* are still relevant today – the rise of a police state, the freedom of the individual, the perversion of science and the nature of man

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## CAPTIVE AUDIENCE

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**Huxley clearly saw that people would come to love entertainment and trivia, and that those would destroy their capacity to think and eventually annihilate any freedom we may possess**  
.....

become the criteria that society uses to evaluate its members. The concept of normality has become subjective as our views have changed to meet societal demands. The individual, as the term was once defined, is becoming passé. As McGoohan commented in 1968:

“At this moment individuals are being drained of their personalities and being brainwashed into slaves. The inquisition of the mind by psychiatrists is far worse than the assault on the body of torturers.”

In a media-dominated age in which the lines between entertainment, politics and news reporting are blurred, it is extremely difficult to distinguish fact from fiction. Moreover, the struggle to remain “oneself in a society increasingly obsessed with conformity to mass consumerism,” writes Davies, means that superficiality and image trump truth and the individual. The result is the group mind and the tyranny of mob-think.

.....  
**Loving entertainment**

Huxley clearly saw that people would come to love entertainment and trivia, and that those would destroy their capacity to think and eventually annihilate any freedom we may possess. Humanity’s bent toward distractions – that is, the bread and circuses of entertainment – leads them to sell their collective souls for one more voyeuristic peek into a celebrity’s life. Indeed, our society is one in which people’s love of entertainment and trivia, according to Davies, has “destroyed their capacity to think and takes away their freedom.”

McGoohan was quoted as saying that “freedom is a myth.” When we think of freedom, what exactly are we talking about? After all, none of us is free to choose when and where we are born, what sex we are, who our parents are and so on.

When we reflect on the question of freedom, we see that there is very little freedom at all. We are so bombarded with images, dictates, rules and punishments and

stamped with numbers from the day we are born that it is a wonder we ever ponder a concept such as freedom. “We’re all pawns,” notes a character in Episode One, in a game that cruelly plays itself out for most of us. In essence, this means that the only hope for true freedom is to break the chains of destiny in an attempt at some momentary individualistic moment, something few ever experience. In the end, we are all prisoners of our own mind. In fact, it is in the mind that prisons are created for us. And in the lockdown of political correctness, it becomes extremely difficult to speak or act individually without being ostracized.

Thus, so often we are forced to retreat inwardly into our minds, a place without bars from which we cannot escape, and into the world of video games and the Internet. That’s why *The Prisoner*’s existential experience of continually questioning everything, including ourselves, is so vital to any concept of individuality. It is only within this existential questioning that there is hope for what we may call freedom.

The fact that *The Prisoner* even attempts to raise such questions is astounding. It is against the meltdown of the modern mind that *The Prisoner* stands, and it is this background that gives it increasing relevance.

McGoohan’s ambivalence about the concept of freedom is reflected in the surrealism of the final episode. Number 6 emerges from The Village into the center of London. The Village, then, is the present reality. In an earlier episode (“The Chimes of Big Ben”), when Number 6 believes he has escaped to a Secret Service office in London, he asks his superior: “I risked my life ... to come back here, home, because I thought it was different ... it is, isn’t it? Isn’t it different?”

**CT**

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*John W. Whitehead is an attorney and author who has written, debated and practiced widely in the area of constitutional law and human rights.*

# The heat of the moment

Climate breakdown is right here, right now, writes **George Monbiot**

**T**here are no comparisons to be made. This is not like war or plague or a stockmarket crash. We are ill-equipped, historically and psychologically, to understand it, which is one of the reasons why so many refuse to accept that it is happening.

What we are seeing, here and now, is the transformation of the atmospheric physics of this planet. Three weeks before the likely minimum, the melting of Arctic sea ice has already broken the record set in 2007. The daily rate of loss is now 50% higher than it was that year. The daily sense of loss – of the world we loved and knew – cannot be quantified so easily.

The Arctic has been warming roughly twice as quickly as the rest of the northern hemisphere. This is partly because climate breakdown there is self-perpetuating. As the ice melts, for example, exposing the darker sea beneath, heat which would previously have been reflected back into space is absorbed.

This great dissolution, of ice and certainties, is happening so much faster than most climate scientists predicted that, one of them reports, “it feels as if everything I’ve learned has become obsolete.” In its last assessment, published in 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change noted that “in some projections, Arctic late-summer sea ice disappears almost entirely

by the latter part of the 21st century.” These were the most extreme forecasts in the panel’s range. Some scientists now forecast that the disappearance of Arctic sea ice in late summer could occur in this decade or the next.

As I’ve warned repeatedly, but to little effect, the IPCC’s assessments tend to be conservative. This is unsurprising when you see how many people have to approve them before they are published. There have been a few occasions – such as its estimate of the speed at which glaciers would be lost in the Himalayas – on which the panel has overstated the case. But it looks as if these will be greatly outnumbered by the occasions on which the panel has understated it.

The melting disperses another belief: that the temperate parts of the world – where most of the rich nations are located – will be hit last and least, while the poorer nations will be hit first and worst. New knowledge of the way in which the destruction of the Arctic sea ice affects northern Europe and North America suggests that this is no longer true. A paper published earlier this year in *Geophysical Research Letters* shows that Arctic warming is likely to be responsible for the extremes now hammering the once-temperate nations.

The north polar jet stream is an air current several hundred kilometres wide, travelling eastwards around the hemisphere. It

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**What we are seeing, here and now, is the transformation of the atmospheric physics of this planet**  
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**Our governments  
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and fish it exposes**  
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functions as a barrier, separating the cold, wet weather to the north from the warmer, drier weather to the south. Many of the variations in our weather are caused by great travelling meanders – or Rossby waves – in the jet stream.

Arctic heating, the paper shows, both slows the Rossby waves and makes them steeper and wider. Instead of moving on rapidly, the weather gets stuck. Regions to the south of the stalled meander wait for weeks or months for rain; regions to the north (or underneath it) wait for weeks or months for a break from the rain. Instead of a benign succession of sunshine and showers, we get droughts or floods. During the winter a slow, steep meander can connect us directly to the polar weather, dragging severe ice and snow far to the south of its usual range. This mechanism goes a long way towards explaining the shift to sustained – and therefore extreme – weather patterns around the northern hemisphere.

I have no idea what is coming to Europe and North America this winter and next summer, in the wake of the record ice melt, but it's unlikely to be pleasant. Please note that this record represents a loss of around 30% of Arctic sea ice, against the long-term average. When that climbs to 50 or 70 or 90%, the impacts are likely to be worse.

Our governments do nothing. Having abandoned any pretence of responding to the environmental crisis during the earth summit in June, now they stare stupidly as the ice on which we stand dissolves. Nothing – or worse than nothing. Their one unequivocal response to the melting has been to facilitate the capture of the oil and fish it exposes.

The companies which caused this disaster are scrambling to profit from it. On last month, Shell requested an extension to its exploratory drilling period in the Chukchi Sea, off the north-west coast of Alaska. This would push its operations hard against the moment when the ice re-forms and any spills they cause are locked in. The Rus-

sian oil company Gazprom is using the great melt to try to drill in the Pechora Sea, north-east of Murmansk. After turning its Arctic lands in the Komi Republic into the Niger Delta of the north (repeated oil spills are left unremediated in the tundra), Russia wants to extend this industry into one of the world's most fragile ecosystems, where ice, storms and darkness make decontamination almost impossible.

As I write, activists from Greenpeace, whom I regard as heroes, are chained to Gazprom's supply vessel, preventing the rig from operating. These people are stepping in where all governments have failed. David Cameron, who still claims to lead the greenest government ever, is no longer hugging huskies. In June he struck an agreement with the Norwegian prime minister "to enable sustainable development of Arctic energy." Sustainable development, of course, means drilling for oil.

Is this how our children will see it: that we destroyed the benign conditions which made our world of wonders possible, then used the opportunity to amplify the damage? All of us, of course, can claim to have acted with other aims in mind, or not to have acted at all, as the other immediacies of life seemed more important. But – unless we respond at last – the results follow as surely as if we had sought to engineer them.

Stupidity, greed, passivity? Just as comparisons evaporate, so do these words. The ice, that solid platform on which, we now discover, so much rested, melts into air. Our pretensions to peace, prosperity and progress are likely to follow.

*“And like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous  
palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Ye all which it inherit, shall dissolve.”* **CT**

.....  
**George Monbiot** is the author of *“Heat: How to Stop the Planet from Burning”*. Read more of his writings at <http://monbiot.com>

# The 99% take on the Republican Convention

Arun Gupta takes a trip to Tampa

Politics is an elaborate chess match, and in St. Petersburg one small strike was staged against the Republican National convention on Aug. 26 that revealed the thrust of President Obama's 2012 re-election strategy.

As panicky Republicans cancelled the first day of the convention because of Tropical Storm Isaac, the focus on Sunday was the "RNC Welcome Event" at Tropicana Field. These days no major convention event is complete without a counter-protest, and in downtown St. Petersburg nearly 500 people gathered Sunday to march to the sports stadium and voice their displeasure at what they derided as "the world's largest cocktail party."

Given the spitting rain and gusts, the turnout was better than expected. And given the months of police and press hype that a mob of mayhem-wreaking anarchists would crash the RNC, the protest rally around Mirror Lake seemed more like a festive Sunday in the park.

A couple of hundred people milled about as Dave Rovics belted out crowd pleasers such as "I'm a Better Anarchist than You." A handful of buses pulled up and disgorged more protesters who came from far away as Miami, New York city and Wisconsin. The rally and protest was organized by the Florida Consumer Action Network, a local grassroots organization focused on public policy

issues.

Few anarchists were in evidence, apart from a scrum of fidgety black-clad youth who melted into the rally after drawing stares. It felt like an Occupy-related event with a giant puppet of Romney tagged with a "King of the 1%," and chants of "We are the 99%."

Grabbing attention with his preacher's cadence, Rev. Manuel Sykes, president of the St. Petersburg NAACP, announced, "I'm here to stop the corporate takeover of America." Sykes castigated "our leaders [who] want to privatize Social Security, Healthcare, Education and Prisons." He blasted Mitt Romney for wanting "to enrich the 1%." And he described the November presidential ballot in epic terms: "We're not just fighting for the 2012 election. We're fighting for the future of America as we know it."

## taunted crowd

On the fringes off the rally, next to a pack of camouflage-clad sheriff's deputies, a pungent, hippie-looking gentleman with a Ron Paul 2012 sign dangling around his neck and a video camera taped to his helmeted head, taunted the crowd. "Do any of these hippies here supporting Obama know that Obama has dropped two times as many bombs as Bush?"

His words stung one observer who yelled

Few anarchists were in evidence, apart from a scrum of fidgety black-clad youth who melted into the rally after drawing stares

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**Occupy has been reduced to a bogeyman police and politicians dangle in front of a lapdog media that dutifully report every outlandish allegation as stone-cold truth**  
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back that “Obama has to do the bidding of Washington.”

The exchange captured the conflicting mindset of the Democratic base. Romney, Ryan and the right are painted, not unfairly, as extremists who will hurtle America back to the dark ages. But Obama, despite sitting in the Oval Office, is seen as powerless.

The weather and fear mongering no doubt cut down on the turnout, but one community organizer clued me in to another factor. The organizer, who wished to remain anonymous, said, “A lot of people I work with don’t have hope in national politics. There was an element of fear about the RNC, ‘Can I even go outside with all the street closures and restrictions?’ There is definitely animosity toward Republicans, a lot of ‘Fuck these guys, but my members also questioned what was going to be accomplished by going out in front of the barricades. I heard a lot of ‘It’s not going to change nothing.’”

The anti-RNC event was labeled a “community vigil,” and it was strikingly diverse. There were anarchists, socialists, libertarians and unaffiliated radicals. Mostly it was white middle-class liberals, working-class African-Americans and a collage of poor people. There were numerous tee shirts and signs indicating support for Obama. What united the crowd was the 99% rhetoric.

That was by design. The community organizer said, “The word from on high was, ‘Don’t say working class, don’t say poor. Say middle class or 99%.’” Why 99%, I asked. “Because it polls well” the organizer explained.

The Occupy Wall Street movement lives on from student-debt campaigning and labor solidarity to home foreclosure defense and anti-fracking organizing. But as a national force Occupy has been reduced to a bogeyman police and politicians dangle in front of a lapdog media that dutifully report every outlandish allegation as stone-cold truth, and it exists as a mobilizing force for

the Democratic Party.

You see, Obama is running a re-election campaign using Occupy Wall Street’s language. He won’t say the 99% or 1% outright. That would be too divisive, or so the media owned by the 1% say. But the attacks on Bain Capital outsourcing and Romney’s secret tax returns are tapping into the volcano of anger that Occupy gave life to. Late last year an official in the AFL-CIO’s national office told me that Romney was their “dream candidate,” and in April Justin Ruben, executive director of MoveOn told me that Mitt Romney was “Mr. 1%.” Unions like SEIU and liberal groups such as MoveOn and Rebuild the Dream carry the water in flogging the message that Romney will be the president of the 1% who will turn the screws even harder on the rest of us.

That assessment is not untrue. The right would unleash a world of pain on most Americans. But the nature of our endless electoral process, which sucks all the oxygen out of the brain, blinds most Obama supporters to how the Democratic Party is complicit in pushing our politics to the right.

.....  
**One-third in poverty**

With close to one third of the population in or on the cusp of poverty, 46 million on food stamps, 51 million uninsured, a “real” unemployment rate stuck at 15 percent, millions of families doubled up and millions of homes still entering foreclosure, Obama can’t run on his economic record. Sure, much of the fault is the guy before him, but that excuse wears thin after four years. Particularly because Obama rode into office with a congressional super majority and a road paved with political capital.

But just as Clinton turned Reagan-era extremism into a bipartisan consensus, Obama doubled-down on the “war on terror,” and endorsed cutting Social Security and Medicare and enacting austerity policies within a year of taking office. Obama thus helped

enable the next stage of right-wing extremism that he is now running against.

So it's not really ironic that Obama has swiped the language of Occupy, even as his FBI and Homeland Security have made Occupy's anarchists into Public Enemy #1. That's how politics work.

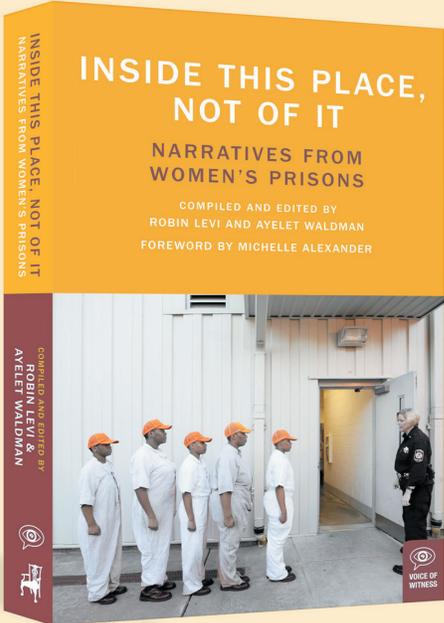
Local organizers in Tampa know the deal. When I mentioned that liberal groups have co-opted Occupy by creating the 99% movement and are using the fury against the whole political system for partisan ends, two different activists agreed and went further. They said there was an astroturf element to the anti-RNC rally in St. Petersburg. One said of liberal groups and unions, "You

see a lot of their tactics that amount to astroturfing. They see the Super PACs employ this strategy and they think they have to do the same thing. That's what I find most troubling."

The 99% are truly suffering. And it's a no brainer that they will suffer even more under Romney than under Obama. But under darkened skies sprinkling rain, no one at the rally spoke of brighter days ahead for the 99% if Obama does win. **CT**

*Arun Gupta is editor of the Independent, = <http://indypendent.org> - a free newspaper in new York City. He is writing a book on the decline of the American Empire.*

**The 99% are truly suffering. And it's a no brainer that they will suffer even more under Romney than under Obama**



## INSIDE THIS PLACE, NOT OF IT

NARRATIVES FROM WOMEN'S PRISONS

COMPILED AND EDITED BY  
ROBIN LEVI AND AYELET WALDMAN  
FOREWORD BY MICHELLE ALEXANDER

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*"Inside This Place, Not Of It is precisely the kind of book we need now. I will never forget these women, or this book."*

—SUSAN STRAIGHT, AUTHOR OF  
*Take One Candle Light a Room*

*"I am passionately, ardently grateful for the existence of this book."*

— PEGGY ORENSTEIN, AUTHOR OF  
*Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the New Girlie-Girl Culture*

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# Manufacturing failed states

Edward S. Herman tells how the United States, urged along by a compliant media, has stormed around the world, leaving death and chaos in its wake

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**After relatively brief spurts of attention to narco-terrorism and then Saddam's threatening weapons of mass destruction, Islamic terrorism came virtually out of nowhere to provide a successor threat**  
.....

**D**uring the Vietnam War, a sign over one of the US army bases read "Killing Is Our Business, and Business Is Good." Well, it was a very good business in Vietnam (and Cambodia, Laos, and Korea as well), the number of civilian deaths running into the millions. And it has been quite respectable in the years after Vietnam. The killings have been carried out both directly and via proxies on every continent, as US "national security" has required bases, garrisons, assassinations, invasions, bombing wars, and the sponsorship of killer regimes, real terror networks, and programs everywhere in response to terrorist threats and challenges to the pitiful giant. Jan Knippers Black pointed out years ago in her great book *United States Penetration of Brazil* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977) that "national security" is a wonderfully elastic concept, expanding in accord with "what a nation, class or institution...thinks it should have," with the result that it is those "whose wealth and power would appear to make them most secure who are, in fact, most paranoid, and who, by their frenetic attempts to ensure their security, bring on their own destruction." (She was addressing the 1960s Brazilian threat of social democracy and its termination by a US-supported counter-revolution and military dictatorship.) Add to this the search by the vested interests of the military-industrial-complex for missions to justify budget increases, and

the mainstream media's full cooperation in this search, and we have a frightening reality.

In reality, the fake-paranoid giant has had to struggle valiantly to produce more or less credible threats, especially with the fall of the "Evil Empire," which this country had long been allegedly "containing." Thank goodness that after relatively brief spurts of attention to narco-terrorism and then Saddam's threatening weapons of mass destruction, Islamic terrorism came virtually out of nowhere to provide a successor threat, no doubt produced by hostility to US freedoms and the Islamic world's unwillingness to allow Israel to find a negotiating partner and peaceably settle any disputes with the Palestinians.

But in addition to maintaining the killing and associated arms business at a high level, the United States has become a large-scale manufacturer of failed states. By a failed state I mean one that has been crushed militarily or rendered unmanageable by political and/or economic destabilization and a resultant chaos and is unable (or is not permitted) for long periods to recover and take care of its citizens' needs. Of course the United States has been such a manufacturer for a long time, as in the cases of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala and those Indochinese states where killing was so good. But we have seen a dramatic resurgence in more recent times, some of it more or less peaceful, as in the cases of post-Soviet Russia and

several of the Eastern European states, where income declines and sharply increased mortality rates resulted from “shock therapy” and Western-assisted but partly locally organized and supported elite semi-legal grand larceny (i.e., privatization under exceptionally corrupt conditions).

But there has been a fresh stream of failed states brought about by US and NATO “humanitarian intervention” and regime change, carried out more aggressively in the wake of the death of the Soviet Union (and thus the end of an important if limited force of “containment”). Humanitarian intervention in Yugoslavia has been a model, with Bosnia, Serbia and Kosovo turned into failed states, several other weaklings broken out, all of them Western clients or supplicants, plus a huge US military base in Kosovo, with this package replacing one formerly independent social democratic state. This demonstration of the merits of imperial intervention set the stage for further failed-state manufacturing efforts in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Libya, with a similar program well advanced today in Syria and one obviously in process for some years in the Free World’s treatment of a threatening Iran, following its happy relationship with the Western-imposed Shah dictatorship.

These manufactured failures have often had common features that show them to be a product of imperial policy and the projection of imperial power. One frequent feature is the rise and/or recognition of ethnic group rebels who claim victimhood, fight their government with terroristic acts, sometimes designed to provoke a violent government response, and who regularly appeal to the imperial powers to come to their aid. Sometimes foreign mercenaries are imported to aid the rebels, and both the indigenous rebels and mercenaries are often armed, trained and given logistical support by the imperial powers. The imperial powers encourage these rebel efforts as they find them useful to justify destabilizing, bombing, and eventually overthrowing the

target regime.

This process was evident throughout the period of the dismantlement of Yugoslavia and creation of the resultant set of failed states. The NATO powers wanted Yugoslavia taken apart and the Republic of Serbia, its largest and most independent component, crushed. They encouraged nationalist elements within the other Republics to rebel, and all of these recognized that NATO would support and eventually go to war for them. This made for prolonged warfare and ethnic cleansing, but did eventually succeed in the destruction of Yugoslavia and creation of the residual failed states. (See Herman and Peterson, “The Dismantling of Yugoslavia,” *Monthly Review*, October 2007). Amusingly, Al Qaeda elements and mercenaries were imported into both Bosnia and Kosovo to help fight the target Republic (Serbia), with the knowledge and cooperation of the Clinton administration, as well as Iran. (See John Schindler’s *Unholy Terror*, which presses this theme very effectively, and is thereby unreviewable, except in *Z Magazine*! See my “Safari Journalism: Schindler’s Unholy Terror versus the Sarajevo Safari’s Mythical Multi-Ethnic Project,” *Z Magazine*, April 2008). Al Qaeda was also one of the constituents of the freedom fighters engaged in the Libyan campaign, and is now admitted even if a little belatedly in the *New York Times* to be a factor in the Syria regime-change program (Rod Nordland, “Al Qaeda Taking Deadly New Role in Syria Conflict,” *NYT*, July 24, 2012). And of course it was a centerpiece in the regime change in Afghanistan and basis of the “blowback” of 9/11 (bin Laden having been an important Saudi-US-sponsored rebel, subsequently abandoned by those sponsors, and later attacking, demonized, and killed by them).

These programs always involve serious “atrocities management,” whereby the government under attack is accused of major acts of violence against the rebels and their supporters, and is by this process effectively demonized and set up for more massive intervention. This was very important in the

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Yugoslav breakup wars, and possibly even more so in Libya and Syria. The process is greatly helped by the mobilization of international agencies, which participate in the demonization by denouncing the atrocities and sometimes indicting and prosecuting the targeted villains. In the case of Yugoslavia, the UN-established International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) worked hand-in-glove with the NATO powers in setting up the Serb leadership for prosecution and justifying any action the US and NATO wanted to take. In a beautiful illustration of the process, the ICTY prosecutor indicted Milosevic in May 1999 just as NATO turned to deliberately bombing Serb civilian facilities to hasten Serbian surrender, although these were war crimes and carried out under a UN Charter violation. But they diverted world attention from the unpleasant and illegal NATO behavior to the charges against the demonized Milosevic.

Similarly, with NATO eager to attack Libya, the prosecutor at the International Criminal Court quickly indicted Muammar Gaddafi without even having conducted any independent investigation, and with an established prosecutor record of never having indicted anybody except Africans who were not Western clients. This kind of “juridical management” is invaluable to the imperial powers and feeds well into the advance of regime change and the manufacture of failed states.

There are also purportedly independent human rights groups and “democracy promotion” entities like Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group, and the Open Society Institute that regularly get on the imperial bandwagon by featuring the violence of the targeted regime and its leaders. This also feeds into the mainstream media, the entire set providing the moral environment for more aggressive intervention on behalf of the victims.

This is helped still further by the fact that the atrocity claims and pictures of grieving widows and refugees, the seemingly compelling evidence on atrocities, and an establish-

ment consensus on the “responsibility to protect” the victim populations, also affect liberal and left elements in the West, causing some to join the mainstream throng in denouncing the targeted regime and demanding humanitarian intervention, and many others to lapse into silence because of confusion and an unwillingness to be accused of “supporting the dictators.” The argument of the interventionists is that while we may seem to be supporting an expanding imperialism, exceptions must be made where exceptionally bad things are happening and the home public is aroused and wants action, but we may show our progressive credentials by trying to micro-manage and contain the imperial attack, as in insisting on adherence to a no-fly zone intervention in Libya. (See Gilbert Achcar, “A legitimate and necessary debate from an anti-imperialist perspective,” ZNet, March 25, 2011; and my reply in “Gilbert Achcar’s Defense of Humanitarian Intervention,” MRZine, April 8, 2011, which refers to the “imperialist fine-tuning left.”).

There is a good case to be made that the United States itself is a failed or failing state. It obviously has not been crushed militarily by any foreign power, but its underlying population has been hugely damaged by its own permanent war system. In this case the military elite, with its contractor, banker, political, media and intellectual allies has greatly enlarged poverty and mass distress, shriveled the public services, and impoverished the country, making it impossible for the hamstrung and compromised leadership to properly service its ordinary citizens, despite steadily rising per capita productivity and GDP. The surpluses are drained into the war system and the consumption and ownership of a small minority, who, in what Steven Pinker in *The Better Angels of Our Nature* calls the era of “recivilization,” are aggressively striving to go beyond mere surplus monopolization to transfers from the incomes, wealth and public claims of the great (and struggling) majority. As a failed state as well as in other ways the United States is surely an exceptional nation! **CT**

.....  
**Edward S. Herman** is professor emeritus of finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania and has written extensively on economics, political economy, and the media.  
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# The emperor's lack of clothes

**Paul Balles** on imperial criminals, thieving empires and the charade that the United States is 'making the world safe for democracy'

**H**ow would you like to live under someone's boot?

That's not a reference to a brute for a husband or a bitch for a bride. It's a question motivated by the behaviour of the mindless louts who enjoy holding sacrificial lambs as hostages and killing those who complain.

Who would be so inhuman? Many. Too many! Scan the histories of imperial criminals and their thieving empires:

European colonies, American settlers, Russian Gulags, African slaves, Japanese internment camps, Jewish holocaust, Palestinians, Darfur refugees, Guantanamo prisoners, South African and Israeli apartheid, Armenian genocide, the prison camps of endless wars.

Where people are privileged enough to have basic comfort, the emperors keep the privileged entertained with sports, television, films, concerts, bars and pubs.

According to journalist Chris Hedges "There are hundreds of millions of people who have a tragic intimacy with the twisted and brutal soul of American imperialism:

"Okinawans, Guatemalans, Cubans, Congolese, Brazilians, Argentines, Indonesians, Iranians, Palestinians, Panamanians, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Filipinos, South Koreans, Taiwanese, Nicaraguans, Salvadorans, Afghans, Iraqis, Yemenis, Somalis.

"There are now some 60,000 Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) operatives, whom the president can dispatch to kill without seeking congressional approval or informing the public."

No one, apart from the rulers, can really know how many military bases the US has around the world. The estimates range from 700 to more than 1,000 in about 130 countries.

The Department of Defence has been called a charade – like the emperor who has no clothes – as there's nothing to defend against and no threat of invasion.

There's always a slogan, however, to keep the population under control. For instance, "The earth should be peopled, governed, and developed, as far as possible, by the races which can do this work best, i.e. by the races of highest 'social efficiency'."

Other justifications include "the concept of *terra nullius* (Latin expression which stems from Roman law meaning 'empty land') used by both the British and Israeli Zionists.

The favourite American justifying slogans have included "making the world safe for democracy." During the cold war it was "to make the US unsafe for communism,"

After 9/11, the clarion call has been to win "the war on terrorism." A few with less than emperor's circle status have spoken

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.....

out against the US imperial courts.

The latest have included author John Mortimer's "A 'war against terrorism' is an impracticable conception if it means fighting terrorism with terrorism."

And Noam Chomsky's appropriate and timely "Wanton killing of innocent civilians is terrorism, not a war against terrorism."

Meanwhile, the US is going broke, and there's nothing the Imperial heads can do about it. The empire cannot afford to cut back on its major source of homeland revenue - one that cannot be outsourced. If America cuts back on military expenses, the military-industrial complex will go out of business and bankrupt the country.

There's no connection between the wars waged by the US and the security of America.

The exception: the danger to servicemen

in places where they have no business being. Last week, six US troops were killed in a single attack led by Afghan forces. Two more Special Operations troops were murdered after giving a newly graduated Afghan trainee his weapon.

"The Emperor's New Clothes" is a short tale by Hans Christian Andersen about two weavers who promise an Emperor a new suit of clothes that is invisible to those unfit for their positions, stupid, or incompetent.

When the Emperor parades before his subjects in his new clothes, a child cries out, "But he isn't wearing anything at all!"

Choose your weaver wisely, Mr. President. **CT**

.....  
*Paul J. Balles is a retired American university professor and freelance writer who has lived in the Middle East for many years.*

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# Food security: A perfect storm

Harvesting grain for fuel is adding to the world's misery, says **Glenn Ashton**

**F**ood prices are rapidly heading toward new record territory, with far more at play than a simple drought in the US Midwest. There are serious implications, especially for nations with high rates of inequality and poverty. We will almost certainly face a potentially catastrophic, global scale famine in the next couple of decades.

The main reason there are now over seven billion people on earth is largely due to the emergence of two separate technologies. Firstly, cheap fossil fuels have enabled us to grow food on industrial scales. We presently require around 10 calories of fossil fuel energy to produce one calorie of food. A century ago each calorie of energy expended produced two calories of food. Secondly, advances in health care, primarily antibiotics and vaccines, have increased human life-spans.

It is an increasing challenge to feed this exponentially increasing population. We produce sufficiently for everyone on earth to have enough food, yet despite this cornucopia a significant proportion of people cannot afford to eat properly. Why?

There are three major reasons for this. Firstly, unequal wealth distribution. Secondly, meat consumption has grown as wealth has increased. Grazing area for meat production, mainly beef, uses more than a quarter of ice-free land surface. Additional-

ly, more than a third of all cropland is used to grow crops to feed livestock. These are produced using energy intensive, industrial agricultural practices.

Third, the risks associated with diminishing energy supplies has encouraged wealthy governments to promote the production and consumption of "biofuels". These are produced from agricultural resources such as sugar cane, beet, maize, soy, and oil crops such as palm oil and canola.

## Shift in focus

This focus on biofuels – which opponents prefer to call agro-fuels because of their propensity to divert scarce agricultural resources toward fuel crops – has caused an unprecedented shift in focus in agricultural production from food production to growing fuel crops.

As a result swathes of sensitive ecosystems have been destroyed to be planted by monocultures like palm oil, sugar cane, maize and soy. High oil prices have provided a potent economic incentive to underpin this ecologically disastrous shift. This destruction is occurring from the jungles of Indonesia – displacing iconic species like orangutans – to West Africa, where local communities are expelled in order to attract "foreign investment" and plant agro-fuel crops.

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**This focus on biofuels has caused an unprecedented shift in focus in agricultural production from food production to growing fuel crops**  
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**Food is controlled  
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Biofuel production has a clear impact on global food reserves, which are presently approaching historical lows. Last year nearly 40% of the US maize crop went into ethanol for fuel. Because the US is the world's largest maize producer this has serious implications for global food trade. This is especially so in light of this year's serious drought across the Midwest. Maize prices have risen to record levels, nearly double that of last year.

High oil prices will maintain demand for maize ethanol, perpetuating the insanity of food for fuel. The global trade in these commodity crops is dominated by three corporations – Cargill, Bunge and Archer Daniel Midland – each deeply involved in both ethanol production and market hedging and speculation.

This commodification of food leaves food security at the mercy of the market. There is no central global oversight or planning to secure sufficient food stocks as a buffer. Food is controlled by the market, not by logic, and certainly not by benevolence.

One solution proposed by the neo-liberal interests such as the G8 and the elitist World Economic Forum is to modernise agriculture throughout the developing world, particularly in Africa, where production has historically lagged international norms. This solution is modelled on imposing high-cost, high-input agricultural practices, reliant on fertilisers, hybrid and genetically modified seeds, increased mechanisation and use of pesticides and chemicals on vulnerable economic and agricultural systems.

The poor inevitably fall victim to this inequity. Peasant farmers are forced to seek loans to secure their position on the industrial agricultural treadmill. When crops fail, their land is lost to consolidated industrial agricultural interests which wrings profits from the land at the cost of biodiversity and social stability.

Huge swathes of land have already been absorbed in land grabs by foreign govern-

ments, private entities and speculators to grow biofuel or feed and fodder crops. Displaced farmers migrate to urban areas to seek work as jobs are lost to mechanisation.

The poor majority are consequently forced into an ever bleaker reality in order to accept these market-oriented solutions to hunger, which in turn annihilates the delicate social and economic dynamics that has sustained them for countless generations.

In the West, families spend 15% of income on food – in the global South this rises to 80%. Yet the dominant economic model claims that small-scale, self-sufficient farmers do not provide any income to tax or pay off the national balance of payments. Therefore the neo-liberal dogma insists these “worthless” farmers must modernise and adopt high input agriculture. And remember, these worthless farmers represent nearly a third of the world's population and feed even more.

.....  
**Threats to food security**

These changes add to the already profound threats to food security, social cohesion and to poverty reduction goals such as the millennium development goals. Ironically, small farming projects are far more resilient to climate instability than the intensive, industrial model being promoted.

In turn, climate change is increasingly related to instability in agricultural productivity. Sharply increased levels of carbon dioxide and, more recently, methane released as the arctic fringe rapidly thaws has exacerbated this uncertainty. This feedback spiral places agricultural production at further, direct risks.

Climate change is more about increasingly unpredictable and extreme weather events than pure “warming.” The harbingers of these changes are events like droughts in the US Midwest, Russia, South Asia, melting of the Arctic ice cap and permafrost and floods in Pakistan, Burma and North Korea.

Add to this volatile mix the predatory instincts of commodity traders seeking short-term profits in the real-time casino economy and it is clear that the poor are exposed to ever increasing, cynical levels of risk. Activism against this exploitation has brought CommerzBank and several other German banks to cease this immoral trade. However speculative traders elsewhere have no such qualms.

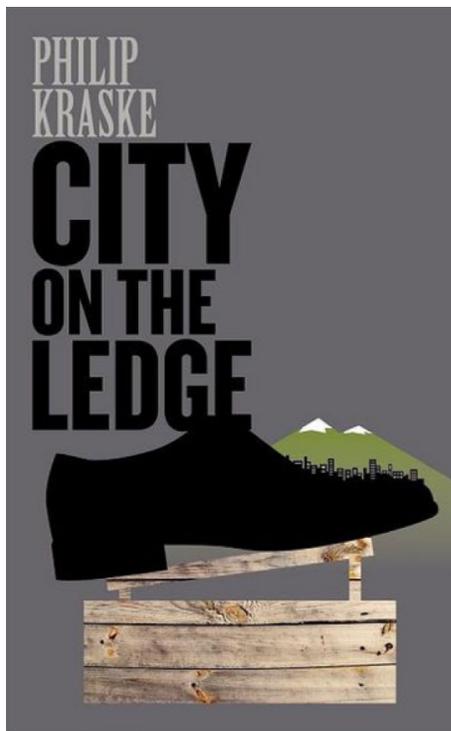
All of these factors add up to a perfect storm. Maize and soy prices are at record levels, above even the speculative bubble

prices they reached in 2008. Wheat is headed in the same direction, as are many other key crops.

All of us will feel the impact of this perfect storm but yet again it will be the poorest amongst us who are most seriously affected. This has serious implications for social stability, especially in nations beset by the twin challenges of poverty and inequality. **CT**

*Glenn Ashton is a writer and researcher working in South Africa. This essay was first published at <http://sacsis.org.za>*

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**All of us will feel the impact of this perfect storm but yet again it will be the poorest amongst us who are most seriously affected**  
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# CITY ON THE LEDGE

PHILIP KRASKE

Quito, Ecuador. In this unknown Andean capital ladled along the ledge of a volcano, an eruption is taking place. After centuries of oppression, the workers are on strike against the banana plantations. And if Ecuador, the top banana exporter in the world and the bargain basement of the industry, raises its price, then so will the others. Set against the emerald majesty of the Andes, full of local color, **City on the Ledge** witnesses the machinations of politicians, spies, diplomats, and lovers to pull off a revolution, or kill it before it can bloom.

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# A tale of two very different Swedens

Ritt Goldstein understands why Julian Assange prefers living in London's cramped Ecuadorian embassy to facing 'justice' in Stockholm

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**Falun found some of its respected officials had taken trips at the expense of a construction firm, a firm that was awarded a sizable contract for a new ski jump**  
.....

**T**he attack came at the afternoon's end, this making the fourth I would report to the local police. I was on the phone when the sickeningly familiar odor made itself known, known in a way that only nightmares that are real can, its presence followed within minutes by the strong kidney pain accompanying such attacks. And while a toxic agent was responsible for the fumes I was enduring, the most remarkable thing was that I was in my apartment in Falun, Sweden, not some distant battle zone.

Of course, history demonstrates that there are times, places, where some have felt free to abuse minorities and particularly 'outsiders'. Whether it was the legendary good ol' boys of America's Deep South of another era, or European Fascists in the 1930s, from time to time, place to place, there have long existed those where only the passage of time demonstrates to a community its capacity for the monstrous.

Not to be misunderstood, some of those I've met in Sweden are among the finest people one might ever encounter; but others would seem unquestionably among their opposite. For some here, it seems that foreigners, 'outsiders', living in Sweden are committing a crime, one demanding 'punishment', or at least a bit of abuse, with this seeming particularly true of any victims that might actually object to such 'special

attention'.

Keeping 'the rabble' in their place is also an old story, regardless of how 'the rabble' is defined and those providing the definition. And in all fairness to the many good folks that do exist here, perhaps the reasons for such changes are similar to those that caused Swedish Radio (SR) to headline this June, "Åtta av tio kommuner misstänker corruption" (Eight of ten municipalities suspect corruption).

While most of the ordinary Swedes I've met are quite decent, assorted scandals have been making news. On the local level there have been a number of sordid affairs regarding the privatization of healthcare and education, plus the usual municipal scandals involving officials caught pursuing some difficult to explain ways.

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**Council trips**

In example, the city of Falun found some of its respected officials had taken trips at the expense of a construction firm, a firm that was awarded a sizable contract for a new ski jump. One local headline read "Peab fick tiomiljonersjobb utan upphandling" (Peab received a ten million job without procurement). But such once unheard of headlines have become a part of today's life.

As just this June the *Local* (Sweden's leading English-language news site) head-

lined “Man charged for running down refugee boy,” imagine how some blame ‘outsiders’ for deteriorating circumstances, the genuine pain that many common people suffer. And, such scapegoating was perhaps even more vividly seen in the recent trial of Peter Mangs.

“Mangs was arrested in November 2010 after a massive manhunt following a string of shootings against people of immigrant origin”, according to the *Local* (Malmö sniper Peter Mangs found guilty), with Mangs convicted in July of two murder counts and four counts of attempted murder. Of course, such troubling conduct may help put the abuse this journalist has suffered in perspective.

The police hadn’t come the first two occasions that someone had previously ‘scented’ my home, the perpetrator entering my apartment in the process on both of those occasions. I actually had to begin to carry anything with me I couldn’t risk being vandalized. The ‘calling card’ left with these ‘unauthorized visits’ smelled noxious, the same sharp odor marking the final three attacks. The quite nasty physical effects became too well known.

It seemed someone felt the need for an ‘upgrade’ after the first assault.

Since the police hadn’t come on the first two occasions, I did invite a medical chemist to visit the flat after the second. There’s no substitute for first-hand experience, not to mention a witness statement.

The fellow was properly surprised when he arrived, the smell of the toxin evident even though I had succeeded in cleaning away most of it. He wrote that its smell reminded one of trichloroethylene, and when the third incident occurred, police did eventually come by to take samples. Earlier, they had first simply suggested I contact my landlord. Following that, they said they were too busy to come for months, again suggesting I contact my landlord (Falun’s municipally owned housing company, Kopparstaden); but, following the witness statement from

the chemist, the third time they did come.

It was months later when I contacted forensic chemist Jan Andrasko of Statens kriminaltekniska laboratorium – SKL (The Swedish National Laboratory of Forensic Science), almost his first words to me being, “I thought that they contact you from our Poison Group”. But the Poison Group never had contacted me, though Andrasko had found “acetic acid”, a solvent, in the samples he received. Notably, he also emphasized there were problems with the samples.

When SKL received the material to be analyzed from Falun’s police, “they are placed in just paper bags”, Andrasko complained, adding that due to the improper packaging, if the samples contained volatile compounds “they are away, of course”. So much for the kind of effective crime-fighting shown on TV and in Henning Mankell’s Kurt Wallander novels.

**About to leave**

What’s particularly remarkable is that at the time of the final attack, I was scheduled to leave the flat the very next day (though very few knew so), my landlord having earlier petitioned the local court to force my removal, the Court finding it was not a ‘hardship’ (translated from the Swedish) to immediately move me. Of course, the flat which Falun’s District Court saw no hardship in my relocation to is documented as contaminated by ‘powerfully elevated’ levels of mold, with ‘unusually high levels’ of some nasty chemicals as well. As to what that means, two environmental consultants testified under oath that they had become ill in the apartment after but a brief period – one became ill in twenty minutes, and for only the second time in his career. A third witness noted that he was ill for three to four days following just hours there; yet, the Falun court’s decision was that my living in such an apartment would not be a ‘hardship’.

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**What’s particularly remarkable is that at the time of the final attack, I was scheduled to leave the flat the very next day**  
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**It is small wonder that Julian Assange prefers the confines of London's Ecuadorian Embassy to Stockholm**  
.....

I find myself repeatedly thinking of how the courts in some small towns in Mississippi during the 1950s must have been, how the legal system worked there and then.

Equally noteworthy, despite the fact that I called police four times in the hours following the last attack, emphasizing that I would be leaving the apartment the next morning and that any evidence would be lost accordingly, no officer ever came. Apparently, my poisoning wasn't a priority, though the police report did term it assault (*misshandel*).

If these events sound far from what one would think appropriate, it should be added that a medical certificate from a local 'chief physician' mentioned the 'furthest negative' consequences that my health could face from exposure to mold or toxic chemicals. Given this, does the Court's action, in itself, arguably raise a question of state-sanctioned abuse?

As justice system discrimination against those of foreign origins has been documented by governmental reports here, does the failure of those authorities charged with protecting the most basic of rights arguably suggest a further question of state-sanction of wrongful conduct?

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**Assange's distrust**

It is small wonder that Julian Assange prefers the confines of London's Ecuadorian Embassy to Stockholm. It is also small wonder that, with an honest evaluation of Assange's circumstances, Ecuador courageously awarded him asylum. However, while reports and events have highlighted problems within the Swedish justice system, this is not to say that such problems are all-encompassing within it.

On 18 June, a criminal investigation was opened by a Stockholm-based environmental prosecutor to whom I had sent documentation regarding a flooring practice my now ex-landlord, Kopparstaden, stated it uses. The prosecutor in question, Anders

Gustafsson, sent me an email observing: "it is my opinion that at this stage there is reason to believe that a *miljöbrott* (environmental crime) has been committed." In replying to my query as regards what suspects are being investigated, Gustafsson said "the company being investigated is, of course, Kopparstaden primarily."

As for my circumstances, I terminated my tenancy with Kopparstaden rather than try and survive in the troubled flat which Falun's court found wouldn't be a 'hardship'. If it was not for the courage of some of those here, the simple decency of others, I seriously wonder if I would be alive to write this. But, what is it that such extreme circumstances say?

At a time when so many people in so many supposedly civilized places suffer silently, I cannot but recall Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, the comments upon the events surrounding the French Revolution which it so eloquently made.

To my eyes, today there seem two Swedens – that of those that exemplify the best of the Progressive state so many yet consider this country, and that of those that recall something far different. As for the latter, Dickens wrote: "Repression is the only lasting philosophy. The dark deference of fear and slavery, my friend,' observed the Marquis, 'will keep the dogs obedient to the whip...'"

Ongoing events have left me with a new appreciation of Dickens, the words he chose to begin his novel ... "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times". And, given this, as some in the US and UK hold up Sweden as a model to follow, it perhaps doesn't seem the best of times to do so. **CT**

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*Ritt Goldstein is an American investigative political journalist based in Sweden. His work has appeared in broadsheets such as Australia's Sydney Morning Herald, Spain's El Mundo and Denmark's Politiken, as well as with the Inter Press Service (IPS), a global news agency.*

# No fury like an empire embarrassed

**William Blum** on lies, humiliation, political manipulation, cold-blooded murder and an insatiable urge for revenge

**L**ouis XVI needed a revolution, Napoleon needed two historic military defeats, the Spanish Empire in the New World needed multiple revolutions, the Russian Czar needed a communist revolution, the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires needed World War I, the Third Reich needed World War II, the Land of the Rising Sun needed two atomic bombs, the Portuguese Empire in Africa needed a military coup at home. What will the American Empire need?

Perhaps losing the long-held admiration and support of one group of people after another, one country after another, as the empire's wars, bombings, occupations, torture, and lies eat away at the facade of a beloved and legendary "America"; an empire unlike any other in history, that has intervened seriously and grievously, in war and in peace, in most countries on the planet, as it preached to the world that the American Way of Life was a shining example for all humanity and that America above all was needed to lead the world.

The Wikileaks documents and videos have provided one humiliation after another ... lies exposed, political manipulations revealed, gross hypocrisies, murders in cold blood, ... followed by the torture of Bradley Manning and the persecution of Julian Assange. Washington calls the revelations "threats to national security", but the world can well see it's

simply plain old embarrassment. Manning's defense attorneys have asked the military court on several occasions to specify the exact harm done to national security. The court has never given an answer. If hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, consider an empire embarrassed.

And we now have the international soap opera, *L'Affaire Assange*, starring Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, Ecuador, and Julian Assange. The United States' neo-colonies of Sweden (an active warring member of NATO in all but name) and the United Kingdom (with its "special relationship" to the United States) know what is expected of them to earn a pat on the head from their Washington uncle. We can infer that Sweden has no legitimate reason to demand the extradition of Julian Assange from London from the fact that it has repeatedly refused offers to question Assange in the UK and repeatedly refused to explain why it has refused to do so.

The Brits, under "immense pressure from the Obama administration", as reported to former British ambassador Craig Murray by the UK Foreign Office, threatened, in a letter to the Ecuadoran government, to raid the Ecuadoran embassy in London to snatch Assange, "[You] should be aware that there is a legal basis in the United Kingdom, the Diplomatic and Consular Premises Act of 1987, which would allow us to take action to

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**The worldwide  
asylum system  
would fall apart if  
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the asylum were  
punished for it**  
.....

arrest Mr. Assange in the existing facilities of the embassy”. Over the August 18 weekend the London police actually made their way into the building’s internal fire escape, coming within a few feet of Assange’s room, as he could hear. The law cited by the Brits is, of course, their own law, one not necessarily with any international standing.

The UK has now formally withdrawn its threat against the embassy, probably the result of much international indignation toward Her Majesty’s Government. The worldwide asylum system would fall apart if the nation granting the asylum were punished for it. In this violent world of terrorists, imperialists, and other dreadfuls it’s comforting to know that an old fashioned value like political asylum can still be honored.

A look back at some US and UK behavior in regard to embassies and political asylum is both interesting and revealing:

In 1954, when the United States overthrew the democratically-elected social democrat Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala and replaced him with a military government headed by Col. Carlos Castillo Armas, many Guatemalans took refuge in foreign embassies. US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles insisted that the new Guatemalan government raid those embassies and arrest those individuals, whom he referred to as “communists”. But Castillo Armas refused to accede to Dulles’ wishes on this issue. Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, in their comprehensive history of the coup, state:

“In the end, Castillo Armas disregarded Dulles’ suggestions. He himself was a product of the widespread belief in Latin America that embassy asylum and safe-conduct passes were a fair resolution to political conflicts. Virtually every politically active Guatemalan, including Castillo Armas, had sought political asylum in an embassy at one time or another and had obtained safe conduct from the government. Dulles’ suggestion for a ‘modification’ of the asylum doctrine was not even popular within the American Embassy.”

It should be noted that one of those who sought asylum in the Argentine Embassy in Guatemala was a 25-year-old Argentine doctor named Ernesto “Che” Guevara.

Baltasar Garzon, the Spanish judge who is one of Assange’s lawyers, came to international attention in 1998 when he indicted former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet while he was in England. But the British declined to send Pinochet to Spain to face the indictment, in effect giving him political asylum, and allowed this proverbial mass murderer and torturer to walk free and eventually return to Chile. Julian Assange, not charged or found guilty of anything, is a de facto prisoner of the UK; while the New York Times and the BBC and the numerous other media giants, who did just what Assange did by publishing Wikileaks articles and broadcasting Wikileaks videos, walk free.

This past April, Chinese dissident Chen Guangcheng escaped house arrest in China and took refuge at the American Embassy in Beijing, sparking diplomatic tension between the two countries. But the “authoritarian” Chinese government did not threaten to enter the American Embassy to arrest Chen and soon allowed him to accept an American offer of safe passage to US soil. How will Julian Assange ever obtain safe passage to Ecuador?

In August 1989, while the Cold War still prevailed many East Germans crossed into fellow-Soviet-bloc state Czechoslovakia and were granted political asylum in the West German embassy. How would the United States – which has not said a word against the British threat to invade the Ecuadoran embassy – have reacted if the East Germans or the Czechs had raided the West German embassy or blocked the East Germans from leaving it? As matters turned out, West Germany took the refugee-seekers to West Germany by train without being impeded by the Soviet bloc. A few months later, the weaker “Evil Empire” collapsed, leaving the entire playing field, known as the world, to

the stronger “Evil Empire”, which has been on belligerence autopilot ever since.

In 1986, after the French government refused the use of its air space to US war-planes headed for a bombing raid on Libya, the planes were forced to take another, longer route. When they reached Libya they bombed so close to the French embassy that the building was damaged and all communication links were disabled.

In 1999, NATO (aka the USA), purposely (sic) bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

After Assange took refuge in the Ecuadoran embassy and was granted asylum by the South American country, the US State Department declared: “The United States is not a party to the 1954 OAS [Organization of American States] Convention on Diplomatic Asylum and does not recognize the concept of diplomatic asylum as a matter of international law.”

Ecuador called for a meeting at the OAS of the foreign ministers of member countries to discuss the whole situation. The United States opposed the request. For Washington the issue was simple: The UK obeys international law and extradites Assange to Sweden. (And then, chuckle-chuckle, Sweden sends the bastard to us.) End of discussion. Washington did not want the issue blown up and prolonged any further. But of the 26 nations voting at the OAS only three voted against the meeting: The US, Canada, and Trinidad & Tobago; perhaps another example of what was mentioned above about a dying empire losing the long-held admiration and support of one country after another.

**The price Ecuador may pay for its courage ... Washington Post editorial, June 20, 2012:**

“There is one potential check on [Ecuadoran president Rafael] Correa’s ambitions. The US ‘empire’ he professes to despise happens to grant Ecuador (which uses the dollar as its currency) special trade prefer-

ences that allow it to export many goods duty-free. A full third of Ecuadoran foreign sales (\$10 billion in 2011) go to the United States, supporting some 400,000 jobs in a country of 14 million people. Those preferences come up for renewal by Congress early next year. If Mr. Correa seeks to appoint himself America’s chief Latin American enemy and Julian Assange’s protector between now and then, it’s not hard to imagine the outcome.”

On several occasions President Obama, when pressed to investigate Bush and Cheney for war crimes, has declared: “I prefer to look forward rather than backwards”. Picture a defendant before a judge asking to be found innocent on such grounds. It simply makes laws, law enforcement, crime, justice, and facts irrelevant. Picture Julian Assange before a military court in Virginia using this argument. Picture the reaction to this by Barack Obama, who has become the leading persecutor of whistleblowers in American history.

Since *L’Affaire Assange* captured world headlines the United States, as well as the United Kingdom, have on several occasions made statements about the deep-seated international obligation of nations to honor extradition requests from other nations. The United States, however, has a history of ignoring such requests, whether made formally or informally, for persons living in the US who are ideological allies. Here’s a partial sample from recent years:

- Former Venezuelan president Carlos Andres Perez, whom the Venezuelan government demanded be turned over to stand trial for his role in suppressing riots in 1989. He died in 2010 in Miami. (Associated Press, December 27, 2010)
- Former Bolivian President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada fled to the United States in 2003 to avoid a trial for the death of about 60 people in La Paz during a military crackdown on demonstrators. In 2008, Bolivia formally served the US government with a request to extradite him back to Bo-

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.....  
**Can you name a single paper, or a single TV network, that was unequivocally opposed to the American wars carried out against Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Panama, Grenada, and Vietnam?**  
.....

livia, which was not acceded to. (Associated Press, February 13, 2006; also see his Wikipedia entry)

- In 2010, a US federal judge denied Argentina's extradition request for former military officer Roberto Bravo, who was facing 16 murder charges stemming from a 1972 massacre of leftist guerrillas in his homeland. (Associated Press, November 2, 2010)

- Luis Posada, a Cuban-born citizen of Venezuela, masterminded the bombing of a Cuban airline in 1976, killing 73 civilians. Inasmuch as part of the plotting took place in Venezuela, that government formally asked the United States for his extradition in 2005. But instead of extraditing him, the United States prosecuted him for minor immigration infractions that came to naught. Posada continues to live as a free man in the United States.

- In 2007 German prosecutors issued arrest warrants for 13 suspected CIA operatives who had abducted German citizen Khaled el-Masri in 2003 and flown him to Afghanistan for interrogation (read torture). The CIA then realized they had kidnapped the wrong man and dumped el-Masri on the side of an Albanian road. Subsequently, the German Justice Minister announced that she would no longer request extradition, citing US refusal to arrest or hand over the agents. (*The Guardian* (London), January 7, 2011)

- In November 2009 an Italian judge convicted a CIA Station Chief and 22 other Americans, all but one being CIA operatives, for kidnapping a Muslim cleric, Abu Omar, from the streets of Milan in 2003 and flying him to Egypt for the usual interrogation. All those convicted had left Italy by the time of the judge's ruling and were thus tried in absentia. In Italy they are considered fugitives. Although there were verdicts, arrest warrants and extradition requests in the case, the Italian government refused to formally forward the requests to their close allies, the Americans;

which, in any event, would of course have been futile. (Der Spiegel [Germany] online, December 17, 2010, based on a Wikileaks US cable)

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**The hidden, obvious, peculiar, fatal, omnipresent bias of American mainstream media concerning US foreign policy**

There are more than 1,400 daily newspapers in the United States. Can you name a single paper, or a single TV network, that was unequivocally opposed to the American wars carried out against Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Panama, Grenada, and Vietnam? Or even opposed to any two of these wars? How about one? (I've been asking this question for years and so far I've gotten only one answer – Someone told me that the Seattle Post-Intelligencer had unequivocally opposed the invasion of Iraq. Can anyone verify that or name another case?)

In 1968, six years into the Vietnam war, the Boston Globe surveyed the editorial positions of 39 leading US papers concerning the war and found that "none advocated a pull-out".

- Now, can you name an American daily newspaper or TV network that more or less gives any support to any US government ODE (Officially Designated Enemy)? Like Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, Fidel or Raul Castro of Cuba, Bashar al-Assad of Syria, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, Rafael Correa of Ecuador (even before the current Assange matter), or Evo Morales of Bolivia? I mean that presents the ODE's point of view in a reasonably fair manner most of the time? Or any ODE of the recent past like Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia, Moammar Gaddafi of Libya, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, or Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti?

- Who in the mainstream media supports Hamas of Gaza? Or Hezbollah of Lebanon?

- Who in the mainstream media is outspokenly critical of Israel's domestic or foreign policies? And keeps his/her job?

● Who in the mainstream media treats Julian Assange or Bradley Manning as the heroes they are?

And this same mainstream media tell us that Cuba, Venezuela, Ecuador, et al. do not have a real opposition media.

The ideology of the American mainstream media is the belief that they don't have any ideology; they are instead what they call "objective".

It's been said that the political spectrum concerning US foreign policy in the American mainstream media "runs the gamut from A to B."

Long before the Soviet Union broke up, a group of Russian writers touring the United States were astonished to find, after reading the newspapers and watching television, that almost all the opinions on all the vital issues were the same. "In our country," said one of them, "to get that result we have a dictatorship. We imprison people. We tear out their fingernails. Here you have none of that. How do you do it? What's the secret?"<sup>8</sup>

On October 8, 2001, the second day of the US bombing of Afghanistan, the transmitters for the Taliban government's Radio Shari were bombed and shortly after this the US bombed some 20 regional radio sites. US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld defended the targeting of these facilities, saying: "Naturally, they cannot be considered to be free media outlets. They are mouthpieces of the Taliban and those harboring terrorists."

**Takles of an empire gone mad**

Afghanistan in the 1980s and 90s ... Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s ... Libya 2011 ... Syria 2012 ... In military conflicts in each of these countries the United States and al Qaeda (or one of its associates) have been on the same side.

What does this tell us about the United States' "War On Terrorism"?

Regime change has been the American goal on each occasion: overthrowing com-

munists (or "communists"), Serbians, Slobodan Milosevic, Moammar Gaddafi, Bashar al-Assad ... all heretics or infidels, all non-believers in the empire, all inconvenient to the empire.

● Why, if the enemy is Islamic terrorism, has the United States invested so much blood and treasure against the PLO, Iraq, and Libya, and now Syria, all mideast secular governments?

● Why are Washington's closest Arab allies in the Middle East the Islamic governments of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, and Bahrain? Bahrain being the home of an American naval base; Saudi Arabia and Qatar being conduits to transfer arms to the Syrian rebels.

● Why, if democracy means anything to the United States are these same close allies in the Middle East all monarchies?

● Why, if the enemy is Islamic terrorism, did the United States shepherd Kosovo – 90% Islamist and perhaps the most gangsterish government in the world – to unilaterally declare independence from Serbia in 2008, an independence so illegitimate and artificial that the majority of the world's nations still have not recognized it?

● Why – since Kosovo's ruling Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) have been known for their trafficking in women, heroin, and human body parts (sic) – has the United States been pushing for Kosovo's membership in NATO and the European Union? (Just what the EU needs: another economic basket case.) Between 1998 and 2002, the KLA appeared on the State Department terrorist list, remaining there until the United States decided to make them an ally, due in no small part to the existence of a major American military base in Kosovo, Camp Bondsteel, well situated in relation to planned international oil and gas pipelines coming from the vast landlocked Caspian Sea area to Europe. In November 2005, following a visit to Bondsteel, Alvaro Gil-Robles, the human rights envoy of the Council of Europe, described the camp as a "smaller

.....  
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Why is the United States supporting Islamic Terrorists in Libya and Syria who are persecuting Christians?

version of Guantánamo”.

● Why, if the enemy is Islamic terrorism, did the United States pave the way to power for the Libyan Islamic rebels, who at this very moment are killing other Libyans in order to institute a more fundamentalist Islamic state?

● Why do American officials speak endlessly about human rights, yet fully support the Libyan Islamic rebels despite the fact that Doctors Without Borders suspended its work in prisons in the Islamic-rebel city of Misurata because torture was so rampant that some detainees were brought for care only to make them fit for further interrogation?

● Why is the United States supporting Islamic Terrorists in Libya and Syria who are persecuting Christians?

And why, if the enemy is Islamic terrorism, did US Ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice – who daily attacks the Syrian government on moral grounds – not condemn the assassination of four Syrian high officials on July 18, in all likelihood carried out by al Qaeda types? RT, the Russian television channel broadcast in various parts of the United States, noted her silence in this matter. Does anyone know of any American media that did the same?

So, if you want to understand this thing called United States foreign policy ... forget about the War on Terrorism, forget about September 11, forget about democracy, forget about freedom, forget about human rights, forget about religion, forget about the people of Libya and Syria ... keep your eyes on the prize ... Whatever advances American global domination. Whatever suits their goals at the moment. There is no moral factor built into the DNA of US foreign policy.

Bring back the guillotine

In July, the Canadian corporation Enbridge, Inc. announced that one of its pipelines had leaked and spilled an estimated 1,200 barrels of crude oil in a field in Wisconsin. Two

years ago, an Enbridge pipeline spilled more than 19,000 barrels in Michigan. The Michigan spill affected more than 50 kilometers of waterways and wetlands and about 320 people reported medical symptoms from crude oil exposure. The US National Transportation Safety Board said that at \$800 million it was the costliest onshore spill cleanup in the nation’s history. The NTSB found that Enbridge knew of a defect in the pipeline five years before it burst. According to Enbridge’s own reports, the company had 800 spills between 1999 and 2010, releasing close to 7 million gallons of crude oil.

No executive or other employee of Enbridge has been charged with any kind of crime. How many environmental murderers of modern times have been punished?

During a period of a few years beginning around 2007, several thousand employees of stock brokers, banks, mortgage companies, insurance companies, credit-rating agencies, and other financial institutions, mainly in New York, had great fun getting obscenely rich while creating and playing with pieces of paper known by names like derivatives, collateralized debt obligations, index funds, credit default swaps, structured investment vehicles, subprime mortgages, and other exotic terms, for which, it must be kept in mind, there had been no public need or demand. The result has been a severe depression, seriously hurting hundreds of millions of lives in the United States and abroad.

No employee of any of these companies has seen the inside of a prison cell for playing such games with our happiness.

For more than half a century members of the United States foreign policy and military establishments have compiled a record of war crimes and crimes against humanity that the infamous beasts and butchers of history could only envy.

Not a single one of these American officials has come any closer to a proper judgment than going to see the movie “Judgment at Nuremberg”.

Yet, we live in the United States of Pun-

ishment for countless other criminal types; more than two million presently rotting their lives away. No other society comes even close to this, no matter how the statistics are calculated. And many of those in American prisons are there for victimless crimes.

On the other hand, we see the Chinese sentencing their citizens to lengthy prison terms, even execution, for environmental crimes.

We have an Iranian court recently trying 39 people for a \$2.6 billion bank loan embezzlement carried out by individuals close to the political elite or with their assent. Of the 39 people tried, four were sentenced to hang, two to life in prison, and others received terms of up to 25 years; in addition to prison time, some were sentenced to flogging, ordered to pay fines, and banned from government jobs.

And in Argentina in early July, in the latest of a long series of trials of former Argentine officials, former dictator Jorge Rafael Videla was convicted and sentenced to 50 years for a systematic plan to steal babies from women prisoners who were kidnapped, tortured and killed during the military junta's war on leftist dissenters – the “dirty war” of 1976-83 that claimed 13,000 victims. Many

of the women had “disappeared” shortly after giving birth. Argentina's last dictator, Reynaldo Bignone, was also convicted and got 15 years. Outside the courthouse a jubilant crowd watched on a big screen and cheered each sentence.

As an American, how I envy the Argentines. Get the big screen ready for The Mall in Washington. We'll have showings of the trials of the Bushes and Cheney and Rumsfeld and Obama. And Henry Kissinger, a strong supporter of the Argentine junta among his many contributions to making the world a better place. And let's not forget the executives of Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan, Bank of America, and Enbridge, Inc. Fining them just money is pointless. We have to fine them years, lots of them.

Without imprisoning these people, nothing will change. That's become a cliché, but we very well see what continues to happen without imprisonment. And it's steadily getting worse, financially and imperially. **CT**

*William Blum is the author of “Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II”, “Rogue State: a guide to the World's Only Super Power” and “West-Bloc Dissident: a Cold War Political Memoir”. He can be reached at: BBlum6@aol.com*

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**Get the big screen ready for The Mall in Washington. We'll have showings of the trials of the Bushes and Cheney and Rumsfeld and Obama. And Henry Kissinger, a strong supporter of the Argentine junta among his many contributions to making the world a better place**  
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# How the economy works

It's all about crime and punishment, writes **John Kozy**

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**From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs was common practice, not an ideological precept**  
.....

*Money makes the world go around  
A mark, a yen, a buck, or pound  
Is all that makes the world go around.*  
– song from *Cabaret*

**T**he economy is merely a sum of money, not practices that sustain the oikos, and the money that makes up the sum is equally valued whether it results from virtuous or vicious, good or bad, constructive or destructive, humane or inhumane, legal or illegal, beneficent or malevolent practices. Whether people benefit or are injured is never an economic concern. People, like everything else that is not monetary, are irrelevant.

Once upon a time, as all good morality legends begin, mankind lived in a natural habitat. People toiled, but none worked at anything like what is today called a job. They hunted, fished, trapped and gathered berries, fruits and edible roots. Later people learned to cultivate land and domesticate and herd animals. Yields were shared with all members of their clans – the young and the aged, the able and the disabled, the well and the ill. From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs was common practice, not an ideological precept. And the human race flourished. Villages around cultivated plots grew into towns and towns into cities. But somewhere in the progression, something went horribly wrong.

People stopped sharing! People with a this began to trade with others for a that, and what is now known as commerce began.

Trouble is, having been removed from a natural habitat to an unnatural, artificial one, everyone didn't have a this to trade for a that. The haves became distinguished from the have-nots. What were the have-nots to do? Well, they could beg or sell themselves or revert to being what they would have been in their natural habitat – hunters and gatherers! But now the prey were the haves and their property became gatherable. So what were the haves to do?

They could have gone back to sharing, but they didn't! Instead, they developed ways of guarding what they had. They assigned some to enact rules and others to enforce them. Some people got jobs, rule-givers and guards. Whenever a rulebreaker was caught, s/he had to be tried. More jobs were created – lawyer and judge. When convicted, the rulebreaker had to be punished, and prisons came into being with their wardens and guards. When prisoners were released, they had to be monitored so now probation officers were needed. All of this costs the haves a lot. Wouldn't sharing have been cheaper?

Perhaps, but people couldn't revert to that now. For all of these guard-workers, as they are now often called in the literature, constitute an economic activity in itself. To

go back to sharing would turn them all into have-nots. But these are now important and powerful people. Judges, lawyers, legislators! Have-nots? Heavens no! Although loath to think of themselves in this way, these people are nothing but ballyhooed security guards. Compared to fish, they are the aquarium's bottom feeders. What would they be without crime?

The commercial enterprise of guard-working is like every other commercial enterprise. To profit, it must grow; but to grow, crime must increase. Without increasing crime, guard-working atrophies. What came into being in order to control crime now requires it. Crime has become a necessary part of the economy. It can't be eliminated; it can't even be reduced without affecting the economy adversely. Economists love it. So do lawyers, legislators, and judges. But they won't admit it! The commercial activity of guarding the haves and their property has to be fed.

Oh, poppycock, some reader will say. Perhaps, but lets abandon the once upon a time and return to now is the time.

Why are some members of Congress intent not only on reducing the social safety net but eliminating it? Because keeping the backs of have-nots to the wall increases their likelihood of becoming criminals to be fed to the guard-workers? And why are these same members of Congress unwilling to curtail the activities of the military-industrial complex? Well, AK-47s come from there and they are productivity enhancing technologies. They make guard-workers and criminals more efficient. And economists? Well, consider how domestic product, the broadest measure of the economy, is measured.

Gross domestic product (GDP) is the market value of all goods and services bought in a given period. In short, it measures how much money is spent. When more money is spent GDP goes up, when less is spent, GDP goes down. When GDP goes up, the economy is said to be growing, when GDP goes

down, the economy is said to be shrinking. This implies, of course, that "the economy" is nothing but a number.

Well, what's wrong with that? Here's what:

Say an arsonist sets a huge building on fire and the fire causes so much damage that the building can't be repaired. The owner hires a vendor to tear it down and remove the refuse. The cost of doing that is domestic product. In a sense, destroying something makes it into a product. Joseph Alois Schumpeter, the Arnold Alois Schwarzenegger of economics, called it "creative destruction" – stuff is destroyed to create domestic product. In reality, crime creates a huge amount of domestic product. The cost of the weapons and tools used by criminals is domestic product. If caught, the cost of an accused's trial is domestic product. If convicted, so is the cost of her/his incarceration.

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**The product of murder**

But it's even worse. The murder of a person creates domestic product. A century or so ago, especially in America's Midwest, when a person died his family found a pleasant spot behind the homestead and dug a grave. Today that can't be done; today death is a moneymaker. First the service of an undertaker is required, next a coffin must be purchased, then a cemetery plot and flowers for the viewing are acquired. A person's death makes domestic product grow and grow. The economy gets better and better. Absurd!, you say. Yes, it is, but that's exactly how the economy works.

So think about it. When a group of Saudi's brought down the World Trade Center, they created domestic product, a lot of it. Most Americans consider these people as terrorists, but from an economic perspective, they are job-creating entrepreneurs. Count all the people employed in cleaning up the site and rebuilding the buildings. It's a fulfillment of Schumpeter's dream, but

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**Crime has become a necessary part of the economy. It can't be eliminated; it can't even be reduced without affecting the economy adversely**  
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## CRIME PAYS

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**Money made by stealing is just as good as money made honestly (as every banker knows). Laundered money is just as good as clean money. Money made by killing (here or abroad) is just as good as money made by giving birth. That's how the economy works**  
.....

he should have called it “destructive creation.”

If you want to know why Americans can't have gun control, think Schumpeter's dream. So-called legitimate businesses make money from death in America. Killing in America is an economically creative activity. It takes human beings and turns them into domestic products. GDP grows with every crime. Without crime, GDP would plummet.

So what is the moral of this legend? How about, “If you want to make the economy better, go out and kill a lot of people.” It won't do much for the country or its people, but GDP will explode and economists will salivate over how good the economy's fundamentals are.

Can you imagine anything more absurd? No matter, because that's how the economy really works. It has no relationship to people and their welfare. Money made by a destructive activity is just as good as money made from a creative one. Money made by stealing is just as good as money made honestly (as every banker knows). Laundered money is just as good as clean money. Money made by killing (here or abroad) is just as good as money made by giving birth. That's how the economy works. Neither people nor the quality of anything matters; only the money made does, and the political chorus chants,

Money, money, money, money, all this in a nation comprised of people, eighty percent of whom claim to be followers of a deity who proclaims that the love of money

is the root of all evil, and not a single cleric complains.

.....  
**Money has no morals**

That, dear reader, is how America works. The economy is merely a sum of money, not practices that sustain the oikos, and the money that makes up the sum is equally valued whether it results from virtuous or vicious, good or bad, constructive or destructive, humane or inhumane, legal or illegal, beneficent or malevolent practices. All of that lucre is filthy. Whether people benefit or are injured is never an economic concern. People, like everything else that is not monetary, are irrelevant which makes this economy totally immoral. This message from a prominent financial advisor proves it:

“As investors, we absolutely must not let our political beliefs, the news media, or anything else stand in the way of our quest to grow our hard-earned money into lasting wealth.” **CT**

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*John Kozy is a retired professor of philosophy and logic who writes 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.*

*His on-line pieces can be found on <http://www.jkozy.com> and he can be emailed from that site's homepage.*

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# Soap opera over Kabul

Fred Reed tells us why military minds and reality don't mix

Oh lordy, lordy, how I love the Afghan war: It just goes on and on, without end. By comparison death and taxes seem long shots.

In the latest episode of this long-running sitcom, the Afghan army is killing GIs. Yes. Blowing them away right and left. In Washington, the Five-Sided Wind Tunnel is in shock and maybe awe. It has stopped training Afghan troops because it is scared of them. It has ordered our soldiers to stay armed to protect themselves against our devoted allies, to whom we are bringing democracy, because they want to kill us.

How can this be, you ask? The brass are puzzled too. The reason can't be that Afghans don't like night raids, torture, GIs going house to house and shooting women and kids, drone strikes blowing up weddings, and other routine mechanisms of democratization. Instead, it must be...Taliban infiltrators. Yes. This being decided, all is now well. Just as the military calls routine atrocities "isolated incidents," it attributes Afghani hostility to Taliban infiltrators. Problem solved. In the modern marketing military, you don't need a solution, just a saleable explanation.

OK. In the *Guardian*, I learn that actual Pentagon military psycho-wonks have done a study on what Afghans and gringos think of each other. (report) Saith the *Guardian*:

"One group sees the other as a bunch of violent, reckless, intrusive, arrogant, self-serving, profane, infidel bullies hiding behind high technology; and the other group [the US soldiers] generally view the former as a bunch of cowardly, incompetent, obtuse, thieving, complacent, lazy, pot-smoking, treacherous, and murderous radicals. Such is the state of progress in the current partnering programme. Over a decade of fighting shoulder-to-shoulder had created mutual loathing that was impossible to camouflage."

Who would have thought it?

Anybody with the slightest acquaintance with reality. Tell you what, brothels and cisterns, I could have written every word of it, and I've never been to Afghanistan. It's Viet Nam all over again. Which means that it's all over, again. GIs and Afghans hate each other.

## Where's the love-in?

What do you expect when you put combative, not too bright, half-educated, unsophisticated lower-middle-class guys into an illiterate thirteenth-century culture with a history of detesting invaders? I know, I know: you figured it would spark a love-in, koombah-yah, Oprah as featured speaker.

This comedy occurs because the military inhabits a parallel reality. In its experience,

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.....

you tell a thing to happen, and it does. If the base commander decides that all dumpsters should be painted Day-Glo chartreuse, he issues orders, paint crews go out, and three days later the dumpsters glow sort of greenly. The military also believes that things work. Put 6000 sailors and a hundred airplanes on an aircraft carrier, obviously an unworkable idea – and it works. It works because everyone wants it to work and does what he is told.

Afghanistan isn't an aircraft carrier. It has a different shape, it isn't as flat, and it is full of Afghans. These are important distinctions.

Further, the military thinks that policy determines existence. American policy is that Afghanistan is an allied country like Germany, which it isn't, that Karzai is chief of state like Angela Merkel, which he isn't, that the Afghan population are our allies, which they are not, and that if you train Afghans who hate us to say Ooo-rah!, they will want to kill other Afghans that we don't like – which, obviously they don't.

Add to the military's eternal misunderstanding of the enemy's motivation a matching underestimation of his capacity to fight, plus hypertrophied self-confidence, and you get an over-armed, under-brained, excessively ooo-rahed pack of losers. Don't think so? How is it that a trillion-dollar military with fighter-bombers, helicopters, armor, electronics, drones, and such can't beat pissed-off goat-herders with rifles? What do you think would happen if GIs had to fight on equal terms – sandals and a smoke pole, no PX?

Please don't send me growly mail about Our Boys and their courage, training, sacrifice, honor, and the rest of that string of beads. For one thing, there is no honor in going to someone else's country and butchering people you don't know because some political general, which is to say some general, told you to; A hit man for the Mafia is exactly as honorable. For another thing, an army's job is not to be brave, selfless, yada

yada, but to win wars. Look at the record:

**Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos:** Dead losses. Underestimated the Vietnamese, the AK, the RPG, the IED. By policy the Pentagon said the war was about communism, while the Viets thought it was about getting invaders out of their country, which they did. The GIs hated the Viets as they always hate their allies. The Pentagon left with its tail between legs.

**Beirut, 1983:** Dead loss, 241 Marines killed versus one Arab. Underestimated the enemy and the truck bomb, had amateurish security, and misunderstood local motivations. Left with tail between legs.

**Mogadishu, 1993:** Dead loss. Underestimated the enemy, the AK, the RPG. Left dead GIs being dragged through the streets. Tail between legs.

**Gulf I: Victory.** Enemy tried to fight Pentagon's kind of war with fifth-rate forces. Tail high.

**Iraq:** Dead loss. Did not get the oil, permanent bases, or docile puppet government. Clueless about politics, urban war. Underestimated the enemy, the IED, the AK, the RPG. Left, tail high, fooling few.

**Afghanistan:** Dead loss, as yet unadmitted.. Underestimated enemy, IED, AK, RPG. Clueless about politics. Tail in default position.

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**Weapons of no purpose**

Several things explain this Gilbert-and-Sullivan performance. Since 1945 the Pentagon has never fought a war it had to win. Nor will it. The possession of nuclear weapons by the First World ensures that no seriously dangerous country will attack any other seriously dangerous country. This leaves the Pentagon and its suppliers free to buy phenomenally expensive weapons of no purpose. The B1, B2, and Airborne Laser come to mind and, now that pilotless airplanes are coming into their own, the US spends hugely on the piloted F35, for which there is no enemy.

But what the military seems particularly not to grasp is that the nature of war has changed. The day of massed armor roaring across deserts under gorgeous sunsets, of fighter aircraft duking it out gloriously at Midway, of huge formations of Marines storming ashore, is over. In Afghanistan there are no targets of high value to destroy, no clear lines of supply to be cut, no cities whose capture means you win, and no concentrations of enemy to be easily killed. World War Two ended a long time ago.

This should be obvious, but militaries don't do obvious. They run on the hormonal aggression built into men – males, grrr, bow-wow, woof – which is why all of history

roils with pointless wars and slaughtered innocents. Herd combat is as biologically determined as a teen-age boy's newfound interest in girls. Oh good.

Coming soon on these same channels: Days of Yemen, a heartwarming series about a handsome young GI's illicit love affair with his aging Ma Deuce. Brought to you by the New! New! Tide, with three special antioxidants that work together to remove all trace of rationality. **CT**

*Fred Reed has worked for Army Times, The Washingtonian, Soldier of Fortune, Federal Computer Week, and The Washington Times. His web site is <http://fredoneverything.net>*

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**The day of massed armor roaring across deserts under gorgeous sunsets, of fighter aircraft duking it out gloriously at Midway, of huge formations of Marines storming ashore, is over**  
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# NEW FROM FRED REED

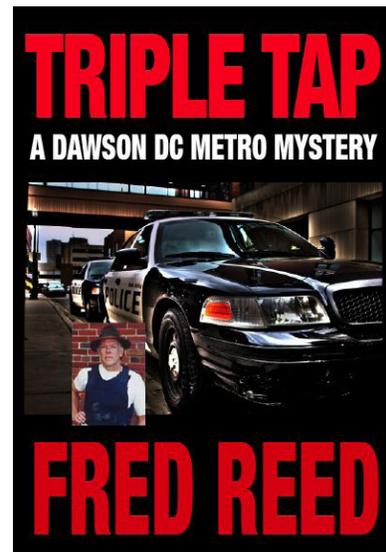
Tired of stories of sensitive detectives who drink white wine, whose authors have never been inside a police car? Ex-Marine Fred Reed spent eight years as police reporter for the *Washington (DC) Times*, in the bad places in the bad hours, and it shows. His protagonist, Robert Dawson, is, as Dawson puts it himself, "an ashen-souled news weasel for the *Washington Herald*. I don't kid myself about what I do. Reporters are lower than winos, but don't have to carry paper bags. I never liked carrying things." On the night when Chiflado Gomez puts two Remington 870 rounds into the chest of young police officer Corrigan, you immediately get the feel of real police work. The murder isn't what it seems.

## TRIPLE TAP

**A Dawson DC Metro Mystery**

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# Decepción in Bolivia

Chellis Glendinning has a drink at her local *cantina* and finds out why things are not going so well for Evo Morales and his government

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The agreement among them echoed a lasting truth of Bolivian culture: a tendency to view things from the perspective of the collective, rather than solely from one's perceived interests  
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A poster of "Guernica" was bursting from the wall, and the umpteenth Latin American rendition of "My Way" was booming from the record player. I was sharing a hand-carved table in a Cochabamba cantina with a cowboy from the Chapare, an anti-capitalist immigration officer, an anarchist surgeon, and a *barbacoa*-restaurateur. Now thrown into the urban mix, all boasted roots in Andean Native cultures, and all had been early supporters of the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) forged by Bolivia's first indigenous president in 500+ years, Evo Morales.

The conversation was fiery and, as is normal in the Andes, its topic was politics.

Despite this crowd's current claim to the middle-class, the agreement among them echoed a lasting truth of Bolivian culture: a tendency to view things from the perspective of the collective, rather than solely from one's perceived interests.

And indeed, this conversation echoed other *charlas* I'd had with *campesinos*, *artisanos*, *taxi-trufi* drivers, and union members – and I need to be straight with you: things are not going well for the government of Bolivia's indigenous leader. It was only a matter of filling in the details – and, in between gulps of Auténtico beer and Cuban mixed drinks, said details were pouring forth at the *cantina*.

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**Forked Tongue I: Madre Tierra**

Out of one tine of what has become the Morales administration's two-sided tongue come blood-stirring proclamations like the president's impassioned *grito* "¡Planeta o Muerte!" at the 2010 Cancun climate change talks. Brilliant. Then there is the stark refusal to sign on to the watered-down agreement at said talks. And now comes the nation's new law proclaiming the rights of Madre Tierra – to some minds, a legal-philosophic leap that, a few decades ago, only traditional Native peoples, bioregionalists, and primitive-anarchists could imagine.

But, sorry to say, the other spine of the eco-fork must be given voice. The following is a list of some projections, plans, under-construction projects, and accomplishments of the administration:

- the launch of genetically-modified agriculture into a countryside nearly free of GMO's;
- two under-construction hydro-electric dams 300% bigger than the US's Hoover Dam at a cost of \$13,000,000,000, slated to channel water to Brazil in exchange for monies to boost Bolivia's petro and plastic industries – this, in a country where many communities have no potable water and water-borne illnesses are rampant;
- in a nation uncontaminated by nuclear

radiation: plans for uranium mining and nuclear power plants, aided by Iran;

- blankets of electromagnetic radiation in the form of Wi-Fi and WiMAX – with the state telecommunications corporation bragging of 1350 new radiobases and more to come;

- commodity-transporting super-highways bulldozing through Constitutionally-protected indigenous lands and nature reserves harboring thousands of rare plants and animals, including endangered species;

- new oil excavations;

- new gas excavations;

- reinvigoration of the world-class silver mine at San Bartolomé/Potosí, constructed by the US's Coeur d'Alene Corporation (a business of the Schitsu 'umsh/Coeur d'Alene tribe of the Pacific Northwest – *not*)

- in partnership with Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, South Korea, and Iran: lithium excavation and industrialization – threatening leeching, leaks, emissions, and spills in the world-treasure salt flats; promising to deplete its fragile water supply; and endangering the world's only large-scale organic quinoa-growing region and Bolivia's own ace-in-the-hole for hearty economic trade;

- Bolivia's own Made-in-China satellite, an expenditure of \$295,000,000 in a country where, according to the United Nations Development Program, more than half live in poverty;

- with the help of India, the construction of humankind's largest iron mine;

- 900 miles of pipeline slated to transport natural gas to Argentina; and

- an explosion of airport, factory, and high-rise construction.

In other words: full-tilt, high-tech, colossal-scale, high-capital modernization – on a Madre Tierra in which such expansion has already been shown to be The Problem.

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**Forked Tongue II: Democracy**

Regarding governance, from one side of Bo-

livia's forked tongue is spoken the legal language of *plurinationalismo*. After centuries of dictatorships, neoliberal governments, and military juntas, the 2009 Morales-initiated Constitution legitimizes a form of decentralized federalism: a reinstatement of decision-making to local communities, whether defined by place, indigenous heritage, or worker identity.

But, from the other tine of the fork, we encounter the reality of unabashed state centralism and the unfortunate stringency of an If-You're-Not-With-Us-You're-Against-Us mentality. A blazing example of such top-down musculature is 2010's Christmas *Gasolinazo*: Decreto Supremo #748 in which Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera abruptly announced that gasoline and diesel prices had been unilaterally jacked up – by as much as 83%. (“Joy to the World” notwithstanding, the nationwide uprisings that followed – featuring burnings of photographs of Evo Morales – rerouted the government's hurry to a slower pace of inflation.)

But the truth remains: ever since the threat from the right wing subsided following Morales' 2009 re-election by 62%, a chronic refusal to listen to the very social movements the president promised to obey has posed a disturbing blow to both descendants of the equalizing *allyus* of traditional Andean decision-making and modern-day adherents of participatory democracy. When indigenous groups protest the bulldozing of their lands for the construction of freeway corridors; when state workers call for increases in salaries against the reality of galloping food prices; when media workers fight for freedom of the press against regulations threatening license suspensions, state control of 20% of the media, and state ownership of all of it – the administration's reaction is knee-jerk. Whether by the president himself, the vice president, or other government officials, citizens questioning the government's dictates are received with neither concern for their suffering nor gratitude for their participa-

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**Another revelation of corruption, more so perhaps for spiritual interest, was the June 2010 arrest of Valentín Mejillones, the *amauta*-priest who had led the purification ritual of Evo Morales' inauguration at Tiawanaku in 2006 – for hosting a cocaine purification factory in his El Alto home**  
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tion; they are bold-facedly dismissed as instruments of US imperialism; dupes of the right wing; middle-class whiners; “*enemigos del Estado*”/”enemies of the State;” out of touch with reality; and/or (more details on this later) “*salvajes*”/”savages.” According to 2000 Water War leader Oscar Olivera, the government is promulgating a “smear and slander campaign” to promote “criminalization of opinion” and discredit former labor/social-movement allies whose support was, in large part, responsible for Morales’ election to the presidency.

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**Meet the New Problems, Same as the Old Problems**

At the same time, Bolivia is rife with chronic problems that, according to cantina-level opinion, the government has failed to address.

Corruption within government is an age-old theme. During the Morales administration, the most spectacular example occurred in February 2011: the US arrest of the national *jefe* of police, former head of the Fuerza Especial de Lucha Contra el Narcotráfico/founder of the Centro de Inteligencia y Generación de Información, General René Sarabria Oropeza, when he was caught in the act of launching new cocaine routes to Miami. His accomplices included a mayor, a military colonel, and a captain. Another revelation of corruption, more so perhaps for spiritual interest, was the June 2010 arrest of Valentín Mejillones, the *amauta*-priest who had led the purification ritual of Evo Morales’ inauguration at Tiawanaku in 2006 – for hosting a cocaine purification factory in his El Alto home.

Too, while the Bolivian coca leaf has been sold for cocaine manufacture since Vietnam War days, the country is fast becoming a global fount of the deadly illegal drug, and this development also feeds popular discontent against the administration. In the tropical Chapare, Bolivia’s most intensive region for coca growing for drug production, every

family has a tale of relinquishing food crops to grow the more valuable product, giving up agriculture all together to work in a lab, or loaning out a youth to play lookout at a staggeringly high salary of \$200 a month.

According to satellite surveillance reported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), since Morales launched his presidency, the number of hectares commandeered has expanded by *fútbol* fields: by 2008 as many as 28,000 hectares were ponying up some 130 tons of cocaine, whereas by 2010 the vice president divulged that el *narcotráfico* contributed \$700,000,000 a year to the national economy – with one out of every twenty citizens working for it.

In truth, the location of drug production is most often determined by international events like droughts, floods, inroads made by drug-war efforts, and inter-cartel politics – yet many Bolivians contend that Morales is to blame. In 2008 he threw out the DEA; all the while, they contend, he was ignoring the expansion of cocaine production as he blithely touted the sacredness of the coca leaf and pushed for the right of cocalers to expand their fields into national parks.

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**Decepción and Protest**

Curiously, in Spanish, the word for “disappointment” is *decepción* – a term that, to the English-speaking ear, does not merely name a feeling; it proposes a dynamic between outer influence and inner response.

In today’s Bolivia my *cantina* conversation with a cowboy, a doctor, a government officer, and a *barbaquoa* owner was not an isolated event. In February 2011, popular *decepción* was measured in a Radio Fides poll in the barrios of La Paz that are normally a MAS stronghold. The result: a whopping 84% of respondents reported loss of confidence in their government, with 80% saying they’d vote for replacement.

Also reflecting growing disappoint-

ment is the fact that today's Bolivia exists in a constant state of disruption due to non-stop and overlapping *huelga*-strikes, *paro*-stoppages, *bloqueo*-road blocks, and *manifestacion*-demonstrations that literally shut down the country. Such tactics fell off during the early, hope-for-the-best years of the Morales administration – but by 2010-12 they had made a full-swing comeback.

They are marked by dedication to collective action, faith in decisions forged by leadership, and a willingness to fight to the death. Who can forget the daring of the *campesinos* and *indigenas* who shut down the city of Cochabamba in 2000 to expel the Bechtel Corporation for privatizing its municipal water supply? It was a time when many others throughout the world had been kowtowed into obedience by the overarching legal/economic/military dominion of multinational corporations, the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank – and yet thousands in Bolivia poured into the streets bearing rocks, slings, and burning tires, hundreds were injured, nine died. And they won. Who could deny the sheer might of 2003's Gas War in El Alto in which displaced land-based people and urban workers arose to reject capitalist looting of Bolivia's natural gas? Some 60 activists were killed. And they won.

If viewed from a historical perspective, the outright pugnacity so characteristic of the Bolivian people reflects an ancient tradition: the Tinku battle wherein – to court the spirits of fertility – the men, women and children of neighboring *altiplano* communities punch and claw at each other in a ritual dance that leads to bloodshed, and sometimes a death. Whatever the origin of the Andean fighting spirit, the tendency to defiant combat may be responsible, in large part, for the remarkable survival of Andean cultures after centuries of brutal oppression. And its contemporary applications – mass strikes, work stoppages, and road blocks – were honed as political strategies

to force demands during the military juntas and dictatorships, and later neoliberal governments, of the 1930-'90s.

Take for example, from December 2009 through March of 2010, during the worst global-warming-induced storms – when for months rain gushed as if being thrown from a bucket and floods washed over communities like rivers – the taxi, *trufi*, and bus *choferes* and *transportistas* shut down what was left of the water-logged economy with *paros*, *bloqueos*, and *manifestaciones* in all the major cities of the country.

Earlier, in October 2010, as the government began to whittle away at guarantees for freedom of the press via La Ley Anti-Racismo y Toda Forma de Discriminación – ostensibly geared to outlaw racism and sexism, but also containing two articles initiating government control over press content – the nation's *periodistas* hit the streets: carting coffins bearing microphones, cameras, and reporter tablets; writing protest placards with their own blood; hanging like Christ figures from the balconies of buildings; collecting thousands of signatures; and appealing to international press associations.

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**El Heroísmo de los Indígenas**

Unquestionably, though, the most historic of contemporary struggles was the TIPNIS march of 2011.

The government plan was to build high-tech super-highway corridors as legs of the Infraestructura Regional Suramericana; the purpose was to facilitate massive transport of commodities for profit-making in the global economy – with the Territorio Indígena y Parque Isibro Sécure (TIPNIS) venue designed to convey petroleum from Brazil through Bolivia to Chile, as well as coca and any oil and gas that might be excavated in the tropical zone. The funder: Brazil, with whom the Morales administration had negotiated a plethora of industrial projects.

The highway was slated to pierce straight

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through what French naturalist Alcides d'Orbigny had, in the 18th century, called “the most beautiful jungle in the world.” The eco-reserve is homeland to the Yurakarés, Moxeños, and Chimanes; boasts over 60 communities, some of them hunter-gatherers still practicing their traditional lifeways; and is home to thousands of precious plants and animals, including eleven endangered species and subspecies of orchids only now being identified. The 2009 Constitution – written and passed by the Morales administration – guarantees the legal rights of Native communities to sovereign decision regarding use of their lands and touts the rights of the natural world.

When it became clear, though, that indigenous groups would protest the highway on grounds of sovereignty rights, ecological preservation, and cultural survival, President Morales lashed out, accusing them of being in cahoots with the US Embassy – with the ultimate motivation of toppling the Bolivian government. He then dragged out a remarkable claim for a government touting itself as sensitive to indigenous needs: he called the protesters “*salvajes*.” Contradictorily, it was also claimed that they were not even true *indigenas*, that they had long since been contaminated by the ingress of progress. Subsequent allegations included that they were receiving financial support from NGO's (a peculiar disqualification as Morales had come to power with the aid of NGO's) and that they were dupes of the right wing, in particular of former dictator “Goni” Sánchez de Lozada. Then, mustering words more to the point, Morales announced: “*Quieran o no quieran, vamos a construir la carretera*”/Like it or not, we're going to construct the highway.

The march began on 15 August 2011. Some 700 Native people set out to walk the 375 miles to La Paz in an effort that echoed the 1990 La March por Territorio y Dignidad. That march had been undertaken by hunter-gatherers of the jungle lowlands who were in danger of losing their ances-

tral territories to encroaching landowners, ranchers, and loggers – and it was a success: presidential decrees were passed restoring lands to Native groups, marking the exact terrain of reserves, preventing logging – and renewing pride to tribes whose stature had long been forgotten. This time around, in 2011, the stated purpose of the march was to bring attention to the planned highway's ecological/cultural/sovereignty threat to the eco-reserve – and demand that the government respect its own laws regarding Native sovereignty.

A complexity of the situation quickly inserted itself: the increasing ingress into the territory of coca-growing settlers, many of them former miners displaced by degradation of the product and economic devaluation of precious metals. The Morales administration was willing and able to manipulate this ready constituency to its advantage; the *cocaleros*, or *colonos*, are among Evo Morales' most loyal constituents. He himself remains president of their national *cocalero* syndicate. The government's official support of the coca industry has led to increasing numbers of traditional family growers – who, by Bolivian law, are legal – to move into the TIPNIS wilderness, slash and burn the jungle, and throw up new villages, towns, and farms. The Office of the United Nations against Drugs and Crime also claims Morales' enthusiasm for *coca* has opened the way for an invasion into the TIPNIS by illegal *narco* growers, as well as the transition of legal farmers into those that serve the fast-growing trafficking industry. These newcomers not only offer up a pro-MAS block for Morales to position against the Moxeños, Yurakarés, and Chimanes; they favor the highway so that they can transport their product to market.

On 11 September, a dynamite-bearing assembly of *cocalero-campesinos* blocked the marchers' route near San Ignacio de Moxos. With clubs in hand, they ran moblike at the marchers and broke the windows of their support vehicles. Four hundred

police were called in to stand between the *colonos* and the *indigenas* to “prevent violence.” The contrast between the state’s military – with their machine guns, high-tech SWAT shields, helicopters, aluminum batons, and steel-toe boots – and the TIPNIS guards in tee shirts and flip-flops, wielding hand-hewn bows and arrows, was a thing to behold.

It was at this point, too, that local stores were closed and incoming transport of food and water halted. The marchers became desperate as their people became ill; already two babies had died. We on the outside became desperate too; ongoing support campaigns to send in water, food, clothing, and medicines were stymied.

An astounding event then took place. The date was 24 September. When Canciller David Choquehuanca arrived at the blockade – by all accounts to make a display of government concern – indigenous women took the Canciller hostage. I am an observer of the details of human behavior, and it did not escape me that the women had provided him with what may have been the only bottle of drinking water within kilometers. He clutched it with sweaty hands, his face craggy from fright, as reportedly there had been mention that they were going to make him march to La Paz, which would have amounted to a month of athleticism. In the end, his presence allowed the entire group to pass through both police blockade and *cocalero* pack – and they let him go.

President Morales was out of the country when the next event unfolded. On Sunday 25 September, the police attacked the encampment of marchers. Bursting in with tear gas, they chased down fleeing *indigenas*, sometimes five officers in full riot gear against a single boy in cotton shorts; with their night sticks they beat them on their backs, chests, and heads; they bound their arms, legs, and mouths with duct tape making it almost impossible to breathe; they dragged *dirigente*-leaders, women, children, and *ancianos* to waiting trucks and hauled

them away to unknown locations. It was claimed that one child died in the violence.

Throughout the struggle, the government had at will blocked media access from areas it considered sensitive, yet, for this, we on the outside had access to non-stop visuals, with television stations running the shocking images over and over again. For hours Bolivia was subdued by shock, you could hear a pin drop on the avenues – and then the popular response burst forth. All over, including at the Bolivian embassy in New York where Morales had been presenting at the United Nations, people took to the streets. And the venting allowed for pent-up emotions to flow into the public vocabulary.

“*Ya no tiene máscara indígena*”/Morales can no longer wear his mask of so-called indigenous support, proclaimed Native social analyst Fernando Untoja. Long-time activist Rafael Quispe trotted out the as-yet unspoken words: “*dictadura*”/dictatorship. Oscar Olivera proclaimed it to be “*la monarcía de Evo Morales*”/the monarchy of Evo Morales, while ex-Masista Alex Contreras termed the actions “*métodos del fascismo*”/methods of fascism.

Astoundingly, one marcher was quoted in *La Prensa*, “*La represión nos fortaleció*”/The repression strengthened us. On 19 October what had started, two months before, as a march of some 700 determined Native people had now swelled to 3000. After two months of trekking/camping, trekking/camping; after the sweltering heat of the tropics and the driving sleet of the mountains; after bearing inadequate shoes, too thin jackets, foot sores, injuries, dehydration, diarrhea, and exhaustion; after enduring disregard and insults spouting from the mouths of government officials: after the official withholding of water and food; and then having endured violent repression – the TIPNIS marchers rounded the last crag before the descent into the capital city.

What lay below, they insist, was unexpected.

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**An astounding event then took place. The women had provided him with what may have been the only bottle of drinking water within kilometers**  
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**Evo Morales had escaped for the day to the MAS stronghold town of Quillacollo, but he did have to make an appearance. Carting a hand-held loud speaker, his face was welded into something of a static smile**  
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The streets of La Paz were teeming with supporters from every hamlet and municipality in Bolivia! Red flags were blowing in the wind. Green flags. Yellow flags. Wiphala flags. Workers. Taxi drivers. Housekeepers. University students. Mothers with babies. Union leaders. Theater groups. Indigenous groups boasting traditional dress, flutes, and drums. Former government officials who had left the MAS party. The press. International support teams. Trumpets blared. Flutes sang. Mariachi bands blasted accordion music. Placards proclaimed: “TIPNIS=VIDA, EVO=MUERTE” and “¡TIPNIS SOMOS TODOS!” People rushed to meet the marchers, hugged them, kissed them on the lips. Men and women were sobbing in the streets! Whole schools had been liberated to play a role in history, and uniformed children were waving flags, holding up their drawings of tropical flowers, and cheering. Along the boulevards the welcomers flanked the marchers like an envelope of protection from potential police action; in some parts the shield extended five times thicker than the march itself.

It was the largest gathering of humanity in the history of Bolivia.

Evo Morales had escaped for the day to the MAS stronghold town of Quillacollo, but he did have to make an appearance. One can only imagine his feelings as he stepped out of the palace in the Plaza Murillo to face his self-created adversaries. Carting a hand-held loud speaker, Morales' face was welded into something of a static smile, and he announced, “*Entendemos perfectamente el pedido de UStedes ... lo que UStedes han pedido he mandado al Congreso para que el camino no pase por el parque nacional Isibro Sécure*”/We understand your demand perfectly ... I have now mandated to Congress that the road will not cut through the national park.

Bolivia sometimes seems like a world stage for the Theater of the Absurd, and to describe this quality award-winning novelist Claudio Ferrufino has written: “*Bolivia*

*carga la distinción de bizzarria absoluta en tal sentido*”/Bolivia carries the distinction of absolute bizarreness at every turn. No sooner had Congress fast-tracked La Ley de Protección de Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isibro Sécure than – what ho, forked tongue? – officials within the halls of governance were announcing that the park was up for grabs. The 11 November *Los Tiempos* headline read: “*Canciller: Gobierno no supo entender demanda indígena*”/Canciller: Government didn't understand the demands of the Natives.

And in an act that infused a surrealist touch to this topsy-turvy back-tracking, President Morales appeared at a traditional dance alongside tribes in favor of the highway, festooned in lowland ritual regalia, complete with white woven dress, draping seed necklaces, and three-foot feathers protruding from a head dress around his skull! To continue the stage performance: the next day, in an act resembling the US embargo against Cuba, the government suspended the licenses of all businesses, many of them Native-run, that operate within the park.

Two days later, the headline in *Los Tiempos* announced to public disorientation that Morales was now saying that the highway through the TIPNIS “*es historia*”/is history. Granted the reader couldn't immediately decipher if these words meant that there would be no highway or if the highway was now a historical certainty, reading further revealed that the administration had indeed waffled – but now the decision was set: the TIPNIS super-corridor would never cut through the eco-reserve of the heroic Yurakarés, Moxeños, and Chimanes.\*

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**The Clutches of “Guernica”**

I understand that this information about Bolivia's indigenous government may be difficult to take in. In a world laden with tornadoes, hurricanes, tsunamis, volcanoes, earthquakes, fires, and technological di-

sasters; wars over land, oil, and water; the unfolding of Peak Oil and, frankly, of what scholar Richard Heinberg calls Peak Everything; a refurbishing of nuclear technologies; swathes of electromagnetic radiation from consumer and military installations; increasing corporate power; decreasing social liberties; out-of-hand control by drug cartels; cancer epidemics; mass addictions; and growing social chaos – in this world, hope is a precious thing.

As Arab-American scholar Edward Said has noted, no one in this world has escaped the impacts of imperialist conquest, and as Western Shoshone spiritual leader/sovereignty activist Corbin Harvey has chanted, “We Are All Wounded, We Are All Healing.” Yet, if we acknowledge that a better – and perhaps evolutionally built-in way of being human – is possible, we might also grasp that the conflicts, contradictions, and conundrum created by centuries of ripping people from land and community have become archetypal to the human experience.

Yes, ours is a world writhing in the clutches of “Guernica,” in which too many people are dancing to “My Way” and too many governments speak with forked tongue. In such a world, the social movements of Bolivia and the TIPNIS indígenas, in particular, offer us a reminder of what is possible.

\* As we say in baseball, “It’s Not Over ‘Til It’s Over,” and indeed the TIPNIS controversy is not over. As of January 2012, pro-highway marches undertaken by some Natives, *colonos*, and *cocaleros* have taken place, supported by the Morales administration. Contradictory to the legal definition of sovereignty, the government

has challenged Native autonomy again by asserting control over what businesses, including extractive industries, may operate within the park. In February it passed a new law nullifying the no-highway law passed just months before; this new law allows for the highway to be built. Another long march to the capital to protect the TIPNIS and its communities then took place, this time with all tribal members, Bolivians, and international brigades invited to join in. Using police force and tear gas, the government refused them entry into the public space in front of the palace, and they have now retreated and begun to make bows and arrows to prevent the government from entering their lands. **CT**

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