

**AL-QAEDA'S ON OUR SIDE?** | DANIEL LAZARE  
**THE DEATH OF FREE SPEECH** | JOHN W. WHITEHEAD  
**INSIDE IRAN'S DEN OF SPIES** | NATE ROBERT

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING | PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

FREE

**10 YEARS OF COLDTYPE – OUR 100th ISSUE**



**WHAT RESISTANCE LOOKS LIKE: A PHOTO ESSAY BY JOSIE HARGREAVES**



Cover Photo:  
Josie Hargreaves  
– See pages 8 to 13

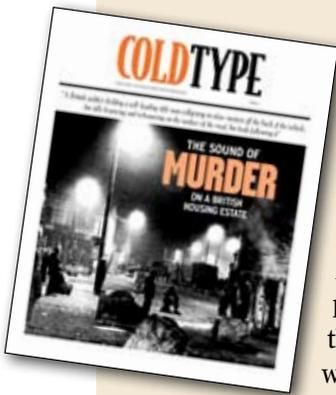
# ColdType

Issue 100 / July 2015

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Editor: Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net

# 10 years, 100 issues, 1,000 thanks



The idea for *ColdType* came while having breakfast in an Edinburgh hotel 20 years ago when I was working on a relaunch of the *Scotsman* newspaper. Reading the *Independent* and *Guardian* over my pot of tea and toast, I wondered if there was a market for a tabloid that would (a) focus on great writing from around the world, and (b) look as

good as it read (well, I was a design consultant!).

Hmm, but how would I get it published? Having a typical journalist's understanding of the financial side of publishing – zilch – I let it rest until I had a eureka moment a year later. As head of design for the Thomson Newspapers group in North America, I already edited a quarterly design tabloid – *RaggedRight* – for editors, so why not abandon my dream of self-publishing and produce it for them instead?

So *ColdType* was born in the spring of 1995. Five tabloid issues were published before I left the company to run my own business 18 months later, after which *ColdType* disappeared for four years until

**Top:** First issue of the original *ColdType*, Spring 1995.

**Right:** Getting the name right (from top): *ColdType/2*, *The Reader*, then back to *ColdType*

I persuaded my former Thomson bosses to give me the title. Then it took another 15 months of indecision before it became the *coldtype.net* website, showcasing great writing and photography from the alternative media.

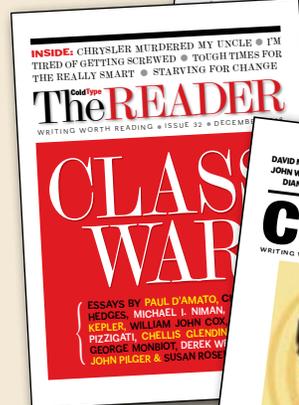
The move to magazine format came in 2005 with the launch of a 24-page pdf mag, titled *ColdType/2*, a name that was so confusing that it was quickly renamed the *ColdType Reader*. And there it stayed for 55 issues until an evening of beer-fueled nostalgia resulted in reverting to the original *ColdType* title.

So here we are after 10 years, still going strong, despite a slight hiccup five years ago when I was persuaded *not* to call it a day at issue 50 by Denis Beckett, a former colleague, editor and publisher, with whom I had worked on a similar (but printed) magazine, *Frontline*, in South Africa years ago. His advice was apt, for I had persuaded him not to kill *Frontline* during a similar moment of publishing ennui a decade or so earlier.

1,000 thanks to our loyal readers, our talented writers and photographers and, of course, to Denis.

Now, on to issue 200.

**Tony Sutton, Editor**



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# Al-Qaeda's on our side?

**Daniel Lazare** tells how plans to bring about regime change in Syria ignore reality by rebranding al-Qaeda as 'moderate' terrorists, whose Syrian affiliates are acceptable to Israel and supported by Saudi Arabia

**Today, the Bush Doctrine is sinking beneath the waves as a growing portion of the punditocracy declares that some forms of terrorism are better than others**

Just nine days after the fall of the World Trade Center, George W. Bush announced that he was imposing a radical new policy on virtually the entire globe: "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime."

As dramatic as the statement was, just about every phrase was open to question in one form or another. But rather than launching into a long and vigorous debate about the meaning of terrorism or America's right to impose diktat on the world at large, congressmen turned their minds off and gave Bush a standing ovation.

Today, the same Bush Doctrine is sinking beneath the waves as a growing portion of the punditocracy declares that some forms of terrorism are better than others and that harboring a terrorist may not be so bad if it advances US interests. But once again, the response is not questioning, debate, or even applause, but silence.

The latest evidence of a sea change in establishment thinking is a blog that Ahmed Rashid, a prominent Middle East correspondent, recently published on the *New York Review of Books* website. Entitled "Why We Need al-Qaeda," it argues that Al Qaeda and its Syrian affiliate, Al Nusra, are evolving in a

more moderate direction in growing contrast to its rival, the super-violent Islamic State. So why not use Al Nusra as a counterforce against both Bashar al-Assad and ISIS?

As Rashid puts it, "Unlike ISIS, which demands absolute subjugation of the inhabitants of any territory it conquers (surrender or be executed), al-Nusra is cooperating with other anti-Assad groups and recently joined the 'Army of Conquest' alliance of rebel militias in northern Syria. Moreover, in contrast to ISIS's largely international and non-Syrian fighting force, al-Nusra's fighters are almost wholly Syrian, making them both more reliable and more committed to Syria's future.

"Meanwhile, in interviews with Al Jazeera, al-Nusra leaders have vowed not to attack targets in the West, promoting an ideology that might be called 'nationalist jihadism' rather than global jihad. In recent months, al-Nusra's leaders have toned down the implementation of their own brutal version of Islamic law, while putting on hold their own plans of building a caliphate."

Thus, according to Rashid's viewpoint, Al Nusra is cooperative, patriotic, unthreatening to anyone other than Assad, and in favor of a kinder and gentler form of shari'a as well. Yet, Rashid argues, that while Turkey and the Arab gulf states recognize that change is afoot, the US keeps its eyes resolutely shut:

"With 230,000 killed and 7.6 million peo-

ple uprooted in Syria alone, the Arab states want a quick end to the Assad regime and a viable solution for Syria. They know that solution will never come from the weak moderate opposition, and that any lasting peace will require support by the strong and ruthless Islamist groups fighting there.”

### **Gulf states' favorite**

So the gulf states are backing the second most ruthless Islamist group in Syria (Al Qaeda's affiliate) in hopes of offsetting the first most ruthless (ISIS) and making short work of the Baathist regime in Damascus. But as Arab leaders prepare for direct negotiations with Al Nusra, Rashid warns, “the only one not at the table could be the United States.”

This is dramatic stuff. After all, Rashid is not taking aim at some minor doctrine, but one that has been a cornerstone of US foreign policy since 9/11. Moreover, he's not the only one talking this way. Since Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan flew to Riyadh in early March to meet with Saudi King Salman and discuss ways of upping support for the Syrian Islamist opposition, there has been a veritable boomlet in terms of calls for a rapprochement with Al Qaeda.

Within days of the Riyadh get-together, *Foreign Affairs* went public with an article arguing that even though “the United States is the closest it has ever been to destroying al Qaeda, its interests would be better served by keeping the terrorist organization afloat.” Lina Khatib, director of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, wrote a few weeks later that “while not everyone likes Nusra's ideology, there is a growing sense in the north of Syria that it is the best alternative on the ground – and that ideology is a small price to pay for higher returns.”

Charles Lister of the Brookings Institute's Doha Center, wrote that Al Nusra is undergoing a “moderating shift.” Frederic Hof, Obama's former envoy to the Syrian guerrillas and now a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council in Washington, said the group has become “a real magnet for young Syrian

fighters who don't have any particular jihadist or even radical sectarian agenda.” They are drawn to Al Nusra, he explained, for two reasons – because it's “well-resourced” and because it “seems to have been willing to fight the regime and not to engage in some of the corrupt activities and warlordism that you would find elsewhere within the panoply of Syrian opposition.”

Rashid's views are hardly unique. Nonetheless, they're the most explicit and upfront to date, an indication that support for an alliance with Al Qaeda is on the upswing and that advocates are growing bolder and more self-confident. So how should ordinary people who are not part of the elite foreign-policy discussion respond?

For one thing, they might notice that such articles are remarkably one-sided and poorly reasoned. Rashid may be “one of Pakistan's most respected journalists,” as the BBC puts it, someone whose work has appeared in such publications as the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. Yet shooting holes through his arguments is child's play.

Take his claim that “al-Nusra's leaders have toned down the implementation of their own brutal version of Islamic law.” Whatever the difference between Al Nusra and ISIS on this score, it's less impressive than Rashid lets on.

The Soufan Group, a New York-based security firm headed by a Lebanese-American ex-FBI agent named Ali H. Soufan, notes, for instance, that while Islamic State released a video in January showing its forces stoning an accused adulteress, Al Nusra released one around the same time showing its forces shooting two women for the same alleged offense. Since the victims in either case were killed, the difference, as the Soufan Group noted, was purely “stylistic.”

Rashid claims that Al Nusra is less extreme in its hostility to Shi'ism, in part because it thinks “anti-Shia fanaticism” is backfiring and becoming “an impediment to gaining more territory.” Indeed, Abu Mohammad al-

**Support for an alliance with Al Qaeda is on the upswing and advocates are growing bolder and more self-confident. How should ordinary people who are not part of the elite foreign-policy discussion respond?**

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## STRANGE ALLIES

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Julani, Al Nusra’s commander-in-chief, told Al Jazeera in a rare interview on May 27 that his forces were willing to welcome Alawites, as Syria’s Shi’ites are known, back into the fold.

“If they drop weapons,” al-Julani said, “disavow Assad, do not send their men to fight for him and return to Islam, then they are our brothers.” But when he described Alawism as a sect that has “moved outside the religion of God and of Islam,” the meaning became clear: Alawite must either convert or die.

Whether this makes Al Nusra less genocidal than ISIS is open to debate. According to the pro-rebel Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, meanwhile, Al Nusra recently massacred more than 20 Druze villagers in northwestern Syria – reportedly after a local commander denounced them as kuffar, or infidels, while al-Julani, in his Al Jazeera interview, specified that Christians must pay the jizya, a special head tax imposed by Islamic law, as well – a stipulation Syria’s ten-percent Christian minority is not likely to find very reassuring.

Ordinary people viewing this from afar might notice that the government that al-Julani is seeking to overthrow is officially secular and non-discriminatory and that even Obama has conceded that it has “protected the Christians in Syria,” as he told a Syrian Christian delegation last September. They might also notice that Rashid’s article is in other respects highly revealing, although not in ways he cares to admit.

For instance, Rashid writes that US policy in the Middle East is beset by “growing contradictions.” This is obviously correct. But the problem is not that Washington refuses to face facts about Al Nusra’s alleged moderating trend, but that the US is attempting to hammer out an accord with Iran while struggling to preserve its alliance with Israel and the Arab gulf states, all of whom regard Iran as public enemy number one.

The effort has led to monumental fence straddling. While entering into talks with

Iran, the Obama administration has given the go-ahead to Saudi Arabia’s two-month-old assault on Iranian-allied forces in Yemen while turning a blind eye to growing Turkish and Saudi support for anti-Iranian terrorists in Syria.

While paying lip service to the Bush Doctrine that he who harbors a terrorist is as bad as a terrorist, the Obama administration made no objection when the Saudis and Turks donated US-made TOW missiles to Al Nusra-led forces in northern Syria or when the Saudi bombing campaign allowed Al Qaeda to expand in Yemen.

It’s a mixed-up policy that has people in the Middle East shaking their heads. Yet Rashid adds to the confusion by misrepresenting the Saudi role. He writes, for instance, that the Arab States are swinging behind Al Nusra because they “want a quick end to the Assad regime and a viable solution for Syria,” when, in fact, Saudi Wahhabists have sought from the start to impose a government much like their own, as a report by US Defense Intelligence Agency observed back in August 2012.

Rather than “viable,” such a government would be precisely the opposite for a highly variegated society like Syria with its large Christian, Shi’ite, and Druze minorities fearful of Sunni fundamentalist domination – yet the gulf states, backed by the US, have pushed on regardless.

On the issue of Al Qaeda’s brutal intolerance, Rashid adds, “For Arab leaders, determining whether al-Qaeda has really changed

will depend on the group’s long-term attitude toward Shias,” suggesting that the gulf states are seeking a fairer outcome for Syria’s Alawites.

### **Saudi Intolerance**

But this is misleading as well since Saudi attitudes toward the kingdom’s own 15-percent Shi’ite minority are deeply oppressive and seem to be getting worse.

According to the Cambridge scholar Toby

Matthiesen, for example, Saudi Shi'ites are barred from the army and the National Guard as well as the top rungs of the government. State-mandated schoolbooks denounce them as "rejectionists," while, according to the independent scholar Mai Yamani, they cannot testify in court or marry a Sunni and must put up with abuse from Wahhabist clerics who regularly preach that killing a Shi'ite merits a greater heavenly reward than killing a Christian or a Jew.

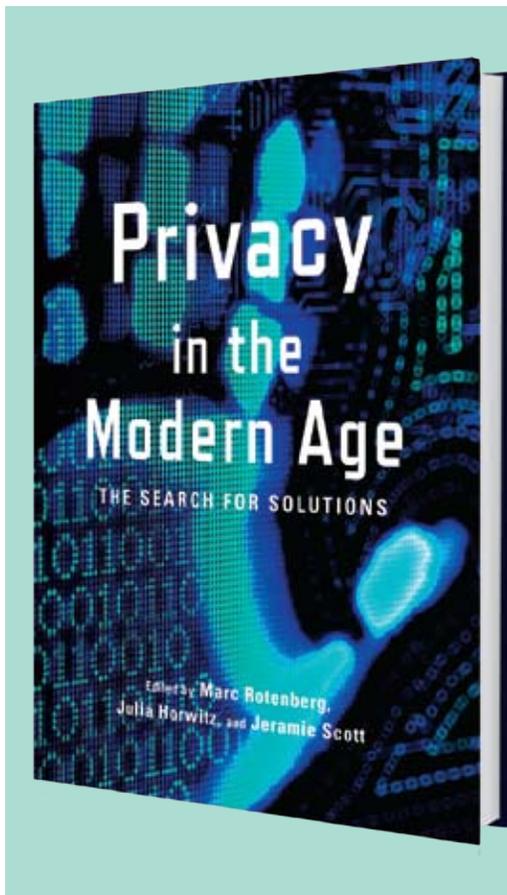
Since Salman's accession in late January, there is no sign of a softening. Indeed, by bombing Yemen's Shi'ite Houthi rebels and stepping up support for fanatically anti-Shi'ite rebels in Syria, Salman gives every indication of intensifying his anti-Shi'ite crusade and taking it abroad.

Neocons pushing for an explicit alliance with Al Nusra are thus attempting to plunge

the US ever more deeply into a growing sectarian war. Ordinary people might also notice that such "experts" expound their views from cushy posts financed by Qatar (the case with Brookings' Doha Center) or by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain (the case with the Atlantic Council).

Yet Congress doesn't care about such conflicts of interest and the White House is too intimidated to speak out, while the American people at large are not consulted. Questioning and debate are more imperative than ever, yet they are as absent as they were back in 2001. **CT**

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*Daniel Lazare is the author of several books including "The Frozen Republic: How the Constitution Is Paralyzing Democracy" (Harcourt Brace).*



### Privacy in the Modern Age: The Search for Solutions

Edited by Marc Rotenberg, Julia Horwitz, and Jeramie Scott of the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC)

.....  
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"*Privacy in the Modern Age* should frighten you into joining with the authors to implement solutions that you can use to protect and defend your self from these invasions." —Ralph Nader



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Family affair: Protesters march in London against cuts promised by the new Tory government.

# What resistance looks like

**Josie Hargreaves** joins 200,000 demonstrators in London's massive protest against the government's latest austerity plans. Text: **Tony Sutton**

**The response was predictable: two huge demonstrations took place in London during the first six weeks of the new parliament**

**W**elcome to Britain, where the Conservative Party, backed by the fear-mongering right wing media, won a surprise victory over their vacillating Labour Party opponents in the May general election. This allowed them to step up the austerity policies that caused so much misery over the past five years when they ruled the UK in a coal-

ition with the Liberal Democrats.

The response was predictable: two huge demonstrations took place in London during the first six weeks of the new parliament. The second, June 20's End Austerity Now march, drew 200,000 people to join the fight against proposed new benefit cuts totalling billions of pounds.

The continuation of the brutal Tory attack

**NO CUTS**

THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY



Socialist Workers

**DEFY  
TORY  
RULE**

Strike, march, occupy





End the Tory Game: Young protesters urge the public to defy the government.

**The marchers, including many young people and families, were also angered by the absence of any real political alternatives**

on the least well-off section of British society, coupled with tax benefits for the rich, was the final straw for protesters, who have become sickened by avaricious bankers, greedy landlords, and the creeping privatisation of social security and the National Health Service, which are the proudest legacies of the post-war Labour government of 1946.

The marchers, including many young

people and families, were also angered by the absence of any real political alternatives. Essentially, they have no one to vote for. First Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, then Ed Miliband almost destroyed the opposition Labour Party by dumping its trade union allies and scrapping deep-rooted socialist values, transforming it into a soulless copy of Tory neo-liberalism, in which the 'needs' of big



**The road to Socialism: Organisers were impressed by the turnout of young people.**

business are deemed more important than the welfare of citizens. Little wonder the party lost the May election and is now a leaderless shell after Ed Miliband quit as soon as the result was announced.

But now the people are fighting back. And the latest London demonstrations, backed by others up and down the country, are the first signs of disruption to come.

Teachers' union general secretary Christine Blower, told the cheering crowd, "This is what resistance looks like; we're going to see a lot more of it."

And Sam Fairbairn, national chairman of the event's organiser, the People's Assembly, said, "Protest has always played an important role in the democratic process." He added, "The idea that a slim parliamentary majority

**"The idea that a slim parliamentary majority equals dictatorial rule for the next five years is badly misjudged"**



Early starter: A young demonstrator helps dad choose a banner.

**The British lion has finally awoken after its five year slumber**

equals dictatorial rule for the next five years is badly misjudged.”

Buoyed by the turnout, more protests are planned, including one this month when new benefits cuts are expected to be announced by George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the new Tory government’s first budget day. That will be followed by a major week-long demonstration at the Tory Party conference in Manchester in October.

To paraphrase poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, the British lion seems finally to have awoken after its five year slumber . . . **CT**





**JOSIE HARGREAVES**

is a 17-year-old activist who is studying photography, art and politics in a London school. This is the third anti-austerity march she's attended. She is keen to get more young people involved in politics

# The *Sunday Times* and the death of journalism

“We just publish the position of the British government.” **David Edwards & David Cromwell** find more evidence of deterioration in mainstream media

**What followed was a series of assertions from faceless sources, backed by zero evidence and outright falsehoods**

In the wake of the greatest crime of the twenty-first century, the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, you might have thought that the days of passing off unattributed government and intelligence pronouncements as ‘journalism’ would be over. Apparently not. On June 14, the *Sunday Times*, owned by Rupert Murdoch, published what has already become a classic of the genre.

The prominent front-page story was titled: ‘British spies betrayed to Russians and Chinese; Missions aborted to prevent spies being killed’. It sounded like an exciting plot for a James Bond film. And the first line was suitably dramatic:

‘Russia and China have cracked the top-secret cache of files stolen by the fugitive US whistleblower Edward Snowden, forcing MI6 to pull agents out of live operations in hostile countries, according to senior officials in Downing Street, the Home Office and the security services.’

What followed was a series of assertions from faceless sources, backed by zero evidence and outright falsehoods.

Western intelligence agencies – famously trustworthy and free of any hidden agenda – said they had ‘been forced into the rescue operations after Moscow gained access to more than a million classified files held by the former American security contractor, who fled to seek protection from Vladimir Putin’. Anyone seeking ‘protection’ from one

of the world’s ‘Bad Guys’ is, of course, immediately deemed suspect.

‘Senior government sources’ claimed that ‘China had also cracked the encrypted documents’, endangering British and American spies. One senior Home Office official accused Snowden of having ‘blood on his hands’, although Downing Street said there was ‘no evidence of anyone being harmed’. The journalists appeared unperturbed by the discrepancy and ploughed on.

More anonymous sources popped up: ‘David Cameron’s aides confirmed’, ‘A senior Downing Street source said’, ‘said a senior Home Office source’, ‘a British intelligence source said’, ‘A US intelligence source said’. The only named source in the whole piece was Sir David Omand, the former director of GCHQ, the secretive agency that conducts mass surveillance for the British intelligence services.

Taking as undisputed fact that Russia and China had access to Snowden’s material, Omand said that this ‘was a “huge strategic setback” that was “harming” to Britain, America and their Nato allies.’ No other views were reported by the *Sunday Times*. This was stenography, not journalism.

The article appeared under the bylines of Tom Harper (the paper’s home affairs correspondent), Richard Kerbaj (security correspondent) and Tim Shipman (political editor). But it was clearly prepared with major

input from intelligence and government sources with their own particular agendas. All of this was, no doubt, given the all-clear by the paper's editor, Martin Ivens.

BBC News echoed the *Sunday Times* article, with an online piece containing 'analysis' by BBC security correspondent Gordon Corera. This supposed expert commentary was based on 'my understanding from conversations over an extended period' and performed his usual function of providing a conduit for the government view.

Some mild scepticism – 'a pinch of salt' - did filter through to later versions of the BBC article as it was updated. But it was shunted to the bottom of the piece, with no mention in the introduction.

In summary, the *Sunday Times* article contained no evidence for its anonymous claims, no challenges to the assertions made, and no journalistic balance. It was almost inevitable, then, that it would quickly fall apart under scrutiny.

**The opposite of journalism**

Craig Murray, the former British diplomat, responded promptly with a blog piece titled, 'Five Reasons the MI6 Story is a Lie'. One of these reasons, Murray notes, is:

'The argument that MI6 officers are at danger of being killed by the Russians or Chinese is a nonsense. No MI6 officer has been killed by the Russians or Chinese for 50 years. The worst that could happen is they would be sent home.'

Another reason is the convenient timing, aimed at providing a propaganda service for the alleged need for mass surveillance by the intelligence services:

'This anti Snowden non-story ... is timed



**The Sunday Times front page**

precisely to coincide with the government's new Snooper's Charter act, enabling the security services to access all our internet activity.'

Ewen MacAskill, the *Guardian's* defence and intelligence correspondent, raised a sceptical eyebrow, listing 'five questions for UK government'. Of course, the *Guardian*, including MacAskill himself, has a history of channeling government propaganda – not least during the great propaganda campaigns pushing for the invasions of Iraq in 2003 and Libya in 2011.

One of the most notorious examples of *Sunday Times*-style state stenography occurred in 2007 when Pentagon propaganda occupied the *Guardian's* front page under the title, 'Iran's secret plan for summer offensive to force US out of Iraq'. As we noted then, the piece by Simon Tisdall, a *Guardian* foreign affairs specialist, was based almost entirely on unsupported assertions by anonymous US officials. Indeed 22 of the 23 paragraphs in the story relayed official US claims: over 95 per cent of the article. It went like this:

'US officials say'; 'a senior US official in Baghdad warned'; 'The official said'; 'the official said'; 'the official said'; 'US officials now say'; 'the senior official in Baghdad said'; 'he [the senior official in Baghdad] added'; 'the official said'; 'the official said'; 'he [the official] indicated'...

No less than 26 references to official pronouncements formed the basis for a *Guardian* story presented with no scrutiny, no balance, no counter-evidence; nothing. Remove the verbiage described above and the *Guardian* front page news report was essentially a Pentagon press release.

The 'pushback' from *Guardian* journalists to the *Sunday Times* article, then, has to be seen in the wider context of: (a)

**One of the most notorious examples of Sunday Times-style state stenography occurred in 2007 when Pentagon propaganda occupied the Guardian's front page under the title, 'Iran's secret plan for summer offensive to force US out of Iraq'**

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## PROPAGANDA AS NEWS

**There is a long history of anonymous government accusations and smears being laundered through the media whenever damaging information is revealed by whistleblowers**

Guardian complicity and journalistic cowardice in the face of Western government propaganda over many years; (b) an opportunity for liberal journalists to attack the corporate competition in the form of a Murdoch newspaper and make themselves look good.

Returning to the *Sunday Times* piece, journalist Ryan Gallagher, who writes for the *Intercept*, notes:

‘the *Sunday Times* story raises more questions than it answers, and more importantly it contains some pretty dubious claims, contradictions, and inaccuracies. The most astonishing thing about it is the total lack of scepticism it shows for these grand government assertions, made behind a veil of anonymity. This sort of credulous regurgitation of government statements is antithetical to good journalism.’

But perhaps the most comprehensive demolition came from Glenn Greenwald, the journalist who met Edward Snowden in Hong Kong, and who was primarily responsible for bringing Snowden’s whistleblowing to public attention. Greenwald writes:

‘the entire report is a self-negating joke. It reads like a parody I might quickly whip up in order to illustrate the core sickness of western journalism.’

This ‘sickness’ is summed up by:

‘the formula that shapes their brains: anonymous self-serving government assertions = Truth.’

This is raw submission to power with the result that:

‘government officials know they can propagandize the public at any time because subservient journalists will give them anonymity to do so and will uncritically disseminate and accept their claims.’

As Greenwald observes, . Much the same happened in the Nixon era to Daniel Ellsberg when he published the Pentagon Papers on the Vietnam War. The US government tried to smear Ellsberg by asserting that he had shared information with the Soviet Union. This was a lie.

Greenwald adds that there is ‘a coordinated smear campaign in Washington to malign Snowden’. The British government and intelligence agencies are no doubt well aware of this, and happy to be part of it. The *Sunday Times* smear job fits the pattern.

Greenwald then exposes what he calls an ‘utter lie’. The paper had stated:

‘David Miranda, the boyfriend (sic – spousal partner) of the *Guardian* journalist Glenn Greenwald, was seized at Heathrow in 2013 in possession of 58,000 “highly classified” intelligence documents after visiting Snowden in Moscow.’

In fact, as Greenwald points out:

‘David did not visit Snowden in Moscow before being detained. As of the time he was detained in Heathrow, David had never been to Moscow and had never met Snowden. The only city David visited on that trip before being detained was Berlin, where he stayed in the apartment of [filmmaker] Laura Poitras.’

The day after the *Sunday Times* piece was published, observes Greenwald, the paper ‘quietly deleted’ the offending paragraph:

they just removed it from their story without any indication or note to their readers that they’ve done so (though it remains in the print edition and thus requires a retraction). That’s indicative of the standard of “journalism” for the article itself. Multiple other falsehoods, and all sorts of shoddy journalistic practices, remain thus far unchanged.’

The *Sunday Times* was clearly stung by Greenwald’s piece. The very next day, Murdoch’s company News UK sent a letter to First Look, the publisher of the *Intercept* where Greenwald’s piece had appeared, demanding that an image of the *Sunday Times* front page be removed from the critical article. Greenwald replied:

‘No, @TheSundayTimes, we are not going to remove the image of your humiliating headline from our story about it <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2101948-news-uk-dmca-notification-first-look-productions.html>’

### **'We just don't know' - four minutes of farcical fumbling**

Tom Harper, the lead reporter of the *Sunday Times* article, appeared in a laugh-out-loud, four-minute interview on CNN that should be shown to journalism students from now until the end of eternity.

George Howell, the CNN interviewer, tried to find out from Harper what his article was about, and what evidence he had for the claims being made. Howell is no radical; but he didn't need to be. By asking basic questions about the *Sunday Times* 'story', he revealed the utter paucity of anything that could count as journalism. Among a blizzard of 'ums' and 'ers', Harper could offer little more than:

'Well, uh, I don't know, to be honest with you, George'.

'All we know is that this is effectively the official position of the British government'.

'Well, again, sorry to just repeat myself, George, but we don't know'.

'Again, I'm afraid to disappoint you, we just don't know'.

Journalist Ryan Gallagher neatly sums up the CNN interview:

'How were the files breached? "I don't know." Were the files hacked or did Snowden hand them over? "We don't know." Were MI6 agents directly under threat? "We don't know." How did the government know what was in the files? "That's not something we're clear on." Can you substantiate the claims? "No."'

Gallagher adds:

'The interview is quite extraordinary because it makes absolutely clear that not only was this entire dubious story based solely on claims made anonymously by government officials, the reporters who regurgitated the claims did not even seek to question the veracity of the information. They just credulously accepted the allegations and then printed them unquestioningly. That really is the definition of stenography journalism - it's shameful.'

The *Sunday Times* approach was best encapsulated when Harper made the mistake of admitting blankly in the CNN interview:

'We just publish what we believe to be the position of the British government'.

That epitaph may as well be engraved on the tomb of British 'mainstream' journalism.

As noted earlier, the natural stance of BBC News was to take the *Sunday Times* propaganda piece at face value, with a smattering of cautious scepticism added later to the mix to simulate 'balanced' journalism. Andrew Marr declared on his Sunday morning BBC show: 'It has a certain plausibility about it, however'. Of course, Marr has a long history in finding 'a certain plausibility' in crass state propaganda, as was seen when he was the BBC's political editor during the invasion of Iraq.

### **The 'moral equivalence' argument gets another airing**

On the flagship Radio 4 Today programme, the BBC's structural bias was exposed yet again when Justin Webb made the mistake of interviewing Glenn Greenwald, who knows what he's talking about.

Webb presented the standard, propaganda-friendly version of Snowden's courageous whistleblowing:

**JW:** 'A lot of people [are] saying, whatever you think of Edward Snowden, he has drawn people's attention to something that needed to have its attention drawn to it. But the other side of that ledger - it would be reasonable to assume, wouldn't it? - is that he has given away secrets that have been useful to people who want to do harm to other perfectly innocent people. I just wonder if you accept that those are the two sides of it, and that's what we've all got to live with?'

**GG:** 'No, I think you just made that up, what you just said [JW laughs in shock]. Edward Snowden has not given any documents or any information to anybody, except for journalists with major media organisations. So if the *New York Times* or the *Guardian* or the *Washington Post* has published a story

**The natural stance of BBC News was to take the Sunday Times propaganda piece at face value, with a smattering of cautious scepticism added later to the mix to simulate 'balanced' journalism**

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## PROPAGANDA AS NEWS

**Webb's framing of Putin as the 'Bad Guy', and the United States and Britain as the 'Good Guys', underpins the delusional 'moral equivalence' argument that corporate journalists habitually deploy**

that you think shouldn't have been published, your quarrel is with them. Edward Snowden didn't disclose any documents. He went to journalists and gave the documents to journalists and said, "I want you to work in order to find the ones in the public interest that the public ought to know."

In the interview, Webb also asked Greenwald:

'I mean you are not suggesting that President Putin's government is on a par in its support of democracy and human rights with the United States or Britain, or are you?'

Greenwald responded:

'I'm pretty sure that it wasn't Russia that invaded and destroyed a country of 26 million people called Iraq, or set up a worldwide torture regime around the world to torture people in secret, or put people in indefinite detention camps in the middle of the ocean called Guantanamo. So I think it would be incredibly naïve for some Westerner to say: "My side is really good. It's Vladimir Putin's side that's the bad side.'"

This was classic BBC propaganda fare. Webb's framing of Putin as the 'Bad Guy', and the United States and Britain as the 'Good Guys', underpins the delusional 'moral equivalence' argument that corporate journalists habitually deploy.

We recall the BBC's Michael Buerk commenting in disbelief to Denis Halliday, the former senior UN diplomat who had resigned in protest at the genocidal sanctions imposed on Iraq by the West:

'You can't... you can't possibly draw a moral equivalence between Saddam Hussein and George Bush Senior, can you?' (BBC radio interview, 2001)

And the BBC's incredulous Jeremy Paxman to Noam Chomsky in a 2004 interview on Newsnight:

'You seem to be suggesting or implying, perhaps I'm being unfair to you, but you seem to be implying there is some moral equivalence between democratically elected heads of state like George Bush or Prime Ministers like Tony Blair and regimes in plac-

es like Iraq.'

Chomsky demolished this specious 'argument':

'The term moral equivalence is an interesting one. It was invented, I think, by Jeane Kirkpatrick [former US ambassador to the UN] as a method of trying to prevent criticism of foreign policy and state decisions. It is a meaningless notion. There is no moral equivalence whatsoever.'

Investigative journalist Peter Osborne, who resigned from the *Telegraph* in February in protest at the paper's perpetration of a 'fraud on its readers' in its failure to report scandals involving HSBC, recently commented:

'The men and women who advocated the Iraq invasion remain dominant in British public life. Those who opposed it remain marginal and despised.'

This ought to be deeply shocking and very disturbing. Unsurprisingly, the journalistic practices that made the Iraq crime possible also remain dominant with honest practices relegated to the margins and despised.

And so we find that major news organisations continue to act as mindless conduits for anonymous state propaganda, somehow unable to learn the blindingly obvious lessons of past deceptions.

Given the scale of the Iraq and Libyan catastrophes, this is powerful testimony indeed to the sheer depth of the structural corruption of the corporate media system. Not even Iraq, not even the deaths of one million Iraqis, not even the devastation of a country of 26 million people, are enough to deter journalists who are driven by ruthless political and economic forces, apparently immune to public pressure - so far.

In truth, those destructive forces have grown stronger in the years since the 2003 invasion. Media performance is indicative of a sharp and dangerous deterioration in Western democracy. **CT**

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*David Cromwell and David Edwards are co-editors of medialens, the British media watchdog – <http://medialens.org>*

# Losing the culture war

**Dell Franklin** discusses high finance with a group of students

**E**arly on a Friday evening, I picked up four male Cal Poly students, all glowing with youthful anticipation of a big keg party in the “Jungle,” a neighborhood just off campus where college students have run off most of the old home owners who could not endure the nonstop nocturnal cacophony of these kids getting in their final rebellion before joining the grown-up world and succumbing to its tedious and complicated follies.

Most of the homes, nestled against apartment complexes constructed strictly for students, were rentals. I once talked to a kid whose father bought a house in this neighborhood so he and his two younger brothers could live in it while attending Cal Poly for eight years, until they all graduated, meeting mortgage payments by taking on roommates and then Dad selling it for a tidy profit when the kids were gone.

The kids in my cab lived on the other side of town in a more tranquil neighborhood with few students. Three white kids sat in the back and a black kid with rimless glasses sat shotgun. They told me they were seniors and had just finished their finals and were close to graduation and were going to “party hardy” tonight.

I asked the kid beside me what his major was.

“Econ. Marketing. Graduating in June and then I’m going out and make my millions.”

A kid in the back said, “A million’s not enough these days. You need way more.”

“A million’s just my start, homey,” Shotgun told him, nodding at me, smiling at the thought.

“How are you going to make your millions?” I asked

“I plan to start out in a solid corporation, and learn, get my feet wet, before I start my own house.”

“Sounds pretty ambitious.”

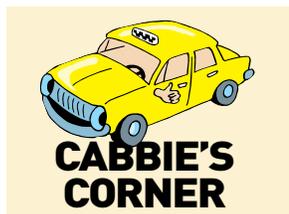
“You got it.” He flashed me a conspiratorial grin. He put out his open palm, and I slapped it.

I waited a while, and asked him what he thought of George W. Bush’s plan of starting your own retirement plan and scrap-

ping social security. He told me Bush was “spot on.” He didn’t want anybody taking his hard-earned money. “I’ve worked my butt off getting through school. I got bills to pay. I intend to outwork everybody to make my millions, and I don’t see why I should put my money into a fund other people are living off that’ll run out by the time I’m retirement age.”

“But what if things don’t work out?” I asked. “And you don’t have any social secu-

**Three white kids sat in the back and a black kid with rimless glasses sat shotgun. They told me they were seniors and had just finished their finals**



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## ON THE ROAD

**I wanted to test their sociability. I asked them what they thought of President Bush, always a controversial subject**

urity to fall back on?”

One of the kids in the back seat leaned forward, joined our discussion. “What’s the difference, if there’s no money left?” he asked.

“Good point,” I admitted.

“Right on, old surfer dude,” piped another kid in back.

The kid in the back went on: “The boomers are living forever and hogging all the cash. We’re going to get taxed to death. Sooner or later it’s going to be every man for himself, which is fine with me.”

I caught his eye in the rearview mirror – a nice-looking, healthy kid from one of the finer white stables of California. “You mean, like the Taliban?” I said. “You don’t want your house to burn down, you pay off the Taliban. Somebody’s gonna rob you at gunpoint, call the Taliban. Need a doctor, call the Taliban. Fuck the safety net, right? Folks who aren’t educated, have no trade, aren’t technologically advanced enough to make their fortune, they’re shit out of luck – bury ‘em dead or alive. That includes me, too, if I’m still around. I’ve been treading water at low-end jobs all my life.”

“Shit out of luck, old surfer dude!” Came the chorus in back, and I laughed with them.

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A couple weeks earlier, at the career counseling office on the Cal Poly campus, I picked up a man in business suit and loosened tie and drove him to the airport. We had an interesting discussion. He recruited for major corporations, usually hitting Cal Berkeley, Arizona State and Cal Poly, seeking out future engineers and computer science whizzes. He informed me he didn’t really like recruiting students out of any of these schools.

“Most of them, no matter how academically advanced, are socially inept when it comes to co-existing with fellow employees. I’d much rather recruit somebody who’s had a couple years under their belt in a smaller firm, so they get a chance to learn how to

work with other people. It’s a problem.”

I asked him why these kids were socially inept.

“A lot of these kids are 22 and they’ve never really had jobs. They know nothing about the world or life. They’re computer geeks. I don’t care how brilliant they are, there’s more to a job than the technical aspect. There’s an arrogance and sense of entitlement to these kids that really turns employers off. They need to be humbled in the work place under somebody who kicks their asses a little. These kids demand 75 grand to start out at, right out of school. Cal Berkeley’s worse. They want 90 grand. I’m here to find somebody who I think can do the work and get along with fellow employees without being too much of a pain-in-the-ass.”

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So I wondered about these kids in my cab. I wanted to test their sociability. I asked them what they thought of President Bush, always a controversial subject.

“He’s rock solid,” said the kid in back. “The man stands for something. He’s not a straw in the wind like Kerry, a real piece of shit.”

“Well,” I said. “Don’t forget Kerry went to war and got wounded, while Bush’s daddy hid him in the National Guard, in 1968, during the worst of it, when nobody could get in the guard.”

“So what,” he retorted. “At least he didn’t come back and turn on his own troops to make his mark as a political figure. Kerry’s a hypocrite.”

“Bush supported the Vietnam War, and so did Chaney. And both decided to let somebody else do the fighting, in case you wanna know, kid.”

“I don’t know what that has to do with what’s going on now,” said the kid, breathing down my neck, his voice growing combative.

“Okay,” I said, driving very slowly, taking the campus route. “We’re in a war, supposedly against terrorism in Iraq, now that we

haven't found any WMD. In past wars, the country rallied out of a sense of duty and patriotism, and most everybody went, putting their asses on the line. And there was a draft. Would YOU kids go to Iraq if there was a draft, knowing it was started by a cabal of lying chickenhawks?"

"That's why we have a volunteer army," the kid beside me said. "If you want to go, you can go. If you don't you don't have to."

I said, "While you and your buddies make your millions, huh?"

The kid in the back said, "We'd rather stay home and support the troops and the country by fighting the culture war."

"What the hell's the culture war?"

"Libs like you," he said, even more combative. "We're sick of the old hippie/liberal agenda."

The kid beside him perked up. "The culture war is against high taxes and unions and big government giving away the country. The culture war is fighting the ideals of the New Deal and the so-called Great Society, which is a proven failure. This is a new era. All these welfare programs for people who don't work and don't want to work, and illegal immigrants who come over here and hop on the gravy train and work under the table and drive around without insurance and get free medical care...the fact that minorities can get into college with mediocre grades and somebody who is white makes good grades and CAN'T get into college..."

"Exactly," agreed shotgun, issuing me a knowing look.

"What about Bush? He got into Yale as a mediocre student because of his Daddy and graduated a mediocre student and failed miserably in business until his Daddy bought him a baseball team, and now he's President."

"What are you, a fucking anarchist?" asked the kid breathing down my neck.

"You got it, kid, especially when I listen to somebody like you."

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The most interesting part of the conversa-

tion with the recruiter was his hiatus in Italy after his junior year in college. He decided to go to Florence and secure a work visa to support himself for two years while he went to school there to study art. He traveled extensively when he could, and discovered a different perspective on life, and America, from a distance. It was an experience he would not have traded for "all the money in the world."

"Too many kids go through high school right into college and straight into a job. Everything is mapped out, and they don't see the other side. In Europe, I met people, saw things; did things I never would have dreamed of doing. I read European writers, and they gave me an insight into OUR country, and how everybody else sees us. It was enlightening. When I came home to the states I finished up my school and went to work, but that experience abroad gave me a background, an education no amount of money could buy."

I told him how after my army discharge I spent a year bumming round the country by thumb and survived on a bunch of odd jobs and wouldn't trade that experience for anything. The recruiter and I sat in the cab for ten minutes discussing things after I arrived at the airport.

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As we approached the "Jungle," the kids in back and I were still going at it pretty good, and their hair was up, especially when I staked my convictions on explaining I'd joined the army because I felt it was part of "your duty as a privilege to live in this country, a sacrifice of three years of your unselfish life." It had something to do with JFK asking "what you could do for the country." The kid breathing down my neck did not like my reiterating that poor kids were repeatedly returning to Iraq to fight and die or be maimed for life to supposedly keep him and his friends safe to drink and party and chase pussy and prepare to make their millions - just like Viet Nam.

"Hey, somebody's got to stay home and

**The kid breathing down my neck did not like my reiterating that poor kids were repeatedly returning to Iraq to fight and die or be maimed for life to supposedly keep him and his friends safe to drink and party and chase pussy**

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## ON THE ROAD

**He dismissively flipped a small wad of unruly bills over my shoulder into my lap and quickly got out**

work their buns off to keep the money flowing to fight these terrorists,” he snarled, as I pulled up to the party house. There was a keg in the yard, male and female students milling around, sprawled on a wide veranda, laughter and loud voices and music pouring out of the house.

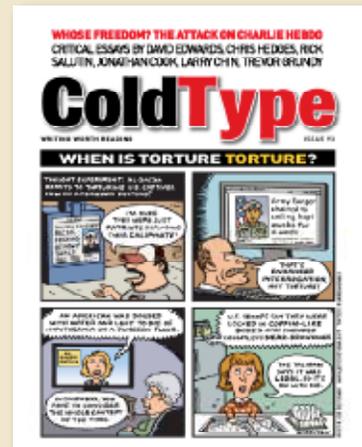
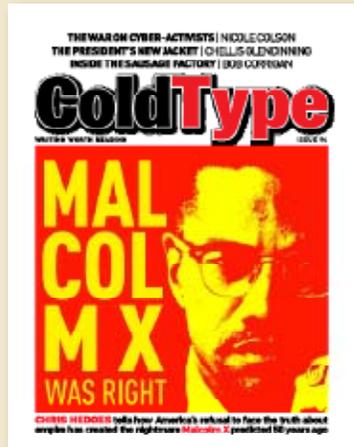
“Our taxes pay for these wars, dude. That’s what my parents have done, working THEIR asses off. You may not approve of where they live, or their politics, but they pay the bills, they keep the country going, not you, scrounging around in a cab like fucking Rasputin.”

He dismissively flipped a small wad of unruly bills over my shoulder into my lap and quickly got out. There was the merci-

ful dollar tip for Rasputin. While the other two kids in back piled out, Shotgun showed me his knuckles and a sympathetic smile, and we rapped. Then he handed me two dollars.

“Those my buds,” he said. “They good guys, bro’, but ain’t none of ‘em gonna change how they feels about the state of affairs, papa.” He said, reverting to some remnant of ghetto jargon. “They ain’t none of ‘em had a bad day in their lives, papa.” **CT**

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*Dell Franklin is a long-time journalist and former publisher of the Rogue Voice newspaper in California. He writes a weekly baseball blog, The Ball Player's Son, at <http://kelsoswing.blogspot.com>*



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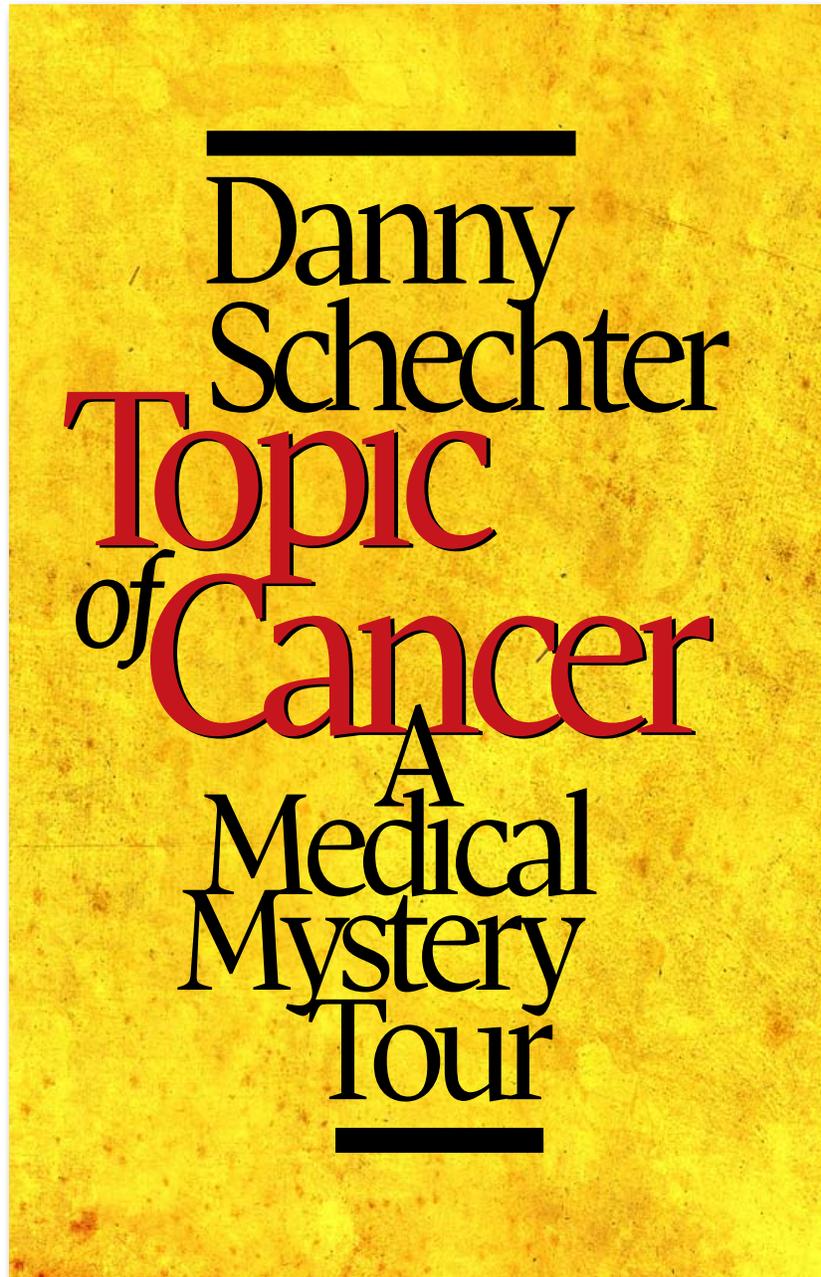
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# The death of free speech

If we don't take back our rights, we'll soon be agreeing with the authorities that 2+2 equals 5, warns **John W. Whitehead**

**For those 'haters' who dare to voice a different opinion, retribution is swift: they will be shamed, shouted down, silenced, censored, fired, cast out . . .**

*"If you don't want a man unhappy politically, don't give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none. Let him forget there is such a thing as war. If the government is inefficient, top-heavy, and tax-mad, better it be all those than that people worry over it.... Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs or the names of state capitals or how much corn Iowa grew last year. Cram them full of noncombustible data, chock them so damned full of 'facts' they feel stuffed, but absolutely 'brilliant' with information. Then they'll feel they're thinking, they'll get a sense of motion without moving. And they'll be happy, because facts of that sort don't change." – Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451*

**H**ow do you change the way people think? You start by changing the words they use.

In totalitarian regimes – a.k.a. police states – where conformity and compliance are enforced at the end of a loaded gun, the government dictates what words can and cannot be used. In countries where the police state hides behind a benevolent mask and disguises itself as tolerance, the citizens censor themselves, policing their words and thoughts to conform to the dictates of the mass mind.

Even when the motives behind this rig-

idly calibrated reorientation of societal language appear well-intentioned – discouraging racism, condemning violence, denouncing discrimination and hatred – inevitably, the end result is the same: intolerance, indoctrination and infantilism.

It's political correctness disguised as tolerance, civility and love, but what it really amounts to is the chilling of free speech and the demonizing of viewpoints that run counter to the cultural elite.

## Unwilling labels

As a society, we've become fearfully polite, careful to avoid offense, and largely unwilling to be labeled intolerant, hateful, closed-minded or any of the other toxic labels that carry a badge of shame today. The result is a nation where no one says what they really think anymore, at least if it runs counter to the prevailing views. Intolerance is the new scarlet letter of our day, a badge to be worn in shame and humiliation, deserving of society's fear, loathing and utter banishment from society.

For those "haters" who dare to voice a different opinion, retribution is swift: they will be shamed, shouted down, silenced, censored, fired, cast out and generally relegated to the dust heap of ignorant, mean-spirited bullies who are guilty of various "word crimes."

We have entered a new age where, as

commentator Mark Steyn notes, “we have to tiptoe around on ever thinner eggshells” and “the forces of ‘tolerance’ are intolerant of anything less than full-blown celebratory approval.”

In such a climate of intolerance, there can be no freedom of speech, expression or thought.

Yet what the forces of political correctness fail to realize is that they owe a debt to the so-called “haters” who have kept the First Amendment robust. From swastika-wearing neo-Nazis marching through Skokie, Illinois, and under aged cross burners to “God hates fags” protesters assembled near military funerals, those who have inadvertently done the most to preserve the right to freedom of speech for all have espoused views that were downright unpopular, if not hateful.

Until recently, the US Supreme Court has reiterated that the First Amendment prevents the government from proscribing speech, or even expressive conduct, because it disapproves of the ideas expressed. However, that long-vaunted, Court-enforced tolerance for “intolerant” speech has now given way to a paradigm in which the government can discriminate freely against First Amendment activity that takes place within a government forum. Justifying such discrimination as “government speech,” the Court ruled that the Texas Dept. of Motor Vehicles could refuse to issue specialty license plate designs featuring a Confederate battle flag. Why? Because it was deemed offensive.

The court’s ruling came on the heels of last month’s shooting in which a 21-year-old white gunman killed nine African-Americans during a Wednesday night Bible study at a church in Charleston, N.C. The two events, coupled with the fact that gunman Dylann Roof was reportedly pictured on several social media sites with a Confederate flag, have resulted in an emotionally charged stampede to sanitize the nation’s public places of anything that smacks of

racism, starting with the Confederate flag and ballooning into a list that includes the removal of various Civil War monuments.

These tactics are nothing new. This nation, birthed from puritanical roots, has always struggled to balance its love of liberty with its moralistic need to censor books, music, art, language, symbols etc. As author Ray Bradbury notes, “There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches.”

### **Hate, distrust, paranoia**

Indeed, thanks to the rise of political correctness, the population of book burners, censors, and judges has greatly expanded over the years so that they run the gamut from left-leaning to right-leaning and everything in between. By eliminating words, phrases and symbols from public discourse, the powers-that-be are sowing hate, distrust and paranoia. In this way, by bottling up dissent, they are creating a pressure cooker of stifled misery that will eventually blow.

For instance, the word “Christmas” is now taboo in public schools, as is the word “gun.” Even childish drawings of soldiers result in detention or suspension under rigid zero tolerance policies. On college campuses, trigger warnings are being used to alert students to any material they might read, see or hear that might upset them, while free speech zones restrict anyone wishing to communicate a particular viewpoint to a specially designated area on campus. Things have got so bad that comedians such as Chris Rock and Jerry Seinfeld refuse to perform stand-up routines to college crowds anymore.

Clearly, the country is undergoing a nervous breakdown, and the news media is helping to push us to the brink of insanity by bombarding us with wall-to-wall news coverage and news cycles that change every few days.

In this way, it’s difficult to think or debate, let alone stay focused on one thing

**By eliminating words, phrases and symbols from public discourse, the powers-that-be are sowing hate, distrust and paranoia**

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## FINDING FREEDOM

**The outrage over the Charleston shooting and racism are fading from the news headlines, yet the determination to censor the Confederate symbol remains**

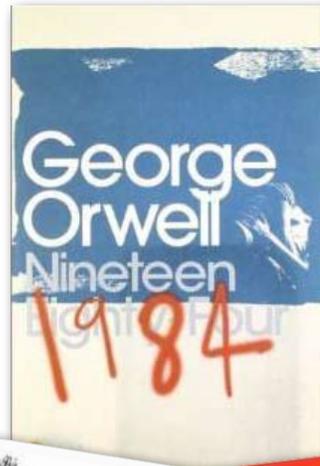
– namely, holding the government accountable to abiding by the rule of law – and the powers-that-be understand this.

As I document in my book “Battlefield America: The War on the American People”, regularly scheduled trivia and/or distractions keep the citizenry tuned into the various breaking news headlines and entertainment spectacles and tuned out to the government’s steady encroachments on our freedoms. These sleight-of-hand distractions and diversions are how you control a population, either inadvertently or intentionally, advancing a political agenda without much opposition from the citizenry.

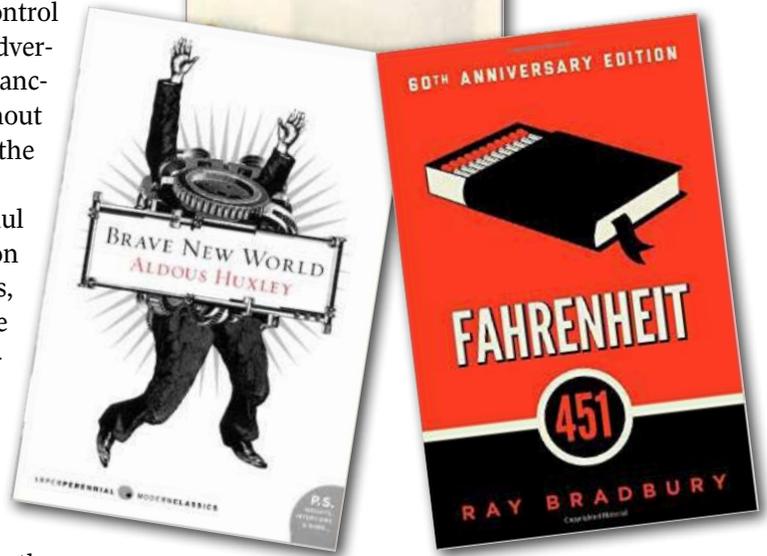
Professor Jacques Ellul studied this phenomenon of overwhelming news, short memories and the use of propaganda to advance hidden agendas. “One thought drives away another; old facts are chased by new ones,” wrote Ellul.

“Under these conditions there can be no thought. And, in fact, modern man does not think about current problems; he feels them. He reacts, but he does not understand them any more than he takes responsibility for them. He is even less capable of spotting any inconsistency between successive facts; man’s capacity to forget is unlimited. This is one of the most important and useful points for the propagandists, who can always be sure that a particular propaganda theme, statement, or event will be forgotten within a few weeks.”

Already, the outrage over the Charleston shooting and racism are fading from the news headlines, yet the determination to censor the Confederate symbol remains. Before long, we will censor it from our thoughts, sanitize it from our history books, and eradicate it from our monuments



**Welcome to Dystopia: George Orwell's "1984," Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World," and Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451"**



without even recalling why. The question, of course, is what’s next on the list to be banned?

### **Freedom for unpopular thoughts**

It was for the sake of preserving individuality and independence that James Madison, the author of the Bill of Rights, fought for a First Amendment that protected the “minority” against the majority, ensuring that even in the face of overwhelming pressure, a minority of one – even one who espouses distasteful viewpoints – would still have the right to speak freely, pray freely, assemble freely, challenge the government freely, and broadcast his views in the press freely.

This freedom for those in the unpopular minority constitutes the ultimate tolerance in a free society. Conversely, when we fail

to abide by Madison's dictates about greater tolerance for all viewpoints, no matter how distasteful, the end result is always the same: an indoctrinated, infantilized citizenry that marches in lockstep with the governmental regime.

Some of this past century's greatest dystopian literature shows what happens when the populace is transformed into mindless automatons. In Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451," reading is banned and books are burned in order to suppress dissenting ideas, while televised entertainment is used to anesthetize the populace and render them easily pacified, distracted and controlled.

In Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World," serious literature, scientific thinking and experimentation are banned as subversive, while critical thinking is discouraged through the use of conditioning, social taboos and inferior education. Likewise, expressions of individuality, independence and morality are viewed as vulgar and abnormal.

And in George Orwell's "1984," Big Brother does away with all undesirable and unnecessary words and meanings, even going so far as to routinely rewrite history and punish "thoughtcrimes." In this dystopian vision of the future, the Thought Police serve as the eyes and ears of Big Brother, while the Ministry of Peace deals with war and defense, the Ministry of Plenty deals with economic affairs (rationing and starvation), the Ministry of Love deals with law and order (torture and brainwashing), and the Ministry of Truth deals with news, entertainment, education and art (propaganda). The mottos of Oceania: WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, and IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH.

All three – Bradbury, Huxley and Orwell – had an uncanny knack for realizing the future, yet it is Orwell who best understood the power of language to manipulate the masses. Orwell's Big Brother relied on Newspeak to eliminate undesirable words, strip such words as remained of unortho-

dox meanings and make independent, non-government-approved thought altogether unnecessary. To give a single example, as psychologist Erich Fromm illustrates in his afterword to "1984":

"The word free still existed in Newspeak, but it could only be used in such statements as "This dog is free from lice" or "This field is free from weeds." It could not be used in its old sense of "politically free" or "intellectually free," since political and intellectual freedom no longer existed as concepts...."

### Challenging authority

Where we stand now is at the juncture of Oldspeak (where words have meanings, and ideas can be dangerous) and Newspeak (where only that which is "safe" and "accepted" by the majority is permitted). The power elite has made their intentions clear: they will pursue and prosecute any and all words, thoughts and expressions that challenge their authority.

This is the final link in the police state chain.

Having been reduced to a cowering citizenry – mute in the face of elected officials who refuse to represent us, helpless in the face of police brutality, powerless in the face of militarized tactics and technology that treat us like enemy combatants on a battlefield, and naked in the face of government surveillance that sees and hears all – we have nowhere left to go. Our backs are to the walls. From this point on, we have only two options: go down fighting, or capitulate and betray our loved ones, our friends and our selves by insisting that, as a brainwashed Winston Smith does at the end of Orwell's 1984, yes, 2+2 does equal 5. **CT**

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*John W. Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and author. He is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute and editor of GadflyOnline.com. His latest book "Battlefield America: The War on the American People" is available at <http://amazon.com>*

**Bradbury, Huxley and Orwell had an uncanny knack for realizing the future, yet it is Orwell who best understood the power of language to manipulate the masses**

# Yes, Karl Marx was right

**Chris Hedges** recently joined professors Richard Wolff and Gail Dines in New York City to discuss why Karl Marx is essential at a time when global capitalism is collapsing. He made these remarks to open the discussion.

**Marx saw that there would come a day when capitalism would exhaust its potential and collapse. He did not know when that day would come**

**K**arl Marx exposed the peculiar dynamics of capitalism, or what he called “the bourgeois mode of production.” He foresaw that capitalism had built within it the seeds of its own destruction. He knew that reigning ideologies – think neoliberalism – were created to serve the interests of the elites and in particular the economic elites, since “the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production” and “the ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships ... the relationships which make one class the ruling one.”

He saw that there would come a day when capitalism would exhaust its potential and collapse. He did not know when that day would come. Marx, as Meghnad Desai wrote, was “an astronomer of history, not an astrologer.” Marx was keenly aware of capitalism’s ability to innovate and adapt. But he also knew that capitalist expansion was not eternally sustainable. And as we witness the denouement of capitalism and the disintegration of globalism, Karl Marx is vindicated as capitalism’s most prescient and important critic.

In a preface to “The Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy” Marx wrote:

“No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room

in it have been developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself.

“Therefore, mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since looking at the matter more closely, we always find that the task itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist, or are at least in the process of formation.”

Socialism, in other words, would not be possible until capitalism had exhausted its potential for further development. That the end is coming is hard now to dispute, although one would be foolish to predict when. We are called to study Marx to be ready.

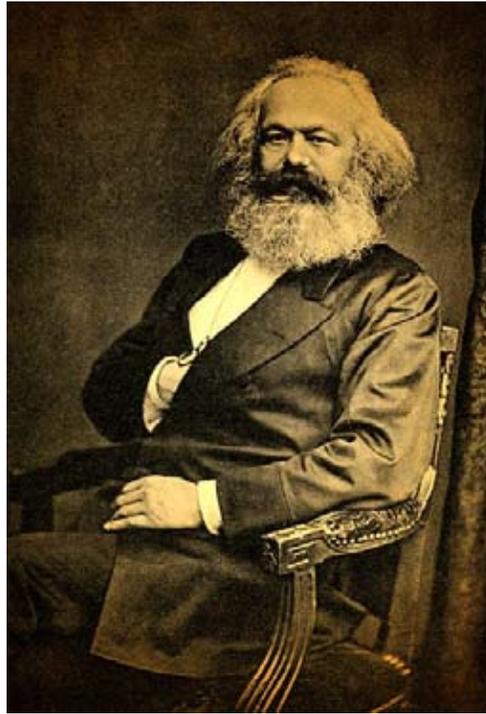
The final stages of capitalism, Marx wrote, would be marked by developments that are intimately familiar to most of us. Unable to expand and generate profits at past levels, the capitalist system would begin to consume the structures that sustained it. It would prey upon, in the name of austerity, the working class and the poor, driving them ever deeper into debt and poverty and diminishing the capacity of the state to serve the needs of ordinary citizens. It would, as it has, increasingly relocate jobs, including both manufacturing and professional positions, to countries with cheap pools of laborers. Industries would mechanize their workplaces.

This would trigger an economic assault on not only the working class but the middle class – the bulwark of a capitalist system – that would be disguised by the imposition of massive personal debt as incomes declined or remained stagnant. Politics would in the late stages of capitalism become subordinate to economics, leading to political parties hollowed out of any real political content and abjectly subservient to the dictates and money of global capitalism.

But as Marx warned, there is a limit to an economy built on scaffolding of debt expansion. There comes a moment, Marx knew, when there would be no new markets available and no new pools of people who could take on more debt. This is what happened with the subprime mortgage crisis. Once the banks cannot conjure up new subprime borrowers, the scheme falls apart and the system crashes.

Capitalist oligarchs, meanwhile, hoard huge sums of wealth – \$18 trillion stashed in overseas tax havens – exacted as tribute from those they dominate, in debt and impoverish. Capitalism would, in the end, Marx said, turn on the so-called free market, along with the values and traditions it claims to defend. It would in its final stages pillage the systems and structures that made capitalism possible. It would resort, as it caused widespread suffering, to harsher forms of repression. It would attempt in a frantic last stand to maintain its profits by looting and pillaging state institutions, contradicting its stated nature.

Marx warned that in the later stages of capitalism huge corporations would exercise a monopoly on global markets. “The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe,” he wrote. “It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.” These corporations, whether in the banking sector, the agricultural and food industries, the arms industries or the communications industries, would use their power, usually by seizing the mechanisms of state, to prevent anyone from



**Karl Marx: “the ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships ... the relationships which make one class the ruling one.”**

challenging their monopoly. They would fix prices to maximize profit. They would, as they [have been doing], push through trade deals such as the TPP and CAFTA to further weaken the nation-state’s ability to impede exploitation by imposing environmental regulations or monitoring working conditions. And in the end these corporate monopolies would obliterate free market competition.

A May 22 editorial in the *New York Times* gives us a window into what Marx said would characterize the late stages of capitalism:

“As of this week, Citicorp, JPMorgan Chase, Barclays and Royal Bank of Scotland are felons, having pleaded guilty on Wednesday to criminal charges of conspiring to rig the value of the world’s currencies. According to the Justice Department, the lengthy and lucrative conspiracy enabled the banks to pad their profits without regard to fairness, the law or the public good.”

The *Times* goes on:

**But as Marx warned, there is a limit to an economy built on scaffolding of debt expansion. There comes a moment, Marx knew, when there would be no new markets available and no new pools of people who could take on more debt**

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## END TIMES?

**Government expenditure accounts for 41 percent of GDP. Corporate capitalists intend to seize this money, hence the privatization of whole parts of the military, the push to privatize Social Security, and so on**

“The banks will pay fines totaling about \$9 billion, assessed by the Justice Department as well as state, federal and foreign regulators. That seems like a sweet deal for a scam that lasted for at least five years, from the end of 2007 to the beginning of 2013, during which the banks’ revenue from foreign exchange was some \$85 billion.”

The final stages of what we call capitalism, as Marx grasped, is not capitalism at all. Corporations gobble down government expenditures, in essence taxpayer money, like pigs at a trough. The arms industry with its official \$612 billion defense authorization bill – which ignores numerous other military expenditures tucked away in other budgets, raising our real expenditure on national security expenses to over \$1 trillion a year – has got the government this year to commit to spending \$348 billion over the next decade to modernize our nuclear weapons and build 12 new Ohio-class nuclear submarines, estimated at \$8 billion each. Exactly how these two massive arms programs are supposed to address what we are told is the greatest threat of our time – the war on terror – is a mystery. After all, as far as I know, ISIS does not own a rowboat. We spend some \$100 billion a year on intelligence – read surveillance – and 70 percent of that money goes to private contractors such as Booz Allen Hamilton, [which] gets 99 percent of its revenues from the US government. And on top of this we are the largest exporters of arms in the world.

The fossil fuel industry swallows up \$5.3 trillion a year worldwide in hidden costs to keep burning fossil fuels, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This money, the IMF noted, is in addition to the \$492 billion in direct subsidies offered by governments around the world through write-offs and write-downs and land-use loopholes. In a sane world these subsidies would be invested to free us from the deadly effects of carbon emissions caused by fossil fuels, but we do not live in a sane world.

Bloomberg News in the 2013 article “Why Should Taxpayers Give Big Banks \$83 Billion a Year?” reported that economists had determined that government subsidies lower the big banks’ borrowing costs by about 0.8 percent.

“Multiplied by the total liabilities of the 10 largest US banks by assets,” the report said, “it amounts to a taxpayer subsidy of \$83 billion a year.”

“The top five banks – JPMorgan, Bank of America Corp., Citigroup Inc., Wells Fargo & Co. and Goldman Sachs Group Inc. – account,” the report went on, “for \$64 billion of the total subsidy, an amount roughly equal to their typical annual profits. In other words, the banks occupying the commanding heights of the US financial industry – with almost \$9 trillion in assets, more than half the size of the US economy – would just about break even in the absence of corporate welfare. In large part, the profits they report are essentially transfers from taxpayers to their shareholders.”

Government expenditure accounts for 41 percent of GDP. Corporate capitalists intend to seize this money, hence the privatization of whole parts of the military, the push to privatize Social Security, the contracting of corporations to collect 70 percent of intelligence for our 16 intelligence agencies, as well as the privatization of prisons, schools and our disastrous for-profit health care service. None of these seizures of basic services make them more efficient or reduce costs. That is not the point. It is about feeding off the carcass of the state. And it ensures the disintegration of the structures that sustain capitalism itself. All this Marx got.

Marx illuminated these contradictions within capitalism. He understood that the idea of capitalism – free trade, free markets, individualism, innovation, self-development – works only in the utopian mind of a true believer such as Alan Greenspan, never in reality. The hoarding of wealth by a tiny capitalist elite, Marx foresaw, along with the exploitation of the workers, meant that the

masses could no longer buy the products that propelled capitalism forward. Wealth becomes concentrated in the hands of a tiny elite – the world’s richest 1 percent will own more than half of the world’s wealth by next year.

The assault on the working class has been going on now for several decades. Salaries have remained stagnant or declined since the 1970s. Manufacturing has been shipped overseas, where workers in countries such as China or Bangladesh are paid as little as 22 cents an hour. The working poor, forced to compete with the labor of those who are little better than serfs in the global marketplace, proliferate across the American landscape, struggling to live at a subsistence level. Industries such as construction, which once provided well-paying unionized jobs, are the domain of non-unionized, often undocumented workers. Corporations import foreign engineers and software specialists who do professional work at one-third of the normal salary on H-1B, L-1 and other work visas. All these workers are bereft of the rights of citizens.

The capitalists respond to the collapse of their domestic economies, which they engineered, by becoming global loan sharks and speculators. They lend money at exorbitant interest rates to the working class and the poor, even if they know the money could never be repaid, and then sell these bundled debts, credit default swaps, bonds and stocks to pension funds, cities, investment firms and institutions. This late form of capitalism is built on what Marx called “fictitious capital.” And it leads, as Marx knew, to the vaporization of money.

Once subprime borrowers began to default, as these big banks and investment firms knew was inevitable, the global crash of 2008 took place. The government bailed out the banks, largely by printing money, but left the poor and the working class – not to mention students recently out of college – with crippling personal debt. Austerity became policy. The victims of financial fraud would be made

to pay for that fraud. And what saved us from a full-blown depression was, in a tactic Marx would have found ironic, massive state intervention in the economy, including the nationalization of huge corporations such as AIG and General Motors.

What we saw in 2008 was the enactment of a welfare state for the rich, a kind of state socialism for the financial elites that Marx predicted. But with this comes an increased and volatile cycle of boom and bust, bringing the system closer to disintegration and collapse. We have undergone two major stock market crashes and the implosion of real estate prices in just the first decade of the 21st century.

The corporations that own the media have worked overtime to sell to a bewildered public the fiction that we are enjoying a recovery. Employment figures, through a variety of gimmicks, including erasing those who are unemployed for over a year from unemployment rolls, are a lie, as is nearly every other financial indicator pumped out for public consumption. We live, rather, in the twilight stages of global capitalism, which may be surprisingly more resilient than we expect, but which is ultimately terminal. Marx knew that once the market mechanism became the sole determining factor for the fate of the nation-state, as well as the natural world, both would be demolished. No one knows when this will happen. But that it will happen, perhaps within our lifetime, seems certain.

“The old is dying, the new struggles to be born, and in the interregnum there are many morbid symptoms,” Antonio Gramsci wrote.

What comes next is up to us.

**CT**

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*Chris Hedges, spent nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans. He has reported from more than 50 countries and has worked for The Christian Science Monitor, National Public Radio, The Dallas Morning News and The New York Times, for which he was a foreign correspondent for 15 years.*

# Iran's Den of spies

**Nate Robert** takes a peek inside the former US Embassy in Tehran, Iran



Entrance to the former US embassy in Tehran, Iran.

**Outside the front entrance of the embassy, a bronze Statue of Liberty stands proudly, stomach removed and replaced with a cage containing a white dove**

The former US Embassy in Tehran, Iran – aka the Den of Espionage – has an uncanny architectural resemblance to a Californian high school. At least, the high schools you see on TV and in the movies. Brandon and the gang from 90210 would be at home here in Iran, bouncing down the steps, a flurry of chambray, leg-warmers and giant cell phones, jumping into Kelly’s totally rad cherry-red drop-top BMW, and cruising down to the Peach Pit for an after-school root-beer float.

But, I reminded myself, I was in Iran, not Beverly Hills, and I marvelled at my inane ability to be so totally and utterly distracted by cheesy 80’s American TV, even at probably the most infamous site anywhere in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

I pulled myself together, firmly wiped my dirty Jordans on the “Down With USA”

doormat, and stepped into a private tour of the American “espionage den” in Tehran. Sometimes, when you’re in Iran, it’s handy to have a friend, who has a friend, whose Uncle knows a guy.

Before our gang of trippers entered the building, it all seemed so normal. We strolled a lovely pathway through the rarely-seen grounds of the former US embassy, avoided sprinklers that were watering lush lawns lined with roses, and waited at the entrance for our “guide”.

It didn’t take long for things to move into a world even more surreal than a Hollywood high school. Outside the front entrance of the embassy, a bronze Statue of Liberty stands proud, stomach removed and replaced with a cage containing a white dove. Our first translation came, and it was a pearl, “The statue represents the Ameri-



Left: If only there was a gift shop. "Down With USA" doormats for everyone this Christmas.



US beware! Sign near entrance of the former US Embassy in Tehran.



Just a standard office door from the 1970's. All office doors had inbuilt retina scanners back then

can government, who have taken freedom and liberty away, from even their own citizens". Wow. I fanned my face and walked up the steps, entering where even Ben Affleck had not dared to tread.

The thing is, being toured through a regular "embassy" would be fairly boring. "Over there is the desk where John sat, there's a filing cabinet, umm, in here's the coffee machine, and well, on Fridays we sometimes wear Hawaiian shirts. So, ah, ummm, go ahead and take a pic of the photocopier if you like."

However, it would soon become clear, this was not a regular embassy. This was an extensive, sophisticated, cutting-edge, state-of-the-art spy base, constructed in secret by a rogue state on foreign soil. Rogue state = USA. Foreign soil = Tehran, Iran. Chances of me ever entering the US again, rapidly declining.

Recent revelations from whistle-blowers such as Edward Snowden have shown how the US government is spying on billions of emails, phone calls, and as much internet traffic as their systems can handle. The Ira-

**This was an extensive, sophisticated, cutting-edge, state-of-the-art spy-base, constructed in secret by a rogue state on foreign soil**



I'm sure this is just the "Scrap-booking and Christmas card making table".

**The Iranians who stormed and took over the US Embassy in Tehran more than three decades ago, would not be surprised in the slightest, to see the level of monitoring that the US government is capable of today**

nians who stormed and took over the US Embassy in Tehran more than three decades ago would not be surprised in the slightest, to see the level of monitoring that the US government is capable of today. And, that was the implied narrative of our private tour – we were not inside an embassy, this was a “Den of Espionage,” a concerted effort by the US to spy on Iran, from the comfort of downtown Tehran.

The commentary and narrative was optional. We had a choice – wander around freely, or listen to a local custodian explain and opine about the building, its contents, and the events that took place here. After passing underneath the “we will make america (sic) face a severe defeat” sign, we spread out on the stairs up to the second level, and began to listen to the first of many commentaries, with translation into English by

an Iranian friend. The stairwell was adorned with graffiti-like aerosol art, and the first mural depicted the World Trade Centers being destroyed.

“So, look, he’s just sayin’, that’s all”. The translation from our guide was that many engineers and experts in the USA agreed that fire alone could not bring down the twin towers. No alternative explanation was offered, just that perhaps we don’t yet know the full story. I looked around. People were smiling. This was rapidly becoming a full-immersion experience, and we had only been in Iran 24 hours.

Personally, I wanted more info before we moved on. I wanted to ask his opinion on the events of the September 11, 2001, like how a few men armed only with box-cutters directed by an old man on dialysis sitting in a cave fortress halfway around the world had used a satellite phone and a chunky



Think of this as just a telephone that can listen to many more calls than a standard telephone.

laptop to direct a sophisticated penetration of the most heavily defended airspace in the world, where some guy hijacked a commercial aircraft and flew wildly off-course for over an hour, wasn't intercepted by a single jet-fighter, before the hijacker – who couldn't handle a single-engine Cessna – expertly flew a Boeing 757 in an 8,000-foot two-hundred-and-seventy-degree-corkscrew-turn, descended to come exactly level with the ground, hit the Pentagon, and yet no footage of the plane hitting the Pentagon has ever been seen? So many questions. But, I thought that, perhaps, the rest of my tour group might think I was a tinfoil-hat-wearing-bat-shit-crazy-conspiracy-theorist, so I didn't ask.

Along the tour, there were a few remarks about the equipment, the events that went down here, a couple of versions of “make

your own mind up, but hey, the US government really is pretty shifty,” and a mention of the number of African Americans being killed by police over in the USA, as well as the obsession Americans have with pornography and being controlled by the mass media. There may also have been some questionable statements about human organ harvesting and Israel, but one thing was for sure – this was an American spy base. A veritable slithering nest of spies.

There was an abundance of physical evidence: we entered the embassy “office” by walking through a bank-vault-door, while other doors had retina-scanning locks. The world's most advanced computer and communications systems (in the 1970's) were still inside, and we were shown a book containing painstakingly-restored shredded documents – outlining the CIA takeover of Iran that never came to pass. To this day,

**We entered the embassy “office” by walking through a bank-vault-door, while other doors had retina-scanning locks**



The most disappointing part of this sound-proof bug-proof room? Realising after we left the building that I could have gotten in, removed a dummy, sat on the chair and had my photo taken.

**Maybe the array of blades, paints, glue, photos, inks, pens, and official looking replica-documents were just there to make really elaborate Mother's Day cards?**

many of those documents remain classified by the United States government. Our guide smiled and laughed as he showed us the book. Copies were promised.

We entered an office with forgery equipment, without our guide, and examined the equipment. Maybe the array of blades, paints, glue, photos, inks, pens, and official looking replica documents were just there to make really elaborate Mother's Day cards? In any case, it was around this time that I was convinced – anyone who explored this building, walked around, and kept an open mind, would conclude they were standing in a sophisticated espionage centre.

Back outside, I asked another Iranian friend to translate one of the many murals adorning the front perimeter wall of the Den of Espionage. She looked back at me with an expression that clearly says, "This is

so embarrassing that foreigners have to see this shit." The message was some kind of generic, "We will crush the USA under our feet" propaganda. It's right near the mural of the Statue of Liberty with a skull-face. Yes, it's a little corny. Her look told me what I already knew – if I wrote an article about this place, it would annoy so many people – Iranians, and Americans.

The messages that come from here don't represent the thoughts or opinions of most Iranians. Many Americans are concerned with the extreme invasion of privacy that their government is responsible for. There are citizens of both nations who don't agree with the actions their leaders have taken over the last few decades. This isn't a place for the moderates or the I-don't-carers. The Den of Espionage attracts the



The paper shredder. Unfortunately for the US government, classified documents were reconstructed from shredded paper, and published in book form.

stories of the hardliners from both sides. It's impossible to write about this place, even with tongue firmly in cheek, and not piss somebody off.

My last intention is not to display the Den of Espionage as being representative of mainstream Iran, because it's not. And focusing on this one building to represent the relationship between the USA and Iran only serves to turn a complex series of events over more than fifty years into a histrionic pantomime of good vs evil. Ben Affleck, I'm looking at you.

The truth is, I absolutely loved it. It's a fascinating, historical and unique place that is rarely visited by foreigners. And hearing points of view that I don't normally hear, such as the explanation of what would happen should Iran ever be attacked by Israel, is informative, if chilling, "If Iran is attacked

by Israel, we will make every city in the entire land of Israel, the same level as the sand."

It was a rough translation. After saying the words out loud, my Iranian friend smiled, moved his right hand onto his chest, pointed at the embassy guide and added "Oh... I wish you could understand Persian, this man is making it sound so much more beautiful than my translation, like, you know, he's saying how all the cities in Israel would be flattened like sand..."

Yeah, I pretty much understood what he was saying the first time. **CT**

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**Nate Robert** specialises in travel photography. Since July 2012, he has been travelling the world full time, traveling through 54 countries. His web site is <http://yomadic.com>

**It's impossible to write about this place, even with tongue firmly in cheek, and not piss somebody off**

# Are strikes obsolete?

Will strikes and the unions that call them ever recover the aura of romance and moral legitimacy they once had? asks **Rick Salutin**

**In the many teachers' strikes, there's minimal interaction between actual strikers and parents or kids. Nothing gets ignited beyond the specific conflict. Then the government stirs and orders them back. Finis**

Is there any reason to think strikes and the unions which call them will ever reacquire the aura of romance and moral legitimacy they once had? They come and go without glamour. Ontario just experienced another batch of teachers' strikes which were unpopular and duly legislated back. But it could be otherwise.

I'm thinking of the students I teach at the University of Toronto each spring. During this year's strike by teaching assistants, near the end of term, I told them to hand in their final essays whether Jeff, our TA, was back to mark them or not. One asked with moral concern if that wasn't like telling them to cross a picket line. "Look where you are", I said with exasperation. "You're in class, you already crossed the picket line. But there is no picket line, even if there's a line somewhere on campus. You've been doing it for weeks. And to confuse it more, the TA's union told you to cross and asked me and others to keep teaching."

Somewhere the script for these things got lost. The students sense it exists and are trying to recover their lines, at least some are. With the ethical sensitivity of youth, they can feel there's a moral charge to such events, even if unions seem like they originated on another planet. Whence this instinct?

Media maven Jesse Hirsh, who visits my class annually, talks about a recent gulf

between "institutional authority," which derives from speaking for a newspaper, university, corporation etc.; versus "cognitive authority," which emerges in direct interaction between people, and which the young find on the Internet. U of T student Olivia Dziwak has pointed out how this is specially relevant to today's youth. They're unimpressed with, say, political parties, but feel affinities with more immediate realities – like strikes! Why? They offer a way to engage that sense of social connectedness, beyond signing online petitions.

Except that most strikes today don't. The union bureaucrats – oh, sorry, leaders – proclaim them and members listlessly walk out. In the many teachers' strikes, there's minimal interaction between actual strikers and parents or kids. Nothing gets ignited beyond the specific conflict. Speaking as a strike buff, it's disappointing. Then the government stirs and orders them back. Finis.

Or take the sad case of the Crown Cans strike in North York: 120 workers on strike for 20 months, in a noble cause: the rights of future workers there. But what has actually happened? The union demands an inquiry. The province agrees. It drags along. The workers collect strike pay. A parade of union higher-ups requests binding arbitration. The province considers it. It's all institutional. There's scant sign of cognitive activity, much less authority.



Striking Ontario teachers demonstrate outside the provincial legislature before being ordered back to work during a recent strike.

Photo: Joel Duff, OFL Communications

Besides, even if strike-like action appeals to the young more than formal politics – former CBC journalist Linden MacIntyre also visited my class this year and was shocked at how uninterested most students seemed in elections – it’s unlikely they’ll ever join unions. Their work will be too “precarious”; they may never go into a workplace where they meet “brothers and sisters.” If any future union model makes sense, it may be more like the radical IWW a century ago, the Wobblies, where any working person could join and get active.

So why expend time on this subject? Does anyone with political concerns still take unions and strikes seriously? Yes, in fact: the political right. In the US the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination is Scott Walker, whose career was almost entirely built on union-busting and strikebreaking. Here, the Harper Tories,

always alert to signals from their US role models, have been swift in interrupting any large strikes, or just glimmers. Not only of present strikes but strikes past. The *Toronto Star* reported: “A room devoted to the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike will be excluded from the renovated Canadian Museum of History.” That was a wobbly-type strike, very grassroots and broad. Memory is a potent adversary. Even when you obliterate today’s eruptions, the past can come alive in people’s minds and threaten all your apparent victories.

So is the right just bullying a virtual corpse that can’t fight back? Possibly. Or might they sense that, though the body is in the coffin, it isn’t dead yet? **CT**

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**Rick Salutin** is an author and activist based in Toronto. This article was originally published in the *Toronto Star*.

**Even if strike-like action appeals to the young more than formal politics it’s unlikely they’ll ever join unions. Their work will be too “precarious”**

# Work force

Surrender your freedom, avoid daylight, live to work, and you, too, could join a toxic, paranoid elite, says **George Monbiot**

**The faith that if we try hard enough, we could join the elite, even as living standards decline and social immobility becomes set almost in stone.**

Perhaps because the alternative is hideous to contemplate, we persuade ourselves that those who wield power know what they are doing. The belief in a guiding intelligence is hard to shake.

We know that our conditions of life are deteriorating. Most young people have little prospect of owning a home, or even of renting a decent one. Interesting jobs are sliced up, through digital Taylorism, into portions of meaningless drudgery. The natural world, whose wonders enhance our lives, and upon which our survival depends, is being rubbed out with horrible speed. Those to whom we look for guardianship, in government and among the economic elite, do not arrest this decline; they accelerate it.

The political system that delivers these outcomes is sustained by aspiration: the faith that if we try hard enough, we could join the elite, even as living standards decline and social immobility becomes set almost in stone. But to what are we aspiring? A life that is better than our own, or worse?

Last month, a note from an analyst at Barclays Global Power and Utilities in New York was leaked. It addressed students about to begin a summer internship, and offered a glimpse of the toxic culture into which they are inducted.

“I wanted to introduce you to the 10

Power Commandments ... For nine weeks you will live and die by these ... We expect you to be the last ones to leave every night, no matter what ... I recommend bringing a pillow to the office – it makes sleeping under your desk a lot more comfortable ... the internship really is a 9-week commitment at the desk ... an intern asked our staffer for a weekend off for a family reunion – he was told he could go. He was also asked to hand in his Blackberry and pack up his desk. ... Play time is over and it’s time to buckle up.”

Play time is over, but did it ever begin? If these students have the kind of parents featured in the *Financial Times* last month, perhaps not. The article marked a new form of employment: the nursery consultant. These people, who charge £290 an hour, must find a nursery that will put their clients’ toddlers on the right track to an elite university. They spoke of parents who have already decided that their six-month-old son will go to Cambridge then Deutsche Bank, or whose two-year-old daughter “had a tutor for two afternoons a week (to keep on top of maths and literacy) as well as weekly phonics and reading classes, drama, piano, beginner French and swimming. They were considering adding Mandarin and Spanish. “The little girl was so exhausted and on edge she was terrified of opening her mouth.”

In New York, playdate coaches, charging \$450 an hour, train small children in the social skills that might help secure their admission to the most prestigious private schools. They are taught to hide traits that could suggest they're on the autistic spectrum, which might reduce their chances of selection.

From infancy to employment, this is a life-denying, love-denying mindset, informed not by joy or contentment, but by an ambition that is both desperate and pointless, for it cannot compensate for what it displaces: childhood, family life, the joys of summer, meaningful and productive work, a sense of arrival, living in the moment. For the sake of this toxic culture, the economy is repurposed, the social contract is rewritten, the elite is released from tax, regulation and the other restraints imposed by democracy.

Where the elite goes, we are induced to follow. As if the assessment regimes were too lax, last year the education secretary announced a new test for four-year-olds. A primary school in Cambridge has just taken the obvious next step: it is now streaming four-year-olds into classes according to perceived ability. The Education and Adoption Bill, announced in the Queen's speech, will turn the screw even tighter. Will this help children, or hurt them?

Who knows? Governments used to survey the prevalence of children's mental health issues every five years, but this ended in 2004. Imagine publishing no figures since 2004 on, say, childhood cancer, and you begin to understand the extent to which successive governments have chosen to avoid this issue. If aspirational pressure is not enhancing our well-being but damaging it, those in power don't want to know.

But there are hints. Mental health beds for children in England increased by 50% between 1999 and 2014\*, but still failed to meet demand. Children suffering mental health crises are being dumped in adult wards or even left in police cells because of

the lack of provision (put yourself in their position and imagine the impact).

The number of children admitted to hospital because of self-harm has risen by 68% in 10 years, while young patients with eating disorders have almost doubled in three years. Without good data, we don't have a clear picture of what the causes might be, but it's worth noting that in the past year, according to the charity YoungMinds, the number of children receiving counselling for exam stress has tripled.

An international survey of children's well-being found that the United Kingdom, where such pressures are peculiarly intense, ranked 13th out of 15 countries for children's life satisfaction, 13th for agreement with the statement "I like going to school", 14th for children's satisfaction with their bodies and 15th for self-confidence. So all that pressure and cramming and exhortation – that worked, didn't it?

In the cause of self-advancement, we are urged to sacrifice our leisure, our pleasures, our time with partners and children, to climb over the bodies of our rivals and to set ourselves against the common interests of humankind. And then? We discover that we have achieved no greater satisfaction than that with which we began. In 1653, Izaak Walton described the fate of "poor-rich men", who "spend all their time first in getting, and next in anxious care to keep it; men that are condemned to be rich, and then always busie or discontented". Today this fate is confused with salvation.

Finish your homework, pass your exams, spend your twenties avoiding daylight, and you too could live like the elite. But who in their right mind would want to? **CT**

**Note:** \*From 844 in 1999 to 1264 in January 2014. When this was found to be insufficient, another 50 beds were announced.

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**George Monbiot's** latest book, *Feral*, is now out in paperback.  
His web site is <http://monbiot.com>

**A primary school in Cambridge has just taken the obvious next step: it is now streaming four-year-olds into classes according to perceived ability**

# Walmart makes its workers disappear

**Elizabeth Schulte** says it's closing five stores because of plumbing problems. But workers say its retaliation for their protests and strikes

**Apparently the lost business is a price worth paying if it gets rid of Walmart's union organizers**

“They gave us five hours notice. They told us that afternoon: ‘This is your last day,’” said Venanzi Luna. She was describing Walmart’s announcement on April 13 that the company would be shutting down a Southern California store due to “plumbing issues” and wouldn’t be reopening until the problems are fixed.

Luna is among several workers who are part of Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart) – and who are organizing for better working conditions at Walmart in Pico Rivera, about 11 miles south of Los Angeles. The store has been a center for organizing for several years. Workers there took part in the first Walmart strike in 2012. This fall, they organized a sit-in inside the store.

“It was a shock to everyone. No one expected Pico Rivera to shut down,” Luna said in an interview. “A lot of the associates were crying because this is how they pay their bills. Workers were crying and were very sad, not knowing where their next paycheck is coming from. It was very sad.”

Walmart laid off some 530 workers – or associates, in Walmart-speak – at Pico Rivera and 2,200 total from five stores – two in Texas, and one each in California, Florida and Oklahoma. Walmart claims it is shutting down the stores because of “plumbing problems,” but according a complaint filed with the National Labor Relations Board

(NLRB) on behalf of workers, no permits have been sought with the Pico Rivera city administration for any repairs. The same is true at the other stores, according to the complaint.

In fact, the Pico Rivera store underwent a \$500,000 refurbishment in 2014 that included the restrooms and grocery department, according to papers on file with the Pico Rivera building department and reported by the *Los Angeles Times*.

You might think that plumbing issues would have been taken care of back then, right? And if the store wasn’t closed during that renovation, why is it being closed now?

Luna said that workers and customers were surprised by the announcement. “This is a very busy store with lots of customers day and night,” Luna said. “It was a high-volume store that made a lot of money for the company.”

But apparently the lost business is a price worth paying if it gets rid of OUR Walmart organizers. “They just shut it down,” Luna said. “It was an easy way to take out OUR Walmart.”

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The only “problem” Walmart wants fixed is the fact that workers are organizing – and, in the process, making some gains.

In April 2014, Walmart was forced to institute a new scheduling system – workers’ inability to get the hours they need, when

they need them, is a widespread problem at the company.

Then, this past February, Walmart agreed to change its sick day policy for full-time workers, eliminating its one-day waiting period – full-time workers had to use one of their two personal days to make up for their first day out sick. The company also announced it planned to increase hourly wages for some 500,000 current employees to at least \$9 in April – and by February 2016, all current workers are supposed to make \$10 an hour.

Walmart workers have joined forces with other low-wage workers in the retail and fast-food industries to demand a \$15 minimum wage. Workers' years of campaigning alongside the Fight for 15 helped push the Los Angeles City Council to finally approve an increase in the minimum wage from \$9 to \$15 by 2020.

Now Walmart is pushing back in the only way it knows how – with ruthless contempt for workers. Walmart has a history of ruthless and underhanded tactics in the interest of keeping out unions and organizers. In 2000, meat cutters at a Walmart in Jacksonville, Texas, successfully organized into a union, a first in Walmart history. Three more stores in Texas and Florida followed suit.

The company's response was swift. It shut down the meat-cutting departments – in all of its stores – and replaced them with “case-ready” beef and pork prepackaged by the meatpacker. No meat-cutting, no meat-cutters, no union.

In 2014, the Canadian Supreme Court ruled that the company violated labor law when it closed a store in Jonqui re, Quebec, after workers voted to join unionize.

Walmart's number one priority remains the same – keeping the union out, no matter what it takes. Workers at Pico Rivera estimate that about 10 percent of the workers have been relocated, and that a lot of workers who are part of OUR Walmart did not go back to work. They've heard from other workers that management is telling them those who were

in OUR Walmart aren't getting hired back. At the same time, they say Walmart continues to hire new workers.

The company got in trouble recently for retaliating against its employees, including an NLRB complaint earlier this year that said Walmart illegally fired, disciplined and threatened more than 60 employees in 14 states for participating in legally protected strikes and protests to demand better wages and working conditions.

In its complaint, the NLRB cited memos in which Walmart threatened retaliation against workers who took part in protest actions. This time around, Luna says, Walmart is being careful not to send out any e-mails or leave a paper trail.

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Activists organized a press conference immediately after the closure announcement to explain to the public what was going on. “People were confused why it was closing down for plumbing issues,” Luna said. “If the store was open during the remodeling, they asked, then why was it closing down now?”

The Walmart is the second-largest employer in Pico Rivera, a city of some 64,000 residents, most of them Latino. Mayor Gregory Salcido estimates that the city receives about \$1.4 million a year in tax revenue – from Walmart. So in many ways, Pico Rivera's future depends on this contest between a bitterly anti-union employer and the workers who make Walmart run.

The Walmart store stands on a site where a Ford Motor Co. Los Angeles assembly plant was located from 1957 to 1980. The plant employed some 1,670 people in decent working-class jobs. After that, it was the location for aerospace and technology giant Northrop Grumman Corp. At its height, 12,000 people worked there. The plant closed in 1999. Walmart opened in 2002.

Today, former Walmart associate Jenny Mills lives in a car with her husband in the parking lot of the store. They lost their apartment a year ago when the landlord raised the rent.

The store's closure has been a blow to the

**Walmart has a history of ruthless and underhanded tactics in the interest of keeping out unions and organizers**

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## FREEDOM WATCH

**The store's closure has been a blow to the community and to neighboring businesses in the plaza where it's located**

community and to neighboring businesses in the plaza where it's located. City officials are opposing the closure, and the El Rancho Unified School District is preparing to vote on a resolution in support of the laid-off Pico Rivera Walmart workers, which calls on Walmart to "commit to transfer all of the associates to surrounding Walmart stores before new people are hired to fill positions in those stores."

Forty workers took part in a 24-hour fast last month, which included an ongoing protest in front of the store, with several people camping out overnight in tents. On June 5, OUR Walmart activists from Pico Rivera will be at Walmart's annual shareholders' meeting in Bentonville, Arkansas, to take their demands to the top.

Walmart has some 1.4 million employees nationwide. If OUR Walmart activists can help transform it into a fair workplace, they are well aware of the impact it will make on workers everywhere. Walmart is showing just how hard it will push back, but activists are

also steeling themselves for the long-term. As Luna said:

"People power makes a difference, and being part of an organization has changed my life in the way I see things. It's about the future of our kids' kids and everybody behind then. We are changing the way companies will treat their workers in the future.

"I remember when a HR [human resources] person told me, "You can't change the policy on sick hours," and I said, "You might not, but I could." I'm happy I got to show her that at the end of the day, people power can change things.

"This is an opportunity for associates to speak up and tell the truth because, at the end of the day, it's only going to make you stronger. We can show them that without the associates, there is no Walmart, because we make this company look good." **CT**

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*Elizabeth Schulte is a journalist and reviews editor for Socialist Worker. First published by <http://socialist worker. org>*

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## HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt





Members of Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign release the findings of the IPCC report into Orgreave Coking Plant in 1984 at the Barnsley headquarters of the NUM. Left to right: Chris Skidmore (Yorkshire Area President, NUM), Granville Williams (Truth and Justice Campaign), and Joe Rollin (an official with Unite the Union and chair of the OTJC), and Arthur Critchlow (miner arrested at Orgreave) Photo: Mark Harvey

# Still searching for justice

**Granville Williams** tells why events which took place 31 years ago still generate so much anger among Britain's former miners.

**T**he UK's Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) announced on 12 June, after a tortuous two and a half year 'scoping exercise', that it would not investigate the policing at the Orgreave coking plant on 18 June 1984, during the UK's year-long miners' strike.

A short summary of the IPCC report would be, "It all happened too long ago for us to investigate, and anyway we don't have the resources to do it." The decision by the IPCC was not unexpected, but in the report there are some damning comments about South Yorkshire Police (SYP):

Para 36: Some of those documents disclose

that SYP acknowledged privately that many officers did overreact and there was evidence of perjury.

Para 57: The evidence from hospital records was that more pickets than police officers required treatment. Some injuries to pickets were serious, including head injuries.

The heavily redacted para 55 adds, "There is no direct evidence that senior officers involved in Orgreave conspired to encourage or instruct officers to commit perjury. It is, however, of particular concern that our review found evidence that the senior officers became aware, after the event, of instances of perjury by SYP officers but did not wish it to be disclosed. [redacted] The unwillingness to

**A short summary of the IPCC report would be, "It all happened too long ago for us to investigate, and anyway we don't have the resources to do it"**

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## FIGHTING BACK

**“The police made sure we were all enclosed in that one field, the Orgreave plant on one side, railway line to another, a road to the other side and then trees and woods. When you ran to the trees, you were met with dogs. I could hear people screaming as they got bitten”**

disclose evidence of wrongdoing by officers does raise doubts about the ethical standards of officers in the highest ranks of SYP at that time. [redacted]

Emotions and views about the policing of the UK miners’ strike remain powerful more than three decades on. For many people, the 1984-85 miners’ strike is part of history, but for those miners who were subjected to the full force of a new paramilitary style of policing, their anger and the demand for a public inquiry into the policing of the strike has not faded. Orgreave was the most powerful public example of the brutal deployment of mounted police and heavily protected long-shield units with batons ranged against miners dressed in summer attire – jeans, teeshirts and trainers.

But the Orgreave story published in the national newspapers and on broadcast news was that the police assault on the miners was *after* the miners had subjected the police to a hail of stones, bricks and concrete. It was a lie, spread by the police, in much the same way that the South Yorkshire Police blamed drunken Liverpool fans for forcing open gates which led to the terrible Hillsborough disaster in 1989 when it was, in fact, the police who opened the gates.

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The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign (OTJC) and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) held a news conference on 12 June in the Barnsley Miners’ Hall, bedecked with NUM branch banners, to give their views on the IPCC report. Radio, TV and newspaper reporters were there in force.

I spoke on behalf of the OTJC, making the point that the IPCC was a flawed organisation, which we had had to lobby relentlessly (two protests outside the IPCC Wakefield offices and one outside the national offices in London in November, 2014) to get progress. I also argued that we had been forced to go down a cul-de-sac once the South Yorkshire Police had referred themselves to the IPCC after a BBC Inside Out programme in October 2012 demonstrated the extent of fabrication in the police statements for the Orgreave trial. Now,

I argued, we could get on with our original demand for a public inquiry.

Arthur Crichtelow, whose skull was fractured at Orgreave, was overcome by emotion as he attempted to speak about his savage treatment at Orgreave (you can see what happened to him in Yvette Vanson’s film, “The Battle for Orgreave”), and his place was taken by another former miner, Paul Winter, who said, “It was the most harrowing and terrifying experience of my life, but what I remember most vividly was seeing a man in his 50s wet himself through fear...

“We had nowhere to run. They made sure we were all enclosed in that one field, the Orgreave plant on one side, railway line to another, a road to the other side and then trees and woods. When you ran to the trees, you were met with dogs. I could hear people screaming as they got bitten.”

The hall erupted in anger when a BBC journalist asked, “What do you hope to achieve after all this time?” John Dunn, a former Derbyshire miner, described how he was beaten over the head by a police truncheon, arrested, had his wound stitched without anaesthetic, and seven months later was convicted of assault and “watching and besetting,” an ancient law which essentially means watching somebody in a threatening manner. For this, he said, he still has, along with thousands of other miners, a criminal conviction. “We want justice,” he said, “but also revenge for the destruction of our industry and communities.”

Outside the Miners’ Hall the IPCC report triggered a different response from those hostile to the miners. The right wing Daily Telegraph (or ‘Torygraph’) reported,

“The IPCC’s decision about the so-called “Battle of Orgreave” ran prominently on BBC news bulletins for much of Friday, attracting anger from some Conservative MPs.

“Conor Burns MP, a close friend of Baroness Thatcher in the years before her death in 2013 and a Conservative member of the Commons’ Culture, Media and Sport committee in the last Parliament, said he was ‘bemused by the BBC’s prominent coverage.’

“He said the BBC had given voice to opinions ‘against Mrs Thatcher,’ adding, ‘It just seemed to me to be an attempt to reheat tensions and divisions that had long passed into study by historians.’ ”

In fact, the IPCC report got prominent coverage across all national media, not just the BBC, and also in the regional media covering the former coalfield communities, because it is an important story.

This is due, in no small part, to the imaginative work done by the OTJC which, since it was set up in November 2012, has been effective in promoting its activity and views in the media. Indeed the way it handled media over the IPCC report is a great example of how a campaign group, which has no full-time staff, is able to operate so effectively.

The IPCC gave us early warning that that they would release the embargoed report at mid-day on Thursday 11 June. OTJC member Mark Metcalf quickly got together a team of people to be interviewed at the Miners’ Hall the following day, including gentle, quietly spoken former miner, Kevin Horne, who was one of those arrested and charged at Orgreave. We also publicised the Friday news conference, using Twitter and social media to invite OTJC supporters to attend. We got our view across to the media that, now the IPCC report was out of the way, we needed a full public inquiry and that would be the focus for our activity.

This determination to keep the OTJC in the public eye was also underlined by the lively demonstration on the anniversary of the Battle of Orgreave on 18 June at Old Bridge in Yorkshire near the site of the infamous police action 31 years ago.

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Meanwhile, on the Parliamentary front, an Early Day Motion (EDM) had 61 signatures on 24 June 2015,

“That this House strongly condemns the decision of the Independent Police Complaints Commission not to launch a full and comprehensive investigation into the behaviour of South Yorkshire Police at the Orgreave

Coking Plant on 18 June 1984; believes there is no time limit to justice and furthermore that mining communities up and down the country deserve the truth; and calls for a wider public inquiry covering not only the policing of Orgreave but of the entire country during the 1984-85 Miners’ Strike.”

In the IPCC report there is a suggestion (para 3) that, while it says it isn’t up to job “nothing in this report precludes” a public inquiry or an exercise like the Hillsborough Independent Panel. 62 Labour MPs have joined with the OTJC in signing a letter asking for an urgent meeting with the Home Secretary, Teresa May, to make the case for a full public inquiry into the policing at Orgreave. The letter argues, “Given the IPCC have indicated they do not have the capacity to carry out such an important investigation, and in light of the seriousness of the allegations against South Yorkshire Police, including perjury, perverting the course of justice, misconduct in a public office, and whether the actions of the police were influenced by the highest levels of government and finally given the scale of public concern, the case for a full public inquiry into the events of Orgreave is clear.”

Our reaction to the IPCC report has generated much more support for the work of the OTJC, but we still have a lot of work to do to ensure that truth and justice are finally achieved for miners, their families and the communities devastated by the brutal destruction of the industry. **CT**

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**Granville Williams** edited *Settling Scores: The Media, the Police and the Miners’ Strike* available from [www.cpb.org.uk](http://www.cpb.org.uk). He was a founding member of the *Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign*. He also chairs the *planning group, With Banners Held High*, which organises events to commemorate the legacy of the miners’ strike. The next one, with a focus on *International Support for the Miners’ Strike* is on 5 March 2016, at *Unity+ Works, Wakefield, West Yorkshire*. For more information contact [wbhh@talktalk.net](mailto:wbhh@talktalk.net)

**We got our view across to the media that, now the IPCC report was out of the way, we needed a full public inquiry**

# The Israeli war crime that goes unmentioned

How has Israel been able to get away with blaming Hizbollah for its slaughter of civilians during the 2006 Lebanon war? asks **Jonathan Cook**

**The clear implication of the story was that, when the next war with Lebanon arrives, as the Israeli army keeps promising is just around the corner, Israel will be able to blame Hizbollah when its attacks kill mostly civilians**

Here set out in black and white in the Israeli media is a moral conundrum that western politicians, diplomats and international human rights organisations are resolutely failing to address – and one I have been highlighting since 2006.

It was then that Israel implemented for the first time its Dahiya doctrine – turning Lebanon back to the Stone Age. It launched an horrific assault that wrecked Lebanon's infrastructure, killed 1,300 Lebanese – most of them, as ever in Israel's wars, civilians – and made refugees of more than a million inhabitants of the country's south. The exercise has been repeated in Gaza on a regular basis ever since.

Last month the *New York Times* kindly published an Israeli press release masquerading as a news report that the Israeli army had photographic evidence that Hizbollah was moving its military bases into villages all over south Lebanon. The evidence was paltry to say the least. And the *New York Times*, quite bafflingly, said it had not been able to “independently verify” the information, as though it lacked reporters in Lebanon who could visit the sites named by its correspondent in far-away Tel Aviv.

The clear implication of the story was that, when the next war with Lebanon arrives, as the Israeli army keeps promising is just around the corner, Israel will be able to

blame Hizbollah when its attacks kill mostly civilians.

As Israel's *Haaretz* newspaper pointed out – possibly inadvertently – in a headline, the *New York Times* was doing Israel's propaganda work for it: “Israel's secret weapon in the war against Hizbollah: The New York Times”.

Although the NYT's propaganda role was noted by several observers, no one seemed to make the point that, if Hizbollah is only now moving its bases into these villages, how can one make sense of the prominent justification for the high civilian death toll in Lebanon in 2006? Then Israel argued – was backed by the UN and others – that the civilian deaths were a result of Hizbollah's “cowardly blending” with the civilian population by firing rockets from built-up areas, though no evidence was produced at the time.

Look at what Amos Harel, *Haaretz's* military correspondent, writes now:

“The [New York] *Times* reports that Hizbollah, as part of the lessons it drew in the Second Lebanon War, in 2006, moved its “nature reserves” – its military outposts in the south – from open farmland into the heart of the Shi'ite villages that lie close to the border with Israel. That in itself is old news.

“Tell that to Jan Egeland, who was the United Nations Undersecretary-General for

Humanitarian Affairs at the time (and later joined Human Rights Watch), as well as all those who echoed his accusation against Hezbollah of “cowardly blending”.

There is another, even more vital point unnoticed by most observers but highlighted in Harel’s report for *Haaretz*. One of the problems for those at the receiving end of these savage Israeli attacks has been: how to respond. Or rather: how to respond within the confines of international law. While Israel has been doing most of the killing, western politicians, diplomats and human rights groups like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have been more exercised by the efforts of Hezbollah and Hamas to retaliate in kind.

### **Two sides of the law**

The international law argument supposedly goes something like this: Israel has the right to defend itself and so long as it is aiming for military targets with its precision armaments and acts proportionately then it is within its rights to launch attacks, whether civilians are killed or not.

The argument’s flip side goes like this: However terrible the suffering endured by their respective populations under this barrage, Hezbollah and Hamas have no right to respond with their imprecise rockets, whether they are aiming for a military target or not, because they cannot be sure their rockets will not hit civilians. In short, anything they fire over the border is a war crime by definition.

The problem when dealing with asymmetrical confrontations is that traditional interpretations of international law are rigged to the advantage of the stronger, better-armed side.

So how does the Israeli army feel about Hezbollah’s efforts to improve its rockets to avoid this international law problem. *Haaretz*’s Harel explains what his military contacts have been telling him:

“Israel is apparently deeply concerned by Hezbollah’s effort to improve the accu-

racy of its rockets. The organization has in its possession vast numbers of missiles and rockets – 130,000, according to the latest estimates – but upgrading its capability is dependent on improving the weapons’ accuracy, which would enable Hezbollah to strike effectively at specific targets, including air force-base runways and power stations.”

In other words, Israel is “deeply concerned” that Hezbollah might soon be able to operate within the terms of international law as laid down by official arbiters like the UN and HRW.

How is Hezbollah trying to upgrade its rockets? Its allies, Iran and Syria’s Bashar Assad, are trying to deliver more sophisticated weapons to it through Syrian territory. How does Israel feel about this? Harel reports: “Israel is upset at the smuggling of weapons by the Assad regime in Syria to Hezbollah.”

In fact, we know Israel is “upset” because it keeps violating Syria’s sovereign air space to launch attacks in Syria to stop convoys it claims are transporting such weapons reaching Hezbollah. It is similarly blockading Gaza to make sure upgraded, precise weapons do not get into Hamas’ hands.

So who will be to blame when Israel gets the next war with Lebanon or Gaza it wants and Hezbollah or Hamas respond by firing their imprecise rockets in retaliation? When Israeli civilians die under those rockets, will Hezbollah and Hamas be responsible or will it be Israel’s fault?

We will doubtless hear the answer from the United Nations, Human Rights Watch and the *New York Times* soon. **CT**

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**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 <http://jonathan-cook.net>

**We know Israel is “upset” because it keeps violating Syria’s sovereign air space to launch attacks in Syria to stop convoys it claims are transporting such weapons reaching Hezbollah**

# Nuke Russia?

The warlords of Washington haven't ruled it out, writes **Justin Raimondo**

**Ukraine's ultra-nationalists – who openly utilize wartime Nazi symbols and regalia – were the muscle behind the movement that pushed democratically elected President Viktor Yanukovich out of power**

**T**he War Party is a veritable propaganda machine, churning out product 24/7. Armed with nearly unlimited resources, both from government(s) and the private sector, they carpet-bomb the public with an endless stream of lies in order to soften them up when it's time to roll. In the past, their job has been relatively easy: simply order up a few atrocity stories – Germans bayoneting babies, Iraqis tipping over babies in incubators – and we've got ourselves another glorious war. These days, however, over a decade of constant warfare – and a long string of War Party fabrications – has left the public leery.

And that's cause for optimism. People are waking up. The War Party's propaganda machine has to work overtime in order to overcome rising skepticism, and it shows signs of overheating – and, in some instances, even breaking down.

One encouraging sign is that the Ukrainian neo-Nazis have lost their US government funding ...

In a blow to the “let's arm Ukraine” movement that seemed to be picking up steam in Congress, a resolution introduced by Rep. John Conyers (D-Michigan) and Rep. Ted Yoho (R-Florida) banning aid to Ukraine's Azov Battalion, and forbidding shipments of MANPAD anti-aircraft missiles to the region, passed the House unanimously.

This is significant because, up until this

point, there has been no recognition in Washington that the supposedly “pro-democracy” regime in Kiev contains a dangerously influential neo-Nazi element.

Ukraine's ultra-nationalists – who openly utilize wartime Nazi symbols and regalia, and valorize Stepan Bandera, the anti-Soviet guerrilla leader who collaborated with the Third Reich – were the muscle behind the movement that pushed democratically elected President Viktor Yanukovich out of power. With the rebellion in the east, the paramilitary militias of the far right have been officially incorporated into the Ukrainian army: Dmytro Yorash, the leader of Right Sector and a member of parliament, is an aide to Viktor Muzhenko, the supreme commander of the Ukrainian military, and Right Sector – an openly neo-Nazi organization – has been officially integrated into the armed forces.

The Conyers-Yoho amendment won't stop Ukraine's neo-Nazis from feeding at the US-provided trough, but, hey, it's the thought that counts. They'll just abandon their independent existence and blend into the official military, effectively going underground, just as they did in the last Ukrainian elections, where fascists like Yarosh won a seat in the parliament with the tacit support of the “mainstream” parties, which withdrew their candidates in his district: Adriy Biletsky, commander of the Azov Bat-



**Friends like these: a show of force in the Ukraine.**

Photo: The Red Phoenix

talion, enjoyed a similar advantage. Open fascists hold prominent positions in the Ukrainian government, the military, and the police.

Vadim Troyan, the deputy leader of the Azov Battalion, is now the regional chief of the Kiev district police, and fascists have the run of the city. The perpetrators of an arson fire at a Kiev theater that sponsored a gay film festival were charged with “disturbing the peace” and let off with a light sentence – and the theater was held responsible for not providing enough security! “I think the government prosecutor and those who are prosecuted are playing for the same team,” says one activist, and this is quite true: the fascists permeate the Kiev regime from top to bottom. When gay activists announced

a Gay Pride march, the Mayor of Kiev said he couldn’t – or wouldn’t – guarantee their safety and asked them to cancel it. What was an open invitation to violent thugs was accepted when dozens of Right Sector stormtroopers attacked the procession, which ended the event after thirty bloody minutes.

As the Kiev regime shows its true colors, its most fervent backers are forced to acknowledge its shortcomings. Yes, even our UN Ambassador, Samantha “responsibility to protect” Power ...

In a recent speech delivered in Kiev, Ambassador Power made oblique reference to the embarrassing slip ups on the part of our sock puppets in Kiev, gently scolding them to be more ... discreet. Citing Abraham Lin-

**As the Kiev regime shows its true colors, its most fervent backers are forced to acknowledge its shortcomings**

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## DANGEROUS WORDS

**The US is playing a dangerous game of nuclear brinkmanship. Robert Scher, undersecretary of defense, has even floated the idea of a nuclear first strike against Russia**

coln, she urged Ukrainians to listen to “the better angels of our nature,” and averred that “Ukraine is stronger” when it does so:

“It means that Ukraine should zealously protect freedom of the press, including for its most outspoken and biased critics – indeed, especially for its most outspoken and biased critics – even as the so-called separatists expel journalists from the territory they control, and even as Russia shutteres Tatar media outlets in occupied Crimea. It means that politicians and police across the country should recognize how crucial it is that people be able to march to demand respect for LGBT rights and the rights of other vulnerable groups without fear of being attacked.”

Citing Lincoln while calling for press freedom is a bit problematic – Abe shut down “treasonous” newspapers and jailed his more vociferous critics, but, hey, Power probably figured the Ukrainians aren’t up on the details of Civil War history, so what the heck. As the US continues to pump money – and weaponry – into the country, they’ll listen politely to Power’s lectures, and laugh all the way to the bank.

Amid all the publicity given to ISIS and the rise of its “caliphate,” the volatile condition of the Balkans has remained in the shadows. Yet the US, while sending only a few hundred “advisors” to Iraq, is sending a huge shipment of tanks and other heavy weaponry to nearly every country in Eastern Europe – enough to equip 5,000 American troops.

Ostensibly proposed in response to a nonexistent Russian “threat” to invade its Baltic neighbors, and/or Ukraine, this represents a significant escalation of the new cold war. And if the tanks are already on the ground, you can bet the troops won’t be long in coming. As NATO James Stavridis put it: “It provides a reasonable level of reassurance to jittery allies, although nothing is as good as troops stationed full-time on the ground, of course.”

And we aren’t just talking about troops

here: the Pentagon is also considering stationing nuclear missiles alongside them.

The US is playing a dangerous game of nuclear brinkmanship. Robert Scher, undersecretary of defense, has even floated the idea of a nuclear first strike against Russia. Claiming that Russia has violated the INF Treaty by testing a banned ground-launched cruise missile, Scher laid out possible options in testimony before Congress:

“Robert Scher, assistant secretary of defense for strategy, plans and capabilities, told politicians in April that one option could be to beef up defenses of potential targets of the Russian cruise missile.

“A second option could ‘look at how we could go about and actually attack that missile where it is in Russia,’ Scher said.

“And a third option would be ‘to look at what things we can hold at risk within Russia itself,’ Scher said.

“His comments appeared to signal employing forces to strike at other Russian military targets – apart from the missiles that allegedly violate the INF accord.

“Brian McKeon, deputy undersecretary of defense for policy, told politicians in December that the United States could consider putting ground-launched cruise missiles in Europe. Such weapons are banned under the INF treaty.”

Yes, that’s how crazy the warlords of Washington are: in their demented calculus, nuclear war is just another “option.”

And if that isn’t the definitive argument for regime-change in Washington, then I don’t know what is. **CT**

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*Justin Raimondo is the editorial director of Antiwar.com, and a senior fellow at the Randolph Bourne Institute. He is a contributing editor at The American Conservative, and writes a monthly column for Chronicles. He is the author of “Reclaiming the American Right: The Lost Legacy of the Conservative Movement” and “An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray N. Rothbard.”*

# Does anyone else miss Muammar Gaddafi?

A poem by **Philip Kraske**

Does anyone else miss Muammar Gaddafi?  
He of the threads and the ten-girl posse.  
Toting his haima, in the backyard he camped,  
Raising no fuss if with babes it was cramped.

He was odd, he was cool, independent, aloof.  
He did as he liked, was under no hoof.  
Dodging astutely from big-power clutches,  
He sold oil, bought Fiat, never sought crutches.

Libyans prospered, they got a good deal:  
Free college for all and food for a steal.  
Here were good doctors, there cement roads.  
But jerk not his chain: he took poorly to goads.

He got along great with the Bush CIA,  
When called to whack Qaeda was no MIA.  
He even stopped folks from jumping the Med.  
Stopped them before in the desert they bled.

He threw heart and soul into those non-aligned.  
With Africa he wanted all Afs of one mind:  
Enough of the white men who'd stolen and robbed,  
Gobbling up assets like corn off the cob.

A posture resented by folks in the West,  
Who hate a loose cannon, a saint or a pest.  
So when Arab Spring in Libya got sprung,  
The Yanks and the Euros all wanted him hung.

Sent in their bombers and fine special forces,  
And topped it all off with democracy courses.  
Gaddafi was chased to a pipe underground,  
Filmed while the mob to a pulp did him pound.

Libya's stunned since as a model of progress:  
So calm, like Iraq, with smooth-running congress.  
Migration has stopped, Al Qaeda is nil,  
There are jobs for the taking and all eat their fill.

Hence for Syria we want the same thing:  
To throw out Assad and let freedom ring.  
There's nothing like being a western Samaritan,  
It makes a guy proud to say he's American. **CT**

*Philip Kraske lives in Madrid, Spain, where he teaches English on a freelance basis and does some translation. His four novels, of varied plots but centering on American politics and society, began to appear in 2009*



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# The sense of an African ending

**Trevor Grundy** on the chaos that followed the collapse of Portugal's African empire

**The coup in Lisbon saw the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Europeans to Portugal, South America, Rhodesia and, of course, Angola's giant neighbor and one time protector, South Africa**

It's a new century but it seems we still we can't get enough about the Cold War years in Africa. Even if you've read Fred Bridgland's "Jonas Savimbi – A Key to Africa," Michael Wolfers and Jane Bergerol's "Angola in the Front Line," Stephen A. Emerson or's "The Battle for Mozambique," or a string of others, there remains an insatiable desire to know more. Much more.

Why do we know so little?

In an article published in *African Affairs* (Vol 77, Issue 308) on the South African Intervention in Angola 1975-1976, Robin Hallett, former lecturer at Cape Town University, writes: "The process of deliberate obfuscation was not confined to one side. If no correspondents were ever permitted to see the South Africans in action, it was equally true that no journalists, however sympathetic their reports, were ever allowed to visit the front-line of the Cubans and the MPLA, and indeed for a long time the government in Luanda described the Cubans, even when the number of troops was well known to have swollen to several thousands, as being present only in the capacity of 'advisors.'"

An editorial (Jan 27, 1976) in the

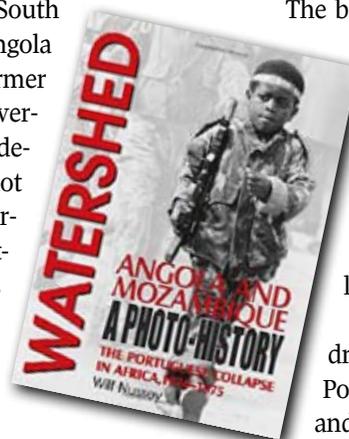
*Guardian* said "the British newspaper reader still knows far more about the South African involvement in Angola than do the South African families whose men have been fighting there."

So expect a round of applause for Wilf Nussey, the well-respected former editor of South Africa's Argus Africa News Service (AANS), who has shed a little more light rather than a great deal more heat on a perplexing subject that simply won't go away.

The book makes no attempt to tell stories about the early days of Portugal's colonial adventures in Africa. Instead, he starts at April 25, 1974 with, in the author's words, "the military coup that toppled the dictatorship in Portugal and, with it, the world's last colonial empire."

The coup saw the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Europeans to Portugal, South America, Rhodesia and, of course, Angola's giant neighbor and one time protector, South Africa.

Nussey tells how a collection of ultra-conservative Portuguese politicians, generals, landowners and business people tried to hold back the wave of Uhuru that rolled down from West Africa towards Central and Eastern Africa in the 1960s. Ian



**WATERSHED:  
Angola and  
Mozambique - The  
Portuguese Collapse  
in Africa, 1974-75**

**Wilf Nussey**  
Helion & Company  
£25



**On the eve of Independence in November 1965, Colonel Samuel Chiwale, Jonas Savimbi's military commander, tours UNITA-held areas of Angola. In those days, Savimbi received the support of the USA, South Africa and President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia.**  
Photo: Trevor Grundy

Smith attempted to block the wave's advance with Rhodesia's declaration of independence from Britain (UDI) in November, 1965.

Portugal was broke, its soldiers angry, confused, ready to stick carnations down the barrels of their guns, and anything sharp that they could lay their hands on up the backsides of their political and military leaders.

By the 1970s, the wars in its colonies were swallowing about 40 percent of Portugal's national budget. So it was little surprise that, in what seemed to be for those who lived there at the time a matter of moments, the face of Portuguese colonialism in Africa changed, with Samora Machel's FRELIMO taking power, almost unopposed, in Mozambique in June 1975.

But Mozambique's independence didn't signal peace. Soon after, South Africa was covertly supporting a serious challenge to FRELIMO in the shape of the Rhodesia-initiated Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO). That war went on for 15 years with

South Africa helping (economically) and harming (militarily) Portugal's freshly liberated quasi-Marxist states.

In Angola, three warring "freedom" movements, Augustino Neto's MPLA, Holden Robert's FNLA and Jonas Savimbi's UNITA fought one another like so many rival gangs in New York street fights.

The MPLA was backed by the Soviet Union and the Cubans, the FNLA originally by the Chinese and then the Americans, and Savimbi was supported by an unlikely coalition of interests, including the CIA, by Kaunda in Zambia and by South Africa, whose president P.W. Botha was clearly disliked (very much) by the author.

The Cold War was raging hot in southern Africa. During this time, Nussey and his team of

journalists were trying to make sense of it all from their temporary bases in Luanda, Lorenzo Marques, Salisbury, Lusaka and Johannesburg.

Two days before Angolan's independence, Nussey had to leave Luanda in a hurry. "I had been marked outside the Tropico Hotel by a group of MPLA youth. 'That's the South African,' one said in Portuguese, pointing at me. The message was obvious: get the hell out of here. This was no place for South Africans while their countrymen were attacking. I left that afternoon."

Part of the value of Nussey's book is the way he describes the mood of the departing Portuguese, who left in their thousands. The pictures in the book show lost and lonely men, women and children, some weeping in doorways, looking with fear at planes while their children sit numb by suitcases as officials search their luggage for weapons.

Nussey writes, "Angola was seeing the biggest human evacuation by air, sea and road

**The MPLA was backed by the Soviet Union and the Cubans, the FNLA originally by the Chinese and then the Americans, and Savimbi was supported by an unlikely coalition of interests**

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## BOOK REVIEW

**One of the best parts of this intriguing book deals with how the South African public was treated by its own government as its troops stormed into Angola**

in African history. Portuguese civilians were fleeing en masse. Abandoning their homes, people streamed into Luanda from outlying villages and farms in trucks, cars, tractors and trailers heaped with luggage – caravans of fear. They ran the gauntlet of trigger-happy rebels for hundreds of kilometers. Many people further away from Luanda headed for their nearest border.”

One of the best parts of this intriguing book deals with how the South African public was treated by its own government as its troops stormed into Angola with the approval of not only the President of America and Congo’s Mobutu but also Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia.

When Nussey and his team reported this astonishing and spectacular intervention, “not a word of it appeared in our newspapers, unknown to those of us in Luanda because no-one had told us about the censorship. They used our reports, but carefully omitted direct mention of South African involvement.”

Towards the end of this excellent book there’s a striking picture (taken by an AANS

photographer but who exactly, Nussey does not say) of a straight-backed African child sitting on a chair.

He is alone. He is dignified. He is poor. And there is a gun across his lap.

The caption reads: “He has a pellet gun, he has cartridges although they are for a shotgun. He has pride. That was all the MPLA gave this young man: no future.”

If still alive, that boy – now a man – is an Angolan citizen, likely to be one of Angola’s out of work, angry and frightened *povo* for whom hundreds of thousands of men and women were slaughtered between the 1960s and the end of February 2002 when the CIA killed Jonas Savimbi.

He was no longer useful to the Americans or the men behind the government of South Africa. The MPLA served their purposes well enough.

**CT**

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*Trevor Grundy is an English journalist who lived and worked in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa from 1966-1996*

# SETTLING SCORES

## THE MEDIA, THE POLICE AND THE MINERS’ STRIKE

edited by *Granville Williams*

Published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom for the 30th anniversary of the 1984-85 UK miners’ strike *Settling Scores* pinpoints unfinished business from the miners’ strike, and the search for truth and justice for miners, their families and the hard-pressed coalfield communities.

Nick Jones reveals what he found in the government Cabinet papers released on 3 January 2014; Tony Harcup uses Freedom of Information to find out how the BBC got it so wrong in its reporting of the Battle of Orgreave on 18 June 1984; Ray Riley, a former miner, analyses the source of the savage police tactics deployed against the miners at Orgreave.

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# Please don't honour our troops

**Fred Reed** thinks it's time we looked at our love affair with the military

**A**aaagh! Enough. I keep reading that I should Honour Our Troops. On airline flights, I am asked to applaud Our Young Men in Uniform. Why, for God's sake? What have Our Troops done for me except cause me great embarrassment, cost money better spent on anything else, and kill millions of people that I have had no interest in killing? For this I am to thank them?

No, they don't have noble motives. Men join the military because they need a job, because they want money for college or because they are bored or want to prove their manhood or go to exotic places and get laid. Basic training, jump school, being a tank gunner or doing nocturnal scuba insertions are much more appealing to a young man than selling fan belts at the NAPA outlet.

Patriotism? "Love of country" is an after-market add-on, good for a drink or a pat on the back at the Legion – nothing more than an expression of the pack instinct that makes men in all places and times join in groups to fight other groups. The pack instinct is why tribal warfare is continual among primitive peoples, why war, otherwise inexplicable, remains incessant between modern countries. It is why the gangs of young males in Chicago mirror military hierarchy, with territory to be expanded or defended, with leaders and insignia (e.g. black and gold jackets for the Lat-

in Kings ), with hand signs to signify identify and loyalty. It is why people join screaming mobs in political conventions, why they become wildly emotional over football teams consisting largely of convicted felons who have nothing to do with the city.

The pattern of loyalty inward to one's pack and hostility outward toward other packs explains the peculiar morality of the military (and of most other people). A Marine colonel will be at home a good neighbor, civic-minded, honest, cut the grass and help old ladies across the street. Come a war and he will mercilessly bomb any city he is told to bomb, and after killing he doesn't care whom on the ground, he will go to the officers' club where there will be high-fives and war stories.

We must not notice this, or the other feral dogs will turn on us. If you say that soldiers are morally indistinguishable from Mafia hitmen, you will arouse outrage – but there is no difference. A soldier who has never heard of Vietnam or Iraq goes when ordered to kill Vietnamese and Iraqis, and duly kills them. Guido and Vito, who have never heard of Hyman Blitzschein the store-owner who is behind on his protection payments, break Hyman's leg when ordered to. What is the difference?

Morality is always a very thin veneer on top of the deeper savagery of the pack. Militaries encourage this savagery. From Joshua

**Men join the military because they need a job, because they want money for college or because they are bored or want to prove their manhood or go to exotic places and get laid**

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## JUST SAY NO

**American atrocities are always Isolated Incidents. An Isolated Incident is business-as-usual that is detected by the press**

onward until very recently, armies regularly put cities to the sword, and generals allowed their troops to sack and rape as rewards for good service. For those unfamiliar with such things, “putting cities...” meant killing every living thing within.

A graphic description of torture and murder routine in the Thirty Years War would have most readers retching. Today this sort of thing, when exposed, is held to be in bad taste. Only the United States engages openly in torture (type “Abu Ghraib” into Google Images) but others do it.

Of course, much depends on who is doing what to whom. When the Germans bombed London, the English thought it barbaric. Later, when they were bombing German cities, it was a form of heroism. The Rape of Nanjing was hideous, while the frying of Hiroshima was not. Killing everyone in a city of a hundred thousand by hand would be very bad PR, but burning them to death from above is a cause for congratulation.

An effect of the pack instinct is the suppression of cognitive dissonance. If one noticed that a woman, campaigning for sexual abstinence, was pregnant with her seventh child, one might notice the contradiction. Patriots, or the American variety anyway, cannot notice that Our Boys, and Our Girls, are committing the routine atrocities that armies normally commit. Call it cognitive indifference.

American atrocities are always Isolated Incidents. An Isolated Incident is business-as-usual that is detected by the press. Thus torture is best avoided by restricting coverage. It is de rigueur to speak of our boys fighting to defend America and our way of life, and to speak of their sacrifices. In the Fifties this spirit was exemplified by Superman jumping out of a window, while the voice-over intoned “truth, justice, and the American way,” then thought to be related.

Actually soldiers are more sacrificed than sacrificing. Precisely how killing Afghan goat-herds protects the United States is not clear: careful students of geography have argued

that Afghanistan is somewhere else. The evidence does seem to support this.

Today, the motives of wars are usually disguised so as to be palatable. It has been said that the British fought for empire, the French for la gloire de la France, the Russians to steal watches from the wounded, and the Americans for vague moral abstractions. Thus Washington fights to rid Iraq of a cruel dictator, while supporting many others just as cruel; fights to instill democracy, as if anyone anywhere cared whether Afghanistan were democratic; and to protect the world from nonexistent WMD.

The dog-pack instinct is most intense in the elite outfits, SEALs and Force Recon and Special Forces, with tightly-bonded small groups – the focus of males – working together. Powerful free-floating hostility characterizes them, and patriotism gives them a cover story for doing what they would want to do anyway.

Loyalty to a small band of warriors is easily transferred to an abstraction such as country or religious faith. Witness the fervor of Muslims today, or the enthusiasm for Christianity of illiterate Crusaders in the eleventh century who knew little of Christianity and certainly didn’t follow its moral precepts. Being swept up in a Cause gives an appearance of meaning to a life otherwise devoid of such. The flags, the hurrahs, the rhythmic thump-thump-thump of hundred of boots, the solidarity – these reinforce the pack instinct, and recruiters and politicians know it.

And so a coalminer who hates the coal company, hates suits and liberals and the rich and blacks and homosexuals and knows he is being exploited and doesn’t really like anybody at all except local friends, will discover unexpected loyalty when the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor.

Now, let’s hear a big huzzah for Our Boys. **CT**

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*Fred Reed worked for Soldier of Fortune and the Washington Times. He lives in Mexico and blogs at <http://fredoneverything.org>*

# Sleepwalking into another world war

**Davis Swanson** wants us to take time to lesson from history



Women at work at a World War Imunitions production factory at Chilwell, near Nottingham, England. Photo: Wikimedia

**B**ooks about how World War I started, and to a lesser degree how World War II started, have tended in recent years to explain that these wars didn't actually come as a surprise, because top government officials saw them coming for years. But these revised histories admit that the general public was pretty much clueless and shocked.

The fact is that anyone in the know or diligently seeking out the facts could see, in rough outline, the danger of World War I or World War II coming years ahead, just as one can see the threats of environmental collapse and World War III approaching now. But the general public lacked a decent understanding prior to the first two world wars and lacks it now on the looming dan-

**Anyone diligently seeking out the facts could see the danger of World War I or World War II coming years ahead**

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## LETHAL THREATS

**Much of the US public believed the US would stay out of the wars once they had begun. And US voters twice elected presidents who were planning to enter world wars but campaigning on promises not to**

gers created by environmental destruction and aggressive flirtation with World War III.

What led to the first two world wars and allowed numerous wise observers to warn of them years ahead, even to warn of World War II immediately upon completion of the treaty that ended World War I? A number of factors ought to be obvious but are generally overlooked:

1. Acceptance of war, leading to steady preparation for it.

2. A major arms race, making instruments of death in fact our leading industry, with hope placed in a balance or domination of powers of war, rather than an over-coming of war.

3. The momentum created for war by massive investment in highly profitable (and status and career advancing) weaponry and other military expenditures.

4. Fear in each nation of the war intentions of the others, driven by propaganda that encourages fear and discourages understanding of the other sides.

5. The belief produced by the above factors that war, unlike the tango, only takes one. On the basis of that belief, each side must prepare for war as self-protection from another war-maker, but doing so is not believed to be a choice or an action of any kind; rather, it is a law of physics, an inevitable occurrence, something to be observed and chattered about like the weather.

6. The consequent, though seemingly mad, willingness by those in power to risk potentially apocalyptic war rather than to pursue survival without war.

World War I was preceded by wars in North Africa and South-Eastern Europe. Weapons spending and war planning soared. Efforts to preserve the peace were launched. Then Austria-Hungary was handed an excuse for attacking Serbia, and certain Germans saw an excuse for attacking Belgium and France, and certain Brits saw an opportunity for fighting Germany, and so forth, and the slaughter was on. It

could have been prevented, but the policies of decades made it likely, regardless of the immediate trigger. The public had very little idea.

World War II followed decades of the first war's victors causing the German people to suffer economically while building up bitter resentment, of another unprecedented arms race, of Western investment in Nazis as preferable to leftists, and of training up Japan as a junior partner in empire but turning against it when it went too far. The Nazi treatment of Jews was knowable and protested. The US military's aggression toward Japan was knowable and protested. The US government drew up a list of actions that could provoke a Japanese attack, including an embargo on oil, and took each of those actions.

Much of the public never saw either world war coming. Much of the US public believed the US would stay out of the wars once they had begun. And US voters twice elected presidents who were planning to enter world wars but campaigning on promises not to.

David Fromkin's book on the beginning of "World War I, Europe's Last Summer," draws just the wrong conclusions. "It was no accident that Europe went to war at that time," he writes. "It was the result of premeditated decisions by two governments. [He means Austria and Germany.] Once those two countries had invaded their neighbors, there was no way for the neighbors to keep the peace. That was true in World War II; at Pearl Harbor, Japan made the war-or-peace decision not merely for itself, but for the unwilling United States as well, by launching its attack. Nor had America any more choice in Europe in 1941; Hitler's Germany declared war on the United States, to which America was obliged to respond."

Fromkin is giving an accurate description of a war of rich on poor. When the United States attacks Iraq or Syria or Pakistan or Yemen or Somalia or Afghanistan or Libya or Panama or Vietnam, etc., etc., no cooper-

ation is required from the poor nation that is bombed or invaded. There is war because the Pentagon says so, although the form that resistance takes is completely open to choice. But had the nations that Fromkin grants innocence in World Wars One and Two spent the previous decades disarming and practicing respectful diplomacy, aid, cooperation, peacemaking, and establishment of the rule of law, there could not have been the rich-on-rich wars that constitute the worst short-time-period events in human history and have been avoided since 1945. Fromkin traces, as most authors do, Germany's WWI aggression to its fear of its neighbors. What if those neighbors had been unfearable?

Perhaps they would have been attacked anyway. Iraq and Libya disarmed, in terms of so-called WMDs, and the US attacked them.

Or perhaps they would have been left alone. Most nations that do not threaten their neighbors are not threatened in return.

In any case, there would have been no world wars killing tens of millions of people if there hadn't been willing partners on both sides. Any war there would have been one-sided. Any nonviolent resistance would likewise have experienced one-sided suffering. But most of the death and destruction would not have happened.

The United States has pulled out of the anti-ballistic missile treaty and expanded NATO to a dozen new nations, moving right up to the border of Russia. It's placed troops and weapons on the Russian border. It's organized a coup in Ukraine and installed a

Ukrainian government full of neo-Nazis. It's lied to its people about Russian invasions and Russian attacks on airplanes. It's fantasized about its missile-defense system allowing it to attack Russia, or China for that matter, without counter-attack. It's proposed to put more nukes in Europe aimed at Russia. It's built bases around the edges of China. It's trying to militarize Japan again. It's imposed sanctions on Russia. It's threatened, mocked, ridiculed, and demonized Russia and its president – and North Korea for good measure. Informed observers warn of the heightened risk of nuclear Armageddon. And most people in the United States haven't a clue.

While I'm not suffering under the delusion that violence is Russia's only or wisest or most strategic response, neither am I urging Russia to turn the other cheek. Having been saddled with a US identity when I'd prefer a local or global one, it's not my place to tell Russia what to do (could I improve on Tolstoy?). But I can tell the US public to wake up and put a stop to this madness before it kills us all. World War III is not inevitable, but it is clearly headed our way if we don't change course. And changing course would give us our best shot at avoiding environmental disaster as well. **CT**

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*David Swanson is an author, activist, journalist, and radio host. He is director of WorldBeyondWar.org and campaign coordinator for RootsAction.org. Swanson's books include War Is A Lie. He blogs at DavidSwanson.org and WarIsACrime.org. He hosts Talk Nation Radio. He is a 2015 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee*

**The United States has pulled out of the anti-ballistic missile treaty and expanded NATO to a dozen new nations, moving right up to the border of Russia. It's placed troops and weapons on the Russian border**

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# Fear and learning in Kabul

**Kathy Kelly** finds message of hope and compassion in a war-torn land

**The western presence in Afghanistan has already caused incalculable destruction, suffering and loss**

I've just spent a wonderfully calm morning here in Kabul, listening to bird songs and to the call and response between mothers and their children in neighboring homes as families awaken and prepare their children for school. Maya Evans and I are just settling into the community quarters of our young hosts, the Afghan Peace Volunteers (APVs). Last night, they told us about the jarring and frightening events that marked the past few months of their lives in Kabul.

They described how they felt when bomb explosions, nearby, awakened them on several mornings. Some said they'd felt almost shell-shocked themselves when they discovered one recent day that thieves had ransacked their home. They shared their intense feelings of alarm at a notorious warlord's statement condemning a human rights demonstration in which several community members had participated. And their horror when a few weeks later, in Kabul, a young woman, an Islamic scholar named Farkhunda, was falsely accused in a street argument of desecrating the Koran, after which, to the roared approval of a frenzied mob of perhaps 2,000 men, members of the crowd, with apparent police collusion, beat her to death. Our young friends quietly sort through their emotions in the face of inescapable and often overwhelming violence.

I thought about how to incorporate their stories into a course I've been preparing for

an international online school that intends to help raise consciousness among people, across borders. I hope the school will help develop movements dedicated to simple living, radical sharing, service and, for many, nonviolent direct action on behalf of ending wars and injustices.

When Voices for Creative Nonviolence members go to Kabul, our "work" is to listen and learn from our hosts and take back their stories of war to the relatively peaceful lands whose actions had brought that war down upon them. Before we'd even departed, the news from Afghanistan was already grim: several dozen people dead in fighting between armed groups; a Kabul hotel attack on international businessmen the week before. We wrote to our friends offering to stay away, in the hope we wouldn't make them targets of the violence. "Please come," they replied. So we're here.

The western presence in Afghanistan has already caused incalculable destruction, suffering and loss. A recently released Physicians for Social Responsibility calculated that since 2001 in Iraq and Afghanistan, US wars have killed at least 1.3 million and quite possibly more than 2 million civilians.

The report chides US political elites for attributing violence in Afghanistan and Iraq to various types of internecine conflicts "as if the resurgence and brutality of such conflicts is unrelated to the destabilization caused by decades of military intervention."

Our young friends have survived the ravages of war, and each of them struggles with trauma, as their parents and grandparents have before them. When we have gone with them to visit refugee camps outside Kabul, several have told of their own experiences as children, running away when their villages were attacked or occupied. We learn from them about the sorrows their mothers endured when there wasn't enough food to feed the family or fuel to carry them through heartless winters: when they themselves nearly died from hypothermia. Several of our young friends experience terrifying flashbacks when they hear accounts in the news of Afghans killed by missiles or gunfire within the horrified sight of their own family members and loved ones. They tremble and sometimes cry, recalling similar experiences from their own lives.

The story of Afghanistan in Western accounts is that it cannot deal with its traumas, however much we try, with our bullets, bases and token schools and clinics, to help. Yet these young people steadfastly respond to their own traumas not by seeking revenge but by finding ways to help people in Kabul whose circumstances are worse than theirs, particularly 750,000 Afghans living, with their children, in squalid refugee camps.

The APVs are running an alternative school for street kids in Kabul. Little children who are the main breadwinners for their families find no time to learn basic math or "the alphabet" when spending more than eight hours daily working in the streets of Kabul. Some are vendors, some polish shoes, and some carry scales along roadways so that people can weigh themselves. In an economy collapsing under the weight of war and corruption, their hard earned income barely buys enough food for their families.

Children of the poorest families in Kabul will have better chances in life if they become literate. Never mind rising school enrollment figures often cited by the US military as the benefits of occupation. The March 2015 *CIA World Fact Book* reports that 17.6 % of females

over age 14 are literate; overall, in the teen and adult population only 31.7% can read or write.

After getting to know about 20 families whose children work in the streets, the APVs devised a plan through which each family receives a monthly sack of rice and large container of oil to offset the family's financial loss for sending their children to informal classes at the APV center and preparing to enroll them in school. Through continued outreach among Afghanistan's troubled ethnicities, APV members now include 80 children in the school and hope to serve 100 children soon.

Every Friday, the children pour into the center's courtyard and immediately line up to wash their feet and hands and brush their teeth at a communal faucet. Then they scramble up the stairs to their brightly decorated classroom and readily settle down when their teachers start the lessons. Three extraordinary young teachers, Zarghuna, Hadisa, and Farzana, feel encouraged now because many of the thirty-one street kids who were in the school last year learned to read and write fluently within nine months. Their experimentation with different teaching methods, including individualized learning, is paying off – unlike government school systems where many seventh graders are unable to read.

While leading a demonstration of street children, Zekerullah was asked if he had any fears. He said that he feared that the children would be harmed if a bomb exploded. But his greater fear was that impoverishment would afflict them all their lives.

That message of courage and compassion will not -- and cannot-- always prevail. But if we take note of it, and even more, if, learning from its example, we take action to exemplify it ourselves, then it offers us a path out of childish fear, out of panicked collusion in war, and out, perhaps, of war's mad grip. We ourselves arrive in a notably better world when we determine to build it for others. Our own education, our own victory over fear, and our own arrival as equals in an adult world, can begin or begin again – now. So let us begin. **CT**

**Several of our young friends experience terrifying flashbacks when they hear accounts in the news of Afghans killed by missiles or gunfire within the horrified sight of their own family members and loved one**

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**Kathy Kelly**

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