

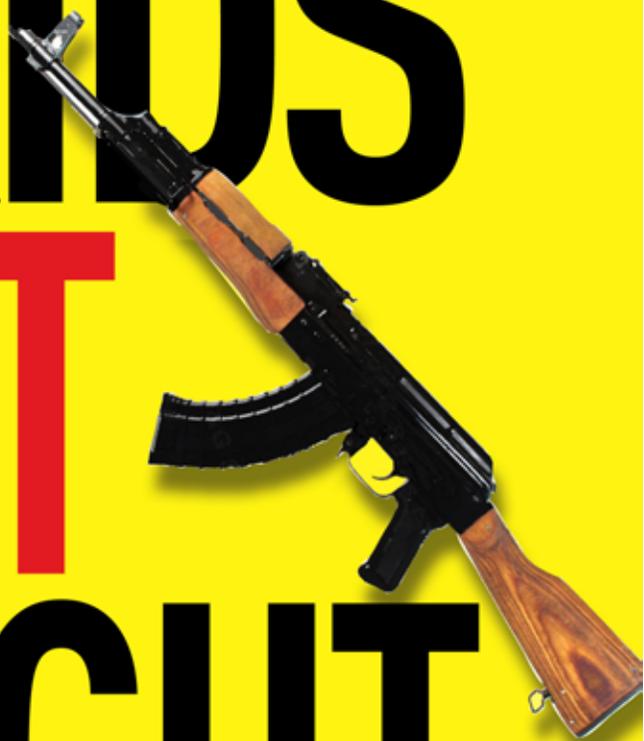
**NO MORE SICK DAYS** | EMMANUEL TSEKLEVES  
**LIVING WITH THE LIES OF OCCUPATION** | MATS SVENSSON  
**LOST IN FARAGE LAND** | TONY SUTTON

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 99

# THE KIDS AREN'T ALL RIGHT



**NICK TURSE** – CHILD SOLDIERS, PRESIDENTIAL WAIVERS, & AN AMERICAN-MADE ARMY IN AFRICA



# ColdType

Issue 99 / June 2015

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Editor: Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net

# Bin Laden read my book. So what?

I'm more interested  
in what the US is  
NOT telling me,  
writes **Greg Palast**



**F**inding out that my book “The Best Democracy Money Can Buy” was on the Bin Laden bookshelf confirms my fears about America’s war on whistleblowers. I already knew that Osama bin Laden read my book before the headlines last month – but I’m still angry that he gave “The Best Democracy Money Can Buy” only four-and-a-half stars on his Amazon review. Obviously, something in the book pissed him off, because he never friended me on Facebook.

It was actually quite embarrassing to learn that Bin Laden was reading my tome – and a few by my homie Noam Chomsky. It’s embarrassing because it’s clear that Bin Laden was more well-read than our president of the time (though, in George W Bush’s defence, there’s much to be learned from “My Pet Goat”).

I do hope Osama made it to page 229. I talk about a guy who worked at my office, Clinton

Davis. Before I left to write for the *Guardian* and *Observer*, my office was in Tower 2 of the World Trade Center. Davis, a cop, was safe at ground level, but he ran upstairs to save others – and disappeared, forever. Did Bin Laden get a little laugh out of that one? At least he got to know his victim’s name.

And what did Bin Laden think of my investigation of the 9/11 attack? While working at BBC’s *Newsnight*, a few weeks after the towers fell, a little birdie dropped off a 30-page memo marked “SECRET,” “eyes only” and “1-99I WF”, which is code for “national security document”. The document suggested that FBI agents were blocked from investigating the Bin Laden family well before 11 September 2001. Calls to the Defense Intelligence Agency, CIA and FBI insiders authenticated this bombshell of a devastating intelligence failure.

**Bin Laden never took credit for 9/11. In fact, he repeatedly denied any responsibility for those mass murders**

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## LOST AND FOUND

**It's clear that Bin Laden was more well-read than our president of the time (though, in George W Bush's defence, there's much to be learned from "My Pet Goat")**

.....  
**Greg Palast** is the author of the international bestsellers, *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*, *Armed Madhouse* and *Vultures Picnic*. His web site is <http://gregpalast.com>

No, the evidence did not show that President Bush knew about the 9/11 attack in advance. But here was something still quite damning: we learned that the Bush family connection to the Bin Laden family business might have been a shield against government probes. Did Bin Laden, reading that, make a note to himself to thank the Bushes for their unintended protection? I assumed the FBI would deny the authenticity of the document. Instead of denying that the Bin Laden investigation had been spiked, the FBI spokesman told Newsnight these chilling words: "There are a lot of things the intelligence community knows and other people ought not to know."

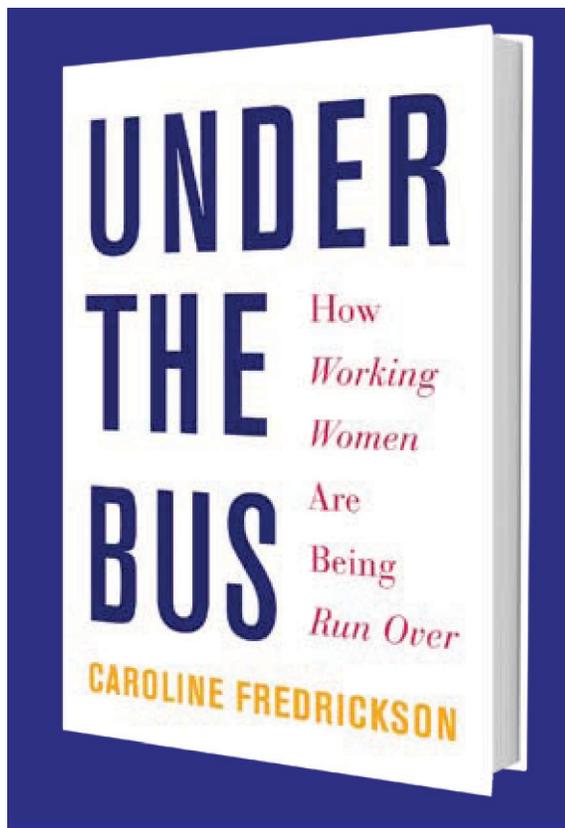
Ought not to know? What else ought we not to know? What else is government hiding from us – and when will it kill us?

The US government has charged Edward Snowden with "willful communication of classified communications and intelligence information to an unauthorised person". CIA agent Jeffrey A Sterling has just received a

three-year sentence for passing information to a reporter. This suggests that, today, Newsnight's releasing the FBI document would land me or my informants in the slammer.

Why? Is there really a fear that terrorists will read our information? Well, in my case at least, I know Bin Laden probably did in fact read secret national security documents – in my book. Did he learn some great state secret that would allow him to escape? Obviously not. Did Bin Laden learn the secret that our leaders are incompetent and craven and that our intelligence agencies are poisoned by commercial and political interests? I suspect he knew that already.

Finding that Bin Laden read my book, with its several chapters revealing state secrets, confirms for me that the new official war on whistleblowers and reporters is not about keeping information out of the hands of terrorists, but making sure that "the public ought not to know" where the fools at the helm are leading us. **CT**



"Unpacks the history of the racism and sexism that has left so many working women and people of color without adequate protections." –*Mother Jones*

"Meticulously researched and utterly gripping." –*Peter Edelman, author of So Rich, So Poor*

"Expands the conversation from the few women at the top of the corporate structure to the many millions who are working to survive. Brilliant, compelling, and important." –*Saru Jayaraman, author of Behind the Kitchen Door*

"Women workers are the backbone of America's service economy yet, as Fredrickson so expertly describes in *Under the Bus*, millions have been abandoned by our nation's employment laws." –*Mary Kay Henry, president of Service Employees International Union*



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# Was Osama Really There?

A poem by **Philip Kraske**

I know that Sy Hersch and others worked hard,  
To tell us the story, turn o'er every shard,  
They've brought us detail with all scuttlebutt,  
They've filled in the gaps and told us what's what,  
And yet I find there are black holes unfilled:  
Was The Man there? Was it he who killed?

The reason I'm puzzled goes back a long way,  
When OBL entered, did Le Figaro say,  
The American Hospital in downtown Dubai,  
For double di-al and just to say hi,  
To our local CIA, Dubai head of station,  
Who brought candy, flowers and polite consolation.

True or not, Osama looked finished,  
When he made his last vid, greatly diminished.  
'Twas a bad hair day, and his arms barely moved.  
Then two Mideast papers said his bucket got hooved,  
This at the end of two thousand and one,  
When George and Dick were just starting their fun.

But before his end, OBL talked turks,  
And said that Eleven was some other jerk's:  
"Not me, not Qaeda; I condemn the attacks,  
I target soldiers, not Jillies and Jacks."  
And you've got to wonder why someone would pull  
The hit of the century and then call it bull.

But with Osama, you know, that's always the case:  
DNA with no blood, a beard with no face.  
Was his bacon saved by some Muslim voo-doo?  
Was he grabbed by the Pakis, retired by AQ?  
Despite all the hoopla, all that we've seen  
Was some gent with turban, Mr. O on the screen

So you can see why I remain undecided,  
'Bout versions that each in turn get derided.  
There's folks cooking books, on that you can bet,  
As agencies elbow and compete for bud-get.  
While somewhere in Tora Osama must lie,  
Enjoying this soap called "Spy versus Spy."

*Philip Kraske is from Minneapolis but has lived for the past 30 years 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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# Fowl deeds and nursery stories

**George Monbiot** is angered by the multiple crises caused by large-scale chicken farming in Britain, and the PR depiction of life on the farm

The jobs are hideous: picking up and binning the birds that drop dead every day, catching chickens for slaughter in a flurry of shit and feathers, then scraping out the warehouses before the next batch arrives

## PART ONE Fowl Deeds

It's the insouciance that baffles me. To participate in the killing of an animal: this is a significant decision. It spreads like a fungal mycelium into the heartwood of our lives. Yet many people eat meat sometimes two or three times a day, casually and hurriedly, often without even marking the fact.

I don't mean to blame. Billions are spent, through advertising and marketing, to distract and mollify, to trivialise the weighty decisions we make, to ensure we don't connect. Even as we search for meaning and purpose, we want to be told that our actions are inconsequential. We seek reassurance that we are significant, but that what we do is not.

It's not blind spots we suffer from. We have vision spots, tiny illuminated patches of perception, around which everything else is blanked out. How often have I seen environmentalists gather to bemoan the state of the world, then repair to a restaurant in which they gorge on beef or salmon? The *Guardian* and *Observer* urge us to go green, then publish recipes for fish whose capture rips apart the life of the sea.

The television chefs who bravely sought to break this spell might have been talking to the furniture. Giant chicken factories are springing up throughout the west of England, the Welsh Marches and the lowlands of the east. I say factories for this is what they are: you

would picture something quite different if I said farm; they are hellish places. You might retch if you entered one, yet you eat what they produce without thinking.

Two huge broiler units are now being planned to sit close to where the River Dore rises, at the head of the Golden Valley in Herefordshire, one of the most gorgeous landscapes in Britain. Each shed at Bage Court Farm – warehouses 90 metres long – is likely to house about 40,000 birds, that will be cleared out, killed and replaced every 40 days or so. It remains to be seen how high the standards of welfare, employment and environment will be.

The UK now has some 2,000 of these factories, to meet a demand for chicken that has doubled in 40 years. I don't know how these units will operate, but factories elsewhere inflict noise and dust and stench and traffic on quiet corners of the country. Because everything is automated, they employ few people, and those in hideous jobs: picking up and binning the birds that drop dead every day, catching chickens for slaughter in a flurry of shit and feathers, then scraping out the warehouses before the next batch arrives.

The dust such operations raise is an exquisite compound of aerialised faeces, chicken dander, mites, bacteria, fungal spores, mycotoxins, endotoxins, veterinary medicines, pesticides, ammonia and hydrogen sulphide. It is listed as a substance hazardous to health,

and helps explain why 15% of poultry workers suffer from chronic bronchitis. Yet, uniquely in Europe, the British government classifies unfiltered roof vents on poultry sheds as the “best available technology”. If this were any other industry, it would be obliged to build a factory chimney to disperse the dust and the stink. But farming, as ever, is protected by deference and vested interest, excused from the regulations, planning conditions and taxes other business must observe. Already, Herefordshire County Council has approved chicken factories close to schools, without surveying the likely extent of the dust plumes either before or after the business opens. Bage Court Farm is just upwind of the village of Dorstone.

Inside chicken factories are scenes of cruelty practised on such a scale that they almost lose their ability to shock. Bred to grow at phenomenal speeds, many birds collapse under their own weight, and lie in the ammoniacal litter, acquiring burns on their feet and legs and lesions on their breasts. After slaughter they are graded. Those classified as grade A can be sold whole. The others must have parts of the body removed, as they are disfigured by bruising, burning and necrosis. The remaining sections are cut up and sold as portions. Hungry yet?

Plagues spread fast through such factories, so broiler businesses often dose their birds with antibiotics. These require prescriptions but – amazingly – the government keeps no record of how many are issued. The profligate use of antibiotics on farms endangers human health, as it makes bacterial resistance more likely.

But Herefordshire, like other county councils in the region, scarcely seems to care. How many broiler units has it approved? Who knows? Searches by local people suggest 42 in the past 12 months. But in December the council claimed it has authorised 21 developments since 2000. This week it told me it has granted permission to 31 since 2010. It admits that it “has not produced any specific strategy for managing broiler unit development”. Nor

has it assessed the cumulative impact of these factories. At Bage Court Farm, as elsewhere, it has decided that no environmental impact assessment is needed

So how should chicken be produced? The obvious answer is free range, but this exchanges one set of problems for another. Chicken dung is rich in soluble reactive phosphate. Large outdoor flocks lay down a scorching carpet of droppings, from which phosphate can leach or flash into the nearest stream. Rivers like the Ithon, in Powys, are said to run white with chickenshit after rainstorms. The River Wye, a special area of conservation, is blighted by algal blooms: manure stimulates the growth of green murks and green slimes that kill fish and insects when they rot. Nor does free range solve the feed problem: the birds are usually fed on soya, for which rainforests and cerrado on the other side of the world are wrecked.

There is no sensible way of producing the amount of chicken we eat. Reducing the impact means eating less meat – much less. I know that most people are not prepared to stop altogether, but is it too much to ask that we should eat meat as our grandparents did, as something rare and special, rather than as something we happen to be stuffing into our faces while reading our emails? To recognise that an animal has been sacrificed to serve our appetites, to observe the fact of its death, is this not the least we owe it?

Knowing what we do and what we induce others to do is a prerequisite for a life that is honest and meaningful. We owe something to ourselves as well: to overcome our disavowal and connect.

## Part 2

### The Abuse of Enchantment

**T**he way that meat, eggs and milk are produced is surrounded by one of our great silences, in which most people collaborate. We don't want to know, because knowing would force anyone with a capacity for empathy to change their diet.

**There is no sensible way of producing the amount of chicken we eat. Reducing the impact means eating less meat – much less**

**The Red Tractor standard is a classic example of an almost meaningless label, whose purpose is to reassure customers in a vague and fuzzy way while holding producers to standards that scarcely rise above the legal minimum. That's a long-winded way of saying bullshit**

You break this silence at your peril. After I published Part One of this article on the *Guardian's* web site, I had to re-read it to check that I hadn't actually proposed the slaughter of the firstborn by terrorist devil worshippers – so outraged and vicious were some of the responses. And that was just the consumers.

The producers didn't like it much either, though their trade associations responded in more measured tones. In letters to the *Guardian*, the National Farmers' Union and the British Poultry Council angrily defended the industry. The NFU wrote:

"In the UK 90% of all chicken is produced to Red Tractor standards and this demonstrates that the chicken has met production standards developed by experts on animal welfare, safety, hygiene and the environment. Farmers take the welfare of their birds extremely seriously, and therefore to accuse the sector of cruelty is absolutely unfounded."

The BPC maintained that chicken "provides a wholesome, nutritious, sustainable and affordable source of protein, produced by an industry unsubsidised by government."

Let's spend a moment examining these claims, before raising the issue of how they get away with it.

In my view, the Red Tractor standard is a classic example of an almost meaningless label, whose purpose is to reassure customers in a vague and fuzzy way while holding producers to standards that scarcely rise above the legal minimum. That's a long-winded way of saying bullshit.

Take the key welfare issue, stocking density. Here's what the government recommendations say:

"The maximum stocking density for chickens kept to produce meat for the table should be 34 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, which should not be exceeded at any time during the growing period."

But the standard for broiler chickens set by the Red Tractor scheme is actually worse than this:

"Planned stocking densities must not exceed 38kg/m<sup>2</sup> for broilers"

Incidentally, this stocking density – 38kg/

m<sup>2</sup> – gives each bird an area the size of a piece of A4 paper.

This meets the legal requirement only because the UK uses a cruel derogation from European law, permitting a maximum stocking density of 39kg/m<sup>2</sup>. So much for the NFU's statement about taking the welfare of chickens extremely seriously.

On almost every welfare indicator, and across all the main farm animals, including chickens, Red Tractor scored worse than any other certification scheme evaluated by Compassion in World Farming. Amazingly, the Red Tractor label imposes no restrictions on the growth rates of chickens: it allows the most overbred varieties to be stuffed with high-protein feed, with the result that the birds often suffer from painful and crippling health problems, as their hearts, lungs and legs are overloaded.

As for the British Poultry Council's claims, if chickens fed on soya – as the great majority in this country are – are sustainable, what does unsustainable look like? Soya production is one of the major agents of the destruction of rainforests, cerrado and other threatened habitats in South America. The environmental impacts of chickenfeed are, well, anything but chickenfeed. The mass production of chickens has major consequences at the other end of the bird too: the mountains of excrement cause both water and air pollution.

Nor is the claim that this industry is unsubsidised correct. Many chicken growers barely break even on the sale of birds, and survive only as a result of the government's renewable heat incentive. This is a remarkably generous scheme whose ostensible purpose is to reduce carbon emissions, but which really functions as another subsidy for businesses, especially farms. Most new chicken units use biomass boilers subsidised by the RHI, and it is immensely profitable.

So now to the real question: how do they get away with it? How is it that we, who regard ourselves as a nation of animal lovers, accept such terrible standards of meat production? If dogs and cats were treated as pigs and chick-

ens are, there would be a deafening outcry: in fact there are plenty of people in Britain who campaign against the raising of dogs and cats for food in Asia. But what's the difference? Why is it acceptable to treat some animals – even creatures as intelligent and capable of suffering as pigs – so brutally, but not others?

In part, this reflects the deep disavowal in which we tend to engage when we eat meat. But I also believe that a major part of the problem is the fairytale view of farming implanted in our minds from the very onset of consciousness.

Many of the books produced for very young children are about farms; and most tell broadly the same story. The animals – generally just one or two of each species – live in perfect harmony with the rosy-cheeked farmer, roaming around freely and talking to each other, almost as if they were members of the farmer's family. Understandably enough, none of the uncomfortable issues – slaughter, butchery, castration, tussling, separation, battery production, farrowing crates – ever feature.

So deeply embedded is this image that I believe many people go through life unable to dismiss it from their minds. It is not easy to unlearn what we are taught when we're very young, and even the grim realities of industrial farming cannot displace the storybook images from our minds. At a deep, subconscious level, the farm remains a place of harmony and kindness – and this suits us very well if we want to keep eating meat.

Perhaps the starkest example of this myth-making I've come across is a children's book distributed with Saturday's Guardian called *The Tale of City Sue*. It tells the story of a herd of cows on an Irish farm.

*This friendly, Friesian family  
were free to roam and browse  
and eat the freshest, greenest grass  
which made them happy cows.*

*They belonged to farmer Finn  
Who called them by their names  
And when it was their birthday*

*He brought party hats and games.*

*He played his violin for them  
inside the milking shed,  
and sung them soothing lullabies  
when it was time for bed."*

Only after I had unthinkingly read it to my three-year-old then turned the back cover, did I discover that it wasn't a book at all, but an extended advertisement for Kerrygold butter.

It wasn't billed as such. The Guardian's website marketed this publication as "A tale from the meadow of imagination: children's author Jeanne Willis's latest book captures the idyllic atmosphere of rural Ireland." Following my questions to the Guardian, this has now been changed to make its provenance clearer.

I find disguised marketing of any kind objectionable, and disguised marketing to children (aimed in this case at reaching their parents) even worse. I feel that this book misleads children about the nature of farming and milk production and sanitises the relationship between farmers and their animals, on behalf of a large corporation (Kerrygold's parent company, Adams Foods). It exploits children's credulity and natural sympathy with animals for corporate profits.

When I challenged the Guardian about this, its spokesperson told me:

"All branded content should be clearly labelled for the benefit of our readers in line with our guidelines. On this occasion the insert was not correctly labelled and we apologise for this error."

I also wrote to the author, Jeanne Willis, who replied as follows: "I was commissioned by Kerrygold so it's best they answer your questions. Xxxx Xxxx from Brazen PR will be in touch soon." Brazen PR. Hmmm.

I wrote back, asking her, "Do children's authors not have a responsibility towards those they write for? Is there not an issue of conscience here for you? After all, if a children's author is misleading children on behalf of a corporation, that's a serious matter, surely? It has been done in your name, and promoted

**Many books produced for very young children are about farms; and most tell broadly the same story. The animals live in perfect harmony with the rosy-cheeked farmer, roaming around freely and talking to each other, almost as if they were members of the farmer's family**

**Could the current Kerrygold marketing blitz be an attempt to embed in our minds a bucolic, superannuated image of an industry that is now changing beyond recognition?**

as your “latest book”, so simply shrugging off responsibility like this feels wrong to me. You must have a view about whether or not accepting this commission was the right thing to do, and whether you were justified in discharging it as you did.”

She responded as follows:

“... to the best of my knowledge, Kerrygold seem to be particularly strong on animal welfare so there wasn’t a question that what I created was going to be misleading. The brief was very simple: Kerrygold cows spend a lot of time outside feeding on grassy meadows so let’s tell some fun stories about our cows. I don’t feel it’s exploiting kids because the only take out is that it’s better to feed cows on grass and ensure they spend as much time outside as possible.

“I’m very careful which brands I work with to avoid this exact situation – I wouldn’t have done this if I thought it was morally wrong. It’s a storybook for families to enjoy. There is no overt message to buy butter. It’s just about the cows. That said, it clearly says Kerrygold on the inside cover and on the back.”

It seems to me that subliminal persuasion of this kind (“the cows are happy”) can be more insidious than overt marketing (“buy our butter”). To my mind, Kerrygold is seeking to persuade people of the inherent goodness of its products at a deeper level than merely flashing up the products.

As for the issue of animal welfare, Kerrygold’s website states “We work with small co-operative farms where small herds are free to graze on lush Irish meadows.” But it does not say “We work only with small co-operative farms ...”.

The parent website run by Adams puts it slightly differently: “Kerrygold is ... is owned by Irish dairy farmers, many of their farms are small and family run”. Which could also mean that many of them are not. So I asked the company, “What is your milk buying policy? In other words, what specifications – on scale, feed, the treatment of animals, process etc – do you put in place that your suppliers have to adhere to?” I have not had a response.

From what I can glean, Kerrygold’s marketing seems to rely on the public perception that Irish dairy farms are small and mostly grass-fed. But they are changing fast.

Last summer, 3,000 dairy farmers visited the biggest dairy operation in the country (which has 820 milking animals) to discover how to increase the scale of their operations. This farm has made a major investment in indoor facilities, and supplements the grass they are fed with maize, barley and soya.

According to the former chair of the Irish Farmers’ Association, “scale must go up. ... The dairy farm of the future is going to have to be bigger.”

Could the current Kerrygold marketing blitz be an attempt to embed in our minds a bucolic, superannuated image of an industry that is now changing beyond recognition? If so, it might be an effective way of pre-empting criticism about the changing nature of its suppliers.

Dairy cows, like chickens and pigs, get a rough deal, while the effluent from dairy farms creates major environmental problems. Imagine the response if children were exposed to such blatant sanitisation of a harsh and polluting industry in any other sector. But so prevalent is this mythologised view of farming, and so wilfully unaware do we remain of the realities of industrial agriculture, that it passes almost without challenge. My guess is that the Guardian made this error – a serious one in my view – partly because the themes Jeanne Willis and Kerrygold exploited are so familiar that they are almost background noise.

Isn’t it time that children’s authors showed a little more imagination and stopped repeatedly churning out the same basic story, even when they are not doing it on behalf of a large corporation?

Is it not time that adults weaned themselves off the fairytale version of farming and began to judge it by the same standards as we would judge other industries?

And is it not time for all of us to become a little more curious about where meat, milk and eggs come from, and how they are produced?

**CT**

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

# Buyer beware

California is hot and dry, the water is gurgling away, and **Stacey Warde** has just broken his cheap Chinese sunglasses

I bought a cheap pair of plastic sunglasses, made in China, at the Cayucos Super Market several days ago, a purchase I've come to regret.

In less than a week, they broke. Of course. The white "Made in China" small print along the inside of the temple piece began to wear off in less than two days. The frame cracked the next day and by the fourth day the flimsy dark plastic eyepiece fell out.

Not my best purchase.

I bought them because the sun bears down hard lately, harder than feels normal this early in the season, mid-April, and summer still officially two months away.

Pollens and dust from swirling, drying winds fill the air. Clouds of tiny bugs drift across the dusty ranch road. They fly into my eyes whenever I drive the quad to get to the orchards I tend as a farmhand. It's annoying as hell, and hazardous to boot. Additionally, my eyes have been light sensitive, they hurt and they've been watering. When I put on scratched-up safety goggles or get sun screen in my eyes, I can hardly see sometimes. A new pair of sunglasses seemed essential. I might have known better. Buyer beware.

It feels like summer already. It's so damned bright, and hot. We've had above-normal temperatures for weeks now, and little of the precipitation this parched country so desperately needs. The governor has put re-



**Caught in the shade: Stacey Warde with his Chinese sunglasses.**

strictions on water, demanding reductions in residential use. Farmers and corporations, apparently, are not subject to the same restrictions. Blame and finger-pointing have begun in earnest; last week, it was Nestle who was most at fault, and this week, environmentalists are to blame for the historic drought. The dust on dirt ranch roads kicks up much more easily now, and hangs in the air longer, like a faded earthen curtain, blinding and choking, slowly drifting with the breeze, moisture and water obscured from sight and becoming more scarce.

Ticks and snakes have come out, predators and pests are more prevalent. The coyotes sneak closer to drink from the dwindling creek in front of my cabin. They nabbed a neighbor's house cat recently.

**The dust on dirt ranch roads kicks up much more easily now, and hangs in the air longer, like a faded earthen curtain, blinding and choking, slowly drifting with the breeze, moisture and water obscured from sight and becoming more scarce**

**When I flashed my light across the creek, I saw the coyote chawing on the victim's feline remains. I threw a rock at the prowler and it dashed off into the darkness with its prey**

I heard the shrill and sudden scream of the cat in its final desperate act of defiance. Wrong place, wrong time that night. Tooth and claw, foolish cat. The kill couldn't have been very satisfying for the coyote. The cat was scrawny, no contender, and had snuck out of the house, where it was safe, and went down to the creek.

"That's what they do," a friend tells me of the coyotes, "they sit near the creek at night and wait for critters to come drink."

The night cry spooked me. I thought a bobcat or young mountain lion had screamed. It pierced the night, fierce and defiant, even for a scrawny animal. When I flashed my light across the creek, I saw the coyote chawing on the victim's feline remains. I threw a rock at the prowler and it dashed off into the darkness with its prey. My neighbor was grief-stricken. "She shouldn't have gone out there," she lamented. "She never had a chance."

As water becomes more scarce, we're likely to have more run-ins with predators risking rocks, ranch rifles and shotguns to get their food and drink. Some say the unusual brightness and intense sunlight are evidence of global warming, or of fallout from the nuclear disaster at Fukushima, or of a government conspiracy to spread mind- and weather-altering chemicals in the sky. Whatever it is, it's rough on the eyes.

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Barely two days after buying my new sunglasses, I noticed the flimsy dark plastic lens on the left side popping off the rim.

"Good thing I got these for eight dollars instead of the fifteen they wanted on the sticker price," I thought.

I had plowed through the plastic-wrapped, toy-like sunglasses on a bottom shelf near the handkerchiefs and beach items and over-the-counter medicines, eager to find a protective cover for my eyes.

"Oh, these'll be OK, only four dollars." My eyes, tired from age, and watering from excessive light, wind and dust, missed a digit on the price tag. The nice lady at the cash

register, seeing my difficulty, offered them to me at the cut rate of only \$7.99 instead of \$14.99.

I knew better the moment I touched those shitty, toy-variety sunglasses, that they were worthless, absolutely worthless, and I bought them any way.

At first I got mad at the country of origin – there wasn't any manufacturer's label, just a price tag. "Fuck you, China, for your cheap consumer 'goods!'" And: "Fuck me for being dumb enough to buy them!"

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I'm working in the avocado orchard today, tending 1,300 or so trees, irrigating, pumping thousands of gallons of water, installing injectors with their chemical magic to keep dying trees in production, cutting out deadwood, and pulling up suckers and sprouted seeds. It's unseasonably hot and dry again. I've put on my new sunglasses, and that helps against the intense brightness of the sun.

We're one of the lucky few growers in California. We still have water. This season's crop of avocados looks promising and we expect a favorable yield, so long as the water supply holds out. Just over the hill, however, barely a mile or so distant, a friend who also farms avocados has already heard the gut-wrenching sound of gurgling from one of his pumps, indicating that his water source is running low.

"It hurts like hell," he says, "to watch what you've worked so hard for just wilt away. But what are you going to do? You can't fight mother nature."

Some growers have begun trucking in water but that's an expense few can afford. The green from what little rain we got this season has begun to fade and turn shades of yellow and brown; drying grasses appear the way they usually do at the beginning of summer.

The rolling golden hills of California...are not such a pretty sight right now. It's going to be a long, hot summer. Trees have been cut down, stumped and painted white. Pests have turned up, attacking weakened trees

and fruit, and will continue to be an issue as water turns more scarce. The great California drought of the new millennium put a significant stamp on this county's agriculture in 2014, according to the ag department, reducing yields of avocados. The drier weather was good for strawberries, though, which topped even grapes as the highest yielding crop in a region that prides itself on wine.

The wine industry, meanwhile, continues to suck up the lion's share of North County's water. How much more water can be squeezed out of the ground is anyone's guess but when it does finally run out, we'll have plenty of wine to drink.

The world-class desal plant in Cambria is a last resort as a home water source but some people still complain about and fight it, arguing they'll pay more for their water rather than contribute to farming water from the ocean or brackish ponds. But how much will they pay when traditional water sources run out?

"This is bad, really bad," people keep saying. Nonetheless, even with water restrictions and hills turning brown, residential landscapes, the little slices of heaven we create to insulate ourselves from the cruel world, manage to stay green. As long as water continues to pour out of the taps, homeowners seem to think, what's to worry about?

In the Central Valley, meanwhile, the nation's breadbasket, some water-starved growers have shut down operations and unemployment among farmhands has skyrocketed.

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One of the benefits of working out here is the lack of distractions from meddlesome and self-important boobs whose only apparent goal in life is to make money, or sell something, regardless of its value.

Not to say there's anything wrong with making money or selling goods and services but some people I know – and avoid – think only of turning a buck, would sell you a bucketful of dogshit if they could, and tell you what a great value you're getting.

I despise those people, the crafty, who lack integrity, whose only motivation is to make a fast buck, the hosers and posers, the merchants of cheap and worthless goods, whose only real interest in you is how much money they can get out of you. I avoid them whenever possible. They're scum.

Then, there's my farmer friend whose wells are going dry, whose one great joy in life is to put food on people's tables. He takes pride in growing quality organic produce, and is glad to provide something of value, something that actually improves the quality of people's lives.

If more people thought the way he did, we might not be subject to cheap imitations and bogus, worthless consumer goods, with which this culture, thanks largely to slave-labor countries like China, more than eager to supply them, seems to have overrun itself.

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While eating lunch in front of Ruddell's Smokehouse in Cayucos, friends brought up the subject of US indebtedness to China.

"What's going to happen," asks one, "when they finally decide to collect on their debt? Will the US be able to pay? And, if not, what will China do, invade us?"

"I doubt it," I say, "but if they do, the only thing that will save us will be places like this, places that haven't succumbed to selling cheap and worthless goods."

What drives this dependency on cheap goods? Low wages? A lackluster economy? The so-called recovery from the Crash of 2008, from which many still suffer, is being hailed as the "low-wage recovery," meaning basically that jobs don't pay enough for workers to survive.

There was a time when, perhaps a fool's errand, I thought I could avoid buying anything made in China. That seems almost impossible now.

**CT**

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**Stacey Warde** is the publisher of  
*The Rogue Voice* – <http://theroguevoice.com>  
– where this essay was first published

**I despise the people who lack integrity, whose only motivation is to make a fast buck, the hosers and posers, the merchants of cheap and worthless goods, whose only real interest in you is how much money they can get out of you**

# Lost in Farage Land

Boston, a market town on England's east coast, has more European immigrants than anywhere else in Britain. It's also the heartland of the anti-immigrant, far-right, UKIP political party

Words and photos by **Tony Sutton**



Street Life: Market day in Boston, Lincolnshire.

The Lincolnshire town of Boston is known as the 'Cabbage Capital' of England, because the flat fields and lush soil on the farms that surround it are perfect for farming vegetables. Those farms, however, have never been as fertile for workers, many of whom lived until the latter part of the last century under the remnants of a feudal system of 'tied' cottages and low pay. The farmers' solution to the resulting exodus of its workforce to better-paying, less-restrictive jobs elsewhere was *not* to lure them back with better pay and ben-



Good Life: Run-down shops in Boston's High Street are transformed.



**Dog's Life:** Waiting for his master outside a European store in Boston



**Love Life:** Boston's Central Park. No sign of anti-social behaviour. Just young lovers.

The farmers' solution to the exodus of its workforce to better-paying, less-arduous jobs elsewhere was to employ foreign workers prepared to sweat more for less pay

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## FARMING COUNTRY / 3

Still infused with memories of World War II – townsfolk rebelled, cursing the foreigners for taking their jobs, talking in foreign languages, littering the streets and shitting in the town's Central Park



**Better life: Immigrants came to Boston for a better quality of life. They aren't always successful.**

efits, but to employ foreign workers prepared to sweat more for even less reward.

The first migrants were Irish. Young, single, on short-term contracts, they were crammed into ramshackle accommodation and endured a punishing working regime. For relaxation, they stormed nearby towns and villages at weekends, drank heavily, fought local teens, lusted after the women and incurred the wrath of uptight civic leaders.

Later, as the Celtic Tiger reclaimed its young men and Britain joined the European Economic Community, the farmers looked east for their workers: first Portugal, then Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, and Romania. These migrant workers were the new Irish – second class citizens in a land that valued the low cost of their labour, but resented their faces, their language, their customs and their lifestyle.

Still infused with memories of World War II – many of the Britain's wartime bomber bases are within 20 miles of Boston – townsfolk rebelled (even rioting in the streets a few years ago), cursing the foreigners for stealing jobs (which the locals won't do), taking over local shops (which otherwise stand empty), hanging around in groups, talking in foreign

languages, littering the streets, and shitting in the town's Central Park (re-employing street cleaners and leaving the lavatories open later at night might help).

Boston's migrants – the town has the highest concentration of European workers in Britain – are also viciously maligned by hysterical commentators on right wing national tabloids such as the *Mail* and *Express*, who denounce them as scroungers, thugs and criminals, in Britain only to cash in on 'generous' government benefit handouts.

### Political saviour?

This disquiet promised an enticing election scenario for a political saviour who would step in and help reclaim the town from the interlopers. After a brief dalliance with the racist, neo-fascist crazies of the British National Party, local support switched to the less rabid UK Independence Party (UKIP), led by the preening Nigel Farage, whose political energy seemed to be devoted to television set-ups, standing in pubs quaffing pints of beer, while vowing to restrict migration and extract his compatriots from the clutches of the wicked European Union (in which he, ironically, is an MP).

UKIP saw the Boston & Skegness constituency as a springboard for its long-anticipated political breakthrough in last month's general election. That breakthrough, Farage hoped, would earn the party a partnership in a Tory-led coalition government in which he would become deputy prime minister. He knew the constituency was filled with angry and scared voters, so how could they resist a party that said, "You're right to feel like that; we agree with you; don't apologise for who you are, or what you think."

The fact that the sweet-talking UKIP leader was, along with his Tory brothers, fanning the flames of populist discontent that turned worker against worker was obscured by the xenophobic media propaganda. Important questions were ignored in the narrow and aggressively one-sided press coverage. Why, for example, should the government allow multinational corporations to close factories and move jobs across borders at will, while denying workers the same mobility? Why put so much effort into encouraging the working class to hate each other when *all of them* – no matter where they live or what language they speak – are being squeezed by zero-hour contracts, falling wages and increased job insecurity? And why are the poor clobbered with savage service cuts while multinational corporations get away with multi-million pound subsidies and unpunished tax fiddles?

The truth is there is no longer a political party – or mainstream medium – in Britain that pays other than lip service to the idea of a fully-informed democracy. Tony Blair betrayed the Labour Party when he moved it from its traditional broadly-based socialism to Thatcherite neo-conservatism, while the Liberal Democrats showed their true colours by deserting their supporters and joining the Tories – the party of the wealthy – in an anti-working class coalition after the previous election.

The people of Boston needed a deeper discussion than the one they got, which was limited to which party would be better at re-

stricting immigration. How about a call for the end of economic austerity, which only works for the rich, the need to create more jobs, and wage equality for all workers, not just those in Boston or Britain, but throughout Europe. And who would show how communities are enhanced, not diminished, by a diversity of cultures, people and shops; to help us exist in harmony, rather than propagandised into scorn, hatred – and war?

### Missing questions

At the May 7 election, however, things didn't go as well as UKIP had hoped. The Boston consistency went to the Conservative Party as usual (folklore has it that the Tories would win a majority in rural Lincolnshire if it put a cabbage onto the ballot). Both Farage, standing in a Kentish seaside constituency, and his 22-year-old Boston candidate Robin Hunter-Clarke were defeated, but UKIP's Boston vote rose by almost 25 per cent. And, nationally, the party, despite only winning one seat under Britain's first-past-the-post voting system, captured 12.6 percent of the national votes, giving it more than a glimmer of hope for the future.

What will happen at the next general election if UKIP pick up enough votes to allow them to en immigration? Who, then, will tend the crops on those sweeping South Lincolnshire farmlands? A Boston friend told me the answer was a no-brainer – send the migrants home and make unemployed English workers "get off their arses" and work the land, or lose their benefits.

Perhaps he and other hostile Bostonians should take a closer look at their town's own history. Visiting a small granite memorial that stands on the shore not far from the town centre will remind them that this was the scene of another great migration, for Boston was the port where, in 1607, the Pilgrim Fathers made their first attempt to escape persecution and find freedom in a New World. They finally got there 13 years later, naming the town they created after the one they had left. **CT**

**Perhaps he and other hostile Bostonians should take a closer look at their town's own history, by visiting a small granite memorial on the shore not far from the town centre**

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**Tony Sutton** is the editor of *ColdType*. His home town, Horncastle, is 18 miles from Boston

# No more sick days

Emmanuel **Tsekleves** tells how wearable health technology may soon let your boss spy on you

**Ultraviolet sensors will detect the increase in sunshine and motion sensors detect movement not typically associated with bed rest**

**N**ow that the sun is shining and the temperature is rising, it's officially sickie season: go to work, or get struck down with "flu", a "24-hour virus", or that faithful stand-by, the dodgy prawn takeaway.

Figures show that over a third of employees in the UK admit to pulling a sickie at some point or other. But things may be changing soon – wearable tech such as the Apple Watch, Microsoft Band, Fitbit, or Jawbone Up may become mainstream within a few years, bringing health monitoring capabilities that reveal how your body is performing. It's not inconceivable that in time this same data could be used to prove how well, or unwell, you are – such as when phoning in sick.

Wearable health tech is still in its early days. These devices come with sensors that can record how many steps and how much exercise you've taken, how well and long you've slept, stress levels, blood pressure, sun exposure, even what you've have eaten. Added together, all this could easily demonstrate that you're not so sick after all.

Since some wearables are aimed at being fashion accessories, employers might be minded to tap into the trend. So next time you're pulling a sickie, you might need the data to back up your story. With GPS-equipped devices there'll be no op-

portunity to escape your sickbed to a bar-beque or trip to the beach, while ultraviolet sensors will detect the increase in sunshine and motion sensors detect movement not typically associated with bed rest.

## **Using your data against you**

What if employers and health insurance companies move in the direction that the car insurance industry has taken, where every health transgression (a boozy night out, a Christmas feast, or too many lazy days on the sofa) could increase your health premium rates? Such a scenario isn't so far away, and this should concern us. Apple is clearly making a beeline for the health and fitness industry with Watch and its integrated HealthKit software, now integrated with its iOS mobile operating system, and it is not the only firm to do so.

Typically, health insurers use body mass index (a calculation of body fat that takes into account your age, weight and height) to set premiums, and some insurers set rates based on basic data from wearables, such as the number of steps we take. Fitbit and Jawbone Up are both already playing a bigger role in how health insurance is calculated, with more employers opting to monitor data generated by such wearable trackers. And here's the catch: employers are holding their insured staff to account with penalties and rewards as part of an

increasing number of so-called “corporate-wellness programmes”.

BP staff, for example, are given Fitbits for free as long as the company has access to their data. The more physically active an employee is (as measured by the device) the more points they’re awarded. Higher points lower the company’s insurance premium. Other companies are adopting similar wellbeing employee health insurance programmes too.

### Consent, for now

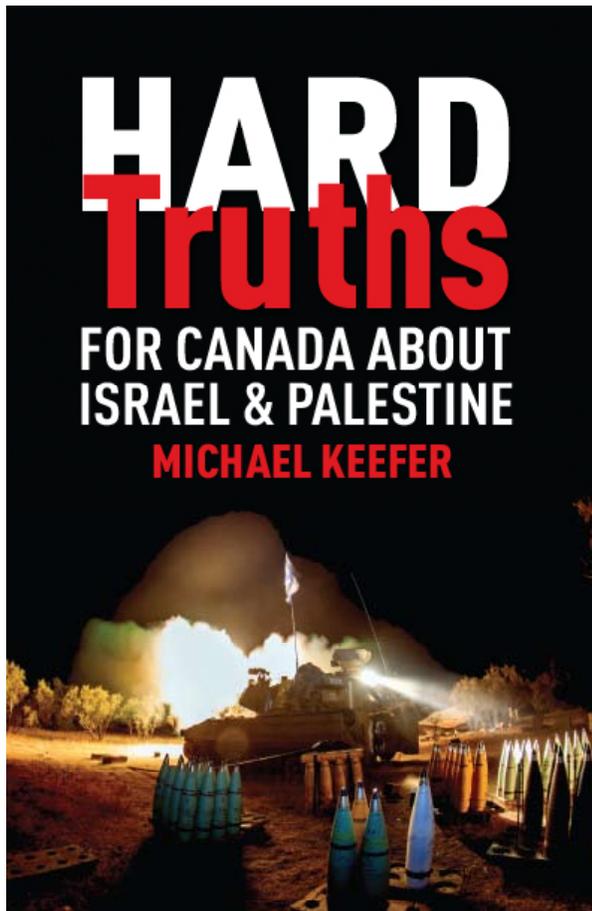
Wearable tech is still far from perfect, and that means inventive workarounds will be found. A few acquaintances of mine who shall remain nameless have found creative ways of racking up a few more miles, while actually continuing their usual, less-than-

active habits. These include holding and shaking the device for a few minutes at a time, or attaching it to their cat or dog, or offering pocket money to other, younger and fitter family members to wear it. Obviously insurers and developers are aware of these antics, so it won’t be long until such loopholes are closed.

For now, we can consent to share our health data from wearables with employers or insurers in exchange for lower premiums or cheaper travel. But how long before the company wearable is a mandatory part of the uniform? **CT**

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*Emmanuel Tseklevs is senior lecturer in Design Interactions at Lancaster University. This article was originally published at <http://theconversation.com>*

**The more physically active an employee is (as measured by the device) the more points they’re awarded. Higher points lower the company’s insurance premium**



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**READ AN EXCERPT FROM THIS BOOK BEGINNING ON PAGE 52 OF THIS ISSUE**

# Poland pays for America's crimes

Now, this is really stupid, writes **Nat Perry**. The United States tortures people in Poland, but Poland has to pay

**The United States, has failed to investigate or prosecute any of the senior officials who authorized the human rights violations at secret CIA prisons in Poland or anywhere else**

It is one of the great ironies of the US-led war on terror and post-Cold War transatlantic relations that democratic accountability and human rights protections at times seem stronger in the former Soviet Union than they do in the United States. This lesson was driven home again last month when Poland paid a quarter of a million dollars to two terror suspects tortured by the CIA in a secret prison on Polish territory between 2002 and 2003.

Imposed by the European Court of Human Rights, the penalty prompted outrage among many Poles who felt they were being unfairly punished for American wrongdoing. "We might have to pay compensation even though our personnel did nothing wrong," said Radoslaw Sikorski, Poland's former foreign minister. Sikorski noted that Poland is the only country that has sought to hold accountable its own senior officials whose decisions allowed the CIA to commit human rights violations on its territory.

This lack of accountability also goes for the United States, which has failed to investigate or prosecute any of the senior officials who authorized the human rights violations at secret CIA prisons in Poland or anywhere else.

Of the 119 known detainees held in CIA black sites between 2001 and 2006, at least 39 were subjected to torture by CIA personnel, according to the US Senate Intelligence

Committee report on torture released last December. The two individuals tortured in Poland, Abu Zubaydah and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, were eventually sent to Guantanamo Bay, where they have remained since 2006.

While al-Nashiri is currently on trial for allegedly orchestrating the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole, Abu Zubaydah is considered one of Guantanamo's "forever prisoners," with no charges or trial foreseen. Not even a preliminary ruling has been made on his case in nearly seven years. In a May 12, 2015 article, ProPublica noted that his case has been stalled "for 2,477 days and counting."

As one of his lawyers, Helen Duffy, wrote in the *Guardian* last December following the long-delayed release of the Senate report's executive summary, "Abu Zubaydah might now be described as exhibit A" in the CIA's rendition and torture regime.

"He has the regrettable distinction of being the first victim of the CIA detention programme for whom, as the report makes clear, many of the torture (or 'enhanced interrogation') techniques were developed, and the only prisoner known to have been subject to all of them," Duffy wrote.

The Senate report contains about 1,000 references to Abu Zubaydah specifically, and confirms the ECHR's findings regarding the interrogation techniques that he endured.

Among these were “wallings” (being slammed repeatedly against a wall), sleep deprivation for up to 180 hours (usually nude and in stress positions), and waterboarding. The waterboarding of Abu Zubaydah, to which he was subjected 83 times in one month alone, was authorized at the highest levels of the US government.

He was also subjected to extreme confinement.

“Over the course of the entire 20 day ‘aggressive phase of interrogation,’ Abu Zubaydah spent a total of 266 hours (11 days, 2 hours) in the large (coffin size) confinement box and 29 hours in a small confinement box, which had a width of 21 inches, a depth of 2.5 feet, and a height of 2.5 feet,” according to the Senate report. “The CIA interrogators told Abu Zubaydah that the only way he would leave the facility was in the coffin-shaped confinement box.”

Duffy notes that beyond Abu Zubaydah’s torture, the Senate report revealed how much misinformation was generated to justify his indefinite detention. Several of the CIA’s claims, in some cases reiterated long after they were known to be false, were repudiated point by point in the report.

For example, despite repeated assertions that Abu Zubaydah was “the third or fourth man in al-Qaida,” the report noted that the “CIA later concluded that Abu Zubaydah was not a member of al-Qaida.” It also refuted the government’s claims regarding his involvement in 9/11, that the interrogating team was “certain he was withholding information” and claims that his torture led to valuable actionable intelligence.

The case of Abu Zubaydah also led to the only prosecution to date in the United States associated with the CIA’s torture program – although not for anyone who was involved with his ill-treatment, but for the CIA whistleblower who first exposed it.

### **Selective prosecution**

In a 2007 interview with ABC News, former CIA officer John Kiriakou described the wa-

terboarding of Abu Zubaydah and later allegedly provided to a journalist the name of a covert officer with the CIA’s Counterterrorism Center who worked on the operation to capture and interrogate Abu Zubaydah. For this offense, Kiriakou was charged under the 1917 Espionage Act and accepted a plea bargain for which he spent two years in prison.

The prosecution of Kiriakou was criticized at the time by some segments of the international community. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, for example, in a resolution adopted in 2012 “condemned the prosecution that US authorities have initiated against former CIA agent John Kiriakou, who is accused of providing journalists details regarding the capture of Abu Zubaydah, an al-Qaeda suspect who is said to have been tortured in a secret CIA prison in Poland and is one of two individuals granted ‘victim status’ by prosecutors in Warsaw.”

Former US Congressman Jim Moran (D-VA) said on the House floor on Nov. 17, 2012 that the government’s targeting of Kiriakou represented a “selective prosecution.” He asked President Barack Obama to pardon Kiriakou and called the 15-year CIA veteran “an American hero.”

With Kiriakou out of prison after serving his term but the CIA’s torture victims still languishing in Gitmo with no end in sight, Poland has faced not only the political fallout for these policies but also the practical challenges of complying with the ECHR’s rulings considering the logistics of compensating individuals who are incarcerated – one a Palestinian and one a Saudi.

Nevertheless, “Poland is applying the ECHR’s decisions,” foreign ministry spokesman Marcin Wojciechowski said. “In the case of one person, the money was paid into a bank account indicated by his lawyers, in the case of the other, hit by international sanctions, we requested the creation of a judicial deposit,” he added.

**Abu Zubaydah spent a total of 266 hours (11 days, 2 hours) in the large (coffin size) confinement box and 29 hours in a small confinement box, which had a width of 21 inches, a depth of 2.5 feet, and a height of 2.5 feet**

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## THE PRICE OF WAR

**“George W. Bush has managed to do what forty-five years of Communist rule could not: puncture the image of essential American goodness that has always been the United States’ key selling point”**

In accordance with the ECHR ruling, Poland has also asked the United States to rule out the death penalty for the two men in line with an EU-wide ban on capital punishment, Wojciechowski told AFP.

### **Plausible deniability**

It irks many in Poland that their country is facing legal repercussions for the secret rendition and detention program which the CIA operated under then-President George W. Bush in several countries across the world after the 9/11 attacks. In Poland, the notion that the former Communist country would tolerate a secret CIA prison in which torture was being used was for years derided by the country’s politicians, journalists and the public as a crackpot conspiracy theory. Polish officials consistently denied the existence of any such prison.

But a string of revelations and political statements by Polish leaders acknowledged for the first time that the United States did indeed run a secret interrogation facility for terror suspects in 2002 and 2003 in a remote region of the country. In December 2014, Poland’s former President Aleksander Kwa niewski officially admitted that a secret CIA prison had existed at an airbase where terror suspects were brought for interrogation, but he insisted that Warsaw had no knowledge of abuse happening at the site.

It now appears that the denials of knowledge regarding torture may have been a case of willful ignorance or plausible deniability enforced by millions of dollars in cash payoffs. The Senate torture report revealed that, despite initial threats by Poland to halt the transfer of terror suspects to the black site 11 years ago, the government became more “flexible” after the CIA started giving it large amounts of money. Reportedly, the CIA paid Polish officials as much as \$50 million in cash to look the other way.

But according to Radoslaw Sikorski, Poland’s former foreign minister and now marshal of the lower house of the Parliament, the prison was set up out of friendship with

the United States. He now concedes however that the covert relationship has proved detrimental to Poland.

“We have been embarrassed by it, but even so we do not apologize for having the closest possible security and intelligence relationship with the United States,” he said. “We might have to pay compensation even though our personnel did nothing wrong. You can imagine how Polish people feel about it.”

“This left bad feelings on our side,” said Tadeusz Chabiera, founder of the Euro-Atlantic Association think tank in Warsaw. “We are a small country that was badly treated by a great power.”

The regrets and feelings of betrayal being expressed in Poland follow a long-established pattern that goes back at least a decade. Signs of this frustration first emerged in 2004 during the US-led occupation of Iraq, to which Poland committed 2,400 troops.

At the height of the Iraqi insurgency, David Ost reported in *The Nation* magazine on Sept. 16, 2004, “George W. Bush has managed to do what forty-five years of Communist rule could not: puncture the image of essential American goodness that has always been the United States’ key selling point.”

### **America’s eroding image**

In Poland, as in many countries around the world, much of that positive image was restored following the election in 2008 of Barack Obama and the promise of change that he seemed to represent. But as the Pew Research Center reported in 2013, “pro-America sentiment is slipping.”

“The decline is in no way comparable to the collapse of US standing in the first decade of this century,” according to Pew, which noted that at the time of the 2013 global survey, more than six-in-ten in Poland, France, Italy, and Spain had a favorable opinion of the US “But the ‘Obama bounce’ in the global stature of the United

States experienced in 2009 is clearly a thing of the past.”

It remains to be seen whether the recent developments on CIA torture will play any significant role in further eroding the image of the United States, but the incongruity of a small country like Poland bearing the brunt of liability for these illegal policies while no one in the United States answers for them should not be lost on any of the US's other allies.

In some of the countries that cooperated with the US rendition program, the wheels of justice are still spinning, albeit slowly.

A criminal investigation is ongoing in Lithuania, where prosecutors are focusing on a possible illegal border crossing involving CIA prisoner Mustafa al-Hawsawi who was allegedly tortured at a Lithuanian black site code-named Violet.

Meanwhile, calls are growing for authorities to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the existence of a CIA black site in Romania, with former Romanian President Ion Iliescu revealing last month that he had approved CIA requests to set up at least one secret prison where prisoners were subject to torture. Iliescu said he deeply regrets that decision.

Calls also continue for the United States to launch credible investigations into its own role, and to offer reparations to the victims of the rendition and torture program.

Coincidentally, the ECHR's penalty against Poland was imposed the same week

that the US was urged by the United Nations to financially compensate victims of the US torture regime and to prosecute the perpetrators of this abuse.

According to a report by the UN Human Rights Council's Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, issued on May 15, the US should “ensure that all victims of torture and ill-treatment – whether still in US custody or not – obtain redress and have an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation and as full rehabilitation as possible, including medical and psychological assistance.”

Further, the US should “ensure proper and transparent investigation and prosecution of individuals responsible for all allegations of torture and ill treatment, including those documented in the unclassified Senate summary on CIA activities published in 2014 and provide redress to victims.”

With a September deadline to respond to the UN's recommendations, the Obama administration will have to make a stated commitment to the world by deciding which of the recommendations will be accepted, and which will be rejected.

When it comes to torture prosecutions and compensation, it is safe to say that the world will be watching. **CT**

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*Nat Parry is an American who lives in Copenhagen. He is editorial director at OSCE PA . This article was first published at [http:// essentialopinion.wordpress.com](http://essentialopinion.wordpress.com)*

**The incongruity of a small country like Poland bearing the brunt of liability for these illegal policies while no one in the United States answers for them should not be lost on any of the US's other allies**

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# Living with the lies of occupation

**Mats Svensson** on stolen homes, impossible borders and bad consciences

**She would pass through the Gaza border, but still suffer the humiliation. The questions, the useless repetitions. Always the same questions**

*We know all about the logic of lies from South Africa's apartheid. It offers lessons for occupied Palestine*

She told me she longed to get away. Just for a few days. She had been invited to visit friends in Amman, only a few miles away.

She only needed to drive down the mountain, down to the Jordan River. If it can still be called a river. Once it had been a fast-flowing river, but now it is almost dry. Getting the “desert to bloom” has demanded a high price. The Jaffa oranges were thirsty. The river dried. The Dead Sea sank. The Dead Sea is already dead, but what will it be called when the salty water has disappeared? One day, perhaps, someone will explain in tourist brochures that “there was once a salt water lake here, but the oranges were thirsty, man never got enough, and the water ran out.”

Beyond the river, she would drive to the other side, up the mountain to Amman, where her friends would be waiting. Laughter, memories and a few hours to feel really good. But she hesitated. Although she wanted to see her friends, did she want to travel the short journey? The short journey that could take so many hours.

Memories envelope her. She had lately visited Gaza many times. It was fantastic to be there and feel she could contribute. But the transfer area, Eretz, made her shudder

... to see everyone in line, queuing to visit their daughters in the Israeli prison or to get hospital treatment. To watch them, patiently awaiting their turn to get through the barrier, while she herself passed relatively easily. She would pass through, but still suffer the humiliation. The questions, the useless repetitions. Always the same questions. The same game. Everyone plays their part, clowns in the a circus without laughter. .

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Then she thinks about Ben Gurion airport. This is probably where the effects of the apartheid system are clearest. Everyone receives a number. If you get a six, you are stuck for a long time. But you get a free, forced massage. Someone searches your hair. A hard and unpleasant massage. Last time this was you: you got a five. If the selection gives you a really low number, you may avoid the questions. You don't need to lie. With the right number, you are free.

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We learn to lie. To lie becomes a part of being, to participate in the theatre of lies. You leave things out. You don't tell the whole story. The lie becomes part of the system., Apartheid builds on this, to create the lie. Nobody is free.

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Vasu and Senzo are leaving Israel. They are going home to South Africa. Hanley, from the South African Representative Office, is



**She points at an old stone house and shouts out: this is our home. During a silent walk, Nakba day 2008**

Photo: Mats Svensson

helping Senzo. I'm helping Vasu. Hanley doesn't like to lie. As a diplomat, you are meant to tell the truth. Even in the epicenter of lies, only the truth should be told.

Hanley responds on behalf of Senzo.

"Where have you been?"

She answers, "In Ramallah."

"Where else have you been?"

"Jerusalem, Hebron and Gaza."

Seconds later, they are taken away. Placed in two rooms. Senzo, who is leaving the country to go home to Durban, is interrogated for almost two hours. They become stressed. They are close to missing their flight. It is important to answer correctly. Both feel like criminals.

Previously, Senzo had planned to return to Israel. After this, the regime has likely succeeded in getting rid of him for ever. During his short visit, he has reacted to all forms of apartheid. To travel with him has taught me a great deal. I had never been that close to the structures of apartheid before. My eyes were opened.

It was easier for Vasu. We passed through quicker. We didn't lie, we just didn't tell the truth. We were like a pair of stand-up comedians. But we were the only ones laughing.

The questioner was young, insecure. A young woman stood behind him, there just to control him, or maybe to give support. Perhaps he had just started his job, we his

During Senzo's short visit, he has reacted to all forms of apartheid. To travel with him has taught me a great deal. I had never been that close to the structures of apartheid before.

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## IS THIS FREEDOM?

**This guy has no script for unexpected answers. No imagination. In the airport outside Tel Aviv, there is no sense of humour**

first “guests.”

“How do you know him?” the young man asks, pointing at Vasu.

“Vasu is a very close friend,” I answer.

“How did you get to know each other?”

“I don’t think you want to know.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“I don’t think you want to know.”

“What do you mean?”

“Ok, we met at a bar.”

“How long has he been here?”

“Five days.”

“Where have you been?”

“I don’t think you want to know.”

“Answer my question, this is not a joke.”

He starts to become stressed.

Vasu starts to understand. He puts his hand on my shoulder.

“Ok, in a hotel room.”

“Have you met any Palestinians?”

“No, he didn’t want to go out.” I point at Vasu. “I am kind of sick of him now. Sick of him, sick of the hotel room. He’s come all the way from South Africa, but has only seen me and a hotel room.”

“What have you done in the hotel room?”

“In a hotel room for five days? I don’t think you want to know!” He hesitates. Doesn’t understand. This guy has no script for unexpected answers. No imagination. In the airport outside Tel Aviv, there is no sense of humor. The woman behind him raises her arms. We are playing the same game, but stay on our own half of the field. The young woman points behind her, and moves to the next “guest.” We begin the long wait for Senzo.

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I could write a book about how the occupation of Palestine creates liars. The person who takes another person’s house is a thief. The person who lives in stolen property is an accomplice. The broker who sells stolen property is a middleman. The thief, accomplice and middlemen, conceal their acts. The truth is pushed aside. What remains is the lie.

To assign themselves a village, to assign themselves a neighborhood, to occupy, un-

dermines. All that anyone holds or lives in eventually becomes stolen goods and the lie is carried forward from one generation to the next.

Most of those who live in the system, including the stranger or visitor, become a part of the system of lies. Fear of their own past becomes an everyday thing. Don’t speak, don’t tell, don’t pass the truth down to the children. A response to the tough question from the child or grandchild becomes the collective lie, “They left voluntarily.”

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We know the lies that emanated from South African apartheid. They permeated everything – the political system, courts, schools, police. It became evident when even church leaders became messengers of lies. Anyone who was affected by the system became the master of lies. For leaders, it was all about grabbing more. They could never get enough. The occupier used the lie to get away. It went so far that the system of apartheid eventually couldn’t handle the truth.

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They would probably impose a death sentence. The “Rivonia Trial” took place in 1963-64. The evidence was extensive. Ten people were charged. Nelson Mandela spoke on behalf of them all. His three hour speech on April 20, 1964 was to the highlight of this long drawn-out trial. He concluded,

“During my lifetime I have dedicated my life to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons will live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal for which I hope to live for and to see realized. But, my Lord, if it needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”

I would really want to know how Walter Sisulu felt when Mandela confessed, when he said he was willing to die for his actions. When Sisulu within himself understood that he probably would be executed. That his wife and children soon would see him for the last

time. However, the truth put the masters of lies on the defensive. It was as though they had planned to impose the death sentence, and couldn't face the truth. Mandela had explained what they had done and why.

The corrupt apartheid system required lies, not truth. Most Afrikaners went to church on Sundays. Many, but not all, priests had forgotten to tell Verwoerd, Vorster, and Botha that the truth sets you free. Churches became a part of the oppressive system. But the ones who faced execution in 1964 continued to live. They refused to surrender. They broke rocks. Rocks piled onto rocks, year after year, decade after decade. Humiliated, they refused to break down. Eventually, even the oppressor was terrified that the "terrorist" Nelson Mandela would die unfree.

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So, she didn't go to Amman, after all. She had become a part of the system that shuts out and shuts in. She had become part of the system of humiliation. A system where all become prisoners. Where the questions are continually asked, "How much should I humiliate, be humiliated? Should I lie or be truthful? Should I stay inside or try to break free?"

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In Israel, nobody is free. You vote for the one who upholds the apartheid system. You cast your vote to uphold the system of oppression. You vote and turn away. The West Bank is not here but over there, high up in the mountains. You will never go there. Gaza is someplace else.

You assure yourself that you cannot know what it's like there. You have never been there. You will never go there. You tell yourself that you have no responsibility. You turn away. Hand over responsibility to someone else. Do not want to hear, to see, to feel, to know. You want to be free.

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You live in an old stone house. You did not build it. You have just bought it, renovated it. You don't know and don't want to know who built it. You don't want to be questioned about it. But deep inside, you know.



**We walk silently through the neighbourhood, surrounded by people looking down at us from stolen properties. Nakba day 2008.** Photo: Mats Svensson

You hope that sometime in the future, it will be forgotten. You hope that your children will never need to know, never have to reflect on the truth. You hope one day to be forgiven.

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You cast your vote. Occupation continues! You want to stay. But the house belongs to someone else. You do not know what to tell your children. So the lie lives. Through you and through your children. **CT**

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*Mats Svensson is the author of Crimes, Victims And Witnesses: Apartheid In Palestine (Real African Publishers, Johannesburg)*

**You vote for the one who upholds the apartheid system. You cast your vote to uphold the system of oppression. You vote and turn away**

# The kids aren't all right

**Nick Turse** discusses presidential waivers, child soldiers, and an American-made army in Africa

**No one, I can say with some certainty, would have thought it a good idea to put an automatic weapon in my hands when I was 15. But someone thought it was acceptable for take kids in South Sudan**

## Malakal, South Sudan

I didn't really think he was going to shoot me. There was no anger in his eyes. His finger may not have been anywhere near the trigger. He didn't draw a bead on me. Still, he was a boy and he was holding an AK-47 and it was pointed in my direction.

It was unnerving.

I don't know how old he was. I'd say 16, though maybe he was 18 or 19. But there were a few soldiers nearby who looked even younger -- no more than 15.

When I was their age, I wasn't trusted to drive, vote, drink, get married, gamble in a casino, serve on a jury, rent a car, or buy a ticket to an R-rated movie. It was mandatory for me to be in school. The law decreed just how many hours I could work and prohibited my employment in jobs deemed too dangerous for kids -- like operating mixing machines in bakeries or repairing elevators. No one, I can say with some certainty, would have thought it a good idea to put an automatic weapon in my hands. But someone thought it was acceptable for them. A lot of someones actually. Their government -- the government of South Sudan -- apparently thought so. And so did mine, the government of the United States.

There was a reason that boy pointed his weapon my way. A lot of them, in fact. In the

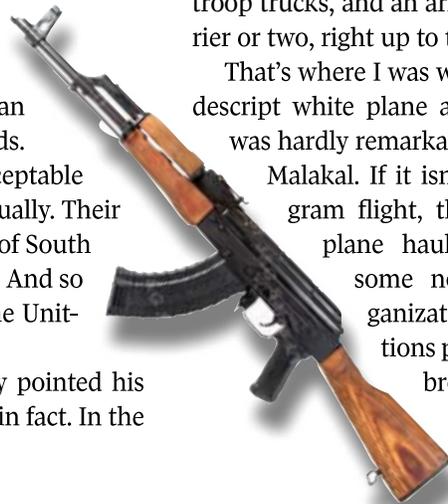
most immediate sense, I brought it upon myself. I was doing something I knew could get me in trouble, but I just couldn't help myself.

I tried to take a picture. Okay, I took a picture. More than one.

Public photography is frequently frowned upon in South Sudan. Take pictures of the wrong thing and the authorities might force you to delete the images, or confiscate your camera, or maybe worse.

The incident in question took place during last year's rainy season on the outskirts of sodden Malakal, a war-ravaged town 320 miles north of the capital, Juba. The airport, near the banks of the White Nile, had devolved into an airstrip. Nobody seemed to use its vintage blue and white terminal building anymore. Instead, you drove past cold-eyed Rwandan peacekeepers, United Nations troop trucks, and an armored personnel carrier or two, right up to the tarmac.

That's where I was when a fairly big, nondescript white plane arrived. That in itself was hardly remarkable. It's de rigueur for Malakal. If it isn't a World Food Program flight, then it's a big-bellied plane hauling in supplies for some non-governmental organization or a United Nations plane like the one that brought me there and that I was waiting for





**Public photography is frequently frowned upon in South Sudan. Take pictures of the wrong thing and the authorities might force you to delete the images, or confiscate your camera, or maybe worse.**

to whisk me away.

This nondescript white plane, however, was different from the others. When the Canadair CRJ-100, with “Cemair” written across its tail, taxied up and its door opened, it wasn’t your typical array of airline passengers who sallied down the gangway. At least not at first. It was a large group of young men in camouflage uniforms carrying assault rifles and machine guns. And they were met on the runway by scores of similarly attired, similarly armed young men who had arrived in a convoy just minutes earlier.

I’d never seen anything like it, so I pulled out my phone and tried to surreptitiously take a few photos. Not surreptitiously enough, though. A commander spotted me, got angry, and headed my way, waving his finger “no.” It was then that this boy with the AK-47, who had arrived in the convoy, turned toward me -- following the officer’s gaze -- and the rifle in his arms turned with him, and I stepped lively to put the commander between me and him, while quickly shoving my phone in my pocket and apologizing again and again.

Approximately 13,000 children have been

recruited into armed groups in South Sudan, according to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). In addition, about 400,000 youngsters have been forced out of school due to the civil war that has been flaring and simmering there for almost a year and a half. How so many children came to be affected by the conflict and why so many of them find themselves serving in the national army, the main rebel force, and other militias needs to be explained. It has much to do with civil wars that started in the 1950s and lasted for the better part of five decades, pitting rebels in the south against the government in the north of what was then a single country: Sudan.

Other factors include the 2005 peace deal that led to an independent South Sudan and transformed a guerrilla force into a national military, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army or SPLA; a rural culture in which cows are king because they are currency and young boys are armed to defend against cattle raids, as well as to conduct them; and an armed grudge match between political rivals representing different tribal groups in South Sudan

**A commander spotted me, got angry, and headed my way, waving his finger “no.” It was then that this boy with the AK-47, who had arrived in the convoy, turned toward me -- and the rifle in his arms turned with him**

**As thousands of refugee “Lost Boys” who had fled the civil war in southern Sudan began to be resettled in cities across the United States, their brothers and sisters back home continued to suffer as civilians or as child combatants**

that began in December 2013. Add all of this together and any tangible recent progress toward ridding South Sudan of the scourge of child soldiers has been obliterated.

Oh yes, and into that mix you would also have to factor the United States, a country that, as then US Senator, now Secretary of State John Kerry put it, helped “midwife” South Sudan into existence.

### **America’s African Army**

In 1996, the United States began funneling military equipment through nearby Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Uganda to rebels in southern Sudan as they battled for independence. A decade later, after the civil war ended in a peace deal, Washington officially began offering military “assistance” to the SPLA, according to State Department documents. At that point, without fanfare and far from the prying eyes of the press, the US launched a concerted campaign to transform the SPLA from a guerrilla force into a professional army.

When I recently asked about the scope of this training, Rodney Ford, the State Department’s Bureau of African Affairs spokesperson, told me: “The US government began a comprehensive defense professionalization program which started in [fiscal year] 2006 [and] continued after the referendum and independence of South Sudan until December 2013. This assistance included infrastructure, vehicles, human rights training, logistics, administration, medical, military justice, finance, and English language training among an array of other military subjects. The US government, for example, conducted a comprehensive medical program with the South Sudanese military which entailed procuring mobile field hospitals, building clinics, training nurses and improving the military’s medical infrastructure.”

Ford also emphasized that no “lethal equipment” was provided and noted that the lessons were designed to “give soldiers the tools and skills that would benefit the civilian population.” It sounded almost like

they were building a South Sudanese Peace Corps.

In reality, there was more to it. US support was not strictly a kumbaya effort of medical clinics and human rights instruction. It included the training and equipping of the elite presidential guard; the construction of a new SPLA headquarters in Juba; the renovation of a training center at the SPLA Command and Staff College in Malou, a town north of the capital; and the construction of the headquarters of two SPLA divisions in the towns of Mapel and Duar. Included as well were training programs for general officers and senior instructors; the deployment of a “training advisory team” to guide the overhaul of intelligence, communications, and other key functions; the employment of Kenyan and later Ethiopian instructors to teach basic military skills to SPLA recruits; the provision of secure voice and data communications to SPLA general headquarters; the development of riverine forces and up to 16 tactical watercraft; military police instruction; the training of commando forces by Ethiopian troops; and the establishment of a noncommissioned officers academy at Mapel with training from private contractors and later US military personnel. And according to a comprehensive report focusing on the years 2006-2010 by Richard Rands for the Small Arms Survey at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, this list only encompasses part of Washington’s efforts.

During the early 2000s, as thousands of refugee “Lost Boys” who had fled the civil war in southern Sudan began to be resettled in cities across the United States, their brothers and sisters back home continued to suffer as civilians or as child combatants. Between 2001 and 2006, however, as international pressure mounted and the civil war waned, some 20,000 child soldiers were also reportedly demobilized by the SPLA, although thousands remained in the force for a variety of reasons, including an extreme lack of other opportunities.

By 2010, when the SPLA pledged to demobilize all of its child soldiers by the end of the year, there were an estimated 900 children still serving in the force. The next year, under terms of the agreement that ended the civil war, the people of southern Sudan voted for their independence. Six months later, on July 9th, South Sudan became the world's newest nation, prompting a strong statement of support from President Barack Obama: "I am confident that the bonds of friendship between South Sudan and the United States will only deepen in the years to come. As Southern Sudanese undertake the hard work of building their new country, the United States pledges our partnership as they seek the security, development, and responsive governance that can fulfill their aspirations and respect their human rights."

While child soldiers, in fact, remained in the SPLA, the US nonetheless engaged in a years-long effort to pour billions of dollars in humanitarian aid, as well as hundreds of millions of dollars of military and security assistance, into South Sudan. Here's the catch in all this: the Child Soldiers Prevention Act (CSPA), passed by Congress in 2008 and enacted in 2010, prohibits the United States from providing military assistance to governments using child soldiers. This means that the Obama administration should have been barred from providing South Sudan with military assistance in 2011. The government, however, relied on a technicality to gain an exemption -- claiming the list of barred countries was created before the new nation formally came into existence.

Washington's support for the SPLA continued even as militia groups with children under arms were folded into the force. The US flung open the doors of advanced US military schools, training centers, colleges, and universities to SPLA personnel. In 2010 and 2011, for example, US taxpayers footed the bill for some of them to attend US military armor, artillery, intelligence, and infantry schools; in 2012 and 2013, it was the National Defense University, the US Army's Command

and General Staff College, the Marine Corps Combat Service Support School, and the Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey, California, among other institutions.

According to the State Department's 2013 Congressional Budget Justification, tens of millions of dollars were also earmarked for "refurbishment, operations, and maintenance of training centers and divisional headquarters; strategic and operational advisory assistance; unit and individual professional training; and communications and other non-lethal equipment for the military." All of it, according to official State Department documents, was designed to promote "a military that is professionally trained and led, ethically balanced, aware of moral imperatives, and able to contribute positively to national and South-South reconciliation."

At the same time it was attempting to transform the SPLA into a national army, the US military began operating from an outpost in South Sudan's hinterlands. At a Combined Operations Fusion Center in Nzara, a small contingent of US Special Operations forces worked with South Sudanese military intelligence as part of Observant Compass, an operation focused on degrading or destroying Joseph Kony's murderous Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Planes and helicopters, flown by private contractors, ferried US troops in and out of the small camp. It was also used by special ops personnel for training SPLA forces in everything from navigation skills to airmobile helicopter assaults and as a staging area for joint raids against the LRA in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Until just weeks before the civil war broke out in South Sudan in 2013, US special operators were conducting military assault drills at Nzara.

As the United States was pouring money and effort into building up the country's armed forces, human rights groups repeatedly complained about its military's use of children. This isn't to say that the Obama administration turned a blind eye to the practice. It was, in fact, much worse than that.

On September 28, 2012, for example, As-

**The Child Soldiers Prevention Act (CSPA), passed by Congress in 2008 and enacted in 2010, prohibits the United States from providing military assistance to governments using child soldiers**

**The presidential guard, trained and equipped by the US a few years earlier, was especially singled out for its brutal crimes**

sistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson issued a strong statement against the use of children as combatants. “Protecting and assisting children affected by armed conflict and preventing abuses against them is a priority for the United States,” he announced. “We remain committed to ending the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).” Carson went on to note that, adhering to provisions of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act, the US would indeed withhold certain security assistance to the DRC (though not all of it).

That same day, President Obama issued a statement of his own, waiving the application of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act with respect to several nations (as the act indeed allows a president to do). South Sudan was included on the grounds that such a decision was in “the national interest of the United States.” It was not, as it happens, in the interest of the children of South Sudan, not at least according to a senior United Nations official who was not authorized to speak on the record. The US waiver “was doing more harm than good because there is absolutely no political will to solve the child soldier problem,” that official explained to me.

In September 2013, Obama issued still another CSPA waiver -- in the form of a memorandum to Secretary of State Kerry -- keeping South Sudan eligible for US military assistance and the licenses needed to buy military equipment, again citing national interest.

By the end of the year, South Sudan had collapsed into civil war with many SPLA soldiers, especially those of the Dinka tribe, remaining loyal to President Salva Kiir’s government and others, predominantly of Nuer ethnicity, joining former Vice President Riek Machar’s rebel forces. Members of the SPLA were almost immediately implicated in mass atrocities, including the killing of Nuer civilians. That presidential guard, trained and equipped by the US a few years earlier, was especially singled out for its brutal crimes.

Machar’s opposition forces, including many Nuers formerly with the SPLA, carried out their own atrocities, including large-scale massacres of Dinka civilians and others. The State Department soon issued a report, indignant over the fact that “since the outbreak of conflict on December 15, [2013] there have been reports of forced conscription by government forces and recruitment and use of child soldiers by both government and anti-government forces” -- precisely the behavior the president had told the secretary of state was in the American national interest just a few months earlier.

### **The Kids Aren’t All Right**

“We worked closely with the SPLA to make sure the elimination of child soldiers or children associated with the military was a high priority,” a State Department official explained to me in a recent email. “Right before the outbreak of the most recent conflict the U.N. had stated that there were no more ‘child soldiers’ in the South Sudanese military though some still remained on SPLA barracks cooking and cleaning, etc.”

That’s not quite how the United Nations actually put it.

Before the civil war erupted, “the United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 162 children, all boys and mostly between 14 and 17 years of age,” 99 of whom were with the SPLA, 35 with a militia allied to a commander named David Yau Yau, 25 associated with the Lou Nuer tribe, and three with South Sudan’s national police. “Children associated with SPLA were identified in military barracks, wearing SPLA uniforms as well as undergoing military training in conflict areas,” according to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. “In addition, reports of the recruitment and use of 133 children were pending verification at the time of reporting.”

Since December 2013, the situation has become far worse. “We have been deeply disappointed to see the progress South Sudan



Young children with toy guns, Tamping Protection of Civilians Site, Juba, South Sudan, July 2014.

had achieved toward ending the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers since independence so gravely set back by the conflict that erupted in December,” US National Security Council spokesman Ned Price told me last year. “Both government-aligned and rebel forces have recruited and used child soldiers in the current conflict, and we call on both sides to end this practice.”

By May 2014, UNICEF estimated that 9,000 children had been recruited into the armed forces of both sides in the civil war, despite the fact that under “both international and South Sudanese law, the forcible or voluntary recruitment of persons under the age of 18, whether as a member of a regular army or of an informal militia, is prohibited.” Today, that number is estimated to have grown to 13,000.

About a year ago, Machar’s SPLA-In Opposition (SPLA-IO) pledged to end the recruitment of child soldiers. In late June, according to the U.N., Kiir’s government agreed to “restart the implementation of the Action Plan signed in 2012 to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Sudan People’s Liberation Army.”

There’s little evidence, however, that this has translated into tangible effects on the ground on either side. “Despite renewed

promises by both government and opposition forces that they will stop using child soldiers, both sides continue to recruit and use children in combat,” said Daniel Bekele, Africa director at Human Rights Watch (HRW), earlier this year. “In Malakal, government forces are even taking children from right outside the United Nations compound.”

A well-placed source within the United Nations offered a similar assessment. “Even though the SPLA re-committed in June of last year, they haven’t released many kids -- only a handful,” he explained. “The SPLA aren’t releasing their kids and there doesn’t seem to be any incentive to do so.”

Skye Wheeler, an expert on South Sudan at Human Rights Watch, agrees that the government hasn’t done much. “The SPLA is entirely aware that at least two former militiamen who are now fighting with the government and who have both been integrated into the army are using and recruiting numerous child soldiers but have not made any significant steps towards punitive action,” she told me recently by email. She added that she also knows of no significant efforts to curb the recruitment of children by Machar’s SPLA-IO.

Last fall, US Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power chaired a meeting

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**Does the United States, after years of waivers, bear a responsibility for helping to entrench South Sudan's practice of using child soldiers?**

of the U.N. Security Council on children and armed conflict in which she declared: "Perpetrators have to be held accountable. Groups that fail to change their behavior must be hit where it hurts." A State Department official who refused to be named for this piece was equally unequivocal when it came to South Sudan. "Since the outbreak of the conflict, there have been no waivers issued," he told me in late March, "and we have expressed our concerns about the recruitment of children by multiple parties in the current conflict." But months earlier -- just weeks after Power's pronouncement and nearly a year after the civil war in South Sudan began -- President Obama had indeed issued another partial waiver allowing continued support for the country, despite the prohibitions of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act.

When I asked about this discrepancy, the State Department backtracked, admitting that the president had "authorized a partial waiver of the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to South Sudan to allow for the provision of PKO assistance," citing a provision of the act and referring to PKO, or "peacekeeping," funding long used to train and equip the SPLA. In this instance, the official insisted that "none of the funds relevant to this partial waiver have been used to provide any direct assistance to the SPLA."

Andy Burnett, a spokesperson from the Office of the Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan, then went further. "Just to apologize, the wording on our response back [to you] was confusing," he told me. "We were speaking about waivers that had been done as in the past -- related to capacity building and assistance for the SPLA. This partial waiver was done with a more narrow intent."

In fact, the way that waiver was issued did not sit well with some. "We were disappointed that a partial waiver was put in place last year again without a clear and public statement by the [US government] that this was purely to allow certain activities (support to IGAD monitors and anti-LRA activities) and

that the government would not be receiving any significant military support until the abuses, including use and recruitment of child soldiers, are properly addressed," HRW's Skye Wheeler told me. She was referring to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's Monitoring and Verification Mechanism for South Sudan, set up in January 2014 to support mediation of the current civil war.

The State Department acknowledged the absence of such a declaration, but emphasized that the United States had expressed its "concern" about the issue to Kiir's government. Asked about South Sudan's response to those concerns, Burnett foggily replied that there were "differences of opinion about the extent to which [recruitment of children by the SPLA] is happening; arguments that when it's happening it's done by the opposition or other armed groups that are outside of [SPLA] control." In other words, after years of copious aid, effort, and waivers, the US can't even get the government of South Sudan to acknowledge its wrongdoing when it comes to recruiting child fighters, let alone halt it.

**Toy guns, real guns, and national interests**

The war in South Sudan has been a nightmare for children. UNICEF estimates that 600,000 have been affected by psychological distress, 235,000 are at risk of severe acute malnutrition this year, and 680 have been killed. "Mothers are burying their children... the level of slaughter, of innocent victims, innocent civilians, is simply unacceptable by any standard whatsoever," Secretary of State John Kerry recently told South Sudan's Eye Radio in scolding remarks. The leaders of South Sudan's warring parties "Salva Kiir, the president, and Riek Machar... need to come to their senses," he said. "They need to sign an agreement that's real and they need to stop allowing the people to be the victims of their power struggle." On one thing Kerry was adamant: "We need to have accountability as this goes forward."

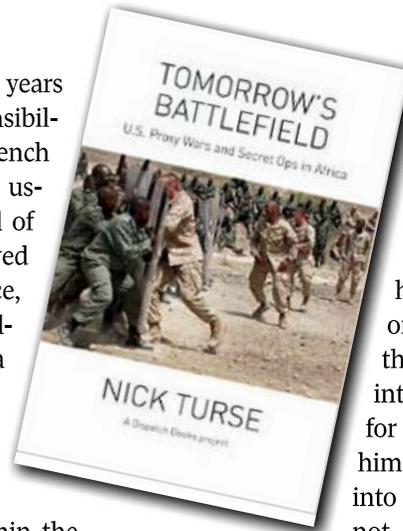
But what about US accountability? Does

the United States, after years of waivers, bear a responsibility for helping to entrench South Sudan's practice of using child soldiers? "In and of itself, it could be perceived as sanctioning the practice, but in the day-to-day reality of engaging, we were a strong advocate for moving beyond the practices that had been historically taking place and removing any child soldiers within the SPLA," says Andy Burnett. "I'm not saying we deserve full credit," he told me, even as he argued that the president's waivers had led to real progress.

Whatever progress might have been made before the civil war, as he readily admitted, was soon obliterated. So was the US training effort in South Sudan a failure?

After a wall of words about the difficulties involved in "creating an accountable and professional armed force" in the available time, Burnett took some responsibility, even if he carefully extended the blame to cover America's partners in the effort. "Yes, that the international effort to reform the SPLA was not successful in preventing something like this [the split of the SPLA in the war] is quite obvious," he told me. This admission, however, does little for the children toting arms now and those who will do so in the years ahead as part of what Burnett calls "a widening problem of child-soldiering," due to "even more incidences of recruitment of children by armed groups within this conflict."

Walking through a camp for internally displaced persons at a U.N. base in South Sudan's capital, Juba, one blazing hot day last summer, I watched a young girl in a bright pink dress and sporting a huge smile, and a somewhat younger boy in pink shorts and gray sandals chase each other through the muck. Each of them was holding a tiny, black



**PRIVACY IN THE MODERN AGE: The Search for Solutions**

Edited by Marc Rosenberg, Jeramie Scott, Julia Horowitz

The New Press

\$25.95

plastic pistol and pretending to shoot the other, just the type of game I reveled in as a boy.

As they raced around me, splattering mud and laughing, however, I began to wonder if one day just a few years down the road, she might be pressed into cooking or carrying water for soldiers and he might find himself with a real weapon thrust into his hands. It's a sad fact that, not so many years from now, I might well encounter that young boy -- his toy pistol exchanged for a real assault rifle -- on some out-of-the-way tarmac in the hinterlands of South Sudan. Should that day ever come, I imagine I'll feel just as unnerved as I did that morning in Malakal when a boy soldier turned his weapon in my direction. I'll then find little comfort in Presi-

dent Obama's contention that looking the other way on child soldiers is in "the national interest of the United States." And I'm sure I'll be just as disturbed that those "interests" -- cited by a president who has his own kids -- so easily trumped the interests of that boy in Malakal and the rest of South Sudan's children.

**CT**

*Nick Turse is the managing editor of TomDispatch.com and a fellow at the Nation Institute. A 2014 Izzy Award and American Book Award winner for his book Kill Anything That Moves, he has reported from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa and his pieces have appeared in the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Nation, and regularly at TomDispatch. His latest book, Tomorrow's Battlefield: US Proxy Wars and Secret Ops in Africa, has just been published. Reporting for this article was made possible by the generous support of Lannan Foundation and the Investigative Fund at the Nation Institute.*

**I watched a young girl in a bright pink dress and sporting a huge smile, and a somewhat younger boy in pink shorts and gray sandals chase each other through the muck. Each of them was holding a tiny, black plastic pistol and pretending to shoot the other**

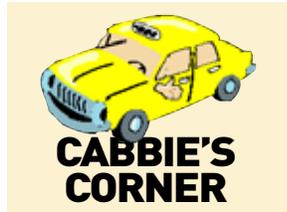
# A hundred degrees in the shade

**Dell Franklin** tells of the day the engine wouldn't stop,  
the air conditioner wouldn't work, and the passengers wouldn't fit

**Uh, Mr. Franklin, why," he asks, pointing. "Do you have that big swatch of duck tape covering your ignition?"**

I'm sitting on a bench in the shade at the San Luis Obispo airport as the blast furnace of Santa Ana winds tries to set an October record of 105 degrees at noon. A few passengers pause to observe my cab as it continues to run in gasps and wheezes. They glance at me in my brown polyester slacks and yellow polyester shirt soaked through with sweat, resembling a soggy creature that has just slithered out of a swamp. They take in my aviator sunglasses, splayed crooked on my face since I broke the stem earlier when I crashed my head against a wall while still foggy after a Friday night of drinking to escape the heat. And then they move on.

The Ford LTD I drive has no AC or tinted windows and the vinyl seats sizzle and turn the interior into a sauna. I'm waiting for a fare from LA on a plane that just landed and now here he is in brown alligator loafers, powder-blue cotton slacks, pink cotton shirt sans tie, ecru linen sport coat and pink tinted shades, sandy hair cut just right with a little left over at the neck – a tanned pastel prince toting Val Pack, overnight bag and computer case. He looks around and spots me standing to nod at him. He scrutinizes first me, then the cab as I take his bag and open the back door, stuff his gear in the trunk, and settle behind the wheel and turn on the meter.



"God, it's hot." He sighs, already miserable.

"One hundred and five, sir, and no AC. Sorry. Not my fault. You're going to the Embassy Suites, right?"

"Right. Thank you." He leans forward, concerned. "Why doesn't this cab have AC? All the cabs down south have AC."

"Because the corporate sadists who run this shoe-string subsidiary don't give a damn about us." I drive out of the airport onto a main artery. "They even made us join their union, which has no benefits except if I get killed in an accident driving these unsafe clunkers they'll send my mother a hundred bucks for burial. You see, they own school buses and

a transportation empire second to none in this country, but we must pay some kind of Mickey Mouse union dues so the execs can have a little slush fund when they hold their drunken conventions in Vegas so they can buy hookers when they're not on the golf course."

He falls back, sighs. "Wow. You're one angry employee, aren't you, Mr...?"

"Franklin. Very angry employee."

"Uh, Mr. Franklin, why," he asks, pointing. "Do you have that big swatch of duck tape covering your ignition?"

"To guard against turning it off."

“Excuse me, Mr. Franklin, but I’m a little lost here...”

“Our mechanic has been waiting for a part for over a week. If we turn the engine off, it won’t start again. There’s only one other cab out there, and it barely runs. This cab has been running continuously for over a week. The engine has over 200,000 miles, so it could blow at any time. We’re like the Pony Express – one gets off the horse, another jumps on, until the poor horse dies of heat stroke.”

Glancing in my rearview mirror, I notice the pastel prince is already lathered in sweat, mopping his face with a monogrammed hanky. “Good God,” he croaks, and sits silently for the remainder of the ride, until I pull into the Embassy Suites. I jump out to open his door and place his baggage on the ground. He asks for a receipt for tax purposes, which I expertly fill out. The ride is eleven bucks and he tips me \$4 and, when I thank him like a grateful peon he hands me his business card, the reading of which stuns me.

“Mr. Franklin, I work for the corporation that employs you,” he says. “I’m here to check on a few irregularities, and I promise I will look into the complaints you have registered. Thank you for a very enlightening ride.” I watch the pastel prince enter the coral colored hotel and think: the prick could’ve tipped me a sawbuck.

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I’m sent immediately back to the airport for two women visiting the minimum and medium security prison on the outskirts of town on Highway 1. These exhausted, elephantine women, dressed in muumuus, fan themselves, their faces flushed, as they await me on the shaded bench. I skid to a stop and jump out to take their luggage while they squeeze into the back seat. I stash their suitcases and start out as the ladies fan themselves more and ask why there’s no AC. After I explain, they ask if I can return to the low-security prison after visiting hours and take them to their motel. They sweat silently until I drop them off at the prison where they tip me twenty cents on a \$14.80 fare.

I stay busy in the teeming Saturday after-

noon home-maintenance traffic and return at 3:30 to fetch the two women. They sit on a bench, peaked and lifeless, just able to lift their massive bulk when I skid to a stop. After they’re stuffed in and settled, fanning their sweat-glazed faces, I start down the single lane road leading to the highway. These ladies – mother and daughter – are staying at a motel across the street from the Greyhound depot. My dispatcher calls and asks if my passengers would mind if I pick up another woman at the medium security prison on the other side of the grounds. I ask and they nod.

I swerve around and approach the other prison, where a stream of visitors heads for the parking lot. A mammoth woman carrying a bible and transparent plastic purse with single bills and coins, wearing shades and clogs and also dressed in a muumuu, waddles around my cab and gets into the seat beside me. She is sweat-glazed and panting.

“Greyhound,” she rasps, and opens her bible. I am about to pull away when I hear a desperate, female voice cry out: “Cabby! Cabby! Wait! I’m going to Greyhound, too!”

I spot yet another obese bible-toting woman heading my way in the usual muumuu, shades and clog. She is enormous, moving in struggling lurches, chin sagging onto enormous breasts. Gasping for air, she opens the rear door and squeezes into the back seat. There are yelps of terror. The two ladies already there are squished against the door, the older one’s eyes popping, pleading with me, helpless, frantic. “No, no, no...” she wails. “For the love of God, please don’t let her IN!”

I jump out. “YOU!” I point to the new arrival wedged into the back seat, unable to close the door. “Move to the front!” Now I bend down into my window and address the shotgun occupant. “YOU! Take the back seat. Switch. We need a switch here, ladies.”

Unhappy with my commands, yet docile, they do as ordered. Shotgun takes a while to unglue herself from the sticky front seat and watches the enormous woman tortuously extricate herself from the back. The switch, in slow motion, is complete. In the back they are

**She is enormous, moving in struggling lurches, chin sagging onto enormous breasts. Gasping for air, she opens the rear door and squeezes into the back seat**

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## ON THE ROAD

**The four stand together divvying up singles, quarters, dimes, nickels, and pay me with exact change**

so cramped they cannot fan, a morose crew. The cab is sinking into the melting, blazing asphalt. I get in, adding another 185 pounds. A pillow-like arm nudges against me. I wonder if the LTD can survive this mash of humanity, for the shocks are already sprung from maniacal cabbies bouncing balls-out over speed bumps and ruts. Out on the highway, there is a hill to ascend. Cars slow behind us as we chug slowly, straining, groaning, losing power. Amazingly, for the first time all day, there is no comment about the lack of AC, though shotgun woman has a comment. "This thing's a real pig. What's wrong with it?"

"It's been running non-stop for a week, because if I turn it off it won't start again. That's why there's a big gob of duck tape over the ignition. Until the part that'll make the ignition work again comes in, this beast will continue to run. And slowly but surely it is losing power and could die any minute now and strand us in this desert with no rescue cabs available."

"Hummmph." She opens her bible.

We make it up the hill and begin coasting down. My aviator glasses fall off my face and land in the cavernous lap beside me; and the lady picks them up in her pudgy hand and hands them back without looking. I toss them on the dash and ask where she's from.

"Porterville," she replies.

"What's Porterville like?"

"It's small."

I nod. "You like Porterville?"

"I used to, 'til the Mongs came."

"Mongs?"

"Boat people. The Mongs trap cats and cook 'em. They're no good. They ruined my neighborhood."

"We got the Veet'meez in Fresno," says the former shotgun woman from the back. "They ain't no better than them Mongs. Fresno use ta be a good place ta live 'til the Mexicans and Veet'meez took over."

"The Mongs'd sooner kill a person and cook 'em like they would a cat or dog," my front seat companion tells her. "They don't believe in God."

"The Veet'meez don't either. I wish they'd

go back to where they belong."

We enter San Luis Obispo's main artery and move sluggishly through town. The ladies have gone quiet.

"So whattaya do for fun in Porterville?" I ask my seat companion.

"There ain't nothin' to do in Porterville," she replies, and reopens her bible at the marker.

"Do they have any McDonald's?"

"Three."

"Three? In a small town like that?"

"I said they got three!" she snaps; weary of my inquisition, sighing mountainously, slapping shut her bible.

I let the subject drop and head toward Greyhound. The poor things have a long, stifling ride ahead, and the Central Valley's an even hotter cauldron. I have visions of the behemoth women stewing in a gigantic pot in some remote jungle with a village of scrawny Mongs dancing around them, whooping and hopping while wielding spears, faces and bodies smeared with war paint as they anticipate a feast that will keep them going for a week, until they return to their usual shenanigans of growing food and trapping animals.

I watch my meter. The usual fare to Greyhound from the prisons is around \$11. I could charge the Valley women separately at \$11 each and another \$11 for the two in the back, but I decide to give them a break. I'll charge them whole crew \$11. But I try and slow down and push it to around \$11.40, to see if they'll give me a 60 cent tip. When I pull into the station the meter reads \$11.60. Just before we arrive I explain the good deal I'm giving them. The ladies grunt. I am surprised at how quickly they remove themselves from the cab. The four stand together divvying up singles, quarters, dimes, nickels, and pay me with exact change.

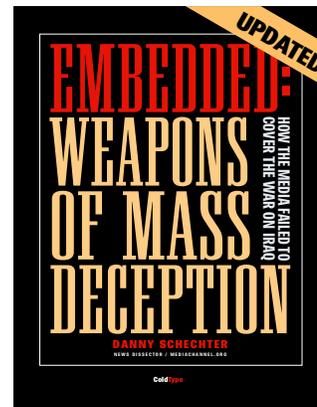
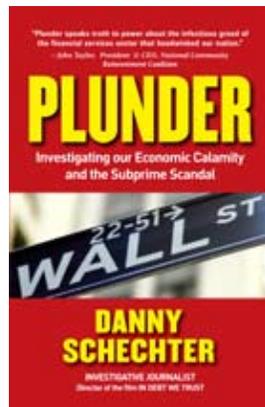
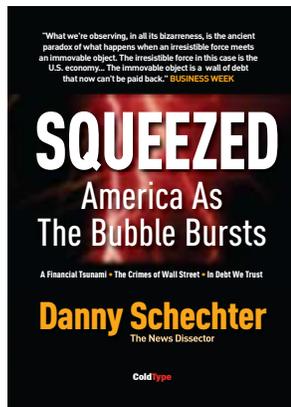
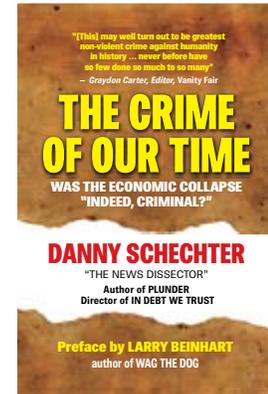
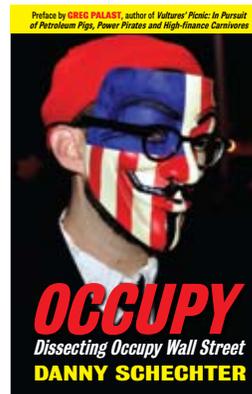
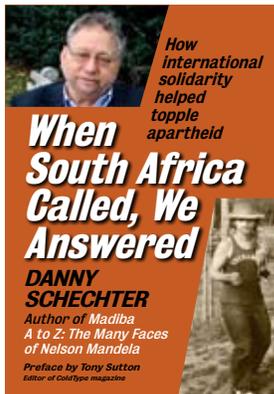
I remove the baggage for the two LA ladies and place it on the ground. The older one asks if I wouldn't mind driving them and their baggage across the street to their motel, about 50 yards away. I fold my arms and tell them it'll be five bucks. They yelp as if stabbed. The mother offers two bucks.

I get in my cab and drive off.

**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>*

# REMEMBERING DANNY SCHECHTER 1942 - 2015



As an appreciation of the work of Danny Schechter, the News Dissector, over the past 50 years, we're giving away free downloads of these seven books, all published in association with ColdType.net

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# Young minds

**William Blum** wonders if the United States' foreign policy is almost as barbaric and depraved as that of the Islamic State

**How do young people raised in the West – the same West we know and love – coldly machine-gun to death more than a dozen Iraqis, men, women, children, reporters, absolutely in cold blood**

*She was a redheaded rebel, the singer in the family, a trash-talking, tattooed 21-year-old wrapped up in a hip-hop dream of becoming Holland's Eminem. Then Betsy found Allah. After her sudden conversion to Islam last summer, Betsy began dressing in full Muslim robes. By January, the once-agnostic Dutch woman, raised in a home where the only sign of religion was a dusty Bible on a shelf, began defending homegrown terrorists. ... Denis Cuspert, a German hip-hop artist known as Deso Dogg who converted in 2010 and later joined The Islamic State [ISIS], delivers a rap-like chant portraying the path to jihad as a chance for empowerment, spiritual fulfillment, vengeance and adventure. ... 'The door to jihad is standing there waiting for you,' says a Swedish convert to Islam in a video. 'It is the fastest way to paradise.'*

**T**ales told many times in recent years, all over Europe, at times in the United States. Parents and authorities are deeply distressed and perplexed. How can young people raised in the West – the freedom-obsessed, democratic, peace-loving, humanitarian, fun-filled West – join the Islamic State and support the public cutting off of the heads of breathing, living human beings? Each of us in our own way are lost souls searching for answers to the awful mysteries of life. But THIS? What life-quest does The Islamic State satisfy

that our beloved West can't satisfy? ISIS is unique in the world in making US foreign policy look good. The Defense Department and the State Department have special task forces studying the new enemy; the latter regularly puts out videos to counteract the many Islamic State videos.

I hope those researching the question look inwardly as well as at ISIS. How do young people raised in the West – the same West we know and love – coldly machine-gun to death more than a dozen Iraqis, men, women, children, reporters, absolutely in cold blood, in the video made famous by Chelsea Manning; but this of course is nothing compared to Fallujah with its two-headed babies, even three-headed, an eye in the middle of the forehead. The Islamic State has done nothing compared to what the United States did to the people of Fallujah. Can anyone name a horror in all of history more gruesome? Yes, there are some, but not many; and much of Fallujah was personally executed by nice, clean-cut, freedom-obsessed, democratic, peace-loving, humanitarian, fun-filled made-in America young men.

Here's US Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, in his memoir, April 6, 2004, the time of Fallujah, in video teleconference with President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. "We've got to smash somebody's

ass quickly,” said Powell. “There has to be a total victory somewhere. We must have a brute demonstration of power.” Then Bush spoke: “At the end of this campaign al-Sadr must be gone. At a minimum, he will be arrested. It is essential he be wiped out. Kick ass! If somebody tries to stop the march to democracy, we will seek them out and kill them! We must be tougher than hell! This Vietnam stuff, this is not even close. It is a mind-set. We can’t send that message. It’s an excuse to prepare us for withdrawal. ... There is a series of moments and this is one of them. Our will is being tested, but we are resolute. We have a better way. Stay strong! Stay the course! Kill them! Be confident! Prevail! We are going to wipe them out! We are not blinking!”

*“Years from now when America looks out on a democratic Middle East, growing in freedom and prosperity, Americans will speak of the battles like Fallujah with the same awe and reverence that we now give to Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima” in World War II. – George W. Bush, 2006*

Well, George, it’s either that or Fallujah was one of the key reasons for the rise of ISIS.

My point here is not that United States foreign policy is as barbaric and depraved as The Islamic State. It’s not. Most of the time. I simply hope to make it a bit easier to understand the enemy by seeing ourselves without the stars in our eyes. And I haven’t even mentioned what the United States has led the world in for over a century – torture.

### **The ever-fascinating and ever-revealing subject of ideology**

Jeb Bush has gotten himself into trouble because, like all politicians running for office, he is unable to give simple honest answers to simple straightforward questions, for fear of offending one or another segment of the population. How refreshing it would be to have a politician say only what s/he actually believes, even if it’s as stupid as usual.

The brother of the previous president

has been asked repeatedly: “Knowing what we know now, would you have authorized the invasion of Iraq?” At first his answer was “yes”, then at times “I don’t know”, even “no” at least once, or he’s refused to answer at all. Clearly he’s been guessing about which reply would win him points with the most people, or which would lose him the least.

This caused a minor uproar, even among conservatives. Right-wing radio host Laura Ingraham was moved to make a rare rational remark: “You can’t still think that going into Iraq, now, as a sane human being, was the right thing to. If you do, there has to be something wrong with you.”

Such discussions always leave out a critical point. Why did millions of Americans, and even more millions abroad, march against the war in the fall of 2002 and early 2003, before it began? What did they know that the Bush brothers and countless other politicians didn’t know? It was clear to the protesters that George W. Bush and Dick Cheney were habitual liars, that they couldn’t care less about the people of Iraq, that the defenseless people of that ancient civilization were going to be bombed to hell; most of the protesters knew something about the bombings of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Panama, Yugoslavia, or Afghanistan; and they knew about napalm, cluster bombs, depleted uranium, etc. Those who marched knew that the impending war was something a moral person could not support; and that it was totally illegal, a textbook case of a “war of aggression”; one didn’t have to be an expert in international law to know this.

Didn’t the Brothers Bush, Hillary Clinton (who voted for the war in the Senate), et al know about any of these things? Of course they did. They just didn’t care enough; supporting the empire’s domination and expansion was a given, and remains so; no US politician gets very far – certainly not to the White House – questioning the right of American Exceptionalism to impose itself

**Why did millions of Americans, and even more millions abroad, march against the war in the fall of 2002 and early 2003, before it began? What did they know that the Bush brothers and countless other politicians didn’t know?**

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## ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

**Virtually everybody, if given the choice, would prefer to work at jobs where the main motivations are to help others, improve the quality of life of society, and provide themselves with meaningful and satisfying work**

upon humanity (for humanity's sake, of course).

Consider the darlings du jour of the American Left, Senators Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders. They very seldom speak out critically about US foreign policy or even the military budget. The anti-war/anti-imperialist segment of the American left need to put proper pressure on the two senators.

Mr. Sanders should also be asked why he routinely refers to himself as a “democratic socialist”. Why not just “socialist”? It's likely a legacy of the Cold War. I think that he and other political figures who use the term are, consciously or unconsciously, trying to disassociate themselves from communism, the Soviet Union, Marxism, etc., all those things that are not good for you. (The word “socialist” once connoted furtive men with European accents, sinister facial hair, and bombs.)

It would be delightful to hear Sanders openly declare that he is simply a “socialist”. Socialism can be democratic; indeed, a lot more so than capitalism, particularly concerning the distribution of wealth and all the ramifications of that. Presented here are some relevant thoughts on these issues, from myself and others:

It's only the socialists who maintain as a bedrock principle: People before Profit, which can serve as a very concise definition of socialism, an ideology anathema to the Right and libertarians, who fervently believe, against all evidence, in the rationality of a free market. I personally favor the idea of a centralized, planned economy. (Oh my God, a damn Commie!) Modern society is much too complex and technical to leave its operation in the hands of libertarians, communitarians, or anarchists seeking to return to a “community” or “village” level.

*“Washington has always regarded democratic socialism as a greater challenge than totalitarian Communism, which was easy to vilify and made for a handy enemy. In the*

*1960s and '70s, the favored tactic for dealing with the inconvenient popularity of economic nationalism and democratic socialism was to try to equate them with Stalinism, deliberately blurring the clear differences between the world views.” – Naomi Klein*

*“If it is true, as often said, that most socialist regimes turn out to be dictatorships, that is largely because a dictatorship is much harder to overthrow or subvert than a democracy.” – Jean Bricmont, Belgian author of “Humanitarian Imperialism” (2006)*

Without a proclaimed socialist vision, radical change becomes too many different things for too many different individuals and groups.

*“Call it democracy, or call it democratic socialism, but there must be a better distribution of wealth within this country for all of God's children.” – Martin Luther King*

The United States is so fearful of the word “socialism” that it changed the “social sciences” to the “behavioral sciences”.

If for no other reason than to save the environment, the world needs to abandon the capitalist system. Every day, in every spot on earth, in a multitude of ways, corporations are faced with a choice: to optimize profits or to do what's best for the planet.

The great majority of people in any society work for a salary. They don't need to be motivated by the profit motive. It's not in anyone's genes. Virtually everybody, if given the choice, would prefer to work at jobs where the main motivations are to help others, improve the quality of life of society, and provide themselves with meaningful and satisfying work. It's not natural to be primarily motivated by trying to win or steal “customers” from other people, no holds barred, survival of the fittest or the least honest.

And what about this thing called “democracy”, or “majority rule”? Many millions marched against the invasion of Iraq before it began. I don't know of a single soul who marched in favor of it, although I'm sure there must have been someone some-

where. That lucky soul was the one they listened to.

Finally, the question being asked of Jeb Bush and others is not the best one. They're asked: "Knowing what we know now, would you have authorized the invasion of Iraq?" A more important question would be: "Knowing what we knew then, would you have authorized the invasion of Iraq?" And the answer should be "no", because we knew that Saddam Hussein had destroyed his weapons of mass destruction. This is very well documented, from diverse sources, international and Iraqi, including Saddam himself and his chief lieutenants.

### **The American mainstream media – a classic tale of propaganda**

*"When an American warplane accidentally struck the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999 during the Kosovo campaign ..."*

These words appeared in the *Washington Post* on April 24, 2015 as part of a story about US drone warfare and how an American drone attack in Pakistan in January had accidentally killed two Western aid workers. The *Post* felt no need to document the Belgrade incident, or explain it any further. Almost anyone who follows international news halfway seriously knows about this famous "accident" of May 7, 1999. The only problem is that the story is pure propaganda.

Three people inside the Chinese embassy were killed and Washington apologized profusely to Beijing, blaming outdated maps among other problems. However, two well-documented and very convincing reports in the *Observer* of London in October and November of that year, based on NATO and US military and intelligence sources, revealed that the embassy had been purposely targeted after NATO discovered that it was being used to transmit Yugoslav army communications. The Chinese were doing this after NATO planes had successfully silenced the Yugoslav government's own transmit-

ters. The story of how the US mainstream media covered up the real story behind the embassy bombing is absolutely embarrassing. (See Extra! Update, the magazine of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting [FAIR], Dec 1999; appeared first as solitary article October 22, 1999 – "US Media Overlook Exposure on Chinese Embassy Bombing.")

Over and above the military need, there may have been a political purpose served. China, then as now, was clearly the principal barrier to US hegemony in Asia, if not elsewhere. The bombing of the embassy was perhaps Washington's charming way of telling Beijing that this is only a small sample of what can happen to you if you have any ideas of resisting or competing with the American juggernaut. Since an American bombing campaign over Belgrade was already being carried out, Washington was able to have a much better than usual "plausible denial" for the embassy bombing. The opportunity may have been irresistible to American leaders. The chance might never come again.

All of US/NATO's other bombing "mistakes" in Yugoslavia were typically followed by their spokesman telling the world: "We regret the loss of life." These same words were used by the IRA in Northern Ireland on a number of occasions over the years following one of their bombings which appeared to have struck the wrong target. But their actions were invariably called "terrorist".

Undoubtedly, the US media will be writing of the "accidental" American bombing of the Chinese embassy as long as the empire exists and China does not become a member of NATO. **CT**

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**William Blum** is an author, historian, and renowned critic of US foreign policy. He is the author of *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* and *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*, among others. He blogs at <http://williamblum.org>

**The bombing of the Chinese embassy was perhaps Washington's charming way of telling Beijing that this is only a small sample of what can happen to you if you have any ideas of resisting or competing with the American juggernaut**

# One nation under surveillance

**John W. Whitehead** warns of dangers posed by the NSA's techno tyranny

**Beware of what you say, what you read, what you write, where you go, and with whom you communicate, because it will all be recorded, stored and used against you**

*"The ultimate goal of the NSA is total population control." – William Binney, NSA whistleblower*

**T**he United States now has a fourth branch of government. As I document in my new book "Battlefield America: The War on the American People," this fourth branch came into being without any electoral mandate or constitutional referendum, and yet it possesses superpowers, above and beyond those of any other government agency save the military. It is all-knowing, all-seeing and all-powerful. It operates beyond the reach of the president, Congress and the courts, and it marches in lockstep with the corporate elite who really call the shots in Washington, DC.

You might know this branch of government as Surveillance, but I prefer "technotyranny," a term coined by investigative journalist James Bamford to refer to an age of technological tyranny made possible by government secrets, government lies, government spies and their corporate ties.

Beware of what you say, what you read, what you write, where you go, and with whom you communicate, because it will all be recorded, stored and used against you eventually, at a time and place of the government's choosing. Privacy, as we have known it, is dead.

The police state is about to pass off the ba-

ton to the surveillance state.

Having already transformed local police into extensions of the military, the Department of Homeland Security, the Justice Department and the FBI are preparing to turn the nation's soldier cops into techno-warriors, complete with iris scanners, body scanners, thermal imaging Doppler radar devices, facial recognition programs, license plate readers, cell phone Stingray devices and so much more.

This is about to be the new face of policing in America.

The National Security Agency (NSA) has been a perfect red herring, distracting us from the government's broader, technology-driven campaign to render us helpless in the face of its prying eyes. In fact, long before the NSA became the agency we loved to hate, the Justice Department, the FBI, and the Drug Enforcement Administration were carrying out their own secret mass surveillance on an unsuspecting populace.

Just about every branch of the government – from the Postal Service to the Treasury Department and every agency in between – now has its own surveillance sector, authorized to spy on the American people. Then there are the fusion and counterterrorism centers that gather all of the data from the smaller government spies – the police, public health officials, transportation, etc. – and make it accessible for all those in power. And

of course that doesn't even begin to touch on the complicity of the corporate sector, which buys and sells us from cradle to grave, until we have no more data left to mine.

The raging debate over the fate of the NSA's blatantly unconstitutional, illegal and ongoing domestic surveillance programs is just so much noise, what Shakespeare referred to as "sound and fury, signifying nothing."

It means nothing: the legislation, the revelations, the task forces, and the filibusters.

The government is not giving up, nor is it giving in. It has stopped listening to us. It has long since ceased to take orders from "we the people."

If you haven't figured it out yet, none of it – the military drills, the surveillance, the militarized police, the strip searches, the random pat downs, the stop-and-frisks, even the police-worn body cameras – is about fighting terrorism. It's about controlling the populace.

Despite the fact that its data snooping has been shown to be ineffective at detecting, let alone stopping, any actual terror attacks, the NSA continues to operate largely in secret, carrying out warrantless mass surveillance on hundreds of millions of Americans' phone calls, emails, text messages and the like, beyond the scrutiny of most of Congress and the taxpayers who are forced to fund its multi-billion dollar secret black ops budget.

Legislation such as the USA Patriot Act serves only to legitimize the actions of a secret agency run by a shadow government. Even the proposed and ultimately defeated USA Freedom Act, which purported to restrict the reach of the NSA's phone surveillance program – at least on paper – by requiring the agency to secure a warrant before surveillance could be carried out on American citizens and prohibiting the agency from storing any data collected on Americans, amounted to little more than a paper tiger: threatening in appearance, but lacking any real bite.

The question of how to deal with the NSA – an agency that operates outside of the

system of checks and balances established by the Constitution – is a divisive issue that polarizes even those who have opposed the NSA's warrantless surveillance from the get-go, forcing all of us – cynics, idealists, politicians and realists alike – to grapple with a deeply unsatisfactory and dubious political "solution" to a problem that operates beyond the reach of voters and politicians: how do you trust a government that lies, cheats, steals, sidesteps the law, and then absolves itself of wrongdoing to actually obey the law?

Since its official start in 1952, when President Harry S. Truman issued a secret executive order establishing the NSA as the hub of the government's foreign intelligence activities, the agency – nicknamed "No Such Agency" – has operated covertly, unaccountable to Congress all the while using taxpayer dollars to fund its secret operations. It was only when the agency ballooned to 90,000 employees in 1969, making it the largest intelligence agency in the world with a significant footprint outside Washington, DC, that it became more difficult to deny its existence.

In the aftermath of Watergate in 1975, the Senate held meetings under the Church Committee in order to determine exactly what sorts of illicit activities the American intelligence apparatus was engaged in under the direction of President Nixon, and how future violations of the law could be stopped. It was the first time the NSA was exposed to public scrutiny since its creation.

The investigation revealed a sophisticated operation whose surveillance programs paid little heed to such things as the Constitution. For instance, under Project SHAMROCK, the NSA spied on telegrams to and from the US, as well as the correspondence of American citizens. Moreover, as the Saturday Evening Post reports, "Under Project MINARET, the NSA monitored the communications of civil rights leaders and opponents of the Vietnam War, including targets such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Mohammed Ali, Jane Fonda, and two active US Senators. The NSA had

**Despite the fact that its data snooping has been shown to be ineffective at detecting, let alone stopping, any actual terror attacks, the NSA continues to operate largely in secret**

**Presidents, politicians, and court rulings have come and gone over the course of the NSA's 60-year history, but none of them have done much to put an end to the NSA's "technotyranny." The beast has outgrown its chains. It will not be restrained**

launched this program in 1967 to monitor suspected terrorists and drug traffickers, but successive presidents used it to track all manner of political dissidents.”

Senator Frank Church (D-Ida.), who served as the chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence that investigated the NSA, understood only too well the dangers inherent in allowing the government to overstep its authority in the name of national security. Church recognized that such surveillance powers “at any time could be turned around on the American people, and no American would have any privacy left, such is the capability to monitor everything: telephone conversations, telegrams, it doesn't matter. There would be no place to hide.”

Noting that the NSA could enable a dictator “to impose total tyranny” upon an utterly defenseless American public, Church declared that he did not “want to see this country ever go across the bridge” of constitutional protection, congressional oversight and popular demand for privacy. He avowed that “we,” implicating both Congress and its constituency in this duty, “must see to it that this agency and all agencies that possess this technology operate within the law and under proper supervision, so that we never cross over that abyss. That is the abyss from which there is no return.”

The result was the passage of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), and the creation of the FISA Court, which was supposed to oversee and correct how intelligence information is collected and collated. The law requires that the NSA get clearance from the FISA Court, a secret surveillance court, before it can carry out surveillance on American citizens. Fast forward to the present day, and the so-called solution to the problem of government entities engaging in unjustified and illegal surveillance – the FISA Court – has unwittingly become the enabler of such activities, rubberstamping almost every warrant request submitted to it.

The 9/11 attacks served as a watershed moment in our nation's history, ushering

in an era in which immoral and/or illegal government activities such as surveillance, torture, strip searches, SWAT team raids are sanctioned as part of the quest to keep us “safe.”

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, George W. Bush secretly authorized the NSA to conduct warrantless surveillance on Americans' phone calls and emails. That wireless wiretap program was reportedly ended in 2007 after the New York Times reported on it, to mass indignation.

Nothing changed under Barack Obama. In fact, the violations worsened, with the NSA authorized to secretly collect internet and telephone data on millions of Americans, as well as on foreign governments.

It was only after whistleblower Edward Snowden's revelations in 2013 that the American people fully understood the extent to which they had been betrayed once again.

What this brief history of the NSA makes clear is that you cannot reform the NSA.

As long as the government is allowed to make a mockery of the law – be it the Constitution, the FISA Act or any other law intended to limit its reach and curtail its activities – and is permitted to operate behind closed doors, relying on secret courts, secret budgets and secret interpretations of the laws of the land, there will be no reform.

Presidents, politicians, and court rulings have come and gone over the course of the NSA's 60-year history, but none of them have done much to put an end to the NSA's “technotyranny.”

The beast has outgrown its chains. It will not be restrained.

The growing tension seen and felt throughout the country is a tension between those who wield power on behalf of the government – the president, Congress, the courts, the military, the militarized police, the technocrats, the faceless unelected bureaucrats who blindly obey and carry out government directives, no matter how immoral or unjust, and the corporations – and those among the populace who are fi-

nally waking up to the mounting injustices, seething corruption and endless tyrannies that are transforming our country into a technocratized police state.

At every turn, we have been handicapped in our quest for transparency, accountability and a representative democracy by an establishment culture of secrecy: secret agencies, secret experiments, secret military bases, secret surveillance, secret budgets, and secret court rulings, all of which exist beyond our reach, operate outside our knowledge, and do not answer to “we the people.”

What we have failed to truly comprehend is that the NSA is merely one small part of a shadowy permanent government comprised of unelected bureaucrats who march in lockstep with profit-driven corporations that actually runs Washington, DC, and works to keep us under surveillance and, thus, under control. For example, Google openly works with the NSA, Amazon has built a massive \$600 million intelligence database for the CIA, and the telecommunications industry is making a fat profit by spying on us for the government.

In other words, Corporate America is making a hefty profit by aiding and abetting the government in its domestic surveillance efforts. Conveniently, as the Intercept recently revealed, many of the NSA’s loudest defenders have financial ties to NSA contractors.

Thus, if this secret regime not only exists but thrives, it is because we have allowed it through our ignorance, apathy and naïve trust in politicians who take their orders from Corporate America rather than the Constitution.

If this shadow government persists, it is because we have yet to get outraged enough to push back against its power grabs and put an end to its high-handed tactics.

And if this unelected bureaucracy succeeds in trampling underfoot our last vestiges of privacy and freedom, it will be because we let ourselves be fooled into believing that politics matters, that voting makes a difference, that politicians actually represent the

citizenry, that the courts care about justice, and that everything that is being done is in our best interests.

Indeed, as political scientist Michael J. Glennon warns, you can vote all you want, but the people you elect aren’t actually the ones calling the shots. “The American people are deluded ... that the institutions that provide the public face actually set American national security policy,” stated Glennon. “They believe that when they vote for a president or member of Congress or succeed in bringing a case before the courts, that policy is going to change. But ... policy by and large in the national security realm is made by the concealed institutions.”

In other words, it doesn’t matter who occupies the White House: the secret government with its secret agencies, secret budgets and secret programs won’t change. It will simply continue to operate in secret until some whistleblower comes along to momentarily pull back the curtain and we dutifully – and fleetingly – play the part of the outraged public, demanding accountability and rattling our cages, all the while bringing about little real reform.

Thus, the lesson of the NSA and its vast network of domestic spy partners is simply this: once you allow the government to start breaking the law, no matter how seemingly justifiable the reason, you relinquish the contract between you and the government which establishes that the government works for and obeys you, the citizen – the employer – the master.

Once the government starts operating outside the law, answerable to no one but itself, there’s no way to rein it back in, short of revolution. And by revolution, I mean doing away with the entire structure, because the corruption and lawlessness have become that pervasive. **CT**

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**The NSA is merely one small part of a shadowy permanent government comprised of unelected bureaucrats who march in lockstep with profit-driven corporations**

# Death at the stadium

56 people died in a football disaster, writes **Mark Metcalf**, but why did it take so long to link it with the fires at the owner's other premises?

**There were narrow exit/entrance tunnels and the drop down from the seats into the standing paddock area at the front of the stand was significant, making it difficult for anyone to gain access to the pitch in the case of an emergency**

**T**ragedy, bravery and a commitment to uncover the truth underpin this sorrowful book. And, if justice is to be served, it should lead to a publicly funded re-examination of Britain's 1985 Bradford soccer stadium fire.

Twelve-year-old Martin Fletcher was in a joyful mood. In 1985, his beloved Bradford City had won promotion to the second flight of English football. One hour before the kick-off against Lincoln City in the final game of the season the City players paraded the championship trophy in front of the celebrating Bantams supporters.

Sitting together in the main stand alongside Martin were his father, brother, grandfather and uncle. Martin's future looked secure. His parents had just moved to a large house in Nottinghamshire and his young father appeared set for a successful business career. All five people's lives were to be torn apart in the events that unfolded.

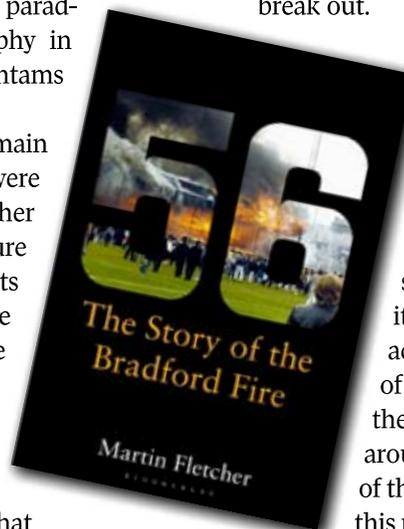
The City ground, Valley Parade, was in a dilapidated state and success on the pitch meant that the club was going to be required to rebuild the whole ground if they

wanted to play there in a higher level of football. The major problem was that the club was skint.

Valley Parade should have been rebuilt many years earlier. The main stand, where Martin and his family were seated, was wooden. Martin could recall an occasion when he had dropped some paper down between the gaps in the floor and had been swiftly reprimanded as in an era where smoking was still permitted, the fear was that a fire would break out.

Getting in and out of the main stand was also problematic. There were narrow exit/entrance tunnels and the drop down from the seats into the standing paddock area at the front of the stand was significant, making it difficult for anyone to gain access to the pitch in the case of an emergency. Meanwhile, the exit gates were locked until around 20 minutes before the end of the match, although, in fact, on this particular fateful day that was, surprisingly, not the case.

Other parts of the ground had previously been condemned after inspections had highlighted dangers in the structural foundations. Safety concerns had been ex-



**56: THE STORY OF THE BRADFORD FIRE**

Martin Fletcher

Bloomsbury

£13.59



**Deathtrap: 56 people died after a fire broke out at Bradford City's footballground.**

pressed by a number of authorities. A health and safety inspector for West Yorkshire County Council (WYCC) had instructed the club to remove litter from under the Main Stand in 1980. The following year the club had been asked by the same officer how they would evacuate the Main Stand in under 150 seconds. In July 1984, WYCC letters warned the club about combustible materials beneath the stand.

#### **Nothing they could do?**

WYCC's fire officer, Graham Karran, later wrongly claimed that there was nothing they could do to make the council listen. Yet there was legislation, which the fire authority had used to close a rickety Yorkshire County Cricket stand in Bradford, that

gave the fire authority powers to inspect undesignated sports grounds and if necessary close stands. A bankrupt Bradford City itself did nothing to improve facilities or to encourage any local inspecting body to visit their ground.

Such a culture of complacency had led to football stadium tragedies in the past. In 1946, 33 supporters at the Bolton Wanderers versus Stoke City FA Cup tie had been crushed to death when the Burnden Park terracing they were allowed onto became overcrowded. At Glasgow's Ibrox Stadium disaster in 1971, 66 Rangers fans died on a badly designed staircase. This resulted in new rules being slowly introduced to make grounds safer and ended the long-running situation whereby football clubs were largely allowed to self police safe-

**The club had been asked by the same officer how they would evacuate the Main Stand in under 150 seconds**

**A day after the fire, the owner told the press that he had been planning to start renovating the stand on 13 May with steel that was already on site. Photographs of the burnt out site proved this was a lie**

ty at their grounds.

Problem was that the licensing process, with grounds in the lower leagues last on the list, was to be staggered over four phases, and when Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979 there was no urgency to force football clubs to bring their grounds up to adequate standards.

With promotion in the offing, Bradford City could no longer not act. But where was the money to come from? The club had announced that improving the ground to bring it up to scratch would cost at least £400,000. This seemed a massive underestimate as considerably greater sums had been needed for much less work at other stadiums across Britain. Even so, the club would still need to find £100,000 to cover the 25 per cent shortfall if 75 per cent of its costs were covered by funds from the Football Grounds Improvement Trust. (FGIT)

City's funding problem was resolved when, at 3:40pm on Saturday 11th of May 1985, the Main Stand was set alight and the fire that ripped through it led to 56 people being killed. Even more would have died if not for the bravery of the police, 42 of whom were injured.

The author of "56," who survived in part because he got split off from his family during the emergency evacuation of the ground, describes the horror of fighting for his life. Relief is then followed by the fear that all four of his relatives may have suffered when he returns to the parked family car and can't find them. Initially the author is unaware that people have been killed but when his mother discovers the truth the pair are also faced with the Press camping outside their house in search of a story. Then, over the following months, as mother and son are continuously photographed at numerous commemorative events, Martin discovers that not all his new school mates are sympathetic.

While the author struggled to come to terms with his losses, the Home Secretary, Leon Brittan, acted with ridiculous haste. Within two days of the fire, He announced

an inquiry into events at Valley Parade. Even worse, Brittan also linked it with the football violence that had taken place at the Leeds United game away to Birmingham City on the same day where one supporter lose killed when a wall collapsed.

The inquiry that had taken place after the Ibrox disaster had been led by a Lord Chief Justice (Wheatley) but on this occasion a High Court judge with less seniority was appointed.

Lord Popplewell began his examination of events at Valley Parade just 13 days after the forensic search of the site was completed, stating, "it is a factual exercise. Blame will not be apportioned" then it was clear the inquiry was never going find answers to all the questions raised by the fire. It lasted a measly five and a half days with Popplewell concluding the cause of the disaster was the dropping of a lighted match, cigarette or tobacco. Yet no clear evidence or testimony that anyone was smoking was presented to prove this. In December 1983, the Timber Research and Development Association had inspected the Main Stand and following the fire it submitted its evidence to the Popplewell Inquiry. It concluded, 'It is extremely unlikely a small source of ignition on its own, say a cigarette in a plastic cup, could have been the primary cause of the ignition of the timber structure.'

### **Correspondence mystery**

Following the fire, Stafford Heginbotham, a local businessman who had invested £20,000 to retake control at Valley Parade in 1983, was telling people that the club had not received the correspondence in July 1984 about the combustible material beneath the stand. Yet parts of the correspondence had clearly been previously employed on a Football Grounds Improvement Trust grant application.

A day after the fire, Heginbotham told the press that he had been planning to start renovating the stand on 13 May with steel that was already on site. Photographs of the

burnt out site proved this was a lie. In fact the preliminary meeting with the council on a process that would have lasted, at least, 12 months was not even set till 15 May.

Meanwhile, Heginbotham was facing ruin as everything he had built up in his businesses over many decades was disappearing before him. Faced with severe international competition, his soft toys company, Tebro Toys, was on a two-day working week and the company was wound up on January 1986 with debts of over £752,000 - the equivalent of £5 million today.

In reality, Bradford City, Heginbotham's one remaining business could only be rescued with public funds. This is what happened as only a few short weeks after Tebro Toys was wound up it was announced that one of the last gestures to be made by West Yorkshire County Council before its formal abolition under the Tories was to present its £1.46 million surplus to Bradford City. With the fire insurance proceeds coming to half a million and another £488,000 from FGIT grants it meant that Bradford City contributed nothing towards what was essentially a completely new ground and had even been left with a £200,000 surplus.

### Tax exile

In 1987, Heginbotham, having suffered a second heart attack, sold his shares in Bradford City for £450,000 and later, following a successful investment in a hotel, he moved as a tax exile to Jersey. He died in 1995.

By now, while the club had admitted at a successful civil case against them that they knew the stand was a fire hazard, they claimed they had not foreseen the consequences of not removing the litter because the county council had not been proactive enough in forcing them to act. Yet the contradictions and discrepancies that had been presented to the public and the authorities were allowed to remain.

Martin Fletcher's did well at school, went to university and was on the way to a successful career. However, he was regularly forced

to confront the mental anguish of what he experienced and as he entered adult life he began to look back at the evidence by examining videos and newspaper coverage of the fire and the Popplewell inquiry itself.

There then began a very long journey in the attempt to find the truth. An unexpected phone call from the author of this piece led to him re-exploring Paul Foot's *Daily Mirror* columns that appeared just after the fire. These revealed that five businesses belonging to Heginbotham had also gone up in smoke. The sums involved were large. Yet no one in the press, within football or the police in May 1985 or afterwards had bothered to look into this.

A much more curious Fletcher then began laboriously going back through old newspapers and discovered more fires at eight other premises belonging to Heginbotham, all of which spread very quickly, produced an incredible amount of toxic smoke and devastation. All caught the fire brigades unaware. Taken together, the insurance paid out to Heginbotham for the fires excluding the one at Valley Parade was the equivalent of £10 million today. When Valley Parade is added to the total it comes to around £27 million.

So, not only did the Bradford Fire rescue Bradford City from being unable to pay for its new ground but it was part of a series of fires that saved Heginbotham from financial ruin.

None of which, of course, proves that the events on 11 May were the results of any deliberate actions by persons unknown.

Yet thirty years on they certainly do warrant further investigation by a suitable publicly funded inquiry that unlike in 1985 is tasked with assembling all the available information.

**CT**

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**Mark Metcalf** is a football author who also works as a campaigning freelance journalist, particularly for the *Big Issue* in the North magazine and the publications of *Unite the Union*, where this was first published.

**Fletcher then began laboriously going back through old newspapers and discovered many more fires at premises belonging to Heginbotham. The combined total rose to, at least, nine**

# The unanimity of British Canada's political elites

An excerpt from *Hard Truths For Canada About Israel & Palestine*,  
by **Michael Keefer**

**In Canadian prime minister Harper's view, any profound criticism of Israeli policies and governance can only be a product of antisemitic hatred, spewed forth by people who are simply looking for further ways of victimizing Jews**

The primary cause of the present-day division within the Jewish community, as formulated by Marc Ellis, has been the state of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, from the Nakba that was an instrumental part of Israel's founding up to the present day. This is, obviously enough, a moral as well as a political and legal issue. But while Jewish opinion is deeply and often bitterly divided, English-Canada's political elites appear to manifest a rare near-unanimity on this same moral, political, and legal issue.

In his address to the Israeli Knesset on January 20, 2014, Prime Minister Stephen Harper declared that "Canada supports Israel because it is right to do so." He added, with a note of self-congratulation: "This is a very Canadian trait, to do something for no other reason than that it is right...." And again, just in case anyone in his audience had yet to appreciate what fine people we are: "It is a Canadian tradition to stand for what is principled and just, regardless of whether it is convenient or popular."

By the same token, Mr. Harper

indicated, serious criticism of the policies and structures of governance of the state of Israel must be not merely unrighteous but impelled by malice – impelled, indeed, by "a mutation of the old disease of anti-Semitism and the emergence of a new strain," a translation into "more sophisticated language for use in polite society" of the "old hatred" that "led to the horrors of the death camps." Harper defined the movement for

a boycott of Israel, both internationally and in Canada, as one manifestation of this hatred, and he smeared what he called "intellectualized arguments against Israeli policies" that are put forward on "some campuses" as another sign of a new antisemitism. "Most disgracefully of all," he said, "some openly call Israel an apartheid state."

In our prime minister's view, any profound criticism of Israeli policies and governance can only be a product of antisemitic hatred, spewed forth by people who are simply looking for further ways of victimizing Jews. It would seem, then, that not all Canadians properly conform to the standards of public speech and behaviour that Mr. Harper understands to be



**HARD TRUTHS  
FOR CANADA  
ABOUT ISRAEL &  
PALESTINE**

**Michael Keefer**

Letonnelier Media  
(Toronto)

**\$16**

constitutive of Canadianness.

Let me return Stephen Harper's compliments. One would like to hope that there does indeed exist a Canadian tradition of standing for what is principled and just, regardless of the cost. But Mr. Harper stands outside that tradition, and in opposition to it – most especially when, in the service of violent injustice, he slanders its exponents as antisemites.

In brief, Mr. Harper's Knesset speech was a patchwork of hypocrisy and of third-hand falsehoods that have been copiously refuted by Jewish scholars and intellectuals, both in Israel and internationally. It came, moreover, from a prime minister who has since given full-throated support to a coup d'état in Ukraine that produced the first European government since 1945 to include acknowledged neo-Nazis – people who have preached hatred, in language borrowed from the phrasebook of Joseph Goebbels, against a supposed “Moscow-Jewish mafia ruling Ukraine” and “the criminal activities of organized Jewry.” But rudderless contradictions of this kind may be hard to avoid when a politician turns away from evidence-based ethics, and shapes his words and his actions instead in terms of “wedge politics”: cynical calculations of electoral advantage, sector by ethnic sector.

I leave it to others to judge what kind of thirst for unrighteousness may have motivated our prime minister's Knesset speech. However, one can note an interesting division of Israeli opinion as to that speech's value. In confident anticipation of Harper's declarations, Benjamin Netanyahu called him “a friend who always stands by us.” Other Israelis, though they are no doubt in a minority, think differently. Uri Avnery, a former Knesset member, a founding figure in Israel's (sadly faltering) peace movement, and an internationally respected journalist, dismissed Harper's speech as “ridiculous.”

Mr. Netanyahu calls Stephen Harper Israel's friend. But let's pause for a moment to ask a question about friendship. Many Is-

raeli commentators have recognized Israel's current policies of ever-harsher discrimination against its Palestinian minority within Israel proper, of ever more violent oppression of the Palestinians of the occupied territories, and of ongoing flagrant violation of international law through its practices of colonization – and yes, of apartheid – as effectively suicidal. Even Ehud Olmert, Netanyahu's predecessor as Prime Minister, argued that these policies will lead inexorably to the collapse of Israeli democracy (such as it is), and to the further international delegitimation of the state of Israel.

Here's the question about friendship. When a person sets out, in a state of febrile intoxication, to drive his car over a cliff, what kind of friend is it who hands him the keys, pats him on the shoulder, and says, “Go for it, buddy; I've got your back”?

Remember the words of William Blake: “Opposition is true friendship.”

Setting aside, for the moment, Canada's obligations under international law to stand up for the systematically violated rights of the Palestinians, and the thought that it might be appropriate to develop amicable state-to-state relations with them as well, let's ask what kind of friendship for Israel is being manifested by Canada's political elites.

I've already intimated that Prime Minister Harper's views are to a large degree shared by the leaders of all of the major English-Canadian political parties. As Tyler Levitan of Independent Jewish Voices Canada remarked shortly after Harper's Knesset speech, his accusation that labeling Israel an apartheid state is a mark of the “new anti-Semitism” was echoed in a CBC discussion “by NDP Foreign Affairs critic Paul Dewar and Liberal Foreign Affairs critic Marc Garneau.” Green Party Leader Elizabeth May has in the past made similar statements – though on July 18, 2014 she co-sponsored a resolution at the Green Party convention that condemned Israel's settlement policies as violations of indig-

**Mr. Harper's Knesset speech was a patchwork of hypocrisy and of third-hand falsehoods that have been copiously refuted by Jewish scholars and intellectuals, both in Israel and internationally**

**Despite British-style apartheid, boys educated at English style public schools in Africa knew they were part of chosen elite and acted as such throughout their lives**

enous rights and international law, and as “incompatible with any good-faith negotiations.” Mario Beaulieu, leader of the Bloc Québécois, took the further step on August 9, 2014 of announcing his party’s participation in a Montréal “Gaza-Québec solidarité” demonstration, while also denouncing the Canadian government’s one-sided position and the complicitous silence of the NDP and Liberal leaders, Thomas Mulcair and Justin Trudeau, and expressing support for UN resolutions that affirm the Palestinian right to self-determination and demand an immediate end to Israeli occupation, blockade, and ongoing colonization. (But who in English Canada listens to anything the Bloc Québécois may have to say?)

During the past six years, there have been three major Israeli attacks on Gaza. In November 2008, Israel broke a cease-fire that the Hamas government had largely adhered to, while Israel had ignored the cease-fire’s provisions for a relaxing of its illegal blockade. The ensuing Operation Cast Lead (December 2008-January 2009), in which more than 1,400 Gazans were killed, was unambiguously an act of aggression.

Operation Pillar of Defence (November 2012) began with the assassination of a Hamas leader who was negotiating a cease-fire with Israel. Gershon Baskin, who had initiated the negotiations, described this with unconcealed anger as “a pre-emptive strike against the possibility of a long-term ceasefire.” During the eight days of hostilities, about 170 Palestinians (nearly two thirds of them civilians) and six Israelis (among them four civilians) were killed.

In Operation Protective Edge (July-August 2014), more than 2,100 Gazans were killed and nearly one-third of the population of Gaza was made homeless. Once again the Netanyahu government, which had violated a 2012 commitment to ease the illegal blockade of Gaza, initiated its campaign with local attacks aimed at provoking return home-made rocket fire that could justify large-scale aggression. The murder

of three young Israelis gave Netanyahu a pretext for trying to smash Hamas and reverse the April 2014 moves toward a Fatah-Hamas unity government. As Gordon Thrall has shown in the New York Times, the escalation to war was “a direct result of the choice by Israel and the West to obstruct the implementation of the April 2014 Palestinian reconciliation agreement.”

Despite Israel’s clear responsibility for initiating the latest round of harshly intensified attacks on Gaza in the summer of 2014, and the Harper government’s parroting of Israeli claims that Hamas was wholly to blame for the violence, Liberal Foreign Affairs critic Marc Garneau chose to share a platform with Foreign Minister John Baird on July 16 – while Israeli bombs, missiles, and artillery fire were raining down on Gaza, where the death toll had already passed 200 – at an Ottawa rally in support of Israel organized by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) and the Ottawa Jewish Federation.

Marc Garneau’s opinions on Israel-Palestine had been made clear years before, when during the 2008 federal election he joined the Canadian Jewish Congress in denouncing the campaign posters of a fringe-party candidate in his riding of Westmount-Ville Marie as “possibly illegal.” The offending posters contained “the slogans ‘Out of Afghanistan’ and ‘End Canadian Support of Apartheid in Israel’ among others”; Garneau called this “a violation of current electoral laws and an affront to the democratic process.” The opinion of the Canadian Jewish Congress on this matter, with which he agreed, seems to have been that it is appropriate for a candidate to put his or her name before the public in a self-flattering manner, and perhaps to say less amiable things about opposing candidates – but not to present such details as these about the policies he or she would like to see enacted. (Garneau is clearly in line with party policy: a similarly exclusionary attitude has been expressed by Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau in

his declaration that “The BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] movement, like Israeli Apartheid Week, has no place on university campuses.”)

I’m sorry to have to disagree publicly with Marc Garneau, for we graduated in the same class from the Royal Military College of Canada forty-five years ago. I was awarded a medal for English studies; Marc I believe won more substantial academic distinctions, and in addition held the highest officer-cadet rank in our class, meaning that in the eyes of the college administration, he embodied most fully its values, as expressed in the college motto: “Truth, Duty, Valour – Vérité, Devoir, Vaillance.”

I mention this ancient history because, surprisingly enough, that Royal Military College motto can help Canadians understand what we are doing when we engage in criticism of our government and of powerful opinion-makers. “Truth, Duty, Valour”: the sense of these words, as an incitement to action (for that is what such a motto or slogan is), can be rendered in classical Greek by a single word, *parrhesia*. In ancient Athenian democracy, *parrhesia* referred to a central concept of that political system: the active citizen’s duty to fearlessly speak the truth to fellow-citizens – even, and especially, when that truth might be unpalatable or unwelcome to the citizenry, and when telling it might involve social sanctions or even punishment for the *parrhesiastes*, the dutiful and fearless truth-teller.

“Vérité, Devoir, Vaillance”: I don’t think Marc Garneau has understood our college motto – or this central principle of democracy – as well as he should have. Stephen Harper knows that such a principle exists – that is the tenor of his remark about standing for what is principled and just, regardless of the cost – and he evidently believes that some political advantage is to be gained by pretending to align himself with it.

I intend to show that in addition to being hypocritical on a matter of principle, Mr. Harper – along with all of the members

of Canada’s political elites who have sided with him on this matter – is also mistaken in his apprehension of the facts.

What, in the present context, are the truths that, as citizens of a democracy, we have a duty to speak, forthrightly, to our fellow-citizens? I will touch on four such truths.

The first is a matter of the state policies and practices that we refer to under the name of Israeli apartheid. My remarks on this subject are based for the most part from writings by Palestinian, Israeli, and South African scholars and political figures.

The second truth is a matter of Canada’s complicity in these apartheid practices – a complicity that should be of concern to English Canada’s political elites, since it shows them to be acting in contempt of major documents of international law of which Canada is a signatory, among them the Fourth Geneva Convention and the 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. I can be brief in discussing this, since the facts have been conveniently assembled in a series of books by Yves Engler (who was also a contributor to my book “Antisemitism Real and Imagined”).

The third truth is the plain fact that the concept of a new antisemitism, to which Stephen Harper alluded with such solemnity, has been refuted and rejected by a wide range of leading Jewish scholars and public intellectuals. Since I devoted some fifty pages to this subject in *Antisemitism Real and Imagined*, I can again be brief.)

The fourth and last is something to which I have already alluded: the clear division of present-day Jews into two opposing camps on the subject of Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians – a phenomenon that Israeli sociologist Eva Illouz has recently compared to the split in American public opinion over the issue of slavery during the mid-19th century.

“Fourth and last,” I have said: but the discussion cannot end there.

**The concept of a new antisemitism, to which Stephen Harper alluded with such solemnity, has been refuted and rejected by a wide range of leading Jewish scholars and public intellectuals**

**CT**

# What am I doing in this Russian jail?

An excerpt from *Don't Trust, Don't Fear, Don't Beg*, the Extraordinary Story of the Arctic Thirty, by **Ben Stewart**

**Across the prison, windows are swinging open and ropes are being fed through bars, then lowered down the outside walls or swung from cell to cell**

Frank Hewetson is lying on the upper bunk of a prison cell in the Russian Arctic, waiting impatiently for the effects of a Valium tablet to kick in. He's wearing woollen tights, two pairs of socks, three T-shirts, a pullover, a skull-gripping hat and earplugs. The hot incandescent bulb dangling from a wire above his head has just been switched off by the guards, and Murmansk SIZO-1 isolation jail is stirring.

He can hear boots stomping on the floor above his head, prisoners thumping the walls in cells down the corridor, the distant sound of screaming. Across the prison, windows are swinging open and ropes are being fed through bars, then lowered down the outside walls or swung from cell to cell.

Frank pulls a blanket up around his neck and holds himself against the cold biting air. He is forty-eight years old, he has a wife and two children back in London and he's charged by the Russian state with piracy – a crime that carries a minimum sentence of ten years in a country where 99 per cent of all trials end in a verdict of guilty.

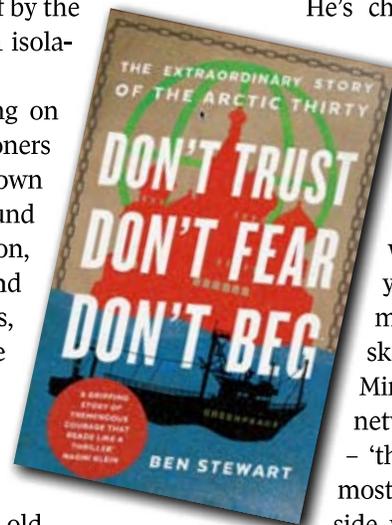
He opens his eyes into narrow slits and looks down. One of his cell-

mates, Boris, is bent at the waist and pressing his ear against the plughole of the sink, an expression of strained concentration on his face. Boris is a short man with olive skin, muscles like marble, a permanent wrap of stubble on his face and a forehead so narrow that his hairline nearly merges with his eyebrows.

He's charged with double manslaughter.

Frank's other cell-mate, Yuri (multiple counts of assault by Taser), is feeding a rope out of the window and whistling to himself. He's younger than Boris, not much meat on him, sallown skin and greasy black hair. Minutes from now this rope network, known as the *doroga* – 'the road' – will connect almost every cell along the outside walls of the jail, allowing the prisoners to communicate with each other and share contraband. It is a physical internet through which power is projected and justice dispensed by the mafia bosses who control much of this place.

With relief, Frank senses his mind becoming foggy. The air



**DON'T TRUST  
DON'T FEAR  
DON'T BEG:**  
The Extraordinary  
Story of the  
Arctic Thirty  
Ben Stewart

The New Press  
\$33.50

no longer stings his cheeks and he can't feel the wire mesh digging into his back through the thin mattress. Thank Christ for those drugs. Every night when the prison awakes the pills allow him to slip into something approaching sleep. He secured the Valium prescription five weeks ago after experiencing what the authorities thought was a cardiac arrest but which was, in reality, a panic attack brought on by the prospect of spending ten to fifteen years in a Russian jail. He was sped to hospital and bundled into a wheelchair then pushed through the corridors at breakneck speed by an armed guard. Patients and doctors dove into doorways to avoid being run down as Frank careered towards an emergency consultation, wires trailing from electrodes stuck to his bare chest, the guard singing lines to himself from the back catalogue of Depeche Mode.

Boris stands up straight and looks at Frank quizzically.

'Frank,' he hisses. 'Come come come. Frank!'

Frank closes his eyes, pretending to sleep, but a moment later he can feel Boris's breath on his face. It smells of potatoes and fish-head soup.

'Fraaaank. Come come.'

'Boris, piss off and leave me alone, all right.'

'Come, Frank. Come.'

He's pointing towards the sink. Something in his voice is utterly, irresistibly insistent.

'Frank!'

'Jesus, Boris. What?'

'Come!'

Frank rubs his eyes, pulls out the earplugs, swings his legs over the edge of the bunk and grudgingly jumps to the ground. Boris slaps him on the back then leads him over to the sink. Yuri ties off the rope, crosses the cell, kneels down under the sink and starts unscrewing the U-bend. Boris kneels down next to him and together the two Russians strain hard, pulling the pipe away from the wall until – with a scraping metallic *pop* – it comes clear.

'Frank, sit.'

Frank scratches his head. The air is filled with thumping and banging as the rope network comes alive. Soon the prisoners will be using it to share illicit letters, sugar, mobile telephones, an underground satirical newspaper and perfumed cigarettes given as gifts by prisoners to lovers they have never met and never will.

His cellmates are staring up at him with imploring eyes. Boris is clutching the liberated U-bend like it's a glass of beer.

Slowly, hesitantly, Frank lowers himself to the ground then Boris pushes Frank's head down, at the same time twisting the U-bend until it's pressed against Frank's ear. Frank's eyes swivel in their sockets; he stares at Boris and he's about to say something when he hears a faint tinny voice.

'Allo? Dis is prisoner boss Andrey Artamov in cell four- one-zero. Is dat the Arctic firty?'

Frank gulps. 'Er ... ' He hesitates then puts his mouth to the end of the tube. 'Yes, hello?'

'Is dat the Arctic firty?'

'Er ... yes. Well, one of them.'

'I have friend of you here.'

'Right. Okay.'

Silence, then, 'Hello, Frank?'

'Yes?'

'Frank, this is Roman Dolgov, your Greenpeace compatriot from the cell above you.'

'Er ... hello, Roman. You seem to be somewhere in my

U-bend system. How did you fit down there?'

'Ha ha, yes, this is funny, Frank. What you say is funny.'

'Roman, is this ... are we talking on ... is this a *telephone*?'

'This is prison telephone. I have to tell you, Frank, we have a problem.'

Roman is a 44-year-old campaigner from the Moscow office of Greenpeace, arrested with Frank and twenty-eight others when their ship was stormed by Russian commandos seven weeks ago. They'd held a protest at

**Patients and doctors dove into doorways to avoid being run down as Frank careered towards an emergency consultation, wires trailing from electrodes stuck to his bare chest, the guard singing lines to himself from the back catalogue of Depeche Mode**



**An illegal telephone network fashioned from the prison plumbing system? Mafia bosses issuing orders through a U-bend?**

an Arctic oil platform operated by President Putin's state-run oil company, Gazprom, and now they're facing the full fury of the Kremlin.

'Roman, what's going on?'

'I speak with respected prisoners, Frank. They tell me you must talk to cell three-one-six. The cell opposite yours.'

'Okay. Why?'

'They say you must get the names of the Russians in that cell. They do not give their names, they do not go to *gulyat* – the hour of exercise the prisoners are granted each day – 'and they have broken the *doroga*. They do not co-operate. The rope network on one wall is broken. Big problem.'

'Er ... okay, Roman. So ... so ... I'm sorry, say again, *what* do they want me to do?'

'Francesco is also in their cell. You must ask him, what are the names of the Russians?'

Frank thinks for a moment. He rubs the fuzz on his head. His blond hair was closely cropped on the ship but now it's growing out. He hands the U-bend to Boris, stands up and opens a hatch in the door.

'Frankie!' he shouts.

In a door across the hallway a hatch opens and the face of 38-year-old Frenchman Francesco Pisanu – another of the Greenpeace detainees – appears.

'Yeah?'

'Francesco, what are the names of the Russians they've just put in your cell?'

'One moment.'

His face disappears. A minute later he returns.

'They will not tell me.'

'Francesco, you must find out the names of the Russians.'

'They will not tell me. They are scared to tell me.'

'Really?'

'They say they are scared.'

Frank kneels down, takes the U-bend and speaks into it.

'Roman, they won't say.'

'They will not say?'

'No.'

'Oh.'

At the other end of the pipe a conversation is conducted in Russian, before Roman returns.

'Okay, Frank. Good night.'

'That's it?'

'Good night, Frank.'

'Er ... okay. Night, Roman.'

Frank leans back, still holding the pipe, tapping the end with a finger and biting his lip. Boris shrugs. Yuri grunts and pushes himself to his feet. Frank stares at the pipe for a moment before handing it back to Boris, then he stands up, sniffs, clammers back onto his bunk, pulls the blanket right up to his neck and lies there, staring at the ceiling.

An illegal telephone network fashioned from the prison plumbing system? Mafia bosses issuing orders through a U-bend? And this isn't even the strangest thing that's happened in the last two months.

'Christ,' Frank whispers to himself, shaking his head.

'How the fuck did I end up here?'

**CT**

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# Death in the air . . .

An excerpt from the new novel *Operation Northwoods*, by **Mike Palecek**

## CHAPTER ONE

*“... Any unwanted sound, soft or loud, sweet or nasty, creates a multidimensional envelope that does more than intrude – it takes over not only your acoustic space, but your mind space as well. Acoustic intrusions reduce your freedom of thought. There is no escaping sound. It meets your body and forcibly enters your mind, not just through your ears but also via your bones, your flesh, and your body cavities.” – Ron Pellegrino*

**W**hat I remember is the way the fish bumped its nose just a little on each pass around the little bowl, like it did not remember having been there before.

The purple and red tiny rocks and the sunken ship with the one cannon poking out the side and a little man right there with his torch lit, ready to fire.

The kind of tiny details you have to throw in a story when it’s not real, when it’s just a story, when you have to draw someone in to really make them believe.

I have killed no one today.

So far.

Not that I know of.

And yes, I hear what you are thinking.

The day is not over.

And so, if it is not.

It wouldn’t matter anyway.

There is always tomorrow.

I worry non-stop just like you.

But about different things, maybe.

I think I am always tense.

My jaws hurt each morning. My fists ache at night. My butt cheeks moan every afternoon around three. Judge Judy’s on at three-thirty.

I don’t recall much of my childhood, but I do remember parades and balloons, just like anybody else.

Not birthday balloons like these.

Bigger.

“The poor go to prison.”

“The rich go to hell.”

“Amen.”

The guys repeat their traditional birthday party saying.

Everybody sits and stands around the table in the cramped kitchen wearing birthday hats.

“Make a wish! Make a wish!”

Ely Dale looks around the room.

The look on his face says do you really want me to do that?

He is certain it will come true.

“Make a wish!”

And so, Ely Dale closes his eyes, scrunches them even, and like holds his breath, presses his hands into old-man fists.

**Ely Dale closes his eyes, scrunches them even, and like holds his breath, presses his hands into old-man fists**

**The cake,  
destroyed now,  
as if by a toy  
backhoe,  
depicted a man  
leaping a river  
of fire**

And a few seconds later he snaps out of it.

And then they have to have the same thing with “blow out the candles!” but we get through it.

There is the smell of the candle smoke, the coffee, some staff’s perfume.

Me. I smell death in the air.

Like the first taste of gumballs when you chew and then it goes away and you have a big wad of just sticky stuff filling your mouth that reminds me of what they might put in dead people to make them rosy in the casket.

That is exactly what death smells like.

It’s happened before.

Probably it’s just me. Do you believe in re-generation? Reincarnation. Many lives means many deaths. Do you really want that?

The cake, destroyed now, as if by a toy backhoe, depicted a man leaping a river of fire. The man wore a Twins ball cap in the original sketch, but that did not survive the rewrite. It’s custom-made, suggested by Steve, formally requested by Dale.

Anoka Annie made Superior Sue, Duluth Delores, and South Saint Paul Samantha go with her to the grocery store to order it because she didn’t think they would believe it if only one person told them.

Biwabik Todd blows a noisemaker into Minnetonka Chad’s face.

Sakharov the goldfish glides from corner to corner in the living room.

Chicago Steve said he once ate three large pizzas, but I’m not sure I can believe much of what he says.

Paper party cups with caffeine-free Coke and Pepsi and reasonably sized portions of cake on party plates sit all around the table

like a wine and cheese party, so everyone can take what they want.

Needles and test strips ready. Blood sugars will need to be checked.

Ely Dale sits at the head of the table, usually reserved for Chicago Steve.

Today is Dale Kowaleski’s 50th birthday.

I have volunteered to chronicle the story of the party for the house newsletter. I sit behind a box of cornflakes because that is just sorta my thing.

The doorbell rings. Somebody bangs on the door.

Biwabik Todd hustles up and carries in an armful of pizzas.

Ely Dale has asked for the cake before the pizza.

I write everyone’s name at the top and the traditional party saying with arrows and dots to show who said what.

Superior Sue and Anoka Annie, the other staff members here for the party, whisper behind their hands.

Two Harbors Terri, one of the overnight staffs, got fired, so it’s a safe bet that’s the hot topic for today.

“Is the pizza slicer a sharp?”

Chicago Steve asks, hoping to catch the staff not knowing, maybe disagreeing.

“What if you went underground and nobody came looking for you?”

Even though he is confined to a side chair for the time being, Steve does not feel any need to allow all the attention flow to ol’ Ely Dale.

I sit at the table, writing, smiling, laughing, eating cake, thinking of how to survive.

I write.

“For a country to have a great writer ... is like having another government. That’s why

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no regime has ever loved great writers, only minor ones.”

Two Harbors Terri has been fired.

For what, who knows? We are all day-to-day. We have no rights, only wrongs. We are never encouraged, only discouraged from doing wrong. As staff members we get not much more than minimum wage, poor insurance. All the staff members live day to day, week to week, trying to pay bills, drinking as much as they can afford to forget just for one moment. This is life on the edge, if you want to know for a fact. I don't particularly like it here.

There are five residents who live at Area 99 Group Home.

The men are diagnosed as having schizophrenia, which means they can be talking with you one moment about parallel universes and the next moment about Barney The Purple TV Dinosaur who is hunting them down to eat them. Barney does not scare me. But I would not care to come face to face with any gigantic make-believe red dogs.

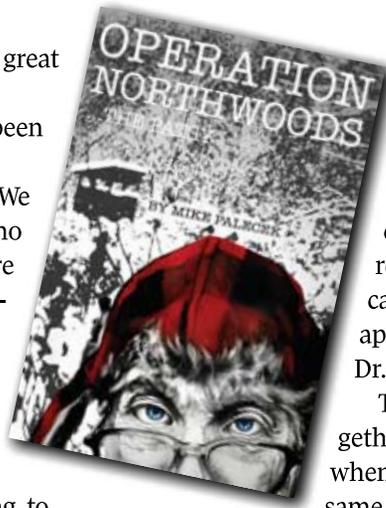
Usually people are able to just live.

You can put in your eight hours and then escape to things you have to do or the things you want to do, and you can get into a rhythm where you can put your time in here on earth in something resembling peace or serenity or its cousin.

But it's when you have to encounter the real power that takes minutes off the time clock of your life.

What I'm trying to say is like when you have to get insurance, or talk to a banker, or apply for a job, all so serious, all about money, all about very survival.

If you can spend as little time in those moments as possible and maybe with some whiskey you can forget quicker, you can get



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back on the field, out of the pit stop, keep going. One more lap.

Anoka Annie puts a finger into the air as she slurps hot cheese off her chin. She has remembered to mark on the calendar in the hall there are appointments coming up with Dr. Popper.

The guys all came here together, at the same time, moved in when the house opened. About the same time I did.

My mind wanders. I look down and see that I am writing.

I put my hand over the doodles, trying to feel without looking whether anyone has seen what I have done, written down something I found somewhere.

“... people ... dedicated ... providing information that, in their view, might be related ... some way to possible threats to ‘national security.’ ... encouraged ... report all ... information ..., including ... about their fellow employees.”

I must have zoned out.

Can't let that happen and survive in this business.

I scribble a smiley face and a house and goal posts. Nobody can read it now.

Usually if I write at work I do it sloppily so that I won't be embarrassed later about someone finding my notes to my next novel, and maybe it is a reason to get rid of me. Writing is so big. Powerful. More than any fake wrestler on TV. Try not to ask someone sitting in the same room with you writing on a sheet of paper what she is writing or reading a book what he is reading. You can't really do it. Nobody can.

Chicago Steve has his laptop on the kitchen table in front of him. He is allowed to have it out here today because he said he wanted to play a YouTube happy birthday song for Ely Dale, but so far all I've seen him doing

**Usually if I write at work I do it sloppily so that I won't be embarrassed later about someone finding my notes to my next novel, and maybe it is a reason to get rid of me**

**I'm a writer, or would like to be, and he would be the one to know that a writer might strive for brevity, because who reads more than they have to anyway?**

is playing some game between eating cake and pizza, looking up every now and again to impart wisdom to the masses.

“To long lives and short sentences.”

Chicago Steve raises his empty cup and Superior Sue fills it with Diet Pepsi and Steve throws it back before anyone else can get their cup ready to join the toast.

I have no idea what he means by most of the things he says. This one could have been another jail related toast. That's what it sounds like, but it could also have been aimed my way. Short sentences. He knows I'm a writer, or would like to be, and he would be the one to know that a writer might strive for brevity, because who reads more than they have to anyway?

And then the owners, nobody really knows who they are, started hiring supervisors and staff and bought this house. That's all you really have to do. The funding comes from different agencies, a good chunk, I've heard.

You can make money.

As long as you don't pay your staff. I don't understand it all. But the part that I really don't understand is all the talk in meetings and trainings about professionalism and care and respect and then they have all this turn-

over and people living like dogs because they pay the lowest amount possible. If they paid more, enough, people could stay and take them seriously when they talk about the value of people.

It's a party after all.

And there sits Chicago Steve right in the middle.

Big smile.

He's gotten them to allow him to have his computer at the kitchen table and he is happy.

The computer. Right in the middle of the action.

The Internet. There is a race on. All these self-actualizing movements out there, people not having to be isolated, bow down to a king. And then there are the kings finding, realizing the computer is the way to actually finally totally dominate. Dictatorship of the Big “D” type.

There's a race.

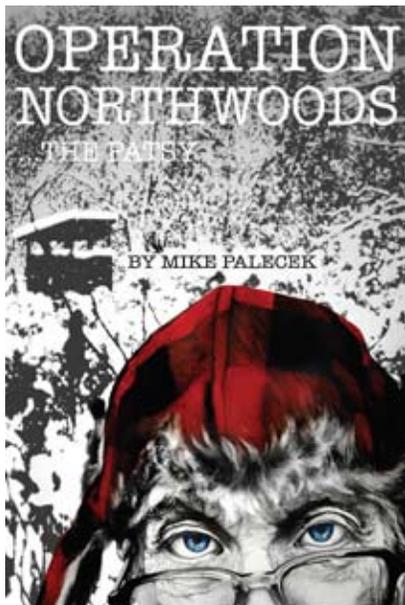
Who will win?

I wonder what Two Harbors Terri did wrong?

I wonder if it has anything to do with me?

Of course it does.

**CT**



# OPERATION NORTHWOODS THE PATSY

A Novel by Mike Palecek

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# Cut the tax breaks

However silly no-tax-increases are, there's no excuse for not cutting tax relief to pay off deficit, writes **Michael Meacher**

**E**nforcing £12bn welfare cuts (and a lot more beyond that if the deficit is really to be eliminated) is not only draconian and callous as a means of making the poor subsidise the rich so that the latter can walk away free of any liability, nevertheless no-tax-increases in this Parliament doesn't end the matter. It doesn't preclude cutting back sharply on enormous and wasteful tax breaks which could make a huge contribution to paying down the deficit. To take one example, the IMF, no less, has calculated that fossil fuel companies globally get £3,400bn a year subsidies, at a rate of £10m every minute of every day, more than the total health spend of all the world's governments. That is 6.5% of global GDP, and if the UK hands out fossil fuel subsidies proportionately to that, it would be spending £100bn a year subsidising oil, gas and coal. The current UK budget deficit is £92bn a year.

Take another example. The buy-to-let market is currently booming, and last year according to the mortgage lender Kent Reliance British landlords made £112bn from capital gains and rental income. Over £44bn of this came from rents very largely paid for out of Housing Benefit grace of the government/taxpayer. This subsidy to private landlords can only increase in the current severe shortage in housing supply. What gives a bitter piquancy to this is that a third

of all houses bought under the Right to Buy have now ended up bought by private landlords and their rents raised steadily towards market levels, sharply diminishing the supply of Council housing at rents that tenants could afford.

Another telling example is the colossal tax break that allows firms to write off payments on their borrowing against taxable earnings. This again is perverse. Before the financial crash in 2007-9 governments in Europe, including the UK, were spending 3% of GDP in foregone tax revenues in cheapening the cost of debt, more than on defence or on all its policies to help the poor. It isn't even sensible. It encourages people to borrow more to buy property than they otherwise would, raises house prices, and encourages over-investment in real estate rather than in productive industry or services. It has reached the point where corporate financial decisions are motivated more by maximising tax relief on debt than on the needs of the underlying business. Nor would it be difficult to phase out these tax breaks for debt at the present time if it were done alongside the major lowering of the corporate tax rate that has occurred.

.....  
**Michael Meacher** was recently re-elected as the Labour Party MP for Oldham West and Royton. His web site is <http://michaelmeacher.info>

**Corporate financial decisions are motivated more by maximising tax relief on debt than on the needs of the underlying business**

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