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ColdType

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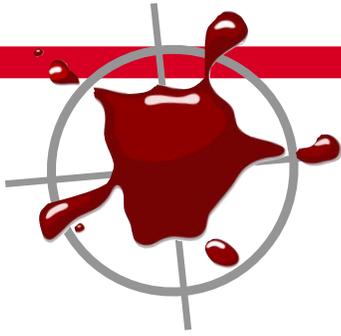
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TARGET VENEZUELA

Stoking the flames of never-ending war

NOW that their Syrian and Afghanistan forays have run out of innocent victims to slaughter in the name of freedom and democracy, the White House's resident crazies have found a fresh target for their regime change machine. Unsurprisingly, their self-serving anger is directed at Venezuela – land of the world's largest oil resources – against which deep resentment has festered since a coup against Hugo Chavez collapsed after 47 hours in 2002.

Donald Trump and John Bolton, encouraged by their chums in the US mainstream media, determined that regime change would work this time round, when they annointed Juan Guaido as Venezuela's new, albeit un-elected, president. Conveniently for the US, their new man just happens to believe the country's oil industry should be run by

US energy corporations.

However, before we jump to the wrong conclusion, we have been reliably informed that this action – backed by allies, who really should know better – is not about oil.

Nope, this latest intrusion stems only from a deep concern for the welfare of Venezuelan citizens who, the White House asserts, have been brutalised by evil president Nicholas

Madero who, they say, also rigged the polls in the country's presidential election.

The fact that – unlike recent US elections – the Venezuelan vote was declared free, fair and unfiddled by international observers, including former US president Jimmy Carter, is just an annoying irrelevance that is better left unmentioned.

The White House gang would also be happy if the public remains misinformed about other regime change adventures that helped create the refugee crisis that is currently causing wall-building hysteria at the Mexican border.

One day, perhaps, US media might wake up long enough to expose the glaring hypocrisy of their political masters as they stoke the flames of never-ending war.

But, until that happens, Bolton and his gang know that no matter how insane their words or how awful the atrocities that follow, they can count on the acquiescent support of their mainstream media accomplices, the original purveyors of fake news.

Tony Sutton, Editor



When is a democracy not a democracy?

When It's Venezuela and the US is pushing regime change, writes **Joe Emersberger**

VENEZUELA has as much right to call itself a democracy as does the United States. Until that is understood by enough people, the Trump administration will continue to devastate Venezuela's economy with illegal sanctions and push it towards civil war.

People can oppose President Donald Trump's economic sanctions and incitement of a military coup without acknowledging President Nicolas Maduro's democratic legitimacy, but by not acknowledging his legitimacy they needlessly weaken their position.

Millions around the world opposed the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the many years of sanctions that came before that invasion, while also accepting, in that case appropriately, that Saddam Hussein was a monstrous dictator. However, massive global opposition to US aggression in Iraq failed to prevent the war that killed hundreds of thousands of people. The most horrifying thing about Venezuela's case is that it shows (for at least the third time in this century alone) that democratic legitimacy provides very little defence for a govern-

ment when the US and its allies decide that it "must go".

On May 20 last year, Maduro received the votes of 6.2 million people, about 31 percent of the eligible voters, about the same percentage that US presidents generally receive (Obama received 31 percent in 2008 and 28 percent in 2012, while Trump received 26 percent in 2016). Four different groups of international observers concluded that Maduro's electoral victory was clean.

If you look beyond vague appeals to the authority of establishment groupthink – statements that typically say the election was "widely dismissed as fraudulent" – you'll find the arguments to support that claim appallingly thin.

Turnout (at 46 percent) was very low by Venezuelan standards because the bulk of the US-backed opposition to Maduro not only called for a boycott and refused to run candidates, it also attacked Henri Falcon, who defied US threats to run in the election. On May 6, Falcon's economic advisor, Francisco Rodriguez, said on Twitter that

people from the opposition side promoting theories that he was in cahoots with Maduro must have taken a "strong dose" of drugs. In another tweet on the same day, Rodriguez asked the opposition party Voluntad Popular to "stop spreading lies" that a secret pact existed between Maduro and Falcon. Incidentally, Voluntad Popular is the party of the previously obscure legislator, Juan Guaido, whom Trump just anointed as Venezuela's president.

Falcon began his presidential campaign with an incendiary 35-minute speech on Venezuelan state media, in which he repeatedly called Maduro the "hunger candidate". In an interview on a large private network, Falcon said that Maduro's government was an "unscrupulous monster" but insisted that Maduro was also "beatable" at the polls.

During the interview, Falcon also advised government opponents that it's foolish to wait for a "military invasion to save Venezuela." Aside from hinting at the obvious objective of the electoral boycott, it's surreal that this was said on TV in a country labelled a "dictatorship" and accused of perpetrating a "crackdown" on dissent. Falcon's adviser also travelled all over Venezuela and made numerous TV appearances campaigning for Falcon.

Reuters, whose headlines have often been quite open in their contempt for Maduro's government, conceded that voting is secret in Venezuela, but tents set up by the government close to voting centres on Elec-

tion Day (known as Punto Rojos) were hyped as “voting buying”. Puntos Rojos (Red Points) are used for exit polling, and have also been used by the opposition, except in a different colour, in numerous elections over the past 20 years. By law, they are required to be 200 meters from voting centres.

On May 3, Maduro said that people who came to a Puntos Rojo after voting could “probably” win a prize. This is hardly an exemplary practice, but voting is secret, so nothing prevents people from voting for the opposition and then showing up for a chance at a prize. An opposition blog referred to these tents as “The Perfect Blackmail”, but even this account concedes that the government can’t know how people voted.

As an argument for calling the election invalid, this is stunningly weak and that’s before you consider a huge offsetting factor: US economic sanctions that effectively hold a gun to the Venezuelan electorate.

It’s perfect blackmail indeed when Western journalism can’t detect a disqualifying electoral problem with sanctions that have cost Venezuela’s government \$6-billion dollars in the 12 months following August of 2017 when Trump imposed financial sanctions.

That’s about 6 percent of its GDP in a region where most countries spend about 7 percent of GDP annually on health care.

Bear in mind also that Ven-



HANGING ON: Nicolas Maduro.



OBSCURE: Juan Guaido.

ezuela was only able to import \$11.7-billion in goods in 2018, according to Torino Capital, where Rodriguez is the chief economist. Aside from being electoral blackmail, US sanctions are clearly murderous, as they drastically cut into the government’s capacity to import essential items such as food and medicine. This is simply ignored by a media that often hyperventilates over very dubious allegations of significant “Russian interference” in US elections through email hacking and clickbait operations.

Francisco Rodriguez has noted (approvingly) that Trump’s

recognition of a “new government” could prevent Venezuela from getting paid for oil shipments to the United States. In other words, Trump is now poised to make the sanctions still more devastating.

Apologists for Trump have dismissed the impact of US sanctions by saying that Venezuela’s crisis was not caused by them. It’s true that Maduro could have prevented the crisis – most easily in the first year-and-a-half of his government when oil prices were still very high – and therefore prevented Trump from ever being able to put his foot on the throat of Venezuela’s economy.

But would it have been acceptable for a foreign government to deliberately make the financial crisis in the United States worse in 2008 by arguing it was not the original cause? Is it acceptable to assault a cancer patient provided the assailant can prove he did not give the patient cancer?

The competence of a government is also a totally separate issue from its democratic legitimacy, but the two are often conflated in Venezuela’s case.

If bad policies that produce needless suffering make a country a dictatorship then was the United States a dictatorship during the Great Depression, or is it today as a result of its scandalously poor health care system for a wealthy country? Was Greece a dictatorship during its economic meltdown after 2010?

Moreover, US support for coup attempts in Venezuela

since 2002 was partly responsible for the policies that led to the crisis. It saddled Venezuela with opposition leaders who knew they'd be supported by the world's most powerful country no matter how they seized power. The exchange rate system that ended up being the Achilles heel of the government's economic policy, was set up after the second major attempt by the US-backed opposition to depose the government by force: that time through the sabotage of the state oil company. The first coup "attempt" briefly succeeded and established a dictatorship under Pedro Carmona that was welcomed by the Bush administration, the *New York Times* editorial board (among others), and the IMF, which stepped forward to offer Carmona's dictatorship loans.

Another complaint about Maduro's electoral victory last year was that two prominent opposition leaders were disqualified from running: Leopoldo Lopez and Henrique Capriles. Both were participants in, not just supporters of, the coup that installed Carmona. In the United States, anyone who participates in a violent uprising that threatens the life of a sitting president would not be complaining about being disqualified from running for office. That would be the least of their worries, for them and any foreign government foolhardy enough to support them.

Additionally, opposition-aligned pollster Datanalysis

claimed, three months before the election, that Falcon was one of the opposition's most popular leaders – basically in a statistical tie with Leopoldo Lopez for the top spot.

The opposition has other reasons for rejecting Maduro's legitimacy but, even when they have some validity, one struggles to see how very similar objections could not also apply to the United States. It was certainly a disproportionate Venezuelan Supreme Court ruling that disqualified the entire National Assembly in 2017 because it flouted the court's authority.

In 2000, the US Supreme Court made a very dubious ruling that gave George W Bush the presidency. Should the Democrats, backed by a foreign power, have disregarded the Supreme Court and named their own president?

Then there is mass incarceration, political brutality, voter suppression, and other forms of corruption in the US political system. The US Electoral College is a bad joke that has, twice since 2000, allowed the loser of the popular vote to take the White House.

Does all that make United States a dictatorship? Which foreign government (if a powerful enough government existed) is anyone willing to authorise to "fix" the US political system through economic blackmail, threats of invasion, or by inciting the US military to perpetrate a coup?

Trump has predictably found some willing allies around the world for his recent escalation

against Venezuela. Unpopular as the Iraq War was around the world in 2003, the US managed to get dozens of governments to join the "coalition of the willing" to perpetrate the supreme international war crime – including two with very progressive reputations: Norway and Denmark. The more widely loathed the US president, the more important allies become.

Hence, on February 29, 2004, George W Bush – who was thoroughly discredited around the world, owing to the invasion of Iraq – was happy to be fully supported by the governments of Canada and France when US troops kidnapped Haiti's democratically elected president and installed a dictatorship under which thousands of loyalists to the deposed government were murdered.

It is possible that Trump may eventually succeed in producing a kind of "electoral victory" similar to that which Ronald Reagan produced in 1990 in Nicaragua through a combination of terrorism and economic strangulation. It is fine and necessary to promote dialogue and negotiations, but if Maduro's democratic legitimacy is not recognized, a "negotiated solution" is not only less likely but also less likely to lead to anything good. **CT**

Joe Emersberger is a Canadian engineer and UNIFOR member with Ecuadorian roots. He writes primarily for Telesur English and Znet. This article first appeared at www.mintpressnews.com



LONE VOICE: Medea Benjamin protests during A meeting of the OAS in Washington. Photo: Twitter

Antiwar hero Medea disrupts Venezuela coup circle jerk

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If you're looking for ideas on how to disrupt the narratives of war, look no further, writes **Caitlin Johnstone**

BEFORE they launch missiles, they launch narratives. Before they drop bombs, they drop talking points. Before they implement crushing starvation sanctions, they demonise and condemn. Before they invade, they propagandise. Manipulation paves the way for the killing.

For this reason, the front line of any antiwar movement is a fight against the establishment narratives about disobedient nations that are aggressively promulgated by the political/media class. And right now one of the very most adept Americans at doing that is an activist named Medea Benjamin.

Benjamin once again dis-

played her knack for getting her message seen in high-profile spaces in a way that grabs attention and punches through cleanly and concisely as she crashed the warmongering bloviations of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at a meeting of the Organization for American States (OAS) in Washington, DC.

Following a speech in which Pompeo regurgitated already established Trump talking points referring to Venezuela's president Nicolas Maduro as the "former president", accusing him of being "economically incompetent", "profoundly corrupt", and "undemocratic to the core", Benjamin cut off his applause

by standing at the end of the council room with a sign reading "OAS: DON'T SUPPORT A COUP IN VENEZUELA", and decrying the Trump administration's attempts to topple the Venezuelan government.

"Don't support the coup!" Benjamin shouted. "A coup is not a democratic transition! Do not listen to Secretary Pompeo! Do not support the coup! Do not support the coup in Venezuela!"

"We call on the OAS to support the democratically elected leader and work for a negotiated solution," Medea continued to yell as security staff cajoled her out of the room. "Coups only bring more violence, war and destruction!"

of course Medea Benjamin is correct. This US-led coup is no different from all the other US-led coups in South America and in oil-rich nations around the world; it is designed to be profitable for the already wealthy and strategically advantageous for the already powerful, with none of the interest in humanitarianism and democracy that it always pretends to have.

For those of you who haven't been following this story, here's a quick breakdown:

Venezuela has the largest proven oil reserves of any nation on the planet, and if that one fact right there doesn't raise your suspicions, you've got a lot to learn about US interventionism.

US foreign interventions often boil down to resource control, so if a resource-rich nation refuses to be absorbed into the blob of the US-centralised power alliance it's a safe bet that you'll eventually hear the US State

Department saying that the people in that nation are in bad need of some Freedom and Democracy (read: starvation sanctions and CIA coups).

Venezuela has been no exception, and the economic strangulations which have been heaped upon the nation under both the previous administration and the current one have effectively made it nearly impossible for its economy to get its head above water. Add in the fact that the CIA Director all but admitted in 2017 that the agency was working to topple the Venezuelan government, and it's not surprising that we're seeing civil unrest there today.

Anyway, some guy named Juan declared that he was the real president of Venezuela and not Nicolas Maduro, who was democratically elected by an overwhelming majority in May of last year in an election which was found to have been perfectly legitimate by the international Council of Electoral Experts of Latin America.

Juan Guaido did not win any election to this position, nor indeed has he ever campaigned for it. The basis for the claim of Maduro's illegitimacy, a congressional interpretation of Article 233 of Venezuela's Constitution, was struck down by the nation's highest court as fraudulent. Nevertheless, the Trump administration announced that it would no longer be recognising Venezuela's elected government and would only be recognising the office of Juan the guy. This move was copied by Canada and a host of South American US allies.

This is, of course, a huge move

by the United States. The only thing that holds governments in place is people's recognition of them, and on an international level that means their being recognised by other governments.

If China ceased recognising America's current government and instead conducted all its diplomacy through some guy named Steve who works at the Home Depot in Newark, New Jersey, all diplomatic relations between the two nations would instantly crumble.

In light of this brazen act, Maduro said all US diplomats have 72 hours to leave the nation, to which the Trump administration replied that it has no intention of doing since the order came from Maduro and not the rando named Juan (who as noted by blogger Moon of Alabama is very keen on changing Venezuela's oil policies to America's advantage).

So now the US is, as Wiki-Leaks observed, effectively conducting "a small occupation" of Venezuela by keeping its diplomats in the nation illegally. If the Venezuelan government (the actual one, not the imaginary one) were to make a move to throw them out, things could get really ugly.

"And so the confrontation begins, as I anticipated just hours ago," tweeted Venezuelan-American attorney and journalist Eva Golinger when this news broke. "Maduro expels US diplomats, they refuse to leave. If he tries to force them out, US will respond, with 'all options on the table' (military interven-

tion). This is a total reality show, invent a reason to invade".

And the Trump administration has indeed made it clear that it considers "all options on the table" up to and including a full-scale military invasion of Venezuela. "All options are on the table for the United States in regards to actions to be taken," a senior administration official told reporters, adding, "When we say 'all options are on the table' that means all options are on the table."

So this is a full-fledged coup attempt, being pushed along by starvation sanctions, CIA covert ops, and copious amounts of propaganda, and it has become a tinder box that could erupt into a US-funded "civil" war or direct US military involvement at the drop of a hat.

The mass media is as usual moving almost exclusively in the direction of unquestioning support for this trajectory. The time to protest is not when the bombs start falling, but when the war propaganda gets rolled out, as is happening right now.

Medea Benjamin is showing the way for anyone who's sick of standing by feeling helpless while the US steamrolls another nation beneath the treads of its insatiable war machine. If you're looking for ideas on how to disrupt the narratives of war, she's setting a very good example for everyone. **CT**

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Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian-based blogger. She has a podcast and a new book *Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers*. Follow her at www.caitlinjohnstone.com

Canada joins with imperial 'Mafia' to threaten Venezuela

Canada and the US are driving Venezuela down a path to intense violence, writes **Yves Engler**

MOST Canadians think of their country as a force for good in the world, but recent efforts by Justin Trudeau's government to overthrow Venezuela's elected government have once again revealed the ugly truth about the Great White North. We are an important partner in imperialism, willing to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, up to and including the use of military force, to benefit the perceived self-interest of our elites.

Over the past two years, Canadian officials have campaigned aggressively against President Nicolás Maduro. Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland has repeatedly criticised Caracas' democratic legitimacy and human rights record. Recently she said, "the Maduro regime is now fully entrenched as a dictatorship", while in September Ottawa asked (with five South American nations) the International Criminal Court to investigate the Venezuelan government, which is the first time a government has been formally brought before the tribunal by another member.

In recent weeks Canadian

diplomats have played an important role in uniting large swaths of the Venezuelan opposition behind a US-backed plan to ratchet up tensions by proclaiming the new head of the opposition-dominated National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, president.

The Canadian Press quoted a Canadian diplomat saying they helped Guaidó "facilitate conversations with people that were out of the country and inside the country" while the *Globe and Mail* reported that "Freeland spoke with Juan Guaidó to congratulate him on unifying opposition forces in Venezuela, two weeks before he declared himself interim president". Alongside Washington and a number of right-leaning Latin American governments, Ottawa immediately recognized Guaidó after he proclaimed himself president. Canadian officials are also lobbying European leaders to recognise Guaidó as president.

Ottawa has long provided various other forms of direct support to an often-violent opposition. In recent years Canada channelled millions of dollars to opposition groups in Venezuela, and 18 months ago outgoing

Canadian ambassador, Ben Rowsell, told the *Ottawa Citizen* that "we became one of the most vocal embassies in speaking out on human rights issues and encouraging Venezuelans to speak out".

Alongside its support for the opposition, Ottawa expelled Venezuela's top diplomat in 2017 and has imposed three rounds of sanctions on the country's officials. In March, the United Nations Human Rights Council condemned the economic sanctions the US, Canada and EU have adopted against Venezuela while Caracas called Canada's move a "blatant violation of the most fundamental rules of International Law".

Since its August 2017 founding, Canada has been one of the most active members of the "Lima Group" of governments opposed to Venezuela's elected government. Canada is hosting the next meeting of the "Lima Group". Freeland has repeatedly prodded Caribbean and Central American countries to join the Lima Group's anti-Maduro efforts.

In September, 11 of the 14 member states of the "Lima Group" backed a statement distancing the anti-Venezuelan alliance from "any type of action or declaration that implies military intervention" after Organisation of American States chief Luis Almagro stated: "As for military intervention to overthrow the Nicolas Maduro regime, I think we should not rule out any option ... diplomacy remains the first option

Photo: Wikimedia

but we can't exclude any action". Canada, Guyana and Colombia refused to criticise the head of the OAS's musings about an invasion of Venezuela.

Alongside the head of the OAS, US president Donald Trump has publicly discussed invading Venezuela. To the best of my knowledge Ottawa has stayed mum on Trump's threats, which violate international law.

Why? Why is Canada so eager to overthrow an elected government? Recent headlines in the *Globe and Mail* (Venezuelan crisis buoys prospects for Canadian heavy crude oil producers) and *Wall Street Journal* (Bond Prices in Venezuela Jump on Prospect of Regime Change) suggest some short term reasons. But looking at the situation from a historical perspective confirms Noam Chomsky's claim that international affairs is run like the Mafia. The godfather cannot accept disobedience.

Thus, while the scope of the Trudeau government's current campaign against Venezuela is noteworthy, it's not the first time Ottawa has supported the overthrow of an elected, left leaning, government in the



Canada's Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland: "The Maduro regime is now fully entrenched as a dictatorship"

hemisphere. Canada passively supported military coups against Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz in 1954 and Brazilian President João Goulart in 1964, as well as 'parliamentary coups' against Paraguayan president Fernando Lugo in 2012 and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff in 2016.

Ottawa played a slightly more active role in the removal of Dominican Republic president Juan Bosch in 1965 and Chilean president Salvador Allende in 1973. In a more substantial contribution to undermining electoral democracy, Ottawa backed the Honduran military's removal of Manuel Zelaya in 2009.

Canada played its most force-

ful role in the removal of a progressive, elected, president in the hemisphere's most impoverished nation. Thirteen months before Jean-Bertrand Aristide was, in his words, "kidnapped" by US Marines on February 29, 2004, Jean Chrétien's Liberal government organised an international gathering to discuss overthrowing the Haitian president. JTF2 special force-

es secured the Port-au-Prince airport the night Aristide was ousted and 500 Canadian troops were part of the US-led invasion to consolidate the coup.

With regards to Venezuela it's unclear just how far Ottawa is prepared to go in its bid to oust Maduro. But, it is hard to imagine that the path Canada and the US have chosen can succeed without Venezuela being plunged into significant violence. **CT**

***Yves Engler** is a Montreal-based activist and author. He has published eight books, the most recent of which is *Left, Right: Marching to the Beat of Imperial Canada*. His web site is www.yvesengler.com*

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BOOGIE

A lost tribe in Moscow

Welcome to Boogie's Moscow.

These are people sculpted by a brutal, concrete landscape, fighting to survive. This is a world of football hooligans, gang tattoos, boxing ...

Yet this is not misery porn, for there is an inherent vitality in the violence – the enduring toughness – of these images. There is dynamism, there is esprit de corps, there is strength.

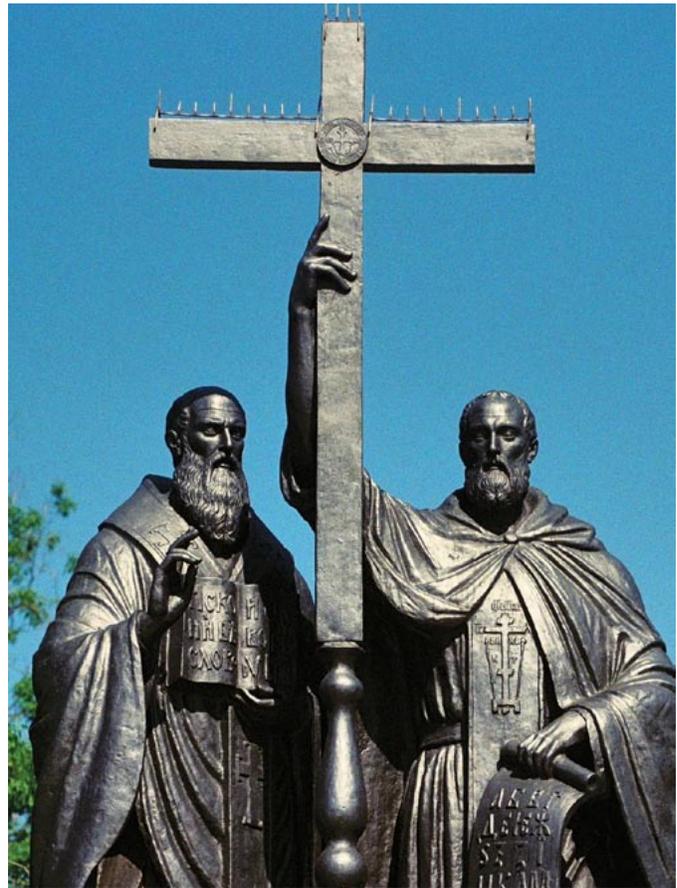
"The first time I visited Moscow, I felt like I had found my tribe. A big, powerful, lost tribe. Us Serbs always regarded Russians as our Orthodox Christian brothers; our historical friends and protectors" says Boogie, the New York based photographer.

"When you first meet them, Russians are very cold and reserved. But when they get to know you, they will give you everything. Russians are very strong: walking around Moscow, you see 50, 60, 70-year old people who could rip your head off!

"When I'm in a foreign city, I shoot like a madman. I walk and shoot 15 hours a day. Moscow is huge; it's very hard to cover photographically. It's hard to do it justice. I think, with this book, I only scratched the surface."

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BOOGIE



Photos from Moscow, by Boogie, published by powerHouse Books

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“ When you first meet them, Russians are very cold and reserved. But when they get to know you, they will give you everything ”





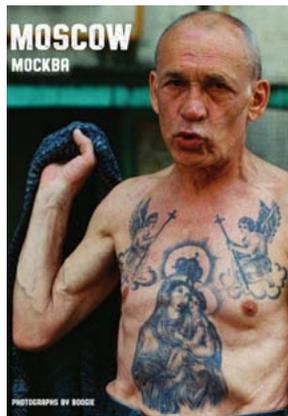
BOOGIE

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“The first time I visited Moscow, I felt like I had found my tribe. A big, powerful, lost tribe”





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Burning tyres are choking India

The British government is already flouting its own rules, allowing scrap tyres to be sent abroad for burning – what will happen post-Brexit?

18 **W**HAT we see is not the economy. What we see is the tiny fragment of economic life we are supposed to see: the products and services we buy. The rest – the mines, plantations, factories and dumps required to deliver and remove them – are kept as far from our minds as possible. Given the scale of global extraction and waste disposal, it is a remarkable feat of perception management.

The recent enthusiasm for plastic porn – footage of the disgusting waste pouring into the sea – is a rare reminder that we are still living in a material world. But it has had no meaningful effect on government policy. When China banned imports of plastic waste a year ago, you might have hoped that the UK government would invest heavily in waste reduction and domestic recycling. Instead, it has sought new outlets for our filth. Among the lucky recipients are Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam, none of which have adequate disposal systems – as I write, our plastic is doubtless flooding into their seas. There's a term for this practice: waste colonialism.

Our plastic exports are bad enough. But something even worse is happening that we don't see at all. Every month, thousands of tonnes of used tyres leave our ports on a passage to India. There they are baked in pyrolysis plants, to make a dirty industrial fuel. While some of these plants meet Indian regulations, hundreds – perhaps thousands – are pouring toxins into the air, as officials look the other way. When tyre pyrolysis is done

badly, it can produce a hideous mix: heavy metals, benzene, dioxins, furans and other persistent organic chemicals, some of which are highly carcinogenic. Videos of tyre pyrolysis in India show black smoke leaking from the baking chamber, and workers in T-shirts, without masks or other protective equipment, cleaning tarry residues out of the pipes and flasks. I can only imagine what their life expectancy might be.

India suffers one of the world's worst pollution crises, which causes massive rates of disease and early death. There is no data on the contribution made by tyre pyrolysis plants, but it is doubtless significant. Nor do we know whether British tyres are being burned in plants that are illegal, as our government has failed to investigate this. It seems prepared to break its own rules on behalf of the companies exporting our waste. And this is before Brexit.

Unlike plastic waste, there is a ready market for used tyres within the UK. They are – or were – compressed into tight blocks to make road foundations, embankments and drainage beds. It's not the closed-loop recycling that should be applied to everything we consume, let alone the radical reduction in the use of materials required to prevent environmental breakdown. But it's much better than what's happening to our discarded tyres now. The companies that made these blocks have either collapsed or are in danger of going that way, as they can no longer buy

GEORGE MONBIOT

scrap tyres: Indian pyrolysis plants pay more.

I was contacted by a leading tyre block broker, David L Reid. He was halfway through a major order from a local authority when his supplies dried up. The contract was lost, and the local authority had to switch to stone, costing it a further £200,000. He has other interests, so is able to weather this disruption, but his company, like others, has had to cease trading. With some of his former competitors, he has been frantically trying to discover what the government is playing at, so far with little success.

Government guidelines seem clear enough: exporters must be able to demonstrate that the final destination of the waste they send to other countries “operates to human health and environmental protection standards that are broadly equivalent to the standards within the EU”. But when one tyre block company tested the UK Environment Agency’s willingness to enforce this rule, by asking whether it could send tyres to pyrolysis plants in Africa that “will not meet UK and EU pollution controls”, the agency told him “your suggested business plan is acceptable as long as the relevant procedures and documents are completed correctly”.

The UK government’s due diligence consists of asking tyre exporters which companies they intend to sell to, then asking the Indian government whether those companies are legit. It has made no efforts to discover whether the firms receiving these tyres are their final destination, or whether the Indian government is properly regulating them. It has no figures for UK tyre exports to India. Arguing that they are classed as “green waste”, it washes its hands of them as soon as they leave our shores.

To become a tyre trader, all you need to do is fill in a “U2 environmental exemption” form. Then you can buy used tyres from garages, ostensibly for bundling into construction blocks. But there

appears to be nothing in British law (or at least in its implementation) to prevent you from using this licence to put them in a shipping container and send them to India.

I put questions to the government about these issues but, despite repeated requests, it failed to send me a response on time. Reid has approached the environment secretary, Michael Gove, his Labour shadow, Sue Hayman, Liam Fox and other MPs and officials, all without answers. Does anyone care? Are the lives of people in India worth nothing to politicians in this country?

It appears that among the first people to export used tyres to India, in 2009, was Richard Cook. He is the former Conservative parliamentary candidate for East Renfrewshire who channelled £435,000 (the origins of which remain mysterious) through Northern Ireland and into the leave campaign in England and Scotland. Investigations by openDemocracy and BBC Northern Ireland alleged that his shipment was classified as illegal by both the Indian government and UK regulators. Indian law at the time forbade used tyre imports. Cook denied the allegations. After I tried to speak to him, his solicitor rang to say “we have intimated a claim for damages against the BBC for defamation” and would not be making any further comment.

In principle, the government could be held to account on this issue by European law. But if this is the way it is prepared to operate before Brexit – flouting its own rules on behalf of British exporters – imagine what it might do after we have left the EU. Every child is taught a basic environmental principle: you clear up your own mess. Our government seems happy to dump it on other people. **CT**

George Monbiot’s latest book, How Did We Get Into This Mess?, is published by Verso. This article was first published in the Guardian. Monbiot’s web site is www.monbiot.com

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KAREN GREENBERG

The Year of the Child (in trouble)

How US politicians are creating a global lost generation

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HALFWAY through 2018, MSNBC's Mika Brzezinski hurled a mother-to-mother dagger at Ivanka Trump. How, during the very weeks when the headlines were filled with grim news of child separations and suffering at the US-Mexico border, she asked, could the first daughter and presidential adviser be so tone-deaf as to show herself hugging her two-year-old son? Similarly, six months earlier, she had been photographed posing with her six-year-old daughter in the glossiest of photos. America had, in other words, found its very own Marie Antoinette, gloating while others suffered. "I wish", Brzezinski tweeted at Ivanka, "you would speak for all mothers and take a stand for all mothers and children".

The problem, however, wasn't just the heartlessness and insensitivity of the first daughter, nor was it simply the grotesque disparity between those mothers on the border and her. The problem was that the sensibility displayed in those photos – that implicit we-are-not-them exceptionalism – was in no way restricted to Ivanka Trump. A subtle but pervasive sense that this country and its children can remain separated from, and immune to, the problems currently being visited upon children around the world is, in fact, widespread.

If you need proof, just watch a night of television and catch the plentiful ads extolling the bouncy exuberance of our children – seat-belted into SUV's, waving pennants at sports events, or basking in their parents' praise for doing homework. If you think about it, you'll soon grasp the

deep disparity between the image of children and childhood in the United States and what's happening to kids in so many other places on Earth. The well-ingrained sense of exceptionalism that goes with such imagery attests to a wider illusion: that the United States can continue to stand apart from the ills plaguing so much of the world.

In truth, the global reality of children in crisis may be the most pressing issue we as a nation need to confront if we are ever to understand that global ills can't be kept eternally outside our borders, not with first-daughter hugs, not with a self-centred version of tunnel vision, not even with a "great, great wall".

From north to south, east to west, children around the world are suffering, increasingly unsafe, and preyed upon in ever larger numbers. For years now, their deaths from disease, deprivation, starvation, and conflicts of every sort have been on the rise. They are increasingly fodder for weapons of war. This is the case, disturbingly, for countries in which the United States has been deeply involved in its post-9/11 global war on terror, which over the last 17 years has unsettled a significant part of the planet and badly affected children in particular.

In the first three-quarters of 2018, for instance, 5,000 children were reportedly killed or maimed in war-torn Afghanistan where the US still has 14,000 troops and countless private contractors. Save the Children estimates that up to 85,000 children under the age of five may have died of starvation in a Yemen being torn apart

Syrin refugee children in a Lebanese school classroom



by civil war and, according to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, at least 1,248 children have been killed and as many wounded in US-backed Saudi air strikes there since 2015.

By the end of 2017, at least 14,000 children had been reported killed in the war in Syria, “by snipers, machine guns, missiles, grenades, roadside bombs and aerial bombs”. In addition, as journalist Marcia Biggs showed in an award-winning PBS NewsHour special, vast numbers of children have been maimed and, having lost limbs, struggle to live with (or without) prosthetics, while their schools have been reduced to rubble.

Nor is such devastation limited to the Middle East. According to UNICEF, 22,000 children die daily worldwide due to starvation. In Africa, violence and hunger threaten children in increasing numbers. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, millions of children are reportedly “at risk of severe acute malnutrition”.

When it comes to children, those who survive the rigours of our present world often find themselves homeless, stateless, and parentless. The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, reports that the number of displaced people, both those who have fled across national boundaries as refugees and those still in their own countries, reached a staggering 68.5-million by the end of 2017. According to UNICEF, nearly half of that displaced population are children, an estimat-

ed 30-million of them. Many of those children are starving, without access to medical care or basic human needs like toilets and clean water, not to speak of schools or a future. Surprising numbers of them, as in Iraq, are in refugee or internal displacement camps. As Ben Taub points out, reporting for the *New Yorker* on post-ISIS Iraq, many such children have “been abandoned or orphaned by the war”.

In addition, living in areas torn by violence and warfare, those children have often witnessed atrocities on a mass scale. Inside and outside the camps where so many of them are now living, youngsters are subject to rape, violence, and abuse. In Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and Afghanistan, among other places, such children have sometimes had siblings and parents killed right before their eyes. According to Taub, those in Iraq who are suspected of having relatives in ISIS, or an affiliation with ISIS, are often brutally punished or even executed. Human Rights Watch reports that the security services in Iraqi Kurdistan are using “beatings, stress positions, and electric shock on boys in their custody” between the ages of 14 and 17 in order to elicit confessions about ties to ISIS.

In a brilliant and searing new documentary, *ISIS, Tomorrow: The Lost Souls of Mosul*,

filmmakers Francesca Mannocchi and Alessio Romenzi report on children who survived three years of Islamic State rule in that Iraqi city, significant parts of which now lie in ruins. Many of them are presently held in camps that are, in Taub's term, "de facto prisons", along with other alleged family members of ISIS fighters. The filmmakers document the psychological scars of being held in such places, as well as of having been subjected to the indoctrination and training offered by ISIS. Having been brutalised, they are full of anger and the desire for revenge. As one young man in the film declares, "May God do the same to them as they did to us".

In other words, in Iraq and elsewhere across the Greater Middle East and parts of Africa, new generations of terror and suffering are already in the offing as the terrorised children of the present nightmares grow up.

Mia Bloom, co-author of the forthcoming book *Small Arms: Children and Terrorism*, suggests that the authorities in such lands should focus on creating "a multi-pronged approach that addresses the psychological trauma suffered by the children from watching executions, in addition to the effects of having participated in acts of violence". Many in the human rights community agree with her. In the harsh conditions of those countries, wracked by conflict and collapse, however, theirs is but a dream.

In reality, such children are regularly ostracised as permanent enemies of the state. They are, as Taub, Mannocchi, and Romenzi show, a lost generation in the most literal sense of the term and that loss will, in the end, affect us all.

And no end is in sight when it comes to the damaging, and then further use, of those damaged young people. Quite the opposite, the cycle of violence is only being strengthened, thanks to an uptick in the recruitment of children for warfare. In Yemen, Sudan, and Libya, for example, the recruitment of child fighters has been on the rise for several years. Meanwhile, to carry on their war in Yemen, the Saudis have also been recruiting – quite literally, buying, in fact – soldiers from the Sudan, "desperate survivors of the conflict in Darfur". Many of them are, reportedly, teenagers as young as 14.

And such recruitment is in no way confined to the Greater Middle East. In Somalia and Ukraine, for example, alarming reports of child recruits have recently come to light. In Ukraine, children as young as eight years old are being trained to shoot to kill and desensitised to the act. CBS News recently quoted one of their adult trainers this way: "We never aim guns at people. But we don't count separatists, little green men, occupiers from Moscow, as people. So we can and should aim at them".

Such attempts to prey upon adrift, often hungry, and desperate young people in an effort to have yet more arms at the ready is a prescription for long-term global violence. And terror groups don't hesitate to use the young either. In her work on children recruited into such wars, for instance, Bloom notes that the Nigerian terror group Boko Haram is notorious for using young girls on suicide missions, while, in the wake of its rise in 2014, ISIS recruited "hundreds, if not thousands, of children for military engagement". So, in fact, has the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Make no mistake: in the long run, the United States will not remain untouched by such violence. Unfortunately, in this century American officials and policymakers have remained convinced that the only way this country can be protected against the turmoil and chaos engulfing the larger world is via a military-first foreign policy. As Senator Lindsey Graham recently put it, in the wake of President Trump's decision to withdraw US forces from Syria, "I want to fight the war in the enemy's backyard, not ours. That's why we need a forward-deployed force in Iraq and Syria and Afghanistan for a while to come". In this, he caught the spirit of an approach embraced by so many in the Bush and Obama administrations, even as American forces continued to unsettle those other "backyards" in significant ways.

As the first 18 years of this century have shown, reality defies this false sense of security, which contends that it is possible to keep the problems of our world at arm's length. As the 9/11 attacks should have shown us, in a global age of

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communications, travel, trade, and the delivery of the weapons of war, the spawning of a homeless, stateless, angry generation is guaranteed to create unbearable future problems, even here in the United States. The only way to limit such future damage isn't the walling off of America, but some kind of compassionate attention to those young people now.

When it comes to creating bitter futures, the Trump administration's treatment of children at the border is of a piece with the larger global attack on them. While on a smaller scale than in the Greater Middle East and beyond, acts against the young at our southern border certainly should evoke their counterparts elsewhere. In December and January, for example, the first deaths of children were recorded at American border detention centres.

In addition, widespread neglect and obvious acts of cruelty continue to define those centres. Tots are left in soiled diapers and otherwise unsanitary conditions, while children of all ages are often separated from their mothers and fathers, initially housed in bitterly cold jail-like conditions, and terrified about what might lie in store for them and their parents. Recently, a video of workers slapping, pushing, and dragging around young immigrants at a detention centre run by Southwest Key Programs in Arizona was made public. Similarly, a jury found guilty the first of two Southwest Key employees charged with sexually abusing children (at two of that company's centres) last September.

And the mistreatment of immigrant children on the border is just a sign of the times. Among US citizens, there is trouble as well. In an ever more unequal society, 21 percent of children in this country now live below the official poverty line, a rate that is the highest among the world's richest countries. In 2009, a Department of Justice report found that more than 60 percent of American children witnessed or were the targets of violence "directly or indirectly". Won't such abuse lead to a version of the resentment, anger, and damage that the rest of the world is struggling to contain? In the words of the Department

of Justice, "Children's exposure to violence... is often associated with long-term physical, psychological, and emotional harm" and can lead to a "cycle of violence".

Giving up on those children and turning a blind eye to the harm being visited on them is a formula for disaster not just in the world but at home as well. In fact, such children should become a far more important American priority than so many of the other national security expenditures we now regularly fund without a second thought. Isn't it time for the United States to set some other kind of example for the rest of the world than those terrible detention centres in our southern borderlands? Shouldn't Washington make the rescue of children a global priority and pioneer new ways to help them regain viable lives? (A first step in that direction might be to create an ambassadorship for the world's children as a way to attest to an American refusal to give up on childhood in this or any other generation.)

For her part, Ivanka Trump could start posing with refugee children, ones seeking asylum, or even American children suffering from poverty, neglect, and violence and so send quite a different Instagram message to the world – namely, that childhood is precious and needs to be protected everywhere.

Admittedly, in the Trump years, this will remain a fantasy of the first order. But keep in mind that to ignore the global crisis of childhood will someday bring it home to roost here, too. We-are-not-them exceptionalism will, in the end, prove just another kind of fantasy. In the meantime, as legal expert Jason Pobjoy notes in his book *The Child in International Refugee Law*, "Childhood is a wasting asset – there are no second chances". **CT**

Karen J Greenberg is the director of the Center on National Security at Fordham Law and editor-in-chief of the CNS Soufan Group Morning Brief. She is the author of *Rogue Justice: The Making of the Security State*. She also wrote *The Least Worst Place: Guantánamo's First 100 Days*. Julia Tedesco helped with research for this article, which first appeared at www.tomdispatch.com

DAVID NIDDRIE

Hugh Lewin: Prisoner of apartheid

South Africa pays tribute to "an incredible writer and courageous soldier"

HUGH LEWIN, author of South Africa's most powerful account of life as a political prisoner under apartheid, died at 79 on January 16 in Johannesburg. He had spent the last decade of his life struggling with a particularly brutal form of Parkinson's disease.

Lewin wrote *Bandiet: Seven years in a South African prison*, in exile in 1971 after his release from Pretoria Central Prison, where white South African political prisoners were incarcerated. It is based on a secret diary he kept, according to fellow-prisoner Denis Goldberg, in near-invisible writing between the lines of the bible that was his only reading matter for the first years of his sentence.

Bandiet's impact (the word is Afrikaans slang for "convict") is intensified by the often-painful honesty evident in all Lewin's writing – including his 2002 *Bandiet Out of Jail*, an expanded version of his first book, for which he won the 2003 Olive Schreiner award. So, too, in *Stones Against the Mirror: Friendship in the Time of the South African Struggle* (winner of South Africa's top literary prize, the Alan Paton Award, in 2012).

In *Stones Against the Mirror*, Lewin elaborates on his friendship with – and betrayal by – Adrian Leftwich, founder of the underground African Resistance Movement (ARM), a liberal, mid-

dle class and mainly white, group that engaged in anti-apartheid sabotage (bombing things, not people, Lewin emphasised), intended to shock white South Africa out of its support for the apartheid government. Apartheid police began rolling up the group within hours of Leftwich's arrest in 1963: almost immediately, he gave police a statement that implicated virtually all its members, including his best friend, Lewin. Leftwich's evidence for the prosecution in Lewin's trial won Leftwich an exist permit instead of years in jail, and was largely responsible for Lewin's seven years behind bars.

Bandiet was banned under apartheid, but copies were smuggled into South Africa and covertly circulated throughout the 1970s and 1980s among anti-apartheid activists, who were chilled by a narrative whose tone fitted absolutely with what those who met him later found was the rumbling timbre of Lewin's oral delivery – although without the bone-dry humour that also characterised Hugh in the flesh.

The son of Anglican missionaries, from whom Lewin imbibed his lifelong (and oddly saintly), Christian morality, Lewin was working as a journalist when he was detained in 1963. He returned to his chosen craft on his release and exile in 1971, to work as a sub-editor for the *Guardian*



DAVID NIDDRIE

and *Observer* newspapers in London. In addition to the legacy of his books (he also wrote four novels for children), Lewin will be remembered by subsequent generations of journalists as a trainer, in Zimbabwe (where he also operated a typically discreet safe-house for ANC operatives), in South Africa where, on his return in 1990, he ran the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism, and in Myanmar – he ran media training courses covertly in neighbouring Thailand for Burmese journalists.

His public memorial was held at Johannesburg's prestigious St John's College, his alma mater, which he later described as a good training ground for prison, "an alien world, a Christian aristocracy dominated by privilege and all the prejudices that went with it".

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa described Lewin as "an incredible writer and courageous soldier", and Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote (in the foreword to *Bandiet Out of Jail*) that he was "a person of extraordinary nobility of spirit" who wrote like a journalist who is a poet". **CT**

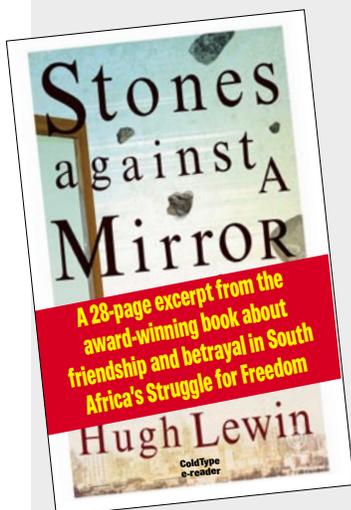


HUGH LEWIN: His book *Bandiet* was based on a secret South African prison diary.

David Niddrie is a Johannesburg-based journalist, and regular contributor to Coldtype.

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Read ColdType's excerpts from two of Hugh Lewin's Award-winning Books



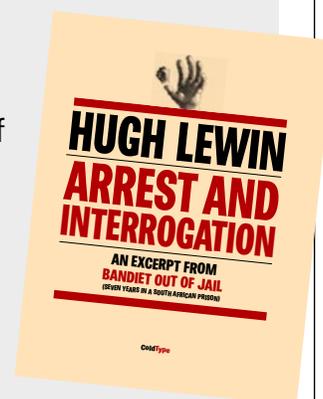
A 28-page excerpt from **Stones against A Mirror** – Friendship in the Time of the South African Struggle

<http://coldtype.net/Assets.12/PDFs/1012.Stones.pdf>

Arrest and Interrogation

A 48-page excerpt from **Bandiet Out of Jail** (Seven Years In A South African Prison)

<http://coldtype.net/Assets.04/Essays.04/LewinBook.pdf>



Democracy or extinction

Only peaceful and massive concerted action from citizens
around the world stands a chance of combating climate change

WHAT will it take for governments to take real action on climate? When will they declare an emergency and do what needs to be done? How much concerted, peaceful public action will be required to disrupt the current economic and political system that is driving humanity to the brink of extinction?

Meanwhile, climate records continue to tumble. 2018 was the hottest for the world's oceans since records began in the 1950s, continuing a deeply worrying trend. Moreover, the last five years were the five hottest. The consequences are likely to be catastrophic. The oceans are crucial to the Earth's climate; they absorb more than 90 per cent of the heating generated by greenhouse gases. Yet another sign of serious climate disruption is revealed with seemingly no impact on the juggernaut of economic 'growth' and government decision-making.

John Abraham, one of the authors of the new scientific study on this alarming rise in ocean temperatures, said: "We scientists sound like a broken record. Every year we present the science and plead for action. Not nearly enough is being done. We can still tackle climate change, but we must act immediately. We have the means to make a difference, we lack only the will".

It is, of course, heartening to see scientists finally being this outspoken. But it is not accurate to keep repeating the mantra, as many well-intentioned people do, that 'we' lack 'the will'. Who is the 'we' here? Big business, pow-

erful financial interests and corporate lobbies have fought tooth and nail to oppose any substantive action. They have battled hard over decades to obscure, rubbish and downplay the science - with huge sums devoted to disinformation campaigns - and to bend government policy in their favour.

US environmentalist Bill McKibben recently observed of the fossil fuel lobby that: "The coalition ha[s] used its power to slow us down precisely at the moment when we needed to speed up. As a result, the particular politics of one country for one half-century will have changed the geological history of the earth".

One could argue that there is a lack of public will to expose and counter corporate power in collusion with nation states; that there needs to be a grassroots revolution to overturn this destructive system of rampant global capitalism. Perhaps there needs to be a revolution in human consciousness; an increased awareness of what it is to be fully human that respects ourselves, other species and the planet itself. Most likely, all of the above. If so, it is vital to say and do much more than merely say, 'we lack only the will'.

Take the ad-dependent, establishment-preserving, Corbyn-hating Guardian. It obfuscated along similar lines in an editorial sparked by the record-breaking ocean temperatures. Global warming, the editors said: "can still be tackled if we act immediately; this is a test of will, not ability".



But where is the Guardian’s systemic analysis of root causes of climate chaos and what needs to be done about it? The Polish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg, who was murdered by right-wing paramilitary forces one hundred years ago this month, warned that global capitalism would lead to environmental destruction. This is not a defect of capitalism, she argued, but an inherent feature of a system that is rooted in brutality, gaping inequality and the unsustainable extraction of natural resources.

In her discussion of Luxemburg’s legacy, Ana Cecilia Dinerstein, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Bath, noted: “This is evident in the recent decision of Brazil’s new far-right president, Bolsonaro, to ‘integrate the Amazon region into the Brazilian economy’. This would expand the authority and reach of powerful agribusiness corporations into the Amazon Rainforest – threatening the rights and livelihoods of indigenous people and the ecosystems their lives are entwined with”.

This destruction of indigenous peoples and ecosystems has been inflicted on the continent since Columbus “discovered” America in 1492. Globally, the process intensified during the Industrial Revolution and, in more recent decades, with the rise of destructive “neoliberal” economic policies pursued with ideological fervour by Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and later acolytes. No wonder that Luxemburg saw a stark choice between “socialism or barbarism”. Today, the choice is most likely “socialism or extinction”.

To any reader unsettled by the scare word “socialism”, simply replace it with “democracy”: a genuinely inclusive system where the general population has proper input and control, and does not simply have its wishes overridden by a tiny elite that enriches itself at our, and the planet’s, expense.

As we have long pointed out, the corporate media are a crucial component of this barbaric

and destructive system of global capitalism. A previous media alert highlighted that even the very names of “our” newspapers propagate a myth of neutral, reliable news (Express, Telegraph, The Times, The Observer) or a stalwart defender of democracy (The Guardian). And, as we have also noted, BBC News promotes itself as a trusted global news brand because it supposedly “champions the truth”.

Propaganda is what Official Enemies - such as North Korea, Iran or Russia – pump out. But not “us”. Thus, BBC Newsnight will readily grant BBC correspondent John Sweeney the resources to compile a condescending report on Russia’s Sputnik News: “Sputnik UK is well-named - it’s a tin can that broadcasts its curious one-note message to the universe: Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep”.

Recall that Sweeney is a serial Western propagandist who welcomed, indeed pushed for, the invasion of Iraq. He wrote in the Observer in January 1999: “Life will only get better for ordinary Iraqis once the West finally stops dithering and commits to a clear, unambiguous policy of snuffing out Saddam. And when he falls the people of Iraq will say: ‘What kept you? Why did it take you so long?’”

If, by contrast, a BBC correspondent had repeatedly called out the UK media’s ‘one-note message’ in boosting the war crimes of Bush and Blair – an extremely unlikely scenario – would they still have a major BBC platform? Of course not.

Or consider a recent BBC News article that proclaimed: “Facebook tackles Russians making fake news stories”.

That fake news is a systemic feature of BBC coverage, and the rest of Western “mainstream” media, is virtually an unthinkable thought for corporate journalists. Try to imagine Facebook taking action against BBC News or the Guardian, or any other “mainstream” outlet for their never-ending stream of power-friendly “journalism”.

Try to imagine BBC News critically examining Western propaganda, including its own output, in the same way that it treated Russian propaganda in this BBC News at Ten piece by Moscow correspondent Sarah Rainsford.

Try to imagine Guardian editor Katharine Viner being made accountable for the fake viral Guardian exclusive last month that Trump’s former campaigner manager Paul Manafort had held secret talks with Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, in London’s Ecuadorian Embassy. She has simply kept her head down and tried to stonewall any challenges.

Try to imagine BBC Question Time host Fiona Bruce being punished by her BBC bosses for brazenly misleading viewers about Labour being behind the Tories in the polls. Or for her poor treatment of Labour guest panelist Diane Abbott, the Shadow Home Secretary, who described the BBC’s behaviour as a “disgrace”. Bruce is married to Nigel Sharrocks, chairman of the Broadcasters’ Audience Research Board which earns significant sums of money from the BBC. There is no mention of this on Fiona Bruce’s Wikipedia page; nor is there a Wikipedia page on Sharrocks himself.

Veteran journalist John Pilger, effectively barred from the Guardian since 2015, and largely shunned by the corporate media, is clear that: “Real journalists act as agents of people, not power”.

Such a simple powerful truth shames all those editors and media “professionals” masquerading as journalists on BBC News, ITV News, the Guardian and elsewhere. When was the last time you saw a BBC News political editor truly challenging any Prime Minister in the past few decades, rather than uncritically “reporting” what the PM has said or even fulsomely praising them?

Pilger was asked how journalism has changed in recent years. He responded: “When I began as a journalist, especially as a foreign correspondent, the press in the UK was conservative and owned by powerful establishment forces, as it is now. But the difference compared to today is that there were spaces for independent journalism that dissented from the received wisdom of authority. That space has now all but closed and independent journalists have gone to the internet, or to a metaphoric underground”.

He continued: “The single biggest challenge is rescuing journalism from its deferential role

as the stenographer of great power. The United States has constitutionally the freest press on earth, yet in practice it has a media obsequious to the formulas and deceptions of power. That is why the US was effectively given media approval to invade Iraq, and Libya, and Syria and dozens of other countries”.

Pilger added his strong support for Julian Assange and WikiLeaks: “The truth about Iraq and Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia and many other flashpoints was told when WikiLeaks published the revelations of whistle-blowers. [...] Julian Assange is a political refugee in London for one reason only: WikiLeaks told the truth about the greatest crimes of the 21st century. He is not forgiven for that, and he should be supported by journalists and by people everywhere”.

In reality, Assange has been ignored, traduced, ridiculed and smeared by corporate journalists; not least by the Guardian which capitalised on his and WikiLeaks’ work.

Returning to the pressing issue of climate catastrophe, we are currently living through the worst-case scenario considered by climate scientists. According to a recent study in *Nature*, global temperatures could rise by a massive 5C by the end of this century. To understand the appalling seriousness of this, Professor John Schellnhuber, one of the world’s leading climate scientists, warned several years ago that: “the difference between two degrees and four degrees [of global warming] is human civilisation”.

In other words, we are talking about the end of human life as we know it; perhaps even human extinction.

Rob Jackson, an Earth scientist at Stanford University and the chair of the Global Carbon Project, which tracks worldwide emissions levels, warns of the huge risk of assuming that humanity will be able to develop technology to remove carbon directly from the atmosphere any time soon: “It’s a very dangerous game, I think. We’re assuming that this thing we can’t do today will somehow be possible and cheaper in the future. I believe in tech, but I don’t believe in magic”.

And even the most magical high-tech fixes removing carbon or blocking sunlight will not be able to resurrect, for example, the 98 per cent and 75 per cent of insects already wiped out in Puerto Rican jungles and German nature reserves, respectively. These insects are the key to the survival of the entire food chain; when they are dead, they will remain dead, and we will die with them.

Instead of magic, scientists are increasingly calling for immediate radical action. But their urgent calls make, at best, a tiny splash for a day or two in the corporate news bubble; and then the ripples die away, leaving an eerie, deathly silence.

Almost in desperation, climate experts say that: “it may still technically be possible to limit warming to 1.5C if drastic action is taken now”. [our emphasis]

Scientific research shows that the impacts of climate change could be mitigated if a phaseout of all fossil fuel infrastructure were to begin immediately. The internationally agreed goal of restricting global warming to less than 1.5C above pre-industrial levels is still possible, say scientists. But it is: “the choices being made by global society, not physics, which is the obstacle to meeting the goal”.

Worse still, the scientific analysis: “[does] not include the possibility of tipping points such as the sudden release of huge volumes of methane from permafrost, which could spark runaway global warming”.

We have now had three decades of increasingly alarming reports from climate scientists since the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was set up in 1988. Last October, the IPCC warned that we only had 12 years left to turn things around, taking radical action now. But alarm bells from scientists have not, and will not, stop governments in their tracks. Only peaceful and massive concerted action from citizens around the world stands a chance of doing that at this desperately late stage. **CT**

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David Cromwell & David Edwards are co-editors of the UK media watchdog Medialens – www.medialens.org – where this article was first published

PETER COLE

Martin Luther King Jr, the union man

“What good does it do to be able to eat at a lunch counter if you can’t buy a hamburger?”

F Martin Luther King Jr still lived, he’d probably tell people to join unions. King understood racial equality was inextricably linked to economics. He asked, “What good does it do to be able to eat at a lunch counter if you can’t buy a hamburger?”

Those disadvantages have persisted. Today, for instance, the wealth of the average white family is more than 20 times that of a black one.

King’s solution was unionism.

In 1961, King spoke before the AFL-CIO, the

nation’s largest and most powerful labour organisation, to explain why he felt unions were essential to civil rights progress.

“Negroes are almost entirely a working people”, he said. “Our needs are identical with labor’s needs – decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children and respect in the community”.

My new book, *Dockworker Power: Race and Activism in Durban and the San Francisco Bay Area*, chronicles King’s relationship with a labour union that was, perhaps, the most racially progressive in the country. That was Local 10 of the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union, or ILWU.

ILWU Local 10 represented workers who loaded and unloaded cargo from ships throughout San Francisco Bay’s waterfront. Its members’ commitment to racial equality may be as surprising as it is unknown.

In 1967, the year before his murder, King visited ILWU Local 10 to see what interracial unionism looked like. King met with these unionists at their hall in a then-thriving, portside neighbourhood – now a gentrified tourist area best known for Fisherman’s Wharf, Pier 39.

While King knew about this union, ILWU

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The union newspaper reported that King appealed in his Sept. 21, 1967 address to Local 10 “for unity between the labour movement and the Negro freedom movement”

Image: The Dispatcher archives, ILWU



Marching in the San Francisco Waterfront Strike of 1934.

Photo: San Francisco Public Library

history isn't widely known off the waterfront.

Dockworkers had suffered for decades from a hiring system compared to a "slave auction". Once hired, they routinely worked 24 to 36 hour shifts, experienced among the highest rates of injury and death of any job, and endured abusive bosses. And they did so for incredibly low wages.

In 1934, San Francisco longshoremen – who were non-union since employers had crushed their union in 1919 – reorganised and led a coast-wide "Big Strike".

In the throes of the Great Depression, these increasingly militant and radicalised dockworkers walked off the job. After 83 days on strike, they won a huge victory: wage increases, a coast-wide contract and union-controlled hiring halls.

Soon, these "wharf rats", among the region's poorest and most exploited workers, became "lords of the docks", commanding the highest wages and best conditions of any blue-collar worker in the region.

At its inception, Local 10's membership was 99 percent white, but Harry Bridges, the union's charismatic leader, joined with fellow union radicals to commit to racial equality in its ranks.

Originally from Australia, Bridges started

working on the San Francisco waterfront in the early 1920s. It was during the Big Strike that he emerged as a leader.

Bridges coordinated during the strike with CL Dellums, the leading black unionist in the Bay area, and made sure the handful of black dockworkers would not cross picket lines as replacement workers. Bridges promised they would get a fair deal in the new union. One of the union's first moves after the strike was integrating work gangs that previously had been segregated.

Cleophas Williams, a black man originally from Arkansas, was among those who got into Local 10 in 1944. He belonged to a wave of African-Americans who, due to the massive labour shortage caused by World War II, fled the racism and discriminatory laws of the Jim Crow South for better lives – and better jobs – outside of it. Hundreds of thousands of blacks moved to the Bay Area, and tens of thousands found jobs in the booming shipbuilding industry.

Black workers in shipbuilding experienced pervasive discrimination. Employers shunted them off into less attractive jobs and paid them less.



King speaks at Local 10 in San Francisco, September 1967. Photo: ILWU Archives

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Similarly, the main shipbuilders' union proved hostile to black workers who, when allowed in, were placed in segregated locals.

A few thousand black men, including Williams, were hired as longshoremen during the war. He later recalled to historian Harvey Schwartz: "When I first came on the waterfront, many black workers felt that Local 10 was a utopia".

During the war, when white foremen and military officers hurled racist epithets at black longshoremen, this union defended them. Black members received equal pay and were dispatched the same as all others.

For Williams, this union was a revelation. Literally the first white people he ever met who opposed white supremacy belonged to Local 10. These longshoremen were not simply anti-racists, they were communists and socialists.

Leftist unions like the ILWU embraced black

workers because, reflecting their ideology, they contended workers were stronger when united. They also knew that, countless times, employers had broken strikes and destroyed unions by playing workers of different ethnicities, genders, nationalities and races against each other. For instance, when 350,000 workers went out during the mammoth Steel Strike of 1919, employers brought in tens of thousands of African-Americans to work as replacements.

Some black dockworkers also were socialists. Paul Robeson, the globally famous singer, actor and left-wing activist had several friends, fellow socialists, in Local 10. Robeson was made an honorary ILWU member during WWII.

In 1967, King walked in Robeson's footsteps when he was inducted into Local 10 as an honorary member, the same year Williams became the first black person elected president of Local 10. By that year, roughly half of its members were African-American.

King addressed these dockworkers, declaring, "I don't feel like a stranger here in the midst of the ILWU. We have been strengthened and energised by the support you have given to our struggles. ... We've learned from labour the meaning of power".

Many years later, Williams discussed King's speech with me: "He talked about the economics of discrimination. ... What he said is what Bridges had been saying all along", about workers benefiting by attacking racism and forming interracial unions.

Eight months later, in Memphis to organise a union, King was assassinated.

The day after his death, longshoremen shut down the ports of San Francisco and Oakland, as they still do when one of their own dies on the job. Nine ILWU members attended King's funeral in Atlanta, including Bridges and Williams, honouring the man who called unions "the first anti-poverty programme". **CT**

Peter Cole is professor of history at Western Illinois University. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com

ONE MAGAZINE'S 10-YEAR QUEST FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Before I wound up in Toronto and ColdType, I designed **Frontline** magazine, South Africa's top liberal-left magazine, for 10 years during the 1980s as it battled for justice and equality during the final years of Apartheid. Now, we're digitising Frontline, as a case study of prophecy and history. The first digital issues are now on line; more will follow each month.

– **Tony Sutton, Editor**



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Read the digital editions of Frontline, exactly as they were published, free of charge, at www.issuu.com/frontline.south

Edging towards war with Iran

US National Security Advisor Bolton may just be blowing smoke when he talks about regime change in Iran? But it's a good idea to take the neo-conservatives at their word

KEEPING track of the Trump administration's foreign policy is like trying to track a cat on a hot tin roof: We're pulling out of Syria (not right away). We're leaving Afghanistan (sometime in the future). Mexico is going to pay for a wall (no, it isn't). Saudi Arabia, Russia, the European Union, China, Turkey, North Korea – one day, friends, another day, foes. Even with a scorecard, it's hard to tell who's on first.

Except for Iran, where a policy of studied hostility has been consistent from the beginning. Late last year, National Security Advisor John Bolton pressed the Pentagon to produce options for attacking Iran, and he has long advocated for military strikes and regime change in Teheran. And now, because of a recent internal policy review on the effect of US sanctions, Washington is drifting closer to war.

According to *On Thin Ice*, a report by the International Crisis Group (ICG), the Trump administration has concluded that the its "maximum pressure" campaign of sanctions has largely failed to meet any of the White House's "goals" of forcing Iran to re-negotiate the 2015 nuclear agreement or alter its policies in the Middle East.

While the sanctions have damaged Iran's economy, the Iranians have proved to be far more nimble in dodging them than Washington allowed for. And because the sanctions were unilaterally imposed, there are countries willing to look for ways to avoid them

"If you look at the range of ultimate objectives" of the administration, from encouraging "protests that pose an existential threat to the system, to change of behaviour, to coming back to the negotiating table, none of that is happening", Ali Vaez of the ICG's Iran Project, told Laura Rozen of *Al-Monitor*.

That should hardly come as a shock. Sanctions rarely achieve their goals and virtually never when they are imposed by one country, even one as powerful as the US. More than 50 years of sanctions aimed at Cuba failed to bring about regime change, and those currently aimed at Russia have had little effect beyond increasing tensions in Europe.

This time around, the US is pretty much alone. While the Trump administration is preparing to withdraw from the 2015 nuclear agreement – the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – the European Union (EU) is lobbying Iran to stay in the pact. Russia, China, Turkey and India have also made it clear that they will not abide by the US trade sanctions, and the EU is setting up a plan to avoid using dollars.

But the failure of the White House's sanctions creates its own dangers because this is not an American administration that easily accepts defeat. On top of that, there is a window of opportunity for striking Iran that will close in a year, making an attack more complicated.

The nuclear agreement imposed an arms embargo on Iran, but if Teheran stays in the agreement, that embargo will lift in 2020, allowing

CONN HALLINAN



Photo: US State Department

GANG OF FOUR: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (second left) with National Security Advisor John Bolton, President Donald J. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence before Pompeo's swearing-in ceremony at the US Department of State in Washington, on May 2, 2018.

the Iranians to buy weapons on the international market. Beefing up Iran's arms arsenal would not do much to dissuade the US, but it might give pause to Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates (UAE), two of Teheran's most implacable enemies.

It is not clear who would be part of a coalition attack on Iran. Saudi Arabia and the UAE would almost certainly be involved, but that pair hardly has the Iranians quaking in their boots. The rag-tag Houthi army has fought the two Gulf monarchies to a standstill in Yemen, in spite of not having any anti-aircraft to challenge the Saudi air war.

Iran is a different matter. Its Russian built S-300 anti-aircraft system might not discomfort the US and the Israelis, but Saudi and UAE pilots

could be at serious risk. Once the embargo is lifted, Iran could augment its S-300 with planes and other anti-aircraft systems that might make an air war like the one the Gulf monarchs are waging in Yemen very expensive.

Of course, if the US and/or Israel join in, Iran will be hard pressed. But as belligerent as Bolton and the Israeli government are toward Iran, would they initiate or join a war?

Such a war would be unpopular in the US. Some 63 percent of Americans oppose withdrawing from the nuclear agreement and by a margin of more than two to one, oppose a war with Iran. While 53 percent oppose such a war – 37 percent strongly so – only 23 percent would support a war

with Iran. And, of those, only nine percent strongly support such a war.

The year 2020 is also the next round of US elections where control of the Senate and the White House will be in play. While wars tend to rally people to the flag, the polls suggest a war with Iran is not likely to do that. The US would be virtually alone internationally, and Saudi Arabia is hardly on the list of most American's favourite allies.

And it is not even a certain that Israel would join in, although Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu calls Iran an "existential threat". Polls show that the Israeli public is hardly enthusiastic about a war with Iran, particularly if the US is not involved.

The Israeli military is more than willing to take on Iranian forces in Syria, but a long-distance air war would get complicated. Iraq and Lebanon would try to block Israel from using their airspace to attack Iran, as would Turkey. The first two countries might not be able to do much to stop the Israelis, but flying over a hostile country is always tricky, particularly if you have to do it for an extended period of time. And anyone who thinks the Iranians are going to toss in the towel is delusional.

Of course Israel has other ways to strike Iran, including cruise missiles deployed on submarines and surface craft. But you can't win a war with cruise missiles, you just blow a lot of things up.

There are deep fissures among the Gulf monarchs. Qatar has already said that it will have nothing to do with an attack on Iran, and Oman is neutral. Kuwait has signed a military cooperation agreement with Turkey because the former is more worried about Saudi Arabia than it is Iran, and with good reason.

A meeting last September of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Emir Sabah Al-Sabah of Kuwait to discuss problems between the two countries apparently went badly. The two countries are in a dispute over who should exploit their common oilfields at Khafji and Wafra, and the Saudis unilaterally stopped production. The Kuwaitis say they lost \$18-billion revenues

and want compensation.

The bad blood between the two countries goes back to the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, when Saudi Arabia refused to accept the borders that the British drew for Kuwait and instead declared war. In 1922 the border was re-drawn with two-thirds of Kuwait's territory going to Saudi Arabia.

Lebanese legal scholar, Ali Mourad, told Al-Monitor that Kuwait has tightened its ties to Turkey because "they are truly afraid of a Saudi invasion", especially given "the blank check Trump has issued" to Prince Salman.

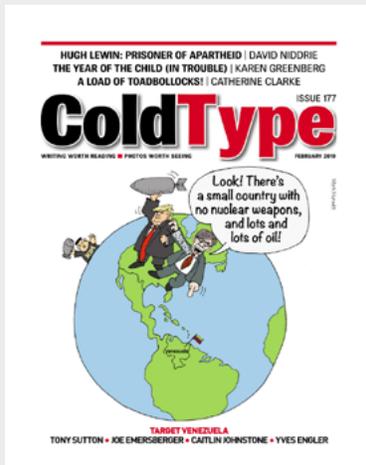
Whether Kuwait's embrace of Turkey will serve as a check on the Saudis is uncertain. Prince Salman has made several ill-considered moves in the region, from trying to overthrow the government of Lebanon, blockading Qatar, to starting a war with Yemen. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are currently at odds over the latter's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, probably the only thing that the Saudi princes hate more than Iran.

Would – or could – Ankara really defend Kuwait from a Saudi attack? Turkey is currently bogged down in Northern Syria, at war with its own Kurdish population, and facing what looks like a punishing recession. Its army is the second largest in NATO, and generally well armed, but it has been partly hollowed out by purges following the 2015 coup attempt.

So is US National Security Advisor Bolton just blowing smoke when he talks about regime change in Iran? Possibly, but it is a good idea to take the neo-conservatives at their word. The US will try to get Iran to withdraw from the nuclear pact by aggressively tightening the sanctions. If Teheran takes the bait, Washington will claim the legal right to attack Iran.

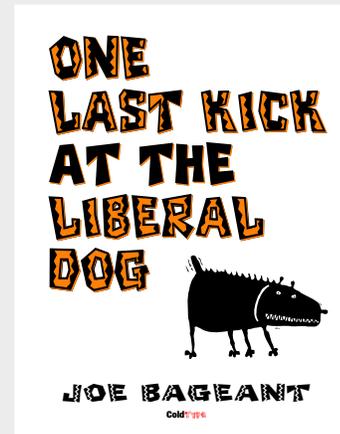
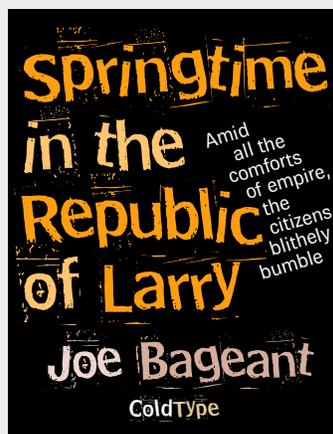
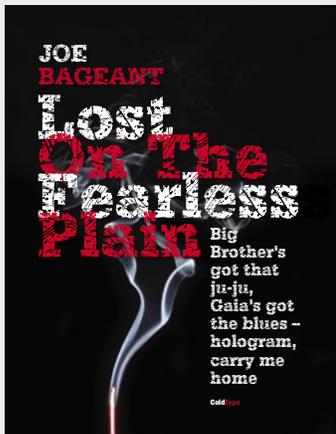
Bolton and the people around him engineered the catastrophes in Afghanistan and Iraq (the Obama administration gets the blame for Libya and Yemen), and knocking out Iran has been their long time goal. If they pull it off, the US will ignite yet another forever war. **CT**

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*Conn Hallinan can be read at www.dispatchesfromtheedgeblog.wordpress.com
and at www.middleempireseries.wordpress.com*



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Whatever your hands find to do

Observing my colleagues at the plastic recycling plant

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PAINTED houses for a decade, and on our crews, we always knew of each other's relative competence, willingness to work, sense of responsibility, substance addictions, if any, and, ultimately, character. My roommate, Jay, for example, really didn't give a fuck, for he was often late, but somehow always rehired, for our boss, Joe LeBlanc, was a softie. Once, Jay and I left our rather pitiful, unheated apartment at exactly the same time, yet Jay somehow managed to miss the bus, thus work for that day.

Chuck was a narcoleptic who had been a car accident, so was more or less one-armed, but still, he was a pretty good worker, and always cheerful. Standing on a 40-footer, Chuck exclaimed, "Hey, who farted?!" Many a poet have never come up with a more memorable instance of philosophy and wit. Pure Zen. If he hasn't wiped himself out, along with a car or busload of innocents, I hope Chuck is doing well.

Smooth was a junkie, so moved very slowly, hence his nickname. Joe paid him accordingly.

Laura could never make it up any ladder taller than herself, so only scraped or painted baseboards and first floor windows. In the kinder and gentler working environment of the 80's and early 90's, even a fat broad could join a housepainting crew.

Now that I'm a foreman at a plastic recycling plant, memories and habits from my housepainting days return, and though Ea Kly is 10,000 miles from Philly, I can readily detect, once again, similar character types, as in who move fast and

efficiently, who lumber along, and who are just faking it.

My brother in law brought me in so I could, in his place, observe what was going on, and immediately, I recommended letting a loafer go, and this even before I knew Tuan had a raging drinking problem. Like Joe LeBlanc, my brother in law is a softie, so he hesitated, but Tuan promptly fired himself this week. Hung over, Tuan missed two days without saying anything to me, and not only that, he drunkenly called our bookkeeper in the middle of the night to demand that he be paid in full immediately, for he was quitting. Sobering up, he came to me to apologise, but it was too late. "I have marital problems, brother Linh, and that's why I drink". Much of the world, then, men and women, would be boozing nonstop. Even Tuan's wife, Thu, who is also employed by us, is not defending this charming dude.

One of Thu's duties is to cook for up to six people, whoever happen to live at the recycling plant at the time. We have an improvised kitchen of two hot plates. Lunch and dinner are served on the floor. The dishes are washed in a courtyard out back, with the pots hung up on a wire fence to dry. Twice a day, the neighbour's dogs drop by to eat our food scraps, and sometimes even a chicken forages around. The cow, love of my life, merely looks on.

My wife is in Saigon working for her sister. Our marriage is strengthened, or at least saved, by these spells apart. Knowing that I'm alone, a few of our workers are joking that I should look for a

LINH DINH

local mate. While women like to gossip or fantasise about other people coupling, most men only conjecture themselves in action. Lien, a woman in her early 30's, joked to me after work, "We have a few middle-aged women here. You should get yourself one, uncle".

"Oh, I'm old, sister, so I don't need an old woman. How tiresome is that?! I need someone young, even the youngest. Now, that would be a good match!"

"There's Coi [Tiny]"

I had no idea who Coi was, but I went along with it, "That sounds great!" Just as in Philly, the Vietnamese working class will joke and banter most inappropriately, for it makes their long, exhausting day goes a little faster.

One of our best employees is Vinh, a mother of four. Tough and responsible, she's the perfect supervisor. At home, she grows a few crops, keeps a few goats, chickens and two cows. Eight days ago, she limped into work after hurting her foot doing some farm work. Take a few days off, we suggested, until you feel better, and when she didn't return after a week, a couple of us dropped by with a small gift of money, as is customary, to help Vinh recover. We have some sad houses in this village, and hers is among the most dismal, I was rather surprised to see, since I have talked to her boastful husband, Binh, a few times. I thought they were we doing OK, at least.

Vinh's two kids still living at home were dressed very shabbily, with the girl, about 12, had on a dirty T-shirt with a smiling cartoon figure, with this bizarre English caption, "What Shall I Make for Dinner?"

We found Vinh bedridden, and about to go to the hospital. Binh whispered to me that his wife had "female problems", a situation that had persisted for years, so it's not the injured foot that had kept her home.

Within hours, however, I found out that there was a huge commotion at their miserable shack recently, that Binh had likely beaten his wife, as he has done many times before, and, moreover, that he's a good for nothing who gambles compulsively, and that's why they're broke. Worse,

they'll soon be kicked off their small plot, since it's slated for some development. Though they've been fairly compensated for it, that money is long gone, to pay off Binh's gambling debts.

Since there are Vietnamese laws against domestic abuses, Vinh can go to the authorities for help, but she doesn't want to see her asshole husband go to jail, thus breaking up the family. Plus, she wants to maintain a facade of marital concord, as if the entire village doesn't already know.

Some Vietnamese women take matters into their own hands, and this week, there's a news item about a Thanh Hoa woman who kept her husband in a cage for three years, for he was a heroin and crystal meth junkie who had often beaten her and their two kids, she defiantly explains to authorities. "I cured him". She never mistreated him, she elaborates, for she always fed him properly, and even gave him a glass of beer with each meal.

Yesterday, we hired two new guys, and they both came in wearing brand new military uniforms, as if ready to shoot up the place. Vietnamese have the unenlightened and deplorable habits of judging people by how their look, so one guy would be said by most to "resemble an executive", for his face is wide and robust, with regular and intelligent looking features. Although he doesn't seem stupid or like a beaten down coolie, he's happy to be hired to do a very dirty, tiring and poorly paid job, but that, too, is hardly unusual in this upside down world. Some of the world's most undeserving are paid most handsomely.

Since some of the women here have matched me with Tiny, I've made it a point to not even look in her direction, since I don't want to creep the young lady out. I am married and try not to be an asshole. I do what I must, and for now, it's returning to work. Grinding along, our machine breaks down hardy, eternal plastic. The men in military uniforms are covered in dust and grime, and so am I. Bent over, Tiny sweeps. **CT**

Linh Dinh returned to his native Saigon last year after living in the US, Italy, England and Germany from 1975. His latest book is Postcards from the End of America and he blogs at <https://linhdinhphotos.blogspot.com>

Israeli general challenges Netanyahu

Benny Gantz launches new party, using videos of Gaza carnage to portray himself as a battle-hardened warrior

WITH April's elections looming, Benjamin Netanyahu has good reason to fear Benny Gantz, his former army chief. Gantz has launched a new party, named Israeli Resilience, just as the net of corruption indictments is closing around the prime minister.

Already, at this early stage of campaigning, 31 percent of the Israeli public prefer Gantz to head the next government over Netanyahu, who is only months away from becoming the longest-serving leader in Israel's history.

Gantz is being feted as the new hope, a chance to change direction after a series of governments under Netanyahu's leadership have over the past decade shifted Israel ever further to the right.

Like Israel's former politician generals, from Yitzhak Rabin to Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon, Gantz is being portrayed – and portraying himself – as a battle-hardened warrior, able to make peace from a position of strength.

Before he had issued a single policy statement, polls showed him winning 15 of the 120 parliamentary seats, a welcome sign for those hoping that a centre-left coalition can triumph this time.

But the reality of what Gantz stands for – revealed in his first election videos – is far from reassuring.

In 2014, he led Israel into its longest and most savage military operation in living memory: 50 days in which the tiny coastal enclave of Gaza was bombarded relentlessly.

By the end, one of the most densely populat-

ed areas on earth – its two million inhabitants already trapped by a lengthy Israeli blockade – lay in ruins. More than 2,200 Palestinians were killed in the onslaught, a quarter of them children, while tens of thousands were left homeless.

The world watched, appalled. Investigations by human rights groups such as Amnesty International concluded that Israel had committed war crimes.

One might have assumed that during the election campaign Gantz would wish to draw a veil over this troubling period in his military career. Not a bit of it. Watch his main campaign video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBc3qojn-w0>

One of his campaign videos soars over the rubble of Gaza, proudly declaring that Gantz was responsible for destroying many thousands of buildings. "Parts of Gaza have been returned to the Stone Age," the video boasts.

This is a reference to the Dahiya doctrine, a strategy devised by the Israeli military command of which Gantz was a core member. The aim is to lay waste to the modern infrastructure of Israel's neighbours, forcing survivors to eke out a bare existence rather than resist Israel.

The collective punishment inherent in the apocalyptic Dahiya doctrine is an undoubted war crime.

More particularly, the video exults in the destruction of Rafah, a city in Gaza that suffered the most intense bout of bombing after an Israeli soldier was seized by Hamas. In minutes, Israel's indiscriminate bombardment killed at least

JONATHAN COOK

135 Palestinian civilians and wrecked a hospital.

According to investigations, Israel had invoked the Hannibal Procedure, the code name for an order allowing the army to use any means to stop one of its soldiers being taken. That includes killing civilians as “collateral damage” and, more controversially for Israelis, the soldier himself.

Gantz’s video flashes up a grand total of “1,364 terrorists killed”, in return for “three-and-a-half years of quiet”. As Israel’s liberal Haaretz daily observed, the video “celebrates a body count as if this were just some computer game”.

But the casualty figure cited by Gantz exceeds even the Israel army’s self-serving assessment – as well, of course, as dehumanising those “terrorists” fighting for their freedom.

A more impartial observer, Israeli human rights group B’Tselem, estimates that the Palestinian fighters killed by Israel amounted to 765. By their reckoning, and that of other bodies such as the United Nations, almost two-thirds of Gazans killed in Israel’s 2014 operation were civilians.

Further, the “quiet” Gantz credits himself with was enjoyed chiefly by Israel.

In Gaza, Palestinians faced regular military attacks, a continuing siege choking off essential supplies and destroying their export industries, and a policy of executions by Israeli snipers firing on unarmed demonstrators at the perimeter fence imprisoning the enclave.

Gantz’s campaign slogans “Only the Strong Wins” and “Israel Before Everything” are telling. Everything, for Gantz, clearly includes human rights.

It is shameful enough that he believes his track record of war crimes will win over voters. But the same approach has been voiced by Israel’s new military chief of staff.

Aviv Kochavi, nicknamed the Philosopher Officer for his university studies, was inaugurated this month as the army’s latest head. In a major speech, he promised to reinvent the fabled “most



DRESSED TO KILL: Benny Gantz, former Israeli Army Chief of Staff, is glorifying his military past to challenge Benjamin Netanyahu.

moral army in the world” into a “deadly, efficient” one.

In Kochavi’s view, the rampaging military once overseen by Gantz needs to step up its game. And he is a proven expert in destruction.

In the early stages of the Palestinian uprising that erupted in 2000, the Israeli army struggled to find a way to crush Palestinian fighters concealed in densely crowded cities under occupation.

Kochavi came up with an ingenious solution in Nablus,

where he was brigade commander. The army would invade a Palestinian home, then smash through its walls, moving from house to house, burrowing through the city unseen. Palestinian space was not only usurped, but destroyed inside-out.

Gantz, the former general hoping to lead the government, and Kochavi, the general leading its army, are symptoms of just how complete the militaristic logic that has overtaken Israel really is. An Israel determined to become a modern-day Sparta.

Should he bring about Netanyahu’s downfall, Gantz, like his predecessor politician-generals, will turn out to be a hollow peace-maker. He was trained to understand only strength, zero-sum strategies, conquest and destruction, not compassion or compromise.

More dangerously, Gantz’s glorification of his military past is likely to reinforce in Israelis’ minds the need not for peace but for more of the same: support for an ultranationalist right that bathes itself in an ethnic supremacist philosophy and dismisses any recognition of the Palestinians as human beings with rights. **CT**

Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His books include *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East* (Pluto Press) and *Disappearing Palestine: Israel’s Experiments in Human Despair* (Zed Books). His website is www.jonathan-cook.net



NOT THEIR FIRST CHOICE: Against the wishes of the Air Force, the Pentagon decided to invest at least \$1.2-billion in Boeing's F-15X fighter aircraft.

Photo: Boeing

Our man from Boeing

Has the arms industry captured Trump's Pentagon?

THE way personnel spin through Washington's infamous revolving door between the Pentagon and the arms industry is nothing new. That door, however, is moving ever faster with the appointment of Patrick Shanahan, who spent 30 years at Boeing, the Pentagon's second largest contractor, as the Trump administration's acting defence secretary.

Shanahan had previously been deputy secretary of defence, a typical position in recent years for someone with a significant arms industry background. William Lynn, President Obama's first deputy secretary of defence, had been a Raytheon lobbyist. Ashton Carter, his successor, was a consultant for the same company. One of President George W. Bush's deputies, Gordon England, had

been president of the General Dynamics Fort Worth Aircraft Company (later sold to Lockheed Martin).

But Shanahan is unique. No secretary of defence in recent memory has had such a long career in the arms industry and so little experience in government or the military. For most of that career, in fact, his main focus was winning defence contracts for Boeing, not crafting effective defence policies. While the Pentagon should be focused on protecting the country, the arms industry operates in the pursuit of profit, even when that means selling weapons systems to countries working against American national security interests.

The closest analogues to Shanahan were Charlie Wilson, head of General Motors, whom Presi-

dent Dwight Eisenhower appointed to lead the Department of Defense (DoD) more than 60 years ago and John F. Kennedy's first defence secretary, Robert McNamara, who ran the Ford Motor Company before joining the administration. Eisenhower's choice of Wilson, whose firm manufactured military vehicles, raised concerns at the time about conflicts of interest – but not in Wilson's mind. He famously claimed that, “for years I thought what was good for the country was good for General Motors and vice versa.”

Shanahan's new role raises questions about whether what is in the best interest of Boeing – bigger defence budgets and giant contracts for unaffordable and ineffective weaponry or aircraft – is what's in the best interest of the public.

Unlike Wilson, Shanahan has at least implicitly acknowledged the potential for conflicts of interest in his new role by agreeing to recuse himself from decisions involving his former employer. But were he truly to adhere to such a position, he would have to avoid many of the Pentagon's most significant management and financial decisions. Last year Boeing received nearly \$30-billion in DoD contracts for working on everything from combat, refuelling, training, and radar planes to bombs, drones, missile-defense systems, ballistic missiles, and military satellites. If Shanahan were to step back from deliberations related to all of these, he would, at best, be a part-time steward of the Pentagon, unable even to oversee whether Boeing and related companies delivered what our military asked for.

There is already evidence, however, that he will do anything but refrain from overseeing, and so promoting, his old firm. Take Boeing's F-15X, for example. Against the wishes of the Air Force, the Pentagon decided to invest at least \$1.2-billion in that fighter aircraft, an upgraded version of the Boeing F-15C/D, which had been supplanted by Lockheed Martin's questionable new F-35. There have been reports that Shanahan has already trashed Lockheed, Boeing's top competitor, in discussions inside the Pentagon. According to *Bloomberg News*, the decision to invest in the F-15X was due, in part at least, to “prodding”

from him, when he was still deputy secretary of defence.

And that's just one of a slew of major contracts scooped up by Boeing in the past year. Others include a \$9.2-billion programme for a new training aircraft for the Air Force, an \$805-million contract for an aerial refuelling drone for the Navy, two new presidential Air Force One planes at a price tag of at least \$3.9-billion, and significant new funding for the KC-46 refuelling tanker, a troubled plane the Air Force has cleared for full production despite major defects still to be addressed. While there is as yet no evidence that Shanahan himself sought to tip the scales in Boeing's favour on any of these systems, it doesn't look good. As defence secretary, he's bound to be called on to referee major problems that will arise with one or more of these programmes, at which point the question of bias towards Boeing will come directly into play.

Defenders of Shanahan's appointment to run what is by far the largest department in the federal government suggest that key Boeing decisions won't even reach his desk. That, however, is a deeply flawed argument for a number of reasons. To start, when making such decisions, lower-level managers will be aware of their boss's lifetime connection to Boeing – especially since Shanahan has reportedly sung the praises of his former firm at the Pentagon. He has insisted, for example, that the massive F-35 program would have had none of the serious problems now plaguing it had it been run by Boeing.

In addition, Shanahan will be developing policies and programmes sure to directly affect that company's bottom line. Among them, he'll be setting the DoD's priorities when it comes to addressing perceived threats. His initial message on his first day as acting secretary, for instance, was summarised as “China, China, China”. Will he then prime the pump for expensive weapon systems such as Boeing's P-8 Poseidon surveillance aircraft designed specifically to monitor Chinese military activities?

He has similarly been the Pentagon's staunchest advocate when it comes to the development of a new Space Force, something that likely thrills President Trump. He's advocated, for

example, giving the Space Development Agency, the body that will be charged with developing military space assets, authority “on steroids” to shove ever more contracts out the door. As a producer of military satellites, Boeing is a major potential beneficiary of just such a development.

Then there’s missile defence, another new presidential favourite. Shanahan presided over Boeing’s missile defence division at a time when one of the systems being developed was the Airborne Laser, meant to zap launched nuclear missiles with lasers installed on Boeing 747 aircraft. The project, a dismal failure, was cancelled after more than \$5-billion in taxpayer funds had been sunk into it. The Pentagon’s latest “Star Wars”-style anti-missile technology, whose development was just announced by President Trump, calls for a major investment in an equally impractical set of technologies at a price that Joseph Cirincione of the Ploughshares Fund suggests could reach \$1-trillion in the decades to come.

Among Boeing’s current missile-defence programmes is the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense System, an array of land-based interceptor missiles that has already failed the majority of its tests. It’s unlikely that it will ever function effectively in a situation in which incoming warheads would be accompanied by large numbers of decoys. The Congressional Budget Office has identified the cancellation of the programme as one obvious decision that could save significant sums. But what chance is there that Shanahan would support such a decision, given all those years in which he advocated for that missile-defence system at Boeing?

Or take nuclear policy. His former company is one of two finalists to build a new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Critics of such weapons systems like Clinton administration Secretary of Defense William Perry point out that ICBMs are the most dangerous and unnecessary leg of the US nuclear triad, since in a potential war they might need to be launched on only minutes’ notice, lest they be lost to incoming enemy nukes. Even some of their supporters have questioned the need for a brand-new ICBM when older ones could be upgraded. Nuclear hawks might eventually be persuaded to adopt such a position, too, since the

cost of the Pentagon’s across-the-board \$1.5-trillion “modernisation” of the US nuclear arsenal (including the production of new nuclear bombers, missiles, and warheads) will otherwise begin to impinge on department priorities elsewhere. But how likely is Shanahan to seriously entertain even such modest critiques when they threaten to eliminate a huge potential payday for Boeing?

Finally, there is the issue of US support for the brutal war launched by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Yemen nearly four years ago. Boeing’s combat planes, bombs, and attack helicopters have played a central role in that conflict, which has killed tens of thousands of civilians, while a Saudi blockade of the country has put millions more at risk of famine. In addition, Boeing continues to benefit from a \$480-million contract to service the F-15s it has supplied to the Royal Saudi Air Force.

Here, President Trump is firmly in that company’s corner. “Boeing, Lockheed, Raytheon... I don’t wanna hurt jobs”, he told 60 Minutes. “I don’t wanna lose an order like that [from the Saudi government]”. Before his resignation, Secretary of Defense James Mattis was regularly called upon to comment on the Saudi war and help craft US policy towards both that country and the UAE. Where will Shanahan stand on a war significantly fuelled by the products of his former company?

There is, in fact, a grim precedent for Shanahan’s present situation. The Intercept and the *Wall Street Journal* have both reported that State Department Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs Charles Faulkner, a former lobbyist for Raytheon, advocated giving Saudi Arabia a clean bill of health on its efforts to avoid hitting civilians in its air strikes in Yemen, lest Raytheon lose a lucrative bomb deal. So much for draining the swamp.

Shanahan and Faulkner are far from the only former defence executives or lobbyists to populate the Trump administration. Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson is a former lobbyist for Lockheed Martin. Ellen Lord, who heads procurement at the Pentagon, worked at Textron, a producer of bombs and military helicopters. Sec-

MANDY SMITHBERGER & WILLIAM D. HARTUNG

retary of the Army Mark Esper – rumoured as a possible replacement for Shanahan as secretary of defence – was once a top lobbyist at Raytheon. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy John Rood was a senior vice president at Lockheed Martin. And the latest addition to the club is Charles Kupperman, who has been tapped as deputy national security advisor. His career includes stints at both Boeing and Lockheed Martin. (His claim to fame: asserting that the United States could win a nuclear war.)

All of the above, including Patrick Shanahan, spun through that famed revolving door into government posts, but so many former DoD officials and top-level military officers have long spun in the opposite direction. In 1969, for example, Wisconsin Democratic Senator William Proxmire, a legendary Pentagon watchdog, was already describing the problem this way: “The easy movement of high-ranking military officers into jobs with major defence contractors and the reverse movement of top executives in major defense contractors into high Pentagon jobs is solid evidence of the military-industrial complex in operation. It is a real threat to the public interest because it increases the chances of abuse ... How hard a bargain will officers involved in procurement planning or specifications drive when they are one or two years from retirement and have the example to look at of over 2,000 fellow officers doing well on the outside after retirement?”

Or, as a 1983 internal Air Force memo, put it, “If a colonel or a general stands up and makes a fuss about high cost and poor quality, no nice man will come to see him when he retires”.

As a presidential candidate, Donald Trump appeared to recognise the obvious problem of the revolving door and proposed a five-point ethics reform plan to slow it down, if not shut it down entirely. Unfortunately, the ethics executive order he put in place fell wildly short of his campaign ambitions, leaving that revolving door spinning madly. A new report from the Project On Government Oversight has documented 645 cases in 2018 alone in which former government officials held jobs at the top 20 Pentagon contractors. The leader among them? You probably won't be surprised

to learn that it's Boeing, with 84 such hires.

Retired Vice Admiral Jeffrey Wieringa, who led the Pentagon's arms sales office, is a case in point. In that role, he helped promote sales of US weaponry globally. Perhaps as a result, he “earned” himself a position as president for global services and support at Boeing less than a year after he retired. He's far from alone. Retired Rear Admiral Donald Gaddis, a programme officer for Navy air systems, also joined the company, as did retired Air Force Major General Jack Catton, Jr, who served as the director of requirements for the Air Combat Command before moving to Boeing. Retired Vice Admiral Mark Harnitchek, the former head of the Defense Logistics Agency, charged with managing \$35-billion in goods and services across the DoD annually, similarly became a vice president at Boeing.

Candidate Donald Trump saw the revolving door between government and industry as a problem. “I think anybody that gives out these big contracts should never ever, during their lifetime, be allowed to work for a defence company, for a company that makes that product,” he said. As the continuing flow of officials through it suggests, however, as president, he's done anything but drain that swamp.

Candidate Trump was onto something. However, rather than curbing the blatant conflicts inherent in the revolving door – the ultimate symbol of the military-industrial complex in action -- President Trump is actually accelerating them. America is indeed great again, if you happen to be one of those lucky enough to be moving back and forth between plum jobs in the Pentagon and the weapons industry. **CT**

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LEE CAMP

Shredding the Russiagate hysteria

A New York Times story just accidentally punctured the balloon of media hysteria

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ONCE in a while, one of those stories comes along that makes the mainstream corporate media look like a bunch of middle-school kids filming their “news show” on an iPhone with their neck ties crooked. Recently, one of those stories splashed down into the middle of our cultural zeitgeist like a small meteor landing in the middle of an elite dinner party. It made our mass media pundits look like hardened fools. But they have kept spouting their nonsense anyway, hoping no one notices the soup dripping down their faces.

But to talk about that, I have to talk about this: In December, we finally got to see the Senate report spelling out the Russian meddling in our last election. And it was a bombshell. It rocked the heart of our country. It shredded the inflamed core of our palpitating democracy.

As Dan Cohen reported for the Grayzone Project, the report said that “...everything from the Green Party’s Jill Stein to Instagram to Pokemon Go to the African American population had been used and confused by the deceptive Facebook pages of a private Russian troll farm called the Internet Research Agency.”

That’s right. Russia even used Pokémon Go to pulverise the previously pristine 2016 election. That’s really frightening, since Pokémon Go is CIA-backed. (I guess it’s high time we just accept that the CIA has been taken over by those ruthless vodka drinkers.)

Back to the point – we learned from the report

that the Russian Internet Research Agency manipulated every one of us with Facebook ads. If you don’t mind, though, the Senate and the corporate media (and anybody else who knows the secret oligarchy handshake) would really prefer you just ignore the fact that Facebook clearly stated “...56percent [of the Russian ads] were after the election” and “...roughly 25 percent of the ads were never shown to anyone.”

But, like an overweight man dressed like Wolverine at a Comic-Con, our brave congressmen and women are not about to be dissuaded by reality. After the report came out, Sen. Mark Warner tweeted, “Incredible. These bombshell reports demonstrate just how far Russia went to exploit the fault lines of our society and divide Americans, in an attempt to undermine and manipulate our democracy”.

Just after posting that, Warner patriotically pissed his red, white and blue Underoos.

So who are these amazing nonpartisan unbiased sleuths who put together this legitimate and nonpartisan unbiased Senate report? The *New York Times* found out they are a group called New Knowledge (which sounds like a terrible boy band). New Knowledge was founded by two veterans of the Obama administration, Jonathon Morgan and Ryan Fox. ... So, I guess we’re, um, doing away with the “nonpartisan unbiased” thing.



Well, in that case – I say go hard or go home. I want MORE bias!

The Grayzone Project – you can find it at <https://grayzoneproject.com> – pointed out that besides working for Obama and the State Department, “... Morgan also developed technology for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the arm of the Department of Defense created for basic, applied technological research, and futuristic war toys”.

All right, all right, not bad. But I know what you’re thinking. “Lee, that might be a great bias appetizer, but we want the full bias entree!”

Okay, how about this?

Ryan Fox is a 15-year veteran of the NSA and was a computer analyst for the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) military unit. JSOC is notorious for its spree of atrocities across the Middle East. ...

Hell yeah! You can feel that bias in my toes, can’t ya? But, the truth is, we’re still only at a 45 percent bias rating. I say we get it up to at least

65 percent. Back to Dan Cohen: “The report ... was overseen by Renee DiResta, a former Wall Street trader and tech specialist who was recruited by Obama’s State Department to devise strategies for combating online ISIS propaganda”.

So now we’ve got former Wall Street, former State Department, former Obama White House, former NSA, former DARPA, and former JSOC writing this completely legitimate completely factual report for the Senate about the powerful Russian impact of Facebook ads that no one ever saw.

I love it. This is like a report written by a hungry virus telling you not to wash your hands.

But hold on, it’s not only this Senate report that showed nefarious Russian meddling. It’s also all

of those evil Russian bots. How do we know there are evil Russian bots? Well, most outlets quote Hamilton 68, which tracked Russian influence operations on Twitter.

Outlets such as MSNBC, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, *Mother Jones* and *Tiger Beat*. They’re all quoting Hamilton 68 or people who are referencing work done by Hamilton 68. Well, who the hell made Hamilton 68, and why does it sound like a ’90s alt-rock band that opened for Blink 182?

Oh, what do you know! Our old friend “[Jonathon] Morgan is also one the developers of Hamilton 68. ... Funded by the German Marshall Fund’s Alliance for Securing Democracy – which is itself backed by NATO and USAID”.

Well okay, that sounds pretty serious. Clearly these people have found a special device that locates Russian bots on the interwebs, and it most likely resembles the thing Egon used in the *Ghostbusters* movies. So, shouldn’t we just congratulate Morgan on helping to develop the holy grail for spotting Russian bots and then call it a day? Well, there’s one itsy bitsy problem: ... one of Hamil-

ton 68's founders, Clint Watts, admitted that the Twitter accounts it follows may actually be real people who are not Russian at all.

Real people? Who aren't Russian? Call me crazy, but what I personally look for in a Russian bot is something that is at least Russian. And if not that, then a bot. And if neither, then you don't have much of a goddamn Russian bot, do ya? Claiming these are Russian bots is like saying, "I just met the Queen of England, except she may have been a small Icelandic goat".

Then, a few weeks ago the *New York Times* revealed that New Knowledge carried out an elaborate false flag operation to hurt the election chances of Judge Roy Moore in Alabama. You might recall that Roy Moore is an accused paedophile and a proven dipshit. And I don't believe he should be elected to pick the bedbugs out of Rush Limbaugh's armpits. But that doesn't mean I think these New Knowledge charlatans shouldn't be revealed for what they are.

So here's how New Knowledge's game worked, according to the *Times*. New Knowledge created a fake Facebook page in order to get conservatives in Alabama to support patio supply salesman Mac Watson instead of Roy Moore.

New Knowledge then tried to make everyone think that Moore's campaign was working with the Kremlin by showing that he had thousands of Russian bots following his Twitter account. Many in the mainstream media ran with this outlandish idea. *Mother Jones's* well-researched (sarcasm) article on the topic was entitled *Russian Propagandists Are Pushing for Roy Moore to Win!* In the article they sourced (Can you guess?) Hamilton 68.

So to rehash: Hamilton 68, using their *Ghostbusters* device (patent pending), found that Russian bots (which may not be Russian and may not be bots and may not be Russian bots) were simply in love with alleged paedophilic Alabama judges. So much so, that a majority of their tweets (meaning at least 51 percent) were in support of Roy Moore.

But as the *New York Times* has revealed, New Knowledge's own internal report said, "We orchestrated an elaborate 'false flag' operation

that planted the idea that the Moore campaign was amplified on social media by a Russian botnet".

After these revelations came out a few weeks ago, Facebook suspended some of the accounts. So now the *New York Times* found itself in a quandary. They must have been thinking, "We need to report on this huge development in which the core authors of the Senate report on Russian meddling and the co-founder of Hamilton 68 were involved in lying, bullshitting, and false-flagging in order to help the Democratic party. But that completely undermines the Russiagate hysteria we have anchored our ship to. What do we do?"

Well, kids, take notes. This is how you do it. This is how you have your yellowcake uranium story and eat it too. The *New York Times* headline was *Facebook Closes 5 Accounts Tied to Russia-Like Tactics in Alabama Senate Race*.

Russia-like tactics?! This is literally an article about how Russia was NOT involved in the Alabama senate race false flag. In fact, it's an article on how the guy who helped write the Senate report on the so-called Russian tactics is also one of the top people at New Knowledge, which either created or pushed pretend Russian bots to support Roy Moore so that they could leak to the press, "Russian bots are supporting Roy Moore!"

Sometimes the ability of the legacy media to believe (or at least regurgitate) their own bullshit is truly breathtaking.

To sum up this fuck de cluster:

1. The Senate report is laughable.
2. Any journalist who quotes Hamilton 68 should have their face sewn to the carpet.
3. If you want ridiculous reporting on nonsense that seduces us all to the edge of nuclear annihilation, turn to your mainstream corporate media.
4. If you want someone to actually put together the truth about these issues, you'll have to turn to alternative outlets.

5. Bill Murray and the Ghostbusters were ahead of their time.

CT

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ColdType Insights

- MICHAEL McCAFFREY
- CATHERINE CLARKE
- ADAM JOHNSON
- SAM PIZZIGATI

Taking a stand against toxic femininity

'Badass' US women demand right to torture and kill for Empire... just like men, writes Michael McCaffrey

Photo: www.marvel.com

THANKS to a new wave of feminism and its call for equality, it isn't just toxic men who can kill, torture and surveil in the name of US militarism and empire: women can now do it too!

Last month saw the third annual Women's March, which is a protest originally triggered by Donald Trump's defeat of Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election, that encourages women across America to rise up against misogyny and patriarchy.

As sincere as these women are in their outrage, in their quest for power they are inadvertently reinforcing the immoral and unethical system that they claim to detest. This is most glaringly apparent when this new feminism boldly embraces the worst traits of the patriarchy in the form of militarism and empire.

The rise of #MeToo, Time's Up and the anti-Trump Women's Movement, has brought forth a new wave of politically and culturally active neo-feminists.



EMPOWERING?: Brie Larsen, star of the new film, *Captain Marvel*.

This modern women's movement and its adherents demand that "boys not be boys", and in fact claim that the statement "boys will be boys" is in and of itself an act of patriarchal privilege and male aggression. The irony is that these neo-feminists don't want boys to be boys, but they do want girls to be like boys.

The inherent contradiction of that ideology was on full display recently when the American Psychological Association (APA) put out a guide to treating men and boys. In the guide's

summary the APA makes the extraordinary claim that "traditional masculinity – marked by stoicism, competitiveness, dominance and aggression – is, on the whole, harmful".

These APA guidelines blatantly turn "traditional masculinity" and "toxic masculinity" into synonyms, and never once mention testosterone, revealing a staggering ignorance of male biology. The APA is in essence blaming the bull for his horns.

Further diminishing their credibility, how can anyone look at the mess that is the current emotional state of our world and think we need less stoicism and not more?

The hypocrisy of the APA guidelines are glaringly evident because everywhere you look nowadays girls and young women are constantly being urged to be more competitive, dominant and aggressive. I guess when women do it, it is empowering, but when men do it, it is dangerous.

Women, and some men, often tell me that if women were in power, the world would be a better and safer place. But that old trope, which obviously animates the feminist movement of today, is foolishness. I mean have none of these people ever heard of that pernicious beast Margaret Thatcher? And does anyone think that Hillary Clinton's

proposed no-fly zone over Syria or her tough talk about Russia would have led to more peace and less war?

Another example of the vacuity of this ideology is the group of Democratic women with military and intelligence backgrounds who won seats in Congress in 2018. These women, who have dubbed themselves “The Badasses”, how toxically masculine of them, are being touted as the “antidote to Trump”.

No doubt these former military and intelligence “badasses” will be so much less toxic than their male counterparts when they demand the US “get tough” by militarily intervening across the globe to further American interests. This sort of star-spangled belligerence is no less toxic in a pantsuit than a three-piece suit, and will only lead to more victims of America’s “competitiveness, dominance and aggression” around the world.

Other toxically-masculine women in government are also being hailed as great signs of women’s empowerment.

Gina Haspel is the first female director of the CIA and women now also hold the three top directorates in that agency. Ms. Haspel proved herself more than capable of being just as deplorable as any man when she was an active participant in the Bush-era torture program. No doubt the pussy-hat wearing brigade would cheer her “competitiveness, dominance and aggression” when torturing

prisoners... most especially the traditionally masculine ones.

Hypocritical Hollywood has long been a haven for toxic masculinity, be it in the form of depraved predators like Harvey Weinstein or Woody Allen or counterfeit tough guys like John Wayne. Hollywood has also long been the propaganda wing of the US military machine. It is well established that for decades Hollywood and the Department of Defense have worked hand in hand in creating movies that tout muscular American militarism and empire.

Now Hollywood and the Department of Defense (DoD) are using the social justice calling card of “diversity and inclusion” to take the next step in indoctrinating young people with the noxious ideology of American exceptionalism and aggression... but this time they are targeting girls and young women.

The latest product of the Hollywood and DoD propaganda machine is the Disney/Marvel movie, Captain Marvel, which comes out next month. The film, which has a budget worth \$150-million and stars one of the leading feminist voices in Hollywood, Academy Award winner Brie Larson, tells the story of Carol Danvers, a former Air Force pilot who “turns into one of the galaxy’s mightiest heroes”.

With Robert Downey Jr and Chris Evans set to potentially leave their roles as Iron Man and Captain America respec-

tively, Disney is positioning itself to replace them as the face of the multi-billion dollar Marvel Cinematic Universe with Brie Larson’s Captain Marvel, who is described as a “badass superheroine”... one more flag-waving, badass lady for the girls to look up to!

The movie has been described as “the recruiting tool of the Air Force’s dreams”, and will no doubt be a huge boost to female recruitment, much as Tom Cruise and Top Gun boosted male military recruitment in the 1980’s.

The DoD has reportedly been partnered with Marvel since 2008’s Iron Man. The DoD and Air Force demand that any film project with which they assist “portrays the Air Force and military in an accurate way and that it is in the service’s interest to partner on the project”.

It is good to know that feminist Brie Larson is cashing in by partnering with the Air Force to make a movie that indoctrinates millions of US kids, specifically girls, with the dream of being able to bomb innocent people across the globe from miles up in the sky and look really “badass” while doing it.

I’m sure Ms. Larson, a public and outspoken advocate for abuse victims here in America, has meticulously weighed the pros and cons of being a recruitment tool for the US military, which in recent years has aided and abetted, or been directly responsible for, the murder of women and children in Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya

and elsewhere.

The cacophony of feminist voices in the public sphere has effectively challenged some minds about some things, but not the right minds about the right things. The mendacious US establishment and its virulent military industrial complex have co-opted this current feminist moment and are using it to further solidify their deadly stranglehold on the American consciousness and Brie Larson is now an accomplice to that crime.

Is this what the new wave of feminism is all about, putting lipstick on the pig of American empire and militarism and calling it a victory for equality? If so, I'll pass on that toxic femininity.

I'll stick with traditional masculinity, you know, the stoic kind, whose adherents, principled men like Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, Dan-

iel Ellsberg, Pat Tillman and Edward Snowden, among many others, all did the right thing in the face of enormous opposition, and who didn't tout themselves as "badass," didn't start fights but finished them, didn't torture, didn't spy and didn't bomb innocent women and children into oblivion.

The bottom line is this, I fervently believe men and women should be equal in their rights and opportunities, but I believe just as fervently that regardless of gender, no one has the right to kill, maim and torture for the American empire. **CT**

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www.mpmacting.com/blog.

This article first appeared at www.rt.com

("big, fat"), but I would hesitate to introduce you to Alfred Taddebollock ("Toadbollock") and you probably won't want to stand too close to Radulf Scitliure ("shit-liver", evidently cursed with chronic diarrhoea or some other stomach complaint). And perhaps we should cross the street to avoid me having to mention Godwin Clawecuncte (use your imagination) at all.

We know these names – with the intriguing clues they give about the people who carried them – from the two 12th-century surveys of Winchester property collectively known as the Winton Domesday. So, what's in a medieval name? What can they tell historians about long-forgotten lives and individuals in the past? And why won't you find anyone with the surname Toadbollock today?

These names don't work in quite the same way as modern surnames. These (usually non-hereditary) medieval bynames add further detail to personal names, noting where someone was from, what job they did and even what they looked like or how they behaved.

Bynames often reflect physical attributes, such as those of Winchester's Alestan Hwit ("white"), who probably had a fair complexion, or Alimer Longus ("tall"). You wouldn't want to see Winchester's Peter Agnell ("little lamb") get into a fight with Godwin Bar ("boar").

Many medieval historians have their own favourite names they've discovered during their research: Professor An-

This story is a load of toadbollocks!

Medieval names give us a glimpse of the colourful lives lived by ordinary people in distant times, writes **Catherine Clarke**

LET me take you for a stroll down the high street of 12th-century Winchester – one of the great cities of medieval England – and introduce you to a few of the locals. Here's Alberic Coquus, the cook, and over there is Ainulf Parcheminus,

the parchment-maker. They are chatting to Luuing Scularius (he builds ladders). Godric Softebred, who has his shop just down the road, is a baker – but his neighbours giggle behind his back and give his wife pitying glances.

You can't miss Robert Crassus

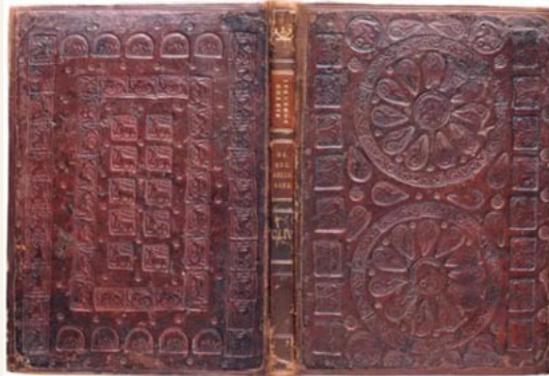
Insights

thony Bale of Birkbeck, University of London, mentions Tom Dustiberd (“dusty beard”) and the likely somewhat dishevelled Adam Charrecrowe (“scarecrow”), as well as Walter Boltuprith (“bolt-upright”).

Other bynames indicate trades and occupations. Richard Farrier was keeper of the king’s horses at Chester in the summer of 1283. Records show that he purchased cut grass for 20 horses, including that of the queen, and also for ten “great” horses arriving from Caernafon. He bought horseshoes, bridles, long ropes of hemp to make reins, as well as plenty of horse salve.

52 Other occupational bynames hint at less happy vocations. John Pynchware and his son worked as shoemakers in 15th-century Chester. But with a byname like that, how well did their shoes fit? Professor Matthew Davies of Birkbeck points to Rowland Lytillskyll, an apprentice tailor in London, in 1486. He doesn’t seem to have made it in his chosen career.

Bynames can also tell us about ethnic identities. Several people in 12th-century Winchester were called “Iudeius” – members of what would become the city’s thriving medieval Jewish community. Godwin Francigena, with his English personal name and byname meaning “Frenchman”, reminds us what a cosmopolitan, multicultural European city this was.



Chronicle of everyday life in the 12th century: Winton Domesday. Courtesy: Society of Antiquaries of London

But sometimes bynames point to political and social tensions. Dr Adam Chapman, at the Institute for Historical Research, shares the example of the 14th-century Welshman known as Madog Drwgwrthgymro: literally “bad to Welshmen”, but translated by the historian Robert Rees Davies more provocatively as “Saxon-lover” – a smear based on perceived disloyalty and ethnic betrayal.

Another Welshman, William Cragh, features in medieval records as an outlaw – or freedom fighter, depending on your viewpoint – who rebelled against Norman rule and was hanged, but came back to life (that’s another story. He cuts less of a romantic, heroic figure when we translate his Welsh byname – perhaps “Scabby William” had suffered some kind of disfiguring disease as a child. Still, he was more likely known by his fellow Welshmen by the patronymic “ap Rhys” (“son of Rhys”).

Somewhere in my own ancestry, someone probably worked

as a clerk. Adam Chapman’s forebears possibly worked in a shop (“ceap-man” meant merchant, from the Old English “ceapan” meaning to sell or buy). Some bynames just stick around: Delia Smith doesn’t work in a forge, and Mary Beard doesn’t have one. But others, unsurprisingly, don’t outlast their original owners.

We see similar revisions when it comes to less appealing place names: just as Wil-

liam Cragh probably preferred being called William ap Rhys, the place where he was hanged in Swansea was renamed, in the late 19th century, from Gibbet Hill Road to the more estate agent-friendly North Hill Road.

So, why are medieval bynames so useful and engaging? For a start, some of them are hilarious – and they give us a humorous way into a seemingly remote and distant historical past. But, more than that, they offer a sense of connection with a real individual and a characteristic which defined them within their own, contemporary local community.

These medieval names also give us glimpses into something the big chronicles, charters and official history books often don’t tell us much about: ordinary people and their ordinary, colourful lives. **CT**

Catherine Clarke is professor of Medieval Literature and Culture at the University of Southampton. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com

How not to report on prison conditions

Prison food is hardly edible, so newspapers' stories of holiday steaks were shameful, writes **Adam Johnson**

THE United States, by all metrics, has one of the cruellest prison systems in the world.

In addition to having 25 percent of the world's prison population (with just five percent of the world's people), US prisons use tortuous solitary confinement, tolerate widespread sexual violence, host massive racial disparities, and routinely abuse children, among other human rights violations.

The idea that the US is “too soft” to people in prison is something even right-wingers rarely bother to argue anymore.

So it may come as a shock that ostensibly mainstream outlets like *USA Today*, the *Washington Post*, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, and NBC News thought it newsworthy to report that prisoners at Coleman federal prison in Wildwood, Florida got a routine holiday meal – steak – that was slightly above their normal, bottom-of-the-barrel provisions.

This “outrage” was contrasted with prison guards not receiving paychecks due to President Donald Trump's “government shutdown.” How dare those criminals live it up, the stories seemed to ask, while correction officers work for free?

Worse were the racist stereotypes about greedy, lazy prisoners – like the Post's headline, which quoted a prisoner saying “I Been Eatin' Like a Boss.”

The quote was allegedly taken from a prisoner's personal mail by a guard and selectively leaked to the *Post* – which not only published it without any context, but led the whole story with it, African-American vernacular and all.

Is it standard for guards to comb through prisoners' personal mail to leak to newspapers?

And what images did papers use to convey these luxurious “steak” dinners? Professionally done stock photos of steaks from gourmet restaurants – like a “flat iron topped with hotel butter from St. Anselm Restaurant in Washington” in the *Post* (price: \$24).

If they showed what actual “steak dinners” look like in prison – think Salisbury, not filet mignon – it might accidentally solicit pity towards people in prison.

Numerous studies have shown prison food is barely edible and causes high rates of illness. “Lapses in food safety have made US prisoners six

times more likely to get a food-borne illness than the general population,” *The Atlantic* reported in 2017. Indeed, one of the primary demands for last fall's multi-state prison strike was for higher quality and more nutritious food.

It gets worse.

“Adding to the staffers' bitter feelings,” NBC added, “the working inmates were still drawing government paychecks for their prison jobs, which include painting buildings, cooking meals, and mowing lawns.”

NBC didn't note that prisoners make slave wages – 23 cents to \$1.40 an hour. The guards, prison reform expert John Pfaff notes by contrast, will get full back pay after “the showdown” ends.

For decades, the single uniting theme in white supremacist propaganda has been the idea that African Americans live high off the government hog while “working class” whites struggle to survive. It was the subtext of Ronald Reagan's infamous 1976 speech accusing a “strapping young buck” of using food stamps to buy T-bone steak.

The narrative being advanced by the *Post* and others here is simply an updated version of this. By reinforcing caricatures of prisoners living it up while others suffer, these outlets reinforced deeply racialised notions of “welfare.”

My guess is the stories were fed by prison guards. After all, they started coming out less

than 48 hours after the release of a federal report that showed rampant abuse and sexual violence in federal prisons – including 524 cases at the very same Coleman prison.

Too many outlets overlooked this story in favour of inflammatory clickbait. Clickbait that'll soon be forgotten after these guards have gotten their back

pay, and the prisoners in question go back to eating barely edible Nutraloaf the other 364 days a year. **CT**

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past December's United Nations climate change talks in Poland.

Climate change activists hoped these talks would stiffen the global resolve to seriously address climate change. But several nations had other ideas. The United States, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait all refused to officially “welcome” the recent dire findings of a blue-ribbon Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, essentially throwing a huge monkey-wrench into efforts to protect our Earth and ourselves.

What unites these four recalcitrant nations? One key characteristic stands out: The United States, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait all just happen to rate among the world's most unequal nations.

Just a coincidence? Absolutely not, suggests a new analysis from the Civil Society Equity Review coalition, a worldwide initiative that counts in its ranks scores of groups committed to averting a climatic cataclysm.

Limiting future global temperature rises, this coalition notes, will require “disruptive shifts” and heighten public anxieties. People will tolerate these disruptions, but only if they believe that everyone is sharing in the sacrifice – the wealthy and powerful included.

Environmental policy makers typically define the wealthy at the level of the nation state. They focus on the relationships between wealthy nations and developing nations still struggling to amass wealth. Wealthier nations, the conven-

How extreme wealth threatens the planet

Millions of years ago, life on Earth survived an existential climate crisis. But that Earth had a distinct advantage: there were no rich people, writes **Sam Pizzigati**

54 **W** E either keep fossil fuels in the ground, or we fry.

That's the conclusion of another new blockbuster study on climate change, this one from the National Academy of Sciences. Our fossil-fuel industrial economy, the study details, has made for the fastest climate changes our Earth has ever seen.

“If we think about the future in terms of the past, where we are going is uncharted territory for human society,” notes the study's lead author, Kevin Burke from the University of Wisconsin.

“In the roughly 20 to 25 years I have been working in the field,” adds his colleague John Williams, “we have gone from expecting climate change to

happen, to detecting the effects, and now we are seeing that it's causing harm” – as measured in property damage and deaths, in intensified flooding and fires.

The last time climate on Earth saw nearly as drastic and rapid a climate shift, relates another new study, came some 252 million years ago, and that shift unfolded over the span of a few thousand years. That span of time saw the extinction of 96 percent of the Earth's ocean species and almost as devastating a loss to terrestrial creatures.

Other scientific studies over this past year have made similarly alarming observations, and together all these analyses provided an apt backdrop for this

Insights

tional climate change consensus holds, have a responsibility to help poorer nations meet the environmental challenges ahead.

But the wealthy have the power to shirk those responsibilities – unless we expand our focus from inequality between nations to inequality within nations as well.

The more unequal a wealthy society, the coalition explains, the greater the power of the rich – and the corporations they run – to ignore their debt to Mother Earth.

And the economic inequal-

ity their wealth engenders, researchers add, has “much to do with the dark character of the current political moment,” referring to the growing xenophobia and racism that make serious environmental aid from developed to developing nations ever less likely.

The world’s wealthiest people and their corporations, left to their own devices, would for the most part rather not bear any sort of significant sacrifice. That’s all the more reason to ad-

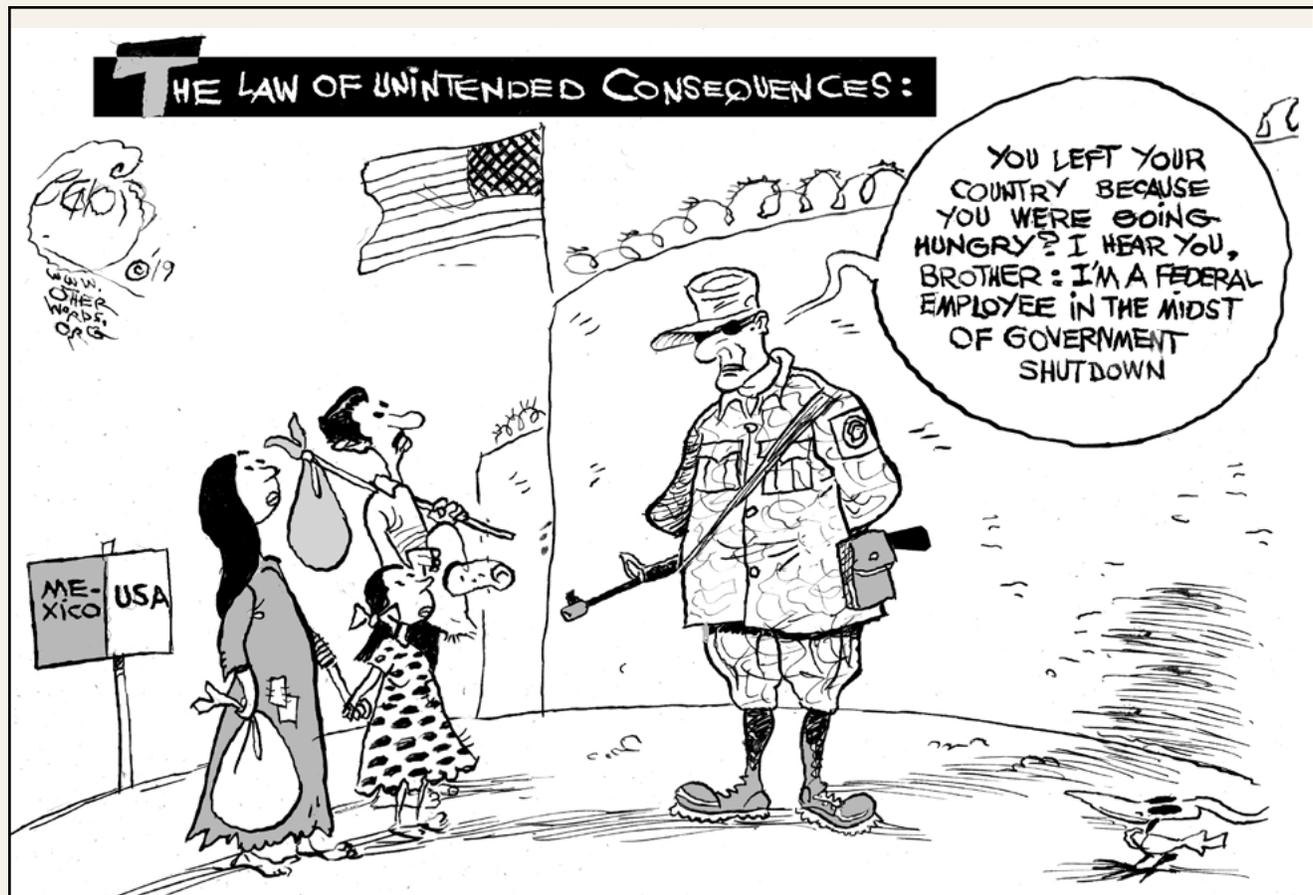
dress the inequality that bestows so much power upon them.

“Addressing climate change effectively and justly,” sums up Basav Sen, the climate policy director at the Institute for Policy Studies, “requires us to transform the unjust social and economic systems that gave us climate change in the first place.” **CT**

Sam Pizzigati co-edits *Inequality.org*. His latest book, *The Case for a Maximum Wage*, has just been published. Follow him at @Too_Much_Online

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