
AMERICA'S WARS CAN GO ON WITHOUT ME | Danny Sjursen
EVERY WAR IS A WAR AGAINST CHILDREN | Kathy Kelly
A RUSSIAGATE REQUIEM | CJ Hopkins

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WRITING WORTH READING

MID-APRIL 2019



Targeting Corbyn

How the UK media smoothed the path for British soldiers to use Labour Party leader Corbyn as target practice, and how their incitement could end in bloodshed

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Issue 182

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I'd tired of carrying water for the US empire, and they'd grown weary of dealing with my dissenting articles and footing the bill for my never-ending PTSD treatments, writes **Danny Sjursen**

GOODBYE TO ALL THAT

America's forever wars can go on without me

4

"Patriotism, in the trenches, was too remote a sentiment, and at once rejected as fit only for civilians, or prisoners."
– Robert Graves, *Goodbye To All That* (1929).

I'M one of the lucky ones. Leaving the madness of Army life with a modest pension and all of my limbs intact feels like a genuine escape. Both the Army and I knew it was time for me to go. I'd tired of carrying water for empire and they'd grown weary of dealing with my dissenting articles and footing the bill for my seemingly never-ending PTSD treatments. Now, I'm society's problem, unleashed into a civilian world I've never gazed upon with adult eyes.

I entered West Point in July 2001, a bygone era of (relative) peace, the moment, you might say, before the 9/11 storm broke. I leave an Army that remains remarkably engaged in global war, patrolling an increasingly militarised world.

In a sense, I snuck out of the military at age 35, my early retirement an ignominious end to a once-promising career. Make no mistake, I wanted out. I'd relocated 11 times in 18 years, often enough to war zones, and I simply didn't have another deployment in me. Still, I wouldn't be honest if I didn't admit that I'll mourn the loss of my career, of the identity inherent in soldiering, of the experience of adulation



from a grateful (if ill-informed) society.

Perhaps that's only natural, no matter how much such a hokey admission embarrasses me. I recognise, at least, that there's a paradox at work here: the Army and the Global War on Terror (GWOT) made me



who I now am, brought a new version of me to life, and gifted me (if that's the right phrase for something so grim) with the stories, the platform, and the pain that now make my writing possible.

Those military deployments to Iraq and Afghani-

stan in particular turned a budding neocon into an unabashed progressive. My experiences there transformed an insecure, aspiring dealer-in-violence into someone who might be as near as a former military man can get to a pacifist. And what the US Army

helped me become is someone who, in the end, I don't mind gazing at in the mirror each morning.

Should I thank the Army then? Maybe so, no matter the damage that institution did to my psyche and my conscience over the years. It's

hard, though, to thank a war machine that dealt so much death to so many civilians across significant parts of the planet for making me who I am. And no matter how much I told myself I was different, the truth is that I was complicit in so much of that for so long.

In a way, I wonder whether something resembling an apology, rather than a statement of pride in who I've become, is the more appropriate way of saying goodbye to all that. Nonetheless, the story is all mine, the burdensome, the beautiful, the banal, and the horrific. War, violence, and bigotry – as I've written – are America's original sins and, looking back, it seems to me that they may be mine as well. In that context, though I'm now officially retired, I think of this as my last piece authored as an active military dissenter – a clearing of the air – before moving on to a life of activism, as well as an unarmed life of words.

It's time to wave goodbye to a litany of absurdity that I witnessed in the institution to which I dedicated my adult life. Some peers, even friends, may call this heresy – a disgruntled former major airing dirty laundry – and maybe in some way it is. Still, what I observed in various combat units, in con-

Goodbye to the devotees of American exceptionalism, stalwart evangelists of a civic religion that believed there was a secret American inside every Arab or Afghan

versation with senior officers, and as a horrified voyeur of, and actor in, two dirty wars matters. Of that, I remain convinced.

So here's my official goodbye to all that, to a military and a nation engaged in an Orwellian set of forever wars and to the professional foot soldiers who made so much of it all possible, while the remainder of the country worked, tweeted, shopped, and slept (in every sense of the word).

Goodbye to the majors who wanted to be colonels and the colonels who wanted to be generals – at any cost. To the sociopaths who rose in the ranks by trampling on the souls of their overburdened troopers, trading lives for minor bumps in statistics and pats on the shoulder from aggressive superiors.

Goodbye to the generals who led like so many lieutenants, the ones who knew the tactics but couldn't for the life of them think strategically, eternally proving the Peter Principle right with every promotion past their respective levels of incompetence.

So long to the flag officers

convinced that what worked at the squad level – physical fitness, esprit de corps, and teamwork – would win victories at the brigade and division level in distant, alien lands.

Farewell to the generals I served under who then shamelessly spun through Washington's revolving door, trading in their multi-starred uniforms for six- and seven-figure corporate gigs on the boards of weapons manufacturers, aka “the merchants of death” (as they were known once upon a distant time), and so helped feed the unquenchable appetite of the military-industrial beast.

Farewell to the senior generals, so stuck in what they called “their lane” that they were unwilling (or intellectually unable) to advise civilian policymakers about missions that could never be accomplished, so trapped in the GWOT box that they couldn't say no to a single suggestion from chickenhawk militarists on the Hill or in the Oval Office.

Goodbye to the devotees of American exceptionalism who filled the Army's ranks, stalwart evangelists of a civic religion that believed there was a secret American inside every Arab or Afghan, ready to burst forth with the slightest poke from Uncle Sam's benevolent bayonet.

Ciao to staff officers who mistook “measures of performance” (doing lots of stuff) for “measures of effectiveness” (doing the right stuff). I won't miss the gaggles of



obtuse majors and colonels who demanded measurable “output” – numbers of patrols completed, numbers of houses searched, counts of Power-Point slides published – from already overtasked captains and the soldiers they led and who will never learn the difference between doing lots and doing well.

Goodbye to battalion and brigade commanders who already had their hands full unsuccessfully “pacifying” entire districts and provinces in alien lands, yet seemed more concerned with the cleanliness of troopers’ uniforms and the two-mile-run times of their units, prioritising physical fitness over tactical competence, empathy, or ethics.

Godspeed to the often-intolerant conservatism and evangelical Christianity infusing the ranks.

See ya to the generals who lent their voices, while still in uniform, to religious organisations, one of whom even became the superintendent of West Point, and at worst got mere slaps on the wrist for that. (And while we’re at it, here’s a goodbye wave to all those chaplains, supposedly non-denominational supporters of every kind of soldier, who regularly ended their prayers with “in Jesus’s name, amen.” So much for church-state separation.)

Farewell to the still-prevalent cis-gender patriarchy and (strangely erotic) homophobia

Ta-ta to the paradox of hyper-capitalism and Ayn Randian fiscal conservatism among the officers of the nation’s most socialist institution, the military

that infuses the ranks of the US military. Sure, “Don’t ask, don’t tell” is a thing of the past, but the Army remains a (straight) boys’ club and no easy place for the openly gay, while the president remains intent on banning transgender enlistees. And even in 2019, one in four women still reports at least one sexual assault during her military tour of duty. How’s that for social progress?

So long to the adrenaline junkies and power-obsessed freaks atop so many combat units, folks who lived for the violence, the rush of nighttime raids without a thought for their often counterproductive and bloody consequences. It’s a relief to leave them behind as they continue – prisoners of counterinsurgency, or COIN, math – to feed the insurgencies the US fights far faster than they kill “terrorists”.

Goodbye to officers, especially generals, who place “duty” above ethics.

Sayonara to those who canonise “martyrs” like former commander James “Mad Dog” Mattis, a hero for resigning as defense secretary rather than

implement (gasp!) modest troop withdrawals from our endless wars in Syria and Afghanistan. (As for a Pentagon-backed war in Yemen that starved to death at least 85,000 kids, he was apparently fine with that.)

Toodle-oo to the vacuous, “thanks-for-your-service” compliments from civilians who otherwise ignore soldiers’ issues, foreign policy, and our forever wars, who never give a thought to placing the country’s disastrous conflicts up there with healthcare on anyone’s election-year priorities list.

Parting is such sweet sorrow when it comes to the neo-Confederate backgrounds and cheerleading of far too many troopers and officers, to a military academy that still has a Robert E. Lee Road on which you drive from a Lee Housing Area to a Lee Barracks, part of an Army that has named at least 10 of its stateside bases after Confederate generals.

Farewell to rampant Islamophobia in the ranks and the leaders who do so little to counter it, to the ubiquitous slurs about Arabs and Afghans, including “hajis”, “rag-heads”, “camel jockies”, or simply “sand niggers”. What a way to win Muslim “hearts and minds!”

Ta-ta to the paradox of hyper-capitalism and Ayn Randian fiscal conservatism among the officers of the



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nation's most socialist institution, the military. Count me in as sick of the faux intellectuals reading books by economists Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman in Iraq or their less sophisticated peers toting around Ann Coulter, Sean Hannity, or Glenn Beck volumes, all the while enjoying their publicly-financed, co-pay-less government healthcare.

Adieu to a military justice system that boots out soldiers who commit "alcohol-related" offences or "piss hot" for marijuana while rarely investigating the Army's role as a catalyst for their addictions – and so long as well to a discipline-over-treatment model for dealing with substance abuse that's only now beginning to change.

Goodbyetoinfightingamong the Army, Navy, and Air Force over funds and equipment and to those "Pentagon Wars" that prioritise loyalty to your service branch over fealty to the nation or the Constitution.

See you later, when it comes to the predictable opinions of a legion of semi-retired generals on 24-hour cable news who count on their public stature to sell Americans yet more guns and militarism.

So long to the faux-intellectualism of men like former "surge" general David Petraeus and his sycophantic army of "warrior monks" and COINdinitaswho have never seen a problem to which slightly

So long to the chauvinism in the senior ranks that asserts some sort of messianic American right and mission to police the globe

improved counterinsurgency tactics wasn't the answer and are incapable of questioning the efficacy of force, intervention, and occupation as ways to alter complex societies for the better.

Farewell to the pride and value military leaders place on superficial decorations – patches and badges and medals – rather than true mission-accomplished moments. (Don't hold your breath waiting for even a single senior commander to ever admit that his forces wasted their time, or worse, during their year-long deployment in one of America's distant war zones.)

Cheerio to the prevailing consensus among US officers that our NATO allies are "worthless" or "weak" because they aren't aggressive enough in taking on certain missions or types of patrols, while fighting and sometimes dying for Uncle Sam's global priorities. (This is the nonsense that led to French fries being banned and "freedom fries" served in the congressional cafeteria after France had the

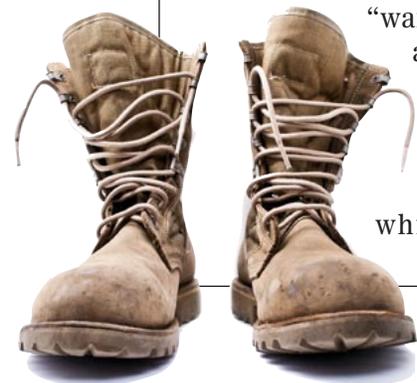
gall to oppose Washington's invasion of Iraq in 2003.)

Goodbye to the colonels and generals who speak at the funeral ceremonies of soldiers they hardly know in order to "re-dedicate" the mourning survivors to the never-ending mission at hand.

Farewell to the soldiers and officers who regularly complained that the Army's Rules of Engagement were too strict – as if more brutality, bombing, and firepower (with less concern for civilians) would have brought victory – as well as to the assumption behind such complaints that Americans have some sort of inherent right to wage wars of choice overseas.

So long to the chauvinism in the senior ranks that asserts some sort of messianic American right and mission to police the globe, dot it with bases, and give its military men licence to strut around the villages and alleyways of sovereign states as if they were their own.

America's servicemen have taken to believing in their own myth: that they really do constitute a special caste above all you measly civilians – and now, of course, me, too. In this way, military men actually reflect a toxic society's values. Few ask why there aren't teachers, nurses, and social workers honoured like US military personnel in America's vaunted sports stadiums. True servants – as we soldiers, in my years of service, were so fond of dubbing ourselves – should stick to humility and recognise





that there are other, far nobler ways to spend one's life.

And here, finally, is what I can't say goodbye to: a society that's come to value its warriors above all others.

So what should this now-retired Army major make of it all? The inconvenient truth is perhaps very little. It's unlikely that anything I'll write will change many minds or affect policy in any way. In the decade following World War I, when Major General Smedley Butler, the most decorated marine of his time, took up the pen to expose the ills of American-style corporate warfare, he (unlike me) made a true splash. As today, however, the American intervention machine just rolled on. So what chance does a former Army major have of moving the needle on US militarism?

I'm active now in what little there is of an antiwar movement in this country. That was part of the genius of President Richard Nixon's cynical decision in 1973, following years of large-scale antiwar activity in this country and in the US military itself during the Vietnam era, to end the draft. He replaced a citizen's army with an all-volunteer force. By turning the military into a professional caste, a kind of homegrown foreign legion, rather than a responsibility of every citizen, by transforming its officers into an isolated, fawned-upon caste, he effectively ensured that the public

I'm not alone. There are a precious few other public voices from the forever wars speaking out and more silent dissenters in the ranks than you might imagine

would look elsewhere and that antiwar movements would largely become things of the past.

Maybe it's hopeless to fight such a beast. Still, as the child of a blue-collar, outer-borough New York City family, I was raised on the romance of lost causes. So I hope to play a small role in my version of a lost cause – as a (lonely) response to the pervasive stereotypes of modern American soldiers, of the officer corps, of West Point. I plan on being there whenever the militarists insist that Army types are all politically conservative, all model patriots, all devout “moral” Christians, all... you name it and I'll be there as an inconvenient counterpoint to a system that demands compliance.

And here's the truth of it: no matter what you may think, I'm not alone. There are a precious few other public voices from the forever wars speaking out and – as various supportive texts and emails to me have made clear – more silent dissenters in the ranks than you might imagine.

So count on this: I'll be hop-

ing that more serving officers as well as troops gather the courage to speak out and tell the American public the score when it comes to our brutal, hopeless, never-ending wars. Sure, it's just a dream for now, but what would those at the top of that war system do if the troops, officers, and commanders they've so consciously placed on a pedestal begin doubting, then questioning, then dissenting? That would be a problem for a war machine that, even in the age of AI and drones, still needs its obedient foot soldiers to hump a ruck and patrol a block.

I was, until recently, one of them, the obsequious grunt at the pointy end of the spear fashioned by a warlike government ruling over an apathetic citizenry. But no longer. I'm only 35 and maybe it won't make a difference, but I must admit that I'm looking forward to my second act. So think of this goodbye to all that as a hello to all that as well. **CT**

***Danny Sjursen** is a retired US Army major and former history instructor at West Point. He served tours with reconnaissance units in Iraq and Afghanistan. He has written a memoir of the Iraq War, *Ghost Riders of Baghdad: Soldiers, Civilians, and the Myth of the Surge*. Follow him on Twitter at @SkepticalVet*

Jonathan Cook shows how the UK media smoothed the path for British soldiers to use Labour Party leader Corbyn as target practice, and how their incitement could lend in bloodshed

The targeting of Jeremy Corbyn

10

IT is time to stop believing these infantile narratives that the British political and media establishments have crafted for us. Like the one in which they tell us they care deeply about the state of political life, and that they lie awake at night worrying about the threat posed by populism to our democratic institutions.

How do they persuade us of the depth of their concern? They express their horror at the murder of an MP, Jo Cox, and their outrage at the abuse of another, Anna Soubry – both victims of the frenzied passions unleashed by Brexit.

But the political and media elites don't really care whether politicians are assaulted, vilified or threatened – at least, not if it is the kind of politician who threatens their power. They aren't seriously worried about attacks on democracy, or about political violence, or about the rottenness at the core of state institutions. Their outrage is selective. It is rooted not in principle, but in self-interest.

Is that too cynical? Ponder this.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn hasn't faced just shouted insults from afar, like Soubry. He was recently physically assaulted, hit on the head by a man holding an egg in his fist. But unlike Soubry, our media expressed no real concern. In fact, they could barely hide their sniggers at his "egging", an attack they presented as little more than a prank. They even hinted that Corbyn deserved it.

The media have been only happy too to vilify Corbyn as a Kremlin stooge and a former Soviet spy. A week ago, Senior Tory Iain Duncan Smith called Corbyn "a Marxist whose sole purpose in life is to do real damage to the country" – a remark that, as ever, went entirely unchallenged by the BBC interviewer giving him a platform. Just imagine a Labour MP being allowed to accuse Theresa May of being a fascist whose only goal is to destroy the country.

But the BBC has never bothered to conceal its intense dislike of Corbyn. Its news shows have even photoshopped the Labour leader to make him look "Russian" – or "more Russian", as the BBC and the rest of the media mischievously phrased it. Those who protested were told they were reading too much into it. They needed to lighten up and not take themselves so seriously.

Senior Conservatives, including the former defence secretary Michael Fallon, have regularly portrayed Corbyn as a threat to national security, especially

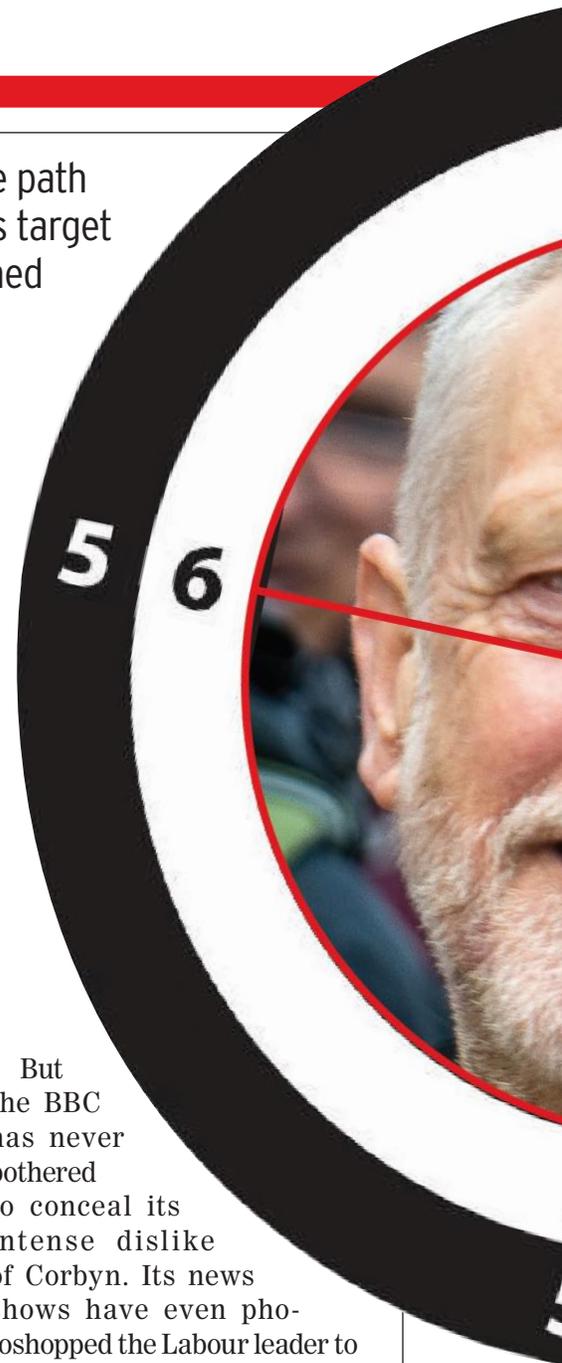




Photo: Garry Knight

of the Trident programme, were derided – like Corbyn – as “pacifists” and “traitors”.

And the mood music to these political clashes was the quite literal demonisation of Corbyn by the red-top dailies. Most famously, the *Daily Mail* photoshopped him as Dracula, above the headline:

“Labour must KILL vampire Jezza”.

Then Corbyn became the target of another sustained smear campaign. It was claimed that this lifelong, very public anti-racism activist – who over decades had forged strong ties to sections of the British Jewish community, despite being a steadfast critic of Israel – was a secret antisemite, or at best providing succour to antisemites as they overran the Labour party.

Was there any factual basis or evidence for these claims? No. But the British public was assured by rightwing Jews like the Board of Deputies and by “leftwing” Jewish supporters of Israel like Jonathan Freedland that evidence wasn’t necessary, that they had a sixth sense for

these things.

Corbyn’s supporters were told that they should not question the wildly inflammatory, evidence-free, denunciations of Corbyn and the wider Labour membership for a supposed “institutional antisemitism” – and, with a satisfyingly circular logic, that to do so was itself proof of antisemitism.

The weaponisation of antisemitism through political spin by Corbyn’s political enemies, including the Blairite faction of the parliamentary Labour party, was and is a dangerous assault on public life, one that has very obviously degraded Britain’s political culture.

The smear was meant to override the membership’s wishes and make Corbyn too toxic to lead Labour.

It has also politicised the antisemitism allegation, weakening it for a section of the population, and irresponsibly inflaming fears among other sections. It has deflected attention from the very real threat of a rising tide of rightwing racism, both Islamophobia and the kind of antisemitism that relates to Jews, not Israel.

Then, there was the serving British general who was given a platform by the *Sunday Times* – anonymously, of course – to accuse Corbyn of being a threat to Britain’s security. The general warned that the army’s senior command would never allow Corbyn near Number 10. They would launch a coup first.

But no one in the corporate

over concerns about the Trident nuclear missile system. Many senior members of Corbyn’s own party have echoed such smears – all amplified, of course, by the media.

Those who suggested that the government and media needed to engage with Corbyn’s well-grounded doubts about the safety of nuclear weapons, or the economics and practicalities

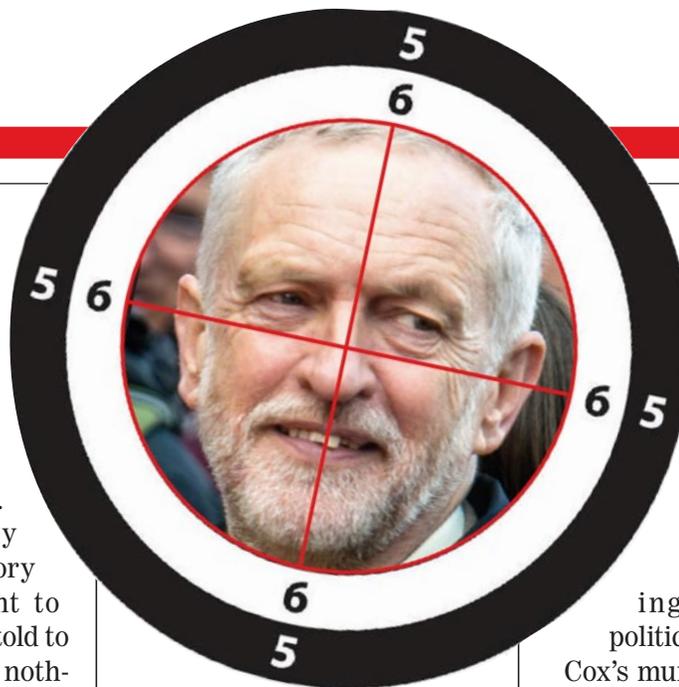
media or the political establishment thought the interview worthy of much attention, or demanded an investigation to find out which general had threatened to overturn the democratic will of the people. The story was quickly dropped down the memory hole. Those who sought to draw attention to it were told to move on, that there was nothing to see.

Now, footage has emerged showing British soldiers – apparently taking their commanders’ expressed wishes more seriously than the media – using a poster of Corbyn as target practice out in Afghanistan.

Do the media and politicians really care about any of this? Are they concerned, let alone as outraged as they were at Soubry’s earlier discomfort at the verbal abuse she faced? Do they understand the seriousness of this threat to British political life, to the safety of the leader of the opposition, they themselves have stoked?

The signs are still far from reassuring. Theresa May did not think it worth using prime minister’s questions to condemn the video, to send an unequivocal message that Britain’s political choices would never be decided by violence. No one else in the chamber apparently thought to raise the matter either.

Sky News even used the footage to question yet again Cor-



No one in the political or media class cares much whether four years of their incitement might encourage someone to use more than an egg and a fist against Corbyn

byn’s “security credentials”, as though the soldiers might thereby have grounds for treating him as a legitimate target.

The clues as to where all this is leading are not hard to fathom. The white nationalist who drove into a crowd outside Finsbury Park mosque in London in 2017, killing a worshipper, admitted at his trial that the real target had been Corbyn. An unexpected roadblock foiled his plans.

The fact is that no one in the political or media class cares much whether their constant trivialising of Corbyn’s political programme degrades British political life, or whether their

smears could lead to political violence, or whether four years of their incitement might encourage someone to use more than an egg and a fist against Corbyn.

So let’s stop indulging the media and politicians as they cite Jo Cox’s murder and Anna Soubry’s intimidation as evidence of their democratic sensibilities and their commitment to political principle.

The truth is they are charlatans. They will use anything – from the murder of an MP to confessions of antisemitism and smears about treason – to incite against a democratic politician who threatens their domination of the political system.

It is their refusal to engage with a political argument they know they will lose, and to allow a democratic process to take place that they fear will produce the wrong result, that is setting the scene for greater polarisation and frustration. And ultimately for more violence. **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.

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**



Read the digital editions of Frontline, exactly as they were published, free of charge, at

www.issuu.com/frontline.south

Tom Bower's new book on Jeremy Corbyn continues an unrelenting four-year pattern of incorrect, misleading and malicious media smears on the leader of the UK Labour Party, writes **David Edwards**

'False, misleading ... and pure fabrication'

IN an article for *Middle East Eye*, journalist Peter Osborne carefully examined a high-profile smear supplied by investigative journalist Tom Bower's book, *Dangerous Hero: Corbyn's Ruthless Plot For Power*

The title of Osborne's piece: "Jeremy Corbyn and the truth about Tom Bower's book – A biography about the Labour leader systematically distorts the truth, writes Peter Osborne".

By contrast, the Amazon entry for Bower's book features these impressive comments:

"THE BOOK EVERY VOTER MUST READ" – *Mail on Sunday*

"Meticulous and highly readable ... Funny and devastating" – *Daily Telegraph*

"The most compelling in-depth study so far" – *Guardian*

No surprise, then, that the book features in prominent, shop-front and multiple other in-store displays in bookshops.

In the *Independent*, former editor Chris Blackhurst wrote:

"Reading Tom Bower's insightful new biography... I was reminded of his [Corbyn's] isolation and single-mindedness".

Blackhurst continued: "Reading Bower, you're left in no doubt that Corbyn wants to turn the clock back, that his solution to those problematic examples and awkward developments that upset his path is merely to ignore them. This makes him very dangerous indeed, hard to reason with, oblivious to criticism and set in his ways. It's a troubling account, one that should give every entrepreneur pause and anyone who works in business pause".

Writing in the *Telegraph*, Tom Harris gave four out of five stars to Bower's 'devastating account of Corbyn's rise to the top'. Harris wrote: "Bower's meticulous and highly readable account must be absorbed from start to finish", [and was] "Funny and devastating".

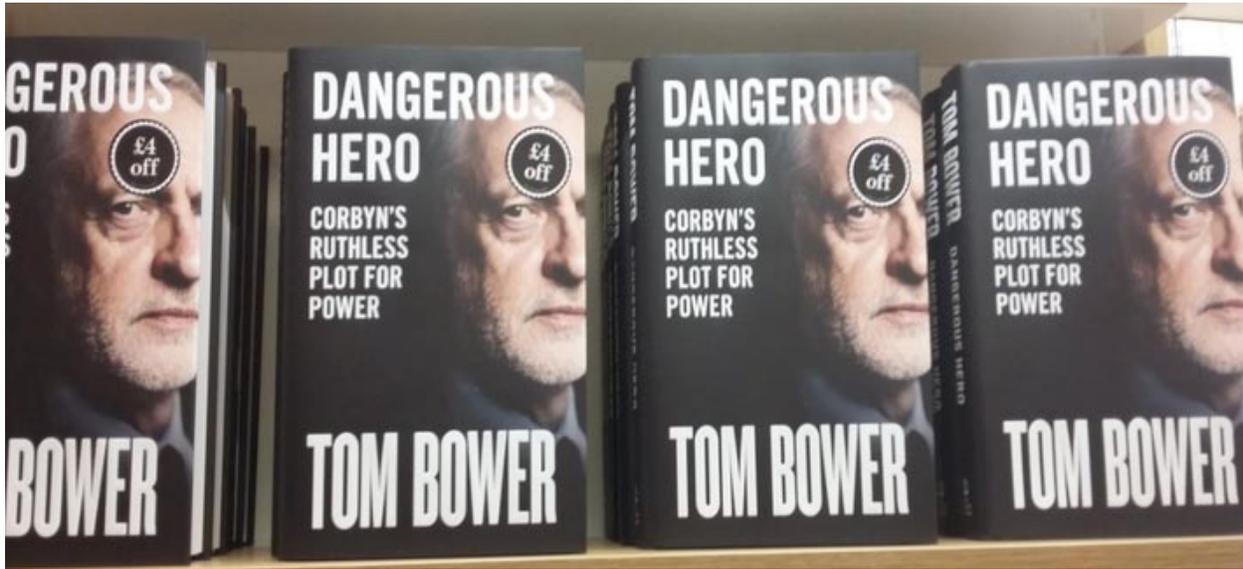
In the *Sunday Times*, Dominic Sandbrook, praised

"a forensically detailed portrait of a man with no inner life, a monomaniac suffused with an overwhelming sense of his own righteousness ..."

ProQuest finds no less than 22 hits for articles mentioning Bower and his book in the *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday*. In the latter, historian Andrew Roberts welcomed the paper's "serialisation of Tom Bower's searing biography of Corbyn". Roberts wrote: "Today's extract from Bower's book charts how anti-Zionism became a near-obsession for Corbyn since his early days as a trades union researcher, leading him to believe in what Bower describes as 'the malign collective power of Jews'."

The book "made clear" that Corbyn "has adopted a Leninist blueprint for taking and controlling power at Westminster, while playing the 'nice guy'."

Osborne, on the other hand, took such a dim view of the book that he felt obliged to remind readers of the ethical basis of political journalism: "Those of



Hailed by the mainstream media, *Dangerous Hero* has also been described as a “catastrophic” failure.

us who report on politics are at liberty to express, within limits, whatever opinions we like. These limits include an obligation to observe standards. We should strive to be accurate. We can make strong arguments but ought not to distort the truth or suppress relevant information to make our point.

“Writer Tom Bower fails catastrophically to meet these standards. It is not only that *Dangerous Hero: Corbyn's Ruthless Plot For Power*, his new book on Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, contains numerous falsehoods. It systematically omits relevant facts in order to portray Corbyn as a ruthless Marxist and anti-semitic hell-bent on destroying Western liberal values”.

Oborne continued: “The ugly truth is that Bower is not straight with his readers, let alone Corbyn.

“Again and again he withholds relevant information, with the result that the Labour leader and his colleagues come over in the worst possible light”.

Oborne provided numerous examples in his long, careful analysis. For example: “Bower makes much of a confrontation between Labour activist Marc Wadsworth and Labour MP Ruth Smeeth at the launch for Shami Chakrabarti’s report on anti-semitism in June 2016. He writes that ‘Wadsworth snapped at her that not only was she ‘working hand-in-hand’

with the right-wing media by speaking to the journalist, but she was also a Jew’.

“The brief incident is recorded on video. I have examined this video. Nowhere in the footage does Wadsworth say that Smeeth is Jewish. I spoke to two eyewitnesses to this event, both of whom confirmed to me that at no point did Wadsworth say that Smeeth was Jewish.”

Bower’s book contains a really extraordinary claim against Corbyn’s press officer, former Guardian comment editor Seumas Milne, describing his behaviour after the arrival of members of the Board of Deputies of British Jews in Corbyn’s office: “In the presence of Jews, his body language had visibly changed”.

Oborne noted that no evidence or source was provided to justify this accusation, which depicts Milne as an authentically Nazi-style Jew-hater. Oborne responded, to devastating effect,

“Again and again he withholds relevant information, with the result that the Labour leader and his colleagues come over in the worst possible light”

citing journalist David Hearst: “I sat for a number of years opposite Seumas,’ he told me. ‘I am Jewish, as are a number of my former colleagues on the *Guardian*. At no time did any of us sense that Seumas’s body language changed in our presence.

“He was part of the team, held in high regard for his knowledge of the Middle East and often consulted on it, particularly by the person who sat next to him, fellow columnist Jonathan Freedland. That opinion of Seumas was shared by our editor at the time, Alan Rusbridger, who kept him as comment editor for six years.”

Bower’s response to Osborne’s critique?

“During the last 36 hours, I have made numerous attempts to make contact with Tom Bower in order to give him the chance to defend himself. I’ve contacted him by mobile phone, by text message and at his direct line at his London home. No answer. I also emailed a list of questions to Bower yesterday morning, both to his private email address and to his publicist at William Collins. He has not responded to me”.

Osborne has since told us that Bower never responded to his questions (Twitter, direct message, March 28). He continued: “Bower has made an astonishing number of factual errors – more than I have ever come across in a book from a mainstream publisher. While something has clearly gone horribly wrong with the editing process at William Collins, Bower is



Tom Bower

“Bower has made an astonishing number of factual errors – more than I have ever come across in a book from a mainstream publisher”

the author and must take full responsibility ...

“Time after time, Bower makes assertions that are not backed by any evidence. The problem is so bad that I resolved to carry out my own investigation into the truth of some of the assertions made in Bower’s book. This article is the result of my research. Again and again, I have been able to prove that his account of events is false, misleading and, in some cases, pure fabrication”.

O Osborne added: “Bower’s book is not just intellectually dishonest, it is a farrago of falsehood and insinuation.

“Yet it appears to have had no difficulty finding a mainstream publisher, while receiving a generous reception in the mainstream press. To their credit a handful of reviewers – above all Stephen Bush in the *Observer* – have exposed some

of the errors in this book. But even the Bush review hardly touches on the extent of the collapse of journalistic standards in Bower’s account of Corbyn”.

To his credit, the *Guardian*’s George Monbiot tweeted Osborne’s piece with high praise: “A brave and remarkable review”.

A tweeter countered, noting that “similar nonsense comes from Guardian on a daily basis without regard to balance or fact.”

Monbiot replied: “Both the *Guardian* and the *Observer* slated the book”.

In fact, *Guardian* columnist and former political editor of the *Observer*, Gaby Hinsliff, concluded of Bower’s book in the *Guardian*: “This is the most compelling in-depth study so far of a man whose head is unusually difficult to get inside, given his suspicion of anyone who isn’t a fellow traveller. Just don’t expect it to change anyone’s mind”.

It is telling to compare Hinsliff’s most severe criticism with Osborne’s: “And that’s perhaps the biggest flaw in an otherwise damning book. Bower’s colours seem nailed to the mast ...”

As Osborne says: “British journalists need to ask themselves a question. Is there something rotten in British media discourse which allows someone like Bower to get away with this?”

It is an important question. Celebrating “a farrago of falsehood” titled *Dangerous Hero* can have dangerous consequences. Last month, Corbyn

was punched in the head by a protestor holding an egg (dismissed as an ‘egging’ by journalists) who was subsequently jailed for 28 days for the attack. This month, we learned that soldiers of the 3rd Battalion of the British Paratroop Regiment filmed themselves shooting at a picture of Corbyn.

This recalls the revelation, in 2015, that a senior serving general had warned that a government led by Corbyn could face ‘a mutiny’ from the army. The unnamed general told the *Sunday Times*: “The Army just wouldn’t stand for it. The general staff would not allow a prime minister to jeopardise the security of this country and I think people would use whatever means possible, fair or foul to prevent that. You can’t put a maverick in charge of a country’s security”.



Jeremy Corbyn

It is astonishing to see how politicians and journalists have turned an honest, compassionate, decent politician into a hate figure

Political and press criticism of Corbyn has always far exceeded the usual fierce disagreement, presenting him as a treacherous threat to national security, an anti-semitic fool who is ‘unfit’ to lead the country. He

has been relentlessly presented as fundamentally unacceptable. As this article was being written, Conservative MP Caroline Johnson warned in parliament that mismanaging Brexit risked “letting down the country and ushering in a Marxist, antisemite-led government”. It is, in fact, astonishing to see how, in less than four years, politicians and journalists have turned an honest, compassionate, decent politician into a hate figure.

If ‘acceptable’ political choices are ultimately determined by the media, the government, or even by the military, we are well on the way to fascism. **CT**

David Edwards is co-editor of medialens, the UK press watchdog, at whose website – www.medialens.org – this article was first published.

LEFT, RIGHT

Marching to the Beat of Imperial Canada

YVES ENGLER

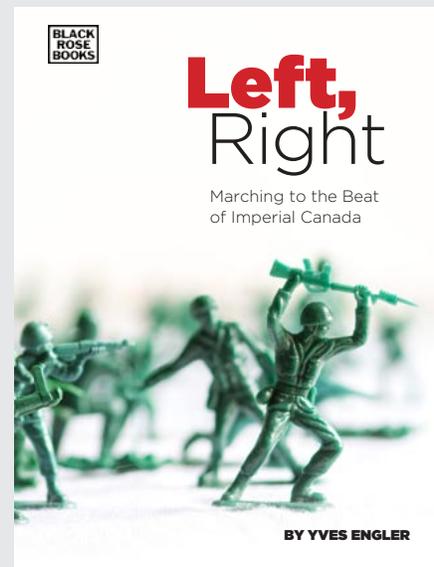
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Immigration tops voters' concerns as Europe gears up for next month's European parliamentary elections. But they're also worried about the economy and youth employment, writes **Conn Hallinan**

Europe stands at the crossroads

AS the campaigns for the European Parliament get under way, some of the traditional lines that formerly divided left, right and centre are shifting, making it harder to easily categorise political parties. In Italy, a right wing coalition calls for a guaranteed income, larger pensions and resistance to the heavy-handed austerity programmes enforced by the European Union (EU). In France, some right wing groups champion the fight against climate change, decry exploitation of foreign workers and growing economic inequality.

In contrast, Europe's political centre seems paralysed in the face of growing disillusionment with the economic policies of the EU. Even the social democratic centre-left defends doctrines that have alienated its former base among unions and working people, pushing such parties to the political margins.

If voters seem confused, one can hardly blame them, which is not good news for the left

and the centre-left going into the May 23-26 elections. Polls show centre-right and centre-left parties, which have dominated the EU Parliament since it first convened in 1979, will lose their majority. Parties that are increasingly skeptical of the organisation may win as many as a third of the seats in the 705-seat body.

However, "Euroskeptic", like "populist", is a term that obscures more than it reveals. In the polls, the two are lumped together in spite of profound differences. The Spanish left party, Podemos, is not likely to break bread with Italy's rightwing League/Five Star alliance, but both are considered "Euro-skeptic". Podemos, along with Greece's Syriza, Portugal's three party centre-left alliance, and La France Insoumise ("Unbowed") are critical of the EU's economic policies, but they do not share an agenda with xenophobic and racist parties like the League, France's National Rally – formally, National Front – and the

Alternative for Germany (AfG).

Which doesn't mean that the upcoming election doesn't pose a serious threat, in part because the Right has adopted some of the Left's longstanding issues.

In Italy, Mario Salvini, leader of the League, says the EU elections will be fought between a Europe "of the elites, of banks, of finance and immigration and precarious work", and a "Europe of people and labour". Take out "immigrants", and the demagoguery of the Right sounds a lot like something Karl Marx might write.

In France, young right-wingers put out a lively environmental magazine, *Limite*, which warns against climate change. Marion Marechal Le Pen – granddaughter of Jean Marie Le Pen, the rightwing, anti-Semitic founder of the old National Front – rails against individualism and the global economy that "enslaves" foreign labour and casts French workers on the scrap heap.

Of course, she also trashes immigrants and Islam, while



Leftwing activists battle 40,000 PEGIDA demonstrators in Dresden in 2015. The rightwing group demanded the repatriation of refugees, whom they claimed were “terrorists”.

Photo: Kalispera Dell / Wikimedia

advocating for a “traditional Christian community” that sounds like Dark Ages Europe.

During the 1990s, the centre-left – the French, Spanish and Greek socialists, the German Social Democrats, and British Labour – adopted the “market friendly” economic philosophy of neo-liberalism: free trade and globalisation, tax cuts for the wealthy, privatisation of public resources, and “reforming” the labour market by making it easier to hire and fire employees. The result has been the weakening of trade unions and

a shift from long-term stable contracts to short-term “gigs”. The latter tend to pay less and rarely include benefits.

On the one hand, Spain’s economy is recovering from the 2008 crash brought on by an enormous real estate bubble. Unemployment has dropped from over 27 percent to 14.5 percent, and the country’s growth rate is the highest in the EU.

On the other hand, 90 percent of the jobs created in 2017 were temporary jobs, some lasting only a few days. Wages and benefits have not caught up to pre-crash levels and Spanish workers’ share of the national

income fell from 63 percent in 2007 to 56 percent today, reflecting the loss in real wages.

Even in France, which still has a fairly robust network of social services, economic disparity is on the rise. From 1950 to 1982, most French workers saw their incomes increase at a rate of four percent a year, while the wealth of the elite went up by just one percent. But after 1983 – when neo-liberal economics first entered the continent – the income for most French workers rose by less than one percent a year, while the wealth of the elite increased 100 percent after taxes.

The “recovery” has come about through the systematic lowering of living standards, a sort of reverse globalisation: rather than relying on cheap foreign labour in places where trade unions are absent or suppressed, the educated and efficient home grown labour force is forced to accept lower wages and fewer – if any – benefits.

The outcome is a growing impoverishment of what was formally considered “middle class” – a slippery term, but one that the International Labour Organization defines as making an income of between 80 percent and 120 percent of a country’s medium income. By that definition, between 23 and 40 percent of EU households fall into it.

For young people, the “new economy” has been a catastrophe. More and more of them are forced to immigrate or live at home to make ends meet, putting off marriage and children for the indefinite future.

This income crunch is adding to a demographic crisis. In a modern industrial society, the required replacement rate of births to deaths is 2.1. The world’s replacement rate is 2.44. If economies fall under 2.1, they are in for long-term trouble. Eventually the work force will be insufficient to support health care, education, sanitation, and infrastructure repair.

The EU posts a replacement rate of only 1.57. Germany is one of the few EU countries that has shown a rise in the ratio – from 1.50 to 1.59 – but that is almost

completely due to the one-million immigrants the country took in four years ago.

The three countries that are leading the crusade against immigrants – Hungary, Poland and Italy – are in particular trouble.

Hungary, where strongman Victor Orban has made immigration a central issue for his rightwing government, is struggling with a major labour shortage. Orban recently rammed through a law requiring Hungarians to work 400 overtime hours a year to fill the shortfall, and he has been berating Hungarian women to have more babies.

The three countries that are leading the crusade against immigrants – Hungary, Poland and Italy – are in particular trouble – they don’t have enough workers

In Italy, the rightwing League/Five Star Movement rode anti-immigrant rhetoric to power in the last spring’s election, but with a replacement ratio of only 1.31 – the lowest in the EU – the country is losing the equivalent of the population of the city of Bologna every three years. All one has to do to see where this ends is to look at Japan, where an aging population has created such a crisis that the normally xenophobic Japanese are importing health care workers. China has similar demographic problems.

Playing on fears of a migrant “invasion” alarms people, but is it an assured vote getter? In recent German elections, the

AfG ran strong anti-immigrant campaigns but ended up losing badly to the Greens.

The latter have a more welcoming posture vis-à-vis migrants than even the German Social Democrats.

If Germany does not address the problem, its population will decline from 81-million to 67-million by 2060, and the workforce will be reduced to 54 percent of the population, not nearly enough to keep the country’s current level of social spending.

Much was made of recent electoral gains by the anti-immigrant neo-fascist Vox Party

in Spain’s southern province of Andalusia, but if Spain does shut down the flow of migrants it will be in serious difficulty. The country’s population has declined since 2012, and there

are provinces where the ratio of deaths to births is three to one. More than 1500 small towns have been abandoned.

Polls indicate that immigration tops EU voters’ concerns, but just. It is only a few percentage points ahead of the economy and youth unemployment.

The right – in particular Hungary’s Orban – has done a masterful job of tying “liberal” to the neo-liberal policies of the EU. Unfortunately, it is an easy argument to make. Most “liberals” in the west associate the term with freedom, democracy and open societies, but

many people in the EU experience “liberal” as a philosophy of rapacious individualism that has dismantled social services, widened the gap between rich and poor, and enforced a system of draconian austerity.

Of course Orbán, Marine Le Pen, the League’s Matteo Salvini, and Germany’s AfD are interested in power, not the plight of the EU’s 500-million citizens.

And for all its talk of resistance, the League/Five Star Movement government folded when the EU nixed an Italian budget that included a guar-

anteed income and higher pensions.

Global migration is on the rise as climate change drowns coastlines and river deltas and drought drives people out of arid climates in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia and Latin America. By 2060, as many as 3-billion people could be affected.

Which argues that the Left and centre-left has a responsibility not only to resist the economic philosophy that currently dominates the EU, but to see immigrants for what they are: potential allies and the future.

As for the Right, it is useful to recall some not so ancient history. In 1934, the Nazi Party’s German Labour Front struck a medal that read “Tag Der Arbeit” (The Day of Labour) and featured a Nazi eagle grasping a swastika, each wing tip embracing a hammer and a sickle – but the first victims of the Nazis were communists and trade unionists. **CT**

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



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**HERESA MAY
LIAR, LIAR,
£995 PANTS ON FIRE**



22

2017, Hackney Wick, East London. Artist unknown

Savage graffiti shows anger, scorn and contempt in UK for Theresa May and her path to Brexit misery for millions of Britons. Photographs by **Duncan Cumming**

The writing's on the wall ...

THERESA May is the most reviled political leader in Britain since Margaret Thatcher stormed the country with a “there is no such thing as society” mantra that saw millions suffer under her Tory party’s vicious neo-liberal policies during the 1980s.

During her three years as prime minister, May has blundered through the escalating insanity of the country’s Brexit shambles, that has been mocked by all sides of the UK political spectrum.

Her ineptitude has provided fodder for grateful newspaper cartoonists, comedians – and graffiti artists, who have savagely caricatured her mishaps on the walls of cities across the nation..

Much of that graffiti, especially in London’s East End, has been documented by Duncan Cumming, a Scottish web developer living in Islington.

Cumming began taking photographs 20 years ago, using a film camera before migrating to digital photography. He now has a flickr.com account



2018, Shoreditch, London. Artist: @effigy_artist



2018, Shoreditch, London. Artist: @asd_remainhumain

bulging with more than 70,000 images, the majority of them of graffiti, demonstrations and street art.

“I hadn’t seen much graffiti until I moved to Glasgow, where I became fascinated by it”, says Cumming. “I liked the idea that someone could paint something on a wall, and the following day that might be replaced with a different painting, or perhaps ‘buffed’ by the council. Graffiti is very temporal, so it needs people like me to constantly photograph it for posterity.

“I also like photographing signs and shop fronts, where people try to brighten up our grey concrete world with touches

of colour, decor and wit.

“My partner tolerates my work, which often involves being dragged around dodgy alleyways when we’re on holiday. I’ve got photos from about 15 different countries so far”.

Cumming says his pictures tend to reflect his left-wing politics, but adds, “I also photograph any right-wing street art I come across as well ... but there’s not much of it!”

Visit Cumming’s flickr.com photostream – [links on Page 26](#) – and you’ll see a memorable collection of witty resistance to the neo-liberalism that has caused so much misery over the past decades. – *Tony Sutton*



Shoreditch, London. Artist unknown

MISTRESS MAY

WON'T

TAKE

A

NAY



SUBDUDE

25

2016, Shoreditch, London. Artist: Subdude

26



2018, Shoreditch, London. Artist: @asd_remainhuman

See more work by Duncan Cumming at
www.flickr.com/photos/duncan/albums



2019, Shoreditch, London. @iggstamatic



2017, Shoreditch, London. Artist: Pegasus



27

2017, Shoreditch, London. Artist unknown

So, now we know. After two long years of bug-eyed hysteria, President Donald Trump is not, in fact, a secret agent conspiring with the Russian intelligence services to destroy the fabric of Western democracy, writes **CJ Hopkins**

A requiem for Russiagate

So the Mueller report is finally in, and it appears that hundreds of millions of Americans have, once again, been woefully bamboozled. Weird, how this just keeps on happening. At this point, Americans have to be the most frequently woefully bamboozled people in the entire history of woeful bamboozlement.

If you didn't know better, you'd think we were all a bunch of hopelessly credulous imbeciles that you could con into believing almost anything, or that our brains had been bombarded with so much propaganda from the time we were born that we couldn't really even think anymore.

That's right, as I'm sure you're aware by now, it turns out President Donald Trump, a pompous former reality TV star who can barely string three sentences together without totally losing his train of thought and barking like an elephant seal, is not, in fact, a secret agent conspiring with the Russian intel-

ligence services to destroy the fabric of Western democracy.

After two long years of bug-eyed hysteria, Inspector Mueller came up with squat. Zip. Zero. Nichts. Nada.

Or, all right, he indicted a bunch of Russians that will never see the inside of a courtroom, and a few of Trump's professional sleazebags for lying and assorted other sleazebag activities (so I guess that was worth the \$25 million of taxpayers' money that was spent on this circus).

Notwithstanding those historic accomplishments, the entire Mueller investigation now appears to have been another wild goose chase (like the "search" for those non-existent WMDs that we invaded and destabilised the Middle East and murdered hundreds of thousands of people pretending to conduct in 2003).

Paranoid collusion-obsessives will continue to obsess about redactions and cover-ups,

but the long and short of the matter is, there will be no perp walks for any of the Trumps. No treason tribunals. No televised hangings. No detachment of Secret Service agents marching Hillary into the White House.

The jig, as they say, is up.

But let's try to look on the bright side, shall we? Disgraceful as this Russiagate fiasco has been, at least it was all just an honest mistake, and not any kind of plot, or conspiracy, or anything as disturbing as that. It's not like the majority of the corporate media perpetrated a massive, coordinated, intelligence agency-initiated psyop on the Western public for two and half years. No, they just "got it wrong," again ... like they did with those Iraqi WMDs.

The corporate media, after all, are comprised of dedicated, professional journalists, who maintain the highest ethical standards, and who would never knowingly bombard the masses with hysterical McCarthyite propaganda based on absolutely nothing but the word of



TOGETHERNESS: Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump.

a bunch of deep state types who were trying to force a president out of office and delegitimise a populist backlash against the spread of global neoliberalism.

Plus, there is no “deep state.” Not really. That’s just one of those right-wing conspiracy theories that only Trump-loving fascists believe in. I mean, it’s not as if elements of the FBI, the DOJ, and the DNC paid a former MI6 spook working for

a Washington PR firm contracted by a Washington law firm contracted by the Clinton campaign to fabricate a “dossier” alleging that “the Russian regime [sic] has been cultivating, supporting, and assisting Trump for at least five years” in order “to sow discord” within the Transatlantic Alliance, and then fed that fabricated dossier to their contacts in the corporate media, who used it to

generate mass hysteria, which the Congress then used to justify the appointment of a special prosecutor, whose investigation of the allegations contained in the fabricated dossier the corporate media and deep state types used to generate even more mass hysteria ... and so on, until hundreds of millions of people actually believed that Donald Trump was some kind of Russian intelligence asset,

and was going to be impeached and tried for treason.

Now, that would be scary, if that had happened!

Another thing that (thank Christ!) didn't happen was when the corporate media hired a bunch of ex-intelligence agency officials to appear on their "news" shows every other night disseminating Rus-siagate propaganda while at the same time effectively banning journalists with dissenting views from challenging their lies. Well, and OK, to the degree they did that (and they certainly did it to some degree), they didn't do it intentionally, or knowingly, or with malice aforethought or criminal intent. They probably just misplaced the telephone numbers (and the email addresses and Twitter handles) of Matt Taibbi, Glenn Greenwald, Aaron Mate, and other infamous "collusion rejectionists," so they had no choice but to bring in the spooks.

Look, I don't want to beat this to death. The important thing is that we can all be grateful that none of that stuff I just mentioned happened, and, basically, just shut up and get back to work. This is not the time to remind everybody how totally insane and hysterical things got, and how they ran around like headless chickens squawking about "Russians" coming out of the woodwork, accusing anyone they disagreed with of being "Kremlin agents" or "Russian bots," and begging corporations to censor the In-



**They made a few mistakes,
and got a little carried away,
but they're only human, after
all. I'm sure they're all very,
very sorry, and will never,
ever, do it again**

ternet.

No, it's time to, you know, let bygones be bygones, and just forget about all this "Rus-siagate" business, and the FBI, and that made-up dossier, and how respected publications like *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and others published completely fabricated stories about secret meetings that never took place, power grid hackings that never happened, Russia-linked servers that never existed, imaginary Russian propaganda peddlers, and ... well, too many other examples to list.

Talking about all that is just a distraction (as my former colleagues on what has recently become the radical Rooskie-hunting Left wasted no time in advising everyone). Worse, it only helps Donald Trump, who, OK, maybe isn't a Russian intelligence asset anymore, but is still almost literally Adolf

Hitler ... or at least some sort of inhuman monster that bears no resemblance whatsoever to Obama or any other normal president, and who is certainly going to declare martial law, proclaim himself Führer, and unleash his underground white supremacist army on us, or something more or less along those lines.

And as for the non-existent deep state, and the Democrats, and the corporate media, and the millions of Americans they accidentally bamboozled ... well, I imagine they're feeling pretty silly right now. So this is not the time to demand a full accounting from the patriots in the intelligence community, or to compare the professionals in the corporate media to the keys of an enormous Goebbelsian piano mechanically hammering out whatever tune the ruling classes decide to play.

Yes, they made a few mistakes, and got a little carried away, but they're only human, after all. I'm sure they're all very, very sorry, and will never, ever, do it again. **CT**

CJ Hopkins is an award-winning American playwright, novelist and political satirist based in Berlin. His plays are published by Bloomsbury Publishing (UK) and Broadway Play Publishing (USA). His debut novel, *ZONE 23*, is published by Snogsworthly, Swaine & Cormorant Paperbacks. He can be reached at www.cjhopkins.com or www.consentfactory.org.



BETTER DAYS: Brazil's jailed ex-President Lula.

Photo: Ricardo Stuckert, Wikimedia

It's a year since Brazil's ex-President Lula was jailed, writes **Vijay Prashad**. His crime? Representing the side of history that says that the powerful should not be allowed to do whatever they want

It's not democracy if you jail the opposition

RECENTLY, I had dinner with the Bangladeshi photographer Shahidul Alam. He spent more than 100 days in prison in Dhaka last year. Shahidul's crime was simple: he, in his quiet and charming way, had questioned the legitimacy of his government. He asked why the government was not able to provide the most basic needs of its people, such as traffic safety for young children and, of course,

protection for workers and a livelihood for the millions who have been set aside by our contemporary world. These are scandalous questions. They are not meant to be asked. Citizens of Bangladesh are meant to be thankful that they are alive. "I can't stop telling the truth". Shahidul said. He is a brave man, with kindness written all over his face.

A few hours after we finished dinner, I heard from my

friend in Chennai, India, PK Rajan, one of the main people in the left publishing house Bharathi Puthakalayam. They were getting ready to release a book by S. Vijayan called *Rafale: A Scam That Rocked the Nation*, which is about a corrupt deal pushed by the government of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the French arms dealer Rafale. The book was to be launched by one of the most respected journalists in India:

N. Ram of the *Hindu* newspaper. Ram had poked his finger in the government's eye with his forensic reporting on corruption surrounding this deal. Hours before the launch, the Election Commission of India sent in the police to seize all the books.

Meanwhile, in New Delhi, LeftWord Books – of which I am chief editor – was getting ready to release its volume on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (titled *The RSS*), the authoritarian, fascistic, paramilitary group to which Prime Minister Modi belongs. The former vice president of India – Hamid Ansari – will release the book. The police have been calling our office to pressure us about this book, which has been authored by one of India's most senior constitutional lawyers, AG Noorani. India goes into an election in a few weeks. Intimidation and fear are the tactics of the powerful to win in the ballot box. Democracy drifts into the wind.

Brazil's former president, Lula, clocked a year in prison earlier this month. It is a bitter-sweet anniversary, not just for Lula, not just for Brazil, but for the idea of democracy. What did Lula do to deserve this time in prison, and indeed what did his successor – Dilma – do to be impeached so aggressively a few years ago?

Like Shahidul, Vijayan, Ram, and Noorani, Lula and Dilma represent the side of history that says that the powerful

should not be allowed to do whatever they want, and when they do what they want, they should not be allowed to get away with it. Lula and Dilma, unlike the others, became heads of governments, and as such, they pushed agendas that rattled the old order.

But they didn't break the bars. All they did was drag some of the sequestered wealth from Brazil's wealthy and try to moderate a society that has been deeply unequal for 500 years. They tackled hunger and corruption, illiteracy and indignity.

The problems in Brazil remain fierce, and – as any reasonable person will attest – Lula and Dilma went after them with honesty and reason. The United Nations pointed to Brazil as an example of a country that was able to eradicate hunger. A visit to the federal universities – set up under Lula's government – shows what was possible in terms of the provision of higher education for oppressed communities.

All this was out of the question. The oligarchy wanted their country back. The viciousness with which Dilma was impeached in April 2016 is an indication of the oligarchy's disregard for democratic norms and hunger to restore power to themselves.

Brazil's president – Jair Bolsonaro (the Trump of the Tropics) – was then a legislator. He dedicated his vote against Dilma to Colonel Brilhante Ustra, the man who tortured Dilma in 1970 during the military dicta-

torship. Bolsonaro looks back longingly at the dictatorship. There was no corruption charge against Dilma, no evidence of anything. The impeachment was a show of machismo by the oligarchy, a coup inside the legislature.

Lula was arrested because it was clear that he – a force of nature – was likely to win the presidential elections of 2018. Recently, 464 Brazilian lawyers – all highly respected in their profession – signed a statement asking for the release of Lula. Lula, they say, did not receive the rules of due process, his defence team was not able to work effectively, and the facts of his complicity were not proved beyond doubt. Lula, the first president from a working-class background, they wrote, pushed an agenda on behalf of the poor, which “may be one of the reasons that explain his arrest”.

Indeed, the corruption allegations would make a serious judge blanch. But Judge Sergio Moro prosecuted Lula as if he was the most corrupt man on the planet. Moro is now in Bolsonaro's government. The quid pro quo corruption of a judge who makes a presidential win possible by taking a job in the new president's cabinet has not raised enough eyebrows. There is no evidence of wrongdoing by Lula except what sounds like evidence in the white-hot noise of the oligarchy's press. It is as if Lula were the devil incarnate, a man with horns on his head. Logic has departed. WhatsApp has taken its place.

So many colleagues – reporters around the world – find themselves arrested for the most ordinary of things, telling the story as they see it. Once more in the Philippines, Maria Ressa has been picked up for writing about the president. Once more, Morocco’s Hamid El Mahdaoui is behind bars for writing about the al-Hirak protests in the Rif region. Both Maria and Hamid tell the story as it appears, without frills, without fear. It is a dying sensibility, as the ecology of news gathering gets more and more chilled by the fear of a prison sentence or of poverty. There is silence at the edge of the cliff.

There is silence about real corruption. Estimates of wealth sequestered in tax havens oscillate between \$10-trillion and \$32-trillion – namely between 12 percent and 35 percent of global household financial wealth.

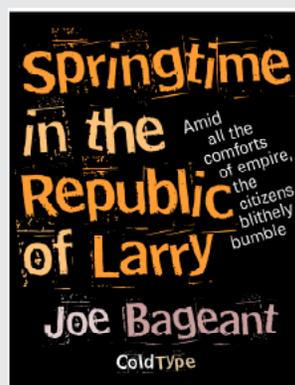
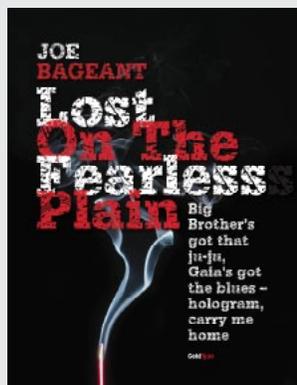
This is where the focus should be: real corruption, with real wealth that could be better utilised to provide meaningful jobs, a genuine social system and a transition from the carbon civilisation to a renewable one. But that is not where one must look. All eyes must focus on a journalist who tells the truth, or on a political leader who is eager to tackle the crime of hunger. Real corruption hides in the shadows.

Lula remains resilient. He has the love of millions with him. Last year, when I arrived in São Paulo airport, the man at passport control asked me why I wanted to enter Brazil. I said I wanted to visit Lula in prison. He smiled. Then he stood up and announced in a very loud voice to all the other passport control officers: “This guy has

come to Brazil to see Lula”. They all cheered. It was a gratifying sight.

I imagine Lula in his cell on April 7, the one-year anniversary of his incarceration. I imagine him looking out at Brazil and hearing the cheers of people like those passport control officers. Knowing Lula, he is thinking about the discarded workers of his country who are suffering from an increase in hunger. He is thinking of Maria Ressa, of Hamid El Mahdaoui, and of Shahidul Alam. I imagine Lula thinking of democracy, withering on the vine, its shell institutions intact, but its spirit corrupted by money and by power. **CT**

Vijay Prashad is an Indian historian, editor and journalist. This article was produced by Globetrotter, a project of the Independent Media Institute.



READ THE BEST OF JOE BAGEANT

www.coldtype.net/joe.html

We fill our children's heads with lies about how the world works, how the government works, how the media works, and, on a deeper level, how their own consciousness works. It's time for change, writes **Caitlin Johnstone**

Propagandised people will never, ever, rebel

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OUR predicament is simple to describe. Since the dawn of civilisation, powerful individuals have controlled the stories people tell themselves about who they are, who's in charge, how a good citizen behaves, what groups should be loved, what groups should be hated, and what's really going on in the world. When you study what we call history, you're mostly just reading the ancient proto-propaganda of whatever kingdom happened to win the last war during that period of time. When you study what we call religion, you're mostly reading stories that were advanced by ancient governments explaining why the people should be meek, forgiving taxpayers instead of rising up and killing their wealthy exploiters.

This continues to this day. We fill our children's heads with lies about how the world works, how the government works, how the media works, and, on a deeper level, how their own consciousness works, and the entire proc-

ess is shaped to funnel power toward the people who control our stories. The modern schooling system was largely formed by John D Rockefeller, widely considered the wealthiest person in modern history, in order to create generations of docile gear-turners for the industrial plutocratic machine. Modern schooling is essentially mainstream media in a building; it promotes authorised narratives day in and day out to ensure that children will have a reaction of cognitive dissonance and rejection when confronted with information which contradicts those narratives.

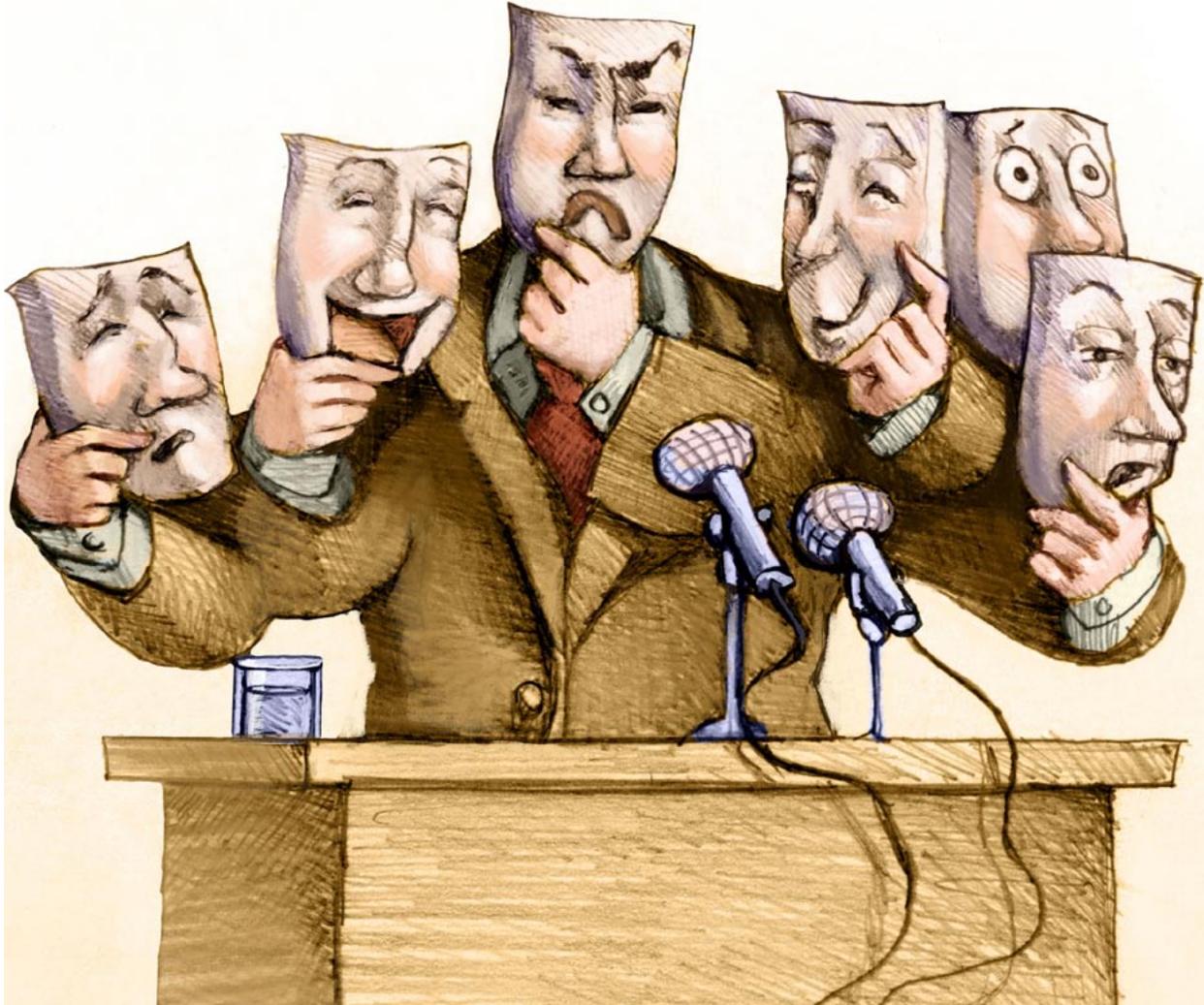
This funnels the populace seamlessly into the narrative control matrix of adulthood, where childhood indoctrination into mainstream narratives lubricates the way for continual programming of credulous minds with mass media propaganda. All the print, TV and online media they are presented with supports the status quo-supporting agendas of the same plutocratic class that John D

Rockefeller dominated all those years ago. This ensures that no matter how bad things get, no matter how severely our spirits are crushed by end-stage metastatic neoliberalism, no matter how many stupid, pointless wars we're duped into, no matter how much further we are drawn along the path toward extinction via climate chaos or nuclear war, we will never revolt to overthrow our rulers.

That's three paragraphs. Our predicament is simple to describe and easy to understand. But that doesn't mean it's easy to solve.

Everyone has at some point known someone in some kind of an abusive relationship, whether it be with a partner, a family member, or a job, and we all know that helpless feeling of being unable to help someone who refuses to walk away from the source of their abuse.

"Just leave him!" we say in exasperation. "The door's right there! It's not locked!"



But it's never that simple. It's never that simple because, although the abuser is indeed physically capable of walking out the door, the thoughts that are in their head keep them from choosing that option.

This is because no abuser is simply violent or cruel: they are also necessarily manipulative. If they weren't manipulative, there wouldn't be any "abusive relationship"; there'd just be someone doing something horrible one time, followed by a hasty exit out the door.

There can't be an ongoing relationship that is abusive unless there's some glue holding the abuser in place, and that glue always consists primarily of believed narrative.

"I didn't mean it. I love you. I just get frustrated sometimes because of your stupidity."

"You can't leave; you'll never make it out there on your own. You need me."

"I'm the only one who'll ever be there for you. Nobody else will ever love you because you're so disgusting."

"Your children need their father. You have to stay."

"I need you! I'll die without you!"

"I'm not doing that. You're paranoid and crazy."

"Your inability to forgive me means something is wrong with you."

They seldom say it so overtly, because if they did its malignancy would be easy to spot, but those are the ideas which get subtly implanted into the

abusee's head day after day after day by way of skillful manipulation.

"It's her own fault for staying," someone will inevitably say.

No it isn't. Not really. The abuser is at fault for the overt abuse, and the abuser is also at fault for the psychological manipulations which keep the abusee in place in spite of terrible cruelty. It's all one thing, and it's entirely the abuser's fault.

Humanity's predicament is the same. I often hear revolutionary-minded thinkers voicing frustration at the mainstream public for choosing to stay within this transparently abusive dynamic instead of rising up and forcing change, and yes, it is self-evident that the citizenry could easily use its vastly superior numbers to do that if it collectively chose to. The door is right there. It's not even locked.

But the people aren't failing to choose the door because they love being abused, they're failing to choose the door because they've been manipulated into not choosing it.

From cradle to grave they're pummelled with stories telling them that this is the only way things can be, in exactly the same way a battered wife or a cult member are pummelled with stories about how leaving is impossible.

The difficulty of our times is not that we are locked up; we aren't. The difficulty is that far too many of us are manipulated into choosing a prison cell over freedom.



The problem is that far too many of us are manipulated into choosing a prison cell over freedom

The fact of the matter is that a populace will never rise up against its oppressors as long as it is being successfully propagandised not to. It will never, ever happen. The majority will choose the prison cell every time.

You'd expect that more dissident thinking would be pouring into solving this dilemma, but not much is.

People talk about elections and political strategies, they talk about who has the most correct ideology, they talk about rising up and seizing the means of production due to unacceptable material conditions, they wax philosophical about the tyranny of the state and the immorality of coercion, but they rarely address the elephant in the room that you can't get a populace to oust the status quo when they do not want to.

Nothing will ever be done about our predicament as long as powerful people are control-

ling the stories that the majority of the public believe. This is as true today as it was in John D Rockefeller's time, which was as true as when Rome chose to spread the "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's" submissive-ness of Christianity throughout the Empire. The only difference is that now the powerful have a century of post-Bernays propaganda science under their belt, and a whole lot of research and development can happen in a hundred years.

So what's the solution? How do you awaken a populace that is not just manipulated into choosing its prison cell every time, but is also manipulated into believing that any suggestion that they're in a prison cell is a crazy conspiracy theory?

Well, what do you do when a loved one is in an abusive relationship? It never works to shake them and scream "You're being abused!"; that just causes them to tighten up and dig in deeper with their abuser's narratives about how this is the only way things can be and anyone who says otherwise is crazy.

What works is to lovingly help that sovereign spark within them gather evidence that the narratives they're being fed by their abuser are lies. Point out every time where reality contradicts the stories they've been told. Weaken their trust in the old stories while strengthening their confidence in their own perception and their sense of entitlement and worthiness. Help them to see that they're being lied to, and that they deserve better.

This breaking of trust needs to happen within the respective partisan echo chambers of those who are being propagandised. It's useless to increase the distrust of CNN and MSNBC among Trump's base, for example, but it's very useful to increase their distrust in right-wing narratives. It's useless to increase Democrats' distrust in Trump and Fox News, but it's very useful to get them skeptical of the narrative control machine they've been plugged into. Each head of the two-headed one-party system needs to be attacked in a way that makes sense inside each of its respective echo chambers.

Mostly, though, what we need is we need is for more thinkers



This breaking of trust needs to happen within the partisan echo chambers of those who are being propagandised

to be more focused on the real problem. I know some influential minds read this blog; if they can help seed the idea out among the movers and shakers

of dissident thought that propaganda is our first and foremost problem, we just might get somewhere. We need a major shift of focus onto the narrative control matrix and the obstacle that it poses to revolution, and everyone can help shift us there in their own way.

The propaganda machine won't be adequately disrupted without intensive effort, and until it is we're going to keep selecting the prison cell every time. **CT**

*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*

REMEMBERING Danny SCHECHTER 1942 - 2015

Danny Schechter, the News Dissector, was acclaimed as one of the most politically astute journalists of the late 20th- and early 21st-centuries. As a tribute to him and an appreciation of his work with ColdType, we are giving away free downloads of the seven books he published in association with ColdType.net. Download them at:

<http://coldtype.net/SchechterBooks.html>

Described as the “man with the mahogany voice”, singer rejected career with '60s superstars, the Walker Brothers, writes **John McGrath**

Scott Walker: From pop music to the avant-garde

SCOTT Walker, who died aged 76, represented that rarest of entities: the intellectual pop star who garnered critical acclaim as well as commercial success; the avant-garde composer with hits; and a musician who demolished the idea of an unbridgeable divide between low and high culture.

Walker's death marks an end to an unparalleled music career spanning teen-idol stardom and avant-garde experimentalism. Reaction to the news came from all corners of the musical world.

The harrowing imagery of Walker's lyrics on songs such as *The Electrician* or *Jesse* would parallel Radiohead's often unusual subject matter on the likes of *Myxomatosis*.

Very few artists have achieved the commercial success of Walker and also achieved enormous acclaim from critics – and none had his voice. Midge Ure referred to Walker as “the man with the mahogany voice” in a tribute

tweet last month. Bowie comparisons are clear, but Walker's late work pushed further and harder than Bowie's in its dark experimentation. There was a friendship between the two – and Bowie famously covered Walker's groundbreaking track *Nite Flights* on his 1993 album *Black Tie White Noise*. Sadly, neither remain with us beyond the recorded medium and the world is poorer as a result.

Born Noel Scott Engel in 1943 Ohio, Walker came to prominence in the late 1960s as part of the Walker Brothers, a group whose orchestral pop had particular success in UK. He remained in England, becoming a British citizen in 1970. Commercial hits such as *Make it Easy on Yourself* (UK number one in August 1965, number 12 in the US) and *The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore* (number three in the UK in 1966) made Walker a household name and earned him his own television series in 1969.

But by the end of the 1960s, Walker chose to go solo – embarking on the first of four landmark records: *Scott 1, 2, 3* and *4* (1967-9). These albums would earn him a reputation for baroque pop with tracks such as the Ingmar Bergman-inspired *The Seventh Seal*. Other key influences were the French songs of Jacques Brel and the Beat poets.

Early premonitions of his later experimentalism are displayed in songs such as *It's Raining Today* on *Scott 3*. Here, the silky baritone delivery is combined with a dissonant string drone reminiscent of contemporary composer György Ligeti's microtonal clusters so effectively employed by Kubrick in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Such a composition – Ligeti's *Atmosphères* (1961) – and those of fellow composer Iannis Xenakis echo Walker's later concern with sound blocks, a method of compositional procedure that juxtaposes textures in a foregrounded avant-garde fashion. The song *Boy Child*

further exemplified a new minimal approach to songwriting on *Scott 4*, as Walker moved beyond earlier Bacharach-esque arrangements.

The Walker Brothers would reunite for a period in the 1970s. *Lines* (1976) and *Nite Flights* (1978) were moderate successes financially but, more importantly, Walker's contributions to the latter document his evolution into the avant-garde composer he was to become on *Tilt* (1995).

Label difficulties and creative differences resulted in a fallow, uninspired period in the 1980s – what Walker referred to as his “lost years” – but for one key record: 1984's *Climate of Hunter*. With this album Walker had truly found his artistic direction, expanding his sound palette and distilling his theatrical approach.

Julian Cope's modestly named 1981 compilation *Fire Escape in the Sky: The God-like Genius of Scott Walker* had marked a turning point in Walker's reception both among the public and critics. Frontman of Liverpool band Tear-drop Explodes, Cope brought Walker's output to a new generation of fans. The album reached number 14 on the UK independent chart and led Virgin Records to sign Walker up for new material – but Virgin was unenthusiastic about the



**Scott Walker:
Pop star to
avant-garde
icon**

aesthetic signalled on *Climate of Hunter* and subsequently dropped him following critical praise but poor sales.

Tilt combined industrial soundscapes with contemporary aria, consolidating Walker's position as an avant-garde artist – but fans had to wait another 11 years for the next solo opus, *The Drift* (2006). The two albums are dark masterpieces with a Beckettian focus on the human condition that would not be out of place in modern opera. Walker con-

tinued to pare down his materials, incorporating silence and polystylism (a postmodern juxtaposition of genres on tracks like *Epizootics!*) to an often profound and unsettling effect. *Bish Bosch*, released in 2012, would be Walker's final solo album while *Soused*, a collaborative record with the band Sunn O))), appeared in 2014.

Walker received many accolades and awards in later years including a Q magazine contribution to music award and a Mojo Icon Award. The 2006 documentary *Scott Walker: 30 Century Man* further highlighted his enormous impact on modern musicians, while a 2017 BBC prom featured John Grant, Richard Hawley, Susanne Sundfør and Jarvis Cocker singing from his early catalogue.

Walker's abilities not only included singer-songwriter, avant-garde composer and producer – he was also an in-demand film composer. He scored *Pola X* in 1999, for instance, while *The Childhood of a Leader* (2015) and *Vox Lux* (2018) (both Brady Corbet films) would see him continuing to innovate well into his 70s. **CT**

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John McGrath is lecturer in Music at the University of Surrey. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com

Muslim congresswoman stirs up US Congress as she takes stand on intrusion of Israel lobby into US politics, writes **Lawrence Houghteling**

Ilhan Omar vs the old way of doing business

THE moment US political partisans learned last November that two Muslim women would be joining Congress, it seemed likely that some fundamental tenets were going to be questioned – in particular, the strong American partiality toward Zionism and the nation of Israel.

It's no secret that for many years that the US government has treated Israel very differently from the way it treats any other nation.

Israel gets an astounding amount of American aid; this year's it's \$3.8-billion, and since 1948 the total (in adjusted dollars) has either crossed the trillion dollar line, or gets there soon. (Israel has a per capita GDP roughly equal to states like Arizona and Maine.)

And what other country ever 'accidentally' attacked an American intelligence-gathering vessel, and got away with it? Several top US officials even called the near-destruction of the USS Liberty in 1967 a

'planned' attack, and what happened afterwards a 'cover-up'. After 20 years of talks, the Israelis agreed to pay \$13-million to the survivors, et al.

And what other country has secretly developed a large nuclear force, and watched the US wink (and wink and wink) at it?

Reasons for American partiality toward Israel exist, many quite understandable – from the shame that timelier American action might have prevented the deaths of millions of Jews during the holocaust, to admiration for the plucky sabra spirit. In addition, there's been a strong Jewish-American desire to 'do right' by the world's only majority-Jewish nation. And more recently, Christian evangelicals have backed Israel more fervently than has any other group.

Of course there is the Israel lobby – with AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, at its core – that rewards friends of Israel and punishes those perceived as anti-Israel.

It runs on money, lots of money (though less so than some other lobbies). Even more, pro-Israel activism runs on enthusiasm: people who strongly support Israel stay involved, and believe the Israel issue must always be kept in mind. And the willingness to call out those holding Isro-skeptical positions as antisemites – the term that's come to be used by those disapproving such behaviour is 'monetising antisemitism' – certainly plays a part.

Since the defeat of Sen. Charles Percy and Cong. Paul Findlay, back in the '80s – both had drawn the wrath of AIPAC after Israel's invasion of Lebanon – many legislators have been tiptoeing around anything having to do with Israel, and around AIPAC. In both houses of Congress there's a core group, pro-Israel to a fault, and a much larger group – a ready super-majority – that's almost always willing to go along.

When Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar were elected in November (Omar, a 37-year-old



ILHAN OMAR: “When people say to us, ‘You are bringing hate’, I know (that) their intentions are that our lights are dim, that we walk around with our heads bowed, that we lower our face and our voice. But we have news for people: Rashida and I (are) here to ... represent the voices of people who have been silenced for many decades and generations”.

hijab-wearing Somali-American, replaced Keith Ellison, ‘the first Muslim member’, in a Minneapolis district with many Jewish voters (Thomas Friedman grew up there!) they immediately came under observation.

Omar got named to the Foreign Affairs Committee, and as a newbie in that ‘hood she immediately tangled with the chairman, Eliot Engel, a 30-year veteran from the Bronx.

A classic liberal on all other issues, Engel is really-hard-core when it comes to Israel: Wikipedia calls him “a vocal and

uncritical supporter of Israel”. As his constituent for many years, I could see that he’s a man for whom Israel can do no wrong, at least that he’d talk about publicly.

He’s a mousy-looking 72-year-old guy with a ‘stache, but he’s a mouse that can fight. Photos of him make him look small, though he’s actually taller than average, and he carries himself with a kind of falsely-modest haughtiness. The grandson of Jewish-Ukrainian immigrants, he worked in pub-

lic schools for a while, got into politics, and since 1989 he’s been a congressman. There’s a photo of him with Nelson Mandela available online, and if he were a generation older there’d be photos of him with Dr. King.

He must have tried to be polite to his new Muslim colleague. But in dealing with Omar, a woman who has said that Israel “has hypnotised the world”, and who vigorously opposes efforts to sidetrack the BDS movement, Engel has problems, and there were rumours of very tense moments behind the committee’s closed doors.

Late in February, Omar tweeted a taunt about the influence of “Benjamins” on American policies. Suggesting your opponents only get their way by buying it is frowned on in American politics, and it’s especially true you can’t make that suggestion about the Israel lobby, since the evil Nazi stereotypes of greedy rich Jews are still so well-remembered. Citing her willingness to “step back and think through criticism”, Omar “unequivocally” apologised. “Anti-Semitism is real”, she said. But her remark wasn’t forgotten.

Then she dissed Elliott Abrams, who deserves it – he did lie to Congress, dammit! But he is such an integral part of the American Likudnik neo-con clique that to get tough with him seems to many, I’m sure, automatically antisemitic.

And then, before that dust had settled, there was the ‘allegiance’ flap.

At an public event, with Tlaib sitting next to her, and citing critical ‘colleagues’ several times, Omar started talking about how she and her allies in Congress were tired of being dismissed for bringing up the wrong questions. She wanted to talk, she said, about “the political influence in this country that says it is OK for people to push for allegiance to a foreign country”.

It’s that word ‘allegiance’, you understand, that’s the big no-no. There’s something so feudal about the word – ‘my liege lord’, and all that. ‘Allegiance’ suggests you’ve put your name

down in blood – potent stuff – and the phrase ‘allegiance to a foreign country’ turns a sentence which with a different word might be seen as a truism into fighting words.

She had invoked “the hoary myth of dual loyalty, in which the Americanness of Jews is inherently suspect”, a *New York Times* report said. An AIPAC spokesman said her words were “deeply insulting to the millions upon millions of patriotic Americans, Jewish and non-Jewish, who stand by our democratic ally, Israel”. And Senate minority leader Charles Schumer called her remark ‘despicable’. (Could we retire that word, please, Chuck?)

Perhaps her harshest critic, though, was Chairman Engel. He welcomed debate, he said, but it was “unacceptable and deeply offensive to call into question the loyalty of fellow American citizens because of their political views, including support for the US-Israel relationship”. Her words, he said, were a “vile antisemitic slur” as well as “outrageous and deeply hurtful”, and he demanded an apology.

He also set out, with his allies, to write a resolution that would denounce just ‘antisemitism’ – in effect singling out Ilhan Omar.

What happened next surprised many, including all those Democrats who’ve long been moving, glacially, toward a more Isro-skeptical point of view. Many Democrats – they’re

the party that’s traditionally been home to most American Jews – have come to recognise that grave wrongs are being done to the Palestinians. Many Jewish Democrats have come to feel this way, too. But, so far, this recognition has not been accompanied by a willingness to call out Israel.

The call-Israel-out faction got a big boost in 2015 when the Israeli government and AIPAC fought hard to get Congress to reject the Iran nuclear deal, although many American, British, French, German, Russian, Chinese, and ‘European’ diplomats had crafted a deal with Iran to hold in check Iranian nuclear-weapon plans, and President Obama had put his prestige and power behind the deal. But the Israeli government, screaming that the deal was inadequate, and that it would fail to keep Iran from acquiring nukes, came out against it, and, along with AIPAC and the most hard-line of Israel’s American supporters, they set out to kill it.

No one claimed the deal was perfect: that’s the nature of deals, after all, no one gets exactly what he wants. But in the words of Adam Schiff of the House Intelligence Committee (who spoke for many), “the [intelligence community’s] assessments and insights into Iran’s nuclear programme have given us the confidence that this agreement will realistically cut off Iran’s path to the bomb for at least the next decade and a half”.

Most issues having to do with Israel can, fairly easily, be por-

trayed as being both pro-Israel and pro-US. But this deal was different. Despite the unanimous Republican opposition to the deal (yet another attempt by them to embarrass President Obama), the Iran-deal manoeuvring marked a time when to stand against the American president's point of view was to demonstrate either Republicanism or insanity (am I repeating myself?) or "allegiance to a foreign country". (And President Trump's lame excuses for his half-scrapping the deal last year basically made the point again.)

Most of the Jews in Congress were satisfied that care had been taken to safeguard both American and Israeli interests. Eventually a large majority of the Jewish Democrats in Congress, 20 of 28, including Schiff, voted for the Obama deal, despite AIPAC and Israel. Some, like Manhattan's Jerrold Nadler, got some ferocious criticism for their vote with the president. A year before, not a single Jewish member voted Yea on a resolution to criticise Israel's harsh treatment of Gaza. But on this vote, AIPAC was humbled. Momentarily.

Two of the eight Jewish Democratic anti-Obama votes in 2015 were cast by men who have now, despite that vote, gone on to attain high party positions within Congress. Despite turning their backs on their party, Senator Schumer was elected

the Democratic 'leader' in the Senate, and Congressman Engel this year became a chairman. "Political influence in this country that says it is OK for people to push for allegiance to a foreign country" – wasn't that the phrase? Anyway, that's how things have been.

But this time out, with Engel and his allies trying to get Omar censured, something weird happened. The progressive half of the Democratic caucus pushed back. The 235 Democrats in the House include almost 100 blacks and Hispanics, a dozen Asian-Americans, four Native Americans, and eight LGBTQ members, so even without

With Engel and his allies trying to get Omar censured, something weird happened. The progressive half of the Democratic caucus pushed back

figuring in an undetermined but not insignificant number of straight white females, the 'minorities' are about half. The more progressive elements in the caucus have been, like the party as a whole, inching for some time toward a more Isro-skeptical position. (Fifty-eight members even boycotted Netanyahu's speech in 2015.) Recent polls show Democrats' support for Israel-over-Palestine has shrunk dramatically; it's barely a plurality today.

The Democratic progressives fought hard against the singling out of Omar, emboldened by Israeli leftists like Gideon Levy. The *Haaretz* newspaper column-

ist, who believes that unthinking, unwavering American support is bad for Israel, called Omar "the most promising US congresswoman today" and "a glimmer of hope." He stated, "There is antisemitism one must fight, and there is criticism of Israel and the Jewish establishment it is imperative to support. ... (T)here are people in Israel crossing fingers for her".

The Democratic establishment, eager to avert a civil war, ditched the Engel-backed denunciation and crafted a compromise resolution critical of antisemitism and "imputations of dual loyalty (that threaten American democracy (and) have no place in American political discourse" – but also opposing Islamophobia, white nationalism, and other evils, "whether from

the political right, centre, or left". All the Democrats, including Omar and Engel, voted Yea, and, with a big majority of Republicans supporting it too, the resolution passed easily.

With a very large piece of the Democratic caucus signalling that they didn't want to see Omar singled out, what had started out as an effort to clip the wings of the House's most vocally Isro-skeptical member had morphed into something very different.

The loser, most people agreed, was the Israel lobby. "Even Tom Friedman comes out against AIPAC, in his need to condemn Omar", wrote Phil

Weiss, in the solidly anti-Zionist *Mondoweiss* website. And the *reductio ad absurdum* came right on cue, when President Trump, calling the Democrats an “anti-Jewish” and “anti-Israel” party, said he considered the vote to be “a disgrace – and so does everybody else”.

Into Mr. Engel’s orderly life and committee had come a headscarf-wearing intruder, one who insists on spouting what she insists are truths. He tried to stay polite and collegial, naturally, but it didn’t work very well; she pisses him off too much. When the new congresswoman spoke out, offended by his chilly contempt, she made sure that her words could be heard by him as referring to him.

“When people say to us, ‘You are bringing hate,’” she said just after making the ‘allegiance’ remark, “I know (that) their intentions are that our lights are dim, that we walk around with our heads bowed, that we lower our face and our voice. But we have news for people: Rashida and I (are) here to ... represent the voices of people who have been silenced for many decades

In the recent standoff, the Old Guard blinked and produced a wide-ranging, basically bland anti-bad-stuff resolution

and generations”.

She insists she’s not out to be offensive; a recent op-ed in the *Washington Post* was gracious and conciliatory. And she readily acknowledges her Jewish constituents’ worries about Jewish safety in Israel, comparing their emotions to the feelings her formerly-refugee family has toward Somalia. “It’s all about family”, she says.

But she’s also made it clear how she intends to proceed: “People are afraid” because now “there are two Muslims in Congress that have their eyes wide open, that have their feet to the ground, that know what they’re talking about, (and) are fearless.” These two women, she added, “understand that they have the same election certificate as everyone else in Congress”.

In the recent standoff, the Old Guard blinked and produced a

wide-ranging, basically bland anti-bad-stuff resolution that every single Democrat could vote for. As “a striking departure from the down-the-line support for Israel that has long

been the norm in Democratic politics” (the *Times*), the substitution process was a signal that the same old way of doing business is coming to an end – maybe not right away, but soon.

But the killing of the antisemitism-only resolution in favour of the compromise also represented a personal victory for the new-way young member against the old-way veteran member.

While it may be true that battles are lost “in the same spirit in which they are won”, as Walt Whitman put it, everyone knows that battles-won conclude with better parties – in, one may hope, more than one sense of the word. **CT**

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Larry Houghteling, a retired New York City schoolteacher, lives with his 98-year-old mother in a Boston suburb. They enjoy reading *Dostoevsky*, *Harry Potter* and *Edith Wharton* aloud together.

**READ THE BEST OF
EDWARD S. HERMAN**
www.coldtype.net/herman.html

Insights



Yemeni children huddle in April 2015 during bombing of a residential neighbourhood.

Every war is a war against children

By **Kathy Kelly**

AT 9:30 in the morning of March 26, the entrance to a rural hospital in north-west Yemen, supported by Save the Children, was teeming as patients waited to be seen and employees arrived at work. Suddenly, missiles from an airstrike hit the hospital, killing seven people, four of them

children.

Jason Lee of Save the Children, told the *New York Times* that the Saudi-led coalition, now in its fifth year of waging war in Yemen, knew the coordinates of the hospital and should have been able to avoid the strike. He called what happened “a gross violation of

humanitarian law”.

The day before, Save the Children reported that air raids carried out by the Saudi-led coalition have killed at least 226 Yemeni children and injured 217 more in just the last 12 months. “Of these children”, the report noted, “210 were inside or close to a house when their lives were torn apart by bombs that had been sold to the coalition by foreign governments”.

Last year, an analysis issued by Save the Children estimated that 85,000 children under five have likely died from starvation or disease since the Saudi-led coalition’s 2015 escalation of the war in Yemen.

“Children who die in this way suffer immensely as their vital organ functions slow down and eventually stop”, said Tamer Kirolos, Save the Children’s Country Director in Yemen. “Their immune systems are so weak they are more prone to infections with some too frail to even cry. Parents are having to witness their children wasting away, unable to do anything about it”.

Kirolos and others who have continuously reported on the war in Yemen believe these deaths are entirely preventable. They are demanding an immediate suspension of arms sales to all warring parties, an end to blockades preventing distribu-

tion of food, fuel and humanitarian aid and the application of full diplomatic pressure to end the war.

The United States, a major supporter of the Saudi-led coalition, has itself been guilty of killing innocent patients and hospital workers by bombing a hospital. On October 3, 2015, US airstrikes destroyed a Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan, killing forty-two people. “Patients burned in their beds”, MSF reported, “medical staff were decapitated and lost limbs, and others were shot from the air while they fled the burning building”.

More recently, on March 23, 2019, eight children were among 14 Afghan civilians killed by a US airstrike also near Kunduz.

Atrocities of war accumulate, horrifically. We in the United States have yet to realise both the futility and immense consequences of war. We continue to develop, store, sell, and use hideous weapons. We rob ourselves and others of resources needed to meet human needs, including grappling with the terrifying realities of climate change.

We should heed the words and actions of Eglantyne Jebb, who founded Save the Children a century ago. Responding to the British post-war blockade of Germany and Eastern Europe, Jebb participated in a group attempting

to deliver food and medical supplies to children who were starving.

In London’s Trafalgar Square, she distributed a leaflet showing the emaciated children and declaring: “Our blockade has caused this – millions of children are starving to death”.

She was arrested, tried, convicted, and fined. But the judge in the case was moved by her

commitment to children and paid her fine. His generosity was Save the Children’s first donation.

“Every war”, said Jebb, “is a war against children.” **CT**

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Kathy Kelly co-coordinates *Voices for Creative Nonviolence* – www.vcnv.org – This article first appeared on the website of *The Progressive* magazine – www.progressive.org

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Lessons from Ralph Waldo Emerson and Machiavelli

By Thomas A. Prentice

DEMOCRATS, the Mass Media Industrial Complex and the Deep State Pentagon Intelligence Surveillance Industrial Apparatus seem to have missed these two memos in ninth grade world history from Ralph Waldo Emerson and Niccolo Machiavelli.

In September, 1843, Emerson wrote, “Never strike a king unless you are sure you shall kill him”, sometimes rendered “if you strike at a king you must kill him”.

Four hundred years before, in 1505, Machiavelli wrote in *The Prince*, “Never do an enemy a small injury”. He also wrote that “the injury that is to be done to a man ought to be of such a kind that one does not

stand in fear of revenge”.

Two years of the frothing-at-the-mouth Russia collusion narrative shows the narrators have laboured mightily producing not even a mouse.

Indeed it was all “fake news” and the Mueller investigation flop has probably insured Trump’s re-election.

Somehow Sean Hannity’s Fox News has become more credible than Rachel Maddow’s MSNBC and CNN plus the big New York and Washington dailies and networks and what’s left of magazines have lost whatever shreds were left of their post-WMD Iraq War credibility.

Congratulations.

When Lord Cornwallis sent

his second-in-command to surrender to George Washington and the French at Yorktown in 1781, the British band played a tune called *The World Turned Upside Down*.

Indeed.

Welcome to the accelerating decline of the US Empire, the successor to the Roman Empire, but with drone bombs, iPhones, microwaves, LED TV screens, gluten-free groceries, rock'n' roll, microfiber, fast food, lattes, regime change uber alles, thermonuclear bombs, Donald Trump, John Bolton, Monsanto, Elliot Abrams, the Boeing 737 MAX, Nancy Pelosi and Goldman-Sachs. Are We Not Already Great Again?

Perhaps room is now available to talk about:

- new, improved Medicare for All,
- the Green New Deal going to a ZERO CARBON economy,
- cancelling student loan debt, making college tuition free,
- increasing the minimum wage to not below \$15 an hour,
- creating millions of jobs with a trillion dollar infrastructure project paid for by cancelling Obama/Trump's trillion dollar nuclear warhead "upgrade",
- fiercely and ferociously regulating banks and corporations,
- restoring national sovereignty from usurpation and negation by international finance cartels,
- giving both Israel and Saudi Arabia the heave-ho,

- paying for everything else by cutting the Deep State Pentagon Intelligence Surveillance Industrial Apparatus and weaponised police by, say, 34.334 per cent,

- home-porting the fleet and shutting down overseas bases,

- abolition of debt peonage by the ancient tradition of a general Jubilee cancelling all personal debt – for people reporting less than \$1-million in income from student loan debt down to the debt held by the vile payday loan sharks,

- embracing authentic democracy (mere elections do not a democracy make) plus embracing democratic socialism to replace catastrophic capitalism, and

- smashing the Central

Intelligence Agency into the thousand pieces President Kennedy vowed to do but somehow never got around to.

And then there is the looming apocalypse – ongoing as we speak – of fossil-FUELLED, global HEATING-causing climate EMERGENCY leading to species EXTINCTION. Time to nationalise Exxon-Mobil et al and shut 'em down. Along with the telecoms, Silicon Valley and the Twittersverse.

Time to start talking about principles, not personalities. **CT**

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Thomas A. Prentice is a writer, poet and nature photographer. He is retired high school and college journalism instructor and teacher education assistant professor, and lives at Dallas, Texas

America is still stranded in the Twilight Zone

By **John W. Whitehead**

"We're developing a new citizenry. One that will be very selective about cereals and automobiles, but won't be able to think." – Rod Serling

HAVE you noticed how much life increasingly feels like an episode of *The Twilight Zone*? Only instead of Rod Serling's imaginary "land of both shadow and

substance, of things and ideas," we're trapped in a topsy-turvy, all-too-real land of corruption, brutality and lies, where freedom, justice and integrity play second fiddle to political ambition, corporate greed, and bureaucratic tyranny.

It's not merely that life in the American Police State is more brutal, or more unjust, or even more corrupt. It's getting more

idiotic, more perverse, and more outlandish by the day.

Somewhere over the course of the past 240-plus years, democracy has given way to idiocracy, and representative government has given way to a kleptocracy (a government ruled by thieves) and a kakistocracy (a government run by unprincipled career politicians, corporations and thieves that panders to the worst vices in our nature and has little regard for the rights of American citizens).

Examples abound.

- In Georgia, political organisers posted a “Black Media Only” sign outside a Baptist Church, barring white reporters from attending a meeting about an upcoming mayoral election.

- In Arizona, a SWAT team raided a family’s home in the middle of the night on the say-so of Child Protective Services, which sounded the alarm after the parents determined that their 2-year-old – who had been suffering a 100-degree fever – was feeling better and didn’t need to be admitted to the hospital.

- In Virginia, landlords are requiring dog-owning tenants to submit their pets’ DNA to a database that will be used to track down (and fine) owners who fail to clean up after their dogs poop in public.

- In Texas, a police officer who allegedly gave a homeless man a sandwich with dog faeces won’t be held accountable

for his actions.

In Illinois, Chicago police used a battering ram and a sledgehammer to crash into a family’s home with weapons drawn, terrorising the young children gathered for a four-year-old’s birthday party, only to find that they were at the wrong house.

- In Kansas, a 61-year-old black man in the process of moving into his new house found himself held at gunpoint and handcuffed by police, who refused to believe he was a homeowner and not a burglar.

If you’re starting to notice a pattern here, it speaks to the fact that nearly 50 years after Serling’s creative brainchild, *The Twilight Zone*, premiered on national television, we’re still fumbling around in the dark, trying to make sense of a world dominated by racism, cruelty, war, violence, poverty, prejudice, intolerance, ignorance, injustice and a host of other social maladies and spiritual evils.

The Twilight Zone was an oasis in television wasteland: a show that captured imaginations; challenged moral hypocrisy and societal prejudices; and railed against inhumanity, racism, prejudice, the mechanization of human beings by way of their technology, tyrants of all shapes and colours, a passive populace, war, injustice, the surveillance state, corporate greed.

Fifty years later, with so much having changed legally, technologically and politically, so much still remains the same. Fear is the same. Prejudice is the same. Ignorance is the same. Hate and war and tyranny are unchanged. Police officers are still shooting unarmed citizens. Bloated government agencies are still fleecing taxpayers. Government technicians are still spying on our communications. And American citizens are still allowing themselves to be manipulated by their fears and pitted one against the other.

All of these themes can be found in *The Twilight Zone*.

Serling, a truth-teller who pulled no punches when it came to calling out the evils of his day, channelled his moral outrage into storytelling. As his daughter Anne explained, “*The Twilight Zone* was more than just the strangest show on TV, with the best theme song, but back in the ’50’s Rod Serling was serving up social commentary through science fiction”.

That social commentary disguised as entertainment tackled some of the most pressing issues of Serling’s day. “It dealt with human issues which I guess is why it’s lasted so long, because it dealt with racism and mob mentality and scapegoating and things that are still very, very prevalent and relevant today sadly”, said Anne.

Serling would have no shortage of material to draw from today, given the government’s

greed for money and power, its disregard for human life, its corruption and graft, its pollution of the environment, its reliance on excessive force in order to ensure compliance, its covert activities, its illegal surveillance, and its blatant disdain for the rule of law.

Serling would have had a lot to say about the lies that masquerade as truth today.

Director Jordan Peele has taken Serling's material out for a new spin in a reboot, but if you haven't experienced the original series, do yourself a favour and spend some time with them.

Fifty years after the original *The Twilight Zone* series questioned whether we can maintain our humanity in the face of authoritarian forces trying to reduce us to mindless automations, we're still struggling with the demons of our age who delight in fomenting violence, sowing distrust and prejudice, and persuading the public to support tyranny disguised as patriotism.

Yet as I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People*, we don't have to be stranded in this twilight zone of tyranny, brutality and injustice.

We still have the power to change our circumstances for the better.

However, overcoming the evils of our age will require more than intellect and activism. It will require decency,

morality, goodness, truth and what Serling described as a toughness that can "take the divisiveness of this land of ours, the fact that everything is polarised, black and white, this or that, absolutely right or absolutely wrong... [and] seek out the middle ground".

As Serling concluded in his remarks to the graduating class of 1968:

"This is one of the challenges. Be prepared to seek out the middle ground ... that wondrous and very difficult-to-find Valhalla where man can look to both sides and see the errant truths that exist on both sides. If you must swing left or you must swing right – respect the

other side. Honour the motives that come from the other side. Argue, debate, rebut – but don't close those wondrous minds of yours to opposition. In their eyes, you're the opposition. And ultimately ... ultimately – you end divisiveness by compromise. And so long as men walk and breathe – there must be compromise". **CT**

John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His new book Battlefield America: The War on the American People (SelectBooks, 2015) is available online at www.amazon.com. Whitehead can be contacted at www.johnw@rutherford.org

Natural world can save us from climate catastrophe

By **George Monbiot**

DON'T expect much joy in writing about climate breakdown. On one side, there is grief and fear; on the other side, machines. I became an environmentalist because I love the living world, but I spend much of my life thinking about electricity, industrial processes and civil engineering. Technological change is essential, but to a natural historian it often feels cold and distancing. Today, however, I can write about

something that thrills me: the most exciting field of research I have covered in years.

Most climate scientists agree that it is now too late to prevent 1.5°C or more of global heating only by cutting our production of greenhouse gases. Even if we reduced our emissions to zero tomorrow, we would probably overshoot this crucial temperature limit. To prevent a full-spectrum catastrophe, we need not only to decarbonise

our economy in the shortest possible time, but also to draw down carbon dioxide that has already been released.

But how? The best-known proposal is called bio-energy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS). This means growing wood or straw in plantations, burning it in power stations to produce electricity, capturing the carbon dioxide from the exhaust gases and burying it in geological formations. Yet, if deployed at scale, it is likely to trigger either an ecological or a humanitarian disaster.

One BECCS proposal, favoured by certain governments, would cover an area three times the size of India with plantations. This involves converting agricultural land, in which case BECCS would cause mass starvation, or converting wild land, in which case almost lifeless plantations would replace 50 percent of the world's remaining natural forests. Even so, it might not be effective, as any carbon savings would be counteracted by the use of nitrogen fertiliser and the release of greenhouse gases from the soil as it's churned up for planting. BECCS can lead only to catastrophe, and should be immediately abandoned.

Another option is direct air capture: extracting carbon dioxide with machines. Aside from the expense, which is likely to be massive, the amount of steel and concrete

required to build these machines could help to push the world beyond certain climate tipping points before the positive effects are felt.

None of this is necessary, however, because there is a much better and cheaper way of drawing carbon from the air. Natural climate solutions do it through the restoration of living systems. The greatest potential identified so far – as so much land can be used this way – is in protecting and restoring natural forests and allowing native trees to repopulate deforested land. The greatest drawdown potential per hectare (though the total area is smaller) is the restoration of coastal habitats such as mangroves, salt marsh and seagrass beds. They stash carbon 40 times faster than tropical forests can. Peaty soils are also vital carbon stores. They are currently being oxidised by deforestation, drainage, drying, burning, farming and mining for gardening and fuel. Restoring peat, by blocking drainage channels and allowing natural vegetation to recover, can suck back much of what has been lost.

These are the best-studied natural climate solutions. They could help to solve two existential problems at once: climate breakdown and ecological breakdown. Their likely contribution is enormous – bigger than almost anyone guessed a few years ago – and other possibilities have scarcely been

explored. For example, we currently have little idea of what the impact of industrial fishing may be on the seabed's vast carbon store. By disturbing the sediments and lifting the carbon they contain into the water column, trawlers and dredgers are likely to expose it to oxygen, turning it into carbon dioxide. One study suggests that repeated trawling in the north-west Mediterranean has caused a reduction in carbon storage in the top 10 centimetres of sediments of up to 52 percent. Given the vast area trawled every year (most of the seabed on the world's continental shelves), the climate impact could be enormous. Closing large parts of the seas to trawling could turn out to be a crucial climate strategy.

Scientists have only begun to explore how the recovery of certain animal populations could radically change the carbon balance. For instance, forest elephants and rhinos in Africa and Asia and tapirs in Brazil are natural foresters, maintaining and extending their habitats as they swallow the seeds of trees and spread them, sometimes across many miles, in their dung. White rhinos can play a major role in preventing runaway wildfires in African savannahs: their grazing prevents dry grass building up. If wolves were allowed to reach their natural populations in North America, one paper suggests, their suppression of herbiv-

ore populations would stop as much carbon being released every year as that produced by 30-70-million cars. Healthy populations of predatory crabs and fish protect the carbon in salt marshes, as they prevent herbivorous crabs and snails wiping out the plants that hold the marshes together.

What I love about natural climate solutions is that we should be doing all these things anyway. Instead of making painful choices and deploying miserable means to a desirable end, we can defend ourselves from disaster by enhancing our world of wonders. However, nothing should be done without the involvement and consent of indigenous people and other local communities. Nor should damaging projects, such as

monocultural plantations, be passed off as natural climate solutions. As a paper published this month in *Nature* shows, several governments are attempting this deception.

Today, a small group of us is launching a campaign for natural climate solutions to receive the commitment and funding they deserve. At the moment, though their potential is huge, they have been marginalised in favour of projects that may be worse than useless, but which are profitable for corporations.

Governments discuss the climate crisis and the ecological crisis in separate meetings when both disasters could be addressed together. We have set up a dedicated website, produced an animation and writ-

ten a letter to governments and international bodies signed by prominent activists, scientists and artists.

We don't want natural climate solutions to be used as a substitute for the rapid and comprehensive decarbonisation of our economies.

The science tells us both are needed: the age of carbon offsets is over. But what this thrilling field of study shows is that protecting and rewilding the world's living systems is not just an aesthetically pleasing thing to do.

It is an essential survival strategy. **CT**

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George Monbiot's web site is www.monbiot.com – This article was first published in the *Guardian*.

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