

ROGUE JOURNALISM AT THE TIMES | Paddy French
THE PLOT TO KEEP CORBYN OUT OF POWER | Jonathan Cook
WHY MAD MAGAZINE STILL MATTERS | Michael J Socolow

ColdType

ISSUE 188

WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

MID-JULY/AUGUST 2019

WEAPONISING WATER



If countries don't work together,
sooner or later the international
'water crisis' will turn into
an old-fashioned war

Conn Hallinan (PAGE 19)

INSIGHTS: LINDA McQUAIG • TED RALL • TONY SUTTON • THOMAS R EDDLEM • JUAN COLE

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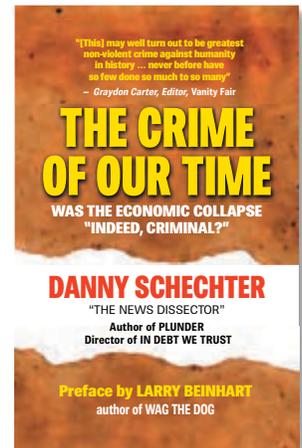
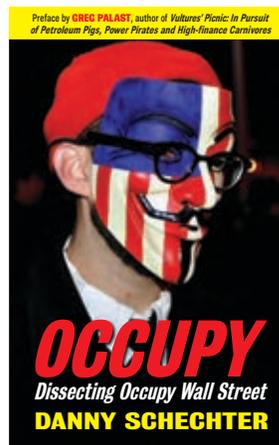
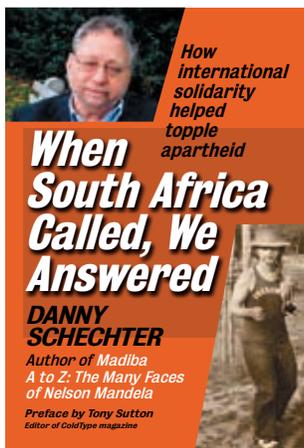
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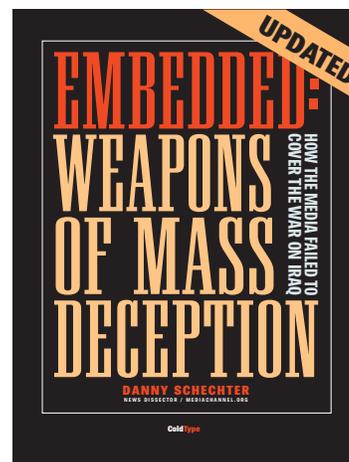
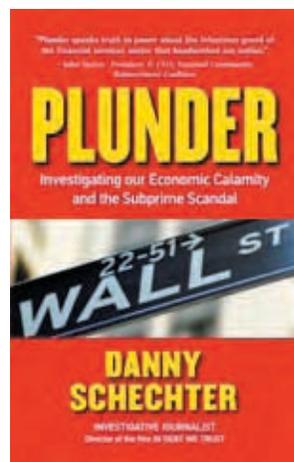
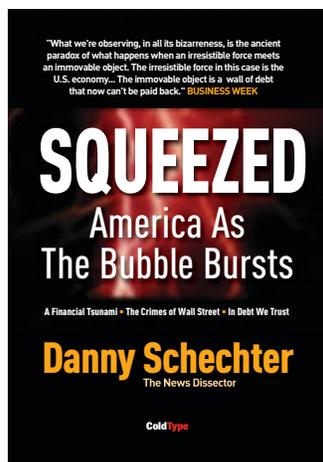
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REMEMBERING **Danny SCHECHTER** 1942 - 2015



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Danny Schechter, the NewsDissector, was acclaimed as one of the most politically astute journalists in recent memory. As a tribute to him and an appreciation of his work with ColdType, we are giving away free downloads of these seven books, all published in association with ColdType.net. Download them at:

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Insights

Photo: William Chen / Wikimedia.org



JUST SAY NO: Protester holds a sign during a 2017 pipeline protest rally in Vancouver, Canada

Trudeau's climate change plan is a dangerous fraud

By **Linda McQuaig**

IT'S possible that the world's top climate scientists are lying. If so, we can relax and feel confident that Justin Trudeau has dealt with the climate crisis in the appropriate way.

Although Canada's prime minister approved the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline in June, he's vowed to channel pipeline profits into clean energy projects. Compared to the Conservatives,

Trudeau's climate package, which includes taxes on carbon, seems reasonable and balanced -- with a sweetener of environmental activism thrown in. (After all, it's 2019.)

But if climate scientists are not lying, if they're just honestly reporting their scientific findings, Trudeau's package is a dangerous fraud -- one that gives us a false sense that we can dramatically increase output from Alberta's oilsands

without seriously imperiling the world, and ourselves.

I'm inclined to believe the scientists. Convened by the United Nations, they reviewed more than 6,000 scientific studies and reported last fall that we have only about a dozen years left if we are to prevent truly dire climate conditions which go well beyond the kind of horrific wildfires, heat waves, droughts and floods we're already experiencing.

To avoid this, the scientists on the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change called on the world to make urgent and unprecedented changes that would dramatically reduce our fossil fuel consumption.

The chances of the world doing so are, of course, slim.

But that slim hope would be reduced to a thread by the Trans Mountain expansion, which would triple the pipeline's capacity to transport the province's heavy crude oil, one of the world's dirtiest, most carbon-intensive fuels.

That would be equivalent to adding 34 million cars to our roads, according to the environmental group Oil Change International.

Renowned US climate scientist James Hansen has said if Alberta's oilsands are fully exploited, it's "game over."

So Trudeau's promise to

direct pipeline profits to clean energy -- as good as that sounds -- is like allowing cigarettes to be sold to kids as long as tobacco companies make generous donations to cancer research.

Given the Canadian political landscape, Trudeau's compromise may seem like the best we can do. But, as Winston Churchill once said: "Sometimes it is not enough to do our best; we must do what is required."

By that standard, we're failing miserably.

With climate change increasingly in the headlines, it's easy to be lulled into believing the world is finally cutting carbon emissions. In fact, they continue to rise.

The climate has warmed roughly 1 C since the 1850s, and it's expected to warm another half-degree, due to carbon already in the atmosphere. The big question is whether we can hold it to 1.5 C -- a level of warming with severe but manageable consequences. At 2 C, it gets truly scary.

Ottawa admits Canada is far from meeting its carbon-reduction targets. This understates our poor performance.

A 2018 study published in the journal *Nature Communications* ranked Canada among countries with the world's least effective climate policies. The study found that if Canada's policies were adopted worldwide, global temperatures would rise by a disastrous

5.1 C by the end of the century. And that assessment was made before Trudeau approved the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.

Given the potential catastrophe ahead, it's amazing the subject is often discussed with detachment.

Economist Moshe Lander of Concordia University recently argued that, with the world moving toward a carbon-free future, Alberta's oil should be extracted while there's still time; "it's sort of a now or never approach."

This attitude -- let's dump every bit of carbon into the air while we can still make a buck from it! -- reveals a stunning indifference to the enormity of the crisis we face, and the fighting spirit we'll need to summon if we're going to save ourselves

and future generations.

Winston Churchill demonstrated that sort of fighting spirit when he vowed in 1940: "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets ..."

Imagine if he'd settled for: "We'll do our best. But we have to balance the need to fight tyranny with the need to create jobs." **CT**

*Linda McQuaig is a journalist and author. Her book *Shooting the Hippo: Death by Deficit and Other Canadian Myths* was among the books selected by the *Literary Review of Canada* as the "25 most influential Canadian books of the past 25 years." This column originally appeared in the *Toronto Star*.*

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Political cartooning was murdered. Here's how ...

By Ted Rall

A CENTURY ago US newspapers employed more than 2,000 full-time editorial cartoonists. Today there are fewer than 25. In the United States, political cartooning as we know it is dead. If you draw editorial cartoons for a living and you have any brains you're working

in a different field or looking for an exit.

You can still find them online so political cartoons aren't yet extinct. But they are doomed. Most of my colleagues are older than me (I'm 55). As long as there are people, words and images will be combined to comment on current affairs.

But the graphic commentators of tomorrow will be ad hoc amateurs rather than professionals. They won't have the income and thus the time to flesh out their creative visions into work that fulfills the medium's potential, much less evolves into a new genre. With zero youngsters coming up in the ranks and many of the most interesting artists purged, our small numbers and lack of stylistic diversity has left us as critically endangered as the wild cheetah. The death spiral is well underway.

June 2018: The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* fired Rob Rogers, a 25-year veteran, for drawing cartoons making fun of President Trump. (Rogers had always been a Democrat.)

January 2019: Steve Benson, the widely-syndicated winner of the Pulitzer Prize, was fired by the *Arizona Republic* after three decades of service.

May 2019: Gatehouse Media fired three cartoonists on the same day: Nate Beeler of the *Columbus Dispatch*, Rick McKee at the *Augusta Chronicle* and Mark Streeter at the *Savannah Morning News*.

June 2019: In one of the strangest offerings, the New York Times fired both of its cartoonists, Heng and Patrick Chappatte, in order to quell criticism over a syndicated cartoon – one drawn by an entirely different cartoonist. The Syrian government thugs who smashed Ali



One of the cartoons that helped get Ted Rall fired by the LA Times in 2015

Ferzat's hands with a hammer in 2011 were more reasonable than editorial page editor James Bennet; the goons only went after the actual cartoonist whose cartoons offended President Bashar Assad. Nor, by the way, did the Syrian dictator ban all cartoons. Political cartooning is now and forever banned from the 100 percent-censored *Times*.

And of course in 2015 the *Los Angeles Times*, whose parent company had recently been purchased by the Los Angeles Police Department pension fund, fired me as a favour to a prickly police chief because he was angry at my cartoons. In 2018 the same paper fired cartoonist David Horsey for the crime of accurately describing White House press flak Sarah Huckabee Sanders' looks as those of a "slightly chunky soccer mom". As at a Stalin-era show trial, they forced Horsey to apologise before giving him the boot.

Individual cartoonists are under fire around the world. Only in the United States, "land of the free", has the art form as a whole been targeted for systematic destruction by ruling elites and cultural gatekeepers. After decades of relentless, sweeping and never-reversed cutbacks there are now far more political cartoonists in Iran than in the United States. After terrorists

murdered 12 people at *Charlie Hebdo*, a single publication in France, hundreds of US newspapers ran editorials celebrating the power of cartoons; 99 percent of these hypocritical blowhards didn't employ a single cartoonist.

American editorial cartooning didn't just die. It was murdered.

Here's how it happened/it's happening:

Cartoonists were overrepresented in mass layoffs. Publishers fired numerous journalists. But they always came first for the cartoonists.

Scab syndication services undercut the market. A few discount syndication companies, one in particular, sold bulk packages of heavily discounted hackwork, undercutting professionally-drawn cartoons.

Publishers killed the farm system. The early 1990s marked the start of a vibrant new wave of 'altie' political art by Generation Xers. Urban free

weeklies carried our work but deep-pocketed dailies and magazines refused to hire us. Gifted young cartoonists realised they'd never be hired and abandoned the profession.

Social media mobs spook editors. Twitter and Facebook make it easy for six angry dorks to look like thousands of angry readers ready to burn down a newspaper over a cartoon. Cowardly editors comply and sack their artist at the request of people who don't subscribe to the paper.

Prize committees reward(ed) bland cartoonists. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Alties like Tom Tomorrow, Andy Singer, Clay Butler, Ruben Bolling, John Backderf and Lloyd Dangle were reinventing American political cartooning. Their revolution would not be recognised. The Pulitzer Prize committee snubbed alties. (Though some have been finalists – me in 1997 – no altie has won a Pulitzer.) Among the older traditional cartoonists as well, prizes usually went to safe over daring. Awards signal what's acceptable and what's not. Editors pay attention. It's a self-reinforcing cycle.

Legacy employers blackballed edgy cartoonists. Click data proves that controversy is popular. Faced with shrinking circulation, however, print newspapers and magazines played it safe and avoided controversy. Kowtowing to advertisers rather than the

readers who drive circulation, publishers fired the controversial cartoonists – the ones whose work readers were talking about – first. Another self-fulfilling prophecy: the dull cartoons Americans saw in major outlets like *USA Today* elicited little response from readers. They weren't missed after they vanished.

Billionaire newspaper 'saviours' refuse to hire cartoonists. When billionaires buy papers they invest in reporters and editors. Not cartoonists. One exception is Sheldon Adelson, who hired Mike Ramirez at the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. But 90 percent of Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway-owned newspapers employ zero cartoonists. Patrick Soon-Shiong bought the *LA Times* after they fired Horsey and me; his paper hired a bunch of underpaid Millennial writers but never replaced or brought back the two cartoonists. To his credit Jeff Bezos kept Tom Toles and Ann Telnaes on at the *Washington Post*, but he hired 'dozens of reporters' – and no one new to draw cartoons. (Historically many newspapers have employed multiple cartoonists.)

Twee identity-politics cartoons are boring. Boosters sometimes point to sites for Millennial cartoonists as a bright spot. For the most part, these cartoons are flat, preachy and predictable. Right or left, political correctness is death to political cartooning.

Online media sites refuse to hire cartoonists. News sites like Huffington Post, Salon, Slate and Vox are heirs to print newspapers. None employ cartoonists. Don't they realise theirs is a visual medium?

Cartoonists fulfill the market for crappy cartoons. Editors, publishers and award committees have made clear what kind of cartoons they are most likely to buy and reward. Jokes should be conventional, preferably derivative. Sacred cows must not be criticised. Patriotism is mandatory. Artistic styles remain frozen safely in the 1960s, when most editors were kids. Cartoonists have a choice: give the marketplace what it wants or go hungry. Many cartoonists produce work they know is beneath their talents, readers don't react when they appear in print and no one takes note when the cartoonist gets laid off.

I love editorial cartooning. All I ever wanted to do was draw for a living. When I was growing up, political cartooning was clever and dangerous. Punk rock.

Now it's Muzak.

Muzak is dead. **CT**

Ted Rall (Twitter: @tedrall), the political cartoonist, columnist and graphic novelist, is the author of "Francis: The People's Pope." You can support Ted's hard-hitting political cartoons and columns and see his work first by sponsoring his work on *Patreon*.

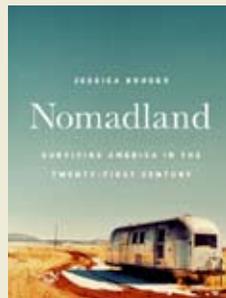
Pounding the road with America's elderly workers

By **Tony Sutton**

NOW here's something to ponder as you munch your morning cornflakes: If the US economy is booming, if Trump is Making America Great Again, why are so many pensioners taking to the highways and spending their golden years living in parking lots while slaving for peanut wages in giant Amazon warehouses.

Jessica Bruder, a journalist who teaches at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York City, has the answer to that and plenty of other questions in her book, *Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century*, in which she reminds us that, although America has always been "a nation of itinerants, drifters, hoboes, restless souls", a new kind of wandering tribe is emerging: "People who never imagined being nomads are hitting the road".

It's not a spirit of reckless adventure that is driving this elderly exodus, but helplessness, hopelessness, and despair. The majority of these wanderers – dubbed workkampers – are victims of the recession triggered by the financial collapse of 2008. Unlike the financiers who triggered the crash,



NOMADLAND
Surviving America in the
Twenty-First Century

By Jessica Bruder
Norton **\$26.95**

regular homeowners weren't bailed out, but were left to fend for themselves. Many have been forced to abandon the comfort of now unaffordable houses and apartments to live in 'wheel estate' – vans, secondhand RVs, school buses, pickup campers, trucks, and cars.

"They are driving away," writes Bruder, "from the impossible choices that face what used to be the middle class". Their plight is defined by questions such as, "Would you rather have food or dental work? Pay your mortgage or electricity bill? Make a car payment or buy medicine?" In the absence of pay rises or half-decent social security, the decisions often

boiled down to a simple choice, "What about cutting your biggest expense? Trading a stick-and-brick domicile for life on wheels?"

Linda May, the central character in *Nomadland*, is one of these late-life nomads. When retirement came after 40 years in construction, as a cocktail waitress, and Home Depot cashier, the grandmother had no home or savings. Unable to pay rent, and tired of living in her daughter's cramped California apartment, she took to the road in a battered Jeep, to which was attached the *Squeeze Inn*, a 10ft-long, bright yellow camper. Her home was no longer defined by a suburban zip code; but alternated between Walmart parking lots, quiet suburban streets, truck stops, and a crowded trailer park, where she and her elderly workmates – enlisted by Amazon's Camperforce programme – spend exhausted evenings recovering after pacing miles each day on unforgiving concrete floors in one of the company's monster warehouses.

Why, you may wonder, does Amazon recruit so many oldies? Well, Bruder points out, it's hardly altruistic. As one of the workers explains, "The Work Opportunity Credit is the reason Amazon can take on such a slow, inefficient workforce. Since they are getting us off government assistance for almost three months of the

year, we're a tax deduction for them".

And there's another, probably more important, reason: "They love retirees because we're dependable. We'll show up, work hard, and are basically slave labour", says 77-year-old David Roderick. Nor do the workcampers join unions or complain to management about the strenuous working conditions. But they offer some benefits; in a revealing insight, Bruder tells how campers' trucks were "like mobile apothecaries . . . I was told that Amazon distributed free over-the-counter pain killers at the warehouses".

Nomadland is not just about workers slogging inside Amazon's vast, impersonal warehouses, however. Bruder also points to stresses inflicted on elderly workers at US Forestry Services campgrounds and at the nation's sprawling amusement parks, which rely on the wheezing brigade of travelling oldies to keep them running efficiently – and cheaply – during their months of operation.

Despite their tribulations, however, the characters in Bruder's book show amazing resilience, good humour and camaraderie as, exhausted at Christmas, the culmination of the hardest and busiest work period at Amazon, they pack their possessions into a motley caravan of dilapidated vehicles and drive away to converge on the winter-cooled deserts of Nevada, California

and Arizona. There, the weary tribe recharges aching joints, finds new pals, and learns new skills needed to survive their "houseless-not-homeless" lifestyles at gatherings such as the Rubber Tramp Rendezvous at Quartzsite, in Arizona – dubbed 'Jurassic Trailer Park' by a reporter for the *Scotsman* newspaper. There, campers-svengali Bob Wells and other experienced nomads teach newcomers the finer points of life on the road.

But driving big vans around the US can only be a short-term lifestyle option, as May realised when she began to suffer from repetitive strain injury. When she reached 62 in 2012, and her first slim Social Security cheques began to arrive, May knew she faced a very real dilemma: "How am I going to live and not have to work for the rest of my life and not be a burden to my children?"

That's when she decided to follow her dream of constructing an Earthship, "a passive-solar home built using discarded materials such as cans and bottles, with dirt-filled tires for load-bearing walls. The idea appealed to May because, "It's like living in a piece of art, and it's something I could build with my own hands". She hoped that one day she'd find a cheap plot of land with lax building codes where she could build her dream home, using free materials with volunteers

to help build it.

That day arrived in 2016 she bought a five-acre patch of desert at Douglas, Arizona. "I'm 66," she told Bruder. "I need to speed things up." She bought a \$46 electrical generator, found an inexpensive water delivery service, and planned to start building after the Rubber Tramp Rendezvous, at which a couple of pals agreed to head back with her to start the process. Awaiting their arrival, she found an excavator driver, to clear the access road and open a path to her land.

"Finally", writes Bruder at the conclusion of *Nomadland*, the excavator "starts working on the main construction site. Everything it touches yields: the gnarled bush, the hardy cactus, the heavy stone. These are obstacles standing in the way of Linda's future. One by one, they get lifted away.

"The land is ready for her now – one perfect acre . . ." **CT**

THE STORY CONTINUES:

To discover how May's story ends, visit her Facebook page – www.facebook.com/linda.may.7583

Read about Nomadland, the movie version of the book, which stars Oscar-winner Frances McDormand as May – www.indiewire.com/2019/02/nomadland-first-look-frances-mcdormand-chloe-zhao-1202043624

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Tony Sutton is the editor of *ColdType*.

Burying my neighbours & slaughtering brown people

By **Thomas R Eddlem**

AS my son-in-law Jon heads off for a six-month deployment to Iraq – a war President Obama supposedly ended back in 2011 – I was struck by the war lobby-employed patois in the recent Democratic Party ‘debates.’ The best part of the in-tandem press conference was also the only point in the dog-and-pony show where it approached an actual debate. It was where Congressman Tim Ryan of Ohio was asked why America isn’t out of Afghanistan. He started his reply: “I’ve been in Congress 17 years, and 12 of those years I’ve sat on the Armed Services Committee...”

At that point, I muttered under my breath “so you’re part of the problem”. And he didn’t disappoint, if wider war and more death gives you a chubby, continuing: “And the lesson that I’ve learned over the years is that you have to stay engaged in these situations. Nobody likes it, it’s long, it’s tedious ... Right now I would say that we must be engaged in this; we must have our State Department engaged; we must have our military engaged.... Whether we’re talking about Central America, whether we’re talk-



Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard

ing about Iran, whether we’re talking about Afghanistan, we have got to be completely engaged”.

Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard of Ohio owned the buckeye lightweight with her put-down reply: “Is that what you will tell the parents of those two soldiers that were just killed in Afghanistan? ‘Well, we just have to be engaged’. As a soldier, I will tell you that answer is unacceptable”.

Still, Gabbard let him off easy. She should instead have said: “We need to stay engaged” has long been Washington-speak for ‘I want to bury more of your neighbours and slaughter more brown-skinned foreigners.’”

Whether or not Ryan and his kin consciously intend to bury more of my neighbours and slaughter more brown-skinned foreigners, that’s the bloody reality of his policy. Ryan de-personalises the horrible costs of war by deploying euphemisms like ‘stay engaged’.

In my home town of Taunton, Massachusetts, Sgt Shane P Duffy was killed while deployed in Iraq in 2008, leaving behind a beautiful young wife and baby daughter. Iraq is a nation that has never attacked the United States. The next town over, Raynham, lost Gerald Monti and Brian Oliveira. Oliveira, like Duffy, died in Iraq. Monti died on a tour in Afghanistan in 2006, years after Osama bin Ladin had fled the country, as part of an American occupation unrelated to the security of people living in the United States.

The policymakers – and, I suppose, many of the family members as well – lie to themselves, saying that these American soldiers died defending their country. But the only ones defending their country were the boys who shot and killed my neighbours.

I’ve opposed my country’s elective wars for decades, but now there’s a real threat to my family with these wars. And I’m not made out for going along with the lies and the usual plastic flag patriotism, such as naming bridges and

Photo: Wikipedia

having dinners in honour of the fallen soldiers.

I don't want to have to go to the dedication of a bridge in my son-in-law's name, as Duffy's widow has done. That won't bring her husband Shane back. I want Jon alive.

I don't want to have to set up a scholarship, as Mrs. Duffy has done (my daughter Ali was one of the first recipients of the Shane Duffy Memorial Scholarship back in 2011).

The scholarship was nice, but I'd rather have Jon alive.

I don't want a hit country song written about the memory of what is done with Jon's automobile, as was done with Gerald Monti's truck. *I Drive Your Truck* was a great – though heartbreaking – song, but I'd much rather have my son-in-law home alive.

Gerald Monti won the congressional Medal of Honor posthumously, but that won't bring him back to his father. The gift of medals also serves as a means Washington employs to justify and popularise its wars; it's not insignificant that the federal government gave out 20 Medals of Honor to soldiers involved in the massacre of Minneconjou Sioux at Wounded Knee in 1890.

The bravery of individual soldiers does not justify the wars themselves. Before he became an enthusiastic warmonger as Secretary of State, John

Kerry told Congress in 1971 of the Vietnam 'engagement', "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?" For an American to die in Iraq or Syria or Afghanistan now is an even greater absurdity.

The reason why this slaughter will continue to occur is clear. Though it isn't found in any of his papers, nor in the papers of his contemporaries, Confederate General Robert E Lee reportedly said while looking at the devastation at Fredericksburg "It is well that war is so terrible, or we should grow too fond of it."

The problem is that – for congressmen like Tim Ryan, and all too many Americans – war

hasn't been so terrible. It hasn't been terrible for them at all, and hasn't directly impacted them. And as a result they seek to bury more of my neighbours and slaughter more brown-skinned people. And now, possibly my family as well.

For me, it's now personal. **CT**

*Thomas R. Eddlem is a freelance writer whose latest book is *A Rogue's Sedition: Essays Against Omnipotent Government*. He also wrote the foreword to William Norman Grigg's posthumous book, *No Quarter: The Ravings of William Norman Grigg*. This article first appeared at www.antiwar.com*

Israel is disappearing the proof of its oppression

By **Juan Cole**

HAGAR Shezaf at the Israeli newspaper of record, *Haaretz* [*The Land*], reveals that a secretive Israeli agency has been systematically going through the country's archives, including local repositories, and removing any classifying documents having to do with repressive and embarrassing Israeli actions toward Palestinians and Palestinian-Israelis.

One such disappeared docu-

ment from 1948, a second copy of which nevertheless was located by Israeli researchers, estimates that 70 percent of the 720,000 Palestinians (out of 1.2-million) expelled from their homes in 1947-49 by were kicked out by Zionist militias acting on behalf of the 500,000 Jewish settlers brought in by the British colonialists.

This document was summarised by historian Benny Morris in a 1986 journal article

but the force of Morris's argument was subsequently blunted because researchers could no longer see the same primary source on which he based himself.

Shezaf quotes from the document: "The 25-page document begins with an introduction that unabashedly approves of the evacuation of the Arab villages. According to the author, the month of April "excelled in an increase of emigration", while May "was blessed with the evacuation of maximum places".

The report then addresses "the causes of the Arab emigration." According to the Israeli narrative that was disseminated over the years, responsibility for the exodus from Israel rests with Arab politicians who encouraged the population to leave.

However, according to the document, 70 percent of the Arabs left as a result of Jewish military operations . . . "without a doubt, the hostile operations were the main cause of the movement of the population".

In addition, "Loudspeakers in the Arabic language proved their effectiveness on the occasions when they were utilised properly." As for Irgun and Lehi operations, the report observes that "many in the villages of central Galilee started to flee following the abduction of the notables of Sheikh Muwannis [a village north of Tel Aviv]. The Arab learned that it

is not enough to forge an agreement with the Haganah and that there are other Jews [i.e., the breakaway militias] to beware of".

The author notes that ultimatums to leave were especially employed in central Galilee, less so in the Mount Gilboa region. "Naturally, the act of this ultimatum, like the effect of the 'friendly advice', came after a certain preparing of the ground by means of hostile actions in the area".

An appendix to the document describes the specific causes of the exodus from each of scores of Arab locales: Ein Zeitun – "our destruction of the village"; Qeitiya – "harassment, threat of action"; Almaniya – "our action, many killed"; Tira – "friendly Jewish advice"; Al'Amarir – "after robbery and murder carried out by the breakaways"; Sumsum – "our ultimatum"; Bir Salim – "attack on the orphanage"; and Zarnuga – "conquest and expulsion".

The Israeli establishment (and its even more fanatical American supporters, whether right wing Jews or Evangelicals) is guilty of a sort of genocide denialism with regard to the Nakba or Catastrophe that the Zionists visited on the Palestinians at the founding of Israel. I use 'genocide' here in its sense in international law, as recognised in the Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court. Killing very large num-

bers of people is only one sense of 'genocide' in this definition. Other forms of genocide can aim at wiping out a people by wiping out their way of life.

There are now on the order of 12-million Palestinians. Five-million live under the Israeli jackboot in Occupied Palestine. 1.6-million are second-class citizens in Israel itself. The rest form part of a vast diaspora, in Jordan (some two-million), Lebanon (400,000?) Syria, Egypt, the Gulf, Europe, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, and the United States among other places.

The Israeli classification program is betting that the history of 1948 can be erased simply by withholding the Israeli documentation. Hierarchies of knowledge privilege state archives over the oral histories of the powerless and oppressed.

Nevertheless, the Palestinians themselves, and their family histories, are the best archive for knowing about their expulsion, and for knowing about the conditions of Apartheid under which some five-million still live. **CT**

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Juan Cole is the Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History at the University of Michigan and the proprietor of the *Informed Comment* e-zine – www.juancole.com – where this article was first published. His most recent book is *The New Arabs: How the Millennial Generation is Changing the Middle East*.

Paddy French tell how he and fellow journalist Brian Cathcart found serious errors in reports on UK Muslims in one of the UK's leading newspapers

Rogue journalism exposed at the Times

Last month UK journalists Brian Cathcart and Paddy French published a devastating critique of the work of a senior journalist at the Times of London:

Unmasked: Andrew Norfolk, The Times Newspaper And Anti-Muslim Reporting – A Case To Answer. *The Times hit back, branding the authors “politically motivated campaigners ... trying to smear and suppress fine reporting”. Here Paddy French explains how the report came to be written*

IN August 2017 the UK's *Times* newspaper published a story which reverberated around the world. The headline – just seven words long – was stark: *Christian child forced into Muslim foster care*. It resonated with all those who believed in the myth that Muslims are, somehow, taking over the western, liberal world.

The article was written by the paper's chief investigative reporter, Andrew Norfolk, one

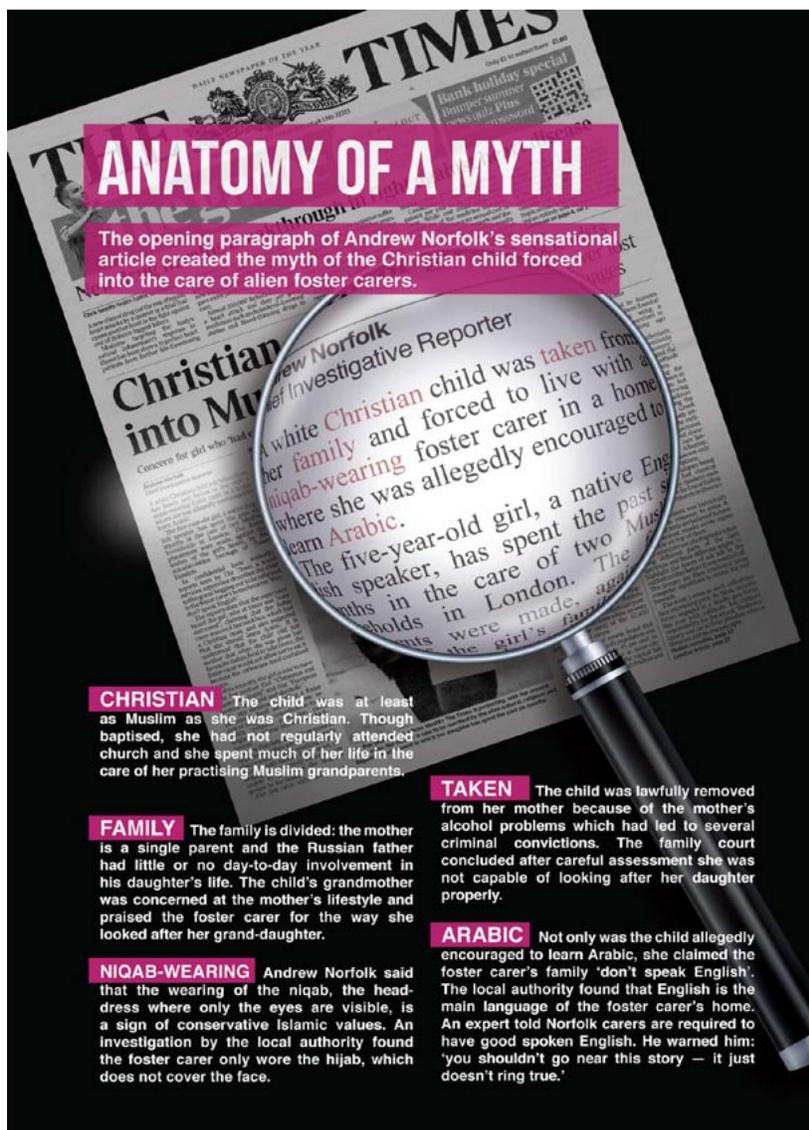
of the UK's most awarded journalists. He made his name with the exposé of gangs of Asian men who groomed underage white girls for sex – work that won him several top UK news awards including Journalist of the Year. Now he had apparently uncovered a black and white case where the “scandal-hit” London borough of Tower Hamlets (which has a large Muslim community) had placed a five-year-old white, English-speaking Christian girl with two Muslim foster carers who sought to indoctrinate her over a six-month period.

Over the next two days, Norfolk wrote more articles, and the *Times* backed its star reporter with an editorial. Norfolk alleged that the mother and a social worker claimed the child had a Christian cross confiscated and was not allowed to eat food that contained bacon. There were further allegations: Christian festivals were mocked, the girl was encouraged to learn Arabic and she had claimed that one of the foster

families “don't speak English”. The day after his first explosive story, the family court decided on the fate of the girl.

The headline in the next day's *Times* was emphatic: “Judge rules child must leave Muslim foster home”, adding, “The *Times* praised for exposing council's failure.” It seemed Norfolk's brief but intense campaign had paid off – the little girl was back with her family, in the care of her maternal grandmother, and free of the Muslim foster carers.

And there the story would probably have stayed had the judiciary not intervened. What went on behind the scenes isn't known, but a highly unusual decision was taken to start releasing documents which directly challenged Andrew Norfolk's version of events. Family courts normally restrict the amount of information to protect the privacy of the child. Now the court issued a case management order which began a slow



Graphic from the *Unmasked* report that was distributed to UK MPs.

but devastating unravelling of Norfolk’s narrative.

The order dramatically revealed that the little girl’s grandmother was, in fact, a Muslim. The document did not say so, but she comes from southern Turkey. Although the court order said the grandmother and her husband were non-practising it later emerged – again from court records – that they were prac-

tising Muslims. They did not attend a mosque, preferring to pray at home. In other words, the court ordered that the little girl should leave a Muslim foster carer ... to live with her Muslim grandmother.

The court also demolished the paper’s claim to have played a part – any part – in its decision. “For the avoidance of doubt ... the decision to approve the new care

arrangements for the child to live with her grandmother ... is ... not as a result of any influence arising out of media reports”. When Andrew Norfolk reported this, he used the words “undue influence”.

The judge in the case also ordered Tower Hamlets to investigate allegations made against the carers and to make the results public. This report found no evidence that any of the allegations were true. It also noted that the grandmother, who now had custody of the child, said the claims against the foster carers were “false and lies”, and she was “distressed and angered” by them. The grandmother later thanked the foster carers for their care of her granddaughter.

In February 2018 the family court held a 10-day hearing to decide the little girl’s long-term future. It ruled that she should permanently live with her grandmother in Turkey. The summary of this long hearing was not released until late 2018 – when it was, it destroyed any remaining credibility in Norfolk’s story. The *Times* did not even bother to report it.

The summary revealed a sad story of a mother who obviously loved her daughter but was incapable of looking after her. She had a history of drug and alcohol abuse and had several drink-related convictions. The child’s father was a Russian who played little part in her life. The relationship between the mother and the father had been

“characterised by incidents of domestic violence (some very serious)”. The child was originally taken from her mother after she kept the little girl with her during an all-night drinking binge with a male friend in the bar of a London hotel in 2017.

Throughout her short life, the child had either travelled with her mother or was cared for by her Muslim grandmother. In 2012 the British embassy in Bulgaria was contacted by a hotel manager who said the mother was using drugs and alcohol while looking after the after the child, who was at that time just a baby.

I had started to take an interest in the story – as had Brian Cathcart, a journalism professor and a founder of the British newspaper reform campaign group Hacked Off. It was clear to us that this was a story that should never have been written, for there was no genuine public interest. Although Norfolk claimed otherwise, the more we looked into the case, the more it became clear that the Tower Hamlets social workers and the courts had done their job properly. The little girl was given excellent care at every stage of the proceedings.

Within a year the *Times* published another sensational front page story written by Andrew Norfolk – this time about Just Yorkshire, a small charity involved in racial justice. Norfolk

There was a distinct pattern to Norfolk’s work when it came to Muslim issues. Everything that could be used to discredit Muslims was included, and everything to their credit was removed

claimed the charity produced a report attacking the Labour MP Sarah Champion that was so scathing it led to death threats against her. This allegation was so serious that the charity’s funders backed off, eventually forcing the charity to close.

By this time, however, I wasn’t prepared to take anything Norfolk wrote at face value. I spoke to a the charity and was told that Norfolk’s account of their report was a gross distortion of what it actually said. The charity allowed me to help them write to the legal department of the *Times*. Three months after the article appeared, a senior editorial lawyer told us that “death threats made against Ms Champion ... have not been directly linked to the report”. In further letters, the legal department said the “*Times* has openly accepted it was not correct to say ... the report had led to death threats. It regrets the error ...” It added that the “error” was a “slip” and a “mistake”.

However, although Just Yorkshire’s report hadn’t led to death threats against the MP, Norfolk’s report did lead

to death threats against the charity. One of these read: “Filthy inbred Muslim cunts. We’re going to kill you all. Britain first.” The *Times* was unmoved by the charity’s plight – it merely removed the death threats allegation from the online version of the original article, while also publishing a short paragraph which said the article “suggested” the report had led to death threats, adding that “no death threats made at that time were attributable to the report”.

In November 2018 Norfolk was at it again. He wrote another front page article claiming Rotherham council had favoured a convicted rapist in court proceedings involving the child he’d fathered on one of his victims. When Brian Cathcart investigated, he found the council had merely obeyed the rules laid down by the family court.

Cathcart and I realised there was a distinct pattern to Norfolk’s work when it came to Muslim issues. Everything that could be used to discredit Muslims was included, while everything to their credit was removed. For example, in the Muslim foster care case, we discovered that Norfolk had talked to Martin Barrow, his former news editor at the *Times*. Barrow, a foster carer for many years, told us that Norfolk was well aware there was a Muslim element to the little girl’s upbringing. Barrow told Norfolk there



HOLD THE FRONT PAGE: The front pages of the Times featured articles by chief investigative reporter Andrew Norfolk that were found to contain serious inaccuracies about British Muslims.

were likely to be innocent explanations for some of the allegations made against the foster carers. He warned Norfolk: “I told him he should be very careful”. Norfolk did not include Barrow’s comments in his article – and nor did he tell readers of the little girl’s Muslim background.

Norfolk also spoke to Andy Elvin, the chief executive of a fostering charity. Elvin told Norfolk the claim that the foster carers didn’t speak English was nonsense: it was a basic requirement of fostering. Elvin was even blunter than Barrow: “You shouldn’t go near this story: it just doesn’t ring true”. Again Norfolk chose not to include Elvin’s comments.

We decided that, rather than just writing articles which had a limited impact, we should produce a detailed report which made the case against Norfolk as powerfully as possible. We realised that in all three of the cases we exam-

ined, Norfolk’s narrative still dominated, despite some scattered criticism. We decided that if we collected all the evidence in each story – and drew out the apparent anti-Muslim bias running through all of them – readers could not come to any other conclusion than that there was something seriously amiss with journalistic standards at the *Times*.

We made the decision to produce a report – and take it directly to the heart of the British establishment.

The night before publication, we arranged for a copy to be delivered to each of Britain’s 650 MPs – as well as selected members of the House of Lords. We published our report at 8.30am on Wednesday, June 26. That morning we hand-delivered copies of *Unmasked* to every major newspaper, radio and television station. In the afternoon, Cathcart and I also

hand-delivered more than 50 copies of the report to key figures, including chief executive Rebekah Brooks and *Times* editor John Witherow, at Rupert Murdoch’s London HQ.

We don’t know what happened next. But the *Times* decided to respond to the report – a news report was prepared and an editorial written for next day’s paper. A decision was taken not to mention the title of the report – perhaps *Unmasked* was just too brutal to mention. The paper also decided not to name me or *Press Gang* as being involved in the report. This may have had something to do with the fact that Cathcart is a founder of the campaign group Hacked Off and the *Times* could legitimately say he was politically motivated. I only held the position of editor of *Press Gang*, an investigative website dedicated to “exposing rogue journalism”. Oddly enough, though, the leading article was headed “Press Gang”.

The editorial was a fierce defence of Andrew Norfolk. The reporter had become the “target of an extraordinary personal attack”. It condemned the report’s accusation that Norfolk wrote articles that “tended to encourage fear of Muslims” and of “breaching standards of professional conduct and ethics”.

“This is a mischievous and ideologically motivated attempt to smear a reporter long recognised as one of the bravest and most scrupulous in the field”, claimed the newspaper.

The three series of articles examined in *Unmasked* were, it said, were “matters of significant public interest”.

The editorial rounded on the groups which had endorsed the report – the Muslim group Mend (Muslim Engagement And Development), Hacked Off, the Media Reform Coalition, Byline and *Press Gang* – all of which, according to the *Times*, wanted media reform including “statutory regulation and the suppression of content at odds with their own narrow agenda”.

The editorial signed off with another blast at the authors.

The *Times* had to admit that parts of two of the three stories analysed in the report had been found by the Independent Press Standards Organisation guilty of breaching journalistic standards

Their intent is “to deter and hamstring journalists from investigating controversial stories. In an era when news risks being obscured by propaganda, it is vital that sensitive issues be debated rather than suppressed”. Neither in its news item nor its editorial did the *Times* address any of the detailed criticisms in *Unmasked*.

The fact that the *Times* was forced to respond to the report was a significant humiliation. Instead of just a few thousand people reading our report, the paper told millions of people it had been accused of anti-Muslim reporting. It also told them that its star reporter, Andrew Norfolk, was accused of professional misconduct. And it had to admit that parts of two of

the three stories analysed in the report had been found by its own tame watchdog, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), to have breached journalistic standards. The *Times* would only have taken this action if the alternative had been much worse.

In future, Andrew Norfolk and *Times* editor John Witherow will have to be very careful when they report on issues affecting the UK’s 2.7-million Muslims. *Unmasked* has laid down a powerful gauntlet – and many journalists will be watching closely to see how Norfolk and his editor respond. **CT**

Paddy French is a retired television current affairs producer. He is editor of the investigative website Press Gang – www.pressganguk.wordpress.com – and is the co-author, with Brian Cathcart, of Unmasked: Andrew Norfolk, The Times Newspaper and Anti-Muslim Reporting – A Case To Answer (Unmasked Books £10). Brian Cathcart, a former Reuters reporter, is a professor of journalism at Kingston University in London. He blogs at www.byline.com

Read the full *Unmasked* report

The *Unmasked* report can be found at

www.hackinginquiry.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Norfolk_Report_Unmasked.pdf

Hard copies of the 72 page report can be ordered, price UK £10 (incl. post and packing), from

www.thegoodgift.co.uk/shop/books/unmasked-scandals-that-didnt-happen



Dimba dam in Pune District, Maharashtra, India.

If countries don't work together, sooner or later the international 'water crisis' will turn into an old-fashioned war, writes **Conn Hallinan**

Weaponising water

DURING the face-off earlier this year between India and Pakistan over a terrorist attack that killed more than 40 Indian paramilitaries in Kashmir, New Delhi made an existential threat to Islamabad. The weapon was not India's considerable nuclear arsenal, but one still capable of inflicting ruinous destruction: water.

"Our government has decided to stop our share of water which used to flow to Pakistan", India's Transport Minister, Nitin Gadkin said on February 21. "We will divert water from eastern rivers and supply it to our people in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. India controls three major rivers that flow into Pakistan".

If India had followed through,

it would have abrogated the 1960 Indus Water Treaty (IWT) between the two countries, a move that could be considered an act of war.

In the end nothing much came of it. India bombed some forests, and Pakistan bombed some fields. But the threat underlined a growing crisis in the South Asian sub-continent, where water stressed mega cit-

ies and intensive agriculture are quite literally drying up. By 2030, according to a recent report, half the population of India – 700-million people – will lack adequate drinking water. Currently, 25 percent of India’s population is suffering from drought,

“If the wars of this century were fought over oil, the wars of the next century will be fought over water”, warns Ismail Serageldin, a former executive for the World Bank.

While relations between India and Pakistan have long been tense – they have fought three wars since 1947, one of which came distressingly close to going nuclear – in terms of water sharing, they are somewhat of a model.

After almost a decade of negotiations, both countries signed the IWT in 1960 to share the output of six major rivers. The World Bank played a key role by providing \$1-billion for the Indus Basin Development Fund. But the on-going tensions over Kashmir have transformed water into a national security issue for both countries. This, in turn, has limited the exchange of water and weather data, making long-term planning extremely difficult.

The growing water crisis is heightened by climate change. Both countries have experienced record-breaking heat waves, and the mountains that supply the vast majority of water for Pakistan and India, are

In the past decade, China has built three dams on the huge Brahmaputra that has its origin in China but drains into India and Bangladesh

losing their glaciers. The Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment report estimates that by 2100 some two-thirds of the area’s more than 14,000 glaciers will be gone.

India’s response to declining water supplies – like that of many other countries in the region, is to build dams. But dams not only restrict down stream water supplies, they block the natural flow of silt. That silt renews valuable agricultural land and also replenishes the great deltas, like the Ganges-Brahmaputra, the Indus and the Mekong. The deltas not only support fishing industries, they also act as natural barriers to storms.

The Sunderbans – a vast, 4,000 square mile mangrove forest on the coasts of India and Bangladesh – is under siege. As climate change raises sea levels, upstream dams reduce the flow of fresh water that keeps the salty sea at bay. The salt encroachment eventually kills the mangrove trees and destroys farmland. Add to this increased logging to keep pace with population growth, and Bangladesh alone will lose some 800 square miles of Sunderban

over the next few years.

As the mangroves are cut down or die off, they expose cities like Kolkata and Dhaka to the unvarnished power of typhoons, storms which climate change is making more powerful and frequent.

The central actor in the South Asia water crisis is China, which sits on the sources of 10 major rivers that flow through 11 countries, and which supply 1.6-billion people with water. In essence, China controls the ‘Third Pole’, that huge reservoir of fresh water locked up in the snow and ice of the Himalayas.

And Beijing is building lots of dams to collect water and generate power.

Over 600 large dams either exist or are planned in the Himalayas. In the past decade, China has built three dams on the huge Brahmaputra that has its origin in China but drains into India and Bangladesh.

While India and China together represent a third of the world’s population, both countries have access to only 10 percent of the globe’s water resources and no agreements on how to share that water. While tensions between Indian and Pakistan mean the Indus Water Treaty doesn’t function as well as it could, nevertheless, the agreement does set some commonly accepted ground rules, including binding arbitration. No such treaty exists between New Delhi and Beijing.

While relations between China and India are far better

than those between India and Pakistan, under the Modi government New Delhi has grown closer to Washington and has partly bought into a US containment strategy aimed at China. Indian naval ships carry out joint war games with China's two major regional rivals, Japan and the US, and there are still disputes between China and India over their mutual border. A sharpening atmosphere of nationalism in both countries is not conducive to cooperation over anything, let alone something as critical as water.

And yet never has there been such a necessity for cooperation. Both countries need the 'Third Pole's water for agriculture, hydropower and to feed the growth of mega cities like Dhaka, Mumbai and Beijing.

Stressed water supplies translate into a lack of clean water, which fuels a health crisis, especially in the huge sprawling cities that increasingly draw rural people driven out by climate change. Polluted water kills more people than wars, including 1.5-million children under the age of five. Reduced water supplies also go hand in hand with water borne diseases, like cholera. There is even a study that demonstrates thirsty mosquitoes bite more, thus increasing the number of vector borne diseases like Zika, Malaria, and Dengue.

South Asia is hardly alone in facing a crisis over fresh water. Virtually every continent on

Stressed supplies translate into a lack of clean water, which fuels a health crisis, especially in the huge sprawling cities that draw rural people driven out by climate change

the globe is looking at shortages. According to the World Economic Forum, by 2030 water sources will only cover 60 percent of the world's daily requirement.

The water crisis is no longer a problem that can be solved through bilateral agreements like the IWT, but one that requires regional, indeed, global solutions. If the recent push by the Trump administration to lower mileage standards for automobiles is successful, it will add hundreds of thousands of extra tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, which, in turn, will accelerate climate change.

In short, what comes out of US auto tailpipes will ultimately be felt by the huge Angsi Glacier in Tibet, the well spring of the Brahmaputra, a river that flows through China, India and Bangladesh, emptying eventually into the Bay of Bengal.

There is no such thing as a local or regional solution to the water crisis, since the problem is global. The only really global organisation that exists is the United Nations, which will need to take the initiative to create a worldwide water agreement.

Such an agreement is partly in place. The UN International Watercourses Convention came into effect in August 2014 following Vietnam's endorsement of the treaty. However, China voted against it, and India and Pakistan abstained. Only parties that signed it are bound by its conventions.

But the Convention is a good place to start. "It offers legitimate and effective practices for data sharing, negotiation and dispute resolution that could be followed in a bilateral or multilateral water sharing arrangement", says Srinivas Chokkakula, a water issues researcher at New Delhi's Centre for Policy Research.

By 2025, according to the UN, some 1.8-billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water shortages, and two-thirds of the world's population could be under "water stress" conditions. There is enough fresh water for seven-billion people, according to the UN, but it is unevenly distributed, polluted, wasted or poorly managed.

If countries don't come together around the Conventions – which need to be greatly strengthened – and it becomes a free for all with a few countries holding most the cards, sooner or later the "water crisis" will turn into an old-fashioned war. **CT**

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

Election time is coming up, so, if you're serious about your anti-fascism, now's the time to load up on silly string, ski goggles, masks, hard knuckle gloves, and whatever you make those milkshakes with, advises **CJ Hopkins**

The United States of Fascism Hysteria

So it's been an exciting few weeks for Antifa and the rest of the neoliberal Resistance. OK, they haven't yet managed to overthrow the Putin-Nazi occupation government (hereinafter POG), but they've definitely got 'the Fash' on the run. 'Fascism' hysteria is spreading like wild-fire. Liberal Twitter mobs are out for blood. At this point, it's only a matter of time until the sleeping giant of normality awakens and purges America of the fascist filth that gave Putin-Nazified this once great nation.

Antifa has been at the vanguard of the fight, smashing the Fash on both East and West Coasts. In Portland, Oregon, where a gang of neo-fascist anti-masturbationists known as the Proud Boys had assembled for a self-promotional street fight they were billing as the 'Battle of Portland 2', Antifa militants positively identified and preventatively beat the living snot out of a journalist named Andy Ngo.

To prevent him from snitching to the fascist cops (who are allegedly working hand in hand with POG), they self-defensively robbed him, sprayed him with silly string, and pelted him with vegan milkshakes.

Now, before you get all up in arms about Antifa assaulting and robbing journalists, you need to know a couple of things. First, according to Antifa spokespersons, and those bloodthirsty liberal Twitter mobs, Andy Ngo is a 'fascist adjacent', and possibly even a card carrying fascist. Antifa representative Alexander Reid Ross claims that Ngo is personally responsible for putting people's names on a Nazi 'kill-list' (or at least that Ngo's writing has been published by *Quillette*, which published an article by someone else that some fascists read and copied people's names from), so, basically, he deserves to die.

Also, assaulting and robbing Ngo was technically 'preemptive self-defence' (you know, the

same as when we invaded Iraq to defend ourselves from those WMDs). Despite their helmets and body armour, and the fact that Ngo is a doughy little gay guy, his presence among them on a public street was making Antifa feel 'unsafe.' So, they had no choice but to beat him senseless, steal his camera, and vegan milkshake him.

As Antifa expert Mark Bray explains, when you're Antifa, "fighting back is always self-defence, even if [you] strike the first blow." (This logic only applies to anti-fascists, of course, like Antifa and the US military, and not to, you know, gangs of thugs, or the perpetrators of wars of aggression.)

Antifa's self-defensive mugging of a journalist apparently scared the crap out of POG, because a week later, back in Washington, DC, President Hitler called in the tanks, and the Luftwaffe, and announced that he was going to stage a reenactment of a Nuremberg Rally right in front of the Lincoln Memorial. The liberal intelligentsia went



DEJA VU?: Air Force One flies above the National Mall as President Trump speaks at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC on July 4.

apeshit. This was really it this time! Putin had given Trump the green-light to declare martial law and pronounce himself Führer. The long-awaited Putin-Nazi Apocalypse was finally about to begin!

Unfortunately, Trump's Fourth of July Jamboree turned out to be a rather tame affair. He even almost made it through his speech without

making an ass of himself. This was extremely disappointing for liberals, who were hoping he would go full-Hitler, paint death's heads on the turrets of the Bradleys and a Swastika on the tail of Air Force One, and order ICE to start rounding up the Jews.

The weekend wasn't a total let-down, however. The Proud Boys (who are clearly glut-

tons for punishment), staged another self-promotional event, this one billed as 'Defend Free Speech'. A few hundred people turned up to listen to speeches by a handful of alt-right clowns desperately trying to reignite their careers. They were outnumbered two-to-one by Antifa, Black Lives Matter, assorted drag queens, and an indigenous, two-spirited transperson of colour, who reportedly "performed a spoken word" on the meaning of the term 'latinx'.

The DC police (who are even more fascist than the Portland police who stood by and watched as Antifa beat up and robbed a journalist) fascistically prevented Antifa militants from storming into the Alt-right rally and beating the snot out of everyone in sight. So, the anti-fascists had no choice but to preemptively attack a newspaper dispenser, which was presumably making them feel unsafe, or disseminating POG propaganda, or something. One of them tried to burn a flag, but he couldn't figure out how to operate his matches. Assorted other hilarious acts of revolutionary direct action followed. Apparently, Antifa's strategy was to smash the Fash by amusing them to death.

Meanwhile, militant Resistance actions against the POG concentration camps continue. New York City, San Francisco, and other liberal metropolitan areas have almost completely emptied out as liberals flock to the southern border to liberate

the surviving prisoners. Conditions in the camps are now beyond inhuman. According to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, migrants are being forced to drink out of toilets, and otherwise subjected to “systematic cruelty”, (so you can understand why liberals are physically putting their bodies on the line to bring an end to this horrifying sadism, and not just sitting around on the Internet shrieking about concentration camps as they travel to their summer holiday rentals on Martha’s Vineyard, or the Hamptons, or wherever).

No, these Putin-Nazi concentration camps are nothing at all like the ‘detention facilities’ the Obama administration operated, even though they look exactly the same. Sure, thousands of migrant children were separated from their parents, in cages, and there were tens of thousands of incidents of rape, sexual abuse, beatings, and so on, but, otherwise, these Obama ‘detention facilities’ were more like great big two-star hotels, or like student dorms at a state university, so there was no need for liberals to get all worked up and start comparing them to places like Dachau and Buchenwald.

Plus ... that picture of the drowned father and daughter! Look at that picture! Those people are dead! So just shut up about Obama already! Enough with history, and critical thinking, and the practical aspects of

Concentration camps and dead people are nothing to joke about. It’s OK, however, to cynically use them to whip people up into a paroxysm of manufactured mass fascism hysteria

immigration policy! It’s time to abolish all national borders, issue everyone a US passport, and transcend the whole concept of national sovereignty ... or at least to provide the capitalist ruling classes with an endless supply of cheap, undocumented, extremely compliant unskilled labor. Those Bel Air lawns aren’t going to mow themselves!

Jesus, I can’t believe I just wrote that. Concentration camps and dead people are nothing to joke about. It’s OK, however, to cynically use them to whip people up into a paroxysm of manufactured mass fascism hysteria. Not that the neoliberal ruling classes and the corporate media would ever do that. No, they would never repeatedly attempt to evoke our hatred of the actual Nazis (and their actual concentration camps ... which people were dragged out of their homes, loaded onto trains, and shipped away to, and which you could not voluntarily depart) in order to short circuit our critical thinking, or otherwise emotionally manipulate us into supporting their War on Populism.

No, the Putin-Nazi occu-

pation government is not just manufactured mass hysteria concocted by the neoliberal ruling classes. Donald Trump is really a Nazi. There’s a portrait of Hitler in the Oval Office. Putin really controls America. Putin, and his cabal of Russian Nazis. They’re everywhere. They own the banks. They control the media. They control elections. They are the ‘International Invisible Government’. (Is any of this sounding vaguely familiar?) They are devising the Final Solution to the Immigrant Problem right this minute. They are doing this at Mar-a-Lago, where Trump has had a big ‘Black Sun’ etched into the marble floor.

So, if you’re serious about your anti-fascism, now’s the time to load up on silly string, ski goggles, masks, hard knuckle gloves, and whatever you make those milkshakes with. POG might be on the run at the moment, but there’s an election season coming up, so we need to be prepared for anything. The important thing is to remain hysterical, and to be ready to respond to whatever emotional stimuli the ruling classes wave in our faces. The fate of democracy hangs in the balance.

Oh, and watch out for those fascist newspaper dispensers! **CT**

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CJ Hopkins is an award-winning American playwright, novelist and political satirist based in Berlin. His debut novel, *ZONE 23*, is published by Snoggsworthy, Swaine & Cormorant Paperbacks. He can be reached at www.cjhopkins.com or www.consentfactory.org

Magazine could be biting and gentle, humorous and tragic, and ruthless and endearing - all at the same time, writes **Michael J. Socolow**

Mad magazine is finished, but here's why it still matters

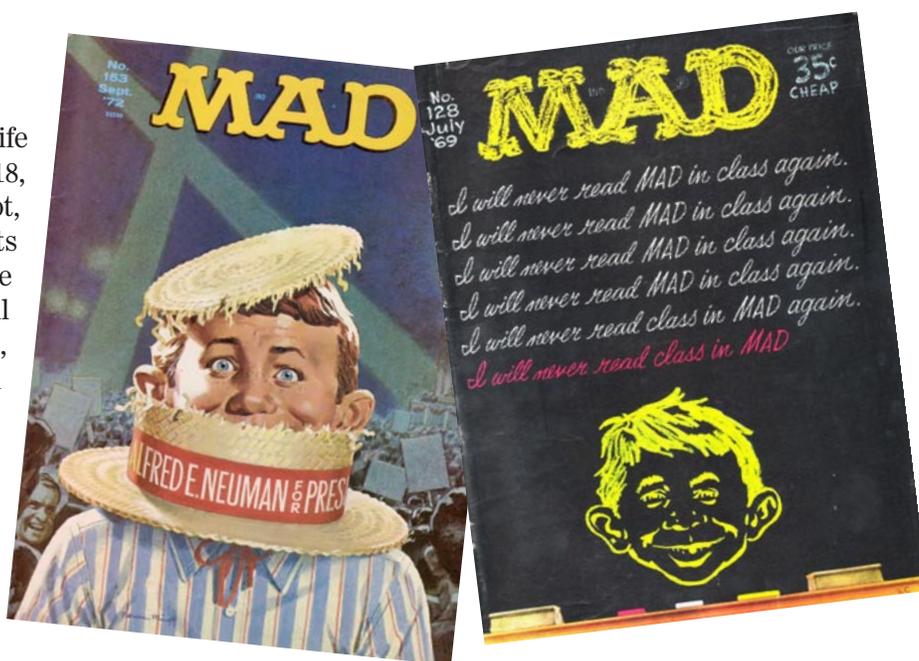
Photos: Jasperdo / Flickr.com

MAD magazine is on life support. In April 2018, it launched a reboot, jokingly calling it its 'first issue'. Now the magazine announced it will stop publishing new content, aside from year-end special issues.

But in terms of cultural resonance and mass popularity, its clout has been fading for years. At its apex in the early 1970s, *Mad's* circulation surpassed two-million. As of 2017, it was 140,000.

As strange as it sounds, I believe the 'usual gang of idiots' that produced *Mad* was performing a vital public service, teaching American adolescents that they shouldn't believe everything they read in their textbooks or saw on TV.

Mad preached subversion and unadulterated truth-telling when so-called objective journalism remained deferential to authority. While newscasters regularly parroted questionable government claims, *Mad* was



CRAZY TIMES: Covers from *Mad* magazine's glory days.

calling politicians liars when they lied. Long before responsible organs of public opinion like the *New York Times* and the CBS Evening News discovered it, *Mad* told its readers all about the credibility gap. The periodical's skeptical approach to advertisers and authority figures helped raise a less credulous and more critical generation in the 1960s and 1970s.

Today's media environment differs considerably from the

era in which *Mad* flourished. But it could be argued that consumers are dealing with many of the same issues, from devious advertising to mendacious propaganda.

While *Mad's* satiric legacy endures, the question of whether its educational ethos - its implicit media literacy efforts - remains part of our youth culture is less clear.

In my research on media, broadcasting and advertising

history, I've noted the cyclical nature of media panics and media reform movements throughout American history.

The pattern goes something like this: A new medium gains popularity. Chagrined politicians and outraged citizens demand new restraints, claiming that opportunists are too easily able to exploit its persuasive power and dupe consumers, rendering their critical faculties useless. But the outrage is overblown. Eventually, audience members become more savvy and educated, rendering such criticism quaint and anachronistic.

During the penny press era of the 1830s, periodicals often fabricated sensational stories like the *Great Moon Hoax* to sell more copies. For a while, it worked, until accurate reporting became more valuable to readers.

When radios became more prevalent in the 1930s, Orson Welles perpetrated a simi-



SPY VS SPY, created by Cuban exile, Antonio Prohias.



**TARGET FIDEL:
A Mad's-eye view.**

lar extraterrestrial hoax with his infamous *War of the Worlds* programme. This broadcast didn't actually cause widespread fear of an alien invasion among listeners, as some have claimed. But it did spark a national conversation about radio's power and audience gullibility.

Aside from the penny newspapers and radio, we've witnessed moral panics about dime novels, muckraking magazines, telephones, comic books, television, the VCR, and now the internet. Just as Congress went after Orson Welles, we see Mark Zuckerberg testifying about Facebook's facilitation of Russian bots.

But there's another theme in the country's media history that's often overlooked. In response to each new medium's persuasive power, a healthy popular response ridiculing the rubes falling for the spectacle has arisen.

For example, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*,

Mark Twain gave us the duke and the dauphin, two con artists travelling from town to town exploiting ignorance with ridiculous theatrical performances and fabricated tall tales.

They were proto-purveyors of fake news, and Twain, the former journalist, knew all about selling buncombe. His classic short story *Journalism in Tennessee* excoriates crackpot editors and the ridiculous fiction often published as fact in American newspapers.

Then there's the great PT Barnum, who ripped people off in marvellously inventive ways. "This way to the egress", read a series of signs inside his famous museum. Ignorant customers, assuming the egress was some sort of exotic animal, soon found themselves passing through the exit door and locked out.

They might have felt ripped off, but, in fact, Barnum had done them a great – and intended – service. His museum made its customers more wary of hyperbole. It employed humour and irony to teach skepticism. Like Twain, Barnum held up a funhouse mirror to America's emerging mass culture in order to make people reflect on the excesses of commercial communication.

Mad magazine embodies this same spirit. Begun originally as a horror comic, the periodical evolved into a satirical humour outlet that skewered Madison Avenue, hypocritical politicians and mindless consumption.

Teaching its adolescent readers that governments lie – and

only suckers fall for hucksters – *Mad* implicitly and explicitly subverted the sunny optimism of the Eisenhower and Kennedy years. Its writers and artists poked fun at everyone and everything that claimed a monopoly on truth and virtue.

“The editorial mission statement has always been the same: ‘Everyone is lying to you, including magazines. Think for yourself. Question authority,’” according to longtime editor John Ficarra.

That was a subversive message, especially in an era when the profusion of advertising and Cold War propaganda infected everything in American culture. At a time when American television only relayed three networks and consolidation limited alternative media options, *Mad*’s message stood out.

Just as intellectuals Daniel Boorstin, Marshall McLuhan and Guy Debord were starting to level critiques against this media environment, *Mad* was doing the same – but in a way that was widely accessible, proudly idiotic and surprisingly sophisticated.

For example, the implicit existentialism hidden beneath the chaos in every *Spy vs Spy* panel spoke directly to the insanity of Cold War brinksmanship. Conceived and drawn by Cuban exile Antonio Prohías, *Spy vs Spy* featured two spies who, like the United States and the Soviet Union, both observed the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction. Each spy was pledged to no one ideology, but rather the complete obliteration

**“History has shown
that while we can
be stupid and credulous,
we can also learn
to identify irony,
recognise hypocrisy
and laugh at ourselves**

of the other – and every plan ultimately backfired in their arms race to nowhere.

The cartoon highlighted the irrationality of mindless hatred and senseless violence. In an essay on the plight of the Vietnam War soldier, literary critic Paul Fussell once wrote that US soldiers were “condemned to sadistic lunacy” by the monotony of violence without end. So too the *Spy vs Spy* guys.

As the credibility gap widened from the Johnson to Nixon administrations, the logic of *Mad*’s Cold War critique became more relevant. Circulation soared. Sociologist Todd Gitlin – who had been a leader of the Students for a Democratic Society in the 1960s – credited *Mad* with serving an important educational function for his generation.

“In junior high and high school,” he wrote, “I devoured it.”

And yet that healthy skepticism seems to have evaporated in the ensuing decades. Both the run-up to the Iraq War and the acquiescence to the carnival-like coverage of our first

reality TV star president seem to be evidence of a widespread failure of media literacy.

We’re still grappling with how to deal with the internet and the way it facilitates information overload, filter bubbles, propaganda and, yes, fake news.

But history has shown that while we can be stupid and credulous, we can also learn to identify irony, recognise hypocrisy and laugh at ourselves. And we’ll learn far more about employing our critical faculties when we’re disarmed by humour than when we’re lectured at by pedants. A direct thread skewering the gullibility of media consumers can be traced from Barnum to Twain to *Mad* to *South Park* to the *Onion*.

While *Mad*’s legacy lives on, today’s media environment is more polarised and diffuse. It also tends to be far more cynical and nihilistic. *Mad* humorously taught kids that adults hid truths from them, not that in a world of fake news, the very notion of truth was meaningless. Paradox informed the *Mad* ethos; at its best, *Mad* could be biting and gentle, humorous and tragic, and ruthless and endearing – all at the same time.

That’s the sensibility we’ve lost. And it’s why we need outlets like *Mad* more than ever. **CT**

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Michael J Socolow is Associate Professor, Communication and Journalism at the University of Maine. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com

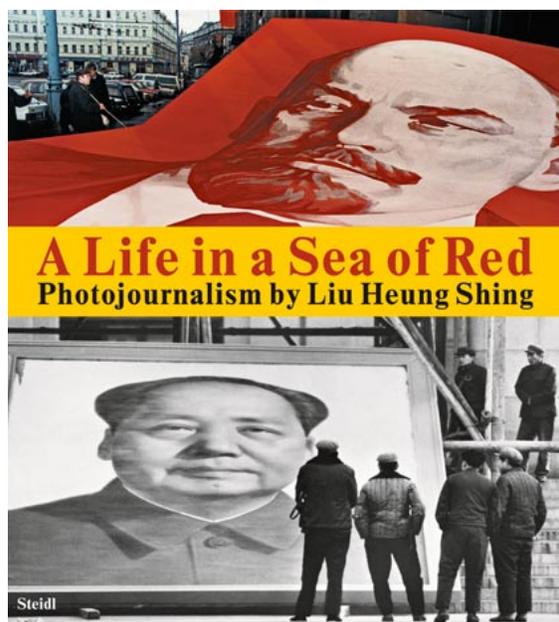
A big new book by **Liu Heung Shing** features gripping images taken during four decades of chaotic revolution and tumultuous change as the West's Cold War adversaries struggled to cope with change under and after Communist rule

Changing times in the East



**A LIFE IN
A SEA OF RED**
Photojournalism
by Liu Heung
Shing

Published by Steidl
www.steidl.de
\$95



LIU HEUNG SHING'S long-awaited, hefty, and superbly-produced 288-page coffee table book, *A Sea in a Life of Red*, recently published by Steidl, contains the two most important bodies of work by the Pulitzer-Prize-winning photojournalist.

Shing's images show the often-uneasy transition of China and Russia from 1976 to 2017, through the fall of hard-core Communism to their re-emergence as global superpowers.

That change has been dramatic: in fact, the only constant element over the past 40 years

MAIN IMAGE: A KGB colonel outside now-vacant prison cells at Russia's notorious Lubyanka prison. 1991.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Students on hunger strike in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. 1989





seems to have been the never-ending Cold War sabre-rattling of the US as it seeks to impose financial and military superiority over the rest of the world.

Born in then British-ruled Hong Kong in 1951, Shing at-

tended school in the People's Republic of China during the early years of Communist control, before returning to Hong Kong, and then moving to New York City in 1970, where he became a photographer under the tutelage of *Life* magazine's Gjon Mili. His early

photographic travels saw him witnessing Spain's transition to democracy after Franco's death, and the Carnation Revolution that ended the far-right regime in Portugal in 1974.

Realising that the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 was a precursor to change for China,



Shing went to Beijing in 1978 to photograph the country for *Time* magazine at a momentous time. Two years later, he joined the Beijing office of Associated Press, where his assignments enabled him to observe the reforms that modernised the country's economy.

After moving back to the US, Shing was sent to New Delhi, to lead AP's photo coverage of the whole of South-East Asia, during which time he witnessed the civil war in Sri Lanka and the Soviet Union's unwinnable war in Afghanistan.

The photographer was work-

MAIN IMAGE: Daily life under the declaration of martial law in China. 1989.

TOP: Protesters ask soldiers to leave Beijing. 1989.

ABOVE: Georgians hold a midnight vigil in memory of victims of a massacre by the Soviet army. Tbilisi, 1990.

ing in Seoul when the world's attention turned to the 1989 violence on Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Shing returned to Beijing to direct the news service's coverage of the events, sending colleague Jeff Widener out to capture the defining image of a sole protester halt-

ing a column of tanks.

From there, Shing moved to Moscow in 1999, where he witnessed the unravelling of the Soviet Union and the fall of Communist regimes in Poland, East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Romania.

The most enduring of his's

photographs from this period shows Mikhail Gorbachev throwing down the speech he delivered on December 25 1991, announcing his resignation and signalling the end of the Soviet Union and Cold War.

This photo, which embodies Shing's ability to convey



complex narratives in a single frame, came from a series that was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1992.

Relocating to Hong Kong in 1996, Shing launched *Zhong*, a short-lived magazine, before producing a series of books that created a narrative of China's

development from the 19th-century to the present. **CT**

Biographical note compiled from an essay, by Christopher Phillips, curator of the International Center of Photography in New York, that appears in A Life in a Sea of Red.

MAIN IMAGE: Cadres study during congress to mark death of Karl Marx. Beijing. 1983.

PREVIOUS PAGE (top): Peasants toss cabbages onto a truck. 1980.

PREVIOUS PAGE (bottom): Painter naps at a store selling ideological portraits, 1980.



Russian media ban and Assange's arrest demonstrate hypocritical doublethink behind first Global Media Freedom Conference, writes **Kit Knightly**

Hypocrisy taints UK media freedom conference

THE UK is currently hosting the inaugural Global Media Freedom Conference, a joint project between the British and Canadian governments. You can read the aims and itinerary on the government's website, at www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/global-conference-for-media-freedom-london-2019/about.

Here's the introduction: "Chrystia Freeland, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Jeremy Hunt, the UK Foreign Secretary, will co-host the conference. It is part of an international campaign to shine a global spotlight on media freedom and increase the cost to those that are attempting to restrict it.

"The conference will be structured around 4 themes:

- protection and prosecution, including impunity
- national frameworks and legislation
- building trust in media and countering disinformation media sustainability, and
- media sustainability.

Global leaders, representatives from the media industry, journalists, civil society and academia will gather to attend interactive panel discussions. The first day will focus on defining the challenges, the second on framing solutions. Commonwealth Foreign Ministers will also meet to discuss media freedom".

All of which sounds great, doesn't it?

I mean, "countering disinformation" sounds like state-backed attempts to control what the media can (or can't) say. Not really in the spirit of "media freedom". And I have no idea what "media sustainability" means.

But pushing all that aside, the entire event is riddled with hypocrisy.

Freeland and Hunt stand at the podium and pontificate about media freedom' how important it is to democracy, and how journalists need to be protected. The pliable audience of mainstream journalists nods along in mute agreement,

happy to be told how important they are, their compromised souls ignored and their over-size egos well fed.

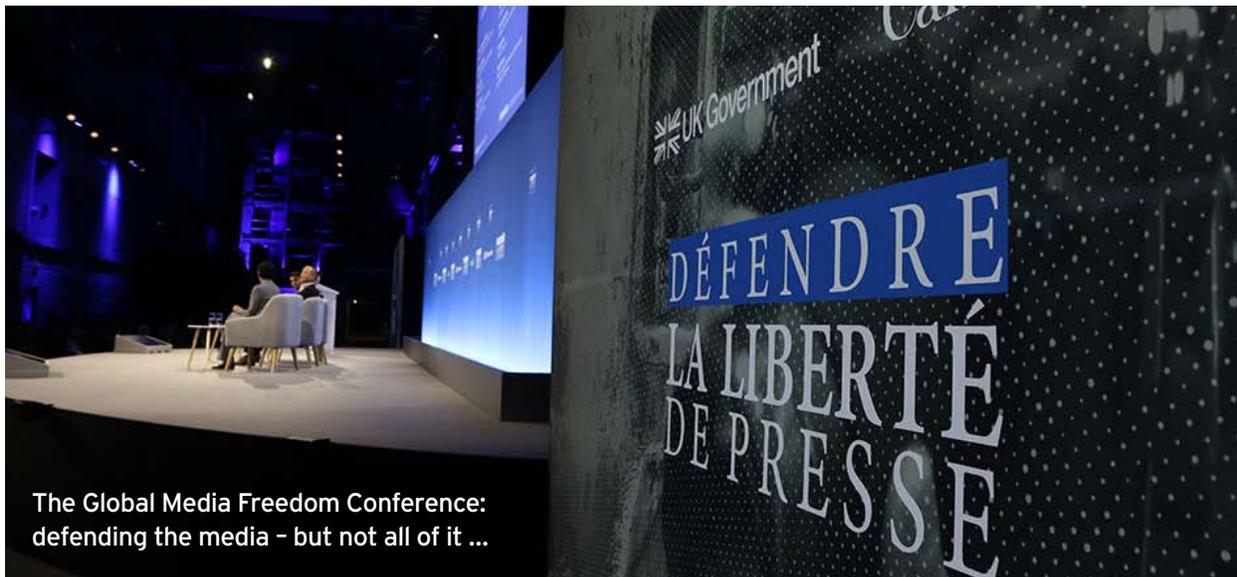
But nobody is talking about the elephant in the room. In this case a rather poorly looking elephant, in a room with bars on the window.

Journalist Bryan MacDonald perfectly summed up the situation when he tweeted: "The British government holding a 'Media Freedom' conference around 12km from the prison where it holds Julian Assange is peak brazenness".

This came after the Foreign Office had tweeted a comment by Canadian journalist Christine Amanpour, 'explaining' the vital role that journalists played in society, "Our job is to report the truth. It is not to be neutral, it is to be truthful".

Julian Assange is in prison for holding power to account. He faces extradition for revealing the crimes He may be executed for telling the truth.

The UN Special Rapporteur called what the UK government



The Global Media Freedom Conference: defending the media - but not all of it ...

has done to Assange, “tantamount to torture”. To have a ‘media freedom’ event in this country, without mentioning that, is beyond absurd.

The second controversy surrounding this public relations -fuelled farce is the fact that Russian media agencies RT and Sputnik were denied accreditation by the Foreign Office.

“We have not accredited RT or Sputnik because of their active role in spreading disinformation”, the UKFO said in a statement.

Two media organizations, banned from a ‘Defend Media Freedom’ conference, because of what they have published?

RT’s statement was short, to the point and pretty much irrefutable: “It takes a particular brand of hypocrisy to advocate for freedom of press while banning inconvenient voices and slandering alternative media”.

In fact, this is just the latest attempt by the British government to undermine alternate

media in general, and specifically RT.

Ofcom, the UK government’s media regulator, has called RT to task over its coverage of several times, and the channel had their UK-based bank accounts frozen in 2016.

It’s no better across the pond, where RT was forced to register as a ‘foreign agent’ in 2017, under an arcane law dating back to WWII. (Why Trump allowed this to happen remains a mystery. Worst. Puppet. Ever.).

The BBC, in the spirit of defending media freedom, had a nice long write up about how terrible RT is, and why they don’t deserve to cover Western events. The little video explainer they did, “What’s so different about Russia Today”, was delightful enough to warrant its own write-up.

A piece of state propaganda, warning us about other state propaganda, while congratulating itself for not being propaganda. A creation of meta-sat-

ire of pure genius. It’s genuinely hilarious.

- The BBC is a state-funded broadcaster attacking another for being state funded.

- The presenter works for BBC Russia, which operates unblocked in ‘authoritarian’ Russia while Russian channels are facing constant attacks here in the “free world”

- The presenter congratulates the BBC for “telling both sides of the story”, while having not a word in RT’s defence. Not. One. Word.

- It’s supporting bias and censorship in the media, and was published on the opening day of the Press Freedom Conference.

You could not fit more hypocrisy into less than two minutes of video if you tried.

Turns out all newsmedia should be free, but some should be freer than others. **CT**

.....
Kit Knightly is co-editor of the www.offguardian.org where this first appeared.

The treatment of the UK Labour Party leader should make us understand that a system designed to allow a few people to grow rich at the expense of the rest of us should not be allowed to continue, says **Jonathan Cook**

The plot to keep Jeremy Corbyn out of power

IN the latest of the interminable media furores about Jeremy Corbyn's supposed unfitness to lead Britain's Labour party – let alone become prime minister – it is easy to forget where we were shortly before he won the support of an overwhelming majority of Labour members to head the party.

In the preceding two years, it was hard to avoid on TV the figure of Russell Brand, a comedian and minor film star who had reinvented himself, after years of battling addiction, as a spiritual guru-cum-political revolutionary.

Brand's fast-talking, plain-speaking criticism of the existing political order, calling it discredited, unaccountable and unrepresentative, was greeted with smirking condescension by the political and media establishment. Nonetheless, in an era before Donald Trump had become president of the United States, the British media were happy to indulge Brand for a while, seemingly believ-

ing he or his ideas might prove a ratings winner with younger audiences.

But Brand started to look rather more impressive than anyone could have imagined. He took on supposed media heavyweights like the BBC's Jeremy Paxman and Channel 4's Jon Snow and charmed and shamed them into submission – both with his compassion and his thoughtful radicalism. Even in the gladiatorial-style battle of wits so beloved of modern TV, he made these titans of the political interview look mediocre, shallow and out of touch. Videos of these head-to-heads went viral, and Brand won hundreds of thousands of new followers.

Then he overstepped the mark. Instead of simply criticising the political system, Brand argued that it was so rigged by the powerful, by corporate interests, that western democracy had become a charade. Elections were pointless. Our votes were

simply a fig-leaf, concealing the fact that our political leaders were there to represent not us but the interests of globe-spanning corporations. Political and media elites had been captured by unshored corporate money. Our voices had become irrelevant.

Brand didn't just talk the talk. He started committing to direct action. He shamed our do-nothing politicians and corporate media – the devastating Grenfell Tower fire had yet to happen – by helping to gain attention for a group of poor tenants in London who were taking on the might of a corporation that had become their landlord and wanted to evict them to develop their homes for a much richer clientele. Brand's revolutionary words had turned into revolutionary action.

But just as Brand's rejection of the old politics began to articulate a wider mood, it was stopped in its tracks. After Corbyn was unexpectedly elected Labour leader,



THREATS TO POWER: The media quickly turned on Russell Brand, left, and Jeremy Corbyn as soon as it became apparent that they wanted to upturn the existing political status quo.

offering for the first time in living memory a politics that listened to people before money, Brand's style of rejectionism looked a little too cynical, or at least premature.

While Corbyn's victory marked a sea-change, it is worth recalling, however, that it occurred only because of a mistake. Or perhaps two.

First, a handful of Labour MPs agreed to nominate Corbyn for the leadership contest, scraping him past the threshold needed to get on the ballot paper. Most backed him only

because they wanted to give the impression of an election that was fair and open. After his victory, some loudly regretted having assisted him. None had thought a representative of the tiny and besieged left wing of the parliamentary party stood a chance of winning – not after Tony Blair and his acolytes had spent more than two decades remaking Labour, using their own version of entryism to eradicate any vestiges of socialism in the party. These 'New Labour' MPs were there, just as Brand had noted, to represent the interests of a corporate class, not ordinary people.

Corbyn had very different ideas from most of his colleagues. Over the years he had broken with the consensus of the dominant Blairite faction time and again in parliamentary votes, consistently taking a minority view that later proved to be on the right side of history. He alone among the leadership contenders spoke unequivocally against austerity, regarding it as a way to leech away more public money to enrich the corporations and banks that had already pocketed vast sums from the public coffers – so much so that by 2008 they had nearly bankrupted the

entire western economic system.

And second, Corbyn won because of a recent change in the party's rulebook – one now much regretted by party managers. A new internal balloting system gave more weight to the votes of ordinary members than the parliamentary party. The members, unlike the party machine, wanted Corbyn.

Corbyn's success didn't really prove Brand wrong. Even the best designed systems have flaws, especially when the maintenance of the system's image as benevolent is considered vitally important. It wasn't that Corbyn's election had shown Britain's political system was representative and accountable. It was simply evidence that corporate power had made itself vulnerable to a potential accident by preferring to work out of sight, in the shadows, to maintain the illusion of democracy. Corbyn was that accident.

'Brainwashing under freedom'

Corbyn's success also wasn't evidence that the power structure he challenged had weakened. The system was still in place and it still had a chokehold on the political and media establishments that exist to uphold its interests. Which is why it has been mobilising these forces endlessly to damage Corbyn and avert the risk of a further, even more disastrous 'accident', such as his becoming prime minister.

The initial attacks on Corbyn were for being poorly dressed, sexist, unstatesmanlike, a national security threat, a Communist spy – unsubstantiated smears the like of which no other party leader had faced

Listing the ways the state-corporate media have sought to undermine Corbyn would sound preposterous to anyone not deeply immersed in these media-constructed narratives. But almost all of us have been exposed to this kind of 'brainwashing under freedom' since birth.

The initial attacks on Corbyn were for being poorly dressed, sexist, unstatesmanlike, a national security threat, a Communist spy – relentless, unsubstantiated smears the like of which no other party leader had ever faced. But over time the allegations became even more outrageously propagandistic as the campaign to undermine him not only failed but backfired – not least, because Labour membership rocketed under Corbyn to make the party the largest in Europe.

As the establishment's need to keep him away from power has grown more urgent and desperate so has the nature of the attacks.

Corbyn was extremely unusual in many ways as the lead-

er of a western party within sight of power. Personally he was self-effacing and lived modestly. Ideologically he was resolutely against the thrust of four decades of a turbo-charged neoliberal capitalism unleashed by Thatcher and Reagan in the early 1980s; and he opposed foreign wars for empire, fashionable 'humanitarian interventions' whose real goal was to attack other sovereign states either to control their resources, usually oil, or line the pockets of the military-industrial complex.

It was difficult to attack Corbyn directly for these positions. There was the danger that they might prove popular with voters. But Corbyn was seen to have an Achilles' heel. He was a life-long anti-racism activist and well known for his support for the rights of the long-suffering Palestinians. The political and media establishments quickly learned that they could recharacterise his support for the Palestinians and criticism of Israel as antisemitism. He was soon being presented as a leader happy to preside over an 'institutionally' antisemitic party.

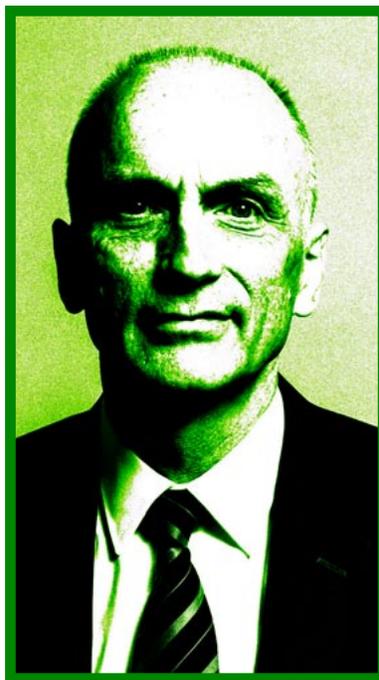
Under pressure of these attacks, Labour was forced to adopt a new and highly controversial definition of antisemitism – one rejected by leading jurists and later repudiated by the lawyer who devised it – that expressly conflates criticism of Israel, and antiZionism, with Jew hatred. One by one Corbyn's few ideological allies in the party – those outside the

Blairite consensus – have been picked off as antisemites. They have either fallen foul of this conflation or, as with Labour MP Chris Williamson, they have been tarred and feathered for trying to defend Labour’s record against the accusations of a supposed endemic antisemitism in its ranks.

The bad faith of the antisemitism smears were particularly clear in relation to Williamson. The comment that plunged him into so much trouble – now leading twice to his suspension – was videoed. In it he can be heard calling antisemitism a ‘scourge’ that must be confronted.

But also, in line with all evidence, Williamson denied that Labour had any particular antisemitism problem. In part, he blamed the party for being too ready to concede unwarranted ground to critics, further stoking the attacks and smears. He noted that Labour had been “demonised as a racist, bigoted party”, adding: “Our party’s response has been partly responsible for that because in my opinion ... we’ve backed off far too much, we have given too much ground, we’ve been too apologetic”.

The *Guardian* has been typical in mischaracterising Williamson’s remarks not once but each time it has covered developments in his case. Every *Guardian* report has stated, against the audible evidence, that Williamson said Labour was “too apologetic about antisemitism”. In short, the *Guardian* and the rest of the media



TARRED AND FEATHERED: MP Chris Williamson was twice kicked out of the Labour party.

have insinuated that Williamson approves of antisemitism. But what he actually said was that Labour was “too apologetic” when dealing with unfair or unreasonable allegations of antisemitism, that it had too willingly accepted the unfounded premise of its critics that the party condoned racism.

Like the Salem witch-hunts

The McCarthyite nature of this process of misrepresentation and guilt by association was underscored when Jewish Voice for Labour, a group of Jewish party members who have defended Corbyn against the anti-semitism smears, voiced their support for Williamson. Jon Lansman, a founder of the

Momentum group originally close to Corbyn, turned on the JVL calling them “part of the problem and not part of the solution to antisemitism in the Labour Party”. In an additional, ugly but increasingly normalised remark, he added: “Neither the vast majority of individual members of JVL nor the organisation itself can really be said to be part of the Jewish community”.

In this febrile atmosphere, Corbyn’s allies have been required to confess that the party is institutionally antisemitic, to distance themselves from Corbyn and often to submit to antisemitism training. To do otherwise, to deny the accusation is, as in the Salem witch-hunts, treated as proof of guilt.

The antisemitism claims have been regurgitated almost daily across the narrow corporate media “spectrum”, even though they are unsupported by any actual evidence of an antisemitism problem in Labour beyond a marginal one representative of wider British society. The allegations have reached such fever-pitch, stoked into a hysteria by the media, that the party is now under investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission – the only party apart from the neoNazi British National Party ever to face such an investigation.

These attacks have transformed the whole discursive landscape on Israel, the Palestinians, Zionism and anti-semitism in ways unimaginable 20 years ago, when I

first started reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Then the claim that antiZionism – opposition to Israel as a state privileging Jews over non-Jews – was the same as antisemitism sounded patently ridiculous. It was an idea promoted only by the most unhinged apologists for Israel.

Now, however, we have leading liberal commentators such as the *Guardian's* Jonathan Freedland claiming not only that Israel is integral to their Jewish identity but that they speak for all other Jews in making such an identification. To criticise Israel is to attack them as Jews, and by implication to attack all Jews. And therefore any Jew dissenting from this consensus, any Jew identifying as antiZionist, any Jew in Labour who supports Corbyn – and there are many, even if they are largely ignored – are denounced, in line with Lansman, as the “wrong kind of Jews”. It may be absurd logic, but such ideas are now so commonplace as to be unremarkable.

In fact, the weaponisation of antisemitism against Corbyn has become so normal that, even as I was writing this post, a new nadir was reached. Jeremy Hunt, the foreign secretary who hopes to defeat Boris Johnson in the upcoming Tory leadership race, as good as accused Corbyn of being a new Hitler, a man who as prime minister might allow Jews to be exterminated, just as occurred in the Nazi death camps.

“Jeremy Hunt, who hopes to defeat Boris Johnson in the upcoming Tory leadership race, as good as accused Corbyn of being a new Hitler, a man who as prime minister might allow Jews to be exterminated”

Too ‘frail’ to be PM

Although anti-semitism has become the favoured stick with which to beat Corbyn, other forms of attack regularly surface. The latest are comments by unnamed ‘senior civil servants’ reported in the *Times* alleging that Corbyn is too physically frail and mentally ill-equipped to grasp the details necessary to serve as prime minister. It barely matters whether the comment was actually made by a senior official or simply concocted by the *Times*. It is yet further evidence of the political and media establishments’ anti-democratic efforts to discredit Corbyn as a general election looms.

One of the ironies is that media critics of Corbyn regularly accuse him of failing to make any political capital from the shambolic disarray of the ruling Conservative party, which is eating itself alive over the terms of Brexit, Britain’s imminent departure from the European Union. But it is the corporate

media – which serves both as society’s main forum of debate and as a supposed watchdog on power – that is starkly failing to hold the Tories to account.

While the media obsess about Corbyn’s supposed mental deficiencies, they have smoothed the path of Boris Johnson, a man who personifies the word ‘buffoon’ like no one else in political life, to become the new leader of the Conservative party and therefore by default – and without an election – the next prime minister.

An indication of how the relentless character assassination of Corbyn is being coordinated was hinted at early on, months after his election as Labour leader in 2015. A British military general told the *Times*, again anonymously, that there would be ‘direct action’ – what he also termed a ‘mutiny’ – by the armed forces should Corbyn ever get in sight of power. The generals, he said, regarded Corbyn as a national security threat and would use any means, “fair or foul”, to prevent him implementing his political programme.

Running the gauntlet

But this campaign of domestic attacks on Corbyn needs to be understood in a still wider framework, which relates to Britain’s abiding Transatlantic ‘special relationship’, one that in reality means that the UK serves as Robin to the United States’ Batman, or as a very junior partner to the

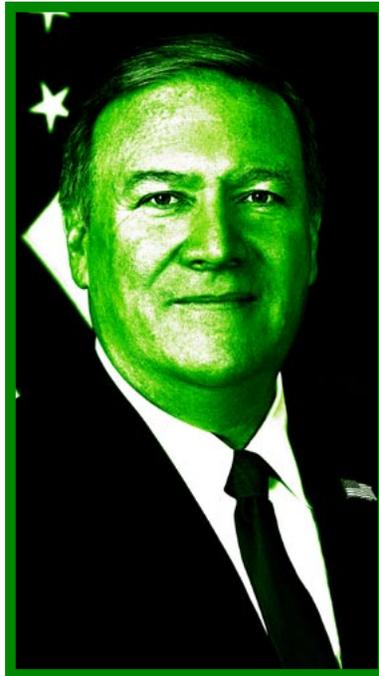
global hegemon.

In June a private conversation concerning Corbyn between the US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, and the heads of a handful of rightwing American Jewish organisations was leaked. Contrary to the refrain of the UK corporate media that Corbyn is so absurd a figure that he could never win an election, the fear expressed on both sides of that Washington conversation was that the Labour leader might soon become Britain's prime minister.

Framing Corbyn yet again as an antisemite, a US Jewish leader could be heard asking Pompeo if he would be "willing to work with us to take on actions if life becomes very difficult for Jews in the UK". Pompeo responded that it was possible "Mr Corbyn manages to run the gauntlet and get elected" – a telling phrase that attracted remarkably little attention, as did the story itself, given that it revealed one of the most senior Trump administration officials explicitly talking about meddling directly in the outcome of a UK election.

Here is the dictionary definition of 'run the gauntlet': to take part in a form of corporal punishment in which the party judged guilty is forced to run between two rows of soldiers, who strike out and attack him.

So Pompeo was suggesting that there already is a gauntlet – systematic and organised blows and strikes against Corbyn – that he is being made to run through. In fact, 'run-



US THREAT: Mike Pompeo told rightwing Jews of likely state action against Jeremy Corbyn.

ning the gauntlet' precisely describes the experience Corbyn has faced since he was elected Labour leader – from the corporate media, from the dominant Blairite faction of his own party, from rightwing, pro-Israel Jewish organisations like the Board of Deputies, and from anonymous generals and senior civil servants.

Pompeo continued: "You should know, we won't wait for him to do those things to begin to push back. We will do our level best. It's too risky and too important and too hard once it's already happened".

So, Washington's view is that action must be taken before Corbyn reaches a position of power. To avoid any danger he

might become the UK's next prime minister, the US will do its 'level best' to 'push back'. Assuming that this hasn't suddenly become the US administration's priority, how much time does the US think it has before Corbyn might win power? How close is a UK election?

As everyone in Washington is only too keenly aware, a UK election has been a distinct possibility since the Conservatives set up a minority government two years ago with the help of fickle, hardline Ulster loyalists. Elections have been looming ever since, as the UK ruling party has torn itself apart over Brexit, its MPs regularly defeating their own leader, prime minister Theresa May, in parliamentary votes.

So if Pompeo is saying, as he appears to be, that the US will do whatever it can to make sure Corbyn doesn't win an election well before that election takes place, it means the US is already deeply mired in anti-Corbyn activity. Pompeo is not only saying that the US is ready to meddle in the UK's election, which is bad enough; he is hinting that it is already meddling in UK politics to make sure the will of the British people does not bring to power the wrong leader.

Remember that Pompeo, a former CIA director, once effectively America's spy chief, was unusually frank about what his agency got up to when he was in charge. He observed: "I was the CIA director. We lied, we cheated, we stole. It's – it was

like – we had entire training courses.”

One would have to be remarkably naive to think that Pompeo changed the CIA’s culture during his short tenure. He simply became the figurehead of the world’s most powerful spying outfit, one that had spent decades developing the principles of US exceptionalism, that had lied its way to recent wars in Iraq and Libya, as it had done earlier in Vietnam and in justifying the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, and much more. Black ops and psyops were not invented by Pompeo. They have long been a mainstay of US foreign policy.

An eroding consensus

It takes a determined refusal to join the dots not to see a clear pattern here.

Brand was right that the system is rigged, that our political and media elites are captured, and that the power structure of our societies will defend itself by all means possible, ‘fair or foul’. Corbyn is far from alone in this treatment. The system is similarly rigged to stop a democratic socialist like Bernie Sanders – though not a rich businessman like Donald Trump – winning the nomination for the US presidential race. It is also rigged to silence real journalists like Julian Assange who are trying to overturn the access journalism prized by the corporate media – with its reliance on official sources and insiders

Accidents like Corbyn will happen more frequently, as will extreme climate events and economic crises. The structures in place to prevent them will grow more ham-fisted, more belligerent, less concealed, to get their way

for stories – to divulge the secrets of the national security states we live in.

There is a conspiracy at work here, though it is not of the kind lampooned by critics: a small cabal of the rich secretly pulling the strings of our societies. The conspiracy operates at an institutional level, one that has evolved over time to create structures and refine and entrench values that keep power and wealth in the hands of the few.

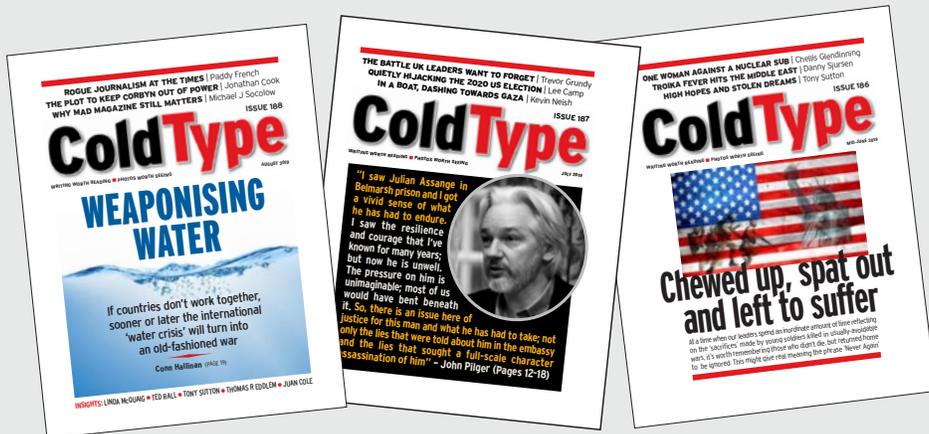
In that sense we are all part of the conspiracy. It is a conspiracy that embraces us every time we unquestioningly accept the ‘consensual’ narratives laid out for us by our education systems, politicians and media. Our minds have been occupied with myths, fears and narratives that turned us into the turkeys that keep voting for Christmas.

That system is not impregnable, however. The consensus so carefully constructed over many decades is rapidly breaking down as the power structure that underpins it is

forced to grapple with real-world problems it is entirely unsuited to resolve, such as the gradual collapse of western economies premised on infinite growth and a climate that is fighting back against our insatiable appetite for the planet’s resources.

As long as we colluded in the manufactured consensus of western societies, the system operated without challenge or meaningful dissent. A deeply ideological system destroying the planet was treated as if it was natural, immutable, the summit of human progress, the end of history. Those times are over. Accidents like Corbyn will happen more frequently, as will extreme climate events and economic crises. The power structures in place to prevent such accidents will by necessity grow more ham-fisted, more belligerent, less concealed, to get their way. And we might finally understand that a system designed to pacify us while a few grow rich at the expense of our children’s future and our own does not have to continue. That we can raise our voices and loudly say: “No!” **CT**

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



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Shafted

The Media, the Miners' Strike and the Aftermath

New Edition | Edited by Granville Williams

The first edition of *Shafted* was published for the 25th anniversary of the miners' strike, just after lax regulation and the financial excesses of the banks led to a government bailout of billions of pounds. So much has happened in the decade since that the second edition is a completely new book. The revelations in the government archives on the miners' strike, the establishment of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign, the cruel austerity policies of the LibDem and Tory governments, and the new interest in the pit camps set up in the wake of the announcement in October 1992 to close 31 pits with the loss of 31,000 jobs are all covered in the new edition.



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You can buy *Shafted* direct from the publisher, Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (North). The book costs £9.99 and is available in the UK for £11.00 inc P&P. Send cheques made out to CPBF(North) to 24 Tower Avenue, Upton, near Pontefract, West Yorks, WF9 1EE

In the four years since he started work on his latest novel, **Philip Kraske** has found that his fantasy has turned into reality. And that could have grave consequences for us all, he says

9/11 and Iran: When life imitates art

BACK in 1995, when John le Carré turned in the manuscript for his novel *Our Game*, one of his editors wondered if the places depicted in it – Chechnya and its capital Grozny – were real or made-up. “By November she had her answer,” he wrote in the *New York Times Book Review*; the civil war there had recently begun. “I felt no triumph, just a kind of nausea,” he adds.

I know what he means. My novel *11/9 and the Terrorist Who loved Bonsai Trees*, which took four years to write – an embarrassing amount of time for just over 200 pages of print – deals with a false-flag operation designed to propel America into war against Iran.

And here we are today, with attacks on oil tankers and American officials wringing every bit of drama from them in order to get into a war. After years of arguing to skeptics that 9/11 was brought off for a similar purpose and writing a novel that illustrates how easy

it is to do, I find current events now bring me a tickle of smugness, true enough, but also le Carré’s same nauseating sense of the suffering to come.

Suffering because this time America’s opposition is a sophisticated people with a real army. And united. They may have their differences with their glum ayatollahs, they may enjoy Michael Jackson tunes and download into cell phones every app imaginable, but the American-led installation of the hapless Shah and the US Navy’s 1988 shutdown of one of their airliners are recent memories. And American sanctions have bitten deeply. Americans will not be greeted as liberators.

Suffering because while the US Air Force is putting on another performance of shock, awe and shameless brutality, Iranians or their proxies will attack any of the dozens of small American installations in the region, making Afghanistan look like a Sunday picnic.

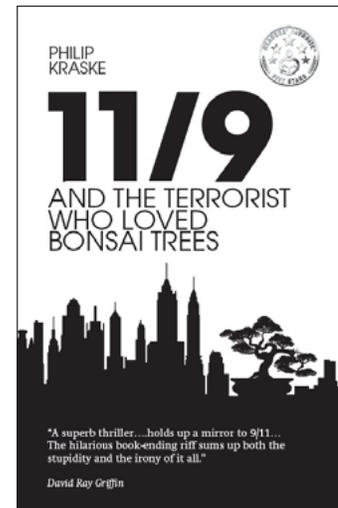
And then there’s the Strait of Ormuz, the blocking of which

means barrel prices in the hundreds. In that case, the casually sadistic Trump, one of whose favourite words is “obliterate”, may well make good on his threat to use nuclear weapons.

But even apart from that, it is a sure bet that the country’s best and brightest will turn their skills against the United States. Cyber attacks – the poor man’s nuclear bomb – in America could become commonplace. Not that airports and power plants will be shut down; I’m always amazed that movie-makers and armchair catastrophists can be so short-sighted.

Cyber attacks really mean that coal doesn’t get delivered to power plants on time because spare parts for the train engines have mistakenly ended up in Paraguay.

Attacks could take the form of news items saying that Facebook is going to be broken up into ten companies and Chase Manhattan is actually bankrupt, of oil refineries breaking down, of sporting events where



THE GARDENER OF MADRID: Author Philip Kraske tends his Bonsai tree. Above: The cover of his new book, 11/9 and the Terrorist who Loved Bonsai Trees.

the lights go out.

Hospitals could run out of the blood supplies and schools out of lunches. If you need a graphic example of the new age of war, remember that recent false nuclear-attack alarm in Hawaii that sent the locals running for cover. *That's* war with Iran.

A wired society is as vulnerable as a newborn baby.

And the rest of the world will look on with complacency, if not provide help, and in places where they hold no truck with jihads or visions of virgins in the afterlife. I don't mean Russia, whose smeared, vilified, slandered, demonised leader is a pillar of reason compared to that coiffured pro-wrestling heel in the White House. War on Iran would mean the fatal blow for America's relations with western Europe. Where I live,

in Spain, the protests would be multitudinous. Pressure to disengage politically and militarily from the US would be intense.

All of this is evidently lost on our foreign policy mandarins. In my novel, I create a portrait of the Deep State – by no means the type you see in movies, with Marine guards standing tensely at attention, computers blinking, insipid clocks showing the times in Paris, Moscow and Tokyo.

Over the years that I wrote and re-wrote those scenes, I had reservations about not deepening the characters that participate in the meetings. But figures like the cantankerous John Bolton or Mike Pompeo, the latter visibly straining the seams of his suit in his enthusiasm for whacking one antichrist or another,

relieved me of those doubts.

We were assured by an anonymous writer in the *New York Times* that there are “adults in the room” keeping President Trump away from his dumber ideas. For the life of me, I cannot detect their influence. Was it they who urged the president to attack Iran? Or who informed Trump, once his forces were all in position fingering the safeties on their guns, that 150 people would die for the drone that Iran shot down, so maybe this wasn't such a hot idea after all? Bravo, adults!

But no matter. The president's spasm of humanity regarding casualties, however dubious, surely reassured the folks in Peoria: *We are a decent,*

feeling people. One of the most enjoyable parts of my book to write was about the manipulation of the media and public opinion. And not only was it fun, it was easy. At one point in my story, the government version of the false-flag op needs to have a full makeover. But with a shocking revelation here and a clever leak there, everything comes off as smoothly as a pop singer changing her image from sweet to racy, with scarcely a break in sales flow.

My '11/9' is a reflection on 9/11 and how the 'narrative' – hateful word – is sold and reinforced to launch America into another Asian war. As one of my characters, a hard-boiled senator from Connecticut, moans, "Oh, *narrative*. Sometimes I wonder if all government has come down to these days is the telling of a goddamn bedtime story."

The most amazing narrative on 9/11 was clearly the Shanksville, Pennsylvania, crash of Flight 93. Here the public was shown a smoking depression in the ground and assured that down below, an entire commer-

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cial airliner lie buried, having burrowed into the ground upon impact – all the way out to its wingtips, all the way up to the stabiliser, scarcely a tray-table left in sight. Incredible – literally. No wonder Osama bin Laden hastened to assure the world that he had nothing to do with 9/11, rather than take credit for it (as the real perps were probably counting on): he must have figured the whole charade would be exposed within a month.

But I was talking about false flags and getting it right on Iran. Having written a novel about how easy it is to stampede the public, I have no faith in either the president, his top advisors,

or those 'adults in the room' to avoid war with Iran – and certainly none in the Deep State, whose record over the past 20 years has been dreadful. Maybe – *maybe* – sundry political calculations regarding the economic consequences will stay their hand. But the false-flag-driven narrative is theirs to write, the media will do nothing but embroider it, and Truthers tripping along behind them like the sand-and-shovel brigade will never get an audience.

But their version of events will ultimately end up the most accurate.

So history has ended – history, that is, as a generally agreed-upon concept of the past. As the comedian in my story sums it up: "People will believe you have eyes on your ass before they believe the government plays dirty." **CT**

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Philip Kraske lives in Madrid, Spain, where he teaches English on a freelance basis and does some translation. His novels, of varied plots but centring on American politics and society, began to appear in 2009. His website is www.philipkraske.com

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After writing on the progress of the Vietnam war for 22-million Americans, I rode the New York subway to help plot a revolution, writes **Tim Knight**

War reporter by day. Revolutionary by night

IT'S the mid-sixties. I'm 27. and have already survived reporting on anti-apartheid revolts and the Sharpeville funeral in South Africa, insurrections in Zambia, and three years and two bloody wars in the Congo. So I fly to America (Richard Nixon, Prop.) to find out if I can play the game with the big boys.

With a lot of luck, I get a job as newswriter at the ABC network's flagship station, WABC-TV in New York. It's the same station that invented – for better or worse – the original Eye-witness News concept, and the same newsroom that houses Jimmy Breslin, Howard Cosell and Geraldo Rivera.

My assignment is writing the daily evening round-up on the progress of the Vietnam war. My guess is that I get the job because I've covered the Congo for United Press International, so presumably know all about wars.

There's much war to write about. The Americans have been fighting in South Vietnam

RADICAL VIGNETTES

A ColdType series

for ten long, brutal, and senseless years. Now they're desperate, and start bombing across the border into North Vietnam itself.

And at Ia Drang, for the first time ever in South Vietnam, the North Vietnamese army stands and fights the Americans, instead of just fading back into the jungle. Already, more than 2,000 Americans have died in this war with more body bags arriving home every week.

So there I am – an English foreigner still in my twenties – reporting to 18-million New Yorkers on their country's disastrous invasion of South Vietnam, and all those relatives, friends and neighbours coming home in body bags.

I write of the battles, the deaths, the lies, the atrocities, the few victories, the many defeats. Every day I try to find

and write the truth of that faraway war so Americans can understand it. I do it well enough to be promoted to the ABC-TV network newsroom to keep writing the war story. Now my audience is potentially 200-million Americans.

Not once, either at WABC or later, at the ABC network, does anyone ever suggest that my war reporting is anything but honest, fair and accurate. Not once – not even in this brutally tough and often paranoid New York news arena – am I accused of bias, political or otherwise.

Instead, my fellow journalists elect me a director of our union, the Writers Guild of America (East), and I win an Emmy for "Outstanding Program Achievements" for my documentary *LSD: Trip to Where?*

But every Thursday evening when I finish writing the day's war story for 200-million Americans I take the subway from the ABC newsroom off Colum-

bus Circle, to an abandoned building on the shabby lower East Side of Manhattan.

There I press a button next to a battered door, exchange passwords, and am buzzed up dangerously rickety stairs for the weekly meeting of the local Trotskyites.

Just in case you've forgotten, according to Wikipedia Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) called for permanent revolution of the working classes: "Trotsky identified as an orthodox Marxist and Bolshevik-Leninist. He supported founding a vanguard party of the proletariat, proletarian internationalism and a dictatorship of the proletariat based on working class self-emancipation and mass democracy".

Twenty-five years after this death, Trotsky's ideas still scare the hell out of the American government. Because what Trotsky means by mass democracy is far from the savage capitalist democracy so beloved of American oligarchs and plutocrats.

Around 20 people usually make these Thursday Trot meetings, most of us in their early twenties and thirties. All of us are appalled by America's colonial war, and we're all working to bring down the American empire. Most of us are ready to abolish private property and revel in a workers' paradise. We argue endlessly over the role of the bourgeoisie in the permanent revolution, the delights of atheism, the ever-popular dialectical materialism, and whether the second American



REVOLUTIONARY REPORTER:
Tim Knight in the 1960s.

revolution is inevitable or merely impossible.

It's heady, scary stuff. We're at the swordpoint of the second American Revolution!

Our meeting place is on the building's third floor, only a few feet from the elevated subway. Every time a train rumbles toward, through and past us, the whole building shakes and everyone stops talking until there's quiet again.

Apparently the anarchist on the floor below us makes bombs. And everyone is scared the subway train's rocking and rolling will set off his bombs

"Trotsky's ideas still scare the hell out of the American government. What Trotsky means by mass democracy is far from the savage capitalist democracy so beloved of American

and blow us all to hell. I'm not sure how our silence makes us any safer from being blown to hell, but that's the way it is.

Part of my revolutionary duty with the Trot cell in lower Manhattan is to print flyers and posters for distribution to the not-so-eager proletarian masses waiting breathlessly to be saved. *No Tsar, But a Workers' Government* they read. And *Permanent Revolution* and *Communism is Freedom*.

The ABC newsroom is almost deserted by the time I get back from the meeting. So it's easy to slip into the room housing the Gestetner duplicating machine and print off a few hundred copies of my Trot flyers and posters, which I then pack into a shopping bag, casually stroll out of the ABC building, walk a half block to the designated live drop-off corner, and wait. At the top of the hour a man appears out of the shadows, takes the bag and, without saying a word, disappears into the dark.

The next day, I'm back in the ABC newsroom writing the Vietnam news – with all its battles, deaths, lies, atrocities, few victories and many defeats – for 200-million Americans.

And so it goes, until I decide that in America being a Trot revolutionary and a journalist at the same time is too dangerous. If anyone finds out that the ABC network's chief Vietnam news writer is also working to overthrow the American empire, I'll likely go to jail. I'll

certainly never work as a journalist in America again.

If a news camera eventually catches me marching with my wife and two children in one of our anti-war parades, I'll have to hand in my ABC press pass and find some other line of work. Then there's the anarchist just waiting to blow me up with his bombs when he makes a tiny mistake just as the subway train passes.

Certainly, there's absolutely no sign of the masses rising up to overthrow what our Chinese comrades call "America's running dogs of imperialism".

Anyway, Trots are notoriously grim and humourless and Trot meetings are ruining my Thursday evenings. So I become a Nichiren Neishu Buddhist instead, and chant *Myoho-enge-kyo ... Myoho-enge-kyo ... Myoho-enge-kyo ...*

Anyway, Trots are notoriously grim and humourless and Trot meetings are ruining my Thursday evenings

which means something along the lines of, "every person can attain enlightenment, without restriction, in this lifetime."

And less than a dozen years later, across the border, I'm appointed executive producer and chief trainer for all the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's TV journalists.

Every training session starts with a lecture on journalistic ethics and morals. And ends with discussion of the journalist's responsibility to guard the free marketplace of ideas – the shining jewel in liberal democ-

racy. I train thousands of TV journalists in hundreds of workshops in a dozen countries.

The reason I write this is to make the point that most journalists are professionals who genuinely believe the craft of journalism is public service. And that journalists can hold radical personal views while, at the same time, respecting the traditional rules of journalism and honestly serving the free marketplace of ideas.

And I would remind you that as journalism goes – so goes democracy. **CT**

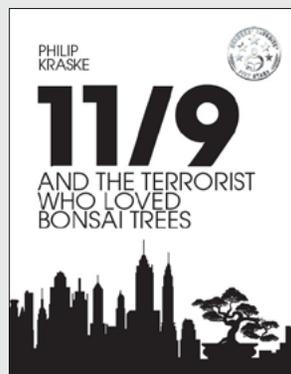
*Tim Knight is an Emmy and Sigma Delta Chi award winning journalist and filmmaker who lives in Cape Town. He is the author of *Storytelling and the Anima Factor*, now in its second edition. www.timknight.org*

A FALSE-FLAG OP THAT LEADS TO WAR WITH IRAN? IT JUST GOES TO SHOW: LIFE IMITATES ART.

"A superb thriller ... holds up a mirror to 9/11 ... The hilarious book-ending riff sums up both the stupidity and the irony of it all." – David Ray Griffin

"Very entertaining." – John Kiriakou

**11/9 AND THE
TERRORIST
WHO LOVED
BONSAI TREES**
By Philip Kraske



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Does the US government and its allies in the media really believe that the public believes all the lies they spew?, asks **Patrick Armstrong**

How stupid do they think we are?

CONSUMERS of the print or electronic output of the League of Copy Typists and their Instructors are expected to believe many impossible things and believe them, not just before breakfast, but all day too.

- Putin kills his enemies by using spectacular methods that can easily be traced back to Russia and preferably when he's staging some high-profile event like the Olympics or World Cup.

- Russian submarines only fool around in the waterways of neutral countries whose elites want to get into NATO, never in NATO ones.

- Poison is smeared on the front doorknob. This requires the roof of the house to be replaced.

Come to think it, believing any part of the official Skripal story, from the incredibly lethal nerve agent that didn't kill them, to the spectacular coincidence of the British Army's chief nurse being on the scene, to the re-wrapped perfume bottle would tax the White Queen's

ability. Here's a list. But that's not to say that we're finished yet: there always seems to be another absurdity like the dead ducks.

- Assad only uses chemical weapons or nerve agents when he's winning.

- They bomb hospitals on purpose, we bomb them by accident.

- The USAF bombs with great precision and accuracy. But the cities it bombs are turned into rubble. Its "precision" is indistinguishable from random carpet bombing. Fallujah. Raqqa. Mosul.

- Washington's enemy-of-the-moment always attacks just when Washington warns it might: vide recent Gulf of Tonkiran episode. Or shoots down innocent drones which are absolutely, positively, in international airspace. Or perhaps they aren't.

- RT is tremendously effective at influencing people even though nobody you know actually watches it.

- Satellite photos vary between amazingly blurry and sharp as a tack. Obviously some

mysterious law of optics is at work here: Russian artillery in Ukraine – blurry; Russian aircraft in Syria – sharp.

- Despite spending billions on intelligence agencies and equipment, NATO depends on Bellingcat and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights for its information. They are credible sources despite being on NATO's payroll (UK in the case of SOHR and the Atlantic Council in the case of Bellingcat); Russian sources are not credible because they are on Moscow's payroll.

- Putin is unable to rig elections in Ukraine or Georgia but he does it with ease in the USA and Europe.

- Democracies are inherently peaceful but always at war.

- No one knows where refugees come from; they just appear. See above and below. (They were warned.)

- NATO, despite its record in destabilising Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and the Balkans, is a force for stability.

- Sanctions, combined with threats and subversions, are not

really an act of war. Even if they kill people in Iraq or Venezuela.

- Brian Hook, the US special representative on Iran, told reporters in Saudi Arabia that Iran “needs to meet diplomacy with diplomacy, not military force”. That statement doesn’t stand up to a millisecond’s consideration – sanctions, reconnaissance aircraft, more fighter planes, troop movements, more troops are not “diplomacy”. But the complaisant media re-prints it with a straight face.

- Iran is the principal state sponsor of terrorism; the most deadly terrorist organisation is al Qaida/ISIS. Or so the US State Department has told us for many years. They’re telling us that a Twelver Shiite state is number one but a Sunni Takfiri entity inspired by ibn Taymiyya and Sayyid Quth, which regards Shiites as even greater enemies, is also number one. Those who say this, over and over again, never quite explain how these two assertions fit together.

- Freedom for same-sex activity is to be encouraged every where except in countries where they face the death penalty.

- Russia’s Military Drills Near NATO Border Raise Fears of Aggression. Comment is neither necessary nor possible on that one, is it?

- US declares Venezuela a national security threat, sanctions top officials. Ditto. And that’s from Obama’s time. (“National security threat”? Wow! Little Venezuela?).

- A dollar spent by Russians on Facebook is more effective

than 1,700 dollars spent by Clinton and Trump. Now that’s PPP!

- An investigation into an airplane crash that gives a suspect veto power and excludes the owner of the aircraft is the gold standard of investigations. Oh, and it’s quite proper to jump to the conclusion before the investigation has even begun. Because, after all, you just knew.

- If you accuse someone of a crime and he doesn’t immediately admit guilt, he’s admitting his guilt. **Litvinenko**: “Beyond the ‘rogue elements’ theories, pro-Kremlin media outlets in Russia have been pushing a slew of alternative theories”; **MH17**: “The Kremlin’s Many Versions of the MH17 Story”, or **Skripal**: “Russia is pushing these 15 mutually contradictory theories to claim they weren’t behind the nerve agent attack. Why don’t you just fess up and stop wasting our time, Putin?”

- AIPAC is not a foreign lobby and therefore is not a matter for FARA.

- Because we are proponents of the Rules-Based International Order we can violate the Vienna Convention whenever we want to and try to force military coups in neighbouring countries. And have as many uninvited soldiers in Syria as we want.

Pseudo psychology explains geopolitics. And pretty idiotically too: a whole country on the couch. “Russia is more insecure and paranoid”, “a kind of neurotic disorder that renders Russia’s sense of insecurity”, “The deep sense of humiliation, the dread of arrogant Westerners, the fear of NATO encirclement”.

or maybe it’s not the whole country, just Putin: Putin’s insecure because of Russia’s “diminished role in the world”. “Well, Russian President Vladimir Putin is a textbook case of someone with a serious inferiority complex”. Anyway, some gasbag pseudo-psychology explains it: there’s no reality, Russia/Putin is just naturally paranoid. Probably nothing you can do about it.

NATO is just going along, minding its own business when, entirely without provocation, hostile nations try to destabilise the world, interfere with freedom of navigation, assault the Rules-Based International Order, and otherwise force NATO to react. From a current Pentagon study: “Russia is adopting coercive strategies that involve the orchestrated employment of military and nonmilitary means to deter and compel the US, its allies and partners prior to and after the outbreak of hostilities”. “Deter and compel” – poor little NATO, so weak, so bullied! Russia does this because of its “deep-seated sense of geopolitical insecurity” which it has just because it has. (More geopolitical pseudo-psychology.)

And, finally, Putin is interfering in the West’s interference in another country. **CT**

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Patrick Armstrong was an analyst in the Canadian Department of National Defence specialising in the USSR/Russia from 1984 and a Counsellor in the Canadian Embassy in Moscow in 1993-1996. He retired in 2008 and has been writing on Russia and related subjects ever since.

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