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**ASSANGE GOES TO THE HOME OFFICE** | Binoy Kampmark  
**OUR NEW DUCK-AND-COVER WORLD** | Tom Engelhardt  
**IT'S TIME FOR US TO TALK PEACE** | Jeremy Corbyn

Issue 234

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

May 2022



## A MOTHER'S ANGUISH

Dorcas Lyoya weeps at the funeral of her son Patrick, who was shot and killed by a Michigan police officer after a routine traffic stop – **See Pages 20-25**



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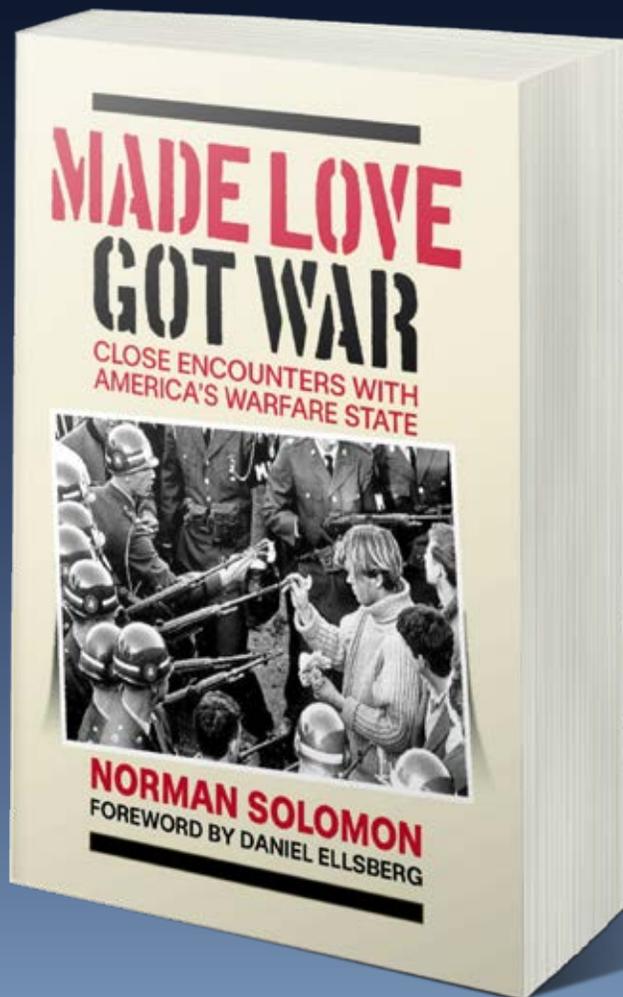
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# INSIGHTS



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JEREMY CORBYN

## It's time for us to talk peace

With Russian shells raining down on Ukrainian cities, an uneasy ceasefire in Yemen, the attack on Palestinians at prayer in Jerusalem and many other conflicts around the world, it might seem to some to be inappropriate to talk about peace.

When a war is going on, though, it is absolutely the time to talk about peace. How else can we prevent even further loss of life or yet more millions forced into refuge somewhere else in the world? It is welcome that at last the United Nations has taken an initiative with the welcome request by Secretary-

General António Guterres for face-to-face meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

There must be an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine followed by a Russian troop withdrawal and agreement between Russia and Ukraine on future security arrangements.

All wars end in a negotiation of some sort—so why not now?

Everyone knows this is what will happen at some point. There is no reason to delay it for bombing and killing, more refugees, more dead and more grieving families in

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Ukraine and Russia. But instead of urging peace, most European nations have taken the opportunity to ramp up arms supplies, feed the war machine and boost the share prices of weapons manufacturers.

It is also the time to talk about our humanity, or lack of it, to people in deep distress as a result of armed conflict, the abuse of their rights or the grinding poverty that many face as a result of the global economic system.

Almost 10 percent of the population of Ukraine is now in exile, suffering trauma, loss and fear. Most countries in Europe have been supportive of Ukrainian refugees. The British government pretends to be as well, but then ensnares Ukrainians in the Home Office's deliberately labyrinthine and nightmarish bureaucracy to deter them. Instead, Ukrainian refugees should be supported and made welcome. That's what the British people by and large want; the huge generosity of ordinary people is showing the best of our humanity.

However, in the treatment of desperate refugees from wars where Britain has a direct responsibility, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, the story is painfully different.

If someone is so desperate that they risk all to attempt to cross the English Channel in a dangerous, flimsy dinghy, they deserve sympathy and support. Instead, the Home Office plan is to remove them to Rwanda. If we believe in humanity, and the rights of refugees, then they should all be treated equally and decently and allowed to make their contribution to our society,

not criminalised and incarcerated. If the Conservative Party gets away with this outsourcing, other European countries will do the same. The Danish government has already spoken warmly about the cruel and unworkable proposal.

The effects of this war on the politics and hopes of our society are going to be huge, not least for the world's institutions. The United Nations was established after World War II to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." Since then, we can reel off the long and lengthening list of conflicts and proxy wars that the world has endured and that have taken the lives of millions. Korea, Vietnam, Iran-Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, India-Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and many other conflicts have been barely reported on by mainstream media, maybe because they were conflicts against colonial occupation such as Kenya.

A huge question must be asked of the UN in the Ukraine conflict. When Russia brutally and illegally invaded Ukraine, was not that the moment for the UN to send its secretary-general to Moscow to demand a ceasefire? The UN has been too slow to act, and too much of the interstate system has pushed for escalation, not negotiation.

The call for more effective and proactive international institutions to support peace was powerfully made in April 2022 in Madrid at a conference hosted by Spain's left-wing Podemos party, following a dialogue initiated by the left-wing activist organization Progressive International. Every one of the 17 speakers condemned the war and

occupation and called for a ceasefire and a future of peace for the people of Ukraine and Russia. The participants knew about the dangers of escalation of this conflict and the further hot wars and violence a new cold war would bring. There are 1,800 nuclear warheads in the world primed and ready for use. One "tactical" weapon would kill hundreds of thousands; a nuclear bomb would kill millions. It cannot be contained, nor can its effects be limited.

In June, Vienna will host a major series of peace events around the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This treaty, supported by the UN General Assembly and opposed by the declared nuclear weapons states, provides the best hope and opportunity for a nonnuclear weapons future. The opportunity should be grasped with both hands.

Some say to discuss peace at a time of war is a sign of some kind of weakness; the opposite is true. It is the bravery of peace protesters around the world that stopped some governments from being involved in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen or any of the dozens of other conflicts going on.

Peace is not just the absence of war; it is real security. The security of knowing you will be able to eat, your children will be educated and cared for and a health service will be there when you need it. For millions, that is not a reality now; the aftereffects of the war in Ukraine will take that away from millions more.

Meanwhile, many countries are now increasing arms spending and investing resources in more

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and more dangerous weapons. The United States has just approved its biggest-ever defense budget. These resources used for weapons are all resources not used for health, education, housing or environmental protection.

This is a perilous and dangerous time. Watching the horror play out and then preparing for more conflicts in the future will not ensure the climate crisis, poverty crisis

or food supply is addressed. It's up to all of us to build and support movements that can chart another course for peace, security and justice for all.

*Jeremy Corbyn is a member of the UK Parliament, former leader of the UK Labour Party and the founder of the Peace and Justice Project. This article was produced by the Morning Star and Globetrotter.*

mentation that they should be a 'ticket' of traffic wardens. Not the most daring or inventive of choices and so there were naturally a good number of better suggestions forthcoming. But, given the reputation that traffic wardens have among the vehicular community, there were inevitably some that were notable more for their venom than their creativity.

A 'shower' was Paul's suggestion, made no doubt with the heavy implication that 'a shower of...' is usually followed by a rather more colourful word.

Houdi suggested a 'clamp of traffic wardens' – now there's one that makes sense, or at least it did until somebody pointed out that traffic wardens don't clamp vehicles.

A 'hover of traffic wardens' was a good one from Heather, as we all know they do tend to hover about at precisely those times you don't want them hovering about.

An 'avoidance of traffic wardens' was Paddy's offering. That's fairly relevant for Squinter, if truth be told, because in ten years Squinter's only had two parking tickets, the most recent in Stranmillis where an unseen but hovering officer pounced, and where the parking rules and hours are so devilishly complicated that Squinter still couldn't understand them after having received the ticket and checked the local signage and road lines.

'A contagion of traffic wardens', offered Concubhar, which Squinter liked because it manages to convey the aforementioned natural distaste among the populace for the men and women in red and black without recourse to salty language. 'A jobsworth of wardens', ven-



**BAND OF BROTHERS:** Traffic wardens congregate in Belfast city centre.

SQUINTER

## Traffic wardens on the loose

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Squinter's often seen two traffic wardens in action together in Belfast city centre, but he has to say he hasn't seen five of them together. What mission they were embarked on in such

numbers is not entirely clear, but it got Squinter thinking: What might be the collective name for a group of wardens?

So Squinter whacked the question up on Twitter with the recom-

# INSIGHTS

tured Damien elegantly, which invoked memories of Squinter's other parking ticket. It was on the Antrim Road and Squinter was bang to rights. But there was, as there usually is, a backstory. The clearway prohibiting parking on the citybound lane is lifted at 9.30am. Squinter took a calculated risk and parked at 9.27am. On returning he felt very unlucky to have been caught in a three-minute time frame by another hoverer. On examination of the ticket, however, he saw that the warden had written the time of the ticket as 9.17am, no doubt because 9.28am or 9.29am would have looked a bit too job-worthy. Still rankles with Squinter to this day, believe it or not.

'A plague of traffic wardens', suggested Susan with obvious feeling, while Conor and Sir Gary mined a similar seam of antipathy with 'a secretion' and 'an infestation' respectively.

Eimear suggested that 'a murder' be switched from crows to traffic warden, remarking that she felt it 'seems appropriate'. Harsh, Eimear, harsh.

'A terror of traffic wardens', from JP was an excellent one, improved by a little bit of alliteration, which always helps, while 'a dose' from Liam was equally accomplished. Tim's 'a wallet of traffic wardens' spoke to the financial pain of a run-in with the wardens, while 'a hatefulness' from Ken fairly reeked of bitter personal experience. 'A catastrophe of traffic wardens' was Natalie's equally wounded contribution and James's 'an extortion' completed a hat-trick of victims still struggling to cope with the pain.

Winner JFW went leaping into

the lead which he was to hold to the finish with 'a skulk of traffic wardens', although Pat immediately put in a strong challenge with a 'pelican of traffic wardens'

'A wicked of wardens' was Francis's impassioned take on the matter while John went into full scathing mode with 'a toss of traffic wardens'. Kittibee went down the conspiracy route with a 'trap of traffic wardens.'

But the most entertainment Squinter enjoyed from the lively exchanges came from someone who didn't accept the invite to put forward a suggestion. Micky simply said: "I thought it was a band parade." **CT**

*The Squinter is a columnist at the Andersonstown News, a weekly newspaper in Belfast, Ireland – [www.belfastmedia.com](http://www.belfastmedia.com).*

WILLIAM J. ASTORE

## Our deplorable leaders

America's "leaders" believe they are in-the-know, and the rest of us are know-nothings who can be pushed around or ignored.

Perhaps the most honest thing Hillary Clinton ever did was to speak of her "basket of deplorables" after which she dismissed them as "irredeemable". This is exactly how Hillary and most of our "leaders" think. Anyone who's sceptical of them, anyone who asks for proof, anyone who's willing to resist, is thrown into a "deplorable" basket and dismissed.

It will work until it doesn't; indeed, it's already not working. But the system is not about to give in. At the presidential level, America's likely candidates for "leader of the

free world" in 2024 are Joe Biden and Donald Trump, or, as my wife likes to joke, ODR versus ODR. Old Demented Rotter versus Old Divisive Rotter.

Let's take the "old" part first, since ageism is an instant rejoinder. It used to be said that being



Hillary Clinton

president of the US was the toughest, most demanding, job in the world, making enormous demands on physical stamina and mental acuity. Eisenhower was considered old when he left the presidency at the age of 70, replaced by John F. Kennedy at the

age of 43. If Biden is reelected in 2024, he will be 82 that November, and Trump will be 78. Both men are well past their prime. Are they truly ready for the rigours of the office? Do we trust either man to be

Gage Skidmore: Wikimedia

# INSIGHTS

able to complete another four-year term in office?

Now, let's take the "D" part. Many observers have noted Biden's mental decline; it was readily noticeable in 2020 when he ran as a candidate in the primaries.

Sadly, mental decline often accelerates with age, sometimes unpredictably. Reelecting Joe Biden in 2024, assuming he runs again, will likely lead to his vice president taking over for him during his second term of office. Trump, meanwhile, is a divisive leader whose personal motto might be "divide and rule".

A leader should bring people together for their mutual advantage, not tear them apart for his own advantage.

And now the "R" part, the "rotter." Neither Trump nor Biden is a champion of workers, of the poor, of

the vulnerable. Neither has much empathy. Both are deeply compromised. It's a common failing of "big fish" politicians to have so little regard for the commoners that they rule, but surely we can find candidates that are, dare I say, less rotten?

"Leaders" like Hillary Clinton are fond of denouncing large swaths of the American public as "deplorable." Is this not a classic case both of projection and of profound narcissism? How do we move beyond ODR versus ODR in 2024? **CT**

*William Astore, a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF) and professor of history, is a senior fellow at the Eisenhower Media Network (EMN), an organisation of critical veteran military and national security professionals. He blogs at [www.bracingviews.com](http://www.bracingviews.com).*

with Nazi Germany during World War II and fight the Soviet Union. The last Russia-Sweden war was the Finnish War that was fought over two centuries ago (1808-1809).

On its face, one lesson to be drawn from the war between Russia and Ukraine is that Russia sees Nato membership on its border as a threat to its security, and it will act to protect its security.

Why then would any country that has been in relatively peaceful co-existence with Russians since the end of WWII seek a change in that status quo that may very well diminish or destroy that peaceful coexistence?

Sweden's Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson was circumspect about Nato membership noting that Sweden has to "think about the consequences.... We have to see what is best for Sweden's security."

Finland's Prime Minister Sanna Marin admitted, "Of course, there are many kinds of risks involved.... We have to be prepared for all kinds of actions from Russia...". Surely, Marin is aware of the risks that were posed by the stand off between John F Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev over Soviet stationing of nukes in Cuba (and American nukes in Turkey).

News of further Nato expansion toward Russia has triggered a response from the Kremlin. Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Russia was considering militarily bolstering its western flank.

Across the pond, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price was welcoming of an enlarged Nato membership. He repeated, "... we believe Nato's open door is an open door."

KIM PETERSEN

## Nato: Whose security is at stake?

Insanity has often been defined as trying the same thing over and over and getting the same result.

Case in point, Ukraine was seeking Nato membership to bolster its security. This membership would have come at the expense of Russian security, as Russian president Vladimir Putin made clear. To thwart Nato's (i.e., the US's) hegemonic ambitions and preserve its own security, Russia felt

compelled to address its security concerns. When these Russian security concerns were treated with contempt by the US and Ukraine, Russia took action to protect itself.

Two neutral countries, Finland and Sweden, are seriously contemplating Nato membership, as did Ukraine. Will this increase security for these two countries? There has been no warring between Russia and Finland since 1941-1944 when the Finns decided to ally

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However, it is quite obvious that the Nato open door has been more a closed door to Russia, as Russia has never been made a full member. It does not take a deep analysis to understand why this is so. Nato proclaims its, “purpose is to guarantee the freedom and security of its members through political and military means”. However, the *raison d'être* for such a military alliance disappears when there is no enemy on the horizon. Thus, Russia is reified as the Nato boogeyman. The existence of Nato serves well the aims of the governmental-military-industrial complex of the US.

Sweden and Finland are considering whether to formalize Nato membership – a key trigger in Russia’s military response to Ukraine. Some questions that arise: Do Finland and Sweden not consider Russia’s security concerns valid? While the circumstances differ, why would these two Nordic coun-

tries try what failed for Ukraine and expect a benign response? Would the presence of Russian nukes and hypersonic weapons targeting their countries make the Swedes and Finns feel more secure?

Instead of being regularly badgered to increase military expenditures as a Nato member, wouldn’t it be better to nix the insanity of spending the hard-earned cash of the Nordic workers on guns, tanks, planes, and missiles and becoming less secure as a result? Wouldn’t the money of the Nordic citizenry be put to better use for housing, road repair, poverty reduction, hospitals, recreation centres, and schools at home? **CT**

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every wardrobe choice – including yours.

You probably haven’t given much thought to the six-years-and-counting civil war in Yemen. The American media hasn’t either. But your ignorance doesn’t stop you from pontificating about Ukraine – nor should it mean you shouldn’t rush to pick sides in this colourful blood-soaked extravaganza that has claimed tens of thousands of lives.

Wearing a T-shirt featuring the black, red and green flag of the Houthi rebel movement not only matches the colour scheme of that of the Houthis’ hip Iranian backers but it may convince sporty members of the opposite sex that you’re on the national soccer team of yet some equatorial country no one has heard of. At cocktail receptions, pretend to be into the Yemeni-Welsh music scene and speak loudly about the need to boycott Yemeni oil.

Conversely, you can make a bold statement against the “fake news” by rocking the white-calligraphy-on-green of the Saudis who back the Sana’a-based government of President Rashad al-Alimi and are themselves backed by the US. Donald Trump talks a good game about hating journalists; Saudi Arabia actually kills them in their own consulates. Show your support for Saudi Arabia; never let a woman drive.

If your taste in vacuous politically tinged fashion statements runs to the outre, try rocking the #IStandWithAfghanistan hashtag to show your thoughtless concern for the 95 percent of the population there that risks starving to death – or the thousands of newborn

TED RALL

## Virtue signalling, after Ukraine

**T**eam Politics has gone international! Who cares if you can’t find Ukraine on a map? Festoon your home with Ukrainian flags! Change your Twitter avatar to a heart-shaped Ukrainian flag! Tattoo your entire body blue and yellow! It’s all about Ukraine – until the next war or the Azov Battalion gets caught doing

something awful, whichever comes first.

But why limit yourself to the yellow-and-blue bicolor you never heard of before two months ago? The United States is directly involved in such a wide range of foreign conflicts, regime-change operations and proxy wars that there’s a shallow virtue signal for

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babies that already have – because President Joe Biden has imposed devastating economic sanctions on the new government there that could literally kill nearly the entire population of an entire country. You have two options: the black Shahada-on-white of the Taliban or the maroon, forest green and black of the recently deposed American puppet regime. Taliban-white wardrobes work best for American virtue signallers based in the warmer climates of the South; if you dig designer clothing with logos, you may prefer the old Northern Alliance seal. Sample quote: “Those guys who fell off the planes were luckier than those who are slowly starving to death, huh?”

Alternatively, there’s always the jokester approach: Support the United States and its theft of billions of dollars in Afghan government funds, money that could be used to feed millions of starving people we used to pretend to care about. Go on Instagram, post photos of every one of the six meals a day you consume with the hashtag #USAStandWithMyOwnFatAssUSA. And vote for your local Democratic congressman this November.

Avant-garde symbolmongers can make boldly confusing statements about the US-involved wars of the future. It’ll be hard to pass up the classic communist red-and-yellow scheme of the People’s Republic of China should the mainland decide to invade Taiwan, but those who want to avoid being cancelled among the NPR-smart set will need to rock the red, white and blue of the island’s nationalist flag as they twist their brains into protesting the invasion of a country in the



United States doesn’t recognise diplomatically as existing in the first place. Support Taiwanese in-

dependence by ordering dumplings from your local Chinese restaurant. Some of them are delicious!

Next time: Recycling – virtue-signalling for the whole planet without doing anything. **CT**

**Ted Rall**, the political cartoonist, columnist and graphic novelist, is the author of a new graphic novel about a journalist gone bad, “*The Stringer*.” His website is [www.tedrall.com](http://www.tedrall.com).

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Caitlin Johnstone

## Manipulated with your eyes wide open

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If you’ve got a gut feeling that your rulers are working to control your perception of the war in Ukraine, it is safe to trust that feeling.

If you feel there’s been a concerted effort from the most powerful government and media institutions in the western world to manipulate your understanding of what’s going on with this war, it’s because that’s exactly what has been happening.

If you can’t recall ever seeing such intense mass media spin about a war before, it’s because you haven’t.

If you get the distinct impression that this may be the most aggressively perception-managed and psyop-intensive war in human history, it’s because it is.

If it looks like Silicon Valley platforms are controlling the content that people see to give them

a perspective on this war that is wildly biased in favour of the US narrative, it’s because that is indeed the case.

If it seems like a suspicious coincidence that Russiagate manufactured mainstream consent for all the same shady agendas we’re seeing ramped up now like cold war brinkmanship against Moscow, internet censorship, and being constantly lied to by the mass media for the greater good, it’s because it is a mighty suspicious coincidence.

If it seems weird to you that so many self-styled leftists are responding to this war by fanatically supporting the extremely dangerous unipolarist geostrategic agendas of the most powerful empire that has ever existed, that’s because it is weird. Really, really, really weird.

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If it seems a bit hypocritical to you that the empire is blasting us in the face all day with narratives alleging Russian war crimes while that same empire is imprisoning a journalist for exposing its war crimes, that's because it absolutely is hypocritical.

If something looks wrong about the fact that a judge has just signed off on Julian Assange's extradition to the United States for practicing journalism while that same United States keeps pushing out narratives about the need to protect Ukraine's freedom and democracy, that's because it should.

If you're beginning to get the nagging sense that the mainstream consensus worldview is a construct manufactured by the powerful, for the powerful and everything you were taught about your nation, your government and your world is a lie, that's definitely a possibility worth considering.

If it's starting to seem like we're all being manipulated at mass scale to think, act and vote in a way which benefits a vast power structure that rules over us while hiding its true nature, I'd say that's a thread worth pulling.

If you've a sneaking suspicion that the lies might go even deeper than that, right down to deceptions about who you fundamentally are and what this life is actually about, that suspicion is probably worth exploring.

If you're feeling a bit like Keanu Reeves in the beginning of *The Matrix* right before the veil gets ripped away, I'd recommend following the white bunny and seeing how deep that rabbit hole goes.

If it has occurred to you that hu-

manity needs to wake up from the matrix of illusion before our socio-pathic rulers drive us to extinction via environmental catastrophe or nuclear armageddon, then your notes match my own.

If you believe it's possible that these existential crises we're fast approaching may be the catalyst we need to collectively rip the blindfold from our eyes and begin moving in a truth-based way upon

this earth and creating a healthy world, then we are on the same page.

If there's something in you that whispers there's a good chance we make it despite the long odds we appear to be facing, I will tell you a secret: I hear it too. **CT**

**Caitlin Johnstone** is an Australian blogger. Her website is [www.caitlinjohnstone.com](http://www.caitlinjohnstone.com).

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123rf.com



BASAV SEN

## Pushing back on 'soft' climate denial

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In early April, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a global scientific body, issued yet another dire report. They warned that we have barely three years to start cutting greenhouse emissions as rapidly as we need to avoid the worst effects of climate disruption.

These scientists put the largest

share of the blame on fossil fuels. But they also show that renewable energy is already cost-competitive. "Systems in some countries and regions are already predominantly powered by renewables", they note.

The report makes clear that the technology to switch from fossil fuels already exists – all that's

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lacking is political will. And that's a particularly big problem in the US, the world's largest producer of both oil and natural gas.

It's a problem even for an administration that says it accepts the science of climate change and wants to take action.

For example, on the eve of the IPCC report, the White House announced a plan to deal with high gas prices. Undoubtedly, high gas prices are causing hardship. But the White House plan makes the long-term problem of climate change worse without even solving the short-term problem of gas prices.

The plan centres around "doing everything we can to encourage domestic production" of oil. This is unlikely to bring down prices in the short term, since new drilling sites can take years to become operational. But it will almost certainly make emissions harder to reduce down the line.

This is part of a pattern. So far, the Biden administration has tried to sell its Bipartisan Infrastructure Law as a measure against climate change. That law does some good things, but on balance it may do more harm than good for the climate.

The legislation offers no funding at all for renewable electricity generation. But it sets aside billions in new fossil fuel subsidies dressed up as green technologies.

For instance, it pushes both carbon capture and hydrogen production from fracked gas. There's no evidence that carbon capture works at scale – it may even cause more emissions than it removes, since it allows fossil fuel companies to continue polluting. And hydro-

gen from fracked gas has a worse climate impact than coal.

The bill also continues the harmful American tradition of overfunding highways and underfunding public transportation. Incentivising more car travel but not cleaner mass transit is a recipe for more transportation emissions, not fewer.

Then there was the notorious incident last year when President Biden gave a speech at the Glasgow climate talks proclaiming US leadership on the issue. But within days of his return, the administration announced the results of the largest US offshore oil drilling lease sale ever.

Fortunately, a federal district court invalidated the lease sale, and the Interior Department decided not to appeal the decision, bowing to grassroots pressure from affected communities and their allies. But if the sale had gone

through, it would have produced as much greenhouse gas as 130 coal-burning power plants.

The Biden administration claims it believes in climate science, but its record shows a gap between these beliefs and the administration's actions – what you might call a "soft denial" of climate science.

Fortunately, grassroots community members from Los Angeles to the Gulf Coast to West Virginia have won important fights to protect their communities, and our planet, from pollution. As the planet warms and midterms approach, the administration needs to listen to communities like these – and take real action before it's too late. **CT**

**Basav Sen** directs the Climate Policy Program at the Institute for Policy Studies. This op-ed was distributed by [www.otherwords.org](http://www.otherwords.org).

## HURWITT'S EYE

MARK HURWITT



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CHRIS HEDGES

# American commissars

Social media platforms are aggressively censoring all who challenge the dominant narrative on Ukraine, the ruling Democratic Party, the wars in the Middle East and the corporate state

**T**he ruling class, made up of the traditional elites that run the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, is employing draconian forms of censorship on its right-wing and left-wing critics in a desperate effort to cling to power.

The traditional elites were discredited for pushing through a series of corporate assaults on workers, from deindustrialisation to trade deals. They were unable to stem rising inflation, the looming economic crisis and the ecological emergency. They were incapable of carrying out significant social and political reform to ameliorate widespread suffering and refused to accept responsibility for two decades of military fiascos in the Middle East. And now they have launched a new and sophisticated McCarthyism. Character assassination. Algorithms. Shadow banning. De-platforming.

Censorship is the last resort of desperate and unpopular regimes. It magically appears to make a crisis go away. It comforts the powerful with the narrative they want to hear, one fed back to them by courtiers in the media, government agencies, think tanks and academia. The problem of

Donald Trump is solved by censoring Donald Trump. The problem of left-wing critics, such as myself, is solved by censoring us. The result is a world of make-believe.

YouTube disappeared six years of my RT show, *On Contact*, although not one episode dealt with Russia. It is not a secret as to why my show vanished. It gave a voice to writers and dissidents, including Noam Chomsky and Cornel West, as well as activists from Extinction Rebellion, Black Lives Matter, third parties and the prison abolitionist movement. It called out the Democratic Party for its subservience to corporate power. It excoriated the crimes of the apartheid state of Israel. It covered Julian Assange in numerous episodes. It gave a voice to military critics, many of them combat veterans, who condemned US war crimes.

**I**t no longer matters how prominent you are or how big a following you have. If you challenge power, you are at risk of being censored. Former British MP George Galloway detailed a similar experience during an April 15 panel organised by *Consortium News* in which I took part:

“I have been threatened with travel restrictions were I to continue the television broadcast I had been doing for almost an entire decade. I have been stamped by the false label ‘Russian State Media,’ which I never had, by the way, when I was presenting a show on Russian state media. It was only given after I ceased to have a show on Russian state media, ceased because the government made it a crime for me to do so.

“My 417,000 Twitter followers had been gaining a thousand a day, going like a runaway train, then suddenly it hit the buffers when the Elon Musk story emerged. I expressed the view that oligarch that he no doubt is, I prefer Elon Musk to the kings of Saudi Arabia, who it turns out are presently major shareholders in the Twitter company. As soon as I joined that fight, my numbers literally crashed to a halt, with shadow bans and all the rest of it...

“All of this is happening before the consequences of the economic crash brought about by western policy and our misnamed leaders has really hit yet. When economies begin to not just slow down, not just hiccup, not just experience levels of inflation not seen for years, or decades, but becomes a crash, as well it



**BANNED:** From top, clockwise – Scott Ritter, George Galloway, Chris Hedges, Jill Stein.

might, there will be even more for the state to suppress, especially any alternative analysis as to how we got here and what we must do to get out of it.”

**S**cott Ritter, a former UN weapons inspector in Iraq and Marine Corp intelligence officer, called out the lie about weapons of mass destruction prior to the US invasion of Iraq in

2003. Recently, he was banned from Twitter for offering a counter narrative about dozens of killings in the Kyiv western suburb of Bucha. Many of the victims in Bucha were found with gunshot wounds to the head and with their hands tied behind their back. International observers and eyewitnesses have blamed Russia for the killings. Ritter’s alternative analysis, right or wrong, saw him silenced.

Ritter lamented the Twitter ban at the forum:

“It took me three years to get 4,000 followers on Twitter. I thought that was a big deal. Then this Ukraine thing comes up. It exploded. When I got suspended for the first time for questioning the narrative in Bucha my account had just gotten over 14,000. By the time my suspension was lifted I was up to 60,000. By the time they suspended me again I was close to 100,000. It was out of control, which is why I am convinced the algorithm said: You must delete. You must delete. And they did. The excuse they gave was absurd. I was abusive and I was harassing by telling what I thought was the truth.

“I don’t have the same insight in the Ukraine I had in Iraq. Iraq, I was on the ground doing the job. But the techniques of observation and evaluation that you are trained as an intelligence officer to apply to any given set apply to Ukraine today. Simply looking at the available data set, you cannot help but draw the conclusion that it was Ukrainian national police, mainly because you have all the elements. You have motive. They don’t like Russian collaborators. How do I know? They said so on their website. You have the commander of the national police ordering his people to shoot people in Bucha on the day in question. You have the evidence. The dead bodies on the street with white armbands carrying Russian food packets. Could I be wrong? Absolutely. Could there be data out there I am not aware of? Absolutely. But it is not there. As an intelligence officer I take the available data. I access the available data. I provide assessments based on that available data. And Twitter found that objectionable.”

Two pivotal incidents contributed to this censorship. The first was the publication of classified documents

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by Julian Assange and WikiLeaks. The second was the election of Donald Trump. The ruling class was unprepared. The exposure of their war crimes, corruption, callous indifference to the plight of those they ruled and extreme concentration of wealth shredded their credibility. The election of Trump, which they did not expect, made them afraid they would be supplanted. The Republican Party establishment and the Democratic Party establishment joined forces to demand greater and greater censorship from social media.

Even marginal critics suddenly became dangerous. They had to be silenced. Dr. Jill Stein, the Green Party presidential candidate in 2016, lost about half her social media following after mysteriously going offline for 12 hours during the campaign. The discredited Steele dossier, paid for by the Hillary Clinton campaign, charged Stein, along with Trump, with being a Russian asset. The Senate Intelligence Committee spent three years investigating Stein, issuing five different reports before exonerating her.

Stein spoke of the threat to freedom of speech during the forum:

“We are in an incredibly perilous moment. It’s not only freedom of the press and freedom of speech, but it is really democracy in all its dimensions that is under threat. There are all these draconian laws now against protest. There are 36 that have been passed that are as bad as a 10-year prison sentence for demonstrating on a sidewalk without a permit. They differ state by state. You need to know the laws in your state if you protest. Drivers have been given licence to kill you if you are out in the street in some states as part of a protest.”

The first indication that we were not only being marginalised – one

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**“Drivers have been  
given licence  
to kill you if you  
are out in the street  
in some states as  
part of a protest”**

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accepts that if you defy established power and practice independent journalism, you will be marginalised – but censored came in November 2016. Craig Timberg, a technology reporter for the *Washington Post*, published a story headlined “Russian propaganda effort helped spread ‘fake news’ during election, experts say”. It referred to some 200 websites, including Truthdig where I wrote a weekly column, as “routine peddlers of Russian propaganda.”

Unnamed analysts, described as “a collection of researchers with foreign policy, military and technology backgrounds” from the anonymous “organization” PropOrNot, made the charges in the story. PropOrNot’s report drew up “the list” of 200 offending sites that included WikiLeaks, Truthout, Black Agenda Report, Naked Capitalism, Counterpunch, AntiWar.com, LewRockwell.com and the Ron Paul Institute. All these sites, they said, either wittingly or unwittingly functioned as Russian assets. No evidence was offered for the charges, since of course there was none. The only common denominator was that all were critics of the Democratic Party leadership.

When we challenged the story, PropOrNot tweeted out: “Awww, wook at all the angwy Putinists, trying to change the subject – they’re so vewwy angwy!!”

We were blacklisted by anonymous trolls who sent out Twitter messages, later deleted, that sound-

ed as if they were written by a gamer living in his parent’s basement.

Timberg did not contact any of us beforehand. He and the paper refused to reveal the identity of those behind PropOrNot. I taught at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. If one of my students had turned in Timberg’s story as a class assignment, he or she would have failed.

The established elites desperately needed a narrative to explain the defeat of Hillary Clinton and their own growing unpopularity. Russia fit. Fake news stories, they said, had been planted by Russians in social media to elect Trump. All critics, on the left and the right, became Russian Assets. Then the fun began.

**T**he outliers many of us find repugnant began to disappear. In 2018, Facebook, Apple, YouTube and Spotify deleted the podcasts, pages and channels of conspiracy theorist Alex Jones and his Infowars website from their platforms. The precedent was set. Once they could do it to Jones, they could do it to anyone.

Twitter, Google, Facebook and Youtube used the charge of foreign influence to start employing algorithms and shadow banning to silence critics. Saudi Prince Al Waleed bin Talal Al Saud, chair of the Kingdom Holding Company, which dismissed Elon Musk’s recent offer to buy the social media platform, has a large stake in Twitter. It is hard to find a more despotic regime than Saudi Arabia, or one more hostile to the press, but I digress.

Sites that once attracted tens or hundreds of thousands of followers suddenly saw their numbers nosedive. Google’s “Project Owl”, designed to eradicate “fake news”, employed “algorithmic updates to surface more authoritative content”

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and downgrade “offensive” material. Traffic fell for sites such as Alternet by 63 percent, Democracy Now by 36 percent, Common Dreams by 37 percent, Truthout by 25 percent, The Intercept by 19 percent and Counterpunch by 21 percent. The World Socialist Web site saw its traffic fall by two-thirds. Julian Assange and WikiLeaks were all but erased. *Mother Jones* editors in 2019 wrote that they suffered a sharp decline in its Facebook audience, which translated to an estimated loss of \$600,000 over 18 months.

The IT people at *Truthdig*, where I had a weekly column at the time, found that impressions – specific words such as “imperialism” typed into Google that bring up recent stories including mine – now did not include my stories. Referrals to the site from impressions for my stories fell from over 700,000 to below 200,000 in a 12-month period.

But pushing us to the sidelines was not enough, especially with Democrats’ looming loss of Congress in the midterm elections and Joe Biden’s abysmal poll numbers. Now we must be erased. Dozens of lesser-known sites, writers and videographers are disappearing. Facebook, for example, removed a “No Unite The Right 2-DC” event connected to a page called “Resisters”, appearing to advertise a counter-rally on the anniversary of the violence in Charlottesville, Virginia. Paul Jay, who runs a site called The Analysis, ran a video essay on February 7, 2021 called, “A Failed Coup Inside a Failed Coup”. YouTube banned the piece, saying it was “content that advances false claims that widespread fraud, errors, or glitches changed the outcome of the US presidential election is not allowed on YouTube.” Tulsi Gabbard, after posting on March 13 that the US funded bio labs in Ukraine and blam-

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## Shutting down critics in a decayed and corrupt society is equivalent to turning off the oxygen on a seriously ill patient

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ing the Russian invasion of Ukraine on Biden’s foreign policy, said she was shadowbanned on Twitter. The “Russians with Attitude” podcast account was suspended on Twitter. It covered the information war in Ukraine and “cried foul” on the Ghost of Kiev. Social media platforms have been especially harsh on those questioning Covid policy, blocking websites and forcing users, social media platforms, or online outlets to delete posts.

These sites make billions of dollars by selling our personal information to corporations, advertising agencies and political public relations firms. They know everything about us. We know nothing about them. They cater to our proclivities, fears, habits and prejudices. And they will silence our voices if we do not conform.

Censorship will not halt America’s march towards Christian fascism. Weimar Germany attempted to thwart Nazi fascism by enforcing rigorous hate-speech laws. In the 1920s, it banned the Nazi party. Nazi leaders, including Joseph Goebbels, were prosecuted for hate speech. Julius Streicher, who ran the virulently anti-Semitic tabloid *The Stormer* (*Der Stürmer*), was fired from his teaching post, repeatedly fined and had his newspapers confiscated. He was taken to court numerous times for libel and served a series of jail sentences.

But like those serving sentences for the assault on the Capitol on January 6, or like Trump, the persecution of Nazi leaders only enhanced their stature the longer the German ruling class failed to address the economic and social misery.

There are many similarities to the 1930s, including the power of predatory international banks to consolidate wealth into the hands of a few oligarchs and impose punishing austerity measures on the global working class.

“More than anything else, the Nazis were a nationalist protest movement against globalization,” notes Benjamin Carter Hett in *The Death of Democracy: Hitler’s Rise to Power and The Downfall of the Weimar Republic*.

Shutting down critics in a decayed and corrupt society is equivalent to turning off the oxygen on a seriously ill patient. It hastens mortality rather than delaying or preventing it. The convergence of a looming economic crisis, fear by a bankrupt ruling class that they will soon be banished from power, the growing ecological catastrophe and the inability to thwart self-destructive military adventurism against Russia and China, have set the stage for an American implosion.

Those of us who see it coming, and who desperately seek to prevent it, have become the enemy. **CT**

**Chris Hedges** is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who was a foreign correspondent for fifteen years for *The New York Times*, where he served as the Middle East Bureau Chief and Balkan Bureau Chief for the paper. He previously worked overseas for *The Dallas Morning News*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and NPR. He is the host of show *The Chris Hedges Report*.

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BINOY KAMPMARK

# Assange goes to the Home Office

His wife's plea: Don't extradite a man  
"to a country that conspired to murder him"

It was a dastardly formality. On April 20, at a hearing at Westminster Magistrates Court, Julian Assange, appearing via video link from Belmarsh Prison, his carceral home for three years, is to be extradited to the United States to face 18 charges, 17 based on the US Espionage Act of 1917.

The final arbiter will be the UK Secretary of the Home Office, the security-hardened Priti Patel who is unlikely to buck the trend. She has shown an all-too-unhealthy enthusiasm for an expansion of the Official Secrets Act which would target leakers, recipients of leaked material, and secondary publishers. The proposals seek to purposely conflate investigatory journalism and espionage activities conducted by foreign states, while increasing prison penalties from two years to 14 years.

Chief Magistrate Senior District Judge Paul Goldspring was never going to rock the judicial boat. He was "duty-bound" to send the case to the home secretary, though he did inform Assange that an appeal to the High Court could be made in the event of approved extradition before the issuing of the order.

It seemed a cruel turn, given the ruling by District Court Judge Vanessa Baraitser on January 4, 2021

that Assange would be at serious risk of suicide given the risk posed by Special Administrative Measures and the possibility that he spend the rest of his life in the ADX Florence supermax facility. Assange would be essentially killed off by a penal system renowned for its brutality. Accordingly, it was found that extraditing him would be oppressive within the meaning of the US-UK Extradition Treaty.

The US Department of Justice, ever eager to get their man, appealed to the High Court of England and Wales. They attacked the judge for her carelessness in not seeking reassurances about Assange's welfare the prosecutors never asked for. They sought to reassure the British judges that diplomatic assurances had been given.

Assange would be spared the legal asphyxiations caused by SAMs, or the dystopia of the supermax facility. Besides, his time in US detention would be medically catered for, thereby minimising the suicide risk. There would be no reason for him to take his own life, given the more pleasant surroundings and guarantees for his welfare.

A fatuous additional assurance was also thrown in: the Australian

national would have the chance to apply to serve the post-trial and post-appeal phase of his sentence in the country of his birth. All such undertakings would naturally be subject to adjustment and modification by US authorities as they deemed fit. None were binding.

All this glaring nonsense was based on the vital presumption that such undertakings would be honoured by a government whose officials have debated, at stages, the publisher's possible poisoning and abduction.

Such talk of assassination was also accompanied by a relentless surveillance operation of the Ecuadorian embassy in London, directed by US intelligence operatives through the auspices of a Spanish security company, UC Global. Along the way, US prosecutors even had time to use fabricated evidence in drafting their indictment.

The Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales Ian Burnett, and Lord Justice Timothy Holroyde, in their December 2021 decision, saw no reason to doubt the good faith of the prosecutors.

Assange's suicide risk would, given the assurances, be minimised – the judges reasoned; he had nothing to fear, given the promise that he would be exempted from the appli-

cation of SAMs or the privations of ADX Florence. In this most political of trials, the judicial bench seemed unmoved by the desperation of the US imperium in targeting the publishing of compromising classified information.

On appeal to the UK Supreme Court, the grounds of appeal were scandalously whittled away, with no mention of public interest, press freedom, thoughts of assassination, surveillance, or fabrication of evidence. The sole issue preoccupying the bench: “In what circumstances can an appellate court receive assurances from a requesting state which were not before the court at first instance in extradition proceedings”.

On March 14, the Supreme Court comprising Lord Reed, Lord Hodge and Lord Briggs, delivered the skimpiest of answers, without a sliver of reasoning. In the words of the Deputy Support Registrar, “The Court ordered that permission to appeal be refused because the application does not raise an arguable point of law.”

While chief magistrate Goldspring felt duty bound to relay the extradition decision to Patel, Mark Summers QC, representing Assange, also felt duty bound to



**LAST CHANCE:** UK's Home Secretary Priti Patel will decide this month whether Julian Assange should be sent to the US for trial.

make submissions against it. “It is not open to me to raise fresh evidence and issues, even though there are fresh developments in the case.”

The defence team has till May 18 to make what they describe as “serious submissions” to the Home Secretary regarding US sentencing practices and other salient issues.

Various options may present themselves. In addition to challenging the Home Secretary's order, the defence may choose to return to the original decision of Baraitser, notably for her shabby treatment of press

freedom. Assange's activities, she witheringly claimed, lacked journalistic qualities.

Outside the channel of the Home Office, another phase in the campaign to free Assange has opened. Activist groups, press organisations and supporters are already readying themselves for the next month. Political figures such as former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn have urged Patel “to stand up for journalism and democracy, or sentence a man for life for exposing the truth about the War on Terror.”

Amnesty International's Secretary General Agnès Callamard has also fired another salvo in favour of Assange, noting that the United Kingdom “has an obligation not to send any person to a place where their life or safety is at risk and the Government must now abdicate that responsibility.”

The prospect of enlivening extraterritorial jurisdiction to target journalism and the publication of national security information, is graver than ever. It signals the power of an international rogue indifferent to due process and fearful of being caught out. But even before this momentous realisation is one irrefutable fact. The plea from Assange's wife, Stella, sharpens the point: don't extradite a man “to a country that conspired to murder him.”

**CT**

**Binoy Kampmark** was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He currently lectures at RMIT University. He is a regular contributor to *Global Research and Asia-Pacific Research*. Email him at: [bkampmark@gmail.com](mailto:bkampmark@gmail.com)



Police body camera video shows Patrick Lyoya after the car he was driving was stopped by a police officer. A few minutes later, he was shot dead.

JOHN ROTHWELL

# A FATAL SHOT...

... and another young black man dies at the hands of an American police officer

**P**atrick Lyoya, a 26-year-old refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo died on April 4 – the 54th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. – after being shot in the back of the head by Grand Rapids police officer Christopher Schurr following a traffic stop on the Michigan city’s south east side.

Schurr pulled Lyoya over just after 8 a.m. after finding that the license plate on the car he was driving didn’t

match the vehicle. After initial questioning, Lyoya ran away, chased by the policeman. A scuffle followed.

Video recordings released by Grand Rapids police show Lyoya and the policeman grappling, while Schurr could be heard shouting, “Let go of my taser”. A few moments later, Lyoya – unarmed and face down on the ground – was dead, shot in the back of the head.

In the aftermath of the shooting, Black Lives Matter of Lansing held a protest at St. Luke Lutheran Church



In this screenshot from a video taken by a witness, police officer Christopher Schurr stoops over the body of Patrick Lyoya.



in Lansing, Michigan on Thursday April 21, demanding justice for Lyoya. Chanting participants marched a mile from the church along Michigan Avenue to the steps of the State Capitol, where speakers from as far away as California rallied the crowd, calling for the identity of the officer to be released, and demanding he be fired and prosecuted.

Four days later, on April 25, Grand Rapids police chief Eric Winstrom released Shurr's name, saying the police

officer had been placed on paid leave while an investigation into possible criminal charges takes place.

After the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020, and the riots that followed, there was a feeling that America might have seen the last of such deadly policing. Two years later, it's apparent these hopes were premature. **CT**

● **A FAMILY'S TEARS: Photos from the funeral – Pages 22-25**



Grieving mother Dorcas Lyoya hugs her son as he lies in the open casket.



John Rothwell



John Rothwell

Nurses were in attendance to help those suffering during the funeral.

JOHN ROTHWELL

# A FAMILY'S TEARS

“We can’t bring Patrick back, but we can bring justice in Patrick’s name”

**A**t the beginning of the April 24 funeral service for Patrick Lyoya, shot dead by a police officer in Grand Rapids, Michigan, his mother Dorcas knelt, hugging and caressing the face of her son, beside the white open casket draped with the flag of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Then, tears rolling down the side of his face, Patrick’s father Peter called out his son’s name as he stood over the coffin. This was the first time that the family had viewed the body since Patrick’s death at the hands of Christopher Schurr. When the service began, the casket was closed.

As music played and a choir sang, grieving mourners filed into the packed Renaissance Church of God in Christ to pay their respects and say their final goodbyes. During the three-hour service, Lyoya’s mother wept silently.

The Reverend Al Sharpton, founder of the National Action Network, delivered the eulogy to the 1,000 mourners, saying: “We can’t bring Patrick back, but we can bring justice in Patrick’s name.”

CT

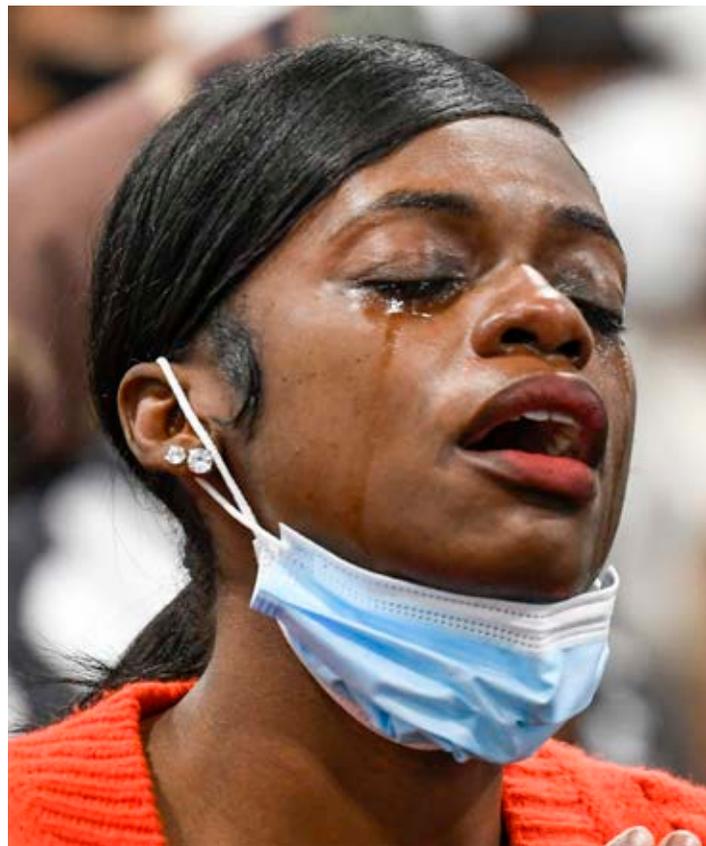
*John Rothwell is a freelance journalist based in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*



Mourners offer comfort during the emotion-filled service.



Above: Patrick Lyoya's father Peter grieves during the funeral.  
Right: A mourner shed tears at the funeral of Patrick Lyoya.





The Reverend Al Sharpton flew in from New York at the family's request to deliver the eulogy.



"It's our Right to Live". A mourner wears a shirt that was handed to mourners.



The casket containing the body of Patrick Lyoya is led out of Renaissance Church of God in Christ in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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THEO TZANIDIS & STEPHEN LANGSTON

# The digital future of rock ‘n’ roll

Abba and Tupac in the metaverse. How digital avatars could be the bankable future of band touring

It was a technological feat that made history, wowed audiences and brought a dead rapper back to life. In April 2012 at the Coachella festival in California, Tupac Shakur took to the stage with Snoop Dogg and Dr Dre. Tupac had been dead for 16 years, killed in a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas. But this was Tupac the hologram, foul-mouthed and lifelike, performing before a “shocked and then amazed” crowd.

Since humans first delighted in the sound of music, advancements in technology have managed to make musical expression immortal. Throughout history, innovators have strived to create original, accessible and eternal performances.

As engineering knowledge developed, musical instrument design advanced. Many classical composers introduced pioneering instrumentations into their scores, adding depth and colour that broadened the listening experience.

Accurate systems for notation matured, offering music an essence of immortality through printed manuscript. In 1853 Edouard-Leon Scott de Martinville’s phonograph pioneered an audio recording technique.

In 1912 WC Handy composed Memphis Blues, a song that took

the US by storm and influenced the development of popular music. Published on paper, it was wildly popular in the dance halls and soon every band in America was asked to play it. This public demand was recognised by an fledgling recording industry, which soon flourished.

A breakthrough in the quality of music capture came with the advent of hi-fi and stereo introduced by Yamaha. Those who embraced the technology artistically could transport a lifelike performance experience into the homes of the masses. One of the biggest bands of the 1970s and 1980s, Swedish supergroup Abba, embraced this technology pioneering recording techniques, which is still used as standard today.

Behind this technology was the creative genius that produced millions of record sales and performances dominating the 1970s and beyond. After the apparent demise of the group, Benny and Björn expanded into the theatrical genre, composing musicals. Along with their interest in emerging technology, this sowed the seeds to recapture and reinvent the Abba machine 40 years later.

May 2022 sees the latest technological advances in musical immortality when Abba return to the live stage after a 40-year absence. But this time they return as humanoids

– the digital hologram “twins” of the original global phenomenon.

George Lucas’s Industrial Light and Magic has created holographic lookalikes that interact with a live band in a purpose-built theatre in east London. Benny, Björn, Frida and Agnetha have provided the pre-recorded vocals and motion-captured movement which will then be reproduced by the digital avatars.

The doppelgangers are more youthful in their appearance – around their 30s, when they were at the peak of their fame – raising an interesting conundrum concerning Abba’s human mortality against their new immortality in the metaverse.

Abba’s music is undoubtedly timeless; the simple tunes with incredibly complicated structures appeal to millions. The “Abbatars” are a reinvention for a new audience, but will they continue beyond the lives of their originals, with new creators pulling the strings?

Besides Abba and Tupac, there are other instances where “digital twinning” has been identified as a key money-making strategy. The digital band Gorillaz’ 2006 Grammy performance blended flawlessly with Madonna’s. And Richard Burton’s hologram performed on a global tour of War of the Worlds in another 2006



**THEY'RE BACK:** Billboard for Abba's virtual concert at the London Stadium.

performance.

Customising 3D avatars has become a unique way for artists to create virtual brands across several digital platforms. They can connect virtually with fans and increase loyalty and engagement, while fans can interact, express themselves and experience new things. This is now achievable using AI software to make holograms, as researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) demonstrated in an experiment that created holograms fairly instantaneously.

Ziva Dynamics a pioneer in simulation and real-time character creation, employs synthetic AI-powered avatars to create autonomous and complex movement simulations based on real muscle, fat, soft tissue and skin contact. In April 2021, in a project called Lost Tapes Of The 27 Club, Google's Magenta AI was even used to compose songs in the styles of musicians who died at the age of 27, including Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison and Amy Winehouse.

These technologies have the potential to create realistic synthetic and AI holographic representations of dead artists, allowing them to

continue creating, influencing and performing for future audiences.

Epic Games, creators of the phenomenally successful Fortnite, predicts that digital twins will combine with the metaverse, an emerging network of fully immersive digital worlds. Whereas live tours are time-intensive and costly for new artists, a low-cost metaverse "tour" might be a new way for music lovers to see live performances. Virtual performances by Justin Bieber, DeadMau5 and The Weeknd have already become popular recently.

In this emerging branch of the music industry, record labels and marketing firms could be replaced by decentralised autonomous organisations (DAOs). DAOs are online organisations that operate like cooperatives, making all decisions jointly.

DAOs are already disrupting the music business – along with NFTs (non-fungible tokens), which are a way of transferring property between people online. In October 2021, PleasrDAO – a collective of decentralised finance (DeFi) leaders, early NFT collectors and digital artists – paid US\$4 million (£3 million) for Once Upon a Time in Shaolin, an

album by New York hip-hop legends Wu-Tang Clan.

While the release of the album predates the rise of NFTs, PleasrDAO now owns the rights and has imposed restrictions on duplication, distribution or public exhibition. A music-focused DAO like Pleasr may acquire bulk concert tickets, finance and organise events and manage fan-owned record labels and marketing agencies to secure investable commodities like first-edition LPs, artwork and instruments.

This creates a new, decentralised route to the market for artists free of corporate interests or interests of individual producers, developing a fairer landscape for the future. It will be fascinating to see how it develops in the months and years to come – and whether it will be enough for music audiences. **CT**

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TOM ENGELHARDT

# Welcome to a new duck-and-cover world

Nuclear weapons seemed to retreat into the ether, into Bert the Turtle's fantasy world, until... well, I hesitate here, but I have to say it: the invasion of Ukraine

**F**ace it, we're living in a world that, while anything but exceptional, is increasingly the exception to every rule. Only the other day, 93-year-old Noam Chomsky had something to say about that. Mind you, he's seen a bit of our world since, in 1939, he wrote his first article for his elementary school newspaper on the fall of the Spanish city of Barcelona amid a "grim cloud" of advancing fascism. His comment on our present situation: "We're approaching the most dangerous point in human history."

And don't try to deny it! What a mess! (And yes, I do think this moment is worth more than a few exclamation points!)

Admittedly, I'm not an active, thoughtful 93-year-old. I'm a mere 77 and feel like I'm floundering in this mad world of ours. Still, like my generation, like anyone alive after August 6, 1945, when the city of Hiroshima was obliterated by a single American atomic bomb, I'm an end-of-the-worlder by nature. And that's true whether any of us like it or not, admit it or not.

In fact, I've lived with that reality – or perhaps I mean the surreality of it all – both consciously (on occasion) and unconsciously (the rest of the time) since my childhood. No one

my age is likely to forget the duck-and-cover drills we all performed, diving under our school desks, hands over heads, to prepare for, in my case, the Soviet Union's attempted atomic destruction of New York City. We followed the advice, then, of the cartoon character Bert the Turtle – in a brief film I remember seeing in our school cafeteria – who "never got hurt because he knew just what we all must do: he ducked and covered."

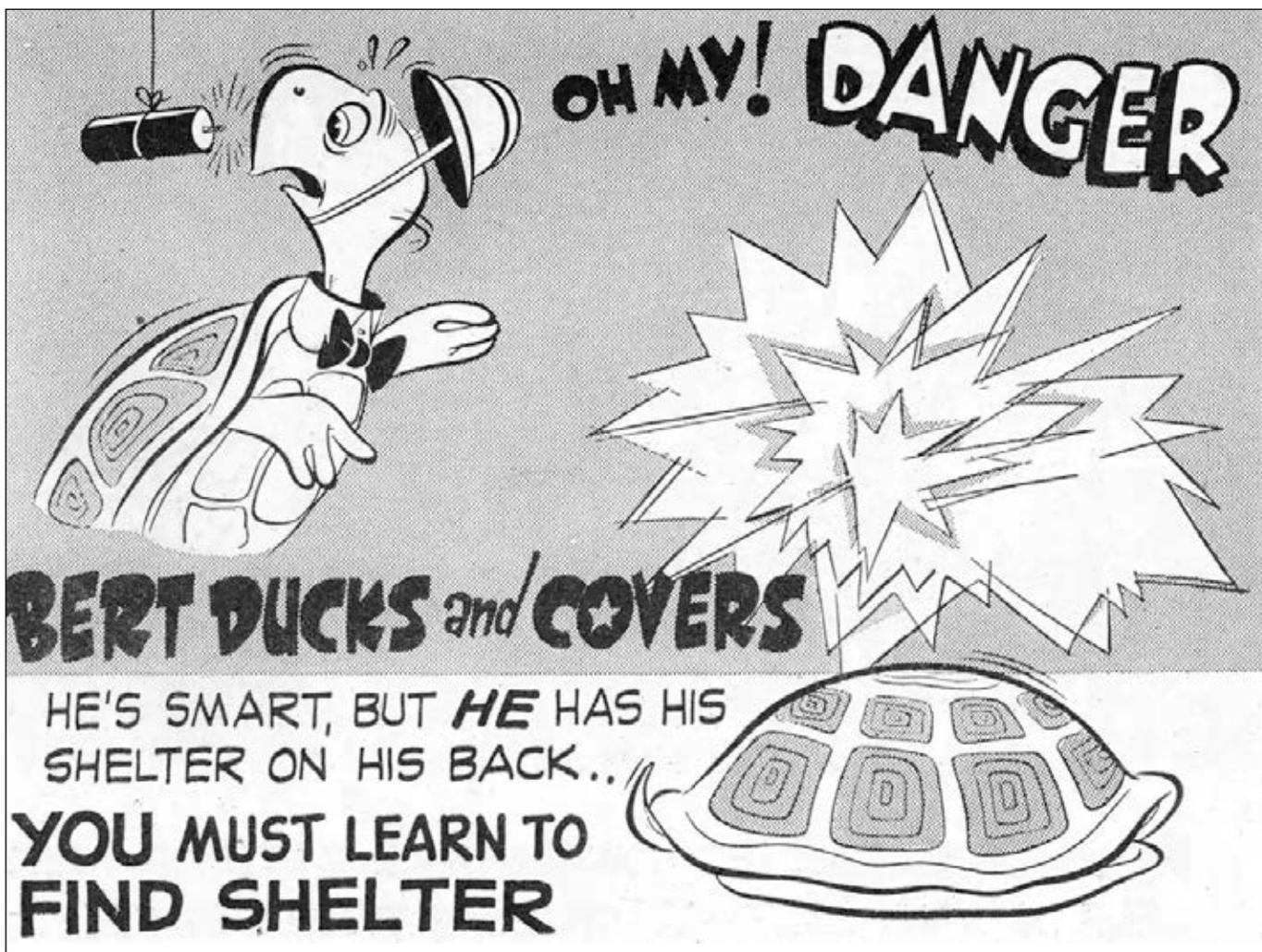
As the sonorous male narrator of that film then put it: "The atomic bomb flash could burn you worse than a terrible sunburn, especially where you're not covered. Now, you and I don't have shells to crawl into like Bert the Turtle, so we have to cover up in our own way... Duck and cover underneath a table or a desk or anything else close by... Always remember, the flash of an atomic bomb can come at any time, wherever you may be."

**T**hat was life in 1950s New York City. On my way to school, I would pass the S-signs for "safe places to go" (as that cartoon put it) or later the bright orange-yellow and black fallout-shelter signs (millions of which were produced and used nationally). And like so many other

young people of that era, I let *The Twilight Zone* nuke me on TV, went to world-ending films in my high-school years, and read similar sci-fi.

I was only 18 and in my first semester of college when, on October 22, 1962, President John F. Kennedy went on national TV, not the norm then, to address us all (though I heard his speech on the radio). He warned us of a "secret, swift, and extraordinary buildup of Communist missiles – in an area well known to have a special and historical relationship to the United States and the nations of the Western Hemisphere, in violation of Soviet assurances, and in defiance of American and hemispheric policy – this sudden, clandestine decision to station strategic weapons for the first time outside of Soviet soil – is a deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which cannot be accepted by this country."

Now, mind you, I didn't know then that the US military already had a Single Integrated Operational Plan, or SIOP, to deliver more than 3,200 nuclear weapons to 1,060 targets in the Communist world. That included at least 130 cities which would, if all went according to plan, cease to exist. Official estimates of casualties ran to 285 million dead and 40 million injured (which probably



Screenshot from *Duck and Cover*, a 1952 movie. The propaganda movie was one of the most famous of all the pieces of propaganda during the early stages of the cold war.

underestimated the effects of radiation). Nor did I know then that, in the 1950s, American officials, at the highest levels, focused endlessly on what was known as the “unthinkable,” all the while preparing to plunge us into a planetary charnel house.

Military and civilian policy-makers then found themselves writing obsessive sci-fi-style scenarios, not for public consumption but for one another, about a possible “global war of annihilation”. In those new combat scenarios, they found themselves and their country on the horns of an unbearable dilemma. They could either forswear meaningful victory

– or strike first, taking on an uncivilised and treacherous role long reserved in our history books (if not in reality) for the enemy.

Still, as the Cuban Missile Crisis began, for Americans like me, everything for which we had long been preparing to duck-and-cover suddenly seemed to loom all too large and in a potentially unduckable fashion. And believe me, I was anything but unique when, as the US Navy launched its blockade of the island of Cuba, I wondered whether the “unthinkable” was now in the cards.

And here I am so many decades later. The world, of course, didn’t end. I never actually ducked and

covered to ward off a nuclear attack in what passed for real life. In those years, that SIOP remained as much a fantasy as anything on *The Twilight Zone*. And though neither superpower actually dismantled its nuclear arsenal when the Cold War ended in 1991 with the implosion of the Soviet Union (quite the opposite, in fact), nuclear weapons did seem to retreat into the ether, into Bert the Turtle’s fantasy world, until... well, I hesitate here, but I have to say it: the invasion of Ukraine.

Only the other day, CIA Director William Burns, once deeply convinced of the dangers of offering Nato membership to Ukraine

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and long warning of a Russian backlash against such a policy, publicly suggested that, sometime soon, Vladimir Putin might turn to atomic weaponry in his disastrous war there. Admittedly, he was talking about so-called tactical or battlefield nuclear weapons (each perhaps one-third the power of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima), not the monster nukes in both our arsenals. Still, welcome to the nuclear age, part 2.

And, of course, that's just to start on a situation that feels as if it could implode. After all, the war in Ukraine has already reached mind-boggling levels of criminal brutality and destructiveness and you can feel that where it truly goes, no one truly knows. A recent Russian diplomatic note to Washington, for instance, warned of "unpredictable consequences" if the Biden administration kept arming the Ukrainians. Meanwhile, the Russians all-too-publicly tested a new intercontinental ballistic missile, which President Vladimir Putin said would make the country's enemies "think twice." Worse yet, it seems as if the global situation could burst out of control in an altogether unpredictable fashion, if Putin begins to feel that Ukraine is a lost war.

Above all, since Cold War, part 1, ended, a second world-ending possibility has been piled atop the first in almost comic fashion.

In fact, I have the urge to cry out, "Duck and cover!" and not just because of those nukes that might sooner or later be brought to bear on Ukraine, leading to who knows what and where. After all, in 1991 when the Soviet Union disintegrated, who would have guessed that, more than three-quarters of a century after the dropping of that first atomic bomb (followed, of course, by a second one on Nagasaki and the end of the most horrific global war ever), there

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## It seems as if the global situation could burst out of control in an altogether unpredictable fashion, if Putin begins to feel that Ukraine is a lost war

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would once again be war in Europe? Isn't that the oldest story of all?

And don't expect good news soon either. In fact, according to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the war in Ukraine won't even end this year, while CNN reports that "some members of Congress and their aides are quietly making comparison to the Korean War, which lasted for three years." And Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley, who once thought Russian invaders could take the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, in 72 hours, now evidently believes the war there could last "at least years for sure."

Really? The Korean War? Such an old, old story (and another war where the nuclear threshold was at least approached). And once again, the world has split into two blocs in what could almost pass for a parody of the original Cold War, with each side already struggling for support from countries around the planet.

**I**f I were making all this up, let me assure you, it would be considered the worst-plotted "take two" imaginable. Oh, let's see, those humans didn't learn a damn thing from almost destroying the planet and each other back then! So, they decided to do the whole damn thing all over again. Only this time, they've thrown in an extra factor! Yep, you guessed it, another way to destroy the planet! (Duck and cover!!)

Yes, indeed, this strangely old-fashioned comedy of horrors is taking place in an all-too-new context, given a factor that wasn't in anyone's consciousness back then. Of course, I'm talking about climate change. I'm thinking about how the planet's top scientists have repeatedly told us that, if fossil-fuel use isn't cut back radically and soon, this planet will all-too-literally become a hell on Earth. And keep in mind that, even before the war in Ukraine began, global carbon dioxide emissions had rebounded from pandemic drops and hit a historic high.

And it could only get worse in the chaos of the Ukraine moment as gas prices soar, panic sets in, and all-too-little attention is paid to the dangers of overheating this planet. I mean, none of this should exactly be a secret, right? If, for instance, you happen to live in the American Southwest or West, parts of which are now experiencing the worst drought in at least 1,200 years and successive fire seasons beyond compare, you should know just what I mean. The worst of it is that such new realities, including, for instance, hurricane seasons to remember, are essentially the equivalent of movie previews. (And mind you, I've barely even mentioned the ongoing pandemic, which has already taken an estimated 15 million lives on this planet.)

It's sadly obvious what should be happening: the great powers, also the great fossil-fuelisers (China, the United States, and Russia), should be working together to green energise our world fast. And yet here we are, fighting a new war in Europe launched by the head of a Saudi-style petro state in Moscow playing out his version of Cold War II with Washington and Beijing – oh, and in the process, ensuring the burning of yet more fossil fuels.

Brilliant! Excuse me if I stop a

second – it’s just a reflex, really – to yell: Bert, duck and cover fast!

Oh, and lest you think that’s the worst of it, let’s turn to the globe’s second-greatest greenhouse-gas emitter of this moment (and the greatest ever, historically speaking). Right now, it looks all too much like the Democrats could go down fast and hard in the 2022 elections, and possibly in 2024 as well. After all, coal merchant Joe Manchin and the congressional Republicans have sunk the president’s Build Back Better Bill and so much else, ensuring the Democrats of all too few accomplishments as the mid-term elections approach. And the polls already reflect that grim reality.

Whether you’re talking about former Gen Z supporters, Hispanics, or, well, you name it, President Biden’s approval ratings seem to be spinning toward a pollster’s version of hell as the war goes on, inflation surges, and the price of gas shoots

Just light a  
giant match and burn  
this planet down,  
assuming Vladimir Putin  
hasn’t already  
done that

through the roof. In fact, only the other week, his administration, which came into office singing its own climate-changing praises and promising, as the future president said on the campaign trail in 2020, “no more drilling on federal lands, period. Period, period, period”, just opened bidding for new leases to do just that.

Meanwhile Donald Trump, the man who pulled this country out of the Paris climate accords and the greatest party boss in memory, luxuriates at Mar-a-Lago, raising sums beyond compare and paying no price for anything he’s done. If his party

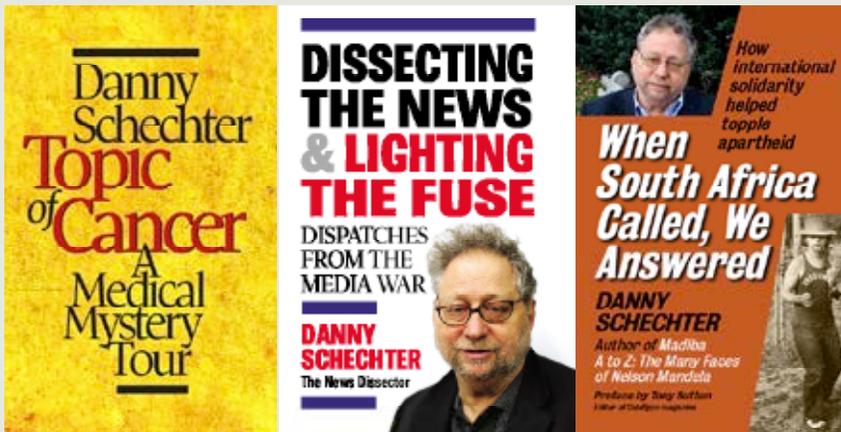
takes over Congress and then the White House, it’s not complicated at all. Just light a giant match and burn this planet down, assuming Vladimir Putin hasn’t already done that.

Call it hell on Earth and you’re anything but exaggerating. The “unthinkable”? Start thinking, my friend. *The fate of the Earth*, once the title of a classic book on the nuclear nightmare by Jonathan Schell, could soon be little short of a post-Trumpian joke.

My advice and I mean it: duck and cover! **CT**

**Tom Engelhardt** created and runs the website *TomDispatch.com*, where this article was first published. He is a co-founder of the American Empire Project and author of a highly praised history of American triumphalism in the Cold War, *The End of Victory Culture*. A fellow of the Type Media Center, his sixth and latest book is *A Nation Unmade by War*.

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TREVOR GRUNDY

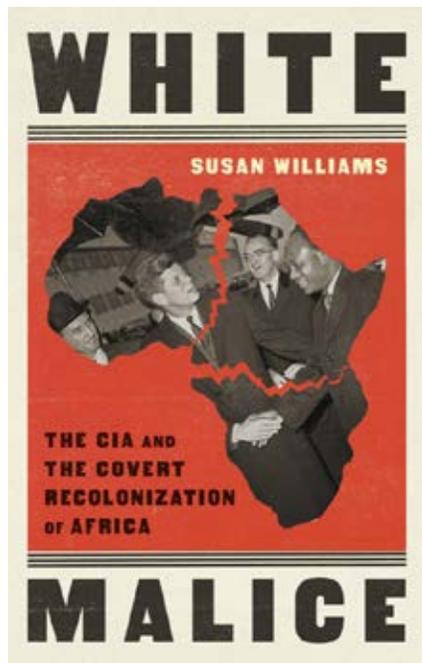
# Lies, double dealing and treachery

New book exposes the lies and hypocrisy of Western intelligence agencies when white colonialists left Africa

Winston Churchill said that in wartime, truth is so precious that she must always be attended by a bodyguard of lies. Were he alive today, he would have had the broadest of cheery grins on his face while reading this new, well-researched and at times fury-making work by the UK-based author/academic Susan Williams.

Williams needs no introduction to Africanists. Born in Zambia and raised in European settler societies, she empathises with Africans and tells us why so much has gone wrong. *White Malice* is the third in her series of books about the dark side of the post-colonial moon in Africa, her longest and arguably her best so far. The first was *Who killed Hammarskjöld – The UN, the Cold War and White Supremacy in Africa*, which was followed by *Spies in the Congo: The Race for the Ore that Built the Atomic Bomb*.

The ability of the senior executives of the American CIA and British M16 to lie their collective heads off while presenting their 'secret' organisations as bodyguards of democracy, freedom, progress and the free market would have left WSC thumping his chair with delight. But young non-academic Africans living



**WHITE MALICE**  
**The CIA and the Decolonisation of Africa**  
Susan Williams  
Hurst Publishers, London  
**£25.00**

with the consequences of such deceit see all of this in another way. And rightly so.

For that reason alone, *White Malice – The CIA and the Decolonisation of Africa* deserves a place on the bookshelves of schools, colleges, universities and in the private homes of politicians throughout the

English-speaking Commonwealth and USA.

It's a book that continues Susan Williams's probe into the activities of the CIA tinkers, M16 tailors and the scores of white as well as black mercenary soldiers and spies who turned post-colonial Africa upside-down and inside-out in their quest to make sure that the men who took over when the white colonialists left had American and British economic and strategic interests close to their hearts as well as their own bank accounts in London, Washington, Paris and Zurich and countless other places.

Kwame Nkrumah and Patrice Lumumba are no longer household names, but they spring back to life in this absorbing book. It was Nkrumah who spearheaded the movement to free Africa from European colonialism. In his most famous book, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, Nkrumah said no African country could be free while vast parts of the Continent remained under the rule of the Portuguese, the British and the Afrikaners in apartheid-run South Africa.

As Edinburgh-based academic Vin Arthey notes: "Both men saw their countries as part of what they wished would become the United

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States of Africa, but it was the United States of America that led to their un-doing.”

Nkrumah and Lumumba were visionaries who admired each other and who shared beliefs about socialism and the need to spread the continent’s wealth.

Nkrumah came to power in 1957, blessed by British royalty and Western banks, while Lumumba strongly believed that Americans, who boasted about their fight against George III and British imperialism, would do their best to support post-colonial Congo in 1960. But the moment they went their own way, flirted with Moscow and made loud noises in public about African socialism (even African Marxism), they discovered their friendship with Washington amounted to the square root of nothing.

The machinations of the CIA in America and the less well-known MI6 in Britain are just as central to the story as are Nkrumah and Lumumba.

Both men were nationalists as well as socialists and, as said, looked to the West for moral as well as financial support. They got it, as long as they steered well clear of Moscow and Russian planners who wanted from Africa exactly what the West wanted: copper, cobalt, industrial diamonds and, above all, the Congo’s high-grade uranium for nuclear weapons.

Uranium deposits found in the Congo were the richest in the world, and Washington’s determination to keep American hands on that precious strategic resource led to a dark and tangled tale of secret agents and informants buying ‘tame’ African politicians, lobbying at the UN, cultural infiltration, assassinations and coups.

Democratic white peace - loving Americans – Good. People hating,

war-loving, poverty-making Soviets – Bad.

Williams has delved deep into the archives, revealing new details of America’s covert Cold War programme, that expose many CIA front organisations that pretended to be acting in Africa’s interests while preparing the minefield of greed, nepotism and corruption so many Africans walk on today.

Watching over the new, inexperienced and often naïve African leaders who popped their heads over the wall in the 1950s and came to power a decade later, were highly trained and well-paid agents from the CIA which was formed in 1947 when Uncle Joe (Stalin) was re-branded overnight at the end of World War II as the West’s most awesome, most dangerous, enemy.

During the long struggle for freedom, the West had by and large ignored African demands for help. But it did come from the Soviet Union. With strings attached, of course.

The nationalist leader James Chikerema, leader of Zapu and then Frolizi in Zimbabwe, told me that when he and Eduardo Mondlane (the assassinated Frelimo leader) visited Moscow on an arms shopping trip, they were assured that they could have what they wanted. But first they had to sign documents promising access to all of their countries’ agricultural and mineral resources after they’d cast off the colonial yoke.

The CIA began its anti-Soviet cultural campaign by spending millions of dollars to set up journals, think tanks, art exhibitions and all aspects of political discourse in a place striving for freedom.

The message was: Follow our example and you’ll be fine. Deviate from our democratic principles and the sky will fall on you. And everything they did to publicise the American ‘democratic’ way of life – even

if that meant masterminding the removal of anyone who threatened American interests – was silently approved with nods and winks by US presidents in Washington.

African Americans were used shamelessly to join in the culture party that toured so many parts of Africa like a travelling multicultural circus., while popular musicians such as Nina Simone and Louis Armstrong were exploited for all they were worth. These Black American artists, poets, novelists, authors, journalists, and human rights campaigners attracted vast crowds of young Africans who had little idea how Afro-Americans and Native Americans (called Red Indians by Hollywood) were treated in democracy loving USA in the 1950s, 1960s and beyond.

While the complicity of the Belgian state in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba has been so well documented by Ludo de Witte author of *The Assassination of Lumumba*, Susan Williams focuses on the way the CIA stood behind the safety curtain as coups and assassinations took place on front stage.

But, sadly, there’s no smoking gun. White men in sunglasses stood back as black men slaughtered Lumumba in 1961 and removed Nkrumah from office in 1966. Men like those two have been replaced, not once and again but again and again, by little known crooks in Savile Row suits and Swiss bank accounts.

Susan Williams is powerless to change what happened, the consequences of which remain with Africans today, but the crusade for the truth goes on and she is one of its best respected, best armed, soldiers. **CT**

*Trevor Grundy is an English journalist who lived and worked in Africa from 1966 to 1996.*



Less than a minute away, a “nutritious rice gruel” shop. Have your gruel with beef, ground pork, chicken, pigeon, frog, pig’s brain, pig’s heart and kidney, eel, snakehead fish, salmon, river crab, egg or cheese, a truly radical ingredient.

LINH DINH

# Good food + Good friends = Good times

Back home from a long international exile, Linh Dinh takes us for a stroll around his favourite eating places

In Windhoek, Namibia, where I’ve been for the past three months, during a long international exile from my home in Vietnam, there are many stretches where you can drive for a mile, easily, without seeing a single restaurant or cafe. Here in Vietnam, you can’t go a block without several food options. In newly built gated communities, still rare, places to eat and drink have generally been banished, however. Imitating the West, Vietnam’s nouveau riche want to be

separated from their society, thus from life.

Paying \$330 a month, I have a pleasant room on the fourth floor in the Minh Thu Hotel. Except on weekends, business is slow, so I rarely run into another guest in the hallway. There are no party animals or bickering couples, so I always sleep well. Though I often go without it, the air conditioner works fine. From a window, I can see a golden Buddha spacing out on a mountain. On an adjacent terrace, there are

stone benches and a table of the kind you’d expect in a park.

In this sauna heat, one goes through several changes of clothing a day, so my washing machine is very useful. I have no stove, however, but that’s not a problem, for an excellent meal can easily be had for less than \$2 within two minutes of my building. Walk with me, I’ll show you.

A Vietnamese day begins early. Each dawn, a slim young woman across the street starts hacking at



Fresh coconut seller hard at work at 6:45 am over the street from my room at the Minh Thu Hotel. Coconuts cost from 52 to 61 cents, with the most expensive brought in from Ben Tre, a four hour drive away.

fresh coconuts. Removing its hard shell from one end, she exposes just enough of its soft meat for a straw to be inserted. With sure downward motions, she never misses, so you better watch what you say, buddy, or she'll transition you into the most au courant Westerner. Each coconut costs from 52 to 61 cents, with the most expensive from Ben Tre, four hours away by truck.

Next to her is a very popular eatery serving rice vermicelli with fish, not my cup of tea. Ten yards away is a guy advertising "nutritious rice gruel", as prepared in Thai Binh, a province way up north. Opening at 6 a.m., he offers gruel with beef, ground pork, chicken, pigeon, frog, pig's brain, pig's heart and kidney, eel, snakehead fish, salmon, sea crab meat, river crab meat, egg or even cheese, a truly radical ingredient I've never seen with rice gruel, but with so much competition, one must innovate, I suppose. The ultimate comfort food, especially for those about to tip into a belated grave,

rice gruel for breakfast is like grits, arroz caldo or polentina elsewhere.

Next, we run into a Family Mart, the Japanese chain. Kids come here to buy hot dogs, fried chicken, microwaveable spaghetti or, most often, just instant noodles, since they're cheapest. Fancy Korean brands come with seaweed and bits of dehydrated kimchi. Their packaging is high class, what the good life is all about. Sitting at a narrow counter, kids can look at the traffic outside. Vietnamese never tire of watching people and vehicles go by. It's comforting to be engulfed by your kind.

Still less than a minute from my building, we're at a traffic circle with six streets radiating from it. Standing right here, you can see three banh mi stands, a sticky rice with Chinese sausage stand, a fried chicken and french fries joint, and a restaurant serving beef stew with french bread in the morning, then seafood hot pot in the evening. My favourite, though, sells rice rolls with minced pork and wood ear

mushroom [bánh cuốn], a Hanoi speciality. Served with pork sausage, bean sprouts and mint leaves, and drenched in watered down fish sauce, vinegar, sugar and chopped chili pepper, it costs just 87 cents!

Now that we've had our breakfast, let's go sit on the second floor at the Cafe Sân Thuong [Terrace Cafe]. Here, a coffee with condensed milk is just 74 cents, and it comes with a free glass of hot tea. Since there's no music, we can easily think or talk. Canned tunes have clouded and crippled minds everywhere

At the next table, some guy is chattering on the phone. "It's too wet to work, so I'm taking the morning off", he says, so he works outside. Then, "We're in a very hot country, so we need cool colours". Discussing paints, he's a contractor, then. Calling a friend to join him for coffee, dude cheerfully announces, "I'm at that traffic circle where you had a fight with two gangstas, where you broke the guy's leg, ha, ha! Why don't you come out and look for them?"



The title of this article is taken from a 25-foot-long slogan in lights at a warehouse-like restaurant, Phú Hào, known for its excellent seafood.

Talking to his son, his tone shifts, “When you talk to dad, you don’t say, ‘What time is it?’ You must say, ‘Dad, what time is it?’ You must say, ‘What time is it, big brother, big sister or uncle?’ Not just, ‘What time is it?’ Remember that!”

A society is finished when loutishness or being an asshole hasn’t just become the norm, but is celebrated. In the name of free speech, America has Howard Stern, Jerry Springer, and the sickest porn ever produced. It is well done.

Tone is everything. At Friendly Lounge, my neighbourhood dive in Philly, you’d hear “fuck” or “fuckin’” all the time, but there’s almost never any hostility in it. That is not loutishness, but simply *vox vulgaris* as embodied by Rabelais and explained so well by Bakhtin. Jesus fuckin’ Christ, how the fuck did he drop that ball?! Fuck this woke shit! What’s suppressed always oozes out, thus the ubiquity of shit and fuck in spoken English, or “đu me” [“fuck

mother”] in Vietnamese. When I still posed as a writing professor, I encouraged my students to absorb and deploy all of English.

This brief food tour of my new neighbourhood shows the range of eating options available, and we’ve only walked in one direction. Going the other way, there’s Hue beef soup, and an old lady who sells quail and duck embryos (boluts) in the afternoon. If we’re willing to walk five minutes, there’s so much more. The title of this piece is taken from a 25-foot-long slogan in lights at a warehouse-like restaurant, Phú Hào, where excellent seafood is available. Though super trite, it’s still true, and as good a philosophy as any. To a Vietnamese, eating is best enjoyed communally, in a festive setting, and that’s why bright lights, often garish, is preferred over candles. A dim, intimate restaurant is very rare here.

Last night at Phú Hào, a young

man had his birthday party, so his face kept showing up on a huge screen, and shouts of “One, two, three, in!” [“Mot, hai, ba, dzô!”] kept erupting from his long table as they downed Tiger Beer. Even without a celebration, many Vietnamese restaurants have a party atmosphere in the evening. Walking by, a foreigner may just think everyone inside is celebrating something together, and they are, in a sense. They’re celebrating eating.

With such a concept of eating, there’s no social distancing, and remember that Orientals use chopsticks to pick out morsels from common plates. Riding around, most Vietnamese wear facemasks, but many already did this before Covid, to keep out pollution. Here in Vung Tau, many even swim in the ocean with a facemask on. When it comes time to eat, though, they revert to their normal selves, that of people practically giddy to share a drawn-out meal together. One, two, three, in!



Bo Cat claims that you won't just have a great meal, but a culinary experience, and that its beef comes straight from the USA. Who cares if factory-farmed American beef is among the worst on earth. Uncle Sam still has cachet.

Sign at a restaurant:  
*don't let TECHNOLOGY  
 DIVIDE us  
 LET'S TURN OFF THE PHONE  
 and talk to each other  
 LIKE BEFORE*

With food shortages widely forecast, how much longer can Vietnamese keep whooping it up as they stuff their faces with anything edible? No Vietnamese I've talked to seemed worried. Vietnam exports food, they say. More importantly, Vietnamese can survive on anything, or next to nothing, so even without electricity, running water or nothing to eat but two bowls of rice a day, they'll make it. Millions of them have been through years, if not decades, of deprivation.

Two decades ago, I stayed in a rural thatch hut where dinner was just rice and water spinach, and that was an improvement. They used to just fry rice with MSG. Vietnamese

will use toothpicks to twist out tiny bits of snail meat, and they'll make an excellent feast out of krills. Many also know which wild plants are edible, and they are adept at raising chickens in cities. In most urban Vietnamese neighbourhoods, you can still hear cocks crowing each dawn. A car repair shop might have two chickens cooped in a corner.

Too many Vietnamese have been Covid vaxxed, however, so their survival and endurance skills are useless if they're poisoned. Although my three closest friends in Vung Tau have not been jabbed, one has noticed many more funerals on his long ride to work each morning, and his own father's health has been wrecked by Pfizer. The old man used to walk miles each day. Now, he can barely trudge one third of a mile.

Less than a mile from my building, there's a restaurant, Bo Cat, that boasts of serving only American beef, never mind that factory farmed

USA cows yield some of the crappiest meat in history. Fed not on grass, these dismal beasts are even stuffed with processed chicken shit.

On Bo Cat's wall, there's an image of the Statue of Liberty, and she appears again on its menu, along with Washington, Jefferson and Teddy Roosevelt, with Lincoln's face cancelled by a hot pot of beef, with all the fixings. On the back wall, there's a cartoon cow with "from USA". Despite all these references to the greatest something ever, there's not a single American dish on the menu. At each table, though, there's a bottle of Vietnamese made ketchup.

Though ignorant or indifferent to American cooking, Vietnamese diners still come to Bo Cat because, well, Uncle Sam is still super sexy. **CT**

*Linh Dinh is the author of six books of poems, two of stories, a novel and the non-fiction Postcards from the End of America. He blogs at [www.linhdinhphotos.blogspot.com](http://www.linhdinhphotos.blogspot.com).*



**HISTORIC MOMENT:** Starbucks workers in Buffalo wait for a vote count from the NLRB.

SAM PIZZIGATI

# What's going on in Buffalo

Stunning union victory inspires “labour spring” that’s sweeping the US

**W**ant an up-close look at what’s going right – at how much is still going wrong – in the ongoing struggle against America’s oligarchs? These days you can see both on the shores of Lake Erie. Just shuffle off, as a Great Depression-era standard once advised, to Buffalo.

And what should you do when you get there? Go find a Starbucks.

With a little bit of luck, you could find yourself gazing at the most impactful Starbucks outlet anywhere.

Until this past December, Starbucks had no unions at any of its over 9,000 corporate-run US locations. But workers in upstate New York changed all that. Rank-and-filers at a Starbucks in Buffalo stared down and beat back the extravagantly funded opposition of a \$50-billion corporate colossus. Against all odds,

they voted to unionise.

That stunning rank-and-file victory has inspired a “labour spring” that’s now sweeping across the United States. Starbucks Workers United has so far won 16 elections nationwide, and workers at 176 other Starbucks storefronts have officially filed for union recognition.

How are the Corporate Starbucks power suits reacting? They’re panicking. The company has even

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brought back retired chief exec Howard Schultz for his third stint as Starbucks CEO. In his nine-year second stint, the intensely anti-union Schultz pocketed \$553-million.

But Schultz the third-timer is clearing feeling the new worker pressure. On April 4, his first day back on the job, the billionaire announced that he was halting the \$20-billion in stock buybacks the company had planned for the next few years. Stock buybacks, notes CEO pay analyst Sarah Anderson, serve to artificially inflate the value of a company's shares – and the value of executives' stock-based pay.

**W**hy is Howard Schultz making this abrupt about-face on stock buybacks his first order of business? His announcement of the change proclaimed that “suspending” buybacks “will allow us to invest more profit into our people and our stores – the only way to create long-term value for all stakeholders.”

Translation: We'll pause our greed-grabs until we can crush the union-organising momentum that workers in Buffalo have inspired. Then we'll get back to enriching the already rich.

That strike you as too cynical an interpretation of the current Corporate Starbucks gameplan? Take a look at the latest press reports. With Schultz back in charge, notes one, firings of union activists “appear to have accelerated”, with several union leaders in Buffalo either “fired or forced out.”

But crushing the union momentum that Buffalo baristas have inspired won't come as easily as Schultz seems to believe. The rank-and-file challenge to America's oligarchy has already burst past the confines of Starbucks. Most notably, Amazon workers at a huge Staten

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## Crushing the union momentum that Buffalo baristas have inspired won't come as easily as Schultz seems to believe

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Island warehouse have scored the first-ever union win within the Amazon empire. First Starbucks, then Amazon. Who knows where America's most inspiring grassroots union upsurge since the 1930s is going to surface next?

America's oligarchs, on the other hand, still wield enormous power at our every political level. Just how entrenched does our oligarchy remain? We now have a new and particularly outrageous example – from Buffalo, the second-largest city of the nation's second-largest “Blue State.”



Local pols in Buffalo, with the help of the state of New York, are now handing the billionaire owner of Buffalo's pro football franchise \$850-million to build a spanking new state-of-the-art stadium. That \$850-million ranks as the single largest taxpayer subsidy in the plutocratic history of American professional sports.

Buffalo, to be sure, already has a football stadium. This existing stadium, open since 1973, sits right across the street from the site where the new stadium will go and functions fine for watching football games. But the facility lacks the luxury boxes,

high-end restaurants, and other goodies that make big bucks for the owners of pro teams that play in newer ballparks and arenas.

The current owner of the Buffalo Bills, the Florida-based Terry Pegula, has spent the last decade not-so-subtly hinting that he'll move the Bills to Toronto if the good citizens of Buffalo don't “fix” his stadium problem. In 2014 and 2018, this extortion ploy won Pegula \$95-million from state taxpayers for stadium renovations. But the renovations haven't produced, Pegula claims, enough new revenue.

The new subsidy deal, Pegula apparently feels, hits the new-revenue sweet spot. The deal certainly does hit taxpayers in their wallets. State taxpayers will be on the hook for at least \$600-million. Erie County taxpayers will pony up another \$250-million. The tab for Pegula will come to \$350-million, but a healthy chunk of that will come out of the pockets of season ticket holders. They'll have to fork out \$1,000 for personal seat licences if they want to continue to watch the Bills punt, pass, and tackle.

One point worth keeping in mind: Bills owner Pegula, who owes his fortune to fracking, holds a net worth now running well over \$5-billion. He could afford to bankroll the entire new stadium himself.

New York governor Kathy Hochul, even so, is calling the financing deal for Pegula's new stadium a “point of pride” for all New Yorkers. For Hochul's husband Bill, the deal could also be a potential “point” of serious personal profit. Bill Hochul serves as senior vice president and general counsel for Delaware North, the company that currently runs the concessions at all the Bills' home games.

“Quite a sweetheart deal”, charges Native American leader Matthew

Pagels, the president of New York's Seneca Nation, a community that's just lost a battle with the state over revenue-sharing funds.

New York's new subsidy for the billionaire Pegula, agrees Stanford economist Roger Noll, rates as a "terrible deal." The governor's claim that subsidising the Bills will pay off big for the regional economy, Noll just told a New York business publication, holds no water. Years of research, he points out, show that new stadiums typically have next to no impact on city-wide income and employment.

"Concessionaires in the stadium sell more food", Noll explains, "but restaurants elsewhere sell less."

## The governor's claim that subsidising the Bills will pay off big for the regional economy holds no water

None of this research, of course, matters to oligarchs. Billionaires like Terry Pegula have the power to get what they want. They may not all have super yachts as large as their Russian oligarch counterparts. But their presence and power foster a systemic corruption just as

destructive.

Starbucks workers in Buffalo have delivered America's oligarchs an unexpectedly solid blow. But our oligarchy will only crumble when we all start hammering together. **CT**

**Sam Pizzigati** writes on inequality for the Institute for Policy Studies. His latest book: *The Case for a Maximum Wage (Polity)*. Among his other books on maldistributed income and wealth: *The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970 (Seven Stories Press)*.

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JOHN CLARKE

# Real reasons for cost of living crisis

The present inflationary shock is one more confirmation of the need for militant and powerful social resistance in the post-pandemic period

**A**s we purportedly emerge from the Covid pandemic, one of the immediate challenges that confronts us is a global cost of living crisis. There has been a sharp round of inflation which, even if we optimistically imagine it will be rapidly contained, has already had a very serious impact on the living standards of masses of people.

As the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports, global food prices reached an all-time high in February. They have risen by an astounding 24.1 percent over the last year and by nearly four percent in the last month. This is an absolutely devastating development for people in poor countries, where the effects of pandemic-induced “economic scarring” are already having a terrible impact. Even those of us in the richest countries, however, are facing a grim reckoning.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, consumer prices rose 3.5 percent last year, while wages rose just 2.3 percent. In that country, workers earning an average wage took an effective pay cut of \$832 when the impact of inflation is taken into account. In the United Kingdom, workers’ wage increases are being wiped out by the surge in prices”. Moreover, a new energy

price cap could see costs for millions of households hiked by 50 percent. In the United States, despite an average wage increase of 3.3 percent, real wages are being pushed down by the highest rate of inflation in 40 years.

Here in Canada, the annual rate of inflation has surpassed five percent for the first time in 30 years and has outpaced wage growth. A recent survey conducted by the Angus Reid Institute found that 70 percent of those they questioned were “stressed about money” as the pressure of inflation weighs on their daily lives. “Canadians’ household budgets are becoming squeezed from all angles as the price of goods rises,” the report concluded. Just over half of respondents indicated that an unexpected \$1,000 bill would put an impossible strain on their finances. Rising housing, gasoline and food prices are the key driving forces and the impacts of this are being felt very unevenly. For example, the average rental price of an apartment in Vancouver has increased by an astounding 23 percent over the course of the last year.

If, as is plausibly argued, the present inflationary crisis is largely attributable to “supply shocks” caused by the economic disruption that has been generated by the pandemic, this may not be the

good news that some suppose. Indeed, ruptures in the fragile supply chain, which was constructed along with the neoliberal reordering of the global workforce, may be considered another emerging feature of the multi-layered crisis of capitalism. First of all, the assumption that the impacts of the pandemic will now recede may well be decidedly premature. As the Chair of the Federal Reserve, Jerome Powell, put it, “contrary to expectations, COVID has not gone away with the arrival of vaccines. In fact, we are now headed once again into more COVID-related supply disruptions from China.”

**T**he lingering effects of the pandemic are, however, but one part of a much wider problem, and the present economic impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine are chief among these. When it comes to this new disruptive inflationary pressure, Goldman Sachs analyst Philipp Hilderbrand suggests that, “We are looking at a supply shock layered on top of a supply shock. And the nature of the new supply shock centred on energy suggests not only that inflation will move even higher and likely prove more persistent moving forward, but also

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that growth will take a hit.”

The inflationary pressures resulting from the Ukraine conflict will not be limited to energy costs but will also produce serious consequences when it comes to food prices. In the poorer countries this takes on the dimensions of a complete disaster, with the head of the World Trade Organization, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, raising the possibility of major riots being triggered by the ensuing acute hardship. “It is poor countries and poor people within poor countries that will suffer the most”, she observed.

Obviously, the intensifying climate crisis looms large when it comes to supply shocks and economic disruption. *Global Trade* magazine, a publication that modestly describes itself as “the authority for US companies doing business globally”, warns that the climate crisis means that “transporting parts and products across the world will become an increasingly challenging and even dangerous task”. It also very plausibly identifies climate change as the key threat to global supply chains. This worsening situation will cause problems that go well beyond the balance sheets of US companies engaged in global trade, and it speaks to economic shocks and inflationary pressures stretching well into the future.

As with any crisis of capitalism, the question of who will pay for it becomes a crucial issue. One potential ‘supply chain disruption’ that the major employers would like to prevent is any effort by workers to defend their rights and living standards. Following a 48-hour work stoppage by Canadian Pacific Railway workers, calls have gone out for rail to be declared an essential service. We may be sure that the profit-driven fragility of the supply chain will be addressed to the least

degree possible but that any effort by workers to take advantage of the choke holds that this creates will be met with loud employer demands to criminalise such actions.

Capitalists, mainstream economists and central banks have long put forward the claim that workers’ wage demands fuel an inflationary spiral. It is hard to see how, in the present situation, workers are driving an inflationary process that they are unable to keep up with but interest rate hikes are nevertheless being considered. To be sure, the faltering global recovery and the deep uncertainties it brings with it are raising doubts in high places about the risks of going too far, but the interest rate hawks are gaining ground. The use of this method by central banks is a standard weapon of class war and even a modest set of increases would have serious adverse effects in this period of economic fragility.

Workers and communities face the dire impact of the inflationary surge, with unions that are far weaker than they were during the spiralling inflation that marked the 1970s. The struggle to win cost of living protections in collective agreements will be an uphill one and a greatly increased proportion of the workforce is now subjected to low-wage and precarious forms of employment. Income support systems are also far less robust than they were 40 or 50 years ago.

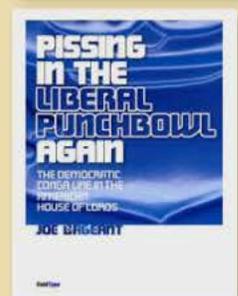
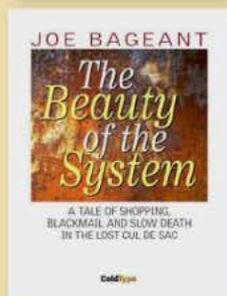
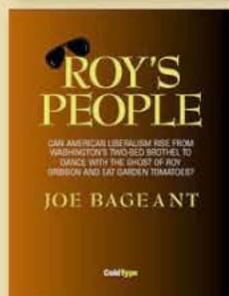
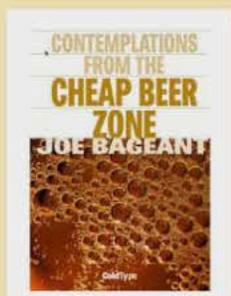
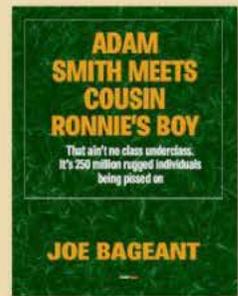
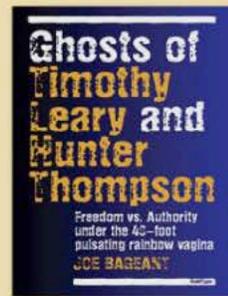
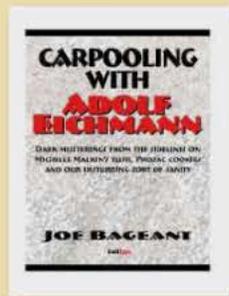
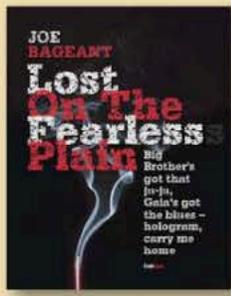
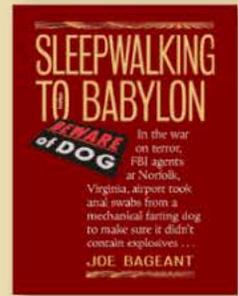
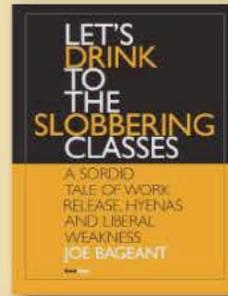
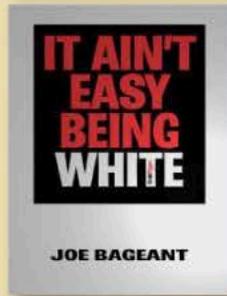
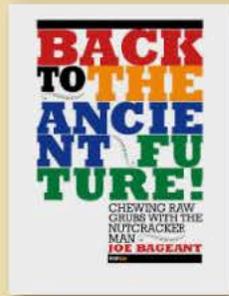
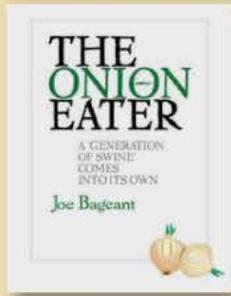
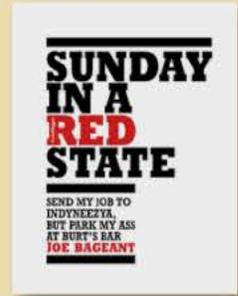
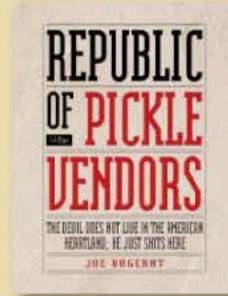
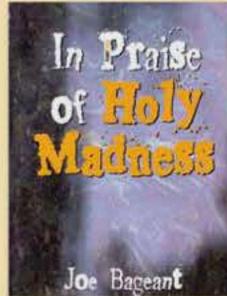
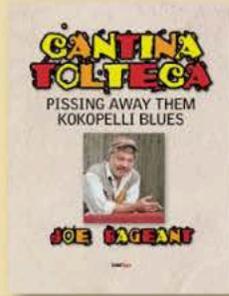
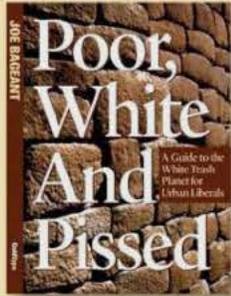
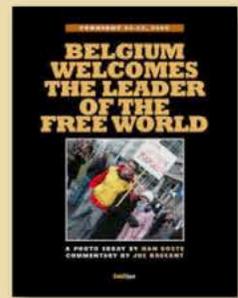
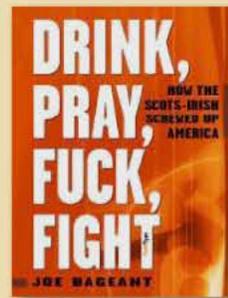
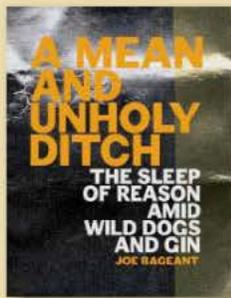
The people in Ontario who live on wretched sub-poverty social assistance income have had their benefits frozen for the last three years. This was already a serious situation before the present cost of living crisis struck but it is now an actual threat to survival. The recent death of a man in Barrie, who perished in

an uninsulated trailer, attests to the inadequacy of the provincial government’s social assistance rates, which force many recipients to choose between dangerous housing conditions and homelessness.

A concerted working class response is imperative in this situation. Certainly, bold demands around workers’ rights, housing and social provision must be made but, there is also going to have to be a determined social mobilization. In Britain, Unite’s general secretary, Sharon Graham, has indicated that her union will fight for wage increases that match real increases in the cost of living: “Today’s rise in inflation reflects a growing crisis in the cost of living for ordinary families. So, workers’ wages will have to at least match the inflation rate because otherwise they will be facing a calamitous drop in their standard of living.”

Protests were recently held across the UK in an attempt to galvanise a movement to fight back in these conditions of crisis. We must follow suit here in Canada. The present inflationary shock is one more confirmation of the need for militant and powerful social resistance in the post-pandemic period. Working class people didn’t cause the pandemic, nor did they provoke the crises that are emerging in its wake. But to foil the attempts to impose the burden on us we must be prepared to organise resistance in our workplaces and communities. **CT**

*John Clarke was an organiser with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) for nearly three decades. He is presently the Packer Visitor in Social Justice at Toronto’s York University. He blogs at [www.johnclarkeblog.com](http://www.johnclarkeblog.com). This article was first published by Canadian Dimension.*



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SUSAN MEISELAS

# Where the girls were!

Reissue of acclaimed  
book takes us back  
to a different age

**S**usan Meiselas' 1976 book *Carnival Strippers* has long been acclaimed as one of the most important photographic projects of the second half of the 20th-century. From 1972 to 1975, Meiselas spent her summers photographing women who performed striptease for small-town carnivals in New England, Pennsylvania and South Carolina.

As she followed the shows from town to town, she captured the dancers on stage and off, their public performances as well as private lives, creating a portrait both documentary and empathetic: "The recognition of this world is not the invention of it. I wanted to present an account of the girl show that portrayed what I saw and revealed how the people involved felt about what they were doing", says Meiselas, who also taped candid interviews with the dancers, their boyfriends, show managers



USA. Tunbridge, Vermont. 1974. Tentful of marks.

© Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos





TOP: Vermont. Essex Junction. August 1973.  
 Club Flamingo.  
 ABOVE: Barton, Vermont. 1974.  
 Shortie on the Bally.

and customers.

Meiselas' frank description of these women brought a hidden world to public attention, and explored the complex role the carnival played in their lives: mobility, money and liberation, but also undeniable objectification and exploitation.

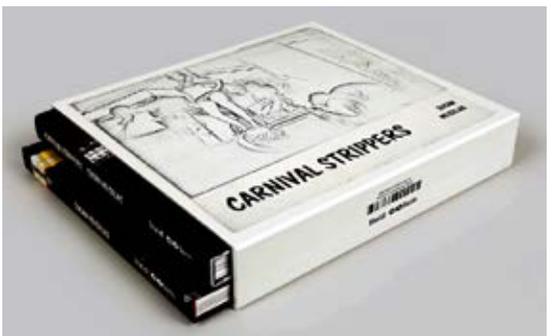
Produced during the early years of the women's movement, *Carnival Strippers* reflects the struggle for identity and self-esteem during an era of change. Featuring largely unpublished additional photos, contact sheets, maps and letters, the new edition, from C/O Berlin and Steidl, *Carnival Strippers Revisited* adds new depth to Meiselas' vision.

The two volumes of *Carnival Strippers Revisited and Making Of* come together in a slipcase, includes colour images that have never been printed and/or published before, along with ephemera material collected by Meiselas as she developed the project. **CT**





© Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos



**CARNIVAL STRIPPERS REVISITED**

Susan Meiselas

Published by Steidl – [www.steidl.de](http://www.steidl.de)

US \$95, Canada \$130, Europe €85

TOP: Vermont. Essex Junction.  
September 1973.

Lena waits for a break.  
LEFT: Tunbridge, Vermont. 1974.  
Before the show.

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HARRIET FLETCHER

# Marilyn and the darker side of the '60s

Perhaps Andy Warhol's Marilyn is not just a symbol of the swinging '60s, but an artefact from a time as turbulent and uncertain as today

If you remember the '60s, you weren't really there". This famous quip says much about our rose-tinted nostalgia for the decade. The fun-loving hedonism of Woodstock and Beatlemania may be etched into cultural memory, but Andy Warhol's Marilyn Monroe portraits reveal a darker side to the swinging '60s that turns our nostalgia on its head.

Warhol's iconic Marilyn Monroe portrait *Shot Sage Blue Marilyn*, due to go on sale at Christie's this month, is expected to fetch record-breaking bids of \$200-million, making it the most expensive 20th-century artwork ever auctioned. Nearly 60 years after they were first created, Warhol's portraits of the ill-fated Hollywood star continue to fascinate us.

According to Alex Rotter, Christie's chairman for 20th- and 21st-century art, Warhol's Marilyn is "the absolute pinnacle of American Pop and the promise of the American dream, encapsulating optimism, fragility, celebrity and iconography all at once".

Hollywood stars were great sources of inspiration for the pop art movement. Monroe was a recurring motif, not only in the work of Warhol but in the work of his contemporaries, including James Rosenquist's *Marilyn Monroe*,

*I* and Pauline Boty's *Colour Her Gone* and *The Only Blonde in the World*.

Born Norma Jeane Mortenson, but renamed Marilyn Monroe by 20th Century Fox, the actress went on to become one of the most illustrious stars of Hollywood history, famed for her roles in classic films like *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Some Like It Hot*. She epitomised the glitzy world of consumerism and celebrity that pop artists thought was emblematic of 1950s and 1960s American culture.

While Rotter's statement may be true to some extent, there is also a sinister edge to the Marylins because many were produced in the months following her unexpected death in 1962.

On the surface, the works may look like a tribute to a much-loved icon, but themes of death, decay and even violence lurk within these canvases. Clues can often be found in the production techniques. One of the collection's most famous pieces, *Marilyn Diptych*, uses flaws from the silkscreen process to create the effect of a decaying portrait. Warhol's *The Shot Marylins* consists of four canvases shot through the forehead with a single bullet. In this, the

creation of Warhol's art is as important as the artwork itself.

At a glance, the surface level glamour of Warhol's Marilyn immortalises the actress as a blonde bombshell of Hollywood's bygone era. It is easy to forget the tragedy behind the image, yet part of our enduring fascination with Marilyn Monroe is her tragedy.

Her mental health struggles, her tempestuous personal life and the mystery surrounding her death have been well documented in countless biographies, films and television shows, including Netflix's documentary *The Mystery of Marilyn Monroe: The Unheard Tapes* and upcoming biopic *Blonde*. She epitomises the familiar narrative of the tragic icon that is doomed to keep repeating itself – something that Warhol understood all too well after surviving a shooting by Valerie Solanas in 1968.

The death at the heart of Warhol's Marylins is not just rooted in grief but is also a reflection of the wider cultural landscape. The 1960s was a remarkably dark period in 20th-century American history. A brief look at the context in which Warhol was producing these images reveals a decade plagued by a series of traumatic events.

*Life* magazine published violent



Warhol created *Shot Sage Blue Marilyn* and then shot a bullet through Marilyn's forehead.

photographs of the Vietnam War. Television broadcasts exposed shocking police brutality during civil rights marches. America was shaken by the assassinations of John F Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. Footage of JFK's death captured by bystander Abraham Zapruder was repeatedly broadcast on television. Celebrated Hollywood stars were dying young and in tragic circumstances, from Marilyn Monroe and Judy Garland to Jayne Mansfield and Sharon Tate.

This image of the 1960s is echoed by the postmodern theorist Fredric Jameson, who describes the decade as a “virtual nightmare” and a “his-

torical and countercultural bad trip”. Stars like Monroe were not as flawless as they may appear in Warhol's portraits, but were “notorious cases of burnout and self-destruction”.

Warhol understood this more than anyone. His *Death and Disaster* series explores the spectacle of death in America and affirms the 1960s as a time of anxiety, terror and crisis. The series consists of a vast collection of silkscreened photographs of real-life disasters including car crashes, suicides and executions taken from newspapers and police archives. Famous deaths are also a central theme of the series, including portraits of Marilyn

Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor and Jackie Kennedy – all of whom are associated with significant deaths or near-death experiences.

Death and Disaster came about in 1962 when Warhol's collaborator Henry Geldzahler suggested that the artist should stop producing “affirmation of life” and instead explore the dark side of American culture:

Maybe everything isn't always so fabulous in America. It's time for some death. This is what's really happening.

He handed Warhol a copy of the New York *Daily News*, which led to the first disaster painting *129 Die in Jet!*.

The recent hype around the auctioning of the Marilyn portrait reveals as much about our time as it does about our nostalgia for the 1960s. We choose to remember the decade in all its glorious technical-our, but uncovering its darker moments provides room for reconsideration. Perhaps Warhol's Marilyn is not just a symbol of the swinging 60s, but an artefact from a time that was as turbulent and uncertain as our own. **CT**

**Harriet Fletcher** is Associate Lecturer in English and History at Lancaster University in England. This article was first published at [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com).



President John F Kennedy in the limousine in Dallas, Texas, minutes before his assassination on November 22, 1963.

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JONATHAN COOK

# Why Zelensky's 'big Israel' dream makes Moscow nervous

The Ukrainian president's comparison bolsters Moscow's claim that Kyiv is intent on a programme of violent 'de-Russification'

**T**he Israeli government has been trying to keep as low a profile as possible over the war in Ukraine, but Volodymyr Zelensky, the Ukrainian president, seems determined to drag Israel on to centre stage.

Zelensky made a direct appeal to the Israeli parliament in March, ostensibly asking for weapons, especially the Iron Dome interception system Israel uses to stop short-range rockets fired out of Gaza by Palestinians trying to draw attention to Israel's 15-year siege of the enclave.

But rather than being flattered by the attention, many Israeli politicians objected to Zelensky's speech. In it, he compared Russia's treatment of Ukraine to the Nazis' "Final Solution" for European Jews. Zelensky, who is Jewish, hoped the parallel would strike home. To most Israeli ears, it sounded offensive. So far Israel has refused to supply Ukraine with weapons or join the West in

waging economic warfare on Russia.

It does not help that major Israeli political parties and religious communities have strong geographical and emotional ties to Russia. Or that Moscow is a major actor in the Middle East, not least in neighbouring Syria. Israel coordinates closely with Russia over regular air strikes in Syria – themselves in violation of international law.

Israel has been trying its best to tread a difficult diplomatic path over Ukraine. On the one hand, Israel is a regional client of the United States, under Washington's protection, and wishes to keep its patron happy. And on the other, Israel's military interests are to maintain good relations with Moscow.

Furthermore, Israeli leaders are worried about reinforcing the consensus that what the Russian army is doing in Ukraine amounts to war crimes, thereby creating a very public precedent that could be turned against Israel over its own abuses



Ukraine President  
Volodymyr Zelensky



Ukraine Government Photo

in the occupied territories.

Adopting an early role as mediator, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett even urged Zelensky to accept a Russian ceasefire proposal.

Nonetheless, Zelensky is intent on tipping the scales in Ukraine's favour with Israel. He understands that his country's plight has captured the western media and western public's sympathy. He has every incentive to weaponise that sentiment to press-gang Israel into more openly supporting Ukraine.

In his speech to the parliament, he appropriated a quote from a former Israeli prime minister, Golda Meir, who claimed that "our enemies want us to cease to exist". Russia planned to do the same to Ukraine, Zelensky warned.

In April, after the first images emerged of mass corpses in Bucha, near Kyiv, Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid changed tune. He commented on Twitter: "Intentionally harming a civilian population is a war crime and I strongly condemn it."

Presumably, Israel hopes it can evade such criticism itself by claiming it has no "intention" to harm Palestinian civilians, despite so often harming civilians.

And then, a few days later, Israel conceded further ground by joining the US and Europe in voting to suspend Russia from the United Nations human rights council. Moscow had warned countries that it would treat the move as an "unfriendly gesture", with repercussions for diplomatic relations.

The Israeli vote at the UN followed hot on the heels of Zelensky making a statement promoting Israel as a model for post-war Ukraine. He said his country would become a "big Israel", with the armed forces having a strong presence in every aspect of Ukrainian society.

He observed that in "all institu-

tions, supermarkets, cinemas, there will be people with weapons". For the foreseeable future, Ukraine would develop as a highly militarised society like Israel rather than being "absolutely liberal, European". Almost as an afterthought, he added that Ukraine would avoid becoming "authoritarian".

The cosyng up to Israel began some time ago under Zelensky. In 2020, he delighted Israel by pulling Ukraine out of a UN committee established in 1975 "to enable Palestinian people to exercise ... the right to self-determination ... the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced".

But the significance of modelling a future Ukraine on Israel is being largely ignored.

Israel is highly militarised because, as a settler-colonial state trying to dispossess and replace the native population, it must treat the Palestinians as an enemy that needs either to be beaten into submission or expelled.

For decades, the Israeli army and settler militias have worked hand in hand to drive Palestinians off their land (ethnic cleansing) and keep them ghettoised and away from the exclusively Jewish communities built in their place (apartheid). Is this what Zelensky intends for Ukraine: a deeply segregated society where the Ukrainian army and militias drive out those seen as not truly Ukrainian?

Paradoxically, that approximates the accusation Vladimir Putin levelled against the Ukrainian government as he justified Russia's invasion in late February. He claimed Ukraine needed to be "denazified" – an allegation met with revulsion

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in western capitals.

But Zelensky's vow to create a Ukraine modelled on Israel, it could be argued, validates the Russian leader's argument.

Kyiv will have no need to station soldiers and militias in every cinema and supermarket if Zelensky makes good on his vow to drive the Russian army out of Ukraine. It will need a large, well-equipped military to defend its northern and eastern borders. But the Ukrainian president, it seems, does not see Russia as Ukraine's only enemy.

So who else is he worried about? To understand that, we need to parse Putin's hyperbolic speeches.

The Russian president's "denazification" allegation, justifying the invasion of Ukraine, was premised on the idea that fascist elements in the Ukrainian army have been carrying out pogroms and ethnic cleansing against a large population of ethnic Russians inside Ukraine, in the Donbas region bordering Russia.

Russia has claimed that, in part, troops are there to prevent Ukraine from carrying out such pogroms – often described as "de-Russification" – in the country's east. Putin has even used the term "genocide".

One can dispute Putin's claim, while also recognising it has not been invented out of thin air – though you might imagine that by listening to the western media. Ukraine has been plunged into what amounts to a civil war in its east since large-scale protests in Kyiv in 2014 removed a government sympathetic to Russia and replaced it with one keen to integrate into Nato.

To some observers, what happened eight years ago looked suspiciously like a US-backed "soft coup", with one senior White House official who had been dispatched to Kyiv at



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**Since the change of government in 2014, groups like Azov have been at the forefront of a civil war in the Donbas region**

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the time, Victoria Nuland, caught on tape discussing who should be installed as the new president.

Subsequent moves by the new nationalist government included not just antagonising Russia by lobbying for greater integration into Nato and the European Union. Kyiv also passed legislation severely downgrading the status of the Russian language, spoken by large swaths of the population, and merging neo-Nazi, openly anti-Russia militias like the Azov Battalion into the Ukrainian military.

Since the invasion, Zelensky has also banned 11 opposition parties because they are considered supportive of Russia or Ukraine's Russian communities.

Putin's "denazification" claim has been exploited by the western media to characterise as "Russian disinformation" any mention of a long-standing neo-Nazi problem in Ukraine – even though all of these outlets reported extensively on that very problem a few years ago.

But the point – at least from Moscow's perspective – about the Azov

Battalion and groups like it is that they represent a powerful strain of Ukrainian ultra-nationalism that not only celebrates historic Ukrainian collaboration with Nazi Germany but sees ethnic Russians in Ukraine as a threat.

In a rare example of Zelensky being challenged about this recently by the western media, he admitted that there were neo-Nazi militias that were "defending our country". He seemed to imagine that western audiences would be reassured by the fact that these far-right groups had been integrated into the Ukrainian military and operated under the national flag.

Since the change of government in 2014, groups like Azov have been at the forefront of a civil war in the Donbas region, where ethnic Russians are concentrated. Fighting has claimed at least 14,000 lives and driven many hundreds of thousands more Ukrainians from their homes.

That may explain why on a visit to one of those eastern towns, even the BBC's defence correspondent had to concede – however reluctantly – that some Ukrainians he interviewed appeared to view their own government, under Zelensky, as more of a problem than Putin or the Kremlin.

This returns us to the question of why Zelensky might be so keen to model Ukraine on Israel – and why such a development would make Moscow nervous.

Israel regards all Palestinians under its rule – whether citizens inside Israel or subjects under military occupation – as a potential fifth column, working to destroy Greater Israel from within on behalf of millions more Palestinians in the diaspora and the wider Arab world.

This ultra-nationalist narrative

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has underpinned Israel's development as a highly militarised ethnic fortress committed to oppressing any Palestinians left within its walls, with the ultimate aim of driving them out.

For anyone not in thrall to Zionism's clash of civilisations, war-without-end narrative, what Israel has done to the Palestinians looks a lot like apartheid – the reason why so many human rights and legal groups have recently started saying this out loud.

But while much of the world increasingly deplores Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, the Ukrainian leadership gives every impression of believing this extreme, ethno-nationalist, apartheid model is an ideal one for Ukraine.

Which, if right, would breathe credibility into – though not justify – some of Putin's reasoning for launching an invasion: to pre-empt the expulsion of Ukraine's historic ethnic Russian communities and their replacement on Russia's doorstep of those sympathetic to the neo-Nazi ideology of the Azov Battalion.

Western pundits have made much of Zelensky being Jewish to swipe away claims of a neo-Nazi problem



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in Ukraine. But it is not clear how much control the Ukrainian president exercises over these militias, or the degree to which an ultra-nationalism expressed chiefly in terms of vehement hatred of all things Russian is spreading among Ukrainians as the war takes a heavier toll.

The corpses littering streets in places like Bucha, and the videos apparently showing Ukrainians executing Russian prisoners of war, are signs of how rapidly these divisions

are becoming even more poisonous, deepening the existing trauma of eight years of civil war.

In such circumstances, the West ought to be doing its level best to impose a ceasefire on both sides as quickly as possible. Instead western states are fanning the flames by flooding Ukraine with weapons to intensify the fighting and raise the death toll.

Even if Ukraine eventually manages to drive out the Russian army, western weapons will remain in the hands of Ukrainians, including militias like the Azov Battalion.

If Zelensky's dream of Ukraine becoming a "big Israel" is realised with the exit of Russian soldiers, it will most likely mark not an end to the blood-spilling but simply a new chapter in Ukraine's trauma. **CT**

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

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