

IRELAND MOVES CLOSER TO UNITY | Matt Kennard

BRIEF HISTORY OF KILL LISTS | Medea Benjamin & Nicolas J.S. Davis

GENOCIDE FORETOLD | Chris Hedges

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Issue 257

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

May 2024

Donald Trump has a distinct affinity for the kinds of gang leaders we've been hearing about recently in ever more disastrously chaotic Haiti. If America re-elects him in November, it could be putting the equivalent of a gang leader into the White House

– John Feffer (PAGE 22)



*When democracies die,
the mobs take over*



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INSIDE

INSIGHTS

5. **Stylising the horrors of genocide**
Juan Cole
7. **World Court broadens scope of genocide**
Binoy Kampmark
9. **At last! Voters refuse to pay for sports stadium**
Victor Matheson
9. **Hurwitt's Eye**
Mark Hurwitt
10. **Now opposing a genocide is worse than aiding one**
Caitlin Johnstone
12. **We must stop our rulers as they rush to war**
Lindsey German
13. **We Are All Fried**
Greg Koenderman

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Kerry Swift
1950-2024

This issue of *ColdType* is dedicated to the memory of Kerry Swift, left, my editorial colleague at South Africa's *Drum* magazine during the turbulent years of apartheid, and former business partner in Johannesburg.

With love, admiration and respect

– Tony Sutton, editor

ISSUES

14. **Inside the Chamber of Propaganda Horrors**
David Edwards
18. **When democracies die, the mobs take over**
John Feffer
22. **A brief history of kill lists: From Langley to Lavender**
Medea Benjamin & Nicolas J.S. Davies
26. **Genocide foretold**
Chris Hedges
29. **Bendib's World**
Khalil Bendib
30. **How 'antisemitic hoax' drowned out discovery of mass graves in Gaza**
Jonathan Cook
36. **Elites in global North are afraid to talk about Palestine**
V.J. Prashad
38. **The closest Irish unity has been since partition**
Matt Kennard
42. **Mass layoffs: The rich thrive while workers writhe**
Sam Pizzigati
44. **Divide and conquer: The government's propaganda of fear and fake news**
John & Nisha Whitehead
48. **The Immense Hunger**
Edward J. Curtin



**17,000 PALESTINIAN CHILDREN
IN GAZA ARE UNACCOMPANIED**
meaning their parents have been killed or they
have been separated from them.

VISUALIZING **PALESTINE**

FEBRUARY 2024
SOURCES bit.ly/OCHA-day129



INSIGHTS

► JUAN COLE

Stylising the horrors of genocide

American humorist and horror author, Ambrose Bierce (d. 1913), produced a serial, staccato, newspaper column consisting of humorous and sardonic definitions of words, which he later published as a book, *The Devil's Dictionary*. (He initially had to entitle it "The Cynic's Wordbook," which doesn't have the same ring, because his pious editors wanted to avoid referring to Mephistopheles.)

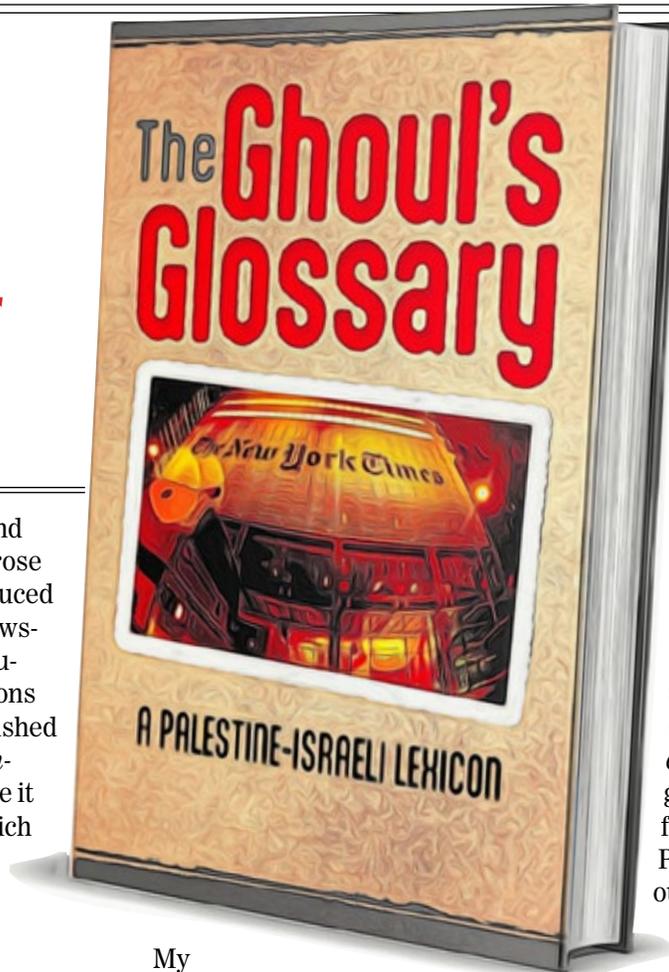
Bierce often tweaked the white nationalist Establishment. For instance, consider this entry:

"Aborigines, n. Persons of little worth found cumbering the soil of a newly discovered country. They soon cease to cumber; they fertilize."

A more concise summation of the genocidal character of white settler colonialism would be hard to discover.

And I rather like this one, skewering pretensions of impartiality:

"Absurdity, n. A statement or belief manifestly inconsistent with one's own opinion."



My homage to Bierce has been *The Ghoul's Glossary*. I did mine as contextual, political satire, and some of the bons mots have faded. But there are a few I'd keep for a book. For instance, this one from 2008:

"**ZIONISM:** The theory that because Nazis hated Jews, the latter would be much better off all gathered together on disputed land in the midst of 300 million Arabs and Iranians."

Or this:

"**PALESTINIANS:** Dispossessed, displaced and stateless persons who are ungrateful for their

condition and therefore vaguely dangerous."

Or speaking of the American attempt to pivot away from the Middle East after causing a spot of bother earlier in the century:

"**WITHDRAWAL:** A way to avoid the worst consequences of a moment of pleasurable conquest, which, however, often comes too late to avoid years of support payments."

I bring all this up because the intrepid Jeremy Seahill and Ryan Grim at *The Intercept* have sprung the style guide of the *New York Times* for talking about Israel and Palestine. If it weren't so serious, it would be hilarious. It is sort of a *Devil's Dictionary* in reverse, which punches down rather than up. It more

resembles Bierce's forays into horror fiction.

So I thought I'd rearrange their fine column as a supplement to the *Ghoul's Glossary*.

● **CARNAGE:** When Israelis kill Palestinians this word should be avoided since it conveys more emotion than information. May be used when Palestinians kill Israelis. Example: "One Israeli said that being high on LSD during the Hamas-led attack on Oct. 7 prompted a spiritual revelation that helped him escape the carnage at a desert rave."

INSIGHTS

– *NYT*, April 12, 2024. May also be used of peoples not under the Palestine Exception. Eg: “As the war continues with no end in sight, Ukraine’s youngest are in increasing peril, at risk of being dragged toward the carnage of ground combat as they defend their homeland.” – *NYT*, April 11, 2024.

● **DEADLY VIOLENCE:** When Israeli settlers kill innocent Palestinian civilians. Eg: “Deadly violence against Palestinians by Israeli settlers in the West Bank has also reached record levels.” – *NYT*, Feb. 21, 2024. Contrast to **TERRORISM**, when Palestinians kill Israeli civilians.

● **ETHNIC CLEANSING:** Large scale removal of a people other than the Palestinians from their homeland. With regard to Palestine (oops, see **Palestine**), it is “another historically charged term: If someone is making such an accusation, we should press for specifics or supply proper context.” May be used for other peoples not under the Palestine Exception. Eg: “Another Ethnic Cleansing Could Be Underway – and We’re Not Paying Attention: Azerbaijan is blockading the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, and people are dying.” – *NYT*, Sept. 2, 2023.

● **FIGHTERS.** This term ordinarily refers to “those who fight,” but cannot be used of Palestinians lest it imply that they are regular soldiers with a state and an army, which they are not and never will be allowed to have. It may be used of non-Palestinian irregulars who are favoured by the US government, and who do not fall under the Palestine Exception. Eg: “The fight-

ers who have claimed responsibility for a rare assault just over the Ukrainian border in Russia’s Belgorod region are members of a volunteer unit made up of Russian citizens who have been fighting with Ukraine’s forces against their own country.” – *NYT*, May 25, 2023. *Note: Russian renegades who attack Russian targets in Russia from Ukraine are never to be referred to as “terrorists,” since they are not Palestinian.*

● **GENOCIDE:** This is something that is definitely not being committed by Israel in Gaza, though it may be reported that some judges expert in international law make the mystifying charge that Israelis would ever do such a thing. Their charges should be explained away as a form of incomprehensible legal jargon not applicable to the real world. The term may, however, be used of peoples other than the Palestinians, who are not under the Palestine Exception. Eg: Re Rwanda, “one of the last fugitives charged in connection with the 1994 genocide.” – *NYT*, June 7, 2023.

● **MASSACRE:** When Israelis kill Palestinians this term should be avoided since it conveys more emotion than information. It may, however, be used when Palestinians kill Israelis. Eg: “It’s a Massacre: Inside an Israeli Village Raided by Palestinian Fighters.” – *NYT* Oct. 10, 2023.

● **PALESTINE:** A word not to be used “except in very rare cases.” No such place has ever existed, nor does it now. “Do not use in datelines, routine text or headlines, except in very rare cases such as when the United Nations General

Assembly elevated Palestine to a non-member observer state, or references to historic Palestine.” That is, other benighted organisations may use the word, but not the *NYT* in its own voice.

● **OCCUPIED TERRITORIES:** Ordinarily this phrase refers to territories seized in war from another people, which are militarily controlled. However, because of the Palestine Exception, it should not be used of the situation in Palestine (oops, S.V. **Palestine**) “When possible, avoid the term and be specific (e.g. Gaza, the West Bank, etc.) as each has a slightly different status.” The term may be used of other occupied territories [which of course actually all have the same status under the 1949 Geneva Convention]. Eg: “the United States might establish what amounts to a military base in Ukraine or encourage Ukraine to retake the Russian-occupied areas of the Donbass by military force.” *NYT*, Nov. 24, 2021.

● **REFUGEE CAMPS:** A term be avoided in favour of “refugee centers.” “While termed refugee camps, the refugee centers in Gaza are developed and densely populated neighborhoods dating to the 1948 war. Refer to them as neighborhoods, or areas, and if further context is necessary, explain how they have historically been called refugee camps.” The term may, however, be used for densely-populated, decades-old places for non-Palestinians such as Afghans, who are not under the Palestine Exception. Eg: – “Sarwar selling watches in a camp for Afghan refugees in Karachi.” – *NYT*, Nov. 24, 2023.

INSIGHTS

● **Slaughter:** When Israelis kill Palestinians it should be avoided since it conveys more emotion than information. May be used when Palestinians kill Israelis. Example: Thomas Friedman: “Israel’s response to the Hamas slaughter.” – *NYT*, October 29, 2023.

● **TERRORISM:** When Palestinian guerrillas kill Israeli civilians. Eg: “It is accurate to use

‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ in describing the attacks of Oct. 7, which included the deliberate targeting of civilians in killings and kidnappings.” When Israeli settlers kill Palestinians, the term of art is in contrast “deadly violence.” Eg: “Deadly violence against Palestinians by Israeli settlers in the West Bank has also reached record levels,” – *NYT*, Feb. 21, 2024. **CT**

Juan Cole is the founder and chief editor of Informed Comment – <https://www.juancole.com/> author/jcedit. He is Richard P. Mitchell Professor of History at the University of Michigan. He is author of ‘Muhammad: Prophet of Peace amid the Clash of Empires and The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam’ and many other books. Follow him on Twitter at @jricole.

ICJ website



The Hague-based International Court of Justice.

► BINOY KAMPMARK

World Court broadens scope of genocide

Can it get any busier? The World Court, otherwise known as the International Court of Justice, has been swamped by applications on the subject of alleged genocide. The site of interest remains the Gaza Strip, the subject of unremitting slaughter since the October 7, 2023 cross-

border attacks by Hamas against Israel. The retaliation by Israel has been of such brute savagery as to draw the attention of numerous states, including those not directly connected to the conflict.

Given that genocide is a crime of universal jurisdiction abominated by international law, and given the

broad application of the UN Genocide Convention intended to suppress and punish it, countries not normally associated with the tormented and blood-drenched relationship between Israel and the Palestinians have taken a keen interest. South Africa got matters moving with its December application last year seeking a judicial determination that Israel was committing genocidal acts in the Gaza Strip.

Since then, Pretoria has convinced the court to issue two interim orders, one on January 26, and another on March 28. While the court has yet to decide the issue of whether Israel is culpable for genocide in waging in Gaza, the interim binding orders demand a lifting of restrictions on humanitarian aid, the prevention of starvation and famine, and observing the UN Genocide Convention. These all hint strongly at the unconscionable conduct on the part of the IDF against the civilian populace.

The implications of such findings also go to Israel’s allies and partners still keen to supply it with weapons, weapons parts, and support of a military industrial nature. Germany has been most prominent in this regard. In 2023 30per-

INSIGHTS

cent of Israel's military equipment purchases totalling US\$326 million came from Berlin. The Scholz government has also been a firm public supporter of Israel's offensive. "There is only one place for Germany at this time, and that is by Israel's side," proclaimed German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to German lawmakers on October 12 last year. Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock curtly stated that "It was not the job of politicians to tell the guns to shut up."

Baerbock's remarks were all the more jarring given the 2006 views of Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who was then serving as Germany's foreign minister. With puffed up confidence, he claimed then that Europeans and Germans had played a seminal role in ending the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon in "silencing of the guns."

Cognisant of such a stance, Nicaragua is now taking the South African precedent further by alleging that Germany is complicit in a genocidal enterprise. While its own human rights record is coarse – the government of Daniel Ortega boasts a spotty record which involves, among other things, the killing of protesters – Nicaragua has form at the ICJ. Four decades ago, it took the United States to the world court for assisting the counterrevolutionary Contras in their attempt to overthrow the Sandinista government.

Its 43-page submission to the court insists that Germany is responsible for "serious violations of peremptory norms of international law taking place" in Gaza in its failure to prevent genocide "against the Palestinian people" and "contributed" to its commission by violating the Genocide Convention. It further alleges that Germany failed

to comply with humanitarian law principles derived from the Geneva Conventions of 1949, its protocols of 1977 and "intransgressible principles of international law" in failing to "ensure respect for these fundamental norms in all circumstances".

The application also compacts Israel's attack on Gaza with "continued military occupation of Palestine", taking issue with Germany's alleged "rendering aid or assistance" in maintaining that status quo in the Occupied Territories while "rendering aid or assistance and not preventing the illegal regime of apartheid and the negation of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people."

Stretches of the Nicaraguan case would make troubling reading. It notes that "by sending military equipment and now defunding UN-RWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency] which provides essential support for the civilian population, Germany is facilitating the commission of genocide" and had failed, in any case, "in its obligation to do everything possible to prevent the commission of genocide".

Such conduct was all the more egregious "with respect to Israel given that Germany has a self-proclaimed privileged relationship with it, which would enable it to usefully influence its conduct."

With these considerations in mind, the application by Nicaragua argues that Germany is obligated to "immediately" halt its military support for Israel "that may be used in the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, attacks directed against civilian objects or civilians protected as such,

or other war crimes". Germany is further asked, not merely to "end its assistance to Israel" but "cooperate to uphold international law and to bring the perpetrators of these atrocities to justice."

On April 8, the ICJ opened preliminary hearings. Alain Pellet, representing Nicaragua, argued that "Germany was and is fully conscious of the risk that the arms it has furnished and continues to furnish Israel" could be used in the commission of genocidal acts. Another legal representative, Daniel Mueller, called the provision of humanitarian airdrops to "Palestinian children, women and men" a "pathetic excuse" given the furnishing of "military equipment that is used to kill and annihilate them". Nicaragua's ambassador to the Netherlands, Carlos José Argüello Gómez, derided Berlin's seeming inability "to be able to differentiate between self-defence and genocide."

Berlin's defence follows on April 9. A sense of its bitter flavour can be gathered from one of its top legal briefs, Tania von Usler-Gleichen. "Germany completely rejects the accusations. We never did violate the Genocide Convention nor humanitarian law either directly or indirectly." Berlin was "committed to the upholding of international law".

If the defence fails to sway the judges, the case may well chart a line about third party responsibilities on preventing genocide in international humanitarian law. At this point, the momentum towards some clarity on the point seems inexorable. **CT**

Dr. Binoy Kampmark was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He currently lectures at RMIT University.

INSIGHTS

► VICTOR MATHESON

At last! Voters refuse to pay for sports stadium

For the Kansas City Chiefs brass, it must have seemed like the perfect time to ask local voters to cough up some money for stadium renovations.

The team was riding high from a big Super Bowl win in February 2024, its third NFL championship in the past five years. Two fellow NFL franchises, the Buffalo Bills and Tennessee Titans, had received record taxpayer handouts for new stadiums in the past two years. And voters in neighbouring Oklahoma City had recently approved at least US\$900 million in subsidies for a new NBA arena.

But the Chiefs and their partners in the effort, the Kansas City Royals of MLB, were in for a rude awakening.

On April 2, 2024, voters in Jackson County soundly rejected a referendum to extend a local sales tax for 40 years in order to provide \$2 billion in public funding to build a new baseball stadium in downtown Kansas City and fund major renovations of Arrowhead Stadium, the home of the Chiefs.

The vote in Missouri came one month after the collapse of an arena project that would have moved the Washington, D.C.'s basketball and hockey teams, the Wizards and Capitals, to Alexandria, Virginia.

Similarly, proposed facilities in

Las Vegas; Oakland, California; Tampa, Florida; and Chicago have all run into serious roadblocks, all stemming from taxpayers questioning why they should be forced to cover private businesses' expenses.

What was looking like a flood of new taxpayer-financed sports facilities across the country has turned into a trickle.

While leagues and team owners always claim that stadiums and arenas revitalize cities and generate huge economic returns,

three decades of research by economists such as myself has proved otherwise.

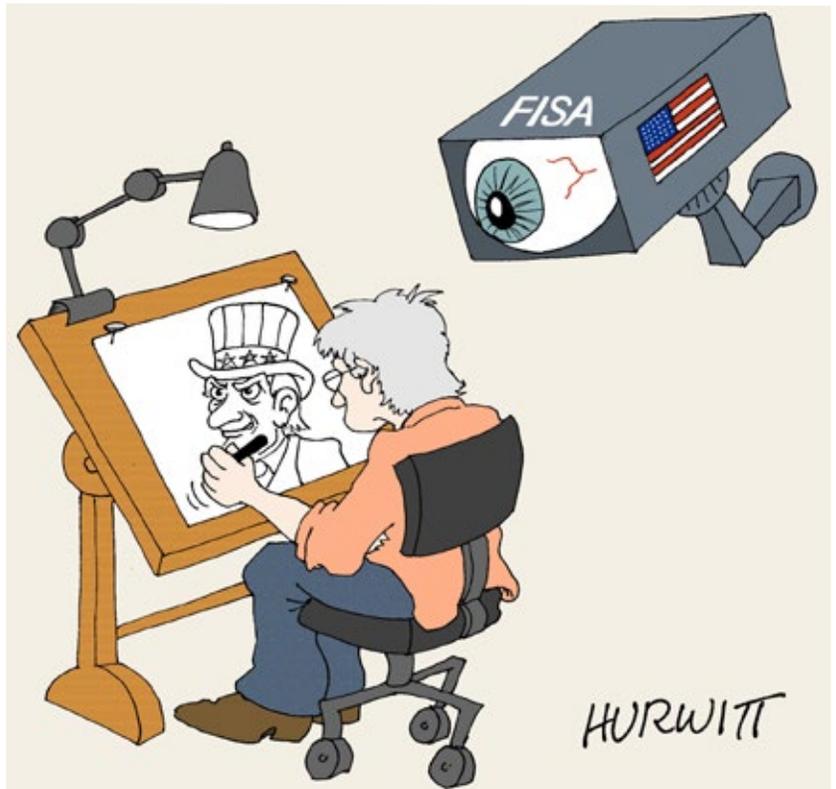
A recent survey of over 130 academic studies shows that the direct economic benefits of stadiums fall well short of the enormous infusions of public money used to build them.

Even taking into account non-monetary benefits of sports teams, such as quality-of-life and civic pride, the survey concluded that "the large subsidies commonly devoted to constructing professional sports venues are not justified as worthwhile public investments."

So the knowledge that stadiums are a terrible public investment is nothing new.

Why, then, were efforts to block a stadium successful in Kansas City, while residents of New York and Tennessee were saddled with billions in construction costs for new

HURWITT'S EYE / MARK HURWITT



INSIGHTS

stadiums?

Most importantly, voters in Kansas City got a direct say in approving the project.

By contrast, Buffalo's \$850 million handout was negotiated in secret by the governor and dropped on unsuspecting taxpayers just days before a final vote was scheduled in the state Legislature.

Nashville's \$1.3 billion stadium subsidy was approved by the mayor and Metro Council, not by voters, who could only express their displeasure by throwing the offending government officials out of office during the next election, far too late to stop the project.

It turns out that handing over taxpayer dollars to billionaire owners tends to be far less popular among regular citizens than among well-connected government officials.

An NFL owner trying to curry favour with local government officials can always lay on the charm offensive by, say, inviting them into the owner's box for games. That strategy doesn't work when trying to win over an entire electorate.

Owners also tend to overestimate how many sports fans there really are in a community. Even in a relatively small market like Kansas City, fewer than 1 in 30 residents

of the metro area are season ticket holders for the Chiefs. A significant majority of the population does not attend a single Royals game in a typical season.

An even smaller fraction of the population has access to VIP seating, yet both Kansas City ownership groups emphasized how the new stadiums would expand these amenities.

Luxury boxes are excellent ways to increase team profits. Public sentiment? Not so much.

Team owners routinely use the tactic of threatening relocation in order to extract subsidies from cities and states. But such threats have tended to produce more resentment than fear, making voter referendums less likely to pass.

In the case of Kansas City, the threat of relocation – halfheartedly hinted at by Chiefs president Mark Donovan – wasn't taken seriously.

Kansas City is an excellent NFL market with a deeply committed fan base that any sensible owner would be reluctant to abandon. In addition, television revenues in the NFL are equally shared among all teams, meaning that even a relatively small-market team like the Chiefs can afford to pay top dollar to keep its best players, like quarterback Patrick Mahomes and tight end – and Taylor Swift beau –

Travis Kelce.

The Royals, with fewer championships and star power, might be a more likely candidate for relocation. But such a move would require finding another city willing to do what voters in Missouri were unwilling to do: provide huge subsidies for a new baseball stadium.

Such cities have proved elusive. The Oakland A's, unable to convince anyone in the Bay Area to build them a new baseball stadium, recently announced a move to Las Vegas, only to find out that Nevadans weren't exactly keen to pay for it, either. The team may end up playing the next three years in a minor league stadium in Sacramento, California, while sorting out its next move.

Billionaire team owners have been trying to convince cities to redirect public money to their private companies for decades. But these subsidies primarily benefit the owners through higher revenues and franchise valuations, not the communities paying for the stadiums.

With Jackson County delivering a resounding loss to team owners, perhaps more Americans are finally heeding the words of former Minnesota governor Jesse "The Body" Ventura.

"Stadiums should be like libraries," he said during a 2001 House Judiciary Committee hearing. "If the taxpayers build it, they should be able to use it for free. **CT**"

Victor Matheson is Professor of Economics and Accounting, College of the Holy Cross at Worcester, Massachusetts. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com.

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INSIGHTS

► CAITLIN JOHNSTONE

Now opposing a genocide is worse than aiding one

All the frenzied shrieking about pro-Palestine protests at universities these last few days makes it clear that our civilisation is so twisted and insane that it sees protesting a genocide as far worse than committing one. Which is about as backwards as any society could possibly be.

Seriously, try to imagine a crazier, more upside-down civilisation than one which gets more angry at people protesting genocidal atrocities than it does at people committing them. A civilisation where people wear their pants on their head and walk backwards all day?

It's as wrong as you can possibly get anything in this world. It's actually hard to imagine how anyone could get anything more wrong. If you've accepted daily massacres of innocent civilians as the baseline normal and appropriate thing, and regard any opposition to this as a freakish and evil abomination, then you're as screwed up and confused about reality as any other stark raving lunatic in town. Maybe worse.

To view nonstop mass military slaughter as moral and opposition thereto as immoral is to live in a mental moral universe that has been flipped on its head. It's to inhabit a reality tunnel that has become completely divorced from

reality. But that's the kind of mainstream worldview that the political-media class in this society is working to indoctrinate us into day in and day out throughout our entire lives.

I just saw a tweet from the commentator Briahna Joy Gray saying



Students tents at New York's Columbia University.

that in order to find any mention in the *New York Times* of the hundreds of Palestinians in mass graves that are being discovered in Gaza, she had to scroll past no fewer than four stories about pro-Palestine protests on college campuses – including two op-eds which criticised the protesters.

What kind of warped, fucked up dystopia is this where that's the kind of mainstream news outlet people are getting their information and ideas from? Our entire civilisation is saturated with reality-distorting propaganda like this, and

it's making people insane. It's got our moral compasses flipped 180 degrees from our true north, and our inner sensemaker tuning in to frequencies of nothing but garbled static.

That's how crazy they need us to be to keep us supporting a globe-spanning empire that literally cannot exist without nonstop violence and tyranny. They need us thinking up is down and black is white. They need us not just unable to tell the difference between right and wrong, but actually believing that wrong is right and right is wrong. So they pound our collective consciousness

day in and day out with extremely aggressive psyops in the form of mass media propaganda to ensure that our insides are scrambled around enough to consent to the amount of depravity necessary for our rulers to continue dominating this planet.

This is what our ruling class has decided will be normal, as Aaron Bushnell said moments before setting himself on fire in protest of the genocide in Gaza. A society

where mass graves get less media attention than university protesters. A society where more political firepower is going into stopping pro-Palestine demonstrations on college campuses than ending Israel's murderous assault on an enclosed enclave packed full of children. A society where trying to stop a genocide is considered evil, and committing one is considered good. **CT**

Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian blogger. Read more of her work at www.caitlinjohnstone.com.au.

TV Screenshot

INSIGHTS

► LINDSEY GERMAN

We must stop our rulers as they rush to war

The conventional response of politicians and media is that we should breathe a sigh of relief that war in the Middle East hasn't broken out. The latest strike by Israel directly on Iranian territory is supposed to have settled the dispute which began when Israel bombed the Iranian consulate in Damascus, killing among others senior military figures.

Maybe for now. But the war in Gaza, the growing conflict between Israel and Iran, which has now involved direct airstrikes on each country by the other, and the willingness of the US to back Netanyahu to the hilt, is preparing for the terrifying prospect of a much bigger war.

While the US urges 'restraint' on Israel, it has given the green light for some sort of invasion of Rafah, where over a million people are trapped. It won't condemn the consulate bombing, even though the betting must be that this was a deliberate provocation by Netanyahu to draw Iran into war. It is imposing further sanctions on Iran, as has the EU, but there are absolutely no sanctions for a state which is committing genocide in Gaza. It is estimated that the cost of shooting down Iranian drones and missiles orchestrated by the US at the end of April was \$1-billion.

Anyone in doubt that the US is



'ironclad' in its commitment to Israel, and that it is driving future wars, should take a look at the bills recently passed in Congress. The lion's share of funding which totals \$9-billion goes to Ukraine, but a huge further \$26bn goes to Israel. In contrast, only \$9-billion goes for humanitarian assistance for civilians in war zones including Gaza, Haiti and Sudan, where civil war is raging. The bill also bans US funding of UNWRA until March of next year.

The Israel bill is giving Netanyahu money to buy weapons and increase its missile defence and will make it easier to give the country US munitions which are presently in dumps across the Middle East.

It is hard to see that this is anything other than an endorsement and encouragement for further attacks on the Palestinians and for Israel to continue its escalation elsewhere, perhaps most likely against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The funding for Ukraine is to deliberately prolong a war which cannot be won. While Zelensky's increasingly beleaguered government welcomes this move (and incidentally supports everything the US does over Israel), there is not a path to victory for Ukraine but only to some sort of settlement with Russia.

This could have happened in 2022, but was scotched by the West as it thought it could defeat Russia. The latter's territorial gains in recent months and its growing missile attacks on Ukraine paint a very different picture from the bragging a year ago that Ukraine's offensive would break through. In fact it was virtually non-existent.

Those suffering here will not be the US or indeed Ukrainian politicians, but the people of Ukraine who are facing very heavy casualties and injuries, and increasing numbers of whom don't want to fight.

The big hike in arms funding for Ukraine and Israel, as well as US allies in the Pacific, including Taiwan, will benefit the US arms industry, but it will also make wider war much more likely. It matches greater commitment especially for Ukraine by the EU and Britain.

There is a global arms race which is likely to end only in one way. At the same time, we can see the way in which the victims of war are treated as collateral damage and thrown crumbs in terms of aid. Nancy Pelosi made a speech supporting military aid to Ukraine,

INSIGHTS

accusing those who opposed it of enabling rape. Does she not think that rape is common in Haiti or Sudan? Or are those people less worthy of consideration?

The stink of hypocrisy and double standards is not just emanating from Washington but from Westminster. Here is a bipartisan politics where Keir Starmer does not allow even the political division that we saw in the US. He supports Trident, more arms spending, scapegoating of refugees, and

this week is stressing his pride and patriotism.

The nausea I feel when seeing Labour's election leaflets drowning in union jacks is only stemmed by the recognition that there are millions around the world who oppose these politics.

The Palestine movement is on a global scale, and despite repression from Columbia students in New York to the Palestine conference in Berlin, it continues relentlessly. But solidarity with the Palestinians is

not going to be enough. We need to oppose war with Iran, and Nato's proxy war with Russia now being fought out in Ukraine.

We cannot be deceived by the talk of restraint or de-escalation. Our rulers are preparing for war and we must prepare to oppose them. **CT**

Lindsey German is national convenor of the Stop the War Coalition. This article was first appeared at www.counterfire.org.

WE ARE ALL FRIED 🗑️

FRIED 18/4/24



Greg Koenderman

Inside the chamber of propaganda horrors

The job of the corporate media system is to pretend the choices are real, to ensure the walls of the prison remain invisible

Tourists visiting Spanish cities like Córdoba, Toledo and Sevilla have the option of whiling away an hour or so at a ‘Museum of the Inquisition’, sometimes known as a ‘Gallery of Torture,’ where for a few euros, visitors can view an exotic range of devices used to impale, immolate, strangle and dismember human beings in the name of God.

It’s tempting to reassure ourselves that these are relics of a far-distant past, horrors that could never happen now. But did the Dark Ages ever really end? Noam Chomsky commented:

“Part of the tragedy of the Palestinians is that they have essentially no international support. For a good reason – they don’t have wealth, they don’t have power. So they don’t have rights. It’s the way the world works – your rights correspond to your power and your wealth.”

It is indeed the way the world works. It is also the way the medieval world worked. UK Foreign Secretary, Lord David Cameron (Baron Cameron of Chipping Norton), recently passed judgement on the war in Ukraine at a Washington press conference:

“It is extremely good value for money ... Almost half of Russia’s pre-war military equipment has been destroyed without the loss of

a single American life. This is an investment in the United States’ security.’

According even to Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelensky, 31,000 Ukrainians have been killed in the conflict. US officials estimate 70,000 dead, while Russia claims to have killed 444,000. Are these deaths ‘good value for money’?

And what about the 50,000 Russians estimated by the BBC to have died? Do they matter? After all, European civilisation is supposed to be founded on Christ’s teaching that we should love, not just our ‘neighbour’ but our ‘enemy’. On Britain’s Channel 5, BBC stalwart Jeremy Vine offered a different view to Bill, a caller from Manchester:

“Bill, Bill, the brutal reality is, if you put on a uniform for Putin and you go and fight his war, you probably deserve to die, don’t you?”

Elsewhere, the Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, commented after Iran retaliated to Israel’s bombing of an Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria, killing 16 people, including two senior Iranian generals:

“The attacks on Israel by Iran this weekend were wrong. They risked civilian lives and they escalated the already dangerous tensions in the region. I pray for the peace and se-

curity of Israel’s people at this time and I appeal to all parties both for restraint and to act for peace and mutual security.” (My emphasis)

If Christ had done political commentary, he would have declared both the Iranian and Israeli attacks wrong, and he would have prayed ‘for the peace and security’ of the peoples of Israel and Iran, and also Palestine.

Cameron responded on the same issue: “[It was] a reckless and dangerous thing for Iran to have done, and I think the whole world can see. All these countries that have somehow wondered, well, you know, what is the true nature of Iran? It’s there in black and white.”

He was immediately asked: “What would Britain do if a hostile nation flattened one of our consulates?”

Cameron’s tragi-comic response: “Well, we would take, you know, we would take very strong action.”

Naturally, ‘we’ would do the same or worse, but it’s a grim sign of Iran’s ‘true nature’ when ‘they’ do it. The ‘Evil’ have no right even to defend themselves when attacked by the ‘Good’. Standard medieval thinking.

In idle moments, we sometimes fantasise about opening our own Media Lens Chamber of Propaganda Hor-



rors, a Hall of Media Infamy. It would be a cavernous space packed with examples of devices used to strangle and dismember Truth.

A special section would be reserved for the sage effusions of BBC security correspondent Frank Gardner, who wrote recently of Israel:

“It responded to the murderous Hamas-led attacks of 7 October ... and then spent the next six months battering the Gaza Strip.”

The Hamas attack was ‘murderous’, then, with Israel administering a mere ‘battering’ with its attack that has caused at least 30 times the loss of life. A ‘battering’ is generally bruising but not necessarily fatal. The term is certainly not synonymous with genocide. Is this biased use of language accidental, or systemic?

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) commented on their careful study of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*: “Looking at all attributions, 77 percent of the time when the word “brutal” was used to describe an actor in the conflict, it referred to Palestinians and their

actions. This was 73 percent of the time at the *Times*, 78 percent at the *Post* and 87 percent at the *Journal*. Only 23 percent of the time was ‘brutal’ used to describe Israel’s actions ...”

The *Intercept* reported on a leaked memo which revealed that the *New York Times* had “instructed journalists covering Israel’s war on the Gaza Strip to restrict the use of the terms ‘genocide’ and ‘ethnic cleansing’ and to ‘avoid’ using the phrase ‘occupied territory’” when describing Palestinian land.

The *Intercept* added: “The memo also instructs reporters not to use the word Palestine ‘except in very rare cases’ and to steer clear of the term ‘refugee camps’ to describe areas of Gaza historically settled by displaced Palestinians expelled from other parts of Palestine during previous Israeli–Arab wars. The areas are recognised by the United Nations as refugee camps and house hundreds of thousands of registered refugees.”

The memo was written by *Times* standards editor Susan Wessling, international editor Philip Pan, and

their deputies. A *Times* newsroom source, who requested anonymity ‘for fear of reprisal’, said: “I think it’s the kind of thing that looks professional and logical if you have no knowledge of the historical context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. But if you do know, it will be clear how apologetic it is to Israel.”

Our Chamber of Propaganda Horrors might feature this barely believable sentence from a BBC report by Lucy Williamson, which reads like something from the film *Dr. Strangelove*: “If you wanted to map the path to a healthy, functioning Palestinian government, you probably wouldn’t start from here.”

Probably wouldn’t start from where? From the middle of a six-months genocide, with two million civilians starving, with children literally starving to death, with tens of thousands of children murdered, with Gaza in ruins? It is hard to imagine a more ethically or intellectually tone-deaf observation. The BBC’s Jeremy Bowen added to the

sense of surreality: “The decision not to veto the Ramadan ceasefire resolution is also an attempt by the Americans to push back at accusations that they have enabled Israel’s actions.”

Is it an ‘accusation’ that the US has supplied billions of dollars of missiles and bombs without which Israel could not conduct its genocide? Is there any conceivable way the US could ever ‘push back at’ that inarguable fact? The *Guardian* described how the US has worked hard to avoid Congressional oversight: “The US is reported to have made more than 100 weapons sales to Israel, including thousands of bombs, since the start of the war in Gaza, but the deliveries escaped congressional oversight because each transaction was under the dollar amount requiring approval.

“The Biden administration ... has kept up a quiet but substantial flow of munitions to help replace the tens of thousands of bombs Israel has dropped on the tiny coastal strip, making it one of the most intense bombing campaigns in military history.”

These hidden sales are in addition to the \$320-million in precision bomb kits sold in November and 14,000 tank shells costing \$106-million and \$147.5-million of fuses and other components needed to make 155mm artillery shells in December.

In response to the latest news of a massive additional supply of arms to Israel, Edward Snowden posted on X: “ok but you’re definitely gonna hold off on sending like fifteen billion dollars’ worth of weapons to the guys that keep getting caught filling mass graves with kids until an independent international investigation is completed, right?

“...right?”

Because we no longer live in the Dark Ages, right?

People are generally not tortured on the rack in Western societies, but are we really any less callous?

Media and political voices seeking to challenge the reigning brutality are not burned alive, but are buried alive like Julian Assange in high security prisons

Christopher Nolan’s film *Oppenheimer* has been lauded to the skies. It earned 13 nominations at the Academy Awards, winning seven Oscars, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor. It also won five Golden Globe Awards.

And yet the film is a moral disgrace. It focuses on the life of physicist Robert J. Oppenheimer, and particularly, of course, on his key role in developing the first atomic weapons. The direct results of his efforts were the dropping of nuclear fireballs on the civilian populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan that killed between 129,000 and 226,000 people.

These were the first acts of nuclear terrorism, by far the greatest single acts of terrorism the world has ever seen. Although the moral doubts haunting the ‘Manhattan Project’ then and since feature strongly in the film, a portrayal of the hideous impact of Oppenheimer’s invention on civilians is almost completely absent. This single, dignified comment from an elderly Japanese viewer reported by the *Guardian* says it all: “I was waiting for the Hiroshima bombing scene to appear, but it never did,” said Mimaki, 82.”

Although the BBC sought out the opinion of cinemagoers in Hiroshima, ‘only meters away’ from where the bomb exploded, the film’s shock-

ing moral failure was not mentioned.

On reflection, our museum might be better called, The Museum Of Media Madness. Thus, the BBC reported on the refusal of event organisers, The European Broadcasting Union (EBU), to ban Israel from the Eurovision Song Contest. The EBU opined: “We firmly believe that the Eurovision Song Contest is a platform that should always transcend politics, promote togetherness and bring audiences together across the world.”

The BBC claims to be obsessed with reporting ‘both sides of the story’, but it conveniently forgot to mention that Russia has been banned from the song contest since 2022 for a reason that did not ‘transcend politics’ – its invasion of Ukraine.

Martin Österdahl, EBU’s executive supervisor for Eurovision, was asked to explain the contradiction. He responded that the two situations were ‘completely different’. True enough – Israel’s crimes in Gaza are much worse even than Russia’s crimes in Ukraine. Österdahl’s casual brush off: “We are not the arena to solve a Middle East conflict.”

Media and political voices seeking to challenge the reigning brutality are not burned alive, but they are buried alive in high security prisons like Julian Assange, beaten up on the street like George Galloway, and forced into exile like Edward Snowden. Dissidents may not be pelted with rotten fruit and vegetables in the stocks, but they are pelted with relentless media attacks intended to discredit them.

In the *Guardian*, columnist John Crace greeted the news that Galloway had returned to parliament, with a piece titled: ‘The Ego has landed: George Galloway basks in his swearing in as MP.’ Crace wrote: “Wherever he goes, his giant ego is there before him. Like most narcissists, the only fool for whom he makes allowances – for whom he has a total blindspot – is himself.”

He added: "... there is a lot about Galloway to dislike. His self-importance is breathtaking. Most MPs suffer from an excess of self-regard, but George is off the scale. It has never crossed his mind that he is not right about everything."

Before Galloway's victory, a *Guardian* news piece commented: "A total, total disaster": Galloway and Danczuk line up for Rochdale push – Two former Labour MPs are back to haunt the party in what has been called "the most radioactive byelection in living memory"

As we have discussed many times, this is the required view, not just of Galloway, but of all dissidents challenging the status quo – they (and we) are all toxic 'narcissists'. Thus, the BBC observed of Galloway, a 'political maverick': "To his critics and opponents, he is a dangerous egotist, someone who arouses division."

What percentage of Tory and Labour MPs under (and including) Sunak and Starmer are not dangerous egotists? Are the thousands of MPs who, decade after decade, line up to vote for US-UK resource wars of aggression of first resort, for action to exacerbate climate collapse, not dangerous egotists? Of course they are, but they are not labelled that way. The only egotism perceived as 'dangerous' by our state-corporate media system is one that threatens biocidal, genocidal and suicidal state-corporate narcissism.

We have to travel far from the 'mainstream' to read a more balanced view of Galloway. Former British ambassador Craig Murray commented: "I have known George Galloway my entire adult life, although we largely lost touch in the middle bit while I was off diplomat-ing. I know George too well to mistake him for Jesus Christ, but he has been on the right side against appalling wars which the entire political class has cheer-led. His natural gifts of mellifluousness and loquac-

The only egotism perceived as 'dangerous' by our state-corporate media system is one that threatens biocidal, genocidal and suicidal state-corporate narcissism

ity are unsurpassed, with an added talent for punchy phrase making.

"... But outwith the public gaze George is humorous, kind and self-aware. He has been deeply involved in politics his entire life, and is a great believer in the democratic process as the ultimate way by which the working classes will ultimately take control of the means of production. He is a very old-fashioned and courteous form of socialist."

We strongly disagree with Galloway's views on fossil fuel production and climate change – in fact, he blocked us on X for robustly but politely challenging him on these issues. Nevertheless, it is clear to us at Media Lens that Murray's view of Galloway is far more reasonable.

In 'Brave New World Revisited', Aldous Huxley wrote: "The victim of mind-manipulation does not know that he is a victim. To him, the walls of his prison are invisible, and he believes himself to be free." (Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited*, archive.org, 1958, p.109)

This is certainly true of corporate journalists. Borrowing illiberally from authentically dissident media, a recurring *Guardian* appeal asks readers to support its heroic defence of Truth. The declared enemy: "Teams of lawyers from the rich and powerful trying to stop us publishing stories they don't want you to see.

"Lobby groups with opaque fund-

ing who are determined to undermine facts about the climate emergency and other established science.

"Authoritarian states with no regard for the freedom of the press.

"Bad actors spreading disinformation online to undermine democracy.

"But we have something powerful on our side.

"We've got you.

"The *Guardian* is funded by its readers and the only person who decides what we publish is our editor."

They have indeed 'got you', many of you, and not in a good way. The real threat to truth in our time, quite obviously, is the fact that profit-maximising, ad-dependent corporate media like the *Guardian* cannot and will not report the truth of a world dominated by giant corporations. The declared aspiration is a sham, a form of niche marketing exploiting the gullible.

The truth is that 'mainstream' media and politics are now captured in a way that is beyond anything we have previously seen. All around the world, political choices have been carefully fixed and filtered to ensure ordinary people are unable to challenge the endless wars, the determination to prioritise profits over climate action at any cost. The job of the corporate media system is to pretend the choices are real, to ensure the walls of the prison remain invisible.

The only hope in this neon-lit Dark Age is genuinely independent media – the blogs and websites that are now being filtered, shadow-banned, buried and marginalised like never before. Please support Media Lens: <https://www.medialens.org/donate/>

CT

David Edwards is co-editor of Media Lens, the UK media watchdog. This article was first published at the organisation's web site, www.medialens.org.

► JOHN FEFFER

Donald Trump has a distinct affinity for the kinds of gang leaders we've been hearing about in ever more disastrously chaotic Haiti. If America re-elects him it could be putting the equivalent of a gang leader into the White House

Haiti has descended into chaos. It's had no president or parliament – and no elections either – for eight long years. Its unelected prime minister Ariel Henry resigned recently when gang violence at the airport in Port-au-Prince made it impossible for him to return to the country after a trip to Guyana.

Haiti is the poorest country in the region, its riches leached out by colonial overlords, American occupying forces, corporate predators, and home-grown autocrats. As if that weren't enough, it's also suffered an almost Biblical succession of plagues

overrun by gangs that emerged as practically the only groups capable of providing services, however meagre, to Haiti's long-suffering population. People have become the country's largest export. Anyone who has money, connections, or sufficient courage has fled, even if those who somehow made it to the United States were all too often deported back into the maelstrom. Haiti doesn't have the three things that might prevent the sort of vacuum into which gangs so eagerly rush: robust democratic governance, a strong civil society, and a sufficiently uncorrupt constab-

battled each other in the Democratic Republic of Congo during its repeated wars, while rebels and jihadis targeted the Syrian government beginning in 2011. In the end, such diverse groups seem to boil down to one thing: guys with guns.

In Haiti, the gangocracy is organised along the classic lines of criminal enterprises like the gangs that ruled New York City in

When democracies die, the mobs take over

in recent years. A coup deposed its first democratically elected leader, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, not once but twice – in 1991 and again in 2004. An earthquake in 2010 killed hundreds of thousands, leaving 1.5-million Haitians homeless, out of a population of less than 10-million. In the wake of that earthquake, nearly a million people contracted cholera, the worst outbreak in history, courtesy of a contingent of UN peacekeepers. To round out the catastrophes, in 2016, Hurricane Matthew made landfall, pushing Haiti back even further.

And now the country has been

ularly. As a result, it's returned to what political theorist Thomas Hobbes once called a "war of all against all" in which violence and the urge for power prevail, as fist takes precedence over gavel – the perfect environment for gangs to flourish.

Political scientists often label places like Haiti "failed states." With the breakdown of order, everything from political institutions to border controls disintegrates. In a comparable fashion, clans contested for power in Somalia in the 1990s and paramilitaries

the mid-19th century (immortalised in the film *The Gangs of New York*) or the Chinese tongs that warred over San Franciscan turf in the years after the Civil War (featured in the current Netflix series *Warrior*). The two major Haitian gangs in the capital city Port-au-Prince, GPep and the G9 Family, have similarly hierarchi-





Boynton

cal structures, roots in particular neighbourhoods, and flamboyant leaders like the former police officer and current G9 head Jimmy “Barbecue” Chérizier.

But gangs aren’t simply criminal syndicates. The Haitian gangs have close connections to political parties and align themselves with business interests (or run businesses of their own). Sometimes such gangs even begin as anti-gangs, neighbourhood self-defense groups meant to help locals survive in an era of lawlessness.

Their mischaracterisation resembles the overly narrow understanding of “terrorists.” Hamas,

for instance, is on the US terrorism list, but it’s not just a bunch of guys with guns and a predilection for violence.

It’s also been a political party, a government, and a service organisation that provided food, health care, and other necessities to underserved communities in Gaza.

Don’t make the mistake of associating gangs like those of Haiti with a “primitive” stage of political development or only with countries on the geopolitical margins. What’s happening there today could prefigure the fu-

ture of the United States, too. In place of the Biblical succession of plagues that swept through Haiti, the US might only need the tinder of climate change and the flint of Donald Trump to go up in similar flames..

Today, Americans associate “gangs” with the Crips and Bloods, who developed a murderous rivalry in the Los Angeles area in the 1970s or, more recently, Mara Salvatrucha, better known as MS-13, a gang of young Salvadoran transplants to Los Angeles initially focused on protecting its members from other gangs.

Shouldn’t we be more catholic in our definitions? After all, what are right-wing paramilitary forces, from the Three Percenters to the Proud Boys, if not gangs? They have their rituals, worldviews, indifference to the rule of law, even their own “Barbecues.”

The gangs associated with far-right ideology and white supremacy today could claim a lineage stretching back to the European settlers of this continent who routinely engaged in the extrajudicial murder of indigenous peoples while expanding westward, or the vigilante mobs that administered “rough justice” to “disobedient” slaves before the Civil War, or even the Ku Klux Klan.

As for real-world impact, the Crips or MS-13 never had the audacity to force their way into the US Capitol and trash the place, as Donald Trump’s informal gang did on January 6, 2021.

But why stop there? The Pinkerton detective agency once functioned like a gang in its attacks on the labour movement. The Central Intelligence Agency developed distinctly gang-like behaviour overseas with its assassinations, coups, and outright criminal activities. And what

about all the deaths associated with corporate gangs like Philip Morris and ExxonMobil? These institutions of “normal” society have had a much higher kill count and a more debilitating effect on the rule of law than the institutions of organised crime. When it comes to gang-like activities, much depends on geopolitics. The emergence of the “Washington consensus” and the birth of neoliberalism in the 1970s was an inflection point when it came to encouraging gang-like behaviour. Previously, at least in advanced industrial countries, the state had been gradually assuming ever greater economic responsibility through the New Deal and its successors in the US and the development of Europe’s market socialism. Neoliberalism, led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in England and President Ronald Reagan in the United States, sought to roll back the power of the state through the defunding, deregulation, and privatisation of government services.

That sustained attack on state functions ensured an increase in poverty and painful budget crises for institutions like school systems and hospitals, while corporate misconduct proliferated. In poorer countries, where states were already more fragile, the impact was far more devastating.

In Haiti, after the state borrowed money in the 1970s and 1980s to feed corruption and sustain autocracy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) pushed subsequent democratic governments to privilege the free market, while opening ever more quickly to the global economy. Sensing opportunity, non-governmental organisations streamed into Haiti to provide food, housing, and health care, everything a cash-strapped government couldn’t do.

America’s ultimate Don is clear about what he expects come November, should he lose. “If I don’t get elected, it’s going to be a bloodbath,” he told one of his rallies

The succession of catastrophes – coups, an earthquake, cholera, hurricanes – only strengthened the humanitarian sector but at the expense of effective government. In this century, the situation had become so dire that all too many parents were giving their children up to orphanages run by foreign charities. In other words, the road to Haiti’s hell was, in part, paved by good intentions.

Or take the case of Jamaica where, from the late 1970s on, similar IMF programmes translated into disaster, especially in the capital, Kingston. Here, too, the state lost power as gang leaders, known as “dons,” expanded their territories.

As Michelle Munroe and Damion Blake put it in *Third World Quarterly*: “Neoliberal policies not only paralysed the state’s capacity to control and contain violence in the streets of Kingston, these changes also made dons and the gangs they command more lethal and powerful.”

Dons and the gangs they command: that language could soon seem all too eerily appropriate for the United States.

America’s ultimate Don is all too clear about what he expects come November, should he lose. “If I don’t get elected, it’s going to be a bloodbath,” he told one of his rallies. According to that scenario, the crew that owes allegiance to Donald Trump – the right-wing militias, diehard conspiracy theorists, open-carry gun enthusiasts – will rise up

in gang-like fashion in the face of another “stolen election.”

That, however, is an example of Trump’s magical thinking. The January 6th “insurrection” revealed the limits of his influence. What happened in Washington that day never came close to a coup d’état, thanks to the actions of the police and the National Guard, nor was it repeated, even in the reddest of states.

The real bloodbath would take place if Trump won the election. After all, he’s already promised violence as an organising principle for his second term. As David Remnick has written in the *New Yorker*, Trump “makes no effort to conceal his bigotries, his lawlessness, his will to authoritarian power; to the contrary, he advertises it, and, most disturbing of all, this deepens his appeal. What’s more, there is no question that Trump has so normalised calls to violence as an instrument of politics that it has inflamed countless people to perverse action.”

Trump has also promised a thorough purge of his enemies in the government and beyond, as well as the weaponisation of the Justice Department to wage war on all MAGA opponents.

As in his first term, he would destroy as many federal agencies as possible. Meanwhile, he would promote drilling über alles and roll back every Biden administration effort to create an industrial policy to guide the United States away from fossil fuels. What Trump proposes is fundamentally different from the now shopworn Republican strategy of reducing the federal government to the size of something that can be “drowned in the bathtub” (as anti-tax activist Grover Norquist once so memorably put it) in favour of “states’ rights.”

Trump has nothing but contempt

for the politics that advance such a perspective. Like the gang leader he is, he'd rather concentrate federal power in his own hands as an instrument of personal vengeance emphasising loyalty above all. Instead of the empowerment of state legislatures, Trump prefers chaos, for in fraught times people look to autocratic leaders.

When it comes to starting fires in the American system, Trump is distinctly the Barbecue type. He admires leaders who slaughter people indiscriminately (Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines), change the constitution multiple times to bypass legislative and judicial opposition (Viktor Orbán of Hungary), or kill their political opponents wherever they might live (Vladimir Putin of Russia). He likes the bad boys who have transformed their parties into gangs and their countries into fiefdoms. In short, he's the ultimate gang leader. Of course, he won't do it alone. There are plenty of true believers and opportunists to staff his administration and implement his whims, but that's not enough. As his first term revealed, the guardrails of democracy – opposition politicians, bureaucrats, even certain Republicans who continue to have qualms – can still prevent the country from tumbling over a cliff.

This time around, Trump and those backing him hope to disable enough of the political infrastructure to create the space for non-state actors to do his work for him. In The Donald's first term, the "deconstruction of the administrative state," as Trumpophile Steve Bannon so infamously put it, was a strategy meant to empower actors like corporations and religious institutions to grab power for themselves.

Next time around, he's likely to surround himself with advisers

Trump needs genuine mayhem-makers. By removing restrictions on firearms, he aims to deputise every American citizen in his camp to MAGAfy the USA

pulled from the think-tank crowd that produced the nightmarish Project 2025 blueprint in order to "free" all MAGA-oriented non-state and (often) anti-state actors to do their damndest. But even ruthless think tanks, corporations, and apocalyptic preachers aren't likely to go far enough for Donald Trump, since they also remain the bedrock of America's more traditional right wing, the coalition that put Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush into the White House. Trump needs genuine mayhem-makers. By removing restrictions on firearms, he aims to deputise every American citizen in his camp to MAGAfy the United States.

Trump's repeated exhortations to violence – "lock her up," "punch him in the face," "be there, will be wild" – may well take a more specific form in a second term. Like McCarthyites at the height of the Cold War, Trumpists have imagined "Marxists" under every bed, even in the Pentagon. It's not far-fetched to think that the reelected president might issue a coded call to his supporters to round them all up and dispatch them in some grim fashion.

Trump often accuses his opponents of exactly the sins – attempting to steal elections, having distinctly senior moments – of which he is supremely guilty. In the MAGA echo chamber, complaints about witch-hunts targeting Trump should be considered just a preface,

should he win this November, to a genuine witch-hunt that could make the Red Scare of the 1950s look like a garden party.

Haiti has no government, much less a strong-armed autocrat like Donald Trump. So, it might seem ludicrous to compare the crisis there with the prospective "bloodbath" Trump promises here. But remember: Haiti suffered under two ruthless dictators from 1957 to 1986: Papa Doc Duvalier and his son, Baby Doc. Between them, they ensured that Haiti would never easily establish democratic institutions.

Donald Trump is nearly 78 years old. He doesn't have a long political future. Yes, were he to win in November, he would surely do what he could to destroy democracy. Still, the true nightmare scenario is likely to come later, as climate change sends yet more migrants surging toward US borders, generates more fires that sweep across the land, and heats politics to the boiling point.

That's when future versions of the gangs Trump has encouraged to "stand back and stand by," the insurrectionists he's promised to amnesty, and the loyalists who have shared images of Joe Biden tied up in the back of a pickup truck could assault the citadels of power in an attempt to destroy once and for all the rule of law that Trump has spent his life undermining.

Cue the ominous music: from sea to shining sea, the war of all against all may be just around the corner.

CT

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► MEDEA BENJAMIN & NICOLAS J.S. DAVIES

A brief history of kill lists: From Langley to Lavender

Technological weapons bring us full circle, from one automated mass murder to the next



UK Reaper with two GBU-12 500lb laser-guided bombs and four Lockheed Martin Hellfire missiles

The Israeli online magazine +972 has published a detailed report on Israel's use of an artificial intelligence (AI) system called "Lavender" to target thousands of Palestinian men in its bombing campaign in Gaza. When Israel attacked Gaza after October 7, the Lavender system had a database of 37,000 Palestinian men with suspected links to Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ).

Lavender assigns a numerical score, from one to 100, to every man in Gaza, based mainly on cellphone and social media data, and automatically adds those with high scores to its kill list of suspected militants. Israel uses another automated system, known as "Where's Daddy?", to call in airstrikes to kill these men and their families in their homes.

The report is based on interviews with six Israeli intelligence officers who have worked with these systems. As one of the officers explained to +972, by adding a name from a Lavender-generated list to the Where's Daddy home tracking

system, he can place the man's home under constant drone surveillance, and an airstrike will be launched once he comes home.

The officers said the "collateral" killing of the men's extended families was of little consequence to Israel. "Let's say you calculate [that there is one] Hamas [operative] plus 10 [civilians in the house]," the officer said. "Usually, these 10 will be women and children. So absurdly, it turns out that most of the people you killed were women and children."

The officers explained that the decision to target thousands of these men in their homes is just a question of expediency. It is simply easier to wait for them to come home to the address on file in the system, and then bomb that house or apartment building, than to search for them in the chaos of the war-torn Gaza Strip.

The officers who spoke to +972 explained that in previous Israeli massacres in Gaza, they could not

generate targets quickly enough to satisfy their political and military bosses, and so these AI systems were designed to solve that problem for them. The speed with which Lavender can generate new targets only gives its human minders an average of 20 seconds to review and rubber-stamp each name, even though they know from tests of the Lavender system that at least 10 percent of the men chosen for assassination and familicide have only an insignificant or a mistaken connection with Hamas or PIJ.

The Lavender AI system is a new weapon, developed by Israel. But the kind of kill lists that it generates have a long pedigree in US wars, occupations and CIA regime change operations. Since the birth of the CIA after the Second World War, the technology used to create kill lists has evolved from the CIA's earliest coups in Iran and Guatemala, to Indonesia and the Phoenix program in Vietnam in the 1960s, to Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s and to the US occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Just as US weapons development aims to be at the cutting edge, or the killing edge, of new technology, the CIA and US military intelligence have always tried to use the latest data processing technology to identify and kill their enemies.

The CIA learned some of these methods from German intelligence officers captured at the end of the Second World War. Many of the names on Nazi kill lists were generated by an intelligence unit called Fremde Heere Ost (Foreign Armies East), under the command of Major General Reinhard Gehlen, Germany's spy chief on the eastern front (see David Talbot, *The Devil's Chessboard*, p. 268).

Gehlen and the FHO had no computers, but they did have access to four million Soviet POWs from all over the USSR, and no compunction about torturing them to learn the names of Jews and communist officials in their hometowns to compile kill lists for the Gestapo and Einsatzgruppen.

After the war, like the 1,600 German scientists spirited out of Germany in Operation Paperclip, the United States flew Gehlen and his senior staff to Fort Hunt in Virginia. They were welcomed by Allen Dulles, soon to be the first and still the longest-serving director of the CIA. Dulles sent them back to Pullach in occupied Germany to resume their anti-Soviet operations as CIA agents. The Gehlen Organization formed the nucleus of what became the BND, the new West German intelligence service, with Reinhard Gehlen as its director until he retired in 1968.

After a CIA coup removed Iran's popular democratically elected prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1953, a CIA team led by US Major General Norman Schwarzkopf trained a new intelligence ser-

US special forces joined the Guatemalan army in a scorched earth campaign in Zacapa, which killed 15,000 people to defeat a few hundred armed rebels

vice, known as SAVAK, in the use of kill lists and torture. SAVAK used these skills to purge Iran's government and military of suspected communists and later to hunt down anyone who dared to oppose the Shah.

By 1975, Amnesty International estimated that Iran was holding between 25,000 and 100,000 political prisoners, and had "the highest rate of death penalties in the world, no valid system of civilian courts and a history of torture that is beyond belief."

In Guatemala, a CIA coup in 1954 replaced the democratic government of Jacobo Arbenz Guzman with a brutal dictatorship. As resistance grew in the 1960s, US special forces joined the Guatemalan army in a scorched earth campaign in Zacapa, which killed 15,000 people to defeat a few hundred armed rebels. Meanwhile, CIA-trained urban death squads abducted, tortured and killed PGT (Guatemalan Labor Party) members in Guatemala City, notably 28 prominent labor leaders who were abducted and disappeared in March 1966.

Once this first wave of resistance was suppressed, the CIA set up a new telecommunications centre and intelligence agency, based in the presidential palace. It compiled a database of "subversives" across the country that included leaders of farming co-ops and labour, student and indigenous activists, to provide ever-growing lists for the death squads. The resulting civil war be-

came a genocide against indigenous people in Ixil and the western highlands that killed or disappeared at least 200,000 people.

This pattern was repeated across the world, wherever popular, progressive leaders offered hope to their people in ways that challenged US interests. As historian Gabriel Kolko wrote in 1988, "The irony of US policy in the Third World is that, while it has always justified its larger objectives and efforts in the name of anticommunism, its own goals have made it unable to tolerate change from any quarter that impinged significantly on its own interests."

When General Suharto seized power in Indonesia in 1965, the US Embassy compiled a list of 5,000 communists for his death squads to hunt down and kill. The CIA estimated that they eventually killed 250,000 people, while other estimates run as high as a million.

Twenty-five years later, journalist Kathy Kadane investigated the US role in the massacre in Indonesia, and spoke to Robert Martens, the political officer who led the State-CIA team that compiled the kill list. "It really was a big help to the army," Martens told Kadane. "They probably killed a lot of people, and I probably have a lot of blood on my hands. But that's not all bad – there's a time when you have to strike hard at a decisive moment."

Kathy Kadane also spoke to former CIA director William Colby, who was the head of the CIA's Far East division in the 1960s. Colby compared the US role in Indonesia to the Phoenix Program in Vietnam, which was launched two years later, claiming that they were both successful programmes to identify and eliminate the organisational structure of America's communist enemies.

The Phoenix programme was designed to uncover and dismantle the

National Liberation Front's (NLF) shadow government across South Vietnam. Phoenix's Combined Intelligence Center in Saigon fed thousands of names into an IBM 1401 computer, along with their locations and their alleged roles in the NLF. The CIA credited the Phoenix program with killing 26,369 NLF officials, while another 55,000 were imprisoned or persuaded to defect. Seymour Hersh reviewed South Vietnamese government documents that put the death toll at 41,000.

How many of the dead were correctly identified as NLF officials may be impossible to know, but Americans who took part in Phoenix operations reported killing the wrong people in many cases. Navy SEAL Elton Manzione told author Douglas Valentine (*The Phoenix Program*) how he killed two young girls in a night raid on a village, and then sat down on a stack of ammunition crates with a hand grenade and an M-16, threatening to blow himself up, until he got a ticket home.

"The whole aura of the Vietnam War was influenced by what went on in the 'hunter-killer' teams of Phoenix, Delta, etc," Manzione told Valentine. "That was the point at which many of us realised we were no longer the good guys in the white hats defending freedom – that we were assassins, pure and simple. That disillusionment carried over to all other aspects of the war and was eventually responsible for it becoming America's most unpopular war."

Even as the US defeat in Vietnam and the "war fatigue" in the United States led to a more peaceful next decade, the CIA continued to engineer and support coups around the world, and to provide post-coup governments with increasingly computerised kill lists to consolidate their rule.

After supporting General Pinochet's coup in Chile in 1973, the CIA

Even as the US defeat in Vietnam and the "war fatigue" in the United States led to a more peaceful next decade, the CIA continued to engineer and support coups around the world

played a central role in Operation Condor, an alliance between right-wing military governments in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia, to hunt down tens of thousands of their and each other's political opponents and dissidents, killing and disappearing at least 60,000 people.

The CIA's role in Operation Condor is still shrouded in secrecy, but Patrice McSherry, a political scientist at Long Island University, has investigated the US role and concluded, "Operation Condor also had the covert support of the US government.

Washington provided Condor with military intelligence and training, financial assistance, advanced computers, sophisticated tracking technology, and access to the continental telecommunications system housed in the Panama Canal Zone."

McSherry's research revealed how the CIA supported the intelligence services of the Condor states with computerised links, a telex system, and purpose-built encoding and decoding machines made by the CIA Logistics Department. As she wrote in her book, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*:

"The Condor system's secure communications system, Condortel, ... allowed Condor operations centres in member countries to communicate with one another and with the parent station in a US facility in

the Panama Canal Zone. This link to the US military-intelligence complex in Panama is a key piece of evidence regarding secret US sponsorship of Condor..."

Operation Condor ultimately failed, but the US provided similar support and training to right-wing governments in Colombia and Central America throughout the 1980s in what senior military officers have called a "quiet, disguised, media-free approach" to repression and kill lists.

The US School of the Americas (SOA) trained thousands of Latin American officers in the use of torture and death squads, as Major Joseph Blair, the SOA's former chief of instruction described to John Pilger for his film, *The War You Don't See*:

"The doctrine that was taught was that, if you want information, you use physical abuse, false imprisonment, threats to family members, and killing. If you can't get the information you want, if you can't get the person to shut up or stop what they're doing, you assassinate them – and you assassinate them with one of your death squads."

When the same methods were transferred to the US hostile military occupation of Iraq after 2003, *Newsweek* headlined it "The Salvador Option." A US officer explained to *Newsweek* that US and Iraqi death squads were targeting Iraqi civilians as well as resistance fighters. "The Sunni population is paying no price for the support it is giving to the terrorists," he said. "From their point of view, it is cost-free. We have to change that equation."

The United States sent two veterans of its dirty wars in Latin America to Iraq to play key roles in that campaign. Colonel James Steele led the US Military Advisor Group in El Salvador from 1984 to 1986, training

and supervising Salvadoran forces who killed tens of thousands of civilians. He was also deeply involved in the Iran-Contra scandal, narrowly escaping a prison sentence for his role supervising shipments from Ilopango air base in El Salvador to the US-backed Contras in Honduras and Nicaragua.

In Iraq, Steele oversaw the training of the Interior Ministry's Special Police Commandos – rebranded as “National” and later “Federal” Police after the discovery of their al-Jadiriya torture centre and other atrocities.

Bayan al-Jabr, a commander in the Iranian-trained Badr Brigade militia, was appointed Interior Minister in 2005, and Badr militiamen were integrated into the Wolf Brigade death squad and other Special Police units. Jabr's chief adviser was Steven Casteel, the former intelligence chief for the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in Latin America.

The Interior Ministry death squads waged a dirty war in Baghdad and other cities, filling the Baghdad morgue with up to 1,800 corpses per month, while Casteel fed the western media absurd cover stories, such as that the death squads were all “insurgents” in stolen police uniforms.

Meanwhile US special operations forces conducted “kill-or-capture” night raids in search of Resistance leaders. General Stanley McChrystal, the commander of Joint Special Operations Command from 2003-2008, oversaw the development of a database system, used in Iraq and Afghanistan, that compiled cellphone numbers mined from captured cellphones to generate an ever-expanding target list for night raids and air strikes.

The targeting of cellphones instead of actual people enabled the

Obama's drone campaign to kill suspected enemies in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia was just as indiscriminate; reports said that 90 percent of the people it killed in Pakistan were civilians

automation of the targeting system, and explicitly excluded using human intelligence to confirm identities. Two senior US commanders told the *Washington Post* that only half the night raids attacked the right house or person.

In Afghanistan, President Obama put McChrystal in charge of US and NATO forces in 2009, and his cellphone-based “social network analysis” enabled an exponential increase in night raids, from 20 raids per month in May 2009 to up to 40 per night by April 2011.

As with the Lavender system in Gaza, this huge increase in targets was achieved by taking a system originally designed to identify and track a small number of senior enemy commanders and applying it to anyone suspected of having links with the Taliban, based on their cellphone data.

This led to the capture of an endless flood of innocent civilians, so that most civilian detainees had to be quickly released to make room for new ones. The increased killing of civilians in night raids and airstrikes fuelled already fierce resistance to the US and NATO occupation and ultimately led to its defeat.

President Obama's drone campaign to kill suspected enemies in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia was just as indiscriminate, with reports suggesting that 90 percent of the people it killed in Pakistan were innocent civilians.

And yet Obama and his national security team kept meeting in the White House every “Terror Tuesday” to select who the drones would target that week, using an Orwellian, computerised “disposition matrix” to provide technological cover for their life and death decisions.

Looking at this evolution of ever-more automated systems for killing and capturing enemies, we can see how, as the information technology used has advanced from telexes to cellphones and from early IBM computers to artificial intelligence, the human intelligence and sensibility that could spot mistakes, prioritise human life and prevent the killing of innocent civilians has been progressively marginalised and excluded, making these operations more brutal and horrifying than ever.

Nicolas has at least two good friends who survived the dirty wars in Latin America because someone who worked in the police or military got word to them that their names were on a death list, one in Argentina, the other in Guatemala. If their fates had been decided by an AI machine like Lavender, they would both be long dead.

As with supposed advances in other types of weapons technology, like drones and “precision” bombs and missiles, innovations that claim to make targeting more precise and eliminate human error have instead led to the automated mass murder of innocent people, especially women and children, bringing us full circle from one holocaust to the next.

CT

Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J. S. Davies are the authors of 'War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict' available from OR Books.

► CHRIS HEDGES

Boyn-ton

Genocide foretold

The genocide in Gaza is the final stage of a process begun by Israel decades ago. Anyone who did not see this coming blinded themselves to the character and ultimate goals of the apartheid state

There are no surprises in Gaza. Every horrifying act of Israel's genocide has been telegraphed in advance. It has been for decades. The dispossession of Palestinians of their land is the beating heart of Israel's settler colonial project. This dispossession has had dramatic historical moments – 1948 and 1967 – when huge parts of historic Palestine were seized and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were ethnically cleansed. Dispossession has also occurred in increments – the slow-motion theft of land and steady ethnic cleansing in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

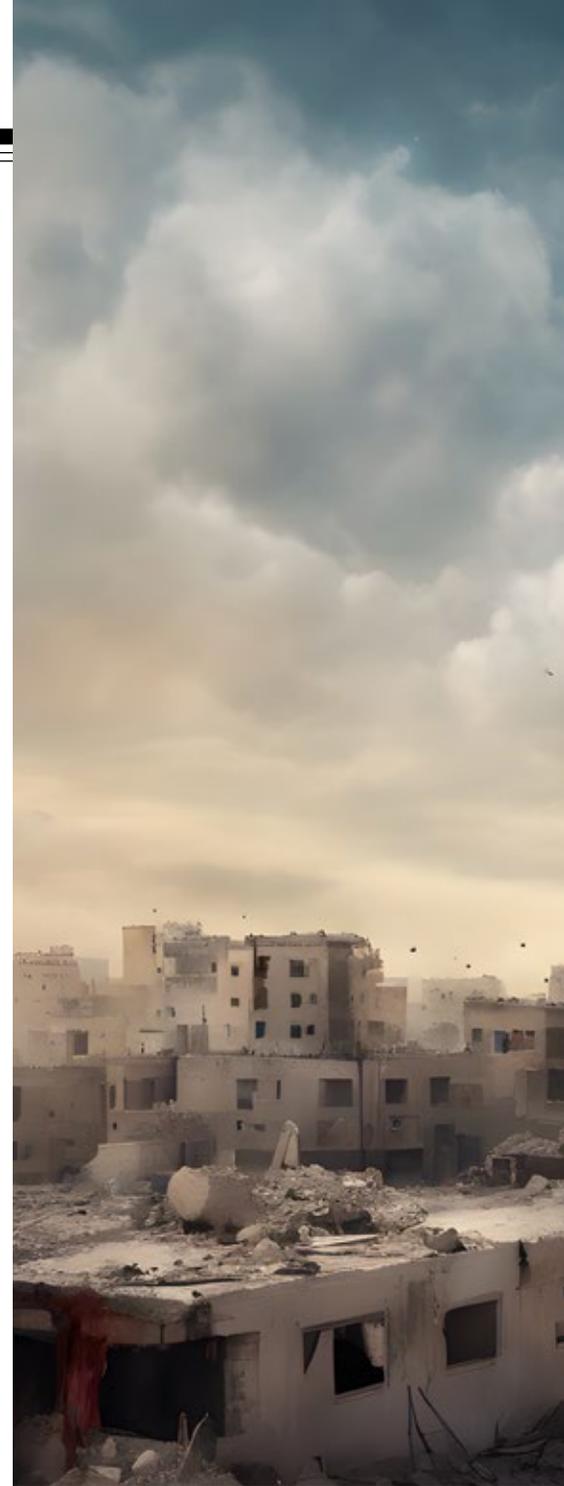
The incursion on Oct. 7 into Israel by Hamas and other resistance groups, which left 1,154 Israelis, tourists and migrant workers dead and saw about 240 people taken hostage, gave Israel the pretext for what it has long craved – the total erasure of Palestinians.

Israel has razed 77 percent of healthcare facilities in Gaza, 68 percent of telecommunication infrastructure, nearly all municipal and governmental buildings, commercial, industrial and agricultural cen-

tres, almost half of all roads, over 60 percent of Gaza's 439,000 homes, 68 percent of residential buildings – the bombing of the Al-Taj tower in Gaza City on Oct. 25, killed 101 people, including 44 children and 37 women, and injured hundreds – and obliterated refugee camps. The attack on the Jabalia refugee camp on Oct. 25 killed at least 126 civilians, including 69 children, and injured 280. Israel has damaged or destroyed Gaza's universities, all of which are now closed, and 60 percent of other educational facilities, including 13 libraries. It has also destroyed at least 195 heritage sites, including 208 mosques, churches, and Gaza's Central Archives that held 150 years of historical records and documents.

Israel's warplanes, missiles, drones, tanks, artillery shells and naval guns daily pulverize Gaza – which is only 20 miles long and five miles wide – in a scorched earth campaign unlike anything seen since the war in Vietnam. It has dropped 25,000 tons of explosives – equivalent to two nuclear bombs – on Gaza, many targets

selected by Artificial Intelligence. It drops unguided munitions (“dumb bombs”) and 2000-pound “bunker buster” bombs on refugee camps and densely packed urban centres as well as the so-called “safe zones” – 42 percent of Palestinians killed have been in these “safe zones” where they were instructed by Israel to flee. Over 1.7 million Palestinians have been displaced from their homes, forced to find refuge in overcrowded UNRWA shelters, hospital corridors and court-





yards, schools, tents or the open air in south Gaza, often living next to fetid pools of raw sewage.

Israel has killed at least 32,705 Palestinians in Gaza, including 13,000 children and 9,000 women. This means Israel is slaughtering as many as 187 people a day including 75 children. It has killed 136 journalists, many, if not most of them deliberately targeted. It has killed 340 doctors, nurses and other health workers – four percent of Gaza's

healthcare personnel. These numbers do not begin to reflect the actual death toll since only those dead registered in morgues and hospitals, most of which no longer function, are counted. The death toll, when those who are missing are counted, is well over 40,000.

Doctors are forced to amputate limbs without anaesthetic. Those with severe medical conditions – cancer, diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease – have died from lack

of treatment or will die soon. Over a hundred women give birth every day, with little to no medical care. Miscarriages are up by 300 percent. Over 90 percent of the Palestinians in Gaza suffer from severe food insecurity with people eating animal feed and grass. Children are dying of starvation. Palestinian writers, academics, scientists and their family members have been tracked and assassinated. Over 75,000 Palestinians have been wounded, many of

whom will be crippled for life.

“Seventy percent of recorded deaths have consistently been women and children,” writes Francesca Albanese, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, in her report issued on March 25. “Israel failed to prove that the remaining 30 percent, i.e. adult males, were active Hamas combatants – a necessary condition for them to be lawfully targeted. By early-December, Israel’s security advisors claimed the killing of ‘7,000 terrorists’ in a stage of the campaign when less than 5,000 adult males in total had been identified among the casualties, thus implying that all adult males killed were ‘terrorists.’”

Israel plays linguistic tricks to deny anyone in Gaza the status of civilians and any building - including mosques, hospitals and schools - protected status. Palestinians are all branded as responsible for the attack on Oct. 7 or written off as human shields for Hamas. All structures are considered legitimate targets by Israel because they are allegedly Hamas command centres or said to harbor Hamas fighters.

These accusations, Albanese writes, are a “pretext” used to justify “the killing of civilians under a cloak of purported legality, whose all-enveloping pervasiveness admits only of genocidal intent.”

In scale we have not seen an assault on the Palestinians of this magnitude, but all these measures – the killing of civilians, dispossession of land, arbitrary detention, torture, disappearances, closures imposed on Palestinians towns and villages, house demolitions, revoking residence permits, deportation, destruction of the infrastructure that maintains civil society, military occupation, dehumanizing language, theft of natural resources, especially aquifers – have long defined Israel’s campaign to eradicate

The genocide in Gaza is the culmination of a process. The genocide is the predictable denouement of Israel’s settler colonial project. It is coded within the DNA of the Israeli state

Palestinians.

The occupation and genocide would not be possible without the US which gives Israel \$3.8 billion in annual military assistance and is now sending another \$2.5 billion in bombs, including 1,800 MK84 2,000-pound bombs, 500 MK82 500-pound bombs and fighter jets to Israel. This, too, is our genocide.

The genocide in Gaza is the culmination of a process. It is not an act. The genocide is the predictable denouement of Israel’s settler colonial project. It is coded within the DNA of the Israeli apartheid state. It is where Israel had to end up.

Zionist leaders are open about their goals.

Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant, after Oct. 7, announced that Gaza would receive “no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel.” Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Israel Katz said: “Humanitarian aid to Gaza? No electrical switch will be turned on, no water hydrant will be opened.” Avi Dichter, the Minister of Agriculture, referred to Israel’s military assault as “the Gaza Nakba,” referencing the Nakba, or “catastrophe”, which between 1947 and 1949, drove 750,000 Palestinians from their land and saw thousands massacred by Zionist militias. Likud member of the Israeli Knesset Revital Gottlieb posted on her social

media account: “Bring down buildings!! Bomb without distinction!!... Flatten Gaza. Without mercy! This time, there is no room for mercy!” Not to be outdone, Minister of Heritage Amichai Eliyahu supported using nuclear weapons on Gaza as “one of the possibilities.”

The message from the Israeli leadership is unequivocal. Annihilate the Palestinians the same way we annihilated Native Americans, the Australians annihilated the First Nations peoples, the Germans annihilated the Herero in Namibia, the Turks annihilated Armenians and the Nazis annihilated the Jews.

The specifics are different. The process is the same.

We cannot plead ignorance. We know what happened to the Palestinians. We know what is happening to the Palestinians. We know what will happen to the Palestinians.

But it is easier to pretend. Pretend Israel will allow in humanitarian aid. Pretend there will be a ceasefire. Pretend Palestinians will return to their destroyed homes in Gaza. Pretend Gaza will be rebuilt. Pretend the Palestinian Authority will administer Gaza. Pretend there will be a two-state solution. Pretend there is no genocide.

The genocide, which the US is funding and sustaining with weapons shipments, says something not only about Israel, but about us, about Western civilization, about who we are as a people, where we came from and what defines us. It says that all our vaunted morality and respect for human rights is a lie. It says that people of colour, especially when they are poor and vulnerable, do not count. It says their hopes, dreams, dignity and aspirations for freedom are worthless. It says we will ensure global domination through racialised violence.

This lie – that Western civilization is predicated on “values” such

as respect for human rights and the rule of law – is one the Palestinians, and all those in the Global South, as well as Native Americans and Black and Brown Americans have known for centuries. But, with the Gaza genocide live streamed, this lie is impossible to sustain.

We do not halt Israel's genocide because we *are* Israel, infected with white supremacy and intoxicated by our domination of the globe's wealth and the power to obliterate others with our industrial weapons. Remember the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman telling Charlie Rose on the eve of the war in Iraq that American soldiers should go house to house from Basra to Baghdad and say to Iraqis "suck on this?" That is the

We do not halt Israel's genocide because we are Israel, infected with white supremacy and intoxicated by our domination of the globe's wealth and the power to obliterate others

real credo of the US empire.

The world outside of the industrialised fortresses in the Global North is acutely aware that the fate of the Palestinians is their fate. As climate change imperils survival, as resources become scarce, as migration becomes an imperative for millions, as agricultural yields decline, as coastal areas are flooded,

as droughts and wild fires proliferate, as states fail, as armed resistance movements rise to battle their oppressors along with their proxies, genocide will not be an anomaly. It will be the norm. The earth's vulnerable and poor, those Frantz Fanon called "the wretched of the earth," will be the next Palestinians. **CT**

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who was a foreign correspondent for 15 years with the New York Times, where he served as Middle East bureau chief and Balkan bureau chief. He previously worked overseas for the Dallas Morning News, the Christian Science Monitor and NPR. He is host of the Chris Hedges Report – www.chrishedges.substack.com.

BENDIB'S WORLD

KHALIL BENDIB



► JONATHAN COOK

How ‘antisemitic hoax’ drowned out discovery of mass graves in Gaza

In confecting a media row about the policing of London marches against genocide, the Israel lobby knew it would score a victory, whatever happened

A gruesome discovery was made in Gaza last month. Some 300 Palestinian bodies – of men, women and children – were unearthed from an unmarked mass grave in the courtyard of the Nasser hospital in Khan Younis

Even given Israel’s record of committing relentless atrocities in Gaza over the past six months – killing tens of thousands of Palestinians, most of them women and children – this one stood out.

Some bodies were reported to have been found with their hands and feet bound, and stripped of clothing, strongly suggesting they had been executed during a three-month invasion of the city by Israeli soldiers. Others were said to be decapitated, or their skin and organs removed.

Up to 10,000 people had been sheltering at Gaza’s second-largest hospital when it was attacked back in February. At the time there were reports of patients and staff being picked off by sniper fire. The medical facility was left in ruins.

Another 400 people are still reported missing in Khan Younis. More mass graves are already being uncovered.

Referring to some of the bodies, Yamen Abu Suleiman, a civil defence leader in Khan Younis, told CNN: “We do not know if they were buried alive or executed. Most of the bodies are decomposed.”

The revelations from Khan Younis fit a pattern that has been gradually emerging as Israeli troops have pulled back.

Towards the end of April, the latest of several mass graves were found at Gaza’s largest hospital, al-Shifa. Israel left the area earlier this month after destroying the hospital. Together, the graves are reported to have contained hundreds of bodies.

Further unmarked graves have been discovered in Beit Lahiya.

The United Nations human rights chief, Volker Turk, said he was “horrificed” by the reports.

Back in the 1990s, the identification of mass graves of thousands of Muslim men from the Bosnian town of Srebrenica led to the setting up of a special war crimes tribunal of the International Criminal Court. It ruled in 2001 that a genocide had occurred in Srebrenica committed by Bosnian Serbs – a judgment later confirmed

by the International Court of Justice, sometimes referred to as the World Court.

In the circumstances, one might have expected the discovery of mass graves of hundreds of Palestinians to be front-page news – especially since the same World Court ruled three months ago that a “plausible” case had been made that Israel was committing genocidal acts in Gaza.

And yet, like so many other Israeli atrocities, this one barely caused a ripple in the news cycle.

Months ago, the establishment British media largely lost interest in reporting on the continuing slaughter in Gaza. The contrast with the media’s early coverage of Ukraine has been stark. The discovery of a mass grave containing some 100 bodies in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha – blamed on Russian troops – caused international outrage.

Bucha quickly became a byword for Russian savagery, and the discovery sustained months of calls for Russian leaders to be tried for genocide.

The general indifference of British media outlets to the mass graves found in Gaza is hugely convenient for Britain’s two main political parties.



WHERE'S THE OUTRAGE? Bodies are excavated from mass graves at a Khan Younis hospital in Gaza.

The UK has avoided pushing for a ceasefire to end Israel's bloodletting in Gaza. It refuses to stop selling Israel weapons and components that have helped in the killing of Palestinians – and potentially aid workers too.

On Israel's say-so, Britain has cut funding to UNRWA, the UN aid agency best placed to stop a famine Israel is wilfully inducing in the enclave by blocking aid. And a British abstention helped foil a vote in the United Nations Security Council this month to recognise Palestine as a state, something 140 other nations have already done.

The Labour party has offered only muted opposition.

Bipartisan support in the UK for Israel's plausible genocide has provoked a groundswell of public anger, including regular protests in Lon-

don that attract hundreds of thousands of marchers.

Once again, however, the British media has seemed far less interested in reporting Israeli atrocities than in imputing malign motivations to large sections of the British public incensed by what is happening in Gaza.

It was quite extraordinary that the discovery of mass graves in the enclave was almost completely drowned out by an all-too-obvious hoax pulled by an Israel lobbyist.

Gideon Falter, chief executive of the Campaign Against Antisemitism, has been trying to shut down the peaceful London marches calling for an end to the butchering of men, women and chil-

dren in Gaza since Israel began its military assault more than six months ago.

In Falter's words, the hundreds of thousands of people who turn out regularly to call for a ceasefire – including a large bloc of Jews – are "lawless mobs" posing a direct threat to Jews like himself.

He has found powerful allies in the government. Home Secretary James Cleverly has said the march organisers have "real evil intent," while his predecessor Suella Braverman labelled the protests calling for a ceasefire as "hate marches."

Both have put pressure on the police to ban the protests for being supposedly antisemitic

There is precisely no evidence for any of these claims. In fact, according to police figures, Glastonbury music festivalgoers were nearly

four times more likely to be arrested than those attending the London marches.

Which has left the continuing mass marches a major embarrassment to both the UK government and the opposition Labour party by highlighting their continuing complicity in what has become – with revelations like the discovery of mass graves – ever more clearly a genocide.

That is the proper context for understanding Falter’s latest intervention.

As the Metropolitan police are only too aware, Falter’s group, along with other pro-Israel activists, has every incentive to engineer a provocation to add to the already considerable pressure on the police to ban the London marches and further curtail a fundamental civil liberty: the right to protest.

A video on social media shows Falter being confronted by police in a previous incident in which he tried to drive a large van with pro-Israel messages down the march route.

But his breakthrough came towards the end of April when, accompanied by an Israeli-trained security detail and a film crew, he tried repeatedly to break through a police line along the route and walk against the flow of the march. Responsible for maintaining public order at large protests, Met officers stopped him.

There are well-known rules imposed by the police surrounding large protests on highly charged ideological issues like this one.

The marchers are not allowed to stray from the route determined by the police, and opponents – whether Israel apologists like Falter or Islamophobic white nationalists – are not allowed to approach and antagonise the marchers. The job of the police is to keep the sides apart.

Blocked by officers, Falter had his script ready. He simply insisted on



TV Screenshot

CONFRONTATION: Gideon Falter, chief executive of the Campaign Against Antisemitism, clashes with a police sergeant as he tries to disrupt a London demonstration against Israeli’s war on Gaza.

his right to “cross the street” as a Jew going about his business.

Given the way the public discourse about Israel and antisemitism has been malevolently manipulated by the British establishment over the past eight years – after the long-time Palestinian solidarity activist Jeremy Corbyn was elected Labour leader – Falter could not lose in this encounter.

If the police arrested him, he would have filmed evidence that he was being victimised as a Jew by an antisemitic police force.

If they refused to let him “cross the street”, he would have filmed proof that the march was indeed filled with Jew haters posing as s he tries to dis-

rupt threat to his safety. And if the police failed in their duties and let him and his retinue walk against the flow of the packed protest, he – like anyone attempting to do this – would at the very least be jostled.

Based on the established credulity of the establishment media in covering antisemitism, Falter was presumably confident that this could be spun as a hate crime against him.

The police clearly seemed to understand Falter’s game plan. They appeared extremely reluctant to arrest him, even though a former chief superintendent, Dal Babu, observed that, in trying to push past them, Falter could have been charged with “assault on a police officer and breach of the peace.”

Instead, the officers patiently argued for at least a quarter of an hour with Falter, pointing out that he could bypass the march using a different route.

But in this lengthy, testy encounter, the Campaign Against Antisemitism boss finally got what he wanted. One officer made a slip-

The police appeared extremely reluctant to arrest Falter. Instead, the officers argued with him for at least a quarter of an hour

up, suggesting that the problem was that the skullcap-wearing Falter was “openly Jewish.”

As noted, lots of Jews attend the march and do so under banners declaring that they are Jews. Despite being “openly Jewish,” all say they are warmly welcomed by other demonstrators.

The officer’s mistake was understandable. Israel apologists and the British establishment spent years manipulating the public discourse to conflate Israel, the political nationalist ideology of Zionism and Jewishness in a blatant ploy to vilify supporters of Corbyn, the anti-racist former Labour leader, as antisemites

The problem wasn’t that Falter is “openly Jewish,” it was that he is a vocal, openly Zionist supporter of Israel, one who makes excuses for its genocide and vilifies those who are opposed to the bloodletting. It is not his ethnicity or religion that are a provocation, it is his ugly politics.

But with the officer’s comment in the can, Falter released a heavily edited version of his confrontation with the police to an establishment media only too willing – at least, initially – to swallow two completely implausible ideas Falter was peddling.

First, that the police officer’s comment was proof that the Met is institutionally racist against Jews and that is why it has allowed the anti-genocide marches to go ahead. Falter called for the head of the Met, Sir Mark Rowley, to be sacked.

And second, and more importantly, that the officer’s comment was proof that the marches are indeed “hate marches” consisting of – as he declared to a BBC interviewer – “racists, extremists and terrorist sympathisers.”

It may all have been fake news but it fitted an agenda the media has been promoting for years: that anything more than the lightest-touch criticism of Israel is evidence of

Falter has given the political and media class more ammunition to argue that the marches need to be banned

antisemitism.

The political and media class have been increasingly struggling to credibly sustain that idea in the face of Israel committing a genocide – but Falter’s video served briefly as a shot in the arm.

From one police officer’s brief, verbal slip-up, he was able to fire up a national debate that took as its premise the idea that police were colluding with “antisemitic hate marches”.

On the back foot, the Met hurriedly agreed to meet Falter and “Jewish community leaders,” seemingly to get their advice on what needed to be done about the marches.

BBC evening news on April 21 reported that pressure was growing on the Met “to get the balance right between allowing legitimate protest and cracking down on hate speech and intimidation.”

Good Morning Britain’s hosts fawned over Falter the next morning, accepting uncritically that the march posed a threat to him as a Jew and expressing concern that the police were not getting that balance right.

But quite unlike the years-long accusations of fake antisemitism whipped up by Falter and others to oust Corbyn, one that was enthusiastically amplified by the state-corporate media, the Met had powerful allies inside the establishment that pushed back.

Before Falter’s hoax could properly take hold, Sky TV released a much longer video of his confrontation with the police. It showed that

they had blocked his way after identifying him as a provocateur. Police can be heard accusing him of being “disingenuous” and telling him to stop “running into protesters.”

Former police officers, including Babu, were invited on TV to offer a counter-narrative that cast Falter in a far less sympathetic light.

By Tuesday, the Met chief Rowley was feeling confident enough to go on the attack, praising the officer at the centre of the row and accusing pro-Israel activists of using “fakery” to undermine the Met.

But even wounded, Falter emerged decisively as the victor.

No one is talking – as they should be – about why groups like the Campaign Against Antisemitism, which regularly and so visibly meddle deeply in British politics in the interests of a foreign power, Israel, are treated as charities.

Instead, Falter has given the political and media class more ammunition to argue that the marches need to be banned, and has put police decision-making under yet more scrutiny.

Whatever bullishness Rowley exhibited in public, his battles behind the scenes against a government keen to silence the marches will have been made far more complicated.

More importantly, Falter has played an invaluable role in bolstering Israel’s favourite tactic. He has deflected attention in the UK away from its war crimes – including the mass graves in Khan Younis – to squabbles entirely divorced from reality about whether Jews are safe from the anti-war movement.

Precisely the same dynamic is playing out in the United States, where the establishment – from President Joe Biden down – is painting peaceful protests on college

campuses against the genocide as hotbeds of hatred and antisemitism.

There, things are even more out of hand, with the police called in to make arrests of students and faculty.

In both cases, the real debate – about why Britain and the US are still actively supporting the bombing and starvation of Gaza’s population after six months of genocide – has once more been muffled by the Israel lobby’s fake news.

Establishment media have once again seized on any pretext available to them to focus on a twig rather than the forest.

The pattern is hard to miss: the British establishment, including the government and the BBC, are working hand in hand to help Israel and its genocide apologists win the public relations battle.

Only briefly, when the honour of the police – the establishment’s fist – got a bloodied nose, was there a degree of pushback.

Take, for example, the day in January when the World Court ruled there was a “plausible” case made by South Africa’s lawyers that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. That same day Israel successfully sabotaged the devastating news with a scoop of its own.

It alleged that some 12 UNRWA staff members it had seized in Gaza – out of a total of 13,000 in the enclave on the agency’s payroll – had

confessed to taking part in Hamas’ attack on October 7, in which some 1,150 Israelis were killed.

Israel demanded western states immediately cut all funding to UNRWA. It has been Israel’s long-term goal to eliminate the refugee agency and permanently erase the rights of Palestinians to return to homes their families were expelled from in 1948 in what is now Israel.

Most western capitals, including the UK, dutifully complied, even though the decision was certain to plunge Gaza even deeper into a famine Israel has been engineering as part of its genocidal policies.

But the announcement’s timing was important too. Western media focused their coverage on a story about UNRWA that should have been marginal, even were it true.

The World Court’s finding that Israel was plausibly committing genocide was far more significant. Nonetheless, reporting on the ruling – especially the fact that the court suspected Israel was carrying out genocidal acts – was entirely overshadowed by the claims against UNRWA.

Now, months on, an independent review commissioned by the UN and led by the former French foreign minister, Catherine Colonna, found that Israel has still failed to

produce any evidence to support its allegations against UNRWA.

But just as with Falter’s hoax, the goal of such accusations by Israel is never to expose the truth. The aim is to distract from the truth.

The same can be said of Israel’s still unsubstantiated claims of unprecedented savagery committed by Hamas on October 7, from beheading babies to carrying out systematic mass rape.

None of these allegations, which have been widely regurgitated by the establishment western media, have ever been backed up with evidence. Whenever testimonies have been scrutinised, they have unravelled.

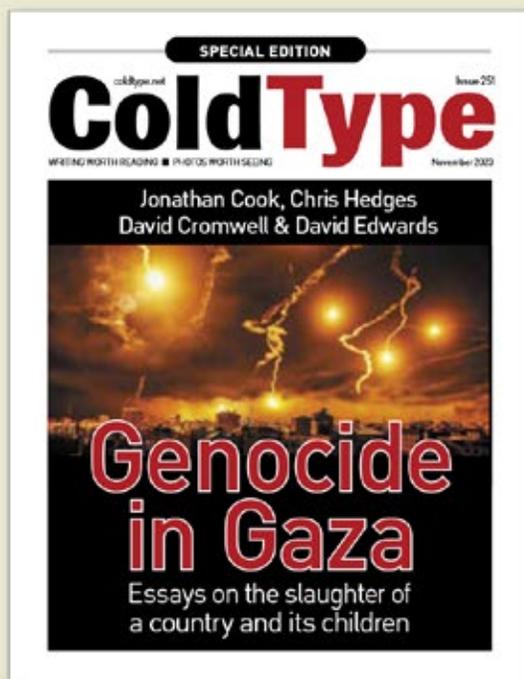
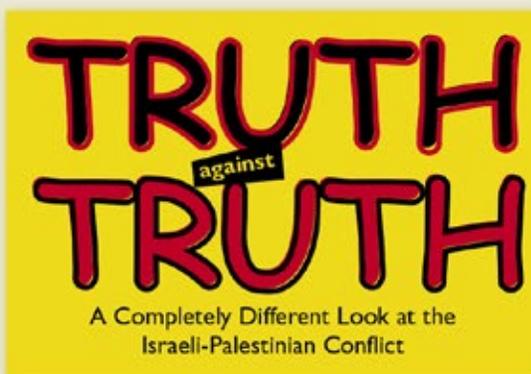
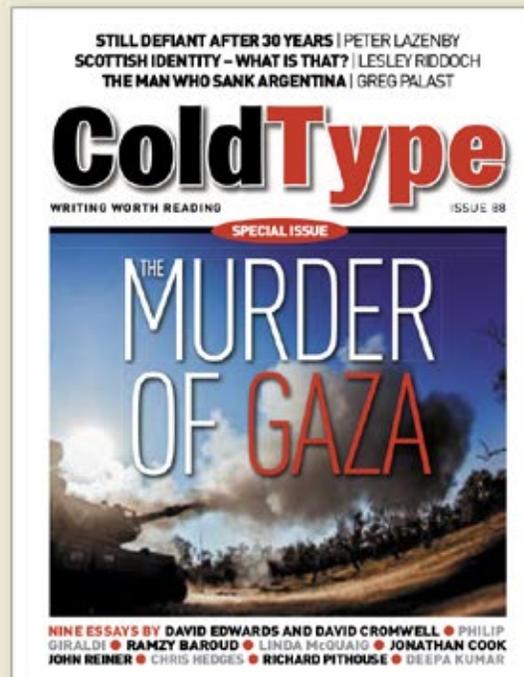
But all these claims have served a purpose. They keep western publics focused on evil humanitarian aid workers and evil anti-war protesters rather than the kind of evil that dares in broad daylight to kill 15,000 children, destroy hospitals, and hide bodies in mass graves. **CT**

Jonathan Cook is an award-winning British journalist, who was based in Nazareth, Israel, for 20 years before returning to the UK in 2021. The author of three books on the Israel-Palestine conflict, Cook won the Martha Gelhorn Special Prize for Journalism in 2011. He previously worked for Britain’s Guardian and Observer newspapers. His website is www.jonathan-cook.net.

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► VIJAY PRASHAD

Elites in global North afraid to talk about Palestine

While people across the world have supported Palestine, the global north's ruling class has supported Israel's genocide and criminalised solidarity

Israeli bombs continue to fall on Gaza, killing Palestinian civilians with abandon. Al Jazeera published a story about the destruction of 24 hospitals in Gaza, each bombed mercilessly by the Israeli military. Half of the 35,000 Palestinians killed by Israel were children, their bodies littering the overwhelmed morgues and mosques of Gaza.

The former United Nations assistant secretary-general for human rights Andrew Gilmour told BBC Newsnight that the Palestinians are experiencing “collective punishment” and that what we are seeing in Gaza is “probably the highest kill rate of any military, killing anybody, since the Rwandan genocide of 1994.”

Meanwhile, in the West Bank section of Palestine, Human Rights Watch shows that the Israeli military has participated in the displacement of Palestinians from 20 communities and has uprooted at least seven communities since October 2023.

These are estab-

lished facts.

Yet, these facts – according to a leaked memorandum – cannot be spoken about in the “newspaper of record” in the United States, the *New York Times*. Journalists at the paper were asked to avoid the terms “genocide,” “ethnic cleansing,” and “occupied territory.”

Indeed, over the past six months, newspapers and television shows in the United States have generally written about the genocidal violence using the passive voice: bombs fell, people died.

Even on social media, where the terrain is often less controlled, the

axe fell on key phrases; for instance, despite his professions of commitment to free speech, Elon Musk said that terms such as “decolonisation” and phrases such as “from the river to the sea” would be banned on X.

At the University of Southern California (USC), Asna Tabassum, a South Asian American, was to deliver an address on campus to 65,000 people as the valedictorian of the class of 2024.

Involved in the conversation around the Israeli war against the Palestinians, Tabassum was targeted by pro-Israeli activists who claimed to feel threatened.

On the basis of this feeling of endangerment, whose source the university refused to disclose, USC decided to cancel her speech.

In a thoughtful response, Tabassum – who majored in biomedical engineering and history (with a minor in re-



Columbia University student encampment for Gaza.

Wyatt Souers

sistance to genocide) – implored her classmates “to think outside the box – to work towards a world where cries of equality and human dignity are not manipulated to be expressions of hatred. I challenge us to respond to ideological discomfort with dialogue and learning, not bigotry and censorship.”

Tabassum is 21 years old. The USC provost who cancelled her speech, Andrew Guzman, is 56 years old. His reasons for shutting her down are less mature than her plea for dialogue.

College students across the United States have been trying desperately to raise awareness about what is happening in Gaza and have sought to get their campuses to divest from companies with investments in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Early protests were tolerated, but then US politicians got involved with congressional hearings and rash comments about these students being funded by the Chinese and Russians.

College administrators, afraid of their donors and of political pressure, buckled and began to censor the students from one end of the country (Columbia University) to the other (Pomona College). College presidents invited local police departments onto their campuses, allowed them to arrest the students, and suspended them from their colleges. But the mood is undeniable. Student unions across the country – from Rutgers to Davis – voted to force their administrations to divest from Israel.

On April 12, 2024, the Berlin police closed a Palestine conference that brought together people from across Germany to listen to a range of speakers, including from other parts of Europe and from Palestine. At the

College presidents invited local police departments onto their campuses, allowed them to arrest the students, and suspended them from their colleges

airport, the police detained and then deported the British-Palestinian doctor, Ghassan Abu Sitta, who had volunteered in Gaza and had witnessed the genocidal war firsthand.

The former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis was to give an online speech at the conference. He was not only prevented from giving that speech, but also was issued a *betätigungsverbot* – or a ban from any political activity in Germany (ban from entry into Germany and a ban from doing an online event). This, Varoufakis said, is essentially the “death knell of the prospects of democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany.”

A few days before the conference in Berlin, Professor Jodi Dean published an essay on the Verso Blog called “Palestine Speaks for Everyone.” The essay is rooted in the simple, and unobjectionable, idea that oppressed people have the right to fight for their emancipation. This is the basis of the International Declaration of Human Rights, also cited frequently by Varoufakis.

The day after the Palestine conference was shut down in Berlin, Jodi Dean’s employer, President Mark Gearan of Hobart and William Smith Colleges in the United States, published a statement announcing that Professor Dean cannot teach the rest of her classes this term.

Gearan wrote that not only was he in “complete disagreement” with

Dean, but he also found her comments to be “repugnant.”

It is interesting that since October, Gearan has only released a public statement condemning Hamas, but nothing about the horrendous genocidal violence against the Palestinians.

What did Jodi Dean write that was so “repugnant”? Gearan focused on the word “exhilarating,” which Dean used to describe her reaction to paragliders that went beyond the Israeli occupation fence around Gaza.

She did not actually celebrate the attacks of October 7, but merely used the paragliders as a metaphor to consider the politics of hope and liberation from a Palestinian standpoint (citing the last poem of Refaat Alareer, killed by Israel on December 6, 2023, with its meditation on kites to highlight the idea of soaring above oppression).

Gearan did not want a dialogue about the occupation or about the genocide. Like the editors and publishers of the *New York Times*, like the German government, and like other US college presidents, Gearan wanted to curtail conversation. Tabassum’s plea for “dialogue and learning” was muzzled; too scared to actually talk about Palestine, people like Gearan prefer “bigotry and censorship.” **CT**

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➤ MATT KENNARD

The closest Irish unity has been since partition

A visit to Belfast as Ireland appears on the edge of something truly historic, with most agreeing that Brexit was the game-changer

In Northern Ireland, July 12 serves as a reminder of the still raw sectarian wounds of the recent past. “The Twelfth”, as it’s known, is a protestant day of parades and marches. It celebrates the victory of King William of Orange over catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. This ensured a protestant ascendancy in Ireland.

The night before, named the Eleventh Night, it is tradition for unionist communities to build huge bonfires, sometimes with effigies of republican politicians, and have street parties into the night.

I walk up towards a protestant community in north Belfast, but to get there I have to go through New Lodge, a working class catholic area.

“Is Tiger’s Bay that way?” I ask at a local newsagent.

“Yes, it is, but be careful, it’s rowdy tonight,” the man tells me. “Where are you from?”

“London,” I say.

“Ah, okay, you’ll be fine, then.”

Like most of Belfast it’s clear when I’ve crossed the unmarked lines that still divide the communities. In Tiger’s Bay, union jack flags flutter all around while pictures of King Charles III appear in windows.

Down Upper Canning St, I come to a large parking lot which has been converted into a party venue. Huge speakers pump out house music at

an incredible volume. Teenagers stand around drinking spirit mixers and beers. The star of the show is the huge bonfire in front, not yet lit at 11pm. It has an Irish tricolour flag strapped across it.

I stand around with a beer for ten minutes before one of the kids asks: “What you doing here?”

“Just looking around,” I say.

“Don’t,” he says.

The Protestant festivities in July are a reminder of how real the divides in Northern Ireland still are. The Orange Order parade the next day brings out all the most extreme within the community. Many catholics don’t leave their houses – or leave the city completely.

But something historic is happening in this territory: the unionists are losing control. Locals say that even the parades have a more lacklustre feel in recent years.

In the 2019 general election, Northern Ireland failed to send a major-

In Tiger's Bay, union jack flags flutter all around while pictures of King Charles III appear in windows

ity of unionist MPs back to London for the first time. Then in the May 2022 Northern Ireland Assembly election, Sinn Féin became the largest party in the Northern Ireland Assembly, again for the first time, pushing the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) into second place.

A year later, in May 2023, Sinn Féin became the biggest party in Northern Ireland local government, the first nationalist party to hold the most council seats.

On top of this, Sinn Féin, who’s flagship policy is a reunified Ireland, is leading in polls south of the border under the leadership of Mary Lou McDonald.

A 10 minute walk west up Duncairn Gardens from the bonfire and teenagers are the offices of John Finucane, one of the seven Sinn Féin MPs who were returned to Westminster at the 2019 general election.

Finucane’s father Pat was a prominent lawyer killed by loyalist paramilitaries from the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) in 1989 as he ate Sunday lunch with his family.

For many in Northern Ireland, the big change that has accelerated the trend towards Irish reunification is the 2016 vote for Brexit.

“Since Brexit, the conversation around a unified Ireland has taken place at a pace people have never seen before,” Finucane tells me.

“The elections in 2022 and 2023



A bonfire with the Irish tricolour flag is prepared for burning in north Belfast.

demonstrate that people are looking more and more on the horizon towards Dublin rather than to Westminster, for all of the reasons that we have seen over the last six or seven years.”

He adds: “The chaos, the recklessness, that emanates from Westminster shows time and time again that they do not care about the interests of people here.”

Finucane and his fellow Sinn Féin MPs practise a policy of abstentionism, which means they do not physically take up their seats in the House of Commons. Their argument is that British political control over Northern Ireland is illegitimate and working within it formally endorses it.

“It is for the people here to decide what their constitutional future will be. If the majority decide that they want to maintain the union with London, then that is what the out-

come will be. If the majority instead want to have something different, they want to have a new Ireland. And I think more and more people, certainly outside of the Republican base, are having that conversation.”

Chris Hazzard, Sinn Féin MP for South Down since 2017, wants to meet at the James Connolly Centre in west Belfast. Connolly is a hero of the republican struggle as a key figure in the Easter Rising of 1916, after which he was shot dead by the British.

Hazzard won South Down for Sinn Féin 101 years after Connolly was killed. And he says that the prospects for Irish reunification have never been better.

“It’s the closest we’ve been since partition,” he says. “We’re not only picking up those republicans who maybe fell out of the electoral system, were maybe more hardline

once, who now see the opportunities that now exist and are coming back to us.

“But equally on the other side of it, the more progressive minded younger people on the civic issues, things like abortion, marriage equality, who haven’t liked how the DUP have done things, and who despise Tory administration, that’s been a really big motivating factor.”

The historic nature of what is unfolding in Northern Ireland seems to be lost on many. The territory was designed to maintain a unionist majority. In the 1918 election, Sinn Féin won an overwhelming victory, with 85 percent of the seats.

But instead of allowing independence, the British government partitioned the island three years later, in 1921. The new territory was composed of six counties in the north, which had a clear protestant

majority.

The resulting political entity was constructed with a lot of gerrymandering. There wasn't one person, one vote. A business owner could have up to six votes and you had to own your own house. Very often Catholics couldn't vote. The state was essentially built to maintain protestant supremacy.

The plan was left in tatters in 2019 when Sinn Féin, led by Michelle O'Neill, won the most seats in Westminster.

Sinn Féin's recent electoral success was a test for the Good Friday Agreement, signed in 1998. The system had worked while the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) was running the executive, but when that changed, there was a stalemate. For nearly two years after becoming the largest party at Stormont, Sinn Féin was not allowed to form an executive, which required DUP approval.

"The Good Friday Agreement stipulates that the first minister should come from the largest party," says Hazzard.

Before the resolution of the impasse in February, Hazzard told me: "I really can't overstate the extent to which people are just so fed up with that approach from unionist political leaders. You can't have it both ways. You were First Minister and now things are changing. You can't just throw your toys out of the pram and say, 'I'm not doing democracy anymore.'"

Hazzard believed there was a "real sense of frustration and annoyance". "You go out in the street and ask 100 people, what do they really believe? And I'm pretty sure 99 of them are going to say they just don't want to work under Michelle O'Neill. That would be the view."

But the stalemate was helping the republican cause, Hazzard add-



A mural in Ballymurphy, west Belfast.

ed. "People are saying if the system doesn't work it's time for something new."

How far O'Neill is allowed to operate as First Minister still remains an open question.

Another interesting part of the dynamic unfolding is that the business community may be increasingly getting behind a united Ireland.

"The DUP would traditionally have had a fairly significant hold in what you would call the pro business type community," Hazzard says. "Brexit smashed that into a million pieces."

He continued: "I was chatting with a businessman this morning, actually, who comes from the unionist tradition. He was talking about the huge surpluses now that the Dublin government is running, and he was saying, 'they're a very wealthy country, part of the European Union'. He's a businessman. He's saying, 'all my trade's with the south'. Five years ago, he would not have been having that conversation.

Danny Morrison, a former national director of publicity for Sinn Féin, added: "The business community, which traditionally was dominated

by the unionists, now see the economic benefits from being in the European Union. So they're going to go with the flow."

Morrison, who was a spokesman for Bobby Sands, a member of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) who died on May 5, 1981 while on hunger strike during his imprisonment at HM Prison Maze on May 5, 1981, added: "A lot of unionists have been disillusioned by a number of factors, including how successive British governments have treated them."

The DUP has reverted to the right and towards their base, which has opened up a large centre ground. The Alliance Party, which is described as a centre ground party, made huge advances similar to Sinn Féin. They have quickly become the third party in Northern Ireland.

"You have your Republican community who will always vote for our unity, you have your unionist community who will always vote for that," added Hazzard. "But that centre ground is now going to be the de-



A mural on Shankill Road running through a loyalist stronghold in West Belfast.

fining place, and the politics of the last five to ten years is making them look one direction at the moment.”

The prospect of a reunified Ireland has come on to the horizon quickly, largely since the Brexit vote, so thinking about what that might look like in practice is inchoate.

Anne Cadwallader is a British journalist who has lived in Belfast since the early 1980s. Until recently she worked at the Pat Finucane centre, named for John’s father.

“Sinn Féin are arguing constantly with the Irish government that they should start preparing for unity now, so that when it happens it isn’t a kind of huge shock to the system,” she says about a united Ireland.

“What would it look like? They say that if there is a united island, it wouldn’t just be the south with the

north tacked onto it, it would have to be an entirely new state.”

There are many open questions and no side seems to have even started grappling with the realities.

“Would there have to be a new flag? Would there have to be a new national anthem? What would the health service look like? Who would control education?” asks Cadwallader.

“All those issues have to be looked at and thought over so that when people vote, they know what they’re voting for.”

The Good Friday Agreement enshrines the right to a referendum on reunification. But the process is amorphous. As part of the Agreement, a provision for holding a reunification poll was made in UK law. The Northern Ireland Act 1998

states that the UK government will allow a vote “if at any time it appears likely to him that a majority of those voting would express a wish that Northern Ireland should cease to be part of the United Kingdom and form part of a united Ireland”. But it is not clear exactly what would satisfy this requirement. It’s also unclear how many in the Republic of Ireland would support it.

Note: The DUP did not respond to requests for an interview. **CT**

Matt Kennard is chief investigator at Declassified UK. He was a fellow and then director at the Centre for Investigative Journalism in London. Follow him on Twitter @kennardmatt. This article was originally published at www.declassifieduk.org.

► SAM PIZZIGATI

Mass layoffs: The rich thrive while workers writhe

A new book explores an eminently achievable route towards confronting corporate greed

How do you know when you can finally rate as certifiably super rich?

One simple test: You can look at the menu that greeted more than 100 wealthy souls who gathered last month at the Palm Beach home of hedge fund billionaire John Paulson and understand exactly what you're going to be feasting upon.

The menu that night, NBC News reports, offered up “endive and fri-see salad, filet au poivre, and pavlova with fresh berries.”

The assembled deep pockets would prove to be suitably grateful for both that repast and the remarks that the evening's special guest, Donald Trump, delivered right before they dug in. By the evening's end, they had pledged \$50.5-million for Trump's 2024 bid to return to the White House.

But deep pockets need not, of course, journey to Palm Beach for fancy fixings. The “bastions of New York City's dining elite,” as *Business Insider's* Linette Lopez recently pointed out, have emerged into the mid-2020s “louder, prouder, and more extravagant than ever.”

“Wall Street bankers, tech executives, generationally wealthy people, the famous and beautiful,” Lopez adds, are all living large on a “granite island of hungry rich people looking for something to do.”

And these hungry deep pockets are increasingly looking to do that something – that dining – with people just as fabulously fortunate as they happen to be. Restaurants off limits to the great unwashed have become Manhattan's next big thing. One such private affair, the Aman Club, charges members an annual \$15,000 on top of a \$200,000 initiation fee.

Average Manhattanites, meanwhile, are struggling to simply get by in a city with a “record-breaking” average rent of over \$5,500 per month. And the monthly squeeze these New Yorkers are facing extends far beyond New York's borders.

Only 44 percent of US adults, analysts at Bankrate reported in February, have enough savings to handle an emergency \$1,000 expense. Some 66 percent of US adults, Bankrate also notes, worry “they wouldn't have enough emergency savings to cover a month's living expenses” if they lost their primary source of household income.

And plenty of American adults, the Labor Institute's executive director Les Leopold reminds us, are losing that primary source of household income, their job. “Mass layoffs” – what happens when a company lets 50 or more workers go

within a five-week period – have become “so commonplace” that top corporate execs “do not hesitate to slash jobs whenever they feel it necessary.”

Those execs seem to be feeling that “necessity” these days on a routine basis. In high-tech alone, Leopold observed earlier this week, mass layoffs cost 60,000 workers their jobs in 2023 and “another 57,000 so far this year.”

Layoffs like these typically get little media or political attention. Why? Leopold's just-published new book, *Wall Street's War on Workers: How Mass Layoffs and Greed Are Destroying the Working Class and What To Do About It*, explores that essential question – and demolishes the standard responses we get from America's leading corporate and political lights.

Those responses usually depict mass layoffs as the inevitable price we pay “to participate fully” in a “complex, highly technical, vast global economic system.” Our ongoing “digital revolution,” this explanation continues, has “mammoth global corporations” searching the world over for the lowest labour costs. To compete in this new economic world, we need to play along. We have no choice.

But why, Leopold wonders, are technologically advanced nations “far more dependent on global trade

than the United States” – think Japan and Germany, for instance – most definitely not experiencing the same waves of massive layoffs that have bedevilled the US economy?

The conventional rationale for mass layoffs, Leopold goes on to show, simply does not hold. This veteran labour movement analyst has a much more compelling story to tell.

During the Cold War, Leopold’s new book relates, established corporate leaders in the United States felt themselves under enormous “cultural and political pressure” to help meet America claim that capitalism could deliver for working people much more effectively than nations in the Soviet sphere.

In that Cold War climate, major American industries accepted the union organising gains of the mid-20th century as a fact of economic life, and unions went on to bargain contracts – throughout the postwar decades – that significantly grew the economic security of America’s working families.

But by the 1980s the global political dynamics had changed. The global “communist threat” no longer posed a serious challenge to the capitalist world. In the Reagan years of the 1980s, Leopold relates, “the unwritten compact that had entwined organized labor within the corporate order collapsed.” The “restraints” on corporate behaviour began unravelling. Mass layoffs would soon become “an increasingly common and highly profitable corporate tool.”

In this new economic environment, figures across the political spectrum would accept and even hail the unconstrained chase after ever-greater profits and wealth as an “absolute good.” This “good,” they claimed, would create “an incentive to take

risks and innovate,” in the process “creating more jobs and income for everyone.”

In the real world, Leopold counters, this “absolute good” would enable “the few to make vast fortunes by destroying the livelihoods of the many.” The deregulation of Wall Street would speed this process along. By gutting antitrust enforcement and winking at stock manipulation, federal officials – under both Republican and Democratic administrations – opened the door to a massive wave of corporate mergers and acquisitions and an equally massive wave of mass layoffs.

Corporate CEOs who advanced these massive waves – at worker expense – would see themselves rewarded at levels the global busi-



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ness world had never ever imagined. Dwight Eisenhower left the White House in 1961 with America’s top corporate execs making 20 to 30 times what their workers were earning. Joe Biden would enter the White House 60 years later with top CEOs making 389 times what their average workers were making.

The Biden administration, to its credit, has taken steps to reverse America’s enrich-the-top economic dynamic. But our nation, Leopold argues, could be doing so much more to protect working families, and he lays out a comprehensive gameplan

for what that so much more could and should entail.

The agenda that Leopold advances ranges from banning corporations from buying back their own shares of stock – a now-common manoeuvre that enriches top execs at the expense of investing in workers and the physical surroundings they need to become more productive – to eliminating the stock-related grants that so pump up CEO compensation.

We also, Leopold notes, “need major reforms to prevent investors and corporations from buying up companies with borrowed money and then loading the debt onto those companies, often dooming them” – while the investors walk off with big-time profits.

“For those who suffer mass layoffs in hard-hit areas,” Leopold goes on, “we need genuine job-creation programmes that don’t devolve into Wall Street piggybanks.”

Leopold’s agenda for corporate change has plenty more to offer as well – like tying federal contracting to corporate behaviours. What if, for instance, the contracts the federal government cuts with corporate contractors required corporations to bargain with workers they wanted to lay off?

The logic behind this mandatory no-compulsory-layoffs approach?

“If a corporation takes taxpayer money,” as Leopold quips, “it should not be laying off taxpayers.” **CT**

Sam Pizzigati, an Institute for Policy Studies associate fellow, co-edits Inequality.org. His latest books include ‘The Case for a Maximum Wage’ and ‘The Rich Don’t Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970’.

Divide and conquer: The government's propaganda of fear and fake news

A populace that stops thinking for themselves is easily led, manipulated and controlled through propaganda, brainwashing, mind control, or fear-mongering

“It is the function of mass agitation to exploit all the grievances, hopes, aspirations, prejudices, fears, and ideals of all the special groups that make up our society, social, religious, economic, racial, political. Stir them up. Set one against the other. Divide and conquer. That’s the way to soften up a democracy.” – J. Edgar Hoover, ‘Masters of Deceit’

“Nothing is real,” observed John Lennon, and that’s especially true of politics.

Much like the fabricated universe in Peter Weir’s 1998 film *The Truman Show*, in which a man’s life is the basis for an elaborately staged television show aimed at selling products and procuring ratings, the political scene in the United States has devolved over the years into a carefully calibrated exercise in how to manipulate, polarize, propagandize and control a population.

Take the media circus that is the Donald Trump hush money trial, which panders to the public’s voracious appetite for titillating, soap opera drama, keeping the citizenry distracted, diverted and divided.

This is the magic of the reality TV programming that passes for politics today.

Everything becomes entertainment fodder.

As long as we are distracted, entertained, occasionally outraged, always polarised but largely uninvolved and content to remain in the viewer’s seat, we’ll never manage to present a unified front against tyranny (or government corruption and ineptitude) in any form.

Studies suggest that the more reality TV people watch – and I would posit that it’s all reality TV, entertainment news included – the more difficult it becomes to distinguish between what is real and what is carefully crafted farce.

“We the people” are watching a lot of TV.

On average, Americans spend five hours a day watching television. By the time we reach age 65, we’re watching more than 50 hours of television a week, and that number increases as we get older. And reality TV programming consistently captures the largest percentage of TV watchers every season by an almost 2-1 ratio.

This doesn’t bode well for a citizenry able to sift through mas-

terfully-produced propaganda in order to think critically about the issues of the day.

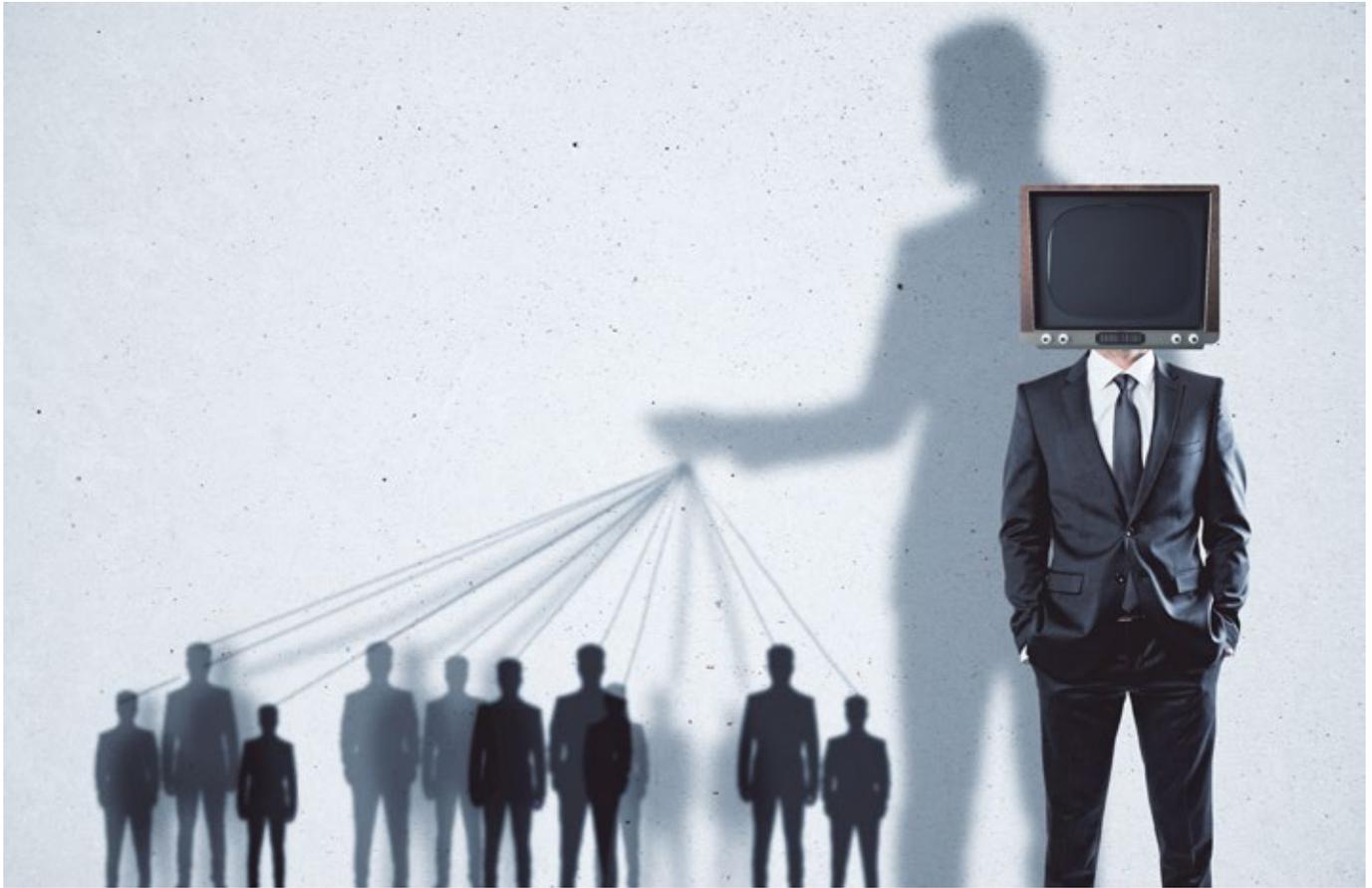
Yet look behind the spectacles, the reality TV theatrics, the sleight-of-hand distractions and diversions, and the stomach-churning, nail-biting drama that is politics today, and you will find there is a method to the madness.

We have become guinea pigs in a ruthlessly calculated, carefully orchestrated, chillingly cold-blooded experiment in how to control a population and advance a political agenda without much opposition from the citizenry.

This is how you persuade a populace to voluntarily march in lockstep with a police state and police themselves (and each other): by ratcheting up the fear-factor, meted out one carefully calibrated crisis at a time, and teaching them to distrust any who diverge from the norm through elaborate propaganda campaigns.

Unsurprisingly, one of the biggest propagandists today is the US government.

Add the government’s inclination to monitor online activity and po-



lice so-called “disinformation,” and you have the makings of a restructuring of reality straight out of Orwell’s *1984*, where the Ministry of Truth polices speech and ensures that facts conform to whatever version of reality the government propagandists embrace.

This “policing of the mind” is exactly the danger author Jim Keith warned about when he predicted that “information and communication sources are gradually being linked together into a single computerised network, providing an opportunity for unheralded control of what will be broadcast, what will be said, and ultimately what will be thought.”

You may not hear much about the government’s role in producing, planting and peddling propaganda-driven fake news – often with the help of the corporate news media – because the powers-that-be don’t

want us sceptical of the government’s message or its corporate accomplices in the mainstream media.

However, when you have social media giants colluding with the government in order to censor so-called disinformation, all the while the mainstream news media, which is supposed to act as a bulwark against government propaganda, has instead become the mouthpiece of the world’s largest corporation (the US government), the Deep State has grown dangerously out-of-control.

This has been in the works for a long time.

Veteran journalist Carl Bernstein, in his expansive 1977 *Rolling Stone* piece “The CIA and the Media,” reported on Operation Mockingbird, a CIA campaign started in the 1950s to plant intelligence re-

ports among reporters at more than 25 major newspapers and wire agencies, who would then regurgitate them for a public oblivious to the fact that they were being fed government propaganda.

In some instances, as Bernstein showed, members of the media also served as extensions of the surveillance state, with reporters actually carrying out assignments for the CIA. Executives with CBS, the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine also worked closely with the CIA to vet the news.

If it was happening then, you can bet it’s still happening today, only this collusion has been reclassified, renamed and hidden behind layers of government secrecy, obfuscation and spin.

In its article, “How the American government is trying to control what you think,” the *Washington Post* points out “Government

agencies historically have made a habit of crossing the blurry line between informing the public and propagandising.”

This is mind-control in its most sinister form.

The end goal of these mind-control campaigns – packaged in the guise of the greater good – is to see how far the American people will allow the government to go in re-shaping the country in the image of a totalitarian police state.

The government’s fear-mongering is a key element in its mind-control programming.

It’s a simple enough formula. National crises, global pandemics, reported terrorist attacks, and sporadic shootings leave us in a constant state of fear. The emotional panic that accompanies fear actually shuts down the prefrontal cortex or the rational thinking part of our brains. In other words, when we are consumed by fear, we stop thinking.

A populace that stops thinking for themselves is a populace that is easily led, easily manipulated and easily controlled whether through propaganda, brainwashing, mind control, or just plain fear-mongering.

Fear not only increases the power of government, but it also divides the people into factions, persuades them to see each other as the enemy and keeps them screaming at each other so that they drown out all other sounds. In this way, they will never reach consensus about anything and will be too distracted to notice the police state closing in on them until the final crushing curtain falls.

This Machiavellian scheme has so ensnared the nation that few Americans even realize they are being brainwashed – manipulated – into adopting an “us” against “them” mindset. All the while, those in pow-

To the invisible government of rulers who operate behind the scenes – the architects of the Deep State – we are mere puppets on a string

er – bought and paid for by lobbyists and corporations – move their costly agendas forward.

This unseen mechanism of society that manipulates us through fear into compliance is what American theorist Edward L. Bernays referred to as “an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.”

It was almost 100 years ago when Bernays wrote his seminal work *Propaganda*:

“We are governed, our minds are moulded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of ... In almost every act of our daily lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or our ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons... who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind.”

To this invisible government of rulers who operate behind the scenes – the architects of the Deep State – we are mere puppets on a string, to be brainwashed, manipulated and controlled.

All of the distracting, disheartening, disorienting news you are bombarded with daily is being driven by propaganda churned out by one corporate machine (the corporate-controlled government) and fed to the American people by way of yet another corporate machine (the corporate-controlled media).

“For the first time in human history, there is a concerted strategy to manipulate global perception. And the mass media are operating as its compliant assistants, failing both to resist it and to expose it,” writes investigative journalist Nick Davies.

So where does that leave us?

Americans should beware of letting others – whether they be television news hosts, political commentators or media corporations – do their thinking for them.

A populace that cannot think for themselves is a populace with its backs to the walls: mute in the face of elected officials who refuse to represent us, helpless in the face of police brutality, powerless in the face of militarised tactics and technology that treat us like enemy combatants on a battlefield, and naked in the face of government surveillance that sees and hears all.

As I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional counterpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, it’s time to change the channel, tune out the reality TV show, and push back against the real menace of the police state.

If not, if we continue to sit back and lose ourselves in political programming, we will remain a captive audience to a farce that grows more absurd by the minute. **CT**

John W. Whitehead is founder and president of *The Rutherford Institute*. His most recent books are the ‘*Battlefield America: The War on the American People*,’ ‘*A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State*,’ and a dystopian fiction novel, ‘*The Erik Blair Diaries*’. Whitehead can be contacted at staff@rutherford.org. **Nisha Whitehead** is the Executive Director of *The Rutherford Institute*. Information about *The Rutherford Institute* is available at www.rutherford.org.

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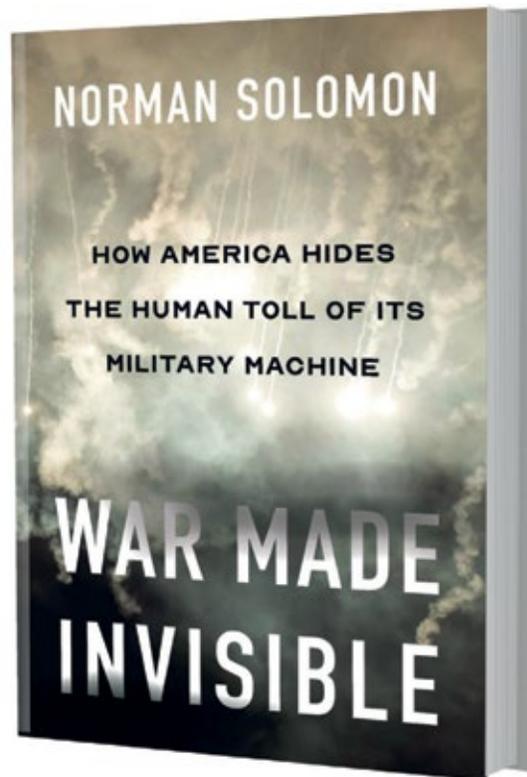
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William Murphy

The Famine Memorial statues in Dublin, crafted by Rowan Gillespie, commemorate the Great Famine of the mid-19th century when Ireland lost more than a million people to famine and emigration.

► EDWARD J. CURTIN

The Immense Hunger

Of desperation and desperadoes – dreams of a world free of conflict

Like all living creatures, people need to eat to live. Some people, eaten from within by a demonic force, try to deny others this basic sustenance. All across the world people are starving because the powerful and wealthy create economic and political conditions that allow their wealth to be built on the backs of the world's poor. It is an old story, constantly updated. It is one form of official terrorism.

From the Irish famine with its terrible aftermath created by the imperialist British government in the 19th-century that caused the

death of between one and two million Irish and the forced emigration of more than a million more between 1846 and 1851 alone, to today's savage Israeli genocide and forced starvation of Palestinians in Gaza, the stories of politically motivated famine are legion.

In their wake, as the historian Woodham-Smith wrote in 1962 of the Irish famine, it "left hatred behind. Between Ireland and England the memory of what was done and endured has lain like a sword."

This Irish bitterness toward the English was strong even in my own Irish-American childhood in New

York's northern Bronx more than a century later. Ethnic cleansing has a way of leaving a livid legacy of rage toward the perpetrators, especially in the Irish case when talk of one's ancestors' perilous forced emigration on the Coffin Ships was ever broached.

Today's Israeli government leaders must be historically ignorant or suicidal, for the Irish rage at the British led to the Easter Rebellion of 1916 and the eventual establishment of the Republic of Ireland, where today in Dublin, its capital, huge throngs march in support of the Palestinian people and their fight against Israel.

Do the Israeli leaders think that they can evade the lessons of history, lessons that oppressed people everywhere learned from the irrepressible Irish rebels? Like their arrogant British imperialist counterparts, they have self-anointed themselves a chosen people so they can inflict death and suffering on the unchosen ones, the animal people, those disgusting creatures not deserving of life, land, or liberty.

But starve, torture, and slaughter people enough and the flaming sword of revenge will exact a heavy price. Dark furies will descend.

Dehumanise people enough, take their land, and the day always comes when the wretched of the earth rise up against their racist colonialist settlers.

Deny the bread of life to people long enough so that they watch their emaciated children die in their arms or search for their body parts beneath the bombed rubble and you will find that the terrified have become terrifying.

Frantz Fanon wrote accurately about the link between bread and land: "For a colonised people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity."

Without bread to eat, as Marx and Victor Hugo told us in their different ways, the desperate become desperadoes.

The poet Patrick Kavanaugh, in his haunting long poem, *The Great Hunger*, concluded it thus:

*"The hungry fiend
Screams the apocalypse of clay
In every corner of this land"*

Lines that with a slight difference pertain to every land where famine is used as a weapon of war.

But why is this so? What is this demonic force that drives some human animals to oppress others?

I think we can agree that humans have animal needs of hunger, thirst, sex, etc. that need to be satisfied, but that we also are symbolic creatures – angels with anuses as Ernest Becker has said so pungently in his classic book, *The Denial of Death*. We live in a world of symbols, not merely matter. Unlike other animal species, we have made death conscious and must deal with that consciousness one way or another. We have beliefs, ideas, symbol systems and get our sense of self-worth symbolically. Of course, the anuses are the problem because they remind us that despite all our highfalutin fantasies of omnipotence of the symbolic sort, what goes in one hole comes out the other and like those backdoor hole deposits we too are destined for underground holes in the earth.

But this is unacceptable. The thought of it drives many savagely crazy – individuals, groups, and nations. So, as Becker writes, "An animal who gets his feeling of worth symbolically has to minutely compare himself to those around him, to make sure he doesn't come off second best." Herein lies the root of competition and the desire to be successful and hoist the symbolic trophies that declare us winners. And if there are winners, there must be losers. If I win and you lose, then I can feel superior to you and "good about myself," at least in the realm where we compete. Equality is a problem for humans, whom Nietzsche termed "the disease called man." This sense of competition can be relatively harmless or deadly.

History is replete with the latter type, where the fear of not being immortal leads to the extermination of others, as if to say: "See, we are number one." You die but we live. This is the case with the present Israeli policy of genocide of the Palestinians through famine, bombs,

and guns. The chosen enemy is always considered dirt, pigs, reduced to animal status not worthy to exist, and in a transference of existential trepidation emanating from a deep sense of insecurity masked as triumphalism, must be eliminated because their very existence threatens the oppressors God-like sense of themselves.

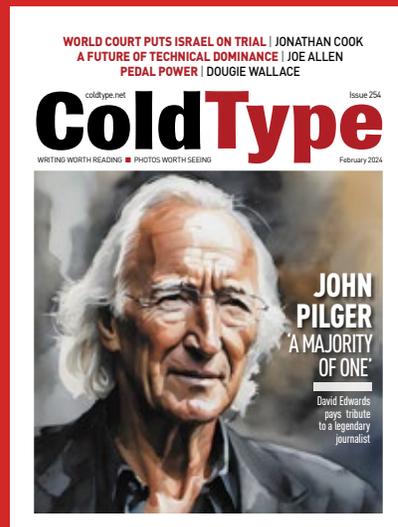
There is physical hunger and there is symbolic hunger. Each needs satisfaction. In a just and equitable world, the hunger for bread would be easy to satisfy. It is the symbolic hunger for an answer to death that poses the deeper problem and causes the former. For in a world where people could recognise their fears and deep-seated anxieties and stop transferring them to others, the bread of truth might reign. We might stop slaughtering and starving others to purge ourselves of the self-hate and insecurity that drives us to feel the love of our fellow victimisers but the hate of our victims. No one would be Number One. All would be chosen and feast as equals at the table of the bread of life.

If only the Israeli and US government leaders were wise enough to read, they might read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and turn from the path of their joint obsession to obliterate the world for a trophy that they will never hoist. Ishmael might reach them with his words: "For there is no folly of the beast of the earth which is not infinitely outdone by the madness of men." And they might seek peace, not an expansion of war.

If only ... but I dream, for they have chosen war, and the dark furies lay in wait. **CT**

Edward Curtin is an independent writer whose work has appeared widely over many years. His website is edwardcurtin.com and his latest book is 'Seeking Truth in a Country of Lies.'

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