

TRUMP IS A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE | Reneva Fourie
THE RISE AND FALL OF ELON MUSK'S RIGHT ARM | Trevor Grundy
WISH YOU WEREN'T HERE! | Martin Parr

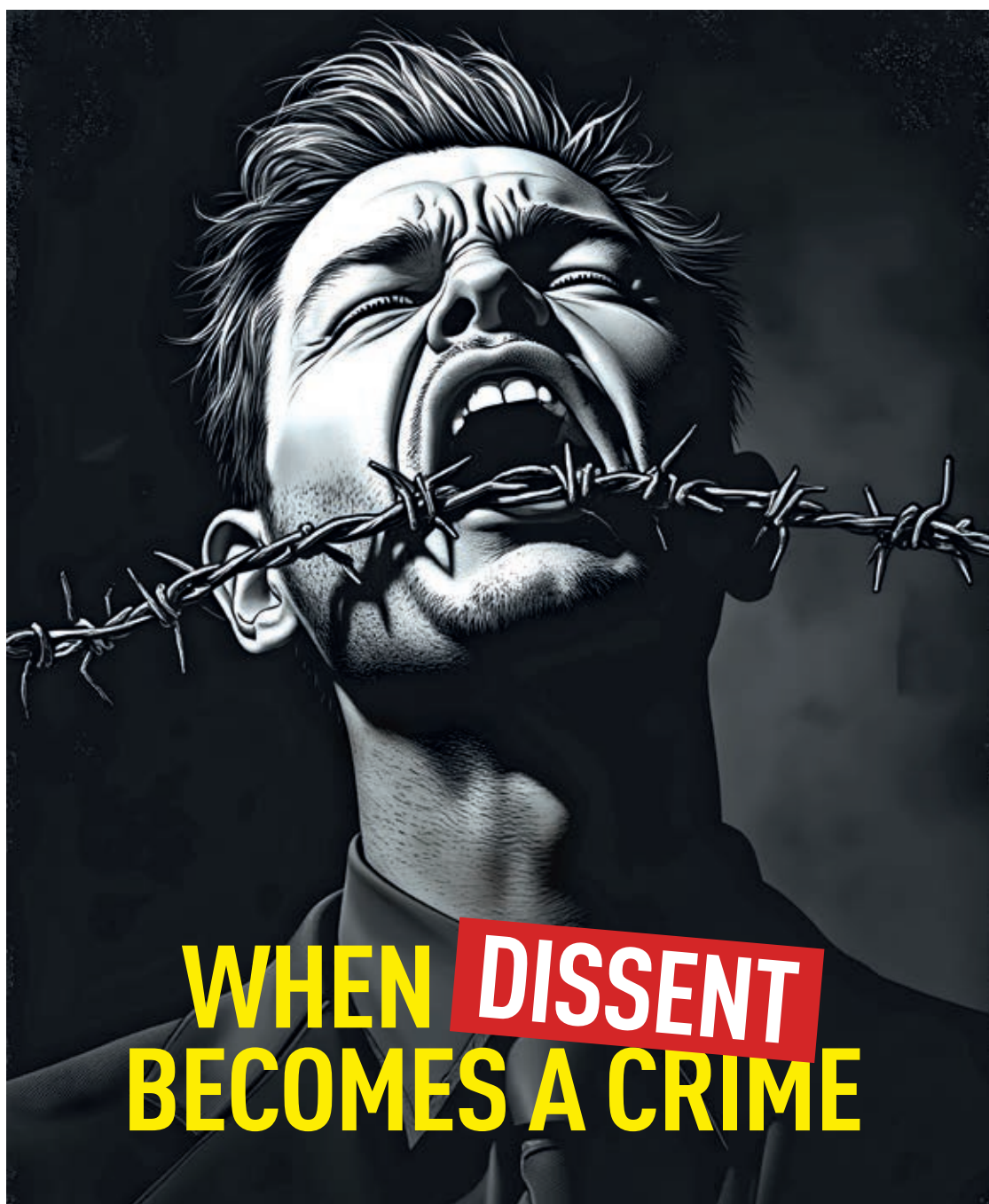
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WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

April 2025





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BUYING TIME FOR GENOCIDE

Israel and the U.S. never really wanted a ceasefire. From the beginning, they obstructed diplomatic efforts to end the genocide and built up Israel's murderous arsenal

May 6, 2024
**PALESTINIAN
NEGOTIATORS
ACCEPT**
framework
for ceasefire

Aug. 13, 2024
**U.S. APPROVES
\$20BN ARMS
SALE** to Israel

Nov. 20, 2024
**U.S. BLOCKS
CEASEFIRE**
resolution at U.N.
Security Council
for the 4th time

Jan. 19, 2025
**CEASEFIRE
BEGINS**

Mar. 17, 2025
**ISRAEL
ABANDONS
CEASEFIRE**



35,215
Palestinians killed
(Oct. 7, 2023–
May 6, 2024)

+3 months
+5,325
Palestinians
killed

+3 months
+4,200
Palestinians
killed

+2 months
+2,984
Palestinians
killed

+2 months
+639
Palestinians
killed

VISUALIZING **PALESTINE**

MAR 2025 ©©©©
Sources: bit.ly/vp-buying-time

INSIGHTS



TV screenshot

SHACKLED: Venezuelan immigrants are led into prison cells on arrival at an El Salvador jail after being deported from USA

Top Trump administration officials – including the president, vice president, attorney general, and secretary of state – openly celebrated the deportation of hundreds of Venezuelan immigrants in mid-March in defiance of a federal judge’s order to halt the removals, which were carried out under a 1798 law that plainly states it is only operative in the context of a declared war.

US Vice President JD Vance wrote on Sunday, March 16, that “there were violent criminals and rapists in our country” and “President Trump deported them.” There was no due process for the more than 200 Venezuelans whom the Trump administration claims are gang members.

► JAKE JOHNSON

‘American Gestapo:’ Uproar over Trump deportations

Vance’s social media post, which came in response to reporting about the White House’s acknowledgment that it ignored the court

order blocking the deportations, was met with disgust and alarm.

“You are beyond vile,” political scientist Norman Ornstein wrote. “You have no idea if the ones that were picked up and sent illegally to an El Salvador prison are all violent criminals. You abused the plain language of the law, gave them no due process, and defied a legitimate court order. This is American Gestapo.”

On Truth Social, Trump claimed without a shred of evidence that former President Joe Biden “sent” the deported Venezuelans “into our country.” Trump went on to thank El Salvador’s far-right president, Nayib Bukele, for agreeing to imprison the immigrants. El Salvador’s prisons are notorious for abus-

INSIGHTS

es, including torture.

Bukele mocked the US federal judge's temporary restraining order against the deportations, writing on X that the decision came "too late" – a claim the White House echoed in defence of its actions, although the timeline of events shows it was not, in fact, too late to halt the deportations.

"Oopsie," Bukele wrote in a post that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio shared.

The American Civil Liberties Union, Democracy Forward, and the ACLU of the District of Columbia demanded in a court filing that the Trump administration "submit one or more sworn declarations from individuals with direct knowledge of the facts" on whether deportation flights took off after the federal judge issued his order on March 15.

The episode underscored the Trump administration's contempt for legal restraints on the president's authority to deport people

it claims are members of foreign gangs – power which Trump administration officials and supporters suggested is somewhere near absolute. The US Department of Justice declared in a court filing that the Trump administration's actions under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 "are not subject to judicial review."

"This is an absurd claim," wrote Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, a senior fellow with the American Immigration Council. "Not a single president in the history of the United States has ever asserted the authority to unilaterally deport someone outside of the procedures set by Congress until now, and the Supreme Court has emphasised that Congress is supreme on immigration."

Overshadowed by the administration's deportation of Venezuelan immigrants was the removal of a kidney transplant specialist and professor at Brown University's medical school, also in defiance of a

court order.

As *The New York Times* reported: "Dr. Rasha Alawieh, 34, is a Lebanese citizen who had travelled to her home country last month to visit relatives. She was detained on Thursday when she returned from that trip to the United States, according to a court complaint filed by her cousin Yara Chehab.

"Judge Leo T. Sorokin of the Federal District Court in Massachusetts ordered the government on Friday evening to provide the court with 48 hours' notice before deporting Dr. Alawieh. But she was put on a flight to Paris, presumably on her way to Lebanon.

"In a second order filed on the morning of March 16, the judge said there was reason to believe US Customs and Border Protection had wilfully disobeyed his previous order to give the court notice before expelling the doctor."

The Council on American-Islamic Relations demanded that the US "immediately re-admit" Alawieh.

"As a US resident for six years and a doctor working for the Division of Kidney Disease and Hypertension at Brown Medicine, Dr. Alawieh played a critical role in treating countless patients who needed treatment by a specialist," the group said in a statement. "Deporting lawful immigrants like Dr. Alawieh without any basis undermines the rule of law and reinforces suspicion that our immigration system is turning into an anti-Muslim, white supremacist institution that seeks to expel and turn away as many Muslims and people of colour as possible." **CT**

Jake Johnson is a senior editor and staff writer for Common Dreams – www.commondreams.org.



ONLY WORDS

FROM THE INTERNET



Martha Kelly ✓

@MarthaKelly3

Under capitalism, it's normal to let children go hungry, let banks force people out of their homes, let sick people die for lack of access to healthcare. But the idea that billionaires could just be less rich — not poor, not struggling, just less rich, is considered insane.

INSIGHTS

Ksenija Stojanovic



SERBIAN demonstrators demand an end to the rule of Aleksandar Vučić

► **SRDJAN D. STOJANOVIC**

Vučić in deep trouble as Serbia crisis worsens

When Serbian students began their mass protests in early November after the fall of the roof at Novi Sad railroad station had claimed 16 lives, their demands were simple: State institutions must function for the benefit of the Serbian people. Ignoring their calls, the state opted to cover up the corruption and mistakes that led to the disaster.

The government's reply to the students was predictable: lies, manipulations and propaganda – a formula that had worked for 13 years. But now, five months later, the students are winning the fight against the regime of Aleksandar Vučić.

Vučić's Serbian Progressives Party (SNS) came to power after defeating parties that had been

instrumental in the overthrow of the previous autocrat Slobodan Milošević in October 2000. From day one of his rule, Vučić focused on totally subjecting all the state institutions to him personally, despite that his constitutional powers are equivalent to the powers of British monarch – protocol rather than rule. It seemed that the infamous French king Louis XIV who had declared “The state is me” had found a new disciple!

Vučić had served as the media minister during Milošević's rule, and learned that the key to power was total control of the media – a formula which paid off 12 years later when he was elected president in 2012. Not only did he immediately subject the state broadcaster RTS to total control, but through his cro-

nies, he bought the acclaimed independent RTV B92 making it his mere mouthpiece.

Internationally, Vučić promised his EU partners (led by German Chancellor Merkel) that he would recognise Kosovo – if given time. In return for this half-fulfilled promise, Vučić was supported for the 2012 election, and subsequently given free rein in governing Serbia. For the next 13 years, the EU's (unelected) leadership ignored warnings of his abuse of human rights, election rigging and robbery of state funds, while complaints from the Serbian opposition and a few isolated voices at the EU Parliament were ignored.

Years of outrageous scandals and affairs did nothing to undermine his grip to power. Then the tragedy at Novi Sad ignited the rebellion – throughout February and March university students marched peacefully for hundreds of kilometres from Novi Sad, to Kragujevac, on to Nish, finally ending in Belgrade on March 15 with the largest gathering in Serbian history.

Along the road the students were welcomed, embraced and fed by people from villages and communities where the voice of freedom could never usually be heard.

Around half a million people peacefully protested in the streets of the Belgrade, angering Vučić, who organised counter-gatherings of “students who want to study” – several hundred fake students recruited from his party faithful and thugs for hire – on the lawn of his office, protected by police and hundreds of tractors, in a fruitless attempt to provoke peaceful protesters into attacking police and institutions. The students remained calm and could not be provoked.

INSIGHTS

Seeing the failure of his demonic plan, Vučić ordered the police to use unlawful sound cannons, causing a massive stampede during a silent vigil for the Novi Sad victims. Several hundred people sought help at the city's hospitals, where doctors were instructed by Vučić's health minister to deny there had been any injuries.

The police minister first denied having sound cannons, before changing his story to having them, but they had been kept in the barracks and had not been used on the demonstrators. However, after photos appeared of a cannon mounted on top of a police vehicle outside the parliament building, opposition MPs demanded an immediate investigation, which lasted just one day. The notorious prosecutor's office said they took statements from the police and military and there were no signs of the sound cannon's presence, nor of people being injured.

Vučić proclaimed that it was high time to bring down the "coloured revolution" paid and organised by

western sources. This infuriated the students, whose response was to say that their protests would only stop when *they* decide to stop.

In response, the government withheld university and middle school teachers' salaries for February – which further invigorated the protests. The result? Almost every profession in Serbia is now on strike, and the government has been crippled by daily protests against Vučić in virtually every town in the country. Serbian people cannot accept his rule anymore and the days of Vučić's psychiatric terror against own citizens are finally running out. **CT**

Srdjan Stojanovic is an activist, writer, journalist and book publisher who lives in Belgrade, Serbia. He holds a Master of Science in Media and Communications from the London School of Economics and Political Science and Master of Philosophy in Media History from the University of Westminster.

eventually became cheaper to drive.

Others, including my colleague Hana Nielsen and I, argue that technological limitations could have been counteracted if electricity grids and charging station infrastructure had been rolled out in the early years of the 20th century.

But this does not rule out explanations based on social or cultural factors. Specifically, do gender roles decide what technologies we end up with? In the 1990s, US historian Virginia Scharff broke new ground when she suggested that electric cars had been labelled 'women's cars,' and that this image 'took hold early and tenaciously.' Similar claims have been made for the UK.

In a new study I used American electric car advertisements from motorist journals and comprehensive vehicle statistics between 1900 and 1919 to examine these claims. I found it is undeniable that electrics were, in fact, considered to be women's cars.

They were not marketed that way at first, however. I found that only 22 percent of electrics between 1900 and 1904 were marketed towards women.

In these very earliest days, electric car ads were rather addressed to businessmen and family men, countering the 'adventure machine' vision of cars that was popular at the time. Electric car manufacturers imagined electrics as clean and reliable cars for the business commute in the cities the grid kept them restricted to. This was a valid argument since gasoline cars were prone to break down and had to be manually restarted with a crank.

► JOSEF TAALBI

When electric cars were marketed as women's cars

It was not a given that petrol-powered cars would come to dominate the world. In fact, back in 1900, just 22 percent of cars produced in the US were powered by gasoline (also known as petrol, benzine or various other names). The rest split between electric and steam cars.

There is no consensus on what explains the success of the petrol car and the historical demise of the electric. Some zoom in on the technical inferiority of electric cars, even though they had an average range of about 90 miles (135 kilometres) in the 1910s and

INSIGHTS

But petrol-powered cars were taking over, accelerated by the iconic, cheap and mass-produced Ford Model T. It was only then that electric vehicle makers began marketing them as ‘women’s cars’ to keep market share.

During the 1910s, 77 percent of electric vehicles directly appealed to female consumers. This reflected traditional gender roles and the Victorian idea of ‘separate spheres,’ promoting the idea that women had limited mobility needs and needed safe, easily operated vehicles.

In the short term, this was a successful strategy: car manufacturers that advertised to female consumers survived much longer.

One of the most well-known examples, the Detroit Electric, produced more than 13,000 cars during its lifetime and was the only major electric car producer to survive into the 1920s.

A significant shift occurred when prolific inventor Charles Kettering introduced electric starting ignition in the 1912 (petrol-powered) Cadillac. These electric starters were initially conceived as ‘effeminate.’ But practicality won and they were introduced as a standard in the immensely popular 1919 T-Ford.

When petrol cars emulated ‘feminine’ qualities such as windcreens and electric starters and made them appeal to both men and women, the electric was in a tough spot. It had become heavily invested in traditional gender roles that were becoming increasingly obsolete.

So, did gendered marketing

doom the electric car? Not at first. Arguably, the lack of infrastructure was the biggest problem, initially, and differences in range and speed became increasingly problematic with the rise of countryside touring. Gendering came as a response to these developments.

However, gender did matter once we ask why the electric car did not exist longer. In particular, the link

windcreens, the starting ignition, and other ‘feminine’ additions to the car were not just good for women, but universal.

Things are now quite different: women buy half of all new cars in the US. Meanwhile, there is a widening gender gap in political attitudes towards sustainability and renewable technology, as evidenced in several studies, where sustainability is often viewed as feminine.

In this context, it is a curious irony of history that Elon Musk, the CEO of one of the world’s leading electric car producers, has been so vocal in favour of bringing back masculinity and traditional gender roles, amid a rise of what some have termed “technofascism”.

The history of electric vehicles rather illustrates that social constructions of feminine and masculine can be barriers to progress and innovation. It also poignantly shows that we do not always end up with socially optimal technology and that ‘tech leaders’ are as unable to foresee the long-term consequences of technology choice as anyone else.

If history is any guide, innovation needs to be based on principles of universal access and inclusion.

Democratic influence can help ensure that technological transitions benefit a large majority of people regardless of their gender, class or ethnicity. **CT**

Josef Taalbi is Associate Professor of Economic History at Lund University, in Sweden. This article was first published at www.theconversation.org.



LADIES' FIRST: Early 20th century advertisement for the Baker Motor Vehicle Co.

of electric cars to a conservative gender order helps explain why they did not bounce back despite being cheaper to operate due to falling electricity prices. Reducing technology choice to a question of gender meant the electric car lost the battle in the public imagination of what cars and mobility could become.

As the historian Virginia Scharff pointed out, US petrol car makers simultaneously saw that

Wikipedia

INSIGHTS

► **NORMAN SOLOMON**

Why pro-Israel, pro-peace advocates deny genocide

Israel's renewed assault on Gaza comes several months after both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch issued reports concluding without equivocation that Israel was engaged in genocide. But very few members of Congress dare to acknowledge that reality, while their silence and denials scream out complicity.

In a *New York Times* interview in Mid-March, the Senate's Democratic leader Chuck Schumer put deep moral evasion on display. Among the 'slogans' that are used when criticising Israel, he said, "The one that bothers me the most is genocide. Genocide is described as a country or some group tries to wipe out a whole race of people, a whole nationality of people. So, if Israel was not provoked and just invaded Gaza and shot at random Palestinians, Gazans, that would be genocide. That's not what happened."

Schumer is wrong. The international Genocide Convention defines genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" – with such actions as killing, "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part," and "imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group."

Such actions by Israel have been accompanied by clear evidence of

genocidal intent – underscored by hundreds of statements by Israeli leaders and policy shapers. Scarcely three months into the Israeli war on Gaza, scholars Raz Segal and Penny Green pointed out, a database compiled by the Law for Palestine human rights organisation "meticulously documents and collates 500 statements that embody the Israeli



Benjamin Netanyahu

state's intention to commit genocide and incitement to genocide since October 7, 2023."

Those statements "by people with command authority – state leaders, war cabinet ministers and senior army officers – and by other politicians, army officers, journalists and public figures reveal the widespread commitment in Israel to the genocidal destruction of Gaza."

Since March 2, the United Nations reports, "Israeli authorities have halted the entry of all lifesaving supplies, including food, medicine, fuel and cooking gas, for 2.1-million

people." Now, Israel's horrendous crusade to destroy Palestinian people in Gaza – using starvation as a weapon of war and inflicting massive bombardment on civilians – has resumed after a two-month ceasefire.

On March 18 children were among the more than 400 people killed by Israeli airstrikes, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu proclaimed that "this is only the beginning."

It's almost impossible to find a Republican in Congress willing to criticise the pivotal US backing for Israel's methodical killing of civilians. It's much easier to find GOP lawmakers who sound bloodthirsty.

A growing number of congressional Democrats – still way too few – have expressed opposition. In mid-November, 2024, 17 Senate Democrats and two independents voted against offensive arms sales to Israel. But in reality, precious few Democratic legislators really pushed to impede such weapons shipments until after last November's election. Deference to President Biden was the norm as he actively enabled the genocide to continue.

The renewal of Israel's systematic massacres of Palestinian civilians has hardly sparked a congressional outcry. Silence or platitudes have been the usual.

For 'pro-Israel, pro-peace' J Street, the largest and most influential liberal Zionist organisation in the United States, evasions have remained along with expressions of anguish. The group's founder and president, Jeremy Ben-Ami, issued a statement decrying "the decision by Netanyahu to reignite this horrific war" and calling for use of

INSIGHTS

“all possible leverage to pressure each side to restore the ceasefire.” But, as always, J Street did not call for the US government to stop providing the weapons that make the horrific war possible.

That’s where genocide denial comes in. For J Street, as for members of Congress who’ve kept voting to enable the carnage with the massive US-to-Israel weapons pipeline, support for that pipeline requires pretending that genocide isn’t really happening.

While writing an article for *The Nation* (“Has J Street Gone Along With Genocide?”), I combed through 132 news releases from

J Street between early October 2023 and the start of the now-broken ceasefire in late January of this year. I found that on the subject of whether Israel was committing genocide, J Street “aligned itself completely with the position of the US and Israeli governments.”

J Street still maintains the position that it took last May, when the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to halt its military offensive in Rafah. “J Street continues to reject the allegation of genocide in this case,” a news release said.

It would be untenable to publicly acknowledge the reality of Israeli

genocide while continuing to support shipping more weaponry for the genocide. That’s why those who claim to be “pro-peace” while supporting more weapons for war must deny the reality of genocide in Gaza. **CT**

Norman Solomon is the national director of RootsAction.org and executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. The paperback edition of his latest book, ‘War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine,’ includes an afterword about the Gaza war.

► **JULIA CONLEY**

Don’t buy a Swasticar, say UK anti-Musk campaigners

With the motto, ‘Pissing off Elon Musk, one small action at a time,’ a UK-based campaign group unveiled an advertisement in March promoting what it called a ‘swasticar’: the Tesla vehicles sold by the billionaire mogul who has taken a front-and-centre role in President Donald Trump’s administration.

The ad (right) features an image of Musk standing in one of his cars while displaying a Nazi salute – as he appeared to do twice at an event for Trump shortly after the president’s inauguration in February.

The Tesla, the ad promises, “goes from zero to 1939 in three seconds.”



The image has been displayed on at least one bus stop in Bethnal Green, London, by a group called Everyone Hates Elon.

Pictures of the ad have gone viral online, and the group called on supporters to help ensure its message spreads far and wide as Musk’s dismantling of US government agencies and services, including its foreign aid agency, and his support for far-right political parties in Europe sparks outrage.

“Not happy with fuelling the far-right in the USA, Elon Musk is now doing the same in Europe,” wrote organisers on a GoFundMe page, where they are attempting to raise £10,000 (\$12,632) to plaster its ‘swasticar’ ad in more public places.

“We can’t let the richest man in the world poison our politics. While nurses use food banks, his wealth grew by \$200-billion last year,” wrote the group, referring to the UK’s cost-of-living crisis.

In the UK, Musk has expressed support for the far-right, virulently

INSIGHTS

anti-immigrant Reform Party and attacked officials from the Labour government, spreading what Prime Minister Keir Starmer decried as “lies and misinformation” about crimes allegedly committed by immigrants.

Musk’s favoured party in Germany, Alternative for Germany, lost the recent elections but caused international alarm as it doubled its vote share since the last nationwide vote. The party has platformed candidates who have used Nazi slogans and diminished the Holocaust, and has been classified as a suspected extremist group by Germany’s intelligence service.

Musk’s encroachment in European politics has been met with contempt, with Tesla sales dropping by more than half in Germany in February.

Everyone Hates Elon wrote sardonically in an Instagram post that it would “be a shame if [the swastical ads] popped up around the world.” Organisers have also plastered hundreds of Teslas in London with stickers telling passersby, “Don’t buy a swastical.” **CT**

Julia Conley is a staff writer for Common Dreams—www.commondreams.org.

of the US, and an ally of sorts against China. No dominoes fell. Iraq didn’t have WMD and Saddam wasn’t the next Hitler; he was merely a regional strongman and a former US ally who got a little too big for his britches, especially for Israel. Afghanistan was a war in search of a clear mission and attainable goals. After 20 years of effort and roughly \$2-trillion in expenditures, the US replaced the Taliban with – the Taliban. (I heard Norman Finkelstein say this first.)

We’re always told versions of the same lie: We need to fight them over there so that we don’t have to fight them here. Communism had to be rolled back in Vietnam else commies would be landing in Manhattan. Iraq had to be pummelled and Saddam overthrown before WMD landed in Boston. Afghanistan had to be pacified and modernised before the Taliban enforced conservative Sharia law in Biloxi.

None of this was true. The United States would have been perfectly safe without committing any troops to Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In fact, the US would have been far better off if those wars had never been fought. Certainly Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan would have been far better off if they’d never become free-fire zones for American munitions (including the poisonous Agent Orange in Vietnam and, more recently, depleted uranium and other poisons in Iraq and Afghanistan).

Now we’re hearing about a possible US war with Iran, allegedly to stop that country from acquiring an atomic bomb. It’s OK for the US to have more than 5,000 nuclear warheads and for Israel

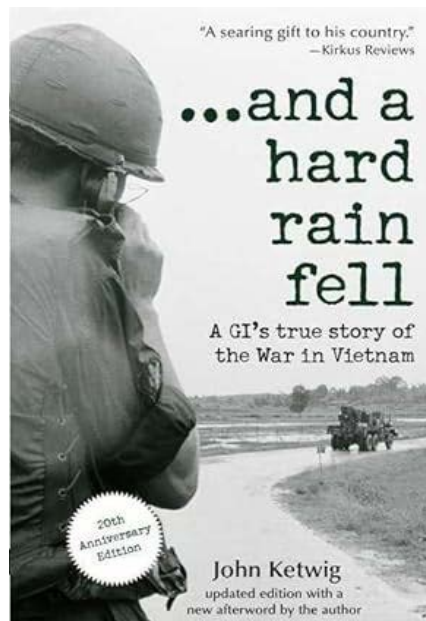
► **WILLIAM ASTORE**

I’m already against America’s next war

I’ve been reading John Ketwig’s memoir *...and a hard rain fell: A GI’s true story of the War in Vietnam*, and it’s reminding me just how plain dumb, destructive, and duplicitous America’s wars have been since World War II.

America’s wars are always dressed up with a necessary, even allegedly noble, cause. In Vietnam, we had to stop communism and all those dominoes from falling. In Iraq, it was about WMD and stopping Saddam Hussein, ‘the next Hitler.’ In Afghanistan, it was about vengeance for 9/11, then creating democracy and even helping women. (How about helping women in America? Never mind.)

Vietnam is nominally communist today – and a big trading partner



WAR STORY 1: The cover of John Ketwig’s memoir *...and a hard rain fell*

INSIGHTS

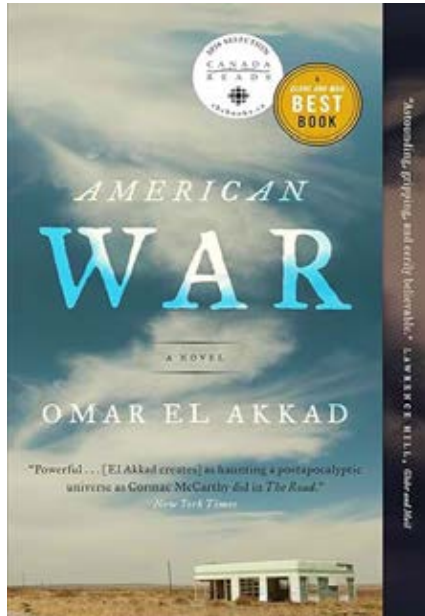
to have 200 or so, but it's not OK for Iran to have even one, because reasons.

The US military, vast as it is, with a vision of global dominance, always needs enemies. Of course, it's not simply the military but the whole military-industrial complex, the MICIMATT,* which needs war and conflict to sustain itself.

I recently read *American War*, a powerful novel by Omar El Akkad. It imagines a second US civil war starting roughly 50 years from now. It's a fascinating book, well worth reading because it captures the horror of war, with all its atrocities, its massacres, its war crimes, and the deep wounds war leaves behind even among the most resolute survivors. John Ketwig's book does the same as he recounts the fears and horrors of his year in Vietnam and the personal struggles he endured in coming to terms with what he'd seen and endured.

So, count me among those who are already against the next war, whether against Iran, China, or for that matter any other country. Sure, I think America needs to defend itself; I don't think peace is going to break out spontaneously around the world; but I know for a fact that fighting constant wars is not a way toward greater peace and prosperity. Quite the opposite.

If you want to know what desperate and profoundly wounded war survivors are capable of, read *American War*. If you want to know what desperate and profoundly confused troops are capable of, read ... *and a hard rain fell*. And ponder the continued propaganda here of the 'good war,' the wonders of warriors and warfighters, and the repe-



WAR STORY 2: The cover of Omar El Akkad's novel *American War*

dition of slogans like 'peace through strength,' a specific form, and of strength measured in kilotons and

megatons of explosives, in massive body counts and military production figures.

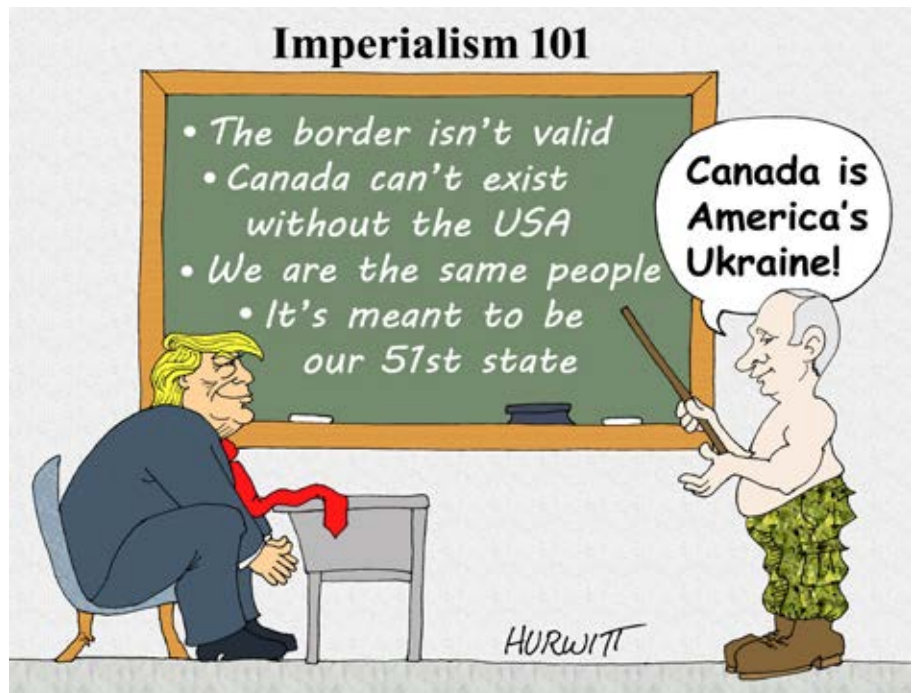
Ask yourself: Is that strength? Are constant wars truly the path toward peace? How can we possibly be so dumb as to believe this?

* *MICIMATT*: military-industrial-congressional-intelligence-media-academe-think-tank complex. It employs millions of people and spends more than a trillion dollars a year. It's not easily confronted. Nor is it easily contained, let alone curtailed. **CT**

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

► HURWITT'S EYE

MARK HURWITT



When dissent becomes a crime: The war on political speech has begun

When the government acts, it is supposed to do so at our bidding and on our behalf, because we are the rulers. That's not exactly how it turned out

"Once the principle is established that the government can arrest and jail protesters... officials will use it to silence opposition broadly."

– Heather Cox Richardson,
historian

You can't have it both ways. You can't live in a constitutional republic if you allow the government to act like a police state.

You can't claim to value freedom if you allow the government to operate like a dictatorship.

You can't expect to have your rights respected if you allow the government to treat whomever it pleases with disrespect and an utter disregard for the rule of law.

There's always a boomerang effect. Whatever dangerous practices you allow the government to carry out now – whether it's in the name of national security or protecting America's borders or making America great again – rest assured, these same practices can and will be used against you when the government decides to set its sights on you.

Arresting political activists engaged in lawful, nonviolent protest activities is merely the shot across the bow.

The chilling of political speech and suppression of dissident voices are usually among the first signs that you're in the midst of a hostile takeover by forces that are not friendly to freedom.

This is how it begins.

Consider that Khalil Mahmoud, an anti-war protester and recent graduate of Columbia University, was arrested on March 11 by ICE agents who appeared ignorant of his status as a legal US resident and his rights thereof. That these very same ICE agents also threatened to arrest Mahmoud's eight-months-pregnant wife, an American citizen, is also telling.

This does not seem to be a regime that respects the rights of the people.

Indeed, these ICE agents, who were 'just following orders' from on high, showed no concern that the orders they had been given were trumped up, politically motivated and unconstitutional.

If this is indeed the first of many arrests to come, what's next? Or more to the point, who's next?

We are all at risk.

History shows that when governments claim the power to silence dissent – whether in the name of national security, border protection,

or law and order – that power rarely remains limited. What starts as a crackdown on so-called 'threats' quickly expands to include anyone who challenges those in power.

President Trump has made it clear that Mahmoud's arrest is just "the first arrest of many to come." He has openly stated his intent to target non-citizen who engage in activities he deems contrary to US interests – an alarmingly vague standard that seems to change at his whim, the First Amendment be damned.

If history is any guide, the next targets will not just be immigrants or foreign-born activists. They will be American citizens who dare to speak out.

If you need further proof of Trump's disregard for constitutional rights, look no further than his recent declaration that boycotting Tesla is illegal – a chilling statement that reveals his fundamental misunderstanding of both free speech and the rule of law.

For the record, there is nothing illegal about exercising one's First Amendment right of speech, assembly, and protest in a nonviolent way to bring about social change by boycotting private businesses. In fact, the US Supreme Court ruled 8-0 in



NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware Co. (1982) that nonviolent boycotts are a form of political speech which are entitled to First Amendment protection.

The problem, unfortunately, when you're dealing with a president who believes that he can do whatever he wants because he is the law is that anyone and anything can become a target.

Mahmoud is the test case.

As journalists Gabe Kaminsky, Madeleine Rowley, and Maya Sulkin point out in *The Free Press*, Mahmoud's arrest for being a "threat to the foreign policy and na-

tional security interests of the United States" (note: he is not actually accused of breaking any laws) is being used as a blueprint for other arrests to come.

What this means is that anyone who dares to disagree with the government and its foreign policy and express that disagreement could be considered a threat

What starts as a crackdown on so-called 'threats' quickly expands to include anyone who challenges those in power

to the country's "national security interests."

Yet the right to speak out against government wrongdoing is the quintessential freedom.

Indeed, the First Amendment does more than give us a right to criticize our country: it makes it a civic duty. Certainly, if there is one freedom among the many spelled out in the Bill of Rights that is especially patriotic, it is the right to criticize the government.

Unfortunately, the Deep State doesn't take kindly to individuals who speak truth to power. This is nothing new, nor is it unique to any particular presidential administration. Throughout history, US presidents have used their power to

suppress dissent. The Biden administration equated the spread of ‘misinformation’ with terrorism. Trump called the press ‘the enemy of the people’ and suggested protesting should be illegal. Obama expanded anti-protest laws and cracked down on whistleblowers. Bush’s Patriot Act made it a crime to support organisations the government deemed terrorist, even in lawful ways. This pattern stretches back centuries – FDR censored news after Pearl Harbor, Woodrow Wilson outlawed criticism of war efforts, and John Adams criminalised speaking against the government.

Regardless of party, those in power have repeatedly sought to limit free speech. What’s new is the growing willingness to criminalise political dissent under the guise of national security.

Clearly, the government has been undermining our free speech rights for quite a while now, but Trump’s antagonism towards free speech is taking this hostility to new heights.

The government has a history of using crises – real or manufactured – to expand its power.

Once dissent is labelled a threat, it’s only a matter of time before laws meant for so-called extremists are used against ordinary citizens. Criticising policy, protesting, or even refusing to conform could be enough to put someone on a watchlist.

We’ve seen this before. The government has a long list of ‘suspicious’ ideologies and behaviours it uses to justify surveillance and suppression. Today’s justification may be immigration; tomorrow, it could be any form of opposition.

This is what we know: the government has the means, the muscle and the motivation to detain individuals who resist its orders and do not comply with its mandates in a vast Xar-



It doesn’t take much to be considered a terrorist ... the government likes to use the words ‘anti-government,’ ‘extremist’ and ‘terrorist’ interchangeably

ray of prisons, detention centres, and concentration camps paid for with taxpayer dollars.

It’s just a matter of time.

It no longer matters what the hot-button issue might be (vaccine mandates, immigration, gun rights, abortion, same-sex marriage, healthcare, criticising the government, protesting election results, etc) or which party is wielding its power like a hammer.

The groundwork has already been laid. Under the indefinite detention provision of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the President and the military can detain and imprison American citizens with no access to friends, family or the courts if the government believes them to be a terrorist.

So it should come as no surprise

that merely criticising the government could get you labelled as a terrorist.

After all, it doesn’t take much to be considered a terrorist anymore, especially given that the government likes to use the words ‘anti-government,’ ‘extremist’ and ‘terrorist’ interchangeably.

This is what happens when you not only put the power to determine who is a potential danger in the hands of government agencies, the courts and the police but also give those agencies liberal authority to lock individuals up for perceived wrongs.

It’s a system just begging to be abused by power-hungry bureaucrats desperate to retain their power at all costs.

Having allowed the government to expand and exceed our reach, we find ourselves on the losing end of a tug-of-war over control of our country and our lives. And for as long as we let them, government officials will continue to trample on our rights, always justifying their actions as being for the good of the people.

Yet the government can only go as far as ‘we the people’ allow. Therein lies the problem.

This is not just about one administration or one set of policies. This is a broader pattern of governmental overreach that has been allowed to unfold, unchecked and unchallenged. And at the heart of this loss of freedom is a fundamental misunderstanding – or even a deliberate abandonment – of what sovereignty really means in America.

Sovereignty is a dusty, antiquated term that harkens back to an age when kings and emperors ruled with absolute power over a populace that had no rights. Americans turned the idea of sovereignty on its head when

they declared their independence from Great Britain and rejected the absolute authority of King George III. In doing so, Americans claimed for themselves the right to self-government and established themselves as the ultimate authority and power.

In other words, as the preamble to the Constitution states, in America, ‘we the people’ – sovereign citizens – call the shots. So, when the government acts, it is supposed to do so at our bidding and on our behalf, because we are the rulers.

That’s not exactly how it turned out, though, is it?

In the 200-plus years since we boldly embarked on this experiment in self-government, we have been steadily losing ground to the government’s brazen power grabs, foisted upon us in the so-called name of national security.

The government has knocked us off our rightful throne. It has usurped our rightful authority. It has staged the ultimate coup. Its agents no longer even pretend that they answer to “we the people.”

This is how far our republic has fallen and how desensitised ‘we the people’ have become to this constant undermining of our freedoms.

If we are to put an end to this steady slide into totalitarianism, that goose-stepping form of tyranny in which the government has all of the power and ‘we the people’ have none, we must begin by refusing to allow the politics of fear to shackle us to a dictatorship.

President Trump wants us to believe that the menace we face (imaginary or not) is so sinister, so overwhelming, so fearsome that the only way to surmount the danger is by empowering the government to take all necessary steps to quash it, even if that means allowing government jackboots to trample all over the



If we are to put an end to this steady slide into totalitarianism, we must begin by refusing to allow the politics of fear to shackle us to a dictatorship

Constitution.

Don’t believe it. That argument has been tried before. The government’s overblown, extended wars on terrorism, drugs, violence and illegal immigration have all been convenient ruses used to terrorise the populace into relinquishing more of their freedoms in exchange for elusive promises of security.

We are walking a dangerous path right now. Political arrests. Harassment. Suppression of dissident voices. Retaliation. Detention centres for political prisoners.

These are a harbinger of what’s to come if the Trump administration carries through on its threats to crack down on any and all who exercise their First Amendment rights to free speech and protest.

We are being acclimated to bold-

er power grabs, acts of lawlessness, and a pattern of intimidation, harassment, and human rights violations by government officials. And yet, in the midst of this relentless erosion of our freedoms, the very concept of sovereignty – the foundational idea that the people, not the government, hold ultimate power – has been all but forgotten.

‘Sovereignty’ used to mean something fundamental in America: the idea that the government serves at the will of the people, that ‘we the people’ are the rightful rulers of this land, and that no one, not even the president, is above the law. But today, that notion is scarcely discussed, as the government continues its unchecked expansion.

We have lost sight of the fact that our power is meant to restrain the government, not the other way around.

Don’t allow yourselves to be distracted, derailed or desensitised.

As I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional counterpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, the moment these acts of aggression becomes the new normal, authoritarianism won’t be a distant threat; it will be reality. **CT**

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The new fascism: Israel is the template for war on freedom

The wide-ranging crackdown on political speech is being framed as a 'war on antisemitism'. But fascism was always going to return in disguise, calling its opponents, not itself, the Nazis

The virus of fascism only ever lay dormant in the West after its apparent destruction during the Second World War.

Early indicators are everywhere that fascism – an ideology that espouses racist hierarchies of human value, of who should have rights and who must not – is reasserting itself in the United States and across large parts of Europe.

There is an intensifying distrust and fear of foreigners. Immigrants are seen as destroying the West from within – irreconcilable with, and antagonistic to, a “superior” civilisation and culture.

In the US, a permanent resident – apparently the first of many – has been disappeared into the US prison system, pending his deportation.

Political speech in opposition to western governments and their crimes is being stigmatised and crushed with old laws and new. Supposedly liberal academic institutions are rolling over as they are

menaced with legal and financial sanctions. There is little reason to assume that judicial systems will provide any meaningful check on executive power.

The West is taking the first formal steps down a different political path – one whose final destination we know from our own relatively recent history.

The far right is now setting the agenda with the same Cheshire Cat grin, whether it's billionaire TV star Donald Trump in the US, or Westminster's glorified used-car salesman Nigel Farage in the UK.

There are fascist-leaning parties inside the governments of Italy, Hungary, Finland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Netherlands and Croatia. Openly far-right parties are jostling for power in France, Germany, Austria, Sweden and, for the first time, Britain. That trend was reflected in a surge of ultra-nationalist delegates elected to the European Parliament last year.

The only available bulwarks are



bloodless technocrats like Prime Minister Keir Starmer in Britain, President Emmanuel Macron in France, and former Vice President Kamala Harris in the US, offering more of the same failed policies that opened the door to the fascists in the first place. These developments have not come out of the blue. They have been decades in the making.

This should come as no surprise, because the main repository for the West's fascist ideas since the Second World War has been hiding in plain sight: Israel.

The West's undisguised crackdown on the most fundamental of rights, such as political speech and academic freedom, is being carried out in the name of protecting Israel



AGONY: A child crouches in the ruins after Israeli attacks killed 400 Gazans, mainly women and children, on March 17.

and those western Jews who cheer-lead its crimes.

Fascism is stepping out of the shadows in the US and Europe as Israel, armed and given diplomatic cover by its western patrons, ostentatiously commits a genocide against the Palestinians of Gaza.

Israel has continued, with the West's conspicuous backing, to do the very things that western states themselves found it impossible to justify in the wake of the Second World War.

When the West was reluctantly forced into decolonisation processes in Africa and Asia, Israel was given licence and endless support to grow a violent ethno-nationalist project on another people's homeland.

Jewish supremacism was respect-

able, even as white supremacism fell out of favour.

Israel became ever bolder in its expulsions and segregationist policies. It herded Palestinians into ever-smaller enclaves, where they were stripped of rights and subjected to constant military abuses.

All of this continued even as, in the mid-1960s, the civil rights movement in the US finally overturned the Deep South's segregationist Jim Crow laws. And it continued as, in the 1990s, the white leaders of apartheid South Africa, another western colonial project, were forced into a truth and reconciliation process with the black majority.

Israel remained the West's most favoured ally, even as it pushed firmly against what was presented

elsewhere as the inexorable tide of progressive change.

Fascism's ascendancy across much of Europe through the 1930s and early 1940s was a wakeup call that led western leaderships to bolster international institutions, whose watchword was human rights.

The United Nations, created in 1945, was supposed to embody these values, issuing its Universal Declaration of Human Rights three years later, and spawning legal bodies such as the International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court to hold rogue regimes to account.

The aim was to prevent a return to the horrors of the Second World War, from the Nazi death camps to

the Allies' fire-bombings of German and Japanese cities.

That was why Israel's ethnic project to colonise Palestine – by removing or killing Palestinians to replace them with Jews – found itself in continuous confrontation with the new watchdog bodies, violating dozens of UN resolutions. Washington was always ready to protect it from repercussions.

It was not that other countries did not commit terrible crimes, too. After all, in its struggle to remain the global top dog during the Cold War, the US destroyed swathes of South-east Asia in bombing campaigns related to the Vietnam War.

But unlike western states, Israel did not even pay lip service to the supposed principles of the post-Second World War international order. Its organising principle was directly opposed to the UN declaration. Israel explicitly rejected universal human rights, and its Basic Laws, amounting to a constitution, excluded the principle of equality.

Meanwhile, Israel's constant military oppression of the Palestinian people was in flagrant violation of the Geneva Conventions. Similar to South Africa's apartheid era, there has not been a day since Israel's founding in 1948 when it was not committing structural violence against the native people it seeks to replace.

There was not a day when it was not segregating Palestinians, destroying their communities, forcing them off their lands, eradicating their crops, blocking their roads, putting them in torture camps, isolating them from the world – or killing them.

It would have carried out this eradication process earlier, faster and even more shamelessly, had it not been for the restraining hand of international law and the difficult

Israel is the place where the West's military industries test their might on Palestinians, who serve as lab rats

optics for the US and Europe of supporting this monstrous behaviour.

But even those restraints have all but evaporated. The current genocide in Gaza, all too visibly sponsored by the West, can only happen in a political climate where the idea of universal human rights has been hollowed out; where the idea that human life is sacrosanct has lost its meaning.

Israeli politics has ostentatiously divided itself between a so-called "liberal" faction and rightwing Zionism, as if there was some grand ideological struggle going on. But in truth, all Israeli politics is fascist in nature.

Both wings of Zionism are premised on the notion that Israeli Jews – most of them recent immigrants – have superior rights over the Palestinian natives, and that any Palestinian who refuses to submit to permanent servitude should be punished.

The debate within Zionism is not about whether this should happen. It is about where fine lines should be drawn. What is the extent of the territory in which Jews unquestionably enjoy superior rights, and how extreme should the punishments be for Palestinians who disobey?

These arguments have largely reflected secular and religious splits within Israel, with parts of its society prioritising western concerns about Israel's reputation on the international stage.

Over decades, confronted by the fact that Palestinians refuse to cooperate with its organising princi-

ple – submit or be punished – the Israeli majority shifted from a liberal Zionism obsessed with appearances to an unapologetic, triumphalist, far-right Zionism. That is why self-declared fascists proudly sit in the current government.

And it is why in February, Israel's ruling party, Likud, became an observer member of Patriots for Europe – an alliance of Europe's far-right parties, often with Nazi and neo-Nazi ties. At an inaugural conference in Madrid, Likud was warmly welcomed, with alliance leaders highlighting their "shared values."

None of this happened discreetly. Israel is the West's last major colonial outpost. It is the place where the West's military industries test their might on Palestinians, who serve as lab rats.

It is where the strength of international law is stress-tested, its principles stretched and warped by endless abuse, and then flagrantly disobeyed.

And it is where a narrative of victimhood, of Jewish and Christian "civilisation," has been crafted to justify a war on the Palestinian people and, more generally, Muslims.

All of this is supposed to carry on, immune from criticism or objection. The West has developed a perfect cover story for cocooning its fascist offspring: those who oppose the subjugation and brutalisation of the Palestinian people are denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination. They are thus "antisemites."

In parallel, any Palestinian who resists subjugation and brutalisation is a terrorist. Ergo, those who ally with Palestinians are in league with terrorists.

In a further leap, because the West has cast Palestinians as part of the Muslim masses of the Arab

world – even though there are many Palestinian Christians and Druze – Palestinian resistance to Israeli oppression can be presented as an adjunct of a supposed Islamist threat to the West.

In truth, no Palestinian group is fighting to conquer the West, or to impose sharia law on Europe and the US. Palestinian resistance groups are seeking only to liberate their homeland from decades of colonial oppression and ethnic cleansing.

Predictably, the longer that oppression has continued, with extravagant western backing, the more Palestinians facing Israel’s abuses have been drawn to less accommodationist militant groups, like Hamas, proscribed as a terrorist organisation in the UK and other countries.

No matter. Israel is presented as a small, heroic nation defending the West from the Muslim hordes. In a narrative that utterly inverts reality, Israel serves as the humanist rampart against Palestinian – and by extension, Muslim – barbarism.

It is this premise that makes it possible for Michael Gove, a former British government minister, to write an article in the midst of Israel’s genocide headlined: “The IDF [Israeli military] should be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.”

It is this premise that allows a respected writer, Howard Jacobson, to demand silence at the killing and maiming of tens of thousands of Palestinian children in Gaza, because speaking in their defence supposedly amounts to a “blood libel” against the Jewish people.

It is this premise that means Melanie Phillips, a journalistic staple of BBC panel shows, can get away with writing: “If you support the Palestinian Arab cause today, you are facilitating deranged and murderous Jew-hatred.”

These are self-pitying, delusional



Michael Gove: “IDF should be nominated for Nobel Peace Prize”



Howard Jacobson: “blood libel” against Jewish people



Melanie Phillips: “facilitating deranged and murderous Jew hatred”

narratives that our European forefathers – plundering Africa of its wealth, enslaving its “savage” peoples or killing millions who refused to accept the West’s civilisational “superiority” – would be only too comfortable espousing.

Fascism was never going to return to Europe or the US dressed in Nazi garb. It was never going to arrive wearing jackboots and brandishing swastikas.

In fact, it was all too predictable that it would arrive in disguise, dressed in suits, telegenic, and characterising its opponents, not itself, as the Nazis.

That is where Israel has been so helpful once again, for it has not just served as a template for fascism, preserving and rejuvenating ideas of racial superiority, colonisation and genocide. For decades, it has also allowed western states to invest Israeli fascism with a moral legitimacy. Support for Israel’s racial hierarchies, in which Palestinian lives are entirely expendable, has been sold as necessary to “protect Jews.”

That premise has, in turn, allowed genocide to become a respectable, moral cause. It is precisely why Starmer felt able to say that Israel had a “right” to deny more than two million Palestinian men, women and children all food, water and fuel. A genocide that he would have rejected in other circumstances – indeed, has rejected – was apparently okay so long as Israel was doing it.

This is why a UN report last month on Israel’s “genocidal acts” received barely any traction in western media. The report shows how Israel has routinised sexual assault and rape against the Palestinians it arbitrarily detains as bargaining chips for the hostages held by Hamas in Gaza.

And it is why Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a wanted war criminal and fugitive from justice, is still welcome in western capitals, as are his generals who have been carrying out the genocide in Gaza.

The West's endless indulgence of Israel's variety of fascism – Zionism – has allowed its ideas to quietly seep back into our own societies, where Zionism is still treated with near-reverential respect.

If racial hierarchies are a good thing in Israel, why are they not a good thing in the US and Europe too? This is why a large section of Trump's base proudly call themselves "white Zionists." They see a Jewish fortress state of Israel as a model for the US as a white fortress state against their "Great Replacement" fears.

If "protecting Jews" in Israel can justify any crime by the Israeli state against Palestinians, why can "protecting Jews" not also justify illegal behaviour by western states towards their own populations?

"Protecting Jews" means that speech critical of Israel must be outlawed, even as Israel commits war crimes and genocide, because that criticism risks offending domestic Jewish organisations that cheerlead Israel.

Academic freedom must be crushed too, to protect the feelings

Washington is creating grounds to demonise vast swathes of the US student population and large sections of the Jewish community

of those Jewish students and professors who think the mass slaughter of Palestinian children is an acceptable price to pay for Israel reasserting its military deterrence.

And with a self-rationalising logic, any western Jews who do not prostrate themselves before Israel enthusiastically enough are deemed to be "the wrong sort of Jews" – or "Palestinian," in the new slur Trump has levelled against Chuck Schumer, the Jewish US Senate minority leader.

In this warped, self-serving calculus of human rights, the sensitivities of Zionist Jews are placed at the apex, and the right of Palestinians not to be murdered at the bottom.

This is precisely why US federal authorities are seeking to set a precedent by abducting and deporting a permanent resident, Mahmoud Khalil, for helping to lead student protests against Israel's genocide in Gaza.

He is being accused, without any evidence, of being "aligned with Hamas", "supporting terrorism," holding antisemitic views, and desir-

ing the destruction of the West by Islamic extremism.

Just as Israel recruited AI to select its targets in Gaza for execution, using the broadest categories it could devise as algorithmic prompts, the White House is using AI to select as broadly as it can who is aligned with Hamas, who is a terrorist, who is an antisemite.

At the same time, US academic institutions are having their federal grants revoked on the grounds that they are supposedly not doing enough to tackle "antisemitism" by crushing the anti-genocide protests. Obedient universities are hurrying to join the government crackdown.

The Trump administration is framing these moves, and more are doubtless to come, as part of a "war on antisemitism" – the sequel to the "war on terror."

In the process, Washington is creating grounds to demonise vast swathes of the US student population and large sections of the Jewish community, especially young Jews unwilling to let a genocide be committed in their name. All now face being vilified as having "aligned with terrorism." **CT**

Jonathan Cook is the author of three books on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and a winner of the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. More of the author's writing can be found at www.jonathancook.net

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Screenshot / YouTube

ELON MUSK: Hitler Salute or 'awkward gesture'?

► TREVOR GRUNDY

The rise and fall of Elon Musk's right arm

History repeats itself: First as a Nazi salute, then
as 'an awkward gesture in a moment of enthusiasm'

In 1936 the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett, then aged 30, was touring Germany where he saw a sign outside a church in Regensburg that stayed with him for the rest of his life.

The author of *Waiting for Godot* noted in his travel diary: "I walked away past the Dominikanerkirche, and saw on the portal above the northern door the words *Gruss Gott* (Good Day) had been crossed out and replaced by *Heil Hitler*."

He added: "Even lavatory attendants greet you with the Hitler Salute and the words Heil Hitler."

Isn't it odd that the infamous Hitler Salute is in the news again, almost 80 years after the end of the Second World War?

One is tempted to say that one of the most prominent figures in USA at the start of Donald Trump's Make American Great Again (MAGA) campaign might not have felt unduly out of place in the Third Reich, as far as greeting one another in public places, that is.

Was the raised right arm (palm facing downwards) gesticulation by Elon Musk, the world's richest man, that caused such controversy at

the inauguration of Donald Trump on January 20 really a Hitler Salute?

Or was it just a spirited revival of the 'hello' signal Romans used when greeting each other while Julius Caesar was bossing the known world 2,000 years ago?

Or was it perhaps – as the Anti-Defamation League in America described Musk's shocking arm motion – just 'an awkward gesture' delivered in 'a moment of enthusiasm'?

Take your pick.

In a month or so, no-one in America will give the proverbial damn. But those Salutes or waves or

'greetings from the heart' could impact in other places, such as Germany where the ultra- right-wing (some say neo-Nazi) Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party came second in that country's recent general election.

Musk's gesture would have surprised Samuel Beckett and might even have inspired another of his theatre of the absurd performances.

Theatre of the absurd it most certainly was in Hitler's Germany as the Frankfurt-based academic Tilman Allert explains in his short and fascinating book *The Hitler Salute*, published by Metropolitan Books, New York, in 2005.

Allert wrote that from the moment the Nazis came to power in 1933, this somewhat cryptic salutation (the Hitler Salute) dominated the culture of human exchange in Germany.

The Nazi Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick said moments after Hitler became Chancellor and Führer: "Now that the state of bickering political parties has been defeated, the Hitler Salute has become the German greeting."

He added: "The German greeting must become second nature to you. Disregard your *Gross Gott, Auf Wiedersehen, Guten Tag, Servus*. All who wish to avoid the suspicion of consciously obstructionist behaviour will use the Hitler Salute."

Germans were required "without prompting" to raise their arms and utter a heartfelt 'Heil Hitler' every time the new German national anthem, the *Horst Wessel Lied*, was played. In short, giving the Hitler Salute was a way of demonstrating one's loyalty to the Third Reich. And God help you if you refused. Not many did.

The salute was not confined to 'good' Germans: In the 1936 Olympic



THE REAL THING: Adolf Hitler salutes at a 1938 parade in Berlin

Games in Berlin, the French delegation showed deference to their German hosts by entering the stadium with their arms outstretched. And there are photographs of the entire English football team doing the same.

First the moral collapse. Then the emergence of the strong man with charisma. Then the salute and the anthem.

What follows moral bankruptcy? What causes the collapse of national and personal morals that can prevent such depravations? Allert attempts an answer: "A fractured relationship to oneself precedes the underestimation of change in social relations. Once those changes have taken place, charisma can let loose its monstrous power and, as Max Weber might have said, turn 'rules, traditions and all ideas of what is holy' on their heads. In Germany, this process took place impercepti-

**First the moral collapse.
Then the emergence
of the strong man with
charisma. Then the
salute and the anthem**

bly but in plain sight."

There is a great deal of moral collapse taking place in plain sight right now. Not just in America, but also in Britain and many parts of Europe. Men who should know better are articulating the fouler thoughts of the mob-minded who can waft the flames of hatred at will.

I am not suggesting that all those who voted for the AfD are part of a mob, but watch out when unemployed and angry young men and women start imitating the gestures made in public by men like Musk.

Will they also be diplomatically described by the Anti-Defamation League as just 'awkward gestures'?

Many of them are young people with a need for standards and ideals which they no longer see in the lives of those who rule them. They are looking for trustworthy leaders.

Watch out, if you care for the future.

To get an idea of the rise of the fascist society, read *The Weimar Republic*, by John Hiden (Longman, London, 1996) which illustrates what happened in Germany before Hitler came to power in 1933.

Try and recall the moment in the film *Cabaret* when Sally Boyles, her

boyfriend (a fictional Christopher Isherwood called Herr Issywood in the book *Goodbye to Berlin*), and their bi-sexual lover saw a boy in Hitler Youth uniform stand up and sing *Tomorrow belongs to me*.

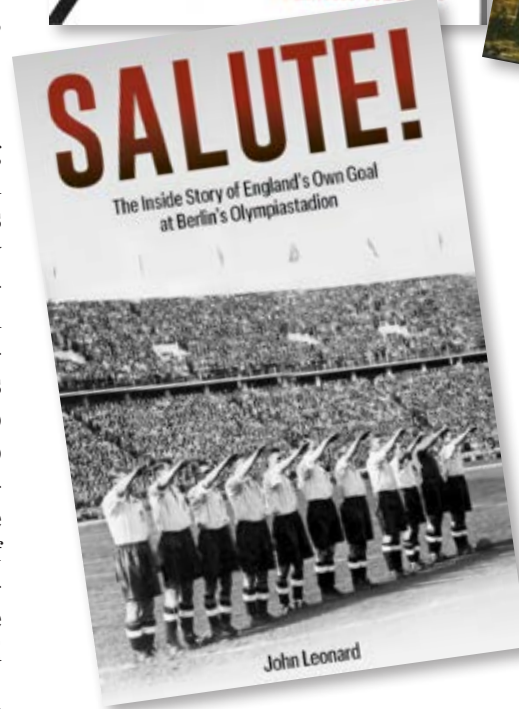
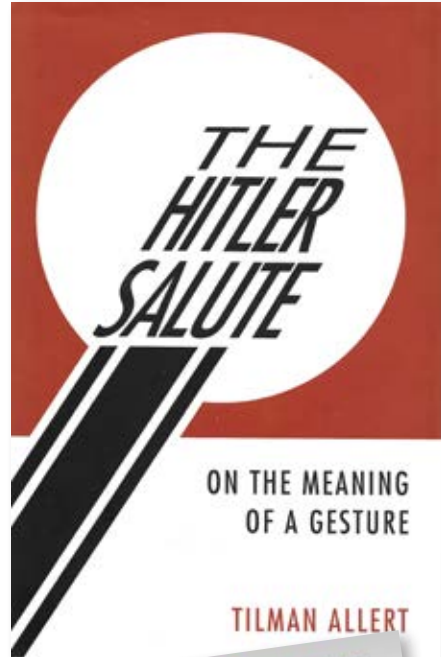
When I saw it, I felt the audience in the cinema collectively shudder. The song has ominous overtones: it could easily be turned into a new song – *Make Germany Great Again*.

This desire for strong leaders is part and parcel of our collective political DNA. Freud knew that. So did Marx and Engels. So did Hitler, Mussolini, Trotsky, Lenin, Stalin, and now Putin.

Says Allert: “The life span of the Nazi Salute seems fleeting when viewed against the more enduring catastrophes produced by National Socialism, yet during the 12 years in which it held sway, its ghostly spectacle invested every human encounter with magical fascination and helped to silence a nation’s moral scruples. The Nazi Salute thus marked Germany’s regression into a state of moral disregard in two ways: it stamped out the act of communication – the very heart of the human encounter – with the sign of the failure, and it signalled the triumph of social radicalism over the fragile space of human dignity and interaction.”

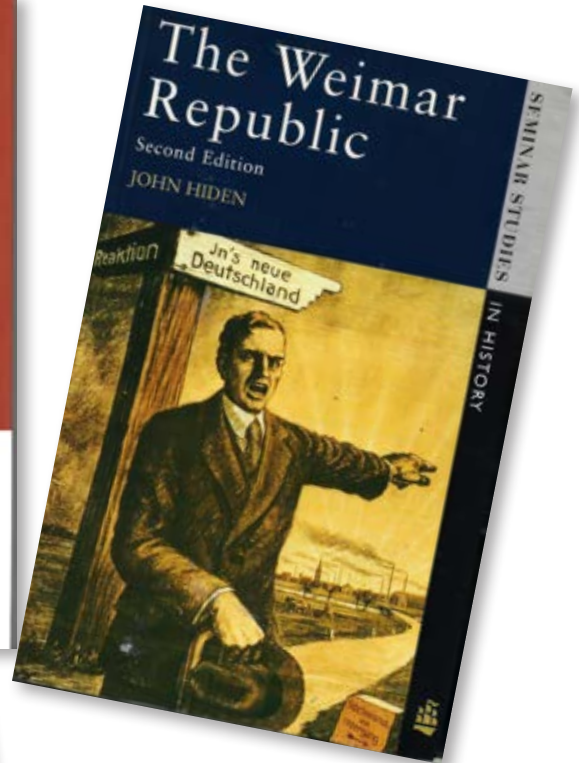
This state of “moral disregard” endured until Hitler’s suicide in April, 1945.

Allert adds: “After the failed attempt to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944, which was led by Wehrmacht officers, the commanders of the three main branches of the German military – desperate to prove their loyalty – asked the Führer to personally approve their decision to introduce the Hitler greeting within the Wehrmacht itself. The change



was officially instituted on July 24, 1944, completing the destruction of the military’s autonomy that had commenced a decade earlier with the new loyalty oath.”

Some of the chilling last words of Joseph Goebbels bear repetition. He said after the completion of his propaganda film *Kolberg* – the Third Reich’s answer to *Gone With the Wind* – for which 100,000 soldiers were withdrawn from



LEFT: Another bad day for England’s soccer team.

ABOVE: Two books that examine Hitler’s years of ‘moral disregard’

the Russian front and turned into extras, that 100 years from 1945 a new film would be made glorifying Hitler and the Nazis.

Those words were: “Gentlemen, don’t you wish to play a part in this film, to be brought back to life in 100 years time? I can assure you that this will be a fine and elevating picture. And for the sake of this prospect, it is worth holding fast. Hold on so that in 100 years hence the audience does not hoot and whistle when you appear on the screen.”

Just 20 years to go . . .

CT

Trevor Grundy is the author of ‘Memoir of a Fascist Childhood,’ published by William Heinemann, London in 1998 and Arrow Books in 1999. A slightly revised edition was published by Routledge in 2023 titled of ‘Love, Hate and the Leader.’ Grundy’s website is www.trevorgrundy.news.

Canada must decouple from the US military

If Donald Trump is so determined to annex Canada, why should its government pay Lockheed Martin \$19-billion for 88 F-35s jets that it does not control?

Just before leaving office last month, Justin Trudeau said Donald Trump wants to sabotage Canada's economy in a bid to annex the country. "What he wants is to see a total collapse of the Canadian economy, because that'll make it easier to annex us," said the then prime minister. Subsequently, the *New York Times* reported that Trump told Trudeau he wanted to redraw the countries' border.

In response to Trump's threats many Canadian nationalists are calling for a big boost in military spending. The *National Observer's* lead columnist Max Fawcett recently said, "it's probably time for Canada to bump its military spending to 5 per cent of GDP" while commentator Dean Blundell noted, "Canada needs to re-arm, recruit and sign strategic security deals worldwide while figuring out how to get the [atomic] bomb."

During the recent Liberal leadership debate both Chrystia Freeland and Karina Gould criticised eventu-

al winner Mark Carney for not committing to their (near impossible) plan to boost military spending to 2 per cent of GDP in two years (Carney committed to five years).

While each have slightly different motivations for seeking increased military spending, there's no credible anti-Trump, nationalist, argument for boosting the military that doesn't include decoupling from the US military.

As I detail in my book, *Stand on Guard for Whom: A People's History of the Canadian Military*, Canada's forces act as an extension of the US empire.

In February, Université du Québec à Montréal political science professor Justin Massie told *Le Devoir*, "Our forces are designed like Lego bricks

that fit into another piece." A Canadian battalion, he noted, is designed to be inserted into a US or international brigade. "We have a sample army to 'patch' holes," Massie added.

The man seeking to annex Can-

ada appears to agree. Trump has repeatedly demanded Ottawa increase military spending. If the US president thought the Canadian Forces were a check on his annexationist plans, he probably wouldn't seek to strengthen them.

Instead of blissfully echoing Trump's call to increase military spending on a force structured to assist the Pentagon, Canadian nationalists should oppose paying tens of billions of dollars to US arms giants.

Canada must re-evaluate all major arms procurement from the US. Support for paying \$19-billion to Lockheed Martin for F-35s unravelled rapidly as information came to light about US control over its software and hardware upgrades, giving the US an effective "kill switch" on fighter jets that will cost \$74-billion over their lifecycle.

After an embarrassingly timid initial response, the NDP has called for scrapping both the purchase of 88 F-35s and a \$6 billion Boeing P-8A intelligence aircraft deal.

But, there are other deals that need to be looked at. According to the *Ottawa Citizen*, the "US controls many of the key systems onboard Canada's new warships, allowing the Americans to hold this country hostage over future upgrades or even the provision of spare parts."



OH CANADA: Donald Trump wants to annex Canada and make it the US's 51st state. So why should Canada buy US fighter planes?

A US firm was contracted for the command management system, which controls the weapons and intelligence-gathering equipment for Canada's \$80-billion Surface Combatants.

It shouldn't be controversial to reconsider paying tens of billions of dollars to US military giants as part of responding to an annexationist president's economic siege. Halting these payments would send a message to the two most powerful arms firms in the US. It would also send a message to the Pentagon since Canada chose these weapons systems largely to be more "interoperable" with the US Air Force.

According to the Department of National Defence, there are "80 treaty-level agreements, more than 250 memoranda of understanding, and 145 bilateral forums on defence" between the two countries' militaries. Ottawa should pause/cancel some of these accords to communicate disapproval with US trade and annexation threats.

Under NORAD the Colorado-based US commander of the accord

could deploy Canadian fighter jets based in this country with-



Wikipedia

Will Canada cancel a \$35-billion order for Lockheed Martin F-35As?

out any express Canadian endorsement. Instead of continuing the Liberals' plan to spend tens of billions of dollars on bolstering NORAD shouldn't we be questioning Canada's participation in the accord?

While cancelling NORAD may be a step too far for mainstream politicians, there's a host of less controversial, cost free, measures Ottawa can adopt to signal displeasure to the Pentagon.

How about a pause in officer ex-

changes until Trump stops threatening annexation? Or what about halting US arms testing in Canada until the president stops pursuing his economic siege? Or how about discontinuing joint naval patrols in far flung oceans until Trump stops referring to Canada's prime minister as governor?

It makes little sense to bolster the military of a country whose president is seeking to annex Canada. **CT**

Yves Engler is a Montreal-based political activist and author. His website is www.yvesengler.com.

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➤ MARTIN PARR

Wish you weren't here!

How holidaymakers chase – and destroy – undiscovered cultures

First published in 1996, *Small World* is one of the most popular books from British photographer Martin Parr. It is a biting satire in which the photographer looks at tourism worldwide, Parr's images showing how, in a never-ending search to discover different sights, many cultures are being destroyed by the numbers of ogling tourists.

In a world of 'carbon footprints,' global warming and climate crisis, the issues that Parr raised almost 30 years ago when the book was first published are more relevant today.

While Parr's larger-than-life troupe of tourists appear willing participants in an omnipresent consumer culture they are also bemused victims – at the mercy of larger social forces which take advantage of their unrelenting quest for new adventures.

Small World's citizens become a symbol of Western society's prosperous freedoms, declaring their power and their right to travel, to choose and to consume.

Perhaps it's time they took a closer look at the damage they are creating and stay closer to home. **CT**

Martin Parr is a member of the Magnum photo agency and has published many books. His work has been exhibited and published worldwide.



Photo from 'Small World' © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos





The Bridge of Sighs, Venice, Italy, 2023



SMALL WORLD

Martin Parr

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Vatican Museum, Vatican City, Italy, 2014



Dovedale, The Peak District, England, 1989



Goa, India, 1993



Tower of London, England, 2015

How the UK allowed Pinochet to escape justice

25 years ago, the UK government allowed Chile's former dictator to evade extradition to Spain. Declassified files reveal how the decision was made

On March 2, 2000, Augusto Pinochet walked falteringly across the tarmac at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire and boarded a Chilean air force jet, marking his final steps on British soil.

The former dictator had just been declared unfit to stand trial by Britain's home secretary, Jack Straw, and was allowed to return to Chile immediately.

Pinochet had spent the previous 16 months under house arrest in Britain, awaiting the outcome of a Spanish extradition request for human rights violations committed under his regime.

Between 1973 and 1988, Chilean state agents were responsible for more than 3,000 deaths or disappearances and tens of thousands of cases of torture and political arrests. The Spanish extradition request for Pinochet included charges of murder and torture.

The UK government's decision to allow Pinochet to escape justice was consequently met with outrage, particularly after the despot seemed to show miraculous signs of recovery upon his arrival in Santiago.

Many suspected that a political agreement had been reached to allow Pinochet to return to Chile under cover of a contentious medical report which claimed he was unable

to instruct his lawyers.

Recently declassified files now indicate how the legal process had been complicated by a secret deal made with Pinochet by Margaret Thatcher during the 1980s.

Thatcher, the files suggest, had promised the dictator medical assistance in Britain in return for Chile's military and intelligence support during the Falklands War in 1982.

The documents also show how the idea to release Pinochet on health grounds had been discussed at length behind closed doors, with the Chilean authorities pushing a "humanitarian" solution to the crisis.

Jeremy Corbyn MP, a prominent supporter of the campaign to see Pinochet extradited, commented: "All the time there was pressure to allow Pinochet to go back... This concoction about his health was developed and we were told that he was a man who was losing his memory, age was taking over, and he would not be fit to face trial."

The warrant for Pinochet's arrest was executed just before midnight on October 16, 1998, at the London Clinic, a private hospital in England's capital.

It was issued so late into the night because "intelligence stated Pinochet was planning to leave

the hospital and the country imminently," a declassified Metropolitan Police briefing notes.

British plain clothes officers stationed at the hospital were also "discreetly armed" to prevent Pinochet's "assisted escape from police custody" into the nearby Chilean embassy.

As the police officers executed their legal duties, news of Pinochet's detention began to reach Whitehall, sparking frenzied internal discussions forecasting a potential political firestorm.

One of the most remarkable dispatches was sent to then UK prime minister Tony Blair from his principal private secretary, John Holmes, on the day of Pinochet's arrest.

"You should be aware that the Spanish authorities have asked for the extradition of General Pinochet, who is currently in London undergoing medical treatment," Blair was informed.

"The position is rather more complicated than it might seem," Holmes continued. "Apparently we have an understanding with him from the past, because of our cooperation with the Chileans against Argentina at the time of the Falklands crisis, that we would help him with medical treatment in London."

Holmes observed ominously: "It would obviously be embarrassing if all this came out."



Chile's ex-president Augusto Pinochet evaded extradition to Spain to face charges of human rights violations in 2000 when the UK government declared him unfit to stand trial and allowed him to flee home to Chile

Fearing Argentine expansionism, the Pinochet regime had provided Britain with military and intelligence support during the Falklands war in return for lucrative arms deals which included the sale of Hawker Hunter jets and Canberra photographic reconnaissance aircraft.

Several files on the Chilean regime's support to Britain during

the war remain classified by the UK Ministry of Defence and Foreign Office.

Despite these complications, Holmes remained cautiously optimistic about the Pinochet case. "This might all come to nothing, with luck," he told Blair.

Holmes added: "The Home Office share my view that it is best if the extradition request goes nowhere,"

seemingly betraying Jack Straw's initial position on the matter.

Holmes' optimism was misplaced.

Pinochet was moved into house arrest while the British courts deliberated on how to proceed with the extradition request. The House of Lords made an historic ruling that former heads of state could not enjoy immunity from prosecution for the most serious international crimes.

Throughout this period, the Chilean authorities consistently pressed the UK government to release Pinochet on "humanitarian" grounds while emphasising that UK-Chile relations would be damaged should Pinochet be extradited, the declassified files show.

In November 1998, Chilean foreign minister José Miguel Insulza met with British ministers inside Downing Street, informing them that his government "wanted to argue for release on compassionate grounds."

Pinochet was "an 83-year-old sick man" and "should be released" for health reasons, he declared.

Insulza further noted how "Chile had better relations with the UK than they had with any other European country for 150 years," and that these relations would be damaged by any decision to approve Pinochet's extradition.

The president of Chile's Senate, Andrés Zaldívar, also lobbied the UK government on freeing the former dictator on compassionate grounds.

In early December, Zaldívar told Blair that the Senate had given him "unanimous backing" in pressing for Pinochet's release, emphasising how "political and humanitarian factors" should be used to refuse extradition.

The Chilean authorities' arguments were in some respects sup-

ported by internal legal advice supplied to Blair and Straw.

On November 27, 1998, Cabinet minister Charles Falconer informed Downing Street that Straw's decision on extradition should have regard to issues including 'Pinochet's health' and "the effect on other countries... if they felt their former leaders might be at risk in this way."

Falconer, who is married to the daughter of Britain's former ambassador to Chile, David Hildyard, added: "The merit of dealing with it now is that return now would probably be easier than after a long court battle in which the atrocities were detailed, and Pinochet lost."

LIt wasn't just the Chilean authorities lobbying for Pinochet's release.

Margaret Thatcher wrote to Blair on November 25, 1998, to declare how "the right decision now is to act swiftly to release him to return home." Pinochet was "an old, sick man who on compassionate grounds alone should be spared what the future would otherwise hold," she

UK foreign secretary Robin Cook reportedly told his Spanish counterpart Abel Matutes that he would "not let him [Pinochet] die in Britain"

declared.

Referring to the Falklands war, Thatcher added that it could "only do this country's reputation harm if it is known that those, like Senator Pinochet, who were our close friends in times of extreme national danger can subsequently expect to be treated in this way."

Even the Vatican weighed in.

Within weeks of Pinochet being arrested, the Holy See's foreign secretary-equivalent wrote to Blair to emphasise his conviction "that all the requisites exist for a humanitarian gesture in favour of an 83-year-old man who is sick and who had gone to London for a serious operation."

By mid-1999, the combined pressure on the UK government to re-

lease Pinochet appeared to be bearing fruit when a deal was concocted between Chile, France, Spain, and the UK for Straw to scotch the extradition request and "return Pinochet home on 'humanitarian grounds.'"

UK foreign secretary Robin Cook reportedly told his Spanish counterpart Abel Matutes that he would "not let him [Pinochet] die in Britain," to which Matutes responded: "I will not let him come to Spain."

After Pinochet returned to Chile, he became the subject of scores of legal cases relating to human rights abuses and corruption. He was never sentenced, and died in 2006. **CT**

John McEvoy is acting Chief Investigator for Declassified UK, at whose website – www.declassifieduk.org – this article was first published. McEvoy is a historian, and filmmaker whose work focuses on British foreign policy and Latin America. His PhD was on Britain's Secret Wars in Colombia between 1948 and 2009. He is working on a documentary about Britain's role in the rise of Pinochet.

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Israel Katz, Israel's Minister of Defence is congratulated by his predecessor Yoav Galant, November 2024

CHRIS HEDGES

The last chapter of Gaza genocide

Israel has begun the final stage of its genocide. The Palestinians will be forced to choose between death or deportation. There are no other options

This is the last chapter of the genocide. It is the final, blood-soaked push to drive the Palestinians from Gaza. No food. No medicine. No shelter. No clean water. No electricity. Israel is swiftly turning Gaza into a Dantesque cauldron of human misery where Palestinians are being killed in their hundreds and soon, again, in their thousands and tens of thousands, or they will be forced out, never to return.

The final chapter marks the end of Israeli lies. The lie of the two-state

solution. The lie that Israel respects the laws of war that protect civilians. The lie that Israel bombs hospitals and schools only because they are used as staging areas by Hamas. The lie that Hamas uses civilians as human shields, while Israel routinely forces captive Palestinians to enter potentially bobby trapped tunnels and buildings ahead of Israeli troops. The lie that Hamas or Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) are responsible – the charge often being errant Palestinian rockets – for the destruction of hospitals, United Nations' buildings or mass Palestinian

casualties. The lie that humanitarian aid to Gaza is blocked because Hamas is hijacking the trucks or smuggling in weapons and war material. The lie that Israeli babies are beheaded or Palestinians carried out mass rape of Israeli women. The lie that 75 percent of the tens of thousands killed in Gaza were Hamas "terrorists." The lie that Hamas, because it was allegedly rearming and recruiting new fighters, is responsible for the breakdown of the cease-fire agreement.

Israel's naked genocidal visage is exposed. It has ordered the evacu-

ation of northern Gaza where desperate Palestinians are camped out amid the rubble of their homes. What comes now is mass starvation – the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) said on March 21 it has six days of flour supplies left – deaths from diseases caused by contaminated water and food, scores of killed and wounded each day under the relentless assault of bombs, missiles, shells and bullets. Nothing will function, bakeries, water treatment and sewage plants, hospitals – Israel blew up the damaged Turkish-Palestinian hospital on March 21 – schools, aid distribution centres or clinics. Less than half of the 53 emergency vehicles operated by the Palestine Red Crescent Society are functional due to fuel shortages. Soon there will be none.

Israel's message is unequivocal: Gaza will be uninhabitable. Leave or die.

Since March 21, when Israel broke the ceasefire with heavy bombing, over 700 Palestinians have been killed, including 200 children. In one 24-hour period 400 Palestinians were killed. This is only the start. No Western power, including the United States, which provides the weapons for the genocide, intends to stop it. The images from Gaza during the nearly 16 months of incessant attacks were awful. But what is coming now will be worse. It will rival the most atrocious war crimes of the 20th century, including the mass starvation, wholesale slaughter and levelling of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943 by the Nazis.

October 7 marked the dividing line between an Israeli policy that advocated the brutalisation and subjugation of the Palestinians and a policy that calls for their exter-

“Gaza residents, this is your final warning,” Israeli Minister of Defense Israel Katz threatened

mination and removal from historic Palestine. What we are witnessing is the historical equivalent of the moment triggered by the annihilation of some 200 soldiers led by George Armstrong Custer in June 1876 at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. After that humiliating defeat, Native Americans were slated to be killed with the remnants forced into prisoner of war camps, later named reservations, where thousands died of disease, lived under the merciless gaze of their armed occupiers and fell into a life of immiseration and despair. Expect the same for the Palestinians in Gaza, dumped, I suspect, in one of the world's hellholes and forgotten.

“Gaza residents, this is your final warning,” Israeli Minister of Defense Israel Katz threatened:

“The first Sinwar destroyed Gaza and the second Sinwar will completely destroy it. The Air Force strikes against Hamas terrorists were just the first step. It will become much more difficult and you will pay the full price. The evacuation of the population from the combat zones will soon begin again... Return the hostages and remove Hamas and other options will open for you, including leaving for other places in the world for those who want to. The alternative is absolute destruction.”

The ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas was designed to be implemented in three phases. The first phase, lasting 42 days, would see an end to hostilities. Hamas would release 33 Israeli hostages who were captured on October

7, 2023 – including women, those aged above 50, and those with illnesses – in exchange for upwards of 2,000 Palestinian men, women and children imprisoned by Israel (around 1,900 Palestinian captives have been released by Israel as of March 18). Hamas has released a total of 147 hostages, of whom eight were dead. Israel says there are 59 Israelis still being held by Hamas, 35 of whom Israel believes are deceased.

The Israeli army would pull back from populated areas of Gaza on the first day of the ceasefire. On the seventh day, displaced Palestinians would be permitted to return to northern Gaza. Israel would allow 600 aid trucks with food and medical supplies to enter Gaza daily.

The second phase, which was expected to be negotiated on the 16th day of the ceasefire, would see the release of the remaining Israeli hostages. Israel would complete its withdrawal from Gaza maintaining a presence in some parts of the Philadelphi corridor, which stretches along the eight-mile border between Gaza and Egypt. It would surrender its control of the Rafah border crossing into Egypt.

The third phase would see negotiations for a permanent end of the war and the reconstruction of Gaza.

Israel habitually signs agreements, including the Camp David Accords and the Oslo Peace Agreement, with timetables and phases. It gets what it wants – in this case the release of the hostages – in the first phase and then violates subsequent phases. This pattern has never been broken.

Israel refused to honour the second phase of the deal. It blocked humanitarian aid into Gaza two weeks ago, violating the agreement. It also killed at least 137 Palestinians during the first phase of the ceasefire, including nine people – three of them journalists – when Israe-

li drones attacked a relief team on March 15 in Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza

Israel's heavy bombing and shelling of Gaza resumed on March 18 while most Palestinians were asleep or preparing their suhoor, the meal eaten before dawn during the holy month of Ramadan. Israel will not stop its attacks now, even if the remaining hostages are freed – Israel's supposed reason for the resumption of the bombing and siege of Gaza.

The Trump White House is cheering on the slaughter. They attack critics of the genocide as “anti-semites” who should be silenced, criminalised or deported while funneling billions of dollars in weapons to Israel.

Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza is the inevitable denouement of its settler colonial project and apart-

Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza is the inevitable denouement of its settler colonial project and apartheid state

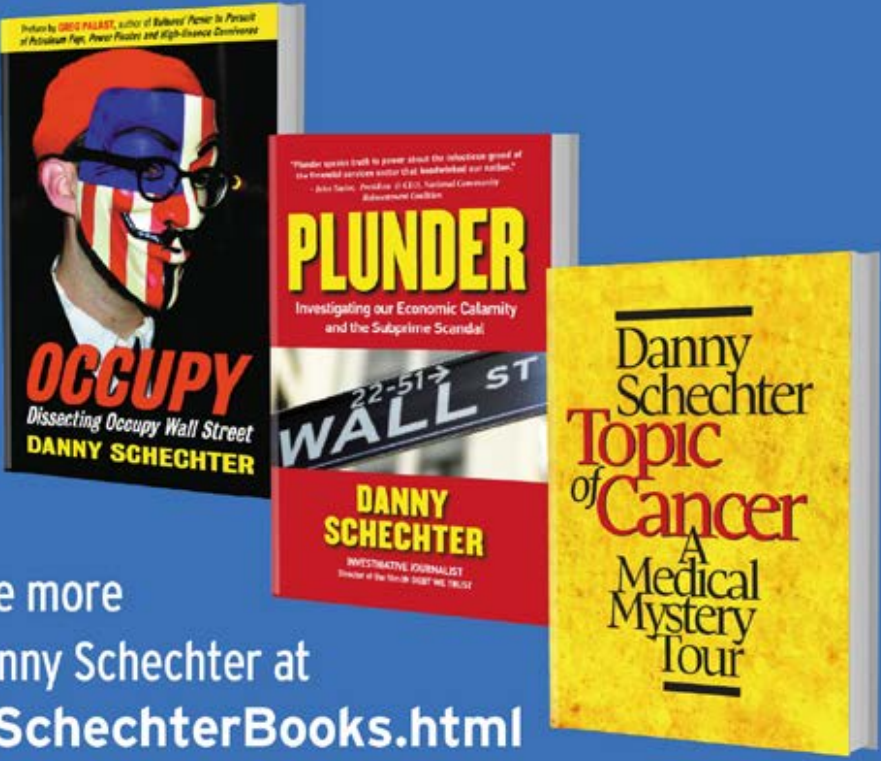
heid state. The seizure of all of historic Palestine – with the West Bank soon, I expect, to be annexed by Israel – and displacement of all Palestinians has always been the Zionist goal.

Israel's worst excesses occurred during the wars of 1948 and 1967 when huge parts of historic Palestine were seized, thousands of Palestinians killed and hundreds of thousands were ethnically cleansed. Between these wars, the slow-motion theft of land, murderous assaults and steady ethnic cleansing in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued.

That calibrated dance is over. This is the end. What we are witnessing dwarfs all the historical assaults on Palestinians. Israel's demented genocidal dream – a Palestinian nightmare – is about to be achieved. It will forever shatter the myth that we, or any Western nation, respect the rule of law or are the protectors of human rights, democracy and the so-called “virtues” of Western civilization. Israel's barbarity is our own. We may not understand this, but the rest of the globe does. **CT**

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

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Trump is an existential threat to global peace

The collaboration between Trump and his technological cohorts is not just a threat to democracy, but is a direct pathway to global catastrophe

Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned ... until there are no longer first-class and second-class citizens of any nation ... until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all ... Dis a war ...now everywhere is war.

– Bob Marley

At first glance, the executive orders enacted by Donald Trump since he began his second term as US President on January 20, demonstrate a commitment to promoting global peace. Even before assuming office, Trump played a pivotal role in facilitating the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas that slowed down the genocide in Gaza.

And, while calling for an end to the three-year war between Ukraine and Russia, Trump also vowed to dismantle the American ‘deep state,’ an intricate network of individuals and institutions that operates beyond the democratic process, and is often regarded as a major orchestrator of global conflict. In addition, Elon Musk’s controversial Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) is swiftly eliminating inefficiencies in the public sector with the objective of revitalising the US economy.

However, throughout history, right-leaning movements have leveraged state institutions, military power, and religious conservatism to maintain power.

And in today’s digital age they have found a powerful new ally in technology which extends the sphere of influence of technology oligarchs far beyond the world of gadgets and software. This collaboration between Trump and his technological cohorts is not just a threat to democracy, but is a direct pathway to global catastrophe.

Under the influence of a handful of powerful tech-oligarchs, the digital economy has ramped up hyper-globalisation, which primarily benefits a highly-privileged elite that has amassed extraordinary wealth by imposing austerity and economic exploitation under the guise of efficiency. Placing profit above people fuels this cycle, creating massive job losses and the erosion of union strength, while allowing digital monopolies to shape economic policies

When people feel disenfranchised, they become more susceptible to nationalist and exclusionary ideologies

that serve only a select few.

This economic framework deepens inequality and creates an environment that is ripe for the consolidation of right-wing populism, which has historically thrived in times of economic distress. When people feel disenfranchised, they become more susceptible to nationalist and exclusionary ideologies. The right wing capitalises on these grievances, blaming immigrants, minorities, and other marginalised groups for economic hardships, rather than addressing the systemic failures of neoliberal digital capitalism.

A key element of this collaboration is the use of big data analysis and algorithmic manipulation to distort information. The rise of social media and AI-driven content curation has allowed the right wing to control narratives, suppress dissent, and spread propaganda more effectively than ever before. These digital tools, owned and operated by a tech oligarchy, are weaponised to influence elections, incite violence, and legitimise extremist ideologies. Thus, racist, autocratic leaders are able to bolster their authority while maintaining the illusion of democracy and freedom of expression amid the restructuring of the global politi-



cal economy.

Our experiences of slavery and colonialism demonstrated that when authoritarian politics and unregulated capitalism unite, the outcome often leads to widespread human suffering. As technology evolves, the global battlefield is shifting into the digital realm, where wars are increasingly being fought with algorithms, misinformation, and economic disruption rather than bullets and bombs.

Google, Microsoft and Amazon offer artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud computing services that bolster the warfare capabilities of mil-

Donald Trump's expulsion of South Africa's Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool (right) is indicative of Trump's coercive tactics against other countries

itary agencies that has been documented in Israel's ruthless and indiscriminate application of AI to pinpoint 'targets' in Gaza.

Trump's cold-hearted arrogance has been illustrated through his re-



cent brazen suggestion that those Palestinians that have survived the Israeli genocide should be relocated so that the ruins of Gaza may be transformed into a real estate riviera. At the same time, he is working to weaken multilateral institutions like the United Nations and undermine efforts to combat climate change.

In South Africa, Trump has forged a mutually beneficial alliance with white Afrikaner extremists, united by a shared goal of removing the ANC from power. For the Afrikaner extremists and their domestic allies, this would signify a return to racial supremacy and a restoration of their economic and social privileges. For the Zionists, this would silence South Africa's vigorous defence of the Palestinian people and its interventions at the international level, including at the International Court of Justice.

To Trump, this alliance also represents an opportunity to dismantle the growing international BRICS economic group, halt discussions on the de-dollarisation of the global economy and the establishment of alternatives to the Bretton Woods institutions, while severing South Africa's ties with countries such as Iran and Cuba that don't align with US interests.

The Trump administration's expulsion last month of South Africa's Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool illustrates the escalating tensions between the two countries. Rasool's incisive remarks during a Mapungubwe Institute for

Strategic Reflection (MISTRA) webinar on Friday, March 14, where he identified the Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement as a reaction to demographic anxiety and supremacist tendencies, were met with hostility.

Rasool's analysis highlighted global trends of right-wing movements resisting societal change, drawing parallels with South Africa's own battles against exclusionary ideologies. Additionally, he called attention to influential figures like Elon Musk, whose platform, X, propagates far-right narratives on a global scale.

The Trump administration's reaction – branding Rasool a 'race-baiting politician' and declaring him persona non grata – reflects the broader antagonism toward South Africa. This heavy-handed approach is indicative of Trump's co-

Rasool's expulsion symbolises the challenges of navigating US-South Africa relations under Trump's divisive policies

ercive tactics, including trade wars and threats against other countries. By expelling Rasool, the US squandered a crucial opportunity for diplomatic engagement, further entrenching its reputation for 'hard impunity.'

However, the president's attempts to discredit the country are failing as global sector leaders continue preparations for the forthcoming G20 Heads of State Summit in Johannesburg on November 22-23

and South Africa successfully hosted a delegation from the European Union.

South Africa remains committed to fostering constructive relations despite these provocations. Rasool's expulsion symbolises the challenges of navigating US-South Africa relations under Trump's divisive policies, which prioritise nationalist rhetoric over meaningful dialogue.

The collaboration between the right-wing and the tech oligarchs poses an existential threat to global peace and democracy. If allowed to continue unchecked, this alliance could lead to unprecedented global instability, wars fuelled by digital imperialism, and a widespread erosion of fundamental human rights. We must expose, challenge, and dismantle this dangerous partnership.

Civil society must come together to reclaim digital spaces, ensuring that technology serves democratic values rather than corporate or rightwing agendas.

Governments must enforce strict antitrust laws and regulate AI ethics and surveillance technologies to curb their misuse. Economic policies should prioritise human welfare over corporate profit, ensuring that technological progress benefits all of society, and not just a privileged few.

Only by regulating corporate greed, resisting authoritarian capitalism, and strengthening democratic institutions can we prevent further dark chapters in human history. **CT**

Dr Reneva Fourie is a Central Committee and Politburo Member of the South African Communist Party. She works as an independent consultant specialising in governance, development and security and is co-author of the book 'The art of power: Pursuing liberation and nation-building.'

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"DEMOCRACY DIES IN BROAD DAYLIGHT"

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Are we being killed by our own waste?

As deliberately-contaminated sewage sludge is spread on farmland, it feels as if humanity is on a suicide mission

If humanity has an epitaph, it might read something like this: “Knackered by the things we missed.” It is true that several existential threats are widely known and widely discussed. But some of the greatest dangers we face appear on almost no one’s radar.

How often have you thought about this one: spreading sewage sludge on farmland? I would guess very few would include it in their top civilisational hazards. Despite the best efforts of a handful of us, it trundles on, unknown to most. Surprising as it may seem, new research suggests that it could help call time on us.

In principle, we should return human waste to farmland, as it is rich in nutrients. But thanks to years of regulatory failure, this waste in many countries is now contaminated with a vast range of toxins. Some come from runoff into the sewers: from roads, building sites, homes and commercial premises. But what we are now discovering is that a great volume of contaminants is introduced deliberately.

At some sewage farms, you can witness tanker lorries queueing to offload liquid waste. In return for a fee to the water company, they can pour this effluent into the “head of the works” (the top of the sewage processing chain). Whistleblowers

from the Environment Agency report that these loads are scarcely tested. The testing that does occur is often for chemicals that may damage the sewage equipment, rather than those that may poison people and ecosystems. The fees appear to create an incentive for water companies to turn a blind eye.

Many of these tankers are delivering leachate from landfill sites, containing a dense cocktail of pollutants, including per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (Pfas, or “forever chemicals”), other persistent organic compounds, pharmaceuticals and a thick sludge of microplastics. Some tankers come from, well, who knows where? The lack of adequate testing looks like an open invitation to organised crime, which, thanks to a total failure of enforcement, has now cornered much of the UK’s hazardous waste disposal market. Altogether, whistleblowers estimate, in England about 1-million tonnes a year of liquid effluent is dumped under this system into sewage works.

Where do these toxins go? Some, especially the soluble compounds, will wash through the sewage plant and into our rivers and the sea. Some will be trapped in the sludge. Where

does the sludge go? About 87percent of it is sold or given to farmers and spread on their land as fertiliser.

What does this fertiliser contain? Good question. It is tested (if at all) only for fluoride, heavy metals and bacteria. No tests are conducted for the vast majority of potential contaminants. From the government’s own, suppressed research, we know that it is likely to contain such toxins as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, dioxins, furans, benzo(a)pyrene, polychlorinated biphenyls and phthalates, many of which bio-accumulate in the soil. A study published last month by the James Hutton Institute found that after four years of sewage sludge spreading, microplastic levels in the fields it tested rose by up to 1,450 percent. It also discovered that there was little reduction in the soil of microplastics dumped 22 years ago: once they arrive, they don’t leave.

An investigation by the Ends Report last year found forever chemicals in the sewage sludge being sold to farmers at levels up to 135 times higher than considered safe by scientists. Almost all the sludge samples it took had concentrations above the risk threshold. For such reasons, Switzerland and the Netherlands have banned sludge spreading.

The new research I mentioned at the beginning shows how micro-



Sludge thrower dumps human waste onto farmland as fertiliser. But no one seems to know what exactly is in this sewage

plastics absorbed by plants could severely inhibit photosynthesis, and therefore crop production. All the major sources of microplastics in farmland soils arise from breath-taking negligence. In some places, trailer loads of microplastic have been spread deliberately by farmers to make the soil more friable. Some have been introduced to the soil in the form of pelleted fertilisers, coated with polyurethane, polystyrene, PVC, polyacrylonitrile or other synthetic polymers. Some may now come from oxo-degradable plastic sheeting. Oxo-degradable polymers are ordinary plastics mixed with compounds which ensure they shatter into microplastics after a while, allowing farmers to plough them in when they have done their job. Such plastics are banned in the EU, but remain legal in the UK. Good old Brexit, eh?

But the major source of microplastics in fields is likely to be sewage sludge spreading. What are the combined impacts on crops of microplastics and the many other toxic compounds in contaminated sewage sludge? Again, no one knows.

At no point in the chain is adequate routine testing conducted: not

of the contents of the tankers before they discharge into the sewers; not of the sludge dispatched to farms; not of the fields receiving repeated applications; not of the crops, meat and milk coming from those fields. But of one thing we can be sure: like the chemicals themselves, the impacts will accumulate over time.

If comprehensive testing of farmland is ever conducted, we could discover that large areas are now too toxic for safe food production. Even the government's own research warns that the cumulative effects of these pollutants could render the soil "no longer ... suitable for supporting crop growth." We have to face this issue just as the global food system looks dangerously fragile.

The legal campaign Fighting Dirty, which three of us set up, sought to oblige the Environment Agency to set a date for the proper regulation of the sewage sludge being spread on farmland. We lost our case, partly on the grounds that the Environment Agency had no duty to act without government direction, yet no such direction had been issued.

The judge also decided that contaminated sludge spreading could not be regarded as "a matter of imperative urgency," because the Environment Agency was not treating it as such. Perhaps they make sense in law, but these grounds look to me like circular reasoning.

We discovered from the court papers that the agency had pressed repeatedly for a "ministerial steer," but was not receiving one, and that better regulation is being impeded by resistance from the water companies and the waste industry. Life is just full of surprises.

The case revealed a massive loophole in the law, which the government still has failed to close. I've been told that officials at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs were crowing over the result: three cheers for mass contamination!

Perhaps another epitaph would read, "Some of us tried, but no one in power would listen." A more concise version would be, "RIP FFS." **CT**

George Monbiot is a columnist with the Guardian, where this article first appeared. His website is www.monbiot.com.

► SAM PIZZIGATI

Let us all *not* praise famous men

Five years after his death, the legacy of Jack Welch, America's most celebrated 20th century CEO, lives on

We've become accustomed, here in the 2020s, to an endless stream of headlines that herald massive new windfalls for America's top corporate and financial execs. Back a century ago, in the 1920s, our nation's executive elites lived through a similarly rewarding era. But that era would suddenly end in the middle of the 20th century. Business and banking chiefs would find themselves, by the 1950s, no longer luxuriating in massive manses.

Indeed, by the early 1970s, one of our nation's top corporate leaders – General Electric chair and CEO Reginald Jones – was pulling down a mere \$200,000 a year and living in a modest brick colonial just outside New York. Jones and his big-time CEO counterparts, the Economic Policy Institute has detailed, were then averaging only 20 times or so more than what their workers were making.

Top execs like Reginald Jones never raged at the relatively modest rewards coming their way. They believed, as a GE predecessor of Jones had believed, that executives and workers were engaging “in a common enterprise for mutual advantage.”

What had top executives in mid 20th century America so accepting of this ‘common enterprise’ orientation? Stiff federal tax rates on high incomes certainly had an impact on their attitudes. America's deep pockets faced a 91 percent tax on income over \$200,000 for most of the two decades after World War II and a 70-percent top-bracket tax rate throughout the 1970s. They had little incentive to insist on higher pay. Uncle Sam, after all, would be taxing most of that higher pay away.

Top execs of the Reginald Jones



Jack Welch
by Donkey/hotey

era also operated in an economy where unions played a pivotal and ever-present role. This labour presence and power tended to keep top execs from claiming any more than a modest share of the wealth their companies were creating. Taken together, all these dynamics combined to create a distinct cultural vibe that frowned upon greed and grasping.

So how did that greed and grasping become groovy again in the late 20th century? In the early 1980s, for starters, the Reagan White House accelerated the tax-cut fever that had triumphantly surfaced in the late 1970s. By 1986 the federal tax rate on top-bracket income had dropped from 70 to 28 percent, just a tad below the 25-percent top rate America's rich had smiled upon back in the late 1920s.

President Reagan also significantly undercut America's labour movement, most infamously in 1981 when he fired more than 11,000 striking federal air traffic controllers. That move defiantly busted a decades-old and widely accepted taboo against firing workers out on strike.

But ending once and for all the paycheck modesty of top execs like GE's Reginald Jones would end up requiring a firm shove as well from inside America's corporate executive ranks. A top corporate exec would have to openly and unapologetically embrace unbridled avarice.

That norm-busting top executive would turn out to be, in the ultimate irony, the CEO successor to Reginald Jones at General Electric. This successor, Jack Welch, would take over GE in 1981 and lord majestic-



Reginald Jones earned \$200,000 a year as CEO of GEC. His successor Jack Welch left the company with a \$400-million retirement package

ly over the company until he retired – with a record \$400-million-plus retirement package – two decades later.

Business journalists, by the end of the 20th century, would be acclaiming Welch's wisdom at every imaginable opportunity. Indeed, noted one *Washington Post* columnist in 1999, “you can hardly open a business magazine nowadays without seeing a salute to Jack Welch. The man's a bloomin' genius.”

That same year, *Fortune* magazine tagged Welch the corporate “manager of the century.” Under his leadership, General Electric had become the world's largest nonbank financial corporation. The value of GE's shares, with Welch in com-

Business journalists, by the end of the 20th century, would be acclaiming Welch's wisdom at every imaginable opportunity

mand, had skyrocketed from \$14-billion to more than \$410-billion, a leap that had turned GE into the nation's most valuable publicly traded corporation.

In the face of such achievement, even crusty CEO-pay critics genuflected.

“Jack Welch of General Electric made \$75-million last year, and he is a brilliant, brilliant chief executive,” CEO gadfly Graef Crystal told reporters in 2000. “You could make the case that if anyone deserves to be paid \$75-million, it's him.”

How could an executive be worth so much? America's biggest book publishers felt America would pay to find out. In 2000, they staged a spirited bidding war for Welch's memoirs. The eventual winner, Time Warner, offered Welch a \$7.1-million advance, an unprecedented sum for “nonfiction.”

Welch's book, published in 2001, went on to become a bestseller. But would-be captains of industry didn't have to read *Jack: Straight from the Gut* to learn the great man's secrets. The “big ideas” behind Welch's phenomenal success had already begun sweeping through America's corporate suites.

Among Welch's most admired contributions to corporate wisdom: his competitiveness dictum. If you're not competitive in a particular market, Welch advised, don't compete.

And Welch practiced what he preached. Early on in his tenure as GE chief exec, he directed his managers to “sell off any division whose

product was not among the top three in its US market.” They did. GE would unload or shut down operations in moves that cost more than 100,000 workers their jobs.

Welch played few favourites. He could be as ruthless with his white-collar help as his blue-collar factory workers. His most brutal office personnel practice – the annual firing squad known as “forced rankings” – had GE managers ranking their professional employees, every year, in one of three categories: top 20 percent, middle 70, or bottom 10. The top got accolades. The bottom got fired.

“Not removing that bottom 10 percent,” Welch would tell GE shareholders, “is not only a management failure but false kindness as well.”

Jack Welch’s General Electric would have no room for “false kindness.” You were either competitively successful, as an employee or a division, or out. You had to deliver.

Except at the top. Jack Welch delivered nothing. He became the 20th century’s most celebrated corporate exec by identifying challenges – and running the other way. A GE division struggling to make a market impact? Dump it. An employee not putting up the numbers? Fire away.

Jack Welch did not turn marginal business operations into market leaders. He did not endeavour to transform weak staffers into standouts. He surrounded himself instead with the already successful – already successful divisions, already successful employees – and rode their successes to his own personal glory.

Welch, to be sure, did sometimes try to develop something new. In the late 1990s, he decided that GE needed to stake out a cyberspace claim. General Electric, Welch told USA

Welch became the 20th century’s most celebrated corporate exec by identifying challenges – and running the other way

Today, has “got to have more ‘dot.coms.’” He proceeded to pour cascades of cash into iVillage and a host of now-forgotten sites that promptly, within a matter of months, lost 90 percent of their value.

Meanwhile, Welch’s own personal value, just kept rising.

“Is my salary too high?” Welch asked in 1999, the year he pocketed \$75-million, the equivalent of over \$140-million today. “Somebody else will have to decide that, but this is a competitive marketplace.”

Translation: “I deserve every penny. The market says so.”

To advance Welch’s quest for that every penny, his minions cut corners at every opportunity. His aircraft engine division defrauded the Pentagon and bribed an Israeli general to gain jet engine orders. His factories poisoned the Hudson River, and his lawyers argued GE had no responsibility to clean the river up. General Electric, Welch preached, had a responsibility only to its shareholders.

“Corporate raiders like T. Boone Pickens and Carl Icahn may have been the first to call for companies to ‘maximize shareholder value,’ but they were outsiders, knocking on corporate America’s door,” as *Bloomberg* columnist Joe Nocera has noted. “Welch was the ultimate insider, and when he started to emphasise shareholder value, so did the entire American business culture.”

“Many other corporate leaders,” the *New Yorker*’s John Cassidy would add right after Welch’s death

in 2020, “followed the example that he set. Together they created a more intensive form of American capitalism, one which greatly enriched owners of capital – themselves most definitely included.”

Donald Trump would famously count himself among those Welch helped enrich.

“We made wonderful deals together,” Trump tweeted after Welch’s passing. “He will never be forgotten.”

Wrong.

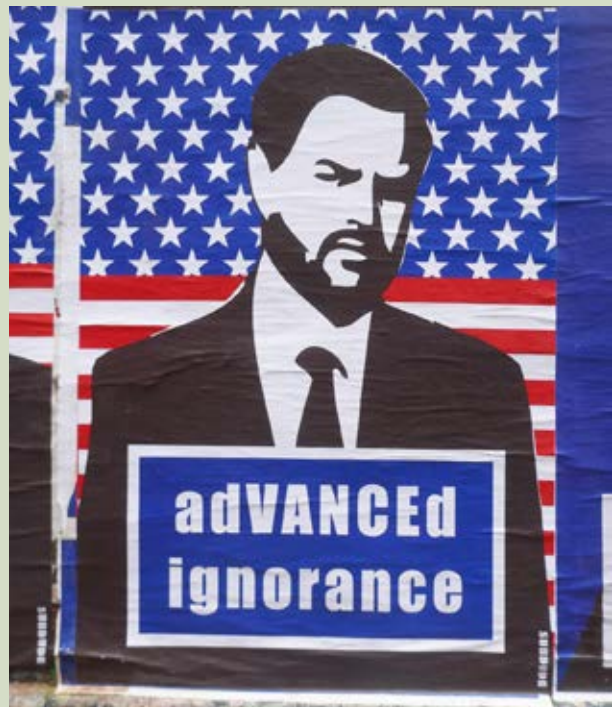
The March 1 fifth anniversary of Welch’s passing has just come and gone virtually unnoticed, a clear signal that this corporate titan’s enormous celebrity status has faded away. So has the company Welch domineered. By 2018, GE had fallen out of the Dow Jones Industrial Average, the bluest corporate blue-chip index. By last April, as CNN reported, the “once mighty industrial icon” had split into a variety of smaller pieces.

But Welch’s enrich-the-already-rich mindset, on the other hand, lives on as powerfully as ever. Donald Trump now rules from the White House, with the world’s richest man, Elon Musk, at his side. Musk made his fortune managing people and enterprises with an imperial bearing that fully befits the brutality of Welch and his “Neutron Jack” job-killing persona.

“Folks,” the Missouri antitrust advocate Lucas Kuncie reflected last month, “Elon Musk isn’t running America, Jack Welch is running it from his grave.” **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.’

WORDS UNNECESSARY | DUNCAN CUMMING



SHOREDITCH, LONDON / MARCH 22, 2025

See more of Duncan Cumming's photography at <https://flickr.com/photos/duncan>
Graffiti by Subdude

Love from Glasgow: Why Celtic fans support Palestine

A shared history of genocide links the people of Gaza and Scotland's Irish diaspora in a common fight against oppression and starvation

The cold terraces of a Scottish football stadium are not the first place you might expect to find a hotbed of organised support for Palestinian liberation. But travel to Celtic Park in Glasgow on match day, and you will see thousands of fans wearing keffiyehs, eating falafels, and waving Palestinian flags.

A storied organisation, Celtic FC is one of only 23 teams to have won the UEFA Champions League (previously known as the European Cup), Europe's premier club competition. But their fans, particularly the hardcore supporter group the Green Brigade, see the club as a vehicle for progressive and radical social change, including backing Palestinian resistance.

This cause has long put them at loggerheads with footballing authorities. In 2016, Celtic hosted a Champions League qualifier game against Israeli team Hapoel Be'er Sheva. In protest at Israeli actions in Palestine, the Green Brigade organised a mass display of Palestinian flags, turning much of the stadium into a wall of black, white, green, and red.

UEFA, European football's governing body, punished Celtic for their actions, fining the club £8,600 (more than US \$11,000). In response,

the Green Brigade launched a 'Match the Fine for Palestine' campaign, aiming to raise a similar amount for the Medical Aid for Palestine charity. The campaign went viral, raising £176,000 (well over US \$200,000).

Political messages like this are common at Celtic games. During the 2018 Scottish Cup Final, the Green Brigade unveiled giant banners at the 70th minute of play, commemorating the 70th anniversary of the 1948 Nakba (ethnic cleansing of Palestine). The banners read, 'End genocide. End Zionism.'

Since October 7, 2023, and the Israeli onslaught that followed it, open displays of support for Palestine have become more frequent and better organised. At league games, it is common to see walls of Palestinian flags replete with messages such as 'Free Palestine. Victory to the Resistance.' And at a Champions League match with Atlético Madrid, fans sang *You'll Never Walk Alone*, dedicating it to the people of Gaza.

But Celtic fans' solidarity goes far beyond words and fundraising. In the wake of the Hapoel Be'er Sheva incident, the Green Brigade helped establish a sister team, Lajee Celtic, for residents of the Aida Refugee

Camp in Bethlehem. The new club's academy has more than 80 children registered as players and an adult first-team squad attempting to secure a spot in the Palestinian Premier League. Lajee Celtic players wear the colours of the Palestine national flag but also with green and white hoops – an homage to their Scottish sister club. Lajee Celtic is more than a club; its mission, in its own words, is to 'break barriers and bring hope' to the country.

Authorities have not taken kindly to Celtic fans' actions and have attempted to punish them. Celtic's management, too, has expressed their dismay and has even banned many Green Brigade members from attending matches. But their actions have also drawn praise from around the world. Last month, Turkish champions Galatasaray displayed a gigantic banner reading, 'We Thank The Celtic Supporters For Their Unwavering Support For Palestine.'

What explains the affinity between Celtic fans and the Palestinian cause? Daniela Latina, an academic from Glasgow and a Celtic fan, said that understanding the club's roots is the key to that question.

Celtic was born out of the Great Famine of the mid-19th century, a largely man-made genocide that saw a collapse in Ireland's potato crop. British authorities – who ruled



SPORTING HEROES: Celtic fans fly banners supporting the people of Palestine in their struggle against Israeli genocide.

Ireland at the time – insisted on the continued export of Irish food to England and blocked efforts at famine relief.

The result, Latina explained, was the death of around a million people and the mass exodus of millions more. The Great Famine continues to haunt Irish society. Today, Ireland’s population has still not recovered to its 1830s level.

One group that did offer genuine help to the starving Irish was the Palestinian people. As Latina told me:

“Sultan Abdülmecid I of the Ottoman Empire, of which Palestine was a part of, granted £10,000 of aid to the Irish, but Queen Victoria intervened and demanded he only send £1,000 as she had sent £2,000, and did not want to seem parsimonious. The Sultan ignored Victoria and

sent £10,000 and a further five ships of grain, food, and medicines.”

English courts rejected the aid ships’ requests to dock. Undeterred, the fleet travelled in secret to Drogheda Harbour in Ireland to deliver their aid. “As a gesture of appreciation, Drogheda United Football Club still bears the Ottoman star and crescent today,” she noted.

Nevertheless, the famine caused hundreds of thousands of Irish to flee to Scotland, especially to the bustling city of Glasgow. These refugees were often treated poorly and lived in destitute conditions. In 1887, a local priest founded the Celtic Football Club as a social enterprise, aiming to use the profits from ticket sales to fund soup kitchens for the Irish

Catholic community. Hence, from its very beginnings, Celtic represented refugees and the most marginalised in society.

At the same time, the movement for Irish independence was gaining momentum. Ireland had been colonised by England for over 700 years, with British authorities going so far as to import large numbers of Protestant settlers to the island. These settlers were given special privileges and land, from which locals were expelled. And even though the Republic of Ireland secured independence in 1921, the island is still divided into two states, with the Protestant-dominated north still part of the United Kingdom.

Thus, Ireland – despite being a Western European nation geographically – has a history more akin to colonised nations in the Global

South than those of its neighbours. This goes a long way in explaining why it has been one of Palestine's most steadfast backers internationally. It was the first European Union member to call for Palestinian statehood and the last to grant Israel permission to open an embassy. And it has been Europe's harshest critic of Israeli aggression, often allying itself with Asian, African, and Latin American countries over European ones.

Because of its history as a nation fighting for an independent state, one many see as still split in two and occupied by a foreign power, and because so many Irish people come from refugee backgrounds, many feel a natural affinity with Palestine, seeing links between their struggles. Perhaps it is only natural that Celtic, Glasgow's Irish Catholic club founded by refugees, would see a lot of themselves in the Palestinian people.

As part of its war on Gaza, Israel has attempted to erase symbols of Palestinian culture and identity. This includes football. Since October 7, 2023, at least 500 Palestinian athletes, referees, or sports officials have been killed. Perhaps the most notable is Dr Adnan Al-Bursh, head of the Palestinian Football Association's medical department. Al-Bursh was captured, tortured, and likely raped to death by Israeli forces, who still refuse to return his body.

The attack on Palestinian football did not begin in 2023, however. In 2014, cousins Jawhar Nasser Jawhar, 19, and Adam Abd al-Raouf Halabiya, 17 – young stars about to be called to the national team – were travelling home from a training session near Ramallah. They were ambushed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), who shot al-Raouf in the legs. Jawhar rushed to his aid, only to be



A 'Show Israel the Red Card' banner at a Champions League match between Celtic and Bayern Munich, at Celtic Park, in Glasgow, on February 12, 2025

peppered with bullets himself, including seven in his left foot, three in his right, and one in the hand. An attack dog was unleashed on them, and soldiers broke al-Raouf's leg for good measure, suggesting they knew who the pair were.

Israel has also deliberately destroyed Palestinian stadiums and has blocked the Palestinian national team from leaving the country, forcing them to withdraw from international competitions. Subsequently, the national team is now filled largely with players from the diaspora community.

As a result, there is a growing, grassroots movement to bar Israel and Israeli teams from international competitions – and it is being led by Celtic fans. At their recent Champions League clash with Bayern Munich, supporters unveiled a huge banner demanding authorities 'Show 'Israel' the Red Card. Similar demonstrations have been seen at games in Italy, Spain, France, Greece, Ireland, Turkey, and Malaysia.

A spokesperson for the group Red Card Israel explained that suspending Israel from sporting events would illustrate that "the violation of human rights results in exclusions on an international level and

that it cannot continue to blatantly disregard international law while still enjoying the privilege of international participation in sport."

Supporters of the ban note that authorities regularly take action against nation-states. In the 1990s, Yugoslavia was banned from competing at the 1994 World Cup amid a civil war in the Balkans. And in 2022, Russia was banned from both the World Cup and the Olympics due to its invasion of Ukraine.

With Israel the situation is more complicated, primarily because those in positions of power have consistently stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Tel Aviv and taken action against those protesting its genocide. Whether the campaign will be successful is highly uncertain. But one thing is beyond doubt: Celtic fans will stand with Palestine, come rain or shine. **CT**

Alan MacLeod is Senior Staff Writer for MintPress News. He is the author of 'Bad News From Venezuela: Twenty Years of Fake News' and 'Misreporting and Propaganda in the Information Age: Still Manufacturing Consent.' This article was originally published at www.mintpressnews.com

The inhumanity of these people is staggering

On March 20, Donald Trump's Commerce Secretary – a Wall Street billionaire named Howard Lutnick, who got the job after raising millions for Trump's 2020 and 2024 campaigns – said the following things:

“Let's say Social Security didn't send out their checks this month. My mother-in-law, who's 94, she wouldn't call and complain.”

“The easiest way to find the fraudster is to stop payments and listen, because whoever screams is the one stealing.”

“A fraudster always makes the loudest noise – screaming, yelling, and complaining.”

“My mother-in-law's not calling. Come on, your mother, 80-year-olds, 90-year-olds – they trust the government.”

By that “logic,” if you're having a heart attack, crying out in pain or calling 911 only proves you're faking it. Funny, we don't remember Lutnick and the rest of the billionaire class keeping their mouths shut whenever some “radical” in Congress has proposed making them pay their fair share in taxes. Apparently “trust the government” is just for us little people.

(And never mind that for decades, right-wing politicians have been actively sowing distrust in the federal government while simultaneously corrupting it for the benefit of billionaires and Big Business. They have created a vicious cycle that leaves the government less and less able to help everyday Americans but more and more susceptible to manipulation. It has culminated in the disaster we are all now living through, as Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and their MAGA sycophants rush to essentially dismantle the federal government and

turn our country into a dictatorship.)

Lutnick said these insane, out-of-touch things on a podcast hosted by a gang of rich Silicon Valley venture capitalists.

Some pesky facts about Social Security:

- Currently, around 70 million Americans depend on Social Security every month.
- At the risk of stating the obvious, they have earned those benefits. Social Security is not a government handout. (Unlike the numerous tax breaks and subsidies that billionaires like Howard Lutnick and giant corporations get courtesy of American taxpayers.)
- People pay into the system throughout their working lives, then get money back once they reach a certain age.
- If the Trump regime fails to fulfil its obligation to send Social Security payments, the American people will have every right to complain, no matter what Howard Lutnick thinks.



Howard Lutnick: Billionaire logic

should know, they have earned – to pay for basic necessities, like housing, food, and medicines. But are you really so out of touch that you think the American people should just shut up and take it if the administration that you are a senior member of fails to fulfil its Social Security obligations? You owe the American people an apology.”

– Robert Weissman & Lisa Gilbert,
Co-Presidents, Public Citizen
www.citizen.org

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