

**INSIDE:** PEDOPHILES & POPES ● THE MAKING OF A TYRANT ● MY DEAD DAD ● HOLDING BACK THE RED TIDE ● INSIDE GAZA ● BLAMING THE POOR

# The <sup>ColdType</sup> READER

WRITING WORTH READING ● ISSUE 47 ● JUNE 2010



ISRAEL'S ATTACK ON THE GAZA FREEDOM FLOTILLA

## PEACE, PIRATES & PROPAGANDA

REPORTS BY **ALAN MAAS** **DANIELA PERDOMO** **MARY RIZZO** **JONATHAN COOK**  
**CRAIG MURRAY** **WILLIAM BOWLES** **DENNIS BERNSTEIN** **JESSE STRAUSS**

# The <sup>ColdType</sup> READER



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Cover Photo:  
Israeli commandos  
storm the Gaza  
Freedom Flotilla

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# Murder on the high seas

Alan Maas reports on Israel's deadly assault on a flotilla of boats carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza

People around the world reacted with furious protests after Israeli commandos carried out an assault on a flotilla of boats carrying humanitarian aid and solidarity activists to the besieged Gaza Strip.

At least 10 activists were killed and dozens more injured when Israeli soldiers – operating under cover of darkness in the early morning hours of May 31 – attacked. Days hours after the assault, the Israeli government still had not released the names of those killed or injured.

According to a statement from the Free Gaza Movement, an organizer of the flotilla: “Under darkness of night, Israeli commandos dropped from a helicopter onto the Turkish passenger ship, Mavi Marmara, and began to shoot the moment their feet hit the deck. They fired directly into the crowd of civilians asleep ... Streaming video shows the Israeli soldiers shooting at civilians, and our last SPOT beacon said: ‘HELP, we are being contacted by the Israelis.’”

The ships were brought to the Israeli port of Ashdod, and the activists were detained. According to one press report, some activists agreed to sign a statement saying they wouldn't attempt to enter Israel again and were being held until deportation – but others were refusing to sign and had been taken to a prison in southern Israel.

From the time of the assault, Israel

clamped down on any and all communication with the activists. One *Guardian* reporter, who encountered several at an Israeli hospital in Ashkelon, just north of Gaza, wrote: “[A] Greek man in a neck brace told reporters: ‘They hit me.’ Who? ‘Pirates,’ he answered. A dazed man with a striking black eye was unloaded from an ambulance. There had been ‘some brutality’ on board, he said, but the activists were nonviolent. ‘We are all Palestinian now,’ he said as the doors of the ER closed behind him.”

With the voices of the activists almost completely silenced, Israeli officials spread claims that the commandos had faced a violent and “premeditated” attack by the peace activists.

## Passengers resisted

Though the U.S. mainstream media lapped up the Israeli version, the story rang hollow. Judging from video of the assault, at most, some passengers on the ship resisted with sticks and other items that came to hand. “Aid volunteers are unlikely, however, to have posed much real challenge to trained Special Forces operatives,” wrote Middle East expert Juan Cole on his *Informed Comment* blog.

As the Electronic Intifada Web site wrote in an editorial: “The Israeli media strategy appeared to be to maintain censorship of the facts such as the number of dead and

**With the voices of the activists almost completely silenced, Israeli officials spread claims that the commandos had faced a violent and “premeditated” attack by the peace activists**

**Reporters were denied access to the activists to hear their side of the story – but were encouraged to talk to a parade of Israeli officials and soldiers peddling the story that the commando team was armed only with non-lethal paintball weapons, and was attacked by activists carrying out a plan to “lynch” them**

injured, the names of the victims and on which ships the injuries occurred, while aggressively putting out its version of events, which is based on a dual strategy of implausibly claiming ‘self-defense,’ while demonizing the Freedom Flotilla passengers and intimating that they deserved what they got.”

Even Israeli officials had to admit, however, that the attack took place in international waters. Since the main vessel where the violence took place was flying a Turkish flag, the Israeli assault amounted to an attack on “Turkish and international civilians on Turkish soil,” Frank Barat, a peace activist living in London, who worked on organizing the flotilla along with the Free Gaza Movement. “So I think what’s going to happen with Turkey in the next few days is going to be very interesting.”

### **International protests**

The attack on the flotilla spurred protests in many countries. According to Al-Jazeera, an organization of Palestinians inside Israel has called for a general strike.

At a Palestinian demonstration at Qalandiya checkpoint in the West Bank on May 31, an American activist with the International Solidarity Movement was shot in the face with a tear gas canister. Emily Henochowicz was rushed to a Jerusalem hospital, where surgeons removed her left eye.

Anger ran especially high in Turkey, where many of the solidarity activists are from. According to press reports, tens of thousands of people gathered in Istanbul to protest, with smaller numbers demonstrating outside the Israeli embassy in the capital of Ankara and the U.S. consulate in Adana. The Turkish Foreign Ministry condemned Israel’s “inhumane practices” – a sign of a further breakdown in relations with a country that was once one of Israel’s few allies in the region.

The U.S. government’s criticisms, on the other hand, were tepid. A White House spokesperson stated that President Obama “deeply regrets the loss of life and injuries sustained.”

As Barat pointed out, “If any other country in the world had acted the way Israel did, I’m sure the U.S. government would say there needs to be a full investigation. The U.S. government has to be put under pressure to act in a responsible manner and stop the double standard it always applies to Israel.”

The activists’ boats were carrying 10,000 tons of desperately needed aid. Basic goods such as concrete, toys, workbooks, food and medical supplies have been barred from getting to Gaza under the siege that Israel imposed, with the cooperation of the U.S. government, following the victory of the Islamist party Hamas in elections for the Palestinian Authority in January 2006.

Israeli officials claimed the activists could have avoided a confrontation if they had delivered the aid to an Israeli port, where it could have been transported to Gaza “through appropriate channels,” said Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Danny Ayalon. “On a daily basis, we do that.”

But this is a lie – exposed in the statements of the World Health Organization (WHO) contradicting Israeli claims that its siege lets through enough food and supplies. According to WHO, hunger stalks the population of Gaza, and one in 10 people are physically stunted from malnutrition.

That was only one of many fabrications to emerge from the Israeli propaganda machine. Israeli government officials claimed wildly that the peace activists were connected to “international terrorism.”

Reporters were denied access to the activists to hear their side of the story – but were encouraged to talk to a parade of Israeli officials and soldiers peddling the story that the commando team was armed only with non-lethal paintball weapons, and was attacked by activists carrying out a plan to “lynch” them.

Journalists for mainstream news organizations were traveling with the flotilla, and some managed to get word out as the assault was launched.

As the Associated Press reported: “An al-

Jazeera journalist delivering a report before Israel cut communications said Israel fired at the vessel before boarding it. In one Web posting, a Turkish television reporter on the boat cried out, 'These savages are killing people here, please help' – a broadcast that ended with a voice shouting in Hebrew, 'Everybody shut up!' ”

Eventually, media reports began to acknowledge that the Israeli assault had “gone badly awry.”

But as Electronic Intifada pointed out, blame for the massacre should be shared: “What should be clear is this: no one can claim to be surprised by what the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights correctly

termed a ‘hideous crime.’ Israel had been openly threatening a violent attack on the flotilla for days, but complacency, complicity and inaction, specifically from Western and Arab governments once more sent the message that Israel could act with total impunity ...”

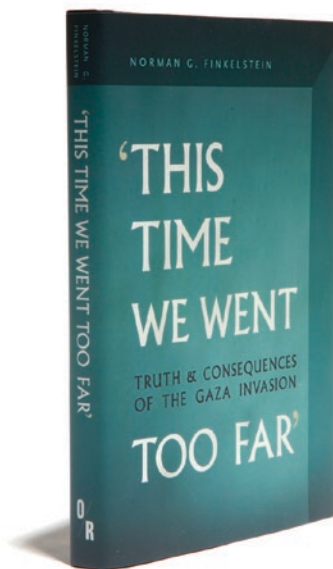
As protest and solidarity actions begin in Palestine and across the world, this is the message they must carry: enough impunity, enough complicity, enough Israeli massacres and apartheid. Justice now. **CT**

*Alan Maas* is editor of *Socialist Worker*.  
This report was first published at [www.socialistworker.org](http://www.socialistworker.org)

**Eventually, media reports began to acknowledge that the Israeli assault had “gone badly awry”**

“Better than any other book, *This Time We Went Too Far*’ shows how the massive destruction visited on Gaza was not an accidental byproduct of the Israeli invasion but its barely concealed object.”

—Raja Shahadeh, author, *Palestinian Walks*



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# Activists armed with bullet-proof vests

Daniela Perdomo examines some of the ‘weapons’ seized by Israeli commandos from the peace activists’ flotilla

Fearsome bullet proof vests to protect the peace activists from Israeli fire. (Sadly, one must assume the nine who died weren’t wearing them)

Israel’s public relations/propaganda efforts are going at full blast as the IDF tries to justify why its commandos ambushed a flotilla of humanitarian civilians in international waters Sunday, leaving at least nine of them dead.

On the Israel Defense Ministry’s official Flickr page, photos have been posted of weapons they say were seized from the peace activists’ flotilla headed to Gaza. Let’s take a look.

First up:



Fearsome bullet proof vests to protect the peace activists from Israeli fire. (Sadly, one must assume the nine who died weren’t wearing them.)

Next:



A single very rusty box-cutter.

Moving on:



That’s right. Not one, but three cans of pepper spray, the kind my mom thinks I should carry around.

This, too, is beyond the pale:



**Kitchen knives! Activists can't possibly chop up onions and tomatoes on their sea journey. (Oh, and CD-ROMS.)**

Finally:



**A power tool. Israel's Flickr page describes this as an electric saw, but someone in the know says it's actually a grinder. Good grief.**

Mark Steel writes in the (London) *Independent*: "It's a shame they weren't more

imaginative, as they could have said, 'We also discovered a deadly barometer, a ship's compass, which could not only be frisbeed at someone's head but even had markings to help the assailant know which direction he was throwing it, and a set of binoculars that could easily be converted into a ray-gun.' "

Some bloggers have pointed out that the dates associated with the Flickr photos are old – from about 2003 – but digital cameras are often set to the incorrect date.

But the dates are really besides the point. The real story is that Israel is trying to present these "weapons" to an irate international community as justification for their spineless attack on a group of humanitarians trying to protest Israel's long-standing blockade of Gaza.

Power tools, old box-cutters, and bullet-proof vests are not weapons, and they are certainly not enough to vindicate the IDF's bellicose actions. Indeed, as my AlterNet colleague Zach Carter says, attacking a ship full of civilians has been an act of war in previous eras. Remember the *Lusitania*? It brought the U.S. into World War I.

Look, there really isn't a way to rationally defend what Israel did at the end of May, lest you really believe the talking-points spewed by mainstream media apologists.

As Eli Clifton writes: "Israel knows exactly what risk it runs when it commits provocative acts such as the recent raid on the flotilla.

"Editorial writers and sympathetic journalists dutifully repeat the message that the Palestinian response to Israel 'defending itself' could lead to a 'new Intifada'. What better way to derail peace talks than to provoke violence before the parties have even gotten to the table?"

By attacking the humanitarian flotilla, Israel may very well have declared war. **CT**

*Daniela Perdomo is a staff writer and editor at AlterNet.org, where this was first published.*

**Power tools, old box-cutters, and bulletproof vests are not weapons, and they are certainly not enough to vindicate the IDF's bellicose actions**

# Lying through his teeth

Mary Rizzo responds to a bizarre press conference statement by Danny Ayalon, Israeli Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs

**“I want to report this morning that the armada of hate and violence in support of the Hamas terror organization was a premeditated and outrageous provocation”**

It is impossible for one to maintain calm while reading lies. Israel’s latest dosage of lies (called Hasbara, and from now on, when an Israeli is lying, I will use the verb “to hasbara”, conjugated appropriately) was more poisonous than usual. It runs under the topic of “defending atrocities”, which is only slightly less frequent than the “defending racist policies” rubric.

My comments to the obscene utterings delivered to a press conference on the day after the massacre of peace activists on the Gaza flotilla by Israel’s Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Danny Ayalon are highlighted in red.

**DEPUTY FM AYALON:** “Good morning, everyone. I want to report this morning that the armada of hate and violence in support of the Hamas terror organization was a premeditated and outrageous provocation.

*Thus begins the greatest lie/hasbara of the day. The invention of a catchy little phrase that only the most audacious would utilise word for word, but the hasbarists will have time to refine it. That they choose to put Hamas and “terror” right in the first line, though is the most important part. This is what may pass to the international news agencies, which is the whole point, and the statements made earlier in the day by outraged politicians the world over are being softened as the minutes pass. Of course the flotilla was premeditated, and of course it was a*

*provocation! How else can one do things with Israel there? Spontaneous, improvised and expecting applause? The intent, however, was not violent and there’s not a stitch of evidence for this, but the violence that follows such an act of a bloody massacre indeed is spontaneous and very real. People are enraged. It is right to be enraged by such an attack on humanitarians bringing aid!!! However, let’s assume that cement powder can be lethal if the bags are swung around, and that paper can cause lots of cuts on the fingers that make it hard to pull triggers of Uzis.*

“The organizers are well-known for their ties to Global Jihad, Al-Qaeda and Hamas. They have a history of arms smuggling and deadly terror. On board the ship we found weapons that were prepared in advance and used against our forces. The organizers’ intent was violent, their method was violent, and unfortunately, the results were violent.

*Oh! This one is good, unfounded, but good for the masses who will believe whatever Israel tells them. Pull out the big bad monster of Global Jihad (what is that? Does it matter?) the terrorist for all seasons Al-Qaeda and Hamas for good measure. As well, it’s pretty clear from the film that when you have commandos storming down on top of you, you are going to expect to be attacked violently, and you grab whatever it is that is near to you, the*



*videos seem to show just parts of the ship itself! No guns on board that were not carried by the Israelis. We see parts of the ship itself, swung around in attempts to stave off the attack. My only question here is, why does the speaker consider the results “unfortunate”? The special ops commandos could have stayed off the boat and if they couldn't resist that, at least not brought automatic rifles that are famous for being violent.*

“Israel regrets any loss of life and did everything to avoid this outcome.

*This phrase is repeated on so many occasions, I think they must have a copyright on it and get royalties each time it's said.*

“We repeatedly called upon the organizers and all those who were associated with them, through diplomatic channels and any other means we could, to stop this provocation.

*Of course, they called on the organisers to do nothing for the people who are suffering in Gaza, but fortunately, there are humans who think for themselves and act upon their consciences. It all could have been avoided had Israel just delivered what is required of it by international law, that is, if they allow goods and money in for reconstruction and basic life needs and allow people in and out.*

“The so-called humanitarian aid was not for a humanitarian purpose.

*No? Do they think that now Gazans will start a cottage industry making paper airplanes and cement rockets?*

“Had it been for a humanitarian purpose, they would have accepted our offer to deliver all humanitarian supply through the appropriate channels which are used on a daily basis, as we make sure that Gaza will not be in short of humanitarian supplies.

*How do you spell “liar”? “h-a-s-b-a-r-i-s-t”. Daily basis? Israel makes sure on a daily basis that Palestinians are hanging on a thread and surviving only by their own wits and tunnels.*

“On a daily basis, we do that.  
*Suuuuure, sure you do!*

“We ask them to send this through the appropriate channels, whether it's the U.N., whether it's the Red Cross, whether it's our people, but to no avail.

*The channels have been asked and implored for years in the words, “open the damned crossings! Lift the damned siege! Free the Gazans from the prison you have closed them into!” To no avail indeed.*

“In fact, what they said was that it's a humanitarian campaign, but they said repeatedly that their intent and purpose was to break the blockade, the maritime blockade, on Gaza.

*Exactly. It is humanitarian to bring in aid if aid is being denied through “appropriate channels”.*

“The maritime blockade on Gaza is very legal and justified by the terror that Hamas is applying in Gaza.

*Very legal? As in what laws precisely? And I don't mean Israeli laws, I mean international laws. There is nothing that justifies denial of construction material, food, medicines, school supplies, clothing, cigarettes, petrol, diapers, balsam, soap, wheelchairs.... Everything that makes life possible.*

“Allowing these ships to go in an illegal way to Gaza would have opened in fact a corridor of smuggling arms and terrorists to Gaza, with the results, inevitable results, of many, many thousands of civilian deaths and violence all over the area.

*There's the contradiction, if things aren't allowed in (because legally – according to Ayalon – they can't go in because the blockade is “legal”) the only option is to circumvent the Israeli law. There is no law in Gaza prohibiting a ship's entry, unless Israel will violate international maritime law or impose their own control over Gaza which “they left” to Palestinians, in their earlier propaganda. To bring in things, anything at all, they call “smuggling” because*

**Israel makes sure on a daily basis that Palestinians are hanging on a thread and surviving only by their own wits and tunnels**

If Israel would leave Gaza to Palestinians, maybe there would be less violence to begin with? But that thought is just too rational to consider!

*they will not legally allow it. Therefore, they see many thousands of (Israeli) deaths (the other deaths don't count for them) because the paranoia is extreme and bringing life to Palestinians by means of goods for survival means Israeli death, logical n'est pas? They must confound people into thinking that all goods brought into Gaza ("Terrorland") are naturally meant just to harm Israeli lives. Of course, we must understand the priorities! If Israel would leave Gaza to Palestinians, maybe there would be less violence to begin with? But that thought is just too rational to consider!*

"After these repeated calls were not heeded by the organizers, we told them that they will not be allowed to break the blockade, as according to maritime law we have the right to do that.

*Not in international waters you don't! And this is where you undertook your operation. But what counts is that already all the other hasbarists are repeating your lies word for word, even adding some exciting details to it such as "people on the boat chanting anti-Semitic songs" (from the AJC org. press release <http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=ijITl2PHK0G&b=2818289&ct=8418965&notoc=1>).*

Unfortunately, they also, people, the organizers upon the ship, did not heed the calls of our forces this morning to peacefully follow them and bring a closure, a peaceful closure, to this event.

*They do not have to give in to acts of piracy*

*on the seas. This is what they bravely did. You will be judged for this, and perhaps they know it too.*

"No sovereign country would tolerate such violence against its civilian population, against its sovereignty, against international law.

*This is the reason you hasbara yourself blue in the face to make certain Palestine is never sovereign. They might just repeat your words sooner than you like. And, to call on international law from the greatest violator of international law on the planet is the definition of chutzpah itself.*

"And we in Israel call today upon all relevant parties and all relevant countries to work together on calming the situation. Thank you very much."

*You call for calm since you know that you have murdered activists and civilians in cold blood, and this will only bring about more and more unrest. You have brought down the rage of the world upon your shoulders. But, like all the other times, you will hasbara your way out of it and the world media and governments will help you. In a few days it will all be forgotten. Hell, there's a World Cup to dispute! People are distracted!*

**CT**

*Mary Rizzo is an art restorer, translator and writer living in Italy. Editor and co-founder of Palestine Think Tank, co-founder of Tlaxcala translations collective. Her personal blog is [Peacepalestine.org](http://Peacepalestine.org)*

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### Quote

**I was deported for having violated Israeli law. And I said to the gentleman, "What law have I violated?" He said, "You have illegally entered Israel." I said, "Well, now, wait. Our ship was taken over by armed commandos. I was brought here at gunpoint against my will, and you call that illegally entering Israel? You and I went to different law schools, guy."**

*– Edward Peck, former US Ambassador, who was on the Gaza aid flotilla that came under attack by Israeli forces on May 31 . . . speaking to Ellen Goodman of Democracy Now!*

# Israel's 'mad dog' diplomacy

**Jonathan Cook** believes a key to Israel's military strategy can be found in the words of Moshe Dayan

**M**oshe Dayan, Israel's most celebrated general, famously outlined the strategy he believed would keep Israel's enemies at bay: "Israel must be a like a mad dog, too dangerous to bother."

Until now, most observers had assumed Dayan was referring to Israeli military or possibly nuclear strategy, an expression in his typically blunt fashion of the country's familiar doctrine of deterrence.

But the May 31 Israeli commando attack on the Gaza-bound flotilla, in which at least nine solidarity activists were shot dead and dozens wounded as they tried to break Israel's blockade of the enclave, proves beyond doubt that this is now a diplomatic strategy too.

Israel is feeling cornered on every front it considers important – and like Dayan's "mad dog", it is likely to strike out in unpredictable ways.

Domestically, Israeli human rights activists have regrouped after the Zionist left's dissolution in the wake of the outbreak of the second intifada. Now they are presenting clear-eyed – and extremely ugly – assessments of the occupation that are grabbing headlines around the world.

That move has been supported by the leadership of Israel's large Palestinian minority, which has additionally started questioning the legitimacy of a Jewish state in

ways that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago.

Regionally, Hizbullah has progressively eroded Israel's deterrence doctrine. It forced the Israeli army to exit south Lebanon in 2000 after a two-decade occupation; it stood firm in the face of both aerial bombardment and a ground invasion during the 2006 war; and now it is reported to have accumulated an even larger arsenal of rockets than it had four years ago.

Iran, too, has refused to be intimidated and is leaving Israel with an uncomfortable choice between conceding to Tehran the room to develop a nuclear bomb, thereby ending Israel's regional nuclear monopoly, and launching an attack that could unleash a global conflagration.

And internationally, nearly 18 months on from its attack on Gaza, Israel's standing is at an all-time low. Boycott campaigns are gaining traction, reluctant support for Israel from European governments has set them in opposition to home-grown sentiment, and even traditional allies such as Turkey cannot hide their anger.

In the US, Israel's most resolute ally, young American Jews are starting to question their unthinking loyalty to the Jewish state. Blogs and new kinds of Jewish groups are bypassing their elders and the American media to widen the scope of debate about Israel.

**Boycott campaigns are gaining traction, reluctant support for Israel from European governments has set them in opposition to home-grown sentiment, and even traditional allies such as Turkey cannot hide their anger**

Gaza's entire population of 1.5 million is now regularly presented in the Israeli media in collective terms, as supporters of terror – for having voted in Hamas – and therefore legitimate targets for Israeli “retaliation”.

Israel has responded by characterising these “threats” all as falling within its ever-expanding definition of “support for terrorism”.

It was therefore hardly surprising that the first reaction from the Israeli government to the fact that its commandos had opened fire on civilians in the flotilla of aid ships was to accuse the solidarity activists of being armed.

Similarly, Danny Ayalon, the deputy foreign minister, accused the organisers of having “connections to international terrorism”, including al-Qaeda. Turkey, which assisted the flotilla, is widely being accused in Israel of supporting Hamas and trying to topple Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

Palestinians are familiar with such tactics. Gaza's entire population of 1.5 million is now regularly presented in the Israeli media in collective terms, as supporters of terror – for having voted in Hamas – and therefore legitimate targets for Israeli “retaliation”. Even the largely docile Palestinian Authority in the West Bank has rapidly been tarred with the same brush for its belated campaign to boycott the settlements and their products.

The leaders of Israel's Palestinian citizens, too, are being cast in the role of abettors of terror. The minority is still reeling from the latest assault: the arrest and torture of two community leaders charged with spying for Hizbullah. In its wake, new laws are being drafted to require that Palestinian citizens prove their “loyalty” or have their citizenship revoked.

When false rumours briefly circulated on that Sheikh Raed Salah, a leader of Israel's Islamic Movement who was in the flotilla, had been gravely wounded in the attack, Israeli officials offered a depressingly predictable, and unfounded, response: commandos had shot him after they came under fire from his cabin.

Israel's Jewish human rights community is also under attack to a degree never before seen. Their leaders are now presented as traitors, and new legislation is designed

to make their work much harder.

The few brave souls in the Israeli media who try to hold the system to account have been given a warning shot with the exile of Haaretz's investigative journalist Uri Blau, who is threatened with trial on spying charges if he returns.

Finally, Israel's treatment of those onboard the flotilla has demonstrated that the net against human rights activism is being cast much wider, to encompass the international community.

Foreigners, even high-profile figures such as Noam Chomsky, are now routinely refused entry to Israel and the occupied territories. Many foreign human rights workers face severe restrictions on their movement and efforts to deport them or ban their organisations. The epitome of this process was Israel's reception of the UN report last year into the attack on Gaza by Richard Goldstone, a respected judge and international law expert who suggested Israel had committed many war crimes during its three-week operation. Goldstone has faced savage personal attacks ever since.

But more significantly, Israel's supporters have characterised the Goldstone report and the related legal campaigns against Israel as examples of “lawfare”, implying that those who uphold international law are waging a new kind of war of attrition on behalf of terror groups like Hamas and Hizbullah.

These trends are likely only to widen and deepen in the coming months and years, making Israel an ever greater pariah in the eyes of much of the world. The mad dog is baring his teeth, and it is high time the international community decided how to deal with him. **CT**

*Jonathan Cook is a writer and journalist based in Nazareth, Israel. His latest books are **Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East** (Pluto Press) and **Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair** (Zed Books). His website is [www.jkcook.net](http://www.jkcook.net)*

# Israeli murders, NATO and Afghanistan

Former British ambassador **Craig Murray** tells how Israel's action against Turkish citizens is a concern for NATO members

**I** was in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office for over 20 years and a member of its senior management structure for six years. I served in five countries and took part in 13 formal international negotiations, including the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea and a whole series of maritime boundary treaties. I headed the FCO section of a multidepartmental organisation monitoring the arms embargo on Iraq.

I am an instinctively friendly, open but unassuming person who always found it easy to get on with people, I think because I make fun of myself a lot. I have in consequence a great many friends among ex-colleagues in both British and foreign diplomatic services, security services and militaries.

I lost very few friends when I left the FCO over torture and rendition. In fact I seemed to gain several degrees of warmth with a great many acquaintances still on the inside. And I have become known as a reliable outlet for grumbles, who as an ex-insider knows how to handle a discreet and unintercepted conversation.

What I was being told on the evening of May 31 was very interesting indeed. NATO HQ in Brussels is today a very unhappy place. There is a strong understanding among the various national militaries that an attack by

Israel on a NATO member flagged ship in international waters is an event to which NATO is obliged – legally obliged, as a matter of treaty – to react.

I must be plain – nobody wants or expects military action against Israel. But there is an uneasy recognition that in theory that ought to be on the table, and that NATO is obliged to do something robust to defend Turkey.

Mutual military support of each other is the entire *raison d'être* of NATO. You must also remember that to the NATO military the freedom of the high seas guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea is a vital alliance interest which officers have been conditioned to uphold their whole career.

That is why Turkey was extremely shrewd in reacting immediately to the Israeli attack by calling an emergency NATO meeting. It is why, after the appalling US reaction to the attack with its refusal to name Israel, President Obama has now made a point of phoning President Erdogan to condole.

But the unhappiness in NATO HQ runs much deeper than that, I spoke separately to two friends there, from two different nations. One of them said NATO HQ was “a very unhappy place”. The other described the situation as “Tense – much more strained than at the invasion of Iraq”.

**There is a strong understanding among the various national militaries that an attack by Israel on a NATO member flagged ship in international waters is an event to which NATO is obliged – legally obliged, as a matter of treaty – to react**

Is NATO genuinely a mutual defence organisation, or is it just an instrument to carry out US foreign policy? With its unthinking defence of Israel and military occupation of Afghanistan, is US foreign policy really defending Europe, or is it making the World less safe by causing Islamic militancy?

Why? There is a tendency of outsiders to regard the senior workings of governments and international organisations as monolithic. In fact there are plenty of highly intelligent – and competitive – people and diverse interests involved.

There are already deep misgivings, especially amongst the military, over the Afghan mission. There is no sign of a diminution in Afghan resistance attacks and no evidence of a clear gameplan. The military are not stupid and they can see that the Karzai government is deeply corrupt and the Afghan “national” army comprised almost exclusively of tribal enemies of the Pashtuns.

You might be surprised by just how high in Nato scepticism runs at the line that in some way occupying Afghanistan helps protect the west, as opposed to stoking dangerous Islamic anger worldwide.

So this is what is causing frost and stress inside NATO. The organisation is tied up in a massive, expensive and ill-defined mission in Afghanistan that many whisper is counter-productive in terms of the alliance aim of mutual defence. Every European military is facing financial problems as a public deficit financing crisis sweeps the continent. The only glue holding the Afghan mission together is loyalty to and support for the United States.

But what kind of mutual support organisation is NATO when members must make decades long commitments, at huge expense and some loss of life, to support

the United States, but cannot make even a gesture to support Turkey when Turkey is attacked by a non-member?

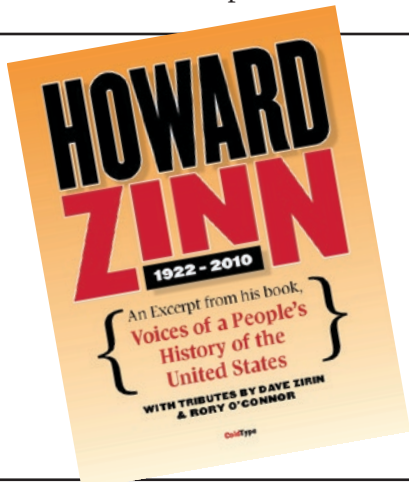
Even the Eastern Europeans have not been backing the US line on the Israeli attack. The atmosphere in NATO on the issue has been very much the US against the rest, with the US attitude inside NATO described to me by a senior NATO officer as “amazingly arrogant – they don’t seem to think it matters what anybody else thinks”.

Therefore what is troubling the hearts and souls of non-Americans in NATO HQ is this fundamental question. Is NATO genuinely a mutual defence organisation, or is it just an instrument to carry out US foreign policy? With its unthinking defence of Israel and military occupation of Afghanistan, is US foreign policy really defending Europe, or is it making the World less safe by causing Islamic militancy?

I leave the last word to one of the senior NATO officers – who incidentally is not British: “Nobody but the Americans doubts the US position on the Gaza attack is wrong and insensitive. But everyone already quietly thought the same about wider American policy. This incident has allowed people to start saying that now privately to each other.”

**CT**

*Craig Murray, a former British ambassador and human rights activist, is the author of **Murder In Samarkand**. Visit his blog at [www.craigmurray.org.uk](http://www.craigmurray.org.uk)*



## PAYING TRIBUTE TO HOWARD ZINN

Download an excerpt from Zinn’s book, **Voices of a People’s History Of the United States**, together with tributes from Dave Zirin and Rory O’Connor at [www.coldtype.net/index.mar10.html](http://www.coldtype.net/index.mar10.html)

# Caught between a liberal and a hard man

**William Bowles** finds bias and omissions in the BBC's reporting of the attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla

*“Israeli commandos had paintball guns” – Israeli Ambassador to Russia, Anna Azari  
“This happened in waters outside of Israeli territory, but we have the right to defend ourselves.” – Israeli military spokeswoman, Avital Leibovich*

**I**n Yiddish it's called *chutzpah*, to have the nerve to say something outrageous, the perfect description – if what was said wasn't so odious – of the recent statements from Israeli propagandists. I'm talking here about an Israeli spokesman, attempting to justify the murderous assault on the Gaza aid activists. Attack becomes “defence”, international waters become Israeli, or not as the case may be.

Actually *chutzpah* doesn't even begin to describe the venomous and hysterical rantings of the Israeli spokesman. Eventually it just got too much for me to watch.

On the other hand we have the ‘measured tones’ of your standard BBC model, allegedly impartial and objective, yet they're both united by a common worldview.

In the first, the Israeli one, we have the archetypal ‘Goebbels’ style, repeat the lies often enough, shout it even and the job is done. Sheer brute force stamps the Zionist reality on your forebrain.

In the second, it's the ‘measured tones’ of the BBC repeated ad infinitum that do the trick, for underpinning both is the ideology

of superiority, both racial and cultural. The BBC method is more subtle, it has all the marks of a reasoned approach to the event but amounts to the same thing; a justification for barbarism.

I think it's worth analyzing a complete ‘analysis’ by the BBC's diplomatic correspondent Jonathan Marcus as to how they pull off the stunt of pulling the wool over the reader's eyes.

First off, the piece below avoids mentioning anything about the illegal and murderous actions of the IDF; instead it concentrates on the public relations problems the Israelis have created for themselves by their actions. But is this the purpose of BBC's ‘objective’ reporting method? Is this article news or blatant propaganda for Israel?

The entire piece reads as if the BBC has a lot invested in what Israel does, which when you think about it, is exactly right. After all, the bulk of the BBC's ‘news’ consists of official Israeli propaganda, and is reprinted without even bothering to insert ‘allegedly’ before regurgitating Israel's outrageous news-speak. Here is the BBC article in its entirety, broken up by my observations (highlighted in red):

## **‘Israel faces flotilla raid fallout’**

**By Jonathan Marcus, 31 May, 2010**

“This was always going to be a high-risk operation for Israel, both in terms of reputation and diplomatic repercussions.

**The entire piece reads as if the BBC has a lot invested in what Israel does, which when you think about it, is exactly right**

“Calamity” is an odd choice of word, not once is it applied to the deaths of innocents on the high seas but only to the problems it creates in selling the state of Israel!

*Note that the human repercussions of the murderous attack doesn't figure, the writer is only concerned with the PR.*

“Taking over vessels at sea is no easy task, even if the units carrying out the mission are well trained, and it is especially difficult if the people already on board the vessels resist.

*No doubt the writer speaks from experience? Resist? A ship in international waters is attacked from the air and the sea with guns firing and all the writer is concerned with is how difficult the operation is! It doesn't occur to him that in fact the people onboard had every right to defend themselves.*

“The full details of what happened will emerge in time, but in political terms the damage has already been done.

*But I doubt that you'll read them on the BBC website.*

“The deaths threaten to make what was always going to be a potential public relations disaster for Israel into a fully-fledged calamity.

*But not if the BBC has anything to do with what is legally an act of war against the sovereign state of Turkey. “Calamity” is an odd choice of words, not once is it applied to the deaths of innocents on the high seas but only to the problems it creates in selling the state of Israel!*

“But the political ramifications could be even more serious.

*Now this invites speculation on what these ramifications are for Israel. Unfortunately the writer seems to have run out of words to describe what they could be. Instead, we find him speculating on what effect it could have on NATO member Turkey, also a strong supporter of Israel, until now, that is.*

“A Turkish charity had a major role in organising this flotilla.

“The Palestinian issue plays strongly in Turkish public opinion, where the tide is already strongly critical of Israel.

“This episode will only make matters worse.

*At last, we get down to the nub of this BBC spin piece. What matters is not the actions of the Israelis, but the fact that it creates problems for the Empire. It threatens to unravel the carefully constructed story erected around the settler state called Israel and the ‘terrorists’. Question this and one has to question all the rationales for the Empire's actions, clearly a step too far for the BBC, so deeply enmeshed is it in the affairs of the Empire.*

“Turkish politics is changing. Groups like the military who always backed strong ties with Israel now have less political clout.

“Relations between the two countries are ratcheting downwards with few pressures operating in the opposite direction to improve ties.

“This incident at sea also firmly puts the spotlight on Gaza and Israel's efforts to control access to the territory.

“Gaza is unfinished business with all three key players – Israel, Egypt and the United States, all happy to try to isolate the Hamas government there.

*The open prison that is the Gaza Strip, where 1.5 million people are denied the basics of life, shot at and bombed virtually every day, is as far as the BBC is concerned merely “unfinished business”.*

“But, as aid agencies warn, this isolation comes at a price for the ordinary people of Gaza and this incident catapults their plight firmly into the spotlight.”

*More newsspeak from the BBC, that having spent years helping to demonize democratically elected Hamas, is clearly worried that Israel's actions threaten to undo all the ‘good work’ the BBC has done on behalf of its patron, Israel. Note, too, that the writer finally manages to mention the “ordinary people of Gaza”, not that he is worried about their plight, but that the Israeli attack puts them “firmly into the spotlight”, obviously the last thing the BBC wants to happen.*

**CT**

**William Bowles** is a freelance writer and consultant on media and communications-related projects. His web site is [www-creative-i.info](http://www-creative-i.info)



# Gaza boat activists deny Israeli story

**Dennis Bernstein and Jesse Strauss** talk to survivors of the Israeli raid after their release from detention

**W**ith its bloody raid on the “Freedom Flotilla,” Israel has demonstrated, once again, a willingness to kill innocents in order to sustain its punishing blockade on the Gaza strip, even when doing so raises more and more questions about nuclear-armed Israel’s national sanity.

Scholar Norman Finkelstein, author of a new book on Israel’s 2008-09 assault on Gaza entitled *This Time We’ve Gone Too Far*, deemed the attack on the six ships in international waters that left nine people dead Monday the actions of a “demented ... lunatic state.”

According to survivors – who include a former ambassador, a Nobel laureate and several well-known human rights activists – the Israeli commandos came heavily armed with explosives and automatic weapons, and some opened fire from the air before landing on the Mavi Marmara, a Turkish-flagged vessel leading the flotilla.

However, Israeli officials offered a competing narrative of a peaceful initiative that only went wrong because of the physical resistance from activists on the ships. The government’s version was that the commandos were armed primarily with paintball guns.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also was unapologetic about the lethal assault, claiming that the embargo is

justified by fears that military-related items could be smuggled into Gaza.

At a press conference on Wednesday, Netanyahu said, “We will never apologize for defending ourselves,” adding: “I’m very proud of what our soldiers did ... This was a hate boat. These weren’t pacifists or peace activists.”

Among those offering a contradictory account was Ed Peck, a former U.S. ambassador and deputy director of the White House Task Force on Terrorism during the Reagan administration, who was on board the Sfenoni vessel of the Freedom Flotilla.

“The first thing we knew was the sound of footsteps, and my eyelids flicked open, and there they were, heavily armed,” said Peck, who was one of the first hostages to be released. “The Israeli government keeps referring to the paint guns, but the paint guns were attached to the automatic weapons and the stun grenades and the pepper spray and the tasers and everything else that these guys carry.”

While the Israelis claim they were attacked violently by Al Qaeda and Hamas-connected “terrorists,” very few soldiers were wounded, and none died. Israeli officials showed off knives and some homemade weapons that allegedly were used by the Mavi Marmara defenders. No firearms were found on the ships.

Nor was there any military-related “con-

**According to survivors the Israeli commandos came heavily armed with explosives and automatic weapons, and some opened fire from the air before landing on the Mavi Marmara, a Turkish-flagged vessel leading the flotilla**

**Arraf and the peace activists who were on Challenger 1 were beaten, tasered, hand-cuffed and locked in a room. They were also threatened with a muzzled guard dog and were searched to remove any telephones and cameras**

traband,” other than bags of concrete and other building materials, which Israel has banned from Gaza purportedly because “terrorists” might hide in the new buildings. Because of Israel’s embargo on construction materials, Gazans have been unable to rebuild following Israel’s devastating offensive that killed some 1,400 people and left many of Gaza’s 1.5 million people homeless.

While no Israeli commandos died in the raid, nine peace activists were killed, including some with multiple bullet wounds apparently from close range and others due to what seemed like indiscriminate fire.

Sarah Colborne, director of campaigns and operations at the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, was on the Mavi Marmara. Later, speaking at a press conference in London, she said unarmed activists were shot by the commandos and that the Israeli attackers ignored calls for medical aid.

“There was live ammunition flying around and I could hear the sounds of the bullets flying and the whirr of the helicopter blades as people were dropped down onto the roof,” Colborne said. “Helicopters appeared and gunshots were heard. We then had the first passenger fatally injured ... He was shot in the head ... It was very clear it was live ammunition.”

Huwaida Arraf, chairperson of the Free Gaza Movement, was on another ship, the Challenger 1, as it was attacked by Israeli commandos by air and sea. As she and other activists resisted the takeover solely with their bodies, she watched the attack on the nearby Mavi Marmara. She also said the commandos opened fire from the air.

“I could see the beginnings of the attack on the Turkish ship, the Marmara, because we were traveling almost side by side with it,” Arraf said. “I saw the Israeli naval zodiacs approach that ship, I heard explosions which I took to be concussion grenades ... and then shooting.

“I don’t know if it was rubber-coated bullets, live ammunition, or what kind, but there definitely was shooting coming from

the Israelis toward the ship before they even boarded, and then I saw a helicopter overhead.”

Arraf and the peace activists who were on Challenger 1 were beaten, tasered, hand-cuffed and locked in a room. They were also threatened with a muzzled guard dog and were searched to remove any telephones and cameras.

For Arraf, the harsh treatment didn’t end with the violent seizure of the boat. The fact that she was an organizer with dual U.S.-Israeli citizenship made her an interesting target for multiple interrogations. After refusing to answer questions without legal or consul representation, she ended up being one of the first to be released.

The interrogators “forced me into a police van, literally, by pulling me up by my hair and my hands and feet and beating me,” she said. “They drove me out of the port, stopped the car at some point – I’m not sure where because I was a little bit disoriented after being punched in the face and the jaw – and then they just opened the door and threw me out of the van.”

Peck, the former U.S. ambassador and counter-terrorism adviser, said he asked Israeli officials who were processing him for deportation why he was being deported, given that he had not violated any Israeli law. He was told that he had illegally entered Israel.

“I said ‘Well, now, wait. Our ship was taken by armed commandos. I was brought here at gun point against my will, and you call that illegally entering Israel?’”

Israel and its defenders maintain that the high-seas raid was justified on the grounds of Israeli national security.

But Richard Falk, the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, said Israel’s action at sea, in international waters, was “as clear a violation of international humanitarian law, international law of the seas, and international criminal law, as we’re likely to see in the early part of the twenty-first century.”

Falk said the United States might also be

implicated. “We are certainly morally and politically implicit and responsible in these kinds of Israeli tactics and undertakings,” said Falk, but he added, “the political will is lacking at the governmental level and at the international institutional level to provide that kind of protection” to the people aboard ships headed to Gaza.

Former British Ambassador Craig Murray, a Law of the Sea expert, made similar points about the clear illegality of the attack in international waters and observed, too, that Turkey, as a NATO member, has the right to turn to other NATO nations, including the United States, and invoke collective defense.

“I must be plain – nobody wants or expects military action against Israel. But there is an uneasy recognition that in theory that ought to be on the table, and that NATO is obliged to do something robust to defend Turkey,” Murray wrote.

Yet, the strength of international law is only as powerful as major world powers allow. As investigative reporter and human rights activist Allan Nairn said, “The problem is not just one of stopping Israel’s crimes, but of stopping Washington from authorizing them and exporting worldwide a U.S. version of ‘rule of law’ that legalizes official killings of civilians.”

“In this attack on the civilian aid ship,” Nairn said, “Israel is not violating U.S. doctrine; Israel is implementing it. This is what the U.S. would have done, and what the U.S. does every day in places like Afghanistan and Iraq and Pakistan directly, and indirectly in dozens of other countries, where it backs armies and paramilitaries that use

these procedures.”

The additional fact that Israel has an estimated 200 or more nuclear warheads worries author Norman Finkelstein.

“If this is the kind of decision-making that they make after a week of intensive deliberation against a humanitarian convoy, to launch an armed commando raid in the dead of night in international waters, then what kind of action may they take in the midst of a full-fledged war, with missiles flying toward Tel Aviv, is very scary.

“I honestly don’t believe that people are giving serious consideration to the fact that things are rapidly getting out of control.”

Meanwhile, despite the deadly brutality of the raid on the “Freedom Flotilla,” Arraf said she and her colleagues are committed to breaking the Gaza blockade, and will not be intimidated.

“We will definitely continue in our efforts to break this illegal blockade and to continue campaigning until the occupation as a whole has ended, and then there is a system here in the Middle East, in what’s known as Israel/Palestine that treats people equally and does not discriminate against people based on race, religion or ethnicity.

“That’s the kind of future that we’re campaigning and fighting for, and we won’t rest until we realize that.”

**CT**

*Dennis Bernstein and Jesse Strauss based this report primarily on interviews done for “Flashpoints” on the Pacifica radio network. You can access the audio archives at [www.flashpoints.net](http://www.flashpoints.net). You can get in touch with the authors at [dbernstein@igc.org](mailto:dbernstein@igc.org) and [jstrauss@riseup.net](mailto:jstrauss@riseup.net).*

**Despite the deadly brutality of the raid on the “Freedom Flotilla,” Arraf said she and her colleagues are committed to breaking the Gaza blockade, and will not be intimidated**

## The Nine Victims

**Cengiz Alquyz**, 42 – Four gunshot wounds: back of head, right side of face, back, left leg

**Ibrahim Bilgen**, 60 – Four gunshot wounds: right chest, back, right hip, right temple

**Cegdet Kiliclar**, 38 – One gunshot

wound: middle of forehead

**Furkan Dogan**, 19 – Five gunshot wounds: nose, back, back of head, left leg, left ankle

**Sahri Yaldiz** – Four gunshot wounds: left chest, left leg, right leg twice

**Aliheyder Bengi**, 39 – Six gunshot

wounds: left chest, belly, right arm, right leg, left hand twice

**Cetin Topcuoglu**, 54 – Three gunshot wounds: back of head, left side, right belly

**Cengiz Songur**, 47 – One gunshot wound: front of neck

# They seek them here, they bomb them there

Brian Cloughley on Obama's drone blitz in Pakistan

**It is claimed that if some civilians are killed, there aren't many of them. As if the murder of some kids and their mothers is quite OK, providing the drones kill the 'bad guys' too**

*They seek him here, they seek him there,  
Those drones they seek him everywhere.  
Bin Laden struck? – Or maybe missed?  
That damned, elusive terrorist.*

– With apologies to Baroness Orczy's  
*The Scarlet Pimpernel*, 1903

**L**et us imagine that Spain invaded Mexico in similar fashion to the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 because Madrid suffered a terrorist atrocity that was planned by a Saudi Arabian fanatic living in Chihuahua. Spanish troops poured into the country, and Spanish generals and mercenaries were to all intents running the place although generously subsidizing a corrupt national government whose president was in power through gross electoral fraud. A militant resistance movement developed and a lucrative drug industry prospered mightily. There was much illegal movement of criminals and insurgents across the US-Mexico border.

And Spain, objecting to transit of militant Mexicans fighting against Spanish occupation of their country, obtained information that some guerrilla fighters might – might – be in a house in the little town of Van Horn in Culbertson County, Texas.

So one morning a video game player in Madrid pressed a button and a Spanish drone roaming round in US airspace fired missiles on Van Horn that killed two Mexican mili-

tants as well as a dozen US citizens, including two women and three children who were minding their own innocent business in their house on Hackberry Street. What do you think Washington's reaction would be to that incident? Do you imagine for an instant that there would be other than raging fury? – Of course there would – to the extent that Madrid would be a smoking (and probably radioactive) ruin by sundown.

But this sort of blitz is experienced every week in Pakistan by people living in its equivalents of Van Horn's Hackberry Street. Obama has ordered over 100 CIA drone strikes in Pakistan since becoming president. It is claimed that if some civilians are killed, there aren't many of them. As if the murder of some kids and their mothers is quite OK, providing the drones kill the 'bad guys' too.

Even if there were no civilian deaths at all – which is decidedly unlikely – the very act of firing missiles into the territory of a foreign country to kill people is by any standards illegal, if the recipient country is not at war with the nation attacking it.

During the daylight hours of May 13 in a small area of Pakistan's North Waziristan Tribal Agency, close to the border with Afghanistan, a lot of US drones were seen in the sky by terrified tribespeople. Some said six, some thought there were more. Nobody knows; and the person who contacted me about it had got out of the area as fast as he

could, as well he might, because he has association with the West and could well be mistaken for a US spy, planting drone-attracting how-to-find-me gadgets around the place. (Two suspected spies had been killed, hideously, the previous day, by panicked and terrified tribesmen.) And the CIA's soundless and terrifying drones were menacing people who cowered in their houses waiting in terror for another flashing crashing strike from the sky. Nobody knew who next might die at the whim of the robots. God Bless America.

### Drone humour

It's difficult to ignore the fact that the President of the United States considers robot drone strikes that kill people are a matter for humour. Do you remember the 2004 White House party for the media when George W Bush thought it hilarious to observe that there were no 'weapons of mass destruction' to be found when he was jovially poking around the function room mimicking a search for them in Iraq – while American soldiers were dying in the war he had ordered? It was a squalid burlesque from which not one reporter was honorable enough to walk out in dignified disdain.

And it seems the current generation of White House media patsies continue to observe that tradition. In a gruesome reprise of the macabre Bush conviviality, President Obama joked during a similar media jamboree that if members of a certain pop group had designs on his daughters there would be "Two words for you: Predator drones. You will never see it coming. You think I'm joking?" No, I don't think the President of the United States was joking. Because nobody in his right mind jokes about killing people with Predator drone strikes. Anyone who thinks killing of any sort is even faintly comical is a psychotic buffoon. And when it is on record that US drone strikes have killed hundreds of women and children in Pakistan, anyone who finds it funny that "you will never see it coming" is out of his tiny mind. US drone strikes, although undoubtedly technically amazing, are not only illegal but asinine and

entirely counterproductive. They cause, in CIA terms, 'blowback.' They are what the Brits would call an "own goal." There has been much scholarly debate about the legality or otherwise of US drone strikes within Pakistan. But it is difficult to see how extrajudicial killing of citizens of a friendly country, within their own country or anywhere else, is in some fashion permissible.

Having said that, there is no doubt that the world would be a better place were it to be rid of such as the fanatical Hakimullah Mehsud, a particularly evil and semi-literate Pakistani revolutionary whose knowledge of Islam is as slight as his desire for bloodshed is extensive. He's just another thug who has latched on to Islam as some sort of justification for his deviant bloodlust. But the trouble is that he is a pretty charismatic thug. A barbarian with appealing pull. Alas, he is a role model for countless thousands of alienated Pushtun tribesmen.

It was reported by the usual media patsies, in the pockets of the always anonymous and eager-to-leak officials, that Mehsud had been killed by a drone-delivered missile. The news was circulated round the world, as was intended. But the trouble for the CIA – and for America – is that Mehsud wasn't killed in either of the drone strikes.

The CIA got it wrong. Again. It was amateur week. Their target – Hakimullah Mehsud – wasn't where the drone missiles struck, either time. But of course there were other people in the places he was thought to be. There were women and children and ancients and lots of inconsequential people – just like you and me – the type of ordinary people who aren't important but have done no harm to anyone and just want to carry on living blameless lives.

According to the website Pakistan Body Count, over 1000 civilians have been killed by American drone attacks on Pakistan. The number of so-called al Qaeda who have been killed is said to be 30 or so. But even if the number of al Qaeda killed by drone missiles was the same as the number of civilians – at a thousand – it doesn't make the

**Nobody in his right mind jokes about killing people with Predator drone strikes. Anyone who thinks killing of any sort is even faintly comical is a psychotic buffoon**

## UNDECLARED WAR

The calculating experts, the dedicated dorks, the disastrous dweebs of the CIA imagine they can deal death with precision

video games any less illegal and immoral. The CIA have bamboozled Obama into believing their drone killings will work, in that they will eradicate anti-American militants. In Vietnam, all these years ago, we used to call it “termination with extreme prejudice”. It didn’t work then, and it isn’t working now. The calculating experts, the dedicated dorks, the disastrous dweebs of the CIA imagine they can deal death with precision. They are confident their technology will result in victory.

But they don’t recognize the human factor. It’s called resentment. It results in hatred. While the drones and their video con-

trollers seek people here and there and try to kill them – and even sometimes succeed in blowing a militant to smithereens – the effect of their blitz is to attract ever more recruits to the legions of anti-American terrorists. Obama joked that “You never see it coming.” But what the drone-masters haven’t seen coming is the blowback. **CT**

*Brian Cloughley is the author of **A History of the Pakistan Army: Wars and Insurrections**, the fourth edition of which is due to be published next year, and **War, Coups and Terror**. His web site is [www.beecluff.com](http://www.beecluff.com)*

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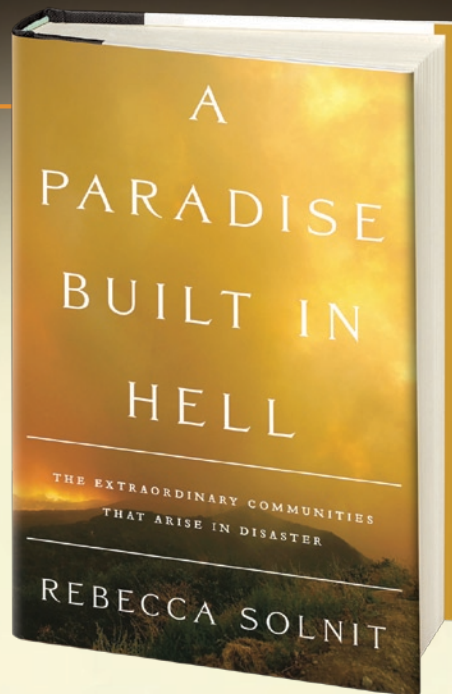
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# Holding back the Red Menace

If you think today's right wing in America is dumb, look back to the days when Communists were the enemy, says **William Blum**

**T**erminally-dumb people have always been with us of course. It can't be that we've suddenly gone stupid.

If you shake your head and roll your eyes at the nonsense coming out of the Teabagger followers of Sarah "Africa is a country" Palin and other intellectual giants like Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh ... If you have thoughts of moving abroad after the latest silly lies and fantasies like "Obama the Marxist" and "Obama the antichrist" ... If you share Noam Chomsky's feeling: "I have never seen anything like this in my lifetime"... keep in mind that the right wing has long been at least as stupid and as mean-spirited. Consider some of the behavior of the same types for half a century during the Cold War with its beloved - albeit imaginary - "International Communist Conspiracy".

\* **1948:** The *Pittsburgh Press* published the names, addresses, and places of employment of about 1,000 citizens who had signed presidential-nominating petitions for former Vice President Henry Wallace, running under the Progressive Party. This, and a number of other lists of "communists", published in the mainstream media, resulted in people losing their jobs, being expelled from unions, having their children abused, being denied state welfare benefits,

and suffering various other punishments.

\* **Around 1950:** The House Committee on Un-American Activities published a pamphlet, "100 Things You Should Know About Communism in the U.S.A." This included information about what a communist takeover of the United States would mean:

**Q:** What would happen to my insurance?

**A:** It would go to the Communists.

**Q:** Would communism give me something better than I have now?

**A:** Not unless you are in a penitentiary serving a life sentence at hard labor.

\* **1950s:** Mrs. Ada White, member of the Indiana State Textbook Commission, believed that Robin Hood was a Communist and urged that books that told the Robin Hood story be banned from Indiana schools.

\* As evidence that anti-communist mania was not limited to the lunatic fringe or conservative newspaper publishers, here is Clark Kerr, president of the University of California at Berkeley in a 1959 speech: "Perhaps 2 or even 20 million people have been killed in China by the new [communist] regime." One person wrote to Kerr: "I am wondering how you would judge a person who estimates the age of a passerby

**Mrs. Ada White, member of the Indiana State Textbook Commission, believed that Robin Hood was a Communist and urged that books that told the Robin Hood story be banned from Indiana schools**

## ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

**“I’ve been told that the communists are trying to flood our country with narcotics to weaken our moral and physical stamina. Is that true?”**

on the street as being ‘perhaps 2 or even 20 years old.’ Or what would you think of a physician who tells you to take ‘perhaps 2 or even twenty teaspoonsful of a remedy?’”

\* Throughout the cold war, traffic in phoney Lenin quotes was brisk, each one passed around from one publication or speaker to another for years. Here’s **U.S. News and World Report** in 1958 demonstrating communist duplicity by quoting Lenin: “Promises are like pie crusts, made to be broken.” Secretary of State John Foster Dulles used it in a speech shortly afterward, one of many to do so during the cold war. Lenin actually did use a very similar line, but he explicitly stated that he was quoting an English proverb (it comes from Jonathan Swift) and his purpose was to show the unreliability of the bourgeoisie, not of communists.

“First we will take Eastern Europe, then the masses of Asia, then we will encircle the United States, which will be the last bastion of capitalism. We will not have to attack. It will fall like an overripe fruit into our hands.” This Lenin “quotation” had the usual wide circulation, even winding up in the Congressional Record in 1962. This was not simply a careless attribution; this was an out-and-out fabrication; an extensive search, including by the Library of Congress and the United States Information Agency failed to find its origin.

\* A favorite theme of the anti-communists was that a principal force behind drug trafficking was a communist plot to demoralize the United States. Here’s a small sample:

“Don Keller, District Attorney for San Diego County, California in 1953: “We know that more heroin is being produced south of the border than ever before and we are beginning to hear stories of financial backing by big shot Communists operating out of Mexico City.”

Henry Giordano, Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1964, interviewed in the *American Legion Magazine*: Interviewer: “I’ve been told that the communists are trying to flood our country with

narcotics to weaken our moral and physical stamina. Is that true?”

Giordano: “As far as the drugs are concerned, it’s true. There’s a terrific flow of drugs coming out of Yunnan Province of China. ... There’s no question that in that particular area this is the aim of the Red Chinese. It should be apparent that if you could addict a population you would degrade a nation’s moral fiber.”

Fulton Lewis, Jr., prominent conservative radio broadcaster and newspaper columnist, 1965: “Narcotics of Cuban origin – marijuana, cocaine, opium, and heroin – are now peddled in big cities and tiny hamlets throughout this country. Several Cubans arrested by the Los Angeles police have boasted they are communists.”

We were also told that along with drugs another tool of the commies to undermine America’s spirit was fluoridation of the water.

\* Mickey Spillane was one of the most successful writers of the 1950s, selling millions of his anticommunist thriller mysteries. Here is his hero, Mike Hammer, in “One Lonely Night”, boasting of his delight in the grisly murders he commits, all in the name of destroying a communist plot to steal atomic secrets. After a night of carnage, the triumphant Hammer gloats, “I shot them in cold blood and enjoyed every minute of it. I pumped slugs into the nastiest bunch of bastards you ever saw. ... They were Commies. ... Pretty soon what’s left of Russia and the slime that breeds there won’t be worth mentioning and I’m glad because I had a part in the killing. God, but it was fun!”

\* **1952:** A campaign against the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization because it was tainted with “atheism and communism”, and was “subversive” because it preached internationalism. Any attempt to introduce an international point of view in the schools was seen as undermining patriotism and loyalty to the United States. A bill in the US Senate, clearly aimed at UNESCO, called for a ban



on the funding of “any international agency that directly or indirectly promoted one-world government or world citizenship.” There was also opposition to UNESCO’s association with the UN Declaration of Human Rights on the grounds that it was trying to replace the American Bill of Rights with a less liberty-giving covenant of human rights.

\* **1955:** A US Army 6-page pamphlet, “How to Spot a Communist”, informed us that a communist could be spotted by his predisposition to discuss civil rights, racial and religious discrimination, the immigration laws, anti-subversive legislation, curbs on unions, and peace. Good Americans were advised to keep their ears stretched for such give-away terms as “chauvinism”, “book-burning”, “colonialism”, “demagogy”, “witch hunt”, “reactionary”, “progressive”, and “exploitation”. Another “distinguishing mark” of “Communist language” was a “preference for long sentences.” After some ridicule, the Army rescinded the pamphlet.

\* **1958:** The noted sportscaster Bill Stern (one of the heroes of my youth) observed on the radio that the lack of interest in “big time” football at New York University, City College of New York, Chicago, and Harvard “is due to the widespread acceptance of Communism at the universities.”

\* **1960:** US General Thomas Power speaking about nuclear war or a first strike by the US: “The whole idea is to kill the bastards! At the end of the war, if there are two Americans and one Russian, we win!” The response from one of those present was: “Well, you’d better make sure that they’re a man and a woman.”

\* **1966:** The Boys Club of America is of course wholesome and patriotic. Imagine their horror when they were confused with the Dubois Clubs. (W.E.B. Du Bois had been a very prominent civil rights activist.) When the Justice Department required the

DuBois Clubs to register as a Communist front group, good loyal Americans knew what to do. They called up the Boys Club to announce that they would no longer contribute any money, or to threaten violence against them; and sure enough an explosion damaged the national headquarters of the youth group in San Francisco. Then former Vice President Richard Nixon, who was national board chairman of the Boys Club, declared: “This is an almost classic example of Communist deception and duplicity. The ‘DuBois Clubs’ are not unaware of the confusion they are causing among our supporters and among many other good citizens.”

\* **1966:** “Rhythm, Riots and Revolution: An Analysis of the Communist Use of Music, The Communist Master Music Plan”, by David A. Noebel, published by Christian Crusade Publications, (expanded version of 1965 pamphlet: “Communism, Hypnotism and the Beatles”). Some chapters: Communist Use of Mind Warfare ... Nature of Red Record Companies ... Destructive Nature of Beatle Music ... Communist Subversion of Folk Music ... Folk Music and the Negro Revolution ... Folk Music and the College Revolution

\* **1968:** William Calley, US Army Lieutenant, charged with overseeing the massacre of more than 100 Vietnamese civilians in My Lai in 1968, said some years later: “In all my years in the Army I was never taught that communists were human beings. We were there to kill ideology carried by – I don’t know – pawns, blobs, pieces of flesh. I was there to destroy communism. We never conceived of old people, men, women, children, babies.”

\* **1977:** Scientists theorized that the earth’s protective ozone layer was being damaged by synthetic chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons. The manufacturers and users of CFCs were not happy. They made life difficult for the lead scientist. The president of one aerosol manufacturing

**There was also opposition to UNESCO’s association with the UN Declaration of Human Rights on the grounds that it was trying to replace the American Bill of Rights with a less liberty-giving covenant of human rights**

## ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

**The Reagan administration declared that the Russians were spraying toxic chemicals over Laos, Cambodia and Afghanistan – the so-called “yellow rain” – and had caused more than ten thousand deaths by 1982 alone**

firm suggested that criticism of CFCs was “orchestrated by the Ministry of Disinformation of the KGB.”

\* **1978:** Life inside a California youth camp of the ultra anti-communist John Birch Society: Five hours each day of lectures on communism, Americanism and “The Conspiracy”; campers learned that the Soviet government had created a famine and spread a virus to kill a large number of citizens and make the rest of them more manageable; the famine led starving adults to eat their children; communist guerrillas in Southeast Asia jammed chopsticks into children’s ears, piercing their eardrums; American movies are all under the control of the Communists; the theme is always that capitalism is no better than communism; you can’t find a dictionary now that isn’t under communist influence; the communists are also taking over the Bibles.

\* The Reagan administration declared that the Russians were spraying toxic chemicals over Laos, Cambodia and Afghanistan – the so-called “yellow rain” – and had caused more than ten thousand deaths by 1982 alone, (including, in Afghanistan, 3,042 deaths attributed to 47 separate incidents between the summer of 1979 and the summer of 1981, so precise was the information). Secretary of State Alexander Haig was a prime dispenser of such stories, and President Reagan himself denounced the Soviet Union thusly more than 15 times in documents and speeches. The “yellow rain”, it turned out, was pollen-laden feces dropped by huge swarms of honeybees flying far overhead.

\* **1982:** In commenting about sexual harassment in the Army, General John Crosby stated that the Army doesn’t care about soldiers’ social lives – “The basic purpose of the United States Army is to kill Russians,” he said.

\* 1983: The US invasion of Grenada, the

home of the Cuban ambassador is damaged and looted by American soldiers; on one wall is written “AA”, symbol of the 82nd Airborne Division; beside it the message: “Eat shit, commie faggot.” ... “I want to fuck communism out of this little island,” says a marine, “and fuck it right back to Moscow.”

\* 1984: During a sound check just before his weekly broadcast, President Reagan spoke these words into the microphone: “My fellow Americans, I am pleased to tell you I have signed legislation to outlaw Russia, forever. We begin bombing in five minutes.” His words were picked up by at least two radio networks.

\* **1985:** October 29 BBC interview with Ronald Reagan: asked about the differences he saw between the US and Russia, the president replied: “I’m no linguist, but I’ve been told that in the Russian language there isn’t even a word for freedom.” (The word is “svoboda”.)

\* **1986:** Soviet artists and cultural officials criticized Rambo-like American films as an expression of “anti-Russian phobia even more pathological than in the days of McCarthyism”. Russian film-maker Stanislav Rostofsky claimed that on one visit to an American school “a young girl had trembled with fury when she heard I was from the Soviet Union, and said she hated Russians.”

\* **1986:** Roy Cohn, who achieved considerable fame and notoriety in the 1950s as an assistant to the communist-witch-hunting Senator Joseph McCarthy, died, reportedly of AIDS. Cohn, though homosexual, had denied that he was and had denounced such rumors as communist smears.

\* **1986:** After American journalist Nicholas Daniloff was arrested in Moscow for “spying” and held in custody for two weeks, New York Mayor Edward Koch sent a group of 10 visiting Soviet students storming out of City Hall in fury. “The Soviet government

is the pits,” said Koch, visibly shocking the students, ranging in age from 10 to 18 years. One 14-year-old student was so outraged he declared: “I don’t want to stay in this house. I want to go to the bus and go far away from this place. The mayor is very rude. We never had a worse welcome anywhere.” As matters turned out, it appeared that Daniloff had not been completely pure when it came to his news gathering.

\* **1989:** After the infamous Chinese crackdown on dissenters in Tiananmen Square in June, the US news media was replete with reports that the governments of Nicaragua, Vietnam and Cuba had expressed their support of the Chinese leadership. Said the *Wall Street Journal*: “Nicaragua, with Cuba and Vietnam, constituted the only countries in the world to approve the Chinese Communists’ slaughter of the students in Tiananmen Square.” But it was all someone’s fabrication; no such support had been expressed by any of the three governments. At that time, as now, there were few, if any, organizations other than the CIA which could manipulate major Western media in such a manner.

**NOTE:** It should be remembered that the worst consequences of anti-communism were not those discussed above. The worst consequences, the ultra-criminal consequences, were the abominable death, destruction, and violation of human rights that we know under various names: Vietnam, Chile, Korea, Guatemala, Cambodia, Indonesia, Brazil, Greece, Afghanistan, El Salvador, and many others.

#### **Anti-Communism, alive and well**

Anti-communism continues to have a detrimental effect upon the intelligence and honesty of Americans.

In April, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated that the Castro brothers “do not want to see an end to the embargo and do not want to see normalization with the United States because they would then lose

all the excuses for what hasn’t happened in Cuba in the last 50 years.”

She doesn’t believe that herself. But she thinks the rest of us are stupid enough to swallow it. If she did believe it, she’d advocate normalization of US-Cuban relations just to stick it to the Castros and show them up for the frauds she says they are. In effect the American Secretary of State declared that the central element of US Cuba policy for 50 years has done exactly the opposite of what it was intended to accomplish. Washington, for all practical purposes, has been a loyal – if unwitting – ally of the Havana regime.

As to “what hasn’t happened in Cuba in the last 50 years” – to add to the mountain of other evidence of the benevolence of Cuban society we now have Save the Children’s “State of the World’s Mothers Report 2010”. Save the Children, an internationally acclaimed children’s advocate organization, annually ranks the best and worst places to be a mother. Amongst the 81 “Less Developed Countries” analyzed, Cuba is ranked number one; i.e., the best place to be a mother. (Amongst the 43 “More Developed Countries” analyzed, the United States is ranked number 28.)

Cuban National Assembly president Ricardo Alarcon responded to Clinton’s statement by saying: “If she really thinks that the blockade benefits the Cuban government – which she wants to undermine – the solution is very simple: that they lift it even for a year to see whether it is in our interest or theirs.”

**CT**

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*Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2; Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower; West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir; and Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire.*

*Sources for almost all of the first section can be found in William Blum, **Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire** (2005), chapter 12.*

**Amongst the 81 “Less Developed Countries” analyzed, Cuba is ranked number one; i.e., the best place to be a mother. (Amongst the 43 “More Developed Countries” analyzed, the United States is ranked number 28)**

# Pedophiles and Popes

Doing the Vatican shuffle with **Michael Parenti**

**In many instances, accused clerics were quietly bundled off to distant congregations where they could prey anew upon the children of unsuspecting parishioners**

**W**hen Pope John Paul II was still living in Poland as Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, he claimed that the security police would accuse priests of sexual abuse just to hassle and discredit them. (*New York Times*, 3/28/10). For Wojtyła, the Polish pedophilia problem was nothing more than a Communist plot to smear the church.

By the early 1980s, Wojtyła, now ensconced in Rome as Pope John Paul II, treated all stories about pedophile clergy with dismissive aplomb, as little more than slander directed against the church. That remained his stance for the next twenty years.

Today in post-communist Poland, clerical abuse cases have been slowly surfacing, very slowly. Writing in the leading daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*, a middle-aged man reported having been sexually abused as a child by a priest. He acknowledged however that Poland was not prepared to deal with such transgressions. "It's still too early. . . . Can you imagine what life would look like if an inhabitant of a small town or village decided to talk? I can already see the committees of defense for the accused priests."

While church pedophiles may still enjoy a safe haven in Poland and other countries where the clergy are above challenge, things are breaking wide open elsewhere. Today we are awash in a sludge of revelations spanning whole countries and continents, going back

decades – or as some historians say – going back centuries. Only in the last few weeks has the church shown signs of cooperating with civil authorities. Here is the story.

## **Protecting the Perpetrators.**

As everyone now knows, for decades church superiors repeatedly chose to ignore complaints about pedophile priests. In many instances, accused clerics were quietly bundled off to distant congregations where they could prey anew upon the children of unsuspecting parishioners. This practice of denial and concealment has been so consistently pursued in diocese after diocese, nation after nation, as to leave the impression of being a deliberate policy set by church authorities.

And indeed it has been. Instructions coming directly from Rome have required every bishop and cardinal to keep matters secret. These instructions were themselves kept secret; the cover-up was itself covered up. Then in 2002, John Paul put it in writing, specifically mandating that all charges against priests were to be reported secretly to the Vatican and hearings were to be held in camera, a procedure that directly defies state criminal codes. Rather than being defrocked, many outed pedophile priests have been allowed to advance into well-positioned posts as administrators, vicars, and parochial school officials – repeatedly accused by their

victims while repeatedly promoted by their superiors.

Church spokesmen employ a vocabulary of compassion and healing – not for the victims but for the victimizers. They treat the child rapist as a sinner who confesses his transgression and vows to mend his ways. Instead of incarceration, there is repentance and absolution.

While this forgiving approach might bring comfort to some malefactors, it proves to be of little therapeutic efficacy when dealing with the darker appetites of pedophiles. A far more effective deterrent is the danger of getting caught and sent to prison. Absent any threat of punishment, the perpetrator is restrained only by the limits of his own appetite and the availability of opportunities.

The tender tolerance displayed by the church hierarchy toward child rapists does not extend to other controversial clergy. Think of those radical priests who have challenged the hierarchy in the politico-economic struggle for liberation theology, or who advocate lifting the prohibitions against birth control and abortion, or who propose that clergy be allowed to marry, or who preside over same-sex weddings, or who themselves are openly gay, or who believe women should be ordained, or who bravely call for investigations of the pedophilia problem itself.

Such clergy often have their careers shut down. Some are subjected to hostile investigations by church superiors.

Church leaders seem to forget that pedophilia is a felony crime and that, as citizens of a secular state, priests are subject to its laws just like the rest of us. Clerical authorities repeatedly have made themselves accessories to the crime, playing an active role in obstructing justice, arguing in court that criminal investigations of “church affairs” violated the free practice of religion guaranteed by the US Constitution—as if raping little children were a holy sacrament.

Church officials tell parishioners not to talk to state authorities. They offer no pastoral assistance to young victims and their shaken families. They do not investigate to

see if other children have been victimized by the same priests. Some young plaintiffs have been threatened with excommunication or suspension from Catholic school. Church leaders impugn their credibility, even going after them with countersuits.

Responding to charges that one of his priests sexually assaulted a six-year-old boy, Cardinal Bernard Law asserted that “the boy and his parents contributed to the abuse by being negligent.” Law himself never went to prison for the hundreds of cover-ups he conducted. In 2004, with things getting too hot for him in his Boston archdiocese, Law was rescued by Pope John Paul II to head one of Rome’s major basilicas, where he now lives with diplomatic immunity in palatial luxury on a generous stipend, supervised by no one but a permissive pontiff.

A judge of the Holy Roman Rota, the church’s highest court, wrote in a Vatican-approved article that bishops should not report sexual violations to civil authorities. And sure enough, for years bishops and cardinals have refrained from cooperating with law enforcement authorities, refusing to release abusers’ records, claiming that the confidentiality of their files came under the same legal protection as privileged communications in the confessional – a notion that has no basis in canon or secular law.

Bishop James Quinn of Cleveland even urged church officials to send incriminating files to the Vatican Embassy in Washington, DC, where diplomatic immunity would prevent the documents from being subpoenaed.

Years ago the Catholic hierarchy would insist that clerical pedophilia involved only a few bad apples and was being blown completely out of proportion. For the longest time John Paul scornfully denounced the media for “sensationalizing” the issue. He and his cardinals (Ratzinger included) directed more fire at news outlets for publicizing the crimes than at their own clergy for committing them.

Reports released by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (one of the more honest

**Responding to charges that one of his priests sexually assaulted a six-year-old boy, Cardinal Bernard Law asserted that “the boy and his parents contributed to the abuse by being negligent.”**

## CHURCH ABUSE

**One of every ten priests ordained in 1970 was charged as a pedophile by 2002**

organizations in the Catholic Church) documented the abuse committed in the United States by 4,392 priests against thousands of children between 1950 and 2002. One of every ten priests ordained in 1970 was charged as a pedophile by 2002. Another survey commissioned by the US bishops found that among 5,450 complaints of sexual abuse there were charges against at least sixteen bishops. So much for a few bad apples.

Still, even as reports were flooding in from Ireland and other countries, John Paul dismissed the pedophilic epidemic as “an American problem,” as if American priests were not members of his clergy, or as if this made it a matter of no great moment. John Paul went to his grave in 2005 still refusing to meet with victims and never voicing any apologies or regrets regarding sex crimes and cover-ups.

With Ratzinger’s accession to the papal throne as Benedict XVI, the cover-ups continued. As recently as April 2010, at Easter Mass in St. Peter’s Square, dean of the college of cardinals Angelo Sodano, assured Benedict that the faithful were unimpressed “by the gossip of the moment.” One would not know that “the gossip of the moment” included thousands of investigations, prosecutions, and accumulated charges extending back over decades.

During that same Easter weekend, Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera, archbishop of Mexico City, declared that the public uproar was an “overreaction” incited by the doings of “a few dishonest and criminal priests.” A few? An overreaction? Of course, the picture now becomes clear: a few bad apples were inciting overreaction by engaging in the gossip of the moment.

The church seems determined to learn nothing from its transgressions, preoccupied as it is with avoiding lawsuits and bad publicity.

### **Really Not All that Serious**

There are two ways we can think of child rape as being not a serious problem, and the Catholic hierarchy seems to have embraced

both these positions. First, pedophilia is not that serious if it involves only a few isolated and passing incidents. Second, an even more creepy way of downplaying the problem: child molestation is not all that damaging or that important. At worst, it is regrettable and unfortunate; it might greatly upset the child, but it certainly is not significant enough to cause unnecessary scandal and ruin the career of an otherwise splendid padre.

It is remarkable how thoroughly indifferent the church bigwigs have been toward the abused children. When one of the most persistent perpetrators, Rev. John Geoghan, was forced into retirement (not jail) after seventeen years and nearly 200 victims, Cardinal Law could still write him, “On behalf of those you have served well, in my own name, I would like to thank you. I understand yours is a painful situation.” It is evident that Law was more concerned about the “pain” endured by Geoghan than the misery he had inflicted upon minors.

In 2001, a French bishop was convicted in France for refusing to hand over to the police a priest who had raped children. It recently came to light that a former top Vatican cardinal, Dario Castrillón, had written to the bishop, “I congratulate you for not denouncing a priest to the civil authorities. You have acted well, and I am pleased to have a colleague in the episcopate who, in the eyes of history and of all the bishops in the world, preferred prison to denouncing his ‘son’ and priest.” (The bishop actually got off with a suspended sentence.) Castrillón claimed that Pope John Paul II had authorized the letter years ago and had told him to send it to bishops around the world. (*New York Times*, 4/22/2010.)

There are many more like Cardinal Law and Cardinal Castrillón in the hierarchy, aging men who have no life experience with children and show not the slightest regard or empathy for them. They claim it their duty to protect the “unborn child” but offer no protection to the children in their schools and parishes.

They themselves are called “Father” but they father no one. They do not reside in households or families. They live in an old-boys network, jockeying for power and position, dedicated to the Holy Mother Church that feeds, houses, and adorns them throughout their lives. From their heady heights, popes and bishops cannot hear the cries of children. In any case, the church belongs not to little children but to the bedecked oligarchs.

The damage done to sexual victims continues to go unnoticed: the ensuing years of depression, drug addiction, alcoholism, panic attacks, sexual dysfunction, and even mental breakdown and suicide—all these terrible aftereffects of child rape seem to leave popes and bishops more or less unruffled.

### **Circling the Wagons**

The Catholic hierarchy managed to convince itself that the prime victim in this dismal saga is the church itself. In 2010 it came to light that, while operating as John Paul’s über-hit man, Pope Benedict (then Cardinal Ratzinger) had provided cover and protection to several of the worst predator priests. The scandal was now at the pope’s door – exactly where it should have been many years earlier during John Paul’s reign.

The Vatican’s response was predictable. The hierarchy circled the wagons to defend pope and church from outside “enemies.” The cardinals and bishops railed furiously at critics who “assault” the church and, in the words of the archbishop of Paris, subject it to “a smear campaign.” Benedict himself blamed secularism and misguided applications of Vatican 2’s *aggiornamento* as contributing to the “context” of sexual abuse. Reform-minded liberalism made us do it, he seemed to be saying.

But this bristling Easter counterattack by the hierarchy did not play well. Church authorities came off looking like insular, arrogant elites who were unwilling to own up to a horrid situation largely of their own making.

Meanwhile the revelations continued. A bishop in Ireland resigned admitting he had

covered up child abuse cases. Bishops in Germany and Belgium stepped down after confessing to charges that they themselves had abused minors. And new allegations were arising in Chile, Norway, Brazil, Italy, France, and Mexico.

Then, a fortnight after Easter, the Vatican appeared to change course and for the first time issued a directive urging bishops to report abuse cases to civil authorities “if required by local law.” At the same time, Pope Benedict held brief meetings with survivor groups and issued sympathetic statements about their plight.

For many of the victims, the pontiff’s overtures and apologies were too little, too late. Their feeling was that if the Vatican really wanted to make amends, it should cooperate fully with law enforcement authorities and stop obstructing justice; it should ferret out abusive clergy and not wait until cases are publicized by others; and it should make public the church’s many thousands of still secret reports on priests and bishops.

In the midst of all this, some courageous clergy do speak out. At a Sunday mass in a Catholic church outside Springfield, Massachusetts, the Rev. James Scahill delivered a telling sermon to his congregation (*New York Times*, 4/12/10): “We must personally and collectively declare that we very much doubt the veracity of the pope and those of church authority who are defending him. It is beginning to become evident that for decades, if not centuries, church leadership covered up the abuse of children and minors to protect its institutional image and the image of priesthood”

The abusive priests, Scahill went on, were “felons.” He had “severe doubt” about the Vatican’s claims of innocent ignorance. “If by any slimmest of chance the pope and all his bishops didn’t know – they all should resign on the basis of sheer and complete ignorance, incompetence, and irresponsibility.”

How did Father Scahill’s suburban Catholic parishioners receive his scorching remarks? One or two walked out. The rest gave him a standing ovation.

**The damage done to sexual victims continues to go unnoticed: the ensuing years of depression, drug addiction, alcoholism, panic attacks, sexual dysfunction, and even mental breakdown and suicide—all these terrible aftereffects of child rape seem to leave popes and bishops more or less unruffled**

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**CT**

# Inside Gaza

An excerpt from **Norman Finkelstein's** new book, *This Time We Went Too Far*, published by OR Books

Having just spent several months perusing Mahatma Gandhi's collected works, and deeply inspired by his commitment to living the life of the impoverished masses, I had resolved to rough it in Gaza. But this was easier said than done

To preserve my sense of purpose, and keep the Palestine struggle from becoming a lifeless abstraction, I need periodically to recharge my moral batteries by reconnecting with the actual people living under occupation and by witnessing firsthand the unfolding tragedy. From each trip I invariably carry away a handful of stark images that I fix in my mind's eye to dispel the occasional hesitations about staying the course. When the memories begin to fade I know it is time to return.

And so, in June 2009, six months after the invasion, I joined a delegation that journeyed to Gaza for a brief visit. Though I had been to Gaza before, most of my time during previous trips to the region was spent with friends in the West Bank. Israel has prohibited me from entering the country for ten years, thereby making it impossible for me to visit the West Bank, allegedly because I am a "security" risk. An editorial in *Haaretz* titled "Who's Afraid of Finkelstein?" cast doubt on the decision's premise – "Considering his unusual and extremely critical views, one cannot avoid the suspicion that refusing to allow him to enter Israel was a punishment rather than a precaution" – and went on to argue against banning me. Nonetheless it is unclear if or when I will be able to see my Palestinian friends again. In the meantime, going to Gaza via Egypt at least enabled me to get some feeling for developments on the ground.



Having just spent several months perusing Mahatma Gandhi's collected works, and deeply inspired by his commitment to living the life of the impoverished masses, I had resolved to rough it in Gaza. But this was easier said than done. Along with several other delegates I volunteered to stay at a Palestinian family's home rather than a hotel. Dressed to the nines, hair gelled, and reeking of cologne,



several Palestinian youths met our group to select their home-stays. They departed with first one young female member of our delegation, then another, then another. The only candidates left hanging at the end of the evening were middle-aged men. We checked into the hotel.

It would be untrue to say that I was terribly jolted by the devastation that I encountered everywhere in Gaza. During the first intifada I had passed time with families in the West Bank living in tents beside the rubble of their former dwellings. Israel would routinely detonate the family residence of an alleged activist in the dead of night after giving the occupants just minutes to evacuate.

Soon after the 2006 war I toured Lebanon. Many of the villages in the south had been flattened. The Dahiya district of Beirut resembled photographs from bombed-out cities during World War II: large craters where apartment houses and offices once stood, the occasional shell of a building in the distance. So by now I have become somewhat inured to Israel's calling card to its Arab neighbors. Nonetheless a few memories from that trip to Gaza remain etched in my mind with particular sharpness. I remember an 11-year-old girl peering out of thick-lensed glasses while she lingered beside the American International School that had been demolished. Speaking in perfect English (her father was a physician and her friends ranked her the top student in the class) the girl wistfully remembered that it had been the best school in Gaza. I also recall the evening we met with government officials in a tent beside what had previously been the Palestinian parliamentary building and was now just a pile of smoldering rubble. Although the devastation was apparently designed not just to subdue Hamas but also to humiliate it, the representatives seemed oblivious to any slight to their dignity from having to convene in such reduced circumstances. And I can still see the huge rectangular depression in the heart of the Islamic University campus where the science and technology building once stood. An administrator recalled with pride tinged by melancholy that, just prior to the attack, the

university had installed cutting-edge equipment for biological research in the building.

No Palestinian I met evinced anger or sorrow at what happened. People appeared calmly determined to resume life, such as it was, before the invasion, although the continuing blockade plainly weighed heavily on them. A young hijab-clad guide sitting next to me on a bus one night casually mentioned that her fiancé had been killed on the last day of the invasion, and then punctuated her statement by staring, dry-eyed, into my pupils. It was neither an accusation nor an appeal for pity. It was as if Israel's periodic depredations were now experienced as a natural disaster to which people had grown accustomed; as if Gaza were situated in the path of tornadoes, except that in Gaza every season is tornado season. Some demented mind in an air-conditioned Tel Aviv office conjures up poetic names for its numberless "operations." Why not a little truth in advertising just this once and call them "Operation Attila the Hun," "Operation Genghis Khan," or "Operation Army of Vandals"?

The female head administrator of a children's library housed in a magnificent edifice that would be the envy of any major city in the United States offered some painful reflections. (Watching the children hard at work in the library, I secretly breathed a sigh of relief that whether wittingly or by miracle Israel had not inflicted on it the same fate as the American International School's.) She was one of seven siblings all of whom had obtained advanced degrees, and, apart from her, had left for greener pastures abroad. She had studied in Great Britain but against her parents' recommendation decided to return to her home. She recalled questioning her decision when, on her way to work one day, Israeli soldiers forced her to wade waist-deep in mud to get past a checkpoint.

Our delegation consisted mostly of Americans. Originally I assumed that I was the only Jew on the delegation, but after making several discreet inquiries I began to wonder whether anyone on the delegation was not Jewish. So far as I could tell Gazans did not care much

**Some demented mind in an air-conditioned Tel Aviv office conjures up poetic names for its numberless "operations." Why not a little truth in advertising just this once and call them "Operation Attila the Hun," "Operation Genghis Khan," or "Operation Army of Vandals"?**

## BOOK EXCERPT

**Although Hamas sought to emulate Hezbollah's victory in 2006, after the massacre it perhaps sunk in that Israel cannot be defeated by shooting firecrackers and Roman candles at it**

about our pedigrees, although, to my mortification, the rector at the Islamic University introduced me as a "Holocaust survivor." I politely corrected him: "tenure battle survivor." Did I really look 90 years old?!

Hamas has a fearsome reputation, but it met its match with the feisty feminists leading our delegation. Among their complaints, forthrightly expressed, was that Hamas did not allow the delegation sufficient freedom of movement at night. Although Hamas eventually gave ground my sympathies went out to them, and not just because in these verbal bouts they appeared the underdogs. It is not as if Gaza had a lively nightlife. Furthermore, Israeli ships still fired on Gaza every night, and Hamas feared that Israel (or its Palestinian underlings) might create an incident to discredit it. It is also not as if Hamas's security concerns lacked plausibility: after all we were Americans, and U.S. intelligence agencies have been complicit in the repression of Hamas.

I had several meetings with Hamas officials and cadre. It was later conveyed to me that those I met were mostly from Hamas's "moderate" wing, although I cannot say exactly what distinguished them from members of the "hard-line" wing, and a lot of the speculation on this matter appears poorly informed. In his dispatch from Gaza the *New Yorker's* Lawrence Wright knowingly told readers that Gaza-based Hamas leader and Prime Minister Ismael Haniya is a "moderate" who has "spoken of negotiating a long-term truce with Israel," whereas Damascus-based head of the Hamas politburo Khalid Mishal is a "hard-liner" who is "more likely to initiate radical, destabilizing actions." But Mishal, the "hard-liner," has repeatedly called for a diplomatic settlement with Israel.

At each of the parleys with Hamas members I repeated the same message: the current diplomatic posture of Hamas seemed in alignment with representative political organizations, respected juridical institutions, and major human rights groups. Many Hamas members appeared genuinely surprised when I rattled off the "pro-Palestin-

ian" positions espoused by these mainstream bodies. If I was correct, then Hamas should couch its political platform in their language because the chink in Israel's armor is its diplomatic isolation. Hamas must hammer away the critical point that Israel is the real outlier in the international community and obstacle to peace: not "Hamas says," but "the U.N. General Assembly resolution supported by 160 nations says"; not "Hamas says, but "the International Court of Justice says"; not "Hamas says" but "Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International say."

My interlocutors seemed earnest and willing to listen. (They even heard out in good humor the head of the delegation when she implored them to shave their "scary beards" to improve Hamas's image in the West.) Although Hamas sought to emulate Hezbollah's victory in 2006, after the massacre it perhaps sunk in that Israel cannot be defeated by shooting firecrackers and Roman candles at it. When I was leaving Gaza, U.S. President Barack Obama had just arrived in Cairo to deliver his landmark address. Hamas sent a letter to him partly informed by our conversations. (A copy of this letter can be found in the appendix.)

For most of the time in Gaza, our delegation was guarded by young Hamas militants. As we parted ways at the end of the visit I felt moved and obliged to state publicly that in my opinion none of them was deserving of the death Israel has attempted to inflict on them. I am aware that according to the "laws of war" they are "legitimate" military targets. But in a rational world the locution "laws of war" would make as much sense as "etiquette of cannibals." It is probably true that violent conflicts would be more lethal and destructive in the absence of these laws, but it is also true that, in their pretense of neutrality, they obscure fundamental truths. Whether from conviction, frustration, or torment, these young men have chosen to defend their homeland from foreign marauders with weapon in hand. Were I living in Gaza, still in my prime and able to muster the courage, I could easily be one of them. **CT**

# The making of a tyrant

**Trevor Grundy** reads an enthralling account of the Catholic Church's record of achievement, betrayal and cowardice in Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe

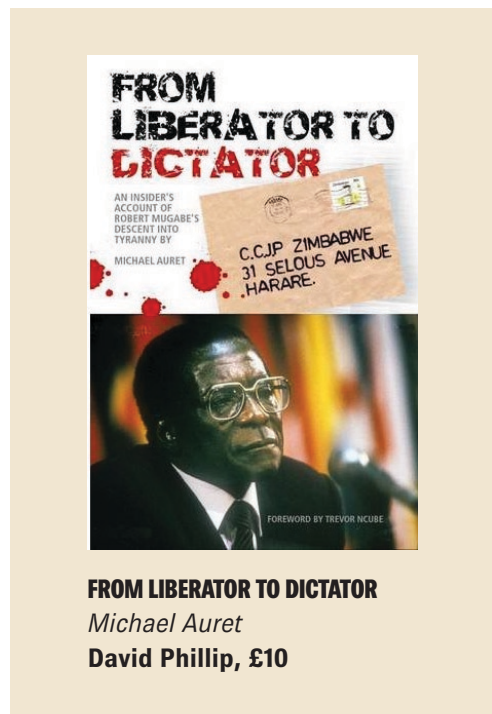
In 1980, the President of Tanzania, Dr Julius Nyerere, told Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe that he had inherited the Jewel of Africa. Close to thirty years later, powdered glass is all that remains.

To try and find answers to questions about what went wrong, many of us have turned the pages of hefty tomes penned by journalists with African experience – Richard Dowden (*Africa – Altered States, Ordinary Miracles*) Martin Meredith (*The State of Africa*) Guy Arnold (*Africa – A Modern History*). We have sobbed along with Peter Godwin (*Mukiwa and When the Crocodile East the Sun*), Alexandra Fuller (*Don't Let's Go To the Dogs Tonight*), David Blair (*Degrees of Violence*) and Judith Todd (*Through the Darkness*).

Sadly, almost all of them are way beyond the financial reach of young Africans. Most are also over-written. Too much information, as they say. When I asked Michael Wolfers, a former Africa editor of the (London) *Times*, if he'd read them he replied: "Read them? I can hardly lift them."

So, welcome to a new and much more modestly priced work by an author who succeeds better than any of the above in conveying what it meant to have been in thrall to Robert Mugabe while serving and not just writing about the needs of ordinary people.

In 1980, Mike Auret stood at a slightly



In 1980, Mike Auret stood at a slightly odd angle to the rest of the European universe in Zimbabwe

odd angle to the rest of the European universe in Zimbabwe.

That was a year when most of the old guard of white liberals, men and women who had lived the good life in Rhodesia while condemning all the policies of Ian Smith which made it such a good life, were told by the new men on the African block that they were surplus to national requirements.

The Australia-based academic Dr Ian Hancock tells us in his 1984 book *White*

## BOOK REVIEW

**The canny Mugabe knew that Auret was respected by human rights workers and newspaper editors around the world. Such men were needed inside, not outside, the tent**

*Liberals, Moderates and Radicals in Rhodesia 1953-1980* (Groom Helm Publishers, London and Sydney) that a few days after Independence a group of whites went to the headquarters of the ruling party Zanu (PF) and offered to share their political experience and democratic expertise with the country's freshly installed freedom fighters so they might better understand the process of government.

Hancock goes on to say that after 17 years of "futile and sometimes half-hearted" opposition to the rule of Ian Smith, it was, perhaps, somewhat impertinent for white liberals to presume that they had anything to teach men and women who had endured every hardship to liberate their country from all white rule imposed after the arrival of the Pioneer Column in 1890.

After all, white soldiers and farmers had killed upwards of 33,000 blacks during the seven year Second Chimurenga or war (1972-1979) between the guerrillas of Robert Mugabe (ZANLA) and Joshua Nkomo (ZIPRA).

A dispirited delegation picked its way through a throng of exultant Africans and out into the world which liberals would like even less than the one they had tried to change. The irrelevance of white liberalism became official, says Hancock and he was right.

But Mike Auret was one of those liberals who was needed and not just by the Catholic Church in which he was raised and which he served so well. The canny Mugabe knew that Auret was respected by human rights workers and newspaper editors around the world. Such men were needed inside, not outside, the tent.

And he was a son of the soil, indigenous to Africa. The child of white settlers, Mike Auret served ten years in the Federal Army when southern Rhodesia was tied to northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi) between the years 1953-1963 and 12 years farming before Robert Mugabe became Prime Minister.

Deported under the rule of Ian Smith, he

returned home in 1980 and took up the job of chairman of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) which supplied so many international journalists with information about atrocities committed by the white-officered Rhodesian Army between 1972-1979.

At independence, Auret (like so many of us who worked and lived there at that time) was overwhelmed by Mugabe's speech about the need for national racial and political reconciliation.

"If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and an ally with the same national interest, loyalty, rights and duties as myself," he declared.

### **The world swooned**

The author several times met Mugabe and makes no attempt in this at times painfully honest book to hide how he was captivated by the man's high intelligence and sincerity.

In a mere 179 pages, Mike Auret provides us with a sketch of the Catholic Church's great achievements in Rhodesia and then in Zimbabwe. It also provides us with a picture of a few of the Roman Church's survival tactics in Africa which many Zimbabweans regard as acts of betrayal and cowardice.

Chapter 18 ("Breaking the Silence") tells how the Catholic Bishops Conference in Zimbabwe attempted to suppress the publication of a report that told part of the story of Mugabe's horrendous attempt to wipe out political opponents in Matabeleland between 1983-1987 when he used a North Korean-trained political army to obliterate an estimated 20,000 innocent men, women and children in Matabeleland and the Midlands as the world stood by and (in the case of Britain) watched and said not a word.

The most chilling moment in this enthralling and timely work is when Archbishop Patrick Chakaipa, a close friend of Robert Mugabe, turned to Auret at a Bishops' Conference in the Zimbabwean Midlands in No-

vember 1996 and muttered angrily – “Never! This will never be published.”

When it was, thanks to an un-named person who sent the document to the editor of the *Mail and Guardian* in Johannesburg, relations between Mike Auret and the Catholic Church were strained. He resigned from the CCJP after almost 30 years service.

Today, Mugabe is ensconced at State House where he looks like staying until his death.

Mike Auret now lives in Ireland but readers are left in no doubt where his heart lies or about (even now) his reluctance to condemn Mugabe who is a man he once not only respected but loved.

“For my part,” he writes, “I spent the first decade (1980-1990) believing in him, despite Matabeleland and working hard to bring about the development he seemed to want for the country. In the second decade (1990-2000) disillusionment began and the drive for development became a drive for democracy and the protection of human rights. But it became clear as time went on

what a white person who considered himself indigenous and who dared to criticize would not be accepted in an authoritarian state.”

This in an important book that widens our understanding of events between 1980 and 2000 in what was once Africa’s most promising country.

Mercifully, there’s no American style pot of gold at the end of this long faded rainbow and the author reminds us that even when Robert Mugabe fades away, Zimbabweans will remain for some time at the mercy of the great wrecker’s followers. “There is,” he writes, “little moral conscience among them and perhaps they have another chapter to write before they succumb to the pressure of their neighbours and the world.” **CT**

*Trevor Grundy worked as a journalist in central, eastern and southern Africa from 1966-1996. In Zimbabwe, where he worked from 1978 to 1996, he was a correspondent for Time, the Scotsman, Beeld, Deutsche Welle and the SABC.*

**Mercifully, there’s no American style pot of gold at the end of this long faded rainbow and the author reminds us that even when Robert Mugabe fades away, Zimbabweans will remain for some time at the mercy of the great wrecker’s followers**

# LOSING OUR COOL

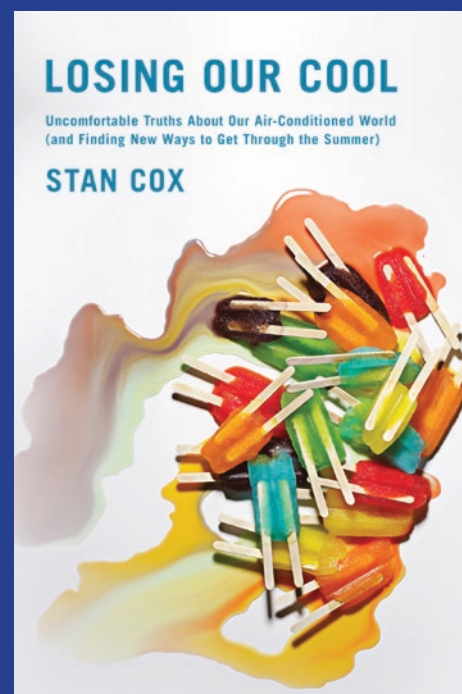
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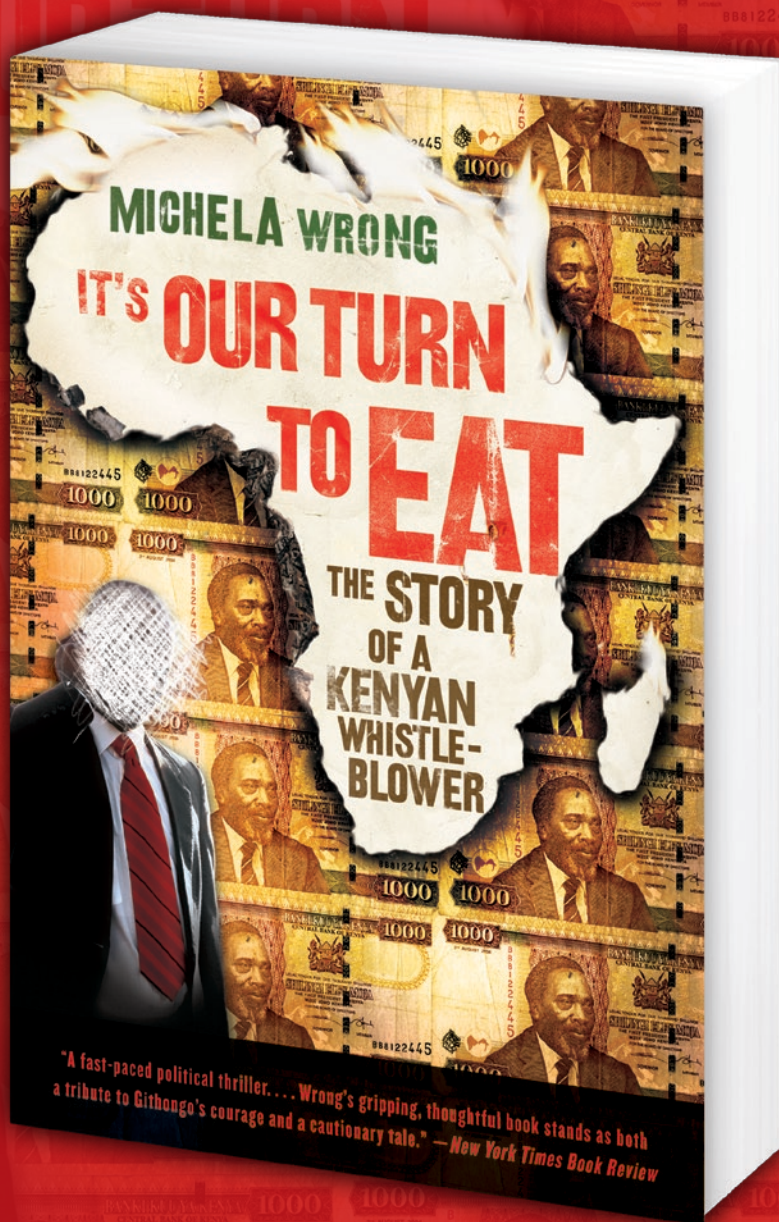
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# My dead dad

Ian Marchant on the death of his father

**M**y Dad died at 11.25pm on May 6th, 2010, just as the UK election results were starting to come in. He was a man without qualities. As his fifth and final wife said to me on the phone a few days after his death, “Ah loved him, but he loathed everything and everybody. He had a narcissistic personality disorder. I hope you never get that.” I told her that although I had a narcissistic personality, I felt that it wasn’t disordered. Now I think I know what she means.

I did my grieving for him a long time ago. He used to rant that I only hated him because I’d been told bad things about him. He was right that I had been told bad things about him for most of my life, but they didn’t stop me loving him, because I didn’t believe them, and he was my Dad. When, as an adult, I came to see that the things I had been told were true, even then I still didn’t hate him. I just wished I’d had another father. In the end, I felt nothing but horror.

In 2006 I went to visit him in Florida, where he had been living for fifteen years or so. He had an American wife, whom I liked. He’d been diagnosed with lung cancer in 1999, and had had a lung removed. He had diabetes, and a spot of prostate cancer, too. But he knew that the lung cancer would get him one day, that removing the lung was only a postponement. This trip was our last chance to talk stuff through. His wife went

to visit her daughter in West Virginia, so my Dad and I could bond. We spent a fortnight in one another’s company, and it was enough. At the end of the trip, I wrote to his wife, telling her I wanted nothing more to do with him; and that, furthermore, I wanted writing out of his will, since all he cared about was money, and I wanted him to see if he could take it with him. My sister had done something similar ten years previously; so had my uncle and one of my aunts. I was just the last person that he had driven away, apart from his American wife. I flew back from Florida to Gatwick, called my step-father to tell him I loved him, and that he had always been my real father anyway; and that was that. I didn’t hear from my Dad, and nor did I expect to.

Until February this year, when he phoned up out of the blue. I was away, so he spoke to my wife for almost an hour. They’d never met. She told me that he couldn’t have been more offensive, unpleasant and insensitive if he’d wanted to. I told her that was him trying to be nice. I was angry that he’d found my phone number. A few days later, he called again, and we spoke. He told me that he was leaving his wife in the States and going to live in Ireland, in a place called Tramore, near Waterford. He said he’d never been there, but he couldn’t stand the US anymore. He’d been fighting with his wife’s family, and wanted out. I told him he was

**We spent a fortnight in one another’s company, and it was enough. At the end of the trip, I wrote to his wife, telling her I wanted nothing more to do with him**

## MEMORIES

**My Dad had a sentimental attachment to the Ireland that he had seen depicted in Oirish Pubs and Finian's Rainbow. He loved traditional Irish music. My Mum loved Nat King Cole**

stupid, but that he could call me when he got there, if he wanted. He didn't. I forgot him.

On the day before the election, I got a call from a medical social worker in Waterford, telling me my Dad was severely ill, that the cancer had come back, and that I should consider flying over at once. He'd given her my number, and told her I was his next of kin. I told her that it was inconvenient, because I had three shows over the course of the coming weekend. I sing in a cabaret duo called Your Dad, and we stood to make a couple of hundred quid each from the gigs. I think she thought me a bit callous. She said, 'You must do what you think right.' I arranged to fly out on Monday May 10 to see him. The next morning, Election day, the head of the palliative care team at Waterford Regional Hospital called me, and told me my Dad wanted to speak to me.

"Put him on ... "

So I got to speak to my Dad on his death bed. He could hardly breathe. He said that I had to love him, as I was his son, and I'd "come out of his body". He told me that he was leaving an estate valued at £250,000, but that I wasn't getting any, and "neither are your girls".

He said, "I know I've not been a perfect father ... " I said that no one was; that I "certainly wasn't a perfect father. "Hah," my Dad gasped. He had got what he wanted to comfort him into the next world. "I'm facking glad to hear you admit it," he said. "At last ... " I had given him some kind of absolution. My lack of perfection as a father was the only explanation he felt he needed for his own fallings short.

He asked me to say that we were mates, so I did. We weren't, not ever, not once. I told him that I could be there the next day, but he said it would worry him because of the money. "Who'd pay?" he asked. "Me or you?" Then he said, "But you talking to me is worth a million dollars."

Then he became agitated, and said he couldn't talk anymore. I said I'd call the following morning to see if he felt able to talk.

Instead, Sister Fidelma from the palliative care ward phoned me at 11.35pm, to say my dear old Dad had died. He was cremated, alone, unmourned, on Saturday May 8 at the Island Crematorium outside Cork. It was also my younger daughter's 21st birthday, which Dad wouldn't have known or cared about if he was still alive.

I had booked that flight for Monday, from Luton to Waterford. Dad's landlord Pat Doyle picked me up from the airport. We went to the hospital to collect some paperwork, and then onto the Community Care Centre to register the death and collect the death certificates. Then we called at Thompson's undertakers to collect the ashes. The place had once been one of those cute Irish pubs that serves beer, and which also functions as a shoe shop, or a barbers, or, in the case of Thompsons, a funeral directors. My Dad loved all that stuff. He had a sentimental attachment to the Ireland that he had seen depicted in Oirish Pubs and Finian's Rainbow. He loved traditional Irish music. My Mum loved Nat King Cole. They lived together until I was 10. Everyday, they fought to get their records on the turntable. When he was home, Dad would always win, and the house would be full of the sounds of The Clancy Brothers or the Dubliners. He liked rebel songs, especially. He loved standing up in pubs and singing "The Wild Colonial Boy." He despised Nat King Cole, who he said was saccharine shit. He told me I needed to learn to appreciate real music, such as "The Mountains of Mourne."

So Pat Doyle took me to the apartment he had rented my Dad in Tramore. There was a great view along the beach towards the sand dune the locals call The Baldy Man. I put down the cardboard box containing Dad's ashes, and started to sort through his things. There wasn't much; a suitcase full of clothes, a jewellery box of old fashioned cuff links and collar studs; a small TV. There were some papers. I looked through them to see what he had chosen to bring with him from the States to Ireland, where he had come to die in order to cause



maximum inconvenience to those people who had conspired against him.

He didn't have any photos. No photos of his five wives, his two children, his five grandchildren, his lovely, kind parents, his funny warm brothers and sisters. No, but he did have a large bundle of napkins from American casinos, on which he had kept records of winning combinations of numbers on the Florida State Lottery, which seems to have been his only great interest in life. He was trying to work out a system.

As well as the napkins, there were two meticulously kept account books, dating all the way back to 1976. He noted every penny he ever spent; shopping, car maintenance, grandchildren's Christmas presents. I'm looking forward to auditing these accounts, and mapping them against his life. It will tell me more about what he felt to be important than he ever did while he was alive. But on his deathbed, he did say one true thing. I did come out of his body; that's why he couldn't quite leave me alone, despite it being all I had asked him for.

Looking at his papers, talking to my Mum, my sister, my step-mothers, my aunt, my uncles, I know one thing for sure about my Dad. He was what used to be called a

sociopath. Here's a handy checklist to see if you are, too: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hare\\_Psychopathy\\_Checklist#Hare.27s\\_Checklist\\_and\\_other\\_mental\\_disorders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hare_Psychopathy_Checklist#Hare.27s_Checklist_and_other_mental_disorders)

I have too many of his traits, there can be no doubt. Here is everything that is worst in my nature. Everything that was worst in my Dad's nature turned from a twisted weakness into a deep sickness that took him over, and drove away everyone who ever loved him, but who he was unable to love in return. I have remembered again the one thing he taught me. I am the son of a sociopath. Everyday I pray that I won't turn into him.

Here's a song for Alan Raymond Marchant, born in Farncombe Surrey 13/12/31. Died Waterford Regional Hospital, 06/05/10 – [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xdxoe\\_nat-king-cole-trio\\_music](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xdxoe_nat-king-cole-trio_music) **CT**

*Ian Marchant is a writer and performer. He is the author of six books, including the critically acclaimed travel memoirs, **The Longest Crawl** and **Parallel Lines**. His new book, **Something of the Night** is due for publication by Simon and Schuster in 2011. He lives with his family in Mid-Wales. His web site is [www.ianmarchant.com](http://www.ianmarchant.com)*

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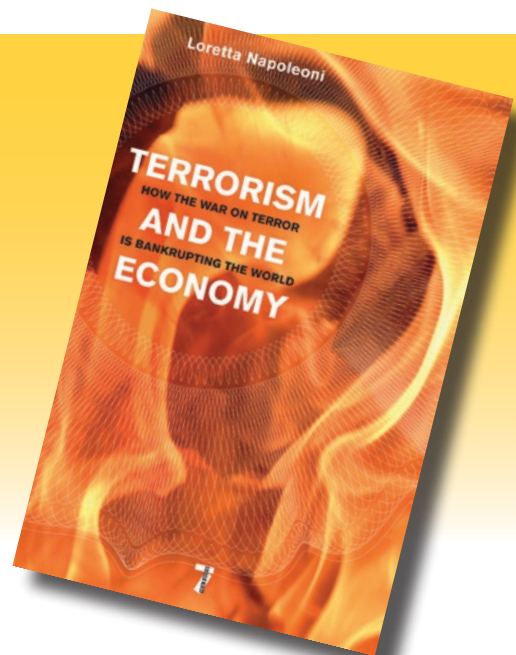
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# A child in Bagram and Guantanamo

Andy Worthington on the torture and forthcoming trial of child soldier Omar Khadr

**A number of witnesses revealed details of Khadr's mistreatment, in the US prison at Bagram airbase in Afghanistan, which hinted at his inclusion in an abusive program that, before the 9/11 attacks, before Yoo's memos and before a general coarsening of attitudes towards abuse and the mistreatment of prisoners**

**A**re we so inured to the implementation of torture by the Bush administration that we no longer recognize what torture is? Torture, according to the UN Convention Against Torture, to which the US is a signatory, is “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person.”

Under President Bush, however, John Yoo, an ideological puppet in the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, which is supposed to objectively interpret the law as it applies to the executive branch, purported to redefine torture, in two memos that have become known as the “torture memos,” as the infliction of physical pain “equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death,” or the infliction of mental pain which “result[s] in significant psychological harm of significant duration e.g. lasting for months or even years.”

I ask this question about torture – and our attitude to it – because of what took place in May, in pre-trial hearings at Guan-

tánamo preceding the trial by Military Commission of the Canadian prisoner Omar Khadr, who was just 15 years old when he was seized after a fire in Afghanistan in July 2002. A number of witnesses revealed details of Khadr's mistreatment, in the US prison at Bagram airbase in Afghanistan, which hinted at his inclusion in an abusive program that, before the 9/11 attacks, before Yoo's memos and before a general coarsening of attitudes towards abuse and the mistreatment of prisoners, would have led to calls for that mistreatment to be thoroughly investigated, and, very possibly, for it to be regarded as torture or as cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment.

In Khadr's case, these questions should not even need raising, for a number of other compelling reasons. The first concerns his age. Under the terms of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflict, to which the US is also a signatory, juveniles – defined as those under the age of 18 when the crime they are accused of committing took place – “require special protection.” The Optional Protocol specifically recognizes “the special needs of those children who are particularly vulnerable to recruitment or use in hostilities,” and requires its signatories to promote “the physical and psychosocial rehabilitation and social reintegration of children who are

victims of armed conflict.”

Instead, however, the US government is attempting, for the third time, to prosecute Khadr for war crimes in a special trial system for foreign terror suspects – the Military Commissions – which were first ruled illegal by the Supreme Court in 2006, were then revived by Congress but abandoned by President Obama on his first day in office (after they had succeeded in delivering just three dubious results), and were then revived again by President Obama, with the support of Congress, last summer.

Compounding the dark absurdity of Khadr’s proposed trial is an uncomfortable truth that has been particularly noted by Lt. Col. David Frakt, a former military defense attorney for the Commissions, who has regularly pointed out that the Military Commissions are fundamentally flawed because they contain “law of war offenses” invented by Congress, including “Providing Material Support to Terrorism” and “Murder in Violation of the Law of War.” Lt. Col. Frakt has recently expressed even graver concerns about how the new Military Commissions Act includes a passage which claims that “a detainee may be convicted of murder in violation of the law of war even if they did not actually violate the law of war.”

Critics of Khadr’s trial have, from the beginning, recognized that there is something horribly skewed about redefining the internationally accepted laws of war so that one side in an armed conflict – the US – can kill whoever it wants with impunity, whereas its opponents are viewed as terrorists, or, when brought to trial, as those who have committed “Murder in Violation of the Law of War.”

Nevertheless, as the Obama administration has decided to press ahead with Khadr’s trial, pre-trial hearings were recently held to address concerns raised by Khadr’s defense team. These largely skirted the issues discussed in the paragraphs above, but focused unerringly on Khadr’s alleged mistreatment, through a “Motion to Suppress Statements Procured Using Torture, Coer-

cion and Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment”, in which his lawyers argued that any self-incriminating statements that Khadr may have made should be ruled out because of the manner in which they were extracted.’

#### The torture of Omar Khadr

Over the years, and in an affidavit submitted in February 2008, Khadr has described his mistreatment in detail, explaining how he was unconscious for a week after his capture, when he was severely wounded, and how, in Bagram, where he was taken after just two weeks in a hospital, his interrogations began immediately, at the hands of an interrogator who manipulated his injuries (the exact details were redacted from his affidavit). Crucially, he also explained how, as soon as he regained consciousness, “the first soldier told me that I had killed an American with a grenade,” and how, during his first interrogation at Bagram, “I figured out right away that I would simply tell them whatever I thought they wanted to hear in order to keep them from causing me [redacted].”

There is much more in the affidavit – casual cruelty, whereby guards made Khadr do hard manual labor when his wounds were not healed, and, significantly, threats “to have me raped, or sent to other countries like Egypt, Syria, Jordan or Israel to be raped.” He also noted, “I would always hear people screaming, both day and night,” and explained that other prisoners were scared of his interrogator. “Most people would not talk about what had been done to them,” he declared. “This made me afraid.”

Khadr also described what happened to him in Guantánamo, where he “arrived around the time that a regime of humiliation, isolation and abuse, including extreme temperature manipulation, forced nudity and sexual humiliation, had just been introduced, by reverse-engineering torture techniques, used in a military program designed to train US personnel to resist interrogation if captured, in an attempt to increase

**Critics of Khadr’s trial have, from the beginning, recognized that there is something horribly skewed about redefining the internationally accepted laws of war so that one side in an armed conflict – the US – can kill whoever it wants with impunity, whereas its opponents are viewed as terrorists**

## JUSTICE ON TRIAL

**He found Khadr hooded and chained to a cage by his wrists with his arms “just above eye level”**

the meager flow of ‘actionable intelligence’ from the prison.”

At various points in 2003, while the use of these techniques was still widespread, Khadr stated that he was short-shackled in painful positions and left for up to ten hours in a freezing cold cell, threatened with rape and with being transferred to another country where he could be raped, and, on one particular occasion, when he had been left short-shackled in a painful position until he urinated on himself:

“Military police poured pine oil on the floor and on me, and then, with me lying on my stomach and my hands and feet cuffed together behind me, the military police dragged me back and forth through the mixture of urine and pine oil on the floor. Later, I was put back in my cell, without being allowed a shower or a change of clothes. I was not given a change of clothes for two days. They did this to me again a few weeks later.”

Crucially, when describing the interrogations that punctuated these experiences at Guantánamo, Khadr explained, “I did not want to expose myself to any more harm, so I always just told interrogators what I thought they wanted to hear. Having been asked the same questions so many times, I knew what answers made interrogators happy and would always tailor my answers based on what I thought would keep me from being harmed.”

Until May, these claims – though well-known to those who have followed Khadr’s case – had, for the most part, not been aired in a courtroom. In response to the defense motion, however, the government attempted to refute Khadr’s claims, calling a female interrogator who stated that Khadr had voluntarily admitted that he threw the grenade that killed US Sgt. Christopher Speer, during sessions after his arrival at Guantánamo in October 2002 that were perfectly amicable, and an FBI agent, Robert Fuller, who stated that his interrogations of Khadr at Bagram earlier in October 2002 were also “conversational” and “non-confrontational,” and that Khadr had freely admitted to throwing the

grenade that killed Sgt. Speer.

Whilst it was possible – if not probable – that both interrogators were telling the truth about interrogating Khadr non-coercively, the problem remains that Khadr has stated that, from the time of his very first interrogation, he regarded telling his interrogators what they wanted to hear as the best way of avoiding mistreatment, and so may not have been telling them the truth. As a result, the latest witnesses were more significant because they shed light on the early days after he recovered consciousness in US custody, and, in particular, on his first interrogation and his subsequent interaction with that interrogator. Along the way, further witnesses cast shadows on the government’s otherwise clean picture of interrogations conducted in a non-coercive environment.

It would have remarkable had this not happened, as countless witnesses – including soldiers as well as current and former Guantánamo prisoners – have described the brutality at Bagram at the time Khadr was held there between August and October 2002, which led, just over a month after Khadr’s departure for Guantánamo, to the murder of two prisoners – and, very possibly, to other murders at the time he was held.

### **The medic’s testimony – and “Palestinian hanging”**

The first to reveal a glimpse of the regime at Bagram was, ironically, a medic called as a witness by the prosecution. “Mr. M,” as he was identified, who testified by video link from Boston, countered Khadr’s claims that, while he was at Bagram, “five people in civilian clothes would come and change my bandages,” and that they “treated me very roughly and videotaped me while they did it,” stating that he alone changed his bandages twice a day, and that no rough treatment was involved.

He did, however, note that, on one occasion, he found Khadr hooded and chained to a cage by his wrists with his arms “just above eye level,” and that when he lifted the

hood, Khadr was visibly upset. The medic added, as Carol Rosenberg described it in the *Miami Herald*, that “he didn’t object to Khadr’s treatment, because chaining was an approved form of punishment” at Bagram, “adding that he didn’t know the reason for the punishment nor how long Khadr had been chained.”

This rather nonchalant description of “chaining” may not have shocked the medic, especially as the chains were apparently “slack enough to allow Khadr’s feet to touch the floor,” but the only reason for this was because of the severity of his wounds, as Khadr explained in his affidavit, in which he also stated that he was chained up “several times.” Otherwise, like numerous other prisoners, including Dilawar (the subject of the movie “Taxi to the Dark Side”) and Mullah Habibullah, the two prisoners who were killed at Bagram in December 2002, he would have been fully suspended by his wrists, in a torture technique more commonly known as the “strappado” technique or “Palestinian hanging.”

Nevertheless, as Barry Coburn, Khadr’s lead lawyer, explained, the medic’s testimony provided “critically important validation” of statements in his client’s affidavit, and another of his lawyers, Kobie Flowers, added, “Had this been an American soldier in North Korea, people would be outraged. Here we have a 15-year-old individual who was nearly killed with bullets in his back who was left up there to hang as punishment.”

#### **“Interrogator No. 2” and Khadr’s first interrogation – on a stretcher**

However, while this was significant in establishing some context for the general and well-chronicled brutality at Bagram, which will no doubt emerge in unprecedented detail should Khadr’s trial proceed, it was not until Tuesday last week that previously unknown information emerged regarding Khadr’s first interrogation on arrival at Bagram, which, according to a master sergeant in the US Army, identified as “Interrogator

No. 2,” who appeared in person, took place on the same day that Khadr was moved from the hospital to what Carol Rosenberg described as “the crude, putrid Bagram Air Base detention center.”

The interrogator, who was an observer at Khadr’s first interrogation on August 12, 2002, revealed that “the questioning took place while Khadr was on a stretcher – he couldn’t remember if Khadr was shackled to it – and that his notes included this detail: ‘Clarification was difficult due to the sedation and fatigue of the detainee.’” He also explained that no coercion was used on him, but just two approved techniques from the Army Field Manual: “fear down,” which is designed to play down a prisoner’s anxieties, and “fear of incarceration,” which encourages prisoners to tell the truth by pointing out that otherwise they may face extended imprisonment.

It is hard to tell if this controlled line of questioning strictly reflects reality, but even so, as one of Khadr’s military lawyers, Army Lt. Col. Jon Jackson noted, the testimony showed that Khadr “was first questioned within just 12 hours of his transfer from the US field hospital to the detention center.” Kobie Flowers was more forceful in his criticism. “You got a guy who is 15, seriously wounded, who has had multiple surgeries, and that’s the first time the United States government takes a statement from him to use in his prosecution,” he said, adding, “Now whether it is torture, cruel, inhumane, degrading treatment or simply involuntary ... I don’t think any federal judge in the United States would allow that type of conduct.”

#### **The testimony of Damien Corsetti**

On Wednesday, a peripheral figure in Khadr’s story – but one who has achieved a certain notoriety – testified by video link from Arlington, Virginia. Damien Corsetti, who was known as “Monster” at Bagram, based on a tattoo on his chest, and also as “The King of Torture,” described himself as “a disabled veteran suffering post traumatic stress dis-

**“Had this been an American soldier in North Korea, people would be outraged. Here we have a 15-year-old individual who was nearly killed with bullets in his back who was left up there to hang as punishment”**

## JUSTICE ON TRIAL

**Testifying by video link from Arizona, Claus recalled, in particular, using the technique described as “fear up harsh” in interrogations of Khadr**

order as a result of his interrogation work in both Afghanistan and Iraq,” and explained how, on seeing Khadr on July 29, 2002, just two days after his capture, he was struck by how he was an injured “child” detained in “one of the worst places on Earth.” He added, “More than anything, he looked beat up. He was a 15 year-old kid with three holes in his body, a bunch of shrapnel in his face. That was what I remember. How horrible this 15 year-old child looked.”

Corsetti, who was cleared in 2005 of abuse charges relating to his conduct in Bagram and, later, at Abu Ghraib in Iraq, explained, back in 2007, how he was still haunted by “the cries, the smells, the sounds” of those whose torture he witnessed, when he was called upon to attend sessions in the basement of Bagram in which “high-value detainees” were tortured. “[T]hey are with me all the time,” he said.

Corsetti told the court that he was “not one of Khadr’s interrogators” but had befriended him in Bagram. He explained that the guards and interrogators, who identified all the prisoners as “BOB” (which stood for “Bad Odor Boys”), named Khadr “Buckshot BOB,” due to his injuries. He added that “there was the sound of screaming and yelling ‘continuously,’” and also confirmed that threats were made to send prisoners to countries where they would be tortured, or raped. He specifically mentioned Israel and Egypt, but added, as Michelle Shephard explained in the *Toronto Star*, that he “did not know if Khadr had been told this.” As Khadr stated in his affidavit that he was indeed threatened with being sent to Israel or Egypt (or Syria or Jordan), Corsetti’s testimony therefore endorsed another of Khadr’s claims.

### **“Interrogator No. 1” and the rape threat**

If Corsetti’s testimony, for the most part, did little more than add some more color to the story of Khadr’s early months in US custody, Thursday’s witness, Joshua Claus, provided potent testimony regarding the kind of threats to which Khadr was subjected, and

also provided a disturbing link to the kind of violence in Bagram that led to the murders of Dilawar and Mullah Habibullah in December 2002. Claus, formerly a sergeant in the 519th Military Intelligence Battalion (of which Corsetti was also a member), was identified in court as “Interrogator No. 1,” and was Khadr’s main interrogator at Bagram, the “skinny blond” man with glasses (just 21 years old at the time) who also interrogated him while he was on a stretcher, on the day that he was moved to Bagram from the field hospital, and who, according to Khadr, mistreated him in an unknown manner (because the details are redacted) during his first interrogation.

Testifying by video link from Arizona, Claus recalled, in particular, using the technique described as “fear up harsh” in interrogations of Khadr, during which he would kick the furniture and scream at the young prisoner. He also admitted that he invented a rape story to scare him, explaining, as Spencer Ackerman described it in the *Washington Independent*: “I told him a fictitious story we had invented when we were there,” Interrogator #1 said. It was something “three or four” interrogators at Bagram came up with after learning that Afghans were “terrified of getting raped and general homosexuality, things of that nature.” The story went like this:

Interrogator #1 would tell the detainee, “I know you’re lying about something.” And so, for an instruction about the consequences of lying, Khadr learned that lying “not so seriously” wouldn’t land him in a place like “Cuba” – meaning, presumably, Guantánamo Bay – but in an American prison instead. And this one time, a “poor little 20-year-old kid” sent from Afghanistan ended up in an American prison for lying to an American. “A bunch of big black guys and big Nazis noticed the little Afghan didn’t speak their language, and prayed five times a day – he’s Muslim,” Interrogator #1 said. Although the fictitious inmates were criminals, “they’re still patriotic,” and the guards “can’t be everywhere at once.”

“So this one unfortunate time, he’s in the shower by himself, and these four big black guys show up – and it’s terrible something would happen – but they caught him in the shower and raped him. And it’s terrible that these things happen, the kid got hurt and ended up dying,” Interrogator #1 said. “It’s all a fictitious story.”

Perhaps so, but as Ackerman also noted, every other interrogator who spoke to Khadr did so “after he heard a ‘fictitious story’ about a young Afghan who lied to US interrogators and as a result was raped and killed in jail.”

In many ways, May’s events were inconclusive, and it remains to be seen how the judge, Army Col. Patrick Parrish, will interpret them. Certainly, there was much worse abuse at Bagram and at Guantánamo than that experienced by Omar Khadr, but he was just a child during his time at Bagram and the early years of his abuse at Guantánamo, and it may well be that, as his lawyers assert, any self-incriminating statements that he made (especially regarding the throwing of a grenade that may have taken place when he was face down and unconscious under a pile of rubble) were produced because rape threats and physical violence based primarily on exploitation of his wounds was enough to terrify him into acquiescence with whatever his captors wanted.

#### **The Pentagon shoots itself in the foot: four reporters banned**

Ironically, the biggest story in Guantánamo recently was not the reports of Khadr’s treatment but the banning of four reporters (including Michelle Shephard and Carol Rosenberg), after they revealed Claus’ name in newspaper reports. The Pentagon alleged that this violated an order stipulating that Claus’ real name was protected information, but this was patently ridiculous, because his name was already in the public domain, and, in 2008, he had even conducted an interview with Michelle Shephard.

Instead of protecting Claus, the Pentagon’s heavy-handed response served only to

make other reporters wonder if the Pentagon was trying to prevent anyone from working out that, unlike Damien Corsetti, Claus served five months in prison for pleading guilty in a court martial to the abuse of an unidentified prisoner at Bagram, who was made “to roll back and forth on the floor and kiss the boots of his interrogator,” as Michelle Shephard described it, and for the assault of Dilawar. In Shephard’s words, “He admitted to forcing water down the throat of Dilawar and twisting a hood over the Afghan’s head.” Moreover, as another soldier explained in a military report into Dilawar’s death, “I had the impression that Josh was actually holding the detainee upright by pulling on the hood. I was furious at this point because I had seen Josh tighten the hood of another detainee the week before. This behavior seemed completely gratuitous and unrelated to intelligence collection.”

In his interview in 2008, Claus insisted that he wanted to set the record straight. “They’re trying to imply I’m beating or torturing everyone I ever talked to [at Bagram],” he said, adding that, with Khadr, “I spent a lot of time trying to understand who he was and what I could say to him or do for him, whether it be to bring him extra food or get a letter out to his family ... I needed to talk to him and get him to trust me.”

Responding to a question about his conviction posed by Barry Coburn, Claus insisted that he “lost control at a very slight moment. You’re talking about two-and-a-half minutes of my life.” This may not technically be correct, as there was clearly more than one incident, but it is obvious that his actions were part of an abusive program sanctioned at the highest level of the Bush administration, and moreover, as Damien Corsetti explained, “the pressure to get information from prisoner at Bagram was intense.” He told Col. Parrish, “This was less than a year after 9/11 so we’re all still pretty heated up about that. This was life and death stuff we were supposedly dealing with. There was just a ton of pressure on us to get information to save lives and generate reports.”

**“He admitted to forcing water down the throat of Dilawar and twisting a hood over the Afghan’s head”**

## JUSTICE ON TRIAL

The Obama administration has until July, when Khadr's trial is scheduled to start, to extricate itself from a public relations disaster of its own making

By banning the four reporters, the Pentagon has only succeeded in drawing attention to something it presumably wanted to hide: that Omar Khadr's mistreatment in Bagram took place at time when the violence in the prison, sanctioned by the Bush administration, was so intense that prisoners died, and that his first interrogator was implicated in the murder of one of these men. It doesn't prove that Khadr wasn't coerced into making false confessions, but it doesn't augur well for claims that everything about his treatment was "conversational" and "non-confrontational."

The Obama administration has until July, when Khadr's trial is scheduled to start, to extricate itself from a public relations disaster of its own making, by formulating an ac-

ceptable plea deal for Khadr and arranging his return to Canada. Too much about this story – from the trumped-up war crimes charges, to the doubts about Khadr's guilt, to his age and the abuse to which, on occasion, he was undoubtedly subjected – makes proceeding with the trial an unpalatable and essentially pointless exercise. It is, I believe, time, after nearly eight years, for his punishment to come to an end, and for his long-delayed rehabilitation to begin. **CT**

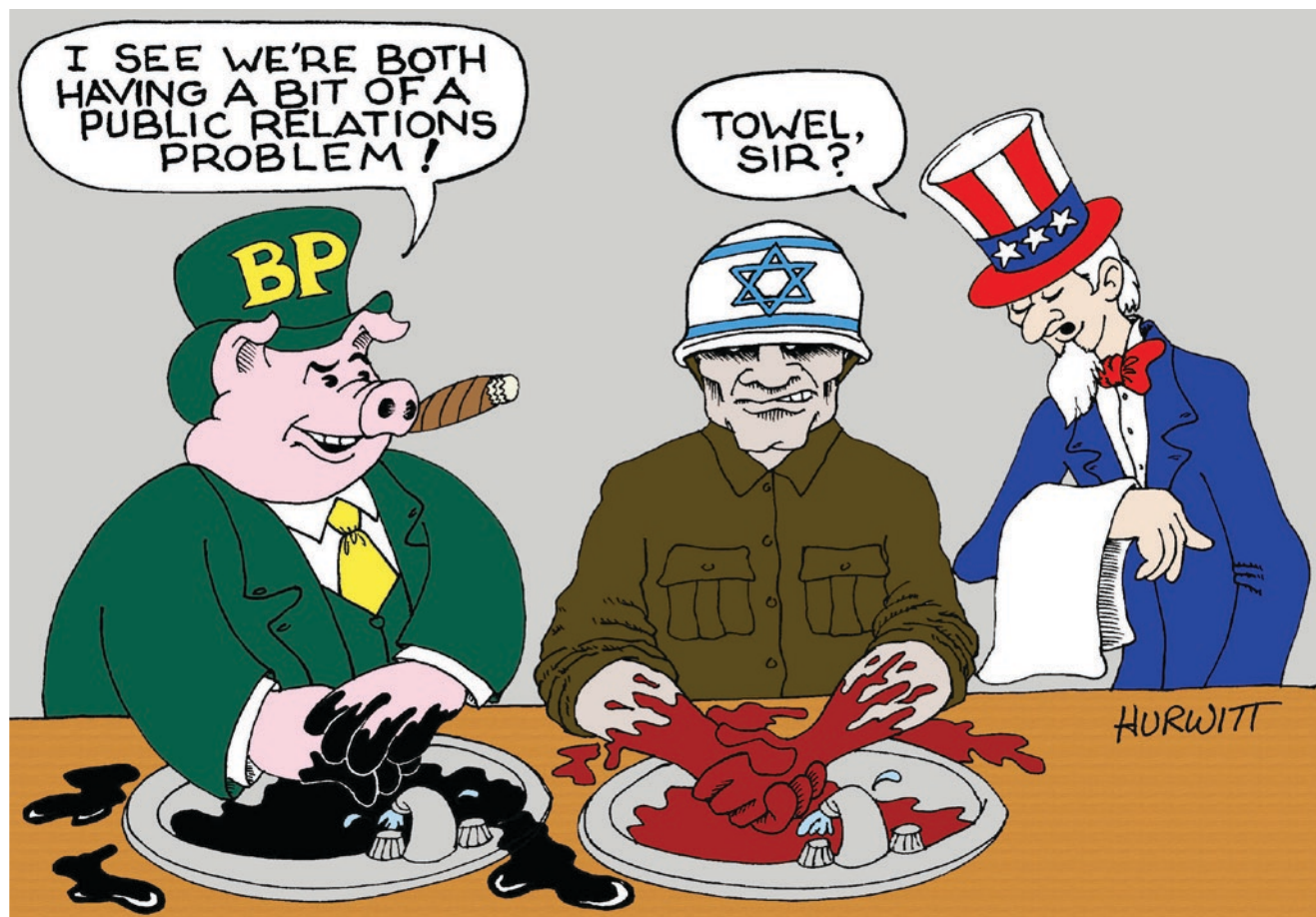
*Andy Worthington is the author of **The Guantánamo Files: The Stories of the 774 Detainees in America's Illegal Prison** (published by Pluto Press, distributed by Macmillan in the US. This essay was first published at [www.cageprisoners.com](http://www.cageprisoners.com)*

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## HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt





# That illegal look

The lawmakers of Arizona should check their history books before they pass ignorant laws, writes **Michael I. Niman**

**T**he lawmakers running Arizona apparently need a quick lesson in their own history. Rather than learn about the state to which they or their parents likely immigrated, they'd rather ban such education, and cripple their constituents with the same ignorance that has branded them as fools and pariahs.

Last month the Arizona legislature passed two loony bills, both signed into law by the governor. The first one mandates that police investigate the citizenship or immigration status of anyone who appears foreign, or as they often put it, "illegal." Once identified as suspicious, suspects must prove their citizenship or immigration status. The second bill outlaws public school classes that might question these attempts to target minorities for oppressive treatment, or, say, just accurately teach about Arizona's culturally diverse history. It's no accident that the two laws appear in tandem.

To prepare for the first law, Arizona's Maricopa County (that's where Phoenix is located), with a population of four million people, hired University of Missouri at Kansas City law professor Kris Kobach to train their police. Kobach, a former George W. Bush administration attorney, also represents the legal arm of the Federation for American Immigration Reform. The Southern Poverty Law Center, a group that monitors and documents racist activity, identifies

the federation as a hate group. The Anti-Defamation League, in condemning the hiring of Kobach, points out that the federation received more than a million dollars in underwriting from a racist group advocating eugenics, the purposeful breeding of a superior race.

For \$250 an hour, Kobach trains Maricopa police officers in the supposed science of spotting undocumented immigrants. According to Professor Kobach, you can identify them by their "dress or appearance." Perhaps he expects them to wear mariachi costumes. Their appearance, he explains, will be "out of place or unusual for a specific locale." So don't wear your loafers to an Arizona McDonald's unless you have your papers in order. (*Zeigen Sie mir Ihre Papiere!*) Suspected "illegals" will also "avoid making eye contact with the officer," behavior that would put most New Yorkers under suspicion. Kobach explains that aliens also make "evasive maneuvers" when driving, "such as abruptly exiting from the highway," and it will appear that their "vehicle and/or its occupants have been on a very long trip," all of which doesn't bode well for the 37 million tourists who visit Arizona annually, most without their birth certificates or passports.

So in short, if you wind up driving in Arizona with, say, New York license plates on your car, don't exit the highway or wear a

**Suspected "illegals" will also "avoid making eye contact with the officer," behavior that would put most New Yorkers under suspicion**

## LOONY LAWS

**Regrettably, the most prevalent explanation in the media for the sluggish delivery of aid was that authorities anticipated rioting by the violence-prone Haitian people**

Yankees cap. Be sure to look all cops in the eye, wear a Stetson, and always carry your citizenship papers. Or maybe just pick another state to visit.

Passed by an overwhelmingly Republican state legislature, the bill amounts to a wild irresponsible act of grandstanding, and is backed nationally by that party's far-right fringe. Bill O'Reilly, for example, speaking on the party's Fox News network, regularly repeats his argument that radical action was necessary in Arizona since Phoenix's crime rate is "through the roof," that "Phoenix is one of the most dangerous cities in the country," and that it has become "the kidnapping capital of the United States." This is news to the FBI, which actually records such statistics, and to the city of Phoenix, which late last year reported that "Violent and property crimes in Phoenix continue to drop, despite an increase in population and a challenging economy." The city boasts that "The numbers of crimes in 2009 are on track to be the lowest in 15 years."

All of this nonsense is supposedly about keeping "illegal" foreigners out of Arizona. The bulk of these supposed foreigners are Mexicans of Native American ancestry, like the people who settled the first agrarian communities in Arizona in 2000 BCE. The new Arizona dragnets would likely snag, for example, native Hopi residents of Oraibi, Arizona, which was settled about 900 years ago and has been continuously occupied ever since. Its residents would, if they traveled to Phoenix, fit many of the criteria Kobach outlines for spotting "illegal" immigrants, and would perpetually have to prove their citizenship status.

A quick look at the history of Arizona contextualizes the wackiness of the state legislature's xenophobia. The Spanish colonized the area we know as Arizona in 1539, making it part of Spain until 1821, when it became part of the newly independent Mexican state. In 1848, the US, in the Mexican-American War, seized the area we now call Arizona. Fifteen years later, during the Civil War, Congress declared Arizona a terri-

tory and brutally expelled 7,000 of its native Diné (Navajo) inhabitants. Do the math. After thousands of years of native settlement, Arizona was Spanish and Mexican for 309 years, then became a US territory and state for 147 years. People whose families have been in Arizona for many generations are likely to be short in stature, dark-skinned, and descended from Spanish speakers. And they're likely to be racially targeted by Maricopa's Kobach-trained police.

Two generations ago, the population of Arizona was roughly 500,000 people. By 1981, the population grew to just under three million. Today it's over six and a half million. Most of the white English-speaking population in Arizona hails from this recent immigration. These immigrants can be identified by their pinkish skin and their ability to "fit in" with other pink-skinned people like Kobach and his movement of English-speaking immigrants. Ten years ago Arizona passed a bill outlawing public school education in any language other than English. Last month the Arizona Department of Education started a crackdown on "heavily accented" teachers. (Imagine what would happen if the US Senate adopted a similar policy.)

Is all this Arizona history new to you? Well, don't feel bad. Soon it will be unknown to Arizona school children as well. This brings us to the second piece of Arizona legislation signed into law last month. Courses in "ethnic studies," which in Arizona means honors or elective high school courses on Mexican-American, Native-American, and African-American history and studies, are now illegal to teach in Arizona public schools.

Historically, every settler state eventually sanitizes its own history, because, as George Orwell put it, "He who controls the past, controls the future." In Arizona, this means there's no place for teaching the history of oppression to a people who are still being oppressed on an increasing basis. If you ignore this oppression, it won't go away, and that's the whole idea here. **CT**

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# Immigration: A slightly different take

**Fred Reed** has a few thoughts that may get him lynched

**I**mmigration is not something Mexico did to the United States, but something the United States did to itself. Decades ago it changed its laws to favor Latin immigrants, gives immigrant children born in the US citizenship, avidly employs the illegals, forbids police to check their papers, gives them social services and schooling, establishes “sanctuary cities,” and in general does everything but send them engraved invitations. And then expresses surprise when they come.

We hear endlessly that Mexicans are “taking the jobs of Americans.” Not quite. Reflect that every time a Mexican gets a job, it is because a shiny white noisily patriotic American businessman gives him that job.

I could take you to whole restaurants in the metropolitan area of Washington, DC, where if I yelled, “Migra!,” the entire staff would disappear out the back door. The owners know perfectly well who they are hiring. Mexicans are easily recognized. They are brown and speak Spanish. Businessmen do not hire them despite their being illegals, but because they are illegals, and therefore cheap.

I always find amusing the claims of love of country and civic responsibility that emanate from businessmen. These frauds will, and do, send American jobs to China, to make a buck. They will, and do, hire Indian programmers to replace more expen-

sive American programmers. They will, and do, sweat children in Indonesian factories to make a buck. And they will hire illegals. If they didn’t, there would be no illegals. They come to work. No work, no come.

‘Nuther topic: I suspect that not one American in twenty has even heard of the Mexican-American War, and maybe one in a couple of hundred can distinguish between the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidlago and, say, the Treaty of Westphalia. Mexicans know that in that war the US simply grabbed half their country, to include little places like, you know, California. The attitude of Americans, if they were told of this war, predictably would be, “Oh. Well, that was some other time, whenever. Tell them to like, get over it.” But Mexicans are not over it. Countless towns and cities have a Calle or Avenida Ninios Heroes commemorating the children who marched out, like the cadets of VMI in another example of Washington’s aggression, to try to stop the oncoming federals.

Don’t expect a lot of sympathy when Mexicans move back into what they regard as theirs in the first place.

Speaking of getting over it, the US will sooner or later will have to entertain the idea of getting over Latin immigration. Allowing the immigration in the first place was a terrible idea, since diversity regularly proves disastrous, but now there is precious little to be done about it. Nativist fantasies not-

**Don’t expect a lot of sympathy when Mexicans move back into what they regard as theirs in the first place**

## THOSE IMMIGRANTS

**What was happening in Vietnam was kept from the American people. What is happening in Afghanistan is in newspapers and available online**

withstanding, the US is not going to round up thirteen (give or take) million people at gunpoint and force them across the border. If it doesn't do this, few illegals will leave.

I encounter all manner of fury from conservatives at the idea of granting amnesty to the illegals. Rounding them up is the very thing, they figure. How do you round up thirteen million people who don't want to be rounded up?

Perhaps at three a.m. you put a lightning cordon of Marines around a ten-block region and then go house to house, kicking in doors and dragging screaming people out. These you would throw into sealed eighteen-wheelers, drive them to the nearest border, and perhaps literally kick them across. Most of the children would be American citizens, but not Mexican. The idea of deporting a couple of million US citizens to a foreign country is fascinating.

Note that large and growing numbers of Hispanics are American citizens. ("Hispanics" are people who speak Spanish, which growing numbers of these folk don't, but never mind.) In several states Latinos are a majority. Their children rise through the schools toward voting age. Politicians being politicians, legislatures in these states will find it difficult to deport a group when over half the voting population is of that group. That leaves the feds, who do not seem energized by the matter. Short of a Nazi-style war of extermination or forced depuration, America is going to have a very sizable population of Latino origin.

Adding to the complexity is that the country is far from united in wanting mass deportation. As I understand it, some two-thirds of the US wants illegal immigration ended, which means sealing the border. But this is a very different thing from massive expulsion of those already in the country. Laws of the sort recently passed in Arizona may have some effect, but, again, most will remain.

While few will care, it is of perhaps minor interest that after '48 (the year of both

Westphalia and Guadalupe-Hidalgo) a large number of Mexicans, and thus their descendants, became American citizens. These people have been Americans longer than, say, anyone whose ancestors arrived in the great immigrant waves around 1900.

Now, a reasonable question might be, "OK, Fred, what would you do?" If I had the power, I would seal the border to stop the influx, declare blanket amnesty for those already in the country, and get on with life. Part of "getting on" would be to encourage assimilation since the last thing the US needs is another indigestible and permanent underclass.

Note (as I have never seen noted) that keeping them illegal forces them into something close to an underclass. If Pablo wants to start a restaurant or auto-bodywork business, he can't, because he will be asked for papers and eventually shut down.

The country seems to be trying to cause what it most doesn't want. Some state or other wants to stop letting the children of illegals attend school. Oh, good. Let's create a population of angry illiterates who can't possibly be assimilated. What could be wiser?

The underlying problem is that no solution, or attempted solution, has enough support to get put into effect. Business wants the labor, politicians eye the vote, polls show young Americans as being much less worried about the whole question than their elders. Conservatives – those, anyway, who are not profiting by immigration – talk of putting the military along the border, but support seems lacking. On Fox News I see people urging the characteristic American solution: high-tech this and that. Anyone with experience with dispersed guerrillas will see the prospects of success. A lot of liberals think immigration is heart-warming and all.

As is so commonly the case in semi-democracies, whatever might work is politically impossible, and whatever is politically possible won't work.

What now, gang?

**CT**

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# We need a few good Communists

**Chris Hedges** explains why the US sorely needs new radical intellectual voices to fight the war against capitalist excess

**T**he witch hunts against communists in the United States were used to silence socialists, anarchists, pacifists and all those who defied the abuses of capitalism. Those “anti-Red” actions were devastating blows to the political health of the country. The communists spoke the language of class war. They understood that Wall Street, along with corporations such as British Petroleum, is the enemy. They offered a broad social vision which allowed even the non-communist left to employ a vocabulary that made sense of the destructive impulses of capitalism. But once the Communist Party, along with other radical movements, was eradicated as a social and political force, once the liberal class took government-imposed loyalty oaths and collaborated in the witch hunts for phantom communist agents, we were robbed of the ability to make sense of our struggle. We became fearful, timid and ineffectual. We lost our voice and became part of the corporate structure we should have been dismantling.

Hope in this age of bankrupt capitalism will come with the return of the language of class conflict. It does not mean we have to agree with Karl Marx, who advocated violence and whose worship of the state as a utopian mechanism led to another form of enslavement of the working class, but we have to speak in the vocabulary Marx em-

ployed. We have to grasp, as Marx did, that corporations are not concerned with the common good. They exploit, pollute, impoverish, repress, kill and lie to make money. They throw poor families out of homes, let the uninsured die, wage useless wars to make profits, poison and pollute the ecosystem, slash social assistance programs, gut public education, trash the global economy, loot the U.S. Treasury and crush all popular movements that seek justice for working men and women. They worship only money and power. And, as Marx knew, unfettered capitalism is a revolutionary force that consumes greater and greater numbers of human lives until it finally consumes itself. The nightmare in the Gulf of Mexico is the perfect metaphor for the corporate state. It is the same nightmare seen in postindustrial pockets from the old mill towns in New England to the abandoned steel mills in Ohio. It is a nightmare that Iraqis, Pakistanis and Afghans, mourning their dead, live each day.

Capitalism was once viewed in America as a system that had to be fought. But capitalism is no longer challenged. And so, even as Wall Street steals billions of taxpayer dollars and the Gulf of Mexico is turned into a toxic swamp, we do not know what to do or say. We decry the excesses of capitalism without demanding a dismantling of the corporate state. The liberal class has a mis-

**We have to grasp, as Marx did, that corporations are not concerned with the common good. They exploit, pollute, impoverish, repress, kill and lie to make money**

## LOOKING LEFT

**The social demands of unions early in the 20th century that gave the working class weekends off, the right to strike, the eight-hour day and Social Security have been abandoned**

guided loyalty, illustrated by environmental groups that have refused to excoriate the Obama White House over the ecological catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico. Liberals bow before a Democratic Party that ignores them and does the bidding of corporations. The reflexive deference to the Democrats by the liberal class is the result of cowardice and fear. It is also the result of an infantile understanding of the mechanisms of power. The divide is not between Republican and Democrat. It is a divide between the corporate state and the citizen. It is a divide between capitalists and workers. And, for all the failings of the communists, they got it.

Unions, organizations formerly steeped in the doctrine of class warfare and filled with those who sought broad social and political rights for the working class, have been transformed into domesticated partners of the capitalist class. They have been reduced to simple bartering tools. The social demands of unions early in the 20th century that gave the working class weekends off, the right to strike, the eight-hour day and Social Security have been abandoned. Universities, especially in political science and economics departments, parrot the discredited ideology of unregulated capitalism and have no new ideas. Artistic expression, along with most religious worship, is largely self-absorbed narcissism. The Democratic Party and the press have become corporate servants. The loss of radicals within the labor movement, the Democratic Party, the arts, the church and the universities has obliterated one of the most important counterweights to the corporate state. And the purging of those radicals has left us unable to make sense of what is happening to us.

The fear of communism, like the fear of Islamic terrorism, has resulted in the steady suspension of civil liberties, including freedom of speech, habeas corpus and the right to organize, values the liberal class claims to support. It was the orchestration of fear that permitted the capitalist class to ram through the Taft-Hartley Act in 1948 in the name of anti-communism, the most destructive

legislative blow to the working class until the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It was fear that created the Patriot Act, extraordinary rendition, offshore penal colonies where we torture and the endless wars in the Middle East. And it was fear that was used to see us fleeced by Wall Street. If we do not stop being afraid and name our enemy we will continue toward a state of neofeudalism.

The robber barons of the late 19th century used goons and thugs to beat up workers and retain control. The corporations, employing the science of public relations, have used actors, artists, writers, scholars and filmmakers to manipulate and shape public opinion. Corporations employ the college-educated, liberal elite to saturate the culture with lies. The liberal class should have defied the emasculation of radical organizations, including the Communist Party. Instead, it was lured into the corporate embrace. It became a class of collaborators. National cohesion, because our intellectual life has become so impoverished, revolves around the empty pursuits of mass culture, brands, consumption, status and the bland uniformity of opinions disseminated by corporate-friendly courtiers. We speak and think in the empty slogans and clichés we are given. And they are given to us by the liberal class.

The “idea of the intellectual vocation,” as Irving Howe pointed out in his essay “The Age of Conformity,” “the idea of a life dedicated to values that cannot possibly be realized by a commercial civilization – has gradually lost its allure. And, it is this, rather than the abandonment of a particular program, which constitutes our rout.” The belief that capitalism is the unassailable engine of human progress, Howe added, “is trumpeted through every medium of communication: official propaganda, institutional advertising and scholarly writings of people who, until a few years ago, were its major opponents.”

“The truly powerless people are those intellectuals – the new realists – who attach

themselves to the seats of power, where they surrender their freedom of expression without gaining any significance as political figures,” Howe wrote. “For it is crucial to the history of the American intellectuals in the past few decades – as well as to the relationship between ‘wealth’ and ‘intellect’ – that whenever they become absorbed into the accredited institutions of society they not only lose their traditional rebelliousness but to one extent or another they cease to function as intellectuals. The institutional world needs intellectuals because they are intellectuals but it does not want them as intellectuals. It beckons to them because of what they are but it will not allow them, at least within its sphere of articulation, either to remain or entirely cease being what they are. It needs them for their knowledge, their talent, their inclinations and passions; it insists that they retain a measure of these endowments, which it means to employ for its own ends, and without which the intellectuals would be of no use to it whatever. A simplified but useful equation suggests itself: the relation of the institutional world to the intellectuals is as the relation of middlebrow culture to serious culture, the one battens on the other, absorbs and raids it with increasing frequency and skill,

subsidizes and encourages it enough to make further raids possible – at times the parasite will support its victim. Surely this relationship must be one reason for the high incidence of neurosis that is supposed to prevail among intellectuals. A total estrangement from the sources of power and prestige, even a blind unreasoning rejection of every aspect of our culture, would be far healthier if only because it would permit a free discharge of aggression.”

The liberal class prefers comfort to confrontation. It will not challenge the decaying structures of the corporate state. It is intolerant within its ranks of those who do. It clings pathetically to the carcass of the Obama presidency. It has been exposed as a dead force in American politics. We must find our way back to the old radicals, to the discredited Marxists, socialists and anarchists, including Dwight Macdonald and Dorothy Day. Language is our first step toward salvation. We cannot fight what we cannot describe. **CT**

*Chris Hedges, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, is a senior fellow at the Nation Institute. His latest book is **Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle.***

**The liberal class prefers comfort to confrontation. It will not challenge the decaying structures of the corporate state. It is intolerant within its ranks of those who do.**

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# Blame the poor, while taking their money

**Gordon Arnaut** wonders how the poorest 1% of the population could possibly have driven the US economy over that cliff

**If we do a bit of simple math we see that a member of that top 1 percent – about 3 million wealthy Americans – owns, on average, about 1,500 times as much as a member of the bottom 120 million Americans**

**D**id you know that the poor (and mostly black) people in the US caused the global financial crisis that threw the world economy into its worst slump since the Great Depression of the 1930's?

I didn't know that either, until I heard this news from the US media and popular broadcasters like Glenn Beck, Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh.

This is how it all happened: Special interest groups representing poor people, minorities, and "socialist" elements in the US government "pressured banks to make loans to people who could not afford them, and then the whole thing melted down..." explains Beck, who has a radio and TV audience of several million viewers and listeners.

Thomas Sowell, a right-wing economist for the Hoover Institution and a writer for the *Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes* magazine, says that anti-poverty activists "blocked drive-up lanes and made business impossible for banks until they surrendered to demands that they make billions in loans that they wouldn't otherwise have made."

God Bless America. The land where truth and freedom prevails.

The only thing I don't understand is how these poor, black and Hispanic Americans, whose combined share of the national wealth is less than the personal fortune of

a few wealthy individuals at the top of the *Forbes* list, could possibly have exerted such a disproportionate influence on the nation's economy.

Statistics from the United Nations tell us that the bottom 40 percent of the population of the United States own less than 1 percent of the nation's wealth. That is about 120 million people. If each and every one of these individuals "forced" the banks to give them mortgages and loans, and then failed to pay them back, the worst that could happen would be a total national loss of 1 percent of wealth.

Is this what happened? That 120 million poor Americans all simultaneously defaulted on their mortgage and loan payments and the economy collapsed because of a 1 percent decline?

Or perhaps the collapse had more to do with the top 1 percent of Americans who own 38 percent of the national wealth? If we do a bit of simple math we see that a member of that top 1 percent – about 3 million wealthy Americans – owns, on average, about 1,500 times as much as a member of the bottom 120 million Americans. Put another way, about 1,500 poor people share a single piece of pie that one wealthy American has all to himself.

Also curious are numbers on who actually lost the most in this Great Recession. According to a study by a professor at the



University of California, the average American household lost an astounding 36 percent of their total wealth. But the top 1 percent households lost only 11 percent. So the net result is that the wealth distribution is even more unequal than it was before the financial crisis. Maybe the top 1 percent should be thanking the poor black folks for “causing” the financial meltdown.

What we do know for sure is that the US government has given more than a trillion taxpayer dollars to big banks like Goldman Sachs and Citigroup, to prevent them from going under. This has led to huge deficits, which has brought demands from the wealthy that the government cut back on social security and Medicare. So while the bank executives continue to reward themselves with multimillion dollar bonuses at the taxpayer’s expense, poor pensioners – who you will see at the grocery store buying marked-down, half-rotten fruit and vegetables – are asked to get by without their medicines and live on bread and water.

Of course the plight of the poor, the sick and the old is of no concern to the slick business media, with their glossy spreads of the “good life” and fawning write-ups of the business elite whose lifestyles would make Marie Antoinette blush – an army of servants, chauffeurs, pilots, prostitutes, maids, cooks, valets, butlers, masseuses, caddies, surgeons...at their beck and call.

And what about the “ordinary” people of America? The great middle class of suburbia? Mom and dad working three or four part-time jobs between them, kids working

too, always trying to get ahead, but never quite getting out from under a lifelong load of debt – interest continually piling up. Banks repossessed nearly a million homes last year. Another three million went into foreclosure and the total number of homes repossessed will likely reach over 7 million when all is said and done, say experts.

Do these people need to lose their homes? What would happen if the trillion dollars that Bush and Obama gifted to the banks were given to help ordinary homeowners instead? The median monthly mortgage payment in the US is about \$1,300. A trillion dollars could pay the mortgage on those 7 million distressed homes for 10 years. If the average mortgage is about \$150,000 then that trillion dollars could pay off completely all seven million of those mortgages.

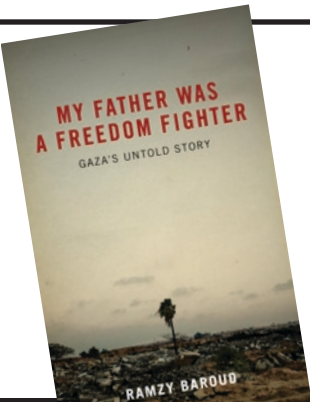
Not that anyone is asking for total debt forgiveness. Even a tiny fraction of the bank bailout, say 100 billion, would be enough to get those homeowners back on their feet and keep a roof over their heads.

So the banks get more than a trillion dollars, but homeowners get practically nothing. (Well not nothing; they get the tax bill that is paying for the bank bailout.) One has to ask the logical question. Is this democracy? Is this a system where the people exercise political power?

Welcome to America, land of 3 million people (and 300 million debt peons). **CT**

*Gordon Arnaut is an aerospace engineer in the civilian sector and a freelance writer. He lives in Ontario, Canada*

**Of course the plight of the poor, the sick and the old is of no concern to the slick business media, with their glossy spreads of the “good life” and fawning write-ups of the business elite whose lifestyles would make Marie Antoinette blush**



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# The heresy of the Greeks

Greece is a microcosm of a modern class war rarely reported as such; we should learn from them, writes **John Pilger**

**When the Papandreou government tried to borrow on the international capital market, it was effectively blocked by the US corporate ratings agencies, which “downgraded” Greek debt to “junk”**

**A**s Britain’s political class pretends that its arranged marriage of Tweedledee to Tweedledum is democracy, the inspiration for the rest of us is Greece. It is hardly surprising that Greece is presented not as a beacon but, as the *Observer* calls it, a “junk country” getting its comeuppance for its “bloated public sector” and “culture of cutting corners” (*Observer*). The heresy of Greece is that the uprising of its ordinary people provides an authentic hope unlike that lavished upon the warlord in the White House.

The crisis that has led to Greece’s “rescue” by European banks and the International Monetary Fund is the product of a grotesque financial system that itself is in crisis. Greece is a microcosm of a modern class war rarely reported as such, but waged with all the urgency of panic among the imperial rich.

What makes Greece different is that it has experienced, within living memory, invasion, foreign occupation, military dictatorship and popular resistance. Ordinary people are not cowed by the corrupt corporatism that dominates the European Union. The right-wing government of Kostas Karamanlis that preceded the present Pasok (Labour) government of George Papandreou was described by the sociologist Jean Ziegler as “a machine for systematically pillaging the country’s resources”.

The machine had infamous friends. The US Federal Reserve board is investigating the role of Goldman Sachs, which gambled on the bankruptcy of Greece as public assets were sold off and its tax-evading rich deposited €360bn in Swiss banks. This haemorrhaging of capital continues with the approval of Europe’s central banks and governments.

At 11 per cent, Greece’s budget deficit is no higher than America’s. However, when the Papandreou government tried to borrow on the international capital market, it was effectively blocked by the US corporate ratings agencies, which “downgraded” Greek debt to “junk”. These same agencies gave triple-A ratings to billions of dollars in so-called sub-prime mortgage securities and so precipitated the economic collapse in 2008.

What has happened in Greece is theft on an epic, though not unfamiliar, scale. In Britain, the “rescue” of banks such as Northern Rock and the Royal Bank of Scotland has cost billions of pounds. Thanks to Gordon Brown and his passion for the avaricious instincts of the City, these gifts of public money were unconditional, and the bankers have continued to pay each other the booty they call bonuses and to spirit it away to tax havens. Under Britain’s political monoculture, they can do as they wish. In the US, the situation is even more remarkable. As the

investigative journalist David DeGraw has reported, the principal Wall Street banks that “destroyed the economy pay zero in taxes and get \$33bn in refunds”.

In Greece, as in America and Britain, the ordinary people have been told they must repay the debts of the rich and powerful who incurred them. Jobs, pensions and public services are to be slashed and burned, with privateers put in charge. For the EU and the IMF, the opportunity presents to “change the culture” and to dismantle the social welfare of Greece, just as the IMF and the World Bank have “structurally adjusted” (impoverished and controlled) countries across the developing world.

Greece is hated for the same reason Yugoslavia had to be destroyed physically behind a pretence of protecting the people of Kosovo. Most Greeks are employed by the state, and the young and the trade unions comprise a popular alliance that has not been pacified; the colonels’ tanks on the campus of Athens University in 1967 remain a political spectre. Such resistance is anathema to Europe’s central bankers and regarded as an obstruction to German capital’s need to capture markets in the aftermath of Germany’s troubled reunification.

In Britain, such has been the 30-year propaganda of an extreme economic theory known first as monetarism, then as neoliberalism, that the new Prime Minister can, like his predecessor, describe his demands that ordinary people pay the debts of crooks as “fiscally responsible”. The unmentionables are poverty and class.

Almost a third of British children remain below the breadline. In working-class Kentish Town in London, male life expectancy

is 70. Two miles away, in Hampstead, it is 80. When Russia was subjected to similar “shock therapy” in the 1990s, life expectancy nosedived. In the United States, a record 40 million cannot afford to feed themselves.

In the developing world, a system of triage imposed by the World Bank and the IMF has long determined whether people live or die. Whenever tariffs and food and fuel subsidies are eliminated by IMF diktat, small farmers know they have been declared expendable. The World Resources Institute estimates that the toll reaches between 13 and 18 million child deaths every year. This, wrote the economist Lester C Thurow, is “neither metaphor nor simile of war, but war itself”.

The same imperial forces have used horrific weapons against stricken countries where children are the majority, and approved torture as an instrument of foreign policy. It is a phenomenon of denial that none of these assaults on humanity, in which Britain is actively engaged, was allowed to intrude on the British election.

The people on the streets of Athens do not suffer this malaise. They are clear who the enemy is and regard themselves as once again under foreign occupation. And once again, they are rising up, with courage. When David Cameron begins to cleave £6bn from public services in Britain, he will be bargaining that Greece will not happen in Britain. We should prove him wrong. **CT**

*John Pilger received the Sydney Peace Prize in November. His latest book, Freedom Next Time, is now available in paperback.*

**In Greece, as in America and Britain, the ordinary people have been told they must repay the debts of the rich and powerful who incurred them. Jobs, pensions and public services are to be slashed and burned, with privateers put in charge**

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# Ignoring the lessons of the big bail-out

**George Monbiot** tells how Matt Ridley's irrational theories remain unchanged by his own disastrous experiment as head of the first British bank to ask for a government bail-out

**When news of the crisis leaked, it caused the first run on a bank in this country since 1878. The parasitic state had to intervene a second time: the run was halted only when the government guaranteed the depositors' money**

**B**rass neck doesn't begin to describe it. Matt Ridley used to make his living partly by writing state-bashing columns in the *Daily Telegraph*. The government, he complained, is "a self-seeking flea on the backs of the more productive people of this world ... governments do not run countries, they parasitise them."<sup>(1)</sup> Taxes, bail-outs, regulations, subsidies, intervention of any kind, he argued, are an unwarranted restraint on market freedom.

Then he became chairman of Northern Rock, where he was able to put his free market principles into practice. Under his chairmanship, the bank pursued what the Treasury select committee later described as a "high-risk, reckless business strategy"<sup>(2)</sup>. It was able to do so because the government agency which oversees the banks "systematically failed in its regulatory duty"<sup>(3)</sup>.

On 16th August 2007, Dr Ridley rang an agent of the detested state to explore the possibility of a bail-out. The self-seeking fleas agreed to his request, and in September the government opened a support facility for the floundering bank. The taxpayer eventually bailed out Northern Rock to the tune of £27bn.

When news of the crisis leaked, it caused the first run on a bank in this country since 1878. The parasitic state had to intervene a second time: the run was halted only when

the government guaranteed the depositors' money. Eventually the government was obliged to nationalise the bank. Investors, knowing that their money would now be safe as it was protected by the state, began to return.

While the crisis was made possible by a "substantial failure of regulation", MPs identified the directors of Northern Rock as "the principal authors of the difficulties that the company has faced". They singled Ridley out for having failed "to provide against the risks that [Northern Rock] was taking and to act as an effective restraining force on the strategy of the executive members."<sup>(4)</sup>

This, you might think, must have been a salutary experience. You would be wrong. Last week Dr Ridley published a new book called *The Rational Optimist*<sup>(5)</sup>. He uses it as a platform to attack governments which, among other crimes, "bail out big corporations"<sup>(6)</sup>.

He lambasts intervention and state regulation, insisting that markets deliver the greatest possible benefits to society when left to their own devices. Has there ever been a clearer case of the triumph of faith over experience?

Free market fundamentalists, apparently unaware of Ridley's own experiment in market liberation, are currently filling cyberspace and the mainstream media with gasps of enthusiasm about his thesis. Ridley

provides what he claims is a scientific justification for unregulated business. He maintains that rising consumption will keep enriching us for “centuries and millennia” to come(7), but only if governments don’t impede innovation. He dismisses or denies the environmental consequences, laments our risk-aversion, and claims that the market system makes self-interest “thoroughly virtuous”(8). All will be well in the best of all possible worlds, as long as the “parasitic bureaucracy” keeps its nose out of our lives(9).

His book is elegantly written and cast in the language of evolution, but it’s the same old cornutopian nonsense we’ve heard one hundred times before (cornutopians are people who envisage a utopia of limitless abundance(10)). In this case, however, it has already been spectacularly disproved by the author’s experience.

*The Rational Optimist* is riddled with excruciating errors and distortions. Ridley claims, for example, that “every country that tried protectionism” after the Second World War suffered as a result. He cites South Korea and Taiwan as “countries that went the other way”, and experienced miraculous growth(11).

In reality, the governments of both nations subsidised key industries, actively promoted exports and used tariffs and laws to shut out competing imports. In both countries the state owned all the major commercial banks, allowing it to make decisions about investment(12,13,14).

He maintains that “Enron funded climate alarmism”(15). The reference he gives demonstrates nothing of the sort, nor can I find evidence for this claim elsewhere(16).

He says that “no significant error has come to light” in Bjorn Lomborg’s book *The Sceptical Environmentalist*(17). In fact it contains so many significant errors that an entire book - *The Lomborg Deception* by Howard Friel - was required to document them(18).

Ridley asserts that average temperature changes over “the last three decades” have

been “relatively slow”(19). In reality the rise over this period has been the most rapid since instrumental records began(20). He maintains that “eleven of thirteen populations” of polar bears are “growing or steady”(21). There are in fact 19 populations of polar bears. Of those whose fluctuations have been measured, one is increasing, three are stable and eight are declining(22).

He uses blatant cherry-picking to create the impression that ecosystems are recovering: water snake numbers in Lake Erie, fish populations in the Thames, bird’s eggs in Sweden(23). But as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment shows, of 65 global indicators of human impacts on biodiversity, only one – the extent of temperate forests – is improving. Eighteen are stable, in all the other cases the impacts are increasing(24).

Northern Rock grew rapidly by externalising its costs, pursuing money-making schemes that would eventually be paid for by other people. Ridley encourages us to treat the planet the same way. He either ignores or glosses over the costs of ever-expanding trade and perpetual growth. His timing, as BP fails to contain the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, is unfortunate. Like the collapse of Northern Rock, the Deep-water Horizon disaster was made possible by weak regulation. Ridley would weaken it even further, leaving public protection to the invisible hand of the market.

He might not have been chastened by experience, but it would be wrong to claim that he has learnt nothing. On the contrary, he has developed a fine line in blame-shifting and post-rational justification. He mentions Northern Rock only once in his book, where he blames the crisis on “government housing and monetary policy.”(25) It was the state wot made him do it. He asserts that while he wants to reduce the regulation of markets in goods and services, he has “always supported” the careful regulation of financial markets(26). He provides no evidence for this and I cannot find it in anything he wrote before the crisis.

Other than that, he claims, he can say

**Northern Rock grew rapidly by externalising its costs, pursuing money-making schemes that would eventually be paid for by other people. Ridley encourages us to treat the planet the same way**

## ONCE BITTEN

**Had the state he despises not bailed out his bank and rescued its depositors' money, his head would probably be on a pike by now**

nothing, due to the terms of his former employment at the bank. I suspect this constraint is overstated: it's unlikely that it forbids him from accepting his share of the blame.

It is only from the safety of the regulated economy, in which governments pick up the pieces when business screws up, that people like Dr Ridley can pursue their magical thinking. Had the state he despises not bailed out his bank and rescued its depositors' money, his head would probably be on a pike by now. Instead we see it on our television screens, instructing us to apply his irrational optimism more widely. And no one has yet been rude enough to use the word discredited.

**CT**

*George Monbiot latest book is **Bring On The Acopalypse**.*

### Notes

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9. He uses this term on p357.

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# Off with *his* head

If our allies are getting their heads chopped off, perhaps it's time to bring our troops home, writes **David Swanson**

**H**ow can we stand to live in a country where this exchange is shown live on TV and nobody comments?

**REPORTER:** [I]n Marja there are reports – credible reports – of intimidation and even beheading of local people who work with your forces. Is that your intelligence? And if so, does it worry you?

**GEN. McCRYSTAL:** Yeah. It absolutely is things that we see. But it's absolutely predictable.

I'm sorry. If it is predictable that people who work with you are going to have their heads sliced off, STOP DOING THAT KIND OF WORK. After all, the work you are doing consists primarily of BLOWING other people's heads off.

STOP IT. NOW.

It's not your country. You're not welcome there. People who try to help you are seen as enemies of their country. They get their heads cut off. And your puppet president thanks you on their behalf.

STOP IT.

NOW.

If Afghanistan had an Arizona-style law, guess who would fit the profile? Guess who's illegal? Guess who is there in violation of the UN Charter, the will of 94% of Kandaharis and a majority of Americans, your own perverse counterinsurgency manual, and any code of human decency whatsoever?

GET THE HELL OUT. AND STAY OUT.

And don't even think about asking for another \$33 billion of our children's money to make it worse,

which we all know you want purely because you think we're stupid enough to believe you're being tough, even though it will do no good whatsoever, your new assault is already failing before being funded, and a majority of us want the whole crime brought to a close.

You don't want to give in to terrorists? OK, then give in to those legally resisting your illegal occupation. Or give in to those nonviolently protesting it. Or give in to the wisdom of your own experts, envoy, ambassador, national security advisor, Army and GAO reports. Or give in to the staggering list of names on the Vietnam Memorial and the fact that there would be fewer if you'd just gotten the hell out sooner.

Or do this: get out and stop bombing Pakistan, which no one gave you any legal right to do, before a successful bomber hits a US city. We all know you'll kill five million innocent human beings the moment such a bomber succeeds. We all know you don't really want to do that. So STOP MAKING IT INEVITABLE that you will be in that situation.

Stop giving our kids illegal orders.

Now.

Bring them home.

Bring them home.

Bring them home.

**CT**

*David Swanson is the author of the new book **Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union** by Seven Stories Press.*

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