

THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM | LORETTA NAPOLEONI
50 YEARS AFTER BIRMINGHAM | JOHN W. WHITEHEAD
HYPOCRITES WITH FAT WALLETS | SAM PIZZIGATI

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING ISSUE 74

THE SHAME OF AMERICA'S GULAGS

ONCE YOU DISAPPEAR BEHIND PRISON WALLS YOU BECOME PREY. Rape. Torture. Beatings. Prolonged isolation. Sensory deprivation. Racial profiling. Chain gangs. Forced labor. Rancid food. Children imprisoned as adults. Prisoners forced to take medications to induce lethargy. Inadequate heating and ventilation. Poor health care. Draconian sentences for nonviolent crimes. Endemic violence.

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The shame of America's gulag

Chris Hedges reveals the appalling conditions endured by prisoners inside jails in the United States

If, as Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote, “the degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons” then we are a nation of barbarians. Our vast network of federal and state prisons, with some 2.3 million inmates, rivals the gulags of totalitarian states. Once you disappear behind prison walls you become prey. Rape. Torture. Beatings. Prolonged isolation. Sensory deprivation. Racial profiling. Chain gangs. Forced labor. Rancid food. Children imprisoned as adults. Prisoners forced to take medications to induce lethargy. Inadequate heating and ventilation. Poor health care. Draconian sentences for nonviolent crimes. Endemic violence.

Bonnie Kerness and Ojore Lutalo, both of whom I met in Newark, NJ, a few days ago at the office of American Friends Service Committee Prison Watch, have fought longer and harder than perhaps any others in the country against the expanding abuse of prisoners, especially the use of solitary confinement. Lutalo, once a member of the Black Liberation Army, an offshoot of the Black Panthers, first wrote Kerness in 1986 while he was a prisoner at Trenton State Prison, now called New Jersey State Prison. He described to her the bleak and degrading world of solitary confinement, the world of the prisoners like him held in the so-called management control unit, which he called “a prison within a prison.” Before being re-

leased in 2009, Lutalo was in the management control unit for 22 of the 28 years he served for the second of two convictions – the first for a bank robbery and the second for a gun battle with a drug dealer. He kept his sanity, he told me, by following a strict regime of exercising in his tiny cell, writing, meditating and tearing up newspapers to make collages that portrayed his prison conditions.

“The guards in riot gear would suddenly wake you up at 1 a.m., force you to strip and make you grab all your things and move you to another cell just to harass you,” he said when we spoke in Newark. “They had attack dogs with them that were trained to go for your genitals. You spent 24 hours alone one day in your cell and 22 the next. If you do not have a strong sense of purpose you don’t survive psychologically. Isolation is designed to defeat prisoners mentally, and I saw a lot of prisoners defeated.”

Lutalo’s letter was Kerness’ first indication that the US prison system was creating something new – special detention facilities that under international law are a form of torture. He wrote to her: “How does one go about articulating desperation to another who is not desperate? How does one go about articulating the psychological stress of knowing that people are waiting for me to self-destruct?”

The techniques of sensory deprivation

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and prolonged isolation were pioneered by the Central Intelligence Agency to break prisoners during the Cold War. Alfred McCoy, the author of *A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, From the Cold War to the War on Terror*, wrote in his book that “interrogators had found that mere physical pain, no matter how extreme, often produced heightened resistance.” So the intelligence agency turned to the more effective mechanisms of “sensory disorientation” and “self-inflicted pain,” McCoy noted. [One example of causing self-inflicted pain is to force a prisoner to stand without moving or to hold some other stressful bodily position for a long period.] The combination, government psychologists argued, would cause victims to feel responsible for their own suffering and accelerate psychological disintegration. Sensory disorientation combines extreme sensory overload with extreme sensory deprivation. Prolonged isolation is followed by intense interrogation. Extreme heat is followed by extreme cold. Glaring light is followed by total darkness. Loud and sustained noise is followed by silence. “The fusion of these two techniques, sensory disorientation and self-inflicted pain, creates a synergy of physical and psychological trauma whose sum is a hammer-blow to the existential platforms of personal identity,” McCoy wrote.

After hearing from Lutalo, Kerness became a fierce advocate for him and other prisoners held in isolation units. She published through her office a survivor’s manual for those held in isolation as well as a booklet, titled *Torture in United States Prisons*. And she began to collect the stories of prisoners held in isolation.

“My food trays have been sprayed with mace or cleaning agents, ... human feces and urine put into them by guards who deliver trays to my breakfast, lunch, and dinner...,” a prisoner in isolation in the Wabash Valley Correctional Facility at Carlisle, Ind., was quoted as saying in *Torture in United States Prisons*. “I have witnessed sane men

of character become self-mutilators, suffer paranoia, panic attacks, hostile fantasies about revenge. One prisoner would swallow packs of AA batteries, and stick a pencil in his penis. They would cut on themselves to gain contact with staff nurses or just to draw attention to themselves. These men made slinging human feces ‘body waste’ daily like it was a recognized sport. Some would eat it or rub it all over themselves as if it was body lotion. ... Prisoncrats use a form of restraint, a bed crafted to strap men in four point Velcro straps. Both hands to the wrist and both feet to the ankles and secured. Prisoners have been kept like this for 3-6 hours at a time. Most times they would remove all their clothes. The Special Confinement Unit used [water hoses] on these men also. ... When prisons become overcrowded, prisoncrats will do forced double bunking. Over-crowding issues present an assortment of problems many of which results in violence. ... Prisoncrats will purposely house a ‘sex offender’ in a cell with prisoners with sole intentions of having him beaten up or even killed.”

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Isolation cages

In 1913 Eastern State Penitentiary, in Philadelphia, discontinued its isolation cages. Prisoners within the US prison system would not be held in isolation again in large numbers until the turmoil of the 1960s and the rise of the anti-war and civil rights movements along with the emergence of radical groups such as the Black Panthers. Trenton State Prison established a management control unit, or isolation unit, in 1975 for political prisoners, mostly black radicals such as Lutalo whom the state wanted to segregate from the wider prison population. Those held in the isolation unit were rarely there because they had violated prison rules; they were there because of their revolutionary beliefs – beliefs the prison authorities feared might resonate with other prisoners. In 1983 the federal prison in Marion, Ill., instituted a

permanent lockdown, creating, in essence, a prisonwide “control unit.” By 1994 the Federal Bureau of Prisons, using the Marion model, built its maximum-security prison in Florence, Colo. The use of prolonged isolation and sensory deprivation exploded. “Special housing units” were formed for the mentally ill. “Security threat group management units” were formed for those accused of gang activity. “Communications management units” were formed to isolate Muslims labeled as terrorists. Voluntary and involuntary protective custody units were formed. Administrative segregation punishment units were formed to isolate prisoners said to be psychologically troubled. All were established in open violation of the United Nations Convention Against Torture, the UN’s International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Kerness calls it “the war at home.” And she says it is only the latest variation of the long assault on the poor, especially people of color.

“There are no former Jim Crow systems,” Kerness said. “The transition from slavery to Black Codes to convict leasing to the Jim Crow laws to the wars on poverty, veterans, youth and political activism in the 1960s has been a seamless evolution of political and social incapacitation of poor people of color. The sophisticated fascism of the practices of stop and frisk, charging people in inner cities with ‘wandering,’ driving and walking while black, ZIP code racism – these and many other de facto practices all serve to keep our prisons full. In a system where 60 percent of those who are imprisoned are people of color, where students of color face harsher punishments in school than their white peers, where 58 percent of African [American] youth ... are sent to adult prisons, where women of color are 69 percent more likely to be imprisoned and where offenders of color receive longer sentences, the concept of colorblindness doesn’t exist. The racism around me is palpable.”

“The 1960s, when the last of the Jim Crow laws were reversed, this whole new set of practices accepted by law enforcement was designed to continue to feed the money-generating prison system, which has neo-slavery at its core,” she said. “Until we deeply recognize that the system’s bottom line is social control and creating a business from bodies of color and the poor, nothing can change.” She noted that more than half of those in the prison system have never physically harmed another person but that “just about all of these people have been harmed themselves.” And not only does the criminal justice sweep up the poor and people of color, but slavery within the prison system is permitted by the 13th Amendment of the US Constitution, which reads: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States. ...”

This, Kerness said, “is at the core how the labor of slaves was transformed into what people in prison call neo-slavery.” Neo-slavery is an integral part of the prison industrial complex, in which hundreds of thousands of the nation’s prisoners, primarily people of color, are forced to work at involuntary labor for a dollar or less an hour. “If you call the New Jersey Bureau of Tourism you are most likely talking to a prisoner at the Edna Mahan Correctional Institution for Women who is earning 23 cents an hour who has no ability to negotiate working hours or working conditions,” she said.

Valuable commodities

The bodies of poor, unemployed youths are worth little on the streets but become valuable commodities once they are behind bars.

“People have said to me that the criminal justice system doesn’t work,” Kerness said. “I’ve come to believe exactly the opposite – that it works perfectly, just as slavery did, as a matter of economic and political

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Female prisoners routinely complain of being sexually abused by guards. One prisoner wrote to her office: “That was not part of my sentence to perform oral sex with officers.”
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policy. How is it that a 15-year-old in Newark who the country labels worthless to the economy, who has no hope of getting a job or affording college, can suddenly generate 20,000 to 30,000 dollars a year once trapped in the criminal justice system? The expansion of prisons, parole, probation, the court and police systems has resulted in an enormous bureaucracy which has been a boon to everyone from architects to food vendors – all with one thing in common, a paycheck earned by keeping human beings in cages. The criminalization of poverty is a lucrative business, and we have replaced the social safety net with a dragnet.”

Prisons are at once hugely expensive – the country has spent some \$300 billion on them since 1980 – and, as Kerness pointed out, hugely profitable. Prisons function in the same way the military-industrial complex functions. The money is public and the profits are private.

“Privatization in the prison industrial complex includes companies, which run prisons for profit while at the same time gleaning profits from forced labor,” she said. “In the state of New Jersey, food and medical services are provided by corporations, which have a profit motive. One recent explosion of private industry is the partnering of Corrections Corporation of America with the federal government to detain close to 1 million undocumented people. Using public monies to enrich private citizens is the history of capitalism at its most exploitive.”

Those released from prison are woefully unprepared for re-entry. They carry with them the years of trauma they endured. They often suffer from the endemic health problems that come with long incarceration, including hepatitis C, tuberculosis and HIV. They often do not have access to medications upon release to treat their physical and mental illnesses. Finding work is difficult. They feel alienated and are often estranged from friends and family. More than 60 percent end up back in prison.

“How do you teach someone to rid themselves of degradation?” Kerness asked. “How long does it take to teach people to feel safe, a sense of empowerment in a world where they often come home emotionally and physically damaged and unemployable? There are many reasons that ex-prisoners do not make it – paramount among them is that they are not supposed to succeed.”

Kerness has long been a crusader. In 1961 at the age of 19 she left New York to work for a decade in Tennessee in the civil rights struggle, including a year at Tennessee’s Highlander Research and Education Center, where Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. trained. By the 1970s she was involved in housing campaigns for the poor in New Jersey. She kept running into families that included incarcerated members. This led her to found Prison Watch.

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Sexual abuse

The letters that pour into her office are disturbing. Female prisoners routinely complain of being sexually abused by guards. One prisoner wrote to her office: “That was not part of my sentence to perform oral sex with officers.” Other prisoners write on behalf of the mentally ill who have been left to deteriorate in the prison system. One California prisoner told of a mentally ill man spreading feces over himself and the guards then dumping him into a scalding bath that took skin off 30 percent of his body.

Kerness said the letters she receives from prisoners collectively present a litany of “inhumane conditions including cold, filth, callous medical care, extended isolation often lasting years, use of devices of torture, harassment, brutality and racism.”

Prisoners send her drawings of “four- and five-point restraints, restraint hoods, restraint belts, restraint beds, stun grenades, stun guns, stun belts, spit hoods, tethers, and waist and leg chains.” But the worst torment, prisoners tell her, is the psychological pain caused by “no touch torture” that in-

cluded “humiliation, sleep deprivation, sensory disorientation, extreme light or dark, extreme cold or heat” and “extended solitary confinement.” These techniques, she said, are consciously designed to carry out “a systematic attack on all human stimuli.”

The use of sensory deprivation was applied by the government to imprisoned radicals in the 1960s including members of the Black Panthers, the Black Liberation Army, the Puerto Rican independence movement and the American Indian Movement, along with environmentalists, anti-imperialists and civil rights activists.

It is now used extensively against Islamic militants, jailhouse lawyers and political prisoners. Many of those political prisoners were part of radical black underground movements in the 1960s that advocated violence. A few, such as Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu Jamal, are well known, but most have little public visibility – among them Sundiata Acoli, Mutulu Shakur, Imam Jamil Al-Amin (known as H. Rap Brown when in the 1960s he was the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), Jalil Bottom, Sekou Odinga, Abdul Majid, Tom Manning and Bill Dunne.

Those within the system who attempt to resist the abuse and mistreatment are dealt with severely. Prisoners in the overcrowded Southern Ohio Correctional Facility, a maximum-security prison in Lucasville, Ohio, staged a revolt in 1993 after years of routine beatings, degrading rituals of public humiliation and the alleged murders of prisoners by guards.

The some 450 prisoners, who were able to unite antagonistic prison factions including the Aryan Brotherhood and the black Gangster Disciples, held out for 11 days. It was one of the longest prison rebellions in US history. Nine prisoners and a guard were killed by the prisoners during the revolt. The state responded with characteristic fury. It singled out some 40 prisoners and eventually shipped them to Ohio State Penitentiary (OSP), a supermax facility outside

Youngstown that was constructed in 1998. There prisoners are held in solitary confinement 23 hours a day in 7-by-11-foot cells. Prisoners at OSP almost never see the sun or have human contact. Those charged with participating in the uprising have, in some cases, been held in these punitive conditions at OSP or other facilities since the 1993 revolt. Five prisoners – Bomani Shakur, Siddique Abdullah Hasan, Jason Robb, George Skatzes and Namir Abdul Mateen – involved in the uprising were charged with murder. They are being held in isolation on death row.

Kerness says the for-profit prison companies have created an entrepreneurial class like that of the Southern slaveholders, one “dependent on the poor, and on bodies of color as a source for income,” and she describes federal and state departments of corrections as “a state of mind.” This state of mind, she said in the interview, “led to Abu Ghraib, Bagram and Guantanamo and what is going on in US prisons right this moment.”

As long as profit remains an incentive to incarcerate human beings and our corporate state abounds in surplus, redundant labor, there is little chance that the prison system will be reformed. It is making our corporate overlords wealthy. Our prisons serve the engine of corporate capitalism, transferring state money to private corporations. These corporations will continue to stymie rational prison reform because the system, however inhumane and unjust, feeds corporate bank accounts.

At its bottom the problem is not race – although race plays a huge part in incarceration rates – nor is it finally poverty; it is the predatory nature of corporate capitalism itself. And until we slay the beast of corporate capitalism, until we wrest power back from corporations, until we build social institutions and a system of governance designed not to profit the few but foster the common good, our prison industry and the horror it perpetuates will only expand. **CT**

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*Chris Hedges' latest book is **Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt**, co-authored with artist and writer Joe Sacco. This essay was originally published at <http://truthdig.org>*

Ayn Rand, USA

In 20 years, corporate profits are up 400% and their taxes have fallen by 50% -- meanwhile the workers' payroll tax has doubled, writes **Paul Buchheit**

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Those in the best position to make money take all they can get, with no scruples about their working class victims, because taking, in the minds of the rich, serves as a model for success
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Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged* fantasizes a world in which anti-government citizens reject taxes and regulations, and "stop the motor" by withdrawing themselves from the system of production. In a perverse twist on the writer's theme the prediction is coming true. But instead of productive people rejecting taxes, rejected taxes are shutting down productive people.

Perhaps Ayn Rand never anticipated the impact of unregulated greed on a productive middle class. Perhaps she never understood the fairness of tax money for public research and infrastructure and security, all of which have contributed to the success of big business. She must have known about the inequality of the pre-Depression years. But she couldn't have foreseen the concurrent rise in technology and globalization that allowed inequality to surge again, more quickly, in a manner that threatens to put the greediest offenders out of our reach.

Ayn Rand's philosophy suggests that average working people are 'takers.' In reality, those in the best position to make money take all they can get, with no scruples about their working class victims, because taking, in the minds of the rich, serves as a model for success. The strategy involves tax avoidance, in numerous forms.

In the past twenty years, corporate profits have quadrupled while the corporate tax

percent has dropped by half. The payroll tax, paid by workers, has doubled.

In effect, corporations have decided to let middle-class workers pay for national investments that have largely benefited businesses over the years. The greater part of basic research, especially for technology and health care, has been conducted with government money. Even today 60% of university research is government-supported. Corporations use highways and shipping lanes and airports to ship their products, the FAA and TSA and Coast Guard and Department of Transportation to safeguard them, a nationwide energy grid to power their factories, and communications towers and satellites to conduct online business.

Yet as corporate profits surge and taxes plummet, our infrastructure is deteriorating. The American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that \$3.63 trillion is needed over the next seven years to make the necessary repairs.

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Turning taxes into thin air

Corporations have used numerous and creative means to avoid their tax responsibilities. They have about a year's worth of profits stashed untaxed overseas. According to the *Wall Street Journal* about 60% of their cash is offshore. Yet these corporate 'persons' enjoy a foreign earned income exclusion [10] that real U.S. persons don't get.

Corporate tax haven ploys are legendary, with almost 19,000 companies claiming home office space in one building in the low-tax Cayman Islands. But they don't want to give up their U.S. benefits. Tech companies in 19 tax haven jurisdictions received \$18.7 billion in 2011 federal contracts. A lot of smaller companies are legally exempt from taxes. As of 2008, according to IRS data, fully 69% of U.S. corporations were organized as nontaxable businesses.

There's much more. Companies call their CEO bonuses "performance pay" to get a lower rate. Private equity firms call fees "capital gains" to get a lower rate. Fast food companies call their lunch menus "intellectual property" to get a lower rate.

Prisons and casinos have stooped to the level of calling themselves "real estate investment trusts" (REITs) to gain tax exemptions. Stooping lower yet, Disney and others have added cows and sheep to their greenspace to get a farmland exemption.

The richest individuals stopped paying

The IRS estimated that 17 percent of taxes owed were not paid in 2006, leaving an underpayment of \$450 billion. The revenue loss from tax havens approaches \$450 billion. Subsidies from special deductions, exemptions, exclusions, credits, capital gains, and loopholes are estimated at over \$1 trillion. Expenditures overwhelmingly benefit the richest taxpayers.

In keeping with Ayn Rand's assurance that "Money is the barometer of a society's virtue," the super-rich are relentless in their quest to make more money by eliminating taxes. Instead of calling their income 'income,' they call it "carried interest" or "performance-based earnings" or "deferred pay." And when they cash in their stock options, they might look up last year's lowest price, write that in as a purchase date, cash in the concocted profits, and take advantage of the lower capital gains tax rate.

Middle-class families. The \$2 trillion in tax

losses from underpayments, expenditures, and tax havens costs every middle-class family about \$20,000 in community benefits, including health care and education and food and housing.

Schoolkids, too. A study of 265 large companies by Citizens for Tax Justice (CTJ) determined that about \$14 billion per year in state income taxes was unpaid over three years. That's approximately equal to the loss of 2012-13 education funding due to budget cuts.

And the lowest-income taxpayers make up the difference, based on new data that shows that the Earned Income Tax Credit is the single biggest compliance problem cited by the IRS. The average sentence for cheating with secret offshore financial accounts, according to the Wall Street Journal [33], is about half as long as in some other types of tax cases.

Only 3 percent of the CEOs, upper management, and financial professionals were entrepreneurs in 2005, even though they made up about 60 percent of the richest .1% of Americans. A recent study found that less than 1 percent of all entrepreneurs came from very rich or very poor backgrounds. Job creators come from the middle class.

So if the super-rich are not holding the world on their shoulders, what do they do with their money? According to both Marketwatch and economist Edward Wolff, over 90 percent of the assets owned by millionaires are held in a combination of low-risk investments (bonds and cash), personal business accounts, the stock market, and real estate.

Ayn Rand's hero John Galt said, "We are on strike against those who believe that one man must exist for the sake of another." In his world, Atlas has it easy, with only himself to think about.

CT

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So if the super-rich are not holding the world on their shoulders, what do they do with their money?

Enough already

There is no point at which those who accumulate money become satisfied, writes **George Monbiot**

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The politics of
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.....

I never did anything for money. I never set money as a goal. It was a result.” So says Bob Diamond, formerly the chief executive of Barclays. In doing so he lays waste to the justification his bank and others (and their innumerable apologists in government and the media) have advanced for surreal levels of remuneration: to incentivise hard work and talent. Prestige, power, a sense of purpose: these are incentives enough.

Others of his class – Bernie Ecclestone and Jeroen van der Veer (the former chief executive of Shell) for example – say the same. The capture of so much wealth by the executive class performs no useful function. What the very rich appear to value is relative income.

If executives were all paid 5% of current levels, competition between them (a questionable virtue anyway) would be no less fierce. As the immensely rich HL Hunt commented several decades ago, “money is just a way of keeping score.”

The desire for advancement along this scale appears to be insatiable. In March *Forbes* magazine published an article about Prince Alwaleed, who, like other Saudi princes, doubtless owes his fortune to nothing but hard work and enterprise.

According to one of the prince’s former employees, the *Forbes* global rich list “is how he wants the world to judge his suc-

cess or his stature.” The result is “a quarter-century of intermittent lobbying, cajoling and threatening when it comes to his net worth listing.”

In 2006, the researcher responsible for calculating his wealth writes, “when *Forbes* estimated that the prince was actually worth \$7 billion less than he said he was, he called me at home the day after the list was released, sounding nearly in tears. ‘What do you want?’ he pleaded, offering up his private banker in Switzerland. ‘Tell me what you need.’”

Never mind that he has his own 747, in which he sits on a throne during flights. Never mind that his “main palace” has 420 rooms. Never mind that he possesses his own private amusement park and zoo and, he claims, \$700 million worth of jewels. Never mind that he’s the richest man in the Arab world, valued by *Forbes* at \$20bn, and has watched his wealth increase by \$2bn in the past year. None of this is enough. There is no place of arrival, no happy landing, even in a private jumbo jet. The politics of envy are never keener than among the very rich.

This pursuit can suck the life out of its adherents. In Lauren Greenfield’s magnificent documentary *The Queen of Versailles*, David Siegel, “America’s timeshare king”, appears to abandon all interest in life as he faces the loss of his crown. He is still worth hundreds of millions. He still has an

adoring wife and children, he is still building the biggest private home in America. But as the sale of the skyscraper that bears his name and symbolises his pre-eminence begins to look inevitable, he sinks into an impenetrable depression. Dead-eyed, he sits alone in his private cinema, obsessively rummaging through the same pieces of paper, as if somewhere among them he can find the key to his restoration, refusing to engage with his family, apparently prepared to ruin himself rather than lose the stupid tower.

To grant the rich these pleasures, the social contract is reconfigured. The welfare state is dismantled. Essential public services are cut, so that the rich may pay less tax. The public realm is privatised, the regulations restraining the ultra-wealthy and the companies they control are abandoned, Edwardian levels of inequality are almost fetishised.

Politicians justify these changes, when not reciting bogus arguments about the deficit, with the incentives for enterprise they create. Behind that lies the promise or the hint that we will all be happier and more satisfied as a result. But this mindless, meaningless accumulation cannot satisfy even its beneficiaries, except perhaps, and temporarily, the man wobbling on the very top of the pile.

Endless economic growth

The same applies to collective growth. Governments today have no vision but endless economic growth. They are judged not by the number of people in employment, let alone by the number of people in satisfying, pleasurable jobs, not by the happiness of the population or the protection of the natural world. Job-free, world-eating growth is fine, as long as it's growth. There are no ends any more, just means.

In their interesting but curiously incomplete book, *How Much is Enough?*, Robert and Edward Skidelsky note that "Capitalism

rests precisely on this endless expansion of wants. That is why, for all its success, it remains so unloved. It has given us wealth beyond measure, but has taken away the chief benefit of wealth: the consciousness of having enough. ... The vanishing of all intrinsic ends leaves us with only two options: to be ahead or to be behind. Positional struggle is our fate."

They note that the nations with the longest working hours – the US, UK and Italy in the graph of OECD nations they publish – are those with the greatest inequality. They might have added that they are also the three with the lowest levels of social mobility.

Four possible conclusions could be drawn. The first is that inequality does indeed encourage people to work harder, as the Skidelskys (and various neoliberals) maintain: the bigger the gap, the more some people will strive to try to close it. Or perhaps it's just that more people, swamped by poverty and debt, are desperate.

An alternative explanation is that economic and political inequality sit together: in more unequal nations, bosses are able to drive their workers harder. The fourth possible observation is that the hard work inequality might stimulate neither closes the gap nor enhances social mobility.

Nor, it seems, does it make us, collectively, any wealthier. The Dutch earn an average of \$42,000 per capita on 1,400 hours a year, the British \$36,000 on 1,650 hours. Inequality, competition, an obsession with wealth and rank appear to be both self-perpetuating and destined to sow despair.

Can we not rise above this? To seek satisfactions which don't cost the earth and might be achievable? The principal aim of any wealthy nation should now be to say "enough already".

CT

George Monbiot is an activist and author. This essay was first published at <http://theguardian.co.uk>

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The welfare state is dismantled.

Essential public services are cut, so that the rich may pay less tax

Hypocrites with fat wallets

Top business executives reap huge rewards while criticising the rest of us, writes **Sam Pizzigati**

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The loophole UnitedHealth so lucratively exploited lets companies deduct off their taxes every dollar of “performance pay” they shovel into their executives’ personal pockets
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America’s top corporate executives love lecturing the rest of us about ‘fiscal responsibility.’ They want us to expect less from government. But they expect more, and a new report shows how they’re getting it.

Last month, federal unemployment benefits for the 400,000 Californians out of work since last fall dropped almost 18 percent, a \$52 cut out of an average \$297 weekly check. Similar cuts have already started rolling out in other states.

In all, 3.8 million long-term unemployed Americans will on average lose nearly \$1,000 each by September 30, the date that ends the 2012 federal fiscal year.

The direct cause of all these cuts: the “sequester,” the \$85 billion in federal austerity budget reductions that kicked in this past March 1.

Who deserves the “credit” for this meat-axe sequester? Credit the power suits who occupy Corporate America’s loftiest executive suites. These top corporate executives – organized in groups like “Fix the Debt” and the Business Roundtable – have been lobbying relentlessly for deep cuts in federal spending.

Only significant cutbacks in programs near and dear to average Americans, these executives proclaim, can save the nation from debt disaster.

But these same top executives, says a

new recently released report, are actually running up the federal debt – purely to enrich themselves.

The giant firms these execs manage, details this new report from the Institute for Policy Studies and the Campaign for America’s Future, “are exploiting the US tax code to send taxpayers the bill for the huge rewards they’re doling out to their top executives.”

How huge do these rewards go? UnitedHealth Group CEO Stephen Hemsley, a “Fix the Debt” endorser, pulled in \$199 million between 2009 and 2011.

A convenient federal tax loophole – in place since 1993 – let UnitedHealth deduct \$194 million of that windfall compensation on its corporate tax return. That deduction, in turn, saved UnitedHealth – and denied the federal treasury – \$68 million, enough to extend full federal unemployment benefits for the rest of the 2013 fiscal year to over 65,000 jobless Americans.

The loophole UnitedHealth so lucratively exploited lets companies deduct off their taxes every dollar of “performance pay” they shovel into their executives’ personal pockets. UnitedHealth, of course, hardly stands alone here. All American corporate and banking giants play the “performance pay” game.

The 90 giant firms that belong to “Fix the Debt” play the game particularly well. Be-

tween 2009 and 2011, the deductions these 90 claimed for top executive “performance pay” added at least \$953 million – and maybe as much as \$1.6 billion – to America’s national debt.

The US tax code’s exceedingly bountiful “performance pay” loophole has its roots in an earlier epoch of American public outrage at excessive CEO pay. Back in 1992, Bill Clinton campaigned against over-the-top executive pay in his drive for the White House. Congress, just months after Clinton’s inauguration, would go on to pass legislation that lawmakers hailed as a check on CEO excess. The new law allowed corporations to deduct off their taxes no more than \$1 million in compensation per executive. But the law had a huge escape hatch. Firms could exempt any “performance-based” pay from the \$1 million limit.

The predictable result? An explosion of “performance-based” compensation, particularly in the form of stock options, an explosion that would keep CEO pay soaring. CEOs had been averaging 42 times US worker pay in 1982. By 1992, the gap had jumped to 201 times. The average gap today: 354 times.

The “performance pay” loophole, the new Institute for Policy Studies and Campaign for America’s Future report stresses, has served “as a critical subsidy for excessive compensation.”

“The larger the executive payout, the less the corporation pays in taxes,” the re-

port explains. “And average taxpayers wind up footing the bill.”

That footing would end if legislation Representative Barbara Lee from California has introduced ever became law. Her Income Equity Act would deny corporations a tax deduction on any executive compensation that runs over 25 times the pay of a company’s lowest-paid workers or \$500,000.

Interestingly, the Affordable Health Care Act enacted in President Obama’s first term sets a \$500,000 cap, effective this year, on how much health insurers like UnitedHealth can deduct for executive compensation.

With this cap now law for health care execs, notes the new Institute for Policy Studies and Campaign for America’s Future report, “taxpayers won’t have to worry so much about their hard-earned dollars going to subsidize fat paychecks for CEOs like Stephen Hemsley of UnitedHealth.”

“But,” sums up the study, “taxpayers may want to wonder why – at a time of scarce government resources – their tax dollars are subsidizing fat paychecks at any American corporate giant.” **CT**

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*Sam Pizzigati, editor of the online weekly Too Much - <http://toomuchonline.org>, writes widely about inequality. An excerpt from his latest book, **The Rich Don’t Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class**, has just been published by Seven Stories Press, was featured in issue 71 of ColdType.*

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Buckling to bigotry

Nima Shirazi tells how actions by Washington's Newseum dishonour two murdered Palestinian journalists

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The move followed an Israel lobby pressure campaign led by anti-Palestinian organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League, the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies and the American Jewish Committee, efforts that were openly supported by the Israeli government
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Just two days before Palestinians commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Nakba, the names of two Palestinian cameramen targeted and killed by Israeli airstrikes in Gaza last November were dropped from a dedication ceremony held to honor “reporters, photographers and broadcasters who have died reporting the news” over the past year. The move followed an Israel lobby pressure campaign led by anti-Palestinian organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League, the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies and the American Jewish Committee, efforts that were openly supported by the Israeli government.

The Atlantic Wire's J.K. Trotter summarizes: “Two days after Washington, D.C.'s Newseum announced its intent to honor Hussam Salama and Mahmoud al-Kumi, who were killed in November while working as cameramen for the Middle East-based Al-Aqsa TV, the well-known temple of journalism has decided – for now – not to recognize Salama and al-Kumi, citing their employer's deep ties to Hamas, a Palestinian organization currently designated by the United States as a terrorist group.

The Newseum, which honored 82 journalists on May 13, 2013, stated that it had “decided to re-evaluate their inclusion as journalists on our memorial wall pending further investigation,” even though in re-

sponse to the hysterical reaction to Salama's and al-Kumi's initial inclusion, the museum had affirmed and defended their decision, noting that “the Committee to Protect Journalists, Reporters Without Borders and The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers all consider these men journalists killed in the line of duty.”

Indeed, as Joe Catron notes on Mondo-weiss, Reporters Without Borders has pointed out, “Even if the targeted media support Hamas, this does not in any way legitimize the attacks,” while the Committee to Protect Journalists “found that the Israeli military's official justifications for its attacks on journalists... ‘did not specifically address CPJ's central question: how did Israel determine that those targeted did not deserve the civilian protections afforded to all journalists, no matter their perspective, under international law?’”

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers includes both Salama and al-Kumi on its list of “69 Media Employees Killed in 2012,” as does the International Federation of Journalists in its report, “In the Grip of Violence: Journalists and Media staff Killed in 2012.”

Human Rights Watch, in its December 20, 2012 report on “Unlawful Israeli Attacks on Palestinian Media,” concluded, “Four Israeli attacks on journalists and media facilities in Gaza during the November 2012

fighting violated the laws of war by targeting civilians and civilian objects that were making no apparent contribution to Palestinian military operations.”

The attacks killed two Palestinian cameramen, wounded at least 10 media workers, and badly damaged four media offices, as well as the offices of four private companies. One of the attacks killed a two-year-old boy who lived across the street from a targeted building.

The Israeli government asserted that each of the four attacks was on a legitimate military target but provided no specific information to support its claims. After examining the attack sites and interviewing witnesses, Human Rights Watch found no indications that these targets were valid military objectives.

“Just because Israel says a journalist was a fighter or a TV station was a command center does not make it so,” said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “Journalists who praise Hamas and TV stations that applaud attacks on Israel may be propagandists, but that does not make them legitimate targets under the laws of war.”

HRW added, “The two men’s families, interviewed separately, said the men were neither participating in the fighting nor members of any armed group. Human Rights Watch found no evidence, including during visits to the men’s homes, to contradict that claim. Hamas’s armed wing, al-Qassam Brigades, has not put either man on its official list of killed fighters – an unlikely omission if the men had been playing a military role.”

For the Newseum to be bullied into omitting Salama and al-Kumi from its rededication ceremony by avowedly Zionist groups and right-wing media outlets demonstrates that the institution itself is no less a propaganda outfit than Al-Aqsa TV. This shameful last minute decision effectively grants the U.S. and Israeli governments the ability to decide who is and who is not a journal-

ist and who should and who should not be honored for their work.

But the decision also reeks of hypocrisy and Manichean double standards.

The Newseum is essentially suggesting that sycophantic journalists parroting government propaganda may be legitimate targets in military operations and should be labeled combatants, rather than civilians who enjoy press freedoms and are subject to protection.

Yet this only extends as far as the U.S. State Department says it does.

The ADL’s Abe Foxman called Salama and al-Kumi “members of a terrorist organization advancing their agenda through murderous violence” and “terrorist operatives” who “were working for a propaganda outlet, not a legitimate news organization.” The AJC’s David Harris echoed these sentiments, labeling Salama and al-Kumi as “brazen terrorists” and “two individuals who were integral to the propaganda machine of the Hamas terrorist organization,” that could not be considered “a legitimate media operation.”

Such terms as “terrorism” and “terrorist” are perhaps the most loaded, politicized, exploited and, consequently, meaningless words in our current lexicon, employed as a bludgeon against critical thinking in order to reinforce “us vs. them” narratives.

Apparently, the Newseum has determined that our propaganda deserves respect and admiration, while their propaganda (in this case, documenting on camera the effects Israeli bombs and missiles have on the human flesh of Palestinian people at Gaza’s al-Shifa Hospital) should be condemned, targeted and investigated.

By this measure, plenty of alleged propagandists grace the memorial wall of the Newseum already, with more added during today’s ceremony.

Mohamed Al-Massalma, a freelance reporter for Al Jazeera, was killed by a sniper while covering the Syrian civil war in Busra Al-Harir in late January 2013. The Syrian

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“Journalists who praise Hamas and TV stations that applaud attacks on Israel may be propagandists, but that does not make them legitimate targets under the laws of war”

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**Embedded
journalists who
were killed while
accompanying
American
occupation
forces in Iraq and
Afghanistan - a
policy promoted
by the U.S.
military in order
to ensure positive
reporting on
American actions
(some might call
that propaganda)
- have also rightly
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a place in the
Newseum's
memorial**
.....

journalist, working under the pseudonym Mohamed Al-Horani, was “an activist in the revolt against President Bashar al-Assad,” before joining Al Jazeera.

In January 2012, Mukarram Khan Aatif was gunned down in the Pakistani town of Shabqadar by members of the Pakistani Taliban. Aatif was a journalist working for Deewa Radio, the U.S. government's Voice of America Pasto-language service. He was among those honored by the Newseum this year.

The taxpayer-funded Voice of America (VOA) and its affiliated services have been legally banned from broadcasting or distribution here in the United States for the past 65 years because of a Congressional act prohibiting the government from propagandizing to its own citizens. Only last year was this law reversed; the ban will be officially lifted this coming July 2013. VOA is literally U.S. government propaganda, yet its reporters are accorded due protection from violence, as they should be.

Another VOA journalist, Mohammed Ali Nuxurkey, was killed in an al-Shabab bombing in Mogadishu, Somalia, this past March. There is no doubt he will be added to the Newseum's wall next year.

If any distinctions are to be made among different categories of journalists caught in the line of fire or deliberately targeted for murder, international law does not, in fact, favor the Foxmans and Harrises of the world.

While war journalists who are not embedded with troops or themselves soldiers taking direct part in hostilities are legally protected by the law of armed conflict, embedded reporters are not necessarily similarly protected.

According to international law professor Sandesh Sivakumaran, writing for the Oxford University Press, embedded journalists, while civilians, may be “casualties of lawful attacks” as “[t]he law allows for the targeting of troops and that targeting may result in bystanders or embedded reporters

becoming casualties.”

Still, embedded journalists who were killed while accompanying American occupation forces in Iraq and Afghanistan - a policy promoted by the U.S. military in order to ensure positive reporting on American actions (some might call that propaganda) - have also rightly been accorded a place in the Newseum's memorial. Journalists like Spanish reporter Julio Anguita Parado and German correspondent Christian Liebig, killed by Iraqi missiles in an April 7, 2003 attack on the U.S. Army's 3rd Division headquarters in Baghdad, are honored by the Newseum as is NBC News soundman Jeremy Little, killed in Fallujah in July 2003 while embedded with the Army's 3rd Infantry.

Sivakumaran also explains that “[j]ournalists who work for media outlets or information services of the armed forces” are legally considered “members of the armed forces,” and therefore “don't benefit from the protections afforded to civilians and their deaths don't constitute a violation of the law.”

As such, the Newseum's glaring duplicity is all the more evident when considering the case of James P. Hunter. A staff sergeant, reporter and photographer with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, Hunter was killed on June 18, 2010 by an IED while covering the massive U.S. offensive taking place in Kandahar, Afghanistan, for *The Fort Campbell Courier*, an Army newspaper in Kentucky. He was an active duty soldier and the first Army journalist to die in combat since 9/11. Still, the Newseum saw fit to honor Hunter on its memorial wall.

Yet in the case of Salama and al-Kumi, “Israeli officials sought to justify attacks on Palestinian media by saying the military had targeted individuals or facilities that ‘had relevance to’ or were ‘linked with’ a Palestinian armed group, or had ‘encouraged and lauded acts of terror against Israeli civilians;” according to Human Rights

Watch. “These justifications, suggesting that it is permissible to attack media because of their associations or opinions, however repugnant, rather than their direct participation in hostilities, violate the laws of war and place journalists at grave risk.”

If repellant statements, including the justification of and praise for acts of violence against civilians, are the benchmark of propaganda and thereby constitute legitimate targeting for death by those opposed to such statements, then countless American journalists and commentators from across the political spectrum would be subject to the same fate as Salama and al-Kumi.

Warmongering and incitement abound in the editorial pages of the *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal*. Liberal commentators like Joe Klein and former White House spokesman Robert Gibbs exalt the extrajudicial executions by flying robot of countless civilians, including a 16-year-old American citizen in Yemen and hundreds of children in Pakistan. Right-wing pundits like Jennifer Rubin and her friends at *Commentary* and the *Weekly Standard* openly advocate for the murder of Iranian and Palestinian civilians, endlessly call for permanent war and occupation, support torture and indefinite detention, advocate for the assassination of whistleblowers, scientists and foreign officials, and justify the war crimes of their preferred military forces and governments.

Just days before the car in which Salama and al-Kumi were traveling, marked clearly as a press vehicle, was blown up by an Israeli bomb, Rubin published a post praising the IDF assault on Gaza. Hardly able to contain her glee, Rubin anonymously quoted “an old Middle East hand” declaring that, after weeks of sporadic Israeli airstrikes (“a form of messaging to Hamas”), “the Israelis escalated. But still they are avoiding infrastructure, hitting pinpoint high-level Hamas target.”

A recent B’Tselem report on Israel’s actions last November, however, “challenges

the common perception in the Israeli public and media that the operation was ‘surgical’ and caused practically no fatalities among uninvolved Palestinian civilians,” noting that, “in some cases at least, the [Israeli] military violated IHL [international humanitarian law] and in other cases there are substantial reasons to believe IHL was violated.” Israeli airstrikes killed 167 Palestinians in Gaza, at least 87 of whom were noncombatants, including 31 minors.

Two days after cheering Israeli war crimes, Rubin set her sights on a bigger target. “Israel can keep swatting down Hamas, using air power or, if need be, going into Gaza on land,” she wrote. “It has a solemn obligation to defend itself against what was a deliberate escalation by Hamas in the number and quality of weapons launched against Israel’s civilian population. But even with the most robust U.S. support this is not a long-term solution. That will only come when Iran is dealt with, either militarily or via regime change.”

Anyone arguing that Rubin could be targeted with violence for writing her opinions would be labeled sociopathic and lambasted for incitement, and for good reason. And there is no doubt that if correspondents from Israeli Army Radio or employees of the state-run Israel Broadcasting Authority were killed, they would be honored by the Newseum, without so much as a whiff of dissent, let alone outrage.

Tireless defamation

It is evident that, as always, Palestinians are subject to unparalleled scrutiny and suspicion due to the tireless defamation and lobbying efforts of big-moneyed Zionist organizations and ideological zealots.

But is it surprising that the Newseum should jump on this bias bandwagon?

In the late 1940’s, Bugsy Siegel’s former publicist Hank Greenspun was recruited by Jewish militias in Palestine to help them fight against both the occupying British and

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Anyone arguing that Rubin could be targeted with violence for writing her opinions would be labeled sociopathic and lambasted for incitement, and for good reason

TAINTED MEMORIES

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Greenspun was apprehended by the FBI while attempting to illegally ship surplus combat airplane engines to Haganah
.....

indigenous Palestinians. He hijacked a yacht and laundered \$1.3 million through Mexico in order to smuggle machine guns stolen from the U.S. Navy in Hawaii to the prolific terrorist group Irgun, which had blown up Jerusalem's King David Hotel the year before and would massacre the residents of Deir Yassin a year later. Soon thereafter, Greenspun was apprehended by the FBI while attempting to illegally ship surplus combat airplane engines to Haganah.

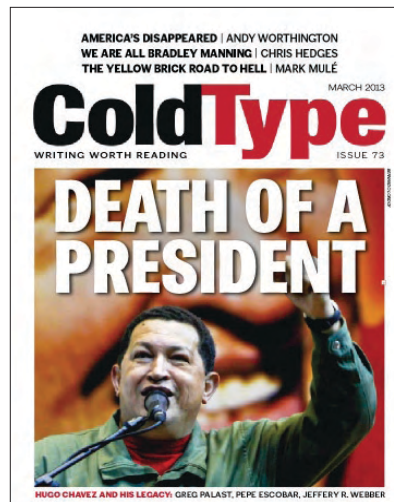
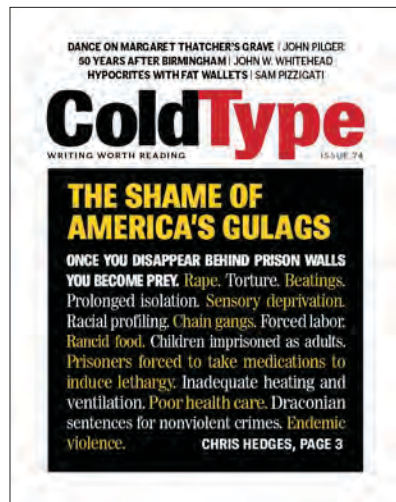
In 1950, he was convicted of violating the U.S. Neutrality Act and fined \$10,000 for his arms deals. The same year, he purchased the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* and renamed it the *Las Vegas Sun*, serving as publisher for the next four decades.

Upon his death in 1989, former Israeli

Prime Minister Shimon Peres called Greenspun "a hero of our country and a fighter for freedom - a man of great spirit who fought with his mind and his soul; a man of great conviction and commitment." In 1993, a one-acre plaza in the Jerusalem Botanical Garden of Hebrew University was dedicated to him.

In 2006, the Greenspun Family donated \$7 million to the Newseum, which named a terrace in his honor. It overlooks Pennsylvania Avenue. **CT**

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Nima Shirazi is co-editor of the Iran, Iraq and Turkey pages for the online magazine Muftah. His political analysis can be found on his blog, Wide Asleep in America. He tweets @WideAsleepNima.



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‘This madman must be stopped’

David Edwards investigates red lines in Syria

Last August, Barack Obama told reporters at the White House: ‘We have been very clear to the Assad regime... that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilised.

‘That would change my calculus; that would change my equation.’

This was a clear threat to repeat the 2011 Nato assault which resulted in the overthrow and murder of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.

So what is the evidence that Assad recently chose to do the one thing most likely to trigger a Western attack and similar fate?

On April 25, the White House claimed that US intelligence assessed ‘with varying degrees of confidence’ that ‘the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons on a small scale in Syria, specifically the chemical agent sarin’.

Having offered this caveated assertion, US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel added: ‘We cannot confirm the origin of these weapons... but we do believe that any use of chemical weapons in Syria would very likely have originated with the Assad regime.’

He concluded: ‘As I’ve said, this is serious business – we need all the facts.’

A sceptical Alex Thomson, chief correspondent at Channel 4 News, commented: ‘WMD, the Middle East, and here we go again... Already a British prime minister is

talking about a “war crime” whilst offering the British people no detailed evidence.’

Evidence included video footage said to show victims of chemical weapons foaming at the mouth.

Thomson offered a link to a detailed report of the 1995 sarin attack in Tokyo, noting: ‘I am advised there’s no mention of any prominent bright, white foam at mouths’.

Thomson also asked, reasonably: ‘Why doesn’t any medic in the film wipe away the white foam on patients’ mouths – the basic paramedic fundamental to preserve an airway?’

On *GlobalPost*, Tracey Shelton and Peter Gelling questioned whether the filmed symptoms matched claims that sarin had been used: ‘In recent years, in other countries in the Middle East where security forces used tear gas on protesters, witnesses reported seeing victims foam at the mouth, convulse and twitch – the same symptoms seen in the Syrian victims.

‘The tell-tale sign of a sarin gas attack is myosis, or constricting of the pupils, and... tremors. While *GlobalPost* confirmed that some of the victims in the April 13 attack suffered from tremors, it was unable to confirm any of them had myosis.

‘Moreover, experts say an attack by sarin gas would cause virtually anyone who had come into contact with the toxin to immediately feel its effects. Exposure to even a

.....
Evidence included video footage said to show victims of chemical weapons foaming at the mouth

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The remarkable suggestion, in 2003, was that a massive attack by 200,000 troops would be justified by the discovery of a single 122mm artillery shell with a range of four miles
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very small amount of sarin could be lethal. While there were casualties in the Aleppo attack, most of the victims survived, which would not likely be the outcome of a sarin attack in a confined environment.’

Crucially, the White House accepted that: ‘The chain of custody is not clear.’ Middle East analyst Sharmine Narwani commented: ‘That is the single most important phrase in this whole exercise. It is the only phrase that journalists need consider – everything else is conjecture of WMDs-in-Iraq proportions.

‘I asked a State Department spokesperson the following: “Does it mean you don’t know who has had access to the sample before it reached you? Or that the sample has not been contaminated along the way?”

‘He responded: “It could mean both.”’

Alastair Hay, a toxicologist at the University of Leeds, cautioned: ‘To make a legal case – whether it’s against the Syrian government or opposition group – you need an ironclad chain of custody.

‘You need to be able to have somebody swear, if you like, that the material was in their custody at all times, whoever it is with before it gets to a laboratory.’

Narwani also questioned the claim that only the Syrian government has access to sarin: ‘In 2004, an IED roadside bomb – a common insurgent tactic – containing the nerve agent was detonated in Iraq. There are no guarantees whatsoever that chemical munitions have not found their way into the hands of rogue elements – or in fact that they are not producing them in small quantities themselves.’

A report in the *Los Angeles Times* offered other explanations: ‘Releases of poison gas could have occurred when soldiers loyal to the regime, which has been trying to secure and consolidate its dozens of chemical weapons sites, moved part of its stockpile, a US Defense official said. Another possibility is that disloyal Syrian weapons scientists supplied chemicals to rebel fighters.

“‘The intel folks are taking a hard look at

this, and they’re not certain,’ the Defense official said, speaking anonymously to discuss intelligence matters. “There’s no definite indication this was used against the opposition.”’

Alex Thomson asked another sensible question: ‘Why did just a few people die – surely a large number of people would have died in a chemical attack, as in Halabja and Iran/Iraq war?’

In fact the quantities of chemicals said to be involved have been described as ‘microscopic’.

Dr. Jeffrey Lewis of the Monterey Institute of International Studies, also founder of Arms Control Wonk, a nuclear arms control and non-proliferation blog, wrote: ‘[T]he constant references to the “small scale” use becomes more clear – we don’t have multiple victims in a single use, as might be expected if the Syrians gassed a military unit or a local community. At most, we have two events in which only one person was exposed.

‘For all we know, these two poor souls stumbled into sarin canisters while ransacking a liberated Syrian military site. I don’t say that to be callous, but rather because strange things happen on the battlefield. Remember, in 1991, US troops detonated a pit of munitions at Khamisiyah in Iraq only to discover that the munitions contained sarin.’

Two events in which only one person was exposed! This reminds strongly of the moment when 11 empty artillery shells were found in an Iraqi bunker in January 2003. An ITN expert declared: ‘The real smoking gun of course would be if one of those shells was still found to contain a chemical mixture.’ (ITV Lunchtime News, January 17, 2003)

The remarkable suggestion, in 2003, was that a massive attack by 200,000 troops would be justified by the discovery of a single 122mm artillery shell with a range of four miles.

Other questions arise. Why would the

Syrian government use the one weapon likely to trigger Western intervention when its use of highly destructive conventional weaponry appears to be reversing rebel gains, as indicated here and here? Writing for *Foreign Policy* in December, Charles Blair commented: ‘The regime would risk losing Russian and Chinese support, legitimising foreign military intervention, and, ultimately, hastening its own end. As one Syrian official said, “We would not commit suicide.”’

It is easy to appreciate Robert Fisk’s view in the *Independent* that the claims are ‘theatre’, ‘a retold drama riddled with plot-holes’. If the media stage managers appeared to be offering some kind of informed consensus, it was for a reason: ‘Walk into a TV studio and they’re all reading newspapers. Walk into a newspaper office and they’re all watching television. It’s osmotic. And the headlines are all the same: Syria uses chemical weapons. That’s how the theatre works.’

Fisk added: ‘In two Canadian TV studios, I am approached by producers brandishing the same headline. I tell them that on air I shall trash the “evidence” – and suddenly the story is deleted from both programmes. Not because they don’t want to use it – they will later – but because they don’t want anyone suggesting it might be a load of old cobblers.’

Stop him!

The scepticism from Thomson, Fisk and others has been welcome indeed. Wider scepticism has doubtless been encouraged by the mixed messages from US officials. Corporate media performance has nevertheless been shocking.

In a leading article, ‘Stop him,’ the *Sun* told its readers on April 27: ‘After the carnage and slaughter in war-torn Syria comes a chilling new tactic from bloodthirsty tyrant Bashar al-Assad.

‘Chemical weapon attacks on his own people.

‘Evidence smuggled out of the divided

nation confirms monster Assad’s regime has used nerve gas sarin.

‘Horrorific footage shows victims frothing at the mouth after the barbaric attacks.

‘Now, after months of rhetoric from statesmen and diplomats, momentum is growing for tough action.’ (Leading article, the *Sun*, April 27, 2013)

The *Sun*’s opinion does matter; its monthly combined reach in print and on-line is nearly 18 million. Its editors also quoted Cameron: ‘This should form for the international community a red line for us to do more.’

The tabloid responded: ‘Quite right, Prime Minister. Do nothing and the world is letting savage Assad evade justice – and condemning countless innocent Syrians to death.

‘This madman must be stopped.’

We can dismiss this as right-wing raving, if we like. But at what is supposed to be the opposite end of the media ‘spectrum’, the *Guardian*’s Ian Black wrote: ‘Syria illustrates a sort of Middle Eastern Murphy’s law – anything that can make things worse invariably happens: massacres, refugees fleeing to Jordan, tensions in Lebanon and Iraq, the use of chemical weapons...’

Black noted ‘the flurry over chemical weapons, leaving the impression that US “red lines” can be surprisingly flexible’.

As discussed, Obama’s ‘red line’ warning was of course directed at Assad. The *Guardian*’s Middle East editor was thus asserting that the Syrian government had used chemical weapons based on evidence which, as we have seen, is frankly risible.

In considering this same evidence, a *Guardian* leader observed: ‘Yet this week has also been marked by further claims that Syria’s Bashar al-Assad has been doing precisely the thing that Mr Bush said so confidently, but so wrongly, was at imminent risk of being done by Saddam Hussein 10 years ago.’

In fact, no-one had warned that the Iraq government might use chemical weapons

.....
“In two Canadian TV studios, I am approached by producers brandishing the same headline. I tell them that on air I shall trash the “evidence” – and suddenly the story is deleted from both programmes”

.....
Obviously it is for Britain and the US – the world’s designated police force by virtue of their spotless legal and moral records – to decide whether to attack yet one more nation. Bombing other countries is as normal as the air we breathe
.....

against its own people. The alleged threat was of an attack on the West ‘within 45 minutes of the order being given’, or via Iraq’s al Qaeda contacts which, like the WMD, did not exist. The *Guardian* continued:

‘The use of chemical weapons is a war crime. It is a war crime even if it is committed by a state which, like Syria (or North Korea), is not a signatory to the international chemical weapons convention. The evidence for the use of chemical weapons is clearly suggestive, if the recent reports are reliable and substantiated, but it is also patchy and not yet fully contextualised.’

This weasel wording managed to point a finger of blame while simultaneously recognising the paucity of evidence.

How readily the *Guardian* referred to a possible Syrian ‘war crime’, while referring in the same editorial to Bush and Blair’s merely ‘mismanaged and hugely damaging invasion of Iraq in 2003’.

Criminals are usually not criticised for ‘mismanaging’ their crimes. Would the *Guardian* refer to al Qaeda’s ‘mismanaged’ attacks of September 11, 2001, or to Iraq’s ‘mismanaged’ 1990 invasion of Kuwait? The reference to a ‘mismanaged’ invasion implies that the *Guardian* does not view the war of 2003 as the supreme war crime it very clearly was.

The *Guardian*’s Dan Roberts noted that ‘initial samples and evidence trails have degraded’. The result: ‘Britain and the US are likely to have to wait for fresh evidence from further attacks before deciding whether to take a military response against the Assad government.’

This again affirmed that the Syrian government had probably used chemical weapons. Obviously it is for Britain and the US – the world’s designated police force by virtue of their spotless legal and moral records – to decide whether to attack yet one more nation. Bombing other countries is as normal as the air we breathe.

On May 2, the BBC commented: ‘The pressure to act has intensified in recent

days after emerging evidence that Syria has used chemical weapons such as the nerve gas sarin.’

This, even though ‘existing evidence of alleged chemical weapon was not sufficient to trigger an international response’.

The *Times*, of course, had no doubts: ‘Reports of chemical attacks suggest a new terror against a captive people. Since protests against his rule erupted more than two years ago, President Assad has created a desert and called it peace...’

‘There are now credible claims that the regime has used chemical weapons against civilians. Western nations ought much earlier in this crisis to have provided heavy weaponry for Syrian rebels to defend themselves. They should do so now.’ (Leader, ‘Assad’s Victims Need Arming,’ *The Times*, April 24, 2003)

The *Times* described the evidence as ‘harrowing and highly plausible’, particularly ‘photographs of victims foaming at the mouth. The symptoms would be consistent with poisoning by sarin.’ Not quite.

Returning to the other end of the media ‘spectrum’ (a short trip), an *Independent* leader commented: ‘Recent days have provided persuasive evidence that chemical weapons are being used in Syria... A widespread conclusion is that the regime of President Bashar al-Assad is resorting to the use of such weapons against its own people.’

As we have seen, the ‘widespread conclusion’ is anything but.

Hopping back to the hard-right, the *Daily Telegraph*’s deputy editor, Benedict Brogan, responded to the sarin story with an article entitled, ‘A wary, weary West is leaving Syria in the butchers’ hands; Obama may talk of red lines, but the US and its allies simply don’t have the will to intervene.’

If that was not clear enough, Brogan added: ‘the CIA has endorsed the conclusions of MI6 and other intelligence agencies that chemical weapons probably were used’.

(Brogan, *Daily Telegraph*, April 30, 2013)

That, of course, does not remotely justify

the title. Nor does the next sentence:

‘Quite how, and by whom, remains a point of argument. Whether Assad himself ordered their deployment, or whether they were being tested in improvised form by a local commander, is unclear.’

These were the thinkable options. Other possibilities – that some agency other than the Syrian government might have used chemical weapons, or that they weren’t used at all – were presumably too outlandish to mention.

The *Telegraph’s* own analysis made a nonsense of Brogan’s response, noting that Senator John McCain, the leading American proponent of intervention, had ‘admitted that the chemical weapons evidence “may not be airtight”’. It also quoted Hamish de Bretton Gordon, a former commanding officer of the Army’s chemical weapons unit who now runs consultancy SecureBio: ‘even if any sarin found was from a regime shell – the nerve agent could have been deployed accidentally or by a rogue squad’.

The *Telegraph’s* editors had previously commented: ‘President Bashar al-Assad’s use of nerve gas presents the British and Americans with an agonising dilemma.’

The editors sighed: ‘it was perhaps inevitable that, one day, credible evidence would implicate this amoral dictator in gassing his enemies’.

And, again, compare this damning verdict with the immediately following observation that the evidence is ‘persuasive but not conclusive’ and is not ‘as compelling as it might seem’. This really is astonishing, in the strange world of media propaganda,

news reports contradict editorials and headlines contradict content. The guiding ethic: ‘I want to believe!’ It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that media performance is shaped by state-corporate forces that are deeply invested in decades of war and the spoils that go with it.

The absurdity of the media rush to the required conclusion was emphasised 10 days later. On May 6, former Swiss attorney-general Carla Del Ponte, speaking for the United Nations independent commission of inquiry on Syria, ruffled many feathers when she said, ‘there are strong, concrete suspicions but not yet incontrovertible proof of the use of sarin gas, from the way the victims were treated. This was use on the part of the opposition, the rebels, not by the government authorities’.

Del Ponte added: ‘We have no indication at all that the Syrian government have used chemical weapons.’

Although the UN quickly rowed back and the US demurred, this was impossible to ignore. Even the BBC, after a delay, posted the story half-way, then at the top, of its news homepage. This made a jarring contrast to the BBC’s usual propaganda performance on Syria. As Craig Murray, formerly Britain’s Ambassador to Uzbekistan, noted, corporate media are supplying ‘an extraordinary barrage of distorted propaganda to fool western populations over the course and meaning of events’.

CT

David Edwards is co-editor of the London-based media watchdog Media Lens - <http://medialens.org>

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lin the strange world of media propaganda, news reports contradict editorials and headlines contradict content

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An Orwellian state of carnage and doublethink

Norman Solomon compares attacks on innocent civilians

.....
One Friday, at
noontime,
US-led NATO
forces dropped
cluster bombs on
the city of Nis, in
the vicinity of a
vegetable market
.....

After the bombings that killed and maimed so horribly at the Boston Marathon, the USA's politics and mass media are awash in heartfelt compassion – and reflexive “doublethink,” which George Orwell described as willingness “to forget any fact that has become inconvenient.”

In sync with media outlets across the country, the *New York Times* put a chilling headline on its front page: “Boston Bombs Were Loaded to Maim, Officials Say.” The story reported that nails and ball bearings were stuffed into pressure cookers, “rigged to shoot sharp bits of shrapnel into anyone within reach of their blast.”

Much less crude and weighing in at 1,000 pounds, CBU-87/B warheads were in the category of “combined effects munitions” when put to use 14 years ago by a bomber named Uncle Sam. The US media coverage was brief and fleeting. One Friday, at noontime, US-led NATO forces dropped cluster bombs on the city of Nis, in the vicinity of a vegetable market. “The bombs struck next to the hospital complex and near the market, bringing death and destruction, peppering the streets of Serbia’s third-largest city with shrapnel,” a dispatch in the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported on May 8, 1999.

And: “In a street leading from the market, dismembered bodies were strewn among carrots and other vegetables in pools of blood. A dead woman, her body covered with a sheet, was still clutching a shopping bag filled with

carrots.”

Pointing out that cluster bombs “explode in the air and hurl shards of shrapnel over a wide radius,” BBC correspondent John Simpson wrote in the *Sunday Telegraph*: “Used against human beings, cluster bombs are some of the most savage weapons of modern warfare.”

Savage did not preclude usage. As a matter of fact, to Commander in Chief Bill Clinton and the prevailing military minds in Washington, savage was bound up in the positive attributes of cluster bombs. Each one could send up to 60,000 pieces of jagged steel shrapnel into what the weapon’s maker described as “soft targets.”

An unusually diligent reporter, Paul Watson of the *Los Angeles Times*, reported from Pristina, Yugoslavia: “During five weeks of airstrikes, witnesses here say, NATO warplanes have dropped cluster bombs that scatter smaller munitions over wide areas. In military jargon, the smaller munitions are bomblets. Dr. Rade Grbic, a surgeon and director of Pristina’s main hospital, sees proof every day that the almost benign term bomblet masks a tragic impact. Grbic, who saved the lives of two ethnic Albanian boys wounded while other boys played with a cluster bomb found Saturday, said he had never done so many amputations.”

The *LA Times* article quoted Dr. Grbic: “I have been an orthopedist for 15 years now, working in a crisis region where we often have injuries, but neither I nor my colleagues have ever seen such horrific wounds as those caused by cluster

bombs.” He added: “They are wounds that lead to disabilities to a great extent. The limbs are so crushed that the only remaining option is amputation. It’s awful, awful.”

The newspaper account went on: “Pristina’s hospital alone has treated 300 to 400 people wounded by cluster bombs since NATO’s air war began March 24, Grbic said. Roughly half of those victims were civilians, he said. Because that number doesn’t include those killed by cluster bombs and doesn’t account for those wounded in other regions of Yugoslavia, the casualty toll probably is much higher, he said. ‘Most people are victims of the time-activated cluster bombs that explode some time after they fall,’ he said.”

Later, during invasions and initial periods of occupation, the US military dropped cluster bombs in Afghanistan and fired cluster munitions in Iraq. Today, the US State Department remains opposed to outlawing those weapons, declaring on its official website: “Cluster munitions have demonstrated military utility. Their elimination from US stockpiles would put the lives of its soldiers and those of its coalition partners at risk.”

The State Department position statement adds: “Moreover, cluster munitions can often result in much less collateral damage than unitary weapons, such as a larger bomb or larger artillery shell would cause, if used for the same mission.”

Similar rationale

Perhaps the bomber(s) who stuffed nails and ball bearings into pressure cookers for use in Boston had a similarly twisted rationale.

But don’t expect explorations of such matters from the USA’s daily papers or commercial networks – or from the likes of NPR’s “Morning Edition” and “All Things Considered,” or the PBS “NewsHour.” When the subject is killing and maiming, such news outlets take as a given the presumptive moral high ground of the US government.

In his novel 1984, Orwell wrote about the

conditioned reflex of “stopping short, as though by instinct, at the threshold of any dangerous thought . . . and of being bored or repelled by any train of thought which is capable of leading in a heretical direction.”

The doublethink – continually reinforced by mass media – remains within an irony-free zone that would amount to mere self-satire if not so damaging to intellectual and moral coherence.

Every news report about the children killed and injured at the finish line in Boston, every account of the horrific loss of limbs, makes me think of a little girl named Guljumma. She was seven years old when I met her at an Afghan refugee camp one day in the summer of 2009.

At the time, I wrote: “Guljumma talked about what happened one morning last year when she was sleeping at home in southern Afghanistan’s Helmand Valley. At about 5 a.m., bombs exploded. Some people in her family died. She lost an arm.”

In the refugee camp on the outskirts of Kabul, where several hundred families were living in squalid conditions, the US government was providing no help. The last time Guljumma and her father had meaningful contact with the US government was when it bombed them.

War thrives on abstractions, but Guljumma was no abstraction. She was no more or less of an abstraction than the children whose lives have been forever wrecked by the bombing at the Boston finish line.

But the same US news media that are conveying the preciousness of children so terribly harmed in Boston are scarcely interested in children like Guljumma.

I thought of her again when seeing news reports and a chilling photo on April 7, soon after 11 children in eastern Afghanistan were even more unlucky than she was. Those children died from a US/NATO air strike. For mainline American journalists, it wasn’t much of a story; for American officials, it was no big deal.

“Circus dogs jump when the trainer cracks his whip,” Orwell observed, “but the really well-trained dog is the one that turns his somersault when there is no whip.”

CT

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Every news report about the children killed and injured at the finish line in Boston, every account of the horrific loss of limbs, makes me think of a little girl named Guljumma

.....
Norman Solomon is co-founder of RootsAction.org and founding director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His books include “War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death.”

Angry, frustrated and on the brink

Danny Schechter on restless times in South Africa

.....
Graca Machel says South Africa is a society /bleeding and breathing pain' and warned against 'deeper trouble from the past that has not been addressed'
.....

These are not the best of times in South Africa. It seems clear that there is fear and loathing everywhere as the press is packed with fresh allegations of corruption, and a restive mood spreads.

Nelson Mandela's wife, Graca Machel, the brilliant Mozambican leader who married the man everyone here calls by his clan name Madiba, is speaking out even as her husband Nelson Mandela no longer can.

She calls South Africa an "angry nation... on the brink of something very dangerous". She was speaking at a memorial for a Mozambican cab driver whose killing by the police was caught on a cellphone camera and went viral. The police deny they were brutal, despite the video, which further outrages a country that seems to be increasingly turning on the politicians they see as plundering its resources.

Machel says South Africa is a society "bleeding and breathing pain" and warned against "deeper trouble from the past that has not been addressed."

That "deeper trouble" evoked the compromise negotiated settlement that won political power for the ANC through elections in the early 90's, but kept economic power in the hands of a mostly white elite dominated by big business, the "mining energy complex." Economist Sampie Terreblanche tells that story of an imposed neoliberalism lobbied for by multinationals, international financial institutions and foreign governments like the US and UK in

his book, *Lost in Transformation*.

There are many critical voices. Steve Biko's one-time close comrade, Mamphela Ramphele, a doctor turned banker, poverty expert and businesswoman, has launched a new political party Agangng (Sesotho for "build") to challenge the ANC. While her base lacks the ANC's deep roots in the black community, her analysis resonates with many. Her statement aimed to "rekindle The South African Dream," writing "the country of our dreams has unfortunately faded...The dream has faded for many living in poverty and destitution."

It was a lyrical call to memory and militancy asking, "Do you remember our patience and quiet dignity as we waited in long queues to cast our very first votes as citizens of a free South Africa? Do you remember how you choked with emotion and had goose bumps as you made your very first cross on the ballot? Do you remember the tears of joy and relief when we watched our first President, Rolihlahla Mandela, being honoured with a fly-past by the air-force that was to have its first democratically elected commander in chief?

"Do you remember the dream we embraced to build ours into a great society – a prosperous constitutional democracy united in its diversity?"

She lashed out at corruption but the media gave her new initiative little chance of succeeding. Other parties, upset that she didn't embrace them remained distant, even as it

prompted Zulu leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi to launch another broadside at the ANC.

“The State of the Nation address (by President Jacob Zuma) has left us in no doubt that the time has come to remove from power a leadership not fit to govern. The time has come to close the door on this first Republic under the ANC, and to close it firmly on all the inefficiencies, deficiencies and problems the ANC has brought with it. This is no longer the party of the 1912 visionaries; the party of Dr Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Inkosi Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela. This ANC is corrupt. It is failing South Africa.”

What Buthelezi and the ANC’s other critics seem to forget is that the former government, the all white apartheid regime was just as corrupt. Also, whenever you have someone taking money, someone else is giving it, like the foreign arms companies that used payoffs to win business in South Africa. This doesn’t make any of it right but shows there is a deeper context implicating more than ANC officials. It is not just the black community that is hurt by or involved in these practices. Indians and whites are also compromised.

In a country shocked by a current domestic rape and child abuse crisis, the one story that made all the headlines was the case of disabled celebrity Olympic athlete Oscar Pistorius, shooting and killing his model girlfriend. Both were white. As *Eurasia Review* noted, “The Pistorius case cannot ... be treated in isolation of a complex culture, which makes its eventual outcome a defining moment for South Africa. Whether that moment shifts the socio-political terrain is another matter altogether

“Between 2011 to 2012, two important centres in Cape Town, which have historically responded to diverse forms of gender based violence were all struggling for survival.”

The Pistorius family has now defended the arsenal of guns found in his home and no doubt in other homes. Violence is endemic in a culture of poverty and insecurity.

Eurasia Review adds, “Alongside this struggle for survival, two other important political events occurred on South Africa’s landscape.

The first was the public murder of miners in Marikana who dared protest in order to demand an acceptable living wage and the second was the constant revival and disappearance of the Traditional Courts Bill...The bill is considered a reversal of the rights of women by making traditional chiefs powerful overlords who are not subject to democratic checks or balances.”

And so if you scratch the surface of almost any issue, you find currents of dissent and disagreement, as well as angry denunciations of whoever is thought responsible. The depth of this estrangement from government and disgust with the direction the country has taken is not fully reported in the media.

The sense of comradeship, unity and feelings of social cohesion – the “we,” not the “I” – that unified South Africans in the struggle for years seems to be disappearing as inequality deepens, and people scramble to survive economically as individuals in an economy that is not growing fast enough to promote economic growth, and is still largely controlled by white-owned multi-nationals and banks.

The sense of traditional solidarity, class cohesion and community is under strain by a blatant Darwinism with even the poor embracing that core Capitalist value: “look out for number one” as government services – what they call “delivery” promises – falter and fail.

The other day I sat with two South African women, one named Confidence, the other the widow of a deceased commander of the Underground MK army that fought for the country’s liberation. Both were frustrated by the slow pace of change, and are in need of medical care they can’t afford. Both were working, but their salaries did not really cover their costs. Once more political, both seem to be spending more time in Church these days praying for divine intervention.

In his autobiography, *Long Walk To Freedom*, now on its way into becoming a major motion picture, Nelson Mandela warned that after you have climbed your final mountains, there will be others to climb. South Africa still has some climbing to do.

CT

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What Buthelezi and the ANC’s other critics seem to forget is that the former government, the all white apartheid regime was just as corrupt

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News Dissector
Danny Schechter has made many films and TV programs about South Africa. He is currently working on the Making and Meaning of Long Walk To Freedom



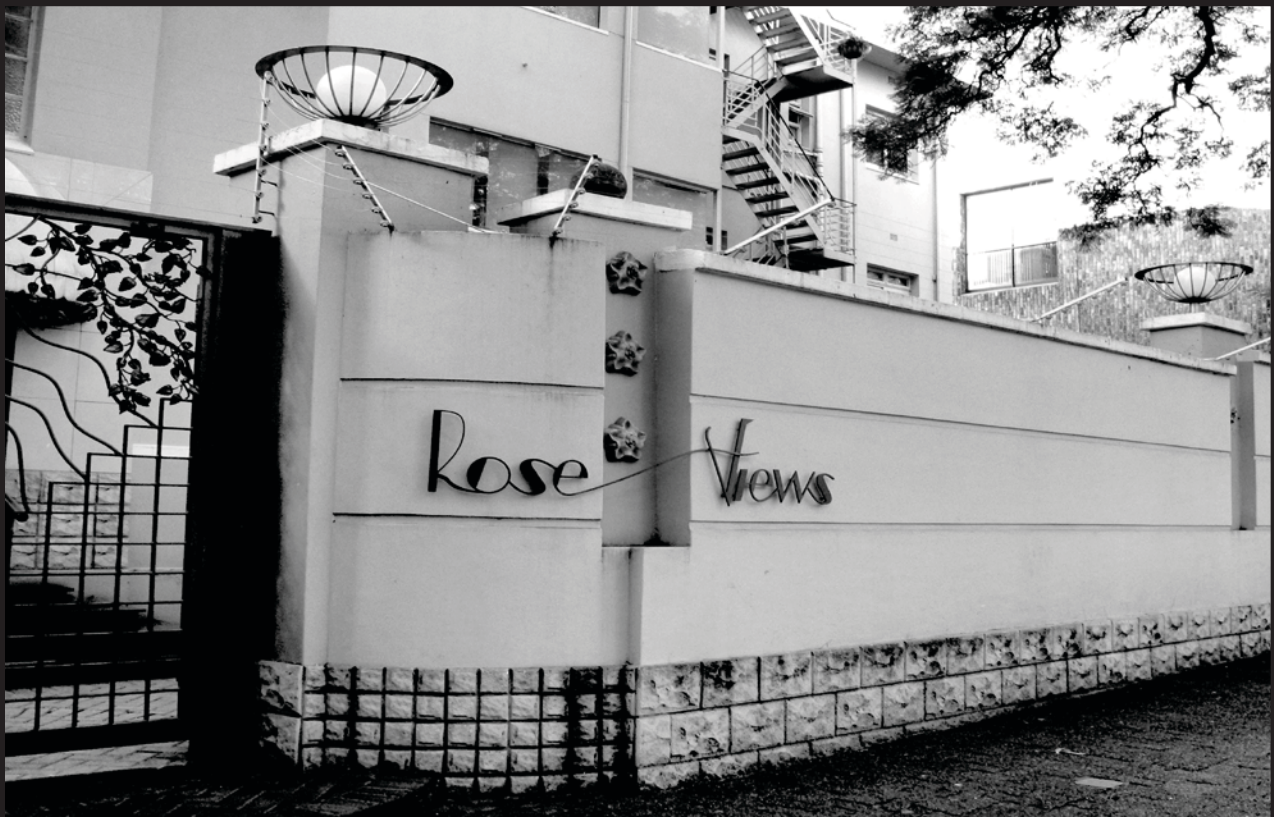
Rosebank, Johannesburg - It's not just the rich who are afraid of being robbed by their poorer cousins; working class apartments are surrounded by railings and protected by gun-toting security contractors. And the bars and locked doors look, to an outsider, like self-imposed prisons.

Behind bars

The fall of apartheid in South Africa heralded the birth of a new society that would create peace, prosperity and purpose. Those qualities were not what **Tony Sutton** found when he returned to Johannesburg last month

It was 37 years ago, a month or so before the Soweto riots of 1976. I had just become editor of *Drum*, a black magazine, based in Johannesburg, South Africa. My driver was taking me to a downtown function. As we drove onto the elevated M1 motorway overlooking the city, his hands left the steering wheel, the car wobbling precariously as he spread his arms wide, exclaiming “One day, this will ALL be mine.”

Hmm, I replied, both our futures would be improved if he kept his hands on the wheel. And I doubted whether the Afrikaners would give up without a fight; or if he'd get quite as much out of it when apartheid finally did end. I was wrong on the first two counts: we didn't crash and the racist government col-



Rose Views may have been an apt name for this Johannesburg apartment block in years gone by, but now it's little more than an ironic statement about life in South Africa two decades after the fall of apartheid. The wonderful art deco building cowers behind a huge wall topped with electrified wire.

lapsed spectacularly 14 years later when FW de Klerk released Mandela from jail, and allowed free elections for all. But I was right on the third point - my driver's dream of social and economic equality for all has yet to arrive in South Africa almost 20 years after the election of the first ANC government.

.....
Too much paranoia

When my family moved to Canada in the final days of 1989, we left a society in which white people obsessed about their homes and possessions with just a little too much paranoia and a lot too much fire-power. We had decided, years earlier, that if the day came when we'd need a gun to defend our-

.....
 selves, it'd be a good time to pack up and go. In 1988, Julia reluctantly bought a 38-Special to provide additional security and peace-of-mind during the weeks she spent alone with the kids while I traveled on business to Europe and North America. Our home was already protected by walls, a noisy dog, bars on the windows, security doors inside and outside the house and a radio alarm. Now we had a loaded gun, nestling in its own safe in our bedroom. That signaled the beginning of the end of our 14-year stay in South Africa.

A couple of weeks into 1990, we watched TV in a hotel room in the heart of Toronto as Nelson Mandela made his triumphant walk to freedom, wondering if, perhaps, our departure hadn't been premature.

.....
Our home was already protected by walls, a noisy dog, bars on the windows, with security doors inside and outside the house. Now we had a loaded gun, nestling in its own safe in our bedroom



No, not a prison, it's an apartment block in Rosebank, Johannesburg. Now that the country has moved from apartheid to 'equality', fear has no colour: middle class blacks are as afraid of the underprivileged as are their white neighbours.

.....
My daughter's school no longer had an open playing field, – every inch of the property covered behind a 2-meter fence, while the main entrance was barricaded like a high-security prison
.....

Then, five years later, with Mandela firmly in the president's seat, we paid our first visit back to Johannesburg, and what we saw was disturbing. The walls of our former home were now topped with razor wire, my daughter's old school no longer had an open playing field – every inch of the property covered behind a 2-meter fence—while the main entrance was barricaded like a high-security prison. And our friends were still obsessed with security.

Teething troubles, we were told. The build-up to the 1994 election had been violent and traumatic, a civil war had seemed likely at the time of the assassination of ANC leader Chris Hani. The fear would soon be replaced by friendship, the high walls

would fall as the suburbs became properly integrated.

Over the next decade I made regular business trips back to South Africa. Each time the security had tightened. The walls around my friends' homes became higher, stronger and topped with electrified wire. The beams of security cameras now spread their invisible tentacles across gardens and over every room in the house. Streets became 'protected' by boom entrances to prevent unauthorised (ie black) access.

.....
Open prison?

Today, the city seems – on my first visit in six years – more and more of how I'd imag-



The outdoor cafes are packed at The Zone in Rosebank, and the stores are full of well-heeled shoppers. But the place is full of guys wearing yellow jackets emblazoned with the word ‘security’. I ask one what he’s protecting. “We’re here to help the people,” he replies. “And we also keep beggars away from shoppers”.

ine an open prison. The residents, formerly white-only, but now complemented by an influx of middle class black families, still enjoy a lifestyle that is the envy of visitors from the hard-hit economies of western nations. But it’s all smoke and mirrors: the happy-go-lucky sun-splashed daytimes quickly become tension-charged evenings as residents return home through electronically-controlled security gates (so they don’t have to leave their cars for a moment) to their smart, suburban homes – luxurious jail-cells – ever more extravagantly protected from home-invaders, rapists, murderers, car hi-jackers, the desperate and the destitute.

But the security is an illusion, illustrated by a story in a recent issue of South Africa’s

Sunday Times newspaper, in which Gus Silber, an old acquaintance, tells how he was robbed by a pair of gun-toting criminals as he returned home from buying a take-out supper. His tale exposes the Achilles heel of every home security system, no matter how hi-tec or how expensive: at some stage you have to open the gates, and that’s when the bad guys get in . . .

After his robbery, Silber wrote:

“The volunteer counsellor, Michelle, in her reflective yellow vest, came over late at night to comfort my daughters, and then came back the next day to find out if they felt okay to go and see Justin Bieber.

“I have heard stories. War stories. Stories of other home invasions, and break-ins, and mug-

.....
Luxurious jail-cells – ever more extravagantly protected from home-invaders, rapists, murders, the desperate and the destitute



In the bad old days of apartheid, Hillbrow was Johannesburg's most cosmopolitan district, immigrants filling the high rise apartments. The first area of the city to be integrated, it now has the smell and feel of Africa - including holes in the pavements where metal covers have been stolen for their scrap value.

.....
'For every guy who holds up a gun,' wrote Denis, 'there are 99 who hold out a hand of friendship'
.....

gings, and violations. They all say the same thing: 'You are not alone.'

"Between fight and flight there lies another response: numb, unblinking incomprehension. Oddly, I didn't feel fear when I saw the gun, which is not to say I felt fearless. I just felt, for a frozen moment...nothing.

"I have felt and thought a lot of things since then, and one thing that keeps going through my mind is something my friend Denis Beckett once wrote, in one of those pieces we need every now and again to remind us of our reasons for being here.

" 'For every guy who holds up a gun,' wrote Denis, 'there are 99 who hold out a hand of friendship.' So this now is my mantra. This is my takeaway. I think it has to be. Otherwise, the man with the gun has won."

Brave words. But I think Gus is wrong: the man with the gun won when South Africans decided to continue living in fear after the revolution of 1994, and refused to accept the unviability of the inequality that surrounded them, the misery of millions of their countrymen who live in squatter camps at the edge of the cities, the families that have nothing in the midst of so much wealth and ostentation.

Despite almost 20 years of 'freedom', South Africa is as divided as it ever was. In the final years of apartheid, there was a certainty that a new society would emerge, with the hope of real change. Yes, several million blacks have experienced upward mobility - they, too, are victims of crime - but the structural nature of poverty and unemployment has not been addressed. My former driver's dream that "one



Johannesburg has the slick look and feel of a European city. But beneath the glittering surface, it shows the signs of a struggling third world economy: poverty, corruption and collapsing infrastructure. The roads are falling apart and rolling power cuts are on everyone’s mind as the winter draws in.

day this will all be mine” soon disappeared. He and his family, along with millions of others, still have none of the things we should take for granted: a home with electricity and running water, food on the table, a good job, and a future for the kids.

The ANC’s full-scale adoption of free market capitalism, instead of a promised socialist economy, has led to the triumph of big business values, and “I want mine” greed that has climaxed in a conspicuous culture of corruption: those without the connections to plunder “legally” plunder illegally.

The government has lost any claim to moral leadership, instead creating a cynical society where self-dealing is all-too-common. Inequality has deepened because, in a globalized world built around the priorities of

business and ‘the market,’ all redistributive policies are resisted. Even a modest wealth tax was rejected when proposed as part of the Truth And Reconciliation process

South Africa’s whites still have their wealth, their paranoia, and their nightmare fear of the *other*. Yes, real change would mean they’d be poorer, as Julia and I now are, living in a working class suburb in a rural community just outside Toronto. We have no swimming pool, no expensive cars, no large garden, no maid, no gardener. But we also have no walls, no electrified fences, no burglar alarms.

We do, however, have greedy politicians and corporations. **CT**

Tony Sutton is the editor of ColdType. He also took the photographs

.....
South Africa’s whites still have their wealth, their paranoia, and their nightmare fear of the other

American media distortion in Palestine

Alison Weir looks at the once-sided coverage of the Middle East conflict

.....
Over 90 Palestinian children were killed before a single Israeli child.
Over 140 Palestinian men, women and children living on their own land were killed before anyone in Israel was
.....

Thirteen years ago I knew very little about Israel-Palestine. Like most Americans, this seemed to be a distant, confusing conflict that had little to do with me. I was unaware – again, like most Americans – that American taxpayers give Israel over \$8 million per day, more than we give to any other nation.

I was unaware that our nation has vetoed numerous United Nations efforts to reign in Israeli aggression; resolutions that were supported by almost every other country around the world. I was unaware that US actions were enabling a massive land theft and ongoing ethnic cleansing that has caused profound tragedy in the Middle East, deep damage to our own nation and endangered American lives.

My personal awakening to these facts and others began in the autumn of 2000 when the Palestinian uprising known as the Second Intifada began and was, for a while at least, in the American news. I grew curious about this conflict, determined to follow the news on it, and noticed quickly how one-sided the news coverage appeared to be. While we heard from and about Israelis frequently, the Palestinian side seemed to be largely glossed over at minimum, and was sometimes completely hidden.

I began searching for additional information on the Internet and was astounded at what I learned. Israeli forces were killing hundreds

of largely unarmed Palestinian men, women and children; many of the children were being killed by gunshot wounds to the head.

While some Israelis were also being killed during this period, these deaths were far fewer and virtually invariably occurred after Palestinian deaths. Over 90 Palestinian children were killed before a single Israeli child. Over 140 Palestinian men, women and children living on their own land were killed before anyone in Israel was.

As I learned the nature of Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the true history of the region, it began to seem to me that this was the longest and possibly most significant cover-up I had ever come across. I finally decided to quit my job as the editor of a small community newspaper in northern California and go and see for myself what was going on, travelling to Israel-Palestine as a freelance reporter in February and March of 2001.

When I returned I created an organisation called "If Americans Knew" to provide the full facts to my fellow citizens and to study why and how US news coverage was failing to do this.

.....
Israel-centrism and patterns of distortion

We have conducted a number of statistical studies on this issue and found that US media were covering Israeli deaths in far

greater detail than they were covering those of Palestinian.

For example, the *New York Times* was reporting on Israeli children's deaths at a rate seven times greater than they were covering Palestinian children's deaths; this didn't even include the far larger number of words and amount of personal information given about Israeli victims compared to Palestinians. We also found that primetime network news programmes were covering Israeli children's deaths at rates up to 14 times greater than the coverage given to Palestinians.

I discovered a system of reporting from the region in which a violent conflict between an officially "Jewish state" and the Muslims and Christians it had dispossessed (and was in the process of dispossessing further) was being covered most of the time by journalists with legal, familial or emotional ties to Israel. A great many are Israeli citizens (though this is almost never disclosed) or married to Israelis, their children also being Israeli.

I discovered that the Associated Press control bureau for the region, from which virtually all news reports that appear in US newspapers were transmitted, was located in Israel and was staffed almost entirely by Israeli and Jewish journalists (many of whom had served in the Israeli military).

I learned that the son of the *New York Times* bureau chief was serving in the Israeli military while his father was reporting on the conflict. In fact, I discovered that it was common for journalists in the region reporting for American media to have close personal ties to the Israeli military; that at least one staff member had been serving in the Israeli military even as he was reporting for the *NY Times*; that *US News & World Report's* senior foreign correspondent, who had covered and written about the Middle East for more than 40 years, had a son serving in the Israeli army during the time he was reporting there; that Middle East "pundit" Jeffrey Goldberg, whose commentary pervades both the print and broadcast media, is an Israeli citizen who served in the Israeli military.

I learned that CNN anchorman Wolf Blitzer lived in Israel for many years, at one point travelled around the US as the "voice of Israel" and had worked for an Israel lobby publication.

I learned that *Time* magazine's bureau chief was an Israeli citizen, and that NPR's long-time correspondent from the region had an Israeli husband who had served in the military and may be an Israeli citizen herself.

I also discovered that this pattern of Israel-centrism went beyond the regional reporting. In fact, the regional filtering of the news may not even be the most significant factor in the broken media reporting on this issue that Americans receive.

Within US-based journalism per se I discovered patterns of Israel-centrism that were deeply troubling. In some cases I personally experienced the intentional suppression of information on Palestine. Following are a few examples.

.....
San Francisco Chronicle

While I was on my first trip to the Middle East I had met with a managing editor at the *San Francisco Chronicle* before I left and told him of my intention to report from the region. He had been quite interested and asked me to send him my first-hand reports.

During my trip, despite the difficulties in doing this, I sent him several reports at a time when almost no other American journalists were in the West Bank or, especially, Gaza. None were printed.

Finally, he sent me an email saying that he might be able to publish some of my reports, but that this would be "political". This was unusually honest but quite troubling. It should not be "political" to publish on-the-scene reporting.

While he never explained the obstacles confronting such reports, I suspect they had to do with the fact that the top editor at the time, Phil Bronstein, tilts toward Israel; that numerous advertisers were pro-Israel; that the pro-Israel power structure is extremely

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I learned that the son of the *New York Times* bureau chief was serving in the Israeli military while his father was reporting on the conflict
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JUST THE FACTS

.....
We were in the process of creating the If Americans Knew website at the time and hurried to make this live, since this would be major exposure
.....

strong in California; that pro-Israel organisations in the US invariably mount protests and boycotts if newspapers stray too far from their preferences; and that others are frequently afraid of being called “anti-Semitic” and of the potential damage honest journalism on this topic could do to their careers.

A few years later a journalist who had worked for the *Chronicle* for many years, Henry Norr, was fired by Bronstein. While a different rationale was put forward for Norr’s termination, Norr himself believes that the real reason was his activities related to Palestine. He had written a column about an Intel factory constructed illegally on Palestinian land and had also given a lunchtime briefing to staffers about a trip he had taken to the West Bank.

Still another former *Chronicle* journalist has described the inner workings related to news coverage of Israel-Palestine; that most of those editing wire copy were Israel partisans, that this journalist was largely kept away from editing reports on the issue; and that there was an atmosphere in which anti-Arab cartoons were sometimes posted on a bulletin board.

In 2004 our organisation conducted a statistical study of the *Chronicle’s* coverage during the first six months of the Second Intifada and discovered that the *Chronicle* had covered 100 per cent of Israeli children’s deaths and only 5 per cent of Palestinian children’s deaths. Before releasing it to the public I phoned Bronstein to meet with him to present it in person, the normal protocol. He failed to return my phone calls. At a public forum I again requested such a meeting. In front of a large audience Bronstein promised to meet. Yet, he later again refused to return phone calls and this meeting never transpired.

We then released our report publicly and distributed it as widely as possible. In addition, some groups and individuals disseminated thousands of fliers containing some of our key charts and statistics, headlined “What Children Matter?” These activities, of course, received considerable attention, and I

feel were far more valuable than a meeting.

Gannett Newspapers

Gannett is one of the top news chains in the US. According to its website, it consists of 82 daily newspapers, including *USA TODAY*, and it reaches 11.6 million readers every weekday and 12 million readers every Sunday. *USA TODAY* is the nation’s top newspaper in print circulation, reaching 6.6 million readers daily.

In addition to its newspapers, Gannett owns 23 TV stations, which reach 21 million households, covering 18.2 per cent of the US population. It also delivers news on 9,500 video screens located in elevators of office towers and select hotel lobbies across North America.

In 2001 a Gannett reporter who was writing a series of articles in the wake of the 9-11 attacks, heard about my trip to the region six months before the attacks and phoned me for an interview. He was extremely interested in my story and ended up calling me several more times for follow-up interviews, asked me to send him all my reports from my trip, and upon receiving them he was quite complimentary about their quality.

The reporter then sent a photographer to take pictures of me in my home for the article, had her express mail them to him, and said the story would be coming out soon.

We were in the process of creating the *If Americans Knew* website at the time and hurried to make this live, since this would be major exposure.

A little later I went on a speaking tour and a reporter from a community newspaper in a tiny newspaper chain in New York State interviewed me for his paper. A few days later he wrote to me saying that the newspaper owner had killed his article. He said this was the first time this had ever happened to him.

I then realised that I had never seen the Gannett newspaper article on me and *If Americans Knew*. I emailed the reporter, told him about this incident, and asked him if I

had missed his article or whether the same thing had happened to him. I hadn't missed it. He said that his editor had similarly killed the story.

I later saw an article by this reporter about Americans visiting Iraq who were highly critical of the US government. It is interesting that this subject matter was permissible, but not a feature on someone critical of Israel.

.....
National Public Radio – Vermont and Michigan

Several years later I was on a speaking tour in Vermont and New Hampshire and was to be interviewed on a local affiliate of the influential National Public Radio network. When I arrived at the radio station it turned out that the radio host who had agreed to do this was not available and another person was going to do the interview, someone called Neal Charnoff.

Charnoff and the programme producer took me back to the studio where they would record the interview for later broadcast. Oddly, the regular sound engineer was told he could go outside and take a break, and the producer took over. The host began his first question with a statement that my articles contained "anti-Semitic" overtones. I interrupted him immediately, said this was untrue, and asked him what he was talking about – which specific articles or statements that I had written did he claim were "anti-Semitic"?

He could not answer. I wondered if he had even read anything I had written or whether he was simply repeating the unfounded accusations by the Anti-Defamation League, a fanatically pro-Israel organisation that has been implicated in a vast spying operation on Americans.

Flustered at the embarrassment at having made a statement based on no evidence, he began the interview again in a more normal fashion. I told him about my trip to the West Bank and Gaza Strip and what I had found.

Within a few minutes, and sooner than the scheduled end of the interview, he stopped it.

He turned off the equipment and said they would not be airing it.

I was shocked and asked him why not. There was then a brief conversation in which he, and to a lesser extent the producer, defended Israel against the statement of facts I had made about what I had seen. The producer, who seemed to be more reasonable – and who also may have realised that Charnoff's intention to kill the interview so publicly would reflect badly on the station – said that she was sure they would be able to broadcast something.

They eventually did so. They did not, however, include information on my upcoming talks in the area, information that would normally have been included. I noticed later that Charnoff's interviews frequently seem to focus on the Jewish experience and that a disproportionate number of the authors, musicians, etc., that he highlights on his programme are Jews.

Another incident took place in another NPR affiliate, this one in Ann Arbor, Michigan, location of the University of Michigan, one of the top public universities in the United States.

One way that we and other groups try to get around the media's reluctance to report fully and accurately on Palestine is through the placement of paid advertising. Sometimes even this is censored.

WUOM, the largest NPR affiliate in the state of Michigan, apparently at the direction of its head, Steve Schram, refused to run a spot giving the name of our organisation. Then, when we challenged this censorship, the station supplied a number of fraudulent and ever-changing explanations. Only after fighting this over a year and involving the university administration and a small sit-in in the WUOM office were we able to force them to include our name in a paid advertisement

.....
**American History Magazine/
Weider History Group**

Still another incident occurred when we tried

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One way that we and other groups try to get around the media's reluctance to report fully and accurately on Palestine is through the placement of paid advertising. Sometimes even this is censored
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JUST THE FACTS

.....
Exposing and overcoming pro-Israel power over information in the US about Israel-Palestine may, I believe, be the most important activity that those seeking justice and peace in the Middle East can undertake
.....

to buy an advertisement in *American History* magazine. The ad was to promote the autobiography of CNI's founder, former US Congressman Paul Findley. We were told that the magazine would not publish the advertisement because CNI was "anti-Israel". In fact, they informed us that none of their other 10 magazines would run the ad either.

We were amazed to learn that almost all the national popular history magazines in the United States are published by the Weider History group; *American History*, *World War II*, *Military History*, *Vietnam*, *Armchair General*, the *Civil War*, etc.

According to its website, the Weider History Group is the largest chain of history magazines in the world, making its pro-Israel bias particularly important. George Orwell's words suggest the significance of the Weider censorship within its history magazines: "Who controls the past controls the future."

As their censorship of our ad because they considered us "anti-Israel" would suggest, the Weiders are very close to Israel. The co-founder of the Weider empire is one of six North American chairmen of the Jerusalem Fund of Aish HaTorah, which takes political leaders, corporate executives, investors and entertainment personages on private trips to Israel to increase their support for the country.

A Weider foundation has given large grants to another Aish HaTorah-connected organisation, the Los Angeles-based American Friends of Aish Hatorah, a nationalistic Israeli organization that promotes Israel in the United States and has a programme to create and equip advocates for Israel on American campuses. Aish has been connected to the production of pseudo-documentaries promoting Islamophobia that were distributed in America.

The Weiders originally brought future movie star and California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to the US and played a major role in building both his personal and political career. Weider patriarch Joe Weider once proclaimed proudly, "We created Arnold." As California governor, Schwarzenegger pro-

moted Israel, stating, "I love Israel. When I became governor, Israel was the first country that I visited."

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The Media role in US policy formation

Thirteen years ago when I grew curious about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I had no idea that my questions would lead me to discover such an extraordinary pattern of influence on behalf of a foreign country in the US media.

This influence, I believe, may be the single most significant factor in creating America's uniquely massive support for Israel. If American news organisations had been reporting fully and accurately on the region; if they had exposed the pro-Israel lobby's power and manipulation in the United States; if they had covered the damage done to Americans by policies centred on what would "benefit" Israel rather than Americans (though not, I believe, those Israelis dreaming of peace), I have no doubt that US policies would be vastly different than those we see today.

Moreover, I feel that it is US support for Israel that has supplied the economic, military and diplomatic support for Israel to continue with astoundingly aggressive and oppressive policies. As such, exposing and overcoming pro-Israel power over information in the US about Israel-Palestine may, I believe, be the most important activity that those seeking justice and peace in the Middle East can undertake.

Providing Americans with the full facts on the region; on the determining influence on our media, our government and our country by Israel and its partisans; and on the devastating, wide-ranging damage created by the current situation, will eventually, I have no doubt, bring the momentous change that is so urgently needed. In fact, given that the US has a history of being a very changeable country, if enough resources are devoted to this effort, such a transformation could occur in less time than some long-time observers might expect.

CT

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Alison Weir is the President of the Council for the National Interest (CNI) and Executive Director of *If Americans Knew*. This essay was originally published in *Middle East Monitor*
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Dance on Margaret Thatcher's grave

John Pilger on the death of the most divisive Prime Minister in British history

In the wake of Margaret Thatcher's departure, I remember her victims. Patrick Warby's daughter, Marie, was one of them. Marie, aged five, suffered from a bowel deformity and needed a special diet. Without it, the pain was excruciating. Her father was a Durham miner and had used all his savings. It was winter 1985, the Great Strike was almost a year old and the family was destitute. Although her eligibility was not disputed, Marie was denied help by the Department of Social Security. Later, I obtained records of the case that showed Marie had been turned down because her father was "affected by a Trade dispute".

The corruption and inhumanity under Thatcher knew no borders. When she came to power in 1979, Thatcher demanded a total ban on exports of milk to Vietnam. The American invasion had left a third of Vietnamese children malnourished. I witnessed many distressing sights, including infants going blind from a lack of vitamins. "I cannot tolerate this," said an anguished doctor in a Saigon paediatric hospital, as we looked at a dying boy. Oxfam and Save the Children had made clear to the British government the gravity of the emergency. An embargo led by the US had forced up the local price of a kilo of milk up to ten times that of a kilo of meat. Many children could have been restored with milk. Thatcher's ban held.

In neighbouring Cambodia, Thatcher left a trail of blood, secretly. In 1980, she demanded that the defunct Pol Pot regime – the killers of 1.7 million people – retain its "right" to represent their victims at the UN. Her policy was vengeance on Cambodia's liberator, Vietnam. The British representative was instructed to vote with Pol Pot at the World Health Organisation, thereby preventing it from providing help to where it was needed more than anywhere on earth.

To conceal this outrage, the US, Britain and China, Pol Pot's main backer, invented a "resistance coalition" dominated by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge forces and supplied by the CIA at bases along the Thai border. There was a hitch. In the wake of the Irangate arms-for-hostages debacle, the US Congress had banned clandestine foreign adventures. "In one of those deals the two of them liked to make," a senior Whitehall official told the *Sunday Telegraph*, "President Reagan put it to Thatcher that the SAS should take over the Cambodia show. She readily agreed."

Training the 'coalition'

In 1983, Thatcher sent the SAS to train the "coalition" in its own distinctive brand of terrorism. Seven-man SAS teams arrived from Hong Kong, and British soldiers set

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**The corruption
 and inhumanity
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Her funeral was a propagandist stunt, fit for a dictator: an absurd show of militarism, as if a coup had taken place
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about training “resistance fighters” in laying minefields in a country devastated by genocide and the world’s highest rate of death and injury as a result of landmines.

I reported this at the time, and more than 16,000 people wrote to Thatcher in protest. “I confirm,” she replied to opposition leader Neil Kinnock, “that there is no British government involvement of any kind in training, equipping or co-operating with the Khmer Rouge or those allied to them.” The lie was breathtaking. In 1991, the government of John Major admitted to parliament that the SAS had indeed trained the “coalition”. “We liked the British,” a Khmer Rouge fighter later told me. “They were very good at teaching us to set booby traps. Unsuspecting people, like children in paddy fields, were the main victims.”

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Lost franchise

When the journalists and producers of ITV’s landmark documentary, *Death on the Rock*, exposed how the SAS had run Thatcher’s other death squads in Ireland and Gibraltar, they were hounded by Rupert Murdoch’s “journalists”, then cowering behind the razor wire at Wapping. Although exonerated, Thames TV lost its ITV franchise.

In 1982, the Argentine cruiser, General Belgrano, was steaming outside the Falklands exclusion zone. The ship offered no threat, yet Thatcher gave orders for it to be sunk. Her victims were 323 sailors, including conscripted teenagers.

The crime had a certain logic. Among Thatcher’s closest allies were mass murderers – Pinochet in Chile, Suharto in Indonesia, responsible for “many more than one million deaths” (Amnesty International). Although the British state had long armed the world’s leading tyrannies, it was Thatcher who brought a crusading zeal to the deals, talking up the finer points of fighter

aircraft engines, hard-bargaining with bribe-demanding Saudi princes. I filmed her at an arms fair, stroking a gleaming missile. “I’ll have one of those!” she said.

In his arms-to-Iraq enquiry, Lord Richard Scott heard evidence that an entire tier of the Thatcher government, from senior civil servants to ministers, had lied and broken the law in selling weapons to Saddam Hussein. These were her “boys”. Thumb through old copies of the *Baghdad Observer*, and there are pictures of her boys, mostly cabinet ministers, on the front page sitting with Saddam on his famous white couch. There is Douglas Hurd and there is a grinning David Mellor, also of the Foreign Office, around the time his host was ordering the gassing of 5,000 Kurds. Following this atrocity, the Thatcher government doubled trade credits to Saddam.

Perhaps it is too easy to dance on her grave. Her funeral was a propagandist stunt, fit for a dictator: an absurd show of militarism, as if a coup had taken place. And it has. “Her real triumph”, said another of her boys, Geoffrey Howe, a Thatcher minister, “was to have transformed not just one party but two, so that when Labour did eventually return, the great bulk of Thatcherism was accepted as irreversible.”

In 1997, Thatcher was the first former prime minister to visit Tony Blair after he entered Downing Street. There is a photo of them, joined in rictus: the budding war criminal with his mentor.

When Ed Miliband, in his unctuous “tribute”, caricatured Thatcher as a “brave” feminist hero whose achievements he personally “honoured”, you knew the old killer had not died at all. **CT**

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John Pilger’s documentaries have won academy awards in both the UK and the US. His website is <http://johnpilger.com>

Subscribe to ColdType - it’s free - at subs@coldtype.net

50 years after Birmingham

John W. Whitehead remembers the words and legacy of Martin Luther King

“I am in Birmingham because injustice is here.” – Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail

Bookended by the Newtown school shootings late last year to the most recent Boston explosions, city-wide imposition of martial law and man hunt, we’ve gone from a winter of discontent, turmoil and strife to a spring of more discontent, turmoil and strife.

No one is happy – not the politicians, who want more power, more control and less oversight; not the citizenry, who want fewer taxes, fewer regulations and greater freedom; and not small business owners, who are being strangled to death by the glut of bureaucratic red-tape being directed their way. Indeed, the only two sectors that might be reasonably content with the status quo, profiting as they do from our misery, are the corporations (especially the security and military industrial complexes) and, by extension, the corporate media.

The times are definitely calling for a change, and a significant change at that, not the cosmetic pandering that passes for political and social rhetoric today. What we are grappling with is how that change will be brought about. Clearly, the political process hasn’t worked, as evidenced by the failure in recent years by both political parties and independent movements to achieve any

meaningful change. Clearly, violence is also not the answer, neither on the government’s part nor on the part of disgruntled citizens. Violence only leads to more violence.

So where does this leave us?

It was fifty years ago this year that Martin Luther King Jr. found himself faced with a similar dilemma. His answer to a white populace largely satisfied with the status quo and critical of his call to activism and a black citizenry hungry for equality and immediate change was what he would later refer to as “military nonviolent resistance.”

The seething stew that was racial conflict finally boiled over in 1963, with King at the helm, leading demonstrations and marches in one segregated city after another. Jailed for participating in civil rights demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama – one of the most racially segregated cities in the country at the time, King found himself on the defensive after eight prominent “liberal” Alabama clergypersons, all white, published an open letter castigating King for inciting civil disturbances through nonviolent resistance and calling on him to let the local and federal courts deal with the question of integration.

Although King rarely bothered to defend himself against his critics, he used his time behind bars to put pen to paper and refute those who not only opted to stand silently on the sidelines and do nothing in the face

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The only two sectors that might be reasonably content with the status quo, profiting as they do from our misery, are the corporations (especially the security and military industrial complexes) and, by extension, the corporate media

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"So the question is not whether we will be extremist but what kind of extremist will we be. Will we be extremists for hate or will we be extremists for love?"
.....

of injustice and oppression but found fault with any who took a more activist stance in the face of an urgent need. The result was King's stirring Letter from Birmingham City Jail, written on April 16, 1963.

King understood that if justice and freedom were to prevail, African-Americans could not afford to be long-suffering. Quoting US Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, King wrote, "Justice too long delayed is justice denied."

Action was needed immediately. In his letter, King declared:

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives in the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere in this country.... Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.... We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.... You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern.... One may well ask, "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: there are just and there are unjust laws. I would agree with Saint Augustine that "An unjust law is no law at all."... Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust.... I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and willingly accepts the penalty by staying in jail to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the very highest respect for law.... We can never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was

"legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. But I am sure that if I had lived in Germany during that time I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers even though it was illegal.... It is the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually time is neutral. It can be used either destructively or constructively. I am coming to feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than the people of good will.... But as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in love – "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that spitefully use you."... Was not Abraham Lincoln an extremist – "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." Was not Thomas Jefferson an extremist – "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." So the question is not whether we will be extremist but what kind of extremist will we be. Will we be extremists for hate or will we be extremists for love?

The word "extremist" has taken on negative connotations over the years, but it is appropriate here. When talking about the urgent need for transformative change, there can be no room for timidity or lukewarm emotions. What we need is passion and dedication and courage.

Fifty years after Martin Luther King Jr. urged Americans to stop standing on the sidelines and become extremists for love and gadflies for change, relying on militant nonviolent resistance as the means for that change, we're in dire need of that pep talk once again, because injustice is still here. **CT**

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John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute and editor of GadflyOnline.com. His latest book *The Freedom Wars* (TRI Press) is available online at www.amazon.com

The rise and fall of Hitler, through German eyes

Trevor Grundy reads two books that tell new stories of the rise and fall of Adolf Hitler

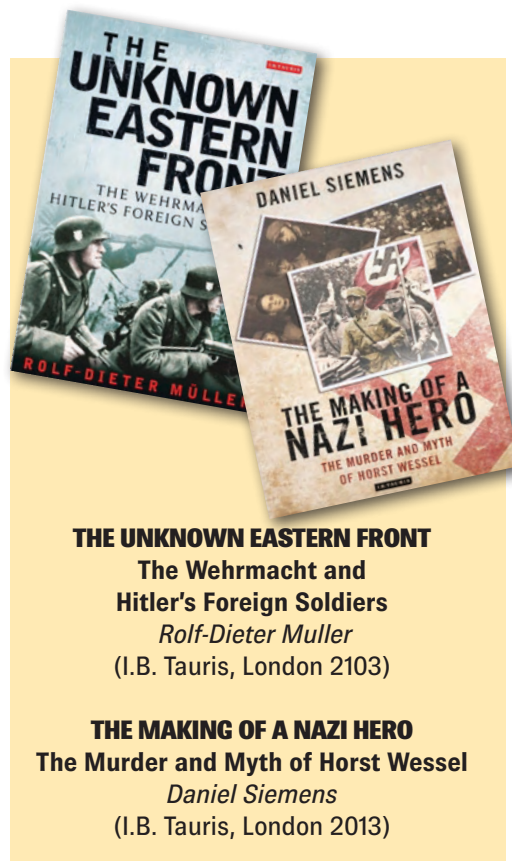
History is written by the winners, that we know. Yet it's often so much more interesting when told by the losers. This is the case with these two books written by formidable scholars who have opened long shut windows and let in fresh light on Hitler's extraordinary rise to power in 1933 and his just as dramatic fall and suicide in 1945.

The first is by the distinguished Professor of Military History at Humboldt University, Berlin, Rolf-Dieter Muller: the second by Daniel Siemens, a historian specializing in modern German history and Eastern European Studies at University College London.

Both books are disturbing and fascinating and should be on the bookshelves of students trying to understand the reason why hundreds of thousands of young Germans rallied to the Swastika flag after the First World War and how Hitler managed to survive for so long after suffering not one but several devastating defeats following his invasion of the USSR – codenamed Operation Barbarossa – in June 1941, the costliest and bloodiest war in human history.

For years British, American and Russian historians have asked one of the thorniest questions in the historiography of that conflict – What kept the Germans in the field for so long?

Thanks to Professor Muller, co-coordinator of the ten-volume German history of the



THE UNKNOWN EASTERN FRONT

**The Wehrmacht and
Hitler's Foreign Soldiers**

Rolf-Dieter Müller

(I.B. Tauris, London 2103)

THE MAKING OF A NAZI HERO

The Murder and Myth of Horst Wessel

Daniel Siemens

(I.B. Tauris, London 2013)

Both books are disturbing and fascinating and should be on the bookshelves of students trying to understand the reason why hundreds of thousands of young Germans rallied to the Swastika flag after the First World War

1939-1945 catastrophe (*Das Deutsche Reich under zer Zweite Weltkrieg*) we have some of the answers.

The Unknown Eastern Front is a translation of a long work on the subject published in Germany in 2007. Its appearance for the first time in English is an important contribution to our understanding of a battle

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Stubbornly and idiotically, Hitler told his commanders: “No-one but a German shall ever be allowed to bear arms – not the Slav, not the Czech, not the Cossack, not the Ukranian”
.....

against Communism which Hitler sold to the world as a religious crusade against what he called Jewish Bolshevism.

Ignoring the usual explanation, popularised by historians who have an eye towards the politically correct marketplace and American script writers in Hollywood that Adolf Hitler was a carpet-biting psychotic with satanic tendencies who hypnotized the German people to obey his every dictate and whim, Rolf-Dieter Muller walks a different path, explaining that Hitler’s plan in 1941 was to win a quick victory in Russia and he told his generals that if the Wehrmacht (Germany Army) smashed down the front door in Moscow, the whole rotten edifice of international communism would collapse like a pack of cards.

In June 1941 – to the surprise of the world – Hitler deployed 600,000 troops to the Eastern front. Their numbers were then swelled by foreign volunteers so that at the height of the Second World War one in three men fighting for the Germans in the East was not a native German. His campaign – or crusade – attracted convinced fascists as well as non-Russian eastern Europeans seeking to regain their independence which had been taken away from them when Stalin and Hitler came to terms in August 1939 – the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

Muller tells us that after the fall of Communism and collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s, the opening of Russian archives stirred the hopes of many military historians. But there were no sensational discoveries. By then it was well known that it was the Russian Army, not the Wehrmacht, that had slaughtered thousands of Polish Army officers at Katyn Woods; that the Germans and the Russians had treated the long-suffering Poles as *untermensch* and that at a time Stalin was denouncing both France and Britain as warmongers, he was also sacrificing dwindling stockpiles of oil and minerals to keep Hitler happy in Berlin. Stalin was stunned when Hitler’s army invaded Russia. For some time he believed his own

commanders were feeding him lies and accused them of turning propagandists for the West thus hoping to divide two “socialist” brothers – himself and Hitler.

Muller’s book tells the story of how fascists from so many European countries rallied to Hitler’s cause: the complete and utter destruction of Bolshevism, and during that process the complete and utter destruction of the Jews of eastern Europe.

They came from Norway and Denmark, from Spain and France, from Italy and Hungary, from Romania, Poland, the Netherlands, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and more than all the rest put together, from Russia.

To survive, Stalin abandoned internationalism and on 14 July 1941 declared the Great Patriotic War.

Stubbornly and idiotically, Hitler told his commanders: “No-one but a German shall ever be allowed to bear arms – not the Slav, not the Czech, not the Cossack, not the Ukranian.” As a result, hundreds of thousands of men who detested Communism and Stalin went into battle against Russian soldiers sometimes with little more than picks and shovels as weapons.

Hitler’s choice of friends did him little good. Furious because he was so kept in the dark about Hitler’s war plans, Benito Mussolini invaded Greece in early 1941 and the Italian Army had to be rescued by the Germans. That delayed Hitler’s attack on Russian by about eight weeks. Hitler put his troops into Russia wearing springtime uniforms, anticipating that Barbarossa would be well over before the Russian winter took over everything.

Franco never liked Hitler. At one point, Hitler considered overthrowing the Spanish dictator. On 12 July, 1942 he received Munoz Grandes at his Wolf’s Lair military headquarters in eastern Prussia. Writes Muller: “The German dictator saw the devoted Spanish general as a potential successor to Franco, a trump card if German plans to march through Spain and capture Gibraltar should materialize after all.”

Until the end, Hitler blamed anyone and everyone for his defeat but never himself. Although there is no written evidence that he ordered the Holocaust, this book makes clear that the German fuhrer pushed a button in 1941 that set off anti-Jewish pogroms throughout eastern Europe, especially so in those countries that had suffered the brunt of Russia's fiercest tactics after the revolution in 1917.

I was recently in Budapest and leaders of the 80,000 to 100,000 Jewish community told me that even the SS were taken back when they witnessed ordinary Hungarians prodding naked Jews into the Danube in the middle of the 1944 winter with sticks and bayonets.

In the end, Hitler agreed that anti-Communist eastern Europeans should be armed, but when that decision was taken there were no arms to hand around. Vilified by Hitler for their supposed failures, condemned and forgotten by their homelands for treason and collaboration, the involvement of Hitler's foreign volunteers has been largely ignored or swept to one side by historians.

Rolf Dieter Muller has opened a long shut window which lets in cold fresh air that might one day blow its way across the Atlantic towards Stephen Spielberg and Hollywood.

Creating a hero

Muller's excellent work goes a long way to explain how Hitler fell from power. Daniel Siemens's equally-scholarly, carefully structured book *The Making of a Nazi Hero – The Murder and Myth of Horst Wessel* goes some way towards explaining how he gained power in the first place.

The author shows us the type of young men, angry but without any purpose of vision, who were too young to fight in the First World War but who grew up in a Germany devastated by Allied repatriations after a humiliating and unexpected defeat in 1918.

Born in 1907, Horst Wessel was 23 when

he was shot at point black range at his home in Berlin. He was an active member of Ernst Roehm's SA and the Nazis laid his murder at the doorstep of a group of Jewish Communists who, in turn, claimed that Wessel was a Nazi lout and a part-time pimp. Hitler's spin-doctor-in-chief Joseph Goebbels quickly turned Wessel into a Nazi martyr, a role model for an entire generation.

Siemens has provided us with a fascinating and gripping account of the background of the Nazi activist's murder, uncovering – as all good crime writers uncover – who did it, why they did it and how they did it. He examines the cult that grew up around Wessel, the ensuing murders of revenge which provided men with knuckledusters, razors, bricks and guns a moral cause.

Siemens tells us that the first official concentration camp, with an initial inmate capacity of 5,000 went into operation on 21-22 March 1933 (two months after Hitler came to power) at Dachau, just north of Munich. Writes Siemens: "The SA men sometimes forced their detainees to sing the *Horst Wessel Song* on the way to the camps and special prisons to publicly humiliate them."

By April 1933 more than 50,000 people, most of them Communists, Social Democrats and trade unionists had mumbled their way through the Nazi anthem, a political hymn that delighted German youth and which appalled Jews, who soon got to know what was in store for them in the New Order.

I know Jews who to this day who say goose bumps appear on their flesh when they hear the song on old TV newsreels or listen to it on radio programmes about the war . . .

*Die Fahne hoch! Die Reihen dicht
gescholsen!*

SA marschirt, mit ruhiug festern Schritt.

*Kameraden, die Rotfront und reaction
erschossen,*

*Marschier'n im Geists in unsern Reihen
mit.*

.....
**Hitler's spin-
doctor-in-chief
Joseph Goebbels
quickly turned
Wessel into a Nazi
martyr, a role
model for an entire
generation**
.....

.....
Had I been born 20 years earlier, I too might have gone quite happily off to the Russian Front (as so many young Britons went off so happily to the Spanish Front in 1936) singing with kamaraden from Spain, Italy, France and Holland the Horst Wessel Lied ending as mincemeat in a field or on a wire fence
.....

In English –
*Raise the flag! The ranks closed tight!
SA marches with firm steady tread.
Comrades shot dead by red Front and
reaction,
March in spirit within our ranks.*

The song also had international appeal for fascists at the time. When I was a child, I was taken to the annual congress of Sir Oswald Mosley’s Union movement in Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, by my fascist parents.

At the end of the conference – attended by a handful of people, all members of his pre-war British Union of Fascists (BUF), the movement’s secretary stood up and put an almost worn-out German-made 78 rpm record onto a turntable. Everyone stood to attention and then sang in English the *Horst Wessel Lied*.

During the last verse Mosley raised his right arm and gave the full Nazi salute. His followers – including my parents – did the same. Of course, I followed their example.

This took place when Winston Churchill was Prime Minister of Britain.

Mosley always referred to his followers as “the cream of the working class.”

Hitler and Goebbels did the same. They made little men feel tall. Writes Siemens: “Wessel performed a double function in the (Nazi) party. On the one hand he was a simple SA man, on the other an up-and-coming political functionary who maintained a direct line to Goebbels. The later entrusted him – or so claimed Wessel – with special tasks on multiple occasions.”

Goebbels was banking on a strategy de-

veloped before him by the Communists who had their own version of Horst Wessel, the little known Fritz Weineck who was killed by Nazis in the turbulent street fighting 1920s. He was commemorated by *The Song of the little Bugler (Das Lied vom kleinen Trompeter)* which was sung to the tune of a soldier’s ditty, *Of All the Comrades (Von allen Kameraden)* which was later to become one of the most well-known songs of the Young Pioneers and the Thalman Pioneers in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) after the war.

The first stanza goes –

*Of all our comrades
None was so dear and good
As our little bugler
With his merry Red Guard blood.*

I was lucky. I survived a fascist childhood. Had I been born 20 years earlier, I might have gone quite happily off to the Russian Front (as so many young Britons went off so happily to the Spanish Front in 1936) singing with kamaraden from Spain, Italy, France and Holland the *Horst Wessel Lied* ending as mincemeat in a field or on a wire fence somewhere in a long forgotten land once known by soldiers as the Eastern Front. **CT**

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Trevor Grundy is a British journalist who lived and worked in Africa from 1966-1996. He is the author of *Memoir of a Fascist Childhood* published by William Heinemann, 1998 and Arrow Books, London, 1999. An excerpt from the book was published in *ColdType Issue 50* - <http://coldtype.net/Assets.10/Pdfs/1010.Fascist.pdf>

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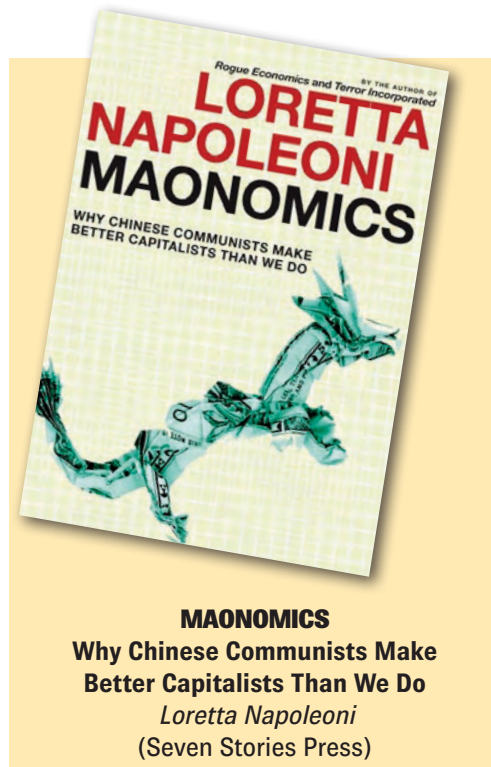
The race to the bottom

An excerpt from *Maonomics* by Loretta Napoleoni

In the twentieth century, China was invaded by foreign businessmen very similar to those that, one hundred years earlier, Marx described as capitalists. That explains why, in 1994, when Beijing approved a law obliging businesses to draw up individual and collective contracts, very few foreign industrialists respected it. The fourteen suicides that took place in 2010 at the Taiwanese Foxconn factory, which produces for Dell, Apple, Cisco, and Intel, shocked the world. The youngest worker was just seventeen years old and the oldest one twenty-eight. What drove these people to end a life that had just started? According to several people, conditions in the factories resembled those of a labor camp.

It is nevertheless true that the local Chinese authorities, intent on attracting as much foreign capital as possible, took precious little action against those who broke their laws on a daily basis.

A few months before the Zhili tragedy, another Hong Kong-owned company, a clothing manufacturer in Guangzhou, caught fire and seventy-two people lost their lives. At the same time as investigations into the Zhili fire were ongoing, sixty workers burned at a Taiwanese company site in Fuzhou. And the authorities? They didn't bat an eye. A combination of corruption, ignorance, and laissez-faire policies served to keep foreign industrialists above the law, and during the



When Beijing approved a law obliging businesses to draw up individual and collective contracts, very few foreign industrialists respected it

1990s workplace fires became tragically frequent.

Meanwhile the corruption of public officials continued to spread. A few months before the Zhili fire, the mayor of Kuichong had defended the owners from criticisms by the Shenzhen inspectors. In a letter the mayor reminded the inspectors of the importance of Hong Kong capital to the zone's development, and assured them that safety measures would be improved in time for

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The consequences of this race-to-the-bottom wage competition, as economists have defined it, are disastrous for factory workers throughout the global village
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the next inspection. Worthless promises, naturally. The same day the letter was sent, Zhili managers agreed to increase the daily subsidy to the inspectors, all municipal employees. This is how a Chinese journalist, in an article denouncing the Zhili tragedy, described the deal: “A business transaction made on the backs of the workers and concluded in the name of national economic development.”

The journalist doesn’t use the word “corruption,” even if that’s what it looks like to our eyes, and not merely for the sake of caution: the terminology employed sums up perfectly the reciprocal relationship that, at the dawn of China’s new economic reality, connects the communist system to foreign capital. The exploitation of the labor force, at times barbaric, is the price that Chinese society has accepted to pay for economic growth, and that politicians have welcomed as a way to save socialism.

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Chinese class consciousness

More than a decade after the Zhili fire, in 2006, a report from the Economist Intelligence Unit reveals that 40 percent of the workers employed in the construction industry work without a contract. While factory conditions have improved, job security remains elusive. At the national level, the study estimates that in 2006, 60 percent of work contracts were still fixed-term and without any guarantees. As we will see, major changes in job security took place at the end of 2007 when Beijing introduced new labor legislation, and in 2009 with the launch of an extremely ambitious program of industrial energy conversion.

In the 1990s and during much of the first decade of the twenty-first century, China is globalized capital’s promised land. But its great attraction is less the ease with which nearly two centuries of labor struggles fought in the West are wiped out, and more that the cost of labor is kept so consistently low. The phenomenon is connected to the

great migrations, as a virtually unlimited standing supply of labor prevents wages from increasing. Thus in 2004 the *New York Times* reports that Chinese workers earn the same as they did in 1993.

The consequences of this race-to-the-bottom wage competition, as economists have defined it, are disastrous for factory workers throughout the global village, as delocalization transforms the minimum wage earned in any part of the globe into a kind of international yardstick. Stephen Roach, an economist with Morgan Stanley, has christened this phenomenon “global labor arbitrage,” whereby companies move production from one country to another according to the cost of labor.

Thus in the 2000s many businesses moved from China to Vietnam and Laos, where the wages were more competitive. Nevertheless, since the Chinese possess a professionalism and work ethic that is rare, and which foreign entrepreneurs did not want to give up, attempts were made to take advantage of this even after further delocalization. In the second half of the first decade of the twenty-first century, China becomes the center of the global assembly line, the pieces produced at lower cost in neighboring countries and put together in Chinese factories. Many foreign industrialists even export Chinese professionalism into Asian markets. A gem-setter from Panyu, in the Shenzhen zone, where twenty years ago the Indian jewel industry relocated from Hong Kong, tells of how he trained several Indians in the craft at the request of his employer. These men then returned to their native country to work for the company of this same entrepreneur who in 2009 closed the Chinese operation because it was too costly.

Once again, Stephen Roach explains how race-to-the-bottom wage competition makes it so workers and communities located on opposite sides of the earth are competing against each other without realizing it. What’s missing is what Marx would have called a “global class consciousness.”

Delocalization also acts as a powerful depressive agent in the creation of new jobs in rich countries such as the United States. If it costs less to produce in China or Vietnam, why do it in Arizona? This is the logic of the modern industrialist. At its base is a perverse mechanism that since the fall of the Berlin Wall has led the globalized economy to structure itself according to an absurd international division of labor: Western companies produce at knockdown prices in the East what is consumed by Western markets.

Race-to-the-bottom wage competition, the absence of labor safety, and the absence of guarantees are an aberration to us in the West, but not to the Chinese. For the hundreds of millions of workers who move from the countryside to factories in Shenzhen, it's instead a unique opportunity to make money and return home with better future prospects.

Chinese workers are conscious of being exploited, and this is indeed a basic difference between two so apparently similar worlds – Marx's England and Deng's China.

Naturally, no one wants to reflect on the risks being taken, on the possibility that the dream of a comfortable old age could turn into a nightmare. The Chinese worker today, like the eighteenth-century English worker, cannot afford this luxury. And this is true to an even greater extent for the women, in China historically subordinate to men, for whom factory work is often an obligatory step toward emancipation.

The majority of the eighty-seven killed in the Zhili fire were in fact women, for the most part very young, young enough to play with the toys they produced.

In the 1980s and '90s, women represented 70 percent of the labor force in Shenzhen. Migrant workers all, *dagonzei* is the Chinese term coined for those women who left the countryside to seek their fortune in the factories of the SEZ. The youngest, women under twenty-five, primarily work in light manufacturing, like the Zhili toy factory, the first foreign industry to relocate to China. It

suits investors to turn to female workers because they work hard and know little about their rights. Before long, young female workers came to represent 90 percent of the light industry labor force.

The bad conscience of the West

The Chinese economic miracle, therefore, begins in Guangdong and is directed by foreign capital. It's not the first time foreigners have upset the economy of the Pearl River Delta. In the nineteenth century, opium smuggling by English merchants devastated the region. In the summer of 1839, Lin Zexu, the imperial commissioner of the Qing Dynasty, a special position created specifically to resolve once and for all the problem of the opium trade in the country, orders the destruction of twenty opium dens near the bay of Humen, a town within Dongguan, not far from where Shenzhen is today. The decision unleashes the First Opium War between China and England. The dispute is centered in the Guangdong province, which the British Navy do not hesitate to carpet bomb.

With the Treaty of Nanking of August 29, 1842, which puts an end to the conflict, China is forced to cede the bay of Hong Kong to His Majesty and open its own ports to English ships and international commerce. This is the beginning of foreign domination, a period of great humiliation which leads to the collapse of the Qing dynasty, civil war, and invasion by Japan, and will only conclude with the victory of the communists in 1949.

The Chinese "century of humiliation" is characterized by emigration. Leaving behind villages in flame in the Pearl River Delta, an army of laborers sets off for the American West. They are absorbed for the most part by a railroad industry engaged in the colossal project of connecting the two coasts by rail. The Chinese are the ones to build it, one of the least known aspects of the myth of the Far West. The level of exploitation is inhuman and death very common. In the most arduous stretches, in the Rocky Mountains,

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it's said that every mile cost the lives of one hundred Chinese. Beside the single track, the survivors write the names of the fallen on pieces of white paper, so that they are not consigned to oblivion. For these people, who worship their ancestors, to be buried in a foreign land, thousands of miles away from home, is a source of great distress, because they are afraid of being forgotten.

Chinese labor was already very much in demand. After all, the people who built the Great Wall had a perfect résumé – there weren't better workers on the planet. The American railroad companies even sent emissaries to China to recruit laborers. For barely a dollar a day, former farmers and fishermen crossed the ocean in the ships' holds, as if they were merchandise. Once they finished building the railroad in the United States they moved to Canada, starting in Vancouver and working their way east.

The present resembles this past a great deal, especially if we consider the inhuman exploitation of Chinese laborers that we find in Old Europe. We know little or nothing about it because they are clandestine immigrants, virtually invisible. "If a Chinese worker is illegal you'll never see him. He lives in the shadows and stays in the shadows," says Fausto Zuccarelli, District Attorney in the Public Prosecutor's office in Naples, Italy, and Deputy Director of the National Antimafia Office.

In 2009 in Milan, Italy, a bunker-style hotel was discovered in the basement of a building frequented by illegal Chinese workers, accessible by way of manholes. It was run by an Italian woman, who had in the narrow space found room for sixty mattresses, two bathrooms, and a tiny kitchen with four liquid gas cylinders. Exposed electrical wires and wretched sanitary conditions – these are the characteristics of invisible workers. "At the first spark," one agent recounted, "there would have been a massacre."

The exploitation of Eastern labor by Westerners is a constant across the planet. And yet, global public opinion expresses

precisely the opposite conviction, namely, that the exploiters come from the East. In the Western collective imagination, China is a communist country whose people are slaves to a cruel dictatorial regime taking advantage of its own people. Few people distinguish, for example, between the Chinese and the North Korean systems; communism continues to have a single face and it's not pleasant to look at.

During the Cold War, to promote this mythology – because this is what we're talking about here – was the task of that segment of the Western press and political class with interest in keeping alive the dichotomy between good and evil, an image that celebrates Western democracy and denigrates everything else. Thus the exploiters are the Chinese communist industrialists, and not our fellow countrymen.

Now the Cold War has been over for twenty years but, in the general ignorance about this remote part of the world, this simplistic vision still enjoys a large following.

"In the West on one side there are those who still see the Chinese as people who put on a uniform and wave Little Red Books around, on the other as a nation of super-rich exploiters," sums up Arthur Kroeber, managing director of the economic research firm Dragonomics in Beijing.

The generation of politicians who came to power in the West after the fall of the Berlin Wall does nothing to contradict this comic book vision of China, and indeed contributes to the creation of new myths shoring it up. Upon his nomination by the Obama administration, the United States Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner denounced China for not revaluating their national currency, a policy, according to him, aimed at ensuring the high competitiveness of the "Made in China" label. And this propaganda diverts the public's attention from the credit crisis and from the recession created by Wall Street, the principal agents of which are now advisors to the American president. We should ask ourselves who in recent years has

earned the most if Chinese products have dominated the international marketplace: the foreign businesses that produced them in China, and certainly not the Chinese assembly line workers.

A Very Inconvenient Truth

For us Westerners the truth is extremely difficult to swallow. In order to modernize China, it's true that Deng laid the foundations of a system to exploit its labor force, but the ones to recreate the inhuman conditions of the Industrial Revolution in the country were entrepreneurs from Western democracies. And we find confirmation of this in our own backyard, in European factories, for example in the high-fashion sector where, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), illegal Chinese workers toil day and night for starvation wages.

The truth is also dangerous, because it would have us reflect on the role that large Western corporations play in the global village, and on the role reserved for us as consumers. A boycott of products sold by those responsible for such suffering is not so improbable a scenario. But do we have the courage to do it? The establishment thinks so; that's why newspapers are unwilling to publish articles denouncing companies that, among other things, pay large sums for advertising in their pages.

The truth is also very complex. The exploitation of Chinese labor is cruel, but does bring wealth to China. It's true that, in the 1980s and '90s, it was foreign industrialists who enjoyed the greatest advantages of delocalization, but it's also true that thanks to this the living standards of the Chinese people have improved significantly in the last thirty years.

Father Mario Marazzi, a missionary who spent forty years in Canton, agrees that China has finally escaped the grips of poverty, an assertion confirmed by the latest report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) published in December 2009. Since 1950,

when per capita income was at its lowest, the Chinese economy has made enormous progress, and in 2009 was equal to 13 percent of the world economy. The aim established by Deng at the end of the 1970s – the modernization of the country – is every day closer to being achieved. It is perhaps the greatest obstacle for us Westerners: to admit that a communist regime has done in China what capitalism did in England two centuries earlier; that two parallel worlds, those of Marx and of Deng, have in just two centuries converged; and that the “bad guys” are once again our own industrialists. But is this really what happened?

The Industrial Revolution had its own mythology too, rooted in the ideological battles of those years, which still today leads us to look at this phenomenon – from a social perspective – as an aberration rather than a necessary step in human progress. From this mythology is born the idea of the good and the bad in economics. Writers like Charles Dickens contributed to the creation of these myths in describing a world divided between good and evil. Their concern was with telling their readers about the great transformations of those years, and this Manichean vision of the world is among the best basic plots for a novel.

Dickens was not a reporter or an analyst, but a narrator – one could venture to describe his books as nineteenth-century pulp fiction. Against the backdrop of the great changes taking place, in as simple and compelling a manner as possible, he gave the readers what they wanted to read. His formula was a well-proven one: in the plots, women and children are exploited by a society in the process of industrialization. They are immortal stories, which had the merit of giving form to the specters looming over the period, but they do not necessarily cover reality in all its facets. Thus in *Hard Times*, the work that best describes the terrible consequences of the Industrial Revolution, the author never stops to look at the changing world with the eyes of the ex-farmer and

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Karl Marx condemns the modes of production but does not reject the process in toto. He's aware that industrialization, whose troubles he knows well, is part of progress and a necessary phase of historical materialism
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now factory worker, concentrating rather on judging the capitalist exploiter.

But it is a fact that in England the division of labor and technological innovations produced by the Industrial Revolution improved the living conditions of the poor.

W. H. Hutt, in his 1925 essay *The Factory System of the Early Nineteenth Century*, wrote: "Compared to the factory workers, the agricultural laborers lived in abject poverty, and the work to which country children were put was far more exhausting than factory labor."

A study by T. S. Ashton that Hutt cites in his essay shows how in 1831 the cost of the standard diet of the English poor was identical to that of 1791. But working in the factories and earning a wage, they could afford to eat more. The same can be said with regard to Chinese industrialization: in the 1950s and '60s, farmers were starving to death; from the time they became migrant workers their stomachs were doubtless less empty.

In comparison with the serfs and slaves of previous centuries, the workers described by Dickens in *Hard Times* are fortunate. And the Chinese who work in our countries today have better prospects than their grandparents and great-grandparents who were subjugated by Western colonialism. A forty-year-old Chinese man working illegally as a welder in a city in Tuscany, Italy, gives us a good picture of this unknown aspect of capitalist exploitation. He earns between €700 and €800 a month. A pittance, by our standards. But all the factories he worked in provided room and board and thus he managed to send home €600 every month. Since his arrival in Italy he has repaid the money he borrowed for the trip and bought himself a house in China. His dream is to return to his native country with ¥200,000 or ¥300,000 (approximately €20,000 to €30,000), enough to buy his two sons a house and live out his old age in peace. It is a feasible goal, which his parents could never have even dreamed of. What made it accessible to his generation was Deng Xiaoping's "open

door" policy and globalization.

Dickens wasn't the only one not to see any positive aspects to the Industrial Revolution for those whom it exploited. According to economist Thomas Malthus's renowned phrase: "The increase in the wealth of nations had contributed little or nothing to an improvement in the living conditions of the poor." On the other side of the ideological barricade we find Adam Smith who, as previously mentioned, sees in the ego-ism of nascent capitalism the divine power of the economy in the form of the market's "invisible hand." And at an equal distance from both positions? That's exactly where we find Marx.

Karl Marx condemns the modes of production but does not reject the process in toto. He's aware that industrialization, whose troubles he knows well, is part of progress and a necessary phase of historical materialism. He maintains that the exploitation of labor is an indispensable stage en route to the dictatorship of the proletariat. It's an entirely similar argument to the one that led Deng Xiaoping to launch the "open door" policy. Deng modernized Marx in order to apply him to late twentieth-century China.

Outside mythologies past and present, the Industrial Revolution is simultaneously the triumph and the shame of the Western bourgeoisie. Many people suffered but, for the first time in history, control of the economy had nothing to do with birthright. And this is a great achievement. In the same way, Chinese capitalism is the triumph and the shame of Marxism. Its shame may have been widespread injustice, lack of personal freedom, and for many years a low standard of living. Its greatest achievement is to have made wealth accessible to all, without destroying socialism. **CT**

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Loretta Napoleoni, a former Fulbright scholar at Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies and Rotary Scholar at the London School of Economics, is an expert on international terrorism

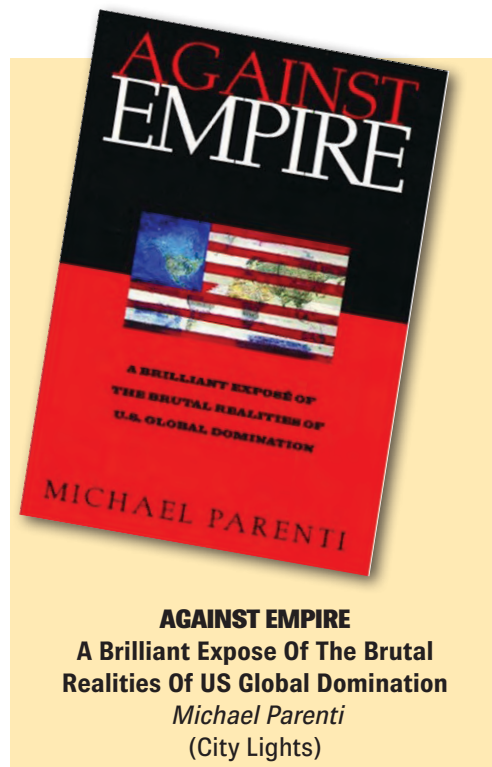
Loretta Napoleoni is

Imperialism 101

Chapter 1 of **Michael Parenti's** classic book, *Against Empire*

Imperialism has been the most powerful force in world history over the last four or five centuries, carving up whole continents while oppressing indigenous peoples and obliterating entire civilizations. Yet, it is seldom accorded any serious attention by our academics, media commentators, and political leaders. When not ignored outright, the subject of imperialism has been sanitized, so that empires become “commonwealths,” and colonies become “territories” or “dominions” (or, as in the case of Puerto Rico, “commonwealths” too). Imperialist military interventions become matters of “national defense,” “national security,” and maintaining “stability” in one or another region. In this book I want to look at imperialism for what it really is.

By “imperialism” I mean the process whereby the dominant politico-economic interests of one nation expropriate for their own enrichment the land, labor, raw materials, and markets of another people. The earliest victims of Western European imperialism were other Europeans. Some 800 years ago, Ireland became the first colony of what later became known as the British empire. A part of Ireland still remains under British occupation. Other early Caucasian victims included the Eastern Europeans. The people Charlemagne worked to death in his mines in the early part of the ninth century were Slavs. So frequent and prolonged



So frequent and prolonged was the enslavement of Eastern Europeans that “Slav” became synonymous with servitude. Indeed, the word “slave” derives from “Slav”

was the enslavement of Eastern Europeans that “Slav” became synonymous with servitude. Indeed, the word “slave” derives from “Slav.” Eastern Europe was an early source of capital accumulation, having become wholly dependent upon Western manufactures by the seventeenth century.

A particularly pernicious example of intra-European imperialism was the Nazi aggression during World War II, which gave the German business cartels and the Nazi

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The expansionists destroy whole societies. Self-sufficient peoples are forcibly transformed into disfranchised wage workers. Indigenous communities and folk cultures are replaced by mass-market, mass-media, consumer societies
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state an opportunity to plunder the resources and exploit the labor of occupied Europe, including the slave labor of concentration camps.

The preponderant thrust of the European, North American, and Japanese imperial powers has been directed against Africa, Asia, and Latin America. By the nineteenth century, they saw the Third World as not only a source of raw materials and slaves but a market for manufactured goods. By the twentieth century, the industrial nations were exporting not only goods but capital, in the form of machinery, technology, investments, and loans. To say that we have entered the stage of capital export and investment is not to imply that the plunder of natural resources has ceased. If anything, the despoliation has accelerated.

Of the various notions about imperialism circulating today in the United States, the dominant view is that it does not exist. Imperialism is not recognized as a legitimate concept, certainly not in regard to the United States. One may speak of “Soviet imperialism” or “nineteenth-century British imperialism” but not of US imperialism. A graduate student in political science at most universities in this country would not be granted the opportunity to research US imperialism, on the grounds that such an undertaking would not be scholarly. While many people throughout the world charge the United States with being an imperialist power, in this country persons who talk of US imperialism are usually judged to be mouthing ideological blather.

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The dynamic of capital expansion

Imperialism is older than capitalism. The Persian, Macedonian, Roman, and Mongol empires all existed centuries before the Rothschilds and Rockefellers. Emperors and conquistadors were interested mostly in plunder and tribute, gold and glory. Capitalist imperialism differs from these earlier forms in the way it systematically

accumulates capital through the organized exploitation of labor and the penetration of overseas markets. Capitalist imperialism invests in other countries, transforming and dominating their economies, cultures, and political life, integrating their financial and productive structures into an international system of capital accumulation. A central imperative of capitalism is expansion. Investors will not put their money into business ventures unless they can extract more than they invest. Increased earnings come only with a growth in the enterprise. The capitalist ceaselessly searches for ways of making more money in order to make still more money. One must always invest to realize profits, gathering as much strength as possible in the face of competing forces and unpredictable markets.

Given its expansionist nature, capitalism has little inclination to stay home. Almost 150 years ago, Marx and Engels described a bourgeoisie that “chases over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. . . . It creates a world after its own image.” The expansionists destroy whole societies. Self-sufficient peoples are forcibly transformed into disfranchised wage workers. Indigenous communities and folk cultures are replaced by mass-market, mass-media, consumer societies. Cooperative lands are supplanted by agribusiness factory farms, villages by desolate shanty towns, autonomous regions by centralized autocracies.

Consider one of a thousand such instances. A few years ago the *Los Angeles Times* carried a special report on the rainforests of Borneo in the South Pacific. By their own testimony, the people there lived contented lives. They hunted, fished, and raised food in their jungle orchards and groves. But their entire way of life was ruthlessly wiped out by a few giant companies that destroyed the rainforest in order to harvest the hardwood for quick profits. Their lands were turned into ecological disaster areas

and they themselves were transformed into disfranchised shantytown dwellers, forced to work for subsistence wages – when fortunate enough to find employment.

North American and European corporations have acquired control of more than three-fourths of the known mineral resources of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. But the pursuit of natural resources is not the only reason for capitalist overseas expansion. There is the additional need to cut production costs and maximize profits by investing in countries with cheaper labor markets. US corporate foreign investment grew 84 percent from 1985 to 1990, the most dramatic increase being in cheap-labor countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Spain, and Singapore.

Because of low wages, low taxes, nonexistent work benefits, weak labor unions, and nonexistent occupational and environmental protections, US corporate profit rates in the Third World are 50 percent greater than in developed countries. Citibank, one of the largest US firms, earns about 75 percent of its profits from overseas operations. While profit margins at home sometimes have had a sluggish growth, earnings abroad have continued to rise dramatically, fostering the development of what has become known as the multinational or transnational corporation. Today some four hundred transnational companies control about 80 percent of the capital assets of the global free market and are extending their grasp into the ex-communist countries of Eastern Europe.

Transnationals have developed a global production line. General Motors has factories that produce cars, trucks and a wide range of auto components in Canada, Brazil, Venezuela, Spain, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Nigeria, Singapore, Philippines, South Africa, South Korea and a dozen other countries. Such “multiple sourcing” enables GM to ride out strikes in one country by stepping up production in another, playing workers of various nations against each other in order to discourage wage and benefit demands

and undermine labor union strategies.

Not necessary, just compelling

Some writers question whether imperialism is a necessary condition for capitalism, pointing out that most Western capital is invested in Western nations, not in the Third World. If corporations lost all their Third World investments, they argue, many of them could still survive on their European and North American markets. In response, one should note that capitalism might be able to survive without imperialism – but it shows no inclination to do so. It manifests no desire to discard its enormously profitable Third World enterprises. Imperialism may not be a necessary condition for investor survival but it seems to be an inherent tendency and a natural outgrowth of advanced capitalism. Imperial relations may not be the only way to pursue profits, but they are the most lucrative way. Whether imperialism is necessary for capitalism is really not the question. Many things that are not absolutely necessary are still highly desirable, therefore strongly preferred and vigorously pursued. Overseas investors find the Third World’s cheap labor, vital natural resources, and various other highly profitable conditions to be compellingly attractive. Superprofits may not be necessary for capitalism’s survival but survival is not all that capitalists are interested in. Superprofits are strongly preferred to more modest earnings. That there may be no necessity between capitalism and imperialism does not mean there is no compelling linkage.

The same is true of other social dynamics. For instance, wealth does not necessarily have to lead to luxurious living. A higher portion of an owning class’s riches could be used for investment rather than personal consumption. The very wealthy could survive on more modest sums but that is not how most of them prefer to live. Throughout history, wealthy classes generally have shown a preference for getting the best of every-

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Superprofits may not be necessary for capitalism’s survival but survival is not all that capitalists are interested in

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I was taught in school that people in tropical lands are slothful and do not work as hard as we denizens of the temperate zone. In fact, the inhabitants of warm climates have performed remarkably productive feats, building magnificent civilizations well before Europe emerged from the Dark Ages
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thing. After all, the whole purpose of getting rich off other people's labor is to live well, avoiding all forms of thankless toil and drudgery, enjoying superior opportunities for lavish life-styles, medical care, education, travel, recreation, security, leisure, and opportunities for power and prestige. While none of these things are really "necessary," they are fervently clung to by those who possess them – as witnessed by the violent measures endorsed by advantaged classes whenever they feel the threat of an equalizing or leveling democratic force.

The impoverished lands of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are known to us as the "Third World," to distinguish them from the "First World" of industrialized Europe and North America and the now largely defunct "Second World" of communist states. Third World poverty, called "underdevelopment," is treated by most Western observers as an original historic condition. We are asked to believe that it always existed, that poor countries are poor because their lands have always been infertile or their people unproductive. In fact, the lands of Asia, Africa, and Latin America have long produced great treasures of foods, minerals and other natural resources. That is why the Europeans went through all the trouble to steal and plunder them. One does not go to poor places for self-enrichment. The Third World is rich. Only its people are poor – and it is because of the pillage they have endured.

The process of expropriating the natural resources of the Third World began centuries ago and continues to this day. First, the colonizers extracted gold, silver, furs, silks, and spices, then flax, hemp, timber, molasses, sugar, rum, rubber, tobacco, calico, cocoa, coffee, cotton, copper, coal, palm oil, tin, iron, ivory, ebony, and later on, oil, zinc, manganese, mercury, platinum, cobalt, bauxite, aluminum, and uranium. Not to be overlooked is that most hellish of all expropriations: the abduction of millions of human beings into slave labor.

Through the centuries of colonization,

many self-serving imperialist theories have been spun. I was taught in school that people in tropical lands are slothful and do not work as hard as we denizens of the temperate zone. In fact, the inhabitants of warm climates have performed remarkably productive feats, building magnificent civilizations well before Europe emerged from the Dark Ages. And today they often work long, hard hours for meager sums. Yet the early stereotype of the "lazy native" is still with us. In every capitalist society, the poor – both domestic and overseas – regularly are blamed for their own condition.

We hear that Third World peoples are culturally retarded in their attitudes, customs, and technical abilities. It is a convenient notion embraced by those who want to depict Western investments as a rescue operation designed to help backward peoples help themselves. This myth of "cultural backwardness" goes back to ancient times, when conquerors used it to justify enslaving indigenous peoples. It was used by European colonizers over the last five centuries for the same purpose.

What cultural supremacy could be claimed by the Europeans of yore? From the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries Europe was "ahead" in a variety of things, such as the number of hangings, murders, and other violent crimes; instances of venereal disease, smallpox, typhoid, tuberculosis, plagues, and other bodily afflictions; social inequality and poverty (both urban and rural); mistreatment of women and children; and frequency of famines, slavery, prostitution, piracy, religious massacres, and inquisitional torture. Those who claim the West has been the most advanced civilization should keep such "achievements" in mind.

More seriously, we might note that Europe enjoyed a telling advantage in navigation and armaments. Muskets and cannon, Gatling guns and gunboats, and today missiles, helicopter gunships, and fighter bombers have been the deciding factors when West meets East and North meets South.

Superior firepower, not superior culture, has brought the Europeans and Euro-North Americans to positions of supremacy that today are still maintained by force, though not by force alone.

It was said that colonized peoples were biologically backward and less evolved than their colonizers. Their “savagery” and “lower” level of cultural evolution were emblematic of their inferior genetic evolution. But were they culturally inferior? In many parts of what is now considered the Third World, people developed impressive skills in architecture, horticulture, crafts, hunting, fishing, midwifery, medicine, and other such things. Their social customs were often far more gracious and humane and less autocratic and repressive than anything found in Europe at that time. Of course we must not romanticize these indigenous societies, some of which had a number of cruel and unusual practices of their own. But generally, their peoples enjoyed healthier, happier lives, with more leisure time, than did most of Europe’s inhabitants.

Other theories enjoy wide currency. We hear that Third World poverty is due to overpopulation, too many people having too many children to feed. Actually, over the last several centuries, many Third World lands have been less densely populated than certain parts of Europe. India has fewer people per acre – but more poverty – than Holland, Wales, England, Japan, Italy, and a few other industrial countries. Furthermore, it is the industrialized nations of the First World, not the poor ones of the Third, that devour some 80 percent of the world’s resources and pose the greatest threat to the planet’s ecology.

This is not to deny that overpopulation is a real problem for the planet’s ecosphere. Limiting population growth in all nations would help the global environment but it would not solve the problems of the poor – because overpopulation in itself is not the cause of poverty but one of its effects. The poor tend to have large families because

children are a source of family labor and income and a support during old age.

Frances Moore Lappe and Rachel Schurman found that of seventy Third World countries, there were six – China, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Chile, Burma, and Cuba – and the state of Kerala in India that had managed to lower their birth rates by one third. They enjoyed neither dramatic industrial expansion nor high per capita incomes nor extensive family planning programs. The factors they had in common were public education and health care, a reduction of economic inequality, improvements in women’s rights, food subsidies, and in some cases land reform. In other words, fertility rates were lowered not by capitalist investments and economic growth as such but by socio-economic betterment, even of a modest scale, accompanied by the emergence of women’s rights.

Artificially converted to poverty

What is called “underdevelopment” is a set of social relations that has been forcefully imposed on countries. With the advent of the Western colonizers, the peoples of the Third World were actually set back in their development sometimes for centuries. British imperialism in India provides an instructive example. In 1810, India was exporting more textiles to England than England was exporting to India. By 1830, the trade flow was reversed. The British had put up prohibitive tariff barriers to shut out Indian finished goods and were dumping their commodities in India, a practice backed by British gunboats and military force. Within a matter of years, the great textile centers of Dacca and Madras were turned into ghost towns. The Indians were sent back to the land to raise the cotton used in British textile factories. In effect, India was reduced to being a cow milked by British financiers. By 1850, India’s debt had grown to 53 million pounds. From 1850 to 1900, its per capita income dropped by almost two-thirds. The

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value of the raw materials and commodities the Indians were obliged to send to Britain during most of the nineteenth century amounted yearly to more than the total income of the sixty million Indian agricultural and industrial workers. The massive poverty we associate with India was not that country’s original historical condition. British imperialism did two things: first, it ended India’s development, then it forcibly underdeveloped that country.

Similar bleeding processes occurred throughout the Third World. The enormous wealth extracted should remind us that there originally were few really poor nations. Countries like Brazil, Indonesia, Chile, Bolivia, Zaire, Mexico, Malaysia, and the Philippines were and sometimes still are rich in resources. Some lands have been so thoroughly plundered as to be desolate in all respects. However, most of the Third World is not “underdeveloped” but overexploited. Western colonization and investments have created a lower rather than a higher living standard.

Referring to what the English colonizers did to the Irish, Frederick Engels wrote in 1856: “How often have the Irish started out to achieve something, and every time they have been crushed politically and industrially. By consistent oppression they have been artificially converted into an utterly impoverished nation.” So with most of the Third World. The Mayan Indians in Guatemala had a more nutritious and varied diet and better conditions of health in the early 16th century before the Europeans arrived than they have today. They had more craftspeople, architects, artisans, and horticulturists than today. What is called underdevelopment is not an original historical condition but a product of imperialism’s superexploitation. Underdevelopment is itself a development.

Imperialism has created what I have termed “maldevelopment”: modern office buildings and luxury hotels in the capital city instead of housing for the poor, cos-

metic surgery clinics for the affluent instead of hospitals for workers, cash export crops for agribusiness instead of food for local markets, highways that go from the mines and latifundios to the refineries and ports instead of roads in the back country for those who might hope to see a doctor or a teacher.

Wealth is transferred from Third World peoples to the economic elites of Europe and North America (and more recently Japan) by direct plunder, by the expropriation of natural resources, the imposition of ruinous taxes and land rents, the payment of poverty wages, and the forced importation of finished goods at highly inflated prices. The colonized country is denied the freedom of trade and the opportunity to develop its own natural resources, markets, and industrial capacity. Self-sustenance and self-employment gives way to wage labor. From 1970 to 1980, the number of wage workers in the Third World grew from 72 million to 120 million, and the rate is accelerating.

Hundreds of millions of Third World peoples now live in destitution in remote villages and congested urban slums, suffering hunger, disease, and illiteracy, often because the land they once tilled is now controlled by agribusiness firms who use it for mining or for commercial export crops such as coffee, sugar, and beef, instead of growing beans, rice, and corn for home consumption. A study of twenty of the poorest countries, compiled from official statistics, found that the number of people living in what is called “absolute poverty” or rockbottom destitution, the poorest of the poor, is rising 70,000 a day and should reach 1.5 billion by the year 2000 (*San Francisco Examiner*, June 8, 1994).

Imperialism forces millions of children around the world to live nightmarish lives, their mental and physical health severely damaged by endless exploitation. A documentary film on the Discovery Channel (April 24, 1994) reported that in countries

like Russia, Thailand, and the Philippines, large numbers of minors are sold into prostitution to help their desperate families survive. In countries like Mexico, India, Colombia, and Egypt, children are dragooned into health-shattering, dawn-to-dusk labor on farms and in factories and mines for pennies an hour, with no opportunity for play, schooling, or medical care.

In India, 55 million children are pressed into the work force. Tens of thousands labor in glass factories in temperatures as high as 100 degrees. In one plant, four-year-olds toil from 5 o'clock in the morning until the dead of night, inhaling fumes and contracting emphysema, tuberculosis, and other respiratory diseases. In the Philippines and Malaysia corporations have lobbied to drop age restrictions for labor recruitment. The pursuit of profit becomes a pursuit of evil.

Development theory

When we say a country is “underdeveloped,” we are implying that it is backward and retarded in some way, that its people have shown little capacity to achieve and evolve. The negative connotations of “underdeveloped” has caused the United Nations, the *Wall Street Journal*, and parties of various political persuasion to refer to Third World countries as “developing” nations, a term somewhat less insulting than “underdeveloped” but equally misleading. I prefer to use “Third World” because “developing” seems to be just a euphemistic way of saying “underdeveloped but belatedly starting to do something about it.” It still implies that poverty was an original historic condition and not something imposed by the imperialists. It also falsely suggests that these countries are developing when actually their economic conditions are usually worsening. The dominant theory of the last half century, enunciated repeatedly by writers like Barbara Ward and W. W. Rostow and afforded wide currency in the United States and other parts of the Western world, main-

tains that it is up to the rich nations of the North to help uplift the “backward” nations of the South, bringing them technology and teaching them proper work habits. This is an updated version of “the White man’s burden,” a favorite imperialist fantasy.

According to the development scenario, with the introduction of Western investments, the backward economic sectors of the poor nations will release their workers, who then will find more productive employment in the modern sector at higher wages. As capital accumulates, business will reinvest its profits, thus creating still more products, jobs, buying power, and markets. Eventually a more prosperous economy evolves.

This “development theory” or “modernization theory,” as it is sometimes called, bears little relation to reality. What has emerged in the Third World is an intensely exploitive form of dependent capitalism. Economic conditions have worsened drastically with the growth of transnational corporate investment. The problem is not poor lands or unproductive populations but foreign exploitation and class inequality. Investors go into a country not to uplift it but to enrich themselves.

People in these countries do not need to be taught how to farm. They need the land and the implements to farm. They do not need to be taught how to fish. They need the boats and the nets and access to shore frontage, bays, and oceans. They need industrial plants to cease dumping toxic effusions into the waters. They do not need to be convinced that they should use hygienic standards. They do not need a Peace Corps Volunteer to tell them to boil their water, especially when they cannot afford fuel or have no access to firewood. They need the conditions that will allow them to have clean drinking water and clean clothes and homes. They do not need advice about balanced diets from North Americans. They usually know what foods best serve their nutritional requirements. They need to be

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It would be better if Zionist readers of the Post stopped complaining and tried to look at those images with an “unbiased” mind

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Historically US capitalist interests have been less interested in acquiring more colonies than in acquiring more wealth, preferring to make off with the treasure of other nations without bothering to own and administer the nations themselves
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given back their land and labor so that they might work for themselves and grow food for their own consumption.

The legacy of imperial domination is not only misery and strife, but an economic structure dominated by a network of international corporations which themselves are beholden to parent companies based in North America, Europe and Japan. If there is any harmonization or integration, it occurs among the global investor classes, not among the indigenous economies of these countries. Third World economies remain fragmented and unintegrated both between each other and within themselves, both in the flow of capital and goods and in technology and organization. In sum, what we have is a world economy that has little to do with the economic needs of the world's people.

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Neoimperialism: Skimming the cream

Sometimes imperial domination is explained as arising from an innate desire for domination and expansion, a "territorial imperative." In fact, territorial imperialism is no longer the prevailing mode. Compared to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the European powers carved up the world among themselves, today there is almost no colonial dominion left. Colonel Blimp is dead and buried, replaced by men in business suits. Rather than being directly colonized by the imperial power, the weaker countries have been granted the trappings of sovereignty – while Western finance capital retains control of the lion's share of their profitable resources. This relationship has gone under various names: "informal empire," "colonialism without colonies," "neo-colonialism," and "neoimperialism." US political and business leaders were among the earliest practitioners of this new kind of empire, most notably in Cuba at the beginning of the twentieth century. Having forcibly wrested the island from Spain in the war of 1898, they eventually gave Cuba

its formal independence. The Cubans now had their own government, constitution, flag, currency, and security force. But major foreign policy decisions remained in US hands as did the island's wealth, including its sugar, tobacco, and tourist industries, and major imports and exports.

Historically US capitalist interests have been less interested in acquiring more colonies than in acquiring more wealth, preferring to make off with the treasure of other nations without bothering to own and administer the nations themselves. Under neoimperialism, the flag stays home, while the dollar goes everywhere – frequently assisted by the sword.

After World War II, European powers like Britain and France adopted a strategy of neoimperialism. Left financially depleted by years of warfare, and facing intensified popular resistance from within the Third World itself, they reluctantly decided that indirect economic hegemony was less costly and politically more expedient than outright colonial rule. They discovered that the removal of a conspicuously intrusive colonial rule made it more difficult for nationalist elements within the previously colonized countries to mobilize anti-imperialist sentiments.

Though the newly established government might be far from completely independent, it usually enjoyed more legitimacy in the eyes of its populace than a colonial administration controlled by the imperial power. Furthermore, under neoimperialism the native government takes up the costs of administering the country while the imperialist interests are free to concentrate on accumulating capital – which is all they really want to do.

After years of colonialism, the Third World country finds it extremely difficult to extricate itself from the unequal relationship with its former colonizer and impossible to depart from the global capitalist sphere. Those countries that try to make a break are subjected to punishing economic and mili-

tary treatment by one or another major power, nowadays usually the United States.

The leaders of the new nations may voice revolutionary slogans, yet they find themselves locked into the global capitalist orbit, cooperating perforce with the First World nations for investment, trade, and aid. So we witnessed the curious phenomenon of leaders of newly independent Third World nations denouncing imperialism as the source of their countries' ills, while dissidents in these countries denounced these same leaders as collaborators of imperialism.

In many instances a comprador class emerged or was installed as a first condition for independence. A comprador class is one that cooperates in turning its own country into a client state for foreign interests. A client state is one that is open to investments on terms that are decidedly favorable to the foreign investors. In a client state, corporate investors enjoy direct subsidies and land grants, access to raw materials and cheap labor, light or nonexistent taxes, few effective labor unions, no minimum wage or child labor or occupational safety laws, and no consumer or environmental protections to speak of. The protective laws that do exist go largely unenforced.

In all, the Third World is something of

a capitalist paradise, offering life as it was in Europe and the United States during the nineteenth century, with a rate of profit vastly higher than what might be earned today in a country with strong economic regulations. The comprador class is well recompensed for its cooperation. Its leaders enjoy opportunities to line their pockets with the foreign aid sent by the US government. Stability is assured with the establishment of security forces, armed and trained by the United States in the latest technologies of terror and repression. Still, neoimperialism carries risks. The achievement of de jure independence eventually fosters expectations of de facto independence. The forms of self rule incite a desire for the fruits of self rule. Sometimes a national leader emerges who is a patriot and reformer rather than a comprador collaborator. Therefore, the changeover from colonialism to neocolonialism is not without risks for the imperialists and represents a net gain for popular forces in the world. **CT**

Michael Parenti is an internationally known award-winning author and lecturer. His highly informative and entertaining books and talks have reached a wide range of audiences in North America and abroad. <http://www.michaelparenti.org>

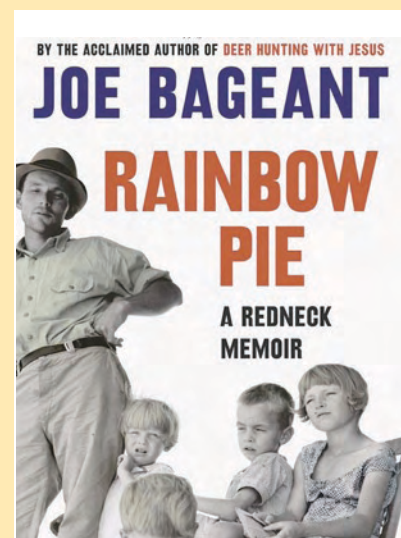
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JOE BAGEANT

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Bageant writes about the rural white underclass, not as an anthropological study of an exotic tribe, but as his very own people. Set between 1950 and 1963, combining personal recollections, family stories, and historical analysis, this book leans on Maw, Pap, Ony Mae, and other members of this dirt poor Scots-Irish family to chronicle the often heartbreaking postwar journey of 22 million rural Americans moving from their small subsistence farms into the cities, where they became the foundation of a permanent white underclass.

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Support our troops, our war, our war criminals

Edward S. Herman on propaganda, lies and double standards

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The ironical usage of “MIA” to mean “missing in America,” referring to war veterans in a sad state of indigence and homelessness at home, also goes back at least to the Vietnam and post-Vietnam war days
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The call to “support our troops,” or “our boys,” is really an appeal to support the war in which the troops are engaged.

Critics of the war would say that if the war is unjustified, possibly even a criminal enterprise in violation of international law at several levels, as was so clearly true of the Iraq war, supporting the troops and war is to support international criminality. The proper support of our troops and boys therefore is to oppose the war and fight to get our boys (and girls) out before they can kill or be killed while participating in such a criminal enterprise.

Naturally, this critical view of supporting our troops gets little play in the propaganda system, and the propaganda design of the formula “support our troops” is probably effective in the environment of patriotic fervor that wars engender.

But the hypocrisy here runs deep. Many of the threads of hypocrisy woven into this propaganda fabric stem from the fact that the political and military establishments care very little about the welfare of our boys. The really bad thing about their deaths, injuries and suffering is the resultant negative publicity and possible increased financial costs of greater attention to their needs that might limit military budget size and flexibility. There has been a notorious struggle over the damage our boys have suffered

in Iraq and Afghanistan from economies in the protective equipment provided to them; from the damaging psychological effects of multiple tours of duty; from the reluctance to recognize the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the seriousness of traumatic brain injury (TBI); and the scandals reflecting lagged and poor care of personnel back home and in need of medical care.

In earlier years, also, it was a long struggle to get recognition of the damage suffered by US troops in Vietnam from the massive chemical warfare used there, where of course the damage to US personnel was only a small fraction of that suffered by the Vietnamese people, still unacknowledged and unrectified by the responsible criminal state.

The ironical usage of “MIA” to mean “missing in America,” referring to war veterans in a sad state of indigence and homelessness at home, also goes back at least to the Vietnam and post-Vietnam war days. There are many MIAs in the United States today, and a dramatic figure that did get some publicity was that more military personnel committed suicide than were killed in combat in Afghanistan in 2012 (349 versus 295).

It is enlightening also that there is an inverse correlation between aggressively supporting US wars and supporting our troops

with generous funding of their medical care and post-service education and general welfare.

This is plausible. The bulk of service personnel are drawn from that 47 percent of the population that Mitt Romney derided as government-dependent and not “job creators.” (The heads of Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, Raytheon and Textron are job creators.) Romney, Paul Ryan, George Bush, John Boehner (etc.) and their monied base are fighting a major battle to diminish or terminate the welfare state, and many Democrats as well as Republicans are with them, so that containing what amount to welfare state benefits to our boys with PTSD and otherwise in distress is entirely logical.

Of course, along with “support our troops” there is an implicit “support our torturers and higher level war criminals.” This flows from the overwhelming and increasingly centralized power in the hands of the dominant elite, including the military-industrial complex (MIC) and leading politicians, and an associated remarkable level of self-righteousness.

Anything we do is tolerable because we are not only strong and the global policeman, but also good and always well-intentioned, and are therefore not to be questioned when we do abroad precisely what we condemn in target states. We can support Saddam Hussein and even provide him with “weapons of mass destruction,” when he is doing us a service in attacking Iran, even when he is using chemical weapons there; and with no seeming sense of shame or guilt we can quickly turn him into “another Hitler” when he disobeys orders. We can help the Shah of Iran build a nuclear capability, but threaten war when his successor regime tries to do what was encouraged with the Shah; and again, with utter self-righteousness.

It testifies to the greatness of the Western propaganda system that these shifts and mind-boggling double standards can occur without the slightest pause or recognition

or any need for explanation or apology.

The really high level war criminals like Bush, Blair, and Obama can get away with anything, not only because they are at the pinnacle of power and can set their own rules, but also because they dominate the external institutions that supposedly make the rule of law international, but fail to do so.

One of the prettiest cases is of course the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, an act matching Hitler’s 1939 invasion of Poland, and resulting in a million or more Iraqi deaths. Although this was a blatant violation of the most fundamental principle of the UN Charter, while UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan did point out that the invasion was “illegal” he didn’t express great anger or suggest that the invaders be expelled or even reprimanded. He got on board the aggression ship, as did the Western great powers (with the Russians and Chinese essentially just sitting there watching).

But the sick comedy of “international law” rode on, with the UN, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and International Criminal Court (ICC) playing their assigned role by applying it whenever the Big Aggressor or one of his leading allies felt the application of legal principles to be useful.

The Big A and his Little Aggressor client Israel wanted a legal input for Darfur, but not for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, invaded by Rwanda and Uganda, whose leaders were Big Aggressor clients, and so it was – Sudan’s al-Bashir was indicted by the ICC, Rwandan and Ugandan leaders were exempt.

Big A and allies wanted legal authority for attacking Libya, but not Bahrain, so the ICC and United Nations Security Council (UNSC) obliged with indictments for Gaddafi and sons, silence on Bahrain.

The Big Aggressor wants international law applied to Syria, so Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who along with her predecessor Louise Arbour didn’t lift a finger in the case of the Iraq in-

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We can support Saddam Hussein and even provide him with “weapons of mass destruction,” when he is doing us a service in attacking Iran, even when he is using chemical weapons there; and with no seeming sense of shame or guilt we can quickly turn him into “another Hitler” when he disobeys orders

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Obama has played all the war cards. He has lauded the Vietnam War as a noble enterprise and is pleased to participate in and laud a memorial that celebrates it
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vasion-occupation, which produced a million dead and 4 million refugees, now repeatedly urges the UNSC to call on the ICC to investigate Bashir al-Assad's war crimes in Syria.

Pillay played the same role in the case of Libya, in collaboration with the ICC, greasing the skids for a NATO military attack on Libya and the ouster and murder of Gaddafi.

The role of the "international community" (in the sense of the leadership of the Western great powers and their clients, not the underlying populations) was dramatically exhibited in giving the newly elected US President Barack Obama the Nobel Peace prize in 2009.

He hadn't done anything whatsoever for peace at that time, but gave the appearance of a leader more moderate than Bush and Cheney. A silly award, but once again a giveaway on the supportive-groveling qualities of Western political/cultural institutions. (Can you imagine the Nobel Committee giving the award to Amira Hass, Malalai Joya, Kathy Kelly, or Richard Falk, people actually making genuine personal sacrifices in the interest of peace?)

Honest analysis and morality would have recognized that Obama was going to be a major war criminal by structural necessity, embedded as he was in a permanent war political economy where political survival, let alone success, required the commission of war crimes.

Obama soon found that political success demanded killing foreigners; that budget enlargement for killing was easy, but spending for progressive civilian needs was diffi-

cult and would anger powerful people. He quickly adapted to being a warrior president, his seemingly most proud accomplishment being the killing of bin-Laden.

Obama has played all the war cards. He has lauded the Vietnam War as a noble enterprise and is pleased to participate in and laud a memorial that celebrates it. Like Bush he loves to speak to military cadres where he can draw resounding applause with patriotic and war rhetoric, although increasing numbers of liberal Democrats have gotten on board his war-oriented ship of state and also find his warrior image and actions agreeable.

He has gone somewhat beyond Bush in institutionalizing government rights to invade privacy, closing down information access, and criminalizing whistle-blowing. His drone war policy and claimed right to assassinate even US citizens based on executive decision alone breaks new ground in criminality and in enlarging the scope of acceptable war crimes.

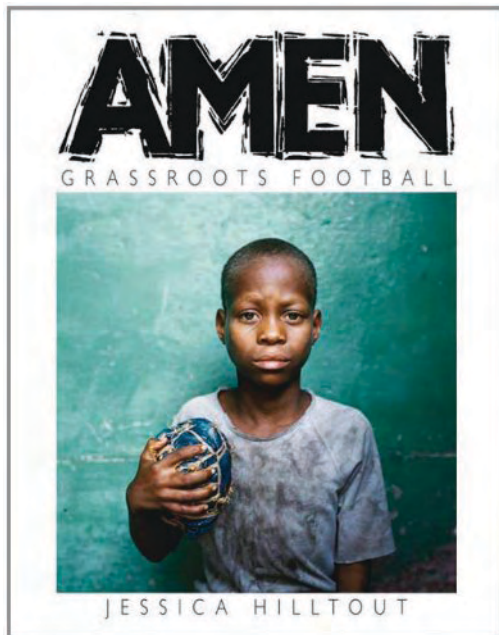
He has also refused to prosecute US torturers and high level war criminals, violating earlier promises but, more importantly, violating international law and effectively ending the rule of law. We need change we can believe in, but Obama is giving us compromise and literal regression that we must vigorously oppose. **CT**

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Edward S. Herman is an economist and media analyst with a specialty in corporate and regulatory issues as well as political economy and the media.

This essay originally appeared at <http://www.zcommunications.org/zmag>

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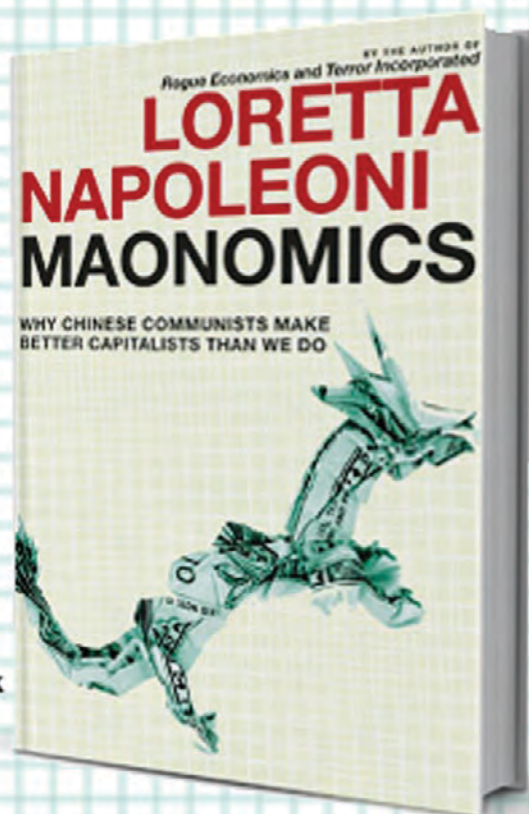
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Boston, terrorism and the United States

William Blum on the close links between state actions and urban terror

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The Marathon bombing took place just days after a deadly US attack in Afghanistan killed 17 civilians, including 12 children, as but one example of countless similar horrors from recent years
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What is it that makes young men, reasonably well educated, in good health and nice looking, with long lives ahead of them, use powerful explosives to murder complete strangers because of political beliefs?

I'm speaking about American military personnel of course, on the ground, in the air, or directing drones from an office in Nevada.

Do not the survivors of US attacks in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, Libya and elsewhere, and their loved ones, ask such a question?

The survivors and loved ones in Boston have their answer – America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

That's what Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the surviving Boston bomber has said in custody, and there's no reason to doubt that he means it, nor the dozens of others in the past two decades who have carried out terrorist attacks against American targets and expressed anger toward US foreign policy. Both Tsarnaev brothers had expressed such opinions before the attack as well. The Marathon bombing took place just days after a deadly US attack in Afghanistan killed 17 civilians, including 12 children, as but one example of countless similar horrors from recent years. "Oh", an American says, "but those are accidents. What terrorists do is on

purpose. It's cold-blooded murder."

But if the American military sends out a bombing mission on Monday which kills multiple innocent civilians, and then the military announces: "Sorry, that was an accident." And then on Tuesday the American military sends out a bombing mission which kills multiple innocent civilians, and then the military announces: "Sorry, that was an accident." And then on Wednesday the American military sends out a bombing mission which kills multiple innocent civilians, and the military then announces: "Sorry, that was an accident." ... Thursday ... Friday ... How long before the American military loses the right to say it was an accident?

Terrorism is essentially an act of propaganda, to draw attention to a cause. The 9-11 perpetrators attacked famous symbols of American military and economic power. Traditionally, perpetrators would phone in their message to a local media outlet beforehand, but today, in this highly-surveilled society, with cameras and electronic monitoring at a science-fiction level, that's much more difficult to do without being detected; even finding a public payphone can be near impossible.

From what has been reported, the older brother, Tamerlan, regarded US foreign policy also as being anti-Islam, as do many other Muslims. I think this misreads Wash-

ington's intentions. The American Empire is not anti-Islam. It's anti-only those who present serious barriers to the Empire's plan for world domination.

The United States has had close relations with Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Qatar, amongst other Islamic states. And in recent years the US has gone to great lengths to overthrow the leading secular states of the Mideast – Iraq, Libya and Syria.

Moreover, it's questionable that Washington is even against terrorism per se, but rather only those terrorists who are not allies of the empire.

There has been, for example, a lengthy and infamous history of tolerance, and often outright support, for numerous anti-Castro terrorists, even when their terrorist acts were committed in the United States. Hundreds of anti-Castro and other Latin American terrorists have been given haven in the US over the years. The United States has also provided support to terrorists in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Kosovo, Bosnia, Iran, Libya, and Syria, including those with known connections to al Qaeda, to further foreign policy goals more important than fighting terrorism.

Under one or more of the harsh anti-terrorist laws enacted in the United States in recent years, President Obama could be charged with serious crimes for allowing the United States to fight on the same side as al Qaeda-linked terrorists in Libya and Syria and for funding and supplying these groups. Others in the United States have been imprisoned for a lot less.

As a striking example of how Washington has put its imperialist agenda before anything else, we can consider the case of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, an Afghan warlord whose followers first gained attention in the 1980s by throwing acid in the faces of women who refused to wear the veil. This is how these horrible men spent their time when they were not screaming "Death to America". CIA and State Department officials called Hekmatyar "scary," "vicious,"

"a fascist," "definite dictatorship material". This did not prevent the United States government from showering the man with large amounts of aid to fight against the Soviet-supported government of Afghanistan. Hekmatyar is still a prominent warlord in Afghanistan.

A similar example is that of Luis Posada who masterminded the bombing of a Cuban airline in 1976, killing 73 civilians. He has lived a free man in Florida for many years.

USA Today reported a few months ago about a rebel fighter in Syria who told the newspaper in an interview: "The afterlife is the only thing that matters to me, and I can only reach it by waging jihad." Tamerlan Tsarnaev may have chosen to have a shootout with the Boston police as an act of suicide; to die waging jihad, although questions remain about exactly how he died. In any event, I think it's safe to say that the authorities wanted to capture the brothers alive to be able to question them.

It would be most interesting to be present the moment after a jihadist dies and discovers, with great shock, that there's no afterlife. Of course, by definition, there would have to be an afterlife for him to discover that there's no afterlife. On the other hand, a non-believer would likely be thrilled to find out that he was wrong.

Let us hope that the distinguished statesmen, military officers, and corporate leaders who own and rule America find out in this life that to put an end to anti-American terrorism they're going to have to learn to live without unending war against the world. There's no other defense against a couple of fanatic young men with backpacks. Just calling them insane or evil doesn't tell you enough; it may tell you nothing.

But this change in consciousness in the elite is going to be extremely difficult, as difficult as it appears to be for the parents of the two boys to accept their sons' guilt. Richard Falk, UN special rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories,

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stated after the Boston attack: “The American global domination project is bound to generate all kinds of resistance in the post-colonial world. In some respects, the United States has been fortunate not to experience worse blowbacks ... We should be asking ourselves at this moment, ‘How many canaries will have to die before we awaken from our geopolitical fantasy of global domination?’”

Officials in Canada and Britain as well as US Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice have called for Falk to be fired.

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President Kennedy’s speech, half a century ago
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I don’t know how many times in the 50 years since President John F. Kennedy made his much celebrated 1963 speech at American University in Washington, DC. I’ve heard or read that if only he had lived he would have put a quick end to the war in Vietnam instead of it continuing for ten more terrible years, and that the Cold War might have ended 25 years sooner than it did. With the 50th anniversary coming up June 13 we can expect to hear a lot more of the same, so I’d like to jump the gun and offer a counter-view.

Kennedy declared: “Let us re-examine our attitude toward the Soviet Union. It is discouraging to think that their leaders may actually believe what their propagandists write. It is discouraging to read a recent authoritative Soviet text on Military Strategy and find, on page after page, wholly baseless and incredible claims such as the allegation that “American imperialist circles are preparing to unleash different types of war ... that there is a very real threat of a preventative war being unleashed by American imperialists against the Soviet Union” ... [and that] the political aims – and I quote – “of the American imperialists are to enslave economically and politically the European and other capitalist countries ... [and] to achieve world domination ... by means of aggressive war.”

It is indeed refreshing that an American president would utter a thought such as: “It is discouraging to think that their leaders may actually believe what their propagandists write.” This is what radicals in every country wonder about their leaders, not least in the United States. For example, “incredible claims such as the allegation that ‘American imperialist circles are preparing to unleash different types of war’.”

In Kennedy’s short time in office the United States had unleashed many different types of war, from attempts to overthrow governments and suppress political movements to assassination attempts against leaders and actual military combat – one or more of these in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, British Guiana, Iraq, Congo, Haiti, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Cuba and Brazil. This is all in addition to the normal and routine CIA subversion of countries all over the world map. Did Kennedy really believe that the Soviet claims were “incredible”?

And did he really doubt that that the driving force behind US foreign policy was “world domination”?

How else did he explain all the above interventions (which have continued non-stop into the 21st century)? If the president thought that the Russians were talking nonsense when they accused the US of seeking world domination, why didn’t he then disavow the incessant US government and media warnings about the “International Communist Conspiracy”? Or at least provide a rigorous definition of the term and present good evidence of its veracity. Quoting further: “Our military forces are committed to peace and disciplined in self-restraint.” No comment.

“We are unwilling to impose our system on any unwilling people.” Unless of course the people foolishly insist on some form of socialist alternative. Ask the people of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, British Guiana and Cuba, just to name some of those in Kennedy’s time.

“At the same time we seek to keep peace

inside the non-Communist world, where many nations, all of them our friends ...” American presidents have been speaking of “our friends” for many years. What they all mean, but never say, is that “our friends” are government and corporate leaders whom we keep in power through any means necessary – the dictators, the kings, the oligarchs, the torturers – not the masses of the population, particularly those with a measure of education.

“Our efforts in West New Guinea, in the Congo, in the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent, have been persistent and patient despite criticism from both sides.”

Persistent, yes. Patient, often. But moral, fostering human rights, democracy, civil liberties, self-determination, not fawning over Israel ... ? As but one glaring example, the assassination of Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, perhaps the last chance for a decent life for the people of that painfully downtrodden land; planned by the CIA under Eisenhower, but executed under Kennedy.

“The Communist drive to impose their political and economic system on others is the primary cause of world tension today. For there can be no doubt that, if all nations could refrain from interfering in the self-determination of others, the peace would be much more assured.”

See all of the above for this piece of hypocrisy. And so, if no nation interfered in the affairs of any other nation, there would be no wars. Brilliant. If everybody became rich there would be no poverty. If everybody learned to read there would be no illiteracy.

“The United States, as the world knows, will never start a war.”

So ... Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Cuba, and literally dozens of other countries then, later, and now, all the way up to Libya in 2012 ... they all invaded the United States first? Remarkable. And this was the man who was going to end the war in Vietnam very soon after being re-elected the following year? Lord help us.

Bush’s legacy

This is not to put George W. Bush down. That’s too easy, and I’ve done it many times. No, this is to counter the current trend to rehabilitate the man and his Iraqi horror show, which partly coincides with the opening of his presidential library in Texas. At the dedication ceremony, President Obama spoke of Bush’s “compassion and generosity” and declared that: “He is a good man.” The word “Iraq” did not pass his lips. The closest he came at all was saying “So even as we Americans may at times disagree on matters of foreign policy, we share a profound respect and reverence for the men and women of our military and their families.” Should morality be that flexible? Even for a politician? Obama could have just called in sick.

At the January 31 congressional hearing on the nomination of Chuck Hagel to be Secretary of Defense, Senator John McCain ripped into him for his critique of the Iraq war:

“The question is, were you right or were you wrong?” McCain demanded, pressing Hagel on why he opposed Bush’s decision to send 20,000 additional troops to Iraq in the so-called ‘surge’.

“I’m not going to give you a yes-or-no answer. I think it’s far more complicated than that,” Hagel responded. He said he would await the “judgment of history.”

Glaring at Hagel, McCain ended the exchange with a bitter rejoinder: “I think history has already made a judgment about the surge, sir, and you are on the wrong side of it.”

Before the revisionist history of the surge gets chiseled into marble, let me repeat part of what I wrote in this report at the time, December 2007:

The American progress is measured by a decrease in violence, the White House has decided – a daily holocaust has been cut back to a daily multiple catastrophe. And

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who’s keeping the count? Why, the same good people who have been regularly feeding us a lie for the past five years about the number of Iraqi deaths, completely ignoring the epidemiological studies.

A recent analysis by the *Washington Post* left the administration’s claim pretty much in tatters. The article opened with: “The US military’s claim that violence has decreased sharply in Iraq in recent months has come under scrutiny from many experts within and outside the government, who contend that some of the underlying statistics are questionable and selectively ignore negative trends.”

To the extent that there may have been a reduction in violence, we must also keep in mind that, thanks to this lovely little war, there are several million Iraqis either dead, wounded, in exile abroad, or in bursting American and Iraqi prisons. So the number of potential victims and killers has been greatly reduced.

Moreover, extensive ethnic cleansing has taken place in Iraq (another good indication of progress, n’est-ce pas? nicht wahr?) – Sunnis and Shiites are now living more in their own special enclaves than before, none of those stinking mixed communities with their unholy mixed marriages, so violence of the sectarian type has also gone down. On top of all this, US soldiers have been venturing out a lot less (for fear of things like ... well, dying), so the violence against our noble lads is also down.

One of the signs of the reduction in violence in Iraq, the administration would like us to believe, is that many Iraqi families are returning from Syria, where they had fled because of the violence.

The *New York Times*, however, reported that “Under intense pressure to show results after months of political stalemate, the [Iraqi] government has continued to publicize figures that exaggerate the movement back to Iraq”; as well as exaggerating “Iraqis’ confidence that the current lull in violence can be sustained.” The count, it

turns out, included all Iraqis crossing the border, for whatever reason. A United Nations survey found that 46 percent were leaving Syria because they could not afford to stay; 25 percent said they fell victim to a stricter Syrian visa policy; and only 14 percent said they were returning because they had heard about improved security.

How long can it be before vacation trips to “Exotic Iraq” are flashed across our TVs? “Baghdad’s Beautiful Beaches Beckon”. Just step over the bodies. Indeed, the State Department has recently advertised for a “business development/tourism” expert to work in Baghdad, “with a particular focus on tourism and related services.”

Another argument raised again recently to preserve George W.’s legacy is that “He kept us safe”. Hmm ... I could swear that he was in the White House around the time of September 11 ... What his supporters mean is that Bush’s War on Terrorism was a success because there wasn’t another terrorist attack in the United States after September 11, 2001 while he was in office; as if terrorists killing Americans is acceptable if it’s done abroad. Following the American/Bush strike on Afghanistan in October 2001 there were literally scores of terrorist attacks – including some major ones – against American institutions in the Middle East, South Asia and the Pacific: military, civilian, Christian, and other targets associated with the United States. Even the claim that the War on Terrorism kept Americans safe at home is questionable.

There was no terrorist attack in the United States during the six-and-a-half years before the one in September 2001; not since the April 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City. It would thus appear that the absence of terrorist attacks in the United States is the norm. **CT**

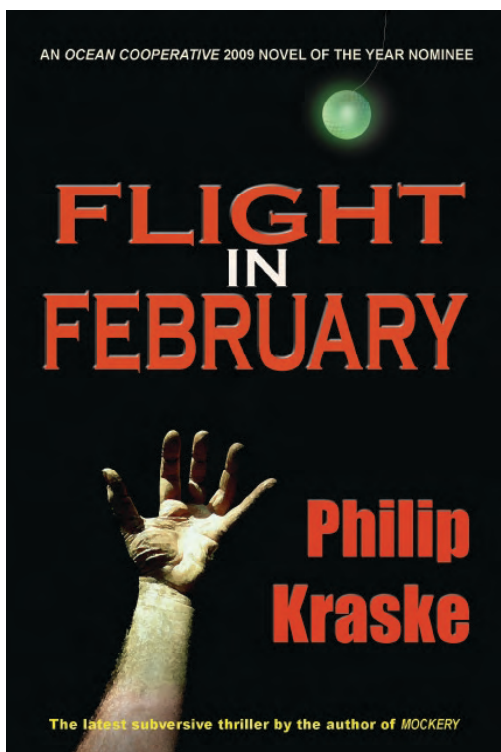
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William Blum’s latest book is America’s Deadliest Export – Democracy: The Truth About US Foreign Policy and Everything Else

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