

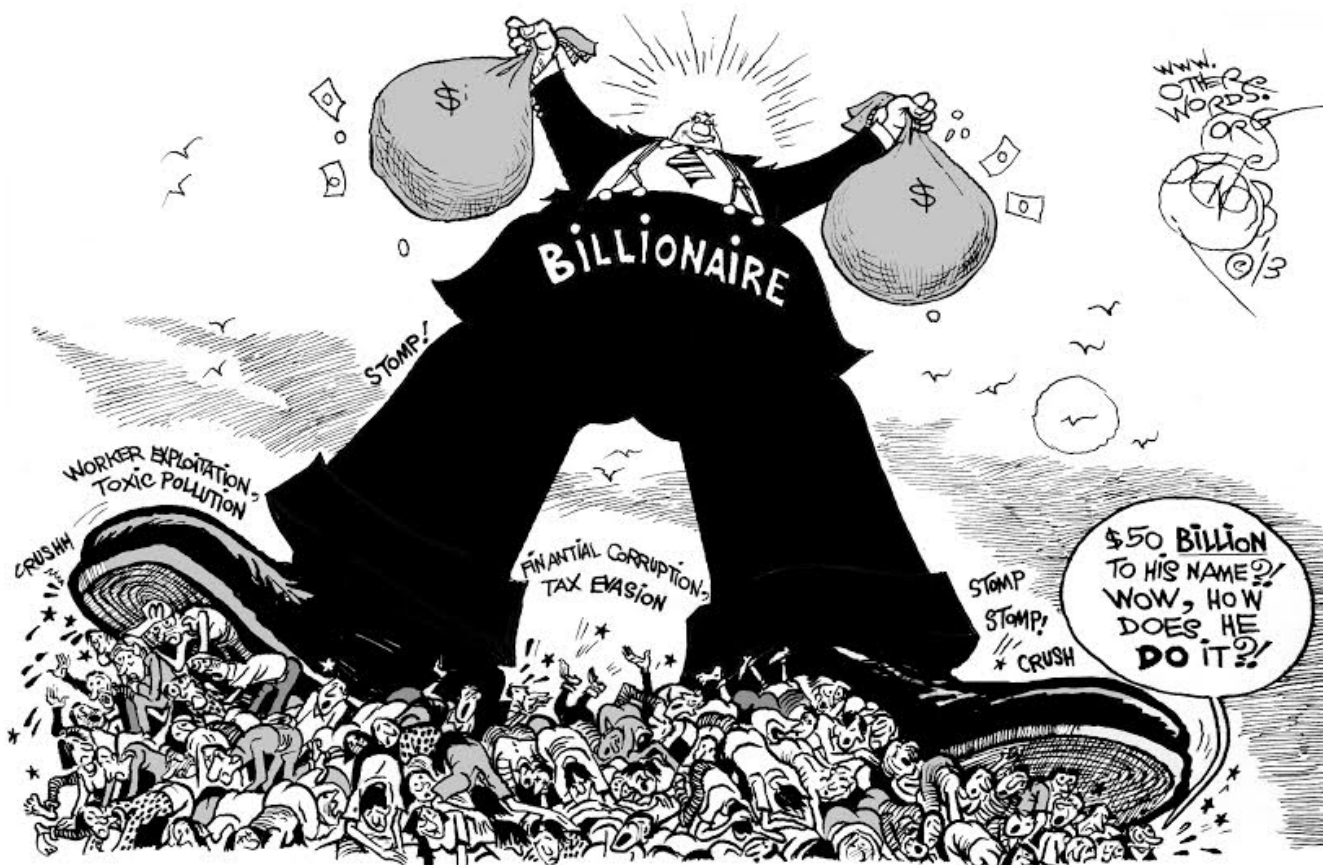
CANADA'S HIROSHIMA | ERIC WALBERG
ARIEL SHARON: WAR IS PEACE! | DAVID EDWARDS
MISSION ABANDONED | EAMONN McCANN

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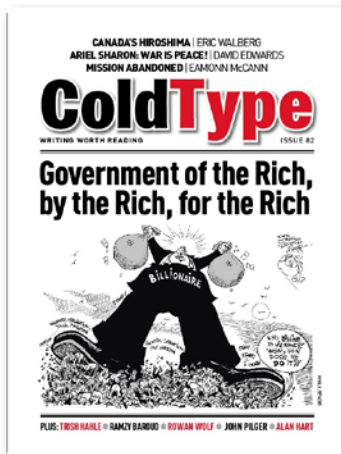
WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 82

Government of the Rich, by the Rich, for the Rich



PLUS: TRISH KAHLE ● RAMZY BAROUD ● ROWAN WOLF ● JOHN PILGER ● ALAN HART



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Khalil Bendib
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ISSUE 82

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- | | | |
|-----|---|--------------------------|
| 3. | MISSION ABANDONED | EAMONN McCANN |
| 5. | THEY POISONED THE RIVER FOR 'CLEAN COAL' | TRISH KAHLE |
| 11. | THE DARK SIDE OF IMPERIAL POWER | EDWARD S. HERMAN |
| 16. | A CHILDHOOD IN ATHENS | FRED REED |
| 18. | ARIEL SHARON: WAR IS PEACE! | DAVID EDWARDS |
| 22. | THE WHITEWASHING OF ARIEL SHARON | RAMZY BAROUD |
| 24. | THE IMPERATUR | URI AVNERY |
| 28. | A NOBEL PRIZE FOR NONSENSE | ALAN HART |
| 30. | ISRAEL, PALESTINE, PINOCHET AND A SOCCER JERSEY | DAVE ZIRIN |
| 32. | JUST CHAMPION! | TONY SUTTON |
| 36. | COVER STORY: GOVERNMENT OF THE RICH, BY THE RICH, FOR THE RICH | JOHN W. WHITEHEAD |
| 40. | THE LAST GASP OF DEMOCRACY | CHRIS HEDGES |
| 43. | UNITING THE HUMAN RACE | JASON NETEK |
| 45. | PROPAGANDA: THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE | DAVID CROMWELL |
| 50. | DEATH BY MEDIA | JOHN PILGER |
| 52. | TO THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN | DANNY SCHECHTER |
| 54. | AND SO THEY FALL – WORKERS AND UNIONS | ROWAN WOLF |
| 60. | WELFARE FOR THE RICH | BILL QUIGLEY |
| 62. | WHY BEATING INEQUALITY WON'T BE EASY | SAM PIZZIGATI |
| 64. | ALBERTA'S OILSANDS: CANADA'S HIROSHIMA | ERIC WALBERG |
| 67. | CRACKS IN THE ALLIANCE | JONATHAN COOK |
| 69. | LEARNING WITHOUT ANSWERING QUESTIONS | JOHN KOZY |
| 73. | INSIDE THE BLACK HOLE OF HISTORY | BARRY LANDO |
| 76. | AMERICA SAVES THE WORLD | WILLIAM BLUM |
-

Editor: Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net

Mission abandoned

The US and British governments have failed to accomplish their central war aims in Afghanistan, says **Eamonn McCann**

British troops can leave Afghanistan and come home with their heads held high: “Mission accomplished,” David Cameron told them in mid-December. Many will have wondered: what mission was that?

Back in 2001, Tony Blair gave two reasons for sending British soldiers to the other side of the world. First, to back up George W. Bush in crushing the Taliban once and for all. And second, to eradicate the production of poppies. Drawing the two issues together, Blair declared: “The arms the Taliban are buying today are paid for by the lives of young British people buying their drugs on British streets. This is another aspect of the regime which we should seek to destroy.”

Today, the Taliban are as strong as at any point since they were ousted from Kabul in November 2001. The main perspective now of the US and the Afghan government of Hamid Karzai is to try to identify Taliban leaders with whom they might negotiate a settlement. Nothing accomplished on that front, then.

Meanwhile, last year was a bumper poppy harvest. September alone yielded 6,060 tons – more than the combined production of the rest of the world, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). A plan introduced in 2010 to cut down production by paying farmers not to plant poppies backfired when thousands of farmers

who had never grown poppies began sowing the plants so as to be paid to stop.

Since then, cultivation has been spreading to new parts of the country. This year, according to the UNODC, Afghans have planted poppies in 516,450 acres across 17 provinces, up from last year’s 380,540 acres in 15 provinces.

In the meantime, 446 British soldiers have met their deaths – a higher figure than in Iraq or the Falklands – most commonly from improvised explosive devices buried along the dusty roads of Helmand province. They have been killed at four times the rate of US troops, a statistical disparity which nobody at Westminster seems anxious to explain.

A snapshot of non-lethal casualties showed that between April 2012 and March 2013, 29 British soldiers had limbs amputated. Twelve of these were classified as “significant multiple amputees.” The average age of those who died was 22. Thirty-one were teenagers, 200 in their 20s. Of the Afghan veterans who had made it home more or less in one piece, the most common cause of death in 2012 was suicide.

One reason for the relatively high British casualty rate – in the absence of evidence, this can only be speculative – could be the ignorance and stupidity of British politicians and their carelessness about the lives of the young people they were sending into

The main perspective now of the US and the Afghan government of Hamid Karzai is to try to identify Taliban leaders with whom they might negotiate a settlement

WASTED LIVES

Karzai wants – get this – an assurance that the US will not intervene to determine the outcome – “sabotage” is Karzai’s word – of elections set for April. This is what so many have given their lives for? What a waste

battle, the resultant failure to provide basic equipment and the deployment of personnel in ways which made no military (or any other sort of) sense.

The role of the politicians was best summed up by Defense Minister John Reid in April 2006, as British soldiers prepared to move into Helmand. He travelled out, press entourage in tow, to explain that their task was not to fight – unless attacked themselves – but to provide protection for local people repairing damage to homes and schools. “We would be perfectly happy to leave in three years’ time without firing one shot,” he told journalists.

The intelligence, in any sense of the word, was non-existent. Small wonder, then, that the soldiers found themselves travelling in soft-skinned vehicles through some of the most dangerous terrain on earth, under constant attack from armed groups.

A measure of how little has actually been accomplished in Afghanistan can be extracted from current discussions between British Prime Minister David Cameron’s selfie sidekick Barack Obama and Karzai about the terms on which the US might maintain a military presence in the country

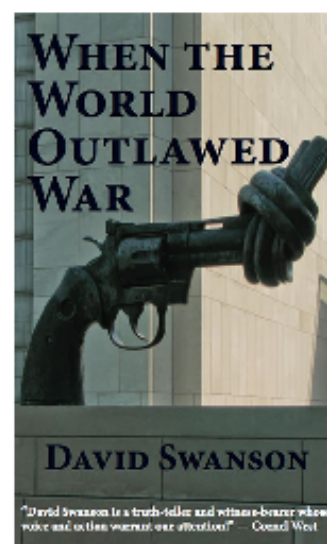
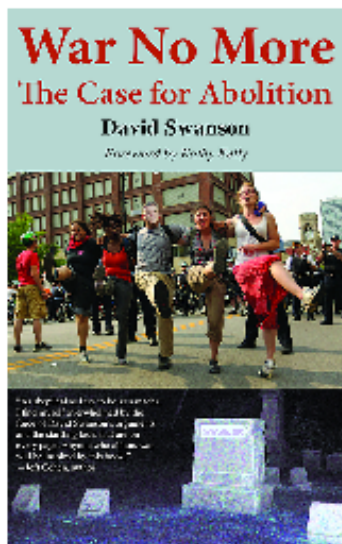
until 2024.

It is reported that Karzai, a spectacularly corrupt leader, the writ of whose government doesn’t reach the suburbs of his capital, is reluctant to accept immunity from all Afghan laws for US troops and mercenaries (“contractors”).

He wants the US to try harder not to kill Afghan civilians and to stop kicking in their doors at night. He wants a greater role for Afghan officials in probing such incidents. He wants – get this – an assurance that the US will not intervene to determine the outcome – “sabotage” is Karzai’s word – of elections set for April. This is what so many have given their lives for? What a waste.

And what a waste of space the politicians are who brought it about and who now tell us it’s all been worthwhile. **CT**

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Eamonn McCann is an activist in Northern Ireland and author of “Bloody Sunday In Derry: What Really Happened”, *War & Peace In Northern Ireland*, “Dear God” *The Price Of Religion In Northern Ireland* and “*The Bloody Sunday Inquiry: The Families Speak Out*”. This articles was first published in the *Belfast Telegraph*.



DavidSwanson.org/Store

They poisoned the river for 'clean' coal

Trish Kahle explains how a chemical used by coal companies spilled into West Virginia's Elk River, causing a crisis affecting hundreds of thousands

PART ONE

Imagine living in the rugged countryside of the Appalachian mountains. You have no source of income or means of transportation, and you find your water has been poisoned and cannot be used – even after being boiled – until further notice. Imagine trying to run a hospital when none of the city's water can be used – even for hand-washing. Imagine having to ration drinking water to school age children in the fourth most water-rich country on earth.

All of these stories and more came true in West Virginia on January 9, after residents reported water that tasted like licorice. The contamination turned out to be 4-methylcyclohexane methanol, a chemical used to produce the misleadingly named “clean coal” through the froth flotation process which “scrubs” the coal prior to burning in power plants.

An unknown amount of the substance had spilled from a 48,000 gallon container located along the Elk River, owned by Freedom Industries (FI). Despite being located only one mile upstream from the water treatment plant where drinking water was contaminated, Tom Aluisse of the West Virginia Environmental Protection Association noted that the chemical cannot actually be removed from the water – and residents will simply have to wait for more than 60 miles

of pipelines to be completely flushed before water safety can be reassessed. “This material pretty much floats on the water, and it's floating downstream, and eventually it will dissipate, but you can't actually get in there and remove it,” Aluisse said.

FI claims they don't know how the hole which caused the toxic substance to leak into the containment area and then into the river got there, but then, according to its own website, FI maintains bulk quantities of not only 4-methylcyclohexane methanol, but 5 other flotation reagents – not to mention the other products stored on site, which include other specialty chemicals including freeze conditioning agents (used in deicing), dust control palliatives, water treatment polymers, and other mining chemicals. “With 4,000,000 gallons of storage capacity,” boasts the Freedom Industries website, the Elk River terminal “can process large volumes of chemical rapidly, and cost effectively.” Processing them safely, on the other hand, doesn't seem to be a primary concern.

Although air-quality officials began receiving odour reports about the facility as early as 7:30 a.m., the emergency response chief of the Department of Environmental Protection didn't receive word of the spill until noon. The *Charleston Gazette* reported that the company had failed to report the spill to the self-regulation agencies, which

The chemical cannot actually be removed from the water – and residents will simply have to wait for more than 60 miles of pipelines to be completely flushed before water safety can be reassessed

WHERE'S OUR WATER?

Hundreds of thousands of people are without water in one of the poorest rural areas of the country, and the government has no idea when the water will be safe to drink again

raises the question why a chemical corporation more interested in efficiency than the safety of hundreds of thousands of people is allowed to regulate itself anyway. A search of the Environmental Protection Agency's facility compliance reports found no record of inspections at the facility for available years, presenting a striking parallel with low OSHA inspection rates that resulted in a deadly explosion at a Texas fertilizer plant last year.

And, of course, with no way for the chemical to be removed from the water through a clean-up operation, it remains unclear what the short and long term effects will be beyond contaminating the water supply of the Kanawha Valley, West Virginia's most populated region. The materials safety data sheets, compiled by OSHA, lists little information about the effects of the chemical, and many emergency officials say they know little about the potential effects of the chemical. West Virginia American Water President Jeff McIntyre did little to reassure residents when he refused to get specific about possible effects, only saying that "it's not particularly lethal in its usage form." And while not completely sure how the contamination will affect residents, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources said that possible effects of ingestion or inhalation could include "severe burning in throat, severe eye irritation, non-stop vomiting, trouble breathing or severe skin irritation such as skin blistering."

In addition to the human effects, it's not clear what the ecological consequences of the spill will be. The Elk River is a major tributary of the Ohio River, and the Appalachian mountains – as well as the valleys downstream – are home to ecosystems already under threat from more than a century of burning coal, mountain-top removal, strip mining, deforestation, and more. Many people rely on these rivers for water supplies, irrigation, and leisure.

Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of people are without water in one of the poor-

est rural areas of the country, and the government has no idea when the water will be safe to drink again. The emergency response has been entirely inadequate, leaving those who could afford it – and who had transportation to get to a store – scrambling to buy rapidly disappearing supplies of bottled water. The Health Department closed all restaurants, tattoo parlors, and schools, and many businesses will remain closed.

Nursing homes and hospitals, while also under the advisory, must still struggle to provide basic services. According to the *Charleston Gazette*, however, some nursing homes will shut down, leaving elderly and disabled people without vital access to care at a critical time. The Charleston Area Medical Center has canceled all procedures until the water use ban is lifted.

West Virginians were quick to point out on social media the failure of the government and the water company in warning people about the danger. As Teresa Boggs Meadow noted, "already cooked, ran the dishwasher, done laundry and drank it. If it happened so early why did you put the warning out so late? It happened at 10:30 am!"

Soon after the announcement, stores began to run out of water supplies. Residents tweeted out that stores were gouging prices, trying to make some extra money from people's fear.

Yet no amount of feigned concern from state and national officials can cover how badly the situation has been handled. Once again, the companies have engaged in ecological warfare against the people of the Appalachian mountains. Once again, the state was negligent in the enforcement of regulations and colluded with company officials to assert control over the situation and avoid the companies being held meaningfully accountable for their actions. Once again, the lives of working people and the health of the land and resources they rely on have come second to the demands of capitalism. The spill in the Elk River is the latest chap-

ter in a long story of ecological and class warfare, where the coal companies have attempted to crush the working people, rob them of their land, and devastate the ecosystems they rely on for survival. It's a story that is far too familiar to the people of West Virginia. As Marilyn Mullens of Cool Ridge W.Va. noted:

"Just for the world to know. This is the same chemical they use to 'clean the coal.' The same chemical that is pumped into billion gallon earthen dams that litter the Appalachian mountains. The chemicals have been seeping into the streams and groundwater of coal field residents for years. Some of us have been pleading with our elected officials to stop this but they are paid off by the coal companies. The same coal companies that are on record as saying my people are "collateral damage" and "expendable." Now this chemical spills into their drinking water and they tuck tail and run. Go figure."

So-called "Clean Coal" is a dangerous myth. It can be easy, sometimes, for those of us who don't live in coal producing areas of the country, to forget the social and ecological toll coal burning and production takes on land and people. For the most part, away from smokestacks and slurry dams, we can forget that at the other end of the energy production chain, all the ugliness is still there. People often claim sustainable energy alternatives – solar panels and wind turbines, for example – are a blight on the landscape. Not only is this untrue, but it ignores the real blight – the one we have outsourced (or perhaps, insourced) to the Appalachian coalfields and imposed on the people who live there, impoverished and murdered by the same energy companies who are destroying the entire planet.

It's no coincidence that this happened in one of the poorest areas of the country. In fact, the same companies that poison the water, decimate the mountaintops, and erect dams to hold back unfathomable amounts of "mountain slurry" are also re-

sponsible for the high levels of poverty that exist throughout the region. For more than a century, minimizing access to health care, education, and other social services has helped employers extract as much profit as possible from the region by keeping corporate tax rates low and by not requiring corporations who own operations in the state to even pay taxes there in the first place. It is in this context we must comprehend the utter failures of state departments to respond to the chemical spill crisis.

What should have been the alternative to leaving those who were able scrambling to find water supplies? How could hospitals and other medical facilities have been prioritized to receive water so the most vulnerable among us would be in less danger?

Instead of closing the schools and other public buildings, these facilities should have been opened to the public as emergency relief centers. Available water supplies should have been centralized, assessed, and distributed according to need, with special attention to vulnerable populations. Communication check-ins should have been established to make sure people in more remote areas got the message to discontinue use of the water, and to make sure those people had adequate supplies on hand.

Instead, the people of West Virginia have been left, for the most part, to fend for themselves. Even as we organize to send them what aid we can to get them through the crisis, the need for a systemic change has never been more urgent. Capitalism is killing us, and our planet. In the grand ways – the super storms, extended fire seasons, rising ocean temperatures, and skyrocketing extinction rates – yes. But also in small ways, a river here, a person there. A person who could have been part of helping build a solution.

PART TWO

On the third day after 4-methylcyclohexane methanol (MCHM) leaked from a storage

People often claim sustainable energy alternatives – solar panels and wind turbines, for example – are a blight on the landscape

WHERE'S OUR WATER?

Why, in a water-rich area in the country with the fourth largest renewable water supply in the world, are hundreds of thousands of people forced to rely on water brought in from other states?

facility into West Virginia's Elk River, little has changed for 300,000 West Virginians who remain without water. The estimated size of the leak remains unclear. Freedom Industries' President Gary Southern could only say for certain that less than 35,000 gallons leaked out, but West Virginia Governor Earl Ray Tomblin claims the spill did not exceed 5,000 gallons. No one can say for sure when the water will be safe to use for even the most basic daily tasks – brushing teeth, washing hands, clothes, and dishes, and, of course, drinking.

Finally, the EPA issued an order forcing Freedom Industries to close down its operation and drain any remaining chemical in the tank. While the site cannot accept any new materials for storage, they will not be required to remove other chemicals from the site. Instead they have been ordered to test the integrity of all other above ground tanks and secondary containment systems. But it comes too late. The Department of Environmental Protection had no jurisdiction over the site since the chemical was only stored – not produced – there, meaning that hazardous chemicals stored in close proximity to major water source had no state or federal oversight and were supposed to self-report EPA violations. OSHA has also launched an investigation into potential violations of worker safety, but their statement also highlighted further oversight and negligence – OSHA has no past relationship with Freedom Industries. Yet another workplace containing dangerous chemicals went uninspected.

Those defending the company because it has no record of violations entirely miss the point: after all, you can't find violations that you aren't even looking for.

The state has launched an investigation into the disaster, and at least six lawsuits were soon filed against Freedom Industries and West Virginian American Water, two of which are seeking class action status. But these lawsuits primarily focus on economic "damage" to businesses over water contam-

ination – and not on the hundreds of thousands of people who may have been exposed to toxic water and who have lost access to the most important public resource as a result of Freedom Industries' negligence. The state is also investigating price gouging on the part of businesses that had stockpiles of bottled water at the time of the spill.

More than 16 trucks of relief water have arrived, but distribution remains uneven as nine counties remain without water. And, perhaps more importantly, no one seems to be asking the questions that should have been prompted by this disaster.

Why, for example, in a water-rich area in the country with the fourth largest renewable water supply in the world, are hundreds of thousands of people forced to rely on water brought in from other states?

Why is a chemical company allowed to store 4,000,000 gallons of chemicals with varying levels of toxicity only a mile upstream of a water treatment facility that serves hundreds of thousands of residents and is connected to the water table that supplies well water for many more?

How can a chemical that cause headaches, irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat, skin rashes, damage to the heart, liver, kidneys, and lungs, possibly resulting in death be considered part of a "clean" energy source?

Why, in the middle of a state emergency, is the government allowing water to still be sold in stores under police guard and not allowing for free community distribution to anyone who needs it?

Why aren't the people being kept from working – people who are disproportionately low-wage workers in restaurants, food service, schools, and hospitals – being paid to help with emergency relief?

These are the questions that most people aren't grappling with, because they call into question the country's energy policy, economic and social inequality, the notion of private property. They call capitalism into question, and the media can't respond. But

ecosocialists can.

Every disaster – from the BP oil spill to the fertilizer explosion in Texas, from the Massey mine disaster to “development” of the tar sands as a oil resource – underscores the increasing urgency of our project. Capitalism is destroying our planet faster than we can study the effects of that destruction. Increasingly, the fundamental conflict emerges with astounding clarity – capitalism and the world’s more than six billion people are accelerating on a collision course.

The people of West Virginia probably understand this conflict better than most people in the United States. Central Appalachia contains some of the world’s largest accessible deposits of bituminous coal, and coal drives the region’s economy. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, coal mines were owned by railroads, then by steel companies, and in the 1960s, began to transition to being owned by large energy conglomerates – usually oil companies. But coal has been an important part of the American economy for more than a century, and as capitalists rushed to exploit the region’s natural resources, they also subjected the people who lived in the region and worked in the mines to countless ecological disasters and deadly explosions and cave-ins in the mines, all while keeping the region in poverty by keeping businesses located out of state.

And West Virginia found itself at the center of a similar debate nearly 45 years ago, as the nation grappled with the rise of nuclear power, increased development of strip mining, and decline of oil and natural gas being used as source fuels in the generation of electricity. As operators pressed for ever-increasing levels of productivity in the nation’s coal mines, increasing numbers of miners died in workplace accidents.

Then in 1972, the Buffalo Creek disaster happened.

One of the coal slurry dams owned by the Pittston Coal Company burst, releasing 132,000,000 gallons of the black liquid.

The deluge, which crested at thirty feet, killed 125 people, injured more than 1,000, and left four-fifths of the town’s population homeless. The company called it “an act of God” but residents knew that, yet again, the companies had put profits ahead of the lives of local residents.

Aftermath of the Buffalo Creek Disaster

The state demanded \$100,000,000 for disaster relief and damages, but settled for only \$1,000,000 – a settlement that reflected the power of the companies in shaping state politics and suggested that the state was less interested in winning justice for its citizens than it was in maintaining a relationship with the coal industry.

But the ecological attacks perpetrated by the companies went far beyond disasters like Buffalo Creek. In an effort to cut costs, the companies expanded the use of strip mining after WWII. They invested in uranium mines. Tooth and nail, they fought every environmental and safety regulation put forward by lawmakers under pressure from organized miners. In the midst of an energy crisis – the energy companies were determined to emerge victorious.

To do so, they attacked the people of West Virginia on every front. They harassed and assaulted residents who tried to block strip mine operations. They attacked workers who unionised and fought against a union leadership that claimed “if coal cannot be mined safely and burned cleanly, it should not be mined or burned at all.” The coal industry even went so far as to say that in lieu of sustainable energy alternatives being developed, government resources should detonate nuclear weapons underground to increase natural gas reserves. (When they tried that, they acted shocked that the resulting gas was radioactive...and therefore unusable.) The people of West Virginia had made clear demands: put land and people first. The companies did neither, but continued on their profit-driven rampage destroying huge swaths of the West Virginia

The companies fought, tooth and nail, every environmental and safety regulation put forward by lawmakers under pressure from organized miners

WHERE'S OUR WATER?

Energy production must be nationalized and the masses of workers displaced from the oil, coal, and natural gas industries should be given unionized employment building an infrastructure entirely based around sustainable energy sources

mountains – one of the world's most beautiful landscapes – with mountaintop removal for cheaper access to coal, exposing WV residents to toxic air pollution in order to provide the rest of the nation with cheap energy. The decisions made in the early 1970s are what got us here today, with hundreds of thousands of people unsure when they will be able to drink their water again.

The debates of the 1970s aren't just the backdrop to the current crisis, but it also can help illuminate the stakes of the current moment.

What happens now matters. It will determine the ability of people to halt capitalism, climate change, and global ecological destruction in its tracks. But what exactly does this history teach us?

Ecological demands are of necessity social demands. Some coal miners and their allies argued that energy resources had to be nationalized in order to not be dominated by the profit motive. Hostility to nationalisation halted the idea in its tracks, but its importance remains. Natural resources are public resources – energy generation and control of water resources must be brought under public control and run for the public good, not for profit. Of course, the trend is exactly the opposite. Increasing numbers of water treatment centers are run by private companies, and companies like Coca-Cola have been pushing to privatize all water resources.

The energy industry is enormously profitable. As long as profit is the driving factor, sustainability will be impossible, and we are running out of time to replace fossil fuels with green alternatives. Energy produc-

tion must be nationalized and the masses of workers displaced from the oil, coal, and natural gas industries should be given unionized employment building an infrastructure entirely based around sustainable energy sources.

Such a fight points toward a different future – one where West Virginia is not a dumping ground for the nation's dirty energy policy and one where workers and mountain residents decide democratically how to utilize the natural resources the land offers and work collectively to implement a system based on meeting everyone's needs and not, as Freedom Industries boasts, processing large amounts of destructive chemicals rapidly and cost effectively.

Much like the crisis of the 60s and 70s, we are at a point of ecological and economic crisis. We must choose between the destruction of our planet and the revolutionary transformation of society, and the steps we take now to begin that process matter. Join the fight for ecosocialism, and in the meantime, demand that Freedom Industries pay for the costs of the chemical spill and be held criminally accountable to the people of West Virginia. **CT**

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Trish Kahle, an activist and writer who has recently relocated from Greensboro, NC to Chicago, IL, where she is working toward a Ph.D. in Labor History and Race and Ethnic Studies at the University of Chicago and is a member of the International Socialist Organization. This essay was originally published at her blog, I Can't believe we Still Have To Protest This Shit, at <http://stillhavetoprotest.wordpress.com>

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The dark side of imperial power

Edward S. Herman reviews a book that offers a fresh and critical account of the Western intervention in Gaddafi's Libya

Maximilian Forte's book on the Libyan war, *Slouching Towards Sirte*, is another powerful (and hence marginalized) study of the imperial powers in violent action, and with painful results, but supported by the UN, media, NGOs and a significant body of liberals and leftists who had persuaded themselves that this was a humanitarian enterprise.

Forte shows compellingly that it wasn't the least little bit humanitarian, either in the intent of its principals (the United States, France, and Great Britain) or in its results.

As in the earlier cases of "humanitarian intervention" the Libyan program rested intellectually and ideologically on a set of supposedly justifying events and threats that were fabricated, selective, and/or otherwise misleading, but which were quickly institutionalized within the Western propaganda system. (For the deceptive model applied in the war on Yugoslavia, see Herman and Peterson, "The Dismantling of Yugoslavia," *Monthly Review*, October 2007; for the propagan-

da model applied to Rwanda, see Herman, "Rwanda and the New Scramble for Africa," *Z Magazine*, Jan. 2014)

The key elements in the war-on-Libya model were the alleged acute threat that Gaddafi was about to massacre large numbers of civilians (in early 2011), his supposed use of mercenaries imported from the south (black Africans!) to do his dirty work, and his dictatorial rule.

The first provided the core and urgent rationale for Security Council Resolution 1973 [R-1973], passed on March 17, 2011, which authorized member states "to take all necessary measures...to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahirija, including Benghazi, while excluding a foreign occupation force in any form..."

Its fraudulently benign and limited character was shown by this exclusion of an occupation force, as presumably any actions under this resolution would be

The key elements in the war-on-Libya model were the alleged acute threat that Gaddafi was about to massacre large numbers of civilians, his supposed use of mercenaries imported from the south (black Africans!) to do his dirty work, and his dictatorial rule



SLOUCHING TOWARDS SIRTE: NATO's War on Libya and Africa

By Maximilian Forte
Baraka Books:
Montreal CA 2012,
341 pp. **\$27.95**

BOOK REVIEW

There were claims of several thousand killed in February 2011, but Forte shows that this also was disinformation supplied by the rebels and their allies, but swallowed by many Western officials, media and other gullibles

limited to aircraft and missile operations “protecting civilians.” Its deep bias is shown by its attributing the threat to civilians solely to Libyan government forces, not to the rebels as well, who turned out to greatly surpass the government forces as civilian killers, and with a racist twist.

As Forte spells out in detail, the imperial powers violated R-1973 from day 1 and clearly never intended to abide by its words. That resolution called for the “immediate establishment of a cease-fire and a complete end to violence,” and “the need to intensify efforts to find a solution to the crisis” and to facilitate “a dialogue to lead to the political reforms necessary to find a peaceful and sustainable solution.”

Both Gaddafi and the African Union called for a cease fire and dialogue, but the rebels and imperial powers were not interested, and the bombing to “protect civilians” began within two days of the war-sanctioning resolution, without the slightest move toward obtaining a cease fire or starting negotiations.

Forte also shows that it was clear from the start that the imperial-power-warriors were using civilian protection as a “figleaf” cover for their real objective – regime change and the removal of Gaddafi (with substantial evidence that his death was part of the program and carried out with US participation). The war that followed was one in which the imperial powers worked in close collaboration with the rebel forces, serving as their air arm, but also providing them with arms, training and propaganda support.

The imperial powers, and Dubai, also had hundreds of operatives on the ground in Libya, training the rebels and giving them intelligence and other support, hence violating R-1973’s prohibition of an occupation force “in any form.”

Forte shows that the factual base for Gaddafi’s alleged threat to civilians, his treatment of protesters in mid-February 2011, was more than dubious. The claimed strik-

ing at protesters by aerial attacks, and the Viagra-based rape surge, were straightforward disinformation, and the number killed was small – 24 protesters in the three days, February 15-17, according to Human Rights Watch – fewer than the number of alleged “black mercenaries” executed by the rebels in Derna in mid-February (50), and fewer than the early protester deaths in Tunis or Egypt that elicited no Security Council effort to “protect civilians.”

There were claims of several thousand killed in February 2011, but Forte shows that this also was disinformation supplied by the rebels and their allies, but swallowed by many Western officials, media and other gullibles. That the actual evidence would induce the urgent and massive response by the NATO powers is implausible, and the rush to arms demands a different rationale than protecting civilians in a small North African state. Forte provides it, compellingly – Obama and company were seizing the “window of opportunity” for regime change.

Forte demonstrates throughout his book that from the beginning of the regime-change-war the bombing powers were not confining themselves to protecting civilians, but were very often targeting civilians. He shows that, as in Pakistan, they used “double-tapping,” with lagged bombings that were sure civilian killers. They were also bombing military vehicles, troops and living quarters that were not attacking or threatening civilians. They also bombed ferociously anywhere their intelligence sources indicated that Gaddafi might be present.

Forte also shows that the rebels were merciless in brutalizing and slaughtering people viewed as Gaddafi supporters, and in the substantial parts of the country where Gaddafi was supported, the rebels’ air-force (i.e., NATO) was regularly called upon to bomb, and it did so, ruthlessly.

Forte’s book title, *Slouching Towards Sirte*, and his front cover which shows dev-

astated civilian apartment buildings in that city, focus attention on the essence of the NATO-rebel war. Sirte was Gaddafi's headquarters, and its populace and army remnants resisted the rebel advance for months, so it was eventually bombed into submission with a large number of civilians killed and injured.

Forte notes that when NATO finally caught up with Gaddafi and bombed and decimated the small entourage that was with him on the outskirts of Sirte, this was justified by NATO because this group could still "threaten civilians"! This was a town that had to be destroyed to save it – for the rebels, who Forte shows (citing Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and UN and other observers) executed substantial numbers of captured Gaddafi supporters. This was a major war crimes scene. The civilians in Sirte needed protection, from NATO and the rebels.

R-1973 explicitly mentions Benghazi as a massacre-threatened town, but Forte points out that no document or witness was ever turned up during or after the war that indicated any Gaddafi plan to attack Benghazi, let alone engage in a civilian slaughter. Furthermore, Forte notes that "the only massacre to have occurred anywhere near [Benghazi] was the massacre of innocent black African migrant workers and black Libyans falsely accused of being 'mercenaries'..." The rebels and their air force smashed a stream of towns in Eastern Libya, killing and turning into refugees many thousands of civilians.

The destruction of Sirte, similar to what R-1973 and the "international community" claimed to fear for Benghazi, and the lynching of Gaddafi, elicited no "grave concern" over "systematic violations of human rights," or call for any Chapter 7 response from the Western establishment. So in this Kafkaesque world the rebels and NATO behaved just as the "international community" claimed Gaddafi would behave, and the civilian casualties that resulted from the

rebel-NATO combination vastly exceeded anything done by Gaddafi's forces, or any probable civilian deaths that would have resulted if NATO had stayed away.

This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the rebels, from the beginning, pursued a race war. Forte stresses the importance in rebel actions of the hatred flowing from the rebels to Gaddafi forces and those deemed his supporters, which the rebels took to include anybody with a black skin. Many thousands of blacks were picked up by rebel forces, accused without the slightest proof of being mercenaries, and often executed.

Among the many cases that Forte describes, in one a hospital was destroyed and dozens of its black patients were massacred. The largely black population of the sizable town of Tawargha was entirely expelled by the rebels.

This racism pre-dates the 2011-2012 war, and resulted in part from Gaddafi's policies reaching out to other African states, his relatively liberal treatment of black immigrants, and his inadequate counter-racist educational and economic-social policies that would alleviate distress at home. But Gaddafi was not a racist, whereas large numbers of the rebel forces (the "democratic opposition" in Western propaganda) were, and their successes, with NATO's help, allowed them to perform as a lynch mob in many places (as Forte documents).

The racist character of the war was reflected in the frequent focus on "black mercenaries" allegedly imported and used by Gaddafi. This was reiterated time and again by the rebels and their supporters and propagandists. Forte shows that this claim was not merely inflated, it was a lie. There were no black mercenaries brought in by Gaddafi. But the claim of the threat posed by his alleged resort to "mercenaries" (read: black mercenaries) was repeated by officials (e.g., Susan Rice and Hillary Clinton) and the mainstream media, and

This racism pre-dates the 2011-2012 war, and resulted in part from Gaddafi's policies reaching out to other African states, his relatively liberal treatment of black immigrants, and his inadequate counter-racist educational and economic-social policies that would alleviate distress at home

BOOK REVIEW

The Chinese and Russians foolishly signed on to this Resolution, apparently not realizing that its “protecting civilians” thrust was a cover that would be immediately violated and that they were contributing to their own ouster from Africa

found its way even into R-1973 (“Deploring the continuing use of mercenaries by the Libyan authorities”). The charge was reiterated often by the rebels in justifying their systematic abuse of blacks during the war.

Note that for a Western target there are “mercenaries” whereas for big time killers there are “contractors.” We may note also that while the word “genocide” was often used to describe Gaddafi’s threat to the rebels and their supporters, in fact, the only facet of this conflict in which a special ethnic group was targeted for mistreatment and removal, and on a large scale, was the rebel focus on and treatment of black people. This point has, of course, escaped Western commentators on human rights.

There is another important race element involved in the Libyan war and regime change. Gaddafi was a devoted supporter of the idea of African independence, unity and escape from Western domination. He was a central figure in the organization of the African Union, served as its chairman, and called repeatedly for a United States of Africa, and for African lending and judicial authorities that could free Africa from subservience to the IMF, World Bank and international justice. He also invested substantial sums in African institutions, including schools, hospitals, mosques and hotels.

Forte shows that this Africanist thrust troubled US and other Western authorities, often frustrated at Gaddafi’s frequent unwillingness to help Western investors as well as threatening Western plans to advance their military-political-economic position in Africa.

Thus, regime change and Gaddafi removal dealt a major blow to African unity and breathed new life into AFRICOM and the West’s power in the scramble for control and access in this resource rich but fragmented and militarily weak area.

The performance of the UN and International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Libyan

war and regime change program displayed once again their subservience to the imperial powers and their facilitation of Western aggression and war crimes. These imperial powers succeeded in getting R-1973 passed, though it was loaded with bias and thoroughly politicized and hysterical claims of threats to civilians, and crucially gave them authority to commit mayhem and create another failed state.

The Chinese and Russians foolishly signed on to this Resolution, apparently not realizing that its “protecting civilians” thrust was a cover that would be immediately violated and that they were contributing to their own ouster from Africa.

As the evidence rapidly accumulated that the imperial powers were killing directly and facilitating rebel killings of civilians, and were carrying out and supporting serious war crimes, although these were sometimes recorded by UN personnel on the ground in Libya, there was no UN response or constraint imposed.

The reliable Ban Ki-Moon found NATO and rebel behavior beyond reproach (“Security Council Resolution 1973, I believe, was strictly enforced within the limit, within the mandate”).

The UN Human Rights Council removed the Libyan government’s representative based on a report from a human rights group affiliated with the Libyan rebels, without requiring evidence or allowing Libya to reply. Ban Ki-Moon allowed rebel representatives to replace those of the Libyan government, again without a hearing and in violation of UN rules.

The ICC performance was even more dismal, with head Luis Moreno-Ocampo rushing to indict Gaddafi without bothering with an investigation, and swallowing the claims of “black mercenaries” being imported by the villain and his supplying Viagra to encourage a rape program (Susan Rice also swallowed this charge).

Although R-1973 does call for the ICC to prosecute anybody “responsible for or com-

plicit in attacks targeting the civilian population, including aerial as well as naval attacks,” it should not surprise that there was no trace of ICC enforcement against NATO or rebel officials.

Human Rights groups also did poorly, with both Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International welcoming the NATO intervention, although both eventually put out reports calling attention to NATO and rebel abuses. But these reports were weak and bias- “balanced.” And in contrast with their very early support of intervention, they failed to call for action against imperial and rebel war crimes. Forte cites compelling evidence that the early figure of 6,000 Gaddafi government killings, which was influential in shaping UN action and media (and liberal-left) opinion, was passed along by the rebels and swallowed by the mainstream with no independent confirmation required.

Forte has a very good account of how effectively the pro-rebel side manufactured claims of civilian abuses via web sites and Twitterers far distant from Libya (London, Geneva, Cairo), but regularly stating the claims were “confirmed” by unnamed “witnesses.”

These plus direct rebel and imperial power official claims, and a remarkable will-to-believe, helped create a fearsome image of Gaddafi misbehavior and threats. Once again the propaganda system did its job of demonization and hysteria stimulation, with effects possibly exceeding those for Serbia (concentration and rape camps) and Iraq (“weapons of mass destruction” and urgent threat). And a substantial chunk of the Western left succumbed once again, sometimes reluctantly agreeing that bombing to protect civilians was here justified, but remarkably silent in the face of the growing evidence of bombing OF civilians and a de facto race war and war of aggression for regime change.

Forte points out that the facts of a race war and war of aggression against an impor-

tant African state were clearly recognized by Africans. There was a sharp divide, with African leaders, journals and academics assailing the NATO war and Western elites applauding it. Africans were very conscious of the fact that the UN and NATO powers simply ignored the AU, preferring to deal with the Arab monarchies and the rebels. Forte cites leaders of South Africa, Liberia, Nigeria, Uganda, and other Africans all of whom are strong in their positive, even if sometimes qualified, views of Gaddafi and his role, and outraged at this new spurt of Western intervention (which they often call re-colonization).

Forte also has several pages on the close relationship between Mandela and Gaddafi, the former indebted to him because of his steadfast support in the years when the ANC was a “terrorist” organization for the imperial powers.

Forte also stresses throughout how strongly opposed Gaddafi was to Al Qaeda and Islamic extremism. He fought them at home and sought to interest US officials in their threat. It is one of many ironies that Al Qaeda and Islamic extremism, firmly embedded in the rebel ranks, were provided the air force by NATO that ushered these democrats into shared power. They are now a force helping stoke chaos in the “liberated” Libya. But this chaos, like the civilians killed and injured by NATO and its allies, only hurts those victims, not the real villains in Washington, London and Paris. **CT**

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A substantial chunk of the Western left succumbed once again, sometimes reluctantly agreeing that bombing to protect civilians was here justified, but remarkably silent in the face of the growing evidence of bombing OF civilians

A childhood in Athens

But no sign of Socrates or thought, writes **Fred Reed**

Coochie just liked kids. And since it was his store, nobody at corporate got his panties in a knot because the comic books were read into virtual dust without ever being bought

It is common for aging men, worn by the long years of drinking and skirt-chasing and strenuous dissolution in any available fleshpot, to remember their youth in roseate hues that never were. But, dammit, we really did go barefoot. And had BB guns. And the dog could go anywhere it damned well pleased, and come back when it chose.

Athens, Alabama, in 1957 was a small Southern town like countless others in Dixie with a statue of a Confederate soldier on the town square and little evidence of government of any kind, which was well since it didn't need any.

While the South had not fared well in its ardent resistance to Federal regulation a century earlier, still there was little meddling by Washington in my years there. The South's martial displeasure with federal intrusion was remembered, though: When I moved down from Virginia, I was to other kids "the damyank on the corner" until I learned to wrap words in a comfortable padding of syllables, as God commanded.

Although my father was a mathematician at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, and perhaps entitled to social pretensions, he didn't have any. Consequently I lived as a half-wild disciple of Tom Sawyer. So did most of the town's boys. Come summer, we at first tentatively abandoned shoes. No one thought this odd, because it wasn't. Soon our soles toughened to leather and we walked every-

where, even on gravel, without ill effect.

And nobody cared. Oh sweet age of nobody cared. Child Protective Services didn't show up, officious passive-aggressive snots, to carry my parents away. Today they would, droning censoriously of hygiene and worms and crippling cuts from broken glass and parental irresponsibility.

Many of my friends lost feet to these perils. To this day you can see them rolling about in wheelchairs in their dozens.

Foot-nekkid and fancy free, we went to the Limestone Drug Store on the town square, piled our ball mitts and BB guns inside the door, and read comic books for hours. The owner, a frizzly redhead man in his seventies whom we knew only as Coochie, liked little boys.

Today this would be thought evidence of pedophilia and he would be required to undergo therapy and wear an ankle bracelet. Actually, Coochie just liked kids. And since it was his store, nobody at corporate got his panties in a knot because the comic books were read into virtual dust without ever being bought. The federal government had not yet regulated small-town soda fountains to protect us.

The devastating plagues that swept the South in those years, mysteriously unrecorded, were doubtless the result of bare feet in Limestone Drug.

BB guns, I said. We all had them. Most

were the Red Ryder model, costing I think \$4.95 in as-yet uninflated currency. Mine was the Daisy Eagle, a more glorious version with a plastic telescopic sight. Every corner store sold big packs of BBs. We went everywhere with these lethal arms, often with a ball glove hung from the barrel for convenient carrying.

Today children of six years are led from classrooms in handcuffs for merely drawing a picture of a rifle (curious in the world's most militarily aggressive country). I suppose we would have been executed for actually having one. But, as I say, the saving benefits of federal counsel had not yet reached Athens.

What did we do with these weapons? First, we didn't shoot each other, or anyone else. We weren't stupid. Stupidity properly comes with adolescence, and then is directed into drink and insane driving, as it should be.

A BB gun provides excellent training in marksmanship because you can see over the sights the little coppery pellet arching into the distance. It produces an eye for elevation and windage that shows up on the rifle ranges of Parris Island.

I remember afternoons of shooting cotton-mouths from the rusting iron bridge over the creek near the Valley Gin Company, no longer existent. (In the South, "gin" means a place that takes seeds out of cotton, instead of vodka made unpalatable by the addition of juniper juice.)

Further, we tried to shoot dragonflies that flitted in iridescent blues and greens among the swamp weeds, wings making a papery rustle. Usually we missed. These insects, known in varying locales as the Devil's darned needles, snake doctors, or 'skeeter hawks, are elusive.

Today they would be a protected species. Buying a BB gun would require proof of adulthood, capacity would be restricted by federal law to six BBs, the purchase of which would require registration and a waiting period. In 1957 Athens figured that BB guns

were none of the government's goddamned business. The concept has been forgotten.

However, regulation is not without reason. If you walk around the town square today, you will notice that perhaps just over half of the men are blind in at least one eye from BB wounds, as they roll about in wheel chairs because of feet lost to going barefoot.

My pooch at the time was Penny, an agreeable gal dog given to occasional promiscuity. This was only human of her. She was a cross between something and something else, as dogs should be. I do not like snooty purebred dogs who eat only at the finest restaurants and probably have psychiatrists.

At night Penny sometimes slept on the foot of my bed, common in those days. When she wanted to go out, she scratched at the door, and went. I don't know where she went. She was a grown dog, competent to manage her affairs. When she returned, she scratched, and came in. This did on two occasions result in new little dogs, but no system is perfect

Today she would require a license, vaccinations, enrolment in Obamacare, and an implanted chip so NSA could protect her from terrorists (always common in Athens). She would have to be constantly on a leash, like all other Americans, and Child Protective Services would carry my parents away for letting her sleep on my bed.

This would be for our own good. Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control show that between 1950 and 1960, 1.2 million Southern children died of dog poisoning. Further, unleashed dogs like Penny frequently killed and ate old people rocking on their porches. I didn't understand that when Penny licked my hand, she was checking for flavor.

Such was America, when it was America. It was a helluva country, warts and all, and Athens was a helluva childhood. These never will be again, but they were, and for those who knew them, it was enough. **CT**

Buying a BB gun would require proof of adulthood, capacity would be restricted by federal law to six BBs, the purchase of which would require registration and a waiting period

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***Fred Reed** lives in Mexico. He has worked for Army Times, The Washingtonian, Soldier of Fortune, Federal Computer Week, and The Washington Times. His web site is <http://fredoneverything.net>*

Ariel Sharon: War is Peace

David Edwards on war crimes, media cover-ups and the reincarnation of the former Israeli prime minister as a compassionate leader

In reviewing comparable crimes by the West and its official enemies, it is able to flick between perceiving virtue in 'our' criminality where only wickedness is found in 'theirs'

Readers will recall the famous perceptual illusion in which the brain switches between seeing a young girl and an image intended to represent an 'old crone'. The picture of course remains the same, but our minds flick between the two interpretations, unable to perceive both images at the same time.

The 'mainstream media' – that curious collection of elite-run, profit-maximising business interests sometimes known as 'the free press' – performs a similar perceptual trick. In reviewing comparable crimes by the West and its official enemies, it is able to flick between perceiving virtue in 'our' criminality where only wickedness is found in 'theirs'. Indeed, though 'our' crimes may be as bad, as cynical, or worse, 'their' crimes are consistently perceived as being far uglier.

Not that 'our' crimes are completely ignored. A *Sunday Times* editorial reviewed the life and career of former Israeli prime minister and general Ariel Sharon, who died on January 11:

'His Unit 101 slaughtered 69 civilians in the Jordanian town of Qibya in 1953 and as defence minister he was blamed for the massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps by Israel's Christian Phalange allies in 1982. He was forced to resign from his post.' (Leading article, 'The old warrior who turned to peace,' *Sunday Times*, January 12, 2014)

The *Sunday Times* described these as mere 'black marks', much as 9/11 and Halabja were 'black marks' against bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, perhaps. Otherwise, Sharon was one of Israel's 'great nation-builders', 'a military hero'; 'He leaves an important legacy.'

The 'black marks' were noted with minimal information, not even a rough idea of the number of victims at Sabra and Shatila. Up to 3,500 civilians were brutally massacred on September 16-17, 1982. Peter Hart of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting writes:

'An official Israeli investigation known as the Kahan Commission found that Sharon had personally decided to send right-wing Christian paramilitary forces, known as the Phalangist militias, into Palestinian refugee camps immediately after Palestinians had been (falsely) accused of assassinating the Lebanese President-elect Bachir Gemayel, a Phalangist leader. The fact "that the Phalangists were liable to commit atrocities... did not concern [Sharon] in the least," the Commission found.

'After the massacre began, Israel assisted the killing by firing flares over the camp to provide illumination for the Phalangists (*New York Times*, 9/26/82). Recently declassified Israeli documents (*New York Times*, 9/17/12) show that when US officials pressed Sharon to order the militias out of the camps, he retorted, "If you don't want the Lebanese

to kill them, we will kill them.”

The dead included infants, children, pregnant women and the elderly, some of whom had been raped and mutilated. As Hart indicates, the Israeli government investigation found that Sharon bore ‘personal responsibility’ for the atrocity.

According to Menachem Klein, a politics professor at Bar Ilan University, near Tel Aviv, Sharon’s founding of Unit 101, a ‘retribution squad’ in the 1950s and 1960s, set the pattern for modern Israeli military strategy named.

Israel-based journalist Jonathan Cook explains:

‘In Israel’s early years, Unit 101 carried out reprisals against Palestinian fighters across the armistice lines, in an attempt to deter future enemy raids into Israeli territory. In practice, however, the price was paid as much by civilians as fighters.’

Cook adds: ‘Today, Sharon’s military philosophy is reflected in the Israeli army’s *Dahiya* doctrine – its policy in recent confrontations to send Israel’s neighbours in Gaza and Lebanon “into the dark ages” through massive destruction of their physical infrastructure.’

An example was Sharon’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon, although it was not included among the *Sunday Times*’ ‘black marks’, nor even mentioned. In *The Nation*, Max Blumenthal describes the invasion, which cost the lives of 20,000 Lebanese and Palestinians, most of them civilians:

‘Sharon sent Israeli tanks rumbling towards Beirut without the approval of the rest of the cabinet, whom Sharon had deliberately deceived. Many of them were outraged, but it was too late to turn back.

‘Against fierce Palestinian resistance, one of the Middle East’s most vital and cosmopolitan cities was laid to ruin. Sharon’s forces flattened West Beirut with indiscriminate shelling, leaving streets strewn with unburied corpses. With each passing day, disease and famine spread at epidemic levels. In August, the day after the Israeli cabinet ac-

cepted US special envoy Philip Habib’s proposal for the evacuation of the PLO, Sharon’s forces bombarded Beirut for seven hours straight, leaving 300 dead, most of them civilians. The Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmmerling wrote that the raid “resembled the attack on Dresden by the Allies toward the end of World War II.”

For the *Sunday Telegraph*, these horrors were ‘controversial methods’ to ‘secure his country’s future’. And anyway, Sharon ‘ended his career with a more complex image, as a tough-minded statesman searching for peace. His example offers hope’. Apparently with a straight face, the editors concluded: ‘as Ariel Sharon’s career showed, peace through dialogue is possible’.

For the *Times*, Sharon’s military record was ‘marked by two shocking episodes’. Again, just the two black marks: the massacres in Qibya, and Sabra and Shatila, which were ‘the harsh aspects of Sharon’s career’. He was ‘uncompromising and divisive’, but the *Times* concluded:

‘Though an unlikely harbinger of peace and negotiation, that, finally, is what he was.’ (Leading article, ‘Warrior Statesman; Sharon’s military and political record was uncompromising and divisive; yet he was finally an unlikely advocate of peace and negotiation,’ January 13, 2014, the *Times*)

The *Independent on Sunday* published an article entitled, ‘Ariel Sharon: A hawk who might just have liberated the Palestinians.’

Middle East peace envoy, Tony Blair, said: ‘His strategic objective never wavered. The state... had to be protected for future generations. When that meant fighting, he fought. When that meant making peace, he sought peace with the same iron determination.’

Peter Hart reports numerous, similarly ‘hollow’ attempts to ‘portray Sharon as a peacemaker’ in the US media.

The *Guardian* refused to unreservedly damn Sharon as it reflexively does official enemies such as Milosevic, Saddam Hussein, Gaddafi and Assad.

Senior *Guardian* commentator Jonathan

The Israeli government investigation found that Sharon bore ‘personal responsibility’ for the atrocity

BUTCHER OF BEIRUT / 1

“I have never come across a single scintilla of evidence to support the notion of Sharon as a man of peace”

Freedland opined that Sharon ‘was silenced by a stroke that left him lodged in the limbo between life and death. That state of ambiguity was strangely fitting for a figure who, after decades painted as either black or white – reviled by his enemies as the “butcher of Beirut”, loved by his admirers as “Arik, King of Israel” – ended his life an unexpected shade of grey’.

The *Guardian* editors wrote that it was ‘tantalsing to speculate that the illness of a man who had spent so much of his life at war may have robbed the region of its greatest chance for peace’. They added:

‘There may be nostalgia for his decisiveness and strength, and we may applaud the withdrawal from Gaza, but we cannot cheer his role in creating the settlements, or his long-held belief that the fight against “terror” can be waged only with bullets and bombs.’

The reality is far uglier than either article suggests. Writing for the *American Conservative*, Scott McConnell argues that Sharon actually sought to provoke ‘terror’:

‘There is reason to believe that Sharon felt that provoking the Palestinians to violence could be of strategic benefit for Israel...

‘I’ve heard other Israeli politicians argue in this vein, implying that they would actually welcome Palestinian violence, because militarily Israel is far stronger and can damage Palestinian society far more in the context of war than peace.’

Noam Chomsky concurs:

‘There is a long history of Israel provocations to deter the threat of diplomacy... The effort to delay political accommodation has always made perfect sense... It is hard to think of another way to take over land where you are not wanted.’ (See our Media Alert: ‘The BBC, Impartiality, And The Hidden Logic Of Massacre,’ February 4, 2009)

Thus, Permanent War has facilitated a key aspect of Sharon’s legacy, the relentless spread of illegal settlements. Blumenthal describes Sharon as ‘the visionary behind the settlements’. Sharon told Winston

Churchill’s grandson:

‘We’ll make a pastrami sandwich out of them. We’ll insert a strip of Jewish settlements in between the Palestinians, and then another strip of Jewish settlements right across the West Bank, so that in twenty-five years’ time, neither the United Nations nor the United States, nobody, will be able to tear it apart.’

Writing for The Jerusalem Fund, Yousef notes that Sharon ‘presided over the single largest period of expansion in the Israeli settler population, some 75,000, since the Menachem Begin era’. This, indeed, makes it hard to portray Sharon as a man of peace.

Avi Shlaim, Emeritus Professor of International Relations at Oxford University, a leading scholar on the Israeli-Arab conflict, comments:

‘President George W. Bush famously called Sharon a man of peace. Sharon was nothing of the sort. He was a man of war through and through, and he called his autobiography “Warrior, not Diplomat”. His approach to diplomacy reversed Clausewitz’s dictum; for Sharon, diplomacy was the pursuit of war by other means. For the last 40 years, the Arab-Israeli conflict has been my main research interest, and I can honestly say that I have never come across a single scintilla of evidence to support the notion of Sharon as a man of peace.’

Chomsky takes a similar view:

‘Well, you know, there is a convention that you’re not supposed to speak ill of the recently dead, which unfortunately imposes a kind of vow of silence because there’s nothing else to say – there’s nothing good to say... He was a brutal killer. He had one fixed idea in mind, which drove him all his life: a greater Israel, as powerful as possible, as few Palestinians as possible – they should somehow disappear – and an Israel which could be powerful enough to dominate the region. The Lebanon War then, which was his worst crime, also had a goal of imposing a client state in Lebanon, a Maronite client state. And these were the driving forces of

his life.

'The idea that the Gaza evacuation was a controversial step for peace is almost farcical. By 2005, Gaza had been devastated, and he played a large role in that. The Israeli hawks could understand easily that it made no sense to keep a few thousand Israeli settlers in Gaza using a very large percentage of its land and scarce water with a huge IDF, Israeli army, contingent to protect them. What made more sense was to take them out and place them in the West Bank or the Golan Heights – illegal... The farce was a successful public relations effort.'

The withdrawal from Gaza was not about peace-making. As Max Blumenthal notes, it was about 'setting the stage for a high-tech siege of that occupied coastal territory.'

Chomsky concludes of Sharon:

'But his career is one of unremitting brutality, dedication to the fixed idea of his life. He doubtless showed courage and commitment to pursuing this ideal, which is an ugly and horrific one.'

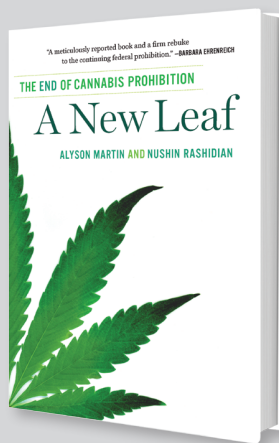
Thus, where comparable crimes by the

West's enemies elicit outrage and bitter condemnation, the crimes of a leading ally are whitewashed as 'harsh', 'controversial', mere 'black marks' against an otherwise 'pragmatic' and honourable nationalist serving his people. Though the facts demand a sceptical interpretation of the 'almost farcical' move in the direction of 'peace', the 'mainstream' finds overwhelming evidence of benevolent intent. Language magically transforms the 'crone' of 'unremitting brutality' into the lovely aspect of compassion. War is peace!

For people with eyes to see – notably, people without a career in journalism to jeopardise – it could hardly be more obvious that the 'free press' functions as an arm of state propaganda. The public mind is under constant attack by a vast illusion machine bending reason and reversing truth to present the interests of a tiny, ruthless elite as 'the national interest'.

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*David Edwards is the co-editor of
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<http://medialens.org>*

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The whitewashing of Ariel Sharon

He was a war criminal, not a hero, writes **Ramzy Baroud**

CNN's Duke appeared to be confronting Sharon's past head on. In reality, he cleverly whitewashed the man's horrendous crimes, while finding every opportunity to recount his fictional virtue

The death of former Israeli leader Ariel Sharon enlivened US media's interest in the legacy of a man considered by many a war criminal, and by some a hero. In fact, the supposed heroism of Sharon was at the heart of CNN coverage of his death on January 11.

Sharon spent the last eight years prior to his death in a coma, but apparently not long enough for US corporate media to wake up from its own moral coma. CNN online's coverage presented Sharon as a man of heroic stature, who was forced to make tough choices for the sake of his own people. "Throughout, he was called 'The Bulldozer,' a fearless leader who got things done," wrote Alan Duke.

In his article, "Ariel Sharon, former Israeli Prime Minister, dead at 85", Duke appeared to be confronting Sharon's past head on. In reality, he cleverly whitewashed the man's horrendous crimes, while finding every opportunity to recount his fictional virtue. "Many in the Arab world called Sharon 'the Butcher of Beirut' after he oversaw Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon while serving as defense minister," Duke wrote.

Nevertheless, Sharon was not called the 'The Bulldozer' for being 'a fearless leader' nor do Arabs call him 'the Butcher of Beirut' for simply 'overseeing' the invasion of Lebanon. Duke is either ignorant or oblivious to the facts, but the blame is not his alone, since references to Sharon's heroism was a

staple in CNN's coverage.

Sharon's demise, however, and the flood of robust eulogies will neither change the facts of his blood-soaked history, nor erase the 'facts on the ground' – as in the many illegal colonies that Sharon has so dedicatedly erected on occupied Palestinian land.

Following the Israeli occupation of Gaza along with the rest of Palestine in 1967, Sharon was entrusted with the bloody task of "pacifying" the headstrong Strip as he was the head of the southern command of the Israel Defense Forces. Sharon was dubbed the "Bulldozer" for he understood that pacifying Gaza would require heavy armored vehicles, and Gaza's crowded neighborhoods and alleyways weaving through its destitute refugee camps were not suited for heavy machinery.

Therefore, he resolved to bulldoze thousands of homes, preparing the way for tanks and bulldozers to move in and topple even more homes. Modest estimates put the number of homes destroyed in August 1970 alone at 2,000.

Over 16,000 Palestinians were made homeless and thousands were forced to relocate from one refugee camp into another. The Beach Refugee Camp near Gaza City sustained most of the damage. Many fled for their lives, taking refuge in mosques and UN schools and tents. Sharon's declared objective was targeting the terrorist infrastruc-

ture. What he in fact meant was targeting the very population that resisted and aided the resistance, for they indeed were the very infrastructure he harshly pounded for many days and weeks. Sharon's bloody sweep also resulted in the execution of 104 resistance fighters and the deportation of hundreds of others. Some were sent to Jordan, others to Lebanon, and the rest were simply left to rot in the Sinai desert.

But Sharon's violence was part of an equally disturbing logic. He believed that any strategic long term plan to secure Israel must have at its heart a violent campaign aimed at disorienting Palestinians. He was quick to capitalize on the Allon plan, named after Yigal Allon, a former general and minister in the Israeli government, who took on the task of drawing an Israeli vision for the newly conquered Palestinian territories.

Sharon recounts standing on a dune near Gaza with cabinet ministers, explaining that along with military measures to control the Strip, he wanted 'fingers' of settlements separating its cities, chopping the region in four. Another 'finger' would thrust through the edge of Sinai, helping create a 'Jewish buffer zone between Gaza and Sinai to cut off the flow of weapons' and divide the two regions in case the rest of Sinai was ever returned to Egypt. That legacy disfigured and isolated Gaza, even years after Sharon implemented his policy of unilateral 'disengagement' in 2005. He relocated the settlers to other illegal colonies in the West Bank and imposed a hermetic siege on the Strip, the consequences of which remain suffocating and deadly.

Sharon was keen on espousing or exploiting on the division of his enemies. He moved against Lebanon in 1982, when the country was at its weakest point, exhausted by division and civil war. And when Israeli forces finally occupied Lebanon in 1982, as PLO fighters were shipped by sea to many countries around the Middle East, a triumphant Sharon permitted his Christian Phalangist allies to enter the defenseless Sabra and

refugee camps.

In the days between September 16-18, 1982, as Israeli troops completely besieged the camps, the Phalangists entered the area and carried out a massacre that gruesomely defined both the Lebanese civil war and the Israeli invasion, killing thousands of Palestinian refugees, mostly butchered with knives, but also gunned down.

Although partly discredited after his disastrous war in Lebanon, Israeli voters brought him back repeatedly, to lead the rightwing Likud party in May 1999 and as a prime minister of Israel in Feb. 2011. The aim was to subdue rebelling Palestinians during the Second Intifada. In fact, it was Sharon's provocative 'visit' to one of Islam's holiest shrines a few months earlier that sparked anger among Palestinians and, among other factors, started the uprising.

Sharon attempted to crush the uprising with the support and blessings of the US, but he failed. By the end of August 2001, 495 Palestinians and 154 Israelis were killed. International attempts at sending UN observer forces were thwarted by a US veto on March 27, thus paving the way for the Israeli army to thrash its way into Palestinian refugee camps and other areas formerly controlled by the Palestinian Authority.

In March and April 2002, Sharon ordered Operation 'Defensive Wall', which resulted in major military incursions into most West Bank cities, causing massive destruction and unprecedented bloodletting. The Israeli operation led to the killing of hundreds of Palestinians, the reoccupation of major Palestinian towns, the destruction of Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah, and the subsequent besiegement of the Palestinian leader in his barely standing office.

Sharon was no hero. It is time for US media to wake up from its own coma, and confront reality through commonsense and the most basic human rights values. It should not be looking through the prism of the most rightwing, if not fascist, elements of Israeli society. **CT**

Sharon believed that any strategic long term plan to secure Israel must have at its heart a violent campaign aimed at disorienting Palestinians

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Ramzy Baroud is an internationally-syndicated columnist, a media consultant and the editor of *PalestineChronicle.com*. His latest book is "My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story" (Pluto Press, London)

The imperator

Uri Avnery recalls Sharon and his catastrophic legacy

Sharon was an insubordinate officer, who despised his superiors and his peers

In the middle of the 70s, Ariel Sharon asked me to arrange something for him – a meeting with Yasser Arafat.

A few days before, the Israeli media had discovered that I was in regular contact with the leadership of the PLO, which was listed at the time as a terrorist organization.

I told Sharon that my PLO contacts would probably ask what he intended to propose to the Palestinians. He told me that his plan was to help the Palestinians to overthrow the Jordanian monarchy, and turn Jordan into a Palestinian state, with Arafat as its president.

“What about the West Bank?” I asked.

“Once Jordan becomes Palestine, there will no longer be a conflict between two peoples, but between two states. That will be much easier to resolve. We shall find some form of partition, territorial or functional, or we shall rule the territory together.”

My friends submitted the request to Arafat, who laughed it off. But he did not miss the opportunity to tell King Hussein about it. Hussein disclosed the story to a Kuwaiti newspaper, *Alrai*, and that’s how it came back to me.

Sharon’s plan was revolutionary at the time. Almost the entire Israeli establishment – including Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Defense Minister Shimon Peres – believed in the so-called “Jordanian option”: the idea that we must make peace with King Hussein. The Palestinians were either ignored or con-

sidered arch-enemies, or both.

Five years earlier, when the Palestinians in Jordan were battling the Hashemite regime there, Israel came to the aid of the king at the request of Henry Kissinger. I proposed the opposite in my magazine: to aid the Palestinians. Sharon later told me that he, a general at the time, had asked the General Staff to do the same, though for a different end. My idea was to create a Palestinian state in the West Bank, his was to create it in the East Bank.

(The idea of turning Jordan into Palestine has a generally unknown linguistic background. In Hebrew usage, “Eretz Israel” is the land on both sides of the Jordan River, where the ancient Hebrew tribes settled according to the Biblical myth. In Palestinian usage, “Filastin” is only the land on the West side of the river. Therefore is quite natural for ignorant Israelis to ask the Palestinians to set up their state beyond the Jordan. For Palestinians, that means setting up their state abroad.)

At the time, Sharon was in political exile. In 1973 he left the army, after realizing that he had no chance of becoming Chief of Staff. This may seem odd, since he was already recognized as an outstanding battlefield commander. The trouble was that he was also known as an insubordinate officer, who despised his superiors and his peers (as well as everybody else.) Also, his relationship with the truth was problematical. David Ben-

Gurion wrote in his diary that Sharon could be an exemplary military officer, if only he could abstain from lying.

When he left the army, Sharon almost single-handedly created the Likud by unifying all the right-wing parties. That's when I chose him the first time as *Haolam Hazeh's* Man of the Year and wrote a large biographical article about him. A few days later, the Yom Kippur War broke out, and Sharon was drafted back into the army. His part in it is considered by many as pure genius, by others as a story of insubordination and luck. A photo of him with his head bandaged became his trademark, though it was only a slight wound caused by hitting his head on his command vehicle. (To be fair, he was really wounded in battle, like me, in 1948.)

After the Yom Kippur war, the argument about his part in that war became the center of "the battle of the generals". He started to visit me at my home to explain his moves, and we became quite friendly.

He left the Likud when he realized that he could not become its leader as long as Menachem Begin was around. He started to chart his own course. That's when he asked for the meeting with Arafat.

He was thinking about creating a new party, neither right nor left, but led by him and "outstanding personalities" from all over the political landscape. He invited me to join, and we had long conversations at his home.

I must explain here that for a long time I had been looking for a person with military credentials to lead a large united peace camp. A leader with such a background would make it much easier for us to gain public support for our aims. Sharon fitted the recipe. (As Yitzhak Rabin did later.) Yet during our conversations it became clear to me that he had basically remained a right-winger.

In the end Sharon set up a new party called Shlomtzion ("Peace of Zion"), which was a dismal failure on election day. The next day, he rejoined the Likud.

The Likud had won the elections and Begin became Prime Minister. If Sharon had hoped to be appointed Minister of Defense, he was soon disabused. Begin did not trust him. Sharon looked like a general who might organize a coup. The powerful new Finance Minister said that if Sharon became commander-in-chief, he would "send his tanks to surround the Knesset."

(There was a joke making the rounds at the time: Defense Minister Sharon would call for a meeting of the General Staff and announce: "Comrades, tomorrow morning at 06.00 we take over the government!" For a moment the audience was dumfounded, and then it broke out into riotous laughter.)

However, when Begin's preferred Defense Minister, the former Air Force chief Ezer Weizman, resigned, Begin was compelled to appoint Sharon as his successor. For the second time I chose Sharon as *Haolam Hazeh's* Man of the Year. He took this very seriously and sat with me for many hours, in several meetings at his home and office, in order to explain his ideas.

One of them, which he expounded at the same time to the US strategic planners, was to conquer Iran. When Ayatollah Khomeini dies, he said, there will begin a race between the Soviet Union and the US to determine who will arrive first on the scene and take over. The US is far away, but Israel can do the job. With the help of heavy arms that the US will store in Israel well before, our army will be in full possession before the Soviets move. He showed me the detailed maps of the advance, hour by hour and day by day.

This was typical Sharon, His vision was wide and all-embracing. His listener was left breathless, comparing him to the ordinary little politicians, devoid of vision and breadth. But his ideas were generally based on abysmal ignorance of the other side, and therefore came to naught.

At the same time, nine months before the Lebanon War, he disclosed to me his Grand Plan for a new Middle East of his making. He allowed me to publish it, provided I did not

His vision was wide and all-embracing. His listener was left breathless, comparing him to the ordinary little politicians, devoid of vision and breadth. But his ideas were generally based on abysmal ignorance

BUTCHER OF BEIRUT / 3

In order to induce the Palestinians to flee, Sharon let the barbarous Christian Phalangists into the Palestinian refugee camps Sabra and Shatila, where they committed a terrible massacre

mention him as the source. He trusted me.

Basically it was the same as the one he wanted to propose to Arafat.

The army would invade Lebanon and drive the Palestinians from there to Syria, from whence the Syrians would drive them into Jordan. There the Palestinians would overthrow the king and establish the State of Palestine.

The army would also drive the Syrians out of Lebanon. In Lebanon Sharon would choose a Christian officer and install him as dictator. Lebanon would make official peace with Israel and in effect become a vassal state.

I duly published all this, and nine months later Sharon invaded Lebanon, after lying to Begin and the cabinet about his aims. But the war was a catastrophe, both militarily and politically.

Militarily it was a demonstration of “the Peter principle” – the brilliant battle commander was a miserable strategist. No unit of the Israeli army reached its objective on time, if at all. The Israeli-installed dictator, Bachir Gemayel, was assassinated. His brother and successor signed a peace treaty with Israel, which has been completely forgotten by now. The Syrians remained in Lebanon for many years to come. The Israeli army extricated itself after a guerrilla war that lasted 18 full years, during which the despised and downtrodden Shiites in Israeli-occupied South Lebanon became the dominant political force in the country.

And, worst of all, in order to induce the Palestinians to flee, Sharon let the barbarous Christian Phalangists into the Palestinian refugee camps Sabra and Shatila, where they committed a terrible massacre. Hundreds of thousands of outraged Israelis protested in Tel Aviv, and Sharon was dismissed from the defense ministry.

At the height of the Battle of Beirut I crossed the lines and met with Yasser Arafat, who had become Sharon’s Nemesis. Since then, Sharon and I did not exchange a single

word, not even greeting each other.

It looked like the end of Sharon’s career. But for Sharon, every end was a new beginning.

One of his media vassals, Uri Dan (who had started his career in Haolam Hazeh) once coined a prophetic phrase: “Those who don’t want him as Chief of Staff, will get him as Minister of Defense. Those who don’t want him as Minister of Defense, will get him as Prime Minister.” Today one could add: “Those who did not want him as Prime Minister, are getting him as a national icon.”

An ex-general, Yitzhak Ben-Israel, told me yesterday: “He was an Emperor!” I find this a very apt description.

Like a Roman emperor, Sharon was a supreme being, admired and feared, generous and cruel, genial and treacherous, hedonistic and corrupt, a victorious general and a war criminal, quick to make decisions and unwavering once he had made them, overcoming all obstacles by sheer force of personality.

One could not meet him without being struck by the sense of power he emanated. Power was his element.

He believed that destiny had chosen him to lead Israel. He did not think so – he knew. For him, his personal career and the fate of Israel were one and the same. Therefore, anyone who tried to block him was a traitor to Israel. He despised everyone around him – from Begin down to the last politician and general.

His character was formed in his early childhood in Kfar Malal, a communal village which belonged to the Labor party. His mother, Vera, managed the family farm with an iron will, quarreling with all the neighbors, the village institutions and the party. When little Arik was injured in a fall on a pitchfork, she did not take him to the village clinic, which she hated, but put him on a donkey and led him for several kilometers to a doctor in Kfar Saba.

When rumor had it that the Arabs in neighboring villages were planning an at-

tack, little Arik was hidden in a haystack.

Later in life, when his mother (who still managed the farm) visited his new ranch and saw a low wall with holes for irrigation, she exclaimed: “Ah, you have embrasures! Very good, you can shoot through them at the Arabs!”

How could a poor army officer acquire the largest ranch in the country? Simple: he got it as a gift from an Israeli-American billionaire, with the help of the finance minister. Several dubious large deals with other billionaires followed.

Sharon was the most typical Israeli one could imagine, embodying the saying (to which I modestly claim authorship): “If force does not work, try more force.”

I was therefore very surprised when he came out in favor of the law dispensing with the military service of tens of thousands of orthodox youngsters. “How can you?” I asked him. His answer: “I am first of all a Jew, and only after that an Israeli!” I told him that for me it was the other way round.

Ideologically, he was the pupil and successor of David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Dayan, leaders who believed in military force and in expanding the territory of Israel without limit. His military career started for real in the 1950s when Moshe Dayan put him in charge of an unofficial outfit called Unit 101, which was sent across the border to kill and destroy, in retaliation for similar actions committed by Arabs. His most famous exploit was the massacre of Qibya village in 1953, when 49 innocent villagers were buried under the houses which he blew up.

Later, when requested to put an end to “terrorism” in Gaza, he killed every Arab who was caught with arms. When I later asked him about killing prisoners, he answered: “I did not kill prisoners. I did not take prisoners!”

At the beginning of his career as commander he was a bad general. But from war to war he improved. Unusual for a general, he learned from his mistakes. In the 1973 war he was already considered the equal of Erwin

Rommel and George Patton. It also became known that between the battles he gorged himself on seafood, which is not kosher.

The main endeavor of his life was the settlement enterprise. As army officer, politician and successively chief of half a dozen different ministries, his central effort was always to plan and set up settlements in the occupied territories.

He did not care whether they were legal or illegal under Israeli law (all of them, of course, are illegal under international law, for which he did not give a damn).

He planned their location, with the aim of cutting the West Bank into ribbons which would make a Palestinian state impossible. Then he rammed it through the cabinet and the ministries. Not for nothing was he nicknamed “the Bulldozer”.

The “Israel Defense Army” (its official Hebrew name) turned into the “Settlers Defense Army”, sinking slowly in the morass of the occupation.

However, when settlements obstructed his plans, he had no compunction about destroying them. When he was in favor of peace with Egypt, in order to concentrate on the war with the Palestinians, he destroyed the entire town of Yamit in North Sinai and the adjacent settlements. Later he did the same to the settlements in the Gaza Strip, attracting the enduring hatred of the settlers, his erstwhile proteges. He acted like a general who is ready to sacrifice a brigade to improve his overall strategic position.

When he died last month, after lying in a coma for eight years, he was eulogized by the very people he despised, and turned into a shallow folk hero. The Ministry of Education compared him to Moses.

In real life he was a very complex person, as complex as Israel. His personal history is interwoven with the history of Israel.

His main legacy was catastrophic: the scores of settlements which he implanted all over the West Bank – each of them a landmine which will have to be removed at great risk when the time comes. **CT**

The main endeavor of his life was the settlement enterprise. He did not care whether they were legal or illegal under Israeli law (all of them, of course, are illegal under international law, for which he did not give a damn)

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Uri Avnery is an Israeli writer and founder of the Gush Shalom peace movement

A Nobel Prize for Nonsense

Like most Western leaders, British PM David Cameron feels a need to kiss Zionism's backside, says **Alan Hart**

"Sharon's true goal was never to end the occupation but to reinforce it under new parameters"

Until recently I thought Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu had no rivals in the business of talking propaganda nonsense (Israel's Jews in danger of annihilation etcetera, etcetera, etcetera). But if there was a Nobel Prize for talking nonsense it does now seem that there would be a number of contenders.

At the top of my list of them would be British Prime Minister David Cameron. In paying tribute to Sharon he praised him for his "brave and controversial decisions in pursuit of peace."

In an article for the *Nation* under the headline How Ariel Sharon Shaped Israel's Destiny, and which contains chilling quotes from some of Sharon's closest advisers about the need "to kill and kill and kill the animals" (the Palestinians), Max Blumenthal wrote that "Sharon's true goal was never to end the occupation but to reinforce it under new parameters." That's my judgment, too.

For Sharon, withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was nothing more than a contribution to defusing the demographic time bomb of occupation after his failure in 1982 to make Zionism's dream come true by delivering the Jordan Option, Zionism's preferred solution to the problem of what to do about the Palestinians.

When in the summer of that year Sharon ordered the invasion of Lebanon all

the way to Beirut, exterminating the entire PLO leadership and destroying the organization's infrastructure was only phase one of his two-stage strategy. Phase two was to have been de-stabilizing Jordan, getting rid of the Hashemite monarchy and then saying to the Palestinians of the occupied West Bank: "Of course you must have a state of your own. There it is, across the Jordan, go to it." Sharon's advance planning for phase two included recruiting and assembling Palestinian collaborators who were to be flown to Amman by Israeli helicopters within minutes of King Hussein abdicating and fleeing, to declare themselves the provisional government of Palestine.

Some years later I asked King Hussein if he had been aware of what Sharon was intending to make happen in Jordan if he had achieved his phase one objectives in Lebanon. The King said he was not only aware of Sharon's intentions at the time but, also, that the Gulf Arab leaders had effectively given him a green light. It was in the form of a message from them, agreed at a secret meeting, to President Reagan. The message was to the effect that when Sharon invaded Lebanon, the Gulf States would make no trouble for the US and Israel.

It was after that secret meeting to agree the message to Reagan that Oman's Sultan Qaboos said to Arafat (as I have previously reported): "When Sharon makes his move

you will ask for our help and it will not be coming. Be careful.”)

Though he was unable to empty Greater Israel of its Palestinians by creating a state for them in Jordan, Sharon did more than most if not all other Israeli leaders to make peace based on an acceptable amount of justice for the Palestinians impossible (unless an American president is prepared to insist that Israel ends its occupation of the West Bank).

The question provoked in my mind by Cameron’s tribute to Sharon was this. Did he praise Sharon’s “pursuit of peace” because he is ignorant of Sharon’s record, described by Blumenthal as a “bloody career that spanned decades, destroyed entire cities and presided over the killing of countless civilians”; or was it because like most if not all Western leaders Cameron feels the need from time to time to kiss Zionism’s backside?

I suspect the later and when he takes his face away from it (Zionism’s backside), I suggest that he reads, in the Guardian’s Comment Is Free space, Avi Shlaim’s conclusions about Sharon’s enduring legacy. It

has been, Shlaim wrote, “to empower and embolden some of the most racist, xenophobic, expansionist and intransigent elements in Israel’s dysfunctional political system.”

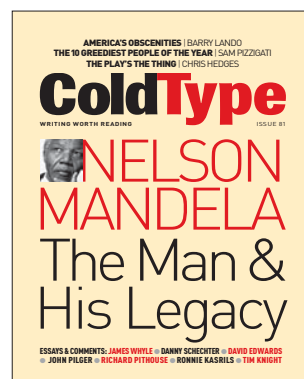
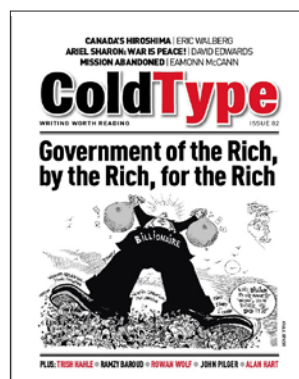
Footnote

One interesting thing very few people know about Sharon is that he was opposed to Israel developing and possessing nuclear weapons. His argued that Israel had military superiority over the Arabs with conventional weapons and better motivated manpower and could maintain that superiority; but if Israel acquired nuclear weapons there might come a day when the Arabs had them, too. In that event Israel would no longer be free to impose its will on the Arabs. **CT**

.....
Alan Hart has been engaged with events in the Middle East and their global consequences and terrifying implications – the possibility of a Clash of Civilisations, Judeo-Christian v Islamic, and, along the way, another great turning against the Jews – for nearly 40 years. His web site is <http://www.alanhart.net>

Sharon did more than most if not all other Israeli leaders to make peace based on an acceptable amount of justice for the Palestinians impossible

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Israel, Palestine, Pinochet and a soccer jersey

Dave Zirin on the bizarre battle over a Chilean soccer team's logo

There is no country in the Western world with a closer connection to the Palestinian territories than Chile

A new sports uniform has been accused of “fomenting terrorism” as well as inspiring “violence and hatred” and no it’s not the Knicks hateful new bright orange duds. The accused team is a Chilean soccer club called Palestino (Club Deportivo Palestino,) and their offense was incorporating an image of historic Palestine on their jerseys.

The controversy is, on the face, bizarre. The Seattle Seahawks have a picture of a bird on their helmets. The Denver Broncos have a horse. Of course Palestino, an esteemed first division club that has been around for almost a century, would picture Palestine. But, alas, in this day and age when Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are divided by a crisscross of concrete barriers, barbed wire fences, and armed check points, the vision of an undivided country provokes rage amongst those who have a vested interest in walls.

To understand the controversy engulfing the Santiago-based soccer club, it is first worth knowing that there is no country in the Western world with a closer connection to the Palestinian territories than Chile. With over half a million residents of Palestinian origin, Chile was the primary destination for those fleeing the Middle East both before and during the wars that surrounded the founding of the state of Israel in 1948.

In 1920, Palestinian émigrés started a

soccer club to rally around called Palestino. (The club’s creation in 1920 is a rather inconvenient truth for a segment of Israeli hardliners who claim that a Palestinian identity did not exist until decades after Israel’s founding.)

Over the decades, Palestino has represented the Palestinian colors, held moments of silence during periods when the Gaza Strip was being bombed, and engaged in numerous charitable efforts to alleviate the suffering of refugees.

It is a team that has consciously positioned themselves over the years as a symbol of historic remembrance. In line with this history, they changed the number 1 on their uniforms to look like the shape of historic Palestine and the uniting of the Israel and the Palestinian territories.

It is for this that the team was charged by the Simon Wiesenthal Center with “fomenting terrorist intent”. Gabriel Zaliasnik, the former president of the Chilean Jewish Organization, said that the shirt incites “violence and hatred” and has pledged go to FIFA to get them banned.

In response, the most well known of Chilean soccer stars of Palestinian origin, Roberto Bishara replied, “I hope they [leaders of the Chilean Jewish community] don’t go to FIFA because this is a question of football. So I wish that instead of worrying about a jersey, they worried about the children that

die day after day in Palestine.”

Bishara is not alone. Many Chilean players of Palestinian origin have played for the Palestinian national team and are taking this opportunity to come forward and speak about why the shirts are not only appropriate but also admirable.

Former coach of the Palestinian National Team, Nicola Hadwa Shahwan had a letter published in the Chilean daily *La Tercera*. People should read the impassioned piece in its entirety. In part, it reads,

“The gesture of Club Deportivo Palestino putting on its shirt the map of the country from which they come, and whose colors they defend, can only annoy those who want to appropriate the territory by force, without respecting the freedom of the people. Peace must be based on justice... Sports, arts, culture and science are not oblivious to the reality of the people; on the contrary, they are the expression of the feelings and historical experiences of them. Therefore, Club Deportivo Palestino interprets the most sensitive feelings of the Palestinians and all who raise the banner of justice, peace and freedom... I give my sincere congratulations and support to the club’s leadership and call sports fans to support this noble initiative.”

There is another aspect to this as well, revealed to me by a Chilean colleague of Palestinian origin who asked to be referred to only as Hector. Hector said to me that sympathies to Chile’s Israeli community would be less than robust. He pointed out that the country’s dictator Augusto Pinochet,

who ruled Chile with an iron fist from 1973-1990, bought military hardware from Israel for years, even when much of the world, particularly the Carter Administration, would not sell the dictatorship weaponry and had deemed Pinochet a pariah due to his egregious human rights violations. Hector said to me, “Pinochet left power twenty years ago but his imprint is still strong. We remember who was on our side and who wasn’t. There were Jews in Chile who heroically fought the General (Pinochet) and Jews who supported him. There were also Palestinians who fought the General and also many who supported him. But there was never a question about what side Israel was on. I can’t be offended by a jersey. I’m more offended by that history.”

This is really less a fight about shirts than about memory. It is about the memory of who stood and who did not stand with Chile in their darkest moments. It is also about an aspiration among masses of Palestinian-Chileans that is not rooted in hate but in the dream that a land defined by walls could be one united country with equal rights for all. The question is less about the appropriateness of a shirt and more about why anyone would find that idea threatening.

[Thank you to Nation intern Dustin Christiansen for translating several interviews for this piece.] **CT**

Dave Zirin is the author of the forthcoming book “Brazil’s Dance with the Devil” (Haymarket)

This is really less a fight about shirts than about memory. It is about the memory of who stood and who did not stand with Chile in their darkest moments

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POSTER POWER

Right:
For the match
against
Thamesmead Town
the designer adapts
a poster for Stanley
Kubrick's movie
A Clockwork Orange

Far right:
Rosie the Riveter
makes a special
appearance
for the Lewes
ladies' team
against
Luton Town



Just champion!

Lewes FC turns matchday posters into works of art

When asked how he rated himself in the British managerial ranks, the late soccer boss Brian Clough famously replied, "I wouldn't say I was the best manager in the business. But I'm in the top one."

Similar sentiments could be expressed about the ranking of the matchday posters for Lewes FC, which plays in non-league English soccer: The team is not among the best in the country. But its posters are in the top one.

Lewes – which has been based at its quaintly-named Dripping Pan ground since 1885 – plays at the lower levels of English soccer in the Ryman Premier League, and is owned by its fans, more than 900 of whom pay £30 a year for a share and vote in the running of the club.

The posters, the brainchild of director Charlie



Dobres, draw on influences as diverse as Soviet-era artwork, film posters, historical works of art and record covers, and were devised to help the South Coast club in its quest to return to its community roots. Seems to be working – attendances have 'soared' from an average of 433 to 600 since the posters were introduced a couple of seasons ago.

While the club is no closer to challenging the might of Manchester City, Arsenal, Chelsea and other moneybags megateams of English soccer, their posters are reaching a wide-reaching audience, being sold to admiring customers all around the world. Brian Clough would definitely approve.

– Tony Sutton

● If you'd like to buy a Lewes FC matchday poster, visit <http://lewesfc.com>

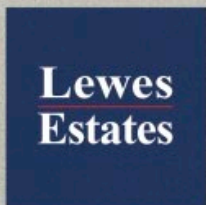
RYMAN PREMIER LEAGUE
LEWES
V
MET POLICE

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Left:
Banksy's famous image of kissing policemen provides a striking poster for Lewes's battle against London's Metropolitan Police.
(The original artwork was spray-painted onto a wall of the Prince Albert pub in neighbouring Brighton. It was later removed and shipped off to be sold in New York)

POSTER POWER

Lewes FC is not among the best in the country.
But its posters are in the top one

Left:

The graphic style of the old Roy of the Rovers comic strip, first seen in 1974 in the British *Tiger* magazine, is revived for the game against Avely

Right: Smart spoof of the movie poster for *Apocalypse Now* is used for the team's final game of the season

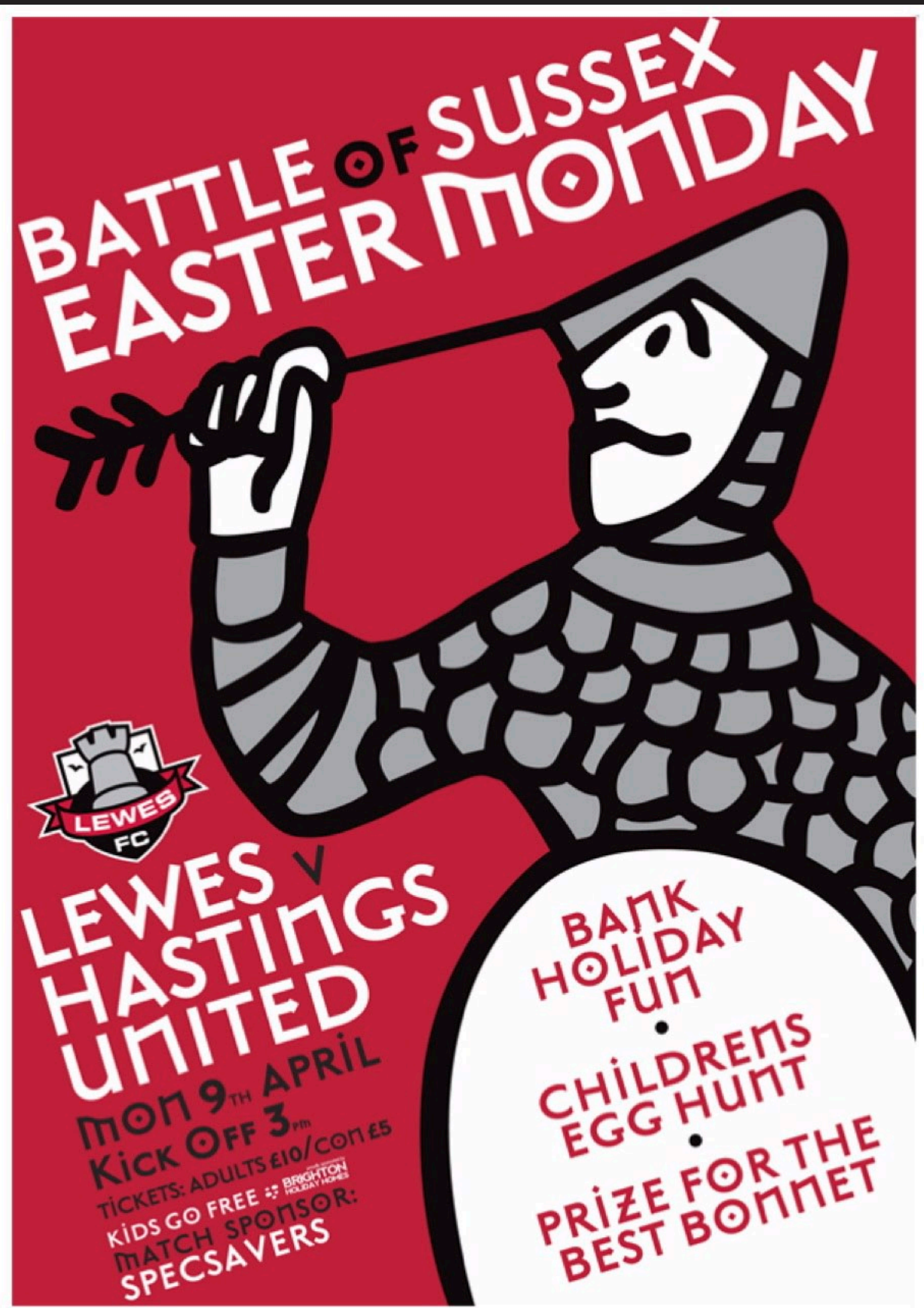
Below, left: Tribute to the sponsoring brewer after the end of recent floods that swept Britain's south coast

Below, right: The final words of King George V were supposedly "Bugger Bognor." So it seems fitting to remind fans of that sentiment for the visit of Bognor Regis Town to the Dripping Pan



POSTER POWER

Left:
The Battle of
Hastings, where
King Harold was
defeated by the
invading Norman
forces, is
remembered
for the poster issued
for the clash
between Lewes
and local South
Coast rivals
Hastings United



Government of the rich, by the rich, for the rich

It's time for 'militant non-violent resistance', writes **John W. Whitehead**

The laws which apply to the majority of the population allow the government to do things like sending SWAT teams crashing through your door in the middle of the night, rectally probing y

"[Everywhere, "time is winding up," in the words of one of our spirituals, "corruption in the land, people take a stand, time is winding up." – Martin Luther King Jr.

We now live in a two-tiered system of governance. There are two sets of laws: one set for the government and its corporate allies, and another set for you and me.

The laws which apply to the majority of the population allow the government to do things like sending SWAT teams crashing through your door in the middle of the night, rectally probing you during a roadside stop, or listening in on your phone calls and reading all of your email messages, confiscating your property, or indefinitely detaining you in a military holding cell.

These are the laws which are executed every single day against a population which has up until now been blissfully ignorant of the radical shift taking place in American government.

Then there are the laws constructed for the elite, which allow bankers who crash the economy to walk free. They're the laws which allow police officers to avoid prosecution when they shoot unarmed citizens, strip search non-violent criminals, or taser pregnant women on the side of the road, or pepper spray peaceful protestors. These are the laws of the new age we are entering, an

age of neo-feudalism, in which corporate-state rulers dominate the rest of us, where the elite create the laws which can result in a person being jailed for possessing a small amount of marijuana while bankers that launder money for drug cartels walk free. In other words, we have moved into an age where we are the slaves and they are the rulers.

Unfortunately, this two-tiered system of government has been a long time coming. As I detail in my book *A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State*, the march toward an imperial presidency, to congressional intransigence and impotence, to a corporate takeover of the mechanisms of government, and the division of America into haves and have nots has been building for years.

Thus we now find ourselves at a point where, for the first time in history, Congress is dominated by a majority of millionaires who are, on average, 14 times wealthier than the average American. Making matters worse, as the Center for Responsive Politics reports, "at a time when lawmakers are debating issues like unemployment benefits, food stamps and the minimum wage, which affect people with far fewer resources, as well as considering an overhaul of the tax code," our so-called representatives are completely out of touch with the daily struggles of most Americans – those

who live from paycheck to paycheck and are caught in the exhausting struggle to survive on a day-to-day basis.

Indeed, although America is supposed to be a representative republic, these people – who earn six-figure salaries and inhabit a world exempt from parking tickets, where gym membership is free and health care is second-to-none, where you only have to work two, maybe three days a week and get 32 fully reimbursed road trips home a year, travel to foreign lands, discounts in Capitol Hill tax-free shops and restaurants, free reserved parking at Washington National Airport, free fresh-cut flowers from the Botanic Gardens, and free assistance in the preparation of income taxes – neither represent nor serve the American people. They have instead appointed themselves our masters.

While Congress should be America's representative body, too many of its members bear little resemblance to those they have been elected to represent. As Dan Eggen reports for the *Washington Post*: "The new figures underscore a long-standing trend of wealth accumulation in Congress, which is populated overwhelmingly with millionaires and near-millionaires who often own multiple homes and other assets out of reach for most of the voters they represent."

Many of our politicians live like kings. Chauffeured around in limousines, flying in private jets and eating gourmet meals, all paid for by the American taxpayer, they are far removed from those they are supposed to represent. Such a luxurious lifestyle makes it difficult to identify with the "little guy" – the roofers, plumbers and blue-collar workers who live from paycheck to paycheck and keep the country running with their hard-earned dollars and the sweat of their brows.

The unfortunate but simple fact is that the rich sit perched at the top of the government. As Joseph Stiglitz writes for *Vanity Fair*:

"Virtually all US senators, and most of the representatives in the House, are members of the top 1 percent when they arrive, are kept in office by money from the top 1 percent, and know that if they serve the top 1 percent well they will be rewarded by the top 1 percent when they leave office. By and large, the key executive-branch policymakers on trade and economic policy also come from the top 1 percent. When pharmaceutical companies receive a trillion-dollar gift – through legislation prohibiting the government, the largest buyer of drugs, from bargaining over price – it should not come as cause for wonder. It should not make jaws drop that a tax bill cannot emerge from Congress unless big tax cuts are put in place for the wealthy. Given the power of the top 1 percent, this is the way you would expect the system to work."

Sadly, electoral politics have been so thoroughly corrupted by corporate money that there is little chance, even for a well-meaning person, to affect any real change through Congress. Whether it be the Oval Office or the halls of Congress, the road to the ballot box is an expensive one, and only the wealthy, or those supported by the wealthy, are even able to get to the starting line.

Just consider the 2012 presidential election cycle. Both parties spent \$1 billion each attempting to get their candidate elected to the presidency. This money came from rich donors and corporate sponsors, intent on getting their candidate in office. Once in office, these already privileged wealthy bureaucrats enter into a life of even greater privilege, unfortunately at the expense of the American taxpayer. It doesn't even seem to matter whether they're Democrats or Republicans – they all take full advantage of what one news report described as "a mountain of perks that most Fortune 500 companies couldn't begin to rival."

Even President Obama's closest advis-

Many of our politicians live like kings. They are far removed from those they are supposed to represent

When half of one's time is devoted to asking for money from rich individuals and special interests, there is no way that he can respond to the problems which pervade the country

ers are millionaires, including those on his 15-member cabinet. It is not unusual for some of them to own vacation homes, such as Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of Health and Human Services, who owns a “summer home worth more than a million dollars.”

And then there are the lobbyists, the source of much corruption and exchanging of money in Washington. With an estimated 26 lobbyists per congressman, it should come as no surprise that once elected, even those with the best of intentions seem to find it hard to resist the lure of lobbyist dollars, of which there are plenty to go around.

This lobbying is in turn buoyed by a congressional lifestyle which demands that our representatives spend the majority of their time fund raising for campaigns, rather than responding to the needs of their constituents. In November 2012, the Democratic House leadership offered a model daily schedule to newly elected Democrats which suggests a ten-hour day, five hours of which are dominated by “call time” and “strategic outreach,” including fund raisers and correspondence with potential donors. Three or four hours are for actually doing the job they were elected to do, such as attending committee meetings, voting on legislation, and interacting with constituents.

When half of one's time is devoted to asking for money from rich individuals and special interests, there is no way that he can respond to the problems which pervade the country. Even well-meaning Congressmen face a Catch-22 where they are pushed to fundraise to secure their seats, but then once in office, it is basically impossible for them to do their jobs. The full ramifications of this are laid out by Rep. Brad Miller (D-NC):

“Any member who follows that schedule will be completely controlled by their staff, handed statements that their staff prepared, speaking from talking points they get emailed from leadership... It really does

affect how members of Congress behave if the most important thing they think about is fundraising. You end up being nice to people that probably somebody needs to be questioning skeptically... You won't ask tough questions in hearings that might displease potential contributors, won't support amendments that might anger them, will tend to vote the way contributors want you to vote.”

What we are faced with is a government by oligarchy – in other words, one that is of the rich, by the rich and for the rich. Yet the Constitution's Preamble states that it is “we the people” who are supposed to be running things. If our so-called “representative government” is to survive, we must first wrest control of our government from the wealthy elite who run it. That is a problem with no easy solutions, and voting is the least of what we should be doing.

“What they don't want,” noted comedian George Carlin, is “a population of citizens capable of critical thinking. They don't want well-informed, well-educated people capable of critical thinking. They're not interested in that. That doesn't help them. That's against their interests.”

A population of citizens capable of critical thinking? That's a good place to start, and it's a sure-fire way to jumpstart a revolution. As Abraham Lincoln said, “Wise men established these great self-evident truths, that when in the distant future some man, some faction, some interest, should set up the doctrine that none but rich men, or none but white men, were entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, their posterity should look up again at the Declaration of Independence and take courage to renew the battle which their fathers began.”

Inspiring words, but what do they really mean for those of us laboring under the weight of an overreaching, militarized, corrupt government that grows increasingly so with each passing day?

How can we change this state of affairs?

The government is too big, too powerful, and its overlords too entrenched to willingly give up any of its power or wealth. The wisest option is to employ the tactics of past protest movements such as the Bonus Army, the Civil Rights Movement, and the 1960s anti-war movement, all of which used sleep-ins, sit-ins and marches to oppose government policies, counter injustice and bring about meaningful change.

For example, in May of 1932, more than 43,000 people, dubbed the Bonus Army – World War I veterans and their families – marched on Washington. Out of work, destitute and with families to feed, more than 10,000 veterans set up tent cities in the nation’s capital and refused to leave until the government agreed to pay the bonuses they had been promised as a reward for their services. The Senate voted against paying them immediately, but the protesters didn’t budge. Congress adjourned for the summer, and still the protesters remained encamped. Finally, on July 28, under orders from President Herbert Hoover, the military descended with tanks and cavalry, beating some protesters senseless and setting their makeshift camps on fire. Still, the protesters returned the following year, and eventually their efforts not only succeeded in securing payment of the bonuses but contributed to the passage of the GI Bill of Rights.

Similarly, the Civil Rights Movement mobilized hundreds of thousands of people to strike at the core of an unjust and discriminatory society. Likewise, while the 1960s anti-war movement began with a few thousand perceived radicals, it ended with hundreds of thousands of protesters, spanning all walks of life, demanding the end of American military aggression abroad.

What these movements had was a coherent message, the mass mobilization of a large cross section of American society, what Martin Luther King Jr. called a philosophy of “militant nonviolent resistance” and an eventual convergence on the nation’s seat of power – Washington, DC – the staging

ground for the corporate coup, where the shady deals are cut, where lobbyists and politicians meet, and where corporate interests are considered above all else.

It is no coincidence that just prior to his assassination in April 1968, King was plotting “to build a shantytown in Washington, patterned after the bonus marches of the thirties, to dramatize how many people have to live in slums in our nation.”

King’s advice still rings true: “We need to put pressure on Congress to get things done. We will do this with First Amendment activity. If Congress is unresponsive, we’ll have to escalate in order to keep the issue alive and before it. This action may take on disruptive dimensions, but not violent in the sense of destroying life or property: it will be militant nonviolence.”

The balance of power that was once a hallmark of our republic no longer exists. James Madison’s warning that “the accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elected, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny” has, regrettably come to pass.

Clearly, it’s time for a mass movement dedicated to change through “militant nonviolence.” If not, the shadow of tyranny that now hangs over us will eventually destroy every last semblance of freedom.

“We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor,” Martin Luther King Jr. warned in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” “It must be demanded by the oppressed.”

CT

John W. Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and author. He is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute and editor of GadflyOnline.com. His latest book A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State (SelectBooks) is available online at www.amazon.com. He can be contacted at johnw@rutherford.org.

Clearly, it’s time for a mass movement dedicated to change through “militant nonviolence.” If not, the shadow of tyranny that now hangs over us will eventually destroy every last semblance of freedom

The last gasp of democracy

Chris Hedges remembers life under fear of the Stasi in East Germany, and warns that his country faces a similar peril if the people don't act

The moment a popular movement arises – and one will arise – that truly confronts our corporate masters, our venal system of total surveillance will be thrust into overdrive

This is our last gasp as a democracy. The state's wholesale intrusion into our lives and obliteration of privacy are now facts. And the challenge to us – one of the final ones, I suspect – is to rise up in outrage and halt this seizure of our rights to liberty and free expression. If we do not do so we will see ourselves become a nation of captives.

The public debates about the government's measures to prevent terrorism, the character assassination of Edward Snowden and his supporters, the assurances by the powerful that no one is abusing the massive collection and storage of our electronic communications miss the point.

Any state that has the capacity to monitor all its citizenry, any state that has the ability to snuff out factual public debate through control of information, any state that has the tools to instantly shut down all dissent is totalitarian.

Our corporate state may not use this power today. But it will use it if it feels threatened by a population made restive by its corruption, ineptitude and mounting repression. The moment a popular movement arises – and one will arise – that truly confronts our corporate masters, our venal system of total surveillance will be thrust into overdrive.

The most radical evil, as Hannah Ar-

endt pointed out, is the political system that effectively crushes its marginalized and harassed opponents and, through fear and the obliteration of privacy, incapacitates everyone else. Our system of mass surveillance is the machine by which this radical evil will be activated. If we do not immediately dismantle the security and surveillance apparatus, there will be no investigative journalism or judicial oversight to address abuse of power. There will be no organized dissent. There will be no independent thought. Criticisms, however tepid, will be treated as acts of subversion. And the security apparatus will blanket the body politic like black mold until even the banal and ridiculous become concerns of national security.

I saw evil of this kind as a reporter in the Stasi state of East Germany. I was followed by men, invariably with crew cuts and wearing leather jackets, whom I presumed to be agents of the Stasi – the Ministry for State Security, which the ruling Communist Party described as the “shield and sword” of the nation.

People I interviewed were visited by Stasi agents soon after I left their homes. My phone was bugged. Some of those I worked with were pressured to become informants. Fear hung like icicles over every conversation.

The Stasi did not set up massive death

camps and gulags. It did not have to. The Stasi, with a network of as many as 2 million informants in a country of 17 million, was everywhere. There were 102,000 secret police officers employed full time to monitor the population – one for every 166 East Germans. The Nazis broke bones; the Stasi broke souls. The East German government pioneered the psychological deconstruction that torturers and interrogators in America’s black sites, and within our prison system, have honed to a gruesome perfection.

The goal of wholesale surveillance, as Arendt wrote in “The Origins of Totalitarianism,” is not, in the end, to discover crimes, “but to be on hand when the government decides to arrest a certain category of the population.” And because Americans’ emails, phone conversations, Web searches and geographical movements are recorded and stored in perpetuity in government databases, there will be more than enough “evidence” to seize us should the state deem it necessary.

This information waits like a deadly virus inside government vaults to be turned against us. It does not matter how trivial or innocent that information is. In totalitarian states, justice, like truth, is irrelevant.

The object of efficient totalitarian states, as George Orwell understood, is to create a climate in which people do not think of rebelling, a climate in which government killing and torture are used against only a handful of unmanageable renegades.

The totalitarian state achieves this control, Arendt wrote, by systematically crushing human spontaneity, and by extension human freedom. It ceaselessly peddles fear to keep a population traumatized and immobilized. It turns the courts, along with legislative bodies, into mechanisms to legalize the crimes of state.

The corporate state, in our case, has used the law to quietly abolish the Fourth and Fifth amendments of the Constitution, which were established to protect us from

unwarranted intrusion by the government into our private lives.

The loss of judicial and political representation and protection, part of the corporate coup d’état, means that we have no voice and no legal protection from the abuses of power. The recent ruling supporting the National Security Agency’s spying, handed down by US District Judge William H. Pauley III, is part of a very long and shameful list of judicial decisions that have repeatedly sacrificed our most cherished constitutional rights on the altar of national security since the attacks of 9/11.

The courts and legislative bodies of the corporate state now routinely invert our most basic rights to justify corporate pillage and repression. They declare that massive and secret campaign donations – a form of legalized bribery – are protected speech under the First Amendment. They define corporate lobbying – under which corporations lavish funds on elected officials and write our legislation – as the people’s right to petition the government. And we can, according to new laws and legislation, be tortured or assassinated or locked up indefinitely by the military, be denied due process and be spied upon without warrants.

Obsequious courtiers posing as journalists dutifully sanctify state power and amplify its falsehoods – MSNBC does this as slavishly as Fox News – while also filling our heads with the inanity of celebrity gossip and trivia. Our culture wars, which allow politicians and pundits to hyperventilate over nonsubstantive issues, mask a political system that has ceased to function.

History, art, philosophy, intellectual inquiry, our past social and individual struggles for justice, the very world of ideas and culture, along with an understanding of what it means to live and participate in a functioning democracy, are thrust into black holes of forgetfulness.

The political philosopher Sheldon Wo-

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RADICAL EVIL

Corporate forces so corrupt and manipulate electoral politics, the courts, the press and the essential levers of power as to make genuine democratic participation by the masses impossible. The US Constitution has not been rewritten, but steadily emasculated through radical judicial and legislative interpretation

lin, in his essential book “Democracy Incorporated,” calls our system of corporate governance “inverted totalitarianism,” which represents “the political coming of age of corporate power and the political demobilization of the citizenry.” It differs from classical forms of totalitarianism, which revolve around a demagogue or charismatic leader; it finds its expression in the anonymity of the corporate state. The corporate forces behind inverted totalitarianism do not, as classical totalitarian movements do, replace decaying structures with new structures. They instead purport to honor electoral politics, freedom of expression and the press, the right to privacy and the guarantees of law. But they so corrupt and manipulate electoral politics, the courts, the press and the essential levers of power as to make genuine democratic participation by the masses impossible. The US Constitution has not been rewritten, but steadily emasculated through radical judicial and legislative interpretation. We have been left with a fictitious shell of democracy and a totalitarian core. And the anchor of this corporate totalitarianism is the unchecked power of our systems of internal security.

Our corporate totalitarian rulers deceive themselves as often as they deceive the public. Politics, for them, is little more than public relations. Lies are told not to achieve any discernible goal of public policy, but to protect the image of the state and its rulers. These lies have become a grotesque form of patriotism. The state’s ability through comprehensive surveillance to prevent outside inquiry into the exercise of power engenders a terrifying intellectual and moral sclerosis within the ruling elite.

Absurd notions such as implanting “democracy” in Baghdad by force in order to spread it across the region or the idea that we can terrorize radical Islam across the Middle East into submission are no longer checked by reality, experience or factually

based debate. Data and facts that do not fit into the whimsical theories of our political elites, generals and intelligence chiefs are ignored and hidden from public view. The ability of the citizenry to take self-corrective measures is effectively stymied. And in the end, as in all totalitarian systems, the citizens become the victims of government folly, monstrous lies, rampant corruption and state terror.

The Romanian poet Paul Celan captured the slow ingestion of an ideological poison – in his case fascism – in his poem “Death Fugue”:

*Black milk of dawn we drink it at dusk
we drink it at noon and at daybreak we
drink it at night
we drink it and drink it
we are digging a grave in the air there’s
room for us all*

We, like those in all emergent totalitarian states, have been mentally damaged by a carefully orchestrated historical amnesia, a state-induced stupidity. We increasingly do not remember what it means to be free. And because we do not remember, we do not react with appropriate ferocity when it is revealed that our freedom has been taken from us. The structures of the corporate state must be torn down. Its security apparatus must be destroyed. And those who defend corporate totalitarianism, including the leaders of the two major political parties, fatuous academics, pundits and a bankrupt press, must be driven from the temples of power. Mass street protests and prolonged civil disobedience are our only hope. A failure to rise up – which is what the corporate state is counting upon – will see us enslaved. **CT**

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Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter. His most recent book is “Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle.” This essay originally appeared at <http://truthdig.org>

Uniting the human race

Jason Netek on the history of *The Internationale*, the socialist movement's best-known anthem

Socialists today operate in a context where the links to past struggles are few and far between. Young people coming to revolutionary conclusions about the world today often don't interact with radicals from previous generations, and therefore don't have the pleasure of hearing their heroic stories. It's quite difficult for a lot of new radicals to comprehend what it feels like to belong to something greater than yourself – to be a part of a global movement with a rich tradition.

One of the strengths of the left historically was its pageantry. It organized cultural events, socials and festivals. It had songs to sing at gatherings and demonstrations.

Sometimes singing a powerful song of protest while on the march is even more valuable than chanting slogans. Slogans transmit the message of the group to the wider world. Songs help show newcomers that the group has a vibrant internal life – that its members feel a sense of belonging and worth that doesn't exist in the everyday life of the isolated individual.

Joe Hill, one of the most revered songwriter-activists in American history, famously said, "A pamphlet, no matter how good, is never read more than once, but a song is learned by heart and repeated over and over."

One of the most important of our movement's songs is "The Internationale."

The lyrics come from a poem written by a French socialist and transportation worker Eugène Pottier in 1871 during the short-lived Paris Commune. Pottier was a delegate to this first attempt at workers' government, which was drowned in blood by the forces of reaction.

In 1888, Pottier's words were finally married to an original tune by another socialist workingman, Pierre De Geyster of Belgium. "The Internationale" has been sung by socialists, communists and anarchists ever since.

The Second International alliance of socialist organizations around the world – which created International Women's Day, for one thing – adopted the song as an official anthem. The Third International, formed after the Russian Revolution of 1917, carried on the tradition. "The Internationale" was the anthem of the USSR after the revolution, until it was dropped in favor of a more explicitly nationalist anthem during the Stalin era.

During the later years of the Second World War, Arturo Toscanini conducted a medley of Giuseppe Verdi's "Hymn of the Nations" – itself based on the national anthems of several European countries – "The Star Spangled Banner" and "The Internationale," as a tribute to the Allied countries fighting against Nazi Germany. The music was performed by the NBC Symphony Or-

"The Internationale" was the anthem of the USSR after the revolution, until it was dropped in favor of a more explicitly nationalist anthem during the Stalin era

LIBERATION'S SONG

British singer Billy Bragg's rendition of the anthem includes his own lyrics and a slight alteration of the tune

chestra, with the Westminster Choir, but US censors cut out the socialist anthem.

While seen as subversive in the West, "The Internationale" became almost sterile by its association with the bureaucratic societies of Russia and its Eastern European satellites. The song still has the same official status in the cynically named "People's Republics" of China and North Korea.

But, despite the attempts to give the song official status, Pottier and De Geyter's anthem of resistance endured. Its rousing call to action could be heard at the barricades of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and other movements that shook the foundations of Stalinism.

In 1989, the Tiananmen Square demonstrators – long misappropriated in the West as a symbol of anti-Communism – recognized the song for the revolutionary appeal that it really is. They could easily have identified the tune with the so-called socialist regime they were rising up against, but instead they took it back for themselves.

"The Internationale" is, above all, a song of protest. It was sung by Russian workers during the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, by volunteers who left their home countries to fight against fascism in the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s, and by countless others at scenes of determined struggle against oppression.

"The Internationale" has been making something of a comeback in recent years, though for radicals, it never really went away. A quick search on the Internet will reveal techno remixes, alongside reggae and heavy-metal renditions. Folk artists such as Alistair Hulett Gregory and Jimmy Gregory have recorded their own versions for years. British singer Billy Bragg's rendition includes his own lyrics and a slight alteration of the tune. A jazz version by Tony Babino kicks off the final credits at the end of Michael Moore's film "Capitalism: A Love Story."

"The Internationale" has been sung

around the world by people who share no common language or cultural norms, but do share a common identity as workers in a global system, which relies on them to function, but treats them like dirt.

The lyrics are quite simple, yet they have a meaning that transcends time and place. Different versions and translations are sung in different countries by different, but they all sound the same call. The first verse and refrain of the American version goes like this:

*Arise ye prisoners of starvation
Arise ye wretched of the earth
For justice thunders condemnation
A better world's in birth!
No more tradition's chains shall bind us
Arise, ye slaves, no more in thrall
The earth shall rise on new foundations
We have been naught, we shall be all.
'Tis the final conflict
Let each stand in their place
The international working class
Shall free the human race.*

What a concept! The downtrodden and mistreated of the world can stand up for themselves. The masses who work, while others live in luxury, are going to upset the balance of things. If they can overcome superstitions and prejudices, they can remake the entire world into whatever they want it to be. They can end wars and conflicts, and they can liberate the entire human race from the terrible existences so many have known. That is the enduring message of "The Internationale."

And what a song! In every scene of resistance to the bosses' agenda around the world, it is likely that this song is in the air – even if it is only being hummed by a few people. When you sing it at home, you're singing along in a worldwide chorus with people you may never meet, but who are the best friends you'll ever have.

"The Internationale," as they say, unites the human race. **CT**

Jason Netek is a socialist activist based in Texas.

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Propaganda: The dominant grand narrative

David Cromwell tells how a barrage of 'planet-crushing propaganda' from the corporate media is distorting the reality of the world in which we live

'Propaganda' sounds like an old-fashioned word from a bygone era. It evokes images of the Nazis in WW2, particularly Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, or Soviet leaders in the Cold War and dictators in 'Third World' countries. Propaganda is something spewed out by official enemies of the West, and surely not a vile practice indulged by 'our' politicians and business leaders. This is a convenient illusion that serves powerful Western elites very well indeed.

The Russian-born filmmaker Andre Vltchek, who has travelled the world extensively in making his documentaries, relates his experience of appearing in the media in different countries. He observes that when he speaks in China, he does so uncensored:

'I was on CCTV – their National TV – and for half an hour I was talking about very sensitive issues. And I felt much freer in Beijing than when the BBC interviews me, because the BBC doesn't even let me speak, without demanding a full account of what exactly I am intending to say.' (Noam Chomsky and Andre Vltchek, *On Western Terrorism: From Hiroshima to Drone Warfare*, Pluto Press, London, 2013, p. 31)

Vltchek continued:

'people in the West are so used to thinking that we are so democratic in terms of the way our media is run and covers the stories. Even

if we know it's not the case, we still, subconsciously, expect that it's still somehow better than in other places and it is actually shocking when we realize that a place like China or Turkey or Iran would run more unedited or uncensored pieces than our own mainstream media outlets. Let me put it this way: Chinese television and newspapers are much more critical of their economic and political system than our television stations or newspapers are of ours. Imagine ABC, CBS, or NBC [major US television stations] coming on air and beginning to question the basics of capitalism or the Western parliamentary system.' (Ibid., p. 32)

A vanishingly rare example of the BBC propaganda system being blasted open was the special edition of the Radio 4 Today programme edited by the English musician PJ Harvey on January 2.

In her opening statement, Harvey explained that she wanted to 'do something unusual with the format and content of the programme.'

Harvey's guests included John Pilger talking about the propaganda role of the corporate media; Denis Halliday, former UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, on the urgent need to democratise the warmongering UN Security Council (here at around 49 mins); Ian Cobain and Phil Shiner on torture committed by UK forces; and Mark Curtis on how Britain's arms trade fuels oppression

A vanishingly rare example of the BBC propaganda system being blasted open was the special edition of the Radio 4 Today programme edited by the English musician PJ Harvey on January 2.

BBC News is a major influence in projecting what McMillan calls the 'dominant grand narrative of our time'. Occasionally, very occasionally, the truth will slip out, and it can actually be comical to observe

around the world.

Harvey wanted her contributors to be unrestricted in what they could say, and she had asked the Today programme to agree to this before accepting the invitation to be a guest editor. She rightly noted that 'a great deal' of her edition of the programme was 'about censorship in one way or another.'

Predictably, reactionary voices bewailed afterwards that the BBC had broadcast 'left-wing tosh' and 'liberal drivel'. Nick Robinson, the BBC's 'impartial' political editor, took particular exception to the contribution by John Pilger [judge for yourself: his contribution is on Page 50-51 of this issue], while the pro-war Murdoch employee David Aaronovitch, a *Times* columnist with a penchant for wagging a warning finger at Glenn Greenwald, objected to being 'lectured at in a news programme'.

By contrast, Paul Mason, a former BBC Newsnight correspondent and now the digital editor at Channel 4 News, better captured the public response:

'Brilliant @PJHarveyUK edition of @BBCr4today demonstrating difference between "truth" and "editorial policy" - amazing how weird it feels'

The veteran Scottish journalist Joyce McMillan astutely summed up the importance of the PJ Harvey-edited Today programme and the dismissive and fearful response to it from elite quarters:

'For the 21st-century British Right, though – used to seeing their sense of what is important go largely unchallenged in day-to-day political broadcasting – the programme was an outrage. [...] Since this year's group of guest editors also included such establishment figures as Dame Eliza Manningham Buller, former head of MI5, and Anthony Jenkins, CEO of Barclays Bank, there are clearly no grounds for complaint from the Right about the overall balance of this year's holiday editions.'

McMillan continued:

'The British boss class, though, increasingly demand not so much balance as total he-

gemony. Where a generation ago they would have had the wisdom to welcome Harvey as an alternative voice that demonstrated Britain's commitment to diversity and freedom, now they just want her and her kind to shut up, before they put any wild ideas into the heads of the compliant masses.'

Although Harvey's contributors made points that were 'accurate, truthful and based on fact', said McMillan, such voices are marginalised in political debate because:

'they are not part of the dominant grand narrative of our time, which requires constant deference to the priorities of rich so-called "wealth creators", and a rapid re-focusing of any popular anger towards other vulnerable groups, such as this New Year's imaginary tidal wave of new migrants from Romania and Bulgaria.'

McMillan warned that unless any serious challenge emerges to the 'dominant narrative' of state-corporate elites, we will be 'trapped by an account of reality so far adrift of the truth [...] that a long age of social, moral and intellectual decline seems almost inevitable.'

Accidental subversion flying beneath the bbc radar

It is therefore important to grasp, as in fact many people already do, that BBC News is a major influence in projecting what McMillan calls the 'dominant grand narrative of our time'. Occasionally, very occasionally, the truth will slip out, and it can actually be comical to observe. Consider a report from Paris by BBC correspondent Allan Little on News at Ten on January 14. Little was talking about the reported marital difficulties of François Hollande, the French president. Why had his alleged affair not stirred up greater controversy in France, in contrast to what would surely have happened in this country if similar revelations had appeared about, say, David Cameron?

In a voiceover of footage of the Sorbonne, Little intoned:

'François Hollande is a graduate of the

École Nationale d'Administration, ENA, which like the Sorbonne here in Paris is an elite institution that trains many of France's future leaders.'

Then, strolling along beside the Sorbonne, Little continued:

'It's often argued that the French ruling elite is a pretty homogeneous group of people. That they're drawn from a very narrow sector of society. They went to the same elite universities, like this one [nods to the Sorbonne] where they were groomed for high-status, high-powered lives. And that this is why newspaper editors, senior politicians, civil servants, industry chiefs, are connected to each other through a network of lifelong loyalties and old friendships. And that this explains why the sexual peccadilloes of previous presidents stayed out of the news.'

That Little's comments also apply to the 'very narrow sector of society' that runs Britain, with its leading cohorts largely drawn from the elite institutions of Oxbridge and London, is obvious. When I emailed Little to congratulate him ironically on his piece of subversive reporting that he'd managed to slip below the BBC editorial radar I got no response – not surprising.

On the other hand, nobody could ever accuse BBC political editor Nick Robinson of subversion, intentional or otherwise. A week earlier (BBC News at Ten, January 6, 2014), Robinson had performed his usual role of 'explaining' – or, more accurately, amplifying – government policy; this time on the increasing levels of 'austerity' being imposed on the British public.

He finished his 'balanced' report with these words:

'Whose purse or wallet should be raided next to pay off the deficit? Welcome to one of the main debates between now and election day.'

But how far would Robinson ever extend the 'main debate' beyond the usual narrow parliamentary voices, if at all? Would he be likely to give prominence to informed comment about cutting the massive subsidies

granted at public expense to the corporate sector, notably the fossil fuel industry? What about a spectrum of views on proper accountability of major banks, and preventing corporations and rich elites from tax-dodging? Would that ever be a significant part of a 'main debate' presented by Robinson on BBC News?

We put these questions to Robinson via email, adding: '

What about going beyond the skewed parliamentary "consensus" that normally shapes your news reporting, and include progressive voices arguing for taxation to reduce the shameful inequities in British society? What about a critical look at the costs of the UK's militaristic foreign policy, including huge government support for the so-called "defence" industry?

'Will you canvas wider opinion on all of this, or will you merely include brief snatches of token vox pops on the street?

'Surely the British public deserves a reasoned debate beyond the usual establishment perspective?' (Email, January 7, 2014)

Despite several follow-up emails, Robinson ignored us. Perhaps he is too busy propping up the 'dominant grand narrative of our time' to answer questions from marginalised voices like ours. Robinson was, however, happy to seek us out a couple of years ago for the source of a quote by Lord Reith, the founding Director-General of the BBC, to include in his 2012 book, *Live From Downing Street*. What was the Reith quote that Robinson was so keen to source? This one:

'They [the government] know they can trust us not to be really impartial.' (C. Stuart, ed., *The Reith Diaries*, 1975)

Life is full of such ironies.

A key element of the elite 'grand narrative' projected by the corporate news media is that the United States is a force for peace in the Middle East. Thus Jeremy Bowen, the BBC Middle East editor, said with a straight face on the BBC Weekend News on January 11 that:

'These days, the Americans are having an-

A key element of the elite 'grand narrative' projected by the corporate news media is that the United States is a force for peace in the Middle East

A recent *Guardian* editorial on UK 'defence' policy, titled 'Military options: sense about defence', was a prime example of pro-power liberal posturing

other go at brokering peace between Israel and the Palestinians.'

Why Bowen, who really should know better, sticks to the discredited script of US as 'peace-broker' is an awkward question that only he can answer. Perhaps one day he will do so - after retiring, when he is finally freed from the shackles of BBC 'balance'.

Fracking the climate system and defending war

Propaganda was once again in full flow when Huw Edwards introduced BBC News at Ten with this beauty: 'We'll have more on the government's plan to give local authorities financial rewards for allowing development of shale gas.' (January 13, 2014)

'Financial rewards'? That is BBC News echoing government-speak. Although the actual news report mentioned in brief that opponents of fracking use the more accurate term 'bribes', it was the government spin that got top billing.

After the broadcast of the report, Nick Robinson sat in the studio facing Huw Edwards across a big polished round table in the tired news-theatre format of presenter and correspondent exchanges masquerading as genuine 'conversation'. As ever, Robinson's purpose was to 'explain' the government's message. This essentially comprised a series of corporate-friendly, pro-fracking bullet points on the 'potential big gain in terms of jobs', 'potentially cheap energy' and 'security of supply'.

There was not a single direct reference to climate change; only an implicit, blink-and-you'll-miss-it hint in Robinson's brief nod to green campaigners' wish for 'clean energy'. The very real risk of climate chaos under business as usual fossil-fuel consumption was not worth discussing, obviously.

In its report, BBC News gave prominence to David Cameron's claim of 74,000 new jobs linked to fracking. Email correspondence between the government and companies involved in fracking, made public after a Freedom of Information request, has since

revealed that Cameron's figure comes from the 'Big Six' energy company Centrica. The '74,000 jobs' assertion has been repeatedly used by Cameron and ministers, even though the government's own study estimated far fewer jobs: a 'peak' of 16,000 to 32,000 jobs.

Moreover, the email correspondence showed that: 'Shale gas executives and government officials collaborated in private to manage the British public's hostility to fracking.'

As Green party MP Caroline Lucas said:

'This is yet more evidence of the creepily cosy relationship between [the government] and big energy. Apparently it's not enough to give fracking companies generous tax breaks, the government also has to help them with their PR. Instead of cheerleading for fracking, the government should be working with community and renewable energy to move us towards a low carbon future.'

Liberal apologetics: war crimes as 'failures'

Of course, it's not just the BBC that deploys its 'serious journalism' credentials to promote the grand narrative that props up elite power. The British flagship of supposedly progressive print journalism, the *Guardian*, relentlessly plays its part too. A recent editorial on UK 'defence' policy, titled 'Military options: sense about defence', was a prime example of pro-power liberal posturing. The editorial was a response to a question posed by former US defence secretary Robert Gates; namely 'whether the UK now has the ability to act alongside the US in the Middle East or Asia.' The *Guardian* argued that this was 'not the only or even the main [question] that needs to be answered.'

The editorial asserted that:

'It is high time that Britain, and Europe, had a serious, effective and public strategic examination of defence needs and affordable options for the mid-21st century.'

By contrast, a genuinely progressive editorial would have argued that:

'It is high time that Britain, and Europe,

had a serious, effective and public strategic examination of the elite interests that drive foreign policy and instead consider sensible options for the mid-21st century.’

The editorial continued: ‘The question that needs answering is how Europe and Britain can best defend ourselves against the threats of today and tomorrow, and how we can play an appropriate military role in the world.’

rather than the more rational:

‘The question that needs answering is how Europe and Britain can best reduce the threats we pose to everyone else, and how we can instead play an appropriate peaceful role in the world.’

The *Guardian* added:

‘the public is war-weary from the failures in Iraq and Afghanistan’

and not:

‘the public is sick of the West’s war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan...’

which we could follow up with:

‘...but voters are deprived of any peaceful party political alternative.’

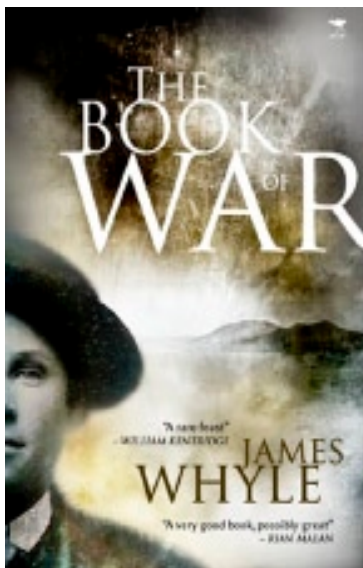
Of course, it is a classic trope of liberal apologetics to describe war crimes by the

state as mere ‘failures’ or ‘mistakes’. And so, shamefully, the *Guardian* was once again showing its true colours as the liberal wing of a voracious power elite. For those with a black sense of humour, it was all summed up by the headline of a satirical piece in the Daily Mash: ‘Britain could miss out on crazy, pointless war with China, says important American’.

Today, it is clearer than ever to a growing number of people that there is something seriously wrong with ‘the news’. The current system of planet-crushing propaganda relies on a mere façade of overall ‘balance’, ‘reasonableness’ and ‘range of views’. In the UK, BBC News is the crucial foundation stone of this propaganda system, with the *Guardian* playing an accompanying role, almost as the print equivalent. In an era of Permanent War and climate chaos, it is time for the public to raise our voices in protest at all parts of the corporate media, and to build a ‘grand narrative’ that represents reality. **CT**

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Davis Cromwell is co-editor of Medialens, the British media watchdog at <http://medialens.org>

Shamefully, the *Guardian* was once again showing its true colours as the liberal wing of a voracious power elite



“A brilliant, unforgettable debut. Steeped in carnage. ... grips from the outset and soaks the imagination like blood in sand”

– Andrew Donaldson, The Times, Johannesburg.

THE BOOK OF WAR

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Death by media

Would as many as a million be alive if the media had done its job, at the time of the Iraq war? wonders **John Pilger**

This mass murder is being funded by the regime in Saudi Arabia, which beheads people and discriminates against women

This is a transcript of John Pilger's contribution to a special edition of BBC Radio 4's 'Today' program, on January 2, 2014, guest-edited by the artist and musician PJ Harvey.

A recent poll asked people in Britain how many Iraqis had been killed as a result of the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The answers they gave were shocking.

A majority said that fewer than 10,000 had been killed. Scientific studies report that up to a million Iraqi men, women and children died in an inferno lit by the British government and its ally in Washington. That's the equivalent of the genocide in Rwanda. And the carnage goes on. Relentlessly.

What this reveals is how we in Britain have been misled by those whose job is to keep the record straight.

The American writer and academic Edward Herman calls this 'normalizing the unthinkable.' He describes two types of victims in the world of news: 'worthy victims' and 'unworthy victims.'

'Worthy victims' are those who suffer at the hands of our enemies: the likes of Assad, Gadaffi, Saddam Hussein. 'Worthy victims' qualify for what we call 'humanitarian intervention.'

'Unworthy victims' are those who get

in the way of our punitive might and that of the 'good dictators' we employ. Saddam Hussein was once a 'good dictator,' but he got uppity and disobedient and was relegated to 'bad dictator.'

When I traveled in Iraq in the 1990s, the two principal Moslem groups, the Shia and Sunni, had their differences, but they lived side by side, even intermarried and regarded themselves with pride as Iraqis. There was no al-Qaeda, there were no jihadists. We blew all that to bits in 2003 with 'shock and awe.' And today, Sunni and Shia are fighting each other right across the Middle East. This mass murder is being funded by the regime in Saudi Arabia, which beheads people and discriminates against women. Most of the 9/11 hijackers came from Saudi Arabia. In 2010, Wikileaks released a cable sent to US embassies by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. She wrote: 'Saudi Arabia remains a critical financial support for Al Qaeda, the Taliban, al Nusra and other terrorist groups . . . worldwide.' And yet the Saudis are our valued allies. They're good dictators. The British royals visit them often. We sell them all the weapons they want.

I use the first person, 'we' and 'our,' in line with newsreaders and commentators who often say 'we,' preferring not to distinguish between the criminal power of our governments and us, the public. We are all assumed to be part of a consensus: Tory and

Labour, Obama's White House, too.

When Nelson Mandela died, the BBC went straight to David Cameron, then to Obama: Cameron, who went to South Africa during Mandela's 25th year of imprisonment on a trip that was tantamount to support for the apartheid regime, and Obama, who recently shed a tear in Mandela's cell on Robben Island - he who presides over the cages of Guantanamo.

What were they really mourning about Mandela? Clearly not his extraordinary will to resist an oppressive system whose depravity the United States and British governments backed year after year. Rather, they were grateful for the crucial role Mandela had played in quelling an uprising in black South Africa against the injustice of white political and economic power. This was surely the only reason he was released. Today the same ruthless economic power is apartheid in another form, making South Africa the most unequal society on earth. Some call this 'reconciliation.'

We all live in an information age - or so we tell each other as we caress our smart phones like rosary beads, heads down, checking, monitoring, tweeting. We're wired; we're on message; and the dominant theme of the message is ourselves. Identity is the zeitgeist.

A lifetime ago in *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley predicted this as the ultimate means of social control because it was voluntary, addictive and shrouded in illusions of personal freedom. Perhaps the truth is that we live not in an information age but a media age. Like the memory of Mandela, the media's wondrous technology has been

hijacked. From the BBC to CNN, the echo chamber is vast.

In his acceptance of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005, Harold Pinter spoke about a 'manipulation of power worldwide, while masquerading as a force for universal good, a brilliant, even witty, highly successful act of hypnosis.' But, said Pinter, 'It never happened. Nothing ever happened. Even while it was happening it wasn't happening. It didn't matter. It was of no interest.'

Pinter was referring to the systematic crimes of the United States and to an undeclared censorship by omission - that is leaving out crucial information that might help us make sense of the world.

Today liberal democracy is being replaced by a system in which people are accountable to a corporate state and not the other way round, as it should be. In Britain, the parliamentary parties are devoted to the same doctrine of care for the rich and struggle for the poor. This denial of real democracy is an historic shift. It's why the courage of Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange is such a threat to the powerful and unaccountable. And it's an object lesson for those of us who are meant to keep the record straight. The great reporter Claud Cockburn put it well: 'Never believe anything until it's officially denied.' Imagine if the lies of governments had been properly challenged and exposed as they secretly prepared to invade Iraq - perhaps a million people would be alive today. **CT**

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John Pilger's new film, "Utopia", opened in cinemas received glowing reviews in the UK and Australia

Perhaps the truth is that we live not in an information age but a media age. Like the memory of Mandela, the media's wondrous technology has been hijacked

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To the top of the mountain

Danny Schechter visits the Sundance Movie Festival

The actor Robert Redford who created Sundance seems to have become less infatuated with the annual spectacle

Mountaintops offer dynamic vistas and symbolize not only physical heights but inspiring points of prominence. On the night before he was murdered, Martin Luther King told a packed church in Memphis where he was crusading on behalf of the city's garbage workers, that he had been to the mountain top.

He was practically singing as he bellowed, "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land!"

To him, climbing that mountain also offered him a panoramic view of a world of pain and change. Earlier in that prophetic final oration, he spoke of the human condition. ". . . the world is all messed up. The nation is sick. Trouble is in the land; confusion all around. That's a strange statement. But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars."

I have just returned from another mountain-top where the streets are packed with people traipsing through the cold and snow – looking for other stars – movie stars.

The Sundance Film Festival is on, based in the wealthy resort of Park City, Utah, up on a snowy mountain not far from Salt Lake City at-

tracting movie aficionados, show biz wannabes, groupies, and skiers.

Most are there to embrace (or worship) the commanding heights of our culture industry. There were plenty of contradictions on display as well.

The actor Robert Redford who created Sundance seems to have become less infatuated with the annual spectacle. The *Hollywood Reporter* profiled him, noting, "Redford seems ambivalent about the festival's success, however, hostile to the corporate and marketing forces overwhelmed his counter-cultural creation, while appreciative about everything it has achieved."

Journalists who cover show biz were even less excited, reported Sharon Waxman, editor or the Hollywood website *The Wrap*:

"If you weren't at Sundance this year, it's just as well. The lack of a breakout, buzzy film that had everyone talking tells us something about the challenged state of independent film. While the festival had glimmers of excitement, the movies were – in the aggregate – interesting but not inspiring, thought-provoking but not thrilling.

"In short, not essential enough to grab a distracted public's attention."

While most of the consciousness there these days still revolves around commerce and Hollywood type deal-making, some major hard hitting documentaries are shown, films we rarely see on TV.

Ironically, one that I saw, “Concerning Violence” was based on the text of 1960’s revolutionary and psychiatrist Franz Fanon who in his bestseller “The Wretched of The Earth” wrote that the road to decolonization was inevitably and necessarily a violent one.

A Swedish production, it is competing with less controversial fare like a tribute to the State’s native son, Mitt Romney. Sundance showed the Fanon-inspired film on the eve of the national holiday celebrating America’s most loved apostle of non-violence.

Just as the Festival opened, President Obama announced his NSA reforms. The local *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that they will not affect the opening, on another nearby mountaintop, known as “the point of the Mountain,” of a new vast, gargantuan NSA spy center.

According to the paper, “The Utah Data Center, a massive warehouse of computer servers at the Point of the Mountain, is largely a storage facility for the agency’s international intelligence gathering operations, expert say...”

That same weekend, amidst stories of a local snake collector complaining of being evicted because he kept 25 boa constrictors in his home, was a page one report that the Defense Department had given a big present to the Utah state police in the form of deadly weapons, an arsenal of bullets and even a tank-like vehicle used in Afghanistan.

So much for Dr. King: It looks like the Pentagon is now quietly preparing for insurrection in America.

Across the world, in Davos in the Swiss Alps, yet another mountaintop of distinction is being readied for a festive gab fest for the elite of the elite, the real 1%, at the annual World Economic Forum that I have covered in years past.

Explains Christopher Dickey in the Daily Beast, “Even the high and mighty assembling at the Swiss resort recognize, now, that grotesque inequality is the greatest threat to world peace.

Their answer: Party on! . . . tonight as the little resort town begins to welcome 2,500 participants, including more than 40 heads of state, the forum itself is better organized than ever – it’s the rest of the world that’s not. Nobody at

Davos claims to be a master of the universe anymore. Hell, nobody would dare.”

Media Tenor, a research company that works for many major corporations issued a report on the finance industry that helps pay for the Davos Forum and is a key cog in the world economy.

“January 21, 2014. Davos, Switzerland – With the image of banks at an all-time low, the industry is currently viewed with the same levels of negativity as organized crime, terrorism, and dictatorship, according to new research from Media Tenor International. This level of negativity, unseen in Media Tenor’s 20 years of research across all industries, positions banks as posing a greater societal risk than nuclear power or tobacco, stepping up pressure on regulatory bodies and central banks.

“The research, released this week at the World Economic Forum, highlights the critical risks banks face in maintaining their license to operate, while also underscoring the dangers society faces from an untrusted banking sector.

The trust meltdown raises questions about how banks can possibly maintain their current client relationships and attract new business with their basic operations under attack by the media, while also suggesting a clear platform for politicians globally.”

Comments Martin Wolf, editor of the *Financial Times*, the newspaper that is practically the house organ of this annual display of affluenza, likens the situation today the eve World War 1, exactly a century ago, when the world’s rich and its ruler stumbled towards the horrific conflagration in history.”

(Somehow when 2012 rolled around, all the buzz was about Mayan prophecies; today, no one seems to remember how, in 1914, an assassination triggered a World War in Sarajevo, a city that was devastated a relatively few years ago, and all but forgotten now. Sarajevo was a city surrounded by mountaintops that were used by Bosnian fanatics as perches from which to kill innocent civilians from.”)

So, while awesome in their beauty, mountaintops are no longer a pathway to the promised land. Not today, not in the world of inequality in which we live.

CT

It looks like the Pentagon is now quietly preparing for insurrections in America

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News Dissector
Danny Schechter
blogs at
NewsDissector.net and edits
Mediachannel.org. His new book is *Madiba AtoZ: The Many Faces of Nelson Mandela*. (*Madibabook.com*) Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org

And so they fall – unions and workers

Rowan Wolf tells how multi-billion dollar demands of corporations are undercutting the benefits and pensions of their workers

Clearly the long term goal is to eliminate these “pesky” union collectives that give workers a voice and actually create a “negotiating table” to sit at

“The goal has been to create a borderless world for goods and finance while building fences with razor wire to keep workers in place.”

On January 3, the machinists union at Boeing voted to approve a new contract that undercuts many long fought for benefits. It was hardly a resounding “win” as the contract only squeaked through with 51% of the vote. Essentially the same (bad) deal had been voted down by the union in the fall [1]. However, the national union pushed through a new vote over the objections of local leaders [2].

Some might think that Boeing’s offer of bonuses for passing the contract are telling. Boeing originally offered a \$10,000 bonus to be paid in 2016, and added an additional \$5000 to be paid in 2020. Unfortunately, you have to still be working for Boeing at the time those bonuses are paid. While, it is assumed that those who voted for the contract were voting for job security over hard won benefits, the contract language is reportedly quite vague on those matters – particularly when it comes to construction of the new composite wings on the 777X.

President of District Lodge 750 of the Machinists Union, Tom Wroblewski, made the following statement regarding the contract (remember that the local had encouraged members to vote against it.):

“All along we knew that our members wanted to build the 777X, and that it was in Boeing’s best interest to have them do it,” he said. “We recommended that our members reject the offer because we felt that the cost was too high, in terms of our lost pensions and the thousands of dollars in additional health care costs we’ll have to pay each year.”

Wroblewski (writing to union members) also states something that could be echoed by every union in this day and age:

“We faced tremendous pressure from every source imaginable in deciding how to vote today. Politicians, the media and others who had no right to get into our business, were aligned against us and did their best to influence your vote.”

Indeed there was pressure, and huge forces are arrayed against unions (in the US and globally). Clearly the long term goal is to eliminate these “pesky” collectives that give workers a voice and actually create a “negotiating table” to sit at. Without unions, there would be no negotiation with employers.

Prior to workers unionizing, in the good old days” from a corporate perspective, the owners held all the cards. That was a time when workers were trapped in corporate towns essentially forever to pay off their debt; back when owners could deal with agitating workers by simply hiring thugs to shut them up or kill them. This is what we are headed

for. Does anybody really think that the hearts and wallet interests of most owners have changed?

High Level Union Busting

An outright war on unions has raged since the presidential union buster Ronald Regan took his stand against the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). As Joseph McCartin wrote in August of 2011:

“Thirty years ago today, when he threatened to fire nearly 13,000 air traffic controllers unless they called off an illegal strike, Ronald Reagan not only transformed his presidency, but also shaped the world of the modern workplace.

“More than any other labor dispute of the past three decades, Reagan’s confrontation with the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization, or Patco, undermined the bargaining power of American workers and their labor unions. It also polarized our politics in ways that prevent us from addressing the root of our economic troubles: the continuing stagnation of incomes despite rising corporate profits and worker productivity.

What Reagan did was to give the presidential seal of approval to union busting. It was an apparent about-face for Reagan to go after unions. Ironically, Ronald Reagan is the only US president to have been in a union, and he served as president of the screen actors guild for six terms. This is why it was consistent for him to one, stand up for Solidarity (the labor union in Poland), and two speak out formally against Poland’s efforts to quash Solidarity (Jlanni, ThinkProgress, 2/25/11).

During Reagan’s Christmas address in 1981 he chastised the Polish government for its efforts to suppress Solidarity. He stated: [3]

“The Polish government has trampled underfoot the UN Charter and Helsinki accords. It has even broken the Gdańsk Agreement of 1980 by which the Polish government recognized the basic right of free trade unions and to strike.”

Or his address at the statue of Liberty where he stated: “Where collective bargain-

ing is forbidden, freedom Is lost.” [4]

As Reagan went after PATCO, one can imagine what the Poles felt as they watched Reagan destroy what they were fighting for, and what Reagan himself had praised.

Yet he went to war with PATCO, and what he started became an ongoing campaign against unions by “everybody.” Or as Wroblewski stated “tremendous pressure from every source imaginable.”

I know that unions have been largely removed from our nation’s textbooks from K through college. Students have virtually no idea of union history, nor what it has meant for this country and for workers. In fact, hand votes in my classes consistently showed that students thought workers were better off without unions; that individuals could negotiate better deals with employers. Naive? Yes. But that is the power of propaganda.

Just a month prior to the fateful January vote, the *NW Labor Press* wrote about the November 13, 2013 vote with the headline “In a Stand for the Middle Class, Machinists reject Boeing Offer.” In fact, in that November vote, 67% of Lodge 751 (Everette, Wa.) and 74% of Lodge 63 (Gresham, Or) voted to reject the mid-term contract that Boeing was pushing. What was that offer? According to the *Press*:

“Specifically, in exchange for a promise of keeping production in Washington, Boeing wanted to convert the defined benefit pension system as of Nov. 1, 2016, to a 401(k)-style savings plan (this from a company whose CEO is on track to receive a pension worth more than \$250,000 per month). It wanted to raise the share of health care costs workers paid by more than 30 percent over the life of the contract. It would have required at least 16 years for a newly hired Machinist to move from the bottom of the pay scale to the top (it currently takes six-and-a-half years). And it would have limited wage increases to 1 percent every other year to 2024. Maximum hourly pay tops out at \$35.25.

“The modifications reportedly would have saved Boeing about \$2 billion over the eight-

It was an apparent about-face for Reagan to go after unions. He is the only US president to have been in a union, and he served as president of the screen actors guild for six terms

Missouri was bidding for the Boeing contract and stopped funds for thirty-one low income housing projects in order to scrape up money for Boeing's tax incentives

year contract. The company recently posted historically high quarterly revenue and profit figures. And shortly after the contract vote, Boeing announced it had pre-orders of 259 777X aircraft worth more than \$95 billion.”

What Boeing actively threatened was to move production of the 777X out of Washington all together. Boeing's wish list was long and very expensive. According to the *Seattle Times* (and others) that list covered (not exhaustively) everything from a rail spur to the site and highway access for the facility, to a landing strip with length and capacity for the 777 and 747 jumbo cargo, space to build a 4.2 million square foot equipped factory (estimated cost \$10 billion), all infrastructure improvements, help with recruiting and training a workforce, and tax incentives. For all of that, Boeing promised 8,500 direct jobs by the time peak production was in play.

This is a breathtaking “wish list,” and one that breaks the back of other projects that states and localities have – such as low income housing. So, for example, Missouri was bidding for the Boeing contract and stopped funds for thirty-one low income housing projects in order to scrape up money for Boeing's tax incentives (*St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 12/16/13).[5]

This “list” gives you some idea of the breadth of the deals that are being wrangled in the halls of government for Boeing and for others corporations (such as the Nike deal in Oregon where they got guaranteed tax rates). [6] [7] This hacking away at the housing projects really doesn't even come close to making up the well over \$10 billion in outlays that Boeing was asking for.

Of course, there are other political and corporate interests involved, such as Republicans who want to gut all public works and social welfare programs. So in Missouri, for example, David Leib reported:

“The senators wanted to offset the new Boeing tax breaks with reductions to Missouri's existing tax credits, which waive more than \$500 million annually in would-be revenues. Those lawmakers have been trying un-

successfully for years to pare back tax credits for the developers of low-income housing and historic buildings, which together accounted for about 43 percent of all tax credits redeemed last year.”

Such tax credits provide incentives for developers to build in areas, or for populations, who would be otherwise excluded because the would-be inhabitants haven't the resources to make those projects profitable.

The “holding,” or even cancellation, of programs such as low income housing are just one of the many costs to the people for meeting the extortionist demands of big business.

Essentially, Boeing said to states (and potential sites) “You pay for everything, and we will give you controlled (right to work) jobs. Oh yeah, and we want a tax break on our profits as well.” Talk about sweet deals. It is right up there with the no-bid, cost plus contracts that characterized the Bush administration in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

This begs the question of whether 8,500 jobs are worth the huge economic and social cost.

This is particularly true when Boeing (or other big companies) can just as easily walk away to another “suitor” if it feels the “winner” isn't lucrative enough. Such arrangements are “devil deals.” The soul is sold for a figmentary promise of one's “desires.”

David Lieb offers an interesting analysis of the impacts Missouri even bidding for the Boeing site. The state demonstrated a willingness to offer a lucrative deal to big businesses wanting to set up in Missouri. The long sought after removal of tax credits for developers constructing low income housing was accomplished. It gives strength to the legislative bid to have Missouri join the ranks of “right to work” states. I would agree with Lieb's analysis in that regard. States are desperate for jobs, and the corporate agenda runs deep. We see it at all levels of government. Unfortunately, that agenda doesn't really go anywhere.

Let's take just one item from the wish list

– giving Boeing a tax break essentially into perpetuity. If Boeing isn't paying taxes then government (and government services) have to be funded elsewhere. That place is workers. Unfortunately, there is a limit on how much tax the people can bear, and so the only option left is to reduce or eliminate critical services and functions of government. Funding for food, health, and housing programs are cut or eliminated. Funding for police, fire, roads, and parks are cut or eliminated. Funding for oversight and research also cut.

This goes with an agenda that has become all too familiar. It is part of the "privatisation" (corporatisation) movement where government outsources its functions to private industry. This is not proving to serve the people very well, but it does contribute to the vast transfer of wealth from the people to corporations, and from the 99.8% to the 0.2%.

On the corporate side of the equation, Boeing predictably argues "competition" and global price pressures. Just how disingenuous can it get? Boeing and Airbus are far ahead of any other competitors – including McDonnell Douglas – and Boeing is number 1. According to an *Oregonian* article by Jim Manning (1/03/2014), Boeing is projected to have profits of \$4.5 billion in 2013 on a revenue of \$85 billion, and expects at least five percent growth for the next 20 years.

This is despite the hit that Boeing has taken on its Lithium Ion battery problems in the 787. However, those problems have been partially attributed to Boeing losing oversight as it engaged in greater outsourcing.

That should have thrown flags all over the place as Boeing wanted to move away from its "expensive" skilled workforce to a "right to work" untrained workforce elsewhere in the nation. But in this corporate-vision-skewed-world such connections are rarely made.

The auto industry as a corollary

What happened with the Machinists at Boeing is not dissimilar to the pressures placed on auto workers. Namely, the pressures to

give up pay and benefits to match or beat competition – sometimes global competition. As Manning notes in his article:

"The company on Thursday urged the workers to voluntarily accept the benefit cuts and wage changes. Boeing's message: Their future employment may hinge on their acceptance of a grim new reality of heightened global competition.

"Our world has changed dramatically," the company said. "Tight competition means the airplanes we are selling now are at significant discounts relative to those in the past. What we do today and tomorrow to better manage costs will have an impact on our earnings years down the road."

Indeed, but who created that reality? It was not workers here or abroad. It was Boeing and all the other corporate interests and their governmental lackeys who did this. From NAFTA to GATT and the WTO (and a slew of follow-on global agreements), to the current push for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)[8].

The goal has been to create a borderless world for goods and finance while building fences with razor wire to keep workers in place. The goal has been to force workers' compensation and rights lower and lower, and safety and environmental standards lower and lower. All of this with the goal of climbing profits. An example of this is the Boeing contract where workers are limited to a wage increase of 1% every other year while Boeing projects its profit growth at 5% a year. Meanwhile, workers have lost their pension benefits (which now go in the hands of the financiers) and have to pay up to 30% of insurance costs. So this corporate run world is feeding on the blood of the workers and other people – like those desperately waiting for low income housing.

With the auto workers union, the pressure was on to have them reduce their wages and benefits to those of the non-union workers at Toyota plants in Kentucky. What the auto companies have done (and continue to do)

There is a limit on how much tax the people can bear, and so the only option left is to reduce or eliminate critical services and functions of government

CORPORATE GREED

Toyota used union construction workers to build its Kentucky facility, but has fought off unions in the production arena

to autoworkers, Boeing is doing to the Machinists as well.

A bit of auto industry history

After the acceleration of destroying manufacturing in the US with the passage of NAFTA in 1994, Ford and GM cut 30,000 jobs and closed fourteen plants in North America. This came after five years of cuts that destroyed 140,000 jobs between the big three US auto makers (DemocracyNow, 1/27/06). While declining profits were listed as the cause of the closures, it seems pretty clear that there was plenty of profit for those at the top.

Meanwhile, enter Toyota manufacturing in the US. While it had a brief business deal with a GM joint venture, it has largely been able to fight off worker unionization (Mattera, Corporate Research Project). Toyota used union construction workers to build its Kentucky facility, but has fought off unions in the production arena.

It is clear that Toyota was engaging in activity to keep wages low from a company memo that got leaked in 2007. Essentially, the Toyota strategy was to close its one union wage plant (NUMMI) and peg its wages to the prevailing wages of the states where their plants are located (*Wired*, 4/2/07). Since, wages are relatively low in places such as Kentucky, this would represent a significant cost saving for Toyota.

Enter the “recession” (aka depression) that was finally acknowledged in 2008, and the request by the Big 3 (Ford, GM, and Chrysler) for a bailout. This is a bailout they received (and which at this time is almost “paid back”). However, that bailout had tremendous implications not only for autoworkers, but also for unions and workers in general.

Shamus Cooke discussed the overall problems well with his 2008 article, “Time for Autoworkers to Fight Back.” He notes that the pressures at play impacts all unions and labor in general, even though the battle he focuses on is the situations of Detroit’s auto workers:

“The corporate media is playing a consistent anti-union drumbeat, blaming union workers for state budget deficits and the ruin of US auto companies.

“Now, the federal government is working in tandem with the owners of the Big Three to extort the United Auto Workers (UAW), making the \$17.4 billion bailout conditional on destroying workers’ wages and benefits.

“This strategy is familiar to many union workers: a threat of a bankruptcy is used at the bargaining table like a gun to the head.

“The workers are made to feel powerless since, if they want to keep their jobs, they must accept the companies’ – and now the government’s – demands.”

Like Reagan’s legitimization of union busting with PATCO in 1986, Bush, then Obama, did exactly the same thing with the conditioning of the bailout on the backs of labor. It reinforces the (erroneous) propaganda that the problems of profitability faced by corporations (and the expense of government) is the awful union workers with their wages and benefits. Except, that sometimes the profits are just fine – even great – as with Boeing. It becomes quite clear that the issue is not profits directly, but to return workers to an effectively indentured state on a global scale.

Back to Boeing

Jeff Manning, in his *Oregonian* article, states without blinking:

“The Machinists also enjoy benefit packages most Americans can only dream about, chief among them a traditional defined-benefit pension plan that guarantees a monthly income for the duration of their retirement.”

A “traditional-defined” pension plan. Yeah, that is one of the important things that union workers fought for and won to the point that even non-union workers benefited (same with the 40 hour work week, sick leave, and more). Pensions (at least at modest and larger companies) provided pensions for their workers. That is what “tradition” means. Now, we have “the public” up in arms

about the outrageous wages and benefits of union workers and how they are destroying the economy and “forcing” good jobs to go over outside the US. Instead of fighting to maintain and expand solid wages and benefits, “the public” helps attack them. Even “Obamacare” goes after the union workers with their so-called “Cadillac” medical coverage.

Thom Hartman states regarding the Detroit bankruptcy (another theft of union benefits among other things):

“But over the past 30-plus years Detroit has been hit hard by the three-headed monster of the new American fire economy: free trade, union-busting, and bankster-run Ponzi schemes.”

These forces are not just pertinent to Detroit, but the entire nation ... even the entire world. The issue isn't just unions, or even profitability. Look at the real costs of the Boeing “wish list” and it is breath taking. One has to wonder what it is that Washington state is doing to keep Boeing. You can be certain that it goes far beyond the union gutting that was accomplished on January 3, 2013. Boeing will be building a new facility for wing construction. They need the land, and the expected cost is about \$4 billion (Gates, 1/4/14). If the “wish list” is any indication, Washington state is going to have to pony up big time.

At what point do we start raising the question “Can we afford these multinational corporations?” Hopefully before the entire world bows in submission. **CT**

Notes

1. The Union comparison of the two contracts can be found at http://www.iam751.org/pages/t2013/Comparison_latest_offer.pdf.

2. “Local officials of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers had urged their 30,000 members to oppose the deal, arguing that the proposal surrendered too much at a time of company profitability. They had opposed

taking a vote at all but were overruled by national leaders in the Machinists union.”

3. See video of address on YouTube.

4. Here Reagan is praising the “brave workers of Poland” video.

5. “Shortly after their meeting, Nixon told the Missouri Housing Development Commission to halt funding for a list of 31 low-income housing projects that the commission had already approved, including three in St. Joseph. The unprecedented “quiet order” is now in place until March 14, which means no interested party can lobby for their project, said Gerald McCush, community development manager for the city.”

“The projects in St. Joseph are: four new three-bedroom homes for seniors built by Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph on South 20th Street; extensive renovations to Brookdale East Apartments, 3414 Messanie St., by Hughes Development Company; and rehab work to InterServ’s two affordable senior housing units at St. Francis, 1601 S. 38th St., and King Hill, 6010 King Hill Ave.” (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 12/16/13)

6. Nike got a 30 year guaranteed tax rate break in 2012 in a special session of the legislature called just fora Nike Gaston, Oregonian, 12/19/2012.

7. PDF of the exclusive agreement between Oregon and Nike.

8. Bill Moyers has an excellent interview with Lori Wallach regarding these issues.

Rowan Wolf is a sociologist, teacher, writer and activist. Her areas of interest include social justice, environment, and globalization/corporatization at the core. Eowan was a member of the City of Portland's Peak Oil Task Force. She is the editor in chief of *Cyrano's Journal* - <http://cyrannosjournal> - and maintains her own site *Uncommon Thought Journal* - <http://uncommonthought.com> - and may be reached by email at rowan@uncommonthought.com

Now, we have “the public” up in arms about the outrageous wages and benefits of union workers and how they are destroying the economy and “forcing” good jobs to go over outside the US

Welfare for the rich

Bill Quigley offers ten examples of how corporations grab billions of dollars in tax breaks and subsidies

The tax code gives corporations special tax breaks which reduced what is supposed to be a 35 percent tax rate to an actual tax rate of 13 percent, saving these corporations an additional \$200 billion annually

Here are the top ten examples of corporate welfare and welfare for the rich. There are actually thousands of tax breaks and subsidies for the rich and corporations provided by federal, state and local governments but these ten will give a taste.

One. State and Local Subsidies to Corporations. An excellent *New York Times* study by Louise Story calculated that state and local government provide at least \$80 billion in subsidies to corporations. Over 48 big corporations received over \$100 million each. GM was the biggest at a total of \$1.7 billion extracted from 16 different states but Shell, Ford and Chrysler all received over a billion dollars each. Amazon, Microsoft, Prudential, Boeing and casino companies in Colorado and New Jersey received well over \$200 million each.

Two. Direct Federal Subsidies to Corporations. The Cato Institute estimates that federal subsidies to corporations costs taxpayers almost \$100 billion every year.

Three. Federal Tax Breaks for Corporations. The tax code gives corporations special tax breaks which reduced what is supposed to be a 35 percent tax rate to an actual tax rate of 13 percent, saving these corporations an additional \$200 billion annually, according

to the US Government Accountability Office.

Four. Federal Tax Breaks for Wealthy Hedge Fund Managers. Special tax breaks for hedge fund managers allow them to pay only 15% rate while the people they earned the money for usually pay 35% rate. This is the break where the multimillionaire manager pays less of a percentage in taxes than the secretary. The National Priorities Project estimates this costs taxpayers \$83 billion annually and 68% of those who receive this special tax break earn more than \$462,500 per year (the top one percent of earners).

Five. Subsidy to Fast Food Industry. Research by the University of Illinois and UC Berkeley documents that taxpayers pay about \$243 billion each year in indirect subsidies to the fast food industry because they pay wages so low that taxpayers must put up \$243 billion to pay for public benefits for their workers.

Six. Mortgage Deduction. The home mortgage deduction, which costs taxpayers \$70 billion per year, is a huge subsidy to the real estate, banking and construction industries. The Center of Budget and Policy Priorities estimated that 77 percent of the benefit goes to homeowners with incomes over \$100,000 per year.

Seven. The billions above do not even count the government bailout of Wall Street which all parties have done their utmost to tell the public they did not need, they paid back, or it was a great investment. The *Atlantic* magazine estimates that \$7.6 trillion was made available by the Federal Reserve to banks, financial firms and investors. The Cato Institute estimates (using government figures) the final costs at \$32 to \$68 billion, not including the takeover of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac which alone cost more than \$180 billion.

Eight. Each major piece of legislation contains new welfare for the rich and corporations. The *Boston Globe* analyzed the emergency tax legislation passed by Congress in early 2013 and found it contained 43 business and energy tax breaks worth \$67 billion.

Nine. Huge corporations which engage in criminal or other wrongful activities protect their leaders from being prosecuted by paying huge fees or fines to the government. You and I would be prosecuted. These corporations protect their bosses by paying off the government. For example, Reuters reported that JPMorgan Chase, which made a preliminary \$13 billion mortgage settlement with the US government, is allowed to write off a majority of the deal as tax deductible,

saving the corporation \$4 billion.

Ten. There are thousands of smaller special breaks for corporations and businesses out there. There is a special subsidy for corporate jets which cost taxpayers \$3 billion a year. The tax deduction for second homes costs \$8 billion a year. Fifty billionaires received taxpayer funded farm subsidies in the past twenty years.

If you want to look at the welfare for the rich and corporations start with the federal Internal Revenue Code. That is the King James Bible of welfare for the rich and corporations. Special breaks in tax code is the reason there are thousands of lobbyists in the halls of Congress, hundreds of lobbyists around each state legislature and tens of thousands of tax lawyers all over the country. **CT**

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Bill Quigley is Associate Director of the Center for Constitutional Rights and a law professor at Loyola University New Orleans. He is a Katrina survivor and has been active in human rights in Haiti for years. He volunteers with the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) and the Bureau de Avocats Internationaux (BAI) in Port au Prince.

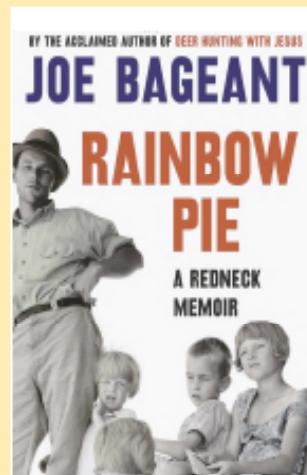
Contact Bill at quigley77@gmail.com

Huge corporations which engage in criminal or other wrongful activities protect their leaders from being prosecuted by paying huge fees or fines to the government. You and I would be prosecuted

JOE BAGEANT **Rainbow Pie: A Redneck Memoir**

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.

\$11.51 Amazon.com



Why beating inequality won't be easy

The rich today wield much more power than their counterparts in the War on Poverty days, writes **Sam Pizzigati**

America has changed. Back in the 1960s, the rich had no chokehold on our politics. Today they do

Half a century ago, President Lyndon Johnson declared a “War on Poverty.” That war would soon make a real difference. In the decade following its 1964 launch, USA’s official poverty rate dropped from 19 to 11.2 percent.

But that progress stalled in the 1970s, and a profound economic insecurity now afflicts the vast majority of Americans, poor and middle-class alike. Our top 1 percent households, meanwhile, have more than doubled their share of the nation’s income. They take home one in five dollars earned in America.

Against this backdrop, President Barack Obama has now declared inequality “the defining issue of our time.” Top Democrats, news reports tell us, are moving to make inequality the centerpiece of the 2014 mid-term elections. Even some GOP pols are jostling to show they care about how unequal America has become.

Will all this new concern about our economic divides translate into an offensive against inequality as credible as the original War on Poverty? The odds say no. The reason? America has changed. Back in the 1960s, the rich had no chokehold on our politics. Today they do.

America had rich people, of course, back in the 1960s. But we didn’t have all that many of them. And those rich we did have had far less wealth than their counterparts

today – and far less capacity to create political mayhem.

How much less capacity? Let’s look at just the richest of our rich.

In 1961, IRS records indicate that the nation’s 400 most affluent taxpayers averaged just over \$2 million in income. These taxpayers, after exploiting every available tax loophole, paid 42.4 percent of their total incomes in federal tax.

In 2007, the last year before the Great Recession hit, our top 400 averaged \$345 million in income. These contemporary rich, after loopholes, paid only 16.6 percent of their total incomes in federal tax.

Taking inflation into account, our top 400 in 2007 grabbed 25 times more income than their 400 counterparts in 1961. And the 2007 richest Americans pocketed 36 times more income after taxes than their 1961 predecessors. In actual dollars, our top 400 in 2007 – after taxes and inflation – together had \$112 billion more sloshing around in their pockets than 1961’s top 400.

Where are today’s super rich putting all this loot? A good bit of it is cascading into politics. In 2012, *The Washington Post* reports, the billionaire Koch brothers and their allies stuffed “at least \$407 million” in politically active nonprofits that didn’t have to disclose their donors.

All those millions came above and beyond the millions the Kochs and other bil-

lionaires funneled directly to candidates and campaign committees, contributions that had to be disclosed. Just one of those billionaires, arch-conservative gaming industry CEO Sheldon Adelson, openly shoveled \$91.8 million into 2012 election “super PACs.”

Billionaires like the Kochs and Adelson underwrite the most rabidly right-wing of America’s political players, those candidates and causes devoted to ending any and all obstacles to the ever greater concentration of America’s income and wealth.

But other billionaires – the Wall Street crowd and the corporate executive elite – have been mobilizing, too. These wealthy power brokers present themselves as far more enlightened and “public-spirited” than their hard right-wing counterparts.

These mega rich don’t deny or celebrate inequality. They’re maneuvering instead to limit how the nation responds to inequality – to make sure that any response leaves their wealth and power essentially intact.

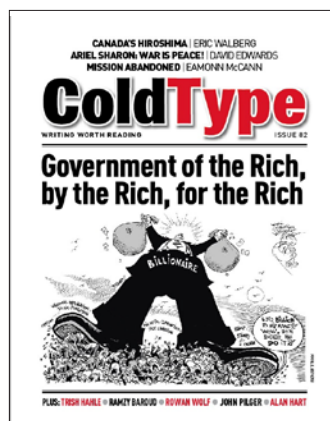
These billionaires, unlike their hard-right brethren, can tolerate modest increases in the minimum wage. They can’t tolerate any serious move to tax their financial transactions, estates, and excess income, or any legislation that would restore to working Americans the basic right to bargain over the ample wealth the US economy continues to create.

So we have today two camps of the colossally wealthy, both immensely powerful and sitting on stashes of cash that tower over the resources the rich of the 1960s could bring to bear on the political process.

But money can’t buy everything. They have the dollars. We still have the votes. **CT**

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Sam Pizzigati, an Institute for Policy Studies associate fellow, edits the inequality weekly *Too Much*. His latest book is “*The Rich Don’t Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class*”.
<http://OtherWords.org>

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Alberta's oilsands: Canada's Hiroshima

Eric Walberg applauds Neil Young's attack on the expansion of the Alberta oilsands into First Nations' territory

**Prime Minister
Stephen Harper's
statement snidely
accused Young of
hypocrisy**

Canadian rock legend Neil Young took to the road with a mission last month when he laid down the gauntlet on national TV, calling the Canadian government “completely out of control” as he began his “Honour the Treaties” tour in Toronto. His goal is to help First Nations in their fight against the expanding oilsands projects in Alberta. To the government, “Money is number one. Integrity isn't even on the map.”

Honour the Treaties is a series of benefit concerts in Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina and Calgary to raise money to support the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) in their battle against a multi-billion dollar expansion of the oilsands project in northern Alberta. ACFN's 2007 court challenge to Shell's lease at the Jackpine Mine failed in 2011, but is being appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

“The oil sands projects are among the very dirtiest on earth,” said a defiant Young. Just to extract and process the toxic sludge each day “produces as much CO₂ as all the cars in Canada”, three times as much as more efficient methods. “This oil is going not to Canada, but to China where the air quality has been measured at 30 times the levels of safety established by the World Health Organization. Is that what Canada is all about?”

This is bad PR for the scandal-plagued

Conservatives. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's office immediately issued a statement insisting that Canada's environmental laws are “rigorous”, and piously vowed to “ensure that companies abide by conditions set by independent, scientific and expert panels.”

The statement snidely accused Young of hypocrisy: “Even the lifestyle of a rock star relies on the resources developed by thousands of hard-working Canadians every day.”

Young wasted no time in turning the tables, insisting that the tarsands “violate our laws, traditions, values” and the “inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples under international law”, that it is the Harper government that is being hypocritical. Young went to see for himself, touring one of 50 oilsands sites, and was shocked at “the ugliest thing I've ever seen. It's the greediest, most destructive and most disrespectful demonstration of something that has run amok.”

Fait accompli?

Shell, Marathon and Chevron plan to massively expand their mining operations at Jackpine, about 70 km north of Fort McMurray, in Cree territory. According to CBC, “Shell's assessment projects that 185,872 hectares of wetlands in the area will be lost or altered as a result of the Jackpine Mine expansion and other industrial activity ...

21 kilometres of the Muskeg River would be destroyed as a result of the mine extension.” When the Conservative government announced final approval last December, Shell stated – anticipating smooth sailing – that it had already purchased 730 hectares of former cattle pasture to compensate for this destruction.

“And that’s Shell’s calculations! What about ours?” asks activist Jennifer Tsun. “Can someone let the migratory birds know? The caribou also need to be notified. And the fish in the water.”

The Athabasca deposit is located within the boundaries of Treaty 8 and overlaps traditional Indigenous lands of the Dene, Cree and Metis. “ACFN has, for the longest time, fought industry and government to really set lands aside for ACFN for the practice of treaty rights”, said Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Elder Pat Marcel. “I have been pushing for 20 years now for consultation to happen.” A dispirited Marcel fears that the expansion will lead to a rush of other mining projects, destroying irrevocably what’s left of their environment.

Canada’s Federal Environment Minister Leona Aglukkaq admitted, “that the designated project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects.” Nonetheless, she okayed the expansion, since the Cabinet “decided that the significant adverse environmental effects that the designated project is likely to cause are justified in the circumstances.”

Protest groundswell

Opposition to the tarsands and the Northern Gateway pipeline project to move the oil to British Columbia for export is gaining momentum, building on the Idle No More movement among natives across the country, as well as campaigns by non-native Canadians who are haunted by the Conservative government’s disregard of the disastrous fallout of its mania for money. In his CBC interview, Young compared what he saw in Fort McMurray to a slow-motion

version of what the US did to Hiroshima on August 6&9, 1945. “I always felt that Canada was a different place, where the values were different and where we cherish the natural surroundings that we’re in,” he lamented.

The campaign against the tarsands has several aces up its sleeve: for one, the support of US natives and environmental activists, and (so far) US President Obama, who has shown little enthusiasm in the scheme, recently appointing an opponent of the tarsands, John Podesta, as a White House adviser.

Secondly, even if Alberta’s Conservatives (and judges) support the project, the toxic sludge dredged up and refined at such a terrible cost must transit British Columbia, where there still is no clear legal title to the land in question, since the BC government expropriated the land as “unoccupied wilderness” prior to the arrival of European settlers. Hmm. Tell that to BC natives.

This is only one of several campaigns against the Conservative agenda for natives and energy exports, stretching from coast to coast. Last November Alberta’s Lubicon Lake Nation peacefully occupied an access road to Penn West Petroleum’s oil lease site. Penn West plans to frack the natives’ territory, a process arguably as destructive as the extraction of tarsands. Whether or not their seismic pounding will find gas, it will cause widespread destruction, including the poisoning of Haig Lake and Sawn Lake, the community’s main source of fish.

In western Ontario, Grassy Narrows Council and Chief Simon Fobister rejects Ontario’s plan for another decade of clear-cut logging on Grassy Narrows territory, which would destroy what little mature forest remains.

In New Brunswick, the standoff in Mikmaq territory continues at the encampment at highway 11, so far preventing the fracking of Mikmaq lands, despite harassment by the RCMP. The corporate ‘Goliath’ there is Irving Oil, which operates Canada’s largest

The Athabasca deposit is located within the boundaries of Treaty 8 and overlaps traditional Indigenous lands of the Dene, Cree and Metis

An Ontario court recently ruled that Ecuadoran farmers and fishermen can try to seize Chevron Canada's assets, based on a 2011 Ecuadoran court decision which found it liable for soil and water pollution near oil wells

oil refinery in Saint John, New Brunswick, and has made New Brunswick a 'company town', where Irving controls much of the economy, including media, lumber and transportation services. The Mikmaq 'Davids' are already a legend.

Blowback from Ecuador

Harper's energy and native troubles are not confined to Canada. An Ontario court recently ruled that Ecuadoran farmers and fishermen can try to seize Chevron Canada's assets, based on a 2011 Ecuadoran court decision which found it liable for soil and water pollution near oil wells, which has ruined the health and livelihoods of people living in nearby areas of the Amazon rainforest. Since then, the victims have been trying to collect \$18 billion in environmental damages without success. A Chevron spokesman vowed, "We're going to fight this until hell freezes over. And then we'll fight it out on the ice."

Ecuadorans are also resisting the attempt by a Canadian mining firm to buy up and flatten a mountain (I'm not kidding), wiping out the village where locals have been mining gold in a low-tech, relatively environmentally friendly way for five centuries. This latest scandal is the subject of a documentary "Marmato" by Mark Grieco to be released this year.

I wonder where Harper's sympathies lie in far-away Ecuador? Will he do what's right - tell Chevron to pay up, tell his mining buddies to leave Marmato's villagers in peace? Is there hope for justice for Ecuadorans from Canada's legal system? Even the US ambassador to Ecuador in 2011 said, "I think

we should be cleaning up the oil, and the lawyers are telling us not to. And we've got to figure out a political compromise. We've got to figure out a way to just get this done." Imagine a Canadian ambassador willing to say that.

Chevron's tarsands assets would go a long way to undo the devastation that it (and its predecessor Texaco) did in Ecuador over the past half century. Hey! That would mean stopping the tarsands, which would let Canada cut its outsize CO2 emissions. As for fracking, putting a stop to that obscenity would be a blessing to everyone except a few Conservative cronies. This show of good will would be a great way to make peace with Canada's First Nations and recoup some of Canada's tattered reputation in the world. Win, win, win.

Neil Young's Honour the Treaties tour is a risky gamble in the messy oilslick of politics. He's staking his personal legend on solidarity with Canada's First Nations. But the creator of "Heart of Gold" clearly sees a 21st century legend in the making, and wants to be part of it. "You want to know who is leading this protection?" asked one shivering Mikmaq protester last November. "The people that walk this earth, my ancestors. It is in our hearts to protect this and our hearts are leading this." **CT**

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***Eric Walberg** is a journalist specializing in the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia. A graduate of the University of Toronto and Cambridge in economics, he has been writing on East-West relations since the 1980s. His web site is <http://ericwalberg.com/>*

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Cracks in the alliance

Is there finally daylight between Israel and the US? asks **Jonathan Cook**

Things have come to a strange state of affairs when Washington regards Avigdor Lieberman, Israel's far-right foreign minister, as the voice of moderation in the Israeli cabinet.

While Lieberman has called the soon-to-be-unveiled US peace plan the best deal Israel is ever likely to get, and has repeatedly flattered its chief author, US secretary of state John Kerry, other ministers have preferred to pull off the diplomatic gloves.

The most egregious instance came when Moshe Yaalon, the Israeli defence minister, launched an unprecedented and personal attack on the man entrusted by President Barack Obama to oversee the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

In a private briefing, disclosed by the *Yedioth Aharonoth* newspaper, Yaalon called Kerry "obsessive and messianic", denounced his peace plan as "not worth the paper it was written on", and wished he would win "the Nobel prize and leave us alone".

Yaalon could hardly claim he was caught in an unguarded moment. According to reports, he has been making equally disparaging comments for weeks. Back in November, for example, an unnamed "senior Israeli minister" dismissed Kerry's ideas as "simply not connected to reality ... He is not an honest broker."

On this occasion, however, Washington's response ratcheted up several notches. US of-

ficials furiously denounced the comments as "offensive" and demanded that Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu publicly slap down his minister.

But what might have been expected – a fulsome, even grovelling apology – failed to materialise. It was only on Yaalon's third attempt, and after a long meeting with Netanyahu, that he produced a limp statement of regret "if the secretary was offended".

Also showing no signs of remorse, Netanyahu evasively suggested that disagreements with the US were always "substantive and not personal".

With the diplomatic crisis still simmering, Yaalon returned to the theme, telling an audience in Jerusalem that the US and Europe had a "misguided understanding" of the Middle East and denouncing a "Western preoccupation with the Palestinian issue".

Not surprisingly, the Palestinian leadership is celebrating the latest evidence of Israel's increasingly self-destructive behaviour. Such outbursts against Kerry will make it much harder for Washington to claim the Palestinians are to blame if, or more likely when, the talks collapse.

The Israeli government is not only hurling insults; it is working visibly to thwart a peace process on which the Obama administration had staked its credibility.

Netanyahu has kept moving the talks' goal posts. He declared for the first time last

Not surprisingly, the Palestinian leadership is celebrating the latest evidence of Israel's increasingly self-destructive behaviour

POWER GAME

Israeli analysts have noted Netanyahu's growing insecurity, fearful that any concessions he makes will weaken him in the eyes of the right and encourage challengers to the throne

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

month that two small and highly provocative settlements in the West Bank, Beit El and a garrisoned community embedded in Hebron, a large Palestinian city, could not be given up because of their religious importance to the "Jewish people".

That is on top of recent announcements of a glut of settlement building, ministerial backing for the annexation of the vast expanse of the Jordan Valley and a new demand that Palestinians stop "incitement".

Even Obama appears finally to be losing hope, telling the *New Yorker* that the chances of a breakthrough are "less than fifty-fifty".

While Netanyahu may act as though he is doing the White House a favour by negotiating, he should be in no doubt of his dependence on US goodwill. He received a timely reminder last month when Congress voted through a \$3.1 billion aid package for Israel in 2014 – plus hundreds of millions of dollars more for missile development – despite the severe troubles facing the US economy.

In part, Netanyahu's arrogance appears to reflect his personality – and a culture of impractical isolationism he has long nurtured on the Israeli right.

With Washington pushing firmly for engagement with the Palestinians, this has started to rebound on him. Israeli analysts have noted his growing insecurity, fearful that any concessions he makes will weaken him in the eyes of the right and encourage challengers to the throne. That explains some of his indulgence of Yaalon.

But his ideological worldview also accords with his defence minister's.

It is hardly the first time Netanyahu has picked a fight over the peace process. In Obama's first term, he waged a war of attrition over US demands for a settlement freeze – and won. He even dared publicly to back the president's Republican challenger, Mitt Romney, in the 2012 elections.

In unusually frank references to Netanyahu in his new memoir, Robert Gates, Obama's defence secretary until 2011, recalls only dis-

dain for the Israeli prime minister, even admitting that at one point he tried to get him barred from the White House. He writes: "I was offended by his glibness and his criticism of US policy – not to mention his arrogance and outlandish ambition." He also calls Netanyahu an "ungrateful" ally and a "danger to Israel".

But the problem runs deeper still. Just too much bad blood has built up between these two allies during Netanyahu's term. The feud is not only over Israel's conflict with the Palestinians but on the related matter of US handling of what Israel considers its strategic environment in the wake of the Arab Spring.

Netanyahu is angry that the US has not taken a more decisive hand in shoring up Israeli interests in Egypt and Syria, and near-apoplectic at what he sees as a cave-in on Iran and what Israel claims is its ambition to build a nuclear weapon.

He appears ready to repay the White House in kind, rousing pro-Israel lobby groups in Washington to retaliate on almost-home turf, in Congress, through initiatives such as a bill threatening to step up sanctions against Iran, subverting Obama's diplomatic efforts.

Aaron David Miller, a veteran US Middle East peace negotiator, recently described the Israeli-US relationship as "too big to fail". For the moment that is undoubtedly true.

But in his *New Yorker* interview, Obama warned: "The old order, the old equilibrium, is no longer tenable. The question then becomes, What's next?"

That warning is a double-edged sword. It is doubtless directed chiefly against those, like Iran and Syria, that are seen as threatening western interests in the Middle East. But Israel is no less a part of the "old order", and if it continues to cramp US efforts to respond effectively in a changing region it will severely test the alliance.

It looks as if the cracks between Israel and the US are only going to grow deeper and wider.

CT

Learning without asking questions

If you want to be smart, start querying your teachers, says **John Kozy**

“Clinging to one’s opinion is the best proof of stupidity.” – Michel de Montaigne

Readin’, ’ritin’, and ’rithmetic don’t occasion much questioning. But subjects like history are another matter! Learning history, or anything else for that matter, can be likened to learning Bible verses if questioning is excluded from the process. This kind of learning without questioning is carried over to our colleges and universities where the problem becomes really severe.

Subjects are taught as if they were comprised of revealed truths. Hardly anyone ever questions them because questioning them is discouraged. So we end up with people who graduate with degrees under their arms who are no wiser than they were on the days they matriculated as freshmen. No new idea ever enters their heads. In this society, people who are learned are not educated. They are little different from hurdy gurdy monkeys, but we elect them to office. Such is the legacy of the Sunday School Syndrome. It yields the stubbornness of what are essentially stillborn minds. No amount of information conveyed can ever make a stupid person smart! So nothing fundamental will ever change until intellectual development rather than the conveyance of information becomes the principal goal of learning.

Every teacher who has tried to teach students an unconventional truth has met an obstinate student, the student to whom the conventional truth he matriculated with is the conventional truth he graduates with. Some claim that the hardest minds to change are religious. I don’t know how to amass any evidence for that but I suspect that there’s a kernel of truth in the claim. Such minds are hard to change because of the way they develop.

In many homes in America’s Bible Belt, children are nurtured in constrained intellectual environments. The only recognized book is the Bible, and children are told from early ages on that it contains the revealed word of God himself which not only is never questioned but is never even questionable. These children go or are taken to church three or more times a week where they are enrolled in Bible school and hear stories, often as outrageous as the parting of the Red Sea, that are never questionable. No one ever asks, or is even ever allowed to ask, How can that be true?

Much of early childhood education lends itself to this type of learning. Readin’, ’ritin’, and ’rithmetic don’t occasion much questioning. But history, for instance, is another matter! Mostly it is learned by rote. No one questions whether anyone was massacred in the Boston Massacre. The Sons of Liberty are never considered to have been a terror-

The Sunday School Syndrome yields the stubbornness of what are essentially stillborn minds

READ THIS!

**Penmanship cannot be taught like reading.
Reading cannot be taught like multiplication.
Multiplication cannot be taught like literature.
Literature cannot be taught like chemistry**

ist organization. Lincoln's sincerity in the Gettysburg Address is rarely questioned. Knowing that Lincoln delivered the address on Thursday, November 19, 1863 and being able to recite it mean nothing. Knowing if Lincoln was sincere when he included the phrase "government of the people, by the people, for the people" or if that phrase was a mere rhetorical flourish makes a world of difference. Learning history can be likened to learning Bible verses if questioning is excluded from the process.

Why have there been several wars after the War to End all Wars was won? No one ever asks. When books that raise questions are found in school libraries, they re often unceremoniously removed. Nothing even remotely like "a search for truth" ever takes place. School is Bible school all over again only without the Bible (whose absence is often lamented).

This kind of learning without questioning is carried over to our colleges and universities where the problem becomes really severe. Questionable courses like economics, for instance, are taught like Bible verses except the verses are now referred to as models. Subjects are taught as if they were comprised of revealed truths.

Hardly anyone ever questions them because questioning them is discouraged. So we end up with people who graduate with degrees under their arms who are no wiser than they were on the days they matriculated as freshmen. They can be likened to cans being filled with trash. No new idea ever enters their heads.

In this society, people who are learned are not educated. They are little different from hurdy gurdy monkeys, but we elect them to office. No new idea has entered the halls of Congress in more than a hundred years; yet we wonder why nothing essential has changed. What fools we be!

Conventional wisdom is not wise. If it were, human beings would be solving problems rather than perpetuating them. People used to say the proof is in the pud-

ding; if the pudding tastes three hundred years old, it is!

No subject is itself unworthy of study, but how it's taught matters. Different subjects need to be taught differently. Learning is more than the conveyance of information. Penmanship cannot be taught like reading. Reading cannot be taught like multiplication. Multiplication cannot be taught like literature. Literature cannot be taught like chemistry.

Some subjects are taught to provide students with techniques; students learn how to do things; other subjects are taught to develop minds. Americans, perhaps people elsewhere too, have never understood this and don't understand it today. Some people in Ancient Athens developed excellent minds; few today have minds that match them.

These Athenians did not study a core curriculum or take standardized tests. Neither did Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Wagner, Madam Curie, Newton, Harvey, Einstein, and numerous others.

Some "reformers" ought to have learned something from that! The "reformers" themselves did not study a core curriculum or take standardized tests. Why don't they ask themselves, How did we possibly learn anything without having done so? But no, questioning is not an American intellectual trait.

Even subjects like geometry can be questioned. If no mathematician had ever questioned Euclid's geometry, non-Euclidean geometry would never have been discovered.

The Europeans who settled America were not interested in developing anyone's mind. They had the good fortune of having come to America knowing everything. They wanted their children to learn what and only what they, themselves, already knew. Many still hold that view today. For instance, the Republican Party of Texas in 2012 included in its Platform the following paragraph:

Knowledge-Based Education

We oppose the teaching of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) (values clarification), critical thinking skills and similar programs that are simply a relabeling of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) (mastery learning) which focus on behavior modification and have the purpose of challenging the student's fixed beliefs and undermining parental authority.

So the colonists established school systems overseen by local people, that is, themselves. They did not then, and many do not now, want anyone telling them what their children need to know. Teach about man-made global warming? Not in our schools. Teach about evolution? Not in our schools. Teach about racial equality? Not in our schools. Teach the Decalogue? Yeah! You bet! So we're back to Bible school! When the Puritans established Harvard College, they did so not to develop minds but only to create a place where preachers could be theologically trained. No search for scientific truth there! What about now?

Politicians are often criticized for being "out of touch with reality." How "out of touch" they are is easily shown.

Calling education a pillar of restoring the new economy, President Obama called for a recommitment to educating scientists and engineers, people 'who are building and making things we can export to other countries.'

Oh, yes! When the Russians put Sputnik into orbit, Americans "reformed" the educational system and science became all the rage. Like the rest of America's frequent rages, it didn't last. When Americans tried to tell students that science was fun, telling them that scientific work was often boring and monotonous was omitted, but students learned that for themselves in short order. Science was never as chic as being a rock star or star athlete. Hopefuls have never been attracted to science in numbers like those attracted to American Idol. In Amer-

ica, science is a flop. Five minutes of fame isn't.

So how "out of touch" are America's politicians? Look at the President's recommendation carefully. He has forgotten that Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, and Mark Zuckerberg are not scientists, engineers, or even college graduates. Had Steve Jobs been minimally scientific, he would likely be alive today. Has the President forgotten that the products these entrepreneurs helped bring to the market are mostly made in Asia and imported to America? Doesn't the President know that scientists don't build products; factory workers do? Doesn't the President know that his view of the economy is 19th Century Sophomoric rather than 21st Century Undergraduate? How far "out of touch" can one be? Well, pretty far if you are an American. Reality can't be encapsulated in pithy bible-like verses.

Perhaps the President really believes that the scientists working at CERN are building stuff to sell to the Prince of Denmark to be used to kill the Emir of Kuwait. I don't know! The foreign-trained scientists who discovered how to build an atomic bomb for America did not then become manufacturers who built and exported bombs to the rest of the world. American politicians did that! Meteorologists don't design, build, and manufacture weathervanes to sell to the rest of the world. What about archaeologists, astronomers, paleontologists, and volcanologists? Ah, yes, volcanologists! What products do they build and make to export to the rest of the world, Mr. President? What products, indeed? If this were not so stupid, it would be laughable! Indeed, America will not need more scientists and engineers until it begins to listen to those it already has like, for instance, its climatologists.

Most Americans, including Congressmen, the scions of business, and university professors do not understand science. Science, indeed all genuine knowledge, is characterized by the existence of irrefutable evidence; its claims can be shown to be true.

When Americans tried to tell students that science was fun, telling them that scientific work was often boring and monotonous was omitted, but students learned that for themselves in short order

READ THIS!

Exxon-Mobil does often raise its prices when supply falls, but when the line of cars at gas pumps gets long, filling station operators do not usually run outside and raise the prices set in the pumps

If, in the search for evidence, proof is found that the claims are false, they are abandoned. People with unscientific minds fail to do one or the other of these two things. In fact, false claims that are not abandoned are associated with some jargon. Zombie claims are never abandoned by their stubborn adherents regardless of the strength of the evidence that refutes them. Cockroach claims are abandoned and then retrieved, often in an altered form. The result is the same – ignorance never dies. As Adlai Stevenson said, “Ignorance is stubborn!”

Take, for example, the claim of economists that supply and demand is a law. As evidence for it, they cite merchants and companies that raise prices when the supply is diminished or the demand is increased, as for instance, oil companies. The evidence they cite is true, but countervailing evidence can easily be found. Exxon-Mobil does often raise its prices when supply falls, but when the line of cars at gas pumps gets long, filling station operators do not usually run outside and raise the prices set in the pumps. So although supply and demand may be an often used business practice, it is not a scientific law. Many economic models are subject to the same criticism. Economics is not science; it is full of cockroach claims.

But this characteristic of science is not restricted to factual claims. It applies to policies too. When a policy that has a specific outcome as its goal can be shown not to work or even to be unworkable, scien-

tific minds abandon it. Not political ones. In fact, political ideologies are founded on zombie ideas. A list of such policies is easily constructed: The war on drugs, the legal system, and American foreign policy top the list. They should have been abandoned decades ago if not sooner. But they have not!

You see, America is a credal nation as are most others. People are not merely irrational, they are anti-rational and anti-scientific. So what irony lurks in the minds of the President and those like him when they believe that this anti-scientific nation, without changing its ways, will be saved from its follies by scientists whom no one pays any attention to? What could be more absurd?

Such is the legacy of the Sunday School Syndrome. It yields the stubbornness of what are essentially stillborn minds. No amount of information conveyed can ever make a stupid person smart! So nothing fundamental will ever change until intellectual development rather than the conveyance of information becomes the principal goal of learning. **CT**

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John Kozy is a retired professor of philosophy and logic who writes on social, political, and economic issues. After serving in the US Army during the Korean War, he spent 20 years as a university professor and another 20 years working as a writer. His on-line pieces can be found at <http://jkozy.com>

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Inside the black hole of history

It's time to take another look at the effects of the Western intervention in Iraq, writes **Barry Lando**

The last thing the US should do is become militarily embroiled in the conflict raging again in Iraq. But for Americans to shake their heads in lofty disdain and turn away, as if they have no responsibility for the continued bloodletting, is outrageous. Why? Because America bears a large part of the blame for turning Iraq into the basket case it's become.

The great majority of Americans don't realize that fact. They never did. So much of what the US did to Iraq has been consigned by America to a black hole of history. Iraqis, however, can never forget.

In 1990, for instance, during the first Gulf War, George H.W. Bush, called on the people of Iraq to rise up and overthrow Saddam Hussein. But when they finally did, after Saddam's forces were driven from Kuwait, President Bush refused any gesture of support, even permitted Saddam's pilots to keep flying their deadly helicopter gunships. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were slaughtered.

[H.W. Bush later denied any responsibility for that uprising, but you can hear his appeal to the Iraqis in a documentary I produced with Michel Despratx, "The Trial of Saddam Hussein."]

Even more devastating to Iraq was the draconian embargo that the United States and its allies pushed through the UN Security Council in August 1990, after Saddam

invaded Kuwait.

The embargo cut off all trade between Iraq and the rest of the world. That meant everything, from food and electric generators to vaccines, hospital equipment – even medical journals. Since Iraq imported 70 percent of its food, and its principal revenues were derived from the export of petroleum, the sanctions dealt a catastrophic blow, particularly to the young.

Enforced primarily by the United States and Britain, the sanctions remained in place for almost 13 years and were, in their own way, a weapon of mass destruction far more deadly than anything Saddam had developed. Two UN administrators who oversaw humanitarian relief in Iraq during that period resigned in protest, considered the embargo to have been a "crime against humanity."

Early on, it became evident that for the United States and England, the real purpose of the sanctions was not the elimination of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, but of Saddam Hussein himself, though that goal went far beyond anything authorized by the Security Council.

The effect of the sanctions was magnified by the wide-scale destruction of Iraq's infrastructure – power plants, sewage treatment facilities, telephone exchanges, irrigation systems – wrought by the American air and rocket attacks preceding the first Gulf

So much of what the US did to Iraq has been consigned by America to a black hole of history. Iraqis, however, can never forget

NEVER FORGET

Four out of five children interviewed were fearful of losing their families; two-thirds doubted whether they themselves would survive to adulthood

War. That infrastructure has still to be completely rebuilt.

Iraq's contaminated waters became a biological killer as lethal as anything Saddam had attempted to produce. There were massive outbreaks of severe child and infant dysentery. Typhoid and cholera, which had been virtually eradicated in Iraq, also packed the hospital wards.

Added to that was a disastrous shortage of food, which meant malnutrition for some, starvation and death for others. At the same time, the medical system, once the country's pride, careened toward total collapse. Iraq would soon have the worst child mortality rate of all 188 countries measured by UNICEF.

There is no question that US planners knew how awful the force of the sanctions would be. In fact, the health calamity was coolly predicted and then meticulously tracked by the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency. Its first study was entitled "Iraq's Water Treatment Vulnerabilities."

Indeed, from the beginning, the intent of US officials was to create such a catastrophic situation that the people of Iraq – civilians, but particularly the military – would be forced to react. As Denis Halliday, the former UN humanitarian coordinator for Iraq, put it to me, "the US theory behind the sanctions was that if you hurt the people of Iraq and kill the children particularly, they'll rise up with anger and overthrow Saddam."

But rather than weakening Saddam, the sanctions only consolidated his hold on power. "The people didn't hold Saddam responsible for their plight," Halliday said. "They blamed the US and the UN for these sanctions and the pain and anger that these sanctions brought to their lives."

Even after the sanctions were modified in the "Oil for Food Program" in 1996, the resources freed up were never enough to cover Iraq's basic needs. Hans von Sponeck, who also resigned his post as UN coordinator in Iraq, condemned the program as "a fig leaf for the international community."

By 1999 a UNICEF study concluded that half a million Iraqi children perished in the previous eight years because of the sanctions – and that was four years before they ended. Another American expert in 2003 estimated that the sanctions killed between 343,900 and 529,000 young children and infants – certainly more young people than were ever killed by Saddam Hussein.

Beyond the deaths and wholesale destruction, the sanctions had another equally devastating but less visible impact, as documented early on by a group of Harvard medical researchers. They reported that four out of five children interviewed were fearful of losing their families; two-thirds doubted whether they themselves would survive to adulthood. They were "the most traumatized children of war ever described."

The experts concluded that "a majority of Iraq's children would suffer from severe psychological problems throughout their lives."

Much more chilling, is the fact that the Harvard study was done in 1991, after the sanctions had been in effect for only seven months. They would continue for another 12 years, until May 22, 2003, after the US-led invasion.

By then, an entire generation of Iraqis had been ravaged. But rather than bringing that nightmare to an end, the invasion unleashed another series of horrors. Estimates of Iraqis who died over the following years, directly or indirectly due to the savage violence, range up to 400,000. Millions more became refugees.

But there was more. The military onslaught and the American rule that immediately followed, destroyed not just the people and infrastructure of Iraq, but the very fiber of the nation. Though Saddam's tyranny was ruthless, over the years the country's disparate peoples had begun living together as Iraqis, in the same towns and neighborhoods, attending the same schools, intermarrying – slowly developing a sense of nationhood.

That process was shattered by the American proconsuls who took charge after the invasion. They oversaw a massive political purge, a witch hunt, that led to the gutting of key ministries, the collapse of the police and military and other key government institutions, without creating any viable new structures in their place. The Shiites who the US helped bring to power took revenge on the Sunnis, many of whom had backed Saddam.

The result was catastrophic. Frightened Iraqis turned for security to their own tribal or sectarian leaders. Local militias flourished. The violence spiraled out of control. Thousands perished in a horrific surge of ethnic cleansing.

Through bribery and political arm twisting, the US was able to tamp down the conflagration it had helped ignite. Underneath, however, the distrust and hatred continued smoldering.

And then, in 2011, the US troops pulled out. President Maliki continued pouring oil on the fire, refusing to give Sunnis and Kurds a share of power. And now, fed by the

conflict in neighboring Syria, Iraq is once again caught up in bloody turmoil.

And who is having to deal with all this? The generation of Iraqis that the Harvard researchers had long labeled “the most traumatized children of war ever described.” The majority of whom “would suffer from severe psychological problems throughout their lives.”

It is they now, who have come of age. It is they who, if they have not fled the country, are the military and police commanders, the businessmen and bureaucrats and newspaper editors, the tribal chiefs and sectarian leaders, the imans and jihadis and suicide bombers – all of them now still caught up in the ever-ending calamity of Iraq.

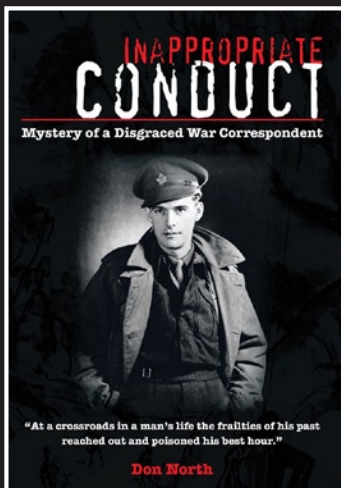
That, America, is the legacy you helped create in Iraq. How do you deal with it now?

God only knows.

CT

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Barry Lando's new book is "The Watchman's File", which follows the attempt of an American investigative reporter to unravel Israel's most closely-guarded secret

"I went in behind the lines and emerged as a kind of agent. I went in as a reporter and came out a kind of soldier. I sometimes wish I had never gone in at all" – Paul Morton



INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT

By DON NORTH

It was the worst nightmare when war reporter Paul Morton found his greatest story, on which he had risked his life behind enemy lines, was not believed by his editors at Canada's largest newspaper . . .

Buy at: <http://inappropriate-conduct.com>

America saves the world

William Blum on the perils of American leadership

With America's massive and indispensable military backing in the 1980s, Afghanistan's last secular government (bringing women into the 20th century) was overthrown, and out of the victorious Mujahedeen arose al Qaeda

"At last the world knows America as the savior of the world!" – President Woodrow Wilson, Paris Peace Conference, 1919

The horrors reported each day from Syria and Iraq are enough to make one cry; in particular, the atrocities carried out by the al-Qaeda types: floggings; beheadings; playing soccer with the heads; cutting open dead bodies to remove organs just for mockery; suicide bombers, car bombs, the ground littered with human body parts; countless young children traumatized for life; the imposition of sharia law, including bans on music ... What century are we living in? What millennium? What world?

People occasionally write to me that my unwavering antagonism toward American foreign policy is misplaced; that as awful as Washington's Museum of Horrors is, al-Qaeda is worse and the world needs the United States to combat the awful jihadists.

"Let me tell you about the very rich," F. Scott Fitzgerald famously wrote. "They are different from you and me."

And let me tell you about American leaders. In power, they don't think the way you and I do. They don't feel the way you and I do.

They have supported "awful jihadists"

and their moral equivalents for decades. Let's begin in 1979 in Afghanistan, where the Mujahedeen ("holy warriors") were in battle against a secular, progressive government supported by the Soviet Union; a "favorite tactic" of the Mujahedeen was "to torture victims [often Russians] by first cutting off their nose, ears, and genitals, then removing one slice of skin after another", producing "a slow, very painful death".

With America's massive and indispensable military backing in the 1980s, Afghanistan's last secular government (bringing women into the 20th century) was overthrown, and out of the victorious Mujahedeen arose al Qaeda.

During this same period the United States was supporting the infamous Khmer Rouge of Cambodia; yes, the same charming lads of Pol Pot and The Killing Fields.

President Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, was a leading force behind the US support of both the Mujahedeen and the Khmer Rouge. What does that tell you about that American leader?

Or Jimmy Carter – an inspiration out of office, but a rather different person in the White House? Or Nobel Peace Laureate Barack Obama, who chose Brzezinski as one of his advisers?

Another proud example of the United States fighting the awful jihadists is Kosovo, an overwhelmingly Muslim province of Serbia. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) began an armed conflict with Belgrade in the early 1990s to split Kosovo from Serbia. The KLA was considered a terrorist organization by the US, the UK and France for years, with numerous reports of the KLA having contact with al-Qaeda, getting arms from them, having its militants trained in al-Qaeda camps in Pakistan, and even having members of al-Qaeda in KLA ranks fighting against Serbia.

But Washington's imperialists, more concerned about dealing a blow to Serbia, "the last communist government in Europe", supported the KLA.

The KLA have been known for their torture and trafficking in women, heroin, and human body parts (sic). The United States has naturally been pushing for Kosovo's membership in NATO and the European Union.

More recently the US has supported awful jihadists in Libya and Syria, with awful consequences.

It would, moreover, be difficult to name a single brutal dictatorship of the second half of the 20th Century that was not supported by the United States; not only supported, but often put into power and kept in power against the wishes of the population. And in recent years as well, Washington has supported very repressive governments, such as Saudi Arabia, Honduras, Indonesia, Egypt, Colombia, Qatar, and Israel.

Not exactly the grand savior our sad old world is yearning for. (Oh, did I mention that Washington's policies create a never-ending supply of terrorists?)

And what do American leaders think of their own record? Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was probably speaking for the whole private club when she wrote that in the pursuit of its national security the United States no lon-

ger needed to be guided by "notions of international law and norms" or "institutions like the United Nations" because America was "on the right side of history."

If you've never done anything you wouldn't want the government to know about, you should re-examine your life choices.

"The idea is to build an antiterrorist global environment," a senior American defense official said in 2003, "so that in 20 to 30 years, terrorism will be like slave-trading, completely discredited."

One must wonder: When will the dropping of bombs on innocent civilians by the United States, and invading and occupying their country become completely discredited? When will the use of depleted uranium, cluster bombs, CIA torture renditions, and round-the-world, round-the-clock surveillance become things that even men like George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Barack Obama, and John Brennan will be too embarrassed to defend?

In January, a former National Security Agency official told the *Washington Post* that the Agency's workers are polishing up their résumés and asking that they be cleared – removing any material linked to classified programs – so they can be sent out to potential employers.

He noted that one employee who processes the résumés said, "I've never seen so many résumés that people want to have cleared in my life."

Morale is "bad overall", said another former official. "The news – the Snowden disclosures – questions the integrity of the NSA workforce," he said. "It's become very public and very personal. Literally, neighbors are asking people, 'Why are you spying on Grandma?' And we aren't. People are feeling bad, beaten down."

President Obama was recently moved to declare that he would be proposing "some self-restraint on the NSA" and

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ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

Manipulating bank records is about as petty and dishonorable as a superpower can behave, and could conceivably, eventually, lead to the end of the NSA as we've all come to know and love it

“some reforms that can give people more confidence.” He also said “In some ways, the technology and the budgets and the capacity [at NSA] have outstripped the constraints. And we’ve got to rebuild those in the same way that we’re having to do on a whole series of capacities ... [such as] drone operations.”

Well, dear readers and comrades, we shall see. But if you’re looking for a glimmer of hope to begin a new year, you may as well try grabbing onto these little offerings. When the American Empire crumbles, abroad and at home, as one day it must, Edward Snowden’s courageous actions may well be seen as one of the key steps along that road.

I’ve long maintained that only the American people have the power to stop The Imperial Machine – the monster that eats the world’s environment, screws up its economies, and spews violence on every continent. And for that to happen the American people have to lose their deep-seated, quasi-religious belief in “American Exceptionalism”.

For many, what they’ve been forced to learn the past six months has undoubtedly worn deep holes into the protective armor that has surrounded their hearts and minds since childhood.

A surprising and exhilarating example of one of these holes in the armor is the New Year’s day editorial in the *New York Times* that is now well known. Entitled “Edward Snowden, Whistle-blower” – itself a legitimization of his actions – its key part says: “Considering the enormous value of the information he has revealed, and the abuses he has exposed, Mr. Snowden deserves better than a life of permanent exile, fear and flight. He may have committed a crime to do so, but he has done his country a great service.”

The president has been moved to appoint a committee to study NSA abuses. This of course is a standard bureaucratic maneuver to keep critics at bay. But the

committee – Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies – did come up with a few unexpected recommendations in its report presented December 13, the most interesting of which perhaps are these two:

“Governments should not use surveillance to steal industry secrets to advantage their domestic industry.”

“Governments should not use their offensive cyber capabilities to change the amounts held in financial accounts or otherwise manipulate the financial systems.”

The first recommendation refers to a practice, though certainly despicable, that is something the United States has been doing, and lying about, for decades. Just this past September, James Clapper, Director of US National Intelligence, declared: “What we do not do, as we have said many times, is use our foreign intelligence capabilities to steal the trade secrets of foreign companies.”

Clapper is the same gentleman who told Congress in March that the NSA does not intentionally collect any kind of data on millions of Americans; and, when subsequently challenged on this remark, declared: “I responded in what I thought was the most truthful, or least untruthful, manner by saying ‘no.’”

The second recommendation had not been revealed before, in a Snowden document or from any other source.

“That was a strangely specific recommendation for something nobody was talking about,” observed the director of a government transparency group.

ABC News reported that “A spokesperson for the NSA declined to comment on the issue of bank account hacking, and a representative for US Cyber Command did not immediately return an emailed request for comment.”

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all come to know and love it.

On the other hand, the Agency no doubt holds some very embarrassing information about anyone in a position to do them harm.

The bombing of Flight 103 – Case closed?

When the 25th anniversary of the 1988 bombing of PanAm Flight 103 occurred on December 21 I was fully expecting the usual repetitions of the false accusation against Libya and Moammar Gaddafi as being responsible for the act which took the lives of 270 people over and in Lockerbie, Scotland. But much to my surprise, mingled with such, there were a rash of comments skeptical of the official British-US version, made by various people in Scotland and elsewhere, including by the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and Libya.

In a joint statement the three governments said they were determined to unearth the truth behind the attack. “We want all those responsible for this brutal act of terrorism brought to justice, and to understand why it was committed”, they declared.

Remarkable. In 1991, the United States indicted a Libyan named Adelbaset al-Megrahi. He was eventually found guilty of being the sole perpetrator of the crime, kept in prison for many years, and finally released in 2009 when he had terminal cancer, allegedly for humanitarian reasons, although an acute smell of oil could be detected. And now they speak of bringing to justice “those responsible for this brutal act of terrorism”.

The 1988 crime was actually organized by Iran in retaliation for the American shooting down of an Iranian passenger plane in July of the same year, which took the lives of 290 people.

It was carried out by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC), a 1968 breakaway from a component of the Palestine Libera-

tion Organization, with some help from Syria. And this version was very widely accepted in the Western world, in government and media circles. Until the US build-up to the Gulf War came along in 1990 and the support of Iran and Syria was needed. Then, suddenly, we were told that it was Libya behind the crime.

If the US and UK now wish to return to Iran, and perhaps Syria, as the culprits, they will have a lot of explaining to do about their previous lie. But these two governments always have a lot of explaining to do.

They’re good at it. And the great bulk of their indoctrinated citizens, with little resistance, will accept the new/old party line, and their mainstream media will effortlessly switch back to the old/new official version, since Iran and Syria are at the top of the current list of Bad Guys. (The PFLP-GC has been quiescent for some time and may scarcely exist.)

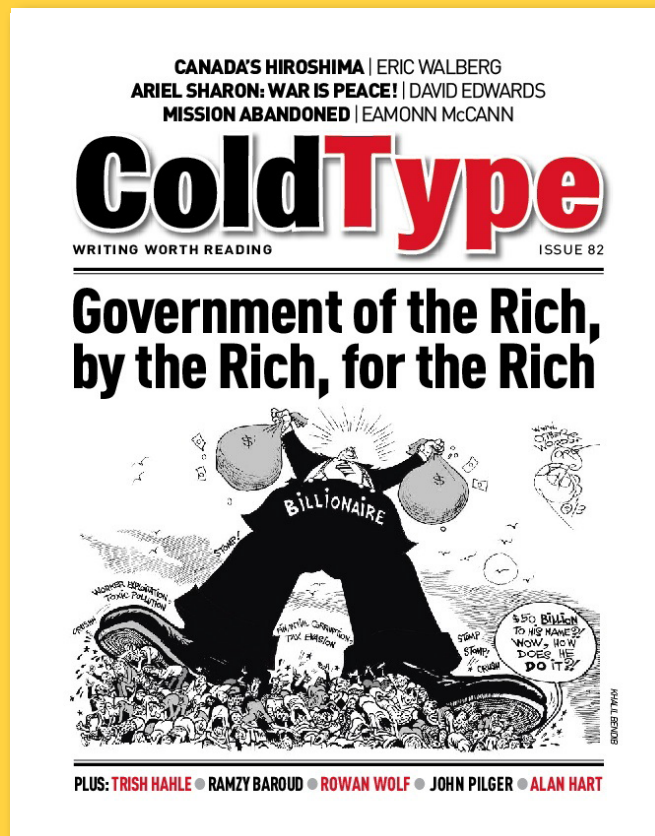
If you’re confused by all this, I suggest that you start by reading my detailed article on the history of this case, (<http://williamblum.org/essays/read/the-bombing-of-panam-flight-103-case-not-closed>) written in 2001 but still very informative and relevant. You may be rather surprised.

The UK, US and Libyan governments have now announced that they will cooperate to reveal “the full facts” of the Lockerbie bombing. And Robert Mueller, the former head of the FBI, said he believes more people will be charged. This could be very interesting. **CT**

William Blum is the author of “Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II”, “Rogue State: a guide to the World’s Only Super Power,” “West-Bloc Dissident: a Cold War Political Memoir,” and “America’s Deadliest Export – Democracy: The Truth About US Foreign Policy and Everything Else”

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