

**DORIS LESSING: USEFUL IDIOT** | TREVOR GRUNDY  
**THE MENACE OF THE MILITARY MIND** | CHRIS HEDGES  
**THE SNOW CONSPIRACY** | MICHAEL I. NIMAN

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 83



## INSIDE IRELAND'S HOUSE OF EVIL

Brothers recall terrifying cycle of sexual and physical abuse at Catholic children's home as country launches massive inquiry ● **BY ALAN RODGERS**



Cover:  
Courtesy Ulster Herald  
<http://ulsterherald.com>

# ColdType

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## NEW – CLICK ON TITLE TO GO DIRECTLY TO PAGE

- |     |                                                     |                   |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 3.  | AS YOU WERE SAYING...                               | READERS' LETTERS  |
| 7.  | THE MENACE OF THE MILITARY MIND                     | CHRIS HEDGES      |
| 10. | NOT EVEN CLOSE TO REALITY                           | DAVID EDWARDS     |
| 14. | BRING IT ON                                         | GEORGE MONBIOT    |
| 16. | <b>COVER STORY</b> – INSIDE IRELAND'S HOUSE OF EVIL | ALAN ROGERS       |
| 25. | STOP INFLATING ISRAEL'S HUGE BUBBLE OF DENIAL       | JONATHAN COOK     |
| 27. | WHAT'S A SLUM?                                      | MICHAEL PARENTI   |
| 29. | THE SUPERBOWL'S MILITARY FABLES                     | DAVE ZIRIN        |
| 31. | THE SNOW CONSPIRACY!                                | MICHAEL I. NIMAN  |
| 34. | COUNTRY LIFE                                        | TONY SUTTON       |
| 38. | TURNING IOWA INTO A WAR ZONE                        | BRIAN TERRELL     |
| 41. | DORIS LESSING: I WAS A USEFUL IDIOT                 | TREVOR GRUNDY     |
| 46. | <b>BOOK EXCERPT</b> – THE BOOK OF DEATH             | JAMES WHYLE       |
| 57. | CANADA'S MONSTER                                    | CONN M. HALLINAN  |
| 59. | GOOD WAR, BAD WAR AND THE STRUGGLE OF MEMORY        | JOHN PILGER       |
| 61. | PUTTING BIG BROTHER IN THE DRIVING SEAT             | JOHN W. WHITEHEAD |
| 64. | WHY DID THE OSCARS SNUB NELSON MANDELA?             | DANNY SCHECHTER   |
| 66. | THE DANGEROUS SEDUCTION OF DRONES                   | MEDEA BENJAMIN    |
| 68. | FOREVER THIRTEEN                                    | FRED REED         |
| 70. | JOURNALISM, FLOODS AND CLIMATE SILENCE              | DAVID CROMWELL    |
| 75. | WHO'S BIASED?                                       | WILLIAM BLUM      |
| 79. | AMERICAN CRISIS                                     | LINH DINH         |

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Editor: Tony Sutton – [editor@coldtype.net](mailto:editor@coldtype.net)

# As you were saying...

Readers tell us what they think of ColdType, our choice of formats – and our sadly-neglected Facebook page

**W**ow! I'm overwhelmed by the response to the email I sent subscribers seeking input on whether we should distribute future issue of *ColdType* in our usual PDF or a new Issue 'flick-through' format. I expected, at most, a couple of dozen replies with at least one calling me a LOUSY COMMIE BASTARD. I was wrong: my mailbox was overflowing with responses – nearly 400, in fact – and no insults.

So, what did we decide? Well, readers were split on the issue, so we've decided to publish *ColdType* in both delivery formats. But that's not all, we've also incorporated a few other reader requests:

1. A 'hot-link' on the index page so readers can go straight to the story they wish to read by clicking on the title.

2. Back copies of *ColdType* are now available at [www.issue.com/coldtype/docs](http://www.issue.com/coldtype/docs) – they may also be downloaded as PDFs from that site. The link is also on our Home Page at [www.coldtype.net](http://www.coldtype.net)

3. We've also started a letters page (you're reading the first now!). We'd love to get your reaction to stories inside each issue and any suggestions you may have for features or photo essays. We'd also like to invite readers to contribute to future issues as well.

Finally, thanks for all the kind things you said about *ColdType*. They, more than anything else, make it worthwhile. Some of comments from readers are reprinted on this and the next three pages.

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**Tony Sutton, Editor**

## Too small

I like the idea of the page-flip format as it should be easier to read, but the print was so small I couldn't read it that way at all. I had to enlarge it so much that the



page-flip format was destroyed and not useful. If a way could be found to make the print larger and still keep it in page-flip format then that would be good. As it is, I had to go back to the original format to read it. – **Pat Gibbs, Canada**

## Print is best

The text is still blurry on my Android S3 phone. I checked it on my laptop and it is fine. Truth be told, I am hesitant to read text on my Android any more as I develop severe eyestrain just

going through Tweets and Facebook. I am also not a fan of reading long pieces on my laptop either, but since I no longer have access to unlimited printing capability (I'm recently retired), I bit the bullet and use the laptop. Given my age and preferences, I remain partial to old fashion print. – **Nabeel Abraham**

*We'd love to produce ColdType in print, too, Nabeel, but we'd need a million dollar investment first. And we'd have to sell adverts. And get a circulation manager. And buy stamps. And . . . no . . . I escaped all that mainstream magazine publishing crap years ago.*

## Download is best

I don't seem to get the hang of the flip page version. It is awkward on a small laptop as the print is too small, and when you enlarge, you get only the top half of the page and it is not easy to move down and then back up (only the mouse pressing the arrows on the right do this). So I would say, the downloadable version is better – **Eric Walberg, Canada**

## Great ColdType

Great publication! I've been reading *ColdType* for years and years. Personally, I would prefer a downloadable

“ColdType is a fantastic source of truth and investigative analysis. It is a source that, as often as I can, I pass on to people I meet and worth with”

PDF ... I just find it much easier to read and to occasionally print out certain articles.

Increasingly, even in traditionally informative and unbiased newspapers (e.g. *Guardian* in the UK), there are more and more articles that don't contain the full story, or don't ask the right questions, or purposefully ignore facts, or twist statistics (as a maths geek, these are my personal worst!) and on and on.

Thus, *ColdType* is a fantastic source of truth and investigative analysis. It is a source that, as often as I can, I pass on to people I meet and worth with. I work in Beijing, and regularly deal with limited access to good quality news (although I don't think the General Administration of Press and Publication has found *Coldtype* yet). – **Ben Newman, China**

### Relevant and important

Thank you so much for all this highly relevant and important information every month. I'm quite happy with the present downloadable version, moreover in the flip version the Facebook button in the right-down corner is covering-up part of the command bar including the zoom and page number function. As usual FB always stands in the way. No change needed for me. – **Wolfgang Heber, Germany**

### Joe Bageant

Thank you for hearing me, and others And thank you for keeping Joe Bageant's writings accessible!!! No reply needed....just know you ARE appreciated. – **M.R.O.**

*We hope we'll have all of Joe's stories online as Issuu files next month*

### Years of great reading

I checked it out and... the Issuu format just doesn't work for me. My PDF reader works on my desktop PC, my laptop Mac, my iPad and my Android phone. It allows me to read it in double page landscape spread, single page portrait view, and in continuous or discreet pages. I can upload it to my Nook for reading wherever, save it to my Dropbox... Online, offline... You get my point. If some readers like the page-turning gimmick, then, no harm in providing in that format, too. But please don't ditch the PDF version. Thanks for years of great reading! – **Evan**

### Difficult to navigate

The flick-through looks fantastic and works well on a tablet or phone with a touchscreen. Also looks great on PC but I found it quite difficult to navigate (within a page, that is – page to page is easy enough). Maybe it's just because I'm not used to it. Overall, I'd much prefer PDFs for downloading and archiving and reading offline. If we could have both that would be just dandy.

PS: I've only now seen that you have a Facebook page! The Facebook link on the reader only goes to Issuu, but it made me think to go search for the Cold Type page, which I've now liked. Perhaps you should provide a link on your homepage? – **Simon Pamphilon, South Africa**

*Ah, our Facebook page, started and abandoned a couple of years ago. Perhaps it's time to take another look.*

### Back copies

The on-line flick-through is great to read! What about access to back numbers if they're not on my own drive?

– **Duncan Martin, South Africa**

*Good news. All back copies are now on line at Issue – [www.issue.com/coldtype/docs](http://www.issue.com/coldtype/docs) – we'll be putting them in year-by-year archives as soon as Issuu finds a way of running each year's issues in sequence.*

### Live person

It's great to be able to communicate with a “real” person on any of various newsletter sites. I really appreciate it, and am guessing lots of your readers feel the same way. *ColdType* is an excellent resource; hope you are able to keep it going! – **Sylvia Callaway**

### Great frustration

Frankly, both formats are awful and not suited to viewing on a computer. I have been reading you faithfully, but with great frustration. When I have the print large enough to read on my 13 inch laptop, I cannot see a full page, and, because of the columns (so well suited to a newspaper but not a computer screen), have to scroll or flip through four times for each page!

The flip-through still has these problems although it is better. It is almost large enough to read on the full screen view, but not quite. If I enlarge it, it is awkward

## “Ah, if only Joe Bageant were still around to contribute! He was a wonderful writer”

to change pages as accidentally touching it with the cursor moves it around – and still a bit small to read easily a page at a time. I can only think these problems are worse with a tablet. I wonder at the need for columns for the computer – very few of the newsletters/papers I read online still use them. Time for a rethink? – **Claudia Resch, USA**

*We have considered producing ColdType in book format with one column to the page, but no one we've spoken to likes it. What do readers think?*

### **Both formats please**

Wonderful to hear from you. Thanks so much for *ColdType*! Flip-page is nice and useful. But please do allow downloads as well. – **Subhash, India**

### **Cumbersome format**

I'm an occasional user of Issuu but utilize that site only for materials I can't obtain elsewhere. I find access to publications there to be cumbersome even when downloads are made available. I would prefer that you continue to provide Cold Type as a PDF via your site, at least as an option. Thanks again for your superb publication and commitment to the real news of our time. – **Virgil Hill, USA**

*Yes, we're still going to provide readers with a downloadable PDF version. of ColdType*

### **Hard copies**

I'm old and still prefer to have hard-copies of everything I read. I'd pay any amount for a hard-copy subscription. It took me an hour to figure out how to print an article from your most-recent issue . . . from the PDF. I couldn't see how to print using the “flick-through.” – **Michael Miano**

### **Needs fine tuning**

Thanks for taking the time to at least ask us! I like the “flick through” idea, but the type is awfully small. If I were able to make it readable, which I cannot, I would imagine that the page turning advantage would be lost, resulting in having to manipulate the page up and down and side to side. Needs some fine tuning. – **Steve Church**

### **Bad experience with Issuu**

I'm old-fashioned so I want to continue downloading *ColdType* as a PDF so I can print it out and read it on paper. I've had bad luck with Issuu in the past. Other publications on it either don't download at all or do so in a mangled form that doesn't print properly. Look at the latest issue of *African Agenda* to see what I mean.

As far as “anything else” goes please don't change a thing. I look forward to *ColdType* and read it cover-to-cover with great pleasure every month. Keep up the good work! – **Jim Lane, Canada**

### **Give us both**

Probably great for, and looks good on, laptops and tablets – I tried it with my HTC one and it works OK, with a little bit of fiddling to magnify, but same as a PDF. With PDF, download once and optional print. My preference is to deliver in both formats – **Michael Peters, Australia**

### **Issuu is terrible**

Issuu is TERRIBLE. Jumps all over the page, hard to read. Hurts my eyes. If it were my only choice, I'd cancel *ColdType*. – **Ronni Bennett**

### **Missing Joe**

I don't especially like Issuu or similar flip-page technologies. Among other things, they don't work well on smaller monitors. I much prefer the portability of PDF format. If you do decide to go with issuu or something similar, please keep the PDF option as well. I really appreciate the content you provide in *ColdType*. Ah, if only Joe Bageant were still around to contribute! He was a wonderful writer. – **Tim Smith**

### **Active table of contents**

Give us both formats Also, allow active TOC so that I can point and click for an article. – **Mitch Sackson**

*Your wish is our command. Hope the links on Page 2 work for you.*

### **More transportable**

The Issuu format is very glam, no doubt, and looks nice on the screen. But I'd like to stick to my PDFs. I find

## “Issuu is pretty and everything, but I am not at all sure what functionality it adds”

them very fuss-free and more easily transportable to my e-reader (not a Kindle) and tablet. I don't do much real-time online reading, therefore an easily portable format is best for me. Keep up the excellent work you do with your mag. It's one of the highlights of my life. – **Dolores**

### PDF guy

I'm more of a downloadable PDF guy, myself (okay, type nerd that I am, I like to zoom in really close at times to inspect the characters of typefaces I might want to purchase someday!). But I can see that others out there might like to view it in an Issuu-type format. I find the Issuu format (which reminds me of Press Display/Press Reader to be awkward at times, what with having to zoom in and pan all over the place.

My preference is for PDF, but if it doesn't cost too much more or is more difficult to set up, then how about both? – **Kent Steinbrenner, USA**

### Awesome Issuu

I just got your email offering the two versions of *ColdType*, and although I enjoy the PDF version quite well, I think the “flip page” is awesome. Receiving both would be an excellent idea though, not for any special reason but for convenience. Thank you for your time. – **George Pollnow**

### Flip verion is better

Although I didn't expect to, I actually like the ‘flip-page’ version better than the PDF. The only thing the PDF can do better is make possible the extraction of some key pages from it to isolate one article for classroom reading, as well as for sending on a URL to others. – **Jay Hamilton, USA**

### Print and read

As far as those “flick-through” publications go, that one seems pretty user-friendly. I could imagine using it on an iPad (though I don't have one yet), though not on a PC. I must confess to being rather old-fashioned though; I still tend to print out the articles which I like from the

PDF and read them on paper, at a cafe, on the bus etc... I'm sure I shall succumb and get an iPad at some point, probably when my current laptop conks out, in which case the flick-through version would become preferable I suppose. – **Dominic Al-Badri**

### Adobe bloatware

Please keep option one – the PDF version. It works just fine on my Mac hardware. I don't even use Adobe Reader. I consider it bloatware. I install very little extra software on the machine. It works better that way. – **David McWade**

### For pretty's sake?

Thanks for the effort that goes in to making ColdType: it's always an informative read. Lots of sites make these changes without any consultation, so it's refreshing to be asked ahead of time about a format change. For what it's worth, I would be keen to keep the basic PDF version, with or without the flipbook version. The flipbook seems optimised for phones (it works well on my Nexus) and tablets (which I do not own) but does not work nearly so well on desktop monitors (I tried it out on a couple of monitors to make sure it wasn't my, somewhat idiosyncratic, set-up at home that was at issue). I can also easily download, keep and reread the PDF versions with great ease – including off-line – and am not sure the flipbook has the same functionality.

Issuu is pretty and everything, but I am not at all sure what functionality it adds. Is there anything to suggest it would improve circulation? If so, go for it! The more readers the better! But if it is ‘pretty for pretty's sake’ or just to be HTML-5-tastic, I'd be happier to see the effort and money involved used towards something more substantial than a redesign/re-platforming.... Anyway, I hope this doesn't seem overly moaning – I will, of course, remain a loyal reader whatever you decide and, again, it's nice to be asked one's opinion ahead of time. – **Keith Fleming**

*Moaning, criticism – whatever. Just keep letting us know what you think.*

**CT**

## TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

We'd like to know what you think about the articles in this issue of ColdType.

Send an email to [editor@coldtype.net](mailto:editor@coldtype.net)

# The menace of the military mind

Why we must thwart the demented leadership dreams of people like James Clapper and his henchmen, says **Chris Hedges**

I had my first experience with the US military when I was a young reporter covering the civil war in El Salvador. We journalists were briefed at the American Embassy each week by a US Army colonel who at the time headed the military group of US advisers to the Salvadoran army. The reality of the war, which lasted from 1979 to 1992, bore little resemblance to the description regurgitated each week for consumption by the press. But what was most evident was not the blatant misinformation – this particular colonel had apparently learned to dissemble to the public during his multiple tours in Vietnam, but the hatred of the press by this man and most other senior officers in the US military. When first told that he would have to meet the press once a week, the colonel reportedly protested against having to waste his time with those “limp-dicked communists.”

For the next 20 years I would go on from war zone to war zone as a foreign correspondent immersed in military culture. Repetitive rote learning and an insistence on blind obedience – similar to the approach used to train a dog – work on the battlefield. The military exerts nearly total control over the lives of its members. Its long-established hierarchy ensures that those who embrace the approved modes of behavior rise and those who do not are belittled, insulted and hazed. Many of the marks of civilian life

are stripped away. Personal modes of dress, hairstyle, speech and behavior are heavily regulated. Individuality is physically and then psychologically crushed. Aggressiveness is rewarded. Compassion is demeaned. Violence is the favorite form of communication. These qualities are an asset in war; they are a disaster in civil society.

Homer in “The Iliad” showed his understanding of war. His heroes are not pleasant men. They are vain, imperial, filled with rage and violent. And Homer’s central character in “The Odyssey,” Odysseus, in his journey home from war must learn to shed his “hero’s heart,” to strip from himself the military attributes that served him in war but threaten to doom him off the battlefield. The qualities that serve us in war defeat us in peace.

Most institutions have a propensity to promote mediocrities, those whose primary strengths are knowing where power lies, being subservient and obsequious to the centers of power and never letting morality get in the way of one’s career. The military is the worst in this respect. In the military, whether at the Paris Island boot camp or West Point, you are trained not to think but to obey. What amazes me about the military is how stupid and bovine its senior officers are. Those with brains and the willingness to use them seem to be pushed out long before they can rise to the senior-officer ranks.

**In the military, whether at the Paris Island boot camp or West Point, you are trained not to think but to obey**

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## WORLDS APART

**To fight terrorists  
Americans have  
become terrorists.  
Peace is for the  
weak. War is  
for the strong.  
Hypermasculinity  
has triumphed  
over empathy.  
We Americans  
speak to the world  
exclusively in the  
language of force**

The many Army generals I met over the years not only lacked the most rudimentary creativity and independence of thought but nearly always saw the press, as well as an informed public, as impinging on their love of order, regimentation, unwavering obedience to authority and single-minded use of force to solve complex problems.

So when I heard James R. Clapper Jr, a retired Air Force lieutenant general and currently the federal government's director of national intelligence, denounce Edward Snowden and his "accomplices" – meaning journalists such as Glenn Greenwald and Laura Poitras – before the Senate Intelligence Committee last month I was not surprised. Clapper charged, without offering any evidence, that the Snowden disclosures had caused "profound damage" and endangered American lives. And all who have aided Snowden are, it appears, guilty of treason in Clapper's eyes.

Clapper and many others who have come out of the military discern no difference between terrorists and reporters, and by reporters I am not referring to the boot-licking courtiers on television and in Washington who masquerade as reporters. Carry out an interview with a member of al-Qaida, as I have, and you become in the eyes of generals like Clapper a member of al-Qaida. Most generals I know recognize no need for an independent press. The munchkins who dutifully sit through their press briefings or follow them around in preapproved press pools and publish their lies are the generals' idea of journalism.

When I was in Central America the US officers who were providing support to the military of El Salvador or Guatemala, along with help to the Contra forces then fighting the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, did not distinguish between us journalists and the rebel forces or the leftist Sandini-

sta government. We were one and the same. The reporters and photographers, often after a day or two of hiking to reach small villages, would report on massacres by the Salvadoran army, the Guatemalan army or the Contras. When the stories appeared, the US officers usually would go volcanic. But their rage would be directed not at those who pulled the triggers but at those who wrote about the mass killings or photographed the bodies.

This is why, after Barack Obama signed into law Section 1021 of the National Defense Authorization Act, which permits the US military to seize US citizens who "substantially support" al-Qaida, the Taliban or "associated forces," to strip them of due process and to hold them indefinitely in military detention centers, I sued the president. I and my fellow plaintiffs won in US District Court. When Obama appealed the ruling it was overturned. We are now trying

to go to the Supreme Court. Section 1021 is a chilling reminder of what people like Clapper could do to destroy constitutional rights. They see no useful role for a free press, one that questions and challenges power, and are deeply hostile to its existence. I expect Clapper, if he has a free hand, to lock us up, just as the Egyptian military has arrested

a number of Al-Jazeera journalists, including some Westerners, on terrorism-related charges. The military mind is amazingly uniform.

The US military has won the ideological war. The nation sees human and social problems as military problems. To fight terrorists Americans have become terrorists. Peace is for the weak. War is for the strong. Hypermasculinity has triumphed over empathy. We Americans speak to the world exclusively in the language of force. And those who oversee our massive security and surveillance state seek to speak to us in the same

### TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

We'd like to know what  
you think about this  
– or any other story in  
ColdType.

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demented language. All other viewpoints are to be shut out. “In the absence of contrasting views, the very highest form of propaganda warfare can be fought: the propaganda for a definition of reality within which only certain limited viewpoints are possible,” C. Wright Mills wrote. “What is being promulgated and reinforced is the military metaphysics – the cast of mind that defines international reality as basically military.”

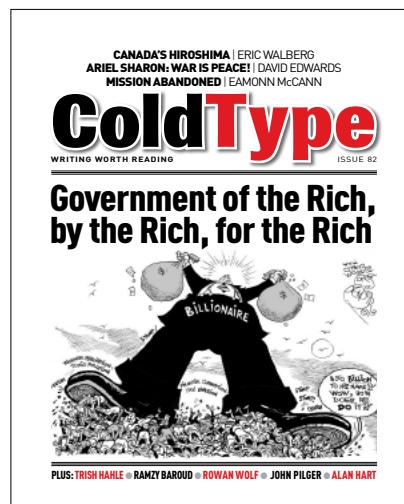
This is why people like James Clapper and the bloated military and security and surveillance apparatus must not have unchecked power to conduct wholesale surveillance, to carry out extraordinary renditions and to imprison Americans indefinitely as terrorists. This is why the nation, as our political system remains mired in paralysis, must stop glorifying military values. In times of turmoil the military always seems to be a good alternative. It presents

the facade of order. But order in the military, as the people of Egypt are now learning again, is akin to slavery. It is the order of a prison. And that is where Clapper and his fellow generals and intelligence chiefs would like to place any citizen who dares to question their unimpeded right to turn us all into mindless recruits. They have the power to make their demented dreams a reality. And it is our task to take this power from them. **CT**

*Chris Hedges spent nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans. He has reported from more than 50 countries and has worked for The Christian Science Monitor, National Public Radio, The Dallas Morning News and The New York Times, for which he was a foreign correspondent for 15 years.*

**Order in the military, as the people of Egypt are now learning again, is akin to slavery. It is the order of a prison**

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# Not even close to reality

**David Edwards** tells how the media's selective filtering of its sources in the Syrian civil war leads to a distorted view of what is actually happening

**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**

If corporate media performance on Iraq was shocking, the response to Syria is made worse precisely because the lessons from Iraq could hardly be more obvious.

We know how the Iraqi 'threat' was demonised with hyped atrocity tales, invented 'links to al Qaeda' and non-existent WMD. We know the West was all along the real threat, using 'diplomacy' to achieve, not avoid, a war for control of Iraq and its oil.

Despite this, and despite the clear need for scepticism regarding claims made about a Syrian government also being targeted by the West, the cartoonist Steve Bell – respected as a rare radical voice at the *Guardian* – recently produced this cartoon in response to a report commissioned by the Qatari government claiming that the Syrian government had 'systematically tortured and executed about 11,000 detainees since the start of the uprising'.

The cartoon suggests not only that Syrian president Assad is personally responsible for the mass torture and deaths, but that he is proud of them. This demonisation of an Official Enemy recalls the crude state propaganda of the First World War.

Consider the source of the claims depicted in Bell's cartoon. The *Guardian* reports that Qatar 'has played a major role arming the rebels seeking to overthrow Bashar al-Assad', having played 'a central role in extending support to the Libyan rebels

fighting to overthrow Muammar Gaddafi'. Noam Chomsky notes that arms have been 'flown in [to Syria] from Qatar by the CIA'. Indeed, Qatar has close military ties to the US and UK, with forces armed and trained by the West. Qatar contains the principle overseas headquarters of the US military's Central Command (CENTCOM) and was a key staging ground for the invasion of Iraq. In 2012, the US State Department reported that arms totalling \$1.7 billion had been approved to Qatar in the previous fiscal year.

Qatar has long been a dictatorship, an absolute monarchy – political parties are forbidden and there is no independent legislature. Amnesty International recently described how the authorities 'maintain strict control on freedom of expression'. New cases of torture recently emerged in a country where migrant workers are 'exploited, abused and inadequately protected under the law'.

I wrote to Bell:

Hi Steve

Regarding this week's cartoon on Assad's 'selfie', are you not at all sceptical about the timing, accuracy and provenance of the recent report on Syrian government killing and torture? You'll know that the report was commissioned by the Qatari government which, according to the *Financial Times*, has bankrolled the 'rebels' to the tune of \$3



“What is reprehensible is that the BBC are presenting the report as though it were produced by neutral experts, whereas the opposite is the case”

**Steve Bell's cartoon from the Guardian newspaper.**

billion in weaponry and other support.

Isn't it obvious that Qatar timed the release of the report to provide an ideal backdrop for media discussion (cartoons included) of the Geneva II peace conference? Should that not encourage a little caution and scepticism?

Sincerely

David Edwards (January 23, 2014)

After an emailed nudge requesting a response, Bell replied:

Dear David Edwards

I'm quite aware of the role of the Qatari government in the Syrian disaster, just as you are well aware of the record of the Assad regime's security apparatus. Timing is important, as is the need to keep our eyes open.

Best wishes

Steve Bell (January 24, 2014)

No doubt many *Guardian* readers would consider it Bell's job to lampoon instant acceptance of questionable propaganda, and indeed stonewalling replies of the kind he sent us in response to our questions.

Craig Murray, the former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, put the cartoon, and much other media performance, in perspective:

'But whether 11,000 people really were murdered in a single detainee camp I am unsure. What I do know is that the BBC presentation of today's report has been a disgrace. The report was commissioned by the government of Qatar who commissioned Carter Ruck to do it. Both those organisations are infamous suppressors of free speech. What is reprehensible is that the BBC are presenting the report as though it were produced by neutral experts, whereas the opposite is the case. It is produced not by anti torture campaigners or by human rights activists, but by lawyers who are do-

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## LESSONS IGNORED

**“The ‘trash can’ was not capable of flying the 6 miles from the centre of the Syrian government-controlled part of Damascus to the point of impact in the suburbs, as claimed by the US government?”**

ing it purely and simply because they are being paid to do it.’

Murray added in a comment beneath his article:

‘It is plain the intention of the commissioners of the report is not to investigate atrocities in Syria, but to push again for Western military intervention. Part of a strategy which will next involve a staged breakdown of the Geneva talks.’

The report was headline and front page news on BBC TV, radio and website, and was given massive coverage across the media. It was accepted – with rare caveats vaguely noting that Qatar ‘supports’ the ‘rebels’ – at face value.

### **‘Trash Can’ Flight Path**

If a report from such an obviously biased source can merit wall-to-wall media coverage, how about a report on Syria’s August 21, 2013 gas attacks by two authentically credible figures like Richard Lloyd and Theodore Postol?

Lloyd is a former United Nations weapons inspector who in two decades at Raytheon, a top military contractor, wrote two books on warhead design. He has written a critique of the Israeli Iron Dome anti-missile system for engineers and weapons designers. In March 2013, the *New York Times* noted that Lloyd ‘has the credentials for a critique’.

Postol is a professor and national security expert in MIT’s Program in Science, Technology and Society. In 1995 he received the Hilliard Roderick Prize from the American Association for the Advancement of Science and in 2001 he received the Norbert Wiener Award from Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility ‘for uncovering numerous and important false claims about missile defenses’. Postol has a proven track record in, for example, debunking Pentagon claims on the success of its Patriot missile system.

In September 2013, the *New York Times* described Lloyd and Postol as ‘leading

weapons experts’.

Their January 14 report titled, ‘Possible Implications of Faulty US Technical Intelligence,’ examines US government claims regarding the August 21 chemical weapons attacks in Damascus. The report finds that the range of the rocket that delivered sarin in the largest attack that night was too short for the device to have been fired from Syrian government positions, as claimed by the Obama administration.

Using mathematical projections about the likely force of the rocket – which has been variously described as ‘a trash can on a stick’ and ‘a soup can’ – Lloyd and Postol conclude that the device likely had a maximum range of 2 kilometres, or just more than 1.2 miles. The ‘trash can’ was not capable of flying the 6 miles from the centre of the Syrian government-controlled part of Damascus to the point of impact in the suburbs, as claimed by the US government, nor even the 3.6 miles from the edges of government-controlled territory. Lloyd and Postol comment in their report:

‘This indicates that these munitions could not possibly have been fired at east Ghouta from the “heart” or the eastern edge of the Syrian Government controlled area depicted in the intelligence map published by the White House on August 30, 2013.

‘This faulty intelligence could have led to an unjustified US military action based on false intelligence.

‘A proper vetting of the fact that the munition was of such short range would have led to a completely different assessment of the situation from the gathered data.’

Postol adds:

‘I honestly have no idea what happened. My view when I started this process was that it couldn’t be anything but the Syrian government behind the attack. But now I’m not sure of anything. The administration narrative was not even close to reality. Our intelligence cannot possibly be correct.’

Lloyd, who has carefully studied weap-

ons capabilities in the Syrian conflict, rejects the claim that rebels are less capable of making these rockets than the Syrian military:

‘The Syrian rebels most definitely have the ability to make these weapons. I think they might have more ability than the Syrian government.’

Lloyd and Postol have made clear that they are not arguing that the rebels were behind the attack, but instead pointing to the flawed assessments behind US claims.

So how have the same media that gave so much coverage to the Qatari-commissioned report responded?

According to the Lexis media database (February 3, 2014), Lloyd and Postol’s report has not been mentioned in any UK newspaper. Following a search of the Factiva database (January 28, 2014), the US political analyst David Peterson told us that the only major US newspapers to have covered the report are the *New York Times* and *Miami Herald*, with one mention each.

This near-total blanking of the report comes in the wake of a detailed analysis of the same chemical weapons attacks by renowned, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh in the *London Review of Books* on December 19, 2013.

As I discussed in December, Hersh reported on his interviews with US intelligence and military personnel:

‘I found intense concern, and on occasion anger, over what was repeatedly seen as the deliberate manipulation of intelligence. One high-level intelligence officer, in an email to a colleague, called the administration’s assurances of Assad’s responsibility a “ruse”’

In an interview with Amy Goodman on Democracy Now!, Hersh added: ‘there are an awful lot of people in the government

who just were really very, very upset with the way the information about the gas attack took place’.

Hersh’s article has received one mention in the entire UK press, in the *Daily Mail*.

This, then, is more evidence indicating a prime mechanism of thought control in ostensibly democratic societies. Sources favourable to state-corporate power, however non-credible, are granted massive favourable coverage. Sources that challenge the required view of the same interests are simply ignored, with no explanations given by a media system that does not tolerate self-analysis or public interference in what is, after all, a business.

David Yelland explained:

‘As a former Sun editor, I know newspapers are dictatorships... too often anyone

who challenges the status quo is ejected from the group or sidelined. Indeed, many papers remain dictatorships: anyone who challenges the editor does not last long. This applies even more to proprietors.’

Elite proprietors and parent companies naturally select editors to represent the interests of elite power. Because the same interests run all major media

outlets, it is no surprise that they flip as one, like a flock of starlings, towards favourable sources and away from unfavourable ones. The autocratic nature of the media system means that the public has no way to ask even the most basic questions about these decisions. We, for example, are largely dismissed as annoying malcontents.

While a number of national newspapers reported Yelland’s comments, Lexis finds that, appropriately enough, not one of them mentioned his claim that ‘many papers remain dictatorships’.

**CT**

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

**“Many papers remain dictatorships: anyone who challenges the editor does not last long. This applies even more to proprietors”**

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# Bring it on

Did an undercover policeman help to instigate a major UK riot?  
asks **George Monbiot**

**Undercover officers, often using the stolen identities of dead children, worked their way into key positions and helped to organise demonstrations**

From the Stephen Lawrence inquiry we learnt that the police were institutionally racist. Can it be long before we learn that they are also institutionally corrupt? Almost every month the undercover policing scandal becomes wider and deeper. Today I can reveal a new twist, which in some respects could be the gravest episode yet. It surely makes the case for an independent public inquiry – which is already overwhelming – unarguable.

Before I explain it, here's a summary of what we know already. Thanks to the remarkable investigations pursued first by the victims of police spies and then by the *Guardian* journalists Rob Evans and Paul Lewis (whose book "Undercover" is as gripping as any thriller), we know that British police have been inserting undercover officers into protest movements since 1968. Their purpose was to counter what they called subversion or domestic extremism, which they define as seeking to "prevent something from happening or to change legislation or domestic policy ... outside the normal democratic process". Which is a good description of how almost all progressive change happens.

Most of the groups whose infiltration has now been exposed were non-violent. Among them were the British campaign against apartheid in South Africa, the protest movements against climate change, people seeking to expose police corruption and the

campaign for justice for the murdered black teenager Stephen Lawrence. Undercover officers, often using the stolen identities of dead children, worked their way into key positions and helped to organise demonstrations. Several started long-term relationships with the people they spied on. At least two fathered children with them.

Some officers illegally used their false identities in court. Some acted as agents provocateurs. Seldom did they appear to be operating in the wider interests of society. They collected intelligence on trade unionists that was passed to an agency which compiled unlawful blacklists for construction companies, ensuring that those people could not find work. The policeman who infiltrated the Stephen Lawrence campaign was instructed by his superiors to "hunt for disinformation" about the family and their supporters that could be used to undermine them. When their tour of duty was over, the police abandoned their partners and their assumed identities and disappeared, leaving a trail of broken lives. As the unofficial motto of the original undercover squad stated, it would operate By Any Means Necessary.

The revelations so far have led to 56 people having their cases dropped or convictions overturned, after police and prosecutors failed to disclose that officers had helped to plan and execute the protests for which people were being prosecuted. But we know

the names of only 11 spies, out of 100-150, working for 46 years. Thousands of people might have been falsely prosecuted.

So far there have been 15 official inquiries and investigations. They seem to have served only to delay and distract. The report by Sir Christopher Rose into the false convictions of a group of climate change protestors concluded that failures by police and prosecutors to disclose essential information to the defence “were individual, not systemic” and that “nothing that I have seen or heard suggests that ... there was any deliberate, still less dishonest, withholding of information.” Now, after an almost identical case involving another group of climate activists, during which the judge remarked that there had been “a complete and total failure” to disclose evidence, Rose’s findings look incredible.

The biggest inquiry still running, Operation Herne, is investigating alleged misconduct by the Metropolitan police. Of its 44 staff, three quarters work for, er, the Metropolitan Police. Its only decisive action so far has been to seek evidence for a prosecution under the Official Secrets Act of Peter Francis, the police whistleblower who has revealed key elements of this story. This looks like an attempt to discourage him from testifying, and to prevent other officers from coming forward.

Bad enough? You haven’t heard the half of it. Last month the activist John Jordan was told his conviction (for occupying the office of London Transport) would be overturned. The Crown Prosecution Service refuses to reveal why, but it doubtless has something to do with the fact that one of Jordan’s co-defendants turns out to have been Jim Boyling, a secret policeman working for the Met, who allegedly used his false identity in court.

John Jordan has now made a further claim. He alleges that the same man helped to organise a street party that went wrong and turned into the worst riot in London since the poll tax demonstrations.

The J18 Carnival Against Global Capitalism on June 18th 1999 went well beyond

non-violent protest. According to the police, 42 people were injured and over £1m of damage was done. One building was singled out: the London International Financial Futures Exchange (Liffe), where derivatives were traded. Though protestors entered the building at 1.40pm, the police did not arrive until 4.15.

After furious recriminations from the Lord Mayor and the people who ran the Liffe building, the City of London police conducted an inquiry. It admitted that their criticisms were justified, and that the police’s performance was “highly unsatisfactory”. The problem, it claimed, was that the police had no information about what the targets and plans of the protestors would be, and had no idea that Liffe was in the frame. The riot was “unforeseen”.

John Jordan was a member of “the logistics group that organised the tactics for J18. There were about 10 of us in the group and we met weekly for over 6 months.” Among the other members, he says, was Jim Boyling. “The ten of us ... were the only people who knew the whole plan before the day itself and who had decided that the main target would be Liffe.” Boyling, he alleges, drove one of the two cars that were used to block the road to the building.

It is hard to think of a more serious allegation. For six months an undercover officer working for the Metropolitan Police was instrumental in planning a major demonstration, which ended up causing injuries and serious damage to property. Yet the police appear to have failed to pass this intelligence to the City of London force, leaving the target of the protest unprotected.

Still no need for an independent public inquiry? Really? **CT**

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**George Monbiot’s** latest book is “*Feral: Rewilding The Land, The Sea and Human Life.*” This essay originally appeared in *The Guardian* newspaper. More of his work appears at his web site <http://monbiot.com>

**For six months an undercover officer working for the Metropolitan Police was instrumental in planning a major demonstration, which ended up causing injuries and serious damage to property**

# Inside Ireland's House of Evil

Brothers recall terrifying cycle of sexual and physical abuse at Catholic-run children's home, writes **Alan Rodgers**

**The shocking nature of the abuse which children were subjected to at Rubane House in Kircubbin, Co Down and other institutions is currently being investigated by the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry**

## Part 1. Background

**T**HE death of their mother in Fintona, Northern Ireland, during the early 1950s dealt a cruel hand to two local men and their six brothers and sisters. At a time when they should have been enjoying growing up, the brothers were separated from their siblings, and plunged into a terrifying cycle of sexual and physical abuse in one of the North's most notorious institutions.

For Patrick Murphy and Willie Kelly, the painful memories of that period will never fade. Both are now aged in their 70s and say they will never forget the horrors of their youth.

The shocking nature of the abuse which children were subjected to at Rubane House in Kircubbin, Co Down and other institutions is currently being investigated by the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry. Last month, The De La Salle Brothers – which ran Rubane House – was one of two Catholic orders that said sorry for the

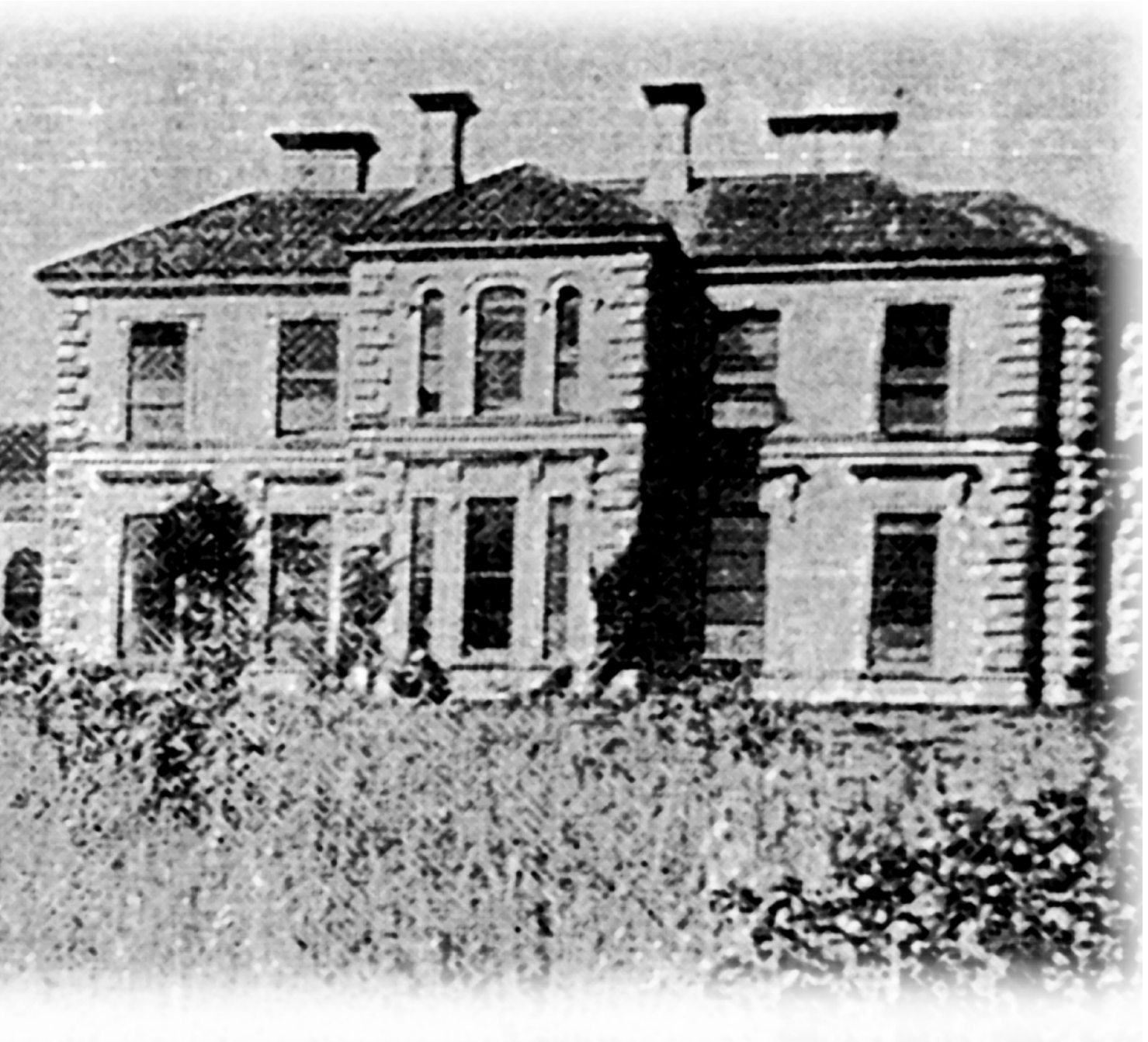


abuse children suffered in their children's homes in Northern Ireland.

The Sisters of Nazareth and the De La Salle Brothers issued apologies on the second day of the inquiry in Banbridge – the biggest public inquiry into child abuse ever to take place in the UK.

It is investigating abuse claims in 13





children's homes and juvenile justice centres in Northern Ireland, from 1922 to 1995, including Rubane House.

More than 100 people from the Omagh and Strabane areas are said to have submitted evidence to the inquiry.

However, the brothers are not taking part because they feel it has come "too

late" for them.

"I am 77 years of age now and the chances of me getting anything other than a feeble sorry are remote," said Patrick. "But if we had been born in Donegal then we'd have received compensation.

"It is hard to say why all of this has taken so long and to be quite honest our view

**The notorious Rubane House in County Down was run by the De La Salle Brothers.**

**“One of the Brothers was running the small farm attached to Kircubbin. But he just wouldn’t leave us boys alone. He had to get your hand down his trousers, but I fought against it,”**

is that they’re only going to be touching the surface of what went on.

“My intention was to take this to the grave with me. But when the inquiries started in the Republic my son began asking me about my experiences because he knew I’d been in a children’s home here.

“He started to make the connection. The real truth became apparent and he couldn’t believe that I had held onto those memories for all these years.”

Patrick and Willie never met for almost four decades following their mother’s death. Both now live in Strabane and it was only by chance that they discovered their shared experience in Rubane House.

“You could have knocked me over with a feather when Willie told me that he had also been in Rubane House,” said Patrick.

After spending most of their lives being separated from each other and their other brothers and sisters, the family is now reunited. Despite the brothers’ reluctance to take part in the inquiry, Survivors NI is appealing for other local people who have been abused to contact them.

Spokesperson Margaret McGuckin told the UH, “Our organisation has been contacted by upwards of 100 people from the West Tyrone area. Many more have not come forward, but I would urge them to contact us because there is nothing to fear,” Ms McGuckin said.

“Victims now have protection and, while we have given a guarded welcome to the apologies by two religious orders in the Catholic Church, this must be supported by their full co-operation with the inquiry.

“At last the victims of this abuse have been given a voice and I have seen grown men and women cry tears of relief that their stories are finally being listened to.

“The pain which they have carried with them for a lifetime never goes away. There will be more heartache ahead for them, but it will be worth it.”

## Part 2. WILLIE’S STORY

**‘They would just do what they had to do and then walk away’**

**T**HERE WAS no-one around to hear the screams of Willie Kelly as a Brother at Rubane House children’s home grabbed him by the neck before abusing him for almost an hour in a cattle crush on the small farm there.

When the nightmare ordeal ended, the Fintona native caused some nearby cattle to stampede in a vain attempt to kill the man who had put him through so much. Such was the vile nature and extent of the abuse, the teenager decided to fight back.

“One of the Brothers was running the small farm attached to Kircubbin. But he just wouldn’t leave us boys alone. He had to get your hand down his trousers, but I fought against it,” he said.

“I was one of the ones chosen to work on the farm. This Brother pulled me towards him and put my head inside what they used to restrain the cattle with. He locked and trapped me there. You’ve only to guess what happened next. He had his way – whatever he wanted to do was done...”

“The whole ordeal lasted about an hour, but it seemed like an eternity. “When I was eventually released I was that mad that I just wanted to kill him and I caused the cattle to stampede from a barn close by. He just got out of the way in time, but gave me a terrible beating afterwards. He accused me of startling the animals. Imagine a young boy of 13 – as I was then – wanting to kill a man.

“Being from the country and knowing nothing about sex, I took it for granted that this is what happened.”

Now aged in his early 70s, Willie had lived for some time at Coneywarren House in Omagh after his mother died prior to being



**Willie Kelly: "Being from the country and knowing nothing about sex, I took it for granted that this is what happened."**

adopted by a "lovely family" near Cloughcor.

However, he recalls with pain how his happy childhood came to an abrupt end when he was then sent to the now infamous Co Down children's home in 1955.

"After our mother died, myself and another baby brother of mine were adopted by a lovely family near Cloughcor. But there was a rule at that time which didn't allow more than two children in the house if another child was born. So I was brought back to Coneywarren and then onto Kircubbin where the abuse started.

"The day I went into that place was like going from a nice colourful beach into a wasteland. Because I was from the country, I was told that I was dirty and smelly. I was put into the shower and the abuse started immediately.

"The Brothers always warned us not to tell anyone what had happened. One of them often appeared at my bedside with nothing on but a big cloak. They would stand on my toes if I didn't do what they wanted. Nobody wanted to sleep at the door because the person in that bed was who they went to.

"They would do what they had to do and then just walk away. On one occasion I went

to Confession and mentioned to the priest what had been done to me. But the next night the same Brother came to me and gave me a terrible battering. He had obviously been told by the priest.

"To the Brothers, we were just a number. They didn't care if we couldn't write our own name. The priorities were completely wrong.

"We were taken out in lorry-loads to gather potatoes for the local farmers and the Brothers took all the money. Boys were also brought to building sites to unload bricks. We were cut to pieces because nobody had gloves and there was no such thing as being treated afterwards. You just had to suffer alone."

Willie also recalls how boys suddenly "disappeared," including one of his friends at the home.

"There was a boy who went missing and when I asked where he'd gone somebody told me that his mother had collected him. But I knew this boy had no mother because he was an orphan like the rest of us. Anyway, the boys being brought home were generally told a few days earlier and there was always great excitement for them knowing that they were leaving," he added.

"I always think that the boy who went missing died due to whatever the Brothers were doing because they were interfering with boys during the night. We would see them returning bleeding and you dare not ask what had happened."

Willie's escape was aided by a regular visitor who brought clothes and toys to the home. One day the then 16-year-old sneaked around the corner and asked the man was there any chance of getting a job.

A month or so later the man returned and took young Willie out to work in a bicycle shop at Divis Street in Belfast.

"All the time that I was in the home, no-one from the authorities ever came in to see how I was getting on. But I was lucky that man helped me to get out. A little while later, he also got a job for one of my friends."

**"I always think that the boy who went missing died due to whatever the Brothers were doing because they were interfering with boys during the night. We would see them returning bleeding and you dare not ask what had happened."**

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## COVER STORY

**“You’d wake up in the middle of the night and a Brother would be under your bed covers. This would happen about twice a week. They also saw the showers as another opportunity for abuse”**

### Part 3. PATRICK’S STORY

**‘We would be awakened by a hand moving under our clothes’**

Even the slightest noise awakens Patrick Murphy because he still feels the fear which gripped him when the De La Salle Brothers came calling in the dark of night.

For him, Rubane House children’s home was “hell” and the Brothers in charge were “the devil.”

The brutality the children suffered was frightening and constant . . . there were no constraints. Young boys like Patrick were at the mercy of the Brothers. Severe beatings were a daily occurrence . . . then there was the sexual abuse.

“It was bad, really really bad,” said Patrick. “You’d wake up in the middle of the night and a Brother would be under your bed covers. This would happen about twice a week. They also saw the showers as another opportunity for abuse.

“My landlady in Birmingham – where I emigrated to later on – once remarked how I was never asleep when she came into the room in the morning.

“That was all due to the way I’d been treated in Rubane. To this day, I’m the man who can hear the grass grow,” Patrick continued.

“You couldn’t lie in your bed without being abused. The worst time was when we were in the bed beside the door of the dormitory. We would be awakened by a hand moving under our clothes,” he said.

“The physical abuse was terrible as well. I remember being in the classroom on an occasion when the Brother was walking very slowly up and down as usual. A boy



**Patrick Murphy pictured as a child at Rubane House.**

directly behind me passed wind as the Brother was close to me.

“The Brother stopped, walked to the top of the class and called me to the front. I was 12 or 13 at the time and pleaded my innocence.

“He hit me across the palm of my two hands with a cane. I didn’t cry and he said, ‘Oh we’ve got a hard man here.’ He proceeded to hit me across the back of my hands. The very first crack took my nail off and I fell to the ground in agony.”

Patrick was one of the first group of 16 boys who entered Rubane House in 1951. They were nearly all orphans and he remembers how the abuse began within days of the home opening.

A later incident of bestiality left Patrick paralysed with fear at what he witnessed.

“I was sent to a classroom to light a fire. A Brother was there and I was so frightened by what I saw that I can hardly describe it. It was bestiality and I was so frightened that he’d seen me I couldn’t talk for two days.

“A Brother also kicked this little boy like a football across the floor. The boy was very small and weak and began to cry. If that was done to an animal today, a person would be done for cruelty.”

Such was the level of fear that Patrick decided to run away several times. On one occasion he was discovered the next morning and brought to the police station where the Brothers were contacted.

His return to the home was marked by more beatings and sexual abuse. Even the slightest mishap was punished in the most extreme manner.

“When I was brought back after attempting to escape, they straight away stripped me naked and put me in a cold shower. A Brother started to beat me with a whip. I went to bed and I still remember hoping that I would die. For days after that I wasn’t able to walk.

“We got out on our 16th birthday and I was sent to stay with a woman called Mrs O’Neill in Omagh.

“I’d been in the town about four weeks

when the Welfare – the forerunner to Social Services – decided to give me a bicycle to get to my job as a painter.

“On this occasion Mrs O’Neill asked me was I originally from Fintona and told me about two little girls who walked past her house and who were also from Fintona.

“About half an hour later they came past and I spoke to them. They were my sisters, and I told them I was their brother. We were delighted and I hoped to see them often after that.

“But the next evening there was a green car sitting outside the house. Mrs O’Neill told me that the man in the car wanted to talk to me. As soon as I got into the car he hit me across the face and told me never to speak to the girls again.

“This brought all the abuse back to me again because I was 16 and thought that I’d put it behind me. He said that they’d had a complaint from the people who the girls were staying with.

“A few days later the man I was working for at the time made a point of only giving me a ten shilling note for my pay. He treated me like dirt in

front of the other workers. That week I’d been beaten and now I was being humiliated. So, I decided that this would never happen again and resolved to leave.”

That evening Patrick returned to his home town of Fintona, sold his bicycle and used the money to travel to Birmingham. He arrived in England “with only the clothes on my back” and got help from the Salvation Army.

A new life beckoned for Patrick far away from the horrors of his youth. **CT**

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*Alan Rodgers is an author of four books and a journalist at the Ulster Herald in Omagh, Northern Ireland, where this series was originally published. The newspaper’s web site is - <http://ulsterherald.com>*

**“I was sent to a classroom to light a fire. A Brother was there and I was so frightened by what I saw that I can hardly describe it. It was bestiality and I was so frightened that he’d seen me I couldn’t talk for two days”**

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# Lies, tyrants, weapons of mass destruction

**Felicity Arbuthnot** wonders why the West is supplying military firepower to yet another puppet regime in Baghdad

**The astute Herr Fischer recognized a pack of lies when he heard them and saved Germany from enjoining a war of aggression**

*“The greatest crime since World War II has been US foreign policy.” – Former US Attorney General, Ramsey Clark*

**O**n February 10th 2003, German Green MP Joschka Fischer, then Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor, stunned an international security conference, in Munich’s opulent 19th century Bayerischer Hof Hotel discussing the proposed invasion of Iraq, by banging on the table, switching to English to guarantee Donald Rumsfeld understood and shouted of the US arguments for war: “. . . I am not convinced.” As he spoke, he gazed at the then US Defence Secretary over his silver, half framed spectacles, concluding: “That is my problem, I cannot go to the public and say, ‘these are the reasons’, because I don’t believe in them.”

A stony faced Rumsfeld was described as: “gazing at Mr Fischer through a tropical plant ... he looked like a tiger in the jungle, ready to pounce.”

The astute Herr Fischer recognized a pack of lies when he heard them and saved Germany from enjoining a war of aggression – Nuremberg’s “supreme international crime” – against a country which posed no threat and had no way of defending itself against the world’s most devastating and destructive weapons, whose poisonous residual pollution will

continue to maim and kill generations to come for all time.

Both Tony “I’d do it again” Blair and George W. Bush face a citizen’s arrest whenever they appear in public, with Blair also reiterating with others responsible for bombing Iraq back to a pre-industrial age (again) that the country is a better place without Saddam, “a tyrant who killed his own people.” In fact the Western trumpeted mass graves found in Iraq were from the 1991 war and subsequent US encouraged uprising and its predictably violent suppression.

In Kurdistan, where the people on the Iran border were caught in the crossfire from the weapons used by both devastated sides (and sold to both sides by the US) Saddam Hussein was firmly in the firing line for the terrible deaths at Halabja. However a meticulous 1990 US War College Report threw doubt on the facts of even that horror, stating: “Iraq was blamed for the Halabja attack, even though it was subsequently brought out that Iran too had used chemicals in this operation, and it seemed likely that it was the Iranian bombardment that had actually killed the Kurds.”

According to a 2008 study George W. Bush “and seven top officials – including Vice President Dick Cheney, former Secretary of State Colin Powell and then National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, made 935 false statements about Iraq” during the

two years following 11th September 2001.

However, the US and UK are seemingly remarkably selective when it comes to tyrants who “kill their own people”, and have not only failed to censure their tyrannical Iraqi puppet, Nuri al-Maliki, but are arming him to the teeth with the same weapons which are linked to horrific birth defects and cancers throughout Iraq, which he is now using on “his own people.” If allegations from very well informed sources that he holds an Iranian passport are correct, to say that US-UK’s despot of choice appears in a whole new political light would be to massively understate.

To facilitate Al-Maliki’s assault on Iraq’s citizens, the US “rushed” 75 Hellfire missiles to Baghdad in mid-December. On 23rd January Iraq requested a further five hundred Hellfires, cost \$82 million – small change compared to the \$14 billion in weapons provided by America since 2005.

The AGM-114R Hellfire II, nauseatingly named “Romeo”, costing \$94,000 each – in 2012. Such spending on weaponry in a country where electricity, clean water, education and health services have all but collapsed since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

Last month an “American cargo jet loaded with weapons” including 2,400 rockets to arm Iraqi attack helicopters also arrived in Baghdad.

Then a contract was agreed to sell a further 24 AH-64E attack helicopters to Iraq “along with spare parts and maintenance, in a massive \$6.2 billion deal.” With them comes the reinvasion of Iraq, with: “hundreds of Americans” to be shipped out “to oversee the training and fielding of equipment”, some are “US government employees”, read military, plus a plethora of “contractors”, read mercenaries.

According to *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, on November 15, 2013, Iraq also took delivery of “its first shipment of highly advanced Mi-35 attack helicopters as part of a \$4.3 billion arms purchase from Russia”, of an order of: “about 40 Mi-35 and 40 Mi-28 Havoc attack

helicopters.”

This all to “attack his own people” in the guise of defeating “Al Qaida” in Anbar province and elsewhere where the people have been peacefully protesting a near one man regime of torture, sectarianism, kangaroo courts which sentence victims who have all had confessions extracted under torture.

The chilling regime led the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay to comment, with considerable understatement: “Weaknesses in the criminal justice system means that the death sentence is often handed down under questionable circumstances in Iraq.”

On January 22 it was reported that 38 people had been executed in the previous four days. In 2013 Iraq had the third highest executions in the world, according to Amnesty International.

So now Al-Maliki is to unleash weapons of mass destruction on any who oppose his reign of terror. Hellfire missiles, also used by the US forces in Fallujah are described as “Thermobaric Hellfire Missiles” “Their effective performance in Fallujah led to major production contracts in 2005.

“Thermobaric weapons use high temperature/high pressure explosives as anti-personnel incendiary weapons. They char or vaporise victims in the immediate target location, or suffocate and collapse internal organs with their extended blast/vacuum effects.

“These weapons use a new generation of reactive metal explosives, some of which are suspected of using uranium for the high temperature and increased kinetic blast effects. If uranium-enhanced warheads were used in Fallujah these may have contained between ten and one hundred kgs of Uranium per warhead, depending on weapon type.”

They also contain a fuel air explosive (fae) of which: “The (blast) kill mechanism against living targets is unique and unpleasant ... What kills is the pressure wave, and more importantly, the subsequent rarefac-

**Such spending on weaponry in a country where electricity, clean water, education and health services have all but collapsed since the fall of Saddam Hussein**

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## KILLING GAMES

**The puppet Iraqi prime minister then enraged a justifiably angry population with a speech on TV talking of the interference of other countries and their support for terrorist groups**

tion (vacuum) which ruptures the lungs ... If the fuel deflagrates but does not detonate, victims will be severely burned and will probably also inhale the burning fuel. Since the most common fae fuels, ethylene oxide and propylene oxide are highly toxic, undetonated fae should prove as lethal to personnel caught within the cloud as most chemical agents”, according to the US Defence Intelligence Agency. Syria watchers please note.

The temperature within the detonation can reach 4,500 to 5,400°F (2,500 to 3,000°C). Outside the cloud, the blast wave travels at over two miles per second (3.2 km/s) – 7200 mph.

There are also reports of white phosphorous or napalm having being used by Maliki’s forces in Fallujah. Certainly if one two minute video is authentic, as it appears to be, a tell tale inflammatory weapon which cannot be extinguished is well apparent.

On 28th January World Bulletin recorded: “Some 650 people have been killed or injured and 140,000 displaced by indiscriminate army shelling in Iraq’s western city of Fallujah” according to Iraqi Parliament Speaker Osama Nujaifi.

The people of Samarra, whose eye wateringly beautiful, golden domed Al-Askari Mosque was blown up in 2006, offered their homes and hospitality to the people fleeing Fallujah and Anbar province, but Maliki’s security warned Samarra residents not to accept any displaced Fallujah and Anbar families. They were given 24 hours to leave Samarra, writes a friend in Iraq, adding: “Can you believe such criminality? Forcing the kicking out the refugees who left their houses due to heavy bombing by Maliki’s criminal forces?”

On January 39, a source with contacts in Fallujah gave the names behind the statistics of just a few of the injured arriving at Fallujah General Hospital:

- Iman Mohammed Abdul Razzaq 40 years old (female)

- Isaac Saleh Mohammed, 4 years old (male)

- Abeer Mohammed Saleh, 18 years old (female)

- Shorooq Borhan Ali, 7 years old (female)

- Ashoaq Mohammed Jassim, 25 years old (female)

- Sarah Mohammed Odeh, 13 years old (female)

- Fatima Mohammed Odeh, 15 years old (female)

- Saleh Mohammed Abdul Razzaq 45 years old (male)

Nobel Peace Laureate Obama and Prime Minister David Cameron’s regimes are as culpable for their continuing support and facilitating of Al-Maliki’s crimes against humanity as were Bush and Blair in the lies that delivered Iraq’s ongoing death and destruction.

But they would do well to note that the escalation of the unrest in Fallujah began on December 30, the anniversary of Saddam Hussein’s execution – by a man who was also called Al-Maliki.

The puppet Iraqi prime minister then enraged a justifiably angry population with a speech on TV talking of the interference of other countries and their support for terrorist groups. The response was to point out his apparent amnesia over the fact that he entered Iraq on the back of the American tanks in an illegal invasion – and there is still the question of that alleged Iranian passport.

Given the Iraqi’s record of running out of patience with imposed despots, he should watch out. The last imposed prime minister called Nuri (al-Said) who ignored, as Wiki puts it, “poverty and social injustice, became a symbol of a regime that failed to address these issues, choosing a course of repression, to protect the privileged”, met a very unpleasant end.

As mentioned before, Iraq’s history repeats in uncanny ways. **CT**

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**Felicity Arbuthnot**  
is a London-based activist and freelance journalist who specialises in Middle Eastern affairs



# Stop inflating Israel's huge bubble of denial

When will country stop insulating itself from reality? asks **Jonathan Cook**

Last month's 24-hour visit by German chancellor Angela Merkel to Israel came as relations between the two countries hit rock bottom. According to a report in *Der Spiegel* magazine, Merkel and Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu have been drawn into shouting matches when discussing by phone the faltering peace process.

Despite their smiles to the cameras during the visit, tension behind the scenes has been heightened by an diplomatic bust-up earlier this month when Martin Schulz, the president of the European parliament and himself German, gave a speech to the Israeli parliament.

In unprecedented scenes, a group of Israeli legislators heckled Schulz, calling him a "liar", and then staged a walk-out, led by the economics minister Naftali Bennett. Rather than apologising, Netanyahu intervened to lambast the European leader for being misinformed.

Schulz, who, like Merkel, is considered a close friend of Israel, used his speech vehemently to oppose growing calls in Europe for a boycott of Israel. So how did he trigger such opprobrium?

Schulz's main offence was posing a question: was it true, as he had heard in meetings in the West Bank, that Israelis have access to four times more water than Palestinians? He further upset legislators by gently suggesting

that Israel's blockade of Gaza was preventing economic growth there.

Neither statement should have been in the least controversial. Figures from independent bodies such as the World Bank show Israel, which controls the region's water supplies, allocates per capita about 4.4 times more water to its population than the Palestinians.

Equally, it would be hard to imagine that years of denying goods and materials to Gaza, and blocking exports, have not ravaged its economy. The unemployment rate, for example, has increased 6 per cent, to 38.5 per cent, following Israel's recent decision to prevent the transfer of construction materials to Gaza's private sector.

But Israelis rarely hear such facts, either from their politicians or media. And few are willing to listen when a rare voice like Schulz's intervenes. Israelis have grown content living in a large bubble of denial.

Netanyahu and his ministers are making every effort to reinforce that bubble, just as they have tried to shield Israelis from the fact that they live in the Middle East, not Europe, by building walls on every side – both physical and bureaucratic – to exclude Palestinians, Arab neighbours, foreign workers and asylum seekers.

Inside Israel, the government is seeking to silence the few critical voices left. The intimidation was starkly on display last week as

**A group of Israeli legislators heckled Martin Schulz, president of the European parliament, calling him a "liar", and then staged a walk-out**

**Contrary to Netanyahu's claim, lots of countries around the world have been singled out for sanctions by the United States and Europe**

the supreme court considered the constitutionality of the recent "boycott law", which threatens to bankrupt anyone calling for a boycott of either Israel or the settlements.

Tellingly, a lawyer for the government defended its position by arguing that Israel could not afford freedom of expression of the kind enjoyed by countries like the US.

Illustrating the point, uproar greeted the news last month that a civics teacher had responded negatively when asked by pupils whether he thought Israel's army the most moral in the world. A campaign to sack him has been led by government ministers and his principal, who stated: "There are sacred cows I won't allow to be slaughtered."

Similarly, it emerged that a Palestinian from East Jerusalem had been interrogated by police for incitement after noting on Facebook that his city was "under occupation".

Outside Israel, Netanyahu is indulging in more familiar tactics to browbeat critics. Tapping European sensitivities, he accused those who support a boycott of being "classical anti-semites in modern garb". Netanyahu justified the allegation, as he has before, on the grounds that Israel is being singled out.

It looks that way to Israelis only because they have singularly insulated themselves from reality. Western critics focus on Israel because, unlike countries such as North Korea or Iran, it has managed to avoid any penalties despite riding roughshod over international norms for decades.

Iran, which is only suspected of secretly developing nuclear weapons, has been enduring years of savage sanctions. Israel, which has hidden its large stockpile of nuclear warheads from international scrutiny since the late 1960s, has enjoyed endless diplomatic cover.

Contrary to Netanyahu's claim, lots of countries around the world have been singled out for sanctions by the United States and Europe – whether diplomatic, financial or, in the case of Iraq, Libya and Syria, military.

But the antipathy towards Israel has deeper roots still. Israel has not only evaded accountability, it has been handsomely rewarded by the US and Europe for flouting international conventions in its treatment of the Palestinians.

The self-styled global policemen have encouraged Israel's law-breaking by consistently ignoring its transgressions and continuing with massive aid handouts and preferential trade deals. In Germany's case, one of the most significant benefits has been its decision to supply Israel with a fleet of Dolphin submarines, which allow Israel to transport its rogue nuclear arsenal around the high seas.

Far from judging Israel unfairly, Schulz, Merkel and most other western leaders regularly indulge in special pleading on its behalf. They know about Israel's ugly occupation but shy away from exercising their powers to help end it.

The reason why popular criticism of Israel is currently galvanising around the boycott movement – what Netanyahu grandly calls "delegitimation" – is that it offers a way for ordinary Americans and Europeans to distance themselves from their governments' own complicity in Israel's crimes.

If Netanyahu has refused to listen to his external critics, western governments have been no less at fault in growing impervious to the groundswell of sentiment at home that expects Israel to be forced to take account of international law.

Both Merkel's diplomatic niceties and her shouting matches have proven utterly ineffective. It is time for her and her western colleagues to stop talking and to start taking action against Israel. **CT**

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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>.

# What's a slum?

They're not full of criminals, but home to honest, hard-working – and underpaid – people, writes **Michael Parenti**

**W**hen I was about thirteen years old I chanced upon an article in Henry Luce's *Life* magazine that described East Harlem (a Manhattan working class neighborhood) as "a slum inhabited by beggar-poor Italians, Negroes, and Puerto Ricans," words that stung me and wedged in my memory.

"We live in a slum," I mournfully reported to my father. "What's a slum?" he asked. He was not familiar with the term. "It's a neighborhood where everybody is poor and the streets are all run-down and dumpy and dirty and filled with beggars." "Shut up and show respect for your home," he replied. Note his choice of words. Poppa was not expressing pride in East Harlem as such. But situated within the neighborhood was our home, and you didn't want anything reflecting poorly upon family and home.

On my block, 118th Street, there was both normal poverty and extreme poverty. But the latter was not readily detectable. For years there was an iceman on the block who did a bustling business. This meant that there were families that did not have refrigerators – including my own. We made do with a window box that held a piece of ice and a bottle of milk and a few other perishables. Eventually we got a second-hand refrigerator.

Also on 118th Street was an old brownstone that served as a nursery for needy

children. One day during my high-school years, I heard the famous writer Dorothy Parker being interviewed on the radio. (I was already familiar with her name if not her writing.) She was talking about giving aid to the poor children who were cared for in that very same settlement house on 118th Street. "Are they Negro children?" asked the interviewer. "No, I believe they are Italians," Dorothy Parker answered. The nursery for the needy was just across the street half-way down the block from my house. I often hung around that area yet I had never seen impoverished children being escorted in or out of there; or I never thought anything of it if I had seen any.

Italian Harlem had its block parties, family links, and numerous face-to-face acquaintances. Still it was not one big *Gemeinschaft* (community). It was not an urban village. Many people were unknown to each other even on the same block, even in adjacent buildings. I had to find out about the nursery-for-the-needy from a radio interview with Dorothy Parker. That is almost pure *Gemeinschaft* (impersonal mass society).

Contrary to the slur in *Life* magazine, I came to realize that, despite the extreme poverty, my neighborhood was inhabited not by "beggar-poor" derelicts but mostly by hardworking and usually underpaid proletarians, more-or-less sane folks who were

**Contrary to the slur in *Life* magazine, I came to realize that, despite the extreme poverty, my neighborhood was inhabited not by "beggar-poor" derelicts but mostly by hardworking and usually underpaid proletarians**

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## HOME SWEET HOME

**Defamatory labels like “slum” and “beggar poor” can hide a multitude of virtues – not likely to be appreciated by Mr. Luce and his super rich cohorts**

the ordinary heroes of the urban landscape. Much the same can be said for the nearby African-American and Puerto Rican communities in Harlem.

In Italian Harlem (as East Harlem was also called) there could be found people who drove the trucks, taxicabs, trolleys, and buses. They manned the loading docks and the maintenance crews, and practically monopolized New York’s building sites as construction workers, carpenters, bricklayers, electricians, roofers, glaziers, housepainters, and plumbers. And when they were not building structures, they were on the wrecking crews that tore them down.

Other Italian Americans put in long hours employed in candy stores, grocery stores, and five-and-dime stores, in dress shops, barber shops, butcher shops, and sweatshops; in beauty parlors, ice cream parlors, and pizza parlors; tending bakeries, barrooms, and poolrooms. They were bank clerks, janitors, dry cleaners, and laundresses. They were auto mechanics, machinists, manicurists, hospital workers, and gardeners; ditch diggers and gravediggers, milkmen and mailmen, shoemakers and homemakers, elevator operators and telephone operators, apartment guards and bank guards, night workers and day jobbers. They shined shoes at Grand Central Station right next to their Black coworkers, and on the Staten Island ferry. And they buffed the shiny lobbies of midtown office buildings.

They served as waiters and waitresses, cooks and caterers; secretaries and receptionists; garment cutters, tailors, seamstresses, and dress designers; fish vendors, vegetable vendors, peddlers, and truck farmers.

They worked in insurance offices and post offices. They built the highest skyscrapers and deepest subway tunnels, and years later their offspring cleaned the subway tracks and the streets and sidewalks of the whole city and collected the garbage, holding the lion’s share of jobs in the Sanitation Department.

These were the people who performed “the work of civilization” to borrow a phrase from the great economist Thorstein Veblen. (Veblen was actually talking about the unsung unpaid work that women did all over the world.) The working poor lived out their lives largely unsung and unnoticed. Wherever they toiled, it was almost always to “bring some money home for the family,” that prime unit of survival.

Tucked away amidst the blue collar ranks of Italian Harlem were the politicians who got out the vote in their neighborhood precincts for the Democratic Party. There were local lawyers and realtors; doctors, dentists, and morticians; professional musicians and many amateur ones, and photographers (mostly for weddings and Holy Confirmations); a few young toughs training to be professional boxers who might end up as downtown bouncers if they were lucky; some union shop stewards and union organizers, a struggling magazine illustrator, a comic book cartoonist, a sculptor, a tall lovely sixteen year-old girl who was working as a model downtown, young men attending City College and young women attending Hunter College, and a few aspiring opera students, including a lovely mezzo-soprano who performed with great charm at local events and at high mass at Holy Rosary Church. Then there was an occasional young man going off to the seminary to become a priest, or a young woman preparing to become a nun.

In sum, pace Henry Luce and *Life* magazine, defamatory labels like “slum” and “beggar poor” can hide a multitude of virtues – not likely to be appreciated by Mr. Luce and his super rich cohorts.

There is the saying that “the slums are not the problem, they are the solution,” meaning they are the place we dump the marginal and low performing groups. It might do well to remember that the slums are where hard-working underpaid people live and out from which they venture to help keep society afloat. **CT**

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**Michael Parenti** is an award winning, internationally known author. His two most recent books are *The Face of Imperialism* (2011), and *Waiting for Yesterday: Pages from a Street Kid’s Life* (2013), from which this article is excerpted.

# The Superbowl's military fables

**Dave Zirin** tells how the US military and the NFL are linked in a dishonest narrative of masculine invulnerability

**T**he Associated Press called it, “The Budweiser Ad That Made You Cry During The Super Bowl.” There was Lieutenant Chuck Nadd returning home from Afghanistan only to be thrown a surprise “welcome home” parade by the good people at Budweiser. He and his wife even traveled through the celebration pulled by Clydesdales “aboard the famously-red Budweiser beer wagon.”

Then, after the ad ended, there was Lt. Chuck Nadd, in the stands at Met Life Stadium watching the Super Bowl. (Hopefully, he did not have to take public transportation there. The Clydesdales would have been a faster ride.)

Seeing Lt. Nadd at the big game was an audacious triple lindy of product placement. You had the military, the NFL and of course the smooth taste of Budweiser, all in one Fox camera shot of corporate Americana. (Budweiser is actually owned by a Belgian/Brazilian consortium but details)

Commercials like these, not to mention the NFL showing live shots of troops watching the game from Kandahar, have become so par for the course, it does not even register. It also serves a purpose for the NFL above and beyond a nod of respectful recognition to the troops. Drew Magary at Deadspin captured this last November. He wrote, “Any time the NFL slaps a camo ribbon on their unis, any time Fox cuts to a bunch of hap-

py veterans... it helps portray the league as some kind of noble civic endeavor when it’s actually just an entertainment venture and moneymaking apparatus designed to rake in billions of dollars and fuck your town out of stadium money. The Falcons, to take one example, managed to euchre \$200 million out of taxpayers for their new stadium. One stroke of a pen, and Arthur Blank has an extra \$200 million to put Sicilian marble in his luxury box shitters. Compare that to the \$800,000 the league donated last year [to military charities]. That \$800,000 helps buy the American flag the Falcons and other teams get to hide behind any time you start to wonder if the league really does have the public’s interests at heart.”

This is all true. The NFL uses the military like Lourdes, all its sins of corporate welfare, medical malpractice, and institutionalized racism are washed away in a red, white and blue cleansing courtesy of Uncle Sam. There is another side of this as well. Yes, the NFL benefits by cloaking itself in the military but the military also benefits by linking arms with the NFL. It makes the military look like a game, an adventure, a burst of adrenaline. You are Marshawn Lynch in beast mode, only you’re holding an M-16 instead of a football. Sure, you will make 1/100 that of an NFL player, but you get the sense of teamwork and the rush you associate with the NFL on Sundays.

**The NFL uses the military like Lourdes, all its sins of corporate welfare, medical malpractice, and institutionalized racism are washed away in a red, white and blue cleansing courtesy of Uncle Sam**

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## HEADER

**The NFL and the Pentagon walk comfortably together not only because they present pumped-up versions of masculine invulnerability as admirable qualities. They also rely on dishonest narratives about what happens to the good people who go through their grinder**

I spoke with Mary Tillman, the mother of NFL player turned Army Ranger Pat Tillman, who was killed in Afghanistan ten years ago this April. “I don’t like that ads for the military are shown at all on TV, especially during sporting events,” she said, “A feeling of camaraderie is important to all humans and I think the camaraderie of sport provides the most reward. Many young men join the military in order to get that feeling of belonging, that feeling of brotherhood. It is irresponsible to try to entice young people into military service with subliminal messages.”

Mary Tillman is absolutely correct. You hear what the NFL and the armed forces want you to hear. You never hear about what you might be asked to do overseas and how that might change you. One of my friends joined the military in the late 1990s for college money, not knowing the United States was about to enter a decade of war. He was one of the most gregarious people I knew, an athlete who was the sort of person that would break up daily scuffles on the court. After five years in Iraq and Afghanistan, he made it home. I saw him and although much quieter, he was still a kind, open person. He was so open, he told me matter-of-factly that his marriage ended because he could not stop choking his wife and screaming in his sleep.

I also was friends with a woman who joined the Army. It is in many ways a similar story. She thought that she could get money for college in the peacetime of the 1990s and found herself on the outskirts on Baghdad. Three years ago, she told me a story about being out one late night on patrol. She had to go to the bathroom far

from any facilities. She knew fellow female soldiers that wore adult diapers because they worried that using the bathroom outside could leave them vulnerable to sexual assault from a supposed “brother” soldier. She would not do that and went to the bathroom and was attacked. She told me she fought off the soldier with three well-placed knees to the nuts, but spent her remainder of time looking over both shoulders, until she cracked from the pressure, as she put it, “of seeing crazy everywhere” and was sent home on mental disability. Sure enough, as of 2009, according to the government’s own figures, “prevalence of military sexual assault among female veterans ranges from 20-48%, and 80% of female veterans have reported being sexually harassed.”

The NFL and the Pentagon walk comfortably together not only because they present pumped-up versions of masculine invulnerability as admirable qualities. They also rely on dishonest narratives about what happens to the good people who go through their grinder. Just as we are only now finally waking up to the fact that generations of former NFL players end up penniless and suffering from tragic neurological damage, the Pentagon highlights people like Lt. Chuck Nadd, the people who make it home intact, with reservoirs of love, community and support systems. They say to young people, “You too could be Chuck Nadd.” They don’t say that, as a soldier, you are equipment, and like the NFL, the Pentagon is pitiless when it comes to damaged goods. **CT**

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

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# The snow conspiracy

What next? Obama is now being blamed for snowstorms in Atlanta, writes **Michael I. Niman**

**B**ack when TV dominated media, I argued that it could only be a democratic medium if everyone had their own channel. Not just one corporate voice, but many diverse voices, could speak. While we're still nowhere near attaining this utopian TV democracy, YouTube has moved us light years closer. Anyone with a computer and an Internet connection can have their own channel.

This supposed technotopia reminds me of an observation Henry David Thoreau made in 1882, writing "We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate." This brings me to the two inches of snow that last week crippled metropolitan Atlanta.

While comedians are having a field day with the fact that a mere two inches of snow can cripple the South's premier city, the denizens of YouTube have another take. The snow, it seems, ain't real. According to a megatrending social media meme, much of the country is being doused with some sort of fake plastic chemical snow cooked up in a massive big gubmint conspiracy to, er, um . . . make fake plastic chemical snow. The airlines, of course, are in on it. And so am I. The airlines are allowing d'gubmint to use their plans to spread chemical jet trails, or "chemtrails," which in this case, become

plastic snow. And I'm in on it too, for my part, besmirching our patriotic YouTube scientists who broke the story.

The experiment goes like this. You put down your Bud Light and go out and grab some snow. Make a snowball. Then place a rudimentary dirty burning cigarette lighter under the tainted ball and watch it turn black from soot while you sniff the delicate bouquet of poorly combusted butane. Voila. The soot and smell is proof positive that the snowball is plastic – probably an Obama plan to ruin the south.

Those of us who were in the seventh grade did the same experiment, but with a Bunsen burner, as our teachers demonstrated "sublime sublimation," the physical principle of how frozen water evaporates, or in laymen terms, how the snowpack matures.

This year's snow sublimation videos no doubt began, as they always do, as a joke. But unlike past years, they coincided with a big two inch southern snowstorm and, well, went viral. While there's always been theatrical snow for sale at craft shops, Internet searches for "fake snow" and "plastic snow" now yield 150-181 million links.

Many point to news sites other than The Onion and The Daily Show, who actually felt a need to debunk the plastic snow "theories," making this one of the biggest outbreaks of "fucking moron syndrome"

**The snow, it seems, ain't real. According to a megatrending social media meme, much of the country is being doused with some sort of fake plastic chemical snow cooked up in a massive big gubmint conspiracy**

**Atlanta did not treat their roads because they could not treat their roads – because they never bought the equipment to do so, because they never taxed themselves to pay for the equipment**

(FMS) since the Republican presidential primaries.

But if it wasn't a big gubmint super slippery engineered snowslime conspiracy that crippled Atlanta, how do we explain how two inches of snow created so much deadly havoc, with thousands of people stranded overnight in their cars, in schools and in shelters? Comedians are having a field day with this story, essentially invoking an overlay of FMS over already existing stereotypes pompous northern bigots already hold about southerners.

But really, any event that spawns hundreds of auto accidents isn't funny. And apparently, is real, and is more complex than everyone in Atlanta supposedly being a moron – which really is a theory that's about as believable as the big gubmint fake snow conspiracy. So what happened?

In the past I've written about "the socialism of snow plowing," how "shrink government until it fits in your pocket" libertarians and Republicans are racing to defund all government services, including those that keep us healthy and alive – like plowing snow, treating sewage, etc. Georgia is one of those Republican success stories. And that success played out with Georgia's roads nearly free of those damned Bolshevik snow plows and salting machines. Of course why would Atlanta have snowplows? This was a freak storm. Right?

It turns out that while unusual, snow in Atlanta is not all that unlikely. According to the National Weather Service, the average low temperature in Atlanta for this time of year is 35 degrees, with precipitation averaging 11 days a month. Atlanta is not Cancun.

Weather records from the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport indicate that there is a seven percent chance of snow on any given day this time of year in Atlanta. Two or, in all fairness, maybe almost three inches of snow is more than normal,

but not unlikely over a period of years.

### **The stingy rich & an angry god**

In what the stingy rich decry as "high tax" states, such as New York, we pay high taxes specifically to fund preparedness for whatever exigencies are statistically possible. We can go years without a heavy snowfall, but when one comes, and they inevitably do, our lives won't be at risk. Georgia made a political decision not to be ready. It's that simple. The National Weather Service, the Atlanta-based Weather Channel and a host of other reporting agencies all predicted a relatively heavy (by Atlanta standards) snow event – and they predicted it with at least a day's warning.

Yet, despite this warning, Atlanta did not treat their roads with salt or sand, allowing black ice to form and cause road-clogging (not to mention life threatening) accidents.

They did not treat their roads because they could not treat their roads – because they never bought the equipment to do so, because they never

taxed themselves to pay for the equipment. The problem in Atlanta is of a political rather than a meteorological nature. They made the decision not to be prepared for a predictable event because, like small children with undeveloped minds, their leaders could not link cause, in this case pathological greed, with a predictable event – having a dusting of snow cripple your city. But there was a plan. The sun would come out and melt the snow. Seriously, that's their low rent snow emergency plan. Wait for a sunny day.

Maybe I'm being too hard on Atlanta. Maybe it was a gubmint conspiracy all along to support the socialism of snowplowing. Watch out for that Domino effect. Snowplows today, free clinics and universities tomorrow. Hell, the evidence supporting plastic snow theory is no less sound than

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the global warming denial “science” touted daily in the right wing media universe. Or maybe, and I’ll take a page from the Bible Belt rulebook, the Atlanta snow chaos was the wrath of an angry God pissed off at Georgia’s executions of seemingly innocent people such as Troy Davis.

Or maybe it’s God punishing Georgia for not recognizing religiously sanctioned marriages of Gay folks. Maybe it’s Georgia’s renewed efforts to repress voting. We can go on and on here, but I’m not one to invoke a supposedly angry God to excuse my own sociopathic transgressions.

Back on earth, global warming is changing the global weather map, disturbing delicate balances that supported temperate and predictable climates during the period that human civilizations developed. As the climate changes, more cities are going to have to prepare for new and different weather, such as the historically unprecedented storm surge that put parts of New York City underwater during Superstorm Sandy in 2012 or the record breaking drought that’s

scorching California now.

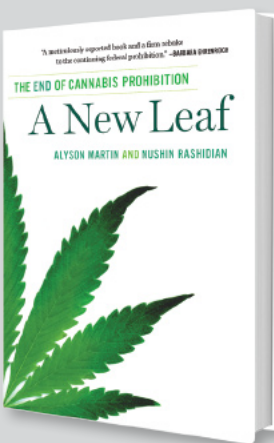
Put simply, while Atlanta’s unusual two inch snow is within historical range, other cities, including Atlanta, will be experiencing new weather threats that will fall outside of the range of historical norms. Getting ready for them involves things like building levies to protect subways and neighborhoods.

Preparing for these predictable weather events is going to be expensive, meaning the new climate will dictate an increased reliance on the public sector to do what we as individuals cannot – such as salt the highways in Atlanta. If we don’t reprioritize our spending from private luxuries to public necessities, there will be many more, and much more serious, cases of Atlanta Syndrome – not being prepared for the predictable.

**CT**

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*Michael I. Niman is a professor of journalism and media studies at SUNY Buffalo State. His previous columns are at archived at <http://mediastudy.com>.*

**As the climate changes, more cities are going to have to prepare for new and different weather**



**THE MOST VIVID AND COMPREHENSIVE ACCOUNT YET OF THE ROCKY ROAD TO CANNABIS LEGALIZATION—AND WHERE WE ARE HEADED NEXT**

## **A NEW LEAF** The End of Cannabis Prohibition

Alyson Martin and Nushin Rashidian

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# Country life

Memories are made of cows, horses, pigs, chickens, old barns – and eggs.  
Words and photographs by **Tony Sutton**



**W**e were just four, my twin brother and I, when Mom took us on our first visit to a farm. There we discovered that – unlike cats, dogs, mice, rabbits and our stuffed toys – real live cows and horses weren't at all cuddly or playful, but big, menacing and very scary.

The pigs were better: smelly, but easy to admire from the safety of the fence around their pen. Grunting and snorting, gobbling potato peelings, their crazy eyes darted hungry glances at their giggling watchers.

However, the chickens made the best impression for they weren't going to crush – or eat – us. Okay, they weren't cuddly, either. But they were fun – fast and noisy, they dashed, clucking in all directions whenever we approached.

“We want to play with them, but





we can't catch them," we whined to Mom as she chatted to Granny in the kitchen. "Out you go," she cajoled, pushing us back into the farmyard, "I'm sure you'll find a way to make friends."

An hour passed. Concerned that she could no longer hear any four-year-old squeals, Mom went searching. Finally, she looked under the old tractor standing idle in the barn, and there we were, with our new friends – six brown hens huddled beneath a net we'd found in the barn, their heads bobbing from side to side, as they sought an escape route.

"We're at school," we told Mom. "We're teachers; they're the kids. But they won't answer our questions. Can we hit them now?"

"No," she cried, dragging us away,

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## ON THE FARM



the chickens struggling free and fleeing. “The farmer won’t like that. And you won’t get any eggs for breakfast.”

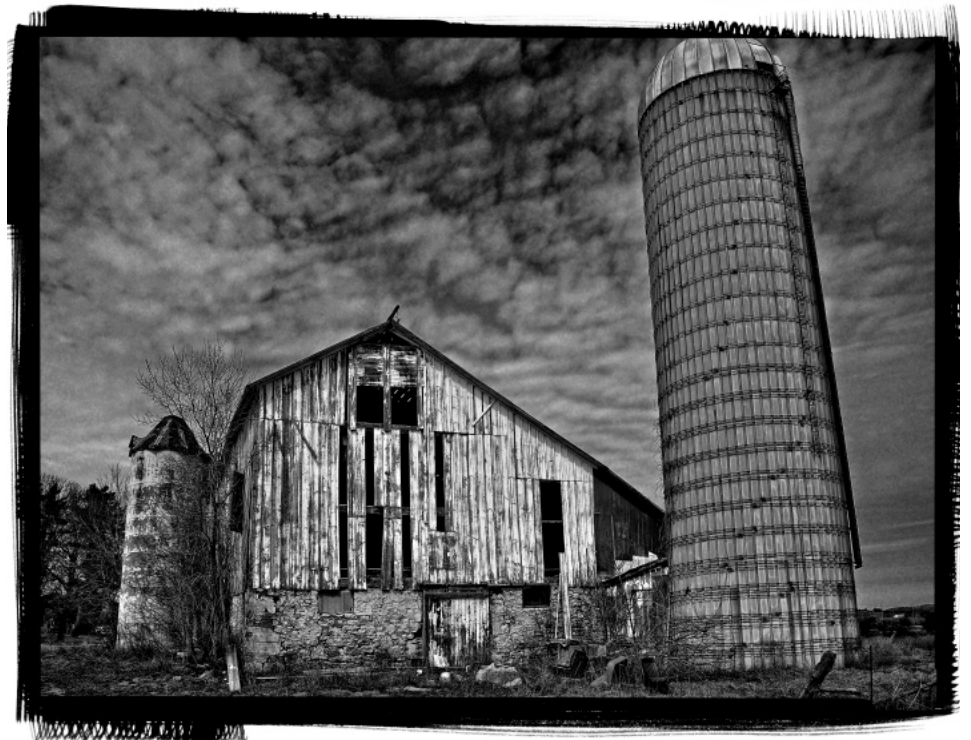
A shout from my brother, “Don’t like eggs; I’ve seen where they come from! Now can I hit the chickens?”

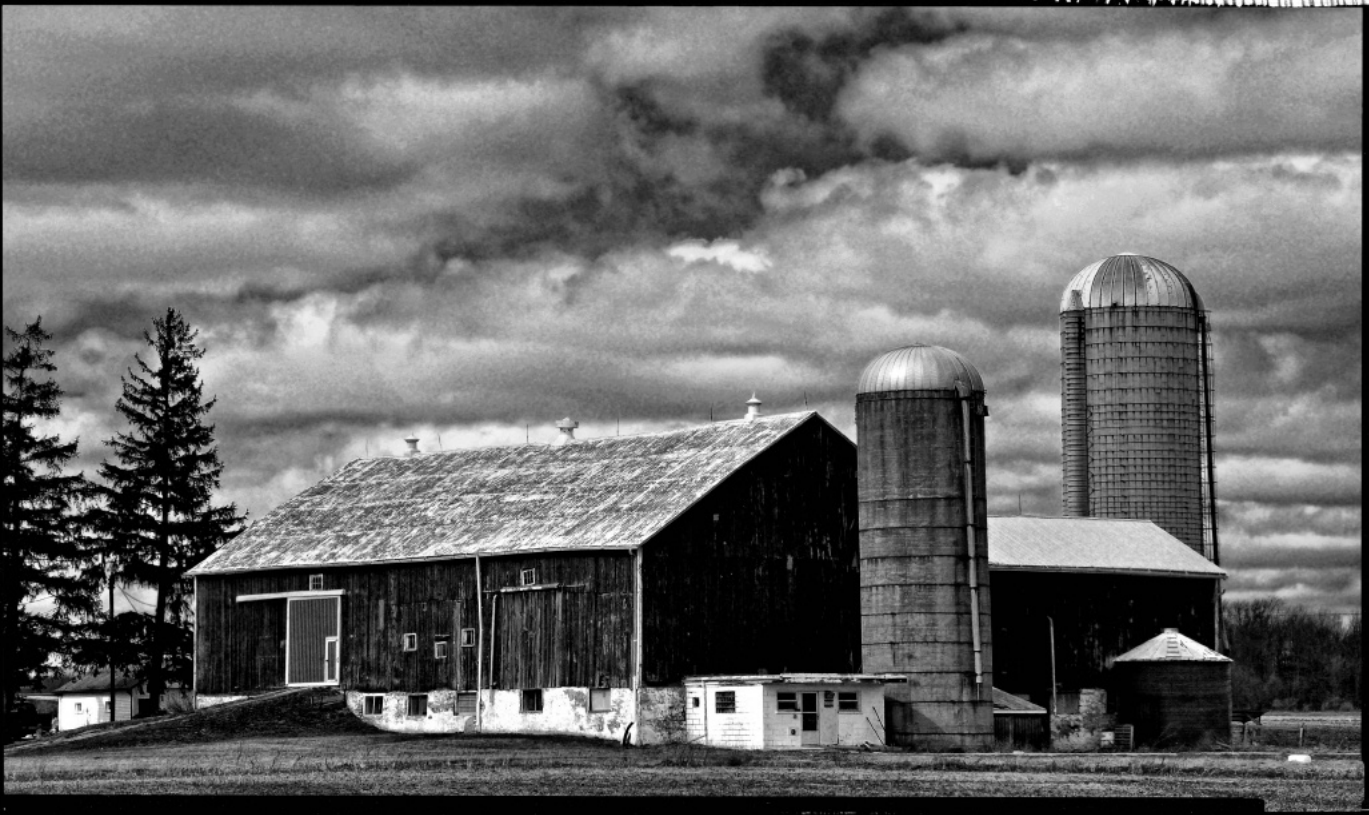
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*It happened more than 50 years ago, but the events of that day still flash through my mind whenever Jools and I drive from our home on the edge of the Niagara Escarpment to the dwindling Ontario farmlands. Horses and cows graze the pasture, brightly coloured, often-dilapidated barns rise above the corn and, although I can’t see them, I’m sure I can hear the excited sounds of small kids chasing, catching – and trying to educate – chickens.*

*The visit left a different impression on my brother – he hasn’t eaten eggs since that day.*

**CT**





The photographs on these pages are of farmyards around Georgetown, Ontario.



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*Tony Sutton* is the editor of *ColdType*

# Turning Iowa into a war zone

Now the National Guard is poised to attack the world from Des Moines airport, writes **Brian Terrell**

**Thousands of miles beyond the reach of the enemy, drone combatants often do not even have to leave their hometowns and are able to return to homes and families at the end of a shift**

The F-16 jets of the Iowa Air National Guard that formerly buzzed the city of Des Moines have disappeared and we are told that their base at the Des Moines International Airport is in the process of refitting into a command center for unmanned aerial vehicles, UAVs, commonly called drones. The MQ-9 Reaper drones themselves will not be coming to Iowa but will be based in and launched overseas. When airborne, these unmanned planes will be flown by remote control via satellite link from Des Moines. Classified by the military as a “Hunter-Killer platform,” the MQ-9 Reaper is armed with Hellfire missiles and 500 pound bombs that according to plan will be launched by airmen sitting at computer terminals in Des Moines.

President Obama, in an address from the National Defense University last May, described this new technology as more precise and by implication more humane than other weaponry: “By narrowly targeting our action against those who want to kill us and not the people they hide among, we are choosing the course of action least likely to result in the loss of innocent life.” There is an understandable appeal to the idea of a weapon that can discriminate between the good and the bad people and limit regrettable “collateral damage.” It is understandable too, that a nation weary of sending its sons and daughters to fight on battlefields

far away, risking injury, death or the debilitating effects of post traumatic stress, might look to embrace a new method of war whereby the warriors fight battles from the safe distances. Thousands of miles beyond the reach of the enemy, drone combatants often do not even have to leave their hometowns and are able to return to homes and families at the end of a shift.

All the promises of a new era of better war through technology, however, are proving false. Rather than limiting the scope of war, drones are expanding and proliferating it, killing more civilians both on battlefields and far from them, endangering our soldiers and the safety of our communities. Instead of keeping the horrors of war at a safe distance, drones bring the war home in unprecedented ways. The plan to fly drones out of the Iowa Air Guard Base in Des Moines threatens to make a literal war zone in Central Iowa.

In his National Defense University speech, the president contended that “conventional air power and missiles are far less precise than drones, and likely to cause more civilian casualties and local outrage.” A few weeks later a study published by the same National Defense University refuted his claim. Drone strikes in Afghanistan, the study found, were “an order of magnitude more likely to result in civilian casualties per engagement.” Despite the president’s



**The Grim Reaper visits Iowa**

assurances to the contrary, drone strikes cause immense “local outrage” in the countries where they happen, turning America’s allies into enemies. “What scares me about drone strikes is how they are perceived around the world,” said former commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan General Stanley McChrystal. “The resentment created by American use of unmanned strikes ... is much greater than the average American appreciates. They are hated on a visceral level, even by people who’ve never seen one or seen the effects of one.”

Former defense secretary Robert M. Gates also warns of the seductive power and precision of armed drones that leads many to perceive war as a “bloodless, painless and odorless” affair. “Remarkable advances in

precision munitions, sensors, information and satellite technology and more can make us overly enamored with the ability of technology to transform the traditional laws and limits of war. A button is pushed in Nevada and seconds later a pickup truck explodes in Kandahar.” Defense experts and policy makers, Gates warns, have come to view drone warfare as a “kind of video game or action movie. ... In reality, war is inevitably tragic, inefficient and uncertain.” General Mike Hostage, chief of the US Air Combat Command, claims that while weaponised drones are useful in assassinations of terror suspects, they are impractical in combat. “Predators and Reapers are useless in a contested environment,” Hostage said.

Some enlisted personnel are also ques-

**Defense experts and policy makers, have come to view drone warfare as a “kind of video game or action movie. ... In reality, war is inevitably tragic, inefficient and uncertain”**

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## REAPING A WHIRLWIND

**Drone strikes rarely catch a “terrorist” in an act of aggression against the US and often occur in counties where the US is not at war**

tioning the use of drones. Heather Linebaugh, a drone operator for the US Air Force for three years says: “Whenever I read comments by politicians defending the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Predator and Reaper program – aka drones – I wish I could ask them a few questions. I’d start with: ‘How many women and children have you seen incinerated by a Hellfire missile?’ And: ‘How many men have you seen crawl across a field, trying to make it to the nearest compound for help while bleeding out from severed legs?’ Or even more pointedly: ‘How many soldiers have you seen die on the side of a road in Afghanistan because our ever-so-accurate UAVs were unable to detect an IED [improvised explosive device] that awaited their convoy?’”

The transformation from fighter planes to drones will be marked by changing the name of the Air Guard unit in Des Moines from the “132nd Fighter Wing” to the “132nd Attack Wing.” This change is more than symbolic – a “fight” by definition has two sides. There is such a thing as a fair fight and a fight has some kind of resolution. An attack, however, is by nature one-sided, something that a perpetrator inflicts on a victim.

A fighter might sometimes be justified, an attacker, never. Drone strikes rarely catch a “terrorist” in an act of aggression against the US and often occur in counties where the US is not at war. Their victims are targeted on the basis of questionable intelligence or “patterns of behavior” that look suspicious from a computer screen thousands of miles away. More than once, drone victims have been US citizens living abroad, executed without charges or trial.

Distance from the battlefield does not isolate soldiers from post traumatic stress or the moral injury of war. Heather Linebaugh speaks of two friends and colleagues who committed suicide and another former drone

operator, Brandon Bryant, said that his work had made him into a “heartless sociopath.” While drone pilots are at a greater distance from their victims than other soldiers, he says, the video feed they watch brings them closer: “Artillery doesn’t see the results of their actions. It’s really more intimate for us, because we see everything.”

When the 132nd Attack Wing is up and running, Iowa’s “citizen soldiers” will be engaged in combat in real time from the Des Moines International Airport. “In an F-16, your whole mission was to train to go to war,” said a pilot of an Ohio Air Guard wing that made a similar conversion from fighters to drones. “In this mission, we go to war every day.”

Previous foreign postings of the 132nd were always made public, but where in the world the wing will be fighting from now on will be shrouded in secrecy. Reason and the rules of war both suggest that assassinations and acts of war on sovereign nations carried on by the 132nd from its base in Des Moines will make the airport there a military target, putting Iowans at peril.

Drone warfare is based on the lie that war can be made more exact, limited and humane through technology.

Our civilian and military authorities, by bringing drones to Des Moines, are acting recklessly and in defiance of domestic and international law. They are acting without regard for the safety and wellbeing of our troops, of the people of Iowa or of people in faraway places who otherwise would mean us no harm. Rather than being an answer, drones perpetuate and multiply the horrors of war and bring them home into our communities. **CT**

.....  
*Brian Terrell lives in Maloy, Iowa, and is a co-coordinator for Voices for Creative Nonviolence.*

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# Doris Lessing: I was a Useful Idiot

Doris Lessing, who died last year, was one of the best known novelists in the world. Did you know about her communist past? asks **Trevor Grundy**

**D**oris Lessing was one of the great novelists of the second half of the twentieth century.

When she died, scores of obituary writers praised her as a pioneering individualist, a woman who had recorded the pain and pleasure of her sex long before the feminist movement took off in the 1960s, a chronicler of some of the most important hinge moments of her age.

An obituary in the *London Times* said that her radicalism ensured that she was regarded with caution by the English literary establishment for which, it should be noted, she had little respect. Yet, at the age of 88 she won the Nobel Prize for Literature. By that time, she had outgrown categories, even communities. “Oh, I do loathe groups, clans, families, the human ‘we,’” she said. “How I dread them, fear them, try to keep them well away. Prides of lions or packs of wild



**Doris Lessing on crutches after a minor car accident in Lusaka, Zambia where she was a frequent companion of British diplomats and British mining consultants on contract to advise President Kaunda how to maximise his country's enormous copper wealth which partly financed the activities of black nationalists in white-ruled Rhodesia.** Photo: Mike Faber

dogs are kindly enemies in comparison.”

Many readers will know about her, how she was born in Persia (Iran) in 1919, taken to Rhodesia when she was six to live on a remote farm with a father who lost a leg in the First World War and a mother who – like one of those women in Russian novels – had high social aspirations but no money to back them up. She dominated Lessing's childhood and teenage years. Those who knew her best said she often confused imperialism with her mother.

Isolated on a remote farm, surrounded by whites who lived for sport and braais (barbeques) at country clubs, where gossip about black servants was a poor substitute for conversation, books became Doris Lessing's friends. They never let her down.

“I was equipped with a fine organ or self-preservation,” she said.

She left school at 14. As she entered pu-

**After her first novel “The Grass is Singing” was published in 1950 the little known wild colonial girl from southern Rhodesia was welcomed into the tight, warm circle of Marxist/Fabian/Christian socialists in Hampstead**

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## CONFUSED COMMUNIST

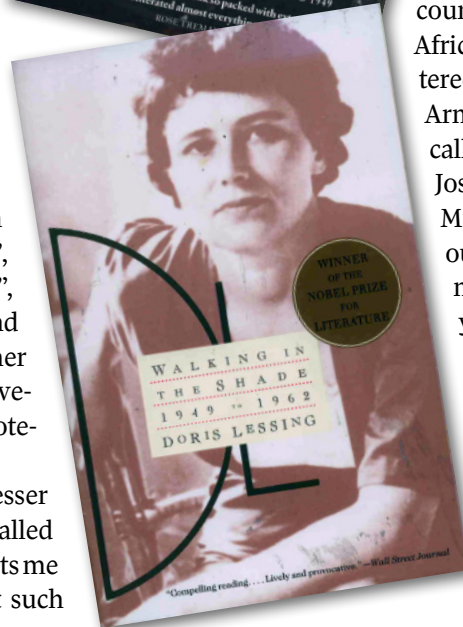
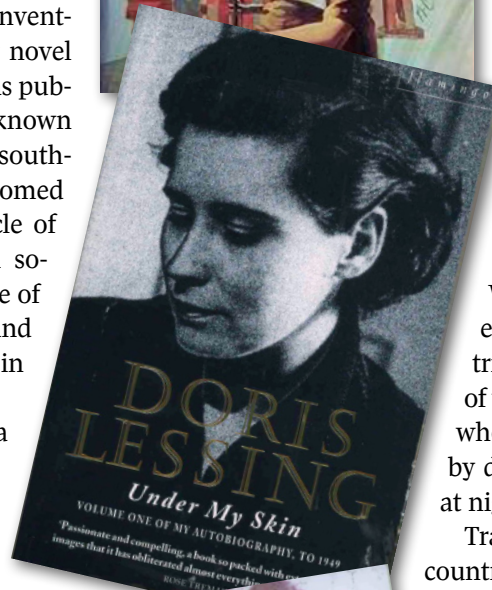
**Because of her association with Communists in the 1940s, Lessing had been declared a prohibited immigrant by the Federal Government led by Roy Welensky**

berty, her greatest adventure had been reading.

At the age of 19, she left the family home to work in Salisbury (Harare) where she trained herself to be a short-hand typist, where she married a Rhodesian civil servant, had two children, divorced, married a Jewish Communist who'd fled Hitler's Germany for white-ruled Rhodesia and had another child with him and then left Africa for England in 1949. In London, she re-invented herself. After her first novel "The Grass is Singing" was published in 1950 the little known wild colonial girl from southern Rhodesia was welcomed into the tight, warm circle of Marxist/Fabian/Christian socialists in Hampstead, one of the capital's wealthiest and most comfortable to live in boroughs.

Her early years as a Communist –under the influence of second husband Gottfried Lessing – fed into many of her later works – the fictional memoir "Children of Violence" (with Doris Lessing as the hero, Martha Quest), "A Proper Marriage", "A Ripple from the Storm", "Landlocked", "The Four Gated City", "The Good Terrorist", and the book that welded her name to the feminist movement, "The Golden Notebook".

But it is one of her lesser known works, a book called "Going Home" that interests me the most, because I spent such



a long time working as a journalist in central, eastern and southern Africa and because for a time I lived in Rhodesia where Doris Lessing grew up. I was Time magazine's correspondent there from December 1977 until the end of that country's terrible civil war (1966-1979) when white-ruled Rhodesia became black-run Zimbabwe in April 1980.

During that time I wrote a short book (and looking back, a very superficial one) with a colleague from Wales titled "The Farmer at War", in which I tried to paint a picture of white men and women who were food producers by day and armed soldiers at night.

Travelling around a country where thousands of Africans were being slaughtered by the Rhodesian Army (sometimes by the so-called liberation armies of Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe) I quickly found out that if you wanted to make a European farmer your deadly enemy in a space of seconds, all you had to do was mention two names – Harold Wilson, the Labour prime Minister of Britain when the Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith declared

Unilateral Declaration of Independence in November 1965, or Doris Lessing.

In 1956, Doris Lessing was well-established as a politically influential writer. After an absence of seven years, she wanted to see what it was like back home. That year – the year of the Suez Crisis and the Soviet Union’s invasion of Hungary – Lessing planned a brief visit to South Africa and Rhodesia.

The trip would lead to a book and a series of newspaper articles about life in her old country. Because of her association with Communists in the 1940s, Lessing had been declared a prohibited immigrant by the Federal Government led by Roy Welensky, but the ban was lifted by the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, Garfield Todd, the New Zealand-born Christian missionary turned politician.

He believed Lessing would write a fair book about what was going on. He welcomed her at his office in Salisbury: he told her she could go anywhere, talk to anyone, do what she liked, and see what she wanted to see.

Todd today is acclaimed as a liberal champion in white Rhodesia. He paid for his liberalism by being sacked by his own Cabinet in 1958. He and his daughter Judith were imprisoned by the Smith Government because of their opposition to UDI and support for black nationalists – Nkomo’s Zimbabwe African People’s Union (Zapu).

So high was the liberal reputation of Todd after independence that Prime Minister Robert Mugabe made him a Senator in the Upper House of the Zimbabwean Parliament.

Doris Lessing landed in Salisbury at a fascinating time. The British-designed Central African Federation (CAF) which started in 1953 and ended in 1963 linked the two Rhodesias (Zambia and Zimbabwe) with Nyasaland (Malawi).

It was working reasonably when Lessing turned up to examine it. Whites in southern Rhodesia looked longingly at the north’s

vast copper and mineral resources. But blacks in both Rhodesias were wary, fearing South African-style apartheid creeping up on them.

Britain’s aim was to use the newly created zone as a sponge to soak up the advance from the north of rampant Black Nationalism, inspired by Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, and to stop the encroachment into “British territory” by Afrikaners and their brand of nationalism known to the world as apartheid coming in from the south.

It was the height of the Cold War. Britain’s goal in Central Africa was to build bridges between the region’s different races – Africans (blacks) Europeans (whites) Indians and Asians and a mixed group called Coloureds.

The aim of the Soviet Union was to dismantle CAF by ridiculing liberal reformers – men like Garfield Todd – and instilling into African (nationalist) leaders the need for a planned Moscow-designed revolution run by a politically aware hierarchy well versed in Marxism/Leninism.

Politically committed writers, journalists, commentators were tools used by both sides in the struggle for world power. They were then. They are today.

“Going Home” was published and well received. It was a book passed around in political, as well as literary circles. How far it influenced the British Labour Party’s approach towards reaching a peaceful settlement with Whites in Rhodesia while advancing the cause of the majority blacks in that ill-fated country will never be known. but Nicholas Ramkin in “Churchill’s Wizards” reminds us of the role well-known writers play as propagandists. When Britain set about “persuading” the USA to join the Allies in the First World War, its spin doctors (then called information directors and newspaper editors) employed the services of J.M. Barrie, G.K. Chesterton, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, John Maysfield, Henry Newbolt and H.G. Wells.

Ramkin wrote: “The belief was that the

**The lady was not for turning and was determined to change the way the Soviet Union, handled journalists**

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## CONFUSED COMMUNIST

**“It appeared that the articles had been edited, cut and bits put in. This is why it is not advisable to write for the Russian press until it modernizes itself: until the rights of an individual journalist, an individual point of view, can be guaranteed”**

work of these great writers would have far more impact than shrieking headlines. It was never meant to be described as propaganda. You never said you were doing it. It seemed to appear naturally – ‘A great writer wrote a book about something and here’s a copy of it and we think you’ll be interested in it. . .’ “

It was twenty years before Doris Lessing revealed who’d financed her trip to the old country. In the 1977 edition of “Going Home” (20 years after it was first published by Michael Joseph) she wrote how she’d been duped by Moscow and used by the Soviet Union as one of Lenin’s ‘useful idiots’ after mocking the concept of partnership between the races and ridiculing Garfield Todd as a puppet of the white power structure.

“I am not a political agitator,” she wrote in the book. “I am an agitator manqué. I sublimate this side of my personality by mixing with people who are.”

With characteristic courage, she described what happened and how “Going Home” (and a series of articles published under her name in the Russian media) came about.

“The financing of this trip (to Southern Rhodesia) was tricky,” she writes. “I had to go home, for emotional reasons. I needed to see how Rhodesia struck me after living in a civilized country (Britain). I needed to feel and smell the place. But I had no money. I was very hard up.”

She went on: “The way I saw it was one of the newspapers (in Britain) ought to send me, because I was equipped to write sense about Federation and Partnership, while the professional journalists were all writing such nonsense. They did not see it my way.”

But the British Press would not cough up. That set her off on a different path, one she later came to regret. Lessing went to TASS

in London. It was the official news agency of the Soviet Union. Often KGB agents were allowed to enter Britain as correspondents for TASS.

“Every civilized country in the world, said I, paid journalists to visit countries and report on what they found there, and why should not Russia do the same? This, of course sounds very naïve.”

But the lady was not for turning and was determined to change the way the Soviet Union, handled journalists.

“Journalism, then as now, in Russia was old fashioned, and one of the thoughts in my mind was that I might be adding my mite towards dragging Russia kicking and screaming into the twentieth century.”

One of her other thoughts was money.

“I said I wanted my fare paid in return for which I would write articles for any newspaper in the Soviet Union he (the TASS man in London) cared to name. Would they let me know, inside a fortnight, if they would pay the fare and what newspaper I should write for? We parted on that basis.”

The fare was paid. A cheque was received. She said she couldn’t remember if it was for £500 or £1,000. Off she went. The result was “Going Home”.

“When I got back I wrote a lot of articles and posted them off to Moscow. Now comes the really unforgivable naiveté. It never occurred to me, since the conditions I was describing were so black a case against ‘imperialism’ they could not be worse, that there was any need at all for them to gild their lily. But then I got a letter from a friend on Moscow saying why had I written this and that? But I hadn’t written this and that. It appeared that the articles had been edited, cut and bits put in. This is why it is not advisable to write for the Russian press until it modernizes itself: until the rights of an individual journalist, an individual point of

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view, can be guaranteed.”

It was to be a long wait.

She wrote again about this ‘unforgivable naiveté’ in the second volume of her autobiography, “Walking in the Shade” – 1949-1962 (HarperCollins, 1997)

Strangely, none of this was mentioned in any of the obituaries, or that “Going Home” was the end result of putting Russian Gold into naïve hands of a great writer.

Yet honest Doris Lessing didn’t stop there. Talking to the journalist John Sweeney (BBC World Service August 4, 2010) 91- year old Lessing admitted that when she’d visited the Soviet Union in 1952 as part of a British delegation she had been used as one of Vladimir Lenin’s Useful Idiots.

“That’s what my role was,” she said. “I was taken around and shown things as a useful idiot. I can’t understand why I was so gullible.”

On the same programme, Professor Donald Rayfield, author of “Stalin and His Hangmen”, said- ”The phrase ‘useful idiots’ seems to have been around for 70 years. It’s someone who doesn’t think they’re an idiot, who thinks they’re highly intelligent but is so easily persuaded by flattery from people in power that they’re prepared to sacrifice their principles and allow themselves to be duped or even just to lie, for the sake of advantage.”

At the end of her long life, Doris Lessing had turned her back on communism. In her book “The Good Terrorist” she had no problem laughing at others who’d been hoodwinked. She became mellow, cynical,

disinterested in great causes retreating into spirituality and Sufism.

After listening to a lecture she made at the end of he fourth visit to Zimbabwe after 1980, the journalist Dr Michael Hartnack said that Doris Lessing was like wine . . . “one of those early Rhodesian reds which, well laid down over many years, lose their headache-making astringency and develop an unexpected depth and mellowness.”

As Orwell might have said about the younger Doris Lessing, “There are some things so stupid that only an intellectual could believe them.”

But, warts and all, Doris Lessing will be remembered not only for what she wrote (I’m going to try and forget “Going Home” now I’ve written this) but also for her great courage in admitting how she’d been so duped in the 1950s. She wasn’t the first, she won’t be the last.

No wonder she said what she said at the end, safe in the harbour of her Hampstead home after a long and often stormy passage over stromy seas –

“Oh, I do loathe groups, clans, and families, the human ‘we’” How I dread them, fear them; try to keep them well away. Prides of lions or packs of wild dogs are kindly enemies in comparison.” **CT**

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*Trevor Grundy is a British journalist who lived and worked in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa from 1966-1996. He is the author of “Memoir of a Fascist Childhood” (William Heinemann, 1998 and “Farmer at War”, (Modern Farming Publications, 1980).*

**These mega rich don’t deny or celebrate inequality. They’re maneuvering instead to limit how the nation responds to inequality**

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# READ THE BEST OF **FRONTLINE**

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# The Book of Death

An excerpt from the novel by South African author **James Whyle**

**The Captain lifted the Adams and thumbed back the hammer and put the barrel to Jack's temple**

I  
*Mutiny – The lash – A destination*

**T**he ball hummed past the Captain's ear buzzing in the air like a live thing and for a moment the cicadas stopped. The Captain put a hand to his neck as though a fly had landed there. He was twenty-two years old. He turned his horse and looked back along the column of irregulars. There were men gathered around Waine and Happy Jack. The sun was low and their shadows and those of the oxen and the wagons lay elongated in grim grotesquery on the sand. The Captain watched the murmuring men and then he dismounted and loosened his Adams in the holster-pipe and he walked back down the line.

He came to the dissenters and they stopped talking and looked at him.

Who fired, said the Captain. Waine dug a finger into his ear and brought it out again.

I did.

Who gave the order?

Waine examined the knob of dirt and wax on his finger tip and tested its consistency with his thumb.

A magpie.

The Captain stared at Waine and then he nodded.

Sergeant Major.

Herrid shambled forward. His chest was level with the top of Waine's head.

Take his firelock.

Herrid reached out a paw and grasped Waine's weapon. Waine tightened his grip and Herrid dug his fist hard into Waine's midriff. The breath squeezed from his diaphragm and the weapon came free in Herrid's hand.

Give him three dozen.

Waine was bent and winded and he lifted an arm and groaned.

You'll see me flogged like a nigger?

He put his hand on Happy Jack's arm.

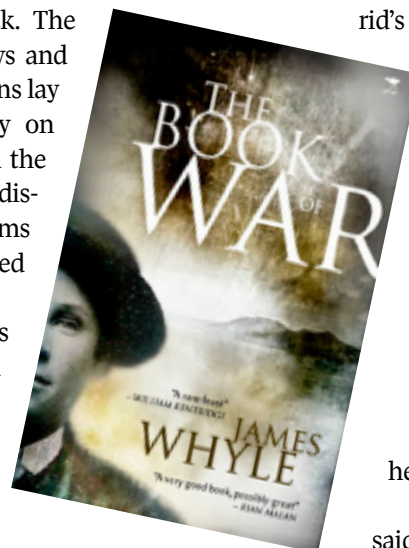
Like a nigger?

Happy Jack shook his head.

There's regulations, he said.

The Captain lifted the Adams and thumbed back the hammer and put the barrel to Jack's temple.

I'll blow the brains out of the next man who speaks.



**The Book Of War**

James Whyle

Published by Jacana Media

**\$9.96 at amazon.com**

Jack watched the Captain from the corner of his eye and he felt the bore at his head and he raised his hands.

Herrid took Waine by the throat and Waine struggled and Herrid squeezed and lifted his hand three inches and Waine stopped struggling.

We don't have a cat, Skipper.

Use your belt.

Herrid released Waine's throat. He took a leather thong from his pocket and tied Waine's hands before him. The Captain lowered his weapon and Jack wiped his hand across his brow.

Bring me my horse, said the Captain, and a man walked up the line to get it.

Herrid hauled Waine up against a gun carriage and bound his wrists to a spoke. He pulled up Waine's jacket to expose hairy flesh. He unbuckled his belt and withdrew it from its holdings. He wound the buckle end twice around his right hand. He placed his feet for purchase and swung the leather up into the sky and dragged it down again. There was a sound like a gunshot and a weal of red grew across Waine's ribs and he roared. He jerked back against the thong at his neck and bounced forward again and his forehead split against the metal rim of the wheel. Blood dripped onto a dusty spoke.

Shame, said Happy Jack. For shame. The Captain remounted and watched. Herrid shifted his footing in the dust and the second blow marked Waine's skin with a tall crooked X.

I'm ashamed, said Happy Jack. I'm ashamed I helped recruit you.

Herrid's third blow brought blood and a fat bluebottle fly settled to taste it. Happy Jack lifted his arms and appealed like a politician at the hustings.

It will be me next. Then you.

The Captain pulled his horse around to face Jack and the animal pricked its ears and watched him with great attention. The Captain nudged his heels inwards and the horse leapt forward and Jack tumbled in legs and hooves. The Captain wheeled the

horse and it rose above and Jack scabbled in the dirt and levered himself backward on arse and palms. The horse came down and Jack jerked back from its hooves and then he howled and hunched forward again. An inch of mimosa thorn protruded from the back of his hand. His palm was decorated with twig and foliage. He grasped at the twig and pulled and the thorn came out clean and blood welled in the grime. He leant forward and bound himself about his knees. Near kilt me, he said.

He clasped his hand and groaned.

There's regulations.

The Captain sat his horse and watched. Jack lifted his hand to his mouth and sucked. When he lowered it the sucked flesh showed in a circle in the dirt and blood welled dark and thick from the centre of it.

The irregulars looked about, one at another. Evans, a bent man with but one ear, lifted an arm to point.

That thorn obeying regulations?

Jack looked at Evans. Evans turned elaborately to the side and spat. Somewhere in the ranks of those improvident pilgrims a man laughed and then others laughed also. The Captain leaned in and put a hand on Herrid's shoulder.

Thirty-three to come.

Herrid lifted his belt and lashed Waine thirty-three further times and the Captain wrote it down in his book and then the column formed once more and they moved on through the green singing bush towards Mount Misery.

## II

***River crossing – Ablutions interrupted – Fingo defectors – General flight – The case against desertion – Slay and eat – Thoughts of women.***

In The noontime they crossed a thirsty plateau where lizards skittered on baked rock. Coming to the rimlands they halted and looked into the valley where the river

**He wound the buckle end twice around his right hand. He placed his feet for purchase and swung the leather up into the sky and dragged it down again. There was a sound like a gunshot and a weal of red grew across Waine's ribs and he roared**

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## BOOK EXCERPT

**The irregular hollered and the giant hurled the weapon which vibrated through the air and entered the irregular's back below the shoulder blade and emerged clean through the front of his jacket**

coiled through dark thickets of boerboon and mimosa.

The Hottentot drivers cried out and applied the brakes and the wagons skidded down the rocky track towards the ford. Happy Jack was tied with Waine to a gun carriage.

Flogged with no medical man present, he said. Court marshal offence.

Waine groaned and Happy Jack looked about in search of sympathisers. The kid walked behind the gun carriage and he looked away when he saw Jack's head turn towards him. The kid had no beef with Jack but his belly was full and he had no beef with the Captain either. He trudged after the gun carriage and the new rifle clattered against his pack. He thought of the bullet seated snug on its charge and he put his hand back to steady the weapon and felt the rich smooth warmth of the stock. His nostrils drew in smells of horse and sweat and dust and the next time Jack looked at him the kid was grinning.

They came down into the bottomlands and approached the river. The Captain and Herrid conferred with the God-struck Lieutenant and then Herrid lined each side

of the ford with a rear and advance guard as though in enemy territory. The wagons were some time crossing. Evans, standing next to the kid, scratched at the place where his ear had been.

There no heathens here.

How do you know?

Evans stared up at the dark hills to the east. Upriver

the Hottentot drivers called out the names of the oxen and their whips reached for the beasts and cracked like leather lightning. Evans took off his hat.

Be good to wash.

He turned and sauntered downstream. The kid followed and they passed a thicket at a bend and were out of sight of the wagons. Evans took off his boots and removed his jacket. The kid frowned. There was a tang of fermented beans and cabbage on the

air. But the next breath brought only rock and water and dust and he followed Evans in undressing and wading into the water.

Evans submerged himself and came up expelling a spray of air and water that glittered like gems in the late afternoon light.

There she blows, said the kid.

Evans wiped a hand across his face and looked at the boy. A thatch of hair over green eyes. Cunning as a ship's cat. With as much chance of surviving.

You worked a whaler?

Yes.

What were you?

Everything.

They heard a cry and the kid looked east and saw an irregular hopping out from a bush and hauling his trousers from his ankles. Behind him came a brown giant wearing a ragged uniform all dressed with dog skin and feathers. He wielded an iron-tipped spear. The irregular hollered and the giant hurled the weapon which vibrated through the air and entered the irregular's back below the shoulder blade and emerged clean through the front of his jacket. The irregular let his trousers fall and looked down at the spearhead. He took it in his hands and examined it like some marvellous prophecy of future journeys and then he fell forward onto the earth. The shaft, on impact, grew by a foot and stood vertical.

The kid leapt from the water. The speared man lay there, a strange sight, impaled and with his bare nates pallid in the sunlight. The giant moved boldly to recover his lance. The kid scrambled for his rifle and felt for a cap. There were yells upriver and also from the forested hillside and the giant bounced like a genie up the rocky slope and was gone. The kid placed a cap on the nipple and fired at the flora that might conceal the monster and then he turned for his clothes.

The irregulars had fled in mirror image of the surprised Fingo defectors whose calls could be heard on the hill. The Hottentot drivers were cutting the traces of the oxen and turning them back into the safety of the



western bush and the Captain stood in the ford with Herrid and the God-struck Lieutenant. He cursed and called and ordered and it made no difference for he was like the epicentre of some awful cataclysm from which all men depart.

As the sun slipped toward the horizon sloping wolves moaned and yipped in the gloom and the irregulars' stomachs began to growl. In small groups of two or three they approached and assessed the ford for safety and then they emerged shamefaced from their cover and waited. When all or most were returned, Herrid assembled them in their ranks with the irregulars at one end and the tiny voorlopers at the other. The Captain paced and his face was pale beneath its dirt.

A bright moon arose and the Captain's voice bounced and skittered off the water and the rocks and the hills and an echo came back ethereal from the cliffs upstream.

We have come to kill the heathen. When we reach Gatestown, the Minié rifles will be there for us to do it with.

He pointed to the east and his voice rose.

They possess upwards of three thousand stand of arms. They have six million rounds of ball cartridge and half a million assegais. Their prophet has told them to slay and eat. Those who flee them will be overtaken and have their throats slit. Any who escape will be hunted and eaten by wild beasts. And should a deserter survive these adventures and return, I will hang him.

The men stood silent and Waine moaned on the gun carriage and Happy Jack cried out.

Justice? the Captain replied, and the cliffs upstream repeated the question again and then again again again. The men stood in silence. The river ran on towards the sea.

Lieutenant.

Captain.

Yoke the oxen and get the wagons across. We camp on the far bank.

The irregulars did as the God-struck

Lieutenant bade them and made their fires and ate and lay to sleep and the kid stared up at the stars which marched in good order across the deep rich blackness of the void. He felt for himself under his blanket and thought of the naked women he had seen in the bay, their breasts like long sacks of chamois hanging black-tipped but in the young ripe and lifting at the nipple like dark sweet fruit.

### III

*A burial – The suffering of beasts – Bitis arietans – A Dutchman – A long shot – A crone's daghasack – Fingo levies – Gatestown – Disagreements in a bar – A fountain of blood – Waine recovered – The Minié rifle – Evans' reaping hook – Happy Jack deserted.*

**O**n The day following flies buzzed loud and intimate as the dead man was buried by the side of the river. The God-struck Lieutenant opened his book and began to read of ashes and dust but the Captain cut him short.

He shouted orders at Herrid and Herrid shouted in turn and a shovel-load of dirt and rock landed on the dead irregular's face and open mouth and the oxen were yoked.

The column creaked up the hill and onto a narrow track arched with overhanging trees and hung with grey festoons of lichen. Bees mumbled in blue plumbago and euphorbias rose thirty feet into the air like hellfire plants shaped by a prevailing wind from below. As the sun reached its meridian the path turned to sand. The earth baked and the oxen stumbled and the Hottentot drivers lifted their whips and cracked them down to release blood from scrawny rumps. The beasts roared and two fell almost simultaneously, their tongues swollen and lolling in the dust, thick strands of mucus gathering up grit and sand.

The irregulars rested for two hours and then they hauled the dead beasts off the

**Those who flee them will be overtaken and have their throats slit. Any who escape will be hunted and eaten by wild beasts. And should a deserter survive these adventures and return, I will hang him**

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## BOOK EXCERPT

**He steadied his breathing and settled the sights and a silence fell among those watching. The kid squeezed steady on the trigger and the cattle bellowed at the sound of the shot**

path and when they moved on there were vultures hanging in the sky and ready to feed.

In the afternoon they crossed a plain of thin baked grass. They travelled in a cloud of dust borne by a blast from the interior. A Hottentot voorloper ran off the track to relieve himself and a rock uncurled beneath his bare feet and a flat head like a beaten arrow flashed up injecting a virulence into his thigh at the spot where the tendons come down to meet the knee. The bitten child was loaded onto a gun carriage and the God-struck Lieutenant prayed by his side and they moved on. The boy was silent and his calf and thigh swelled as though become a plant that harbours water and then he died.

They left the corpse in a shallow grave and the sun was low behind them and they proceeded like a rough beast that would devour its shadow. They passed a party of traders travelling to The Bay with wagon-loads of stinking skins. They were escorted by Fingos whose members knocked like stunned serpents against their thighs. The God-struck Lieutenant asked an anthropological question.

What is the difference between the Fingo and the heathen?

As far as I can make out, said the Captain. There is only one.

And that is?

The Fingo, defectors aside, fight for us.

The traders moved on towards their obscure destiny and the irregulars to theirs specific and they encamped on a dry riverbed. Small apes screamed and swore at them from the forest. It stormed in the night and the men rose drenched and cursing when a dim light in the east signalled the approach of dawn.

At sunrise they were travelling through a low grassy land devoid of tree or bush and covered with anthills strongly built and baked as hard as stone. Waine moaned on the gun carriage and the weals on his back attracted rotund flies which laid their eggs

in the viscous matter that oozed there.

They halted in the afternoon on the farm of a Dutchman. The place was all stockaded with boxes and chests and barrels filled with sand and the evening light was gold on the fields and on the crops which were much refreshed by the previous night's rain. The Captain stood and spoke with the Dutchman. He took out his Adams and demonstrated its revolving action and then he called for the kid to bring the one Minié rifle carried by the corps. The ball is cone-shaped, said the Captain. It has an

expansive base which catches the rifling on the bore. A spin is imparted and the ball travels true and far.

I believe what I see, said the Dutchman.

The Captain smiled and gestured towards the kid.

He has a talent. He pointed to the Dutchman's cattle which were returning down a hill some six hundred yards opposite.

He will kill one with a head shot.

If he can do that, said the Dutchman, you can eat it.

Thank you, said the Captain. He turned to the kid.

The kid watched the oxen and then he slung the rifle from his shoulder and placed the butt on the ground before him. He took a Minié cartridge between forefinger and thumb and he bit the end from it and he shook the powder into the barrel. He reversed the cartridge and drew his hand down so that the cone-shaped ball sat snug in the mouth of the bore and he twisted off the paper that remained protruding. He dropped his hand to the head of the ramrod and pulled it half out and released it and reversed his hand and took the middle of the rod and he drew it out backhanded and twisted it round and forced the ball down till his hand touched the muzzle. He slid his hand up to the end of the rod and he pushed the ball home on the powder. He tapped twice lightly on the rod to ensure that the ball was secure and he drew the rod half out and reversed his hand and withdrew it and

replaced it in its slot. He placed a percussion cap firm on the nipple and cocked the weapon. He knelt and rested the barrel in his left palm on the Dutchman's balcony. He steadied his breathing and settled the sights and a silence fell among those watching. The kid squeezed steady on the trigger and the cattle bellowed at the sound of the shot. A large white ox started into the bush at a trot and then it slowed and its knees collapsed beneath it.

The irregulars cheered and ran to haul the beast into camp on the Dutchman's sled and the Hottentot drivers flensed it with their stabbing spears and that night the men feasted on the fresh meat and the Dutchman's vegetables.

Waine was sweating and groaning at the fire during the meal and the Dutchman's wife examined him and called forth an ancient Hottentot woman. The crone shuffled up beneath a worn cloak of antelope skin. She examined Waine's wounds and then she searched under her coverings and brought out a daghasack formed from a monkey's skin entire, the only opening being the mouth as its anus had been stitched tight. From this hairy grail she selected a variety of mouldy leaves and roots and placed them in a little water in a small pot on the embers of the fire. She applied the poultice to Waine's back and she spoke an incantation, a mumbled chant of clicks and hisses and strange shifting vowels and then she laughed.

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At noon on the day following the column was met by a convoy of ten wagons sent from Gatestown to lighten their loads. The wagons were escorted by fifty Fingo levies bearing spears and battered flintlocks. They carried daghasacks like the crone's but formed from the skins of the wild cat or hyrax. Their felt hats were ornamented with feathers and hung behind with jackals' tails and strips of tiger skin. Some wore tattered shirts and some had short cloaks of grimy

blanket and all were naked besides.

Thus accompanied the irregulars moved up a narrow valley shut in by rocky hills. They marched by the side of a fresh clear stream along which grew white arum lilies and orange salvias. Flocks of golden green starlings and orioles and honey birds rose from the forest and whirled above to mark their passage. After toiling up a steep and rocky path they passed through a narrow gorge and out onto the tableland above the town. It lay below them, a straggling place, scorched in the heat and surrounded by low hills from which came into the kid's nostrils a thin clean scent of island herbs.

As they entered the village the settlers and their servants stared in astonishment at the column. The Captain rode before and the irregulars loped behind him, their faces dark with grime and beard. Some trod as though surprised to find the earth beneath their feet instead of a rolling deck and all stared with greedy convict's eyes at the women and the grog shops and the deserted market and the small white houses in the dust. The voorlopers pranced like dwarves at a fair and the gaunt beasts plodded after them with lowered heads. Behind the wagons rolled the creaking gun carriages with Waine groaning and Happy Jack bound and muttering and after them the Fingo levies strode savage and tall and silent.

When the tents were pitched and the oxen and horses watered, a guard was organised and those without duty followed the Hottentot drivers to the village.

Evans and the kid entered a dim lean-to where candles guttered. A man in the corner looked up and examined their uniforms and then he rose and spat on the floor and left. Evans called for the cheapest drink available and a toothless settler felt below the bar. Cape Smoke, he said.

He brought out a bottle of alcohol distilled from the fruit of a thorny succulent and the men drank and they fell to talking about the war.

**He brought out a bottle of alcohol distilled from the fruit of a thorny succulent and the men drank and they fell to talking about the war**

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## BOOK EXCERPT

**The joiner took Jack's face in his hands like a lover and stared into his eyes. He rocked back and brought his high-domed forehead down on the bridge of Jack's nose where the soft cartilage joins with the bone of the skull**

The heathen don't come at you in rows blowing bugles, said the settler.

How do they come?

They come out of nothing. Like roots. I was with the Dutchmen the first time they tried to relieve Old

Thunder at Fort Vic. The heathen stood up out of the rocks on both sides of us. A thousand of them in the bushes where the scouts had ridden half an hour before. That wasn't written in the pamphlet, said Evans.

What was written in pamphlet?

Sunny skies. And good pay.

Evans turned to the kid.

True?

It is, said the kid.

There was a noise at the door and Happy Jack came in, followed by an old man, a Hottentot by his gait and features. Jack approached the counter and the Hottentot stood separate and waited.

There'll be justice, Jack said. A doctor is going to examine Waine tomorrow.

The settler looked at Jack and then he spat. He pointed at the ragged trousers of the Hottentot.

When I came here they were naked or in sheepskins. There was among the irregulars one who had been a joiner, a gaunt man and darkly bearded. His eyes were of a brown that might be called black in certain contexts and yet burned in others with a strange heat. This lean figure turned now from his place in the shadows. When the white man came the Hottentot wore hide cloaks. They ran like greyhounds. They would hold a spear out at the height of your shoulder and any man in the company could leap clear over it from a standing position. They sent their cattle into battle against you. Commanded them by whistling.

The Hottentot was staring at the joiner but the kid had no notion of what he comprehended.

The heathen will whistle three times in the bush, said the settler, and your own cattle lying sleeping will rise up and go to

him like well-trained dogs. Hottentot likewise.

Maybe they aren't your cattle, said Evans.

Happy Jack downed an inch of his brandy.

Waine's going to be examined tomorrow.

The first white men who saw the Hottentot, said the joiner, compared them to ancient Greeks.

To what?

Greeks.

How do you know?

Books.

The settler spat and Jack looked at the joiner.

Your mother was a Greek, he said. You saw Herrid lash Waine when there was no medical man. Waine's near to dying. Just tell what the Captain did. We'll be disbanded. We'll march back to The Bay and sail for the Cape on full pay.

My mother was a what?

They'll put you in the levies, said the settler.

A Greek, said Jack. Without the Captain, there's no corps.

Say it again, said the joiner.

A hairy Greek. With a moustache.

Now now, said the settler.

The joiner took Jack's face in his hands like a lover and stared into his eyes. He rocked back and brought his high-domed forehead down on the bridge of Jack's nose where the soft cartilage joins with the bone of the skull. Jack's body seemed to fold in many places and he collapsed like a sack and a wash of blood came from his nostrils. A man complained loudly that the blood had soiled his uniform and the settler threatened to call a constable if there was any more violence.

Be pleased to meet him, said the kid, but Evans hushed him and congratulated the joiner and ordered another round.

—

On the day following a doctor came

to the encampment to examine Waine as Happy Jack had foretold. Waine was housed in the hospital area of the barracks with a guard attendant and the Captain watched as he removed his shirt. Jack, whose nose had swelled overnight and now encroached upon his face in lurid blues and yellows, sat on the bed opposite.

Miracle he lived, he said.

The doctor looked at Happy Jack and then bent to examine Waine's back which showed a healthy crust of scab and no sign of seeping or redness or any infection whatsoever.

This man can go back on active duty, said the doctor.

He looked at Jack.

Him too, if you want him. Happy Jack sat silent and puzzled and the Captain

thanked the doctor and they walked outside together towards the posts where the man's horse was tied.

—

In the afternoon the irregulars stood in single file by a wagon of the commissariat presided over by a wrinkled yellow Hottentot whose slant eyes watched discreet and focused as each man handed in his firelock and received the Minié rifle which the Captain had paid for. Then they assembled in their ranks and the Captain lectured them on the qualities of the weapon which he said would be their greatest friend and ally and on its care.

You are going to be, said the Captain, a living advertisement for the Minié rifle. Because of this weapon you will become the most feared and respected force in this country.

He walked down the line and halted before the kid.

I gave this man our only example because he among all of you showed a true propensity to kill with it.

He took the kid's weapon and charged the bore and seated a bullet and drove it home.

There are many varieties of heathen of

which our Gaika enemy is but one. There are Gunukwebees and Lambies and the sons of Ham. And we will be marching with Fingo levies who are barely distinguishable from these savages even in the light of day.

He put a cap on the nipple and thumbed back the hammer. A cat alighted from a sill at the back of the kitchens and picked a delicate way through motes of dust and past a broken reaping hook lying on the beaten earth and past a stray dog, a mangy skeletal thing panting next to a clay bowl from which it had recently scavenged. A fowl was feeding on what remained and it lifted its head at the cat's approach. It stood there with one claw raised in anticipation of flight.

It's important, said the Captain, that we exterminate our enemy and not our ally.

He lifted the rifle and fired. The sound in that silent arena was prodigious. The fowl's head ceased to exist and its body ran and pumped blood from its neck. The cat leapt for the cover of the woodpile and the dog fled howling. A surprised cook put his head out of the kitchen door and watched the bird which continued its spurting anarchic sprint like a miraculous fountain created to demonstrate the persistence of the heart.

When Herrid called for them to fall out the men formed groups and examined and discussed their new weapons. Evans went to the spot where the fowl was being plucked. He picked up the broken reaping hook and he examined it and felt for sharpness in the blade.

In the evening they were assembled again and the Captain told them that they would depart at dawn for the mountains, all but Happy Jack who the doctor had ascertained was plagued by infected molars which had been affecting his morale and which were scheduled for removal as soon as the necessary levers and grasping implements could be assembled.

**You are going to be, said the Captain, a living advertisement for the Minié rifle. Because of this weapon you will become the most feared and respected force in this country**

**A female delved in another's fur and removed a blood-gorged tick and ate it and looked down at the activity below with an expression as thoughtful as a vintner's assessing the product of an auspicious year**

#### IV

*The rocky pass – Signs of conflict – Right fork to Fort Adams – Provenance – Methods for encouraging oxen – Breakfast – A dusty citadel on the Nameless River – Indifference of the Kabyles – A demon horde.*

The Irregulars left Gatestown in a ragged column with scouts riding ahead. They ascended a long hill to the tableland and in the late morning they gained the rimlands and saw before them sun-struck valleys and grassy plains dotted with mimosa and thorny succulents. There were rocky outcrops containing forested gorges and behind them the mountains, rank on rank, vast and austere.

On the day following they entered a rocky pass winding up through stony hills that sang with the voltaic hum of insects. At the tail of a valley they proceeded between a wall of rock and a vertiginous ravine. The path owned holes as deep as horse ponds and rocks the size of the arms chests strapped to the wagons. Spoked wheels crunched and squealed over the bones and dried skins of oxen and horses slaughtered in ambush. Gorged vultures lumbered into the air and hauled themselves towards the crags from which the spears and gunfire had come down. Three large apes occupied these outposts now. They sat back on their haunches and conversed among themselves with furrowed brows. A female delved in another's fur and removed a blood-gorged tick and ate it and looked down at the activity below with an expression as thoughtful as a vintner's assessing the product of an auspicious year.

The column descended from the pass by a steep rough road and passed through sandy country scattered with thorny bush. They came to a place where the road turned left towards Fort Cox and they took the right fork to Fort Adams and arrived at last at a lonely quadrangular fortification close to a ford of the Little

Fat River and they encamped on the op-

posite bank. That night the kid and Evans sat separate at a small fire and chewed on black biscuit while beef charred on the coals. Evans turned the meat with his reaping hook and then commenced to file and polish the weapon and examine its glint in the light of the flames. The kid stared into the coals and saw there flickering and shifting the enactment of ambush and slaughter and other prophecies for which there are no words.

On the day following their road ran along the foot of a gaunt black cliff, its summits fringed with overhanging trees and scarlet geranium and red aloe blossoms like spearheads glowing from the forge. The kid looked up and saw standing heraldic against the blue an antelope as large as a dragoon's stallion, taut and crowned with spiral horns that augured the void and then a whip cracked in the column. When the kid looked up again the sky was empty save for high black filaments, floating scavengers that rode on updrafts a mile above.

He marched with Evans and the joiner and the men fell to talking about how they came there. Evans was reticent about his provenance.

What happened to your ear?

Blackpool.

The kid stared at Evans for a moment but Evans said no more and the kid looked at the joiner.

You? Needed the money. What's your problem? The kid said he had been a mate's servant and the mate had difficulties with the skipper and the skipper left the Cape without them. The kid had been in need of forage when Happy Jack rolled past fed and fuelled and offering employment.

Happy Jack, said Evans.

They marched in silence for a time and watched how the dust rose and fell about the feet of the men before.

Evans looked at the joiner.

These heathens.

What about them?

They fight with spears.

Some of them.

The joiner eased the hard leather strap of his rifle upon his shoulder.

Old Thunder says they have a choice. Obey the law, or go live other side the Big Fat.

What law?

Our law.

Who's Old Thunder?

The General.

The kid pondered. Where's the Big Fat?

The joiner pointed to the east.

They left the cliff behind them and commenced to ascend a long steep winding road littered with the bones and carcasses of horses and bullocks. Their own animals groaned and staggered and they took the wagons up in two portions with double teams on each. The Hottentot drivers put aside their whips and brought out six-foot lengths of hide as thick as a man's wrist at the handle and when these failed they took the tails of the oxen in their hands and sank their teeth into them and then they bent them until they broke. When the irregulars gained the summit there were twenty further carcasses left behind for the jackals and the wolves and the circling scavengers above.

They passed along the edge of a ravine guarded by sentinel euphorbias and they marched down a dusty track through clumps of spekboom. In the north were plains of red sand and bush-covered hills. The mountains stood footed in their plates and mantled in folds of blue. Beyond the peaks were unseen grasslands where snow falls sometimes and beyond them in turn plains so vast that a man can stop for three days and watch a herd of antelope pass continuous before his wondering eyes like a tide.

On the day following the irregulars rose late and proceeded by the side of the stream. In the mid-morning they came to the foot of a short steep hill and the Hottentot drivers in the rear began to make preparations for breakfast. They kindled fires and pounded coffee and rummaged in their bags for pieces of raw meat. The blackened lumps of flesh emerged studded with copper caps and dusted with crumbs of powdered biscuit.

The foremost wagons were yoked once more with double teams and before they topped the hill the drivers below had devoured their charred meal and extinguished their fires and wiped their clasp knives clean of grease and ash in the sparse coils of their hair.

They marched on at a good pace and passed a military settlement burnt and looted and derelict. At the ford of a small brook a wagon broke down and the irregulars unloaded it and carried its contents to the far side and then they spoked the wagon, inch by inch, across the drift while the joiner and the driver chose a small straight tree and chopped it down and fashioned a new shaft to connect the front axle to the yokes once more.

In the heat of the afternoon they gained the summit of a low hill and saw Fort Adams below them; a dusty excuse for a citadel lying on the flatlands by the side of the upper reaches of the Nameless River. In its centre was a cluster of battered white houses and next to these a group of domed Fingo huts. The outpost was all enclosed by picketing and low mud walls mounting a few guns and old musquetoons and the sun struck the dwellings fiercely so that they shimmered.

As the column descended they were met by a party of mounted officers and soon after a carnival of naked Hottentots and Bastards who sang and danced as they accompanied the irregulars through the gates.

The oxen were unyoked and watered and tents were pitched and the Captain and the God-struck Lieutenant were shown to their rooms which owned uneven floors of dried cow dung and rough walls of wattle-and-daub below smoke-blackened rafters and sooty thatch. When the Captain's trunk was brought in he took from it a Dollond telescope and went to stand in the crooked doorway and trained it on the mountains to the north. He stood there for some time and then he handed the telescope to the Lieutenant.

I have seen the indifference of the Kabyles in the Atlas mountains, he said. But here we have a poorly armed throng of savages pa-

**When the irregulars gained the summit there were twenty further carcasses left behind for the jackals and the wolves and the circling scavengers above**

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**BOOK EXCERPT**

**They wielded short knobbed sticks with which they struck each other blows to the head that reported like rifle shots**

rating themselves within six miles of a garrison of the British Empire.

That night the kid shared a tent with Evans and the joiner and ten others. Evans groaned in his sleep and muttered of the lash and Norfolk Island and in the morning they woke to Herrid's shouts and dressed and began to assemble for Sunday service. Before communion with God could commence there were shouts from the Fingo levies.

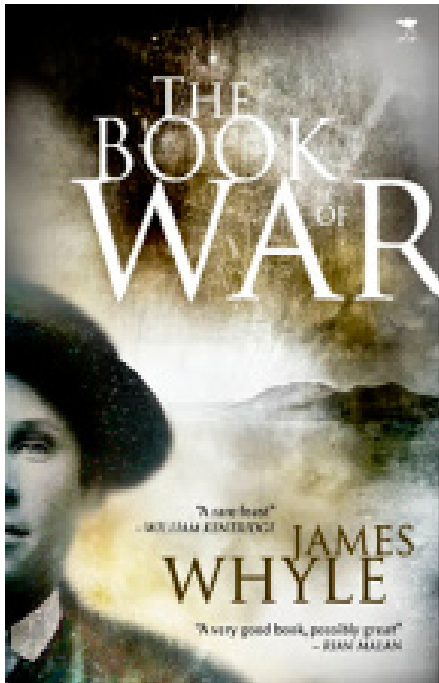
Several hundred naked men were struggling like demons in a cloud of dust. They wielded short knobbed sticks with which they struck each other blows to the head that reported like rifle shots and removed tufts of hair and skin so that blood flowed freely. A party of disputants, fearing themselves outmanoeuvred, took up their stabbing spears and entered the throng in a tight unit slashing left and right.

The Commandant ordered a field gun to be loaded with grapeshot and swung round to bear on the men but Johnny Fingo poured

a palmful of black powder into the bore of an ancient musket and seated a ball above it. He placed the butt of the weapon on a hitching post and fired off a blast which echoed across the hills and the mountains and stilled the disputing warriors. They were tall men and well made and they stood silent and pale with dust and streaks of bright blood flowed down their faces. They looked like a demon horde, vigorous and powerful and struck dumb by a miracle. **CT**

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*James Whyle has published poetry, short stories and journalism. Radio dramas, commissioned by the BBC, include "A Man Called Rejoice" which was published as "Rejoice Burning" in the UK. His story, "The Story", was chosen by JM Coetzee as winner of the 2011 Pen/Studzinski competition. His book, "The Book of War" was short listed for South Africa's Sunday Times Literary Award. He blogs at <http://jameswhyte.blogspot.ca>*



**"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

By **JAMES WHYLE**

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# Canada's monster

**Conn M. Hallinan** reads a book that tells how Canada changed from peacekeeper to warrior and poured billions of dollars into a futile war

Americans tend to think of Canadians as politer and more sensible than their southern neighbors, thus the joke: “Why does the Canadian chicken cross the road? To get to the middle.” Oh, yes, bit of a muddle there in Afghanistan, but like Dudley Do Right, the Canadians were only trying to develop and tidy up the place.

Not in the opinion of Jerome Klassen and a formidable stable of academics, researchers, journalists, and peace activists who see Canada's role in Central Asia less as a series of policy blunders than a coldly calculated strategy of international capital. “Simply put,” writes Klassen, “the war in Afghanistan was always linked to the aspirations of empire on a much broader scale.”

“Empire's Ally” asks the question, “Why did the Canadian government go to war in Afghanistan in 2001?” and then carefully dissects the popular rationales: fighting terrorism; coming to the aid of the United States; helping the Afghans to develop their country. Oh, and to free women. What the book's autopsy of those arguments reveals is disturbing.

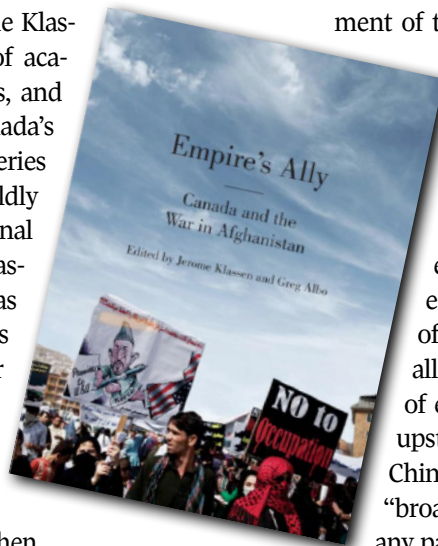
Calling Canada's Afghan adventure a “revolution,” Klassen argues,

“the new direction of Canadian foreign policy cannot be explained simply by policy mistakes, US demands, military adventurism, security threats, or abstract notions of liberal idealism. More accurately, it is best explained by structural tendencies in the Canadian political economy – in particular, by the internationalization of Canadian capital and the realignment of the state as a secondary power in the US-led system of empire.”

In short, the war in Afghanistan is not about people failing to read Kipling, but is rather part of a worldwide economic and political offensive by the US and its allies to dominate sources of energy and weaken any upstart competitors like China, and India. Nor is that “broader scale” limited to any particular region.

Indeed, the US and its allies have transformed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) from a European alliance to contain the Soviet Union, to an international military force with a global agenda. Afghanistan was the alliance's coming out party, its first deployment outside of

**The war in Afghanistan is not about people failing to read Kipling, but is rather part of a worldwide economic and political offensive by the US and its allies to dominate sources of energy**



**Empire's Ally:  
Canada and the War in  
Afghanistan**

Edited by Jerome Klassen and Greg Albo

University of Toronto Press

Price

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## BOOK REVIEW

**After almost \$1 trillion dollars poured into Afghanistan – Canada’s contribution runs to about \$18 billion – some 70 percent of the Afghan population lives in poverty, and malnutrition has recently increased**

Europe. The new “goals” are, as one planner put it, to try to “re-establish the West at the centre of global security,” to guarantee access to cheap energy, to police the world’s sea lanes, to “project stability beyond its borders,” and even concern itself with “Chinese military modernization.”

If this all sounds very 19th century – as if someone should strike up a chorus of “Britannia Rules the Waves” – the authors would agree, but point out that global capital is far more powerful and all embracing than the likes of Charles “Chinese” Gordon and Lord Herbert Kitchener ever envisioned. One of the book’s strong points is its updating of capitalism, so to speak, and its careful analysis of what has changed since the end of the Cold War.

Klassen is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Center for International Studies, and Greg Albo is an associate professor of political science at York University in Toronto. The two authors gather together 13 other academics, journalists, researchers and peace activists to produce a detailed analysis of Canada’s role in the Afghan war.

The book is divided into four major parts dealing with the history of the involvement, its political and economic underpinnings, and the actual Canadian experiences in Afghanistan, which had more to do with condoning war crimes like torture than digging wells, educating people, and improving their health. Indeed, Canada’s Senate Standing Committee on National Security concluded that, in Ottawa’s major area of concentration in Afghanistan, Kandahar, “Life is clearly more perilous because we are there.”

After almost \$1 trillion dollars poured into Afghanistan – Canada’s contribution runs to about \$18 billion – some 70 percent of the Afghan population lives in poverty, and malnutrition has recently increased. Over 30,000 Afghan children die each year from hunger and disease. And as for liberating women, according to a study by TrustLaw Women, the “conflict, NATO airstrikes and cultural practices combined” make Afghanistan the “most

dangerous country for women” in the world.

The last section of the book deals with Canada’s anti-war movement.

While the focus of “Empire’s Ally” is Canada, the book is really a sort of historical materialist blueprint for analyzing how and why capitalist countries involve themselves in foreign wars. Readers will certainly learn a lot about Canada, but they will also discover how political economics works and what the goals of the new imperialism are for Washington, London, Paris, and Berlin.

Klassen argues that Canadians have not only paid in blood and gold for their Afghanistan adventure, they have created a multi-headed monster, a “network of corporate, state, military, intellectual, and civil social actors who profit from or direct Canada’s new international policies.”

This meticulously researched book should be on the shelf of anyone interested in the how’s and why’s of western foreign policy. “Empire’s Ally” is a model of how to do an in-depth analysis of 21st century international capital and a handy guide on how to cut through the various narratives about “democracy,” “freedom,” and “security” to see the naked violence and greed that lays at the heart of the Afghan War.

The authors do more than reveal, however, they propose a roadmap for peace in Afghanistan. It is the kind of thinking that could easily be applied to other “hot spots” on the globe.

For this book is a warning about the future, when the battlegrounds may shift from the Hindu Kush to the East China Sea, Central Africa, or Kashmir, where, under the guise of fighting “terrorism,” establishing “stability,” or “showing resolve,” the US and its allies will unleash their armies of the night. **CT**

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**Conn M. Hallinan** is a columnist for *Foreign Policy In Focus*. He holds a PhD in Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley. A winner of a Project Censored “Real News Award,” he lives in Berkeley, California. Mr Hallinan blogs at <http://dispatchesfromtheedgeblog.wordpress.com>

# Good war, bad war and the struggle of memory

The regime that Washington created, the “good” Korea, was set up and run by those who had collaborated with Japan and America, writes **John Pilger**

**F**ifty years ago, E.P. Thompson’s ‘The Making of the English Working Class’ rescued the study of history from the powerful. Kings and queens, landowners, industrialists, politicians and imperialists had owned much of the public memory. In 1980, Howard Zinn’s ‘A People’s History of the United States’ also demonstrated that the freedoms and rights we enjoy precariously – free expression, free association, the jury system, the rights of minorities – were the achievements of ordinary people, not the gift of elites.

Historians, like journalists, play their most honourable role when they myth-bust. Eduardo Galeano’s ‘The Open Veins of Latin America’ (1971) achieved this for the people of a continent whose historical memory was colonised and mutated by the dominance of the United States.

The “good” world war of 1939-45 provides a bottomless ethical bath in which the west’s “peacetime” conquests are cleansed. De-mystifying historical investigation stands in the way. Richard Overy’s ‘1939: the countdown to war’ (2009)

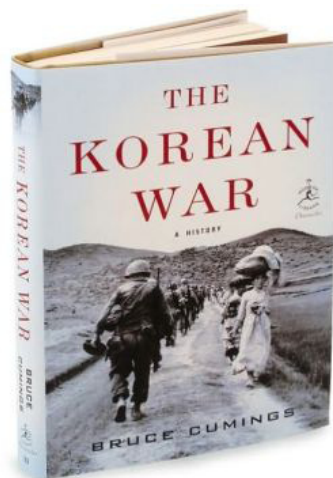
is a devastating explanation of why that cataclysm was not inevitable.

We need such smokescreen-clearing now more than ever. The powerful would like us to believe that the likes of Thompson, Zinn and Galeano are no longer necessary: that we live, as Time magazine put it, “in an eternal present”, in which reflection is limited to Facebook and historical narrative is the preserve of Hollywood. This is a confidence trick. In ‘Nineteen Eighty-Four’, George Orwell wrote: “Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.”

The people of Korea understand this well. The slaughter on their peninsula following the second world war is known as the “forgotten war”, whose significance for all humanity has long been suppressed in military histories of cold war good versus evil.

I have just read “The Korean War: A History” by Bruce Cumings’ (2010), professor of history at the University of Chicago. I first saw Cumings interviewed in Regis Tremblay’s extraordinary film, ‘The Ghosts of Jeju’, which documents the

**Like most Koreans, the farmers and fishing families protested the senseless division of their nation between north and south in 1945**



## **The Korean War: A History**

Bruce Cumings

Published by Modern Library Chronicles

**\$16**

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**BOOK REVIEW**

**On Jeju island, as many as 60,000 people were massacred by militias supported, directed and, in some cases, commanded by American officers**

uprising of the people of the southern Korean island of Jeju in 1948 and the campaign of the present-day islanders to stop the building of a base with American missiles aimed provocatively at China.

Like most Koreans, the farmers and fishing families protested the senseless division of their nation between north and south in 1945 – a line drawn along the 38th Parallel by an American official, Dean Rusk, who had “consulted a map around midnight on the day after we obliterated Nagasaki with an atomic bomb,” wrote Cumings. The myth of a “good” Korea (the south) and a “bad” Korea (the north) was invented.

In fact, Korea, north and south, has a remarkable people’s history of resistance to feudalism and foreign occupation, notably Japan’s in the 20th century. When the Americans defeated Japan in 1945, they occupied Korea and often branded those who had resisted the Japanese as “commies”. On Jeju island, as many as 60,000 people were massacred by militias supported, directed and, in some cases, commanded by American officers.

This and other unreported atrocities were a “forgotten” prelude to the Korean War (1950-53) in which more people were killed than Japanese died during all of world war two. Cumings’ gives an astonishing tally of the degree of destruction of the cities of the north is astonishing: Pyongyang 75 per cent, Sariwon 95 per cent, Sinanju 100 per cent. Great dams in the north were bombed in order to unleash internal tsunamis. “Anti-personnel” weapons, such as Napalm, were tested on civilians. Cumings’ superb investigation helps us understand why today’s North Korea seems so strange: an anachronism sustained by an enduring mentality of siege.

“The unhindered machinery of incendiary bombing was visited on the North for three years,” he wrote, “yielding a wasteland and a surviving mole people who had learned to love the shelter of caves, mountains, tunnels and redoubts, a subterranean

world that became the basis for reconstructing a country and a memento for building a fierce hatred through the ranks of the population. Their truth is not cold, antiquarian, ineffectual knowledge.” Cumings quotes Virginia Wolf on how the trauma of this kind of war “confers memory.”

The guerrilla leader Kim Il Sung had begun fighting the Japanese militarists in 1932. Every characteristic attached to the regime he founded – “communist, rogue state, evil enemy” – derives from a ruthless, brutal, heroic resistance: first to Japan, then the United States, which threatened to nuke the rubble its bombers had left. Cumings exposes as propaganda the notion that Kim Il Sung, leader of the “bad” Korea, was a stooge of Moscow. In contrast, the regime that Washington invented in the south, the “good” Korea, was run largely by those who had collaborated with Japan and America.

The Korean War has an unrecognised distinction. It was in the smouldering ruins of the peninsula that the US turned itself into what Cumings calls “an archipelago of empire”. When the Soviet Union collapsed in the 1990s, it was as if the whole planet was declared American – or else.

But there is China now. The base currently being built on Cheju island will face the Chinese metropolis of Shanghai, less than 300 miles away, and the industrial heartland of the only country whose economic power is likely to surpass that of the US. “China,” says President Obama in a leaked briefing paper, “is our fast emerging strategic threat.” By 2020, almost two thirds of all US naval forces in the world will be transferred to the Asia-Pacific region. In an arc extending from Australia to Japan and beyond, China will be ringed by US missiles and nuclear-weapons armed aircraft.

Will this threat to all of us be “forgotten”, too?

**CT**

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*John Pilger’s new film, “Utopia”, opened in cinemas received glowing reviews in the UK and Australia*

# Putting Big Brother in the driving seat

I've seen our motoring future, and it consists of V2V transmitters, black boxes and drones, says **John W, Whitehead**

*"It's a future where you don't forget anything...In this new future you're never lost... We will know your position down to the foot and down to the inch over time... Your car will drive itself, it's a bug that cars were invented before computers...you're never lonely...you're never bored...you're never out of ideas... We can suggest where you go next, who to meet, what to read... What's interesting about this future is that it's for the average person, not just the elites."*  
 – Google CEO Eric Schmidt on his vision of the future

**T**ime to buckle up your seatbelts, folks. You're in for a bumpy ride.

We're hurtling down a one-way road toward the Police State at mind-boggling speeds, the terrain is getting more treacherous by the minute, and we've passed all the exit ramps. From this point forward, there is no turning back, and the signpost ahead reads "Danger."

Indeed, as I document in my book, "A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State," we're about to enter a Twilight Zone of sorts, one marked by drones, smart phones, GPS devices, smart TVs, social media, smart meters, surveillance cameras, facial recognition software, online banking, license plate readers and driverless cars – all part of the interconnected technological spider's web that is life

in the American police state, and every new gadget pulls us that much deeper into the sticky snare.

In this Brave New World awaiting us, there will be no communication not spied upon, no movement untracked, no thought unheard. In other words, there will be nowhere to run and nowhere to hide.

We're on the losing end of a technological revolution that has already taken hostage our computers, our phones, our finances, our entertainment, our shopping, our appliances, and now, it's focused its sights on our cars. As if the government wasn't already able to track our movements on the nation's highways and byways by way of satellites, GPS devices, and real-time traffic cameras, government officials are now pushing to require that all new vehicles come installed with black box recorders and vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) communications, ostensibly to help prevent crashes.

Yet strip away the glib Orwellian double-speak, and what you will find is that these black boxes and V2V transmitters, which will not only track a variety of data, including speed, direction, location, the number of miles traveled, and seatbelt use, but will also transmit this data to other drivers, including the police, are little more than Trojan Horses, stealth attacks on our last shreds of privacy, sold to us as safety measures for the sake of the greater good, all the while

**Yet strip away the glib Orwellian doublespeak, and what you will find is that these black boxes and V2V transmitters, are little more than Trojan Horses, stealth attacks on our last shreds of privacy**

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## AUTO PILOT

**Once drones take to the skies en masse in 2015, there will literally be no place where government agencies and private companies cannot track your movements**

poised to wreak havoc on our lives.

Black boxes and V2V transmitters are just the tip of the iceberg, though. The 2015 Corvette Stingray will be outfitted with a performance data recorder which “uses a camera mounted on the windshield and a global positioning receiver to record speed, gear selection and brake force,” but also provides a recording of the driver’s point of view as well as recording noises made inside the car. As journalist Jaclyn Trop reports for the *New York Times*, “Drivers can barely make a left turn, put on their seatbelts or push 80 miles an hour without their actions somehow, somewhere being tracked or recorded.” Indeed, as Jim Farley, Vice President of Marketing and Sales for Ford Motor Company all but admitted, corporations and government officials already have a pretty good sense of where you are at all times: “We know everyone who breaks the law, we know when you’re doing it. We have GPS in your car, so we know what you’re doing.”

Now that the government and its corporate partners-in-crime know where you’re going and how fast you’re going when in your car, the next big hurdle will be to know how many passengers are in your car, what contraband might be in your car (and that will largely depend on whatever is outlawed at the moment, which could be anything from Sudafed cold medicine to goat cheese), what you’re saying and exactly what you’re doing within the fiberglass and steel walls of your vehicle. That’s where drones come in.

Once drones take to the skies en masse in 2015, there will literally be no place where government agencies and private companies cannot track your movements. These drones will be equipped with cameras that provide a live video feed, as well as heat sensors, radar and thermal imaging devices capable of seeing through the walls of your car. Some will be capable of peering at figures from 20,000 feet up and 25 miles away. They will be outfitted with infrared cameras

and radar which will pierce through the darkness. They can also keep track of 65 persons of interest at once. Some drones are already capable of hijacking Wi-Fi networks and intercepting electronic communications such as text messages. The Army has developed drones with facial recognition software, as well as drones that can complete a target-and-kill mission without any human instruction or interaction. These are the ultimate killing and spying machines. There will also be drones armed with “less-lethal” weaponry, including bean bag guns and tasers.

And of course all of this information, your every movement – whether you make a wrong move, or appear to be doing something suspicious, even if you don’t do anything suspicious, the information of your whereabouts, including what stores and offices you visit, what political rallies you attend, and what people you meet – will be tracked, recorded and streamed to a government command center, where it will be saved and easily accessed at a later date.

By the time you add self-driving cars into the futuristic mix, equipped with computers that know where you want to go before you do, you’ll be so far down the road to Steven Spielberg’s vision of the future as depicted in *Minority Report* that privacy and autonomy will be little more than distant mirages in your rearview mirror.

The film, set in 2054 and based on a short story by Philip K. Dick, offered movie audiences a special effect-laden techno-vision of a futuristic world in which the government is all-seeing, all-knowing and all-powerful. And if you dare to step out of line, dark-clad police SWAT teams will bring you under control.

Mind you, while critics were dazzled by the technological wonders displayed in *Minority Report*, few dared to consider the consequences of a world in which Big Brother is, literally and figuratively, in the driver’s seat. Even the driverless cars in *Minority Report* answer to the government’s

(and its corporate cohorts') bidding.

Likewise, we are no longer autonomous in our own cars. Rather, we are captive passengers being chauffeured about by a robotic mind which answers to the government and its corporate henchmen. Soon it won't even matter whether we are seated behind the wheel of our own vehicles, because it will be advertisers and government agents calling the shots.

Case in point: devices are now being developed for European cars that would allow police to stop a car remotely, ostensibly to end police chases. Google is partnering with car manufacturers in order to integrate apps and other smartphone-like technology into vehicles, in order to alert drivers to deals and offers at nearby businesses. As Patrick Lin, professor of Stanford's School of Engineering, warns, in a world where third-party advertisers and data collectors control a good deal of the content we see on a daily basis, we may one day literally be driven to businesses not because we wanted to go there, but because someone paid for us to be taken there.

Rod Serling, creator of the beloved sci fi series *Twilight Zone* and one of the most insightful commentators on human nature, once observed, "We're developing a new citizenry. One that will be very selective about cereals and automobiles, but won't be able to think."

Indeed, not only are we developing a new citizenry incapable of thinking for themselves, we're also instilling in them a complete and utter reliance on the government and its corporate partners to do everything for them – tell them what to eat, what to wear, how to think, what to believe, how long to sleep, who to vote for, whom to associate with, and on and on.

In this way, we have created a welfare state, a nanny state, a police state, a surveillance state, an electronic concentration

camp – call it what you will, the meaning is the same: in our quest for less personal responsibility, a greater sense of security, and no burdensome obligations to each other or to future generations, we have created a society in which we have no true freedom.

Pandora's Box has been opened and there's no way to close it. As Rod Serling prophesied in a Commencement Address at the University of Southern California in March 17, 1970:

"It's simply a national acknowledgement that in any kind of priority, the needs of human beings must come first. Poverty is here and now. Hunger is here and now. Racial tension is here and now. Pollution is here and now.

These are the things that scream for a response. And if we don't listen to that scream – and if we don't respond to it – we may well wind up sitting amidst our own rubble, looking

for the truck that hit us – or the bomb that pulverized us. Get the license number of whatever it was that destroyed the dream. And I think we will find that the vehicle was registered in our own name."

You can add the following to that list of needs requiring an urgent response: Police abuse is here and now. Surveillance is here and now.

Imperial government is here and now. Yet while the vehicle bearing down upon us is indeed registered in our own name, we've allowed Big Brother to get behind the wheel, and there's no way to put the brakes on this runaway car.

**CT**

## TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

We'd like to know what you think about this – or any other story in ColdType.  
Send an email to [editor@coldtype.net](mailto:editor@coldtype.net)

*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](http://www.amazon.com). He can be contacted at [johnw@rutherford.org](mailto:johnw@rutherford.org)*

# Why did the Oscars snub Nelson Mandela?

Danny Schechter writes an open letter to the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences

**Hollywood exploits the violence associated with victimization and subjugation but doesn't admire the sacrifice connected with liberation**

It was ironic to read that the theme of this year's Oscar ceremony will be heroes – even as the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences just snubbed the movie about Nelson Mandela that South Africa's first black President, and without question, a hero of the world, had given his rights to be turned into a major motion picture.

He wanted it made by South Africans, somehow not trusting foreign moviemakers.

I wonder why.

No one is questioning the Academy's right to nominate and honor any movie but, given the world we live in, and its need for inspiration, we can question the judgment involved in passing over a critically acclaimed story of a successful fight for freedom while lesser themes seem to be considered more compelling: crime dramas that spoof, but don't explain, the greed and criminality on Wall Street and government, a love affair between a man and his laptop, and a movie focusing on the ordeal of slave but not the system of slavery, among others.

For reasons that seem to reflect the commercial imperatives and callousness in American popular culture, we exploit the violence associated with victimization and subjugation but don't admire the sacrifice connected with liberation.

● *Why does Hollywood prefer to milk guilt rather than promote solidarity? It is not "sour grapes" to ask questions like this.*

Again, filmmakers must be free to deal with any and all issues but the public has a right to discuss the priorities, politics and values embedded in our "best" films even if the industry's voters do not seem to be conscious that their choices make a statement about their outlook, by what they vote for and what they ignore.

● *Was Mandela Long Walk To Freedom passed over because it was produced by an African?*

Movie critics in our best newspapers praised it for its integrity. It was debated, not panned. Mandela himself was saluted by all our media. *Time* magazine, hardly a marginal outlet, issued a Special Commemorative Edition saluting a "Hero's Journey."

● *Is it true that Hollywood can only handle one "black film" a year even as Mandela's fight for a non-racial society galvanized international support with 91 heads of State, including our own, speaking at his funeral. It rejected racism.*

● *Was a story deemed heroic by virtually every nation in the world ignored because it is not about some American obsession in an age when Hollywood claims to represent a global industry?*

● *Is it not entertaining—or perhaps critical—enough?*

● *Was the lack of pricey big name American stars a liability?*

● *Was the Mandela movie bypassed because*



it had no big studio backing and, hence, no deep pockets to lobby for it?

It may be that the film's 'Oscar campaign' assumed that Academy members saw the film and cared about the story.

Maybe the movie's boosters relied too much on hopes for black-American support, not realizing how much the black community in our country has been devastated by the financial crisis and its epidemic of foreclosures, making it more difficult for many families of color to afford increasingly costly movie tickets as apartheid-like inequality deepens beyond Beverly Hills.

Perhaps they don't realize that the decline of public education makes it less likely that students will even learn about Mandela in their classrooms, or that our news biz as show biz "journalists" who have mostly abandoned the world, will cover his story in any depth.

Many prefer to fawn on the rich and famous asking them how they feel to be in the spotlight. They rarely do the same with the poor and anonymous.

Once their "death watch" was over, the world moved on. In their words, they are "Mandela-ed out."

What does Hollywood care about these days except more and more displays of attractive actresses parading around in expensive gowns trying to capture the glory of an earlier era?

Maybe it was the booze that was consumed by the gallon at the Golden Globes sponsored by an institution of questionable integrity,

We know you love to wear tuxedos and love movies that make big bucks so you can reward them with a gold statuette to help them make more. In the end, is that what its all about?

How naïve of me not to "get it."

Nelson Mandela is not around to express his disappointment, but the people of South Africa who struggled with him cannot be happy with the indifference the Academy has shown for more trivial fare, whatever its artistic merits.

I am not saying "Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom" should win - but it should have been given the chance to compete.

One dissent to my own argument: Reality has not been abandoned completely. Many of the documentaries up for consideration this year deal with serious subjects and under-covered issues. All the potential winners, however, are repeatedly warned to keep their remarks apolitical and brief.

"I want to thank...." Music sneaks in. Your 15 seconds of fame is done.

So much for freedom of speech!

In 1990, when the Mandela visited Los Angeles, he was given the key to the city and leaders in the Entertainment Industry flocked to greet him and express their admiration. That was then; been there, done that.

Twenty years later, after his death from a prison induced medical condition at age 95, the Academy has turned its back on him and his achievements while only offering up a booby prize - a nomination for U2's memorable song about love that ends the movie, a song that earlier won the Golden Globe.

Again, was that because U2 would later agree to perform at the ceremony, another "name" to boost flagging ratings?

The NAACP "Image" award stayed with images more than substance. In lieu of an award, Mandela received a blessing from Oprah, as if his story had to be interpreted by a certified celebrity, not told by the producer Mandela chose to translate his autobiography for the big screen.

No disrespect here but let us recall that the ANC and NAACP were both founded as moderate lobbying organizations just three years apart - ANC in 1912 and NAACP in 1909.

Both were prominent, but they went down different political paths. Only one liberated a people, becoming far more "controversial" with the embrace of armed struggle. TV networks mostly opt for those who unlike Mandela were not "troublemakers. (That was his African nickname!)

See a pattern here?

Where is the love for Madiba in terms of his voice and "message?"

Where is the admiration?

Where is the courage in LaLa land? **CT**

**What does Hollywood care about these days except more and more displays of attractive actresses parading around in expensive gowns trying to capture the glory of an earlier era?**

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**Danny Schechter,**  
*the News Dissector,* blogs at *Newsdissector.net* and edits *mediachannel.org*. His latest book is "Madiba A to Z: The Many Faces of Nelson Mandela" - <http://madibabook.com>.

# The dangerous seduction of drones

After 10 years of remote-control killing, the Obama administration should seek solutions that adhere to international law, says **Medea Benjamin**

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

Senior Obama administration officials say the US government is sharply scaling back its drone strikes in Pakistan. That's a step in the right direction. It would be even better if the entire US program of targeted killings in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia were scrapped.

By embracing drones as a primary foreign policy tool, President Barack Obama has taken on the role of prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner.

Without declaring a war there, US forces have hit Pakistan with more than 350 drone strikes since 2004. These US-engineered operations have left a death toll of somewhere between 2,500 and 3,500 people, including almost 200 children.

Despite being billed as a weapon of precision, only 2 percent of those killed in these drone strikes have been high-level Taliban or al-Qaeda operatives. Most have been either innocent people or low-level militants.

Simply put, our drones have killed young men with scant ability – or intent – to attack Americans. And drones don't just kill people, they terrorize entire communities with their constant buzzing and hovering overhead.

A Stanford/NYU Law School study titled "Living Under Drones" shows how the mere presence of drones disrupts community life. Parents grow too afraid to send their children to school or remain in their own

homes. They're afraid – with good reason – to attend community gatherings, or go to weddings or funerals.

"Your government is terrifying 250,000 people in my province to get one or two individuals, who could easily be captured," a young woman leader named Entisar Ali told me in Yemen during my trip there last year. "In your fight against terrorism, you are terrorizing us."

By fueling anti-US sentiment, drones also act as a recruiting tool for extremists. In Yemen, when the Obama administration started drone attacks in 2009, there were perhaps 200 people who identified as members of extremist groups.

Today, there are over 1,000. With every drone strike, more and more join the ranks of al-Qaeda to seek revenge. Worldwide, a decade of drone strikes hasn't wiped out al-Qaeda. In fact, al-Qaeda has grown. It now has a larger presence in Syria and Iraq, as well as in several countries in North and West Africa.

If other states were to claim this broad-based authority to kill people anywhere, anytime, using drones "the result would be chaos," explained Philip Alston, a former UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions.

Former Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair has called drones "dangerously seductive" because they make the govern-

ment feel it has a strategy for combating terrorism yet really only move the focal point from one place to another and guarantee a perpetual state of war.

Finally, drones are dangerous because they are fueling a new arms race. As of today, only the United States, the UK, and Israel have used weaponised drones, but there is already a multi-billion-dollar arms race going on. Israel is the No. 1 drones exporter, followed by the United States and China. Over 80 nations possess some form of drones, mostly for surveillance purposes. Between 10 and 15 nations are working on weaponizing their drones.

Another factor fueling the proliferation of armed drones is a global push to make smaller weapons that can be tailored to fit

smaller aircraft. This will make it easier for non-state actors like al-Qaeda to get their hands on these types of weapons.

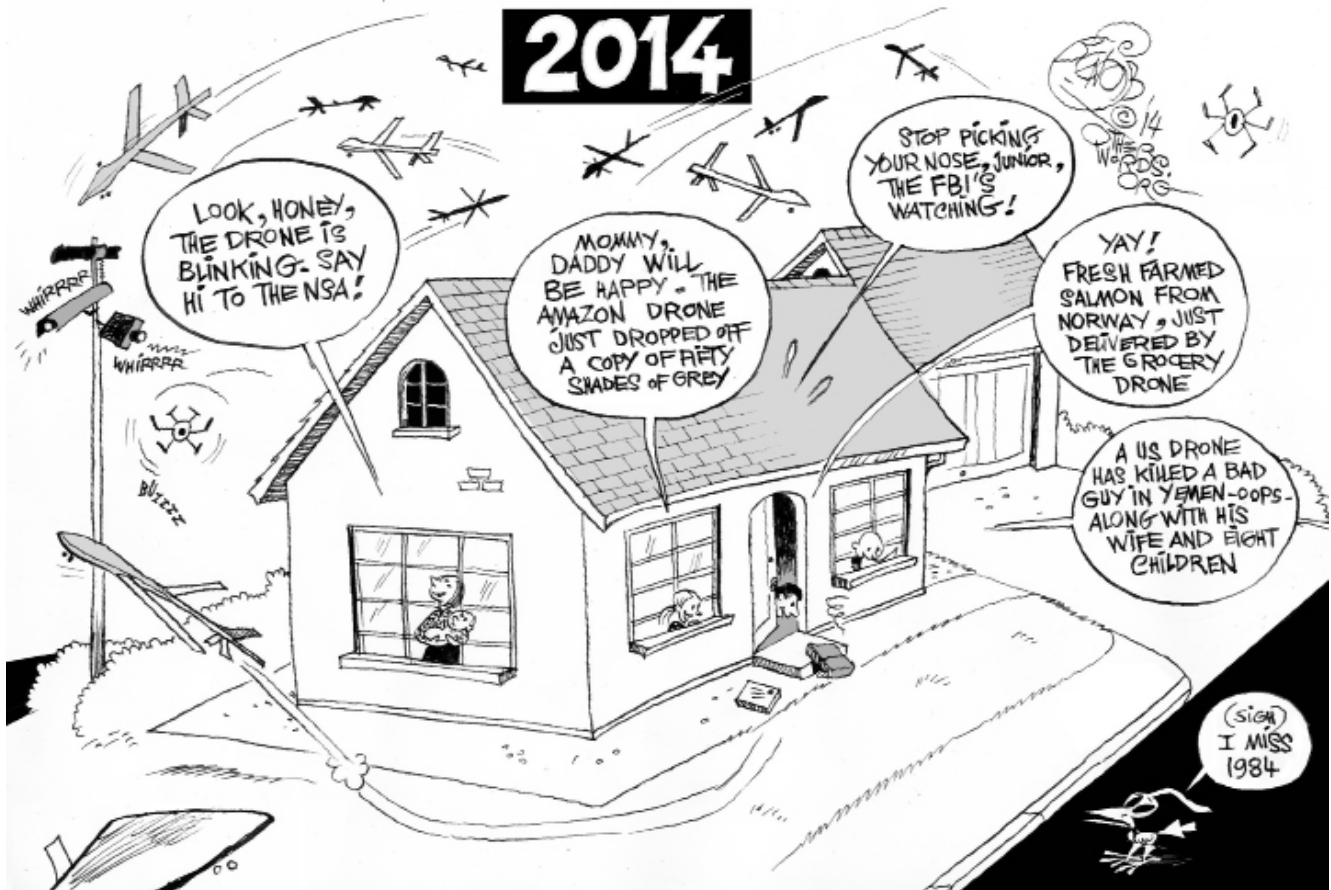
After 10 years of an unsuccessful policy of remote-control killing, it's time to seek effective solutions that adhere to international law and promote democratic ideals. These include peace talks, alliance-building, treating terrorists as criminals who are arrested and tried, targeted development aid, and empowering women. The drone wars are making us less safe by simply creating new enemies abroad. **CT**

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*Medea Benjamin, the founder of CODEPINK and Global Exchange, is the author of Drone Warfare: "Killing by Remote Control". <http://codepink.org>*

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

**BENDIB'S WORLD**

Khalil Bendib, OtherWords.org



# Forever thirteen

**Sigmund Fred** (aka Fred Reed) analyses the great new minds of the Great Squirrel Cage to the north of Mexico

**The silly self-admiring solemnity of it all! I'm not sure whether to be amused or annoyed**

Oh, help. It seems that at Columbia University a ratpack of nursery feminists have got their skivvies in a knot because the library, Butler, is named for a . . . ugh! . . . man. Yes. It cannot be denied. In protest, these girls, apparently having nothing more important to do, have filmed “feminist pornography” in the library. A scandal arose. What feminist porn might be is not clear. Since feminism has more dykes than the Zuiderzee, presumably they will show it to each other.

Anyway, one of these drab libertines, a Sara Grace Powell, says, “Butler is an extremely charged space – the names emblazoned on the stone facade are, for me, a stimulant for resistance.”

A stimulant to grow up might be more to the point. She means “stimulus,” of course, but why would a child at an Ivy university be expected to know English?

What droning boilerplate. If her thoughts were any shallower I would suspect her brain pan of being a cookie sheet. It is a case of Darwinian reversal. We regress to cephalopody.

To an extent I have to sympathize with Sara. I grant that seeing a horrible male name “emblazoned” (the pretentious verbiage of a high-school newspaper) would send me into a decline also. Wouldn't it you? Never mind that if the man thus emblazoned had not made the money to donate the library,

Sara wouldn't have one in which to make pornography, presumably the purpose of libraries. Nor, if it weren't for men, would she have anything to study except, I suppose, her fascinating angsts. (I will guess without evidence that her presence at a pricey finishing school like Columbia depends on a parasitic relationship to her father's bank account.)

The adage that children should be seen and not heard gets half of it right.

More from Miss Powell, again writing with more Sara than Grace:

“I work in Butler but sometimes feel suffocated by it . . . The point was to transgress the relative conservatism (and its history) of the space with this hysterical intervention.” What godawful pedestrian self-important prose. Couldn't she, you know, like, go do her homework or something? If I had in my beginnings written that mysteriously or badly, I would not have been permitted on the obit desk. Perhaps she means “histrionic,” or merely that the participants are hysterics, which hardly needs emphasis. With Sara Grace, one is never sure.

The silly self-admiring solemnity of it all! I'm not sure whether to be amused or annoyed. Hers is dishwater academese of the hormonally unfinished that says, “Look at me I'm all grown up really, really, see the really neat words I use.” It is the language of a federal report improved by narcissism.

One expects pubescent behavior from the pubescent. Yet this pseudo-literate pretentiousness is standard at hundreds of Women's Studies departments everywhere: priggish, self-righteous, moralizing. But aren't universities places where teenagers grow up instead of avoiding doing so? (No.) Today in America adulthood seems to flow upward like sap in a tree, reaching the genitals at age twelve or so, and the head at twenty-eight. We approach perpetual juvenility.

One expects middle-school behavior in middle school. One expects students in high-school infallibly to know everything about everything, to be sure how to correct an erring world that has puzzled adults for at least several thousand years. But shouldn't they get over it? How did our universities and graduate schools turn into intellectual litter boxes?

Let us return to the work of feminist pornographers:

"It begins with a group of girls sitting around a library table taking their shirts off. As the film progresses, the girls engage in activities including kissing, rubbing eggs on their bodies and twerking around a chicken carcass."

I consulted the Wikipedia to see what "twerking" might be. "Twerking is a type of dancing in which an individual dances to popular music in a sexually provocative manner involving thrusting hip movements and a low squatting stance."

Ah, I thought, enlightened. It sounds like SueBob's Red Rooster Lounge and Poon Pit in Wheeling. It takes place in the library at Columbia, thank God. If these painfully asexual co-eds took their show on the road to SueBob's, the customers would give up sex and become stylite monks in the Syrian desert. It is interesting, though, that their approach to attacking men involves taking their shirts off. Merchandising seems a female instinct. I remember when feminists burned their bras, thinking that this was a blow at males. Being a boy myself at

the time, I encouraged them in this political action.

But I promised psychoanalysis. My diagnosis is that Sara-kind suffer from a Freudian Complex, which consists in a failure to separate emotionally from their parents, with whom they confuse the university. Thus the desperate desire to outrage. They could get the same effect by dying their hair green or going to a secluded glen and rolling in anchovy oil, thus allowing others to study. That isn't the spirit of the thing, somehow.

What I particularly like, being a connoisseur of all forms of cultural collapse, is that the grown-ups at Columbia, if any, let this stuff go on. A reasonable course would be to tell these excessively serious gal-chillun that a university is not the place for acting like stupid, self-indulgent little twits, and suspend them for a semester. Apparently this doesn't happen, in part because the faculty are little better than the children. At the high end of the age distribution are professors who came out of the Sixties and their aftermath. These (I know: I was there) had little interest in scholarship, which they regarded as irrelevant, racist, sexist, ageist, elitist, capitalist, and male - which latter, thank God, it is. Add to this the spinelessness of academics, and the conversion of universities into profit-making corporations, and...voila! Hail Columbia.

Perforce, I yield to reality. Twerk until you drop. However, I demand democracy. It is elitist that only Columbia girls can embarrass themselves in the library, dancing around a dead chicken like ditz-rabbit Twerpsichores. I too want squat and make thrusting movements with my pelvis at Columbia. (I worry about the chicken, though. Isn't there an animal-rights issue here?) Yes, I know. These pole-dancers without a pole are merely expressing their deepest political conceptions. (I am prepared to believe this.) No doubt it is their right. All I ask is that I have an equal right to make an ass of myself. **CT**

**Twerking sounds like SueBob's Red Rooster Lounge and Poon Pit in Wheeling**

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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>

# Journalism, floods and climate silence

**David Cromwell** on the mainstream media's reluctance to face the facts

**There was nothing at stake in this war except prestige and more African colonies. Nobody wanted it except the decision makers and their generals and admirals. But oh boy did they love the prospect**

**T**he key to what is precisely wrong with corporate journalism is explained in this nutshell by the US commentator Michael Parenti:

'Bias in favor of the orthodox is frequently mistaken for "objectivity". Departures from this ideological orthodoxy are themselves dismissed as ideological.'

Examples of bias towards the orthodoxy of Western power are legion every day of the week. On January 30 this year, David Loyn reported for BBC News at Ten from Bagram airbase in Afghanistan as US troops prepared to withdraw from a blood-strewn occupation. Standing beside a large US military plane, he intoned:

'For all of the lives lost and money spent, it could have been so much better.'

The pro-Nato perspective of that remark masquerading as impartial journalism is stark. By contrast, Patrick Cockburn summed up the reality:

'After 12 years, £390bn, and countless dead, we leave poverty, fraud – and the Taliban in Afghanistan...60 per cent of children are malnourished and only 27 per cent of Afghans have access to safe drinking water...Elections are now so fraudulent as to rob the winners of legitimacy.'

The damning conclusion?

'Faced with these multiple disasters western leaders simply ignore Afghan reality and take refuge in spin that is not far

from deliberate lying.'

BBC News has been a major component of this gross deception of the public.

The BBC's 'objective' bias in support of power also imbues the 'impartial' stance of alpha-male interviewer Jeremy Paxman, who recently disparaged 'extreme' WWI conscientious objectors as 'cranks'.

BBC political editor Nick Robinson is another safe pair of hands. He once described his 'objective' role in the run-up to the illegal invasion of Iraq (when he was ITN's political editor):

'It was my job to report what those in power were doing or thinking . . . That is all someone in my sort of job can do.' (Nick Robinson, ' "Remember the last time you shouted like that?" I asked the spin-doctor', The Times, July 16, 2004)

We tweeted a reminder of this remarkable admission by Robinson of his stenographic role as a channeller of state propaganda:

'The skewed way in which @bbcnickrobinson sees his role as BBC political editor can only lead to bias towards power.'

US journalist Glenn Greenwald responded pithily:

'That'd make an excellent epitaph on the tombstone of modern establishment journalism'

After we had repeatedly challenged Robinson about his bias towards power (see

this recent media alert), he finally responded via email (January 27, 2014):

‘We could have this debate forever I suspect.’

But in reality ‘this debate’ never gets an airing on the BBC. It is simply taboo.

### **‘It Is Easier To Stay Out Than Get Out’**

Pointing out facts such as these is not to ‘attack’ individual journalists; a canard that is all too easily, and lazily, flung at Media Lens. Likewise, Canadian media critic Joe Emersberger has received unfair accusations of a ‘hectoring, self-righteous, fundamentalist and insulting tone’ when challenging journalists. Emersberger’s thoughtful response to such charges is worth repeating:

‘First, there is always a tradeoff between honesty and civility. If you honestly describe the horrific outcomes that the corporate media produces, then offending some journalists, including the ones you least care to offend, is inevitable. Nevertheless, I think describing the outcomes honestly should be the priority even if it puts off some decent journalists.’

He continues:

‘Second, I do not believe that most corporate journalists are below average in their intelligence or in their capacity to empathize with others. Top-down organizations hire and promote people who make certain assumptions about the world. Even the assumption an internal dissident might make (“I can contribute something positive by working within these constraints, and resigning will do no good at all”) is still a very necessary assumption. There are rotten people in all walks of life, but I don’t think such people are necessarily a majority within rotten institutions.’

Emersberger’s astute observations remind us that ‘good people’ working for corporations do not, and cannot, change the fundamentally destructive and psychopathic nature of corporations. (‘The Corporation’, 2003). The danger of becoming assimilated within a skewed value system

that rewards obedient behaviour towards corporate priorities is immense. Barry Eisler warns aspiring journalists how the process works:

‘Probably the first compromise will take the form of a rationalization. You’ll be pressured to do something you know isn’t quite right. But you’ll be scared not to do it -- if you don’t, you’ll alienate someone powerful, your career will suffer a setback, your ambitious goals will suddenly seem farther away. At this point, your lesser self, driven by fear, greed, status-seeking, and other selfish emotions, will offer up a rationalization, and your greater self will grasp at it eagerly.’

As the journalist’s career develops:

‘Do you find yourself identifying more with the public figures you’re supposed to hold to account than with the readers and viewers you’re supposed to serve?’

### **Access to power**

By this point journalists are consumed, and thus constrained, by the need to maintain ‘access’ to the centres of power as ‘reliable’ sources of news and comment, as Ed Herman and Noam Chomsky so powerfully explained in their propaganda model of the media (‘Manufacturing Consent’, 1988). The political editors and high-profile correspondents of the major news media fall into this category. Carne Ross, who was once the senior British official responsible for the genocidal sanctions regime imposed on Iraq in the 1990s, described ‘how the Foreign Office manipulated a willing media’:

‘We would control access to the foreign secretary as a form of reward to journalists. If they were critical, we would not give them the goodies of trips around the world. We would feed them factoids of sanitised intelligence, or we’d freeze them out.’

Eisler sums up the whole process that engulfs, not just the unwary journalist, but the wary too:

‘when you enter an enormous, shifting system single-mindedly dedicated to be-

**General Haig was the military moron who caused the needless deaths of his men by frontal assault in the face of withering machine gun fire. But who today remembers the names of the German and French socialists who were pacifists on Sunday and warmongers Monday**

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## 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**

guiling you into surrendering your values and assimilating you, you have to do more than assure yourself you'll practice good journalism. You have to take the threat seriously, consider how many people have succumbed to it before you, and armor up accordingly. If you don't, you don't have a chance. And if you don't think you need to take the threat seriously, you're even more vulnerable, and more likely doomed, than most.'

Or, as Mark Twain wrote even more succinctly, 'It is easier to stay out than get out.'

### **A flood of propaganda**

The recent media coverage of severe floods in the UK demonstrates this assimilation and herd mentality of corporate media professionals about as well as any other topic today. No matter how extreme the weather, and how awful the hardships endured by ordinary people in the floods, the culpability of corporate-driven industrial 'civilisation', its inherent ecological unsustainability, and the urgent need for radical changes, must not be addressed in any meaningful way.

A careful analysis by Carbon Brief of 3,064 flood-related newspapers stories, published between the start of December and 10 February, makes this clear. Their stark conclusion is that over 93 per cent of press stories did not mention climate change (never mind the role of humans in disturbing the delicate balance of climate).

Media Lens does not have the resources to monitor BBC News in its entirety across television, radio and the internet and come up with similarly precise statistics. In fact, perhaps only the BBC has the resources to monitor itself in this way, a form of self-regulation that has patently failed. But in our experience, BBC News coverage has been similarly woeful.

Consider that on February 10, BBC News at Ten was introduced by newsreader Fiona Bruce:

'Good evening. The flood waters are

stretching further across the UK tonight as the River Thames has risen to record levels, with waters creeping into the London suburbs. Several villages are flooded along the Thames Valley, and hundreds of homes have had to be evacuated. The crisis is only likely to worsen as forecasters are warning more rain and strong winds are on their way.

'We have three reports: from the Thames Valley where police have declared a major incident; thousands of homes are at risk. We report on the political row and blame game between the government and the Environment Agency. And we'll also be hearing from Southwest England where David Cameron went to see the transport challenges for himself.'

'We have three reports', said Bruce, but not one of them said anything about the role of climate change in the unfolding crisis. The notion that the extreme rainfall and flooding have anything to do with human-induced climate change was buried. One online BBC story the previous day had noted that Julia Slingo, the Met Office's chief scientist, had surmised that 'all the evidence suggests there is a link to climate change.' But subsequent BBC coverage of the floods proceeded almost entirely as though she had spoken into a vacuum.

The second of the three News at Ten reports on February 10 had the BBC's David Shukman talking about the 'blame game' and London flood defence spending. But what about climate change? Once again, nothing. This glaring omission was especially galling from the BBC science editor. (Belatedly, Shukman did briefly address the 'possible influence from us' on News at Ten two days later, saying with great caution that 'there are some signs that global warming may be involved.')

We sent emails to Shukman and several other BBC correspondents and editors (February 11, 2014):

'Over the past few days and weeks, I have been watching the news reports from BBC correspondents in Datchet, the Somerset



Levels, Dawlish and elsewhere. While BBC News does a reasonable job of telling us what is happening in those specific locations, why are you not addressing human-induced climate change in your news programmes? In failing to do so, you are in danger of giving a false impression to the viewers that climate change is irrelevant to the flooding.

'This careful analysis produced by the respected Carbon Brief website could equally well apply to BBC News:

<http://www.carbonbrief.org/blog/2014/02/analysis-how-climate-change-features-in-newspaper-coverage-of-the-uk's-floods/>

'I'd be grateful to receive a reply from you, please.'

### **The BBC responds**

There was a near-total silence to this challenge. However, BBC News deputy director Fran Unsworth did send this identikit 'response', suitable for all occasions, the following day:

'Thank you for your email. I am sure you will understand that it is not feasible for me to enter into a dialogue with individuals.

'However, as previously explained, if you would like to make a complaint, you can do so via the webform on the BBC's complaints website. The BBC has gone to some trouble to establish procedures that will enable us to be as responsive as possible to complaints from the public at the same time as exercising due regard to the need to use licence fee payers' money efficiently. For this reason, we prefer complaints to be processed and logged centrally and staff, such as myself, are contacted for the responses as necessary. Unfortunately, because of the way our systems work, we cannot forward your email and must ask you to resubmit your complaint if you would like a reply.

'To send a complaint to the BBC please submit it centrally through our complaints website at [www.bbc.co.uk/complaints](http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints) to

be guaranteed a reply (or alternatively by post to BBC Complaints, PO Box 1922, Darlington DL3 0UR or by phone on 03700 100 222). Full details of our complaints service are available on our Complaints website.'

Of course, from years of experience, we had no illusions about getting a proper response from the BBC to our challenge. We replied to the deputy director of BBC News (February 11, 2014):

'Thank you for such a prompt reply. But when even the former BBC chairman Lord Grade described his experience of complaining to the BBC as "grisly" due to a system he said was "absolutely hopeless", what hope for the rest of us mere mortals?

'It is entirely your personal choice whether or not it is "feasible ... to enter into a dialogue with individuals". But if you continue to sidestep serious queries by diverting the public into a "convoluted", "overly complicated" and "absolutely hopeless" "complaints service", the credibility of BBC News will nosedive.'

On February 13, BBC Radio 4 Today asked, 'Is climate change a factor in the recent extreme weather?', and once again showed itself embarrassingly out of its depth, with the BBC still stuck in a discredited framework of climate change as a battle between 'believers' versus 'sceptics'. The programme set up a falsely balanced 'debate' between an authoritative, if rather conservative, climate scientist – Sir Brian Hoskins, one of the country's most eminent climatologists – and a neoliberal climate denial propagandist with undisclosed sources of funding – Lord Nigel Lawson, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer under Margaret Thatcher. Perhaps Today would also host a 'debate' between the government's principal medical officer and a paid lobbyist for the tobacco industry to discuss, 'Is smoking a factor in cancer and heart disease?'

Some signs of climate sanity started to break through after weeks of journalistic feet being shuffled almost in embarrass-

**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**

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## NEVER FORGET

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

ment. Unlike BBC News, Channel 4 News appeared to be comfortable addressing, to some extent, the possibility of human-induced climate change being a factor in the extreme weather. Greenpeace campaigner Joss Garman even took part in one live broadcast. This live segment was also notable for the evasiveness of Adam Afriyie, the local Tory MP for Windsor, in declaring he was ‘really not comfortable’ talking about climate change. Kudos to Jon Snow for at least putting the climate change point to him, and then pointing out the ‘massive carbon emission’ overhead as a jet flew past!

Last Friday, the Guardian gave front-page coverage to important remarks by economist Nicholas Stern who noted the ‘immense’ risks of human-induced climate change, adding:

‘If we do not cut emissions, we face even more devastating consequences, as unchecked they could raise global average temperature to 4C or more above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century [...] The shift to such a world could cause mass migrations of hundreds of millions of people away from the worst-affected areas. That would lead to conflict and war, not peace and prosperity.’

### Backlash begins

There were also promising signs of a popular backlash against climate denialism with calls for the sacking of Environment Secretary Owen Paterson. Green MP Caroline Lucas rightly noted that:

‘It is absurd to leave someone in charge of a department whose role is to protect the country from a growing climate crisis who himself believes that “people get very emotional about this subject, and I think we should just accept that the climate has been changing for centuries”.

‘If we’re to have an integrated and credible national strategy to deal with the flood-

ing crisis, we must start by having someone in charge who is prepared to acknowledge the reality of the growing climate threat that we face.’

Shamefully, Tory jeers drowned out Lucas during Prime Minister’s Questions when she said that any Cabinet member who did not take ‘an evidence-based approach to the increasing reality of climate change’ should be removed from their post.

At the weekend, Labour leader Ed Miliband criticised David Cameron for ‘backtracking’ on a supposed ‘commitment to the environmental cause’ and said that:

‘climate change threatens national security because of the consequences for destabilisation of entire regions of the world, mass migration of millions of people and conflict over water or food supplies.’

Miliband added:

‘The science is clear. The public know there is a problem. But, because of political division in Westminster, we are sleepwalking into a national security crisis on climate change.’

Those are certainly sensible words. But Labour’s own abysmal record on the environment, and the party’s close ties to corporate and establishment interests, do not bode well for the radical changes that are required.

Finally, if our persistent challenging of BBC News, in particular, appears needlessly relentless, then bear in mind the stakes here.

We are already in the midst of the sixth great extinction in the geological record, this time at the hands of humans. And unless drastic measures are taken to curb global warming, we will be engulfed by catastrophic climate change. **CT**

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*David Cromwell is co-editor of Medialens, the UK media watchdog – <http://medialens.org>*

### TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

We’d like to know what you think about this – or any other story in ColdType.

Send an email to [editor@coldtype.net](mailto:editor@coldtype.net)

# Who's biased?

**William Blum** thinks it's time the US public became aware of the one-sided message it's getting from its mainstream media

*"Bias in favor of the orthodox is frequently mistaken for 'objectivity'. Departures from this ideological orthodoxy are themselves dismissed as ideological." – Michael Parenti*

**A**n exchange in January with Paul Farhi, *Washington Post* columnist, about coverage of US foreign policy:

Dear Mr. Farhi,

Now that you've done a study of al-Jazeera's political bias in supporting Mohamed Morsi in Egypt, is it perhaps now time for a study of the US mass media's bias on US foreign policy? And if you doubt the extent and depth of this bias, consider this:

There are more than 1,400 daily newspapers in the United States. Can you name a single paper, or a single TV network, that was unequivocally opposed to the American wars carried out against Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Panama, Grenada, and Vietnam? Or even opposed to any two of these wars? How about one? In 1968, six years into the Vietnam war, the *Boston Globe* surveyed the editorial positions of 39 leading US papers concerning the war and found that "none advocated a pull-out".

Now, can you name an American daily newspaper or TV network that more or less gives any support to any US government ODE (Officially Designated Enemy)? Like

Hugo Chávez of Venezuela or his successor, Nicolás Maduro; Fidel or Raúl Castro of Cuba; Bashar al-Assad of Syria; Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran; Rafael Correa of Ecuador; or Evo Morales of Bolivia? I mean that presents the ODE's point of view in a reasonably fair manner most of the time? Or any ODE of the recent past like Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia, Moammar Gaddafi of Libya, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, or Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti?

Who in the mainstream media supports Hamas of Gaza? Or Hezbollah of Lebanon? Who in the mainstream media is outspokenly critical of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians? And keeps his or her job?

Who in the mainstream media treats Julian Assange or Chelsea Manning as the heroes they are?

And this same mainstream media tell us that Cuba, Venezuela, Ecuador, et al. do not have a real opposition media.

The ideology of the American mainstream media is the belief that they don't have any ideology; that they are instead what they call "objective". I submit that there is something more important in journalism than objectivity. It is capturing the essence, or the truth, if you will, with the proper context and history. This can, as well, serve as "enlightenment".

It's been said that the political spectrum concerning US foreign policy in the Ameri-

**Who in the mainstream media treats Julian Assange or Chelsea Manning as the heroes they are?**

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## ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

**So what do we have here? The NSA being used to steal industrial secrets; nothing to do with fighting terrorism**

ca mainstream media “runs the gamut from A to B”.

*William Blum, Washington, DC*

Reply from Paul Farhi:

I think you’re conflating news coverage with editorial policy. They are not the same. What a newspaper advocates on its editorial page (the Vietnam example you cite) isn’t the same as what or how the story is covered in the news columns. News MAY have some advocacy in it, but it’s not supposed to, and not nearly as overt or blatant as an editorial or opinion column. Go back over all of your ODE examples and ask yourself if the news coverage was the same as the opinions about those ODEs. In most cases, I doubt it was.

–

*Dear Mr. Farhi,*

Thank you for your remarkably prompt answer.

Your point about the difference between news coverage and editorial policy is important, but the fact is, as a daily, and careful, reader of the *Post* for the past 20 years I can attest to the extensive bias in its foreign policy coverage in the areas I listed. Juan Ferrero in Latin America and Kathy Lally in the Mideast are but two prime examples. The bias, most commonly, is one of omission more than commission; which is to say it’s what they leave out that distorts the news more than any factual errors or out-and-out lies. My Anti-Empire Report contains many examples of these omissions, as well as some errors of commission.

Incidentally, since 1995 I have written dozens of letters to the *Post* pointing out errors in foreign-policy coverage. Not one has been printed.

Happy New Year

*William Blum*

I present here an extreme example of bias by omission, in the entire American mainstream media: In my last report I wrote of

the committee appointed by the president to study NSA abuses – Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies – which actually came 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.”

So what do we have here? The NSA being used to steal industrial secrets; nothing to do with fighting terrorism. And the NSA stealing money and otherwise sabotaging unnamed financial systems, which may also represent gaining industrial advantage for the United States.

Long-time readers may have come to the realization that I’m not an ecstatic admirer of US foreign policy. But this stuff shocks even me. It’s the gross pettiness of “The World’s Only Superpower”.

A careful search of the extensive Lexis-Nexis database failed to turn up a single American mainstream media source, print or broadcast, that mentioned this revelation. I found it only on those websites which carried my report, plus three other sites: Techdirt, Lawfare, and Crikey (First Digital Media).

### **JFK, RFK, and some myths about US foreign policy**

On April 30, 1964, five months after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, his brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, was interviewed by John B. Martin in one of a series of oral history sessions with RFK. Part of the interview appears in the book “JFK Conservative” by Ira Stoll, published three months ago. (pages 192-3)

**RFK:** The president ... had a strong, overwhelming reason for being in Vietnam and

that we should win the war in Vietnam.

**MARTIN:** What was the overwhelming reason?

**RFK:** Just the loss of all of Southeast Asia if you lost Vietnam. I think everybody was quite clear that the rest of Southeast Asia would fall.

**MARTIN:** What if it did?

**RFK:** Just have profound effects as far as our position throughout the world, and our position in a rather vital part of the world. Also it would affect what happened in India, of course, which in turn has an effect on the Middle East. Just as it would have, everybody felt, a very adverse effect. It would have an effect on Indonesia, hundred million population. All of those countries would be affected by the fall of Vietnam to the Communists.

**MARTIN:** There was never any consideration given to pulling out?

**RFK:** No.

**MARTIN:** ... The president was convinced that we had to keep, had to stay in there ...

**RFK:** Yes.

**MARTIN:** ... And couldn't lose it.

**RFK:** Yes.

These remarks are rather instructive from several points of view:

Robert Kennedy contradicts the many people who are convinced that, had he lived, JFK would have brought the US involvement in Vietnam to a fairly prompt end, instead of it continuing for ten more terrible years. The author, Stoll, quotes a few of these people. And these other statements are just as convincing as RFK's statements presented here. And if that is not confusing enough, Stoll then quotes RFK himself in 1967 speaking unmistakably in support of the war. It appears that we'll never know with any kind of certainty what would have happened if JFK had not been assassinated, but I still go by his Cold War record in concluding that US foreign policy would have continued along its imperial, anti-communist path. In Ken-

nedey's short time in office the United States unleashed many different types of hostility, from attempts to overthrow governments and suppress political movements to assassination attempts against leaders and actual military combat; with one or more of these occurring in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, British Guiana, Iraq, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Cuba and Brazil.

"Just have profound effects as far as our position throughout the world, and our position in a rather vital part of the world." Ah yes, a vital part of the world. Has there ever been any part of the world, or any country, that the US has intervened in that was not vital? Vital to American interests? Vital to our national security? Of great strategic importance? Here's President Carter in his 1980 State of the Union Address: "An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America".

"What a country calls its vital economic interests are not the things which enable its citizens to live, but the things which enable it to make war." – Simone Weil (1909-1943), French philosopher

If the US lost Vietnam "everybody was quite clear that the rest of Southeast Asia would fall." As I once wrote: Thus it was that the worst of Washington's fears had come to pass: All of Indochina – Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos – had fallen to the Communists. During the initial period of US involvement in Indochina in the 1950s, John Foster Dulles, Dwight Eisenhower and other American officials regularly issued doomsday pronouncements of the type known as the "Domino Theory", warning that if Indochina should fall, other nations in Asia would topple over as well. In one instance, President Eisenhower listed no less than Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and Indonesia amongst the anticipated "falling dominos". Such warnings were repeated periodically over the next decade by succeeding administra-

**Robert Kennedy contradicts the many people who are convinced that, had he lived, JFK would have brought the US involvement in Vietnam to a fairly prompt end**

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## ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

**“There are no 72 beautiful virgins waiting to reward you for giving your life for jihad. No virgins at all. No sex at all”**

tions and other supporters of US policy in Indochina as a key argument in defense of such policy. The fact that these ominous predictions turned out to have no basis in reality did not deter Washington officialdom from promulgating the same dogma up until the 1990s about almost each new world “trouble-spot”, testimony to their unshakable faith in the existence and inter-workings of the International Communist Conspiracy.

### **Killing suicide**

Suicide bombers have become an international tragedy. One cannot sit in a restaurant or wait for a bus or go for a walk downtown, in Afghanistan or Pakistan or Iraq or Russia or Syria and elsewhere without fearing for one’s life from a person walking innocently by or a car that just quietly parked nearby. The Pentagon has been working for years to devise a means of countering this powerful weapon.

As far as we know, they haven’t come up with anything. So I’d like to suggest a possible solution. Go to the very source. Flood selected Islamic societies with this message: “There is no heavenly reward for dying a martyr. There are no 72 beautiful virgins waiting to reward you for giving your life for jihad. No virgins at all. No sex at all.”

Using every means of communication, from Facebook to skywriting, from billboards to television, plant the seed of doubt, perhaps the very first such seed the young men have ever experienced. As some wise

anonymous soul once wrote:

“A person is unambivalent only with regard to those few beliefs, attitudes and characteristics which are truly universal in his experience. Thus a man might believe that the world is flat without really being aware that he did so – if everyone in his society shared the assumption.

“The flatness of the world would be simply a “self-evident” fact. But if he once became conscious of thinking that the world is flat, he would be capable of conceiving that it might be otherwise.

“He might then be spurred to invent elaborate proofs of its flatness, but he would have lost the innocence of absolute and unambivalent belief.”

We have to capture the minds of these suicide bombers. At the same time we can work on our own soldiers. Making them fully conscious of their belief, their precious belief, that their government means well, that they’re fighting

for freedom and democracy, and for that thing called “American exceptionalism”. It could save them from committing their own form of suicide. **CT**

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*William Blum is the author of “Killing Hope: U.S. 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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# American crisis

Born in England, Thomas Paine is one of America's foremost political icons. What would he think of his adopted country now? asks **Linh Dinh**

**T**hough Thomas Paine galvanized this country into being and gave it its very name, the United States of America, there is almost no trace of him here. In Philadelphia, where he spent his most significant years, there is a Thomas Paine Plaza, but it is barely marked as such, with no statue of the man. Instead, one finds a bronze likeness of Frank Rizzo, of all people, and a Jacques Lipchitz sculpture that Rizzo once compared to a dropped load of plaster. Composed of torturous human forms holding up some insufferable burden, it's titled "Government of the People," though walking by it for decades, I actually thought it was a Holocaust memorial. Just outside the Paine Plaza, there is also a huge statue of Ben Franklin as a printer. Unlike Paine, Franklin is all over Philly, with the largest monument to him the bridge that leads to Camden. When it opened in 1926, it was the world's longest suspension bridge. Franklin is so beloved here, even his toilet is commemorated with a explanatory marble lid.

Up the river in Bordentown, New Jersey, where Paine had a house for 25 years, there is a statue of this most significant of Americans and, for two years now, an Easter egg hunt-styled game around Paine's birthday, with plastic "Thomas Paine" bones hidden at downtown businesses. Hey, if

it can bring in more customers, then why not? Buried in New Rochelle, NY, a town that didn't even allow Paine to vote in local elections, his bones were dug up by a British admirer, for the purpose of a ceremonious burial back in England, but his remains somehow became lost. It is said that one of his ribs might be in France, his skull in Australia, with other bones turned into buttons.

In 2006, I had a chance to visit Paine's birthplace at Thetford in Norfolk, England, where I saw his statue, one of only five in the entire world, but the most impressive monument in Thetford belongs to the Maharajah Duleep Singh. Maharajah who? A child king of the Sikhs, Singh nominally ruled the Punjab, bigger than England itself, but after the English stole his kingdom and, incidentally, the Koh-i-Noor diamond, largest in the world at the time, they exiled Singh to Norfolk and converted the boy to Christianity. Queen Victoria thought him cute, "Those eyes and those teeth are too beautiful." Although he died dissolute and broke, Singh now appears regal and dignified on his stately horse, elevated on a pedestal taller than a man's head. Prince Charles dedicated the statue.

In Philadelphia, Paine is more invisible than Ben Franklin's colon's target, and in Thetford, his hometown, he's lesser than

**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**

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## CONFUSED LEGACY

If you donate up to \$99,999 to the National Rifle Association, you will be listed as a member of its Thomas Paine Society



Remembered: Thomas Paine's house in Bordentown, New Jersey

Queen Victoria's pet Indian, so what gives? As one who ridiculed the British Crown, it's understandable that Tom's effigy would not be anywhere within a canon shot of Buckingham Palace, but why has he been faded out here, in a country he had a seminal role in creating?

In bits and pieces, Paine does turn up in quite a few places, it is true. So quotable, his words are appropriated by numerous camps, including Libertarians, "Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil," or gun owners, "The supposed quietude of a good man allures the ruffian; while on the other hand, arms, like law, discourage and keep the invader and the plunderer in awe." In fact, if you donate up to \$99,999 to the National Rifle Association, you will be listed as a member of its Thomas Paine Society. Bump that to a million or more, and you'll be allowed into the Charlton Heston one.

A selfless man of unimpeachable integrity, Paine has even been hijacked by one of the phoniest Americans ever. In his first

Inaugural Address, Obama dropped a Paine title into this sentence, "Our Founding Fathers, faced with perils we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations," then quoted him entire later, "that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet [and to repulse it]." It's not clear why Obama skipped the last part. Maybe the teleprompter flickered. In any case, it's telling that Obama did not mention Paine by name, only that this passage was read to American troops by "the father of our nation," George Washington, he of the 300-plus slaves.

Hey, isn't that a cheap shot? Didn't they all, like, own slaves? Well, a bunch of the Founding Fathers certainly did, including Jefferson, Franklin, John Hancock, James Madison, John Jay and Benjamin Rush, but some of them didn't, including, notably,



John Adams, Samuel Adams, Alexander Hamilton and, of course, Thomas Paine. A signer of the Declaration of Independence and Constitution, Robert Morris, had also been a slave trader.

Poor most of his life, Paine couldn't afford a slave had he wanted one, not that he ever did. Sane seeing slavery for the barbarity that it was, Paine was one of the earliest and most outspoken polemicists against it. In fact, he thought that the very first act of the new American nation should be to abolish this monstrosity, "And when the Almighty shall have blest us, and made us a people dependent only upon Him, then may our first gratitude be shown by an act of continental legislation, which shall put a stop to the importation of Negroes for sale, soften the hard fate of those already here, and in time procure their freedom."

Over and over again, Paine would speak and act from his firmest convictions, no matter the cost. A poor man, he gave his royalties from "Common Sense" and "American Crisis" to clothe the Continental Army, and even donated his life savings to it. As our first whistleblower, Paine exposed Silas Deane as an embezzler and war profiteer, thus provoking the wrath of not just Deane's many powerful allies, but other corrupt officials as well. In "Age of Reason", his dismantling of organized religions, Paine alienated many ordinary folks, his natural audience.

Always blunt and upright, Paine annoyed or threatened many people, including erstwhile allies, like George Washington, for one. When Paine was imprisoned and almost killed during the French Revolution, Washington didn't gnash his ivory, cow bone and black slave teeth in worries or sorrows, and this mean coldness destroyed their lopsided relationship. Paine had mistakenly considered Washington an intimate friend. Except for Paine, America's Founding Fathers came from the wealthiest stratum of American society, so during and after the Revolutionary War, they sought to protect their privileges.

They tolerated Paine since he could rally the ordinary people, "the grazing multitude" in Washington's memorable phrase, but when the war had been won, they had no more use for him.

Just as you and I inhabit a world entirely alien to those who rule over us, Paine was also viewed by the elites of his time as a clear outsider or pesty gadfly, if not outright freak. Speaking on the floor of Congress, Gouverneur Morris described Paine as "a mere adventurer from England, without fortune, without family connections, ignorant even of grammar." John Adams acknowledged Paine's unmatched sway over the masses, but arrived at a colorful and telling conclusion, "I know not whether any man in the world has had more influence on its inhabitants or affairs or the last thirty years than Tom Paine. There can no severer satyr on the age. For such a mongrel between pig and puppy, begotten by a wild boar on a bitch wolf, never before in any age of the world was suffered by the poltroonery of mankind, to run through such a career of mischief," so to have such influence over ordinary people is to indulge in a career of mischief? So Paine was little more than a demagogue from many elites' perspective, but if he could get farmers and tradesmen to pick up rifles, then he had a temporary role to play.

Paine gave the American Revolution a much more democratic veneer, and he's still trotted out every now and then, in tiny doses, to give the impression that we have stayed true to his vision, but if Paine's foundational ideas are really compared to the actual state of our union, it's clear that we've gone from a flawed yet promising beginning to become this physically and mentally ill, insatiably rapacious yet raped nation. Throughout our entire history, the American underclass has been partially appeased by a trickled down prosperity achieved through endless plunder and conquest, but our rottenness is becoming harder to hide as our ship creaks, lists and sucks

**Paine was little more than a demagogue from many elites' perspective, but if he could get farmers and tradesmen to pick up rifles, then he had a temporary role to play**

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## CONFUSED LEGACY

**Echoing Washington's anguish, Paine called this possible revenge murder "a sentence so extraordinary, an execution so repugnant to every human sensation."**

in cascades. Standing in this bilge, we can't help but see our misfortune steadily rising to our ankles, shins, thighs and higher. It's past time we act.

To begin to see what ails us, let's start at the top. Paine equated kings with wars, and although we have no king as such, our executive office has usurped the power to unleash war to itself, irrespective of Congress or popular opinions, so that each President has become a de facto king as long as he occupies the White House. With no check or balance, he can have anyone killed, imprisoned or tortured, and even destroy an entire nation. Or take our current President's nonchalance towards his kill list, as in "I'm a very good killer" and joking about drone strikes, and compare it to the agony Washington went through as he contemplated executing a Brit soldier, Charles Asgill, in retaliation against an American prisoner of war who had been hanged by the English. Asking Congress to decide Asgill's fate, Washington wrote that "It is a great national concern, upon which an individual ought not to decide." Echoing Washington's anguish, Paine called this possible revenge murder "a sentence so extraordinary, an execution so repugnant to every human sensation." In the end, Asgill was spared. Released, Asgill charged that he had been treated barbarically during his captivity, but this is only an indictment against his local jailers, not anyone higher up. An Abu Ghraib it was not. Think also of how American diplomacy and civility has declined since, for Washington's behavior is a far cry from Hillary Clinton's chirpy "We came, we saw, he died!" when speaking about Muammar Gaddafi, a foreign leader who had been sodomized with a knife, killed then displayed in a supermarket freezer by the American-supported thugs. And no, such breezy barbarity is not at all common, since no one but the US routinely violates foreign countries, persons or corpses.

As for Congress, Paine writes that our elected representatives "are supposed to

have the same concerns at stake which those have who appointed them, and who will act in the same manner as the whole body would act were they present." It sure doesn't sound like what we have, that's for sure. In fact, Americans' approval rating for their "representatives" has been hovering in the single digits, and I wouldn't be surprised to see it hit zero soon enough, complete with a dead cat bounce. Maybe it will even sink below zero. With fresh outrages each day, we'll have to come up with new ways to measure our degradation. First of, an American politician cannot serve the common man when he can really get paid by the big boys or, more importantly, be destroyed by them should he step out of line. With mass surveillance a normalized fact of life, all of his hidden crimes, vices, peccadilloes and goofy or ghastly kinkiness can also be exposed. This is no conspiracy theory but what happens when our bankers and war profiteers are also in control of our mass media. The same fat guys and gals sit on each other's boards.

Paine spoke of the American Tories as an internal enemy who should be expelled, with their properties confiscated, which in fact happened to 60,000 Loyalists of all kinds after the War of Independence, but who are our internal enemies of today? Contrary to the relentless propaganda that molests our synapses daily, America's greatest internal threat does not come from terrorists lurking at airports, train stations and shopping malls, but a ruling apparatus that openly serves supranational or even foreign interests.

A Federal Reserve that bails out openly criminal banks, domestic and foreign, is certainly an internal enemy, as are all politicians who support the wrecking of our financial and moral standings to advance another nation's geopolitical interests. Besides oil companies, who do you think benefit from our series of ruinous Middle East wars? Last month, newly elected mayor of New York, Bill de Blasio, proudly declared, "Part of my

job description is to be a defender of Israel [for] it is elemental to being an American.” No, it’s not, Bill, for it’s only elemental to being an American politician, as things now stand. Persistently defending a rogue state, we have become a naked one ourselves, as led by traitors who have pledged “Israel, right or wrong.” The continued offshoring of American industries and jobs under the cover of “free trade” is also hostile to our interests, so all American politicians who facilitate it must be considered as enemies.

In Scranton, I once saw Thomas Paine quoted on a huge, unsightly memorial outside the county courthouse, “If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace.” Since most of the other quotations advocated unquestioning participation in any American war, the Paine snippet had clearly been taken out of context.

Again, he was being used. Far from a being a limp protestor, Paine fully believed in the use of violence, but only if the cause was just. He supported the American army when it was a popular force fighting against oppressive, despotic rule, and certainly not wars of greed, “Not all the treasures of the world, so far as I believe, could have induced me to support an offensive war, for I think it murder.” If Paine was alive today, he would be aghast at our brainwashed or mercenary soldiers who don’t question being sent anywhere to defend the war profiteers’ and banks’ bottom lines and, episodically, even Israel.

There is something very relevant, though, about Paine’s admonition about not passing

on our troubles to subsequent generations, for that is exactly what we are doing, and in the most grotesque manners, too. No people in history have so mortgaged the future. We’re indebted beyond salvation, and as our currency becomes debased through reckless money creation, or quantitative easing in current parlance, we won’t just sink ourselves but condemn our offspring to a much degraded existence. In this, Paine also had plenty to say, for he warned against the abuses of fiat money, as controlled by a greedy elite. He would be astounded to see that not only have we allowed paper money to breed unchecked, we’ve come up with the dodgy innovation of paper gold. Soon

enough, even the still smug among us will find out that we’re rich in paper only.

In Paine’s time, the enemy was a distant and easily identifiable king, but in ours, the enemy is within and mostly invisible. Our public officials are only the cabana boys and girls, or waiters, of this sick system, and they’re certainly not serving us. In fact, we

can’t even press our noses against the glass to see who are dining within. Standing out back, we fight among ourselves for the discarded scraps and that, for now, is our only battle. We’re sad. **CT**

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*Linh Dinh* is was born in Vietnam in 1963, came to the US in 1975, and has also lived in Italy and England. He is the author of two collections of stories, “Fake House” and “Blood and Soap”, five books of poems, and a novel, “Love Like Hate”. Read more of his writing at <http://linhdinhphotos.blogspot.ca>

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