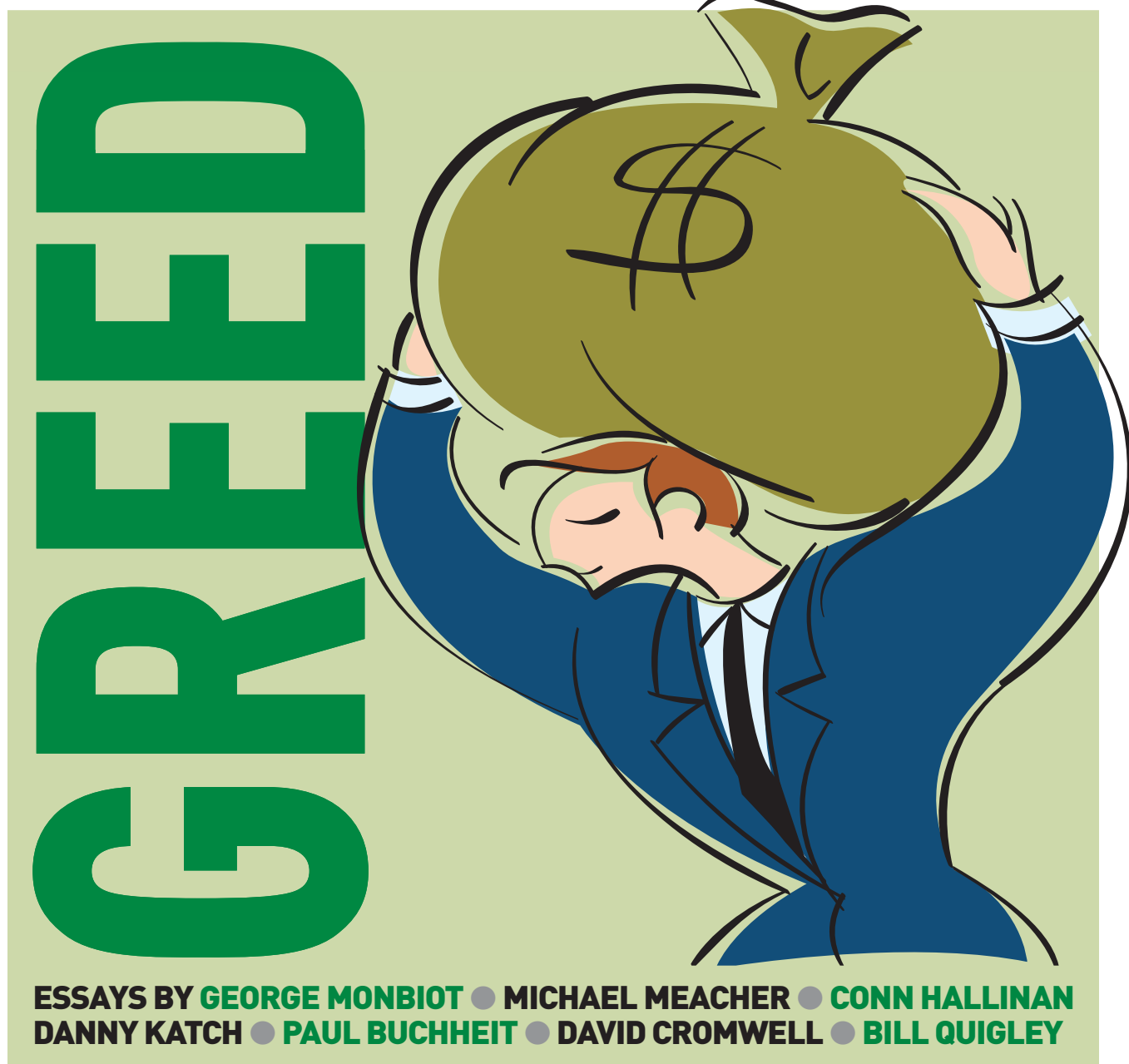


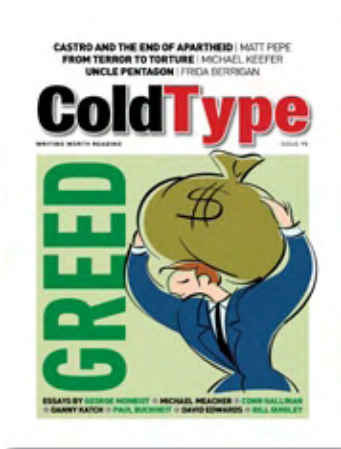
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**FROM TERROR TO TORTURE | MICHAEL KEEFER**  
**UNCLE PENTAGON | FRIDA BERRIGAN**

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 95





# ColdType

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Editor: Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net

# Uncle Pentagon

**Frida Berrigan** remembers a life growing up in the shadow of the American war state

**T**he Pentagon loomed so large in my childhood that it could have been another member of my family. Maybe a menacing uncle who doled out put-downs and whacks to teach us lessons or a rich, dismissive great-aunt intent on propriety and good manners.

Whatever the case, our holidays were built around visits to the Pentagon's massive grounds. That's where we went for Easter, Christmas, even summer vacation (to commemorate the anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki). When we were little, my brother and sister and I would cry with terror and dread as we first glimpsed the building from the bridge across the Potomac River. To us, it pulsed with malice as if it came with an ominous, beat-driven soundtrack out of Star Wars.

I grew up in Baltimore at Jonah House, a radical Christian community of people committed to nonviolent resistance to war and nuclear culture. It was founded by my parents, Phil Berrigan and Liz McAlister. They gained international renown as pacifist peace activists not afraid to damage property or face long prison terms. The Baltimore Four, the Catonsville Nine, the Plowshares Eight, the Griffiss Seven: these were anti-Vietnam War or antinuclear actions they helped plan, took part in, and often enough went to jail for. These were also creative conspiracies meant to raise large ques-

tions about our personal responsibility for, and the role of conscience in, our world. In addition, they were explorations of how to be effective and nonviolent in opposition to the war state. These actions drew plenty of media attention and crowds of supporters, but in between we always went back to the Pentagon.

As kids, horrific images of war were seared into our brains from old documentaries about Hiroshima and Nagasaki and newer dispatches from Vietnam, and later El Salvador and Guatemala. And all of them seemed traceable to that one place, that imposing five-sided building overlooking the Potomac and surrounded by parking lots and sylvan acres of lawns and paths.

## **Burning hair and baby bottles filled with blood**

In many ways, I grew up at the Pentagon. Our family never sat for a formal portrait. We didn't take snapshots at parties or picnics or on vacation. But what we do have is photo albums stuffed with pictures taken at the Pentagon as we protested there year after year after year.

In one of my favorite photos of myself as a toddler, I'm marching down the Pentagon parade ground, holding a bottle of milk in one hand and tightly grasping the hand of my favorite grown-up, Rosemary Maguire, with the other. The pillars of the River En-

**Our holidays were built around visits to the Pentagon's massive grounds. That's where we went for Easter, Christmas, even summer vacation**

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## GROWING UP

**When I was eight, 75 people from our community were arrested blockading the entrances to the Pentagon**

trance are behind me. Best guess: it's 1976. My brother Jerry relaxes in a stroller in the background. My mom and other friends are standing nearby. We could be anywhere, but of course we're not. We're at the Pentagon and our protest is either just over or about to begin.

When President Gerald Ford requested a post-Vietnam Pentagon budget of \$105 billion for 1976, he was asking for an increase of 15% in military spending. American nuclear capabilities, already vast, were to be built up yet more, while conventional non-nuclear forces were to be expanded, too. After debate on the Hill, however, Congress cut his increase in half.

These were overwhelming sums to the adults protesting back then. And yet, even after adjusting for inflation, they seem almost modest today. Nearly 30 years later, President Barack Obama is requesting \$534 billion for the Pentagon and another \$50.9 billion for ongoing military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. And this doesn't even include the more than \$12 billion for maintaining and bolstering US nuclear forces, most of which is tucked away in the Energy Department's budget at a moment when Washington is committing itself to a trillion-dollar, multi-decade upgrade of those forces.

A snapshot eight or nine years later shows me crouched behind my little sister, then an irresistibly cute toddler of two or three. I'm helping her hand out leaflets to Pentagon employees as they come to work. A woman takes a flyer from her, while grown-up friends hold a banner that reads "Faithfulness to the Covenant Means Disarmament."

Our house was full of such banners, painted in block letters on sheets. The year might have been 1983 and the Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists then stood at three minutes to nuclear midnight. Caspar Weinberger was Secretary of Defense; the Pentagon was, of course, his office; and he had already earned the



**Frida (at about two) and Rosemary Maguire at the River Entrance to the Pentagon in 1976.**

moniker "Cap the Ladle" for his efforts to increase spending on nuclear weapons like the MX missile and President Ronald Reagan's futuristic "Star Wars" anti-missile-defense weapons fantasy.

In the picture, I'm in a jean jacket that I loved to rags and wore regardless of the weather, and a regrettable headband with a floppy bow. The Pentagon workers would undoubtedly have refused flyers from me, but they took them with a smile from my little sister. They probably didn't read them, but getting those tracts into their hands seemed like some measure of success.

When I was eight, 75 people from our community were arrested blockading the entrances to the Pentagon. Meanwhile, a few people towed a broken-down station wagon onto its parade ground, disabled it completely, and left it there with "LAST RESORT" spray-painted on its side in big block letters. "Auto workers are sleeping in their cars in Houston," John Shields, one of the protest leaders, told UPI, "We are making the connection between homelessness and the lack of jobs because of the mad buildup of the arms race."

In another photo, taken in April 1985, I walk down the River Entrance steps. I am 11 and soaking wet and grimacing. I still remember the moment. I'm hoarse from chanting "You can't wash the blood away!"

as a maintenance crew works to scrub down one of the Pentagon's imposing pillars. They could and did wash the blood away. Their hoses are visible in the background and the pillars are clean. Drawn from the veins of my parents and their friends, the dark red liquid was a potent symbol meant to mark that building with the end result of war. My parents hoped that it would remind those entering of the reality of their work, of what lay behind or beyond the clean offices they labored in and the spiffy suits or uniforms they wore. At the time, the Pentagon was locked in a fierce fight with the CIA and the White House over the wisdom of trading weapons for hostages with Iran and giving the money to US-backed mercenaries in Nicaragua who were fighting a bloody war against peasants, catechists, and communists who wanted land reform, education, and democracy.

Thrown from baby bottles, splattered high onto porous white marble, the blood was hard to wash off. The maintenance guys worked around us as much as possible. They tried not to get us wet. Occasionally, the police would move us out of the way, only to watch us scamper back through the suds and pools of pinkish water.

Sandblasting, power-washing, scraping: it was all tried to get those stains out. Over the years, the columns wore away perceptibly and by that modest measure we marked our success. We were changing the Pentagon, molecule by molecule. It was hard work, but maybe easier than changing the hearts and minds of the men and women who walked through those pools of blood, tracking it onto that building's highly polished floors.

### **Tweak of conscience**

All those years protesting at the "War Department" – my parents liked to use the old World War II-era name for it – so many hours spent pleading, haranguing, imploring, condemning, appealing, and confronting, and not surprisingly, a stilted decorum

developed around our acts. Ah yes, you again, it must be Hiroshima Day.

We were the reminder, the tweak of conscience, the minor cost of doing business. They abhorred us but also tolerated us; they welcomed us as a foil or a challenge. Sometimes, it seemed like a little of all three at once. Looking back now, it's kind of incredible that "they" let us be there, year after year. Maybe they appreciated our creativity. One thing was for sure: we knew how to make a spectacle.

In the late 1980s, a group of women cut off all their hair and burned it on the Pentagon steps. Wrapped in burlap sacks, they then keened in mourning for the victims of war – and let me assure you that burning hair does smell like death, like war, like terror. It may be the most awful smell in the world.

At the time, I was a young teenager in love with my long hair and I held onto it tightly as women I admired cut theirs off. (My mother's hair was already too short to hack away dramatically.) Later, I felt their bare heads in wonder and laughed as one of them tried to lessen or at least neaten the damage with a small pair of scissors and a comb. The stench of their witness lodged in the back of my throat and clung to my jacket for the rest of the winter. This is the smell of the Pentagon, I would tell myself whenever I wanted to toss my coat in the washer. It's good to remember.

In the early hours of one morning during the brief and devastating first Gulf War of 1991 – who today even remembers "the highway of death"? – we blocked the roads leading to the Pentagon with huge piles of broken concrete and rebar. A handful of people with banners stood marking the piles as the "rubble of Baghdad." The police arrested them, but could hold no one because they had no witnesses to the dumping of all that material. One officer even told my mom that she should get "an academy award for this one! This is the best you've ever done!"

**Drawn from the veins of my parents and their friends, the dark red liquid was a potent symbol meant to mark that building with the end result of war**

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## GROWING UP

**Leaflets are no longer allowed, nor are photographs. Any activity or demonstration outside of that grassy little spot is met with arrest**

In another picture, I am in my late teens, standing at the top of the steps of the River Entrance, along with my brother and another friend. We hold a banner that reads in part “We Remember, We Remember.” I’m squinting into the early morning light and my hand is on my chest. And I do remember, even all these years later, that feeling of dread. I look at the picture and know that my younger self is barely breathing and my heart is racing beneath my hand – I am that afraid. I still feel that.

### **Set himself on fire**

Ours was not a solitary witness like that of Baltimore Quaker Norman Morrison who, in November 1965, set himself on fire under Defense Secretary Robert McNamara’s window to protest the war in Vietnam. With his wife Anne, Morrison was a war-tax resister and peace activist. He was searching for a way to end that grim war. He died of his wounds.

During the Vietnam War there were also huge crowds on the grounds. As many as 50,000 people marched to the Pentagon in a vast and militant October 1967 demonstration, which included an element of the absurd and mystical, a Yippie ritual of exorcism and “transformation” to levitate the Pentagon.

We did not have huge crowds, but we were steady and predictable. Year after year, my family and community made up for our modest numbers by being the most faithful and regular of visitors, willing to risk prison for nonviolent spectacle and witness against war. And we are still there. Every Monday morning at the crack of dawn, a handful of friends brave the cold (or heat) and a long commute to stand with signs of protest inside a fence-enclosed “free speech area.”

But it’s another, tighter, more repressive age when it comes to the war state. Leaflets are no longer allowed, nor are photographs. Any activity or demonstration outside of that grassy little spot is met with arrest,

which happens often enough without a lot of media or other attention.

Since September 11, 2001, the nature of war itself has changed. There is no longer really a battlefield except that semi-metaphorical “global” one, nor any clear delineation between civilian and combatant. There are no front lines. War is now total in a new way: in the air and on the ground, human and robotic, online and cyber.

In the process, the “footprint” of the Pentagon has been transformed. On that September day, of course, Flight 77 took out one side of the building, killing 125 people. As part of the reconstruction of the site, a whole series of security upgrades and physical changes were made so that visitors – including protesters – can get nowhere near it without walking a gauntlet of official searches and scrutiny.

At the same time, monstrously huge as it is, the Pentagon is no longer a single place, a single building at all. In its way, in the post-9/11 era, the Pentagon and the complex of military corporations that service and serve it have spread all over Northern Virginia. You can find a mini-Pentagon in the Department of Homeland Security and another in the State Department, not to speak of countless police departments across the country.

So much has changed, but the Doomsday Clock has again tick-tocked back down to three minutes to nuclear midnight and wars are raging at every turn. It’s been a few years since I paid old Uncle Pentagon a visit. I am long overdue. **CT**

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*Frida Berrigan is the author of **It Runs in the Family: On Being Raised by Radicals and Growing into Rebellious Motherhood** (OR Books, 2015). She writes the **Little Insurrections** column for **WagingNonviolence.Org**, serves on the board of the **War Resisters League** and is active with **Witness Against Torture**. This excerpt was originally published at <http://www.tomdispatch.com>*

# The Oaxaca Express

The first of a series of tales by **Dell Franklin**  
from his former life as a taxi driver in California

Sitting in your cab when the buses roll in at the Greyhound station in San Luis Obispo, you pretty much know who your prospective rides are going to be: black women visiting inmates at the state prison, little old ladies afraid to fly, parolees in new issue shuttling down to LA from prisons north, tattooed white trash, the occasional student, and Mexican immigrants from the poorest provinces of that country. The very rock-bottom of the socioeconomic ladder in America.

Anybody who departs from a Greyhound bus after having been on it for days exudes an identifiable odor: a distinct blend of cigarette smoke, exhaust fumes, sour, dead air, armpit sweat and crotch rot – all accumulating over years and soaking into seats and clinging to the hair, skin and clothes of a passenger and rising from them like a fetid, septic vapor, a sensory bludgeoning.

I picked up a group of field hands, or *campesinos*, always immigrants. Six of them. Since a cab is by law only allowed five passengers, I tried to explain this to them in my broken Spanish, but they pretended not to understand and piled in, five squishing up in the back. They were not about to separate and take another cab for an extra \$60 or \$70 to transport them to the farm or ranch where they were to cultivate and harvest vegetables

and fruit and tend cattle out by Cambria, thirty five miles away. Besides, they were diminutive people compared to fat Americans, stick-like and black-eyed, no doubt from the farthest reaches south, 3,000 miles from home.

Each toted a flimsy satchel with their meager belongings, which I stuffed in the trunk. The five in the back were young men, while the oldest, with grey flecks in his abundant hair and bushy mustache, sat shotgun in the bucket seat. He smiled at me hopefully, a sly, wise look on his face.

I was familiar with these people. As a college kid, I had worked part-time and saved enough money to travel to the interior of Mexico with three pals in an old jalopy we eventually blew up. We hit cantinas, beaches, whorehouses,

and although we were poor compared to most Americans, we must have seemed rich and privileged to these peasants to our south.

These passengers were not street-wise, big city or border town Mexicans. This was possibly their first time in America. They seemed curious yet wary, like young kittens.

The man sitting shotgun smiled at me. “You geeve me good deal, amigo?”

I shrugged, looking helpless, pointed to the meter. “No po-see-blay, amigo.”

“We have leettle dinero, senior.”

I nodded. “I understand. But it will cost you around seventy dollars.” He winced, as if

**These passengers were not street-wise, big city or border town Mexicans. This was possibly their first time in America.**



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## ON THE ROAD

**They sat quietly, ignoring the passing countryside, like mutes awaiting a sentencing. Alfredo kept an eye on me, occasionally producing his reassuring grin, his teeth white and clean**

stabbed. He was possibly a few years younger than me but looked older, obviously having lived a harder life, as they all did.

I remembered how, when our car stalled in little villages and big cities, everybody, even kids and women, came out of buildings or shacks to push us up hills, waving and smiling as we pulled away. I remember, deep in the interior, little dark men like those in my cab buying us beers and tequila when they could not afford it, because, evidently, they liked us, or were too proud to allow us to buy them drinks, or perhaps they were showing us the true nature of the Mexican people – warm and generous, money meaning little in the face of gratitude and goodness of spirit.

“I’ll try and make us a deal, amigo, but it is very difficult.” I pointed to the meter, explaining that my supervisor kept close tabs on cab drivers. Then I picked up the phone, checked in with my dispatcher/supervisor, informed him I was going somewhere past Cambria and would be gone a while.

The car stank. It was chilly outside, but I had my window open and the thin-blooded peasants huddled up and shivered in their faded denim jackets. Shotgun, who was named Alfredo, asked politely if I could roll up the window, so I cracked it a little, turned on the heat, but the stench increased and wafted to my nostrils, my gorge rising, like somebody died in my cab. They were, of course, immune from their own miserable smell and had probably been eating food they’d never eaten before, arousing their bowels.. This happened to us in Mexico. These poor kids were used to nothing but beans and rice and tortillas and whatever they could kill.

They sat quietly, ignoring the passing countryside, like mutes awaiting a sentencing. Alfredo kept an eye on me, occasionally producing his reassuring grin, his teeth white and clean.

I asked him where they were from. And he told me Oaxaca. I told him I’d been there, and it was pretty, and was about to comment on how poor it was, but knew this would humiliate him and place me at a disadvantage when

we started haggling over the fare. I’d decided to give them some kind of deal. He knew this, sensed my willingness to compromise. I could tell the dispatcher I got lost from poor directions by non-English speaking Mexicans. Perhaps cut the meter at around \$40 or \$50. That was my limit. So I relaxed just past Morro Bay, and Alfredo and I talked. My chopped up Spanish was as adequate as his English. He had a wife and five kids. Two of his boys were in back. They lived in a small village outside of Oaxaca. He was foreman at a ranch outside of Cambria. As we passed Cayucos and its glinting bay, my passengers did not bother to look. Studying the peasants in the rearview mirror, they looked exhausted, half asleep, like bags of ragged clothes. Urchin-like, they received little or no help from their government, I knew, forcing their survival on family alone. They possessed the high-cheek-boned, ridged faces of bantamweight boxers toiling in American arenas and on our sports channels on TV – men who could dish it out and take it and ignore blood and pain, never backing up until the final bell rang, bleeding, swollen about the eyes, yet still proud and game. They had perfect skin, were splendid looking people. Their women, in teenage years, before being burdened with multiple children, were breathtakingly beautiful. As a people they broke your heart, but you never let them know. Never.

Alfredo pointed to a side road running into the fields and inland hills near Cambria. Barns and ranch houses nestled among clusters of oaks. Cows and the occasional horses grazed. I had cut the meter at \$40 and was saving them at least \$25. At Alfredo’s direction, I turned onto a bumpy dirt road; rows of crops on either side. There were orchards and more cows. We arrived at a single trailer situated some fifty yards from a main house and barn and small corral.

When we pulled up, a door opened and five Mexicans who looked exactly like my passengers spilled out of the trailer. Their satchels and a few duffel bags were stacked by the steps. They looked fit and fuller than my crew. Everybody piled out of the cab and I opened the



trunk and my peasants took out their satchels and everybody commenced to speak in Spanish at such a rapid pace I could not keep up with it. Alfredo talked to an older man who could have been his brother. He glanced at me as they talked.

I observed the crew I'd dropped off. They would be here for months, a year, probably longer, working all day, every day. Occasionally, after a harvest, on a pay day, they'd go to a bar in Cambria and get drunk, shoot pool, become happy and sentimental, stare hungrily at big, healthy white girls, perhaps get angry, maybe fight among themselves and be called "beaners" and "wetbacks" before being run out. This was to be part of their lot: Work, eat, drink, sleep; go without.

The two older men approached me. Any Mexican, be he a cab driver, pimp, or merchant involving any kind of exchange, liked to haggle. We learned to do it well in Mexico. They had no respect for you if you didn't try and chisel them down or were a pushover when you tried.

"How much to San Luis?" asked Alfredo.

"The same, amigo – forty dollars."

Again the pained look. "Too much, amigo."

"Other cabbies, they charge you sixty five, seventy on the way up, the same on the way back. They are not like me. They are not simpatico."

Alfredo nodded, expressing his appreciation of my understanding and generosity. He turned to the man who looked like his brother and conversed rapidly while the peasants talked in the background. I heard the word "simpatico." I'm sure they knew from previous rides that if I drove back alone I got paid nothing. Dead time.

This was an excellent opportunity for all of us to come to a very pleasing compromise. Since they didn't tip, which was fine with me, I could make some quick cash and be a true amigo at the same time.

Alfredo returned to barter. He shrugged helplessly. "We are not reech, senior. It is too much."

Now they were all staring at me, a dozen bantamweights with calloused hands, wiry frames, sparkling teeth, deep leather tans. The departing kids would be returning home with pockets full of cash for their families, where they would be kings in their small village, almost heroes. They had no doubt already sent money home. I had seen their kind break hundred dollar bills in the Cayucos Tavern to buy pitchers of beer. They spent their money on little else, lived free in the trailer, were fed; had few expenses. They became very generous when drunk, forgetting temporarily how poor they were as they bought local gringos and women shots and beers if they seemed halfway tolerant and interested in them as people. The drunker they became, the more foolish they became with their cash. They dropped it on the floor and left it on the bar and sometimes lost wallets. They requested their honking, tooting, oompah music on the jukebox, but no bar would hear it.

Alfredo and I haggled amicably, bluffing, shrugging, throwing up our hands, and eventually arrived at a price – \$60 for a round-trip. I would make myself a \$20 tip. For them they were saving a fortune. Everybody was happy, satisfied. They paid me with a hundred dollar bill. Alfredo and I shook hands. His brother, Eduardo, nodded at me, smiling. Everybody piled in.

On the drive back, I talk with Eduardo, who was from a family of fifteen. The kids in the back were talkative and lively, behaving like jubilant school boys going away to summer camp. It was a quick, easy ride. I dropped them off at the Greyhound depot, where they hauled off their plump satchels and duffel bags. They wore new denim jackets and new leather boots and Levi's and plaid flannel shirts and white straw hats. They were freshly cleaned and laundered and smelled good. Such sweet people. They would stink to high heaven when their bus pulled into Oaxaca. **CT**

**Alfredo and I haggled amicably, bluffing, shrugging, throwing up our hands, and eventually arrived at a price**

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*Dell Franklin is the founding publisher of the Rogue Voice – <http://theroguevoice.com>*



OTTAWA: Protesters in Canada's capital say No to the government's proposed new anti-terror bill.

Photo: Mike Gifford

# From terror to torture

**Michael Keefer** on the darker side of Canada's new Terrorism Act, with photographs from Canada's March 14 national day of protest

**The bill isn't really about terrorism: it's about smearing other activities by association – and then suppressing them in ways that would formerly have been flagrantly illegal**

Canada's Conservative government's Bill C-51, or Anti-Terrorism Act, has been in the public domain for more than a month. Long enough for us to know that it subverts basic principles of constitutional law, assaults rights of free speech and free assembly, and is viciously anti-democratic.

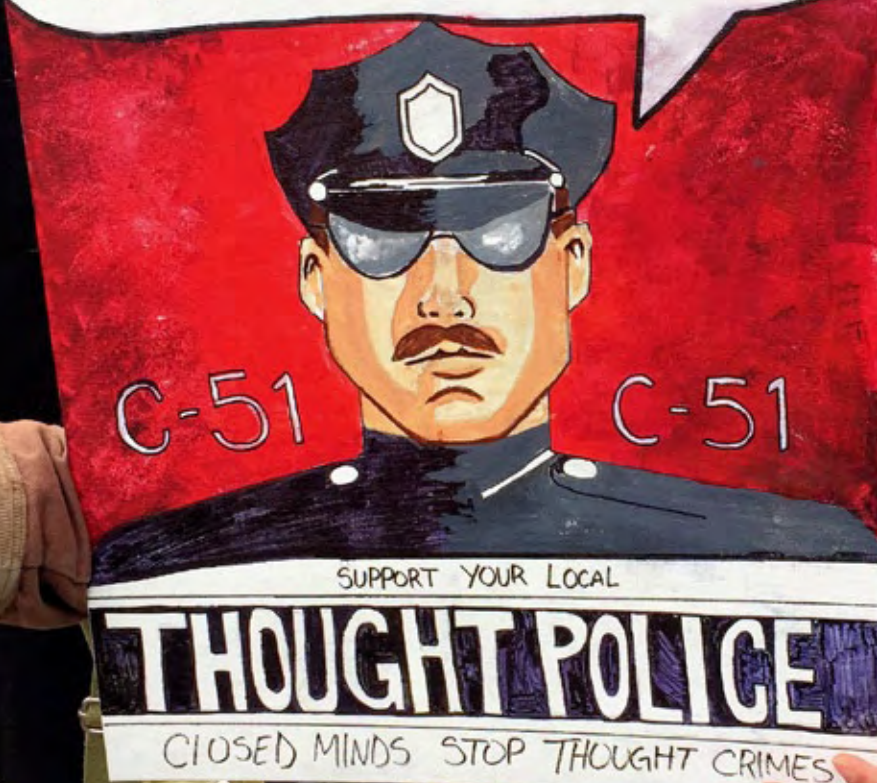
An unprecedented torrent of criticism has been directed against this bill as the government rushes it through Parliament. This has included stern or at least sceptical editorials in all the major newspapers; an open letter, signed by four former Prime Ministers and five former Supreme Court judges, denouncing the bill for exposing Canadians to major violations of their rights;

and another letter, signed by a hundred Canadian law professors, explaining the dangers it poses to justice and legality.

As its critics have shown, the bill isn't really about terrorism: it's about smearing other activities by association – and then suppressing them in ways that would formerly have been flagrantly illegal.

The bill targets, among others, people who defend the treaty rights of First Nations, people who oppose tar sands, fracking, and bitumen-carrying pipelines as threats to health and the environment, and people who urge that international law be peacefully applied to ending Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories. (Members of this latter group include significant

LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE  
HAD TO MUCH TO THINK



TORONTO: Big Brother is on the way, according to this lady's poster. But are the people listening? Recent surveys show that most Canadians support the bill  
Photo: Katelynn Northam

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## CANADA PROTESTS



WINNIPEG: Hyperbole or reality? These protesters give passers by something to think about

Photo: William Ruff

**CSIS agents can obstruct, pervert and defeat to their hearts' content, so long as they do so haphazardly, rather than "wilfully"**

numbers of Canadian Jews.)

But the Anti-Terrorism Act is more mortally dangerous to Canadian democracy than even these indications would suggest. A central section of the act empowers CSIS agents to obtain judicial warrants – on mere suspicion, with no requirement for supporting evidence – that will allow them to supplement other disruptive actions against purported enemies of Harperland with acts that directly violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and other Canadian laws.

The only constraints placed on this legalized law-breaking are that CSIS agents shall not “(a) cause, intentionally or by criminal negligence, death or bodily harm to an individual; (b) wilfully attempt in any manner to obstruct, pervert or defeat the course of

justice; or (c) violate the sexual integrity of an individual.”

The second of these prohibitions – occurring in the midst of a bill that seeks systematically to obstruct citizens in the exercise of their rights, pervert justice, and defeat democracy – might tempt one to believe that there is a satirist at work within the Department of Justice. (Note, however, that CSIS agents can obstruct, pervert and defeat to their hearts' content, so long as they do so haphazardly, rather than “wilfully.”)

But the first and third clauses amount to an authorization of torture.

On February 16, Matthew Behrens observed that these clauses recall “the bone-chilling justification of torture” in the infamous memos of George W. Bush's Justice



REGINA, Saskatchewan: Sign of the times . . .

Photo: Bernadette Wagner

Department. He pertinently asked what the Canadian government knows, if it “actually feels the need to spell out such a prohibition, [...] about illicit CSIS practices behind closed doors....” On February 17, two prominent legal experts, Clayton Ruby and Nader R. Hasan, remarked that the “limited exclusions” in these clauses “leave CSIS with incredibly expansive powers, including water boarding, inflicting pain (torture) or causing psychological harm to an individual.”

Like the Bush torture memos, Harper’s Anti-Terrorism Act is attempting to legitimize forbidden practices. Bush’s lawyers argued that interrogation methods producing pain below the level of “organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death” were legal – as were methods producing

purely mental suffering, unless they resulted in “significant psychological harm [...] lasting for months or even years.” Harper’s legislation prohibits acts of the kind that created an international scandal when the torture practices of Abu Graib, Bagram and Guantánamo became public. But as Ruby and Hasan recognize, in so doing it is tacitly declaring acts of torture that fall below that horrifying threshold to be permissible.

Most of the torture methods applied in the black sites of the American gulag during the so-called War on Terror would be permitted to CSIS under Harper’s Anti-Terrorism Act. Among these methods are sleep deprivation and sensory deprivation (both of which induce psychosis, without of course leaving physical marks), stress-position tor-

**Like the Bush torture memos, Harper’s Anti-Terrorism Act is attempting to legitimize forbidden practices**

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## CANADA PROTESTS



VANCOUVER: We're not taking this lying down. Well, actually, he is!

Photo: Jeremy Board

### We know already that Stephen Harper doesn't flinch from covering up high-level Canadian responsibility for torture in Afghanistan

ture and waterboarding (which again leave no marks of “bodily harm”), and techniques of beating and pressure-point torture that produce excruciating pain without leaving visible traces.

As to what CSIS does behind closed doors, we know enough to be able to say that this agency is already seriously off its leash. CSIS agents were involved in interrogating Afghan prisoners from early 2002 until 2007 or later, a period during which the American and Afghan agencies with which they collaborated were systematically torturing detainees. We know from journalists Jim Bronskill and Murray Brewster that one of the Kandahar interrogation sites used by CSIS, “work[ing] alongside the American CIA and in close co-operation with Canada’s secretive, elite JTF-2 commandos,” was a “secluded base” – this seems a polite way of saying ‘secret torture facility’ – “known as Graceland.”

American torturers seem to have enjoyed giving names of this sort to their black sites: the secret facility outside the Guantánamo prison where three prisoners were tortured to death on the night of June 9, 2006 is called

“Penny Lane.” (Think about the lyrics to Paul Simon’s “Graceland” and the Beatles’ “Penny Lane”: you’ll understand that these interrogators are sick puppies indeed.)

But these are the people that Jack Hooper, Assistant and then Deputy Director of CSIS Operations from 2002 until 2007, wanted his agents to emulate. He told his men, “If you’re going to run with the big dogs, you’d better learn to piss in the high grass.”

We know already that Stephen Harper doesn’t flinch from covering up high-level Canadian responsibility for torture in Afghanistan. In November 2009, the *Toronto Star* quoted a former senior NATO public affairs official as saying that flagrantly false denials about Canadian complicity in the torture of Afghan detainees had been scripted by Harper and his PMO, “which was running the public affairs aspect of Canadian engagement in Afghanistan with a 6,000-mile screwdriver.” And we’ve not forgotten that a month later Mr. Harper prodded Parliament in order to shut down a parliamentary committee that was hearing evidence on the subject.

But on October 22 of last year, when a



It seems that Mr. Harper would now like us all to share the emotion he felt in that Ottawa closet

**GUELPH, Ontario: Protesting is a family affair.**

Photographer unknown

deranged gunman murdered Corporal Nathan Cirillo at the National War Memorial and then tried to run amok on Parliament Hill, Mr. Harper was less brave. While some members of his caucus prepared to defend themselves and their parliamentary colleagues with anything that came to hand, he hid in a closet.

It seems that Mr. Harper would now like us all to share the emotion he felt in that closet – if not by quivering at the mention of ISIS jihadis, then, soon enough, by shaking in our boots at the thought of CSIS toughs kicking down doors at midnight.

Canadians need to tell this government, and this prime minister, that we are not in-

timidated on either count.

We are ashamed by his lies over high-level Canadian complicity in torture in Afghanistan.

We will not tolerate his attempt to institutionalize torture in Canada. **CT**

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*Michael Keefer, who is Professor Emeritus at the University of Guelph, is a graduate of the Royal Military College of Canada, a former President of the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English, a member of the Seriously Free Speech Committee, and an associate member of Independent Jewish Voices Canada*

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# The Washington Post will kill us all

**David Swanson** wonders what happened to the once-Liberal newspaper

**It is the first publicly released scientific assessment of what a nuclear attack in the Middle East might actually mean for people in the region**

*“War with Iran is probably our best option.”*

This is an actual headline from the *Washington Post*.

Yes it’s an op-ed, but don’t fantasize that it’s part of some sort of balanced wide-ranging array of varied opinions. The *Washington Post* wouldn’t print a column advocating peace to save its life – as such an act just might help to do. And you can imagine the response if the headline had been: “Racism is probably our best option,” or “Rape is probably our best option,” or “Child abuse is probably our best option.” Nobody would object: “But they’ve probably had lots of columns opposing child abuse. Surely they can have one in favor, or do you want to shut down debate?” No, some things are rightly considered beyond the range of acceptability. War, in Washington, is not one of them.

Now, war propaganda is illegal under the International Covenant on Civic and Political Rights. War itself is illegal under the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the United Nations Charter. But the *Washington Post* isn’t one to worry about legal niceties.

There was quite a brouhaha last month when 47 senators tried to impede negotiations between the White House / State Department and Iran. Yes, charges of violating the Logan Act were ridiculous. If that was a violation, there have been thousands. In

fact here’s one now from the *Washington Post*. Iran’s government reads this vicious piece of propaganda just as surely as it reads an “open letter” from 47 sexually repressed climate-denying bible-thumping nimrods with corporate funding. When my town’s government passed a resolution opposing any US war on Iran I was immediately contacted by Iranian media, and our city council members were never charged with undermining the federal government’s so-called foreign policy. But the nonpartisan substance of the critique of the 47 Fools and of the Netanyahu Get-Up-Sit-Down aerobics workout was important and applies equally to the *Washington Post*: advocating war is immoral, illegal, and idiotic.

It is no secret what war on Iran means:

“Iranian cities – owing to geography, climate, building construction, and population densities – are particularly vulnerable to nuclear attack, according to a new study, ‘Nuclear War Between Israel and Iran: Lethality Beyond the Pale,’ published in the journal *Conflict & Health* by researchers from the University of Georgia and Harvard University. It is the first publicly released scientific assessment of what a nuclear attack in the Middle East might actually mean for people in the region.

“Its scenarios are staggering. An Israeli attack on the Iranian capital of Tehran using five 500-kiloton weapons would, the



study estimates, kill seven million people – 86% of the population – and leave close to 800,000 wounded. A strike with five 250-kiloton weapons would kill an estimated 5.6 million and injure 1.6 million, according to predictions made using an advanced software package designed to calculate mass casualties from a nuclear detonation.

“Estimates of the civilian toll in other Iranian cities are even more horrendous. A nuclear assault on the city of Arak, the site of a heavy water plant central to Iran’s nuclear program, would potentially kill 93% of its 424,000 residents. Three 100-kiloton nuclear weapons hitting the Persian Gulf port of Bandar Abbas would slaughter an estimated 94% of its 468,000 citizens, leaving just 1% of the population uninjured. A multi-weapon strike on Kermanshah, a Kurdish city with a population of 752,000, would result in an almost unfathomable 99.9% casualty rate.”

### **Barbaric boneheadedness**

The barbaric boneheadedness of someone who would write such murder off as acceptable because the victims are not Americans is almost unfathomable. The response would be attacks on US soldiers and US citizens and the United States. The potential for escalation into a global and nuclear war would be significant, particularly with the US playing at war games on Russia’s western border and arming attacks on the government of Syria.

But here comes Joshua Muravchik in the *Washington Post*. He’s funded by corporate-funded and war-industry-funded institutes. He’s backed all the recent wars, including the war on Iraq. He has no shame, no repentance. He wants more war. And all the many wars that President Obama is happy to wage or provoke just aren’t enough. There must be a war on Iran.

Muravchik calls Iran “violent, rapacious, devious, and redolent with hatred for Israel and the United States” without offering any evidence or explanation, and then claims

– contrary to some 17 US and 1 Israeli spy agencies – that Iran “is bound to continue its quest for nuclear weapons.” Imagine submitting an op-ed to the *Washington Post* that asserted that Iran had never had and does not have a nuclear weapons program. The editors would demand proof. Imagine providing the proof. The editors would reject it out of hand. After all, “both sides” make the same baseless accusations. President Obama and Senator McCain will both tell you that Iran is trying to build a nuke and must be stopped. They’ll just disagree on how to stop it, with Obama proposing a response that fits better with reality than it does with his own rhetoric.

Muravchik objects to any deal that might be reached with Iran because it will, necessarily and by definition, have Iran’s agreement. A better option, he says, would be the above mass-murder scenario. “What if force is the only way to block Iran from gaining nuclear weapons?” Iran is abiding by its treaty obligations, unlike the United States or Israel. Its nuclear energy puts it close to nuclear weaponry, but no closer than many other nations including all the Gulf dictatorships to which the West is currently spreading nuclear energy, just as it did to Iran – not to mention the CIA’s handing nuclear bomb plans to Iran and scapegoating Jeffrey Sterling over it. Beyond a negotiated agreement, a little leading by example, the removal of Israel’s nukes, the provision of clean energy, and a coordinated elimination of nuclear energy are entirely doable.

Muravchik knows this. And he knows that anyone you can talk to can work out a deal with you that is far superior to murdering millions of human beings. In fact everyone who’s not a vicious fascist pig knows this. So, there are two solutions in the standard propaganda toolbox: 1) claim Iran cannot be talked to, 2) call Iran a bunch of Nazis:

“Ideology is the *raison d’être* of Iran’s regime, legitimating its rule and inspiring its leaders and their supporters. In this

**The barbaric boneheadedness of someone who would write such murder off as acceptable because the victims are not Americans is almost unfathomable**

**He claims that the madmen of Iran, even while exhibiting such rational restraint, would nonetheless spread their imperial conquests. Never mind that the United States has troops in 175 nations while Iran has not attacked another nation in centuries**

sense, it is akin to communist, fascist and Nazi regimes that set out to transform the world. Iran aims to carry its Islamic revolution across the Middle East and beyond. A nuclear arsenal, even if it is only brandished, would vastly enhance Iran's power to achieve that goal."

He admits that nuclear arsenals tend not to be used. But he claims that the madmen of Iran, even while exhibiting such rational restraint, would nonetheless spread their imperial conquests. Never mind that the United States has troops in 175 nations while Iran has not attacked another nation in centuries. If Iran can be imagined as behaving the way the United States would, and the United States can be imagined as behaving the way civilized countries do, then violence can be made to seem justified.

But you have to catapult the propaganda: "Sanctions may have induced Iran to enter negotiations, but they have not persuaded it to abandon its quest for nuclear weapons." There is of course no evidence for the opening claim in that sentence, nor for the concluding lie.

So, what we need, according to the *Washington Post's* columnist is another knowingly self-defeating war that makes everything even worse: "Wouldn't an attack cause ordinary Iranians to rally behind the regime? Perhaps, but military losses have also served to undermine regimes, including the Greek and Argentine juntas, the Russian czar and the Russian communists." Our over-excited neocon may actually be at the point of imagining that Ronald Reagan invaded the USSR. The *Washington Post*, if questioned, will tell you that accuracy is not relevant in opinion writing.

And, if at first you kill millions of innocent people while accomplishing nothing: "Wouldn't destroying much of Iran's nuclear infrastructure merely delay its progress? Perhaps, but we can strike as often as necessary. Of course, Iran would try to conceal and defend the elements of its nuclear program, so we might have to find new ways to

discover and attack them. Surely the United States could best Iran in such a technological race."

Surely. And if not, what's the viability of life on planet earth in the grand scheme of things? After all, there is some "us" for whom a war on Iran is "our" best option. For this crowd, there is a more important world than this one. It is the world of sacred self-deluded megalomaniacal murderers for whom killing is a sacrament.

And never mind the uncontrollable outbreak of wider war, when you've already written off the planet: "And finally, wouldn't Iran retaliate by using its own forces or proxies to attack Americans – as it has done in Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia – with new ferocity? Probably. "But, says our sociopathic friend, it is better for the United States to suffer hard losses, while killing lots of Iranians unworthy of any notice, than to suffer the even worse losses that would surely come if an imaginary Iran that behaved like the United States attacked its neighbors and the United States were "drawn in" to those wars.

When you're starting wars, not on the grounds that fictional weapons of mass destruction will kill you otherwise, not on the pretense of preventing an attack on civilians, but on the grounds that if you don't start a war now someone else could theoretically start one later, you have set up a logic of Armageddon. And it may kill us all. We may die in part of overdosing on Hollywood movies with happy endings that convince us reality looks like that. But we won't all die, I feel fairly certain, without the *Washington Post* cheering death through the door. **CT**

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*David Swanson is an author, activist, journalist, and radio host. He is director of WorldBeyondWar.org and campaign coordinator for RootsAction.org. Swanson's books include War Is A Lie. He blogs at DavidSwanson.org and WarIsACrime.org. He hosts Talk Nation Radio. He is a 2015 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee.*

# Fidel Castro and the end of Apartheid

**Matt Peppe** takes a look behind the scenes of the confrontation that helped bring freedom to South Africa

Until the fall of the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974, apartheid in South Africa was secure. There was no substantial resistance anywhere in southern Africa. Pretoria's neighbors comprised a buffer zone that protected the racist regime: Namibia, their immediate neighbor which they had occupied for 60 years; white-ruled Rhodesia; and the Portuguese-ruled colonies of Angola and Mozambique. The rebels who fought against minority rule in each of these countries, operating without any safe haven to organize and train, were powerless to challenge the status quo. South Africa's buffer would have remained intact for the foreseeable future, solidifying apartheid and preventing any significant opposition, but for one man: Fidel Castro.

In October of 1975, South Africa invaded Angola at the behest of the US government to overthrow the left-wing Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in the soon-to-be independent country. Without Cuban assistance, the apartheid army would have easily cruised into Luanda, crushed the MPLA, and installed a puppet government friendly to the apartheid regime.

Cuba's intervention in Angola managed to change the course of that country and reverberate throughout Africa. By ensuring independence from the white supremacists, Angola was able to preserve its own revolution and maintain its role as a base for armed

resistance groups fighting for liberation in nearby countries.

In the American version of Cold War history, Cuba was carrying out aggression and acting as proxies of the Soviet Union. Were it not for one persistent and meticulous scholar, we might never have known that these are nothing more than dishonest fabrications. In his monumental books "Conflicting Missions" and "Visions of Freedom", historian Piero Gleijeses uses thousands of documents from Cuban military archives, as well as US and South African archives, to recount a dramatic, historical confrontation between tiny Cuba and Washington and its ally apartheid South Africa. Gleijeses is the only foreign scholar to have gained access to the closed Cuban archives. He obtained thousands of pages of documents, and made them available to the Wilson Center Digital Archive, which has posted the invaluable collection online.

Gleijeses's research made possible a look behind the curtain at one of the most remarkable acts of internationalism of the century. "Internationalism – the duty to help others – was at the core of the Cuban revolution," Gleijeses writes. "For Castro's followers, and they were legion, this was not rhetoric... By 1975, approximately 1,000 Cuban aid workers had gone to a dozen African countries, South Yemen, and North Vietnam. In 1976-77, technical assistance was extended to Jamaica and

**By ensuring independence from the white supremacists, Angola was able to preserve its own revolution and maintain its role as a base for armed resistance groups fighting for liberation**

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## HELPING OTHERS

**As the South African troops advanced inside Angola, they made remarkably easy gains through scarcely defended villages that put up little – if any – resistance**

Guyana in the Western Hemisphere; to Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia in Africa; and to Laos in Asia. The CIA noted: “The Cuban technicians are primarily involved in rural development and educational and public health projects – areas in which Cuba has accumulated expertise and has experienced success at home.”

The fight against apartheid, for the liberation of people who suffered for centuries under colonialism and racial subjugation, was truly a David versus Goliath conflict. In addition to having a strong military itself and being armed with nuclear weapons, South Africa enjoyed the diplomatic support of the United States, the world’s largest superpower. In this context, Cuba’s intervention – a poor Caribbean island under relentless attack from an unrivaled hegemon against a racist juggernaut backed by the world’s leading imperial powers – is even more remarkable.

Explaining how the significance of Cuba’s role in Angola is “without precedent,” Gleijeses writes: “No other Third World country has projected its military power beyond its immediate neighborhood.” He notes that while the Soviet Union later sent aid and weapons, they never would have become involved unless Castro had taken the lead (which he did in spite of Russian opposition). “The engine was Cuba. It was the Cubans who pushed the Soviets to help Angola. It was they who stood guard in Angola for many long years, thousands of miles from home, to prevent the South Africans from overthrowing the MPLA government.”

### **White elitism has suffered an irreversible blow**

It had become clear that the left-wing People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the largest and most widely-supported of three warring groups, would prevail and gain control of the country. Afraid of having a government staunchly opposed to white domination so close to home, South Africa rushed to prevent self-determination for the Angolans. They were aided by US Sec-

retary of State Henry Kissinger, who believed the threat of black liberation in Africa, which would lead to local control of their own resources at the expense of foreign investors, could still be contained.

South Africa launched an invasion to topple the MPLA and install the guerilla Jonas Savimbi, leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), the smallest and least popular of the three groups, as a puppet dictator in Angola. Savimbi, a collaborator with the Portuguese dictatorship before Angolan independence, was known for his ruthlessness, terrorism, and hunger for power. An avowed anti-communist who had already aligned with South Africa, Savimbi would have made the perfect Angolan facade for apartheid control.

Agostinho Neto, the President of Angola, appealed to Cuba to send troops to ward off the apartheid army’s invasion. On November 4, Castro agreed. Several days later the first Cuban special forces troops boarded planes for Angola, where they would launch Operation Carlota.

As the South African troops advanced inside Angola, they made remarkably easy gains through scarcely defended villages that put up little – if any – resistance. But by November 9, Cuban Special Forces had arrived and went immediately to the battlefield. In the Battle of Quifangondo, the Angolans, supported by Cuban troops, made a decisive stand. They turned back the apartheid army and prevented their easy march to Luanda, where that same day the Portuguese military left Angola and Neto declared independence.

Throughout November, the Cubans prevented further South African advances towards the Angolan capital. On November 25, the Cuban troops laid a trap for the racist army in the Battle of Ebo. As the South African Defence Force (SADF) tried to cross a bridge, Cubans hidden along the banks of the river attacked. They destroyed seven armored cars and killed upwards of 90 enemy soldiers.

Cuban troops kept pouring into Angola throughout the rest of the year. As many as 4,000 had arrived by the end of 1975, roughly the same number as South African invaders. Unable to penetrate deeper into Angolan territory, and facing a barrage of negative criticism after international media discovered SADF troops, rather than mercenaries, were behind the invasion, the South African advance ended.

The impact of the Cuban victory resonated far beyond the battlefield. More important than the strategic gain, the victory of black Cuban and Angolan troops against the whites of the South African racist army shattered the illusion of white invincibility.

A South African military analyst described the meaning of his country's defeat: "The reality is that they have won, are winning, and are not White; and that psychological edge, that advantage the White man has enjoyed and exploited over 300 years of colonialism and empire, is slipping away. White elitism has suffered an irreversible blow in Angola, and Whites who have been there know it."

American officials claimed that the Soviets masterminded the operation with Cubans acting as their proxies. They couldn't fathom Castro acting on its own, rather than as Moscow's puppet. Such claims were repeated for years. American politicians went as far as falsely accusing Cuban troops of being mercenaries. But the record makes clear that these were in reality nothing more than slanderous lies.

The Americans were furious. "Kissinger's response to Castro's intervention was to throw mercenaries and weapons at the problem," Gleijeses writes. The Secretary of State was afraid that after their successful intervention in Angola, Cuba would put the rest of the racist regimes in the region in jeopardy.

"We can't say Rhodesia is not a danger because it is a bad case. If the Cubans are involved there, Namibia is next and after that South Africa, itself... If the Cubans move, I recommend we act vigorously. We can't per-

mit another move without suffering a great loss."

### **Support and solidarity with revolutionary movements**

Though South Africa had lost the battle, it by no means had surrendered the war. The apartheid regime still had designs on toppling the Angolan revolution and using it for its own ends. "It would be the centerpiece of the Constellation of Southern African States that they sought to create," writes Gleijeses. "The concept had first emerged under Prime Minister Vorster, but it was PW Botha who had given it 'a substance previously lacking.' The constellation, the generals hoped, would stretch beyond South Africa, its Bantustans, Lesotho, Malawi, Botswana, and Swaziland, to embrace Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Zaire, and a nominally independent Namibia. The black members of the constellation would be anticommunist, tolerant of apartheid, and eager to persecute the ANC (the African National Congress in South Africa) and SWAPO (the South West Africa People's Organization in Namibia)."

Cuba was aware of this. "In Southern Africa Angola today, more so than a year ago, is the bastion of the fight against the racists and the unquestionable revolutionary vanguard. Imperialism knows this," wrote Jorge Risquet, head of the Cuban Civilian Mission in Angola to President Neto. "Imperialism has to know what Angola does for Zimbabwe, what Angola does for Namibia, what Angola does for South Africa. Angola, bravely, lends real support to the movements of Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa. In concrete terms, nothing less than training in its territory 20,000 combatants from those three countries oppressed by the racists."

With the omnipresent threat against Angola, Cuba maintained a large contingent of around 30,000 troops at the behest of the MPLA to prevent another invasion. In a letter to the political bureau of the MPLA after Neto's death, Fidel wrote of the sacrifice Cuba was willing to make.

**More important than the strategic gain, the victory of black Cuban and Angolan troops against the whites of the South African racist army shattered the illusion of white invincibility**

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## HELPING OTHERS

**Despite the growing cost to Cuba of maintaining about 30,000 troops in Angola, Castro was confident that he would be able to wait out the inevitable downfall of the racist regime**

“Cuba cannot keep indefinitely carrying out a military cooperation effort of the magnitude it currently is in Angola, which limits our possibilities of support and solidarity with the revolutionary movement in other parts of the world and defense of our own country,” Fidel wrote. But he made clear that Cuba had no plans to abandon Angola: “I want to assure you, above all, that in these bitter and difficult circumstances, Cuba will be unconditionally at your side.”

Meanwhile, South African aggression was relentless. In 1983, the SADF bombed Angolan towns and pushed nearly 90 miles into Angolan territory. When the UN moved to condemn the invasion, the United States made sure the censure would not include sanctions, as they had done for more than a decade.

The apartheid regime used Washington’s diplomatic shield to keep its dreams of a Constellation of Southern African States alive. The International Court of Justice had decisively rejected the continued presence of South Africa in Namibia in a 1971 Advisory Opinion as “illegal.” The court declared that “South Africa is under obligation to withdraw its administration from Namibia immediately and thus put an end to its occupation of the territory.” Seven years later, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 435 reiterating its objective of “the withdrawal of South Africa’s illegal administration from Namibia and the transfer of power to the people of Namibia.”

Washington’s support enabled South Africa to ignore the ICJ and UN Security Council. The apartheid government, understanding that free elections would mean a SWAPO victory, refused to comply. “The South Africans took advantage of US goodwill to further their foreign policy aims,” Gleijeses writes.

In 1978, a South African massacre against a refugee camp in Cassinga killed more than 600 Namibians. The US opposed sanctions in the Security Council. President Carter took the excuses of the apartheid regime at face value: “They’ve claimed to have withdrawn and have not left any South African troops in

Angola. So we hope it’s just a transient strike in retaliation, and we hope it’s all over.” Even after Angolans foiled an attack by South African commandos against Gulf Oil pipelines inside Angola in 1985, which would have killed US citizens, the US government continued protecting their racist allies.

### **The whole world is against apartheid**

As international opinion turned, Castro sensed that apartheid in South Africa would not be able to last much longer. Despite the growing cost to Cuba of maintaining about 30,000 troops in Angola, Castro was confident that he would be able to wait out the inevitable downfall of the racist regime.

“Today they are totally on the defensive in the political arena, in the international arena, they have a very serious economic crisis,” Castro said in a conversation with Angolan President José Eduardo Dos Santos in 1985. “I can’t say how this is going to end, what the end result of it all will be; but in my opinion, South Africa won’t recover from this crisis.” Castro said that the situation facing South Africa did not occur by chance, but that it was a result of the collective action of the people in many parts of Southern Africa fighting for their independence. “All these factors, common struggles, common sacrifices, have contributed to create this crisis for apartheid, that wasn’t created in one day, it was created over many years,” Castro said. [10]

“I believe that apartheid – I sincerely believe it – is mortally wounded,” Castro said. [11]

Nevertheless, the apartheid government kept up its relentless fight for survival. Throughout the 1980s, Angola was subjected to various incursions and invasions by South Africa. At the same time, the Angolan Armed Forces (FAPLA) fought against former Portuguese collaborator Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA army, who was backed by South Africa and the United States. Savimbi sought to roll back MPLA rule and form an alliance with the apartheid regime.

The confrontations climaxed in the Battle

of Cuito Cuanavale in late 1987. After a forward offensive to attack UNITA stalled, Angolan and Cuban troops managed to defend the town. They then turned to the Southwest where they attempted to drive the SADF out of the country once and for all. As the Cubans asserted supremacy with their air force, they were able to take the lead on the battlefield.

With the military confrontation raging, talks started between Angola, Cuba and South Africa, with the United States moderating, in London in early 1988. In instructions to the Cuban delegation, Castro reflected on the South Africans and American mindset.

“The fact they have accepted this meeting in London at such a high level shows that they are looking for a way out because they have seen our advance and are saying, ‘How is it that Cuba has converted itself into the liquidator of Apartheid and the liberator of Africa?’ That’s what is worrying the Americans, they’re going to say: ‘They’re going to defeat South Africa!’” Castro said.

Castro also told his delegation that the goal was not to pursue a war or military victory, but to achieve negotiations over SADF from Angola and implementation of Resolution 435, which would grant independence to Namibia. “They should know that we are not playing games, that our position is serious and that our objective is peace,” he said.

The Cuban Commander-in-Chief’s instructions to his negotiating team show that he fully understood that Cuba stood firmly on the right side of history.

“All of Africa is in favor, all of the non-aligned movement, all the United Nations, the whole world is against Apartheid,” Castro said. “This is the most beautiful cause.”

The negotiations would continue throughout the year and lead to the New York agreements in December 1988, which Gleijeses says “led to the independence of Namibia and the withdrawal of the Cuban troops from Angola.”

This was the beginning of the end of apartheid.

“By the time Namibia became independent, in March 1990, apartheid was in its death throes,” Gleijeses writes. “A month earlier, Frederick de Klerk, who had replaced the ailing PW Botha as South Africa’s president, legalized the ANC and the South African Communist Party, and he freed Nelson Mandela. The apartheid government engaged in protracted and difficult negotiations that led in April 1994 to the first elections in the country’s history based on universal franchise.”

### **The Contribution of the Cuban internationalists**

No one was more grateful for Cuba’s role in the defeat of apartheid and the liberation of blacks in Africa than Nelson Mandela. In July 1991, during a visit to Cuba to mark the 38th anniversary of the Cuban revolution, Mandela spoke of his gratitude for the Cuban role in Southern Africa.

“The Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the people of Africa. The Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African independence, freedom and justice, unparalleled for its principled and selfless character,” Mandela said. “We in Africa are used to being victims of countries wanting to carve up our territory or subvert our sovereignty. It is unparalleled in African history to have another people rise to the defence of one of us.”

Many years later, after the passing of Nelson Mandela, Castro would wonder why after so many years the enablers of apartheid still could not admit the truth.

“Why try to hide the fact that the apartheid regime, which made the people of Africa suffer so much and incensed the vast majority of all the nations in the world,” Castro wrote, “was the fruit of European colonialism and was converted into a nuclear power by the United States and Israel, which Cuba, a country who supported the Portuguese colonies in Africa that fought for their independence, condemned openly?”

Since the success of the Cuban revolu-

**Castro also told his delegation that the goal was not to pursue a war or military victory, but to achieve negotiations over SADF from Angola and implementation of Resolution 435, which would grant independence to Namibia**

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## HELPING OTHERS

**Glejjeses wrote that Obama must have noticed the reception of Cuban President Raúl Castro in South Africa, and implored him to reconsider the disconnect between the two countries**

tion of 1959, American policy has always been reflexive opposition to anything Cuba did. Shortly after Mandela's funeral, Glejjeses wrote an open letter to President Obama that described the actual course of events in Africa during the Cold War: "While Cubans were fighting for the liberation of the people of South Africa, successive American governments did everything they could to stop them."

Glejjeses wrote that Obama must have noticed the reception of Cuban President Raúl Castro in South Africa, and implored him to reconsider the disconnect between the two countries. "Perhaps, Mr. President, what you saw in South Africa may inspire you to bridge the chasm and understand that in the quarrel between Cuba and the United States the United States is not the victim," he wrote.

But Obama has not been able to learn this lesson. On December 17, when he announced a change in the US's Cuban policy, Obama claimed that the current policy "has been rooted in the best of intentions." This is a

gross misrepresentation that suppresses the policy of unrelenting economic war, which has caused unimaginable pain and suffering to millions of Cubans; a covert terrorist campaign against the island carried out first directly by the US government then later sanctioned and outsourced to reactionary terrorists provided safe haven in the United States; and collaboration with the apartheid regime to punish Cuba for helping fight for the liberation of black Africa.

American officials would, no doubt, prefer that Cuba's heroic role in defeating apartheid and the US's shameful role in enabling it be relegated to the ash heap of history. But the historical and documentary record speaks for itself, despite Washington's attempts to bury it. Like Castro, one has to wonder: why keep hiding the truth? **CT**

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*Matt Peppe writes about politics, US foreign policy and Latin America. This essay first appeared at his Just The Facts blog at <http://mattpeppe.blogspot.ca>*

"I was extremely delighted to be asked to make this film. It took me back to my roots in documentary film making. The solidarity of striking miners and the emergence of a new feminist movement 'Women Against Pit Closures' inspired a humour and camaraderie which is apparent still today." **Judi Alston Director**

The film *With Banners Held High* explores the resilience of Miners and Women Against Pit Closures through their sense of humour, camaraderie and community spirit in the 1984/85 Miners' Strike.

The ability to laugh and share funny moments or observations in times of adversity was important during the year-long strike.

Stories from the strike capture a legacy of contemporary history and offer a profound insight into the culture and heritage of the former coalfield communities.

Judi Alston, of One to One Development Trust, directed the film, which was commissioned for the *With Banners Held High* event held in Wakefield on Saturday 7 March 2015.

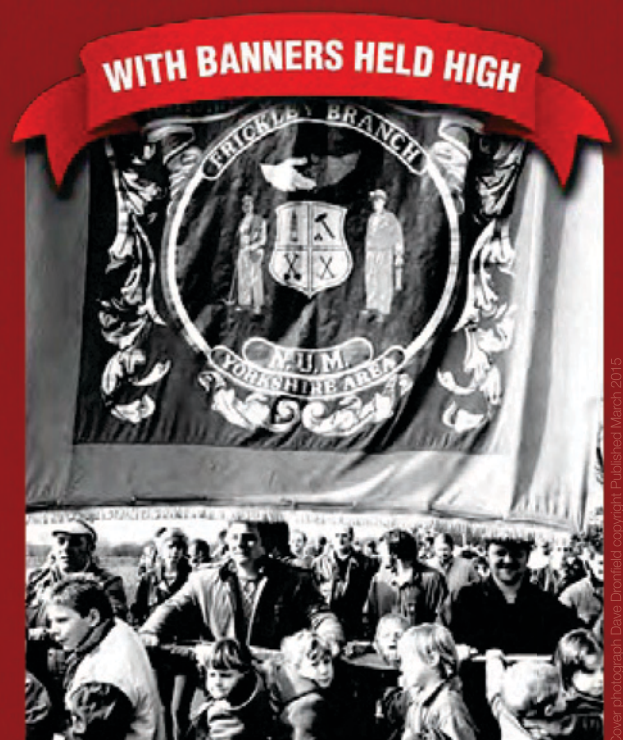
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Cover photograph: David Dornfield, copyright. Published March 2015



# City slickers

The Corporation of London undermines all attempts to curb the excesses of finance, writes **George Monbiot**

It's the dark heart of Britain, the place where democracy goes to die, immensely powerful, equally unaccountable. But I doubt that one in 10 British people has any idea of what the Corporation of the City of London is and how it works. This could be about to change. Alongside the Church of England, the Corporation is seeking to evict the protesters camped outside St Paul's cathedral. The protesters, in turn, have demanded that it submit to national oversight and control.

What is this thing? Ostensibly it's the equivalent of a local council, responsible for a small area of London known as the Square Mile. But, as its website boasts, "among local authorities the City of London is unique". You bet it is. There are 25 electoral wards in the Square Mile. In four of them, the 9,000 people who live within its boundaries are permitted to vote. In the remaining 21, the votes are controlled by corporations, mostly banks and other financial companies. The bigger the business, the bigger the vote: a company with 10 workers gets two votes, the biggest employers, 79. It's not the workers who decide how the votes are cast, but the bosses, who "appoint" the voters. Plutocracy, pure and simple.

There are four layers of elected representatives in the Corporation: common councilmen, aldermen, sheriffs and the Lord Mayor. To qualify for any of these offices, you must be

a freeman of the City of London. To become a freeman you must be approved by the aldermen. You're most likely to qualify if you belong to one of the City livery companies: medieval guilds such as the worshipful company of costermongers, cutpurses and safecrackers. To become a sheriff, you must be elected from among the aldermen by the Livery. How do you join a livery company? Don't even ask.

To become Lord Mayor you must first have served as an alderman and sheriff, and you "must command the support of, and have the endorsement of, the Court of Aldermen and the Livery". You should also be stinking rich, as the

Lord Mayor is expected to make a "contribution from his/her private resources towards the costs of the mayoral year." This is, in other words, an official old boys' network. Think of all that Tory huffing and puffing about democratic failings within the trade unions. Then think of their resounding silence about democracy within the City of London.

The current Lord Mayor, Michael Bear, came to prominence within the City as chief executive of the Spitalfields development group, which oversaw a controversial business venture in which the Corporation had a major stake, even though the project lies outside the boundaries of its authority. This illustrates another of the Corporation's unique features. It possesses a vast pool of cash, which it can spend as it

**Think of all that Tory huffing and puffing about democratic failings within the trade unions. Then think of their resounding silence about democracy within the City of London**



**Several governments have tried to democratise the City of London but all, threatened by its financial might, have failed**

wishes, without democratic oversight. As well as expanding its enormous property portfolio, it uses this money to lobby on behalf of the banks.

The Lord Mayor's role, the Corporation's website tells us, is to "open doors at the highest levels" for business, in the course of which he "expounds the values of liberalisation". Liberalisation is what bankers call deregulation: the process that caused the financial crash. The Corporation boasts that it "handle[s] issues in Parliament of specific interest to the City", such as banking reform and financial services regulation. It also conducts "extensive partnership work with think tanks ... vigorously promoting the views and needs of financial services." But this isn't the half of it.

As Nicholas Shaxson explains in his fascinating book "Treasure Islands", the Corporation exists outside many of the laws and democratic controls which govern the rest of the United Kingdom. The City of London is the only part of Britain over which parliament has no authority. In one respect at least the Corporation acts as the superior body: it imposes on the House of Commons a figure called the remembrancer: an official lobbyist who sits behind the Speaker's chair and ensures that, whatever our elected representatives might think, the City's rights and privileges are protected. The mayor of London's mandate stops at the boundaries of the Square Mile. There are, as if in a novel by China Miéville, two cities, one of which must unsee the other.

Several governments have tried to democratise the City of London but all, threatened by its financial might, have failed. As Clement Attlee lamented, "over and over again we have seen that there is in this country another power than that which has its seat at Westminster." The City has exploited this remarkable position to establish itself as a kind of offshore state, a secrecy jurisdiction which controls the network of tax havens housed in the UK's crown dependencies and overseas territories. This autonomous state within our borders is in a position to launder the ill-gotten cash of oligarchs, kleptocrats, gangsters and drug bar-

ons. As the French investigating magistrate Eva Joly remarked, it "has never transmitted even the smallest piece of usable evidence to a foreign magistrate". It deprives the United Kingdom and other nations of their rightful tax receipts.

It has also made the effective regulation of global finance almost impossible. Shaxson shows how the absence of proper regulation in London allowed American banks to evade the rules set by their own government. AIG's wild trading might have taken place in the US, but the unit responsible was regulated in the City. Lehman Brothers couldn't get legal approval for its off-balance sheet transactions in Wall Street, so it used a London law firm instead. No wonder priests are resigning over the plans to evict the campers. The Church of England is not just working with Mammon; it's colluding with Babylon.

If you've ever dithered over the question of whether the UK needs a written constitution, dither no longer. Imagine the clauses required to preserve the status of the Corporation. "The City of London will remain outside the authority of parliament. Domestic and foreign banks will be permitted to vote as if they were human beings, and their votes will outnumber those cast by real people. Its elected officials will be chosen from people deemed acceptable by a group of medieval guilds ...".

The Corporation's privileges could not withstand such public scrutiny. This, perhaps, is one of the reasons why a written constitution in the United Kingdom remains a distant dream. Its power also helps to explain why regulation of the banks is scarcely better than it was before the crash, why there are no effective curbs on executive pay and bonuses and why successive governments fail to act against the UK's dependent tax havens.

But now at last we begin to see it. It happens that the Lord Mayor's Show, in which the Corporation flaunts its ancient wealth and power, takes place on 12 November. If ever there were a pageant that cries out for peaceful protest and dissent, here it is. Expect fireworks – and not just those laid on by the Lord Mayor. **CT**

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**George Monbiot's latest book, "Feral," has recently been published in paperback.**

# Greed's next level

Think bankers are greedy and self-interested?  
You should meet fund managers, says **Michael Meacher**

The latest incomes data shows bankers still getting obscenely high remuneration and whopping big bonuses, yet they are being overtaken by another group within the finance sector. Fund managers have now overtaken the pay and bonuses of bankers, though they're keeping it very quiet. They say there's no need for customers (i.e. the investing public) to know about their pay because all the overall data about running a fund – its cost, performance, etc. – is already published. But this evades the role which fund managers should be playing, but are not playing, under free-markets anything-goes contemporary capitalism.

These executives who manage the enormous pension and insurance funds that make such a large part of Stock Exchange shareholdings are the same persons who both usually exercise a decisive vote at company AGMs, over contested merger and acquisition issues, and at determining the boss's pay in remuneration committees. Whereas all these major decisions should be taken independently at arm's length, or at least within a much wider and more representative forum, the fund managers co-exist within a closed circle around the top and thus have all the big decisions neatly sewn up – for which they are rewarded with the riches of Croesus.

In any accountable economic system the fund managers should be the guardians of good

corporate governance, both in terms of insisting on objectivity and independence for decisions made at the top of the business world and also demanding that pay and incentives are moderated to a degree that is socially acceptable. They do the reverse. By encouraging, or at least not fretting at, greed in the boardroom they indirectly get a kickback in their exorbitant fees.

Fund managers are at the epicentre of non-accountability in the City of London. They exercise no leverage against excessive pay because they refuse to make public their own out-of-control remuneration. Their boast of pay-for-performance is nullified by their insisting on rewarding themselves with the same proportion of assets even when in the good times these assets are rapidly swelling. Fees should be falling as investment houses get bigger, and the benefits of size should be passed on to individual investors, but they're not.

In the last 30 years the proportion of share on the Stock Exchange held by individual investors has nosedived till it is now a mere 10%. Their place has been taken either by big foreign interests (who now control half of all Stock Exchange holdings) or by the big UK institutional funds. With this degree of shareholder control vested in fund managers' own hands goes crude power. It is another example exposing how the checks and balances have been eroded away within an increasingly rotten capitalism. **CT**

**In the last 30 years the proportion of share on the Stock Exchange held by individual investors has nosedived till it is now a mere 10%**



# Europe's debts: lies and myths

Conn M. Hallinan tells why we shouldn't believe all that we read about those 'lazy' Greek workers

**There was corruption in Greece and in Ireland, but it wasn't the penny ante variety of tax evasion or profit skimming**

*"Debt, n. An ingenious substitute for the chain and whip of the slave driver" – Ambrose Bierce, Journalist & writer*

*"The history of an oppressed people is hidden in the lies and agreed myth of its onquerers" – Meridel Le Suer, Author & activist*

Myths are dangerous precisely because they rely more on cultural memory and prejudice than facts, and behind the current crisis between Greece and the European Union (EU) lays a fable that bears little relationship to why Athens and a number of other countries in the 28-member organization find themselves in deep distress.

The tale is a variation of Aesop's allegory of the industrious ant and the lazy, fun-loving grasshopper, with the "northern countries" – Germany, the Netherlands, Britain, Finland – playing the role of the ant, and Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland the part of the grasshopper.

The ants are sober and virtuous – led by the frugal Swanbian house frau, German Chancellor Andrea Merkel – the grasshoppers are spendthrift, corrupt layabouts who have spent themselves into trouble and now must pay the piper.

The problem is that this myth bears al-

most no relationship to the actual roots of the crisis or what the solutions might be. And it perpetuates a fable that the debt is the fault of individual countries rather than a serious crisis at the very heart of the EU.

First, a little myth busting.

The European debt crisis goes back to the end of the roaring '90s when the banks were flush with money and looking for ways to raise their bottom lines. One major strategy was to pour money into real estate, which had the effect of creating bubbles, particularly in Spain and Ireland. In the latter, from 1999 to 2007, bank loans for Irish real estate jumped 1,730 percent, from 5 million Euros to 96.2 million Euros, or more than half the

GDP of the Republic. Housing prices increased 500 percent. "It was not the public sector but the private sector that went haywire in Ireland," concludes *Financial Times* analyst Martin Wolf.

Spain, which had a budget surplus and a low debt ratio, went through much the same process, and saw an identical jump in housing prices: 500 percent.

In both countries there was corruption, but it wasn't the penny ante variety of tax evasion or profit skimming. Politicians – eager for a piece of the action and generous "donations" – waved zoning rules, environmental regulations, and cut sweetheart tax



deals. Hundreds of thousands of housing projects went up, many of them never to be occupied.

Then the American banking crisis hit in 2008, and the bottom fell out. Suddenly, the ants were in trouble. But not really, because the ants have a trick: they gamble and the grasshoppers pay.

The “trick,” as Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Laureate in economics, points out, is that Europe (and the US) have moved those debts “from the private sector to the public sector – a well-established pattern over the past half-century.”

Fintan O’Toole, author of “Ship of Fools: How Stupidity and Corruption sank the Celtic Tiger,” estimates that to save the Irish-Anglo Bank Irish taxpayers shelled out \$30 billion Euros, a sum that was the equivalent of the Island’s entire tax revenues for 2009. The European Central Bank – which, along with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Commission, make up the “Troika” – strong-armed Ireland into adopting austerity measures that tanked the country’s economy, doubled the unemployment rate, increased consumer taxes, and forced many of the country’s young people to emigrate. Almost half of Ireland’s income tax now goes just to service the interest on its debts.

Poor Portugal. It had a solid economy and a low debt ratio, but currency speculators drove up interest rates on borrowing beyond what the government could afford, and the European Central Bank refused to intervene. The result was that Lisbon was forced to swallow a “bailout” that was laden with austerity measures that, in turn, torpedoed its economy.

In Greece’s case corruption was at the heart of the crisis, but not the popular version about armies of public workers and tax dodging oligarchs. There are rich tax dodgers aplenty in Greece, but Germany, Sweden, and many other European countries spend more of their GDP on services than does Athens. Greece spends 44.6 percent of its GDP

on its citizens, less than the EU average and below Germany’s 46 percent and Sweden’s 55 percent.

And as for lazy: Greeks work 600 hours more a year than Germans.

According to economist Mark Blyth, author of “Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea,” Greek public spending through the 2000s is “really on track and quite average in comparison to everyone else’s,” and the so-called flood of “public sector jobs” consisted of “14,000 over two years.” All the talk of the profligate Greek government is “a lot of nonsense” and just “political cover for the fact that what we’ve done is bail out some of the richest people in European society and put the cost on some of the poorest.”

There was a “score” in Greece. However, it had nothing to do with free spending, but was a scheme dreamed up by Greek politicians, bankers, and the American finance corporation, Goldman Sachs.

Greece’s application for EU membership in 1999 was rejected because its budget deficit in relation to its GDP was over 3 percent, the cutoff line for joining. That’s where Goldman Sachs came in. For a fee rumored to be \$200 million (some say three times that), the multinational giant essentially cooked the books to make Greece look like it cleared the bar. Then Greece’s political and economic establishment hid the scheme until the 2008 crash shattered the illusion.

It was the busy little ants, not the fiddling grasshoppers that brought on the European debt crisis.

American, German, French, and Dutch banks had to know that they were creating an unstable real estate bubble – a 500 percent jump in housing prices is the very definition of the beast – but kept right on lending because they were making out like bandits.

When the bubble popped and Europe went into recession, Greece was forced to apply for a “bailout” from the Troika. In exchange for 172 billion Euros, the Greek government instituted an austerity program that saw economic activity decline 25 percent,

**Portugal had a solid economy and a low debt ratio, but currency speculators drove up interest rates on borrowing beyond what the government could afford, and the European Central Bank refused to intervene**

**The main culprit in the debt crisis was a fall in tax revenues resulting from massive tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy**

unemployment rise to 27 percent (and over 50 percent for young Greeks). The cutbacks slashed pensions, wages, and social services, and drove 44 percent of the population into poverty.

Virtually all of the “bailout” – 89 percent – went to the banks that gambled in the 1999 to 2007 real estate casino. What the Greek – as well as Spaniards, Portuguese, and Irish – got was misery.

There are other EU countries, including Italy and France that, while not in quite the same boat as the “distressed four,” are under pressure to bring down their debt ratios.

But what are those debts? This past summer, the Committee for a Citizen’s Audit on the Public Debt issued a report on France, a country that is currently instituting austerity measures to bring its debt in line with the magic “3 percent” ratio. What the Committee concluded was that 60 percent of the French public debt was “illegitimate.”

More than 18 other countries, including Brazil, Portugal, Ecuador, Greece and Spain, have done the same “audit,” and, in each case, found that increased public spending was not the cause of deficits. From 1978 to 2012, French public spending actually declined by two GDP points.

The main culprit in the debt crisis was a fall in tax revenues resulting from massive tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy. According to Razmig Keucheyan, sociologist and author of “The Left Hemisphere,” this “neoliberal mantra” that was supposed to increase investment and employment did the opposite.

According to the study, the second major reason was the increase in interest rates that benefits creditors and speculators. Had interest rates remained stable during the 1990s, debt would be significantly lower.

Keucheyan argues that tax reductions and interest rates are “political decisions” and that “public deficits do not grow naturally out of the normal course of social life. They are deliberately inflicted on society by the dominant classes to legitimize austerity poli-

cies that will allow the transfer of value from the working classes to the wealthy ones.”

The International Labor Organization recently found that wages have, indeed, stalled or declined throughout the EU over the past decade.

The audit movement calls for repudiating debt that results from “the service of private interests” as opposed to the “wellbeing of the people.” In 2008, Ecuador canceled 70 percent of its debt as “illegitimate.”

How this plays out in the current Greek-EU crisis is not clear. The Syriza government is not asking to cancel the debt – though it would certainly like a write down – but only that it be given time to let the economy grow. The recent four-month deal may give Athens some breathing room, but the ants are still demanding austerity and tensions are high.

What seems clear is that Germany and its allies are trying to force Syriza into accepting conditions that will undermine its support in Greece and demoralize anti-austerity movements in other countries.

The US can play a role in this – President Obama has already called for easing the austerity policies – through its domination of the IMF. By itself Washington can outvote Germany, the Netherlands, and Finland, and could exert pressure on the two other Troika members to compromise. Will it? Hard to say, but the Americans are certainly a lot more nervous about Greece exiting the Eurozone than Germany.

But the key to a solution is exploding the myth. That has already begun. Over the past few weeks, demonstrators in Greece, Spain, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Great Britain, Belgium and Austria have poured into the streets to support Syriza’s stand against the Troika. “The Left has to work together having as its common goal the elimination of predatory capitalism” says Maite Mola, vice-president of the European Left organization and member of the Portuguese parliament. “And the solution should be European.”

In the end, the grasshoppers might just turn Aesop’s fable upside down. **CT**

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**Conn M. Hallinan**  
is a columnist for *Foreign Policy In Focus*, “*A Think Tank Without Walls*,” and an independent journalist. He is a winner of a Project Censored “Real News Award,” and lives in Berkeley, California

# The greatest heist in history

The vast majority of Americans have been the victims of one of the biggest and longest-lasting robberies in history. **Danny Katch** uncovers the culprits

**T**he tenth richest person in America stood before a private audience in the most expensive town in America and declared that he should one day write a book about . . . why the poor are poor in America.

Michael Bloomberg was trying to explain to the exclusive crowd at the Aspen Institute that he had the remedy for why “it’s always the poor people who get screwed.” But his words rang truer than he intended. During the billionaire’s three terms as mayor of New York City, Bloomberg pretty much wrote the book already about how to keep people in poverty.

The Bloomberg era saw the wealth of New York’s elites increase astronomically, while the majority of the city’s population lived near or below poverty. This is a city whose government posts public service posters about filing for the earned income tax credit, which feature a smiling family beaming that once they get their tax refund, “We’re making rent this month.”

The *New York Daily News* reported about homeless people sleeping outdoors during one of the coldest Februaries in city history—within yards of some of the most expensive luxury buildings in the world. The article focused on Deuce, a 50 year old who had found

a safe spot in front of a construction site, across the street from a luxury tower where the penthouse apartment just sold for a record \$100 million.

The outcome of the article is just as much a sign of the times as the story itself: The next day, the construction company ordered its workers to kick Deuce off the property.

Back in the ski resort town of Aspen, Colorado, Bloomberg rattled off more advice he would give to ordinary New Yorkers: They should drop their college ambitions and focus on becoming waiters in some of the city’s many high-end restaurants.

Then he told his audience of fellow wealthy white people that young Blacks and Latinos shouldn’t be allowed to own guns: “95 percent of your murders, and murderers, and murder victims fit one . . . description. They are male, minorities, 15 to 25 . . . The kids think they’re getting killed anyways because all of their friends are getting killed. So they just don’t have any long-term focus or anything. It’s a joke to have a gun, it’s a joke to pull the trigger.”

The former mayor didn’t mention to the Aspen crowd that young Black men in New York City suffer from a 33.5 percent unemployment rate, a catastrophic situation that generates poverty, hopelessness and, yes, vi-

**The former mayor didn’t mention to the Aspen crowd that young Black men in New York City suffer from a 33.5 percent unemployment rate**



During his twelve years as mayor—while most of the city saw its income stagnate or decline—Bloomberg himself quintupled his wealth from \$5 billion to more than \$25 billion. Two years later, he's up to \$35 billion



**We're making rent this month.**

What would you do with *your* refund?

**You may be eligible for up to \$10,000 from tax credits, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).**

**Call 311 or go to [nyc.gov/taxprep](http://nyc.gov/taxprep) for ways to file your taxes for FREE.**



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Julie Marin  
Commissioner



Text "Refund" to 97779\* and join #GotMyRefund conversations on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.  
\*Message and data rates may apply. Check with your service provider.

**Rising inequality: New York is a city whose government posts public service posters about filing for the earned income tax credit, which feature a smiling family beaming that once they get their tax refund, "We're making rent this month." Meanwhile, the rich just get richer and richer.**

olence. Perhaps Bloomberg didn't want facts like these to get in the way of showing off his deep and complex understanding of what life is like on the streets.

There's something else that Michael Bloomberg didn't mention during his Aspen Institute lecture on poverty. During his twelve years as mayor – while most of the city saw its income stagnate or decline—Bloomberg himself quintupled his wealth from \$5 billion to more than \$25 billion. Two years later, he's up to \$35 billion.

We'll see if Bloomberg manages to explain how that happened when he

gets around to writing that book.

Rising inequality isn't just a New York story. The richest 400 Americans now have more wealth the entire bottom 60 percent of the population. In other words, each of these billionaires owns more than almost 500,000 people do collectively. Put another way, each member of the billionaire elite are richer than the all the people who live in Atlanta put together.

Annual income is radically skewed, too. Back in 1980, the country's richest 1 percent took 10 percent of total income. Thirty-five



years later, their share of income had more than doubled to 22 percent. If income distribution had remained where it was in 1980—when the US was already one of the most unequal countries among wealthy nations—the average yearly salary in the US today would be \$10,000 more.

And these statistics about income don't even capture the gap in wealth, which comes mostly from investments, rather than wages, and is therefore even more skewed toward the rich. Almost 25 percent of all the wealth in the country is owned not by the 1 Percent but by the 0.1 Percent—about 300,000 people.

If only one-one-thousandth of the population owns almost one-quarter of the country, how much money does that leave for everyone else? The obvious answer is not so much. Over a third of all adults in the US have a debt in collections reported in their credit files, according to a study by the Urban Institute—with an average of \$5,200 being owed. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that there are 369,000 people employed in the debt collection industry.

It's fitting that there's a rough symmetry between the number of people in the 0.1 Percent who own a quarter of the wealth, and the number of people employed to collect debts from the roughly 90 million people who own less than none of it.

So whether measured by income, wealth or debt, inequality in the US is at its highest levels since 1929. That was the final year of the Roaring Twenties, which itself was the final decade of the half-century when modern capitalism was born—a time when a handful of men wrung fortunes out of workers who labored 14 hour factory shifts and permanently indebted farmers.

Today, we call the late 1800s and early 1900s the Gilded Age, after the Mark Twain novel about greed and corruption. Industrialists like John Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie were called “captains of industry” by their admirers—and “robber barons” by their critics. They established charities and

built libraries so that future generations like ours would think of them as generous donors, rather than brutal employers who ordered striking workers to be shot dead in places like Homestead, Pennsylvania and Ludlow, Colorado.

The gap between rich and poor is returning to the levels of the Gilded Age. But we're told that things today are different from those bad old days. Rising inequality is portrayed in the media not as a product of class warfare, but as a neutral process that just happens to have resulted from vague impersonal forces like “globalization” and “technology.”

Often, the 99 Percent itself is blamed for not having the supposedly numerous well-paying jobs out there for workers with the proper skills and education—even though more Americans than ever before are going to college, and going deeper into debt to do it.

The fact of the matter is this: The rising gap between the rich and the rest of us isn't being caused by mysterious new forces, but by a very old-fashioned one: theft.

The biggest heist in history, committed by the ruling class, has three distinct parts, each employing its own criminal technique. There's the in-your-face mugging—forcing workers' wages down in order to increase profits. There's bribery—showing Congress with cash in return for tax cuts for the super-rich. And there's the long con—complicated financial schemes hatched by Wall Street to suck money away from ordinary people's savings.

The most significant of these crimes is the attack on wages. The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) reports that in 2014, wages for most workers stagnated or fell. That finding didn't raise many eyebrows because, as the EPI noted, this has been the case for the past 35 years. During this same period of time, the rate of productivity—that is how much wealth that workers are producing for their bosses per hour worked—rose by 64 percent.

A *Wall Street Journal* article last March

**The rising gap between the rich and the rest of us isn't being caused by mysterious new forces, but by a very old-fashioned one: theft**

**The official tax rate on business profits is 39 percent, but corporations have plenty of money to hire accountants to find loopholes and to bribe/lobby elected officials to grant them exemptions.**

treated low wages as a mysterious phenomenon that bosses are helpless to prevent. “Stagnant incomes have restrained the American consumer for years,” the Journal reported, “creating a vicious circle that has left businesses waiting for stronger spending before they rev up hiring and investment.”

In reality, the company that hired more workers than any other has a business model entirely based on stagnant wages.

Walmart, the largest private employer in the country, earned showers of appreciation from the media when it announced recently it would raise pay for its sales associates to a minimum of \$9 an hour in April, and \$10 an hour in a year’s time. If the press were a little less infatuated with the corporate giant, it might have pointed out that the current average wage of \$8.81 an hour, according to the union-backed coalition Making Change at Walmart, “translates to annual pay of \$15,576, based upon Walmart’s full-time status of 34 hours per week. This is significantly below the 2010 federal poverty level of \$22,050 for a family of four.” Even with the increased minimum pay, associates will fall below the poverty line.

Walmart is vicious alright, but there’s nothing circular about the flow of wealth. It goes in a straight line from the workers who create it, up to CEO Mike Duke, who makes \$18 million a year, and the six richest members of the Walton family, whose combined net worth is \$144 billion.

The second part of the heist is rich people paying lower taxes, both on their personal income – where the rate paid by the richest households on income over about \$450,000 for couples has declined from 70 percent in the late 1970s to less than 40 percent today – and on their investments, which is known as the capital gains tax.

Then there are the taxes corporations pay – or rather don’t pay. The official tax rate on business profits is 39 percent, but corporations have plenty of money to hire accountants to find loopholes and to bribe/lobby elected officials to grant them exemptions.

Thus, economists have another statistic to measure what corporations actually pay. It’s called the effective corporate tax rate, and it stands today at 12.6 percent, which is less than the official income tax rate paid by an unmarried Walmart sales associate.

In one stunning example of how “effective” businesses are at not paying taxes, that luxury building in Manhattan with the \$100 million penthouse got a \$35 million tax break – under a program meant to encourage the construction of affordable housing!

Finally, there’s the astronomical growth of the financial industry and the various Wall Street schemes to pocket money under the guise of investing it. The New York Times recently reported that financial advisers are convincing pension funds to put more of their workers’ retirement money into private investment plans known as hedge funds, even though these funds make less of a return than traditional stocks.

Hedge funds are an outrageous con: By pocketing 20 percent of all profits – plus 2 percent of all money invested, if the gamble loses – hedge funds have put their owners, not their clients, on the fast track to becoming billionaires. And to top it off, this “success” for the few is put forward as evidence for why ordinary people should trust the hedge funds with even more of their life savings.

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There is a growing awareness about rising inequality, thanks to a series of protest movements beginning with Occupy Wall Street in 2011, which got people talking about the divide between the 1 Percent and the 99 Percent.

Since then, days of strikes and demonstrations by workers at Walmart, McDonalds and other low-wage corporations have brought the Gilded Age-style greed of some of the country’s largest corporations into sharper focus. Plus, the rebellion of Black people in Ferguson and the ensuing Black Lives Matter movement has raised the issue not only of police violence, but the overall conditions of

racial inequality, 50 years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act.

In response, members of the political establishment who have been in power for years are suddenly noticing the gap between rich and poor. Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen declared last October that she was “greatly concerned about growing inequality.”

Democrats hope to use inequality as a campaign issue next year, but Republicans are taking up the call, too. A new political action committee launched by presidential hopeful Jeb Bush declares that “While the last eight years have been pretty good ones for top earners, they’ve been a lost decade for the rest of America.”

Even Mitt Romney, who famously described half of the country that wasn’t going to vote for him in 2012 as “takers,” is getting in on the populist action. “Under President Obama,” he said, “the rich have gotten richer, income inequality has gotten worse, and there are more people in poverty than ever before.”

Michael Bloomberg, however, is an example of a politician who didn’t adjust his rhetoric. For most of his mayoralty, he was admired as someone who was extremely rich and therefore extremely smart. By the end, he was dismissed as an out-of-touch billionaire, and New Yorkers replaced him with Bill de Blasio and his “tale of two cities” campaign against the Bloomberg legacy.

Over a year into the de Blasio era, New York is still a tale of two cities. The new may-

or has passed a few small reforms and has a great relationship with some union leaders and community organizations, but he hasn’t scratched the surface of redressing the profound theft committed by city elites over the past 40 years.

There’s a lesson there for the rest of the country. The remedy for inequality is not empathy, but wealth redistribution, which is not a matter of kindness, but of rectifying a crime.

It’s not a coincidence that the last time inequality was this high was 1929. That was the eve of the Great Depression, a period that saw tremendous suffering, but also a wave of workers’ struggles – often led by socialists – that won unions for millions of workers and scared the federal government into creating programs such as unemployment insurance and Social Security.

Those victories certainly didn’t end the inequality and injustice of capitalism, but they reduced them for half a century. We’re going to need those levels of strikes and protests again if we want our generation to write its own story – and take it back from the hands of Michael Bloomberg and his fellow billionaires.

**CT**

.....  
*Danny Katch is a Queens-based activist, journalist, and comedian. The author of “America’s Got Democracy! The Making of the World’s Longest Running Reality Show.” he is a columnist for Socialist Worker - <http://socialistworker.org> - where this was first published.*

**Michael Bloomberg, however, is an example of a politician who didn’t adjust his rhetoric. For most of his mayoralty, he was admired as someone who was extremely rich and therefore extremely smart**

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# Messed up by money

Paul Buchheit shares some financial facts the mainstream media ignores

**Recent data has shown that the richest 0.1% (115,000 households) have each increased their wealth by an astonishing \$10 million per year**

There's something perversely wrong with a society that creates \$30 trillion in new wealth while putting six million more children on food stamps.

The mainstream media rarely publishes facts like this. The super-rich keep building up their own numbers, as quietly as possible. And our leading members of Congress have little need for numbers, except for budget cuts and the strings of zeros at the end of their campaign contributions.

But numbers have the power to reveal the dramatic fall of the middle class over the past 35 years.

**1.138,000 kids were homeless while 115,000 households were each making \$10 million per year**

Recent data has shown that the richest 0.1% (115,000 households) have each increased their wealth by an astonishing \$10 million per year. As they counted their money on a frigid night in January, 138,000 children, according to the US Department of Housing, were without a place to call home.

**2. The average US household pays \$400 to feed and clothe Walmart, McDonalds, and other low-wage workers**

The Economic Policy Institute reports that

\$45 billion per year in federal, state, and other safety net support is paid to workers earning less than \$10.10 an hour. Thus the average US household is paying about \$400 to employees in low-wage industries such as food service, retail, and personal care.

Walmart's well-advertised \$1 raise will cost the company about \$1 billion a year. Its profits last year were about \$25 billion.

The sordid tale gets even worse, as told by a PBS report: Walmart has spent about \$6.5 billion per year on stock buybacks to enrich investors, approximately the same total annual amount billed to taxpayers for food stamps, Medicaid, housing, and other safety net programs for the company's underpaid employees.

**3. As \$30 trillion in new wealth was being created, the number of kids on food stamps increased 70%**

Before the recession, 12 out of every 100 American children got food stamps. After the recession, 20 out of every 100 American children got food stamps.

That's nearly a 70 percent increase, from 9.5 million kids in 2007 to 16 million kids in 2014, at the same time that US wealth was growing by over \$30 trillion. Even with that incomprehensible increase in wealth



our nation was not able to ensure food security for millions of its most vulnerable citizens.

#### 4. Despite the decline in food security, the Food Stamp Program was cut by \$8.6 billion and the money paid to corporate agriculture

As more and more children go hungry, the largest agricultural firms continue to take taxpayer money to supplement their billions in profits. The 2014 farm bill cut \$8.6 billion (over the next ten years) from the food stamp program, of which nearly half of all participants are children. Meanwhile, \$14 billion is annually paid out to the largest 10 percent of farm operators.

#### Beaten Up, Broken Down

The mainstream media highlights the resurgent economy, the booming stock mar-

ket, and the drop in unemployment. But the stock market has enriched only about ten percent of America, handing them millions of dollars since the recession, while the newly available jobs are well below the skill levels of college-trained adults and often without health care and retirement benefits. Too many once-prosperous Americans are beaten up and broken down, waiting in vain for our elected leaders to stop the redistribution of our national wealth. **CT**

*Paul Buchheit teaches economic inequality at DePaul University. He is the founder and developer of the Web sites UsAgainstGreed.org, PayUpNow.org and RappingHistory.org, and the editor and main author of "American Wars: Illusions and Realities" (Clarity Press). He can be reached at paul@UsAgainstGreed.org.*

## BENDIB'S WORLD

Khalil Bendib



# Conspiracy of silence

David Cromwell on the bank, the newspaper, and the defrauded British public

**According to whistleblower Nicholas Wilson, HSBC was 'involved in a fraudulent scheme to illegally overcharge British shoppers in arrears for debt on store cards at leading British high-street retailers'**

The corporate media have swiftly moved on from Peter Osborne's resignation as chief political commentator at the *Telegraph* and his revelations that the paper had committed 'a form of fraud' on its readers over its coverage of HSBC tax evasion.

But investigative journalist Nafeez Ahmed has delved deeper into the latest bank scandal, reporting the testimony of a whistleblower that reveals a 'conspiracy of silence' encompassing the media, regulators and law-enforcement agencies. Not least, Ahmed's work exposes the vanity of the *Guardian's* boast to be the world's 'leading liberal voice'.

In February, the corporate media, with one notable exception, devoted extensive coverage to the news that the Swiss banking arm of HSBC had been engaged in massive fraudulent tax evasion. The exception was the *Telegraph* which, as Osborne revealed, was desperate to retain advertising income from HSBC.

But now Ahmed reports another 'far worse case of HSBC fraud totalling an estimated £1 billion, closer to home'. Moreover, it has gone virtually unnoticed by the corporate media, for all the usual reasons.

According to whistleblower Nicholas Wilson, HSBC was 'involved in a fraudu-

lent scheme to illegally overcharge British shoppers in arrears for debt on store cards at leading British high-street retailers, including B&Q, Dixons, Currys, PC World and John Lewis. Up to 600,000 Britons were defrauded.

Wilson uncovered the crimes while he was head of debt recovery for Weightmans, a firm of solicitors acting on behalf of John Lewis. But when he blew the whistle, his employer sacked him. He has spent 12 years trying to expose this HSBC fraud and to help obtain justice for the victims. The battle has 'ruined his life', he said during a brief appearance on the BBC's *The Big Questions*, the only 'mainstream' coverage to date.

Ahmed writes that the 'most disturbing' aspect of 'HSBC's fraud against British consumers' is that it 'has been systematically ignored by the entire British press'.

He adds:

'In some cases, purportedly brave investigative journalism outfits have spent months investigating the story, preparing multiple drafts, before inexplicably spiking publication without reason.'

Examples include BBC *Panorama*, BBC *Newsnight*, BBC *Moneybox*, BBC *Radio 5 Live*, the *Guardian*, *Private Eye* and the *Sunday Times*.



The Sunday Times is the most recent example. A couple of weeks ago, the paper had a big exposé on the HSBC consumer credit fraud ready to go. But it was ‘inexplicably dropped’ at the last minute. Ahmed writes:

‘HSBC happens to be the main sponsor of a series of Sunday Times league tables published for FastTrack 100 Ltd., a “networking events company.” The bank is the “title sponsor” of The Sunday Times HSBC Top Track 100, has been “title sponsor of The Sunday Times HSBC International Track 200 for all 6 years” and was previously “title sponsor of The Sunday Times Top Track 250 for 7 years.”’

Ahmed reports that the *Sunday Times* journalist preparing the spiked story did not respond to a query asking for an explanation.

### **The world’s ‘leading liberal voice’ ... loses its voice**

But surely the *Guardian* would go where other papers fear to tread? After all, says Ahmed, the paper:

‘loudly and triumphantly congratulated itself for reporting on the HSBC Swiss bank scandal despite the bank putting its advertising relationship with the newspaper “on pause.” Yet the newspaper has refused to cover Wilson’s story exposing HSBC fraud in Britain. Why?’

Perhaps there is no definitive answer to that question. But as Ahmed points out, the *Guardian* just ‘happens to be the biggest recipient of HSBC advertising revenue: bigger even than the *Telegraph*’, which is ‘something you won’t read in the *Guardian*’. The *Guardian*’s ‘partnership’ with HSBC even helped fund the paper’s crucial move into the US market, according to the Guardian Media Group’s financial report last year.

However, the *Guardian*’s links with HSBC go beyond advertising and extend to the very corporate structure of the newspaper. As Media Lens noted when we wrote about Nafeez Ahmed’s sacking from the *Guardian* last December, the paper’s journalistic free-

dom is supposedly secured under the auspices of Scott Trust Limited, the company that replaced the much-vaunted Scott Trust in 2008. We added:

‘The paper, therefore, might not at first sight appear to be a corporate institution. But the paper is owned by the Guardian Media Group which is run by a high-powered Board comprising elite, well-connected people from the worlds of banking, insurance, advertising... and other sectors of big business, finance and industry.’

Ahmed has done further extensive digging, revealing, in particular, the *Guardian*’s specific corporate ties with HSBC, past and present. For instance, the chair of the Scott Trust Ltd board is Dame Liz Forgan. She has links with St Giles Trust and the British Museum, two institutions that are ‘sponsored’ by HSBC.

Consider, too, Anthony Salz who sits alongside Forgan on Scott Trust Ltd. He is a senior investment banker and executive vice chairman of Rothschild, and a director at NM Rothschild and Sons. Salz was previously a corporate lawyer with Freshfields, a member of the ‘Magic Circle’ of elite British law firms. HSBC is one of Freshfield’s most prominent long-term clients.

Philip Tranter is another board member of Scott Trust Ltd. He is a former partner and head of corporate law at Boyes Turner. HSBC is one of their clients.

As well as past and present relationships with HSBC, there are also wider connections between Scott Trust Ltd board members and elite corporate and financial circles. For example, Jonathan Scott is chairman of Ambac Assurance UK, and a former director at KPMG Corporate Finance. Ambac was ‘at the heart of the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis, and was implicated in fraud to save its skin as the crisis kicked off’.

Andrew Miller, another board member, was chief financial officer of *Autotrader* publisher, Trader Media Group. Until early last year, TMG was jointly owned by the *Guardian* Media Group and the giant private eq-

**As well as past and present relationships with HSBC, there are also wider connections between Scott Trust Ltd board members and elite corporate and financial circles**

**The *Guardian* newspaper is deeply embedded in elite networks of corporate and financial muscle**

uity firm, Apax Partners. One early director of an Apax Fund, David Staples, is now a director of HSBC Private Bank Ltd. When the Guardian Media Group sold its 50.1% stake in TMG, one of the firms that provided advice for the sale was Anthony Salz's former firm, Freshfields. Freshfields also advised HSBC over a government inquiry into competition in the banking sector last year.

And so it goes on... and on. Far from being some kind of benign charitable operation, the *Guardian* newspaper is deeply embedded in elite networks of corporate and financial muscle.

Ahmed notes the consequences of all this for *Guardian* journalism. The company board members running the newspaper:

'must juggle the task of operating the *Guardian* "as a profit-seeking enterprise," while securing its "financial and editorial independence" – goals that as the HSBC

case illustrates, are ultimately mutually incompatible.'

He summarises Nicholas Wilson's revelations on HSBC fraud in Britain as 'the worst and largest single case of banking fraud to have ever emerged in this country. They make the Swiss leaks case look like peanuts.'

And yet the fraud has been entirely ignored by the 'free press'. Our searches of the Lexis newspaper database yield not a single article. In particular, there has been no corporate media response to Ahmed's careful investigative journalism since his article was published on March 2. 'Even' the *Guardian*, the supposed 'flagship' of liberal journalism, has looked away. **CT**

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*David Cromwell is co-editor of Medialens, the British media watchdog. The website is <http://medialens.org>*

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## How the children of the 1% sleep at night



America's high-end interior designers are certainly doing their part to pave the way for a new aristocracy of wealth. They've made "princess décor" the nation's hottest new design trend for deep-pocket parents. This bedroom for a Northern Virginia two-year-old, the *Wall Street Journal* reports, came with a \$200,000 price-tag. Princess beds from PoshTots, a top source for luxury children's furnishings, start at \$35,000.

Sam Pizzigati



# You know the minimum wage is too low when . . .

Bill Quigley has the details that you need to know

**One.** Seven Nobel Laureates in Economics endorse the higher minimum wage to \$10.10 by 2016, saying it does not lead to lower fewer jobs.

**Two.** Job losses from raising the minimum wage are negligible. Minimum wage has already been raised 23 times. Every time it was raised it was opposed by some few who said “it is going to lose jobs and wreck the economy” which is factually untrue as study after study has proven.

**Three.** It is a myth that small business owners can't afford to pay their workers more, and therefore don't support an increase in the minimum wage. In fact, a June 2014 survey found that more than 3 out of 5 small business owners support increasing the minimum wage to \$10.10.

**Four.** The value of the minimum wage has fallen dramatically. Since the minimum wage was last raised in 2009, the price of apples went up 16%, bacon 67%, cheddar cheese 21%, coffee 27%, ground beef 39%, and milk 21%. The minimum wage went up 0%. Plus, in the 1960s the minimum wage was essentially half the average wage. If that was still the case it would be \$12.50 an hour.

**Five.** Saying we have a “free market” that will take care of workers is a myth. No corporations rely on the mythical “free market,” why should workers? Corporations lobby like crazy all the time in Washington DC and before every state and local government for direct and indirect public assistance. All levels of government provide widespread corporate welfare so why not provide some help to low wage workers? The Wall Street bailout cost over \$200 billion. Fifty billionaires received taxpayer funded farm subsidies in past two decades.

Corporate jet subsidy is \$3 billion a year. Special tax breaks for hedge fund managers allow them to pay only 15% tax rate, while the people they invest for pay twice that much and their secretaries pay a higher percentage. The home mortgage deduction is \$70 billion a year, with 77% going to people with incomes of over \$100,000 per year. Giving workers more money is small potatoes compared with what corporations and the rich are receiving all the time.

**Six.** In fact, one way to look at this is that low minimum wage laws are government subsidies to low wage businesses. What do working people do if they do not have enough to eat or get sick or need housing? They turn to government for public ben-

**The Wall Street bailout cost over \$200 billion. Fifty billionaires received taxpayer funded farm subsidies in the past two decades**



**Worker productivity has gone up much faster than wages. Workers are already much more productive**

efits. For example in the fast food industry alone research by the University of Illinois and UC Berkeley documents that taxpayers pay about \$243 billion each year in indirect subsidies to the fast food industry because they pay wages so low that taxpayers must put up \$243 billion to pay for public benefits for their workers.

**Seven.** There is widespread religious support for living wages. Catholic support for living wages has been taught since 1891. In 1940, US Catholic Bishops stated: “The first claims of labor, WHICH TAKES PRIORITY OVER ANY CLAIMS OF THE OWNERS TO PROFITS, respects the right to a living wage.” Protestant churches were first on the record for living wages since 1908. Religious support for living wages has a long history and has been recently been reaffirmed by the Episcopal Church, the Jewish Council of Public Affairs, the Presbyterian Church, the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Methodist Church.

**Eight.** Worker productivity has gone up much faster than wages. Workers are already much more productive. Using the 1968 minimum wage as benchmark, if minimum wage grew at same rate as worker pro-

ductivity it would be \$21.72 per hour.

**Nine.** It is a myth that the minimum wage is only for teens and entry level workers. Raising the minimum wage to \$10 would impact over 15 million workers. 4.7 million working moms would get a raise if we raise it to \$10.10. As would 2.6 million working dads for a total of 7 million parents.

**Ten.** There is widespread bipartisan support for raising the minimum wage. In a 2015 poll, 75% of Americans, including 53% of Republicans, support raising the minimum wage to \$12.50 by 2020.

**Bonus point.** You know the minimum wage is too low when . . . WALMART announces it will raise its minimum wage to \$10 an hour by February next year.

As President Franklin Roosevelt said in 1933: “No business which depends for existence on paying less than living wages to its workers has any right to continue in this country.” **CT**

*Bill Quigley is Law Professor, Loyola University New Orleans, CCR Associate Legal Director*

# KILLING IS NOT A WAY OF LIFE

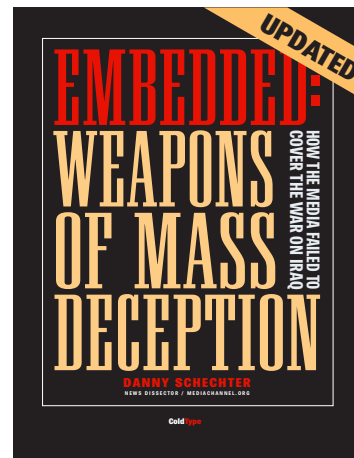
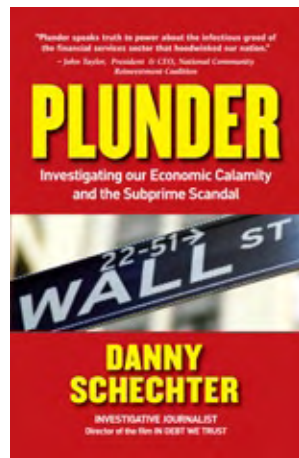
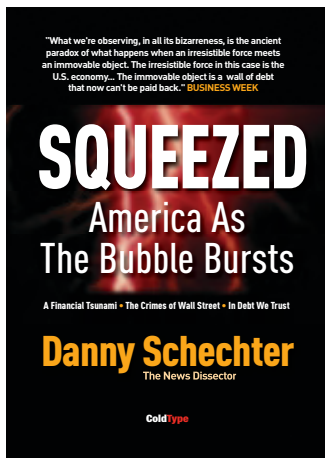
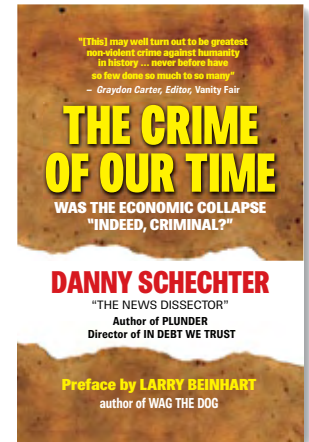
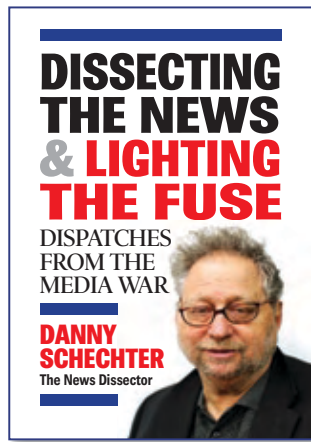
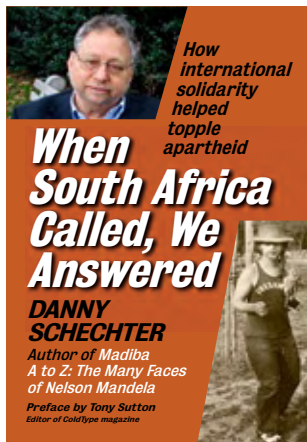
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National Union of Mineworkers branch banners in the Main Hall at Wakefield's Unity+Works.

# 'The cause was right'

Yorkshire celebrates the 30th anniversary of the return-to-work after the year-long UK miners' strike

Words by **Granville Williams**  
Photographs by **Mark Harvey**

“I know why the streets of Wakefield are empty, you are all in here,” veteran Labour Member of Parliament Dennis Skinner quipped as he addressed a capacity crowd of more than 700 people at the With Banners Held High event in Unity+Works, Wakefield, on Saturday 7 March. The event had a great atmosphere, a buzz, summed up by one former miner: “It’s just like the Durham Miners’ Gala, but indoors.”

In a passionate speech which won a standing ovation Skinner explained why, after 30 years, people were still inspired by the epic year-long struggle. “It is because the cause you fought for was right,” he said. “A fifty-nine year old miner went on strike to protect the job of a sixteen-year old miner he didn’t know in another part of the country. It wasn’t about pay – it was about jobs and communities.”



Dennis Skinner MP delivers an impassioned speech.

***"A fifty-nine year old miner went on strike to protect the job of a sixteen-year old miner he didn't know in another part of the country. It wasn't about pay – it was about jobs and communities."***

– Dennis Skinner, MP



Members of the audience swap stories.

Packed into the hall to hear him speak were former miners from Scotland, the North East of England and Yorkshire including miners from the last three remaining pits – Kellingley in North Yorkshire, Hatfield in South Yorkshire, and Thoresby in Nottinghamshire.

In another part of the Unity building was the Reunion Room, where the NUM banners for these three pits hung from the beams above. Here men who had last met decades ago during the strike renewed friendships over a pint of beer, while around them displays of miners' lamps and exhibitions reminded them of a way of working life which has almost disappeared.

And it isn't just the jobs that have gone but the rich social and cultural networks which they sustained – the Miners' Welfare Clubs, the brass bands based at pits like

Sharlston and Grimethorpe (the Grimley of the movie 'Brassed Off'), the humour and friendships sustained by working in demanding and dangerous conditions underground, and much more.

The city of Wakefield is at the heart of the former West Yorkshire mining area which at the start of the strike in 1984 had fifteen collieries. A mile down the road from the Unity+Works venue was Manor Pit which closed in the early 1980s. Wakefield is a city literally built on coal.

The city's economic base was mining and manufacturing. The Wakefield engineering company, British Jeffrey-Diamond, which made pulverisers, crushers, conveyors and coal face mining machinery, employed 1,300 people at its peak in 1961. It closed in 2001 as the pits to wh-

**It isn't just the jobs that have gone but the rich social and cultural networks which they sustained**





**Nottingham's Five Leaves Books does good business.**

The anti-Thatcher celebrations enlivened a former mining village which normally has a depressed air, with many houses and shops boarded up and whole streets demolished. But Goldthorpe was not always a depressed area. In the 1980s there were three pits around the village, and miners' wages boosted a thriving local community. What broke Goldthorpe, and many other villages surrounding it, was the Tory pit closure programme of the 1990s.

Communities were broken up, drug use soared, crime became a serious issue and poor health a major concern. It was a pattern replicated across all mining communities, whether in Scotland, the North-East, Yorkshire, Kent or South Wales. In December 2013 Britain's first "social supermarket" opened in Goldthorpe.

It provides food and damaged goods to poor people at around one third of the nor-

**"Every day we live with the aftermath of that strike"**

– John Dunn, Orgreave Truth and Justice campaign activist



**The branch banners of the UK's last three coal mines.**

mal cost. John Dunn, s former miner, and now Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign activist, sums it up: "Every day we live with the aftermath of that strike: destroyed communities, dole and despair, and an industry butchered. All around us are the boarded shop windows, the closed miners' welfares and the sadness in people's eyes."

So the question is, why after 30 years did people turn out in such numbers from these scarred and neglected former mining communities to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of a year-long strike which ended in defeat? The answer is that the key issues of the strike resonate and remain relevant today, the miners feel vindicated by their stand. But there is also unfinished business.

By coincidence With Banners Held High took place two days before the senior South Yorkshire Police (SYP) officer, David Duck-

**Communities were broken up, drug use soared, crime became a serious issue and poor health a major concern**

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## MINERS REMEMBER

**'The fire still burns, the sense of ongoing injustice drives us on.'**

– John Dunn, Orgreave Truth and Justice campaign activist



Tony Goodwin - the Pitman Poet.



Former miners meet in the Reunion Room.

**This sort of behaviour by South Yorkshire Police strikes chords with miners who experienced the infamous police assault on them at the battle of Orgreave**

enfield, in charge when the Hillsborough football disaster of 1980, which claimed the lives of 96 Liverpool football supporters, was giving evidence at the Warrington inquest. Duckenfield admitted that he had lied to Graham Kelly, then the Football Association chief executive. He lied, saying Liverpool fans had 'forced open' the gate when he, in fact, had ordered it to be opened. What senior SYP officers did was to conceal their own failings by creating a false account of events that day, blaming the disaster on drunken, ticketless Liverpool fans.

This sort of behaviour by South Yorkshire Police strikes chords with miners who experienced the infamous police assault on them at the battle of Orgreave on 18 June 1984, and the fabricated evidence concocted by SYP at the trial of 95 miners.

That's why a session at the With Banners Held High event, where we showed

the Yvette Vanson film, 'The Battle for Orgreave', and the subsequent discussion was packed out. Other sessions on 'The Aftermath of the Strike' and 'Inequality: The Real Enemy Within' linked events 30 years ago to what is happening in former mining communities today.

It's also why the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign (OTJC), set up in November 2012 to campaign for a full public inquiry into the policing at Orgreave in June 1984, goes from strength to strength.

Another reason for this burning sense of injustice is the partial release (matters to do with the security services and policing have been excluded) of the 1984 and 1985 UK government cabinet papers covering the strike.

Nick Jones, a BBC Radio industrial correspondent at the time of the strike, scoured the cabinet papers for information on the miners' strike. In his well-attended session





**Roughneck Riot perform at the evening fund-raising benefit.**

at *With Banners Held High* he showed how the government lied about the extent of the plans for pit closures, the active day-to-day involvement of the Prime Minister in the strike, including her push to ‘stiffen the resolve’ of the police and set up road blocks to stop miners picketing in Nottinghamshire, and the role of the security services in locating NUM funds in banks abroad. He pointed out, too, how lessons learned during the strike were used in the showdown by Rupert Murdoch with the print unions at Wapping in January 1986.

John Dunn sums up what made the 30th anniversary of the miners’ strike, and the event in Wakefield, so memorable: “I have had the honour of speaking at numerous meetings this last year, meeting up once again with battle-hardened comrades of 30 years ago. Not just nostalgia, but a real coming together of true class fighters. We may

be older, walk with a stick or stoop a little; some of us may be gone; but the fire still burns, the sense of ongoing injustice drives us on.”

In the evening *Unity+ Works* was the setting for a sell-out fund-raising benefit for the OTJC. The headline act, *New Model Army*, were strong supporters of the miners in the 1984-85 strike. The band was backed up by *The Hurriers*, *Roughneck Riot* and *Louise Distras*.

It was a great end to a great day. **CT**

.....  
*Granville Williams* chaired the group which planned *With Banners Held High*. He is the editor of *Settling Scores: The Police, the Media and the Miners’ Strike* and *Big Media & Internet Titans: Media Ownership -The Democratic Challenge*, both available from [www.cpb.org.uk](http://www.cpb.org.uk)

**Lessons learned by the government during the strike were used in the showdown by Rupert Murdoch with the print unions at Wapping in January 1986**

# The possibility of escape

Non-violent women offenders shouldn't be serving time in federal prisons, writes **Kathy Kelly**

**Constructing prisons and filling prisons with people who posed little or no threat to our security didn't happen secretly, without our consent**

*"That is also us, the possibility of us, if the wonderful accident of our birth had taken place elsewhere: you could be the refugee, I could be the torturer. To face that truth is also our burden. After all, each of us has been the bystander, the reasonable person who just happens not to hear, not to speak, not to see those people, the invisible ones, those who live on the other side of the border". – Karen Connelly, *The Lizard Cage**

It was a little over two weeks ago that Marlo entered Atwood Hall, here in Lexington federal prison. Nearly all the women here are nonviolent offenders. When I first saw Marlo, her eyes seemed glued to the tiled floors as she shuffled along hallways. I guessed her age to be 25 or so. A few days later, she came to a choir rehearsal. She was still shy, but she looked up and offered a quiet smile when she joined the soprano section. The next time our choir gathered, Marlo raised her hand before we ended our rehearsal. "I got something to say," she said, as she stood. "When I first came here, I can tell all of you now, I was terrified. Just plain terrified. I have 70 months, and I felt so scared." The intake process for this, her introduction to the prison system, had badly frightened her, but before sundown that same day, a second intake process had occurred, with several inmates finding her, reassuring her, and getting her beyond that first panic.

During my four stints in US federal prisons,

I've witnessed long-term inmates' unconquerably humane response when a newcomer arrives. An unscripted choreography occurs and the new prisoner finds that other women will help her through the trauma of adjustment to being locked up for many months or years. Halfway through a three-month sentence myself, I'm saddened to realize that I'll very likely adapt to an outside world for which these women, and prisoners throughout the US prison system, are often completely invisible.

US state and federal prison populations have risen, since 1988, from 600,000 to an estimated 1,600,000 in 2012. This trend shows inhumane behavior on the part of lawmakers and myriads of employees who benefit from the so-called "criminal justice" system. But our entire society bears responsibility for what now can aptly be labeled a "prison-industrial complex." Constructing prisons and filling prisons with people who posed little or no threat to our security didn't happen secretly, without our consent. We watched, mesmerized perhaps, and allowed ourselves to become a country with the world's largest prison system.

A friend from home recently sent me encouraging news of Illinois Governor Rauner's initiative to address the problems in some of the United States' most brutally overcrowded prisons. A *Chicago Tribune* article from several weeks ago notes that Rauner plans to reduce the state's prison population by 25% over the



**Atwood Hall, Lexington, federal prison: A grim home for non-violent women offenders.**

**I can't imagine a figure too high to pay, in dollars or in human work hours, to effectively challenge the way US people think about safety and justice**

next ten years, establishing the reduction as a goal through executive order. The article, by columnist Eric Zorn, cites a widely-cited recent report by the Vera Institute of Justice that “nearly 75% of the population of both sentenced offenders and pretrial detainees are in jail for nonviolent offenses like traffic, property, drugs or public order violations.”

Skyrocketing costs of incarceration have finally convinced some lawmakers to work toward “reducing prison populations.” Yesterday, I read a long report about how the California Department of Corrections has responded to a court-ordered demand that the state reduce the numbers of people locked up in California state prisons. The order was first issued in 2009 by a three-judge panel. The state appealed the order, but in 2011, the US Supreme Court upheld it, ordering the state of California to comply by 2013. The California government sought and was granted two extensions. As of now, the order insists that California must reduce its prison population, by 2016, to “no more than 137.5 percent of the design capacity” of its state prisons.

Whatever plans Gov. Rauner’s committee proposes for Illinois, the notoriously incarceration-minded Illinois state legislature is likely to put up just as vigorous a fight. Meanwhile the California report discusses “cost-effective measures,” “recidivism reduction results,”

“rehabilitative programming” and “programming slots” at “in-state contract facilities.” The language, highly impersonal, suggests warehousing. I wonder if zookeepers might be more attentive to the individuality of the beings they cage.

Trapped in a cruel and uncaring system, women here in Atwood Hall reliably find humane ways to cope. Among many signs of daily generosity, one of my favorites is the practice of “window shopping.” Women place extra items they can spare in the window sills nearest the stairwells. A new prisoner can find new fresh socks, a warm knit cap, books, magazines, pitchers – items that quickly disappear and are soon replenished.

Perhaps we’ll begin to see a trend toward finding humane ways to cope with seemingly intractable problems in today’s criminal justice system. The US Supreme Court’s insistence that the State of California must release many thousands of prisoners signals a trend in which, as Gov. Rauner’s order recognizes, “States across the country have enacted bipartisan, data driven and evidence based reforms that have reduced the use of incarceration and its costs while protecting and improving public safety.” Zorn notes that the MacArthur Foundation recently granted \$75 million for a 5-year “Safety and Justice Challenge” meant “to reduce over-incarceration

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## BEHIND BARS

**Fellow activists incarcerated in men's prisons likewise concur that the system is futile, merciless and wrongheaded. Our jailers, I'm convinced, can see this**

by changing the way America thinks about its prisons and jails.”

I can't imagine a figure too high to pay, in dollars or in human work hours, to effectively challenge the way US people think about safety and justice. In describing a class that he taught in a New Jersey maximum-security prison, Chris Hedges wrote:

“The mass incarceration of primarily poor people of color, people who seldom have access to adequate legal defense and who are often kept behind bars for years for nonviolent crimes or for crimes they did not commit, is one of the most shameful mass injustices committed in the United States. The 28 men in my class have cumulatively spent 515 years in prison. Some of their sentences are utterly disproportionate to the crimes of which they are accused. Most are not even close to finishing their sentences or coming before a parole board, which rarely grants first-time applicants their liberty. Many of them are in for life. One of my students was arrested at the age of 14 for a crime that strong evidence suggests he did not commit. He will not be eligible for parole until he is 70. He never had a chance in court and because he cannot afford a private attorney he has no chance now of challenging the grotesque sentence handed to him as a child”.

Here in Atwood Hall, guards and administrators know that they imprison humane, caring, generous and talented women, people not very different from their own relatives, friends and co-workers. Where are the “bad sisters” that could ever justify the punishment of isolating women like Marlo from their children and other loved ones for long and wearying years? I imagine that many BOP guards admire, as I do, the courage and fortitude of the women facing long sentences here. Do they wonder, sometimes, what courage would be required, in their own lives, to stop working as enforcers of the prison system? Or do they perhaps wish, sometimes, that the general public could muster up the will to stop voting for the prison system?

There is a cynical quote which a cynical

friend of mine likes to quote to me, from the philosopher David Hume: “A prisoner who has neither money nor interest, discovers the impossibility of his escape, as well when he considers the obstinacy of the gaoler, as the walls and bars with which he is surrounded; and, in all attempts for his freedom, chooses rather to work upon the stone and iron of the one, than upon the inflexible nature of the other.” It's the cliché of the prisoner attempting escape: the prisoner sees more hope tunneling out through bricks than appealing to the stone-faced jailer.

But who are the jailers? These prisons were built, and filled, in our name – in the name of making us “safer”. More guards, more lawyers, judges, wardens, marshals, probation officers and court personnel would be hired even if the present ones resigned. Meanwhile the creative work to create real security, real community in the face of social dislocation and crime, would still need to be done. We, the broader public, must be the jailers. Sometimes we seem to be a stone rolling down the path of least resistance. But we're not stone. We can choose not to be jailers, and choose, instead, to be ever more inflexible in our resistance to injustice and to hatred born of fear.

I'm here among women, some of whom, I've been told, are supposed to be “hardened criminals.” Fellow activists incarcerated in men's prisons likewise concur that the system is futile, merciless and wrongheaded. Our jailers, I'm convinced, can see this. Men like Governor Rauner, it seems, can see it, or his advisers can.

Where are the inflexible ones keeping women like Marlo isolated from and lost to the world, trembling for their future for the next five years? I would like to make an appeal to you, and to myself two months from now when I've left here and once more re-joined the polite society of these women's “inflexible jailers.” I choose to believe that we can be moved and these women can escape. I am writing this, as many have written and will write, to see if we're easier to move than iron and stone. **CT**

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**Kathy Kelly**, co-coordinator of *Voices for Creative Nonviolence* – [info@vcnv.org](mailto:info@vcnv.org) – is serving three months in federal prison for participation in an anti-drone protest.

# The new march of fascism

If we remain silent in the face of the reckless lies of warmongers, victory over us is assured, and a new holocaust beckons, writes **John Pilger**,

**T**he recent 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz was a reminder of the great crime of fascism, whose Nazis iconography is embedded in our consciousness. Fascism is preserved as history, as flickering footage of goose-stepping blackshirts, their criminality terrible and clear. Yet in the same liberal societies, whose war-making elites urge us never to forget, the accelerating danger of a modern kind of fascism is suppressed; for it is their fascism.

“To initiate a war of aggression...,” said the Nuremberg Tribunal judges in 1946, “is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.”

Had the Nazis not invaded Europe, Auschwitz and the Holocaust would not have happened. Had the United States and its satellites not initiated their war of aggression in Iraq in 2003, almost a million people would be alive today; and Islamic State, or ISIS, would not have us in thrall to its savagery. They are the progeny of modern fascism, weaned by the bombs, bloodbaths and lies that are the surreal theatre known as news.

Like the fascism of the 1930s and 1940s, big lies are delivered with the precision of a metronome: thanks to an omnipresent, repetitive media and its virulent censorship by omission. Take the catastrophe in Libya.

In 2011, Nato launched 9,700 “strike sor-

ties” against Libya, of which more than a third were aimed at civilian targets. Uranium warheads were used; the cities of Misurata and Sirte were carpet-bombed. The Red Cross identified mass graves, and Unicef reported that “most [of the children killed] were under the age of ten”.

The public sodomising of the Libyan president Muammar Gaddafi with a “rebel” bayonet was greeted by the then US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, with the words: “We came, we saw, he died.” His murder, like the destruction of his country, was justified with a familiar big lie; he was planning “genocide” against his own people. “We knew... that if we waited one more day,” said President Obama, “Benghazi, a city the size of Charlotte, could suffer a massacre that would have reverberated across the region and stained the conscience of the world.”

This was the fabrication of Islamist militias facing defeat by Libyan government forces. They told Reuters there would be “a real bloodbath, a massacre like we saw in Rwanda”. Reported on March 14, 2011, the lie provided the first spark for Nato’s inferno, described by David Cameron as a “humanitarian intervention”.

Secretly supplied and trained by Britain’s SAS, many of the “rebels” would become ISIS, whose latest video offering shows the beheading of 21 Coptic Christian workers seized in Sirte, the city destroyed on their be-

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## ENEMY WITHIN

**Yugoslavia was a uniquely independent, multi-ethnic federation that had stood as a political and economic bridge in the Cold War. Most of its utilities and major manufacturing was publicly owned**

half by Nato bombers.

For Obama, Cameron and Hollande, Gaddafi's true crime was Libya's economic independence and his declared intention to stop selling Africa's greatest oil reserves in US dollars. The petrodollar is a pillar of American imperial power. Gaddafi audaciously planned to underwrite a common African currency backed by gold, establish an all-Africa bank and promote economic union among poor countries with prized resources. Whether or not this would happen, the very notion was intolerable to the US as it prepared to "enter" Africa and bribe African governments with military "partnerships".

Following Nato's attack under cover of a Security Council resolution, Obama, wrote Garikai Chengu, "confiscated \$30 billion from Libya's Central Bank, which Gaddafi had earmarked for the establishment of an African Central Bank and the African gold backed dinar currency".

The "humanitarian war" against Libya drew on a model close to western liberal hearts, especially in the media. In 1999, Bill Clinton and Tony Blair sent Nato to bomb Serbia because, they lied, the Serbs were committing "genocide" against ethnic Albanians in the secessionist province of Kosovo. David Scheffer, US ambassador-at-large for war crimes [sic], claimed that as many as "225,000 ethnic Albanian men aged between 14 and 59" might have been murdered. Both Clinton and Blair evoked the Holocaust and "the spirit of the Second World War". The West's heroic allies were the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), whose criminal record was set aside. The British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, told them to call him any time on his mobile phone.

With the Nato bombing over, and much of Serbia's infrastructure in ruins, along with schools, hospitals, monasteries and the national TV station, international forensic teams descended upon Kosovo to exhume evidence of the "holocaust". The FBI failed to find a single mass grave and went home. The Spanish forensic team did the same, its

leader angrily denouncing "a semantic pirouette by the war propaganda machines". A year later, a United Nations tribunal on Yugoslavia announced the final count of the dead in Kosovo: 2,788. This included combatants on both sides and Serbs and Roma murdered by the KLA. There was no genocide. The "holocaust" was a lie. The Nato attack had been fraudulent.

Behind the lie, there was serious purpose. Yugoslavia was a uniquely independent, multi-ethnic federation that had stood as a political and economic bridge in the Cold War. Most of its utilities and major manufacturing was publicly owned. This was not acceptable to the expanding European Community, especially newly united Germany, which had begun a drive east to capture its "natural market" in the Yugoslav provinces of Croatia and Slovenia. By the time the Europeans met at Maastricht in 1991 to lay their plans for the disastrous eurozone, a secret deal had been struck; Germany would recognise Croatia. Yugoslavia was doomed.

In Washington, the US saw that the struggling Yugoslav economy was denied World Bank loans. Nato, then an almost defunct Cold War relic, was reinvented as imperial enforcer. At a 1999 Kosovo "peace" conference in Rambouillet, in France, the Serbs were subjected to the enforcer's duplicitous tactics. The Rambouillet accord included a secret Annex B, which the US delegation inserted on the last day. This demanded the military occupation of the whole of Yugoslavia - a country with bitter memories of the Nazi occupation - and the implementation of a "free-market economy" and the privatisation of all government assets. No sovereign state could sign this. Punishment followed swiftly; Nato bombs fell on a defenceless country. It was the precursor to the catastrophes in Afghanistan and Iraq, Syria and Libya, and Ukraine.

Since 1945, more than a third of the membership of the United Nations - 69 countries - have suffered some or all of the following at the hands of America's modern fascism. They have been invaded, their governments

overthrown, their popular movements suppressed, their elections subverted, their people bombed and their economies stripped of all protection, their societies subjected to a crippling siege known as “sanctions”. The British historian Mark Curtis estimates the death toll in the millions. In every case, a big lie was deployed.

“Tonight, for the first time since 9/11, our combat mission in Afghanistan is over.” These were opening words of Obama’s 2015 State of the Union address. In fact, some 10,000 troops and 20,000 military contractors (mercenaries) remain in Afghanistan on indefinite assignment. “The longest war in American history is coming to a responsible conclusion,” said Obama. In fact, more civilians were killed in Afghanistan in 2014 than in any year since the UN took records. The majority have been killed - civilians and soldiers - during Obama’s time as president.

The tragedy of Afghanistan rivals the epic crime in Indochina. In his lauded and much quoted book ‘The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives’, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the godfather of US policies from Afghanistan to the present day, writes that if America is to control Eurasia and dominate the world, it cannot sustain a popular democracy, because “the pursuit of power is not a goal that commands popular passion... Democracy is inimical to imperial mobilisation.” He is right. As WikiLeaks and Edward Snowden have revealed, a surveillance and police state is usurping democracy. In 1976, Brzezinski, then President Carter’s National Security Advisor, demonstrated his point by dealing a death blow to Afghanistan’s first and only democracy. Who knows this vital history?

In the 1960s, a popular revolution swept Afghanistan, the poorest country on earth, eventually overthrowing the vestiges of the aristocratic regime in 1978. The People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) formed a government and declared a reform programme that included the abolition of feudalism, freedom for all religions, equal

rights for women and social justice for the ethnic minorities. More than 13,000 political prisoners were freed and police files publicly burned.

The new government introduced free medical care for the poorest; peonage was abolished, a mass literacy programme was launched. For women, the gains were unheard of. By the late 1980s, half the university students were women, and women made up almost half of Afghanistan’s doctors, a third of civil servants and the majority of teachers. “Every girl,” recalled Saira Noorani, a female surgeon, “could go to high school and university. We could go where we wanted and wear what we liked. We used to go to cafes and the cinema to see the latest Indian film on a Friday and listen to the latest music. It all started to go wrong when the mujaheddin started winning. They used to kill teachers and burn schools. We were terrified. It was funny and sad to think these were the people the West supported.”

The PDPA government was backed by the Soviet Union, even though, as former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance later admitted, “there was no evidence of any Soviet complicity [in the revolution]”. Alarmed by the growing confidence of liberation movements throughout the world, Brzezinski decided that if Afghanistan was to succeed under the PDPA, its independence and progress would offer the “threat of a promising example”.

On July 3, 1979, the White House secretly authorised \$500 million in arms and logistics to support tribal “fundamentalist” groups known as the mujaheddin. The aim was the overthrow of Afghanistan’s first secular, reformist government. In August 1979, the US embassy in Kabul reported that “the United States’ larger interests... would be served by the demise of [the PDPA government], *despite whatever setbacks this might mean for future social and economic reforms in Afghanistan.*” The italics are mine.

The mujaheddin were the forebears of al-Qaeda and Islamic State. They included Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who received tens of

**“It all started to go wrong when the mujaheddin started winning. They used to kill teachers and burn schools. We were terrified. It was funny and sad to think these were the people the West supported”**

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## ENEMY WITHIN

**Operation Cyclone became the “war on terror”, in which countless men, women and children would lose their lives across the Muslim world, from Afghanistan to Iraq, Yemen, Somalia and Syria**

millions of dollars in cash from the CIA. Hekmatyar’s specialty was trafficking in opium and throwing acid in the faces of women who refused to wear the veil. Invited to London, he was lauded by Prime Minister Thatcher as a “freedom fighter”.

Such fanatics might have remained in their tribal world had Brzezinski not launched an international movement to promote Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia and so undermine secular political liberation and “destabilise” the Soviet Union, creating, as he wrote in his autobiography, “a few stirred up Muslims”. His grand plan coincided with the ambitions of the Pakistani dictator, General Zia ul-Haq, to dominate the region. In 1986, the CIA and Pakistan’s intelligence agency, the ISI, began to recruit people from around the world to join the Afghan jihad. The Saudi multi-millionaire Osama bin Laden was one of them. Operatives who would eventually join the Taliban and al-Qaeda, were recruited at an Islamic college in Brooklyn, New York, and given paramilitary training at a CIA camp in Virginia. This was called “Operation Cyclone”. Its success was celebrated in 1996 when the last PDPA president of Afghanistan, Mohammed Najibullah - who had gone before the UN General Assembly to plead for help - was hanged from a streetlight by the Taliban.

The “blowback” of Operation Cyclone and its “few stirred up Muslims” was September 11, 2001. Operation Cyclone became the “war on terror”, in which countless men, women and children would lose their lives across the Muslim world, from Afghanistan to Iraq, Yemen, Somalia and Syria. The enforcer’s message was and remains: “You are with us or against us.”

The common thread in fascism, past and present, is mass murder. The American invasion of Vietnam had its “free fire zones”, “body counts” and “collateral damage”. In the province of Quang Ngai, where I reported from, many thousands of civilians (“gooks”) were murdered by the US; yet only one massacre, at My Lai, is remembered. In Laos

and Cambodia, the greatest aerial bombardment in history produced an epoch of terror marked today by the spectacle of joined-up bomb craters which, from the air, resemble monstrous necklaces. The bombing gave Cambodia its own ISIS, led by Pol Pot.

Today, the world’s greatest single campaign of terror entails the execution of entire families, guests at weddings, mourners at funerals. These are Obama’s victims. According to the *New York Times*, Obama makes his selection from a CIA “kill list” presented to him every Tuesday in the White House Situation Room. He then decides, without a shred of legal justification, who will live and who will die. His execution weapon is the Hellfire missile carried by a pilotless aircraft known as a drone; these roast their victims and festoon the area with their remains. Each “hit” is registered on a faraway console screen as a “bugspat”.

“For goose-steppers,” wrote the historian Norman Pollock, “substitute the seemingly more innocuous militarisation of the total culture. And for the bombastic leader, we have the reformer manqué, blithely at work, planning and executing assassination, smiling all the while.”

Uniting fascism old and new is the cult of superiority. “I believe in American exceptionalism with every fibre of my being,” said Obama, evoking declarations of national fetishism from the 1930s. As the historian Alfred W. McCoy has pointed out, it was the Hitler devotee, Carl Schmitt, who said, “The sovereign is he who decides the exception.” This sums up Americanism, the world’s dominant ideology. That it remains unrecognised as a predatory ideology is the achievement of an equally unrecognised brainwashing. Insidious, undeclared, presented wittily as enlightenment on the march, its conceit insinuates western culture. I grew up on a cinematic diet of American glory, almost all of it a distortion. I had no idea that it was the Red Army that had destroyed most of the Nazi war machine, at a cost of as many as 13 million soldiers. By contrast, US losses, including in the Pacific,



were 400,000. Hollywood reversed this.

The difference now is that cinema audiences are invited to wring their hands at the “tragedy” of American psychopaths having to kill people in distant places - just as the President himself kills them. The embodiment of Hollywood’s violence, the actor and director Clint Eastwood, was nominated for an Oscar this year for his movie, ‘American Sniper’, which is about a licensed murderer and nutcase. The *New York Times* described it as a “patriotic, pro-family picture which broke all attendance records in its opening days”.

There are no heroic movies about America’s embrace of fascism. During the Second World War, America (and Britain) went to war against Greeks who had fought heroically against Nazism and were resisting the rise of Greek fascism. In 1967, the CIA helped bring to power a fascist military junta in Athens - as it did in Brazil and most of Latin America. Germans and east Europeans who had colluded with Nazi aggression and crimes against humanity were given safe haven in the US; many were pampered and their talents rewarded. Wernher von Braun was the “father” of both the Nazi V-2 terror bomb and the US space programme.

In the 1990s, as former Soviet republics, eastern Europe and the Balkans became military outposts of Nato, the heirs to a Nazi movement in Ukraine were given their opportunity. Responsible for the deaths of thousands of Jews, Poles and Russians during the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, Ukrainian fascism was rehabilitated and its “new wave” hailed by the enforcer as “nationalists”.

This reached its apogee in 2014 when the Obama administration splashed out \$5 billion on a coup against the elected government. The shock troops were neo-Nazis known as the Right Sector and Svoboda. Their leaders include Oleh Tyahnybok, who has called for a purge of the “Moscow-Jewish mafia” and “other scum”, including gays, feminists and those on the political left.

These fascists are now integrated into

the Kiev coup government. The first deputy speaker of the Ukrainian parliament, Andriy Parubiy, a leader of the governing party, is co-founder of Svoboda. On February 14, Parubiy announced he was flying to Washington get “the USA to give us highly precise modern weaponry”. If he succeeds, it will be seen as an act of war by Russia.

No western leader has spoken up about the revival of fascism in the heart of Europe - with the exception of Vladimir Putin, whose people lost 22 million to a Nazi invasion that came through the borderland of Ukraine. At the recent Munich Security Conference, Obama’s Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Victoria Nuland, ranted abuse about European leaders for opposing the US arming of the Kiev regime. She referred to the German Defence Minister as “the minister for defeatism”. It was Nuland who masterminded the coup in Kiev. The wife of Robert D. Kaplan, a leading “neo-con” luminary of the far-right Center for a New American Security, she was foreign policy advisor to the fascist Dick Cheney.

Nuland’s coup did not go to plan. Nato was prevented from seizing Russia’s historic, legitimate, warm-water naval base in Crimea. The mostly Russian population of Crimea - illegally annexed to Ukraine by Nikita Krushchev in 1954 - voted overwhelmingly to return to Russia, as they had done in the 1990s. The referendum was voluntary, popular and internationally observed. There was no invasion.

At the same time, the Kiev regime turned on the ethnic Russian population in the east with the ferocity of ethnic cleaning. Deploying neo-Nazi militias in the manner of the Waffen-SS, they bombed and laid to siege cities and towns. They used mass starvation as a weapon, cutting off electricity, freezing bank accounts, stopping social security and pensions. More than a million refugees fled across the border into Russia. In the western media, they became unpeople escaping “the violence” caused by the “Russian invasion”. The Nato commander, General Breedlove -

**Nuland’s coup did not go to plan. Nato was prevented from seizing Russia’s historic, legitimate, warm-water naval base in Crimea**

**The intensity of the smear campaign against Russia and the portrayal of its president as a pantomime villain is unlike anything I have known as a reporter**

whose name and actions might have been inspired by Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* - announced that 40,000 Russian troops were "massing". In the age of forensic satellite evidence, he offered none.

These Russian-speaking and bilingual people of Ukraine - a third of the population - have long sought a federation that reflects the country's ethnic diversity and is both autonomous and independent of Moscow. Most are not "separatists" but citizens who want to live securely in their homeland and oppose the power grab in Kiev.

Their revolt and establishment of autonomous "states" are a reaction to Kiev's attacks on them. Little of this has been explained to western audiences.

On May 2, 2014, in Odessa, 41 ethnic Russians were burned alive in the trade union headquarters with police standing by. The Right Sector leader Dmytro Yarosh hailed the massacre as "another bright day in our national history". In the American and British media, this was reported as a "murky tragedy" resulting from "clashes" between "nationalists" (neo-Nazis) and "separatists" (people collecting signatures for a referendum on a federal Ukraine).

The *New York Times* buried the story, having dismissed as Russian propaganda warnings about the fascist and anti-Semitic policies of Washington's new clients. The *Wall Street Journal* damned the victims - "Deadly Ukraine Fire Likely Sparked by Rebels, Government Says". Obama congratulated the junta for its "restraint".

If Putin can be provoked into coming to their aid, his pre-ordained "pariah" role in the West will justify the lie that Russia is invading Ukraine. On January 29, Ukraine's top military commander, General Viktor Muzhemko, almost inadvertently dismissed the very basis for US and EU sanctions on Russia when he told a news conference emphatically: "The Ukrainian army is not fighting with the regular units of the Russian Army". There were "individual citizens" who were members of "illegal armed groups", but there was no

Russian invasion. This was not news. Vadym Prystaiko, Kiev's Deputy Foreign Minister, has called for "full scale war" with nuclear-armed Russia.

On February 21, US Senator James Inhofe, a Republican from Oklahoma, introduced a bill that would authorise American arms for the Kiev regime. In his Senate presentation, Inhofe used photographs he claimed were of Russian troops crossing into Ukraine, which have long been exposed as fakes. It was reminiscent of Ronald Reagan's fake pictures of a Soviet installation in Nicaragua, and Colin Powell's fake evidence to the UN of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

The intensity of the smear campaign against Russia and the portrayal of its president as a pantomime villain is unlike anything I have known as a reporter. Robert Parry, one of America's most distinguished investigative journalists, who revealed the Iran-Contra scandal, wrote recently, "No European government, since Adolf Hitler's Germany, has seen fit to dispatch Nazi storm troopers to wage war on a domestic population, but the Kiev regime has and has done so knowingly. Yet across the West's media/political spectrum, there has been a studious effort to cover up this reality even to the point of ignoring facts that have been well established... If you wonder how the world could stumble into world war three - much as it did into world war one a century ago - all you need to do is look at the madness over Ukraine that has proved impervious to facts or reason."

In 1946, the Nuremberg Tribunal prosecutor said of the German media: "The use made by Nazi conspirators of psychological warfare is well known. Before each major aggression, with some few exceptions based on expediency, they initiated a press campaign calculated to weaken their victims and to prepare the German people psychologically for the attack... In the propaganda system of the Hitler State it was the daily press and the radio that were the most important weapons." In the *Guardian* on February 2, Timothy Garton-

Ash called, in effect, for a world war. “Putin must be stopped,” said the headline. “And sometimes only guns can stop guns.” He conceded that the threat of war might “nourish a Russian paranoia of encirclement”; but that was fine. He name-checked the military equipment needed for the job and advised his readers that “America has the best kit”.

In 2003, Garton-Ash, an Oxford professor, repeated the propaganda that led to the slaughter in Iraq. Saddam Hussein, he wrote, “has, as [Colin] Powell documented, stockpiled large quantities of horrifying chemical and biological weapons, and is hiding what remains of them. He is still trying to get nuclear ones.” He lauded Blair as a “Gladstonian, Christian liberal interventionist”. In 2006, he wrote, “Now we face the next big test of the West after Iraq: Iran.”

The outbursts - or as Garton-Ash prefers, his “tortured liberal ambivalence” - are not untypical of those in the transatlantic liberal elite who have struck a Faustian deal. The war criminal Blair is their lost leader. The *Guardian*, in which Garton-Ash’s piece appeared, published a full-page advertisement for an American Stealth bomber. On a menacing image of the Lockheed Martin monster were the words: “The F-35. GREAT For Britain”. This American “kit” will cost British taxpayers £1.3 billion, its F-model predecessors having slaughtered across the world. In tune with its advertiser, a *Guardian* editorial has demanded an increase in military spending.

Once again, there is serious purpose. The rulers of the world want Ukraine not only as a missile base; they want its economy. Kiev’s new Finance Minister, Nataliwe Jaresko, is a former senior US State Department official in charge of US overseas “investment”. She was hurriedly given Ukrainian citizenship. They want Ukraine for its abundant gas; Vice President Joe Biden’s son is on the board of Ukraine’s biggest oil, gas and fracking company. The manufacturers of GM seeds, companies such as the infamous Monsanto, want Ukraine’s rich farming soil.

Above all, they want Ukraine’s mighty neighbour, Russia. They want to Balkanise or dismember Russia and exploit the greatest source of natural gas on earth. As the Arctic ice melts, they want control of the Arctic Ocean and its energy riches, and Russia’s long Arctic land border. Their man in Moscow used to be Boris Yeltsin, a drunk, who handed his country’s economy to the West. His successor, Putin, has re-established Russia as a sovereign nation; that is his crime.

The responsibility of the rest of us is clear. It is to identify and expose the reckless lies of warmongers and never to collude with them. It is to re-awaken the great popular movements that brought a fragile civilisation to modern imperial states. Most important, it is to prevent the conquest of ourselves: our minds, our humanity, our self respect. If we remain silent, victory over us is assured, and a holocaust beckons. **CT**

**The rulers of the world want Ukraine not only as a missile base; they want its economy**

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# Tariq Ali: The right time for a palace revolution

Chris Hedges meets a long-standing hero of the British Left

**He lamented the loss of the radicalism that was nurtured by the 1960s counterculture, saying it was “unprecedented in imperial history” and produced the “most hopeful period” in the United States, “intellectually, culturally and politically”**

Tariq Ali is part of the royalty of the left. His more than 20 books on politics and history, his seven novels, his screenplays and plays and his journalism in the *Black Dwarf* newspaper, the *New Left Review* and other publications have made him one of the most trenchant critics of corporate capitalism. He hurls rhetorical thunderbolts and searing critiques at the oily speculators and corporate oligarchs who manipulate global finance and the useful idiots in the press, the political system and the academy who support them. The history of the late part of the 20th century and the early part of the 21st century has proved Ali, an Oxford-educated intellectual and longtime gadfly who once stood as a Trotskyist candidate for Parliament in Britain, to be stunningly prophetic.

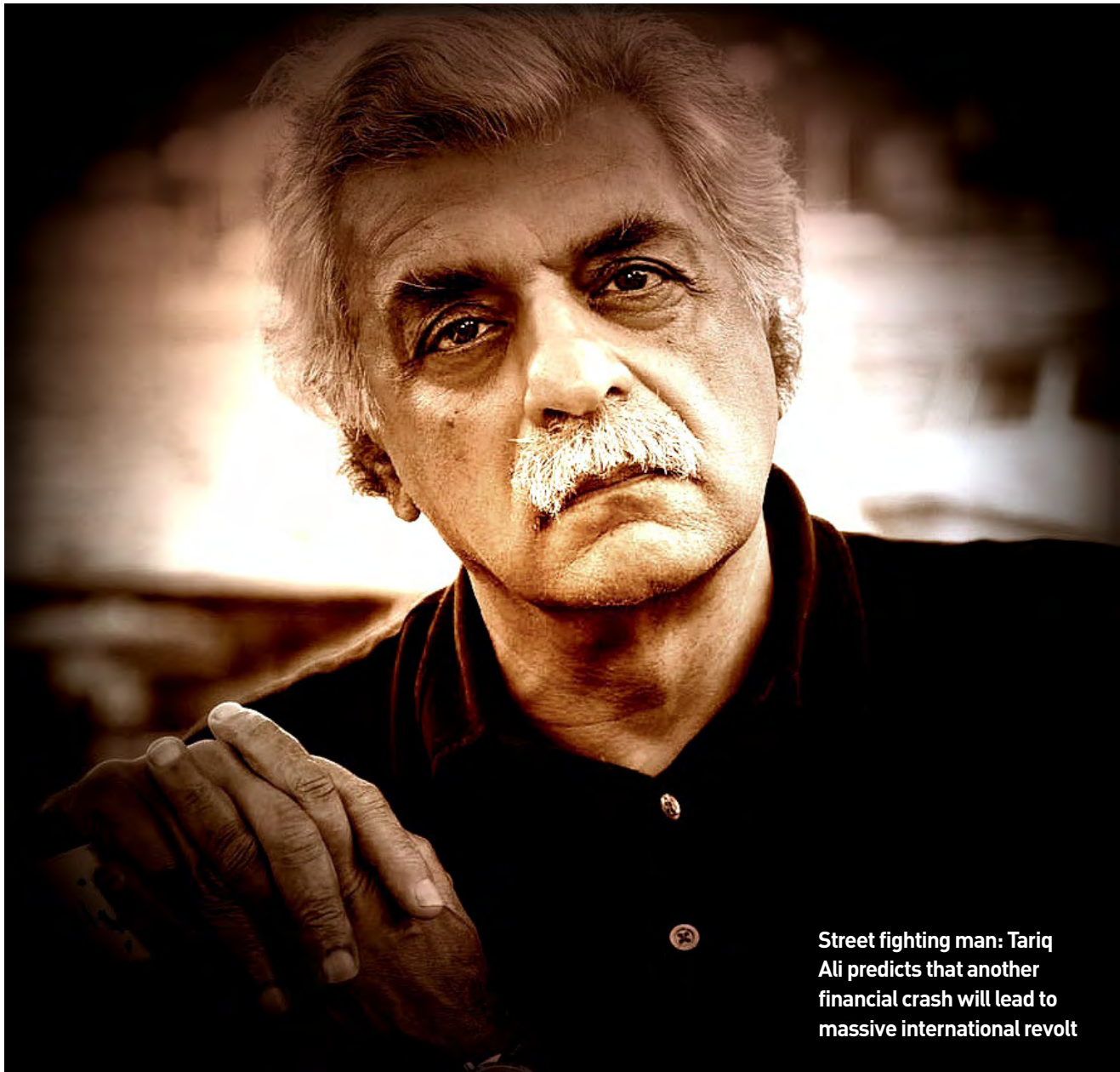
The Pakistani-born Ali, who holds Pakistani and British citizenships, was already an icon of the left during the convulsions of the 1960s. Mick Jagger is said to have written “Street Fighting Man” after he attended an anti-war rally in Grosvenor Square on March 17, 1968, led by Ali, Vanessa Redgrave and others outside the US Embassy in London. Some 8,000 protesters hurled mud, stones and smoke bombs at riot police. Mounted police charged the crowd. Over 200 people were arrested.

Ali, when we met recently shortly before he delivered the Edward W. Said Memorial

Lecture at Princeton University, praised the street clashes and open, sustained protests against the state that erupted during the Vietnam War. He lamented the loss of the radicalism that was nurtured by the 1960s counterculture, saying it was “unprecedented in imperial history” and produced the “most hopeful period” in the United States, “intellectually, culturally and politically.”

“I cannot think of an example of any other imperial war in history, and not just in the history of the American empire but in the history of the British and French empires, where you had tens of thousands of former GIs and sometimes serving GIs marching outside the Pentagon and saying they wanted the Vietnamese to win,” he said. “That is a unique event in the annals of empire. That is what frightened and scared the living daylights out of them [those in power]. If the heart of our apparatus is becoming infected, [they asked] what the hell are we going to do?”

This defiance found expression even within the halls of the Establishment. Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings about the Vietnam War openly challenged and defied those who were orchestrating the bloodshed. “The way that questioning was conducted educated a large segment of the population,” Ali said of the hearings, led by liberals such as J. William Fulbright. Ali then added sadly that “such hearings could



**Street fighting man: Tariq Ali predicts that another financial crash will lead to massive international revolt**

never happen again.”

“That [spirit is what the ruling elite] had to roll back, and that they did quite successfully,” he said. “That rollback was completed by the implosion of the Soviet Union. They sat down and said, ‘Great, now we can do whatever we want. There is nothing abroad, and what we have at home – kids protesting about South America and Nicaragua and the contras – is peanuts. Gradually the dissent decreased.’ By the start of the Iraq

War, demonstrations, although large, were usually “one-day affairs.”

“It was an attempt to stop a war. Once they couldn’t stop it, that was the end,” he said about the marches opposing the Iraq War. “It was a spasm. They [authorities] made people feel there was nothing they could do; that whatever people did, those in power would do what they wanted. It was the first realization that democracy itself had been weakened and was under threat.”

**By the start of the Iraq War, demonstrations, although large, were usually “one-day affairs”**

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## STILL RAGING

**The battle between popular will and the demands of corporate oligarchs, as they plunge greater and greater numbers of people around the globe into poverty and despair, is becoming increasingly volatile**

The devolution of the political system through the infusion of corporate money, the rewriting of laws and regulations to remove checks on corporate power, the seizure of the press, especially the electronic press, by a handful of corporations to silence dissent, and the rise of the wholesale security and surveillance state have led to “the death of the party system” and the emergence of what Ali called “an extreme center.” Working people are being ruthlessly sacrificed on the altar of corporate profit – a scenario dramatically on display in Greece. And there is no mechanism or institution left within the structures of the capitalist system to halt or mitigate the reconfiguration of the global economy into merciless neofeudalism, a world of masters and serfs.

“This extreme center, it does not matter which party it is, effectively acts in collusion with the giant corporations, sorts out their interests and makes wars all over the world,” Ali said. “This extreme center extends throughout the Western world. This is why more and more young people are washing their hands of the democratic system as it exists. All this is a direct result of saying to people after the collapse of the Soviet Union, ‘There is no alternative.’”

The battle between popular will and the demands of corporate oligarchs, as they plunge greater and greater numbers of people around the globe into poverty and despair, is becoming increasingly volatile. Ali noted that even those leaders with an understanding of the destructive force of unfettered capitalism – such as the new, left-wing prime minister of Greece, Alexis Tsipras – remain intimidated by the economic and military power at the disposal of the corporate elites. This is largely why Tsipras and his finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis, bowed to the demands of European banks for a four-month extension of the current \$272 billion bailout for Greece. The Greek leaders were forced to promise to commit to more punishing economic reforms and to walk back from the pre-election prom-

ise of Tsipras’ ruling Syriza party to write off a large part of Greece’s sovereign debt. Greece’s debt is 175 percent of its GDP. This four-month deal, as Ali pointed out, is a delaying tactic, one that threatens to weaken widespread Greek support for Syriza. Greece cannot sustain its debt obligations. Greece and European authorities will have to collide. And this collision could trigger a financial meltdown in Greece, see it break free from the eurozone, and spawn popular upheavals in Spain, Portugal and Italy.

The cost of open defiance, which, Ali pointed out, is our only escape route from corporate tyranny, will at least at first be painful. Our corporate masters do not intend to release their death grip without a brutal fight.

Ali recalled that even his late friend Hugo Chavez, the firebrand socialist president of Venezuela, was not untouched by intimidation from Establishment forces. “I remember talking to Chavez many times and saying, ‘Comandante, why do you stop there?’” Ali said. “He said it is not realistic to do it at the present time. We can regulate them, make life difficult for capitalism, use oil money for the poor, but we can’t topple the system.”

Ali added, “The Greeks and the Spanish are saying the same.”

“I don’t know what Syriza thought,” he said. “If it thought we can divide the European elite, we can make a big propaganda campaign in Europe and they will be forced to make concessions, that was foolish. This European elite, led by the Germans, doesn’t crack easily. They have walked all over the Greeks. The Greek leaders should have said to their own people, ‘We are going to try and get the best possible conditions – if not we will report to you what has happened and what we need to do.’ Instead, they fell into the European trap. The Europeans made virtually no concessions that mattered.”

The clash between the Greeks and the corporate elites that dominate Europe, Ali said, is “not economic.”

The European Union is “prepared to pour billions into fighting Russians in the Ukraine,” he said. “It’s not a question of the money. They can throw away the bloody money, as they are preparing to do and are doing in the Ukraine. With the Greeks they pretend it is economic, but it’s political. They are fearful that if the Greeks pull it off, the disease will spread. There are elections in December in Spain. If Podemos [Spain’s left-wing party] wins with Greece already having won and proceeding, however modestly, on a different path, the Spanish will say the Greeks have done it. And then there is the Irish waiting patiently with their progressive parties, saying, ‘Why can’t we do what Syriza has done? Why can’t we unite and take on our extreme center?’ ”

Ali said he was “shocked and angry about all the hopes that were invested in Obama by the left.” He lambasted what he called the American “obsession with identity.” Barack Obama, he said, “is an imperial president and behaves like one, regardless of the color of his skin.” Ali despaired of the gender politics that are fueling a possible run for the White House by Hillary Clinton, who would be the first woman president.

“My reply is, ‘So bloody what?’ ” he said. “If she is going to bomb countries and put drones over whole continents, what difference does her gender make if her politics are the same? That is the key. The political has been devalued and debased under neoliberalism. People retreat into religion or identity. It’s disastrous. I wonder if it is even possible to create something on a national scale in the United States. I wonder if it would be better to concentrate on big cities and states to develop some movements where they can have an influence in Los Angeles, New York or in states such as Vermont. It may be wiser to concentrate on three or four things to show that it can be done. I can’t see the old way of reproducing a political party of the left, modeled on the Republican and Democratic structures, as working. These people only work with money. They do not

even speak with very many ordinary people. It is credit-card democracy. The left cannot and should not emulate this. America is the hardest nut to crack, but unless it is cracked we are doomed.”

Ali said he fears that should Americans become politically conscious and resist, the corporate state will impose naked forms of militarized repression. Government’s reaction to the 2013 bombings at the Boston Marathon stunned him. Authorities “closed down an entire city with the support of the population.” He said that the virtual declaration of martial law in Boston was “a dress rehearsal.”

“If they can do it in Boston they can do it in other cities,” he said. “They needed to try it on in Boston to see if it would work. That frightened me.”

“The manufacturing of threats manufactures fear,” he said. “It creates sleepwalking citizens. They [officials] never tried to do this on this scale when they were fighting the Soviet Union and the communist enemy, which was supposed to be the worst, most dangerous threat ever. Now they do it over a handful of bloody terrorists.”

Groups such as Black Lives Matter, he said, offer some hope.

“Just as the traditional left parties have been wiped out all over the world, so has the radical segment of the African-American population and their organizations,” he said. “They were physically wiped out. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, some of the most gifted leaders, were assassinated. The Black Panthers were destroyed. Areas where blacks lived on the West Coast were flooded with drugs. It was a well-planned assault. But the young people who came out in Black Lives Matter have this older spirit. When Jesse Jackson went to Ferguson and engaged in demagoguery he was heckled. They did the same on the East Coast with [Al] Sharpton. These black leaders, bought off, are being seen for what they are.”

Ali’s deep concern is that organizations such as Black Lives Matter too often react to

**“If she [Hillary Clinton] is going to bomb countries and put drones over whole continents, what difference does her gender make if her politics are the same? That is the key**

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## STILL RAGING

**"No civil rights movement has sprung up uniting the citizens against mass surveillance. Neoliberalism has effectively destroyed solidarity and empathy, helped by new technology. It is a culture of narcissism**

events and "don't totally grasp that dealing with this problem of continuous state violence against the citizenry requires political movements." He worries that Americans lack an understanding of their own history and that very few are literate in basic revolutionary theory, from Karl Marx to Rosa Luxemburg. This illiteracy, he said, means that opposition movements are often unable to effectively analyze the structures and mechanisms of capitalist power and cannot formulate a sophisticated political response.

"Why didn't the American working class produce a Labour Party or a proper Communist Party?" he asked. "Repression. If you look at ... what happened in America in the early decades of the 20th century and the last decade of the 19th century you see that private mercenaries were hired to stop it [political organizing]. This is a history that is not emphasized. This wretched neoliberalism has downgraded the teaching of history. It is the one subject they really hate. Politics they can take up because they use anti-communism. But history is a huge problem. You can't understand the emergence of Syriza without understanding the Second World War, the role of the partisans, the role of the Communist Party that organized the partisans and how at one point 75 percent of the country was controlled by these partisans. Then the West came and fought a new war, Churchill did it with Truman's backing, to defeat these people."

"I was sympathetic to the Occupy movement, but not to the business of not having any demands," he said. "They should have had a charter demanding a free health service, an end to the pharmaceuticals and insurance companies' control of the health service, a free education at every level for all Americans. The notion, promoted by anarchists such as John Holloway, that you can change the world without taking power is useless. I have a lot of respect for the anarchists that mobilize and fight for immigrant rights. But I am critical of those who theorize a politics that is not political. You

have to have a political program. The anarchists of yore, in Spain, for example, had a real political program. This new type of anarchism achieves nothing. And probably half of these groups are infiltrated. We have the figures of how many FBI people were in the Communist Party and their Trotskyist offspring. There were huge numbers. FBI people were making key decisions."

Ali said that the failure on the part of citizens to build mass movements to dismantle wholesale surveillance in the wake of the revelations by Edward Snowden was an example of our collective self-delusion and our complicity in our own oppression. The cult of the self, a product of neoliberal corporate propaganda, infects every aspect of society and culture and leads to paralysis.

"Hollywood gave an Oscar to 'Citizenfour' and that is as far as it goes," he said. "As if that matters. That is what is frightening. No civil rights movement has sprung up uniting the citizens against mass surveillance. Neoliberalism has effectively destroyed solidarity and empathy, helped by new technology. It is a culture of narcissism."

Ali predicted that the current global speculation would result in another catastrophic financial crash. This new crash will give birth to "movements and people who will say, 'Enough.' " If these movements build radical political programs with an alternative socialist vision for society, our "authoritarian capitalism" can be battled, but if this vision is absent, if revolt is simply reactive, things will get worse. The epicenter of this struggle, he said, will be in the United States.

"If nothing happens in the United States, if nothing new is created to challenge systemic excesses and empire, it will be a bad situation for all of us," he said. "One is doomed if nothing happens in the US." **CT**

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*Chris Hedges, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, writes a regular column for Truthdig – <http://truthdig.com> – every Monday.*



# Welcome to Canaan, the 51st State

**Lawrence Houghteling** suggests a radical – if unlikely – way to end the Israel-Palestine conflict

**T**oday (March 17), we woke up to a brand-new Middle East reality. Bin-yamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, known as “Bibi,” who in his bid for re-election thumbed his nose at the nation that has kept his country alive and prospering for 50 years, I mean of course the United States ... has won big.

There’s no getting away from the fact that three or four days ago Netanyahu’s main opposition party, the Zionist Union, seemed poised to win the largest number of seats in the new Knesset, with a good shot at forming the new government. Today the prime minister’s Likud Party has won 30 seats out of 120 (Zionist Union won 24), and in a coalition with West-Bank-settler parties, Russian-immigrant parties, and so on, Bibi is likely to be able to form a new government with a bigger majority – and hence more stability and more power – than his old coalition enjoyed.

How did he accomplish this? Only one thing can account for Netanyahu’s sudden victory: his declarations a few days before the election that he would never permit the creation of a Palestinian state side-by-side with Israel, and that he would continue and even step up the policy of adding new and enlarging existing Jewish settlements on the West Bank. Apparently between eight and ten percent of Israel’s voters, people who had been planning on voting for a party other than Likud a week ago or had claimed to be

“undecided,” were persuaded by his remarks to switch to Likud.

Bibi is deeply disliked and distrusted in Israel, and in some circles of the United States, and in much of the rest of the world. I think many informed people would agree with my calling him “deeply cynical and intellectually corrupt” – and yet he has apparently won an unprecedented fourth term, with increased power. Amazing!

This does not bode well for the future of Israel, to say the least.

For one thing, Bibi’s actions of the last few weeks have poisoned his relationship with the American president and large portions of the Democratic Party (interestingly, the traditional political home of about three-fourths of American Jews). Because of the strength of the “Israel Lobby” and its ability to use its money and influence to punish politicians who are overtly anti-Israel (or even insufficiently pro-Israel), I don’t expect to see the sorts of overt declarations of loathing for Bibi and his politics and policies that they deserve any time soon. And yet ...

Netanyahu openly backed the Republican candidate in the 2012 presidential election against the incumbent president, Barack Obama, whom he deemed at the very least insufficiently pro-Israel ... and he has gotten away with it.

He accepted an invitation from the opposition-led US Congress to speak out against

**Bibi’s actions of the last few weeks have poisoned his relationship with the American president and large portions of the Democratic Party (interestingly, the traditional political home of about three-fourths of American Jews)**

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## IF ONLY ...

**With possible defeat at the polls staring him in the face, he gambled his future on proclaiming his disdain for the “Two-State Solution”, the core of joint American-Israeli peace efforts**

Mr. Obama’s difficult, ongoing diplomacy with Iran. This was an unprecedented breach of protocol both on his part and on that of the Republican Congress. And he has gotten away with it.

He has made it clear for years to anyone not predisposed to believe his pro-peace words that he and his right-wing government were not really serious about crafting a peace with the Arabs in the Occupied Territories. But now, with possible defeat at the polls staring him in the face, he gambled his future on proclaiming his disdain for the “Two-State Solution”, which has been at the core of joint American-Israeli peace efforts ever since Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza strip more than 40 years ago. Throwing aside any pretense of being interested in making peace, Bibi has cast his lot decisively with the Greater Israel crowd. And he’s won his bet; he’s gotten away with it.

That this will cause great problems for Arabs, Israelis, Americans and the rest of the world need hardly be gone into with extended analysis.

- For the Arab citizens of Israel, having unified their efforts in the election and hav-

ing achieved unprecedented electoral success (they are now the third largest bloc in the Knesset), it will mean even less influence on the incoming government than they had on the previous one.

- For the Arabs of the West Bank and Gaza, it means that for the foreseeable future, they are totally screwed. They will be abused even more badly than they have been. Their land will be taken from them; they will be arrested and incarcerated for picayune and fraudulent reasons; they will be endlessly mistreated, and punished if they retaliate in any way. As for the Arabs of surrounding countries, most of them have grave problems in their own societies to deal with, and they will be unable to help Israel’s captive Arabs in any significant way. For what it’s worth, the notion that the Palestinians in Israel’s occupied territories live in “bantustans” and that the way they are treated amounts to “apartheid” will become the conventional wisdom worldwide, and even widely believed and spoken of in the United States.

- For the large number of Israelis who are disturbed by Netanyahu’s electoral success – nearly half the country, the polls suggest



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– thoughts of a possible “end to the Zionist dream” must be coming to mind. How many of them will start looking toward the exits? Some of the ancient Crusader kingdoms, they surely know, lasted almost two hundred years. But unable or unwilling to create long-term friendly relationships with their neighbors, they were eventually driven out. Can Israel somehow avoid their fate?

All of these groups are stymied. The Arabs can protest, but to what avail? Dissident Israelis just had a chance to change Israel's policies in this election, but it has become clear that a majority of Israelis is so deeply suspicious of the rest of the world, including the United States, that they claim to “favor peace” while clinging to policies, like ever-increasing settlements, that make peace all-but impossible on any terms but a complete Palestinian surrender (which ain't gonna happen).

And the only outside force that might temper Israel's behavior, the United States, seems to have given up. (Realistically speaking, no president since Eisenhower has acted tough towards Israel. Kennedy and Johnson let Israel “go nuclear.” Reagan hardly looked up when Israel invaded Lebanon. Clinton avoided the subject when, after “Oslo” – an era in which real progress might have occurred – the Israelis beefed up West Bank settlements, a thumb in the eye for the Palestinian peace-making camp.)

To complicate things greatly, Israel's nuclear weapons (whether they have 80 or 400 hardly matters; they have plenty) are an ongoing insult to their neighbors, and sooner or later one of these will acquire nukes, too, and the next big Middle East war would likely go nuclear, fast. We can expect, in such a case, that many millions will die and that the whole region will be blighted for generations with radioactive debris. This what we have to “look forward to” if the present trends continue. On both sides, the best are a minority that hardly dares to speak up, while “the worst are full of passionate intensity.”

Israel has received scads of American

money over the last 70 years – more than \$3 billion annually for many years now, and an estimated \$115 billion since 1948, according to GlobalPost. (Others, factoring in other payments, loans and favors, have estimated the US contributions to Israel over the years at many times \$115 billion.) Today this tiny country of about six million citizens and several million occupied non-citizens has the fourth or fifth most powerful armed forces in the world, as well as a “First World” economy – its per capita income would rank it about the median if it were an American state.

Will the US continue to subsidize an Israel that is wealthy, could find other ways of paying for its military preparedness, and no longer even pretends to listen to our advice? For a while, of course, we will. Thanks to the still-strong Israel Lobby, and the still-powerful sense that “we owe Israel something” because of the Nazi holocaust, we will continue these lavish payments, for a while. But someday it will occur even to Republicans and fundamentalist Christians (two groups, by the way, that were staunchly anti-Semitic and resisted admitting additional Jewish refugees in the 1930s) that these dollars could be better spent to take care of American needs, such as tax cuts for the wealthiest one percent.

Israelis will continue sending us mixed messages in the best op-ed pages. They will tell us endlessly that two states are the only solution – and also that the Two-State Solution cannot work, and we need to forget about it. Or they will inform us that the only sensible solution is One State between the Mediterranean and the Jordan – or that the idea of yoking together two such disparate and antagonistic groups has never worked and never will. So what are we to believe?

We Americans want people to get along, and we always believe that there must be a way of solving even the thorniest problem. Well, there is, and here it is:

America must admit a combined Israel-and-Palestine as the 51st state of the United States of America. Since calling this state ei-

**Today this tiny country of about six million citizens and several million occupied non-citizens has the fourth or fifth most powerful armed forces in the world**

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## IF ONLY ...

**I believe that only by making Israel and Palestine, yoked together, part of the USA., can we avoid the hideous future which awaits the entire region**

ther Israel or Palestine would make the other side unhappy, we will call the new state “Canaan.”

Hebrew, Arabic and English will all be legal languages in the new state. There will be a legitimate agreed-upon attempt to make sure that Jewish persons wishing to immigrate to the United States (and to Canaan, if they so desire) will find it easy to do so. Likewise, there will be a legitimate agreed-upon attempt to make sure that Palestinian Arabs displaced by fighting in the 1947-48 war will find it easy to become Americans (and Canaanites, if they so desire). The question not of whether but how to compensate victims of the naqba can be settled by a commission, with reparation payments made up at least in part by saving the annual \$3 billion tribute.

- All residents of Canaan will be allowed to vote in local, state and federal elections, regardless of previous status. All the laws of the United States, including the US Constitution and its amendments, will apply to all the new citizens. All residents of Canaan will be able to relocate to or move freely anywhere within the other 50 states of the US All citizens of the “Old Fifty” will be free to visit or relocate to Canaan.

- The “defensive” walls that have carved up the land and split apart villages and farms will be torn down. Persons whose lands have been taken from them against their wishes will be able to apply to a Peace and Reconciliation Commission for a restoration of their lands, if they assert the taking was unnecessary or illegal. Moreover, the Commission will have the power to review thousands of court cases and decide whether any persons have been wrongfully imprisoned, and it will have the right to free such persons as it may indicate.

- All Israeli and Palestinian armed forces will become part of the United States armed forces, and all Israeli nuclear weapons will become part of the American nuclear arsenal. As a sign of goodwill toward the rest of the region, the United States will withdraw

all nuclear arms at present housed in the State of Israel or on board its submarines from the Middle East. These weapons will henceforth be kept in the continental US or aboard American submarines elsewhere.

- The rights of all religious groups in Canaan must be respected, and places considered holy by any religious group must be respected by all other religious groups. A Religious Reconciliation Commission in which all three great monotheistic religions as well as non-believers will be represented, shall have the power to investigate breaches of the First Amendment and encroachments by any group on any other groups’ holy places and observances.

I believe that only by making Israel and Palestine, yoked together, part of the USA., can we avoid the hideous future which awaits the entire region if the Palestinians, the Israelis, and their neighbors are allowed to continue the short-sighted and malignant policies they have been pursuing as long as any human being alive can remember. The only way to save the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian non-Jews is to bring them together in the 51st “American” state. We must make clear, especially to the Israelis, whose ideal of a “Jewish state” will make them resist this Canaanite solution, that the United States has been their great and loyal friend for generations, but the gravy train is coming to an end, and that we can no longer condone behavior we see as suicidal. If the Israelis choose to go it alone, they can no longer expect us to underwrite their wars, nor to stand up for them when the inevitable shit comes down.

But, we must emphasize, by accepting citizenship in Canaan, the 51st state of the United States of America, destruction can be averted, and a bright future may be possible for both of these deeply wronged and worthy peoples. **CT**

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*Lawrence Houghteling is a retired New York City high school teacher. He writes again for ColdType after a five-year absence from these pages*

# Guilt trip

On the way to the casino, **Patrick Lee** learns a lesson about life

It's Friday afternoon. I am stepping along Canal Street, New Orleans en route to the casino. The sidewalk is wide and mostly clear, a nippy wind keeping everyone moving. I hear a cheery "Hello, sir, how are you?". There at my shoulder is a scar-faced urchin, looking up at me from 5'3".

"In a hurry," says I brusquely with a quickening of pace. His eyes turn flat and he peels away immediately. Slightly surprised at how easily he gives up and a twinge of guilt but what the hell, my mind is on the blackjack table. During the evening I think a few times of the poverty and marks of childhood violence on his face.

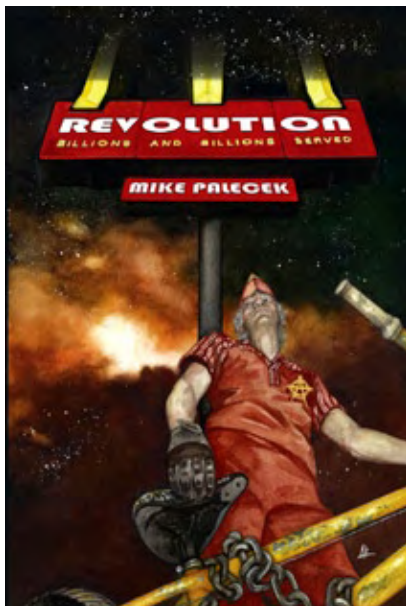
The next afternoon, when I have searched the entire hotel room for my sunglasses, I realize what happened. Luckily that's all that was in the outside pocket of my jacket, sunglasses in a soft case that could look and feel like a wallet. Pickpocketed in New Orleans, duh, but the interesting thing is how instantly my memory of the event changes when realization hits. My first version of each instant was shaped by my interpretation of our brief relationship, me the uncharitable boulevardier, him the

needy supplicant. I brush him off, he is too cowed to press his case. All that is gone. Now I see what I didn't before: how he materialized out of thin air, suddenly too close, inside my space; I even feel what I didn't before: perhaps a brush on my coat in the stiff breeze.

His quick peel away is not because I am fierce, it is because he has what he wants from the idiot tourist's pocket, and now needs distance. Viewed from above in my mind now, I see a perfect maneuver -- the shambling course of the easy mark, the smooth parabola of the attack. From his point of view, I played my role faultlessly -- if I had stopped to be gracious, that would have been a problem for him.

I am short the sunglasses, but I have gained something, too. Be the one on whom nothing is lost. **CT**

*Patrick Lee grew up in South Africa where he worked as a journalist and screenwriter. His novel "On The Wild Coast" is set in a remote coastal village in the aftermath of the end of apartheid. Lee moved to the US and in 2012 published a crime novel set in Connecticut, "The Flies of August".*



## REVOLUTION: BILLIONS AND BILLIONS SERVED

A Novel by Mike Palecek

Published by CWG Press Price \$14

Paperback available at Amazon.com and at Createspace.com – <https://wwwcreatespace.com/5386905>

E-book available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Apple, Scribd and other outlets

# Looking for a revolution

An excerpt from the new novel, *Revolution: Billions and Billions Served*, by **Mike Palecek**

He stopped to try to read up and down the back of the T-shirt of a large red-haired woman waiting for chow

## CHAPTER ONE

*“Hope is a feeling that life and work have meaning. You either have it or you don’t, regardless of the state of the world that surrounds you.” — Vaclav Havel*

**G**ob Bless America.  
Dog Bless America.  
And Doug Bless The America  
People and the New Nighted States  
Of American.

“You look like you won the shittin’ lottery.”

Britt’ny chewed a fry and wiped the front counter.

“I did. Didn’t you hear?”

He raised his voice and put a hand to his ear to offer her a hint he knew she wouldn’t accept on the choice of local morning show on the radio blaring out the speakers in each corner of the building, inside and out.

“No! Really?”

The old man walked into his restaurant like he used to be somebody.

He stopped to try to read up and down the back of the T-shirt of a large red-haired woman waiting for chow.

“Yo ... outlook ... life ... result ... how ... like yoursel ...”

What? What does that possibly mean?  
“How much?”

Britt’ny pressed her big stomach into the counter.

“A lot,” he smiled.

He came to her, careful not to get close. He smelled almonds, maybe from the token fruit basket by the register, but suspecting cyanide in the vial she would pour in his coffee when fate handed her the chance.

“Where’s my money?”

She held out her hand, palm up. She was not kidding.

“I would ...”

She stared over the heads of the customers waiting.

“Get ...”

She listed what type of car, house, land, trips, as the people waiting stared holes into her eyes and her forehead.

“Don’t you want to know what I’m going to do?” he shouted from the drinks area.

He gathered his creamers, went to his closet, hauled out his broom, mop, bucket, spray bottle, pulled them all into his arms with his pop and his notebooks, pencils.

She turned away to fetch pastry, still smiling, thinking about ...

He excused himself to the front of the line, bumped shins with buckets, leaned over the counter to ask the stout girl if there were any more creamers in that box under the counter.

He stopped short, seeing she’d returned to earth.

He glared over the top of his glasses down his nose at the girl in the black glasses

whose eyes just came to the top of the cash register.

He wore a yellow shirt, the same as she, red paper cap.

She smelled like makeup, he thought.

He smells like urine, he imagined her thinking.

The plump had returned to her cheeks, her eyes sunken, lips blue, not enough blood to keep everything running and rosy.

“You ... are a shithead!” She screamed and her face glowed bright, her freckles pulsed like brake lights in traffic, her fists flat against her sides reached to her waist, no farther. She seemed to stand on tiptoes.

No, not at all, she smelled like gladioli perfume. He changed his mind.

“You don’t even want it! Why do people like you get everything!”

The people in line avoided eye contact, studied the floor, looked toward the door as she turned away, seemed to be sniffing.

When actually the only thing either could smell was hamburgers and french fries, the ubiquitous hint of the dark roast.

The drivers squawked. The old people talked loud in the corner.

But, this ageing recluse had no time for old Americans.

He hurried along, head down. He had a job to do.

Real people waiting for him.

He grabbed together his coffee, creamers, sugars, mop and bucket, broom, rags, clumped them with his pencils and notebooks and humped and clanged his way to his table, where he dropped the writing things over the table and displayed the cleaning things about as if constructing the scene for a community play.

He had an idea. That burned in his brain and in his heart, shooting tingles down his spine to his toes.

He was rich

**CHAPTER TWO**

*“It is well enough that people of the nation do not understand our banking and monetary system, for if they did, I believe there would be a revolution before tomorrow morning.” — Henry Ford*

Gob Bless America.

Dog Bless America.

And Doug Bless The America People and the New Nighted States Of American.

The teacher ground the sentence into the blackboard with a new piece of yellow chalk, throwing flakes on her fingers and her white fluffy blouse.

She rubbed her shirt and smeared the chalk into the fabric.

She gritted her teeth and clenched her jaw, then swirled back to the class, commanding them to copy what she had written on their own paper in neat handwriting.

“And tell me what’s wrong.”

One of the children did not hear what his teacher had said.

He sat halfway back in the middle row, smiling, with a comic book stuck inside his history textbook.

The teacher saw him. Him not taking out a fresh sheet of loose leaf paper or opening his writing notebook. Not budging at all.

He held up the history book in front of his face, with the Super Hero comic inside. He smiled and did not see the warning looks and coughs of the kids around him.

The teacher stood over him, hands on hips, glaring down.

“Can you please tell me what I just said, Mister?”

The boy folded the history book. The comic book showed on the edges.



**REVOLUTION:  
Billions and Billions  
Served**

Mike Palecek

CWG Press

\$14 (Amazon.com)

**He held up the history book in front of his face, with the Super Hero comic inside**

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## BOOK EXCERPT

**Antoinette saw the flame and the push of the explosion blow out the windows. She threw dollars at the cashier and floored it**

He let the books down onto his desk like the silver revolver in the confessional.

She had the goods.

“Umm,” he said.

“Will you please tell me and the class what the assignment is?”

“My favorite tree,” he said, as girls around him tittered.

“My favorite vacation ... and my most memorable school assignment.”

Stuffed state birds — mockingbird, brown thrasher, cardinal, goldfinch

— ringed the counters around the room; each state flag ran in a circle above the blackboards; each state flower — camellia, forget-me-not, apple blossom — student drawings of state sayings filled the bulletin boards.

Baggies containing state grains sat in neat rows on the card table under the windows.

Kate Smith gargled “God Bless Americans” in the intercom box above the blackboard.

The teacher wore a camo dress and blaze orange high heels with aircraft carrier earrings, framed with red, white and blue eye-glasses, and the children dressed as their favorite branch of the military.

Each child had a lunch of apple pie and hot dogs waiting in a paper sack in the cloakroom.

The class pet bald eagle perched on its post in the back of the room, pecking at the golden chain holding one leg.

The children and their teacher heard the wap-wap of a helicopter overhead and everyone hoped their grandmothers were going to be okay.

A young man with a walkie-talkie in his lap sat carefully into the rose bushes on the east school lawn.

A reporter and her cameraman hurried into the van and sped out of the station parking lot.

A group gathered by the tennis courts and softball field, drinking coffee from Styrofoam cups, making nervous little talk, waiting, sneaking looks toward the school.

Tori Francis walked her twin Malamutes down the north sidewalk in front of the school, holding the leashes in one hand and her bible to her nose with the other.

“Two creamers please, no napkin, well, sure, go ahead, that’s all right, thank you.”

Antoinette Marie Cole got her coffee from the drive-through. She was in a hurry, as always.

Paul Eustis, the UPS driver for this neighborhood, galloped back from the Addison front door, his arms at chest level. His goal for this day, for the entire summer: perpetual motion.

The young boy sneaked looks at the blackboard, around the arms of the teacher. One of his friends had crept up and now pointed at the writing on the board.

The young boy in the wooden desk wearing the tri-cornered hat made of newspaper that his mother had constructed for him at the last minute smiled and looked into the dark eyes of his teacher, back to his friend in the front nodding his head to say, do it, do it, now! Or you’re dead!

The young boy pushed up from his desk, stood in the aisle, making his teacher move, looked out the window to think a little more, now smiling wide.

He had it.

He placed his flat hand over his heart, proudly proclaiming just before the bomb went off, “Ant to the me-public for bitch it stands, be patient, underdog with liberty and just us for Paul.”

First they heard the snap-boom, the bark, the roar.

Tori sprinted across the lawn, her dogs tugging on her arms.

Antoinette saw the flame and the push of the explosion blow out the windows. She threw dollars at the cashier and floored it.

Paul jumped in, pulled a U-turn and in a minute he charged through the front glass doors.

The smoke cloud rose like a burnt cinnamon roll above the school, drifting over the trees.



A police officer pushed Paul back with a firm hand in the chest, back out the doors, onto the front walk.

A pair of emergency type persons in orange vests held up their hands and told Tori to take her dogs and go home.

“They’re gone.

“All gone,” said the policeman and the orange vests.

As Antoinette jumped from her car she was surrounded by cops pointing guns telling her to get down on the ground.

“Now!”

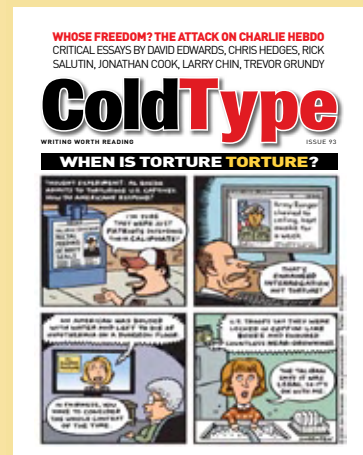
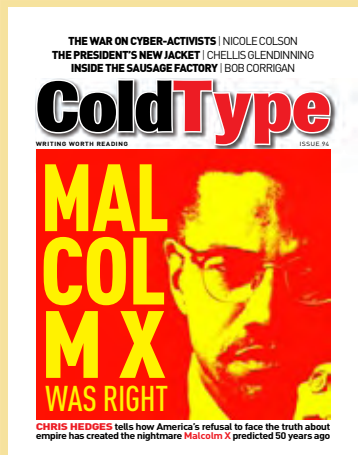
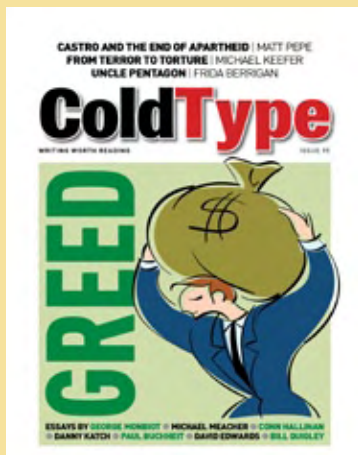
The group that had been milling at the tennis courts and ball field streamed out the shuttle bus, walking fast toward the school.

The helicopter wap-wapped overhead, someone leaning out an open bay door with a camera.

The smoke cloud floated over the neighborhoods, over McDonald’s, city bank, Kum N’ Go, out to the fields.

“You can’t keep doing this, Zeke,” said the tall young man in the red paper hat, the squeaky voice making its way through the thick smoke. **CT**

**The helicopter wap-wapped overhead, someone leaning out an open bay door with a camera**



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