

AT SCHOOL WITH THE LAS VEGAS SHOOTER | GREG PALAST
LEPRECHAUNS, NAZIS & TRUNCHEONS | CONN M. HALLINAN
NOAM CHOMSKY AND THE BBC | DAVID CROMWELL

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ISSUE 147

WHEN THE LAW COMES KNOCKING

“There are many Hackneys, but this is the one I kept thinking about while I lived there. I wanted to know what was at the end of the sirens and flashing lights”

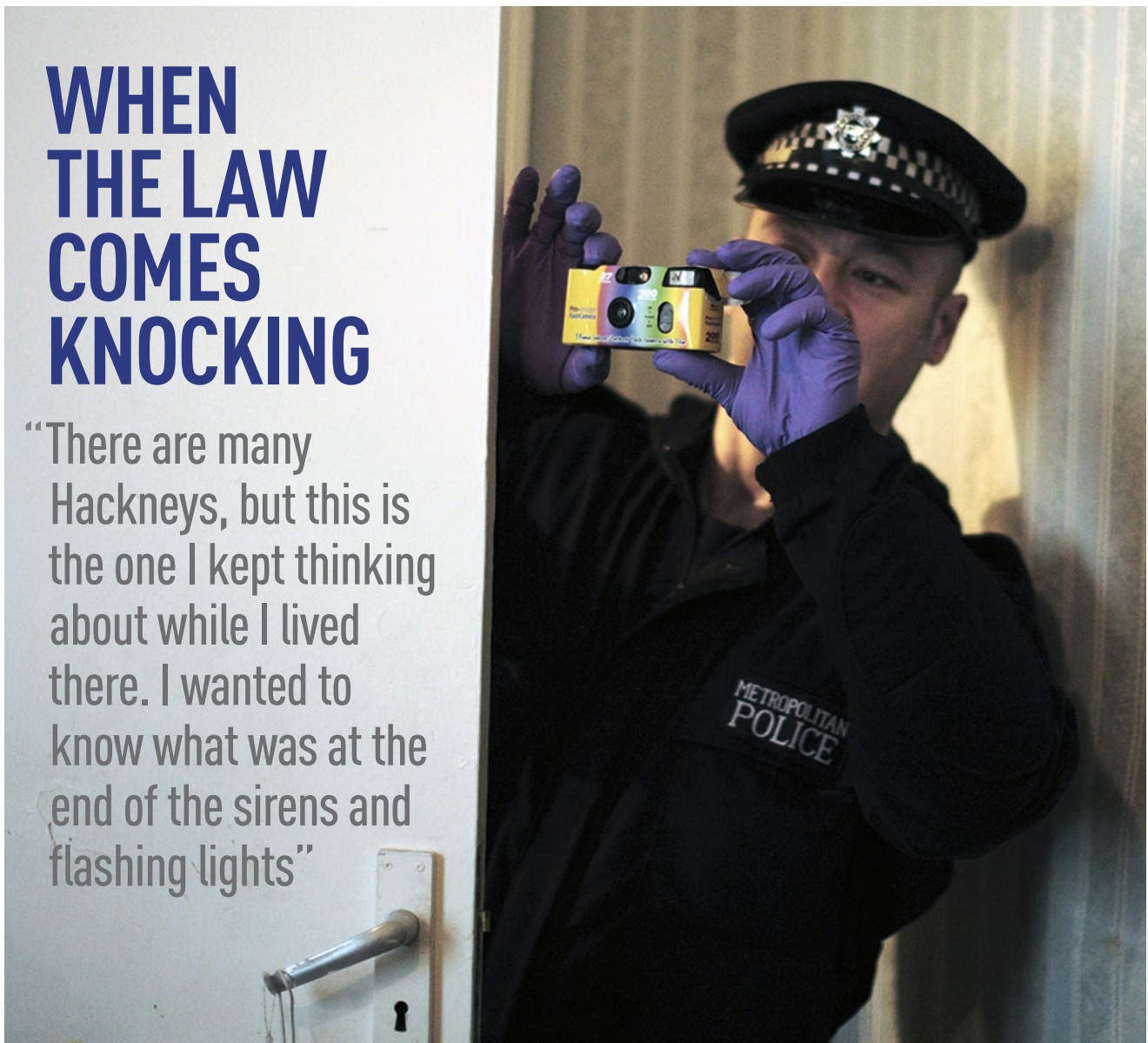


Photo: Robin Maddock

PLUS: SPECIAL REPORT: THE JOURNALIST AND THE FIXER – NICK TURSE

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Cover photo:

Robin Maddock

Cop wears purple rubber gloves as he takes a photo with a yellow disposable camera during a raid on a London housing estate.

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INSIGHTFUL ANALYST:

Noam Chomsky

Photo: Wikimedia

Noam Chomsky and the BBC

A brief comparison shows whose analysis is the more trustworthy, writes **David Cromwell**

A recent interview with 88-year-old Noam Chomsky once again demonstrates just how insightful he is in providing rational analysis of Western power and the suffering it generates. By contrast, anyone relying on BBC News receives a power-friendly view of the world, systematically distorted in a way that allows the state and private interests to pursue business as usual.

In what follows, I present examples of Chomsky's clarity on several important topics and contrast them with the distortions and silences from BBC News. These examples are not intended to be fully comprehensive, with lots of detailed background. But they are highly illustrative of the propaganda nature of what the BBC broadcasts every day.

First, consider North Korea which has carried out missile tests that have “demonstrated its growing power and expertise, stoking tensions with the US,” as the BBC puts it. A helpful graphic shows much of the northern hemisphere within range of these missiles. In particular, the west coast of the United States is portrayed as under real threat from the “hermit” state's nuclear missiles: a scaremongering scenario that BBC News has promoted in line with the propaganda requirements of the White House, the Pentagon and the arms industry. Video clips on the BBC News website have titles such as “N Korea announces nuclear

test,” “S Korea drill response to N Korea missile,” “We're used to hearing about being bombed,” and “I don't know when I might be killed.”

In a forthcoming book of interviews with journalist David Barsamian, *Global Discontents: Conversations on the Rising Threats to Democracy*, Chomsky acknowledges that North Korea has a “growing arsenal of nuclear weapons and missiles” which does indeed “pose a threat to the region and, in the longer term, to countries beyond.” But then he provides vital context for this arsenal of weapons:

“Its function is to be a deterrent, one that the North Korean regime is unlikely to abandon as long as it remains under threat of destruction.”

Yes, threat of destruction; something that is very real in the historical memory of the people: “North Koreans remember well that their country was literally flattened by US bombing, and many may recall how US forces bombed major dams when there were no other targets left. There were gleeful reports in American military publications about the exciting spectacle of a huge flood of water wiping out the rice crops on which ‘the Asian’ depends for survival.”

Today, as Chomsky notes, we are instructed that “the great challenge faced by the world” is how to compel North Korea to freeze its nuclear and missile programmes. “Perhaps we should resort to more sanc-

Truth Telling

If a BBC News reporter presents an “analysis” that does not mention an important proposal that could bring about peace, and which the US has outright dismissed, what does that say about BBC bias?

tions, cyberwar, intimidation [...] perhaps even to direct attack on North Korea.”

He continues: “But there is another option, one that seems to be ignored: We could simply accept North Korea’s offer to do what we are demanding. China and North Korea have already proposed that North Korea freeze its nuclear and missile programmes. The proposal, though, was rejected at once by Washington, just as it had been two years earlier, because it includes a quid pro quo: It calls on the United States to halt its threatening military exercises on North Korea’s borders, including simulated nuclear-bombing attacks by B-52s.”

Wait. What was that? There is another option? An article in the Diplomat, which describes itself as “the premier international current-affairs magazine for the Asia-Pacific region,” outlines the proposal; namely that: “Pyongyang declare a moratorium on both nuclear and missile tests, in exchange for the United States and South Korea halting their large-scale joint military exercises.”

China has given this proposal the succinct name of “dual suspensions.”

Chomsky explains further: “The offer to freeze North Korea’s nuclear and missile programmes in return for an end to highly provocative actions on North Korea’s border could be the basis for more far-reaching negotiations, which could radically reduce the nuclear threat and perhaps even bring the North Korea crisis to an end. Contrary to much inflamed commentary, there are good reasons to think such negotiations might succeed.”

He continues: “Yet even though the North Korean programmes are constantly described as perhaps the greatest threat we face, the Chinese-North Korean proposal is unacceptable to Washington, and is rejected by US commentators with impressive unanimity. This is another entry in the shameful and depressing record of near-reflexive preference for force when peaceful options may well be available.”

So, there is a reasonable proposal from

China and North Korea that could form the basis for negotiations leading to a peaceful resolution of the crisis – but it has been dismissed by Washington and US commentators. To what extent has it been covered by BBC News? Consider a report by Seoul-based BBC correspondent Stephen Evans when US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson threatened North Korea with military action. Like Obama, Trump has ruled out negotiation with North Korea. The “situation remains the same,” said Evans in the section of the BBC News report grandly titled Analysis:

“North Korea shows no hint of being willing to renounce nuclear weapons, whatever economic blows it receives and whatever China might think.”

If a BBC News reporter presents an “analysis” that does not mention an important proposal that could bring about peace, and which the US has outright dismissed, what does that say about BBC bias?

This is not a one-off. Washington-based BBC correspondent Barbara Plett-Usher noted dutifully that Tillerson had urged an “international response” to North Korea’s nuclear and missile tests, without once mentioning the China-North Korea proposal.

Last month, BBC’s China editor Carrie Gracie also offered her Analysis: “China has insisted time and again that it will never accept North Korea as a nuclear weapons state, and it can’t avoid the obvious and urgent question: how does China intend to stop it?”

There was nothing about the proposal that China has made, with North Korea, to address the stalemate. Likewise, earlier in the year, Gracie had said in another BBC News report: “So in Beijing today, Mr Tillerson kept it diplomatic. There was no public repetition of President Trump’s complaint that China is not doing enough to prevent North Korea’s nuclear and missile programmes.”

The BBC News reporter was thus uncritically presenting Washington’s “complaint” about China without pointing out that its

rational proposal had been summarily dismissed by the US. This is not journalism; it is power-friendly propaganda.

Iran: The doctrinal view versus reality

BBC News has been reporting in the past few days that Trump “is planning to abandon the Iran nuclear deal shortly.” The BBC website dutifully provides articles with titles like “Iran nuclear deal: Key details” and “What will happen to the Iran nuclear deal?” But you will struggle in vain to find the necessary context and vital facts that Chomsky provides: “Iran has long been regarded by US leaders, and by US media commentary, as extraordinarily dangerous, perhaps the most dangerous country on the planet. This goes back to well before Trump. In the doctrinal system, Iran is a dual menace: It is the leading supporter of terrorism, and its nuclear programmes pose an existential threat to Israel, if not the whole world. It is so dangerous that Obama had to install an advanced air defence system near the Russian border to protect Europe from Iranian nuclear weapons – which don’t exist, and which, in any case, Iranian leaders would use only if possessed by a desire to be instantly incinerated in return.”

As Chomsky says, that’s the view according to “the doctrinal system” espoused by Washington and allies, along with their cheerleaders in the mainstream media and academia. But what about the reality?

“In the real world, Iranian support for terrorism translates to support for Hezbollah, whose major crime is that it is the sole deterrent to yet another destructive Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and for Hamas, which won a free election in the Gaza Strip – a crime that instantly elicited harsh sanctions and led the US government to prepare a military coup. Both organisations, it is true, can be charged with terrorist acts, though not anywhere near the amount of terrorism that stems from Saudi Arabia’s involvement in the formation and actions of jihadi networks.’

Chomsky then points to: “the unmentionable fact that any concern about Iranian weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) could be alleviated by the simple means of heeding Iran’s call to establish a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. Such a zone is strongly supported by the Arab states and most of the rest of the world and is blocked primarily by the United States, which wishes to protect Israel’s WMD capabilities.”

For BBC diplomatic correspondent Jonathan Marcus, this call by Iran for a WMD-free zone in the Middle East has seemingly never happened. Sounds familiar? As with the China-North Korea proposal discussed above, the Iranian proposal for a WMD-free zone in the Middle East appears not to exist for the BBC. Instead, his “analysis” is littered with propaganda nuggets such as: “Washington’s most pressing problem with Iran is its regional behaviour.”

It is left to Chomsky once again to provide an accurate representation of reality: “Since the doctrinal system falls apart on inspection, we are left with the task of finding the true reasons for US animus toward Iran. Possibilities readily come to mind. The United States and Israel cannot tolerate an independent force in a region that they take to be theirs by right. An Iran with a nuclear deterrent is unacceptable to rogue states that want to rampage however they wish throughout the Middle East.”

Remember that Marcus has a supposed BBC commitment towards “impartiality.” This allegedly includes the commitment to consider “the broad perspective . . . ensuring the existence of a range of views is appropriately reflected.” These BBC News editorial standards are, of course, regularly breached every day of the year.

The BBC correspondent then goes on to provide a list of “flashpoints between Washington and Tehran,” as though the two countries were sparring partners, rather than a global power attempting to assert control over a country that is trying to maintain its independence. Tellingly, there is no room in

“In the real world, Iranian support for terrorism translates to support for Hezbollah, whose major crime is that it is the sole deterrent to yet another destructive Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and for Hamas, which won a free election in the Gaza Strip”

Truth Telling

Chomsky points out something that is difficult, if not impossible, to find on the BBC about what is happening under Trump

the BBC's list of "flashpoints" for the violent US removal of the democratically elected Iranian government in 1953. As Chomsky notes of the 1979 revolution that removed the Shah of Iran: "Iran cannot be forgiven for overthrowing the dictator installed by Washington in a military coup in 1953, a coup that destroyed Iran's parliamentary regime and its unconscionable belief that Iran might have some claim on its own natural resources."

Spotlight on the showman while the planet burns

In his interview, Chomsky points out something that is difficult, if not impossible, to find on the BBC about what is happening under Trump: "out of the spotlight, the most savage fringe of the Republican Party is carefully advancing policies designed to enrich their true constituency: the Constituency of private power and wealth, 'the masters of mankind,' to borrow Adam Smith's phrase."

These policies include legislation that attacks workers' rights, consumer protection, rural communities, health programmes and "much-needed constraints on the predatory financial system that grew during the neoliberal period."

As well as pulling out of the Paris climate agreement, the Republican Party "wrecking ball" is: "intent on maximising the use of fossil fuels, including the most dangerous; dismantling regulations; and sharply cutting back on research and development of alternative energy sources, which will soon be necessary for decent survival."

As Chomsky notes, some of "the most dangerous developments under Trump trace back to Obama initiatives." He gives an example: "A very important study in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, published in March 2017, reveals that the Obama nuclear weapons modernisation programme has increased 'the overall killing power of existing US ballistic missile forces by a factor of roughly three – and it creates exactly what one would expect to see, if a nuclear-armed state were planning to have the capacity to fight and win a nuclear war by disarming enemies with a surprise first strike.' As the analysts point out, this new capacity undermines the strategic stability on which human survival depends."

Chomsky observes that this "has barely been reported." Certainly, we have been unable to find any mention of it anywhere on the BBC News website. Chomsky adds that: "the chilling record of near disaster and reckless behaviour of leaders in past years only shows how fragile our survival is. Now this programme is being carried forward under Trump. These developments, along with the threat of environmental disaster, cast a dark shadow over everything else – and are barely discussed, while attention is claimed by the performances of the showman at center stage."

This is an apt description of BBC News coverage, even as the world plunges towards possible terminal disaster for humanity. **CT**

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David Cromwell is the co-editor of Medialens, the British media watchdog – www.medialens.org

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Of leprechauns, Nazis and truncheons

Conn M. Hallinan visits Ireland where he finds time to reflect on the worrying political changes that are changing the face of Europe

The tiny village of Ballingarry, in the Republic of Ireland, with its narrow streets and multiple churches, seems untouched by time and untroubled by the economic and political crosscurrents tearing away at the European Union. But Ireland can be a deceptive place, and these days nowhere is immune to what happens in Barcelona, Paris and Berlin.

Ballingarry, in the heart of County Limerick – the place from which my grandfather emigrated from 126 years ago – was a textile centre before the 1845 potato famine starved to death or scattered its residents. Today, it has five pubs, “One for every 100 people,” says my third cousin Caroline, who, with her husband John, lives next to an old Protestant church that has been taken over by a high tech company.

When the American and European economies crashed in 2008, Ireland was especially victimised. Strong-armed into a “bailout” to save its banks and speculators, the Republic is only beginning to emerge from almost a decade of tax hikes, layoffs, and austerity policies that impoverished a significant section of its population. The crisis also re-ignited the island’s major export: people, particularly its young. Between 2008 and 2016, an average of 30,000 people, age 15 to 24, left each year.

The Irish economy is growing again, but the country is still burdened by a massive debt, whose repayment drains capital from needed investments in housing, education and infrastructure. But “debt” can be a deceptive word.

It is not the result of a spending spree, but the fallout from a huge real estate bubble pumped up by German, Dutch and French banks in cahoots with local speculators and politicians, who turned the Irish economy into an enormous casino. From 1999 to 2007, Irish real estate prices jumped 500 percent.

People here have reason to be wary of official government press releases and Bank of Ireland predictions. The centre-right government of former Prime Minister Enda Kenny crowed that the economy had grown an astounding 26 percent in 2015, but it turned out to be nothing more than a bunch of multinationals moving their intellectual property into Ireland to protect their profits. The forecast has since been labelled “Leprechaun economics.”

Former US House Speaker, Thomas “Tip” O’Neill – whose ancestors hailed from County Donegal in Ireland’s northwest – once said, “All politics are local,” and that’s at least partly true here. The news outlets are full of a scandal about the Irish police, the Garda, cooking breathalyser tests to arrest motorists, an upcoming abortion referendum, and a change of leadership in the left-wing Sinn Fein Party. There is also deep concern about Brexit. Britain is Ireland’s number two trading partner – the US is number one – and it is not clear how London’s exit from the EU will affect that. There is also the worrisome matter of the now open border between the Republic and Northern Ireland, accompanied by fears that Brexit will

The news outlets are full of a scandal about the Irish police, the Garda, cooking breathalyser tests to arrest motorists, an upcoming abortion referendum, and a change of leadership in the left-wing Sinn Fein Party. There is also deep concern about Brexit

Europe's Problems

Dublin is still awash with the 100th anniversary commemorations of the 1916 Easter Rebellion. At the time, the rising was opposed by many of the Irish, but when the British authorities began executing the rising's leaders, sentiment began to shift

undermine the Good Friday peace agreement between northern Catholics and Protestants.

But even the Irish have a hard time focusing on themselves these days, what with the German elections vaulting Nazis into the Bundestag and Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's auto da fe against the Catalans. Watching Spain's Guardia Civil using truncheons on old people, whose only crime was trying to vote, felt disturbingly like the dark days when Gen. Francisco Franco and his fascist Falange Party ran the country.

There is an interesting parallel between Catalonia and Ireland. Dublin is still awash with the 100th anniversary commemorations of the 1916 Easter Rebellion. At the time, the rising was opposed by many of the Irish, but when the British authorities began executing the rising's leaders, sentiment began to shift. In 1921, the British threw in the towel after 751 years. It is a lesson Spain's Rajoy should examine. Before he unleashed the Guardia Civil, polls showed the Catalans were deeply split on whether they wanted to break from Spain. That sentiment is liable to change rather dramatically in the coming weeks.

There are a number of cross currents in Europe these days, although many of them have a common source: an economic crisis in the European Union and austerity policies that have widened the inequality gap throughout the continent. The outcome of the German elections is a case in point. Going into the Sept. 25 vote, the media projected a cakewalk for Chancellor Angela Merkel and her Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union alliance. What happened was more like a train wreck, The major parties, including the Social Democratic Party (SDP), dropped more than 100 seats in the Bundestag, and the openly racist, rightwing Alternative for Germany took almost 13 percent of the vote and 94 seats.

In some ways the German election was a replay of the British election last June, but without the Labour Party's leftwing turn. Faced with the British Conservative Party's numbingly vague platform of "experience" and "order," voters went for Labour's progres-

sive program of tax the rich, free tuition, and improve health care and education, and denied the Tories a majority.

Merkel ran an election not very much different than the British Conservatives, but with the exception of the small Die Linke Party (which was itself divided) there were not a lot of alternatives for voters. The SDP were part of Merkel's Grand Coalition government, making it rather hard to critique the Chancellor's policies. The SDP leader, Martin Schultz started off campaigning against economic inequality, but shifted to the middle after losing three state elections. In their one big debate it was hard to distinguish Schultz from Merkel, and both avoided climate change, housing, the Brexit, and growing poverty.

There was certainly ammunition to go after the Chancellor with. In Merkel's 12 years in power, the chasm between rich and poor in the EU's wealthiest state has widened. Despite low unemployment, almost 16 percent of the population is near the poverty line. The problem is that many are working low paying temp jobs. Under normal circumstances that would be a powerful issue, except that it was Chancellor Gerhard Schoeder and the SDP who put policies in place that led to rise of temporary jobs and reduced wages. Suppressing wages boosted German imports but left a whole section of the population behind.

It is a continent-wide problem. According to the European Commission, almost one-third of Europe's workforce is part of the "gig" economy, many working for under minimum wage and without benefits. The replacement of employees with "independent contractors" has allowed companies such as Uber to amass enormous wealth, but the company's drivers end up earning barely enough to get by.

In short, German voters did not trust the SDP and looked for alternatives. Given the hysteria around immigration, some choose the fascist Alternative for Germany. As odious as it is to have the inheritors of the Third Reich sitting in the Bundestag, it would be a mistake to think the Party's programme was behind its success. The Alternative has nothing to offer

but racism and reaction, and neither will do much to close the wealth gap in Germany.

Dublin has turned over a wing of its National Library to an exhibit of the great Irish poet and playwright, William Butler Yeats, who is much quoted these days. A favourite seems to be some lines from "The Second Coming": "Thing fall apart; the Centre cannot hold . . . the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity."

On one level that seems a pretty good description of the rise of Europe's extreme right-wing parties, and the precipitous decline of centre and centre-left. It is an attractive literary simile, but misleading. It was the "Centre" that introduced many of the neo-liberal policies that wiped out industries, cut wages, and abandoned whole sections of the population. When French, British, German, Spanish, Italian and Greek socialists embraced free trade and wide-open markets over strong unions and social democracy, is it any wonder that voters in those countries abandoned them?

When centre-left parties returned to their roots, as they did in Britain and Portugal, voters rewarded them. After being dismissed as a deluded leftist who would destroy the British Labour Party, suddenly Corbin is being talked of as a future prime minister. In the meantime the alliance of the Portuguese Socialist Party with two other left parties is rolling back many of the more onerous austerity policies inflicted on Lisbon by the EU, sparking economic growth and a drop in the jobless rate.

Visually, Ireland is a lovely country, though one needs to prepare for prodigious amounts of rain and intimidatingly narrow roads (having destroyed two tyres in 24 hours I was banished to riding shotgun half way through our trip). But while the meadows sweeping down from dark mountains in Kerry look timeless to the tourists who pack the scenic Ring, they are not. Ireland's modern landscape is a deception. In 1845 the population of Kerry was 416 people per square mile, compared to 272 in England and Wales. Those sweeping meadows that the tourists ogle were crowded with cottages before three years of potato blight

swept them all away, "Look at those great grass fields, empty for miles and miles away," wrote the Bishop of Clonfert in 1886, "every one of them contained once its little house, its potato ground, its patch of oats."

It is ironic that Europe is so befuddled by the flood of immigrants pounding on its doors, or that Europeans somehow think the current crisis is unique. Between 1845 and 1848, one and half to two million Irish fled their famine-blackened land (another million – likely far more – starved to death) in large part due to the same kind of economics Europe is currently trying to force on countries like Ireland, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain and Cyprus.

"God brought the blight, the English brought the famine," is an old Irish saying, and it is spot on. The Liberal Party government in London was deeply enamoured with free trade and market economics, the 19th-century version of neo-liberalism, and they rigidly applied its strictures to Ireland. The result was the worst disaster to strike a population in the century. Between 1845 and 1851, Ireland lost between 20 and 25 percent of its people, although those figures were far higher in the country's west. Today, the migrants are from Syria, Somalia, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, fleeing wars Europeans helped start and from which some make money dealing arms. Others are from Africa, where a century of colonialism dismantled existing states, suppressed industry and throttled development. Now those chickens are coming home to roost.

Ireland is a small player, but it has much to teach the world: courage, perseverance, and a sense of humour. When the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in 1921, the people of Galway pulled down a statue of Lord Dunkellen and tossed it into the sea, while a band played "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles."

And Europe would do well to pay attention to some of its poets, like Patrick Pierce, who was executed at Kilmainham jail for his part in the Easter Rebellion: "I say to the masters of my people, beware. Beware of the risen people who shall take from ye that which you would not give."

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CT

In The Picture

When the law comes knocking

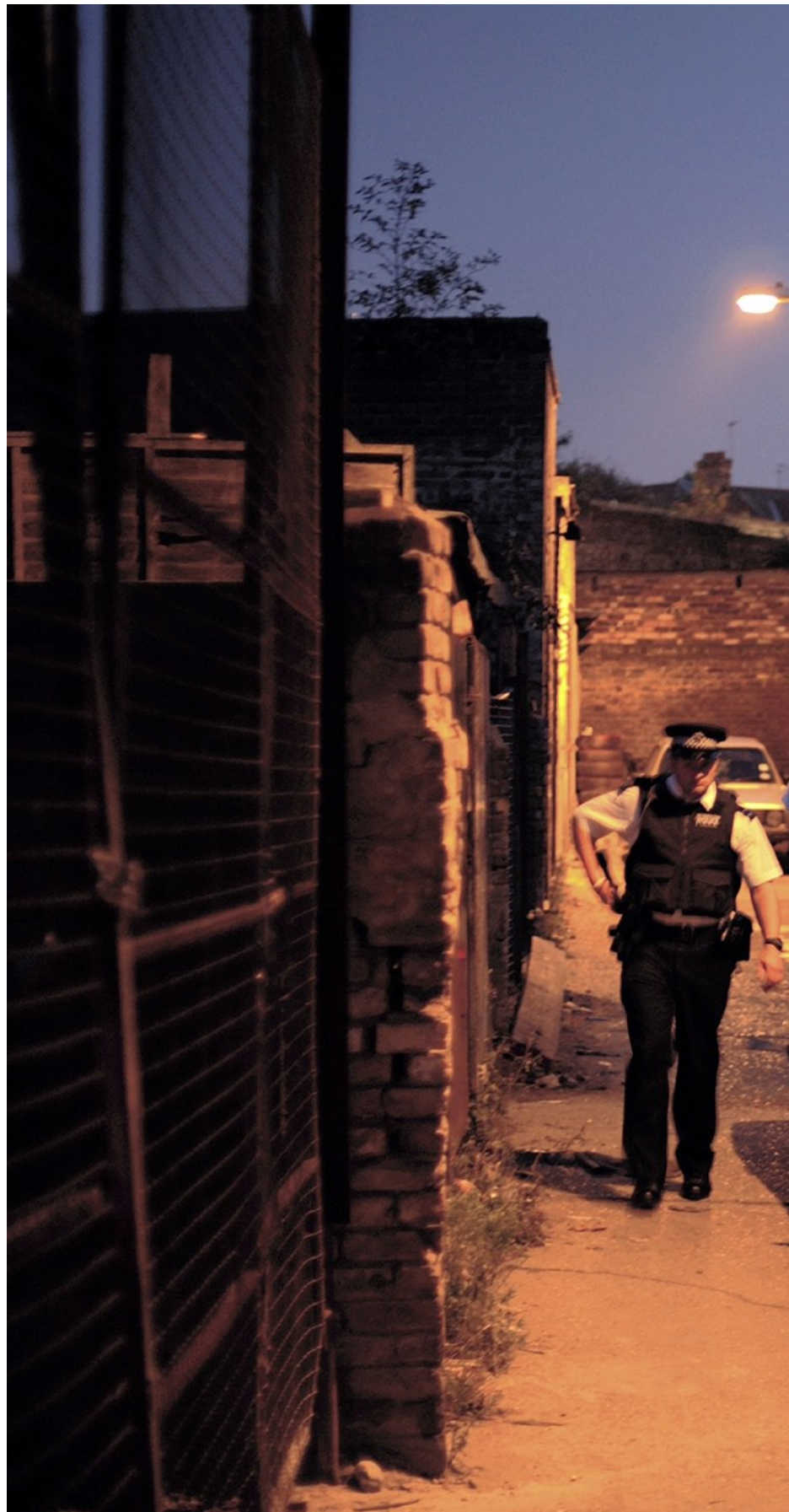
The police car lights flash, sirens scream, doors are kicked in, houses are searched, arrests are made . . .

Robin Maddock searches for the real story behind the frantic action on the dark London streets

Robin Maddock spent three years following the ear-splitting sirens and pulsating lights of police cars, photographing their occupants as they conducted symbolic, but usually futile, drug raids on impoverished homes in high rise apartments of Hackney in the east end of London.

His images in the resulting book, **Our Sons Are Going To Hell**, reveal a criminality quite unlike that we witness on our TV screen or at the movies. Many of the scenes owe more to the Keystone Cops than to any 'real-life' police drama: a cop wearing purple rubber gloves takes a photo with a multi-coloured disposable camera; another looks for a stash down the front of a suspect's track pants; while, in a third picture, a huge poster of rapper Tupac Shakur gives the finger to the back of an oblivious policeman.

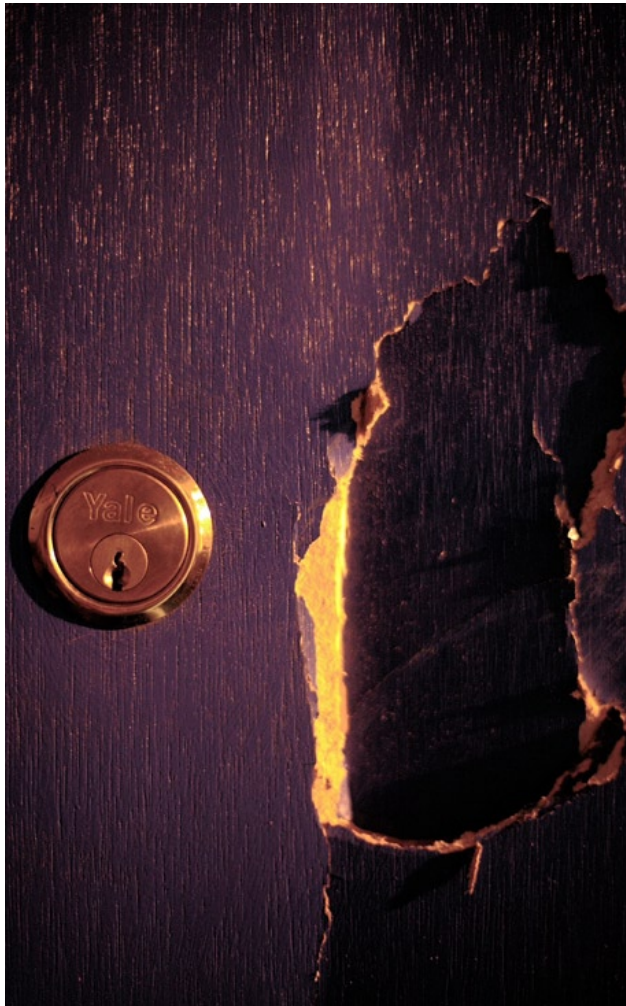
Other, often-blurry, images show a darker,





Photos © Robin Maddock, from Our Kids Are Going To Hell

In The Picture



more ominous side of the raids: doors smashed down, furniture overturned, children frightened by robocop raiders. There's a gun, a pile of cash being counted. Suspects sit in handcuffs. Poverty and despair hang like a cloud. Ghettoised concrete blocks stand in defiant contrast to the fanciful urban renewal that is turning Hackney into a desirable area for London's wealthy.

Maddock writes, "There are many Hackneys, but this is the one I kept thinking about while I lived there. I wanted to know what was at the end of the sirens and flashing lights." These minor drug raids are events that often don't even make the local newspapers. Yet the shame is one that anyone would face, it lies in the washing up, ones pornography, or being literally caught with your trousers down. In briefings before raids, I've heard what the suspects have done to other people, seen their faces. I can't feel empathy for either side.

These are cold pictures about a wider view. A lifestyle of hustle is now a product our mainstream media feeds off. To be handcuffed with your parents by twenty masked police in your bedroom is now part of a wider confusing picture of Britain. Drugs are valued equally by both sides, usually glamorous in their absence. Yet in these pictures they are only a currency, not a means of prosecution.

"Appearances in this big dark city often deceive. People in this book have not necessarily done something for which they ought to be prosecuted. In turn, doubtless some have done far more than they will ever be held account for."

In an accompanying essay, noted author Iain Sinclair highlights the pointlessness of the strategy: "Walking the streets of Hackney early in the morning, I frequently witness preparations for the sort of incidents Maddock



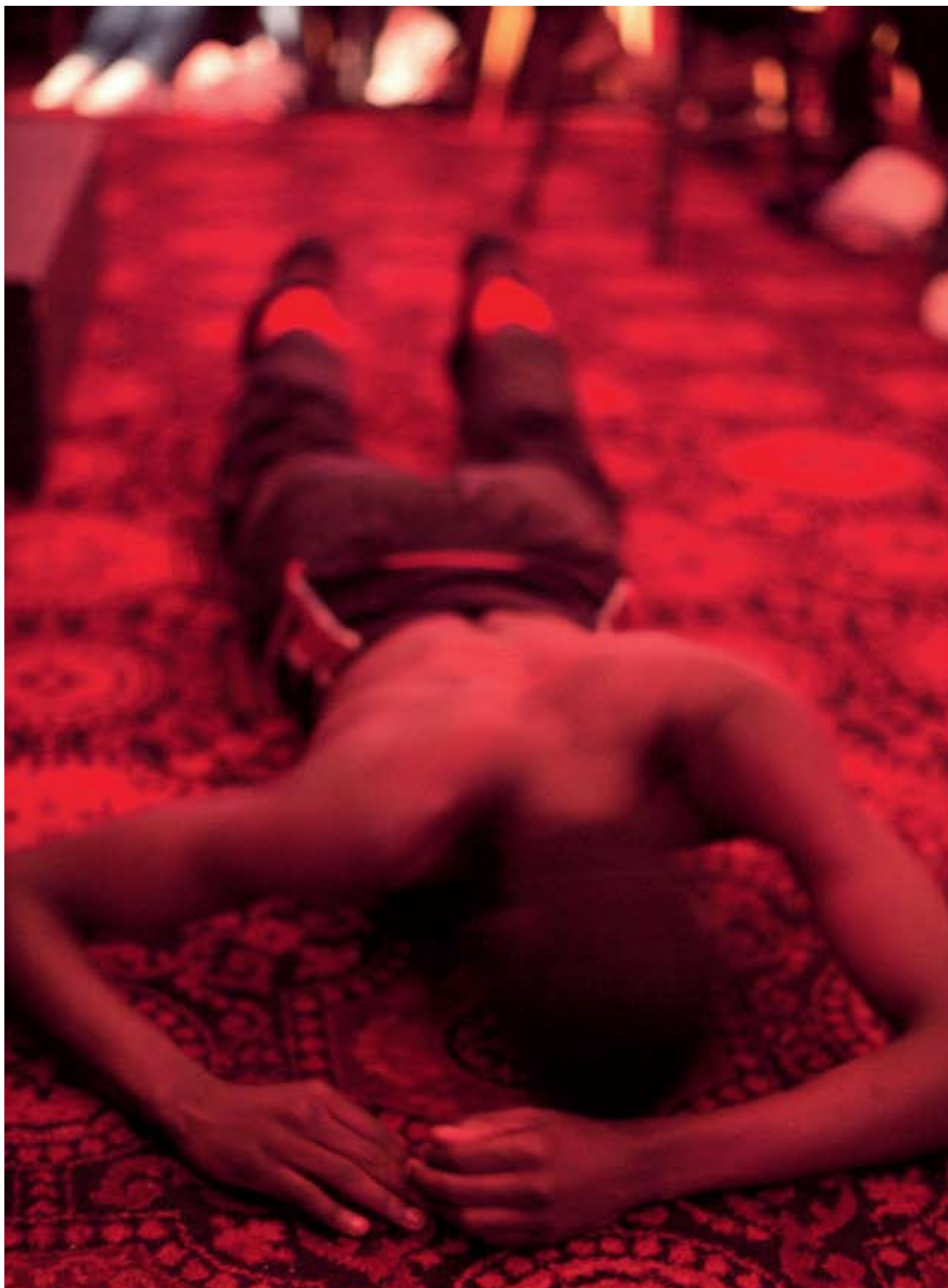
In The Picture



documents . . . The slow procedural hours, in the aftermath of the smashed door, inspire a catalogue of small revelations. There seems to be an agreement between cops and gangs to avoid collision: the raiders mass at first light and the youths manifest at dusk on the same estates. Screaming sirens work like a courtesy call, allowing offenders to melt into the shadows before they become tedious paperwork.”

It's easy to gaze critically at these images and argue that the occupants of the apartments are getting no more than they deserve; that firm police action on the pettiest of crime is necessary if we wish to





In The Picture

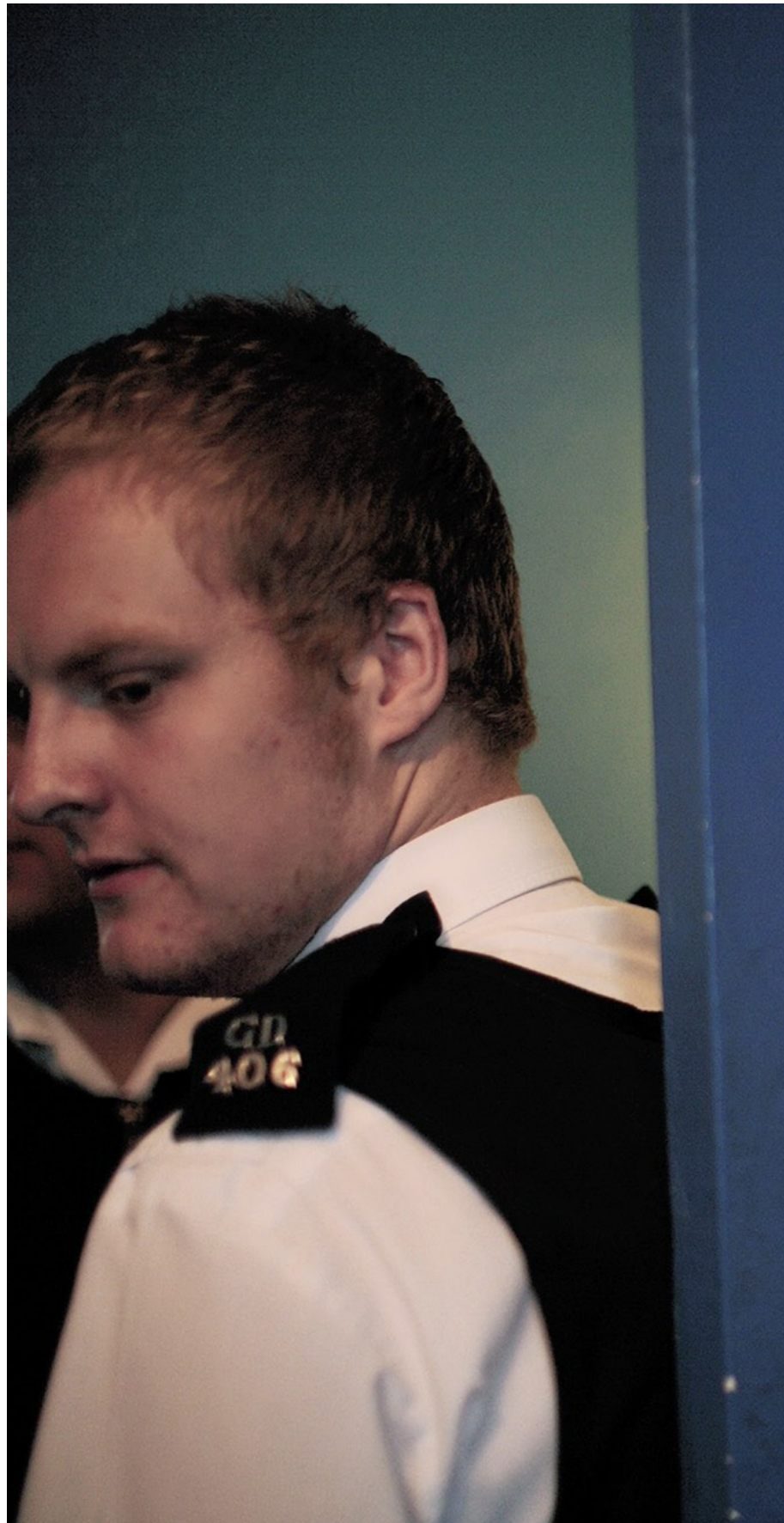
live in a civilised society. But, as Sinclair points out, we mustn't fall into the easy trap of allowing that desire for law and order to progress too far: "While Robin Maddock was accompanying police from Stoke Newington on their raids into what they understood as alien (if not enemy) territory, Hackney councillors decided that the best tactic for combating litter abuse was to establish a snoop squad, undercover agents stalking the borough with cameras. 'In one incident,' the Evening Standard reported, 'two enforcement officers burst into a café in Mare Street, searching for a woman who had dropped a cigarette butt on the ground outside.'"

Sinclair's example provides a glimpse into a future world that most of us would rather not inhabit: where the heavy hand of the law is used to crush the most trivial sign of dissent and disorder. A world in which we all dread that early-morning knock at the door. – **Tony Sutton**



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The journalist and the fixer

Nick Turse introduces some of the brave, and anonymous, men and women who make the reporting of international news possible

Once, I believed journalists roamed the world reporting stories on their own. Presumably, somebody edited the articles, but a lone byline meant that the foreign correspondent was the sole author of the reporting. Then I became a journalist and quickly learned the truth

We were already roaring down the road when the young man called to me over his shoulder. There was a woman seated between us on the motorbike and, with the distance, his accent, the rushing air, and the engine noise, it took a moment for me to decipher what he had just said: “We might have enough gas to get to Bamurye and back.”

I had spent the previous hour attempting to convince someone to take me on this ride, simultaneously weighing the ethics of the expedition, putting together a makeshift security plan, and negotiating a price. Other motorbike drivers warned that it would be a one-way trip. “If you go, you don’t come back,” more than one of them told me. I insisted we turn around immediately.

Once, I believed journalists roamed the world reporting stories on their own. Presumably, somebody edited the articles, but a lone byline meant that the foreign correspondent was the sole author of the reporting. Then I became a journalist and quickly learned the truth. Foreign correspondents are almost never alone in our work. We’re almost always dependent on locals, often many of them, if we want to have any hope of getting the story. It was never truer for me than on that day when I was attempting to cover an ongoing ethnic cleansing campaign in South Sudan.

As the motorbike driver was topping up the tank with gasoline from a plastic water bottle, I had a final chance to think things over. We were going to cross the border from Uganda into South Sudan so I could gather evidence of a murder by government troops in a village garrisoned by those same soldiers. The driver hailed from one of the ethnic groups being targeted by South Sudan’s army. If we were found by soldiers, he would likely be the first of us killed. The woman, Salina Sunday, was my guide. She was confident that she would be safe and didn’t show an ounce of fear, even though women were being raped and killed as part of the ethnic cleansing campaign churning through the southlands of South Sudan, including her home village, Bamurye.

Within minutes we were off again to find, if we were fortunate, the mutilated body of the murder victim; if we were unfortunate, his killers as well. I had met Sunday barely more than an hour earlier. I had laid eyes on the driver for the first time only minutes before we left. They were strangers and I was risking their lives for my work, for “my” story.

The fix is in

When it comes to overseas news gathering, it’s the fixers, those resourceful, wired-in locals who know all the right people, who often make it possible. Then there are the



Gruesome sight: Human skull in the middle of a well-worn path in South Sudan.

Photo: Nick Turse

generous local reporters, translators, guides, drivers, sources, informants of every sort, local friends, friends of friends, and sometimes – as in my trip to Bamurye (recently recounted in full in the *Columbia Journalism Review*) – courageous strangers, too. Those women and men are the true, if unsung, heroes behind the bylines of so many foreign correspondents. They’re the ones who ensure that, however imperfectly, we at least have a glimpse of what’s happening in far-off, sometimes perilous places about which we would otherwise be clueless.

So when the great Iona Craig dons a black abaya and niqab, inserts her “brown tinted contact lenses to cover [her] green foreigner eyes,” and blows the lid off a botched US Navy SEAL raid in Yemen that killed at least six women and 10 children, she does it with the aid of fixer-friends. They are the ones who make the arrangements; who drive and translate; who, in short, risk their lives for her, for the story – and for you. When Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist Daniel Berehulak produces an instantly icon-

ic New York Times exposé of the brutal war on drugs launched by Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, veteran journalist and uberfixer Rica Concepcion is also behind it.

If you read the reporting of the New Yorker’s Jon Lee Anderson, Leila Fadel (then of the *Washington Post*), or Nancy Youssef (then of *McClatchy*) on Libya, you likely benefited from the work of fixer Suliman Ali Zway. Eyder Peralta’s powerful report on a doctor’s strike at Kenya’s Kiambu County Hospital that you heard earlier this year? The late Jacque Ooko, a veteran journalist who worked as National Public Radio’s bureau assistant in Nairobi, got Peralta in the door. And that August 19, 2017, front-page tour de force by Ellen Barry of the *New York Times* about a murder in a village in India? You can thank her colleague Suhasini for it, too.

Canadian journalist Deborah Campbell is no different. Like so many foreign correspondents, she’s also leaned on fixers. Unlike most of us in the trade, however, she’s written a beautiful book-length love letter to one of them – her vivid, captivating *A Disappearance*

Canadian journalist Deborah Campbell, like so many foreign correspondents, also leaned on fixers. Unlike most of us in the trade, however, she’s written a beautiful book-length love letter to one of them

Special Report

Campbell responds to her friend's disappearance by utilising the very skills that make her a great journalist and begins to investigate just what happened. At times, it turns her book into a first-class detective story

in Damascus: Friendship and Survival in the Shadow of War. Campbell's award-winning memoir-and-more offers a unique window into the life and work of foreign correspondents and the relationships they forge with those they rely on to help them do their jobs.

Unlike the New York Times's Jeffrey Gettleman, whose recent book, *Love, Africa: A Memoir of Romance, War, and Survival*—oddly, fixates on both his ardour for his girlfriend-turned-wife and his infidelity – “As we tumbled into bed, a firestorm erupted... We didn't stop” – the love in Campbell's book has nothing to do with eros. Nor is it an obsession with place, though Campbell's affection for the beauty she finds in Syria is evident. Instead, what drives *A Disappearance in Damascus* is the story of the deep bonds of friendship that formed between Campbell and her fixer in Syria, a remarkable Iraqi refugee named Ahlam. While Gettleman's book is sold as “a tale of passion,” the burning desire in Campbell's pages is most felt when, in the second half of the book, she launches a relentless search for her fixer and friend after Ahlam disappears without a trace.

Campbell, a self-described “immersive journalist,” travelled to Damascus in 2007 to cover the deluge of Iraqis flooding into Syria as a result of the American invasion of their country and the carnage that followed. There, she found the resilient Ahlam, elevated to a position of leadership in the Iraqi refugee community by popular acclaim. She was a charismatic figure who exuded confidence, knew all the right people, and got the job done – the very qualities that make for a top-flight fixer. While supporting her husband and two children, fixing for Campbell and other journalists, and solving the problems of beleaguered refugees, Ahlam even managed to set up a school for displaced girls. It's little wonder that Campbell took to her and that those two strong, driven women became close friends.

The power of their personal bond, the blessing of their friendship, however, turned out to be a curse as well. When Ahlam was suddenly

disappeared by the Syrian regime, Campbell became convinced that she had been targeted because of their work together. Ahlam had, in fact, aided journalists from al Jazeera, the Wall Street Journal, the BBC, and other media outlets, worked for multiple foreign aid groups, and even the US military (in Iraq), which meant that there were myriad reasons why the Syrian government might have arrested her. Still, Campbell couldn't shake a deep-seated feeling that she was at fault.

In a profession typified by countless anxieties, fear for your fixer (or driver or source) is a special one that may manifest itself in an acidic churn deep in your gut or racing thoughts that you can't slow down as you stare up through your mosquito net at a wobbling ceiling fan. Have you endangered the people who devoted themselves to helping you do your job? Have you potentially sacrificed their welfare, perhaps their lives, for a story? As Campbell puts it:

“I could accept the knowledge that nothing I wrote or would ever write would change a thing and that the world would continue to create and destroy and create and destroy as it always did. I could accept living without a relationship. I would still be okay. What I could not accept was Ahlam being gone. It was unthinkable that she had been missing for almost seven weeks. Unthinkable that she could be lost and never heard from again. Unthinkable that I could do nothing.

“It called to my mind a time when a driver-turned-friend of mine was smacked around and taken away by angry government officials. I've never forgotten my fear for him and the abject sense of powerlessness that went with it. It's a special type of anxiety that, I suspect, many foreign correspondents have experienced. (My driver was luckily released a short time later, a far different outcome than Ahlam's arrest.)”

Campbell responds to her friend's disappearance by utilising the very skills that make her a great journalist and begins to investigate just what happened. At times, it turns her book into a first-class detective story and,

for that very reason, provides a useful primer on how reporters practice their craft.

For those who know anything about the sparse literature on the subject, *A Disappearance in Damascus* calls to mind perhaps the most iconic tale of this type – another story rooted in platonic love, deep affection, and the sense of responsibility that grows between a journalist and a fixer (even if that fixer was officially a “stringer”).

“I began the search for my friend Dith Pran in April of 1975. Unable to protect him when the Khmer Rouge troops ordered Cambodians to evacuate their cities, I had watched him disappear into the interior of Cambodia, which would become a death camp for millions,” wrote New York Times reporter Sydney Schanberg. “Pran had saved my life the day of the occupation, and the shadow of my failure to keep him safe – to do what he had done for me – was to follow me for four and a half years.”

That magazine-article-turned-book – both titled *The Death and Life of Dith Pran* – and the movie adaptation, *The Killing Fields*, chronicled Pran’s long journey as he navigated and survived the unthinkable horror of the Cambodian auto-genocide and also stands as a testament to his enduring friendship with Schanberg. *A Disappearance in Damascus* brings to mind some of the same themes of friendship and responsibility, raises some of the same questions about duty and loyalty, and evokes some of the same emotions, though I won’t give away whether Ahlam, like Pran, makes it out alive. In war – or even its shadow – nothing is certain. (At least until you read the book.)

Someone has to open the door

When they meet again in 1979, after Pran has survived the unimaginable and trekked through Cambodia’s killing fields to safety beyond the Thai border, Schanberg asks his friend if he can ever forgive him. “Nothing to forgive,” Pran replies, offering him something like complete absolution.

Not all relationships with fixers, of course,

blossom into Schanberg-Pran, Campbell-Ahlam love stories. And not all fixers are fantastic and fearless. There are the incompetent ones and the lazy ones and those allergic to schedules. Others come to see you as a bottomless wallet – and who can blame them, given our privilege and relative riches? But this can lead to unrealistic expectations, as it once did for me, when I received an email from a fixer I’d worked with many times asking for a stipend of \$500 per month in (more or less) perpetuity. And that, in turn, can result in hurt feelings when you explain that you simply can’t do it. These are, thankfully, the exceptions.

While largely unknown to the public, fixers might finally be getting some much-deserved recognition – albeit in small ways. *A Disappearance in Damascus* is a shining example. These days, foreign correspondents seem to be acknowledging those who helped them more openly, offering warm tributes to and remembrances of their fixers. Perhaps this is evidence, as reporter Aaron Schachter put it, of a greater willingness to admit the “dirty little secret of foreign correspondents: We don’t do our own stunts.” Late last year, *Roads & Kingdoms*, a digital magazine “publishing long form dispatches, interviews, and global ephemera,” began a series called “Unbylined” in which fixers from Mexico to Haiti, Afghanistan to Libya, get their say through thoughtful interviews focused on their craft.

Still, even fixers are just part of the story. Where would foreign correspondents be without great drivers? Probably stranded on some wretched stretch of road. I can’t count the number of times I’ve stayed too long doing interviews, leaving my driver to try to make up the time to the river before the last ferry departs for the day or get off a dangerous road before dark. These are the guys who know all the short cuts, the complex language of car horns, and how to make good time on bad roads. Along with them, depending on where you travel, there are the motorbike drivers and the men and women who pilot boats, as

I can’t count the number of times I’ve stayed too long doing interviews, leaving my driver to try to make up the time to the river before the last ferry departs for the day or get off a dangerous road before dark

Special Report

Sunday was in desperate circumstances, homeless, a woman without a country. Still, she took the time to stop and speak with a stranger. And she told me about a friend who had been murdered by rampaging South Sudanese troops, a man whose corpse she had only recently seen by the side of the road

well as those who fly the puddle jumpers and helicopters that get you where you're going. And that's just to begin a list.

There are precious few Africans (or Afghans or Iraqis, for that matter) of much depth in Jeffrey Gettleman's *Love, Africa* – another in a list of reasons the book has been panned by many and excoriated in his own newspaper's book review. But in his discussion of "Commander Peacock" (the man's own *nom de guerre*), an Ethiopian who is treated as a person and not simply a prop, Gettleman offers up important insights into what he calls "the transitive property of trust." He observes: "Reporters deposit their lives in it all the time. People I'd trusted had hooked me up with people they'd trusted who hooked me up with people they'd trusted. Peacock and I were simply two terminal points on a long line drawn by trust."

This form of faith – based on a sequence of relationships – is often key to overseas reporting, but it isn't the only type of journalistic trust to be found out there. There's trust of another sort, trust that's earned, like that between Schanberg and Pran or Campbell and Ahlam. And then there's the trust that's freely given, a faith that you can only hope someday to be worthy of.

That's the trust of the Salina Sundays of this world, of those ordinary people who exhibit extraordinary courage, place their confidence in you, and even risk their lives because they believe in what you're doing, in the stories you hope to tell.

When I met Sunday – a gimlet-eyed, middle-aged woman with a strong bearing – on what she reckoned was a somewhat safer road, she was setting off into South Sudan on a difficult journey to try to salvage a few of her belongings for what she expected would be a long exile in Uganda. She was in desperate circumstances, homeless, a woman without a country. Still, she took the time to stop and speak with a stranger. And she told me about a friend who had been murdered by rampaging South Sudanese troops, a man whose corpse she had only recently seen by

the side of the road.

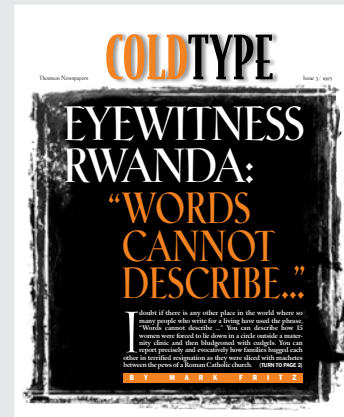
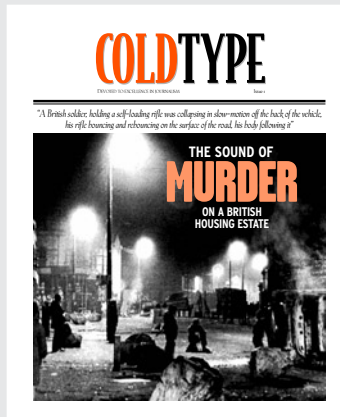
I asked if she would guide me to him and she readily agreed. In the midst of an unfolding tragedy, that is, she upended her plans and decided without hesitation to lead a foreigner she had just met down a more dangerous path, literally and figuratively. She didn't know a thing about me – not whether I could get a story published or had any hope of doing justice to this particular horror or would even bother to write about it. But she made a leap of faith and put her life on the line for the sake of my story – and so for me as well.

I tried to live up to her confidence, to make the risk she took worthwhile. I think this is a common experience for many journalists. You feel a deep responsibility to the people you interview and to your fixers, drivers, and translators – to everyone, that is, who sacrifices and takes chances to make your work possible.

I don't know what Salina Sunday would think about the stories I've written, but I hope she would approve. She wanted the world to know just what had happened in Bamuraye, what South Sudan's soldiers had done to her friend. She wanted people overseas to grasp the grim nature of the war in her homeland. It's exactly what drove Ahlam in her work for Deborah Campbell, the reason she took risks to tell stories that could turn her into a target. "Someone," the Iraqi-refugee-turned-fixer said, "has to open the door and show the world what is happening." **CT**

Nick Turse is the managing editor of *TomDispatch*, a fellow at the *Nation Institute*, and a contributing writer for the *Intercept*. He recently covered ethnic cleansing by government forces in South Sudan for *Harper's Magazine* and the *Columbia Journalism Review*. His latest book is *Next Time They'll Come to Count the Dead: War and Survival in South Sudan*. His website is NickTurse.com. This article, which first appeared at www.tomdispatch.com, was reported in partnership with the *Investigative Fund* at the *Nation Institute*.

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How Labour could change the world

The rupture of 2008 presents a chance to throw out an iniquitous system that is breaking the planet. **George Monbiot** has some ideas that may help

Sustained economic growth on a planet that is not growing means crashing through environmental limits

We are still living in the long 20th-century. We are stuck with its redundant technologies: the internal combustion engine, thermal power plants, factory farms. We are stuck with its redundant politics: unfair electoral systems, their capture by funders and lobbyists, the failure to temper representation with real participation.

And we are stuck with its redundant economics: neoliberalism, and the Keynesianism still proposed by its opponents. While the latter system worked very well for 30 years or more, it is hard to see how it can take us through this century, not least because the growth it seeks to sustain smacks headlong into the environmental crisis.

Sustained economic growth on a planet that is not growing means crashing through environmental limits: this is what we are witnessing, worldwide, today. A recent paper in *Nature* puts our current chances of keeping global heating to less than 1.5C at just One percent, and less than 2C at only five percent. Why? Because while the carbon intensity of economic activity is expected to decline by 1.9 percent a year, global per capita GDP is expected to grow by 1.8 percent. Almost all investment in renewables and efficiency is cancelled out. The index that was supposed to measure our prosperity, instead measures our progress towards ruin.

But the great rupture that began in 2008 offers a chance to change all this. The challenge now is to ensure that the new political movements threatening established power in Britain and elsewhere create the space not for old ideas (such as 20th-century Keynesianism) but for a new politics, built on new economic and social foundations.

There may be a case for one last hurrah for the old model: a technological shift that resembles the second world war's military Keynesianism. In 1941, the US turned the entire civilian economy around on a dime: within months, car manufacturers were producing planes, tanks and ammunition. A determined government could do something similar in response to climate breakdown: a sudden transformation, replacing our fossil economy. But having effected such a conversion, it should, I believe, then begin the switch to a different economic model.

The new approach could start with the idea of private sufficiency and public luxury. There is not enough physical or environmental space for everyone to enjoy private luxury: if everyone in London acquired a tennis court, a swimming pool, a garden and a private art collection, the city would cover England. Private luxury shuts down space, creating deprivation. But magnificent public amenities – wonderful parks and playgrounds, public sports centres and swim-

ming pools, galleries, allotments and public transport networks – create more space for everyone at a fraction of the cost.

Wherever possible, such assets should be owned and managed by neither state nor market, but by communities, in the form of commons. A commons in its true form is a non-capitalist system in which a resource is controlled in perpetuity by a community for the shared and equal benefit of its members. A possible model is the commons transition plan commissioned by the Flemish city of Ghent.

Land value taxation also has transformative potential. It can keep the income currently siphoned out of our pockets in the form of rent – then out of the country and into tax havens – within our hands. It can reduce land values, bringing down house prices. While local and national government should use some of the money to fund public services, the residue can be returned to communities.

Couple this with a community right to buy, which enables communities to use this money to acquire their own land, with local commons trusts that possess powers to assemble building sites, and with a new right for prospective buyers and tenants to plan their own estates, and exciting things begin to happen. This could be a formula for meeting housing need, delivering public luxury and greatly enhancing the sense of community, self-reliance and taking back control. It helps to create what I call the politics of belonging.

But it doesn't stop there. The rents accruing to commons trusts could be used to create a local version of the citizens' wealth funds (modelled on the sovereign wealth funds in Alaska and Norway) proposed by Angela Cummine and Stewart Lansley. The gain from such funds could be distributed in the form of a local basic income.

And the money the government still invests? To the greatest extent possible, I believe it should be controlled by participatory budgeting. In the Brazilian city of Porto Ale-

gre, the infrastructure budget is allocated by the people: around 50,000 citizens typically participate. The results – better water, sanitation, health, schools and nurseries – have been so spectacular that large numbers of people now lobby the city council to raise their taxes. When you control the budget, you can see the point of public investment.

In countries such as the UK, we could not only adopt this model, but extend it beyond the local infrastructure budget to other forms of local and even national spending. The principle of subsidiarity – devolving powers to the smallest political unit that can reasonably discharge them – makes such wider democratic control more feasible.

All this would be framed within a system such as Kate Raworth's doughnut economics which, instead of seeking to maximise growth, sets a lower threshold of well-being, below which no one should fall, and an upper threshold of environmental limits that economic life should not transgress. A participatory economics could be accompanied by participatory politics, involving radical devolution and a fine-grained democratic control over the decisions affecting our lives.

Who could lead this global shift? It could be the UK Labour party. It is actively seeking new ideas. It knows that the bigger the change it offers, the greater the commitment of the volunteers on which its insurgency relies: the "big organising" model that transformed Labour's fortunes at the last election requires a big political offer.

Could Labour be the party that brings the long 20th century to an end? I believe, despite its Keynesian heritage, it could. Now, more than at any other time in the past few decades, it has a chance to change the world.

CT

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George Monbiot's latest book, *Out Of The Wreckage: a New Politics for an Age of Crisis*, is published by Verso. His website is www.monbiot.com

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The rise of Britain's new politics

Most Britons see Tony Blair as a liar and Donald Trump as a threat to world peace. Could Jeremy Corbyn satisfy the demand for change? asks **John Pilger**

While Sanders is a familiar liberal politician, Corbyn may be a phenomenon, with his indefatigable support for the victims of American and British imperial adventures and for popular resistance movements

Delegates to the recent Labour Party conference in the English seaside town of Brighton seemed not to notice a video playing in the main entrance. The world's third biggest arms manufacturer, BAE Systems, supplier to Saudi Arabia, was promoting its guns, bombs, missiles, naval ships and fighter aircraft.

It seemed a perfidious symbol of a party in which millions of Britons now invest their political hopes. Once the preserve of Tony Blair, it is now led by Jeremy Corbyn, whose career has been very different and is rare in British establishment politics.

Addressing the Labour conference, the campaigner Naomi Klein described the rise of Corbyn as "part of a global phenomenon. We saw it in Bernie Sanders' historic campaign in the US primaries, powered by millennials who know that safe centrist politics offers them no kind of safe future."

In fact, at the end of the US primary elections last year, Sanders led his followers into the arms of Hillary Clinton, a liberal warmonger from a long tradition in the Democratic Party.

As President Obama's Secretary of State, Clinton presided over the invasion of Libya in 2011, which led to a stampede of refugees to Europe. She gloated at the gruesome murder of Libya's president. Two years earlier, Clinton signed off on a coup that over-

threw the democratically elected president of Honduras. That she has been invited to Wales this month to be given an honorary doctorate by the University of Swansea because she is "synonymous with human rights" is unfathomable.

Like Clinton, Sanders is a cold-warrior and anti-communist obsessive with a proprietorial view of the world beyond the United States. He supported Bill Clinton's and Tony Blair's illegal assault on Yugoslavia in 1998 and the invasions of Afghanistan, Syria and Libya, as well as Barack Obama's campaign of terrorism by drone. He backs the provocation of Russia and agrees that the whistleblower Edward Snowden should stand trial. He has called the late Hugo Chavez – a social democrat who won multiple elections – "a dead communist dictator."

While Sanders is a familiar liberal politician, Corbyn may be a phenomenon, with his indefatigable support for the victims of American and British imperial adventures and for popular resistance movements.

For example, in the 1960s and '70s, the Chagos islanders were expelled from their homeland, a British colony in the Indian Ocean, by a Labour government. An entire population was kidnapped. The aim was to make way for a US military base on the main island of Diego Garcia: a secret deal for which the British were "compensated"



LABOUR HOPES: (From left) **Robin Cook, Tony Blair, Jeremy Corbyn.**

Photos: Wikimedia

with a discount of \$14-million off the price of a Polaris nuclear submarine.

I have had much to do with the Chagos islanders and have filmed them in exile in Mauritius and the Seychelles, where they suffered and some of them “died from sadness,” as I was told. They found a political champion in a Labour Member of Parliament, Jeremy Corbyn. So did the Palestinians. So did Iraqis terrorised by a Labour prime minister’s invasion of their country in 2003. So did others struggling to break free from the designs of western power. Corbyn supported the likes of Hugo Chavez, who brought more than hope to societies subverted by the US behemoth.

And yet, now Corbyn is closer to power than he might have ever imagined, his foreign policy remains a secret.

By secret, I mean there has been rhetoric and little else. “We must put our values at the heart of our foreign policy,” said Corbyn at the Labour conference. But what are these “values”?

Since 1945, like the Tories, British Labour has been an imperial party, obsequious to Washington: a record exemplified by the crime in the Chagos islands.

What has changed? Is Corbyn saying Labour will uncouple itself from the US war machine, and the US spying apparatus and US economic blockades that scar humanity?

His shadow foreign secretary, Emily Thornberry, says a Corbyn government “will put human rights back at the heart of Britain’s foreign policy.” But human rights have never been at the heart of British foreign policy – only “interests,” as Lord Palmerston declared in the 19th-century: the interests of those at the apex of British society.

Thornberry quoted the late Robin Cook who, as Tony Blair’s first foreign secretary in 1997, pledged an “ethical foreign policy” that would “make Britain once again a force for good in the world”.

History is not kind to imperial nostalgia. The recently commemorated division of In-

Human rights have never been at the heart of British foreign policy – only “interests,” as Lord Palmerston declared in the 19th-century: the interests of those at the apex of British society

Time For Change

Like Jeremy Corbyn, Robin Cook made his name as a backbencher and critic of the arms trade. “Wherever weapons are sold,” wrote Cook, “there is a tacit conspiracy to conceal the reality of war”

dia by a Labour government in 1947 – with a border hurriedly drawn up by a London barrister, Gordon Radcliffe, who had never been to India and never returned – led to blood-letting on a genocidal scale.

*Shut up in a lonely mansion, with police night and day
Patrolling the gardens to keep the assassins away,
He got down to work, to the task of settling the fate
Of millions. The maps at his disposal were out of date
And the Census Returns almost certainly incorrect,
But there was no time to check them, no time to inspect
Contested areas. The weather was frightfully hot,
And a bout of dysentery kept him constantly on the trot,
But in seven weeks it was done, the frontiers decided,
A continent for better or worse divided.*

– W.H. Auden, ‘Partition’

It was the same Labour government (1945–51), led by Prime Minister Clement Attlee – “radical” by today’s standards – that dispatched General Douglas Gracey’s British imperial army to Saigon with orders to re-arm the defeated Japanese in order to prevent Vietnamese nationalists from liberating their own country. Thus, the longest war of the century was ignited.

It was a Labour foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin, whose policy of “mutuality” and “partnership” with some of the world’s most vicious despots, especially in the Middle East, forged relationships that endure today, often sidelining and crushing the human rights of whole communities and societies. The cause was British “interests” – oil, power, wealth.

In the “radical” 1960s, Labour Defence Secretary, Denis Healey, set up the Defence Sales Organisation (DSO) specifically to

boost the arms trade and make money from selling lethal weapons to the world. Healey told Parliament, “While we attach the highest importance to making progress in the field of arms control and disarmament, we must also take what practical steps we can to ensure that this country does not fail to secure its rightful share of this valuable market.”

The doublethink was quintessentially Labour. When I later asked Healey about this “valuable market,” he claimed his decision made no difference to the volume of military exports. In fact, it led to an almost doubling of Britain’s share of the arms market. Today, Britain is the second biggest arms dealer on earth, selling arms and fighter planes, machine guns and “riot control” vehicles, to 22 of the 30 countries on the British government’s own list of human rights violators.

Will this cease under a Corbyn government? The preferred model – Robin Cook’s “ethical foreign policy” – is revealing. Like Jeremy Corbyn, Cook made his name as a backbencher and critic of the arms trade. “Wherever weapons are sold,” wrote Cook, “there is a tacit conspiracy to conceal the reality of war;” and “it is a truism that every war for the past two decades has been fought by poor countries with weapons supplied by rich countries.”

Cook singled out the sale of British Hawk fighters to Indonesia as “particularly disturbing.” Indonesia “is not only repressive but actually at war on two fronts: in East Timor, where perhaps a sixth of the population has been slaughtered . . . and in West Papua, where it confronts an indigenous liberation movement”.

As foreign secretary, Cook promised “a thorough review of arms sales.” The then Nobel Peace Laureate, Bishop Carlos Belo of East Timor, appealed directly to Cook: “Please, I beg you, do not sustain any longer a conflict which without these arms sales could never have been pursued in the first place and not for so very long.” He was referring to Indonesia’s bombing of East

Timor with British Hawks and the slaughter of his people with British machine guns. He received no reply.

The following week Cook called journalists to the Foreign Office to announce his “mission statement” for “human rights in a new century.” This PR event included the usual private briefings for selected journalists, including those at the BBC, in which Foreign Office officials lied that there was “no evidence” that British Hawk aircraft were deployed in East Timor.

A few days later, the Foreign Office issued the results of Cook’s “thorough review” of arms sales policy. “It was not realistic or practical,” wrote Cook, “to revoke licences which were valid and in force at the time of Labour’s election victory.” Suharto’s Minister for Defence, Edi Sudradjat, said that talks were already under way with Britain for the purchase of 18 more Hawk fighters. “The political change in Britain will not affect our negotiations,” he said. He was right.

Today, replace Indonesia with Saudi Arabia and East Timor with Yemen. British military aircraft – sold with the approval of both Tory and Labour governments and built by the firm whose promotional video had pride of place at the Labour Party conference – are bombing the life out of Yemen, one of the most impoverished countries in the world, where half the children are malnourished and there is the greatest cholera epidemic in modern times.

Hospitals and schools, weddings and funerals have been attacked. In Riyadh, British military personnel are reported to be training the Saudis in selecting targets.

In Labour’s 2017 manifesto, Jeremy Corbyn and his party colleagues promised that “Labour will demand a comprehensive, independent, UN-led investigation into alleged violations . . . in Yemen, including air strikes on civilians by the Saudi-led coalition. We will immediately suspend any further arms sales for use in the conflict until that investigation is concluded.”

But the evidence of Saudi Arabia’s crimes

in Yemen is already documented by Amnesty and others, notably by the courageous reporting of the British journalist Iona Craig. The dossier is voluminous.

Labour does not promise to stop arms exports to Saudi Arabia. It does not say Britain will withdraw its support for governments responsible for the export of Islamist jihadism. There is no commitment to dismantle the arms trade.

The manifesto describes a “special relationship [with the US] based on shared values . . . When the current Trump administration chooses to ignore them . . . we will not be afraid to disagree”.

As Jeremy Corbyn knows, dealing with the US is not about merely “disagreeing.” The US is a rapacious, rogue power that ought not to be regarded as a natural ally of any state championing human rights, irrespective of whether Trump or anyone else is president.

When Emily Thornberry linked Venezuela with the Philippines as “increasingly autocratic regimes” – slogans bereft of facts and ignoring the subversive US role in Venezuela – she was consciously playing to the enemy: a tactic with which Jeremy Corbyn will be familiar.

A Corbyn government will allow the Chagos islanders the right of return. But Labour says nothing about renegotiating the 50-year renewal agreement that Britain has just signed with the US allowing it to use the base on Diego Garcia from which it has bombed Afghanistan and Iraq.

A Corbyn government will “immediately recognise the state of Palestine.” But it is silent on whether Britain will continue to arm Israel, continue to acquiesce in the illegal trade in Israel’s illegal “settlements” and treat Israel merely as a warring party, rather than as an historic oppressor given immunity by Washington and London.

On Britain’s support for Nato’s current war preparations, Labour boasts that the “last Labour government spent above the benchmark of two per cent of GDP” on Nato.

British military aircraft – sold with the approval of both Tory and Labour governments and built by the firm whose promotional video had pride of place at the Labour Party conference – are bombing the life out of Yemen, one of the most impoverished countries in the world, where half the children are malnourished

Time For Change

Most Britons oppose the invasion of other countries and regard Tony Blair as a liar. The rise of Donald Trump has reminded them what a menace the United States can be, especially with their own country in tow

It says, “Conservative spending cuts have put Britain’s security at risk” and promises to boost Britain’s military “obligations.”

In fact, most of the £40-billion Britain currently spends on the military is not for territorial defence of the UK but for offensive purposes to enhance British “interests” as defined by those who have tried to smear Jeremy Corbyn as unpatriotic.

If the polls are reliable, most Britons are well ahead of their politicians, Tory and Labour. They would accept higher taxes to pay for public services; they want the National Health Service restored to full health. They want decent jobs and wages and housing and schools; they do not hate foreigners but resent exploitative labour. They have no fond memory of an empire on which the sun never set.

They oppose the invasion of other countries and regard Tony Blair as a liar. The rise

of Donald Trump has reminded them what a menace the United States can be, especially with their own country in tow.

The Labour Party is the beneficiary of this mood, but many of its pledges – certainly in foreign policy – are qualified and compromised, suggesting, for many Britons, more of the same.

Jeremy Corbyn is widely and properly recognised for his integrity; he opposes the renewal of Trident nuclear weapons; the Labour Party supports it. But he has given shadow cabinet positions to pro-war MPs who support Blairism, tried to get rid of him and abused him as “unelectable.”

“We are the political mainstream now,” says Corbyn. Yes, but at what price? **CT**

John Pilger’s latest film is The Coming War On China. his website is www.johnpilger.com

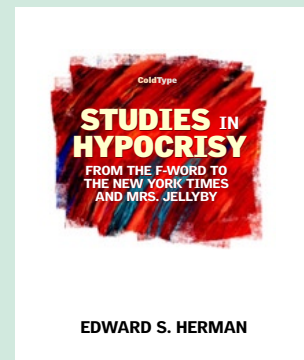
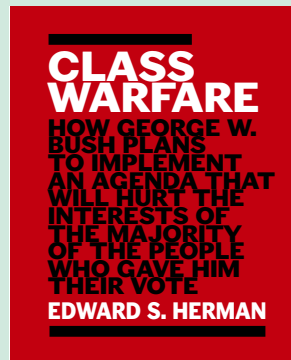
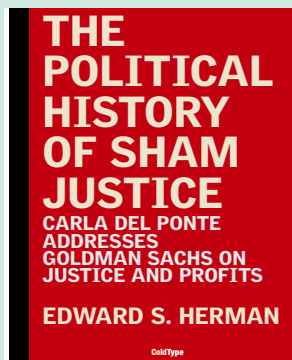
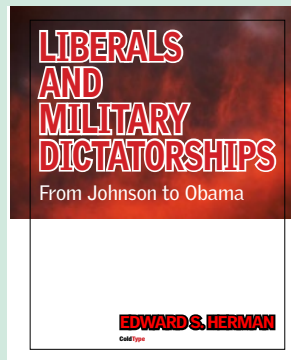
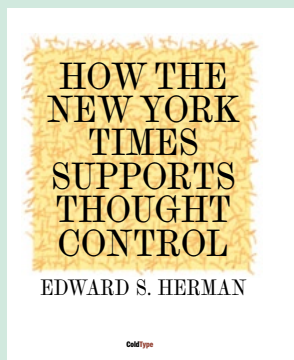
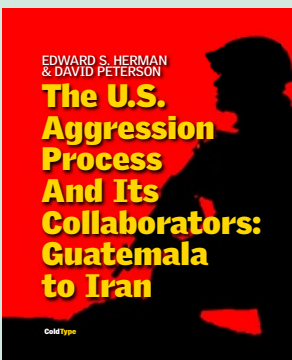
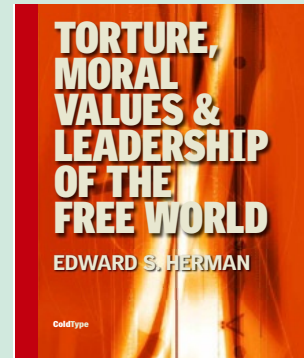
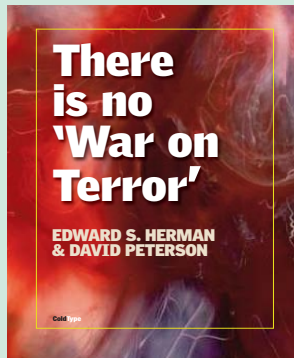
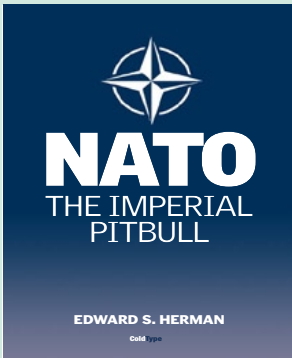
HURWITT’S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



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Member of a pro-Donald Trump march carries a yellow banner into the battle that didn't happen.

Photo: Zach D. Roberts

MAGA vs. Juggalo: A fight that was not to be

A pro-Trump rally and a Juggalo rights march the same day in the same city. What were the differences?
Zach D. Roberts reports

What was supposed to be the biggest planned news story for US photojournalists in September (not counting 'acts of God' such as hurricanes and earthquakes) turned out to be a dud. While most of America was obsessed with the much-hyped world boxing "superfight," Mayweather vs McGregor, every photojournalist I knew on the east coast was prepping for MAGA v. Juggalo. (For those not in the know, MAGA is an acronym for the pro-Donald Trump's Make America Great Again movement, while Juggalos are fans of Insane

Clown Posse, a rap group that calls itself "the most hated band in the world.")

All the regular sites hyped it up – Salon called it the Coachella of countering rallies – they wrote stories detailing how it was going to be the stand-off of our times. At first it was just that there was to be a pro-Trump rally and a Juggalo rights march the same day in the same city – Washington, DC. That was weird enough for me to want to cover it; but then came the rumours of the increasingly infamous Antifa joining the fight. That made it not just a simple two-sided boxing match,



The Juggalos were not quite as dangerous as the Justice Department had suggested.

Photo: Zach D. Roberts

but a WWE tag team match that could ONLY have been dreamed up in the fevered mind of a doped-up Vice.com editor.

As the day grew closer and closer, the bad news (for photojournalists) kept pouring in. First it was unlikely that Antifa was going to show, then the Juggalos made a peace deal with the Mother of All Rallies, the MAGA crowd. That ended any thoughts that a surreal battle of make-upped JNCO-jeans-wearing music fans would be throwing Faygo bottles at Trump-supporting white nationalists on the lawn of the White House

Arriving at the scheduled kick-off of the Mother of All Rallies, there was a sparse showing of Kekistan promoters, Fred Perry polo shirt wearers and “Don’t Tread on Me” flag-draped white men and women. However, all was not lost, for, although the MAGA crowd usually shows up early for events, there was still loads of time before the main speakers

hit the stage.

Immediately, I came upon a well-bearded man with American flag aviators, a classic red “Make America Great Again” baseball cap and a large “Don’t Tread on Me” flag fluttering over his shoulder. Considering the website for the event requested that people only show up with American flags – that by itself was interesting.

Joshua Glaspie, founder of Patriots for America USA told me that MOAR was “unlike any other rally in the history of the United States. This is the largest gathering of ardent American patriots . . . of America’s most ardent patriots. This is like a condensed soup of Americana. . . It’s going to be a great time full of patriotism, full of love and full of diversity.”

His emphasis on “diversity” in the statement was clearly not true. The MOAR rally was similar to most of the Trump rallies I’ve been to over the last two years – white. Like,

The MOAR rally was similar to most of the Trump rallies I’ve been to over the last two years – white!

Culture Clash



Painted faces on the march. Must be those dangerous Juggalos (aka Insane Clown Posse fans).

Photo: Zach D. Roberts

God Bless The USA was scream-sung by someone through PA system speakers attached to a flatbed that was decorated with TRUMP MOAR in cut-out wooden letters, a human-size Statue of Liberty that had lost an arm and signs that repeated Trump's many slogans from the campaign

whiter than a Klan rally after the local Walgreens had a sale on bleach.

The next person I met was, as far as I could tell, a simple free speech troll. He didn't really have any politics, but just wanted to say that everything was free speech, including hate speech, and it was all just fun. He told me: "Hate speech is free speech, I don't agree with it, but you're just going to make yourself look like a jackass to everybody. If you're going to look like a jackass, you're going to look like a jackass . . . and, as has been said many times, bad ideas should be exposed to the light of day so they can be argued, not fought. And a big problem is a lot of people being physically attacked or having their careers ruined because just a shitty comment . . ."

My experience from Charlottesville was different than his – but he wasn't the only one with strong opinions on the definition of free speech at this rally. There were people who argued back and forth with stories they'd heard – and were convinced were true – via Alex Jones's site InfoWars. Although I

told them that I was actually at Charlottesville and didn't see or even hear of the busloads of Antifa and Nazis being dropped off at the park, it didn't matter to them, which proved, perhaps, that one man's Youtube video is better than any journalist's own experience.

The music

There was a lot of patriotic singing . . . which I guess I shouldn't have been surprised by. The first great sing-along was music blasted from the Trump Train. Lee Greenwood's God Bless The USA was scream-sung by someone through PA system speakers attached to a flatbed that was decorated with TRUMP MOAR in cut-out wooden letters, a human-size Statue of Liberty that had lost an arm and signs that repeated Trump's many slogans from the campaign.

Oh, did I mention the flags? It had lots of them: Trump flags, American flags, the Blue Lives Matter incarnation of the American flag. And also, for some reason, a motorcycle, for singing along to the patriotic melody

from the Trump Train were members of the Bikers for Trump, a group that often provided freelance security at Trump rallies. By freelance I mean, they weren't there in any official capacity: they just grabbed protestors and pulled them out of the arena.

As the day went on, the patriotic music continued. Children were forced, in some cases physically, to get on the stage and sing the national anthem. It was a sort of nationalistic hostage situation: blank-eyed kids staring at a crowd of 1,500 or so people, hats in hand singing back at them. As one of the few members of the non-rightwing press, it was pretty clear that I was alone in being horrified by the scene . . . everyone else was entranced.

Swapping sides

After Charlottesville, I don't do well in crowds of people waving flags and chanting, so I headed over to the gathering of Juggalos on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

As I took the long walk along the Reflecting Pool, I heard a speaker talking passionately about how this group of Juggalos was his family, in some ways more than his real one, as he could always count on them. He talked of the kindness of the Juggalos at Insane Clown Posse concerts, bringing extra food for those who'd spent all their money to get to the show, providing a place to crash for those who couldn't afford a motel . . .

Getting closer, I saw the painted faces, the ridiculously flamboyant costumes, couples hugging and friends in circles sharing stories.

This was the rally in Washington, DC today that was, according to the Justice Department, the dangerous one. Juggalos are "a loosely-organised hybrid gang, [and] are rapidly expanding into many US communities," they had warned us during the Obama era. So dangerous, in fact, that the 2011 National Gang Threat Assessment had put them right along side the Aryan Brotherhood, the Bloods and the Crips. The reasons given on the official document were simply a handful of examples of crimes that people who are Juggalos had committed. Unlike most of the



Thumbs up for the president!

Photo: Zach D. Roberts

other gangs listed in the assessment, which discusses large scale organised federal crimes, none were listed for the Juggalos.

I wish I could say I was exaggerating the differences, but this gang was peaceful and pleasant. Happy to pose for photos and pleased to explain what being a Juggalo meant. However, I doubt, under a Jeff Sessions Justice Department, this group of Insane Clown Posse fans will get the change in classification that they want.

It should be noted that the "peaceful" MOAR rally had its own militia guarding the event, with many police officers on horseback and around the outskirts of the event.

The only violence that I heard of that day was a when a man wearing a MAGA hat grabbed a flag from a Juggalo. She was tearful and just asked why the man did it. Like a child, the man was forced by police to apologise. The woman accepted the apology, but didn't believe it. Neither did I. **CT**

This was the rally in Washington, DC today that was, according to the Justice Department, the dangerous one

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Zach D. Roberts is a photo/video journalist who is working with Greg Palast on a full length documentary, *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*. He is co-host of the *Around the Lens* podcast. This article was first published at nationofchange.org

Damn, I don't want Rahman to end up dead

Behind every war are many untold stories of human suffering. **Hakim Young** brings one of them to our attention



Inaam, whose brother, Rahman, signed up to be a soldier as there were no other viable jobs

I felt a slow panic, even though I hadn't met Rahman before

Sultan, Ali's brother, was killed in Afghanistan in August 2016. Hussein, Bismillah's uncle, was killed in April 2017. I don't want Rahman, Inaam's brother, to end up being killed. Rahman is now training to be a soldier. Both Sultan and Hussein were Afghan soldiers in their twenties. They joined the army because there were no other viable jobs available and their families needed food. Hussein was killed in Helmand Province 18,000 policemen (not counting soldiers or civilians) have been killed in the past 15 years.

Sir Isaac Newton would have wondered

why we fail to apply scientific laws to human behaviour: for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. The more 'enemies' that armies and soldiers kill, the more soldiers and civilians will be killed.

The casualty numbers in Afghanistan and elsewhere prove this. The 2015 Global Terrorism Index has recorded a nine-fold increase in terrorism-related deaths since 2000. War doesn't work!

Inaam, who is a street kid attending the Borderfree Afghan Street Kids School, had taken me to his family's rented room so I could do an annual household survey. It was there that I heard his mother tell Rahman's story. I felt a slow panic, even though I hadn't met Rahman before.

"My son called to say he was feeling terrible. His hands were blistered from the army training. They are training him to shoot," she told me, her fingers gesturing as if to pull a trigger. She paused, before adding nervously, "He said he doesn't wish to continue. I cried. He told me not to cry, saying, 'This is life, mother.'"

She took the helm of her headscarf and wiped off the tears that had ballooned rapidly above her eye-bags. Just as I've seen so many times before in Afghan demeanour, she steadied herself within seconds, pulled her shoulders back slightly, swallowed her anxiety, and looked up again. I heard a pa-



Inaam on his bicycle, near his house and the scene of a suicide bomb attack

ralysis, a sort of helplessness in her voice. Inaam, meanwhile, was sitting by the window sill. I could tell he was worried.

Blood-stained history

Like a mad fever, I saw the blood-stained history of humanity streaming into that spartan room in Kabul. The water well in the yard outside had dried up, part of a severe water crisis in Kabul: While the leaders of the world are pumping money into the business of fighting and killing, no one is paying attention to the depletion of water.

Like a scene from a movie that's replayed again and again, I saw Rahman crawling in the burning, dry desert sand, cold dehydrated sweat on his brow.

"When Rahman called, he asked whether Inaam was returning home from 'work' earlier every night, instead of at 9.30 pm, when 'all sorts of crime and incidents fester in the streets.' Out of worry, I beat Inaam once for coming home too late. I didn't want to punish him, but I got so intolerably wor-

ried about bad things happening to him. He's still so young, said his mother.

Inaam is 13. I asked, "Why didn't Inaam tell me that Rahman was hoping to continue his studies in night school? How I wish I had known about his deliberations to join the army!" My frustration at life's small but water-shed decisions was obvious.

"Inaam didn't want you to know that we're trapped in this undignified situation," his mother replied. "As you know, Inaam's father is a drug addict, and we have so many problems. We don't tell anyone such things," she explained. Inaam hasn't seen his father for more than seven years. His father is in another province, unable to kick his drug habit, and oblivious to the desperate challenges at home.

Inaam's mother added, "And, Inaam is not a kid who complains. He goes to school and then to work. He comes home, and he listens. He doesn't give us any trouble. I reassured her, "There's no shame in your sons' hard work to eke a living. The Afghan Peace

While the leaders of the world are pumping money into the business of fighting and killing, no one is paying attention to the depletion of waste

Cost Of War

Rahman's fate was linked to mine and it was now tied to a ticking timebomb that would follow Newton's Law

Volunteers are a family, and it is no shame for family members to help out if possible. Please ask Rahman to come meet us when he's on a home visit, and perhaps, we can discuss job options."

Inaam's mother gave Inaam some instructions. He shuffled about in the corridor space outside the room, which doubles up as a kitchen, and returned quickly, placing a plate of washed grapes before me.

Dignified labour

What is needed is food on the table, enabled through dignified labour. But, where are the decent-wage jobs that don't involve exploitation and killing? If the call is to choose peace, where are the everyday options? Why can't peace, economic justice-, and environmental groups pool their efforts to address their common root problems, which Naomi Klein describes as "the deepening of relationships between issues and movements, so that our solutions address multiple crises at once?" This would surely include making non-violent jobs available to Rahman, as a way of saving him.

Why can't I do something about this?

As we left on our bicycles, Inaam pointed out the reinforced concrete walls of an army facility a few hundred metres away from his home. The thick walls had been broken into pieces as if they were made of paper in a suicide bomb attack a couple of months ago.

"I was not at home. The battle raged for a few hours after the explosion," Inaam said. I could only imagine his shocked mother sit-

ting in the room alone, legs folded, biting her lips, pale with worry.

My thoughts kept hovering around Rahman, searching for a definite way to ease him out of war's insanity and death. But how?

I had heard Rahman's voice on the phone before, when I called to ask Inaam to turn up at the centre. This was before Rahman was recruited into the army. Just hearing a voice, even a stranger's, can connect us to the person's humanity. "Where? What time? Okay! I'll tell Inaam. Thank you."

That day, as I cycled back to the Border-free Nonviolence Centre, where Ali, Bismillah and the Afghan Peace Volunteers realise that every crisis and every human is connected, my heart was thumping away.

I felt that Rahman's fate was linked to mine and it was now tied to a ticking timebomb that would follow Newton's Law.

Damn, I don't want Rahman to end up dead. **CT**

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Hakim Young is a medical doctor from Singapore who has done humanitarian and social enterprise work in Afghanistan for more than ten years, including being a mentor to the Afghan Peace Volunteers, an inter-ethnic group of young Afghans dedicated to building non-violent alternatives to war. He is the 2012 recipient of the International Pfeffer Peace Prize and the 2017 recipient of the Singapore Medical Association Merit Award for contributions in social service to communities.

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ColdType Insights

I went to school with the Las Vegas shooter

Greg Palast shares his memories of the ex-schoolmate who killed 58 people in Las Vegas massacre

When we were at Francis Polytechnic High in Sun Valley, California, Steve Paddock and I were required to take electrical shop class. At Poly and our junior high, we were required to take metal shop so we could work the drill presses at the GM plant. We took drafting. Drafting, as in “blueprint drawing.”

Paddock. Palast. We sat next to each other at those drafting tables with our triangular rulers and #2 pencils so we could get jobs at Lockheed as draftsman drawing blueprints of fighter jets. Or do tool-and-die cutting to make refrigerator handles at GM where they assembled Frigidaire refrigerators and Chevys.

But we weren't going to fly the fighter jets. Somewhere at Phillips Andover Academy, a dumbbell with an oil well for a daddy was going to Yale and then fly our fighter

jets over Texas. We weren't going to go to Yale. We were going to go to Vietnam. Then, when we came back, if we still had two hands, we went to GM or Lockheed. (It's no



Mobile home on tracks, Sun Valley CA, birthplace of the Vegas shooter.

From the film *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*.

coincidence that much of the student population at our school was Hispanic.)

But if you went to “Bevvie” – Beverly Hills High – or Hollywood High, you didn't take metal shop. You took Advanced Placement French. You took Advanced Placement

Calculus. We didn't have Advanced Placement French. We didn't have French anything. We weren't Placed, and we didn't Advance.

Steve was a math wizard. He should have gone to UCLA, to Stanford. But our classes didn't qualify him for anything other than LA Valley College and Cal State Northridge. Any dumbbell could get in. And it was almost free. That's where Steve was expected to go, and he went with his big math-whiz brain.

And then Steve went to Lockheed, like he was supposed to. Until Lockheed shut down plants in 1988. Steve left, took the buy-out.

And after NAFTA, GM closed too.

Land of Opportunity? Well, tell me: who gets those opportunities?

Some of you can and some of you can't imagine a life where you just weren't give a fair chance. Where the smarter you are, the more painful it gets, because you have your face pressed against the window, watching THEM. THEY got the

connections to Stanford. THEY get the gold mine. WE get the shaft.

This is where Paddock and Palast were bred: Sun Valley, the anus of Los Angeles. Literally. It's where the sewerage plant is. It's in a trench below the Hollywood Hills, where the smog settles into a kind of puke yel-

low soup. Here's where LA dumps its urine and the losers they only remember when they need cheap labour and cheap soldiers when the gusanos don't supply enough from Mexico.

Let's go to Sun Valley. Take a look, America. Along the tracks that once led in to the GM plant, you see a bunch of campers that the union men bought for vacations. Now they live in them.

No, Steve's brain was too big to end up on the tracks. He lived in empty apartments in crappy buildings he bought, then in a barren tract house outside Reno. I laugh when they say he was "rich." He wanted to be THEM, to have their stuff. He got close.

It's reported that Steve was a "professional gambler." That's another laugh. He was addicted to numbing his big brain by sitting 14 hours a day in the dark in front of video poker machines. He was a loser. Have you ever met a gambler who said they were a Professional Loser?

It's fair to ask me: Why didn't I end up in a hotel room with a bump-stock AR-15 and 5,000 rounds of high velocity bullets?

Because I have a job, a career, an OBSESSION: to hunt down THEM, the daddy-pampered pricks who did this to us, the grinning billionaire jackals who make a profit off the slow decomposition of the lives I grew up with.

Dear Reader: The publication that pulled this story at the last moment was plain scared – that they'd be accused of approving murder.

But I'm telling you, that I know it's a very fine line, and lots of crazy luck, that divided my path from

Paddock's.

Paddock slaughtered good people, coldly, with intense cruelty, destroying lives and hundreds of families forever. If you think I'm making up some excuse for him, then I give up.

But also this: The editor of the Beverly Hills-based publication, a Stanford grad, could not understand that, just like veterans of the Vietnam war who suffer from PTSD even today, so too, losers of the class war can be driven mad by a PTSD that lingers, that gnaws away, their whole lives.

*What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it . . . fester like a sore? Does it
stink like rotten meat? Sag . . . like a
heavy load?
Or does it explode?*

Steve, you created more horrors than your cornered life could ever justify.

But, I just have to tell you, Steve: I get it. **CT**

.....
Greg Palast is an investigative reporter, author and filmmaker. His latest film is *The Best democracy Can Buy*.

The low-rent bullying of the Zionist ideologue

Thomas S. Harrington explains why those who criticise the behaviour of Israel should be tolerated, not targeted

Imagine for a moment that you're talking to an Italian-American about fascist Italy (1922-1945) and how elements of that destructive and authoritarian ideology are still present in many areas of the Italian body politic.

Then imagine that the friend shuts down the conversation because it makes him or her feel "uncomfortable." When you ask why, the person explains that, though you might not be aware of it, your critique of fascism is really a coded way of expressing a deep and pernicious hatred of all Italians and that, given the harm done to Italians in the past by such Italophobic musings, we really need to stop things right here.

Then imagine that the person makes behind-your-back visits to your direct-work supervisor – in the case of an academic like me, his or her academic dean – to complain about the malign thought-crimes being conjured in your head and the need to enact measures to cut down on the uncomfortable "environment of hate" that these thought-crimes promoted by you are generating for everyone in the community.

I think that if a friend or a colleague acted in this way, we would rightly see them, at the very least, as someone lacking a basic understanding of the implied rules of intellectual exchange, and at the very worst, as a heedless bully.

Insights

Amazingly, however, most of us put up with behaviour quite similar to this – or worse, we frequently self-censor to avoid the possibility of their onset – when it comes to talking to committed Zionists about Israel and its political and military behaviour.

In case you missed the point in the little story above, it is this: Zionism is a particular political ideology produced in a particular moment of time by a particular faction of a large and diverse ethno-religious group known as the Jews.

For most of the vast and impressive history of this collective it has not existed. It is no more essential, despite what Zionist ideologues ceaselessly tell us today, to the condition of being Jewish than, being a fascist authoritarian was, or is, to being a true self-respecting Italian.

And, despite the enormous social pressure exercised by censorious and bullying people such as the ones described in the hypothetical Italian case outlined above, many Jews – indeed, it would seem, an ever-increasing percentage of their numbers – do not see their identification with their people's rich past and present as being coterminous with a blind commitment to the particular, and relatively new, racist ideology that undergirds the operation of the state of Israel today.

No other political interest group that I know in the US regularly demands, through the profligate employment of interpersonal bullying, social and professional slander, and orchestrated campaigns of ostracism, that we accept their particular ideology as per se legitimate and lovable.

Indeed, if anyone else tried to



Steven Salaita is an academic whose career has been damaged by constant attacks by supporters of Zionism.

put us in this position, most of us would, quite rightly, either tell them to go to hell or laugh them out of the room.

Isn't it time we started taking back the right and – if you consider the enormity of Israel's dependence

on US funding and diplomatic cover – the responsibility to treat Zionism for what it is?

What is that?

It's a passing political current that like all passing political currents is absolutely fair game for revision, critique, and yes, even outright censure, a passing political ideology that is no more congruent with the entirety of the Jewish historical experience than socialism is to the experience of being Swedish, than Francoism to the experience of being Spanish, than the ideological exaltation of invading and bombing foreign countries is to the experience of being an American today. **CT**

.....
Thomas S. Harrington is a professor of Iberian Studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut and the author of the recently released *Livin' la Vida Barroca: American Culture in a Time of Imperial Orthodoxies*.

Cold War then. Cold War now

William Blum wonders why American journalists insist on being so biased in their writing about Russia

The anti-Russian/anti-Soviet bias in the American media appears to have no limit. You would think that they would have enough self-awareness and enough journalistic integrity – just enough – to be concerned about their image. But it keeps on coming, piled higher and deeper.

One of the latest cases in point is a review of a new biography of Mikhail

Gorbachev in the New York Times Book Review (Sept 10). The review says Gorbachev “was no hero to his own people” because he was “the destroyer of their empire.” This is how the New York Times avoids having to say anything positive about life in the Soviet Union or about socialism. They would have readers believe that it was the loss of the likes of Czecho-

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slovakia or Hungary et al. that upset the Russian people, not the loss, under Gorbachev's perestroika, of a decent standard of living for all, a loss affecting people's rent, employment, vacations, medical care, education, and many other aspects of the Soviet welfare state.

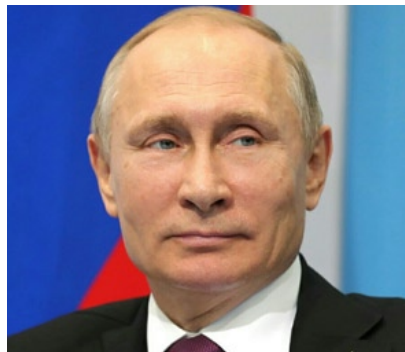
Accompanying this review is a quote from a 1996 Times review of Gorbachev's own memoir, which said: "It mystifies Westerners that Mikhail Gorbachev is loathed and ridiculed in his own country. This is the man who pulled the world several steps back from the nuclear brink and lifted a crushing fear from his countrymen, who ended bloody foreign adventures [and] liberated Eastern Europe. . . . Yet his repudiation at home could hardly be more complete. His political comeback attempt in June attracted less than one percent of the vote."

Thus is Gorbachev's unpopularity with his own people further relegated to the category of "mystery," and not due to the profound social changes.

It should be noted that in 1999 USA Today reported: "When the Berlin Wall crumbled [1989], East Germans imagined a life of freedom where consumer goods were abundant and hardships would fade. Ten years later, a remarkable 51 percent say they were happier with communism." Earlier polls would likely have shown even more than 51 percent expressing such a sentiment, for in the ten years many of those who remembered life in East Germany with some fondness had passed away; although even 10 years later, in 2009, the Washington Post could report: "Westerners [West Berliners] say they are fed up with the tendency of their eastern counterparts to wax nostalgic about communist times." It was in the post-unification period that a new



COLD-EYED?: George H.W. Bush (above), Vladimir Putin (below). Photos: Wikimedia



Russian and eastern Europe proverb was born: "Everything the Communists said about Communism was a lie, but everything they said about capitalism turned out to be the truth."

The current New York Times review twice refers to Vladimir Putin as "authoritarian," as does, routinely, much of the Western media. None of the many such references I have come across in recent years has given an example of such authoritarian policies, although such examples of course exist, as they do under a man named Trump and a woman named May and every other government in the world. But clearly if a strong case could be made of Putin being authoritarian, the Western media would routinely document such in their attacks upon the Russian president. Why do they not?

The review further refers to Putin to as "the cold-eye former KGB lieu-

tenant colonel." One has to wonder if the New York Times has ever referred to President George H.W. Bush as "the cold-eye former CIA Director."

Just as in the first Cold War, one of the basic problems is that Americans have great difficulty in believing that Russians mean well. Apropos this, I'd like to recall the following written about George Kennan, one of the most prominent American diplomats ever:

"Crossing Poland with the first US diplomatic mission to the Soviet Union in the winter of 1933, a young American diplomat named George Kennan was somewhat astonished to hear the Soviet escort, Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov, reminisce about growing up in a village nearby, about the books he had read and his dreams as a small boy of being a librarian.

"We suddenly realized, or at least I did, that these people we were dealing with were human beings like ourselves," Kennan wrote, "that they had been born somewhere, that they had their childhood ambitions as we had. It seemed for a brief moment we could break through and embrace these people."

It hasn't happened yet.

Kennan's sudden realisation brings George Orwell to mind: "We have now sunk to a depth at which the restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men." **CT**

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William Blum is the author of *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2*; *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*; *West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir*; and *Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire*. His web site is www.williamblum.org

Why so many young men in UK carry knives

Violent knife crime is surging. The cause? Instability, anxiety – and social media, writes **James Treadwell**

Concern is mounting about a recent surge in violent knife crime in Britain's biggest cities.

Crime figures for the year ending in March 2017 showed an 18 percent rise in violent crime, including a 20 percent surge in gun and knife crime. There has also been an increase in the use of bladed weapons in prison with 635 incidents recorded in 2016, up 29 percent on the previous year. There are almost two knife crimes a day in prison, a setting where security is supposed to be paramount.

The Guardian project, *Beyond the Blade*, has been mapping fatal teenage knife offences throughout 2017. Writing in April, the journalist Gary Younge laid part of the blame for the rise in knife violence on austerity which had led to cuts in youth services. Other commentators have put the blame elsewhere, from the rise of gangster rap to the decline in the use of police stop and search powers.

Gangs, grim estates and grime music are often given as the backdrop to a typical knife murder. Yet move outside of London, and that doesn't seem to be the picture. And a spate of recent knife fatalities in the West Midlands suggest that the violence is not simply a gang issue. While some of the recent killings

are gang related, many are not and it seems part of the problem is that knife and weapon-carrying has become increasingly normal for a significant number of young men. In the West Midlands, some of those involved in serious knife violence have had little contact with the criminal justice system before.

According to much criminological research, young men are often motivated to carry knives by anxiety and insecurity. Many are concerned about their own risk of being the victim. Respect and street kudos are also factors.

Social media can be a powerful platform for young people to craft identity, or to present themselves as tough and macho. I've seen platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram being used by prisoners to pose with knives and money. Pictures are posted momentarily and taken down instantly leaving little trace. To their peers, this reinforces the idea that owning and carrying weapons is normal – and therefore sparks others to do so.

During my own research, I have interviewed many violent young men in custody who have been both the instigators and victims of serious violence. Frequently, this includes being stabbed. One thing that strikes me is how many of these young men see nothing

exceptional in carrying and using weapons, viewing it almost as logical.

Offenders tell me that carrying knives is frequently about "self-protection." One told me: "You never know who else will have one, but most people do now." Another said: "If someone is going to stab me, I will stab them first." As another man succinctly put it: "Nobody is bigger and harder than a blade."

Such words tend to reflect an abdication of personal responsibility, a point made by the former prison doctor Theodore Dalrymple in his recent book, *The Knife Went In*. Dalrymple sees weapon-carrying as a symptom of moral decline, also making the point that murderers do not take personal responsibility for their actions.

Yet young men's self-justifications for carrying weapons arguably mirror the dominant contemporary political and economic logic of our time. Consumer society tells them to indulge now and feel no guilt – to enjoy themselves and put their own interests ahead of obligations to others. At the same time, the importance of self-reliance, a political mantra shared by the Conservatives and New Labour, has trickled down to young people from on high – even when the money didn't.

We should not be shocked that many young men have now internalised this selfish individualism.

Men from cities like London, Birmingham and Manchester live within a stone's throw of central city spaces that hold little real attachment for them. Most cannot afford to shop in the expensive

designer stores and frequent the expensive, high-end bars that proliferate there. Many do not want employment in a sports shop on a zero hours' contract or to be part of a service sector that will barely pay them enough to make ends meet.

Precarious, insecure work in the gig economy means that for many it is better to dabble in the entrepreneurial and sometimes violent world of petty crime – such as cannabis cultivation, arguably one of the few homegrown industries Britain has left. My own research also suggests that similar drug markets involving synthetic cannabis are starting to emerge and become well established in prisons. The only drawback is that disputes in

such concealed, unregulated spaces tend to get resolved by violence.

Whether it is inside the walls of the prison or on the outside in the hollowed out communities of England's inner city estates, there is no one single cause driving men to stab one another. Knife carrying isn't all gang-related, but young men's increasing reliance upon knives and weapons is not just a media scare either – and it provides a grim glimpse into the fragile state of young male mentality.

James Treadwell is professor in criminology at Staffordshire University in England. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com

vice or wrong-headed thinking, that media like AlterNet – dedicated to fighting white supremacy, misogyny, racism, Donald Trump, and fake news – would be clobbered by Google in its clumsy attempt to address hate speech and fake news. . .

“So the reality we face is that two companies, Google and Facebook – which are not media companies, do not have editors or fact-checkers, and do no investigative reporting – are deciding what people should read, based on a failure to understand how media and journalism function.”

“Bad advice,” “wrong-headed,” “clumsy,” “failure to understand.” AlterNet itself is the one that has misunderstood what is going on. There is nothing accidental or clumsy about what Google and Facebook are doing. In fact, what has happened was entirely predictable as soon as western political and media elites started raising their voices against “fake news.” That was something I and others warned about at the time.

But the claim of “fake news” does usefully offer western security agencies, establishment politicians and the corporate media a powerful weapon to silence their critics. After all, these critics have no platform other than independent websites and social media. Shut the sites and you shut up your opponents.

Google and Facebook have been coming under relentless and well-documented pressure from traditional media corporations and the political establishment to curb access to independent news and analysis sites, especially those offering highly critical perspectives on the

Google search engine bias is no accident

Internet giant's action is pushing us back into the arms of the big media conglomerates, writes **Jonathan Cook**

Alternet has recently gone public with concerns about the way Google and Facebook have limited traffic to its website and, more generally, undermined access to progressive and independent media.

Its traffic from web searches has dropped precipitously – by 40 per cent – since Google introduced new algorithms in the summer. Other big progressive sites have reported similar, or worse, falls. More anecdotally, and less significantly, I have noticed on both my own

website and Facebook page a sharp drop in views and shares in recent weeks.

AlterNet is appealing for financial help, justifiably afraid that the drop in traffic will impact its revenues and threaten its future. Nonetheless, there is something deeply misguided, even dangerous, about its description of what is happening. Here is how its executive editor, Don Hazen, describes AlterNet's problems:

“Little did we know that Google had decided, perhaps with bad ad-

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policies and behaviour of western corporations and state bureaucracies. These moves are intimately tied to ongoing efforts to spread the dishonest claim that progressive sites are working in the service of Russia's Vladimir Putin in his alleged attempts to subvert western democracies.

Shadowy groups such as PropOrNot have been springing up to make such wildly unsubstantiated claims, which have then been taken up as authoritative by traditional corporate media such as the Washington Post. It is noticeable that the list of sites suffering sudden downturns in traffic closely correlates with the progressive websites defamed as Putin propaganda outfits by PropOrNot.

The pressure on Google and Facebook is not going to ease. And the two new-media giants are not likely to put up any more resistance than is absolutely necessary to suggest they are still committed to some abstract notion of free speech. Given that their algorithms and distribution systems are completely secret, they can say one thing in public and do something else entirely in private.

Other comments by Hazen fur-

ther suggest that Alternet does not really understand the new environment it finds itself in. He writes:

“Ben Gomes, the company's vice president for engineering, stated in April that Google's update of its search engine would block access to 'offensive' sites, while working to surface more 'authoritative content.' This seemed like a good idea. Fighting fake news, which Trump often uses to advance his interests and rally his supporters, is an important goal that AlterNet shares.”

Fake news can be found across much of the media spectrum: in the New York Times, CNN, BBC, Guardian, as well in Donald Trump's tweets. It has existed for as long as powerful interests have dominated the media and its news agenda – which is since the invention of print. Fake news cannot be defeated by giving greater powers to huge media conglomerations to decide what people should hear. It is defeated by true media pluralism – something we have barely experienced even now, in this brief heady period of relative online freedom.

Alternet is treating Google and Facebook, and the powerful corporate interests behind them, as

if they can be tamed and made to see sense, and persuaded that they should support progressive media. That is not going to happen.

Like the media barons of old, who alone could afford to distribute newspapers through truck deliveries and corner shops, Google and Facebook are the monopolistic distribution platforms for new and social media. They have enormous power to decide what you will see and read, and they will use that power in their interests – not yours.

They will continue to refine and tighten their restrictions so that access to dissident media becomes harder and harder. It will happen so subtly and incrementally that there is a real danger few will notice how they have been gradually herded back into the arms of the media corporations. **CT**

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Jonathan Cook won the *Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism*. His latest books are “*Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East*” (Pluto Press) and “*Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair*” (Zed Books). His web site is www.jonathancook.net

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WHEN THE LAW COMES KNOCKING

"There are many Hackneys, but this is the one I kept thinking about while I lived there. I wanted to know what was at the end of the sirens and flashing lights?"



Photo: Robert Malesch

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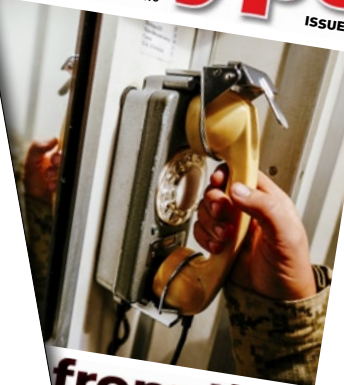


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WELCOME TO KENSINGTON AVENUE

CAB DRIVERS, DOPE DEALERS, HOOKERS AND JOHNS. A BAR AND A CHURCH ON EVERY CORNER

Photo: Jeffrey Schuchman