

TODD MILLER | JONATHAN COOK | JOE ALLEN | TIM KNIGHT | LINH DINH
KAREN J. GREENBERG | RONNIE KASRILS | LINDA McQUAIG | AND MORE

ISSUE 223

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

June 2021

“If you listen
really hard
you can see
the pictures”



REMEMBERING THE WORK OF CONFLICT
PHOTOGRAPHER DAVID P. GILKEY [24-27]



READ COLDTYPE'S BACK ISSUES



at www.coldtype.net/reader/html
and at www.issuu.com/coldtype

CONTENTS

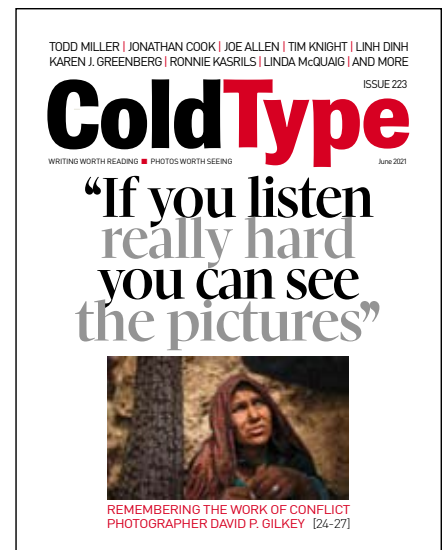
WRITING WORTH READING | PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

ISSUES

- 4 WE NEED A WORLD OF BIKES, NOT WALLS** / Todd Miller
- 8 SPRINGTIME IN THE END TIMES** / Joe Allen
- 12 IGNORE KEIR STARMER'S MORAL POSTURING**
Jonathan Cook
- 16 PALESTINE MON AMOUR** / Ronnie Kasrils
- 18 SAVAGE PUNISHMENT OF AN OPPRESSED PEOPLE**
David Cromwell & David Edwards
- 22 MARVIN GAYE'S SONG FOR THE AGES** / Tyina Steptoe
- 24 'IF YOU LISTEN REALLY HARD YOU CAN SEE THE PICTURES** / David P. Gilkey
- 28 ZERO IMPACT** / George Monbiot
- 30 THE FOREVER PRISON OF THE FOREVER WARS**
Karen J. Greenberg
- 34 GREETINGS FROM 'NEW NORMAL' GERMANY**
C.J. Hopkins
- 36 IN A WORLD OF RAKI AND HIGH-JUMPING GOATS**
Linh Dinh

INSIGHTS

- 43 HOW THE PLAGUE CHANGED DRINKING HABITS**
James Brown
- 45 PUBLISHED AND BE DAMNED** / Tim Knight
- 47 JOINING UP THE DOTS IN AMAZON STORY**
Granville Williams
- 48 DISPOSABLE WORKERS ARE BAD FOR BUSINESS**
Sam Pizzigati
- 49 TIME TO REJECT TRICKLE-DOWN SCAM**
Linda McQuaig
- 51 WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT JEFF BEZOS'S NEW BOAT**
Jim Hightower
- 51 DEJA VU** / Mark Hurwitt



ColdType

7 Lewis Street, Georgetown, Ontario,
Canada L7G 1E3

Contact ColdType:

Write to Tony Sutton
at editor@coldtype.net

Subscribe:

For a FREE subscription
to Coldtype, e-mail
editor@coldtype.net

Back Issues:

www.coldtype.net/reader.html or
www.issuu.com/coldtype

Cover Photo: David P. Gilkey /

From the book *Pictures on the Radio*
– See Pages 24-27

© ColdType 2021

Disclaimer: The contents of the articles
in ColdType are the sole responsibility
of the author(s). ColdType is not responsible
for any inaccurate or incorrect statements
they may contain

TODD MILLER

We need a world of bikes, not walls

I knew that I was risking a prison sentence if I gave a ride to Juan Carlos, who told me he was from Guatemala. My hesitation reminded me how borders can be internalised

From the mountaintops of southern Arizona, you can see a world without borders. I realised this just before I met Juan Carlos. I was about 20 miles from the border but well within the militarised zone that abuts it. I was, in fact, atop the Baboquivari mountain range, a place sacred to the Tohono O'odham, the Native American people who have inhabited this land for thousands of years. At that moment, however, I couldn't see a single Border Patrol agent or any sign of what, in these years, I've come to call the border-industrial complex. On the horizon were just sky and clouds — and mountain ranges like so many distant waves. I couldn't tell where the United States ended or Mexico began, and it didn't matter.

I was reminded of astronaut Edgar Mitchell's reaction when he gazed back at the Earth from the moon: "It was [a] beautiful, harmonious, peaceful-looking planet, blue with white clouds, and one that gave you a deep sense ... of home, of being, of identity. It is what I prefer to call instant global consciousness".

A couple of hours after my own peaceful moment of global consciousness, Juan Carlos appeared at the side of a dirt road. I was by then driving in a desolate stretch of

desert and he was waving his arms in distress. I halted the car and lowered the window. "Do you want some water?" I asked in Spanish, holding out a bottle, which he promptly chugged down.

"Is there anything else I can do for you?" I asked.

"Can you give me a ride to the next town?"

At that moment, my vision of a borderless world evaporated. Even though I couldn't see them, I could feel the proximity of armed border agents in their green-striped trucks. Perhaps one of the high-tech surveillance towers in the area already had us in its scope. Maybe I had tripped a motion sensor and a Predator B drone was flying over the car. Unfortunately, I knew far too much about one of the most surveilled borders on this planet and how it's designed to create a potentially deadly crisis for people like Juan Carlos who cross it.

Although this particular incident happened a couple years ago, the US border strategy still regularly forces such migrants into the deep and dangerous desert, as has been true for the last quarter-century.

The reason I so palpably felt the surveillance system all around

me was because I knew that I was risking a prison sentence if I gave a ride to Juan Carlos, who told me he was from Guatemala. So, I hesitated. The natural impulse to help a fellow human being was almost instantly overridden by a law making it a felony to transport him and in any way further his presence in this country.

My hesitation both infuriated me and reminded me of how borders can be internalised. I had to think about what the Border Patrol would notice if they pulled me over, particularly that Juan Carlos only spoke Spanish and that he had brown skin. They would assume he was undocumented. Such racial profiling is encoded in the border-security paradigm.

In the end, I wrote a whole book, *Build Bridges, Not Walls: A Journey to a World Without Borders*, as a kind of meditation on that moment of hesitation and how it acted like a prism through which I could reflect on my two decades of border reporting. But the book is also a reckoning with the border itself, based on conversations I had with refugees, migrants like Juan Carlos, Border Patrol agents seeking out those like him, border-industrial complex officials making money off such voyagers, journalists and



FENCED IN: The US-Mexico border at Tijuana, Mexico.

scholars covering the never-ending “crisis” there, indigenous people watching their lands being walled off, and those among them who have visions of how all of this can work differently.

One of the most important conversations of all came with someone who will inherit this wall-plagued world of ours, my five-year-old son, William. One day, on a beach south of San Diego, a Border Patrol agent yelled at him as he ran toward the tall, steel-barred wall there at the border to greet people waving from the other side, in Tijuana, Mexico. I remember him sitting in the sand, trying to grasp why that agent wouldn’t let him go to the fence and be friendly. Later, when we talked over the incident, he asked me: “Why can’t we turn the wall into bikes?”

A good question and, with Donald Trump and his talk of a “big, fat,

beautiful wall” gone, there’s been lots of news coverage about Biden-era immigration reform, about “fixing a broken system”. While my expectations are low, there also couldn’t be a better moment to begin to demilitarise our border and turn it into something else. As my son suggested, another world, a world of bikes, not walls – both more humane and more sustainable – is not only possible, but essential to pursue.

It was a hot day in 2008 when the Border Patrol dispatcher radioed agent Brendan Lenihan, telling him that a motion sensor had been tripped in a rugged mountain range about 30 miles from where I met Juan Carlos. Thousands of such sensors have been implanted along the US-Mexico border, even miles inland where Lenihan slowly drove to

an empty mine shaft at the top of a mountain. There, as he got out of his truck, a man appeared waving his arms in distress and talking rapidly in Spanish.

As you consider Brendan’s story, which he told me long after, keep in mind that our closed but porous borders are also an enormously elaborate system of death-by-design. Yet even mentioning the concept of “open borders” usually brings, at best, polite rejection and often instant ridicule. From the more courteous side, a common argument is that open borders would be a threat to this country’s stability. Yet Brendan’s story not only illustrates the border’s violence and – his word – “absurdity,” but also the way in which borders actually maintain instability in a world of immense inequality.

That day, when Lenihan pulled his assault rifle over his shoulder and followed Rogelio – a name he would learn later – he had no idea what he was heading into. He was a new agent, taken on during a post-9/11 hiring surge when the border suddenly became a “counterterrorism” priority mission and the fiscal faucets opened wide for US Customs and Border Protection under the newly minted Department of Homeland Security. Never had there been more Border Patrol agents.

Descending the ravine, he came across a scene that would only become more common in an age of increasing border “enforcement.” An older man, Miguel, was gently rocking a younger one, his cousin and Rogelio’s brother, Roberto, like a baby. Roberto’s eyes, when open, were rolled back and white. The situation was clearly dire. Brendan radioed for help, but a helicopter couldn’t land in the ravine.

By clasping their arms, Rogelio and he formed a human stretcher.

Roberto started to vomit. Black bile oozed from one corner of his mouth. As they climbed up that ravine under a burning sun, the strain and sweat made their hands slip and Brendan became ever more aware that Rogelio's calloused hands were locked in his. It was, he would later tell me, "strangely intimate", holding hands with someone he would normally arrest. Then he simply forgot who he was. The border disappeared. With it went his uniform, his badge, and his gun. Looking down at Roberto, he saw only a young man in his arms and, for a long moment, felt as if he were carrying his own brother.

Suddenly, his radio crackled and he came back to his senses. He was still a Border Patrol agent. The border itself had never gone away. At that very moment, it was, in fact, killing Roberto. Now, however, Brendan found himself moving with a new sense of empathy. To experience this was little short of miraculous, given his intense Border Patrol training, given that the border, by its very nature, is anti-empathetic.

As it happened, the Border Patrol EMT unit was unable to revive Roberto. At a bar later that night, seeing that he was upset, Brendan's fellow agents assured him that such a tragedy was just part of the "border game". And callous as it may have sounded, it was true. The border, by its very nature, by its strategy, by the way the border-industrial complex had developed it, was indeed death by design and most of them had already experienced that all too vividly.

The next day, Brendan's supervisor called him. Don't worry, he said, they were nothing but "drug mules". When Brendan relayed this to me, he looked exasperated and added, "What did I care?"

"It didn't matter to you that they

The border, by its very nature, by its strategy, by the way the border-industrial complex had developed it, was indeed death by design

were allegedly smuggling drugs?" I asked.

"To me", he said, "it doesn't make a difference. They just seemed like regular guys. And who knows what kind of job I would have had if I grew up with them in their situation in life. It could have been me. I could have been one of them".

Shortly after that call from his supervisor, he noticed the scent of marijuana coming through his apartment window. "And now", he added, "my neighbour is smoking the very thing I'm trying to stop. There's an element of absurdity to it all".

Yes, indeed, when it comes to the border and its many "crises," the absurdity runs deep. Take those claims about immigrants and drugs. In reality, more than 80 percent of all illicit drugs making it into the United States arrive through regular ports of entry, not the vastness of the desert. Along the same lines, the usual claims that immigrants are likely to be criminals or prone to crime are simply untrue, as study after study after study have shown.

And by the way, other studies clearly indicate that, far from depressing the economy, higher rates of immigration bolster it. An analysis from the investigative news site ProPublica, for example, indicates that, for every 1 percent increase in immigration, there was a simultaneous 1.15 percent increase in the gross

domestic product. In other words, if President Trump actually wanted to achieve the 4 percent economic growth he swore, in 2016, that his presidency would bring, the one surefire way to do so, as ProPublica's Lena Groeger suggested, would have been to stop building that wall of his and let eight million immigrants into the country.

No less important, as Brendan Lenihan's experience implicitly suggested, this country's ever more fortified borders have little to do with global stability. In fact, they play a key role in maintaining the instability of a world in which 2,153 billionaires (many of them American) have more wealth than the poorest 4.6-billion people on this planet. We're talking, of course, about a place where forecasts of climate displacement suggest that, by 2050, as many as one-billion people could be desperately on the move.

Borders, at least as presently imagined, are an impediment to a sustainable world based on empathy and equality.

Soon enough, my son's mind would turn from bikes to other possibilities. Why, he wondered, couldn't the wall be made into houses or rails for trains, anything more useful for us human beings and the health of the planet (one of his growing concerns). When, like him, I begin to imagine shifting the shapes of things in our world, I often think of budgets. From 2003 to 2021, the federal government spent \$332.7-billion on US Customs and Border Protection and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement – on, that is, our designated border and immigration control agencies. Those sums would translate into nearly 700 miles of walls – built not just by our last president, but over multiple administrations – as well as more than 20,000 armed agents, billions in high-tech border surveillance technology,

and at least 200 detention centres.

When it came to actual human security and wellbeing, however, that money was distinctly ill-spent. As Flint, Michigan, has shown, for instance, contaminated water is a tangible and major threat to human health. Imagine if some of that border-fortification money had been directed not to ludicrous walls on our southern border, but to producing cleaner, safer water or better health care. Wouldn't that have brought stability in a way another mile of border wall or the latest surveillance tower never does? Imagine, for instance, a world in which such money was used not to purchase medium-sized drones with facial recognition capabilities, but to help alleviate the crisis in (un)affordable housing.

And mind you, 1,000 border walls won't stop climate change, the "biggest threat that modern humans have ever faced", as British naturalist David Attenborough told the UN Security Council. Imagine the carbon that might sooner or later be gone from this world if our 21,000 Border Patrol agents planted one tree every day for years to come. Turning such agents into gardeners and foresters might sound silly, but it might prove crucial for future generations. Maybe demilitarising the border and turning it into a lush garden would bolster human security more than any wall, guard, or gun.

I never had a chance to ask Juan Carlos how or why he had found himself lost and desperate by that desert road. Still, I did know that he wasn't part of a "border crisis" but, as Harsha Walia puts it, a "displacement crisis". As she writes, "Migrants and refugees do not just appear at our borders. They are produced by systemic forces".

Looking back, I have no doubt his

Imagine if some of that border-fortification money had been directed to producing cleaner, safer water or better health care

request at that moment was also part of that very displacement crisis and US policy had played a significant role in producing it. I mean, how else can you think of his country, Guatemala, where the CIA instigated a coup in the name of the United Fruit Company in 1954 and our government trained homicidal generals responsible for atrocity after atrocity in the 1980s? There's a whole forgotten history of what this country helped create in Central America, as historian Aviva Chomsky has made all too clear, one that's intrinsically tied to today's ongoing immigration disaster.

Any future border freedom of movement policy would be the twin pillar with another fundamental right, the right to stay home and live a dignified life. A fortified border falls, in other words, with the creation of a more humane world.

Perhaps Juan Carlos had been a farmer whose harvest never came in thanks to the increasing Central American droughts associated with a warming globe. I know my country was far more responsible than his for the greenhouse gas emissions now in the biosphere creating that overheated world. Or he could have been displaced by the transnational influx of extractive industries in his country intent on taking its natural wealth, part of a long legacy of dispossession

by foreign companies in what still passes for a free-market economy. Or maybe his trip north was thanks to persecution from military and police units (many US-trained) or organised crime and gangs, or both at the same time. I had no way of knowing.

What I did know was that there were no border patrols trying to stop the mining companies, the military-security assistance crews, the economic dispossessors, or the greenhouse gas emitters. The border patrols were reserved for the displaced, not those responsible for their displacement – those, that is, who really live in a world of open borders.

And so, as I sat there, infuriated by my own fear, my hesitation about giving Juan Carlos a ride, I realised – as had Brendan many years before – that I was the one who actually needed help. I was the one who needed Juan Carlos to orient me when it came to what a more humane world might be like. I was the one whose spirit was thirsty and needed a drink. I was the one who needed to imagine a world in which such human-made, fortified, militarised borders melted away amid a new global consciousness and solidarity.

So, I looked at Juan Carlos, who needed that lift to the nearest town and knew that, to get to such a world of solidarity and global consciousness, it would be necessary to break the law. And though after that morning, I never saw him again – somehow, he remains with me to this day. **CT**

Todd Miller's latest book is "Build Bridges, Not Walls: A Journey to a World Without Borders".

You can view more of his work at www.toddmillerwriter.com.

This essay was first published at www.tomdispatch.com.

JOE ALLEN

Springtime in the End Times

From the Houston skyline to a Montana favela, the human race is nasty, brutish . . . and beautiful.

Nakedface in Texas

To be honest, I've rarely had a great time in Texas, but I do love Texans. It's like having a good friend who lives in a shady trailer park. You're not eager to visit, but you're always happy to see him.

My recent excursion to Houston was better than usual, if only because the state was full-on nakedface. Everywhere my wandering took me, I was greeted by smiles, drawls, and Southern women wearing shorts cut so high, you might as well be walking through a forest of smooth legs under a canopy of creased underbun.

The air was so muggy, though, it was like swimming through a bowl of hot soup. Houston's inhabitants paddled from one bar to the next on rivers of sweat, blending flavours in a thick multicultural stew.

There were cholo bikers riding down the street on space age butt rockets. Each bike was equipped with iPhone navigation, hydraulic lift kits, neon ground lights, and ghetto-bumping speakers – all playing different songs. It seemed imprudent to tell them their choice of music wasn't appropriate around small children and conservative Muslims, but I suspect they already knew.

Out on the public green, there were throngs of protesters waving Arab flags in solidarity with Palestine. Most of the women wore chadors. At one point, a pale white girl with dyed Crayola-red hair walked by with a low-cut tank top and high-cut shorts. Her shirt said FREE PALESTINE. I imagined her walking through a market in Hebron dressed like that, and wondered what sort of solidarity she would enjoy there.

Around every corner, there were psychotic hobos using aggressive tactics that seemed closer to extortion than begging. One evening, as I stood outside my downtown hotel, a crusty white dude started swinging around one of those long squeegees in the porte-cochère. At first it looked like he was gonna beat the valet to death, but apparently he just wanted to wash some windows. No takers.

The next day, a young black guy came up in a fluster. He punched at invisible assailants on the sidewalk and gibbered incoherent oracles with frothy gobs of spit lining his dry lips. He screamed at my companions, "I'm stressed out! I'm stressed out! You don't understand! I'm stressed out like a man!"

Some guys have a harder time relaxing than others.

My favourite part of that week-long trip was saying "Howdy" to all the arena riggers and rowdy rednecks down there. That is, all except for one pasty ballroom rigger who had to be somebody's nephew in the union. Other than that bureaucratic dork, the Texas riggers were fine company for a melancholy soul. But we'll keep all that between me and them.

On the way back home, I got a brief glimpse into the era ahead. If you've ever been to Houston's international airport, you know it's crumbly on the outside and totally boring on the inside. The drab atmosphere forces travellers to retreat into their smartphones and laptops.

Walking into the baggage claim, I saw this future shock black kid playing some VR game out in public. He had goggles over his eyes and a mask over his mouth, oblivious to the outside world. He rocked his head and thrashed his hands as if he'd dropped a ten-strip of geltabs at a Dead show.

An elderly white airport employee watched over him protectively. He must have been worried that someone out there couldn't resist pushing a blind man over if given the chance.

Waving like seaweed in a bay, the kid was lost in an internal world



Future Shock Zoomer at Houston's international airport.

that was completely external to his mind.

Masked up and mad as hell

Throughout the pandemic, I've refused to wear a medical mask. For well over a year now, any time I was instructed to don a Communist burka to get groceries or enter a library or board a plane, I always wore my bandana instead. Better to signal that I'm a bank-robber than a compliant social experiment.

That all changed on my final connecting flight back to Montana. On two flights to Houston and one to Minneapolis, I wore my ol' cattle-rustler – no problem. Then out of nowhere, as I went to board my final flight, the snippy stewardess threw up her freckled hand.

"I'm sorry, sir, but we don't allow

bandanas anymore. Here, take one of these".

She held up a box of sky-blue Communist burkas. I damn near walked back into the terminal. I argued that she was being arbitrary. Nothing. I argued that she was scientifically illiterate. Nothing. I suggested she was being a bitch. Nothing. A blue mask trembled in her hand, right in front of my nose.

A moment later, I was sulking in my seat, fully muzzled, the adjacent passengers whispering about my bad behaviour. The other steward got on the intercom and lisped, "For the protection of everyone on this flight, we ask that you wear your mask over your nose and mouth. If you choose to eat, briefly pull your mask down to take a bite, then pull it back up to chew and swallow. Let me see a thumbs-up if everyone is good with this!"

The thumbs all went up. I raised my middle finger above them and let it linger. The thumbs fell. Gasps behind me. Sudden silence on the intercom. For a moment, it seemed likely I was gonna get booted from the plane. I crossed my arms and radiated all the negative vibes I could muster. Then I realised no one could actually see my frown. Jerks.

The thing is, I didn't get booted. Instead, I got free wine! Being a stubborn asshole has its perks.

The snack cart approached slowly. All the way down the aisle, the chatty steward told everyone about how he used to be a teacher before becoming a flight attendant. When he was few rows ahead of me, this passive-aggressive ding-a-ling began referencing my outburst. Loudly.

"Any time we get someone who doesn't like the rules", he lisped to

the virtue-signaller sitting just in front of me, “I suggest they seek out other options”. He looked straight into my eyes from over his sky-blue mask.

Sudden visions of being stuffed onto a smelly Greyhound flooded my mind. Or even worse, a Southwest cabin. I could see myself back out on the interstate on-ramp, a film of dust covering my sweaty face, my thumb out, a cardboard sign in my other hand that reads: GOTTA GET TO WORK!

I had to think fast. When the steward got to my row, I asked him about his teaching job. Caught off guard, he asked if I also worked in education. From his condescending tone, it was clear he thought I was illiterate. I told him I used to teach college courses on world religions. His eyebrows raised.

“One reason I quit”, I explained, “was because the administration had started deploying robots to teach classes online. They expected students to think like machines. They promoted standardised tests expecting conformist answers. When you have a system based on arbitrary rules, the brightest students will always slip through the cracks”.

The steward was a black guy. He taught in the inner city for two decades. He knew exactly what I was talking about.

My first free wine was pretty good. When he kept bringing me more, I knew we were on the same page.

Unmasked in Montana

Back under the Big Sky, everyone was breathing easy. Sunshine above the mountains, and germ clouds down below. It was a fine day for my glorious return.

My taxi driver was an older lady with long white hair. Because this is the middle of nowhere, she had an-

“They’re creating tiny black holes with that particle accelerator”, the driver shouted out her window, “and they’re doing satanic rituals”

other passenger in the van. It was a young woman, an elementary school teacher, and quite pretty.

“How are-ya?” the teacher asked.

“Drunk and nakedface,” I replied.

It was a long ride, so we talked about many things. The weather. The spring thaw. The black bears and hobos re-emerging from hibernation. Our governor had finally instituted a Mask-Free Montana policy. The schoolteacher told us about the dozens of maladjusted, frequently suicidal children she’s still dealing with in the wake of lockdowns and school closures.

“There’s this one girl”, she said, “who literally bawls her eyes out if she has to go outside without her mask. It isn’t her parents, either. They don’t buy this crap. So she must be getting it from TV, or maybe online. But she’s completely terrified of the outside world. So sad...”

The driver jumped in with her theories about government manipulation and the 2020 election. Although she never used these terms, she had a lot to say about the psychological conditioning of forcing the populace to live behind masks. It’s as if authorities want us to be invisible to each other.

“You know what’s really crazy?” I said. “The Shingularity.”

The driver knew exactly what I was talking about. She turned around with wide eyes. For once, I wished there was a robot behind the wheel.

“Do you know about that particle accelerator in Switzerland?!”

“You mean CERN?” which I pronounced “Shern”.

“Yes! They do satanic rituals there! I saw it on the Internet!”

“Well, I mean, they wore black robes and all of that. But the statue in the courtyard is Shiva. That’s Hindu...”

“You betcha! And that’s satanic.”

“I mean, ish got a weird vibe, but—”

She launched the van into the parking lot of my Montana favela. Stepping out into the sunset, I noticed fresh bits of litter settling into the ancient layer. A soggy mask. Cigarette butts. Crumpled rubber gloves. A baby’s sock, soaked in leaked motor oil and plastered to the pavement.

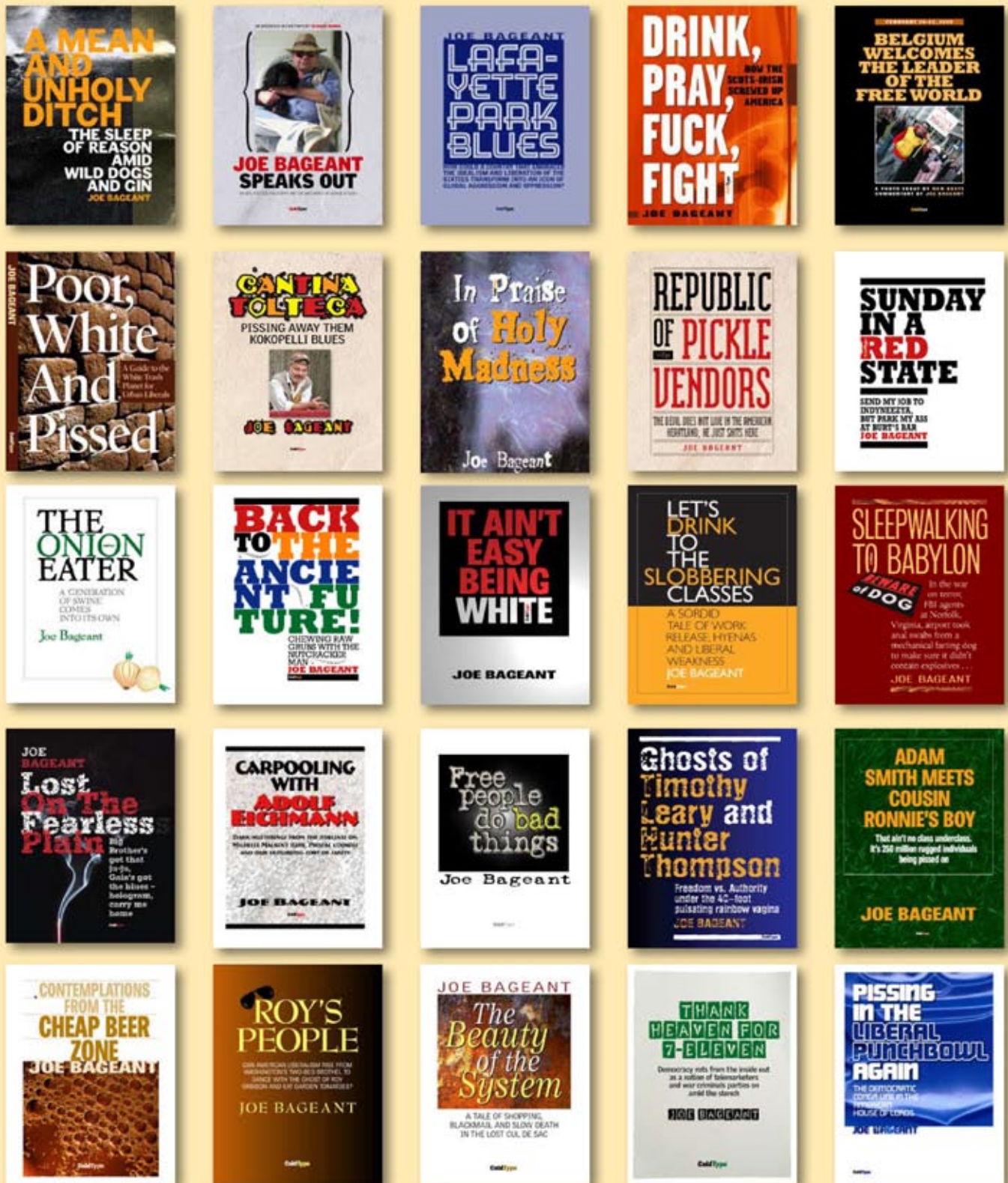
“They’re creating tiny black holes with that particle accelerator”, the driver shouted out her window, “and they’re doing satanic rituals. Look it up on the Internet. Do your research!”

I lugged my gear out of the taxi and gave her a huge tip. I said my farewells to the pretty teacher.

Cold air was blowing in from the canyon. The meth-addicted parents a few doors down were fighting again. Their toddler was crying and the mom screamed at him to shut up. “Shut up! Shut up!! Just shut the fuck up!!!” The kid kept wailing.

A gnawed melon rind, still glistening, laid in front of my apartment door. You could see from the tooth marks that an adult ate it. Call me a romantic, but I’m sure it was delicious. **CT**

Joe Allen writes about race, robots, and religion. Presently, he lives in the western shadow of the Rocky Mountains. Read his weekly newsletter at www.JOEBOT.xyz.



Read the Best of Joe Bageant

Download his essays, in pdf format, at www.coldtype.net/joe.html

JONATHAN COOK

Ignore Keir Starmer's moral posturing. He's the one we should blame for stoking antisemitism in Britain today

Labour's leader is not seeking to 'de-escalate' the 'tensions' causing bloodshed thousands of miles away in the Middle East – he is fuelling those very same tensions in his own back yard

No one should be surprised that Britain's rightwing prime minister, Boris Johnson, has had barely anything to say about Israel's recent pummeling of Gaza, with more than 200 Palestinians killed by airstrikes and many hundreds more seriously wounded.

Nor should we be surprised that Johnson has had nothing to say about the fact that Israel is using British weapons to bombard Gaza, killing families and blowing up media centres.

Johnson has had nothing to say either about Israel's recent efforts to ethnically cleanse Palestinians from occupied East Jerusalem – the very obvious trigger, along with its attacks on the al-Aqsa mosque, for

this latest round of so-called “clashes” between Israel and Hamas.

And like most of his predecessors, Johnson has had remarkably little to say about the much longer-term ethnic cleansing of Palestinians that was always at the core of mainstream Zionism's mission and was officially sponsored by Britain through its 1917 Balfour Declaration.

But if Johnson's performance at this critically important moment has been predictably dismal, what about the leader of the opposition Labour party, Sir Keir Starmer? Presumably he is picking up the slack, making clear that Israel is committing war crimes and that there must be harsh consequences, such as sanctions and an arms embargo.

Except Starmer is strangely quiet too.



Over the first week of the bombings, Starmer tweeted three times on matters related to events in Israel-Palestine. The first two were before Israel had begun unleashing the full might of its arsenal on Gaza. Starmer joined others in mealy-mouthed calls to “de-escalate tensions”, as though this was a slightly-too-noisy row between a bickering couple rather than serial wife-beating that has been going on for decades, aided by Britain.

As the death toll in Gaza mounted, and the both-sideism favoured by western leaders was exposed ever more starkly as moral cowardice, Starmer uttered not a word on the events unfolding in Israel and Palestine. Complete quiet.

That was until Sunday May 16 when Starmer took time out from his



day of rest to comment on a small convoy of cars – driven from Bradford and Oldham, according to a *Jewish News* report – that had passed through an area of London where many Jews live, waving Palestinian flags and shouting antisemitic curses.

Starmer commented: “Utterly disgusting. Antisemitism, misogyny and hate have no place on our streets or in our society. There must be consequences”.

And sure enough, there were immediate consequences. The police arrested four people under hate-crime laws.

In referring to Bradford and Oldham, the *Jewish News* report was suggesting – probably correctly – that the occupants of the cars were drawn from the large Muslim populations that live in those cities.

As the death toll in Gaza mounted, Starmer uttered not a word on the events unfolding in Israel and Palestine.

This is a pattern we have seen before. When Israel starts attacking Palestinians, many of whom are Muslim and whose lands include important Islamic holy sites under constant threat from Israel, Muslims are likely to feel the pain and insult far more deeply and personally than most other British populations.

Their outrage is likely to peak when Israel desecrates a holy site

under occupation such as al-Aqsa in Jerusalem – which is also a powerful symbol of the Palestinians’ aspiration towards political sovereignty in their historic homeland – during the holy month of Ramadan.

Many Muslims feel Israel’s reckless bombardment of Gaza and its civilian population, as well as the invasion of al-Aqsa mosque by Israeli soldiers, as very personal attacks on their dignity, their identity and their values.

“White” Britons struggling to understand such emotions might try to recall how incensed they felt at an attack by Islamic extremists on the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine in Paris back in 2015. That led to a march through the French capital by world leaders, including Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, uphold-

ing free speech, most especially the right to offend Muslims' religious sensitivities, as a supreme – and inviolable – value. (That is the same Paris that has just used water cannon and baton charges against Palestinian solidarity activists, many of them Muslims, trying to exercise their free speech rights to denounce Israel's attacks on Gaza.)

Many “white” Europeans felt the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* as a threat to Enlightenment values and as an assault on “western civilisation”. Similarly, many Muslims feel Israel's attacks on Palestinians and on the sanctity of Islamic holy sites, largely indulged by western politicians and the western media, as no less grave a threat.

And just as it is common for many “white” Europeans – including western politicians – to confuse Muslims and Islam with Islamic extremism, blaming a religion for the flaws of its more extreme adherents, so a portion of Muslims wrongly associate Jews in general with the crimes committed by Israel.

Israel does nothing to dispel this dangerous conflation. In fact, it actively encourages it. It declares itself the state of the entire Jewish people, disdaining the presence and rights of 1.8-million second-class Palestinian citizens. Or as Netanyahu observed two years ago, shortly after enshrining institutionalised racism in Israeli law, Israel is “the national state, not of all its citizens, but only of the Jewish people”. When Israel speaks and acts, its leaders claim, it speaks and acts on behalf of all Jews worldwide.

Some prominent western Jews – including *Guardian* columnist Jonathan Freedland – add to the confusion. They appear to agree with Netanyahu by avowing that Israel is at the core of their identity and that attacks on Israel are an at-

Israel declares itself the state of the entire Jewish people, disdaining the presence and rights of 1.8-million second-class Palestinian citizens

tack on who they are. This line of argument was widely weaponised against former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, suggesting he was engaging in antisemitism, or at least indulging it, by being such a trenchant critic of Israel.

So, however wrong it was for the occupants of those cars on May 16 to be shouting antisemitic profanities, and however right it is for the police to be investigating this incident, it is not something difficult to explain. Manufactured confusion over the distinctions between Jews, Judaism, Israel and Zionism are as common as manufactured confusion over Muslims, Islam, various Islamic states and jihadism.

But there is a more important point to make that relates directly to Starmer – and most other western politicians. He may claim the moral high ground in his public denunciations of the antisemitic curses from the convoy of cars in London at the weekend. But he must take a considerable chunk of the blame for them.

Over the past few weeks, British politicians have mostly chosen to avert their gaze from the war crimes committed by Israel against Palestinians with Britain's help – in the form of diplomatic silence, weapons sales and continuing trade agreements.

With Corbyn gone, no one in British politics now represents the rights of Palestinians – and by extension

the rights of Britain's large Muslim population, whose interests and dignity are trampled every time Israel's army kills, wounds or demonises Palestinians or desecrates Palestine's holy places.

In his studied silence about Israel's bombing of Gaza – after Israel recklessly provoked Hamas rockets by intensifying the ethnic cleansing of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem to replace them with Jewish settlers – Starmer has sent a clear message to Britain's Muslim communities, like those in Bradford and Oldham: “I do not represent you or your concerns. I support, as I stated during my campaign to become Labour leader, ‘Zionism without qualification’. Like the Palestinians, you are on your own. You are not part of the British debate”.

It is not just that Britain's Muslims have been abandoned by politicians like Starmer. Muslims understand that, when it comes to core issues of their identity and their dignity, they have no representation, no voice, in the UK in stark contrast to the treatment of Jewish communities that choose to support the belligerent, apartheid state of Israel.

Those Jews – unlike Britain's Muslims and anti-Zionist Jews – have Starmer's full attention, his “support without qualification”. That was why Starmer was only too ready to insult every Muslim in Britain by cancelling at the last minute his attendance at a Ramadan supper last month, to break that day's fast, at the behest of pro-Israel Jewish groups. The reason? One of the supper's organisers had once spoken in favour of boycotting Israel's settlements, in line with international law – a position one might have imagined a high-profile lawyer like Starmer would have appreciated rather than punished.

These actions have all too pre-

dictable consequences. They fuel alienation from British politics among many Muslims, and racism and extremism among a very small subsection of them – of exactly the kind we saw at the weekend in the convoy driving through London.

Denouncing the convoy's participants as racist while pretending that there are no grounds for Muslims – or anyone else who cares about international law and human rights – to feel aggrieved by what is happening in Gaza, as Starmer has effectively done through his silence, is to pick further at an open wound. It is to claim an entirely unjustified “white” righteousness – like those two-faced world leaders who marched through Paris in 2015 – that serves only to deepen the offence and spread it.

In professing his blind support for Israel and Zionism – Israel's ide-

In professing his blind support for Israel and Zionism ... Starmer revealed himself to be a hypocrite and racist

ology of Jewish supremacism, the counterpart of extreme political Islam – Starmer revealed himself to be a hypocrite and racist. One rule for ugly Muslim supremacism, another for ugly Israeli supremacism. One denounced, one placated.

Starmer is not seeking to “de-escalate” the “tensions” causing bloodshed thousands of miles away

in the Middle East – and mostly, let's note, among Palestinians. Rather, he is fuelling those very same tensions, escalating them, in his own back yard. He may not be shouting profanities at the top of his voice from his car window.

He has no need to. He can cause even more damage simply by loudly prosecuting verbal threats while quietly exonerating war crimes that cause mass death. **CT**

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



GET YOUR FREE SUBSCRIPTION TO COLDTYPE

Send an email to editor@coldtype.net
– write SUBSCRIBE in the subject line

RONNIE KASRILS

Palestine Mon Amour

‘The phoenix rises from the ashes ... This latest blood-fest has united Palestinians as never before ... Israel’s strategy of divide and rule is in tatters’

An evocative French film set in a Hiroshima destroyed by the United States atomic bomb in 1945 haunted me throughout the latest dreadful days of carnage in Gaza. I refer to the 1959 anti-war masterpiece *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. It resonates with the ethnic cleansing and incremental genocide of the Palestinians since the 1948 Nakba (Catastrophe) in exploring issues of memory, seeing and responsibility.

Israeli bombs demolishing a TV centre and inventing a Hamas presence aimed to obstruct the exposure of the state’s ongoing crimes, rammed this point home for me. The truth must prevail. It cannot be wished away. It must not be distorted to make the victim responsible, whitewash the perpetrator and provide a smokescreen for its backers.

How do we penetrate the fog and noise of war? Who is right? Who is wrong? Should the world not be neutral and even-handed in addressing the problem? Humanity is not assisted by pro-Israeli obfuscation and disinformation; and diversionary strategy of the Apartheid Zionist state and its main Western allies, led by the USA, along with Britain, France and Germany.

The solution to any problem is to

understand its fundamental cause. At the poisonous root is a settler colonialism that hijacked the land of an indigenous people. The scheming of Britain and France following the First World War and collapse of the Ottoman Empire began the process leading to the Nakba which continues to this day.

The fundamental cause is perfectly understood by those who suffered under settler colonial rule, including the people of Algeria, Angola, Ireland, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, with their settler enclaves. Those with a colonial mindset can never understand the motivation of a dispossessed people to use all means of resistance possible to regain their freedom, dignity, land and rights.

Israeli settlers, conditioned by the colonialist narrative, cannot countenance Palestinian claims. For them the natives are inferior, a threat to their welfare. They have a “god-given” right to grab the land, and mercilessly expunge Palestinians from the face of the earth. The psychosis of the system inculcates extremes of racism that eats the settler soul. Their military doctrine is to punish the Palestinians relentlessly, into passive submission or death.

Three decades since the Oslo Accords, we have seen the situation of the Palestinians grow infinitely worse. Oslo and the two-state option, which saw Palestinian leaders settle for a state reduced to 22 percent of their land, has been exposed as a hoax. Those who have suffered oppression know that the only way to force the colonisers into meaningful change is through resistance. Ask Cuba; ask Vietnam.

Freedom, unfortunately, comes at a very high cost. Picture the injured young man flashing a victory sign as he is rescued from the rubble of a demolished Gaza building. Or the terrified young girl running into her mother’s arms following a nearby Israeli air strike that shook their building, crying: “I want to be courageous, mama, but I don’t know how when death is so near”.

But the phoenix rises from the ashes. As Omar Barghouti, a leader of the BDS Movement (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) observes: “That’s the definition of the Palestinians ... We are protesting because we want to live”.

As though in some apocalyptic basketball game, Israel’s ruling elite gloat as the death toll mounts in Gaza - 249 (70 children, 29 women) to 12. Slam dunk! Twenty-seven slaughtered on the West Bank. Others



SILENCING THE MEDIA: The Israeli Air Force destroys the al-Jalaa media building that housed the offices of Al Jazeera and Associated Press in Gaza on 15 May.

lynched in Jerusalem and Israel. Yet they are losing the war. Netanyahu, and his cronies are frightened and perplexed. This latest blood-fest has united Palestinians as never before. The fragmented parts, from Gaza to the West Bank, Jerusalem, within Israel, the refugee camps and diaspora, have rediscovered their national unity, and have risen up to shake the resolve of the settlers. The strategy of divide and rule is in tatters.

A general strike by Palestinians across Israel and Jerusalem locked down their shops and businesses; the biggest such event since 1936.

Tel Aviv saw a significant rally of Jews and Arabs demanding peace. Massive marches in London, Paris, Berlin, Sydney, Toronto and New York have seen unprecedented crowds supporting the Palestinian cause, and unity between the Black Lives Matter and Free Palestine movements is of huge significance. Palestinians everywhere are celebrating.

Civil society in occupied Palestine has challenged the international community to match Palestinian courage by pressurising Western governments to withdraw support for Israel. The US provides Israel

with \$4-billion aid annually. President Joe Biden's response to Israel's aggression was to give \$750-million for improved bombing technology was so utterly shameless that he faced an unprecedented level of protest across the US to change course. That is why he put pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to end the bombing of Gaza in an unconditional ceasefire.

Nelson Mandela famously declared that "South Africa's freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians". He understood what was right and what was wrong. He said that freedom for the Palestinian people was "the greatest moral issue of our time". His statement still rings true.

South Africa's people are urging the ANC government to be faithful to Mandela's statement and legacy; to break all ties with Apartheid Israel; and to lead the world in implementing BDS action.

As in the rest of the world, South Africa has witnessed unprecedented displays of solidarity for Palestine led by the National BDS Coalition. Protests have taken place throughout the country, but most significantly with the dockers, trade union and solidarity groups at Durban's waterfront protesting against the off-loading of cargo from an Israeli ship. Thousands have been involved. This follows dockers' solidarity actions on America's West coast. And in Italy. An international picket of Israeli shipping could follow.

Palestine, Mon Amour. You are not alone. We see you. **CT**

Ronnie Kasrils is a former ANC freedom fighter and was Intelligence Minister in South Africa.

DAVID CROMWELL & DAVID EDWARDS

Savage punishment of an oppressed people

How BBC and corporate media coverage of Israel's latest assault on Gaza presents a 'false equivalence between occupier and occupied'

Recent media coverage of Israel and Palestine, not least by BBC News, has been full of the usual deceptive propaganda tropes: Israel is “responding” or “reacting” to Palestinian “provocation” and “escalation”; Palestinian rockets “killed” Israelis, but Palestinians “have died” from unnamed causes; Israel has “armed forces” and “security forces” but Hamas has “militants”. And, as ever, Palestinians were killed in far greater numbers than Israelis. At least 248 Palestinians were killed by Israeli bombardment in Gaza, including 66 children. Palestinian rocket fire killed 12 in Israel, including one child.

Imagine if the BBC reported: “Palestinian security forces responded after Israeli militants enforcing the apartheid occupation attacked and injured Palestinian worshippers”.

BBC Middle East editor Jeremy Bowen referred night after night on BBC News at Ten to “a war between Israel and Hamas”, a version of events pushed hard by Israel. As John Pilger said in a recent interview, “Bowen knows that’s wrong”. This is no war. In fact, the world has witnessed a massive attack by one of the world’s most powerful, lethal militaries, armed and supported to the hilt by the US (which sends \$3.8-

billion in military aid to Israel each year) and western allies, imposing a brutal occupation and deliberately subjecting the Palestinian civilian population to death, violence, terror and appalling hardship.

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) warned early on that heavy Israeli bombing was pushing Gaza to the edge of catastrophe: “The Israeli bombing is incredibly heavy and stronger than previous bombing campaigns. Relentless bombing has destroyed many homes and buildings all around us. It’s not safe to go outside, and no one is safe inside, people are trapped. Emergency health workers are taking incredible but necessary risks to move around”.

On 19 May, the 10th day of intense Israeli bombardment of Gaza, the BBC News website carried headlines: “Israel targets Hamas chiefs”. And: “Israel targets Gaza militants”.

So, why was Israel killing so many non-combatants, including children? Why were residences being flattened? The United Nations estimated that Israel had demolished 94 buildings in Gaza, comprising 461 housing and commercial units. Why were hospitals and clinics suffering so much damage? And buildings

where media organisations were based?

Why were there Israeli airstrikes in the area of the MSF clinic in Gaza City, killing at least 42 people including 10 children? An orphanage was also destroyed.

The massacre was “one of the most horrific crimes” Israel has committed during its ongoing war against the people of Gaza, according to Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor which added that: “the attack was not an isolated incident, but another example of Israel’s systematic policy that we have witnessed over the past six days”.

As Tamara Nasser observed in a piece on the Electronic Intifada website, Israel was unable to substantiate its claim that “Hamas military intelligence were using the building” when pressed to do so by US public radio network NPR.

Nasser added: “Even if that Israeli claim were true, under the laws of war, Israel’s destruction of entire buildings would be wholly disproportionate.

“Rather, Israel’s mass destruction of buildings and infrastructure appears to fit the pattern of the Dahiya Doctrine – named after its 2006 destruction of the southern suburb of Beirut.

“The goal is to deliberately inflict



such pain and suffering on the civilian population and society at large as to deter anyone from resisting against Israel’s occupation. This can be prosecuted as a war crime”.

It also serves as a useful definition of terrorism.

Christophe Deloire, Secretary General of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), said via Twitter: “What the Israeli army asserts, namely that the alleged presence of Hamas in the buildings would make them legitimate military objectives is absolutely false from a legal point of view, since they also house civilians, such as the media”.

He added: “Even assuming that the Israeli fire was necessary (which

is absolutely not proven), the total destruction of the buildings demonstrates that the principles of distinction and proportionality have been flagrantly violated”.

Indeed, RSF sent a letter to Fatou Bensouda, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, urging an investigation of Israel’s targeting of the offices of 23 media organisations in Gaza during Israel’s bombardment.

Gregory Shupak wrote in a piece for Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting, the US-based media watchdog, that corporate media coverage presented a “false equivalence between occupier and occupied”.

He continued: “The fatal flaw in the “both sides” narrative is that only the Israeli side has ethnically

cleansed and turned millions on the Palestinians” side into refugees by preventing them from exercising their right to return to their homes. Israel is the only side subjecting anyone to apartheid and military occupation. It is only the Palestinian side – including those living inside of what is presently called Israel – that has been made to live as second-class citizens in their own land. That’s to say nothing of the lopsided scale of the death, injury and damage to infrastructure that Palestinians have experienced as compared to Israelis, both during the present offensive and in the longer term”.

When the truce “between Israel and Hamas” was imminent, Jeremy Bowen told BBC viewers: “Now, the essentials of that conflict are not go-

ing to change. Until they do, there will be more trouble in the future”.

But Israeli settler-colonialism, ethnic cleansing, lethal sanctions maintained by a brutal military occupation, apartheid, the killing and imprisonment of Palestinian children, Israel’s constant trampling of international law, and the daily humiliation of Palestinians constitute “trouble” right now regardless of what happens “in the future”. These essential truths are regularly unmentioned or glossed over by Bowen, the BBC and the rest of a “mainstream” media trying to “normalise the unthinkable” by presenting violent occupation as a “clash” between two sides competing for legitimacy.

As Abby Martin noted in a video powerfully rebutting the Israeli claim that Hamas uses “human shields” in Gaza: “Israel has intentionally made Gaza unliveable. The only way Gaza is able to exert pressure on Israel is by firing rockets. If they peacefully protest their conditions, they’re massacred just the same. If they do nothing, Israel continues to blockade them, erode their living conditions while ethnically cleansing the rest of their land”.

This perspective – the Palestinian perspective – is almost entirely absent from news coverage. Moreover, WikiLeaks has revealed that when Israel’s forces invaded Gaza in 2009’s “Operation Cast Lead” they – Israel – did actually use Gazans as human shields. A classified US cable reported that Israeli soldiers: “testified to instances where Gazans were used as human shields, incendiary phosphorous shells were fired over civilian population areas, and other examples of excessive firepower that caused unnecessary fatalities and destruction of property”.

During the latest phase of Israeli aggression, Israel’s Minister of De-

The Palestinians are seen as an obstacle by Israel’s leaders; an irritant to be subjugated

fence Benny Gantz warned: “No person, neighbourhood or area in Gaza is immune [from airstrikes]”.

This is a grotesque justification for war crimes. Where was the headlined outrage in response from “mainstream” media that regularly cite defence of human rights as justification for war on countries like Iraq, Syria and Libya?

Hamas is regularly presented by corporate media as some kind of monster, a terrorist organisation with a declared intention of destroying Israel. This is a “convenient” misrepresentation, as explained cogently in a recent interview with Frank Barat by Imad Al-soos, a research fellow at the Max Planck Institute, who is an expert on Hamas – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAksUesy6og>

Likewise, in an interview with Afshin Rattansi on RT’s “Going Underground” John Pilger commented: “There’s been a whole attempt to make Hamas the centre of the reporting. And that’s nonsense. As if Hamas is a peculiar demon. In fact, Hamas and its military wing are part of a resistance; a resistance that was provoked by the Israelis. The real demon in this is Israel. But it’s not simply Israel. I mean, this is as much a British and American war against Palestine, as it is an Israeli one”.

Pilger added that this is a war

“against the people of Palestine who are doing one thing – and that is exercising their moral and legal right to resist a brutal occupation”.

It is rarely mentioned in the “mainstream” media that Hamas is, as Pilger pointed out, the legitimately elected government of Gaza. Moreover, Hamas has repeatedly declared its readiness to negotiate a long-term ceasefire with the Jewish state within its pre-1967 borders. But Israel has always rejected the offer, just as it rejected the Arab League peace plan of 2002; and just as it has always rejected the international consensus for a peaceful solution in the Middle East. Why? Because the threat of such “peace offensives” would involve unacceptable concessions and compromises. Israeli writer Amos Elon has written of the “panic and unease among our political leadership” caused by Arab peace proposals. (Noam Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, Pluto Press, London, 1999, p.75.)

The Palestinians are seen as an obstacle by Israel’s leaders; an irritant to be subjugated. Noam Chomsky commented: “Traditionally over the years, Israel has sought to crush any resistance to its programs of takeover of the parts of Palestine it regards as valuable, while eliminating any hope for the indigenous population to have a decent existence enjoying national rights”.

And, as Chomsky noted: “The key feature of the occupation has always been humiliation: they [the Palestinians] must not be allowed to raise their heads. The basic principle, often openly expressed, is that the “Araboushim” – a term that belongs with “nigger” or “kike” – must understand who rules this land and who walks in it with head lowered and eyes averted.” (Chomsky, op. cit., p. 489.)

In 2018, when Palestinians were being shot dead by Israeli soldiers in peaceful weekly “Great March of Return” protests near Gaza’s border, Israeli journalist Gideon Levy observed that: “the killing of Palestinians is accepted in Israel more lightly than the killing of mosquitoes”.

Given all of the above context, it is criminal that, day after day, BBC News presented a false balance between a powerful Israeli state-occupier and a brutalised, ethnically cleansed, apartheid-suffering Palestinian people. This systematic misrepresentation of reality amounts to complicity in Israel’s vast PR campaign to “justify” its war crimes, brutality and repression of Palestinian people.

As well as Bowen’s wilfully distorted reporting for BBC News, and the biased coverage by corporate

Israeli journalist Gideon Levy observed, “the killing of Palestinians is accepted in Israel more lightly than the killing of mosquitoes”

media generally, Pilger pointed to the lack of dissent in the UK Parliament in the face of atrocities being committed once again by Israel. He focused particular attention on:

“Starmer’s Labour party which allowed pro-Israel groups to direct the policies of the Labour party, that, in effect, support this attack. When you have the Shadow Foreign Secretary saying that to criticise Israeli atrocities is antisemitic, then we’re in Lewis Carroll world, really”.

Chomsky once wrote of an elderly Palestinian man demonstrating in Gaza with a placard that read:

“You take my water, burn my olive trees, destroy my house, take my job, steal my land, imprison my father, kill my mother, bombard my country, starve us all, humiliate us all but I am to blame: I shot a rocket back”.

This simple but devastating message, said Chomsky, is “the proper context” for “the savage punishment of Gaza”.

It is a context that is almost entirely missing from corporate media coverage of Israel and Palestine, not least by BBC News. **CT**

David Cromwell and David Edwards are co-editors of *Media Lens*, the UK media watchdog. This article was first published at www.medialens.org.

Free Books
by
DENIS BECKETT

THE ROAD STOPS AT NOWHERE
“They say you choose your friends, but not your family; then you love regardless. You don’t choose your nation, either. South Africa is my nation – revolutionaries and racists and samaritans and dimwits and all!”
DENIS BECKETT

RADICAL MIDDLE
Chasing peace while apartheid ruled
DENIS BECKETT

WHITE MAN WALKING
DENIS BECKETT

Download these three books and 20 of the best stories from South Africa’s Frontline magazine at www.coldtype.net/frontline.html

TYINA STEPTOE

Marvin Gaye's song for the ages

Motown classic album is as relevant today as it was in 1971

Motown wasn't really known for its politically conscious music. Then came *What's Going On*. Released on May 21, 1971, at the height of the Vietnam War, Marvin Gaye's album became a monster, spawning three hit singles on its way to becoming Motown's best-selling album to date. The album also marked a turning point for Motown and for Marvin Gaye as an artist.

As a scholar of race and culture in the US and the host of the weekly radio show, *Soul Stories*, I am struck by how many of the themes Gaye explores remain as relevant today as they were when he first wrote about them 50 years ago.

Some of the songs on the album speak directly to the state of the world in the early 1970s. The title track, with its timeless lyric "War is not the answer, for only love can conquer hate," condemned the nation's involvement in Vietnam. But the song provides an insight into the evolution of Gaye's music to encompass overtly political themes.

What's Going On contrasts with his earlier work from the Vietnam War era that presents a different perspective. For example, *Soldier's Plea*, the first single from Gaye's second album, *That Stubborn Kinda*

Fellow in 1962, offers a decidedly romantic view of war:

While I'm away, darling how often do you think of me?

Remember, I'm over here, fighting to keep us free

Just be my little girl and always be true

And I'll be a faithful soldier boy to you

Soldier's Plea fits neatly into Motown's early business model. Both Berry Gordy – who founded Tamla Records in 1959 and then incorporated it as the Motown Record Co. a year later – and the songwriters he brought in mostly avoided political content.

Motown singers such as Mary Wells, The Supremes and The Temptations were to be, as the label liked to say, the "Sound of Young America," not political activists. Gordy told *Time* magazine in 2020, "I never wanted Motown to be a mouthpiece for civil rights".

While song lyrics did not explicitly mention the ongoing civil rights protests emerging across the nation in the 1960s, Motown didn't entirely ignore racial politics. The label released the spoken-word album *The Great March to Freedom* on the same day as the March on Washington – Aug. 28, 1963. The release commemorated the Walk to Freedom,

a Detroit mass march from earlier that summer, and featured a speech by Martin Luther King Jr.

Motown also created the Black Forum label, which released other political speeches by King, such as his 1967 *Why I Oppose the War in Vietnam*, and Stokely Carmichael's song *Free Huey!*, pleading for the release of fellow Black Power leader Huey Newton in 1970. The label also released albums of poetry by Amiri Baraka, Elaine Brown, Langston Hughes and Margaret Danner.

By and large, though, early releases on the Motown label were restricted to the apolitical. But the world had changed by 1971. The freedom struggle had taken a more radical turn with the emergence of the Black Power movement, the Chicano Movement, the Young Lords and the American Indian Movement. The first Earth Day, April 22, 1970, focused attention on the emerging US environmental movement. Meanwhile, anti-war activists protested the draft, escalating violence, and the sight of body bags returning from Vietnam.

The US musical soundscape shifted alongside these political, social and economic transformations. Art and politics merged through 1969's Woodstock festival. Meanwhile, Black Power-driven mes-



50 YEARS ON: Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On?* is as relevant today as it was when it was first released.

sages started to emanate from the soul and gospel music distributed by the Stax label in Memphis and a host of other musicians, such as Nina Simone, Curtis Mayfield and Gil Scott-Heron, who offered searing critiques of US imperialism.

Alongside this political shift came internal pressure in Motown to give artists more agency over their own output. As Motown performers matured artistically, some felt stifled by Gordy's model and demanded more artistic control.

Gaye produced *What's Going On* himself – a revolutionary act at Motown. The result is a painfully beautiful protest album from first track to last.

The opening lines of the album are sung softly, yet urgently: *Mother, mother, there's far too many of you*

crying/ Brother, brother, brother, there's far too many of you dying.

Lyrics grapple with the effects of the war on families and the lives of young men sent overseas. The next song follows one of those young men home to a nation grappling with an unemployment rate of 6 percent. "Can't find no work, can't find no job, my friend," Gaye laments on *What's Happening Brother*.

The album's final track conveys frustration: "Makes me wanna holler how they do my life ... this ain't living, this ain't living." In between, we have everything from an exploration of faith to the environmentalist anthem *Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)* concluding with the refrain "How much more abuse from man can she [the earth] stand?"

Yet *What's Going On* expresses

hope. Gaye repeats the affirmation "right on" – a phrase distinctly grounded in black urban vernacular – throughout the album and on a song bearing that name. We first hear this phrase on the title track, where Gaye affirms "Right on, brother" to men who respond in kind at different points in the song. The call and response communicates a sense of shared concern, shared struggle, and shared redemption – an ethos Gaye took from the gospel tradition that informs his musicality.

This call and response is repeated in *Wholy Holy*, with Gaye utilising a multitracking technique to layer two versions of his own vocals:

We can conquer (yes we can) hate forever (oh Lord)

Wholy (wholy holy, wholy holy)

We can rock the world's foundation

Everybody together, together in wholy (wholy holy)

We'll holler love, love, love across the nation

Gordy was initially reluctant to embrace Gaye's new direction. But Motown could not ignore the album's success. The title track reached the top spot on Billboard's R&B chart and peaked at No. 2 on the Hot 100. The album was on the charts for 58 weeks.

As someone who teaches courses on the history of music in the United States, I've noticed that most of my students immediately recognise songs from *What's Going On* – an album released decades before they were born. In a nation where people continue to protest white supremacy, endless wars, environmental damage, police brutality and poverty, *What's Going On* remains as relevant as ever. **CT**

Tyina Steptoe is Associate Professor of History at the University of Arizona. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com.

DAVID P. GILKEY

‘If you listen really hard, you can see the pictures’

New book pays tribute to the work of Detroit photojournalist who died in Afghan war

The new book *Pictures on the Radio*, published by New York’s powerHouse Books, compiles the work of David Gilkey, a celebrated conflict photographer who helped the US National Public Radio (NPR) bring vivid life to stories with global impact.

Known for chronicling pain and beauty in war and conflict, Gilkey was on assignment in Helmand, Afghanistan in 2016 when he and NPR’s Afghan interpreter, Zabi-hullah Tamanna were killed by a Taliban ambush of their convoy.

The nine chapters in *Pictures on the Radio* include photographs from assignments in Afghanistan, Haiti, and Gaza covering war, natural disasters, and political strife. The book also includes a surreal journey on the Trans-Siberian Railway, a voyage down the Yamuna River, and coverage of American war veterans, all of which combine to showcasing



A boy drives a donkey carrying unused election ballots across a stream on their way to the village of Quali Kuana in the Yangam District. The Afghan Independent Election Commission is using donkeys to deliver voting materials to remote areas of the country for the second democratic election since the US invasion in 2001. Badakhshan province, Afghanistan, August 2009.



Gilkey's range as a photojournalist whose work captured the strength and fragility of our humanity and our planet.

Essays by NPR correspondents who accompanied David on assignment – including Jason Beaubien, David Greene, Julie McCarthy, and Eric Westervelt – introduce each chapter of award-winning photographs, while a preface by Alyda Gilkey paints a portrait of the man behind the camera.

Pictures on the Radio continues David Gilkey's lifelong mission of connecting Americans to the frontlines far beyond their shores.

David Patrick Gilkey began his professional career in 1996, working with the *Detroit Free Press* for which some of his most celebrated work was produced in South Africa, where he covered violence in the townships at the turn of the century.

Half a dozen wars later (Somalia, Rwanda, Kosovo, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq), David hit his stride when his video coverage of a Michigan Marine unit through an entire deployment to Iraq won an Emmy Award.

Two decades into his career, with newspapers were in free fall, Gilkey joined NPR in 2007, continuing to cover conflict and international news for the radio network. The wisecracks got so common, writes NPR colleague Quil Lawrence in the book's first accompanying essay, that Gilkey soon developed a ready response.

"How do you see pictures on the radio?"

Gilkey would lean in like he was going to tell you a secret.

"If you listen really hard, you

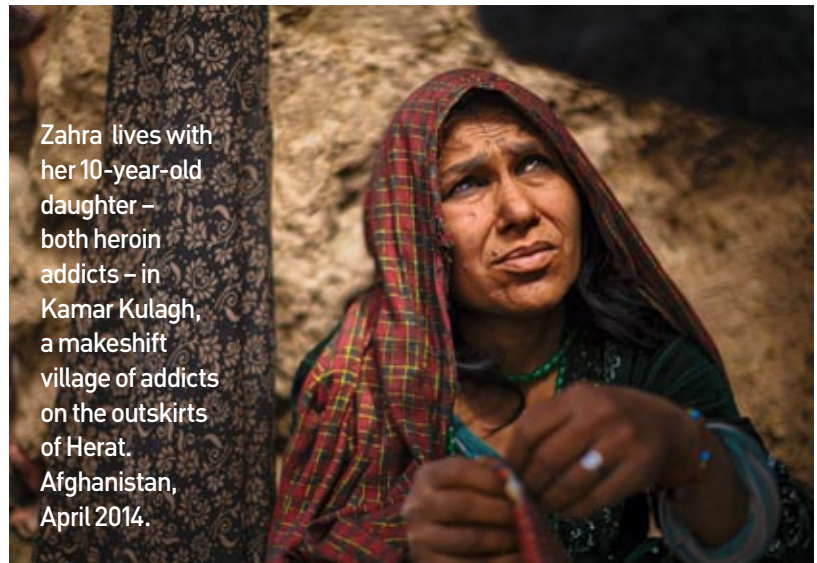
Horses and riders collide as they grab for the headless animal carcass that serves as the "ball" in a game of buzkashi. A centuries-old game, buzkashi is Afghanistan's national sport. Sheberghan, Jowzjan province, Afghanistan, March 2014.



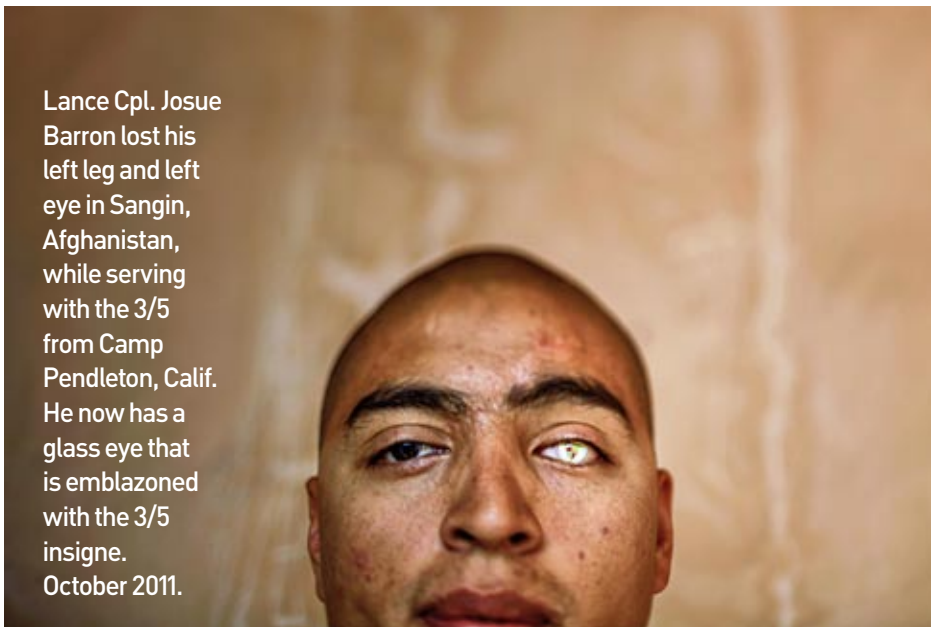
A Haitian man holds a knife as he watches for looters in a shop near downtown Port-au-Prince. January 2010



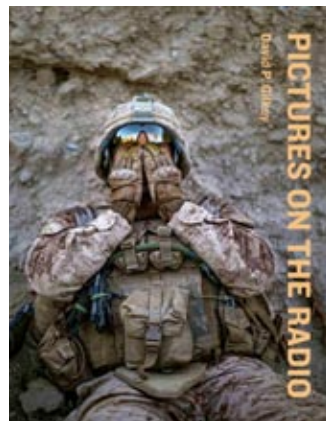
Spc. Jotiar Saaty, 101st Airborne, yells for more ammunition during a four-hour gun battle with insurgents near Pashmul. Kandahar province, Afghanistan, July 2010.



Zahra lives with her 10-year-old daughter – both heroin addicts – in Kamar Kulagh, a makeshift village of addicts on the outskirts of Herat. Afghanistan, April 2014.



Lance Cpl. Josue Barron lost his left leg and left eye in Sangin, Afghanistan, while serving with the 3/5 from Camp Pendleton, Calif. He now has a glass eye that is emblazoned with the 3/5 insignie. October 2011.



PICTURES ON THE RADIO
David R. Gilkey

Published by powerHouse Books
www.powerhouse.com

US\$50 / Can \$70

GEORGE MONBIOT

Zero impact

Despite producing ambitious targets, governments have failed to tackle the big environmental issues over the past 15 years

Every week governments make headline announcements about saving the planet, and every week their small print unsaves it.

The latest puff by the G7 is a classic of this genre. Apparently, all seven governments have committed “to conserve or protect at least 30 percent of the world’s land and at least 30 percent of the world’s ocean by 2030”. But what does it mean? The UK, which says it secured the new agreement, claims already to have “conserved or protected” 26 percent of its land and 38 percent of its seas. In reality, it has simply drawn lines on the map, designating our sheep-wrecked hills and trawler-trashed seas “protected”, when they’re nothing of the kind. This is the way the world ends. Not with a bang, but a press release.

All governments do this, but Boris Johnson’s has perfected the art. It operates on the principle of commitment inflation: as the action winds down, the pledges ramp up. Never mind that it won’t meet the targets set by the fourth and fifth carbon budgets: it now has a thrilling new target for the sixth one. Never mind that it can’t meet its old commitment of an 80 percent cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Instead, it has promised us

“net zero” by the same date. Yes, we need more ambition, yes, the government is following official advice, but ever higher targets appear to be a substitute for action.

Fifteen years ago, I wrote a book called *Heat*. I tried to work out how far we would have to cut greenhouse gases to fulfil our international obligations fairly, and how we could do it without destroying the prosperity and peace on which success depends. The best estimates at the time suggested that if the UK were justly to discharge its responsibility for preventing climate breakdown, we would need to cut our emissions by 90 percent by 2030.

Researching the preface for a new edition, I wanted to discover how much progress we’ve made. An article in the journal *Climate Policy* uses a similar formula for global fairness. Its conclusion? If the UK were justly to discharge its responsibility for preventing climate breakdown, we would need to cut our emissions by 90 percent by 2030. And by 2035, it says, our emissions should reach “real zero”. In other words, in terms of the metric that really counts, we have gone nowhere. The difference is that we now have nine years in which to make the 90 percent cut,

instead of 24.

How could this be true, given that the UK has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 49 percent since 1990? Surely we’ve been a global leader on climate action?

It’s partly because we now know that limiting global heating to 2C commits us to a dangerous world. In theory, governments have accepted a more stringent target of 1.5C. But it’s also because, if we ignore the impact of the pandemic, our reduction of greenhouse gases has stalled.

We did the easy things first. Coal-burning power stations were replaced with gas, and some of the gas with renewables. This makes no difference to most people: when we flick the switch, the lights still come on. But almost all the other reductions must involve us directly. They won’t happen unless the government mobilises the nation: encouraging us to drive less and use our feet, bicycles and public transport more; taxing frequent flyers; refitting our homes; reducing the amount of meat we eat; reducing the emissions embedded in the stuff we buy. On these issues, the government’s commitment to action amounts to zero. Not net zero. Absolute zero.

Road transport in the UK releases the same amount of greenhouse gases as it did in 1990: a shocking



NOT ENOUGH: Rampion offshore wind farm, in the English Channel off the south coast of England, is one of many that began operating as the UK phased out its coal-fired power stations. But, writes Monbiot, real change to Britain's emissions reductions will not happen until the government "... mobilises the nation: encouraging us to drive less and use our feet, bicycles and public transport more; taxing frequent flyers; refitting our homes; reducing the amount of meat we eat; reducing the emissions embedded in the stuff we buy".

failure by successive governments. Yet Johnson intends to spend another £27-billion on roads. Every major airport in the UK has plans to expand.

Buildings release more greenhouse gases than they did in 2014, and the schemes intended to green them have collapsed. The green homes grant, which the government outsourced to a private company, has been a total fiasco, meeting roughly 8 percent of its target. At the current rate of installation, the UK's homes will be equipped with low-carbon heating in a mere 700 years.

When I wrote *Heat*, we were promised that all new homes would soon be green ones. It still hasn't happened, and the date has been

pushed back yet again, this time to 2025. Rubbish homes are still being built, which will either require a much more expensive refit or will lock in high emissions for the rest of their lives.

This is the way the world ends. Not with a bang, but a press release

And no one in government wants to touch the biggest issue of all: the greenhouse gases embedded in the stuff we buy, which account for some 46 percent of our emissions. Government ministers urge China to cut its greenhouse gases, but our economic

model depends on us buying junk we don't need with money we don't have. Because the fossil fuels required to produce most of it are burned overseas and don't appear in our national accounts, the government can wash its hands of the problem.

But something has changed for the better: us. In 2006, climate campaigners beat their heads against public indifference. Now, at last, we have mass movements, and some highly effective actions, such as the successful shutdown of the McDonald's network by Animal Rebellion last week. If there is hope, this is where it lies. **CT**

George Monbiot is a columnist for the *Guardian*, where this article first appeared. His website is www.monbiot.com.

KAREN J. GREENBERG

The forever prison of the forever wars

The Guantanamo conundrums never seem to end

Twelve years ago, I had other expectations. I envisioned a writing project that I had no doubt would be part of my future: an account of Guantánamo's last 100 days. I expected to narrate in reverse, the episodes in a book I had just published, *The Least Worst Place: Guantánamo's First 100 Days*, about – well, the title makes it all too obvious – the initial days at that grim offshore prison. They began on January 11, 2002, as the first hooded prisoners of the American war on terror were ushered off a plane at that American military base on the island of Cuba.

Needless to say, I never did write that book. Sadly enough, in the intervening years, there were few signs on the horizon of an imminent closing of that US military prison. Weeks before my book was published in February 2009, President Barack Obama did, in fact, promise to close Guantánamo by the end of his first year in the White House. That hope began to unravel with remarkable speed. By the end of his presidency, his administration had, in fact, managed to release 197 of the prisoners held there without charges – many, including Mohamedou Ould Slahi, the subject of the film *The Mauritanian*, had also been tortured – but 41

remained, including the five men accused, but not yet tried, for plotting the 9/11 attacks. Forty remain there to this very day.

Nearly 20 years after it began, the war in Afghanistan that launched this country's Global War on Terror and the indefinite detention of prisoners in that facility offshore of American justice is now actually slated to end. President Biden recently insisted that it is indeed "time to end America's longest war", and announced that all American troops would be withdrawn from that country by September 11th, the 20th anniversary of al-Qaeda's attack on the United States.

It makes sense, of course, that the conclusion of those hostilities would indeed be tied to the closure of the now-notorious Guantánamo Bay detention facility. Unfortunately, for reasons that go back to the very origins of the war on terror, ending the Afghan part of this country's

"forever wars" may not presage the release of those "forever prisoners," as New York Times reporter Carol Rosenberg so aptly labelled them years ago.

Just as President Biden has a history, dating back to his years as Obama's vice-president, of wanting to curtail the American presence in Afghanistan, so he called years ago for the closure of Guantánamo. As early as June 2005, then-Senator Biden expressed his desire to shut that facility, seeing it as a stain on this country's reputation abroad.

At the time, he proposed that an independent commission take a look at Guantánamo Bay and make recommendations as to its future. "But", he said then, "I think we should end up shutting it down, moving those prisoners. Those that we have reason to keep, keep. And those we don't, let go". Sixteen years later, he has indeed put in motion an interagency review to look into that detention facility's closing. Hopefully, once he receives its report, his administration can indeed begin to shut the notorious island prison down. (And this time, it could even work.)

It's true that, in 2021, the idea of shutting the gates on Guantánamo has garnered some unprecedented

President Barack Obama promised to close Guantánamo by the end of his first year in the White House.

That hope began to unravel with remarkable speed



STILL WAITING: On January 11, 2016, the 15th anniversary of the opening of the prison at Guantanamo Bay, human rights advocates and people of faith demanded that the US government should close Guantanamo. They – and we – are still waiting.

mainstream support. As part of his confirmation process, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, for instance, signalled his support for its closure. And Congress, long unwilling to lend a hand, has offered some support as well. On April 16th, 24 Democratic senators signed a letter to the president calling that facility a “symbol of lawlessness and human rights abuses” that “continues to harm US national security” and demanding that it be shut.

As those senators wrote, “For nearly two decades, the offshore prison has damaged America’s reputation, fuelled anti-Muslim bigotry, and weakened the United States’ ability to counter terrorism and fight for human rights and the rule of law around the world. In addition to the \$540-million in wasted taxpayer dollars each year to maintain and operate the facility, the prison also comes

at the price of justice for the victims of 9/11 and their families, who are still waiting for trials to begin”.

Admittedly, the number of signatories on that letter raises many questions, including why there

It has damaged America’s reputation, fuelled anti-Muslim bigotry, and weakened the US’s ability to counter terrorism and fight for human rights and the rule of law around the world ...

aren’t more (and why there isn’t a single Republican among them). Is it just a matter of refusing to give up old habits or does it reflect a lack of desire to address an issue long out of the headlines? Where, for example,

was Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer’s name, not to mention those other 25 missing Democratic senatorial signatures?

And there’s another disappointment lurking in its text. While those senators correctly demanded a reversal of the Trump administration’s “erroneous and troubling legal positions” regarding the application of international and domestic law to Guantánamo, they failed to expand upon the larger context of that forever nightmare of imprisonment, lawlessness, and cruelty that affected the war-on-terror prisoners at Guantánamo as well as at the CIA’s “black sites” around the world.

Still, that stance by those two-dozen senators is significant, since Congress has, in the past, taken such weak positions on closing the prison. As such, it provides some hope for the future.

For the rest of Congress and the rest of us, when thinking about finally putting Guantánamo in the history books, it's important to remember just what a vast deviation it proved to be from the law, justice, and the norms of this society. It's also worth thinking about the American "detainees" there in the context of what normally happens when wars end.

Defying custom and law, the US war in Afghanistan broke through norms like a battering ram through a gossamer wall. Guantánamo was created in just that context, a one-of-a-kind institution for this country. Now, so many years later, it's poised to break through yet another norm.

Usually, at the end of hostilities, battlefield detainees are let go. As Geneva Convention III, the law governing the detention and treatment of prisoners of war, asserts: "Prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities".

That custom of releasing prisoners has, in practice, pertained not only to those held on or near the battlefield but even to those detained far from the conflict. Before the Geneva Conventions were created, the custom of releasing such prisoners was already in place in the United States. Notably, during World War II, the US held 425,000 mostly German prisoners in more than 500 camps in this country. When the war ended, however, they were released and the vast majority of them were returned to their home countries.

When it comes to the closure of Guantánamo, however, we can't count on such an ending. Two war-on-terror realities stand in the way of linking the coming end of hostilities in Afghanistan to the shutting down

That custom of releasing prisoners has, in practice, pertained not only to those held on or near the battlefield but to those detained far from the conflict

of that prison. First, the Authorization for the Use of Military Force that Congress passed right after the 9/11 attacks was not geographically defined or limited to the war in Afghanistan. It focused on but was not confined to two groups, the Taliban and al-Qaeda, as well as anyone else who had contributed to the attacks of 9/11. As such, it was used as well to authorize military engagements – and the capture of prisoners – outside Afghanistan. Since 2001, in fact, it has been cited to authorize the use of force in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and elsewhere. Of the 780 prisoners held at Guantánamo Bay at one time or another, more than a third came from Afghanistan; the remaining two-thirds were from 48 other countries.

A second potential loophole exists when it comes to the release of prisoners as that war ends. The administration of George W. Bush rejected the very notion that those held at Guantánamo were prisoners of war, no matter how or where they had been captured. As non-state actors, according to that administration, they were exempted from prisoner of war status, which is why they were deliberately labelled "detainees".

Little wonder then that, despite Secretary of Defense Austin's position on Guantánamo, as the *New York Times* recently reported, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby "argued that there was no direct link

between its future and the coming end to what he called the 'mission' in Afghanistan".

In fact, even if that congressional authorisation for war and the opening of Guantánamo on which it was based never were solely linked to the conflict in Afghanistan, it's time, almost two decades later, to put an end to that quagmire of a prison camp and the staggering exceptions that it's woven into this country's laws and norms since 2002.

The closing of Guantánamo would finally signal an end to the otherwise endless proliferation of exceptions to the laws of war as well as to US domestic and military legal codes. As early as June 2004, Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor flagged the possibility that a system of indefinite detention at Guantánamo could create a permanent state of endless legal exceptionalism.

She wrote an opinion that month in a habeas corpus case for the release of a Guantánamo detainee, the dual US-Saudi citizen Yaser Hamdi, warning that the prospect of turning that military prison into a never-ending exception to wartime detention and its laws posed dangers all its own. As she put it, "We understand Congress' grant of authority for the use of 'necessary and appropriate force' to include the authority to detain for the duration of the relevant conflict, and our understanding is based on longstanding law-of-war principles." She also acknowledged that, "If the practical circumstances of a given conflict are entirely unlike those of the conflicts that informed the development of the law of war, that [the] understanding [of release upon the end of hostilities] may unravel. But," she concluded, "that is

not the situation we face as of this date.”

Sadly enough, 17 years later, it turns out that the detention authority may be poised to outlive the use of force. Guantánamo has become an American institution at the cost of \$13-million per prisoner annually. The system of offshore injustice has, by now, become part and parcel of the American system of justice – our very own “forever prison”.

The difficulty of closing Guantánamo has shown that once you move outside the laws and norms of this country in a significant way, the return to normalcy becomes ever more problematic – and the longer the exception, the harder such a restoration will be. Remember that, before his presidency was over, George W. Bush went on record acknowledging his preference for closing Guantánamo. Obama made it a goal of his presidency from the outset. Biden, with less fanfare and the lessons of their failures in mind, faces the challenge of finally closing America’s forever prison.

Once you move outside the laws and norms of this country in a significant way, the return to normalcy becomes ever more problematic

With all that in mind, let me offer you a positive twist on this seemingly never-ending situation. I won’t be surprised if, in fact, President Biden actually does manage to close Guantánamo. He may not do so as a result of the withdrawal of all American forces from Afghanistan, but because he seems to have a genuine urge to shut the books on the war on terror, or at least the chapter of it initiated on 9/11.

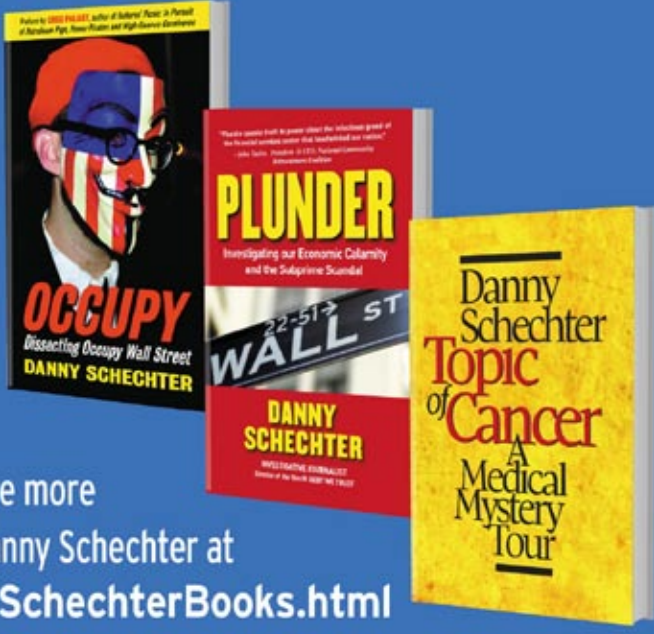
And if he were also to shut down that prison, in the spirit of that letter from the Democratic senators, it would be because of Guantánamo’s gross violations of American laws and norms. While the letter did

not go so far as to name the larger war-on-terror sins of the past, it did at least draw attention directly to the wrongfulness of indefinite detention as a system created expressly to evade the law – and one that brought ill-repute to the United States globally.

That closure should certainly happen under President Biden. After all, any other course is not only legally unacceptable, but risks perpetuating the idea that this country continues to distrust the principles of law, human rights, and due process – indeed, the very fundamentals of a democratic system. **CT**

Karen J. Greenberg is the director of the Center on National Security at Fordham Law and author of the forthcoming “Subtle Tools: The Dismantling of Democracy from the War on Terror to Donald Trump” (Princeton University Press, August). Julia Tedesco helped with research for this article, which first appeared at www.tomdispatch.com.

Free Books
by
DANNY SCHECHTER



Download these – and five more full-length e-books by Danny Schechter at www.coldtype.net/SchechterBooks.html

**GET YOUR
FREE
SUBSCRIPTION
TO COLDTYPE**

Send an email to editor@coldtype.net – write SUBSCRIBE in the subject line

C.J. HOPKINS

Greetings from the 'New Normal' Germany

Keep your vaccination papers in order if you don't want to be mistaken for an ideological deviant and banished from society

On April 1, 1933, shortly after Hitler was appointed chancellor, the Nazis staged a boycott of Jewish businesses in Germany. Members of the Storm Troopers ("die Sturmabteilung," or the "Storm Department", as I like to think of them) stood around outside Jewish-owned stores with Gothic-lettered placards reading "Germans! Defend yourselves! Do not buy from Jews!" The boycott itself was a total disaster – most Germans ignored it and just went on with their lives – but it was the beginning of the official persecution of the Jews and totalitarianism in Nazi Germany.

Last month, here in "New Normal" Germany, the government (which, it goes without saying, bears no resemblance to the Nazi regime, or any other totalitarian regime) implemented a social-segregation system that bans anyone who refuses to publicly conform to the official "New Normal" ideology from participating in German society. From now on, only those who have an official "vaccination pass" or proof of a negative PCR test are allowed to sit down and eat at restaurants, shop at a "non-essential" stores, or go to bars, or the cinema, or wherever.

Of course, there is absolutely no valid comparison to be made be-

tween these two events, or between Nazi Germany and "New Normal" Germany, nor would I ever imply that there was. That would be illegal in "New Normal" Germany, as it would be considered "relativising the Holocaust", not to mention being "anti-democratic and/or delegitimising the state in a way that endangers security", or whatever. Plus, it's not like there are SA goons standing outside shops and restaurants with signs reading "Germans! Defend yourselves! Don't sell to the Unvaccinated and Untested!" It's just that it's now illegal to do that, i.e., sell anything to those of us whom the media and the government have systematically stigmatised as "Covid deniers" because we haven't converted to the new official ideology and submitted to being "vaccinated" or "tested".

Protesting the new official ideology is also illegal in "New Normal" Germany. OK, I think I should prob-

There is nothing inherently totalitarian, or fascist, or robotically authoritarian and hyper-conformist about the Germans, as a people

ably rephrase that. I certainly don't want to misinform anyone. Protesting the "New Normal" isn't outlawed *per se*. You're totally allowed to apply for a permit to protest against the "Covid restrictions" on the condition that everyone taking part in your protest wears a medical-looking N95 mask and maintains a distance of 1.5 meters from every other medical-masked protester ... which is kind of like permitting anti-racism protests as long as the protesters all wear Ku Klux Klan robes and perform a choreographed karaoke of Lynyrd Skynyrd's *Sweet Home Alabama*.

Who says the Germans don't have a sense of humour?

I don't mean to single out the Germans. There is nothing inherently totalitarian, or fascist, or robotically authoritarian and hyper-conformist about the Germans, as a people. The fact that the vast majority of Germans clicked their heels and started mindlessly following orders the moment the "New Normal" was introduced last year doesn't mean that all Germans are fascists by nature. Most Americans did the same thing. So did the British, the Australians, the Spanish, the French, the Canadians, and a long list of others. It's just that, well, I happen to live here, so

I've watched as Germany has been transformed into "New Normal Germany" up close and personal, and it has definitely made an impression on me.

The ease with which the German authorities implemented the new official ideology, and how fanatically it has been embraced by the majority of Germans, came as something of a shock. I had naively believed that, in light of their history, the Germans would be among the first to recognise a nascent totalitarian movement predicated on textbook Goebbelsian Big Lies (i.e., manipulated Covid "case" and "death" statistics), and would resist it en masse, or at least take a moment to question the lies their leaders were hysterically barking at them.

I couldn't have been more wrong. Here we are, over a year later, and waiters and shop clerks are "checking papers" to enforce compliance with the new official ideology. Perfectly healthy, medical-masked people are lining up in the streets to be experimentally "vaccinated". Lock-down-bankrupted shops and restaurants have been converted into walk-in "PCR-test stations". The government is debating mandatory "vaccination" of children in kindergarten. Goon squads are arresting octogenarians for picnicking on the sidewalk without permission. And so on. At this point, I'm just sitting here waiting for the news that mass "disinfection camps" are being set up to solve the "Unvaccinated Question".

Whoops ... there I go again, "relativising the Holocaust." I really need to stop doing that. The Germans take this stuff very seriously, especially with Israel under relentless attack by the desperately impoverished people it has locked inside an enormous walled ghetto, and is self-defensively ethnically cleansing.

But, seriously, there is no simi-

Here we are, over a year later, and waiters and shop clerks are "checking papers" to enforce compliance with the new official ideology

ilarity whatsoever between Nazi Germany and "New Normal" Germany. Sure, both systems suspended the constitution, declared a national "state of emergency" enabling the government to rule by decree, inundated the masses with insane propaganda and manipulated "scientific facts," outlawed protests, criminalised dissent, implemented a variety of public rituals, and symbols, and a social segregation system, to enforce compliance with their official ideologies, and demonised anyone who refused to comply ... but, other than that, there's no similarity, and anyone who suggests there is is a dangerous social-deviant extremist who probably needs to be quarantined somewhere, or perhaps dealt with in some other "special" way.

Plus, the two ideologies are completely different. One was a fanatical totalitarian ideology based on imaginary racial superiority and the other is a fanatical totalitarian ideology based on an imaginary "apocalyptic plague" ... so what the hell am I even talking about? On top of which, no swastikas, right? No swastikas, no totalitarianism! And nobody's mass murdering the Jews, that I know of, and that's the critical thing, after all!

So, never mind. Just ignore all that crazy stuff I just told you about "New Normal" Germany. Don't

worry about "New Normal" America, either. Or "New Normal" Great Britain. Or "New Normal" wherever. Get experimentally "vaccinated." Experimentally "vaccinate" your kids. Prove your loyalty to the Reich ... sorry, I meant to global capitalism. Ignore those reports of people dying and suffering horrible adverse effects. Wear your mask. Wear it forever. God knows what other viruses are out there, just waiting to defile your bodily fluids and cause you to experience a flu-like illness, or cut you down in the prime of your seventies or eighties ... and, Jesus, I almost forgot "long Covid." That in itself is certainly enough to justify radically restructuring society so that it resembles an upscale hospital theme park staffed by paranoid, smiley-faced fascists in fanciful designer Hazmat suits.

Oh, and keep your "vaccination papers" in order. You never know when you're going to have to show them to some official at the airport, or a shop, or restaurant, or to your boss, or your landlord, or the police, or your bank, or your ISP, or your Tinder date ... or ther "New Normal" authority figure. I mean, you don't want to be mistaken for a "Covid denier," or an "anti-vaxxer," or a "conspiracy theorist," or some other type of ideological deviant, and be banished from society, do you? **CT**

C.J. Hopkins is an American playwright, novelist and political satirist based in Berlin. His plays are published by Bloomsbury Publishing and Broadway Play Publishing. His dystopian novel, "Zone 23", is published by Snoggsworthy, Swaine & Cormorant. His *Consent Factory Essays* are published by *Consent Factory Publishing*. He can be reached at www.cjhopkins.com or www.consentfactory.org.



"Kebab carts on the sidewalk at Shkoder. Half a liter of raki costs less than two bucks, enough for a temperate slush for two days".

LINH DINH

Caught in a world of raki and high-jumping goats

Albania is slowly recovering from the harshest excesses of Communism

I'm inside a tiny cafe in Tirana, the capital of Albania, built around a eucalyptus tree. John Belushi, the Madonna and someone's deceased grandma charm its wooden walls. I sip a macchiato to start my day. At the bar, an old man in an old suit orders a raki [a potent brew made from grapes and aniseed]. It's not quite nine, yet he's downing a shot of five-alarm firewa-

ter. A minute later, another grandpa does the same.

Near the Avni Rustemi roundabout, there are grilled meat joints where I sometimes sit after dark, enjoying the breeze and gazing at the sidewalk. For around \$5, I can stuff my face with kebabs, sausages and fries, and drink a large beer. Even in the morning, though, there are old farts at these zgara places, with

fat mugs in front of them. Albanians start early, I've learned.

In Shkoder, 86km from Tirana, there are many kebab carts on sidewalks. Served on a soft roll, each costs less than a buck. Some mustard would help, certainly, but this is not Germany. Though no soft drinks are for sale, many carts have raki, though not always advertised. I've been ad-



"Asti tells me, "I drink raki when I get up, before I drink water, or eat food. Some people drink it at five in the morning'".

vised that raki goes well with kebabs, best eaten with fingers. Fork tines ruin the taste. Half a liter of raki costs less than two bucks, enough for a temperate slush for two days. It's much cheaper than beer.

A Shkoderian, Asti, tells me, "I drink raki when I get up, before I drink water, or eat food". He laughs, showing no teeth. "Some people drink it at five in the morning".

"But if you start so early, you must keep drinking it all day!"

"True".

We're sitting in a café on Skanderbeg Street, not far from the Mother Teresa Statue, with its reverent flowerpots. At other tables, there are five men, all middle-aged. Michael Jackson is on the radio. Outside the plate-glass windows beautiful young women parade by. Seemingly assured, with the world at their high

heels or Adidas, they have their own unquenched terrors.

Most cafes serve raki, of course, but many stores also sell it. Pointing to a tobacco shop across the street, I ask Asti, "Do they sell raki too?"

"Maybe. Many do. People know where to buy".

"So it's not regulated?"

"No".

Forty-four-years-old, Asti looks at least 60. About 5ft 10ins, he has that classic Albanian beak nose, and dresses rather shabbily. Albanian men past 40 tend to be much more formal. Even when riding a junkyard bicycle with a plastic bag-covered seat, many wear a suit and dress shoes.

In his 20's, Asti spent three years in Greece working as a construction worker, gardener, office cleaner or packer in a garment factory. Asti's

two older brothers also do construction, same as their father. "I am the worst. That's why I made small money. I was always a dreamer. I read too much", he tells me.

Asti has taught himself four foreign languages: Greek, Italian, English and French, with the last his weakest. "I started to learn it after I was 30-years-old". He has also written a 200-page novel, long-hand, "As a boy, I had two dreams: learn a foreign a language, and write a novel". So he's done it, though it was only read by maybe three people before being tossed away.

Publishing anything anywhere is nearly impossible. With a population of just three-million, Albania's book market is miniscule, but at a Shkoder sidewalk kiosk, I saw trans-

lated titles by Orhan Pamuk, Amos Oz, Mario Vargas Llosa, Junot Diaz, Bukowski, Richard Kapuscinski, Jane Austen, Homer, Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Swift, Goethe, Voltaire, Pushkin, Dumas, Orwell, Pasolini, Kundera, Kafka, Sartre, di Beauvoir and Faulkner. There were also several Kadare novels, of course, and serious history books, such as Jack Weatherford's *Genghis Khan*, Misha Glenny's *Histori e Ballkanit* and Bhuto's *Pajtimi* [Reconciliation]. All this, at a tiny shop in a provincial city, so don't tell me Albanians aren't civilised.

Moving boxes and delivering for a food and beverage distributor, Asti makes less than 100 euros a month, but his duties are light. Often, he just sits at a nearby cafe. "I have a problem, you see. I'm slightly schizophrenic. I must take medicines every day". Mixed with raki, they're curing his madness, apparently.

To give you an idea of prices here, a fat baguette is about 60 cents. A sandwich costs \$1 to \$1.50. In a rather nice Shkoder restaurant, I saw an old man order pilaf with a single kebab for just a buck. A macchiato is 50 to 70 cents at most cafes. A bus ride in Tirana is 40 cents, and 30 cents in Shkoder.

Earning just over 200 euros a month, Asti's wife labours in a garment factory. They have two girls, aged 14 and 11, and an 8-year-old boy.

When Asti was 14, soldiers dragged two corpses behind a truck to his village. These young men had been tortured, then shot, for escaping. With everyone gathered, a soldier asked a woman while pointing at a mangled cadaver, "Do you know who that is?"

"No".

"It's your son", he laughed.

For 27 years, she took care of 23 cows and milked them.

At her retirement, the state gave her one more cow

Asti: "I will never forget that. He had bullet holes in his face and on his chest. No one could recognise who he was. They showed the corpses to all the villages, to scare people, you know, from escaping".

Asti also told me about Dom Simon Jubani, a Shkoder priest who was jailed, and often tortured, for 26 years. In late 1990, Father Jubani conducted an illegal mass at a cemetery attended by thousands. His book, *From the Depths of Hell, I Saw Jesus on the Cross*, has not been translated into English, only French.

Unlike so many anti-Communists, Father Jubani did not praise the USA, but said on live Albanian television that Uncle Sam was "the master of terrorism". This most impresses Asti.

With his foreign languages, Asti also supplements his pinched income by giving tours for tips, or by steering tourists towards hotels, with each referral earning him a euro. The Covid crisis has dried up this side hustle, however.

Luckily, he pays no rent, but shares with a brother a charming house built by their dad. Eleven people sleep in six bedrooms over two floors, and they have a pleasant and productive garden that grows tomatoes, eggplants, olives, onions, scallions and grapes, the last a must for most Albanian houses, even Muslim ones, with any patch of earth. I've seen countless grape arbors on

concrete roofs. Homemade raki is best.

I've sat at a cafe with this brother. Fifty-three-years-old, with close-cropped white hair, he's ravaged from decades of rakia, so he now mostly sips B-52, the energy drink. He also likes to gamble, when there's extra cash, which is almost never.

Asti's mother also lives there. For 27 years, she took care of 23 cows and milked them. At her retirement, the state gave her one more cow. Her monthly pension of 100 euros isn't quite enough to cover food and medicines, and she's still in pretty good health. In simple black, she's often seen sitting on an armchair on their shady porch.

From Asti's house to his workplace downtown is just a 20-minute walk, so there's no transportation cost. Asti has no motor vehicle.

Compared to Tirana, bicycles are much more visible in Shkoder, and at least a dozen streets here resemble flea markets, with vendors, many of them rural people, selling absolutely everything on sidewalks – I've seen used sewing needles, rusty frying pans, TV antennas, ancient microwaves and prehistoric washing machines.

After a decade in Greece, Asti's other brother moved to Italy 20 years ago. He's doing well and has a Georgian wife, a relative of Stalin.

Scoping out Il Bel Paese, Asti visited his brother for two months, "I could only make small money there, so I came home. You know, Albanians went there very early, in 1991. Some of us did bad things, so Italians, they really didn't like us, but we are doing better. Albanians have Italian friends. They feed them, buy them drinks. Now, Italians don't hate us so much".

Foreign jobs pay more, so going abroad has become a standard aspi-



"At least a dozen streets here resemble flea markets with vendors, many of them rural people, selling absolutely everything".

ration here. Very nice houses built from money sent back challenge those who remain. Hamstrung for 45 years from the harshest excesses of Communism, Albanians are still recovering. Just be thankful *you* haven't experienced a Hoxha.

"Your son is eight-years-old", I say to Asti. "Maybe he won't have to go anywhere when he's 20".

"I don't know. I hope so. I'd like to keep him close to me".

"When you're an immigrant, you have so many problems".

"That's true. People humiliate you, look down on you. They say you're taking their jobs, that you're only there to send money to Albania".

War, insane ideology and free transfer of capital have dislocated

millions of people. Millions more must flee from societies they themselves have befouled, through collective stupidity, cowardice or depravity. It's who they are, simply. Before you sneer or curse, though, remember that you too may end up just like them. How much have you contributed to your nation's destruction?

A visible minority anywhere is like an albino or midget. Even if he's never treated differently, which is impossible, he's likely to build up resentment at being so odd, even if his distinctiveness is viewed favourably.

A traveller, though, doesn't mind such handicap, for he gets the entire world in exchange. Easily bothered people can't move an inch.

To really see any country, it's

important to get out of the capital, with all its financial, cultural and power distortions, so I've been taking buses or passenger vans here and there, with almost no idea what I'm going to see.

Northern Albania was the stronghold of Gjergj Skanderbeg [a 15th-century Albanian feudal lord and military commander] and the last part of the country to yield to the Turks. Its mountainous villages show Albania at its most savage, true and tested. Shkoder is the main city of this region.

Asti tells me "Goat milk is best for babies, and goat meat is also very good. In the mountains, there are wild goats. You can only shoot them with a silencer, because if they hear

the sound of your gun, they'll jump three meters in the air!"

I've visited Shkoder twice before, but only this time did I get a room, for three nights. Booking it online, I didn't know its address was purposely incorrect, to evade the tax man, I suppose. To reach this unmarked property, I had to meet a young man at a street corner. It was like the worst spy movie. Smiling, he emerged from the dark. Though the online price was \$12 per night, he asked for more than \$14 before checking me in. Since it was already evening, and I was exhausted and more than buzzed, I didn't protest. It was still dirt cheap.

There is no breakfast, as promised, but the room is large and comfortable. With two narrow beds, a couch, coffee table, chest, cabinets, sinks and TV, it's a basic apartment, so for a long stay, it wouldn't make a bad base. A bare bulb dangles from the ceiling.

My bathroom is indeed private, though not en-suite, and the water heater must be just for show. Nothing happened after I plugged it in, flipped on the switch and fidgeted with the dial. All my showers, then, have been bracingly brief.

Two of my three keys were likely forged during the Ottoman era, if not Venetian or Roman. Since they're impossible to use, I haven't locked my door, but it's fine. The owner is in the next room, so she can be my watchdog. Plus, we're on the second floor, over a small courtyard, down a longish, narrow path, off an alley. (Four doors down is a Baptist church, sign of a changing Albania.)

I'm near Edith Durham Street, with its Saint Stephen Catholic Cathedral, built in 1858 with Ottoman permission. During Communism, it was converted into a sports hall, where ping pong was played and gymnasts

The water heater
must be just for show.
Nothing happened
after I plugged it in,
flipped on the switch and
fidgeted with the dial

could tumble and fall. After it was renovated in 1993, Pope John Paul II celebrated mass there, with Mother Teresa in attendance.

Faint on an outside wall, there's an all-seeing eye inside a radiating pyramid, with this inscription in Italian, "DIO VEDE TUTTO" (God Sees All). That's our best hope for justice, isn't it? Unless we're the torturer, swindler or simple adulterer, then the absence of God means all is forgiven. Hallelujah!

More than anyone, Durham, corralled Albania for English readers. Asti's kids attend Edith Durham School. It's heartening to see the English artist and anthropologist honoured. It's baffling how a nation that's nestled between Rome and Greece, thus at the heart of Europe, could be so little known, and still so dimly seen.

Read Durham's *High Albania*, to start your education. Spending much time here, Durham recorded Albania's enduring customs, including its blood feuds. These have not been eradicated, incredibly. Honour still matters.

Durham in 1909: "Such backwaters of life exist in many corners of Europe – but most of all in the Near East. For folk in such lands time has almost stood still".

Albania's most exotic superstitions and practices, then, predate their exposure to the Turks and

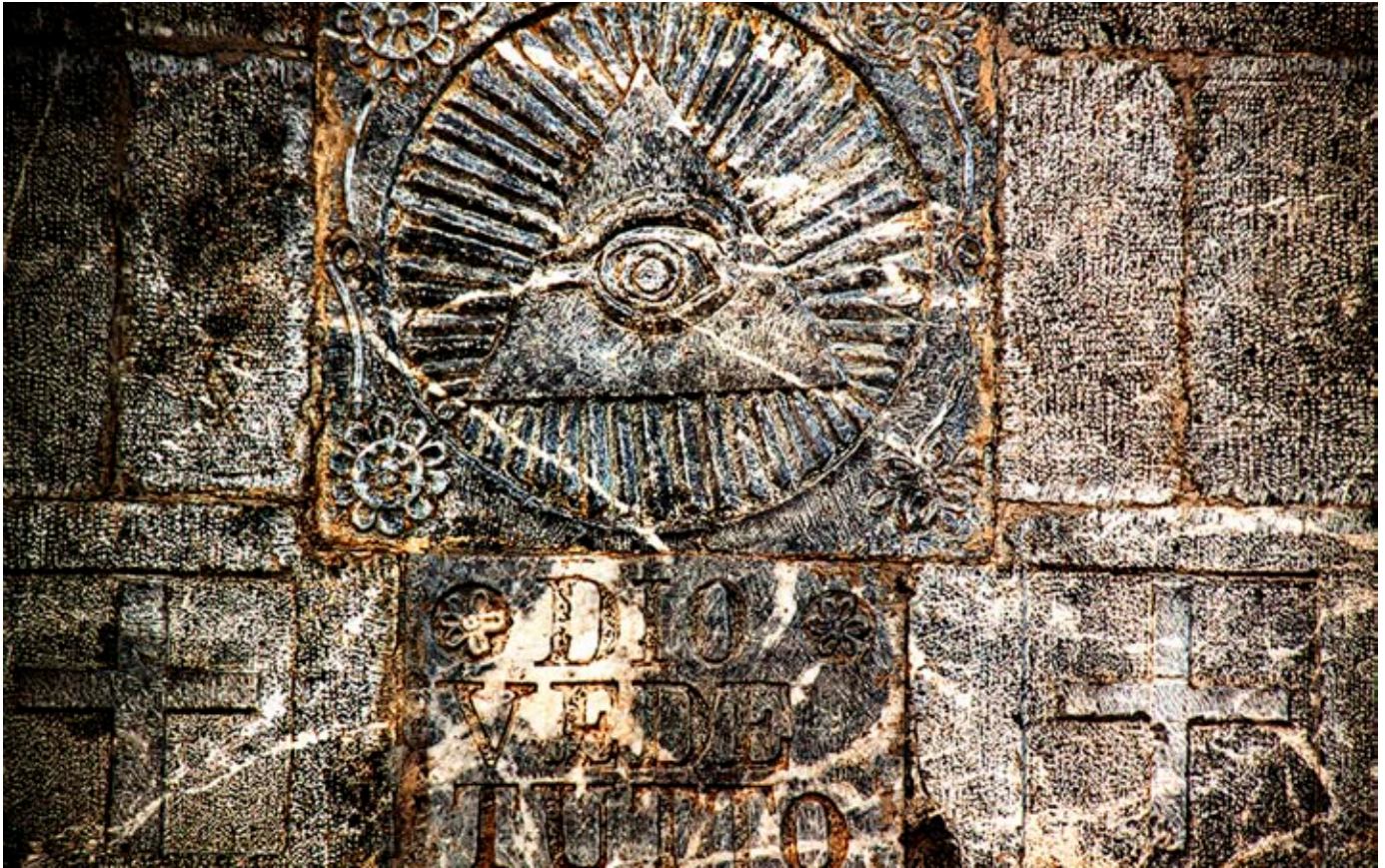
Islam, so don't point your finger eastward with your diatribes. These are the deepest layers of Europe, its bedrock.

Durham: "Marriage is arranged entirely by the head of the house. The children are betrothed in infancy or in utero. Even earlier [...] The most singular part of the business is the readiness with which most youths accept the girl bought for them. I never heard of one refusing, though I met several 'Albanian virgins', girls who had sworn virginity to escape their betrothed".

Durham: "According to the Canon a man is absolute master in his own house, and, in the unmodified form of the law, has the right to kill his wife, and any of his children. My informants doubted whether the killing of the wife would be tolerated now. She would be avenged by her own family. A man may, however, kill his wife with the consent of her family [...] By the Canon a man could divorce his wife by cutting off a piece of her dress and sending her home thus disfigured".

Albanian women did, however, enjoy a certain leniency. Durham inform us, "A woman is never liable for blood-vengeance, except in the rare case of her taking it herself. But even then there seems to be a feeling that it would be very bad form to shoot her [...] I roused the greatest horror by saying that a woman who commits a murder in England is by law liable to the same punishment as a man".

Durham on Albanian hospitality: "The sacredness of the guest is far-reaching. A man who brought me water from his house, that I might drink by the way, said that I now ranked as his guest, and that he should be bound by his honour to avenge me should anything happen to me before I had received hospitality from another".



"Faint on an outside wall, there's an all-seeing eye inside a radiating pyramid, with this inscription in Italian, DIO VEDE TUTTO."

There were no prisons on Albanian mountains, so justice was often meted out through revenge, but its violence had to be proportionate. Durham: "I would remind you that we play the same game on a much larger scale and call it war", and she wrote that before the two World Wars, with its millions butchered, and entire cities, filled with civilians, obliterated in a flash.

More than a century later, there are no more infant betrothals, legally discretionary wife killings, sartorial divorces or fiercely honourable protection of guests, but the mindset that gave rise to such habits must still linger, like a bias, ghost, undercurrent or whiff, in this weather.

Honour was everything. Even if it would get him killed, a man must act correctly. Justice and balance had to be achieved.

"Ah, shut up already", I can hear

a chorus rising. "Those Albanians are just Turkic barbarians, with their chains of brothels encircling this disgusting world. Too bad there isn't one in my Christian town. All we have are thrift stores and tattoo parlours".

Still lagging, Albanians are the most unadulterated whites alive, and that's to their advantage, whatever you may think. They're some of the last Europeans with balls.

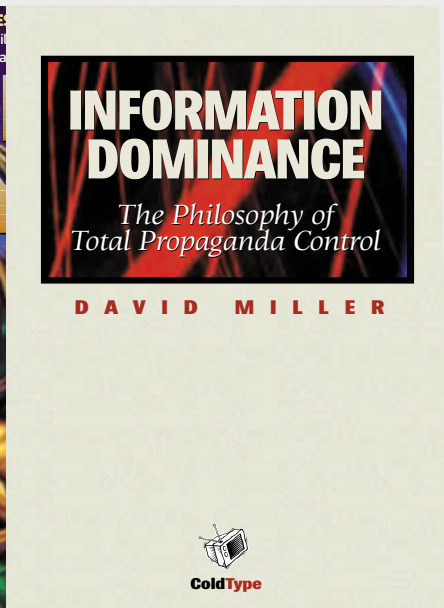
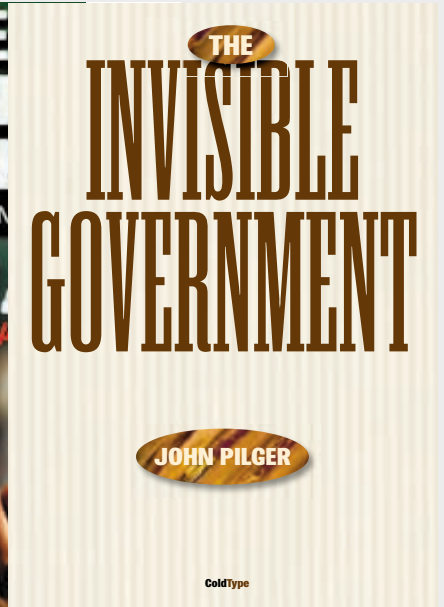
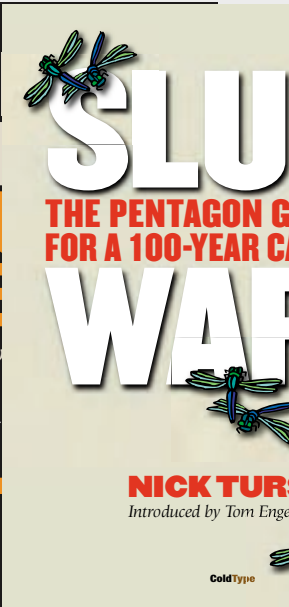
Sadly, they're trying to catch up by reading Barack and Michelle Obama, Kamala Harris, and about Joe Biden and Elon Musk. They're listening to the worst American rap, and imitating it. In Tirana, there's a George W. Bush Boulevard, and in Kamez, there's a Donald Trump one. Many seem to think the American flag has talismanic power.

In Lezhe, there's the American Strip Nightclub. Ogling local girls, patrons can pretend they're staring at fake boobs and many more tattoos. In the dim, reddish light, they can add piercings to gyrating flesh.

By chance, I'm in Shkoder on Flowers Day, which is what they call Saint George's Day here. Strolling through a well-landscaped park, I'm suddenly surrounded by beaming angels in paper headdresses, Native American style. Some wear goofy polyester skirts, with sequined or stitched flowers. On a stage, kids sing or dance, but innocent happiness is everywhere. From toddlers to the very old, they are simply enjoying themselves, being themselves. **CT**

Linh Dinh's latest book is *"Postcards from the End of America"*. His maintains a photo blog at www.linhdinhphotos.blogspot.com.

More great journalism for you to enjoy



Check out all these and dozens more outstanding
reads in the ColdType archives at
www.coldtype.net/find.html

NEWS | VIEWS | OPINIONS

INSIGHTS



Art: Wellcome Collection

Engraving of a man drinking plague water during the 1665 London outbreak

Alcohol deaths in England and Wales in 2020 were the highest for 20 years. The Office for National Statistics recorded 7,423 deaths from alcohol misuse, a 19.6 percent increase compared with 2019. Although this is likely to have many complex causes, data from Public Health England suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting lockdowns are at least partly responsible for the increase. Largely, the disruption of work and social routines have led to a surge of hazardous drinking within the home (with some fairly harrowing personal stories).

JAMES BROWN

How the bubonic plague changed drinking habits

The Intoxicating Spaces project, of which I'm part, has been exploring how pandemics also influenced the use of intoxicants, including patterns of alcohol consumption, in the past. As part of this work, we've looked at how the successive bubonic plague outbreaks that gripped England, especially London, in the 17th-century (1603, 1625, 1636 and 1665) wrought similar changes in people's drinking habits.

Like today, these sudden and frightening outbreaks of disease restricted access to inns, taverns, alehouses and other public drinking places – the cornerstones of early-modern sociability. While never

INSIGHTS

subject to wholesale closure, these environments were targeted by the equivalent of social distancing legislation. A 1665 London plague order, for example, identified “tippling in taverns, alehouses, coffee-houses, and cellars” as “the greatest occasion of dispersing the plague”, and imposed a 9pm curfew.

The extent to which these regulations altered 17th-century people’s relationship with alcohol is difficult to determine based on surviving information. However, anecdotal evidence suggests there might have been a comparable shift towards drinking at home.

In his classic 1722 meditation on the 1665 London outbreak *Due Preparations for the Plague*, Daniel Defoe told the story of a London grocer who voluntarily quarantined himself and his family in their home for the duration of the pandemic. Among the provisions he assembled were 12 hogsheads of beer; casks and rundlets containing four varieties of wine (canary, malmsey, sack and tent; 16 gallons of brandy; and “many sorts of distill’d waters” (spirits).

According to Defoe, this was not gratuitous but “necessary supplies”. This is because, surprisingly from the perspective of today’s public health messaging, in this period alcohol was thought to have had medicinal value and its moderate consumption during plague outbreaks was actively encouraged.

Contemporary doctors and medical writers believed alcohol worked as a plague preventatives, in two main ways.

First, the consumption of beers, wines and spirits was believed to strengthen the body’s key defensive organs of the brain, heart and

liver. They were especially beneficial when taken first thing in the morning, with many commentators recommending fortifying liquid plague breakfasts.

In his 1665 plague treatise, *Medela Pestilentiae*, minister and medical writer Richard Kephale claimed that it’s good “to drink a pint of maligo [Malaga wine or port] in the morning against the infection”. (He was also effusive on “the inexpress-



Art: Wellcome Collection

A painting of a quarantined house during the 1665 London plague outbreak, with the signboards of public houses visible in the background.

ible virtues of tobacco”). Many recipes for the popular “preventative” and “cure” plague water invariably contain wine and spirits, as well as pharmaceutical herbs.

Second, and perhaps more significantly, moderate drinking was believed to ward off those fearful mental states that induced melancholy (early modern terminology for depression), which was thought to make people more vulnerable to contracting the plague.

As Defoe put it, the grocer’s liquor hoard was not for his and his family’s “mirth or plentiful drink-

ing”, but rather “so as not to suffer their spirits to sink or be dejected, as on such melancholy occasions they might be supposed to do”. Likewise, in his 1665 plague treatise, *Zenexon Ante-Pestilentialis*, physician William Simpson advocated the “drinking of good wholesome well-spirited liquor” to “make the heart merry” and “cause cheerfulness”. This would banish “many enormous ideas of fear, hatred, anxiousness, sorrow, and other perplexing thoughts”, and thereby “fortify the balsam of life against all infectious breaths”.

The key thing for all of these writers was alcohol “moderately taken”. Excessive drinking to the point of drunkenness was still cautioned against, and “living with temperance upon a good generous diet” (in the words of one author) remained the baseline for most plague medicine.

However, then as now, it’s likely that the disruption of patterns of labour and leisure, along with the daily anxieties of living in a plague-stricken city, drove many to the psychological consolations of the bottle on a more dangerous and habitual basis. In *A Journal of the Plague Year* – Defoe’s other, more celebrated novel about the 1665 London outbreak – he tells the story of a physician who kept his “spirits always high and hot with cordials and wine”. But “could not leave them off when the infection was quite gone, and so became a sot for all his life after”. **CT**

James Brown is Research Associate & Project Manager (UK), University of Sheffield. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com.

INSIGHTS

TIM KNIGHT

Published and be damned

Kitwe, Northern Rhodesia, August, 1964: The British colony of Northern Rhodesia has turned into the independent, democratic state of Zambia. The Queen has given her gracious consent, and sends her very best wishes along with her aunt, the Princess Royal, to preside over the handover. A new flag has been designed, a new constitution written, an election called.

The election is as peaceable, free and fair as any election anywhere. And when it's over, Kenneth Kaunda, a Bemba, schoolteacher and son of a Church of Scotland missionary, is running to become the first president of Zambia.

That's the easy part. If he wins, Kaunda will have to play both father and midwife to a new Central African nation born with far too many problems.

Like most of Africa below the Sahara, Zambia's economy is almost entirely controlled by whites, mostly foreigners. The country has a surfeit of missionaries, but fewer than one out of a hundred of its people finish primary school. There are only 109 black university graduates out of more than 3-million people in the whole country.

Kenneth Kaunda's followers call him "KK". They say it with respect and affection. They believe he can perform miracles.

Kaunda is president of the big-



Kenneth Kaunda in 2020.

United National Independence Party (UNIP). Like so many of the new, post-colonial world leaders, he's also a graduate of Her Majesty's Prisons. In Third World politics, time spent in the colonial masters' prison is the equivalent of a Nobel Prize. Or at least a Ph.D.

Kaunda served a year for "political activities" which means that he believed in the Magna Carta and democracy and equality and that sort of thing and is prepared to fight for them.

Kaunda is an intellectual. An ascetic. He believes in non-violence. He's immensely honest. He's something of a saint. When you meet Kaunda, you sense he's a bit

bigger, a bit finer than the rest of us. He walks into a room and the atmosphere changes. People move toward him without realising it.

Kaunda is a man of considerable respect. Now he's running for president of this new democratic nation.

I'm 24, a very young, rather self-important news reporter and sometime anchor for RTV, working out of Kitwe on the Copperbelt. Everything around here is built on copper. It's Zambia's only real export. In fact, there's nothing much else to sell.

Today, a contact tells me that the copper miners are secretly planning to strike before the election. Close down all the copper mines, all over the Copperbelt. The miners want the rewards of independence. Now.

They've been waiting years for these rewards. They want to be paid like whites. They want cars, like whites. And houses, like whites. They want the sweet life, just like whites. And they want it now. If they don't get it, they'll close the mines and the new nation will surely starve.

The election for president of the new Zambia is only a few months away.

The phone rings in the TV newsroom.

"This is Kenneth Kaunda".

"Yes sir. How can I help you?"

Kaunda explains politely that if I play down the strike threat for a while, don't give it much air time, he'll have a chance to get the various sides and interests together. He'll have time to find some sort of compromise. He wants desperately

Photo: Wikipedia.org / council.gov.zm

INSIGHTS

to avoid violence.

“Tim” says Kaunda “you and I both want to see peaceful majority rule come to Zambia. Help me bring it about. Please ...”

“Sir, I’m a journalist”, I reply. “I’m a journalist. I have to report what’s happening”.

Long pause.

“Tim, you’re not helping”, says Kaunda.

Long pause.

“I’m a journalist. It’s not my job to help. I’m sorry”.

Long pause.

His voice is very soft. “All I’m asking is some time. Is it asking too much?”

Long pause.

“Tim ... is it asking too much?”

You know how dangerous a strike will be. You know there likely will be real violence. Emotions are very high. There could be deaths. Lots of deaths. You know how much our future... Zambia’s future... depends on the mines working after independence. The world is watching us, Tim. Very carefully. The racists wants to see us Africans fail when we get independence. Much of the world wants to see us fail because it believes we’re not good enough without the whites. You know that”.

Long pause.

“I just need some time, Tim”.

“I’m sorry, sir. I’m a journalist...”.

His voice is faint, a long way away. “Is it too much to ask?”

“There’s nothing I can do, sir. I’m sorry”.

Another long pause.

“You’re not helping”.

Yet another long pause.

“Good-bye, Tim ...”.

I cut and write the story and we

run it on the news two nights later.

Within a week, the copper miners strike. All over the Copperbelt.

Kaunda was right. The strike turns violent.

People die.

A few weeks later, Kenneth Kaunda is elected first president of the brand new democratic nation of Zambia.

He never calls me again. **CT**

Tim Knight is an Emmy and Sigma Delta Chi winning international journalist and filmmaker. His book, “*Storytelling and the Anima Factor*” is now in its second edition. He lives and writes at *Surfer’s Corner* outside Cape Town, South Africa.

GRANVILLE WILLIAMS

Joining up the dots in Amazon story

I started to write this review when the news broke that Amazon is to hire 10,000 new workers in the UK as it opens more warehouses in the north and south of England. This will take its UK workforce to 55,000. In the same news bulletin it was announced that the department store Debenhams will finally close all its 118 high street stores and 12,000 jobs will have disappeared.

News reports don’t join up the dots. The remorseless rise of Amazon leads to shuttered shops on the high streets. Amazon has fashioned a mythology around its growth, casting the company as a force for good that ends up benefiting everyone.

The Amazon announcement was greeted enthusiastically by the Tory Business Secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, who said the move was “a huge vote of confidence in the British economy”. No mention was made, however, of widely-pub-



FULFILLMENT Winning and Losing in One-Click America

Alex MacGillis

Published by Farrar, Straus and Gilroux
www.us.macmillan.com/fsg/

\$28

licised criticism over working conditions and the derisory amount of tax the company pays.

When Alex MacGillis began work on *Fulfillment: Winning and Losing in One-Click America*, he

INSIGHTS

could not have anticipated just how timely a book about Amazon's power and influence in America would be.

Recent press accounts have exposed that working at Amazon is not just exhausting but extremely dangerous, with injury rates about double the industry average.

The company has actively sought to block unions, most recently at their warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama. The action prompted global news coverage of what was portrayed as a David vs Goliath struggle.

These revelations came as the pandemic gave Amazon its most profitable year by far, as people resorted to shopping online rather than at bricks-and-mortar shops.

Amazon has its own unreal internal language. The word fulfillment describes processing customers' orders, workers are associates and you aren't fired, but let go. MacGillis, however, has a different take on the word fulfillment: the chance to seek satisfaction or a sense of meaning through work. His book is a powerful indictment of a company which, through its political and economic power, has made fulfillment something those at the very top of the company enjoy, but for the vast majority of its workers it is completely absent.

This new and compelling book doesn't focus on the internal workings of Amazon, however, but on its massive impact on American life and work. MacGillis writes in a clear, accessible style but it is the working people he describes, their limited choices and experiences, who bring the book alive.

One example: In a chapter, "Dignity: The transformation of Work", he focuses on a Baltimore man, Bill Bogdani, using his life to describe the changing fortunes of US workers.

Bogdani started his working life at a GM plant in Bessemer, Alabama before moving in 1967 to work at the giant Sparrows Point Bethlehem Steel works, where he spent the next three decades. In 2015 he was retired but needed to work again. The bankruptcy of his former employer had resulted in his monthly pension being slashed from \$3,000 to \$1,600 and he



needed money to cover his and his wife's medical bills.

Amazon had built a sprawling warehouse – over one-million square feet, equivalent to 18 football fields and nearly a third of a mile long – on the site of the former GM plant. Bogdani went to work at there, aged 66, in 2015.

MacGillis points out, "The GM jobs had paid an average of \$27 per hour and had come with generous benefits. Now, a decade later, the jobs at the same site paid \$12 or \$13 per hour and came with much thinner benefits. This had not kept local and state leaders from showing the company with incentives to open the warehouse here – \$43-million in all".

Fulfillment is packed with examples like this which reveal the damage Amazon does. In El Paso, Texas, Amazon has aggressively

marketed itself to the city government as a go-to source for office supplies – which has pushed local suppliers to open up online on Amazon with a large cut of their sales going to the corporation.

In York, Pennsylvania, the headquarters of the once-fashionable Bon-Ton department store has been made extinct by Amazon and the broader retail consolidation it represents. The crisis of unemployment that has ensued is one that Amazon exploits, to employ in its warehouses in nearby towns.

Amazon's political influence is focused on Washington where Jeff Bezos owns the *Washington Post*, and a sumptuous property he purchased for \$23-million in cash in 2016. He also has the largest lobbying office of any tech firm in Washington, with 28 people, in addition to more than 100 lobbyists on contract at a dozen firms around the city.

Amazon fiercely resists any attempts to limit its control both of its workforce and the way it operates, as we saw in the ruthless tactics deployed to block the failed attempt to unionise the Bessemer, Alabama, warehouse recently. However, more people are becoming aware of the damage the company does. This book can play an important role in making more people realise that the convenience of next day delivery comes at great human cost. **CT**

Granville Williams is editor of *MediaNorth*, the magazine of the UK's Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (North) – www.medianorth.org.uk.

INSIGHTS

Photo: Fibonacci Blue



Protesters demand a \$15/hour minimum wage at an earlier strike at a McDonald's restaurant in Minneapolis.

SAM PIZZIGATI

Disposable workers are bad for business

McDonald's workers in 15 US cities recently staged a week-long strike demanding a \$15 hourly wage for every McDonald's worker. McDonald's resisted, pledging only to raise average wages to \$13 an hour.

In the meantime, the profits keep rolling in. The fast-food giant registered \$4.7-billion in 2020 earnings. CEO Chris Kempczinski personally pocketed \$10.8-million last year, 1,189 times more than the \$9,124 that went to the company's median worker.

Executives at McDonald's seem to think they can outlast the Fight for \$15 campaign. More to the point, they think they know every-

thing. Nothing happens at Mickey D's without incredibly intensive market research: "Plan, test, feedback, tweak, repeat". More hours may go into planning the launch of a new McDonald's menu item than Ike marshalled planning the D-Day invasion.

All this planning has McDonald's executives supremely confident about their business know-how. But, in fact, these execs do not know their business inside-out. They don't know their workers.

Workers remain, for McDonald's executive class, a disposable item. Why pay them decently? If some workers feel underpaid and overstressed, the McDonald's corporate attitude has historically been

"good riddance to them". Turnover at McDonald's was running at an annual rate of 150 percent before the pandemic.

The entire fast-food industry rests on a low-wage, high-turnover foundation. And at those rare moments – like this spring – when new workers seem harder to find, the industry starts expecting its politician pals to cut away at jobless benefits and force workers to take positions that don't pay a living wage.

But if leaders were really doing their research, they'd learn very quickly that this makes no sense. Instead of treating workers as disposable and replaceable, businesses ought to be treating them as partners.

Who says? The *Harvard Business Review*, hardly a haven for anti-corporate sloganeering. Employee ownership, the journal concluded recently, "can reduce inequality and improve productivity".

Thomas Dudley and Ethan Rouen reviewed a host of studies on enterprises where employees hold at least 30 percent of their company's shares. These companies are more productive and grow faster than their counterparts, Dudley and Rouen found. Cooperatives are also less likely to go out of business.

Enterprises with at least a 30-percent employee ownership share currently employ about 1.5-million US workers, just under 1 percent of the nation's total workforce. If we raise that number to 30 percent, Dudley and Rouen calculate, the bottom half of Americans would

INSIGHTS

see their share of national wealth more than quadruple.

Elsewhere, enterprises with 100-percent employee ownership already exist. Spain's Mondragon cooperatives, the *New York Times* noted earlier this year, have flourished since the 1950s. They aim "not to lavish dividends on shareholders or shower stock options on executives, but to preserve paychecks."

At each of Mondragon's 96 cooperative enterprises, executives make no more than six times what

workers in the network's Spanish co-ops make. In the United States, the typical rate runs well over 300 to 1.

We're not talking artsy-crafty boutiques here. Mondragon co-ops, including one of Spain's largest grocery chains, currently employ 70,000 people in the country.

Mondragon has had a particularly powerful impact on the Basque region in Spain, the network's home base. By one standard measure, the Basque region currently ranks as one of the most egalitar-

ian political areas on Earth.

"We want to transform our society", Mondragon International president Josu Ugarte told me in a 2016 interview. "We want to have a more equal society".

So do workers at McDonald's. **CT**

Sam Pizzigati is a co-editor of *Inequality.org* and author of *The Case for a Maximum Wage* and *The Rich Don't Always Win*. This op-ed was adapted from *Inequality.org* and distributed by *OtherWords.org*.

LINDA MCQUAIG

Time to reject trickle-down scam

There's an iconic photo that shows Ronald Reagan and a bunch of his Republican cronies buckled over, laughing uproariously. Who knows what they found so funny -- maybe President Reagan just burped or George H.W. Bush did an armpit fart. Whatever.

But some wag turned the photo into a legend with the caption: "And then we told them the wealth would trickle down!"

Could it be that this knee-slapper is finally wearing thin, that the public is sick and tired of the trickle-down scam?

To the surprise of many, US President Joe Biden is making a daring bid to overturn much of the mean-spirited conservative economic agenda that's dominated

America -- and the world -- since Reagan's presidency in the 1980s.

"Trickle-down has never worked", declared Biden in his recent address to Congress, as he rolled out a massive agenda that would drive a hole through the heart of Reaganomics and its small-government fetish (at least when it comes to government helping ordinary people).

Biden wants to spend \$6-trillion on things that would significantly improve the lives of regular Americans -- family benefits, paid medical leave, free preschool and community college, infrastructure and green new jobs, enhanced rights for workers.

And he wants to pay for it by raising taxes on corporations and other high-fliers last seen buckled

over laughing at how massively they've swindled the American people.

Of course, Biden faces huge obstacles getting his plans through both houses of Congress; it's quite possible he won't succeed. Still, his willingness to directly challenge long-held dogma is invigorating -- and likely to change the debate.

That could help Canada also break free of the suffocating effects of Reaganomics (or neoliberalism) with its agenda of austerity for the masses and tax breaks for those at the top.

Certainly, Biden's endorsement of bigger government makes it easier for PM Justin Trudeau to proceed with his recently announced national child-care plan. Canada's deficit hawks won't have their usual clout now that our largest trading partner has stopped preaching austerity and small government.

Trudeau has shown some spine against the deficit hawks, but he has been timid about joining Bi-

INSIGHTS

den's campaign to tax the wealthy. (Trudeau's new luxury tax is a nothing-burger compared to Biden's proposed tax hike on capital gains held by the super-rich.)

Too bad. We could sure use the money to pay for needed programmes. Besides, when nations co-operate, corporations have a hard time playing us off against each other in pushing for ever-lower taxes.

That's why Canada should be backing Biden's effort to clamp down on corporate tax havens, which deprive governments around the world of US\$245-billion a year in desperately needed revenue, according to Tax Justice Network.



In a potentially game-changing move, Biden is trying to enlist major nations (through the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) to support a global minimum tax, which corporations would be required to pay on their worldwide income, regardless of whether it was reported in a tax

haven. Washington is proposing a minimum rate of 21 percent. So if a US corporation reports income in a country where the corporate tax rate is 5 percent, Washington would impose an additional tax to bring that corporation's tax rate up to 21 percent. This would mean much higher taxes for corporate giants – Amazon, Facebook, Google, etc – that make extensive use of tax havens.

International tax expert Gabriel Zucman says that if other countries follow the US in policing their corporations this way "it's the end of tax havens".

Germany and France have pledged support for Biden's corporate minimum tax – but not Canada. Trudeau said he's open to the idea, but declined to commit to it, insisting instead that Canada will always ensure its taxes are competitive with other nations. This kind of tax competition is exactly what Biden's global minimum corporate tax is designed to avoid.

Over the years, Canada has far too often bowed to Washington, which typically lines up behind corporate interests. How mad-denying that we're showing a rare streak of independence when Washington is finally cracking down on corporate misconduct and actively pushing to rid the world of the scourge of tax havens.

Linda McQuaig is a journalist and author of *"The Sport & Prey of Capitalists: How the Rich are Stealing Canada's Public Wealth"*. This article first appeared in the *Toronto Star*.

GET YOUR FREE SUBSCRIPTION TO COLDTYPE

Send an email to editor@coldtype.net
– write SUBSCRIBE in the subject line

INSIGHTS

JIM HIGHTOWER

We need to talk about Jeff Bezos' new boat

Not only are the rich different from you and me — they're getting more different than ever.

I'm not referring to mere millionaires, but to the billionaire bunch. In the past year, while ordinary Americans have lost jobs, businesses, and homes due to the pandemic economic crash, America's 664 billionaires have found themselves nearly 40 percent richer than before Covid.

These fortunate few collectively added more than \$1-trillion in 2020 to their personal stashes of wealth. And practically all of them got so much richer by doing nothing —

their money made the extra money for them, because corporate stock prices zoomed even as regular people lost income.

Take a peek at Jeff Bezos of Amazon. He hauled in an additional \$75-billion last year, or roughly \$37-million an hour. You could do a lot of good with such riches ... or you could splurge on yourself.

Bezos splurged.

He bought one of the largest sailing vessels ever built. More than one-and-a-third football fields long, the superyacht cost him around half a billion dollars. Plus, he'll pay some \$60-million each year for operating expenses. He also had to

buy a "support yacht" to sail along with his main boat. Why? Because the three sails on his 400-footer are so huge that a helicopter can't land on the deck, requiring an auxiliary yacht to provide a helipad.

See, the rich really are different — where to park our helicopter while at sea is a problem you and I don't have to face. According to mega-yacht sellers, the main draw of these ostentatious purchases is that they reinforce inequality, literally letting the rich float in leisure and luxury, oceans apart from even having to see hoi polloi like us.

Not coincidentally, Amazon paid no federal taxes in 2019. So the Biden administration's idea to fund an American jobs package with corporate tax hikes sounds like a good one to me. **CT**

Jim Hightower is a radio commentator, writer, and public speaker. This article was distributed by OtherWords.org.

DEJA VU

MARK HURWITT



David & Goliath, The Updated Version

WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

ColdType



For a **FREE** subscription, email
editor@coldtype.net
(Write Subscribe in Subject Line)