

SPECIAL  
SECTION:

THE LYING  
GAME

- MARJA: THE CITY THAT NEVER WAS
- GOODBYE TO TRUTH AND LIBERTY
- AIPAC TELLS ANOTHER WHOPPER
- A NATION IS PACIFIED

# The <sup>ColdType</sup> READER

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**PHOTO ESSAY: THE TAX REVOLT  
THAT ENDED THATCHER'S REIGN**



JOHN HARRIS / REPORT DIGITAL.CO.UK

## THE WAR MACHINE

**Essays on War and its Consequences** by Norman Solomon, John Pilger, Sherwood Ross, Joe Bageant, Tom Engelhardt and George Monbiot

# The <sup>ColdType</sup> READER



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

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## ISSUE 45 APRIL 2010

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# 37 years in solitary confinement

In 1972, three men in a Louisiana prison were placed in solitary confinement after a guard was murdered. Two are still there – even though many believe they are innocent, writes **Erwin James**

**A**ngola prison, the state penitentiary of Louisiana, is the biggest prison in America. Built on the site of a former slave plantation, the 1,800-acre penal complex is home to more than 5,000 prisoners, the majority of whom will never walk the streets again as free men. Also known as the Farm, Angola took its name from the homeland of the slaves who used to work its fields, and in many ways still resembles a slave plantation today. Eighty per cent of the prisoners are African-Americans and, under the watchful eye of armed guards on horseback, they still work fields of sugar cane, cotton and corn, for up to 16 hours a day. “You’ve got to keep the inmates working all day so they’re tired at night,” says Warden Burl Cain, a committed evangelist who believes that the rehabilitation of convicts is only possible through Christian redemption.

Undoubtedly there is less violence and abuse among the prisoners under his wardenship than there was under his predecessors. But Angola is still a long way from being a “positive environment that promotes responsibility, goodness, and humanity”, as he proclaims in the prison’s mission statement. In fact at the heart of Cain’s prison regime is an inhumanity that would make Jesus weep.

For more than 37 years, two prisoners, Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox, have

been locked down in Angola’s maximum security Closed Cell Restricted (CCR) block – the longest period of solitary confinement in American prison history.

Having experienced the isolation of “23-hour bang-up” during my own 20 years of imprisonment, for offences of which I was guilty, I can attest to the mental impact that such conditions inflict. My first year was spent on a high-security landing where the cell doors were opened only briefly for meals and emptying of toilet buckets. If decent-minded prison officers were on duty we were allowed to walk the yard for 30 minutes a day. The rest of the time we were alone. The cells were 10ft x 5ft, with a chair, a table and a bed. You could walk up and down, run on the spot, stand still, or do push-ups and sit-ups – but sooner or later you had to just stop, and think.

## Vivid dreams

As the days, weeks and months blur into one, without realising it you start to live completely inside your head. You dream about the past, in vivid detail – and fantasise about the future, for fantasies are all you have. You panic but it’s no good “getting on the bell” – unless you’re dying – and, even then, don’t hope for a speedy response. I had a lot to think about. When the man in the cell above mine hanged himself I thought about that, a lot. I still do. You

**Having experienced the isolation of “23-hour bang-up” during my own 20 years of imprisonment, for offences of which I was guilty, I can attest to the mental impact that such conditions inflict**

## THE ANGOLA THREE

**King was also convicted of a murder in Angola in 1973, and was held in solitary alongside Wallace and Woodfox for 29 years, until his conviction was overturned in 2001 and he was freed**

look at the bars on the high window and think how easy it would be to be free of all the thinking.

Such thoughts must have crossed the minds of Wallace and Woodfox more than once during their isolation. They are fed through the barred gates of their 9ft x 6ft cells and allowed only one hour of exercise every other day alone in a small caged yard. Their capacity for psychological endurance alone is noteworthy.

Wallace and Woodfox were confined to solitary after being convicted of murdering Angola prison guard Brent Miller in 1972. But the circumstances of their trial was so suspect that there are no doubts among their supporters that these men are innocent. Even Brent Miller's widow, Teenie Verret, has her reservations. "If they did not do this," she says, "and I believe that they didn't, they have been living a nightmare."

One man who understands the nightmare that Wallace and Woodfox are living more than anyone else is Robert King. King was also convicted of a murder in Angola in 1973, and was held in solitary alongside Wallace and Woodfox for 29 years, until his conviction was overturned in 2001 and he was freed. Together, King, Wallace and Woodfox have become known as the "Angola three".

### **Roddick's cause**

The case of the Angola three first came to international attention following the campaigning efforts of the Body Shop founder and humanitarian Anita Roddick. Roddick heard about their plight from a young lawyer named Scott Fleming. Fleming was working as a prisoner advocate in the 1990s when he received a letter from Wallace asking for help. The human tragedy Fleming uncovered had the most profound effect on him. When he qualified as a lawyer, their case became his first. "I was born in 1973," he says. "I often think that for my entire life they have been in solitary."

Through Fleming, Roddick met King and then Woodfox in Angola. Their story, she said later, "made my blood run cold in my

veins". Until her death in 2007 Roddick was a committed and passionate supporter of their cause. At her memorial service King played two taped messages from Wallace and Woodfox. In the congregation was filmmaker Vadim Jean who had become good friends with Roddick and her husband Gordon during an earlier film project. "Anita's big thing was, 'Just do something,'" says Jean. "No matter how small an act of kindness. Listening to Herman and Albert's voices at her memorial was like having Anita's finger pointing at me and saying, 'Just do something.'" And so he decided to make *In the Land of the Free*, a searing documentary, released last month.

The story Jean's film tells is one that has resonance on many levels. All three men were from poor black neighbourhoods in New Orleans. They grew up fearing the police, who would regularly "clear the books" of crimes in the area, according to King, by pinning them on disaffected young black men. "If I saw the police, I used to run," King says. He admits to being involved in petty crime in his early years, but "nothing vicious". Eventually King was arrested for an armed robbery he says he did not commit and was sentenced to 35 years, which he began in New Orleans parish prison – and there he met Albert Woodfox.

Woodfox had also been sentenced for armed robbery – and given 50 years. On the day he was sentenced he escaped from the courthouse. He made his way to Harlem in New York, where he encountered the Black Panthers, the revolutionary African-American political movement. He witnessed the Panthers engaging with the community in a positive, constructive way, educating and informing people of their rights. He says it was the first time in his life that he had seen African-Americans exhibiting real pride, pride that emanated from the young activists, he says, "like a shimmering heatwave".

Two days later Woodfox was caught and taken to New York's Tombs prison where he saw first-hand the militant tactics of imprisoned Panthers who resisted their guards

with organised protests. In Tombs, Woodfox was labelled “militant” and sent back to New Orleans where he joined King on the parish prison block, known – due to the high concentration of Panther activists – as “the Panther tier”. There Woodfox became a member of the Black Panther party.

Outside, confrontations between the Panthers – described by FBI director J Edgar Hoover as “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country” – and the police were escalating. In an attempt to undermine the influence of the Panthers in New Orleans parish prison, officials tried to shoehorn men they termed “Black Gangsters” on to the tier – men like Wallace, also serving decades for armed robbery. One day Wallace was suffering from the pain of ill-fitting shoes. One of the Panthers, on his way to a court appearance, took his shoes off and handed them to Wallace. “Right then I knew that that was what I needed to be a part of,” he says. In the summer of 1971 Wallace and Woodfox were shipped to Angola.

#### **Still segregated**

The civil rights bill had been signed in 1964, but seven years later Angola was still operating a segregated regime. Prisoner guards carried guns and were also responsible, according to well-documented sources, for organising systematic sexual abuse of vulnerable prisoners, which flourished in the prison’s mostly dormitory accommodation. And violence between prisoners had reached such levels that Angola was known as “the bloodiest prison in America”.

Woodfox and Wallace quickly extended the New Orleans chapter of the Black Panthers into Angola, establishing classes in political ideology and exposing injustices. They organised work stoppages, demonstrating to fellow prisoners the liberating power of acting with a “unity of purpose” and worked to eradicate the prevalent sexual abuses. But their political activities made them targets for the administrators. By the spring of 1972, tensions in the prison were

dangerously high.

These were the conditions in which Brent Miller met his untimely death. That April, a prisoner work strike drew the attention of the guards who were called from normal duties to deal with the disturbance. Miller, a strong, athletic young man of 23, stayed behind alone. He entered a dormitory holding 90 prisoners and sat on an elderly prisoner’s bed, drinking coffee and chatting. Moments later he was attacked and stabbed 32 times.

Two days later, four men identified as “black militants”, including Wallace and Woodfox, were accused of the murder. It was quickly ascertained that one of the four had been inserted into the case by the prison administration. Charges against him were dropped. Another, Chester Jackson, admitted to holding Miller while the guard was stabbed to death. Jackson turned state’s evidence in return for a plea to manslaughter. The case was tried in a town called St Francisville, the closest courthouse to Angola. The jury had been picked from the local populace, many of whom earned their living from the prison or had families and friends that worked there; all were white. Wallace and Woodfox were found guilty of Miller’s murder, sentenced to life imprisonment without parole and taken from the court straight to Angola’s CCR block to begin their life in isolation.

Robert King was brought to Angola from the parish prison two weeks after Miller’s killing, as part of a roundup of black radicals. King had never met Miller and was in a prison 150 miles away when the murder took place. Yet he was investigated for the crime and identified as a “conspirator” before being transferred to lockdown on CCR alongside Wallace and Woodcock.

The following year a prisoner named August Kelly was murdered on King’s CCR tier. A man named Grady Brewer admitted that he alone was responsible for the killing, which he said he carried out in self-defence. But King was also charged. The two men faced trial together in the same St Francisville courthouse where Wallace and

**The jury had been picked from the local populace, many of whom earned their living from the prison or had families and friends that worked there; all were white**

## THE ANGOLA THREE

**A bloody fingerprint was found close to Brent Miller's body. It was determined that it did not belong to Woodfox nor to Wallace, but despite the prison holding all the fingerprints of all the prisoners, no attempt was made to find out whose it was**

Woodfox had been convicted the year before. The sole evidence against King came from flawed prisoner testimony. He and Brewer had not been allowed to speak to their attorneys for any length of time before their trial. When they protested, the judge ordered their hands to be shackled behind their backs and their mouths gagged with duct tape for the duration of their trial. The men were convicted and sentenced to life without parole. King later won an appeal; the federal court ruled that he had not been sufficiently unruly in the dock to warrant the shackling and gagging. He went back to trial in 1975, was re-convicted and immediately sent back to CCR.

When, after Scott Fleming's intervention in the case of Wallace and Woodfox in the 1990s, new lawyers reviewed the original trial of both men, discovering "obfuscation after obfuscation". The state had used a number of jailhouse informants against them, many of whom gave contradictory accounts of what they saw. One was registered blind. The key witness in the case was a man called Hezekiah Brown who testified he witnessed the murder. In his initial statement to investigators however, Brown said he had not seen anything. Three days later, when he was taken from his bunk at midnight by prison officials and promised his freedom if he testified, he agreed to say that he saw Wallace and Woodfox kill Miller. At the time Brown was serving life without parole for multiple rapes. Immediately after he agreed to testify he was given his own minimum security private house in the prison grounds and a weekly cigarette ration.

Wallace and Woodfox did not give up. They fought their convictions from their cells and in 1993 Woodfox was granted an appeal, forcing a new trial. The case was sent back to the same courthouse to be tried in front of a new grand jury. A local author, Anne Butler, who had published a book in which she detailed the case and was convinced that the right people had been convicted, acted as jury chairperson. No witnesses were called. Instead Butler was called upon

to explain the case. Once again, the jury was composed of people who worked in Angola or were related to people who worked there. Butler's husband and co-author was Murray Henderson, who had been the warden of Angola when Brent Miller was murdered. It is worth noting that Henderson was a key member of the original investigation team and that, during that investigation, a bloody fingerprint was found close to Brent Miller's body. It was determined that it did not belong to Woodfox nor to Wallace, but despite the prison holding all the fingerprints of all the prisoners, no attempt was made to find out whose it was. The bloody print was also ignored at Woodfox's retrial. He was reconvicted and sent back to isolation in Angola's CCR.

It was 26 years before King won the right to another appeal. In 2001 the Federal court found that the jury in King's original trial had systematically excluded African-Americans and women and agreed that the case should be reheard. This time around the prisoner witnesses recanted and the federal court sent the case back to the district court for review. The state negotiated a deal with King. Reluctantly, and with his left hand raised instead of his right, he pleaded guilty to conspiracy; an hour and a half later he was freed.

### **Conviction overturned**

In September 2008, Woodfox's conviction was overturned; the federal court ruled that his core constitutional rights had been violated at his original trial. Louisiana attorney general Buddy Caldwell could have set Woodfox free immediately. Instead he decided to contest the federal decision and Woodfox, now 64, was returned to Angola's CCR, where he remains. Herman Wallace, now 68, was moved to another Louisiana prison last year, where he too continues to be held in solitary confinement.

Today King, now 67, is still campaigning for justice for his friends. Albert Woodfox: "Our primary objective is that front gate. That is what we are struggling for and we

are actually fighting for our freedom. We are fighting for people to understand that we were framed for a murder that we are totally, completely and actually innocent of.” Robert King says he is free of Angola, but until his friends are free, “Angola will never be free of me.”

Jean hopes his film will make a difference. “These men need help,” he says. “Louisiana needs to be shamed into doing the right thing.” **CT**

*In the Land of the Free* was released on 26 March

*Erwin James served 20 years of a life sentence before his release in August 2004. In prison he took a degree course with the Open University, majoring in history, and graduated in 1994. His first article in the Guardian appeared in 1998 and he began writing a regular column, entitled A Life Inside, in the Guardian in 2000. A collection of his columns, A Life Inside, a Prisoner’s Notebook, was published in 2003. A follow-up, The Home Stretch, From Prison to Parole, was published in 2005.*  
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“We are fighting for people to understand that we were framed for a murder that we are totally, completely and actually innocent of”

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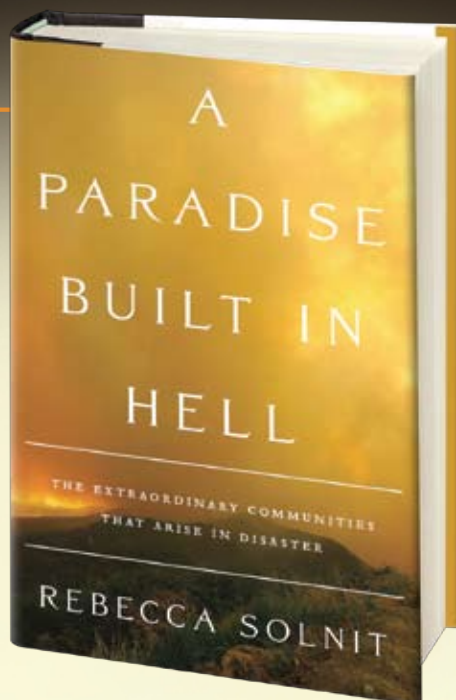
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# Marja, the city that never was

The target of a major offensive in the Afghanistan war didn't actually exist, writes **Gareth Porter**

**It turns out that the picture of Marja presented by military officials and obediently reported by major news media is one of the clearest and most dramatic pieces of misinformation of the entire war**

For weeks, the US public followed the biggest offensive of the Afghanistan war against what it was told was a “city of 80,000 people” as well as the logistical hub of the Taliban in that part of Helmand. That idea was a central element in the overall impression built up in February that Marja was a major strategic objective, more important than other district centres in Helmand.

It turns out, however, that the picture of Marja presented by military officials and obediently reported by major news media is one of the clearest and most dramatic pieces of misinformation of the entire war, apparently aimed at hyping the offensive as a historic turning point in the conflict.

Marja is not a city or even a real town, but either a few clusters of farmers' homes or a large agricultural area covering much of the southern Helmand River Valley.

“It's not urban at all,” an official of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), who asked not to be identified, said. He called Marja a “rural community”.

“It's a collection of village farms, with typical family compounds,” said the official, adding that the homes are reasonably prosperous by Afghan standards.

Richard B. Scott, who worked in Marja as an adviser on irrigation for the US Agency

for International Development as recently as 2005, agrees that Marja has nothing that could be mistaken as being urban. It is an “agricultural district” with a “scattered series of farmers' markets,” said Scott.

The ISAF official said the only population numbering tens of thousands associated with Marja is spread across many villages and almost 200 square kilometres, or about 125 square miles. Marja has never even been incorporated, according to the official, but there are now plans to formalise its status as an actual “district” of Helmand Province.

The official admitted that the confusion about Marja's population was facilitated by the fact that the name has been used both for the relatively large agricultural area and for a specific location where farmers have gathered for markets.

However, the name Marja “was most closely associated” with the more specific location, where there are also a mosque and a few shops. That very limited area was the apparent objective of “Operation Moshtarak”, to which 7,500 US, NATO and Afghan troops were committed amid the most intense publicity given any battle since the beginning of the war.

So how did the fiction that Marja is a city of 80,000 people get started? The idea was passed on to the news media by the US Ma-





rines in southern Helmand. The earliest references in news stories to Marja as a city with a large population have a common origin in a briefing given Feb. 2 by officials at Camp Leatherneck, the US Marine base there.

The Associated Press published an article the same day quoting “Marine commanders” as saying that they expected 400 to 1,000 insurgents to be “holed up” in the “southern Afghan town of 80,000 people.” That language evoked an image of house to house urban street fighting.

The same story said Marja was “the biggest town under Taliban control” and called it the “linchpin of the militants’ logistical and opium-smuggling network”. It gave the figure of 125,000 for the population living in “the town and surrounding villages”. ABC news followed with a story the next day referring to the “city of Marja” and claiming that the city and the surrounding area “are more heavily populated, urban and dense than other places the Marines have so far been able to clear and hold.”

The rest of the news media fell into line with that image of the bustling, urbanised Marja in subsequent stories, often using “town” and “city” interchangeably. *Time* magazine wrote about the “town of 80,000” Feb. 9, and the *Washington Post* did the same Feb. 11.

As “Operation Moshtarak” began, US military spokesmen were portraying Marja as an urbanised population centre. On Feb. 14, on the second day of the offensive, Marine spokesman Lt. Josh Diddams said the Marines were “in the majority of the city at this point.”

He also used language that conjured images of urban fighting, referring to the insurgents holding some “neighbourhoods”.

A few days into the offensive, some reporters began to refer to a “region”, but only created confusion rather than clearing the matter up. CNN managed to refer to Marja twice as a “region” and once as “the city” in the same Feb. 15 article, without any explanation for the apparent contradiction.

The Associated Press further confused

the issue in a Feb. 21 story, referring to “three markets in town – which covers 80 square miles ...”

A “town” with an area of 80 square miles would be bigger than such US cities as Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh and Cleveland. But AP failed to notice that something was seriously wrong with that reference.

Long after other media had stopped characterising Marja as a city, the *New York Times* was still referring to Marja as “a city of 80,000”, in a Feb. 26 dispatch with a Marja dateline. The decision to hype up Marja as the objective of “Operation Moshtarak” by planting the false impression that it is a good-sized city would not have been made independently by the Marines at Camp Leatherneck.

A central task of “information operations” in counterinsurgency wars is “establishing the COIN [counterinsurgency] narrative”, according to the Army Counterinsurgency Field Manual as revised under Gen. David Petraeus in 2006. That task is usually done by “higher headquarters” rather than in the field, as the manual notes.

The COIN manual asserts that news media “directly influence the attitude of key audiences toward counterinsurgents, their operations and the opposing insurgency.” The manual refers to “a war of perceptions ... conducted continuously using the news media.”

Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, commander of ISAF, was clearly preparing to wage such a war in advance of the Marja operation. In remarks made just before the offensive began, McChrystal invoked the language of the counterinsurgency manual, saying, “This is all a war of perceptions.”

The *Washington Post* reported Feb. 22 that the decision to launch the offensive against Marja was intended largely to impress US public opinion with the effectiveness of the US military in Afghanistan by showing that it could achieve a “large and loud victory.”

The false impression that Marja was a significant city was an essential part of that message. **CT**

**CNN managed to refer to Marja twice as a “region” and once as “the city” in the same Feb. 15 article, without any explanation for the apparent contradiction**

**Gareth Porter** is an investigative historian and journalist specialising in US national security policy. The paperback edition of his latest book, ***Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam***, was published in 2006.

# Goodbye to truth; goodbye to liberty

**Paul Craig Roberts** wonders why truth no longer seems relevant to Americans, who are now ruled by propaganda

Truth is an unwelcome entity. It is disturbing. It is off limits. Those who speak it run the risk of being branded “anti-American,” “anti-semitic” or “conspiracy theorist”

**T**here was a time when the pen was mightier than the sword. That was a time when people believed in truth and regarded truth as an independent power and not as an auxiliary for government, class, race, ideological, personal, or financial interest.

Today Americans are ruled by propaganda. Americans have little regard for truth, little access to it, and little ability to recognize it. Truth is an unwelcome entity. It is disturbing. It is off limits. Those who speak it run the risk of being branded “anti-American,” “anti-semitic” or “conspiracy theorist.”

Truth is an inconvenience for government and for the interest groups whose campaign contributions control government.

Truth is an inconvenience for prosecutors who want convictions, not the discovery of innocence or guilt.

Truth is inconvenient for ideologues.

Today many whose goal once was the discovery of truth are now paid handsomely to hide it. “Free market economists” are paid to sell offshoring to the American people. High-productivity, high value-added American jobs are denigrated as dirty, old industrial jobs. Relics from long ago, we are best shed of them. Their place has been taken by “the New Economy,” a mythical economy that allegedly consists of high-tech white

collar jobs in which Americans innovate and finance activities that occur offshore. All Americans need in order to participate in this “new economy” are finance degrees from Ivy League universities, and then they will work on Wall Street at million dollar jobs.

Economists who were once respectable took money to contribute to this myth of “the New Economy.”

And not only economists sell their souls for filthy lucre. Recently we have had reports of medical doctors who, for money, have published in peer-reviewed journals concocted “studies” that hype this or that new medicine produced by pharmaceutical companies that paid for the “studies.”



## Swine flu

The Council of Europe is investigating the drug companies' role in hyping a false swine flu pandemic in order to gain billions of dollars in sales of the vaccine.

The media helped the US military hype its recent Marja offensive in Afghanistan, describing Marja as a city of 80,000 under Taliban control. It turns out that Marja is not urban but a collection of village farms.

And there is the global warming scandal, in which NGOs, the UN, and the nuclear industry colluded in concocting a doomsday

scenario in order to create profit in pollution.

Wherever one looks, truth has fallen to money.

Wherever money is insufficient to bury the truth, ignorance, propaganda, and short memories finish the job.

I remember when, following CIA director William Colby's testimony before the Church Committee in the mid-1970s, presidents Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan issued executive orders preventing the CIA and US black-op groups from assassinating foreign leaders. In 2010 the US Congress was told by Dennis Blair, head of national intelligence, that the US now assassinates its own citizens in addition to foreign leaders.

When Blair told the House Intelligence Committee that US citizens no longer needed to be arrested, charged, tried, and convicted of a capital crime, just murdered on suspicion alone of being a "threat," he wasn't impeached. No investigation were pursued. Nothing happened. There was no Church Committee. In the mid-1970s the CIA got into trouble for plots to kill Castro. Today it is American citizens who are on the hit list. Whatever objections there might be don't carry any weight. No one in government is in any trouble over the assassination of US citizens by the US government.

As an economist, I am astonished that the American economics profession has no awareness whatsoever that the US economy has been destroyed by the offshoring of US GDP to overseas countries. US corporations, in pursuit of absolute advantage or lowest labor costs and maximum CEO "performance bonuses," have moved the production of goods and services marketed to Americans to China, India, and elsewhere abroad. When I read economists describe offshoring as free trade based on comparative advantage, I realize that there is no intelligence or integrity in the American economics profession.

Intelligence and integrity have been purchased by money. The transnational or global US corporations pay multi-million dollar

compensation packages to top managers, who achieve these "performance awards" by replacing US labor with foreign labor.

While Washington worries about "the Muslim threat," Wall Street, US corporations and "free market" skills destroy the US economy and the prospects of tens of millions of Americans.

Americans, or most of them, have proved to be putty in the hands of the police state.

Americans have bought into the government's claim that security requires the suspension of civil liberties and accountable government. Astonishingly, Americans, or most of them, believe that civil liberties, such as habeas corpus and due process, protect "terrorists," and not themselves. Many also believe that the Constitution is a tired old document that prevents government from exercising the kind of police state powers necessary to keep Americans safe and free.

Most Americans are unlikely to hear from anyone who would tell them any different.

I was associate editor and columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*. I was *Business Week's* first outside columnist, a position I held for 15 years. I was columnist for a decade for Scripps Howard News Service, carried in 300 newspapers. I was a columnist for the *Washington Times* and for newspapers in France and Italy and for a magazine in Germany. I was a contributor to the *New York Times* and a regular feature in the *Los Angeles Times*. Today I cannot publish in, or appear on, the American "mainstream media."

#### Mainstream ban

For the last six years I have been banned from the "mainstream media." My last column in the *New York Times* appeared in January, 2004, coauthored with Democratic US Senator Charles Schumer representing New York. We addressed the offshoring of US jobs. Our op-ed article produced a conference at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. and live coverage by C-Span. A debate was launched. No such thing could happen today.

**Astonishingly, Americans, or most of them, believe that civil liberties, such as habeas corpus and due process, protect "terrorists," and not themselves**

## PROPAGANDA RULES

**The American corporate media does not serve the truth. It serves the government and the interest groups that empower the government**

For years I was a mainstay at the *Washington Times*, producing credibility for the Moonie newspaper as a *Business Week* columnist, former *Wall Street Journal* editor, and former Assistant Secretary of the US Treasury. But when I began criticizing Bush's wars of aggression, the order came down to Mary Lou Forbes to cancel my column.

The American corporate media does not serve the truth. It serves the government and the interest groups that empower the government. America's fate was sealed when the public and the anti-war movement bought the government's 9/11 conspiracy theory. The government's account of 9/11 is contradicted by much evidence. Nevertheless, this defining event of our time, which has launched the US on interminable wars of aggression and a domestic police state, is a taboo topic for investigation in the media. It is pointless to complain of war and a police state when one accepts the premise upon which they are based.

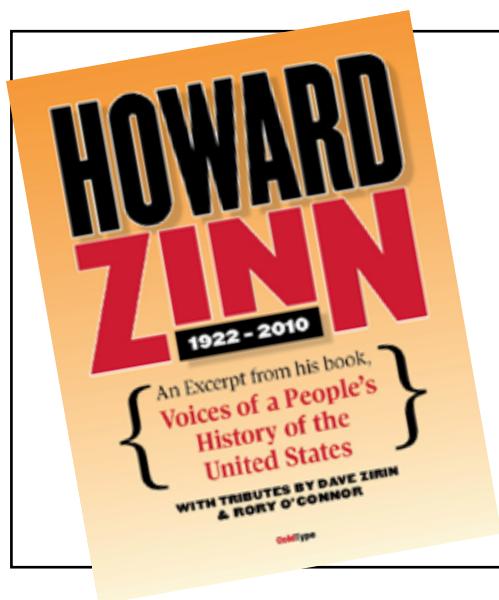
These trillion dollar wars have created financing problems for Washington's deficits and threaten the US dollar's role as world reserve currency. The wars and the pressure that the budget deficits put on the dollar's value have put Social Security and Medicare

on the chopping block. Former Goldman Sachs chairman and US Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson is after these protections for the elderly. Fed chairman Bernanke is also after them. The Republicans are after them as well. These protections are called "entitlements" as if they are some sort of welfare that people have not paid for in payroll taxes all their working lives.

With over 21 per cent unemployment as measured by the methodology of 1980, with American jobs, GDP, and technology having been given to China and India, with war being Washington's greatest commitment, with the dollar over-burdened with debt, with civil liberty sacrificed to the "war on terror," the liberty and prosperity of the American people have been thrown into the trash bin of history.

The militarism of the US and Israeli states, and Wall Street and corporate greed, will now run their course. As the pen is censored and its might extinguished, I am signing off. **CT**

*Paul Craig Roberts was an editor of the Wall Street Journal and an Assistant Secretary of the US Treasury. His latest book, **How The Economy Was Lost**, has just been published by CounterPunch/AK Press.*



## PAYING TRIBUTE TO HOWARD ZINN

Download an excerpt from Zinn's book, **Voices of a People's History Of the United States**, together with tributes from Dave Zirin and Rory O'Connor at

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# AIPAC tells another whopper

The story that AIPAC wants you to hear is quite a tale, notable for what it doesn't mention, writes **Stephanie Westbrook**

**T**he theme of last month's annual policy conference for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) was 'Israel: Tell the Story.' And it was quite a story that AIPAC wanted to tell.

The conference aimed at imparting to more than 7,000 attendees 'an intimate understanding of the many ways that Israel is making the world a better place,' with a focus on peacemaking and innovation. According to the AIPAC web site, conference goers will also 'meet Israelis who rush to the scene of natural disasters in far away lands because they believe that to save one life is to save the whole world.' No mention was made of the 1,400 people killed during the Israeli assault on Gaza.

Against a backdrop of creative blends of US and Israeli flags and icons, the three-day conference in Washington DC included plenary speeches by former Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Tzipi Livni and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, whom, according to journalist MJ Rosenberg, delegates were warned in advance not to boo or hiss. Workshops varied from self-serving questions such as 'Are Settlements An Obstacle to Peace?' and 'Is Israel Treated Unfairly in the Press?' to 'The Gaza Dilemma' and 'Inside Iran.'

Large numbers of young people attended the conference. With more than 900 university students from 370 campuses as well as 397 high school students, many benefiting from scholarships, students made up nearly 17% of the total number of participants.

Standing outside the conference it was clear that AIPAC is reaching out well beyond the Jewish community for support.

The constant flow of buses, with taxpayer-funded police escort, dropped off conference attendees including many African-American delegations. In fact, workshop sessions centered on the emerging alliance with the African American community and how this alliance can be 'ignited around the pro-Israel cause.'

The conference also included fear-mongering workshops in Spanish, presumably as an attempt to reach the Latino community, on Iran's influence in Latin America via its strong ties with Venezuela, Cuba and Brazil, and concerns that this might lead to terrorism, Islamic extremism and anti-American sentiments.

Additional workshops focused on capitalizing on pro-Israel support from the Christian evangelical community as well as a 'new era of military and intelligence cooperation' with India.

However, the scope of most of the work-

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## ISRAEL'S STORY

**“The Israeli government has announced plans to replace its aging fleet of F-16 fighter jets with new, American-made F-35 fighters, a major cost that Israel hopes will be substantially borne by American taxpayers”**

shops was to prepare participants for the lobbying day on Capitol Hill, with the three main requests for Congress. First and foremost, AIPAC was calling for ‘crippling sanctions on Iran.’ Noting that it was unlikely for the UN Security Council to pass such a resolution, AIPAC called on the United States ‘to lead the international community,’ a euphemism for unilateral action.

The second request dealt with the current tensions between the US and Israel following the continued announcements of new illegal settlements in East Jerusalem. An AIPAC-drafted letter initiated by House majority and minority leaders Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and Eric Cantor (R-VA) called on Secretary Clinton to ‘reaffirm our commitment to the unbreakable bond that exists between our country and the State of Israel’ and to solve any disputes ‘quietly, in trust and confidence, as befits longstanding strategic allies.’ Over 50% of the US House of Representatives have signed onto the letter. A similar letter is circulating in the Senate.

### **New fighters**

Last but certainly not least, AIPAC urged support for continuing US military aid for Israel, which AIPAC refers to as ‘security assistance,’ by approving President Obama’s request for \$3 billion for fiscal year 2011 as part of the 10-year \$30 billion package. *Time* magazine was unusually candid in its coverage of this request, reporting ‘the Israeli government has announced plans to replace its aging fleet of F-16 fighter jets with new, American-made F-35 fighters, a major cost that Israel hopes will be substantially borne by American taxpayers.’

That’s the same F-35 that Secretary of Defense Gates was referring to in his testimony before Congress on March 25 when he spoke of “unacceptable delays and cost overruns.” The price tag for the Pentagon’s most expensive weapons program has nearly doubled since 2001, recently leading Secretary Gates to replace the program manager and withhold more than \$600 million from the lead contractor, Lockheed Martin. It’s no

wonder Israel would prefer US taxpayers foot the bill!

Inside the Washington Convention Center, AIPAC was simultaneously calling for the US public to be kept in the dark regarding any disputes with Israel while asking taxpayers to fund 20% of Israel’s defense budget. Outside it was a different story. Activists from CodePink, Veterans for Peace, Military Families Speak Out, Avaaz, Jewish Voice for Peace and the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation kept up a presence during the conference with signs and banners calling for respect for international law and human rights, an end to the siege of Gaza, Israeli apartheid and US taxpayer funding of war crimes.

Using street theatre, we set up a checkpoint to greet the participants, and I, in the role of a Palestinian woman, tried in vain to get through. I pleaded with the sometimes startled conference-goers to help me get to a hospital, but Tighe Barry, playing an IDF soldier at the checkpoint, pushed me away telling the AIPAC supporters, “You can pass. This is a Jewish only road.”

During our presence outside the conference, I got an earful of everything from thoughtful debate to the most vulgar of insults to outright ignorance on the issues: “There is already a settlement freeze!” “Gaza isn’t under siege, Israel is!” “AIPAC has nothing to do with policy!” This last remark was made while standing under the enormous sign reading ‘AIPAC Policy Conference.’

We were outnumbered roughly 100 to 1, yet the very sight of us sent some people over the edge. A few people even resorted to violence, shoving and hitting the activists. During a press conference held outside the Convention Center, we were constantly interrupted, with people shouting and walking in front of the cameras. Josh Ruebner of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation rightly judged this as a classic example of the AIPAC crowd trying to completely control the debate so that no other voices can be heard.

But there was at least some debate going on inside the conference. Hadar Susskind of the new self-proclaimed pro-Peace pro-Israel lobby J Street was being interviewed by the BBC when Alan Dershowitz, one of the conference's principal speakers, approached and the two got into a heated debate. As the press gathered around, Dershowitz asked "How can you not agree that Goldstone is a despicable human being?" referring to the well-respect South African judge who led the UN fact-finding mission investigating the Israeli assault on Gaza. AIPAC security quickly moved in to usher the argument outside the building. A French documentary crew had their credentials revoked after refusing to leave.

The second day of protests outside the conference made use of satire to try to get the message through. CodePink issued a fake press release announcing AIPAC's support for a settlement freeze in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The phony release was picked up by several news outlets prompting AIPAC to issue a statement refuting the claim, and thereby confirming that they are not in line with US policy on the issue or the majority of US citizens. Some conference participants were then questioning why AIPAC was not supporting a settlement freeze.

Later that morning, 'Netanyahu and the Settlements' arrived at the conference. Activists with the global online advocacy group Avaaz.org showed up wearing cardboard boxes shaped like settlement housing along with someone in a Netanyahu mask wearing a Caterpillar hard-hat chanting, "Build settlements, not peace." Later that afternoon, nicely dressed activists escorted the conference participants: "Right this way to the Apartheid Conference."

The main attraction of the three-day event was, of course, the gala dinner where Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke. Rae Abileah of CodePink, who had purchased a ticket to the conference but then received a certified letter saying that her registration had been cancelled, was nonetheless inside

the dinner waiting for her moment. After the traditional Roll Call, the interminable reading of the names of the Congress members present – some 59 senators and 269 members of the House of Representatives – Netanyahu finally took the stage.

"When the prime minister announced Israel's commitment to defense, I could no longer remain silent," so Rae jumped up on AIPAC Executive Director Howard Kohr's private table right next to the stage and opened a banner reading 'Build Peace Not Settlements' while shouting, "Lift the siege of Gaza! No illegal settlements!"

Shortly after Rae was forcibly removed from the dinner, Joan Stallard, also of CodePink, unfurled a banner and shouted, "Stop the settlements!" Joan, who was seated a little to close to security, was quickly thrown to the floor and promptly removed from the dinner.

#### **Beating the crowd**

Following Tony Blair's speech the morning of the third day of the conference, the AIPAC lobbyists made their way to Capitol Hill, where a reported 500 meetings with Congress had been set up. We arrived early to beat the crowd and delivered thank you letters to the 36 members of the House who had voted NO on the resolution condemning the Goldstone Report.

'Netanyahu and the Settlements' had arrived by the time we finished and were there to greet the AIPAC lobbyists as they lined up to enter the Rayburn building. Holding a gigantic cheque made out for 'Endless Illegal Settlements' signed by Barack Obama, we called out on the megaphone, "Bank of Israel, otherwise known as the United States Congress. Nothing is too much for Israel." There were a number of groups of young people on the Hill the same day lobbying for education and jobs programs. As we passed, I told them, "Sorry, no money left for your school or jobs. Congress wants to give it to Israel."

We then walked over to the Senate side of the Hill. Two senators, Republican Lindsey

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## ISRAEL'S STORY

**Just one day before the AIPAC conference began, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon stated during a tour of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, "Let us be clear. All settlement activity is illegal anywhere in occupied territory and must be stopped"**

Graham of South Carolina and Democrat Charles Schumer of New York, had spoken the previous day at the AIPAC conference. Senator Graham quickly dismissed the pesky problem of East Jerusalem: "Jerusalem is not a settlement. No government in Israel will ever look at Jerusalem as a settlement! No government in the United States should ever look at Jerusalem as a settlement! It is the undivided capital of the State of Israel. It is the eternal home of the Jewish faith. And it is now time to move onto other issues."

We paid visits to the offices of both Senators Graham and Schumer, as well as those of Senators Lieberman and Kyl. Donning tunics that said 'Settler' and waving a flag that read 'Mine,' we moved in, occupied the office, set up a road block and began moving the furniture around to our pleasing. Again playing the part of a Palestinian woman, I pleaded with the staff, who were, not surprisingly, alarmed at what was happening, for their help in removing the settlers from my family's land. In three out of four cases we managed to secure a meeting with a member of the staff; at Sen. Graham's office Capitol Police arrived and promptly removed us!

This year's AIPAC conference couldn't have been scheduled during a more interesting period, with unusually high tensions between the US and Israel. Holding signs saying 'Israel Endangers Peace' during the Senate Armed Forces Committee hearing on March 16, we heard General Petraeus state

clearly that "the [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict foments anti-American sentiment due to a perception of US favoritism toward Israel." On CNN recently, there has been unprecedented talk of an Apartheid state in Israel and calls for cutting off US military aid. And just one day before the AIPAC conference began, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon stated during a tour of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, "Let us be clear. All settlement activity is illegal anywhere in occupied territory and must be stopped."

As much as AIPAC appears to be living in a bubble, it also seems unlikely that the US government, or the international community for that matter, will take a courageous stance and do what many Israelis have been asking, save Israel from itself. That's why so many activists are now taking it upon themselves to lead the way by supporting the Palestinian call for boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. Right outside the AIPAC conference the newly formed BDS group of the greater Washington area called on local residents not to buy Israeli products as a way to make a meaningful contribution to ending the Israeli occupation.

Invest in peace. Boycott Israel! **CT**

*Stephanie Westbrook is a US citizen who has been living in Rome, Italy since 1991. She is active in the peace and social justice movements in Italy and traveled to Gaza in June 2009. She can be reached at [steph@webfabbrica.com](mailto:steph@webfabbrica.com)*

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# A nation is pacified

**Kathy Kelly** wonders why the US public seems so unconcerned about the killings of innocent civilians by its military forces

If the US public looked long and hard into a mirror reflecting the civilian atrocities that have occurred in Afghanistan, over the past ten months, we would see ourselves as people who have collaborated with and paid for war crimes committed against innocent civilians who meant us no harm.

Two reporters, Jerome Starkey (the *Times* UK), and David Lindorff, (*Counterpunch*), have persistently drawn attention to US war crimes committed in Afghanistan. Makers of the film “Rethinking Afghanistan” have steadily provided updates about the suffering endured by Afghan civilians. Here is a short list of atrocities that have occurred in the months since General McChrystal assumed his post in Afghanistan.

**December 26th, 2009:** US-led forces, (whether soldiers or “security contractors” (mercenaries) is still uncertain), raided a home in Kunar Province and pulled eight young men out of their beds, handcuffed them, and gunned them down execution-style. The Pentagon initially reported that the victims had been running a bomb factory, although distraught villagers were willing to swear that the victims, youngsters, aged 11 – 18, were just seven normal schoolboys and one shepherd boy. Following courageous reporting by Jerome Starkey, the US military

carried out its own investigation and on February 24th, 2010, issued an apology, attesting the boys’ innocence.

**February 12, 2010:** US and Afghan forces raided a home during a party and killed five people, including a local district attorney, a local police commander two pregnant mothers and a teenaged girl engaged to be married. Neither Commander Dawood, shot in the doorway of his home while pleading for calm waving his badge, nor the teenaged Gulalai, died immediately, but the gunmen refused to allow relatives to take them to the hospital. Instead, they forced them to wait for hours barefoot in the winter cold outside.

Despite crowds of witnesses on the scene, the NATO report insisted that the two pregnant women at the party had been found bound and gagged, murdered by the male victims in an honor killing. A March 16, 2010 U.N. report, following on further reporting by Starkey, exposed the deception, to meager American press attention.

**Two weeks later: February 21st, 2010:** A three-car convoy of Afghans was traveling to the market in Kandahar with plans to proceed from there to a hospital in Kabul where some of the party could be taken for much-needed medical treatment. US forces saw Afghans travelling together and launched an air-to-ground attack on the first car. Women

**The Pentagon initially reported that the victims had been running a bomb factory, although distraught villagers were willing to swear that the victims, youngsters, aged 11 – 18, were just seven normal schoolboys and one shepherd boy**



## WAR CRIMES

**How odd to have grown up wondering how anyone could ever have been an uninvolved bystander allowing Nazi atrocities to develop and to find myself, four decades later, puzzling over how German people or any country's citizenship could exercise so much control over their governance**

in the second car immediately jumped out waving their scarves, trying desperately to communicate that they were civilians. The US helicopter gunships continued firing on the now unshielded women. 21 people were killed and 13 were wounded.

There was press attention for this atrocity, and US General Stanley McChrystal would issue a videotaped apology for his soldiers' tragic mistake. Broad consensus among the press accepted this as a gracious gesture, with no consequences for the helicopter crew ever demanded or announced.

Whether having that gunship in the country was a mistake – or a crime – was never raised as a question. And who would want it raised? Set amidst the horrors of an ongoing eight-year war, how many Americans think twice about these atrocities, hearing them on the news. So I'm baffled to learn that in Germany, a western, relatively comfortable country, citizens raised a sustained protest when their leaders misled them regarding an atrocity that cost many dozens of civilian lives in Afghanistan.

The air strike was conducted by US planes but called in by German forces. On September 4, 2009, Taliban fighters in Kunduz province had hijacked two trucks filled with petrol, but then gotten stuck in a quagmire where the trucks had sank. Locals, realizing that the trucks carried valuable fuel, had arrived in large numbers to siphon it off, but when a German officer at the nearest NATO station learned that over 100 people had assembled in an area under his supervision, he decided they must be insurgents and a threat to Germans under his command. At his call, a US fighter jet bombed the tankers, incinerating 142 people, dozens of them confirmable as civilians.

On September 6, 2009, Germany's Defense Minister at the time, Franz Josef Jung, held a press conference in which he defended the attack, playing down the presence of civilians. He wasn't aware that video footage from a US F15 fighter jet showed that most of the people present were unarmed civilians gathering to fill containers with fuel.

On November 27, 2009, after a steady outcry on the part of the German public, the Defense Minister was withdrawn from his post, (he is now a labor minister), and two German military officials, one of them Germany's top military commander Wolfgang Schneiderhan, were forced to resign.

I felt uneasy and sad when I realized that my first response to this story was a feeling of curiosity as to how the public of another country could manage to raise such a furor over deaths of people in faraway Afghanistan. How odd to have grown up wondering how anyone could ever have been an uninvolved bystander allowing Nazi atrocities to develop and to find myself, four decades later, puzzling over how German people or any country's citizenship could exercise so much control over their governance.

Today, in the US, attacks on civilians are frequently discussed in terms of the "war for hearts and minds."

Close to ten months ago, Defense Secretary Robert Gates told reporters at a June 12, 2009 press conference in Brussels that General Stanley McChrystal "would work to minimize Afghan civilian casualties, a source of growing public anger within Afghanistan."

"Every civilian casualty – however caused – is a defeat for us," Gates continued, "and a setback for the Afghan government."

On March 23rd, 2010, McChrystal was interviewed by the *Daily Telegraph*. "Your security comes from the people," he said. "You don't need to be secured away from the people. You need to be secured by the people. So as you win their support, it's in their interests to secure you, ... . This can mean patrolling without armored vehicles or even flak jackets. It means accepting greater short-term risk – and higher casualties – in the hope of winning a "battle of perceptions and perspectives" that will result in longer-term security."

And on March 2nd, 2010, he told Gail McCabe "What we're trying to do now is to increase their confidence in us and their confidence in their government. But you can't do that through smoke and mirrors, you have to

do that through real things you do – because they’ve been through thirty-one years of war now, they’ve seen so much, they’re not going to be beguiled by a message.”

We’re obliged as Americans to ask ourselves whether we will be guided by a message such as McChrystal’s or by evidence. Americans have not been through thirty-one years of war, and we have managed to see very little of the consequences of decades of warmaking in Afghanistan.

According to a March 3, 2010 Save the Children report, “The world is ignoring the daily deaths of more than 850 Afghan children from treatable diseases like diarrhea and pneumonia, focusing on fighting the insurgency rather than providing humanitarian aid.” The report notes that a quarter of all children born in the country die before the age of five, while nearly 60 percent of children are malnourished and suffer physical or mental problems. The UN Human Development Index in 2009 says that Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world, second only to Niger in sub-Saharan Africa.

The proposed US defense budget will cost the US public two billion dollars per day. President Obama’s administration is seeking a 33 billion dollar supplemental to fund wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Most US people are aware of Taliban atrocities, and many may believe the US troops are in Afghanistan to protect Afghan villagers from Taliban human rights abuses. At least the mainstream news media in Germany and the UK will air stories of atrocities. The US people are disadvantaged inasmuch as the media and the Pentagon attempt to pacify us, winning our hearts and minds to bankroll ongoing warfare and troop escalation in Afghanistan. Yet it isn’t very difficult to pacify US people. We’re easily distracted from the war, and when we do note that an atrocity has happened, we seem more likely to respond with a shrug of dismay than with a sustained protest.

At the Winter Soldier hearings, future presidential hopeful John Kerry movingly asked Congress how it could ask a soldier

“To be the last man to die for a mistake,” while contemporary polls showed less prominent Americans far more willing to call the Vietnam war an evil – a crime – a sin – than “a mistake.” The purpose of that war, as of Obama’s favored war in Afghanistan, was to pacify dangerous populations – to make them peaceful, to win the battle of hearts and minds.

Afghan civilian deaths no longer occur at the rate seen in the war’s first few months, in which the civilian toll of our September 11 attacks, pretext for the war then as it is now, was so rapidly exceeded. But every week we hear – if we are listening very carefully to the news, if we are still reading that final paragraph on page A16 – or if we are following the work of brave souls like Jerome Starkey – of tragic mistakes. We are used to tragic mistakes. Attacking a country militarily means planning for countless tragic mistakes.

Some of us still let ourselves believe that the war can do some good in Afghanistan, that our leaders’ motives for escalating the war, however dominated by strategic economic concerns and geopolitical rivalries, still in some small part include the interests of the Afghan people.

There are others who know where this war will lead and know that our leaders know, and have simply become too fatigued, too drained of frightened tears by this long decade of nightmare, to hold those leaders accountable anymore for moral choices.

It’s worthwhile to wonder, how did we become this pacified?

But far more important is our collective effort to approach the mirror, to stay in front of it, unflinching, and see the consequences of our mistaken acquiescence to the tragic mistakes of war, and then work, work hard, to correct our mistakes and nonviolently resist collaboration with war crimes. **CT**

**Kathy Kelly** co-coordinates *Voices for Creative Nonviolence* ([www.vcnv.org](http://www.vcnv.org)) and helps promote the *Peaceable Assembly Campaign*, a *Voices* project to end US funding for war and occupation.

**It isn’t very difficult to pacify US people. We’re easily distracted from the war, and when we do note that an atrocity has happened, we seem more likely to respond with a shrug of dismay than with a sustained protest**

LOOKING BACK

# The tax revolt that ended Thatcher's reign

Photographs by  
John Harris and Howard Davies

**LONDON, March 31, 1990** – When Britain's prime minister Margaret Thatcher introduced a poll tax to cover local authority spending in 1990, she didn't realise that she was sowing the seeds of her own downfall later that year.

The tax replaced a system that taxed people on the estimated value of their house to an occupancy tax. This meant, for example, that the Duke of Westminster, who had previously paid £10,255 in taxes on his estate, was billed £417, the same as his housekeeper and chauffeur.

The heavy-handed implementation of the tax, which resulted in the prosecutions of thousands of people who refused – or couldn't afford – to pay, culminated in a massive 100,000-strong demonstration in and around London's Trafalgar Square where more than 400 rioters were arrested as protesters battled police.

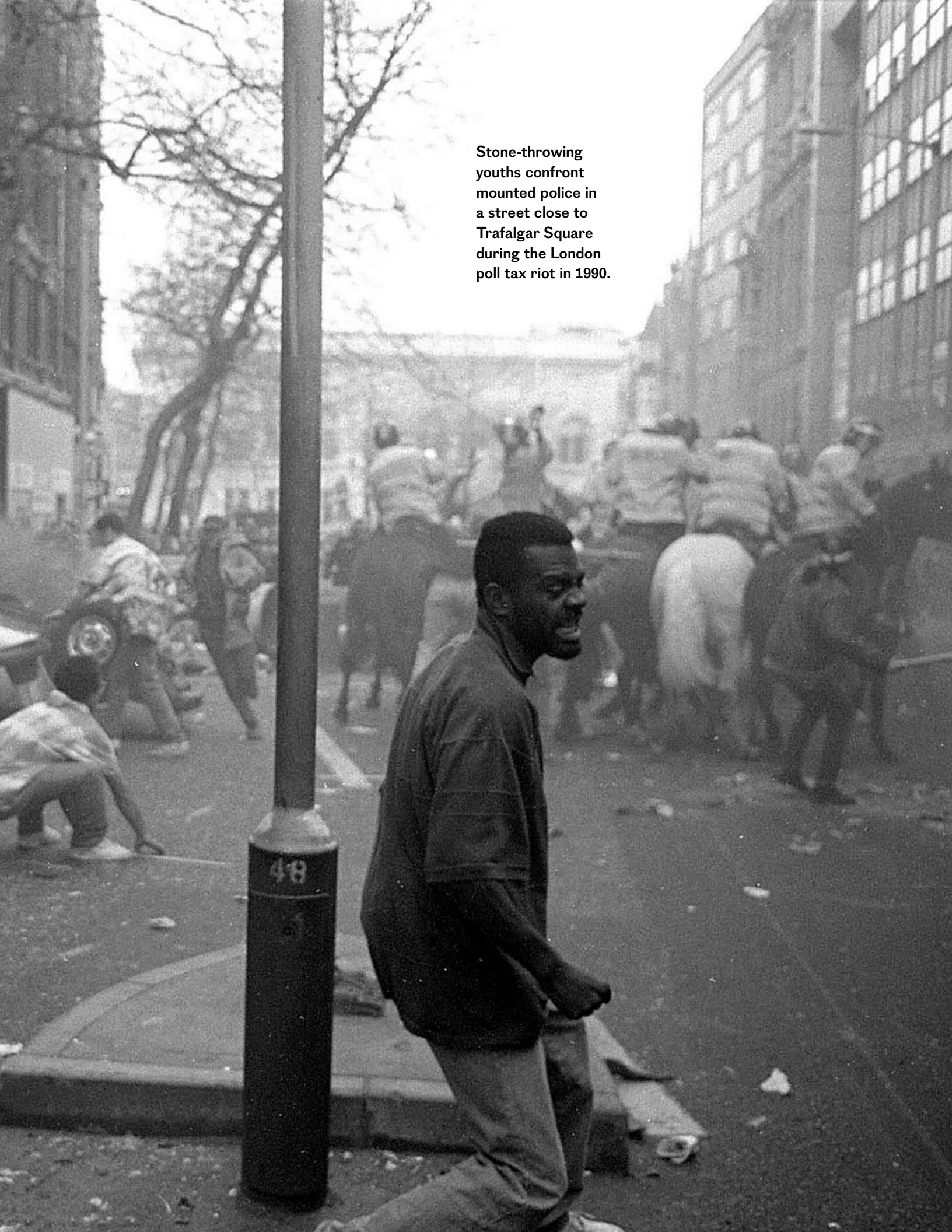
The unpopularity of the tax contributed to Thatcher's resignation in November 1990 after 11 years as prime minister. Her successor, John Major scrapped the poll tax in 1991 and replaced it with one based on the value of a house.

– **Audsley Edwards**

JOHN HARRIS / REPORT DIGITAL.CO.UK



Stone-throwing youths confront mounted police in a street close to Trafalgar Square during the London poll tax riot in 1990.



## LOOKING BACK



HOWARD DAVIES / REPORT DIGITAL.CO.UK

Above: Truncheon poised, a puffing policeman restrains a demonstrator as his colleagues move in to help.

Below: On the attack, – a band of riot police charges demonstrators in Trafalgar Square.

Right: Love conquers all – a building burns in the background as a pair of punks try a different form of demonstration.



JOHN HARRIS / REPORT DIGITAL.CO.UK



HOWARD DAVIES / REPORT DIGITAL.CO.UK

# Down and out on the European Animal Farm

The fall of Greece really is a capitalist plot, writes **Diana Johnstone**

**The markets, like the ancient gods, have a great old time tormenting mere mortals in trouble, so their response to the Greek problem was naturally to rush to profit from it**

**F**or Europe's poorest countries, European Union membership has long held out the promise of tranquil prosperity. The current Greek financial crisis ought to dispel some of their illusions.

There are two strikingly significant levels to the current crisis. While primarily economic, the European Union also claims to be a community, based on solidarity – the sisterhood of nations and brotherhood of peoples. However, the economic deficit is nothing compared to the human deficit it exposes.

To put it simply, the Greek crisis shows what happens when a weak member of this Union is in trouble. It is the same as what happens on the world scale, where there is no such morally pretentious union perpetually congratulating itself on its devotion to human rights. The economically strong protect their own interests at the expense of the economically weak.

The crisis broke last autumn after George Papandreou's PASOK party won elections, took office and discovered that the cupboard was bare. The Greek government had cheated to get into the EU's euro zone in 2001 by cooking the books to cover deficits that would have disqualified it from membership in the common currency. The European Treaties capped the acceptable budget deficit at 3% and public debt at 60% of

GDP respectively. In fact, this limit is being widely transgressed, quite openly by France. But major scandal arrived with revelations that Greece's budget deficit reached 12.7% in 2009, with a gross debt forecast for 2010 amounting to 125% of GDP.

Of course, European leaders got together to declare solidarity. But their speeches were designed not so much to reassure the increasingly angry and desperate Greek people as to soothe “the markets” – the real hidden almighty gods of the European Union. The markets, like the ancient gods, have a great old time tormenting mere mortals in trouble, so their response to the Greek problem was naturally to rush to profit from it. For instance, when Greece is obliged to issue new bonds this year, the markets can blithely demand that Greece double its interest rates, on grounds of increased “risk” that Greece won't pay, thus making it that much harder for Greece to pay. Such is the logic of the free market.

## **Squeeze the people**

What the EU leaders meant by “solidarity” in their appeal to the gods was not that they were going to pour public money into Greece, as they poured it into their troubled banks, but that they intended to squeeze the money owed the banks out of the Greek people.

The squeezing is to take the forms made



familiar over the past disastrous decades by the International Monetary Fund: the Greek State is enjoined to cut public expenses, which means firing public employees, cutting their overall earnings, delaying retirement, economizing on health care, raising taxes, and incidentally probably raising the jobless rate from 9.6% to around 16%, all with the glorious aim of bringing the deficit down to 8.7% this year and thus appeasing the almighty invisible gods of the market.

This just might propitiate both the gods and German leaders, who above all want to maintain the value of the euro. The financial markets will no doubt grab their pound of flesh in the form of increased interest rates, while the Greeks are bled by IMF-style “shock treatment.”

And what about that great theater of human rights and universal brotherhood, the European Parliament? Well, in that august forum everyone gets to speak for a carefully clocked 1, 2, or 3 minutes, but when it comes to the most serious matter, the budget, the authoritative voices are all German.

Thus the chairman of the EP’s special committee on the economic and financial crisis, Wolf Klinz, has called for sending a “high representative” of the EU to Greece, an “economies commissar” to make sure the Greeks carry out the austerity measures properly. The Greek crisis can allow the EU to put into practice for the first time its “Treaty instruments” concerning “supervision of budgetary and economic policy.” Interest rates may go up because of “risk,” but there is to be no risk. The pound of flesh will be delivered.

There was no such supervision of the financial fiddling which caused this mess. The EU statistics agency Eurostat recently discovered and revealed that in 2001, Goldman Sachs secretly (“but legally,” protest its executive officers) helped the Greek government meet EU membership criteria by using a complicated “currency swap” that masked the extent of public deficit and national debt.

Who understands how that worked? I

think it is fair to guess that not even Angela Merkel, who is trained as a scientist, understands clearly what went on, much less the incompetent Greek politicians who accepted the Goldman Sachs trickery. It allowed them to create an illusion of success – for a while. Success meant being a “member of the club” of the rich, and it can be argued that this notion of success has actually favored bad government at the national level. Belonging to the EU gave a false sense of security that contributed to the irresponsibility of incompetent political leaders.

#### Debt trap closes

Having euros to buy imported goods (notably from Germany) pleased rich consumers, while the euro priced Greek goods out of their previous markets. Now the debt trap is closing. The traditional way out for Greece would be to leave the euro and return to a devalued drachma, in order to cut imports and favor exports. This way, the burden of necessary sacrifices would not be borne solely by the working class. But the embrace of EU “solidarity” is there to prevent this from happening. German authorities are preparing to lay down the law to the Greeks, after reducing the income of their own working class in order to benefit Germany’s export-oriented economy.

Austerity measures are the opposite of what is needed in a time of looming depression. Rather, Keynesian measures should be used to stimulate employment and strengthen the domestic market. But Germany is firmly attached to the export model, for itself and everyone else (“globalization”). For a country like Greece, which cannot compete successfully within the EU, exports outside the EU are crippled by its use of a strong currency, the euro. Bound to the euro, Greece can neither stimulate its domestic market nor export successfully. But it is not going to be allowed to extricate itself from the debt trap and return to its traditional currency, the drachma. Poverty appears to be the only solution.

There is discontent within the German

**The traditional way out for Greece would be to leave the euro and return to a devalued drachma, in order to cut imports and favor exports. This way, the burden of necessary sacrifices would not be borne solely by the working class**

## TROUBLED TIMES

Northern European media portray Greece practically as a Third World country, peripheral and picturesque, where people speak an impossible language, dance in circles on islands, and live beyond their means in their carefree way

working class at their country's policies aimed at shrinking wages and social benefits for the sake of selling abroad. In an ideal "social Europe", workers in Germany would come to the aid of workers in Greece by demanding a radical revision of economic policy, away from catering to the international financial markets toward building a solid social democracy. The reality is quite different.

The Greek financial crisis exposes the absence of any real community spirit in the EU. The "solidarity" declared by the country's EU partners is a solidarity with their own investments. There is no popular solidarity between peoples. The EU has established a surrogate ideology of internationalism: rejection of the nation-state as source of all evil, a pompous pride in "Europe" as the center of human rights, giver of moral lessons to the world, which happens to fit in perfectly with its subservience to United States imperial foreign policy in the Middle East and beyond.

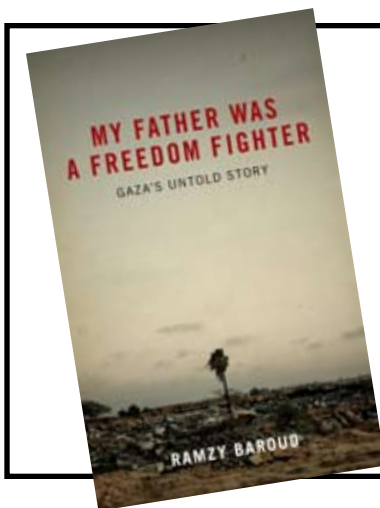
The paradox is that European unification has coincided with decreasing curiosity in the larger EU states about what happens to their neighbors. Despite a certain amount of specialized training needed to create a Eurocrat class, the general population of each EU member is only superficially acquainted with the others. They see them as teams in soccer matches. They go on holiday around the Mediterranean, but this mostly involves meeting fellow tourists, and study of foreign

languages has declined, except for English (omnipresent, if mangled). Mass media news reports are turned inward, featuring missing children and pedophiles ahead of even major political events in other EU member states.

Northern European media portray Greece practically as a Third World country, peripheral and picturesque, where people speak an impossible language, dance in circles on islands, and live beyond their means in their carefree way. The crickets in the Aesop fable, scorned by the assiduous ants. Media in Germany and the Netherlands imply that IMF-style shock treatment is almost too good for them. The widening polarization between rich and poor, between and within EU member states, is taken for granted.

The smaller indebted countries within the EU are amiably designated by the English-speaking financial priesthood as the PIGS – Portugal, Italy (perhaps Ireland), Greece, Spain – an appropriate designation for an animal farm where some are so much more equal than others. **CT**

*Diana Johnstone is a widely-published essayist and columnist who has written extensively on European and international politics. She is the author of **The Politics of Euromissiles: Europe's Role in America's World** (Verso, 1985) and **Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO, and Western Delusions** (Monthly Review Press, 2003). She can be reached at [diana.josto@yahoo.fr](mailto:diana.josto@yahoo.fr)*



### **MY FATHER WAS A FREEDOM FIGHTER** **GAZA'S UNTOLD STORY**

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# It's enough to make you die laughing

**Michael I. Niman** is scratching his head in amazement over the latest deranged tactics of those wacky republicans

**A**ctivists took to the streets a generation ago to protest nuclear power, unpopular immoral wars, sexism, homophobia, police violence, racism, sweatshops, environmental destruction, human rights violations, union-busting, and anti-labor trade pacts, to name a few causes. Protests such as the 1982 New York City march against Ronald Reagan's nuclear weapons policies drew historically unprecedented crowds with, for example, police estimating 750,000 participants and organizers estimating over one million at that demonstration. Despite the size of these protests, corporate media organizations did their best to minimize, trivialize or outright ignore these events.

Today we're seeing a new wave of angst, only this time it has produced relatively small numbers of rather inarticulate protesters, buoyed by an intellectually vapid mass media that celebrates their semi-lucid intellectual flatulence at every opportunity. It's the last hurrah of angry white Republican guys, rising to protest the conspiracy to guarantee their right to receive healthcare and perhaps avoid being pauperized by the experience.

Or at least, according to recent polls, they aren't going to accept healthcare reform from a racist, white-hating, fag-loving, anti-American, terrorist-sympathizing, socialist-capitalist, Hitleresque Anti-Christ, foreign-born president.

The 15-year-old boys weaned on Beavis and Butthead are now 30-year-old Republicans phoning death threats in to congressional offices and gathering in small numbers to scream incoherent phrases to Fox News crews whose wonks deify them as "patriots."

This is one of those weird junctures in history when we have to stop, take a deep breath, and gather some data – if not to figure out what has happened, at least to chronicle the moment for future comedians.

## Republican beliefs by the numbers

Perhaps some recent polling data can shed light on the zeitgeist of this new Know-Nothing Movement. A March 2010 Harris poll surveying a "representative sample" of slightly more than 2,000 voters found that 24 percent of Republican voters think President Obama "may be the Anti-Christ." Of course, it's telling that such questions make their way into a political poll in the first place, but to put it into context, a Gallup poll found that 18 percent of Americans believe that the sun revolves around the earth, so hey, I guess if enough people suspect a political candidate has cloven hooves, that can turn an election. For the sake of understanding, let's indulge the Republican political debate, if for no other reason than to understand how nutjobs like Pennsylvania's Rick Santorum get elected to the US Senate. "M-i-s-t-e-r," that's six letters; "B-a-r-a-c-k,"

**Today we're seeing a new wave of angst, only this time it has produced relatively small numbers of rather inarticulate protesters, buoyed by an intellectually vapid mass media that celebrates their semi-lucid intellectual flatulence at every opportunity**

## THE ANGRY BRIGADE

**One fifth think Obamas not a socialist, an observation that's perhaps informed by his right-leaning determination to preserve the private banking and health insurance industries and a tax system that favors the rich**

another six; "H. O-b-a-m-a," another six. That's it, smoking gun, 666, the beast. I get it now.

According to the same Harris poll, 47 percent of Republicans believe that President Obama "resents America's heritage," 41 percent say he's anti-American, 42 percent think he's a racist who hates white people, 22 percent say "he wants the terrorists to win," whatever that means, and 38 percent say "he is doing many of the things that Hitler did." (Like eating and sleeping, perhaps?)

Two thirds of Republicans polled believe Obama is a "socialist," while 40 percent, seemingly unclear on the concept of socialism, think he's under the control of "Wall Street and the bankers," who presumably must also be socialists, albeit in denial.

Most Republicans, according to the poll, think the president is a sort of one-man sleeper cell who "wants to turn over sovereignty of the United States to a one world government," which makes sense to them since 45 percent of them think the Hawaiian-born president was, like the Panamanian-born John McCain, not born in the United States – a premise with which many native Hawaiian rights activists would agree. And 57 percent of them think he's a Muslim. You'd think all his church-going and his lack of any affiliation with a mosque might have clued them in otherwise.

Forty-five percent of Republicans polled think Obama "is a domestic enemy that the US Constitution speaks of."

Another recent poll, conducted by Research 2000, and using a similar sample size and methodology, came to relatively similar findings on similar questions. One fifth think he's not a socialist, an observation that's perhaps informed by his right-leaning determination to preserve the private banking and health insurance industries and a tax system that favors the rich. But the survey found that two-thirds of Republicans thinking the president who rode into office on a wave of corporate campaign contributions is a socialist, while 16 percent struggled with the question. Fifty-eight percent of Republicans

in this poll either think Obama is a foreigner (36 percent) or are not sure where he was born (22 percent).

A Research 2000 poll breaks into other areas of Republican thought, showing that 33 percent of Southern Republicans would themselves like to be foreigners: They think their states should secede from the US. The nationwide number of Republicans no longer wanting to be American is just under one quarter. A majority of Republicans polled believe that reality show host, half-term Alaska governor, and former Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin "is more qualified to be President than Barack Obama." One third weren't sure about that, while 14 percent thought that perhaps the president was smarter or more experienced in worldly matters.

### **Republican intellectuals**

This recent data is contextualized by a University of Maryland poll conducted in 2003 that found that people who got their news from commercial networks were more likely to believe that the secular Iraqi government was aligned with its fundamentalist al-Qaeda enemies, and hence presumably linked to the 9/11 attacks; that US troops actually found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq; and that world opinion supported the US invasion of Iraq. Fox News viewers, the poll showed, were the most confused and misguided, with their misconceptions informing their political opinions and actions.

Fast-forward to the present. Radio host Rush Limbaugh reacted to the Harris poll last week by bemoaning that only 67 percent of Republicans believe Obama to be a socialist. His argument: "I mean, the facts are the facts. The president is a socialist." If that empiricism hasn't put your skepticism to rest, try Fox News host Glenn Beck's argument on for size. Obama, he argued earlier this month, "has surrounded himself with Marxists his whole life." Of course, with Marxist economic scholars producing some of the most prescient economic predictions, perhaps a capitalist like Obama would stand to

benefit from immersion in an intellectual environment that included such thinkers. Alas, Beck made it all up. There's no evidence of any such associations in the president's past – just a lot of hobnobbing with the usual crowd of neo-liberal conservative capitalists.

Beck's Fox News colleague, Sean Hannity, argued in late march that Obama's decision to fight against the popular demand for a Canadian-style single payer healthcare plan, and instead further entrench a for-profit private health insurance industry in his healthcare proposal, was "the single biggest power grab and move toward socialism in the history of the country." I guess Hannity is unaware of Roosevelt's "New Deal," the expansion of the military, the creation of Social Security and Medicare, and the creation of public education and the interstate highway system. Sadly, Stephen Hayes of the *Wall Street Journal* quickly chimed in to agree with Hannity. I say "sadly" because until its recent acquisition by Fox News' owner, Republican activist Rupert Murdoch, the *Wall Street Journal* was a reputable conservative news organization.

The racism allegations don't stem from anything Obama wrote, said, did, or supported, but from the Republican noise machine. Limbaugh, for example, proclaimed last July, "They're finally hearing me. He's an angry black guy. I do believe that about the president. I do believe he's angry."

Not to be outdone, Glenn Beck, on the following day, told his Fox audience that Obama harbors "a deep-seated hatred for white people or the white culture," whatever that may mean. "This guy," he went on, "is, I believe, a racist!"

There we have it.

### Republicans in action

In Washington, the Republicans may be the Party of No, trying to gain idiot points by opposing all Democratic and independent attempts to rectify or even address the economic, environmental, and social destruction left in the wake of the Bush presidency. The reality is that the Bush wars and tax cuts for the richest Americans compounded

the structural problems created by the Reagan tax cuts for the rich, ultimately turning the budget surplus left by the Clinton administration into the worst deficit in history. Likewise, decades of apocalyptic consumerism and environmental inaction have left the world with an ecological deficit that is coming due in the form of catastrophic climate change and species extinctions.

Now that the grownups have returned to the White House, it's time to start cleaning up the mess. Like the austerity measures the Clinton administration imposed, mostly on the backs of the poorest Americans, after the fiscal irresponsibility of the Reagan and Bush Senior presidencies, the new fiscal and environmental medicine will be harsh to swallow. If history teaches us anything, it is that Republicans will grandstand against all painful remedies, leaving the Democrats to impose them, then retake power on the "are you any better off" platform. Then they will once again loot the economy and leave the mess for Democrats to fix – again, usually on the backs of poor and working folks.

The Party of No strategy leaves Republicans with clean hands, because their hands never leave their pockets. Hence, the party that has controlled government for most of my life can ride to a new victory on a wave of anti-government feelings while their corporate masters continue to benefit from the social injustices of both Democratic and Republican administrations. The real difference between the parties is that the Democrats more or less try to keep the country afloat and save capitalism from collapse, mostly at the expense of working people who see their quality of life and economic security declining. The bones that Democrats have historically thrown our way, things like the New Deal, Social Security, and now minimalist healthcare reform, keep popular discontent in check, and keep a miniscule social safety net in place in order to hold rampant crime and disease epidemics at bay.

Republicans, on the other hand, just shout and loot between sex scandals.

"Dittoheads" who drink too much of Lim-

**If history teaches us anything, it is that Republicans will grandstand against all painful remedies, leaving the Democrats to impose them, then retake power on the "are you any better off" platform. Then they will once again loot the economy and leave the mess for Democrats to fix – again, usually on the backs of poor and working folks**

## THE ANGRY BRIGADE

Limbaugh rallied his rabid sheep, telling them, “We need to defeat these [Democratic] bastards, we need to wipe them out”

baugh’s Kool-Aid are the storm troopers of this new movement, and presumably the folks who are chanting racist slogans at Tea Party branded events and posting them on rightist blogs – you know, like calls to “lynch” Eric Holder, the nation’s first black Attorney General. At the end of March, Limbaugh rallied his rabid sheep, telling them, “We need to defeat these [Democratic] bastards, we need to wipe them out.”

Later in the week, liberal Democrat Louise Slaughter, who represents parts of Buffalo and Rochester in Congress, got a brick through her office window in Niagara Falls and another through the window of her party’s headquarters in Rochester, while a phone caller left a message that snipers were readying to assassinate the children of Democratic members of Congress like Slaughter, who voted to guarantee them a right to healthcare.

Republican officials, for their part, are crying foul on their followers’ death threats, saying Democrats are playing them up for political gain. You know, threatening to assassinate politicians and their families has gotta be just some harmless dumb fun, like pranking a rival frat or torturing some Iraqi

prisoners. The Republican response to these violent response has been, “Who, us, what did we do? Sure, some of the fellas are getting a bit unruly, but that’s not our fault. What, are we their mothers or something? Don’t look at us.”

But I did look. I went right to their goddess’s Twitter page on March 26, just as the bricks were flying and the phone lines were ablaze with terrorist threats, knowing that if anyone could master a tweet, it would be Sarah Palin. Her wisdom for her followers? “Don’t Retreat, instead Reload! Pls see my Facebook Page.” Reload? I went to her Facebook page. There I found a map of the US with target crosshairs over 20 Democratic congressional districts.

What I didn’t find there or anywhere else in the Republican noise machine was a coherent argument for maintaining the health-care status quo, as Palin’s party did during the eight years they controlled the White House, the Senate, the House of Representatives, and the Supreme Court. **CT**

*Dr. Michael I. Niman is a professor of journalism and media studies at Buffalo State College.*

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# To hell in a handbasket

The kindest thing you can say about America today is that it is not a serious country anymore, says **David Michael Green**

I live in New York. To say that the politics of my state are dysfunctional would be like saying that Adolf Hitler could sometimes be not such a nice fellow. It's all true, of course. It just doesn't do justice to the scope of the crimes committed.

We have a governor (as of this writing, anyhow) who just got blasted by the New York State Commission on Public Integrity for lying under oath in their investigation of him. But that's okay. Before that, he accepted the favor of free tickets to the World Series, which is what he lied about. But that's okay. Before that he was putting pressure on a woman who was the victim of domestic violence to go away and shut up. But that's okay. The person who was beating and choking her was one of his top staffers. But that's okay, before that he and his wife were involved in all sorts of tawdry but unspecified sex and drug related scandalous behavior. But that's okay. He's the governor who came in after the last governor had to resign because he was laundering money in order to visit high-priced hookers. But that's okay. Everybody in Albany is out of control, including one state senator who cut his girlfriend's face open with broken glass, and a former leader of the Senate on trial for wholesale corruption. But that's okay, because none of them actually do anything, anyhow.

Which, considering the sheer scumminess of this lot, could very well be a good thing.

It's certainly a common thing. I grew up in California, which seems determined not to be eclipsed by New York or anybody in the dysfunctionality department. California once had the nation's top school system. But it cost money, so they gutted property tax revenues and made it nearly impossible for the state to ever raise taxes again. Now the schools are making Mississippi's look good. California once had a great Supreme Court, too, which was the envy of other states in the union. But the justices weren't killing enough inmates, so some nice folks engineered a then-unheard of thing and got the public to recall half the bench, replacing them with pro-death penalty (oh, and incidentally, pro-corporate) new judges. California also once had a decent and politically very moderate governor. But then Enron came in and created power black-outs in order to drive up electricity prices on the grid, and so he to was blamed and then recalled too, replaced by a movie actor who played a tough but loving cyborg from the future. Now, in his new role as governor of California, he plays the leader of a nascent third world country, fiscally so chaotic it's about ready to qualify for IMF bailouts.

As for Texas, I don't live there and I didn't grow up there, either. (I did kinda like Ste-

**Albany is out of control, including one state senator who cut his girlfriend's face open with broken glass, and a former leader of the Senate on trial for wholesale corruption**

## HOME OF THE ?

**Lots of the Neanderthal Party's members fulminated in Congress expressing their outrage at the stimulus bill, while simultaneously bragging at home about how many federal dollars from it they were able to funnel into fat local projects**

vie Ray Vaughan, though. I don't know if that counts for anything.) But them folks are about to re-elect a governor who just last year was talking about how so very heavy is the yoke of the federal government that Texas just might have to secede from the union. Er, rather, secede again, I should say. Funny, though. He didn't mention how the states where you find the most tea-partiest type of politics tend to be the ones bringing home the bulk of the federal bacon. As the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* noted in 2005, only five blue states are net recipients of federal subsidies, while only two red states are net payers of federal taxes. Imagine my surprise at the hypocrisy of it all, and at recent revelations that lots of the Neanderthal Party's members fulminated in Congress expressing their outrage at the stimulus bill, while simultaneously bragging at home about how many federal dollars from it they were able to funnel into fat local projects.

And then, of course, nominally presiding over New York, California and Texas is the United States federal government, about as pathetic a sight as one is ever likely to see. Groaning under the weight of enormous problems, almost all of them entirely of its own making, it is completely unable to act in any fashion other than to exacerbate those problems further while denying their existence. It's true that the Founders of this country set out to create a system of government that would almost never be able to do anything, and boy were those fellas good. Just in case, though, the current lot of kleptocrats in the Republican Party have done them one better, grinding a system that's already ground to a halt all the way into reverse. Except when they have the keys to the government, of course. At which point they employ the legislative equivalent of bunker buster bombs to kick out the jams and rape the country with impunity.

Meanwhile, there's another party in Washington, too. You may have heard of them. Heck, they even control the government, though you'd never know it. They're pretty much committed to not doing any-

thing, ever. And, if by some inadvertent mistake they actually do take action of some sort, they're equally devoted to doing it ineptly, ineffectively, and on the terms of their adversaries.

Well, really, nominal adversaries would be a more accurate way to put it, since the party that once actually used to do something for the public interest every once in a while has now joined the other party in full-on devotion to the feeding and care of oligarchs, 24/7. The only difference is the masks they wear. If you're merely a sick puppy, you put on the disguise of ineptitude and frustration as you do the bidding of your corporate masters. If you are, on the other hand, absolutely sociopathic, you work for the same folks, but you sell it to the numb-nuts you affectionately refer to as your constituents in the form of protection from fur'ners and fags, instead. Oh, and a bit of wholesale violence with the invasion of some third world country every other year or so.

### **Quality of leadership**

A very good measure of the health of a given polity – especially in a democracy – is given by the quality of leadership running the joint. That measure is incredibly telling in the case of the United States, and what it is telling us is grim indeed. Consider the last three presidents against the comparative backdrop of one of our greats, and his response to the country's most serious existential crisis ever, excepting the Civil War. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and the Germans soon thereafter declared war on the US as well, Franklin Roosevelt led the country into a massive national response and a four-year-plus effort combining full-on public support, massive military, industrial and societal mobilization, masterful diplomacy and stellar strategic vision in order to defeat the genuine threat of global fascism.

If Bill Clinton had been president, on the other hand, he would have responded by trying to cop a feel off the Japanese am-



bassador's daughter. If George W. Bush had been president, he would invaded Mexico, bungled the war for seven years, then invaded Botswana, and sapped the military's strength by simultaneously bungling that irrelevant war for six years, all while the Japanese and Germans rampaged freely, coming closer to American shores every day. And if Barack Obama had been president, he would have studied the matter for a year, offered to bargain away half of Europe and Asia in a deal with the Axis Powers, and then, when they spit in his face for the thirty-seventh time, deployed a half-dozen or so unarmed marines in a rubber dinghy as America's military response to the attack.

Our so-called leaders are bad enough, but it gets almost worse at the level of the American public, who of course also bear the burden of choosing these abysmal presidents, on top of their own crimes. These latter include utter negligence in maintaining the gift of American democracy, complete laziness in the most basic of civic duties, mass corruption of social, political and personal values, and a reliance upon every form of cheap magic or distraction to avoid basic personal and civic responsibilities.

And, always, it's about having everything. At once. For nothing. The same idiots who have been seduced by cigarette-money-sized tax cuts for themselves, used to justify a massive slashing of the burden once carried by the rich, are now bitching as government services implode. The *New York Times* is reporting that citizens of Arizona – one of the most regressive states in the union – are now unhappy because their highway rest stops have been eliminated due to the state's fiscal crisis. I just want to grab these people and shake them by the shoulders, politely suggesting to them that next time they have to pull over in the desert sands between Tucson and Phoenix and squat by the side of the road, they might want to give a thought or two to all the money they pissed away in another desert, this one in Mesopotamia. Likewise, people are now also starting to whine about schools clos-

ing and prisoners being released from jail, also because of budget slashing. And I just want to ask those bright folks whether they still think all those tax cuts for the already outrageously wealthy plutocracy were such a good idea in retrospect, after all

#### **Imploding government**

This is just the tip of the spear. American government is in the process of imploding, and it won't be long until the pathetically minuscule social safety net that we have will be shredded as well. Stupid voters who turn to the Republican Party in the next two election cycles will be outraged at the GOP if it does what it says it will do and slashes social spending. And, of course, they will be equally outraged if the Republicans don't. It just doesn't seem to occur to these folks that you have to pay for government services. And why should it, really? The GOP have been selling the magic of free government since Ronald Reagan brought voodoo economics to the national stage in 1980, nearly quadrupling the national debt in the process.

And when the financial voodoo remedies somehow amazingly fail to entice the gods sufficiently to redeem the disaster that is American fiscal policy, desperate political invocations and supplications to the deities du jour are sure to follow. In fact, they began long ago. Term limits? Swell! No tax increase pledges? Cool! Tea parties? What a great idea! Ross Perot and his binders full of government plans gathering dusts on the shelves of bureaucracies all across Washington? Brilliant! Deregulation? Of course! Let the market fix everything! Privatization? Why have a government when you can buy a lousier one for a lot more money, so that profits can be extracted? Hey, and while we're at it, why not pretend to fund our schools as the pretext for government-sponsored gambling through lotteries? Excellent! That's a threefer! Bad schools, government-induced addiction, and a rip-off of the public's money.

The American public is in oscillating

**The same idiots who have been seduced by cigarette-money-sized tax cuts for themselves, used to justify a massive slashing of the burden once carried by the rich, are now bitching as government services implode**

## HOME OF THE ?

**We've worked pretty hard these last decades to destroy the American middle class and to hammer the working class and poor, all because the folks who were really rich decided about thirty years ago that they instead deserved to be fantastically rich**

parachute mode right now, and my guess is that it's going to get worse. Like a desperate patient with a potentially terminal illness, we careen from one panacea to the next, hoping that the laws of political physics can somehow be suspended if we just wish it earnestly enough. In observing this pathetic sight, I am reminded of nothing so much as a cranky adolescent who expends ten times the energy and grief to avoid doing his math assignment as it would take to just sit down for twenty minutes and crank it out.

That's the funny thing about the American political malaise. Some of the changes most necessary for our rescue would not only be easy, they'd be way cheaper than free. This country could solve ninety percent of its problems by the simple act of getting money out of politics and thereby (re)turning the American government into being an instrument for the benefit of the public, rather than a servant for aggregating wealth on behalf of a predatory plutocracy. Among the immediate benefits such a change might be expected to realize would be precipitous drops in military spending and corporate welfare, along with a serious rise in revenues from a tax system that required the rich to actually pay their share. In other words, for no cost to the individual American other than getting up off their couches and actually demanding government for the people rather than for the people's vampires, the public could right the ship of state and probably even get a beloved tax cut out of the deal. But, alas, there is that couch to keep warm ...

### **The wrong thing**

Really, I'm afraid the kindest thing you can say about America today is that it is so not a serious country anymore. Churchill joked that you can always count on America to do the right thing, after it has exhausted all the other possibilities. I'm down with the second half of the equation, but unfortunately growing increasingly dubious about the first.

Let's assume, for the sake of argument,

that there is no substantial economic recovery – measured in jobs, not GDP or the Dow or Wall Street bonuses – in the coming years. I regret to say that I think that's a pretty safe assumption. The abandonment of workers in America that we're seeing today is a the final (we hope) result of a decades-long relentless pursuit of profits in the name of overclass greed über alles. Who cares about American workers if you can do a job cheaper with a machine? Why give a shit about shutting down entire communities if you can export those jobs overseas at a fraction of the cost? Sorry too about those trade treaties that only helped to exacerbate that tendency! Oh, and too bad we don't have any money to dump into community redevelopment or schools or infrastructure. Got to do tax cuts for the rich instead. Got to keep our priorities straight, you know?

In short, we've worked pretty hard these last decades to destroy the American middle class and to hammer the working class and poor, all because the folks who were really rich decided about thirty years ago that they instead deserved to be fantastically rich. And, lo and behold, it's worked! The good years of the mid-twentieth century in America are now going, in the long view of history, from being a foundation to a continuing and improved future to instead becoming an historical anomaly. It was a blip, in between the normal of gross disparities of wealth that came before it and after it. A thirty year party. A generational experiment that went badly awry for the boss class, 'til they returned to clean up the mess.

But it's hard to give it up, especially since nobody told us it was a one-time deal. Ironically, our decline based on class thievery soon became become the perfect condition for its own amplified replication, as the regressive movement in America, starting with Reagan, began marketing an exacerbation of this effect, masked as just its opposite and channeling the fear and rage of economic insecurity into hatred and violence toward brown people, gays, women, etc. Aided and abetted by an 'opposition'

party that went from consternation to crash to concussion to confusion to compliance to co-optation to collaboration and then finally to clones, the process has been really quite remarkable for its diabolical ingeniousness and its near complete success.

Emphasis on the word 'near', though. It's not over yet, and this is where I think we begin to get into some really scary territory, and where Churchill's formula may well break down. This is a country steeped in violence, political stupidity, racism, sexism, homophobia, and beliefs in every kind of magic, including – especially – religion. It feels in my gut, right now, like a very combustible collection of tinder, and I don't imagine the revolution, if it comes, will be a particularly progressive one.

I would expect the Democratic Party to get annihilated in the next two election cycles. Assuming people will even wait that long for serious change, that brings Sarah Palin, or her equivalent, and gang to power three years from now.

Consider their choices as they take control of the government.

If this new regime does nothing, or reverts to the GOP's previous form of spending more, taxing less and borrowing like crazy, they will solve nothing, and will be tossed out (again) like the Democrats before them.

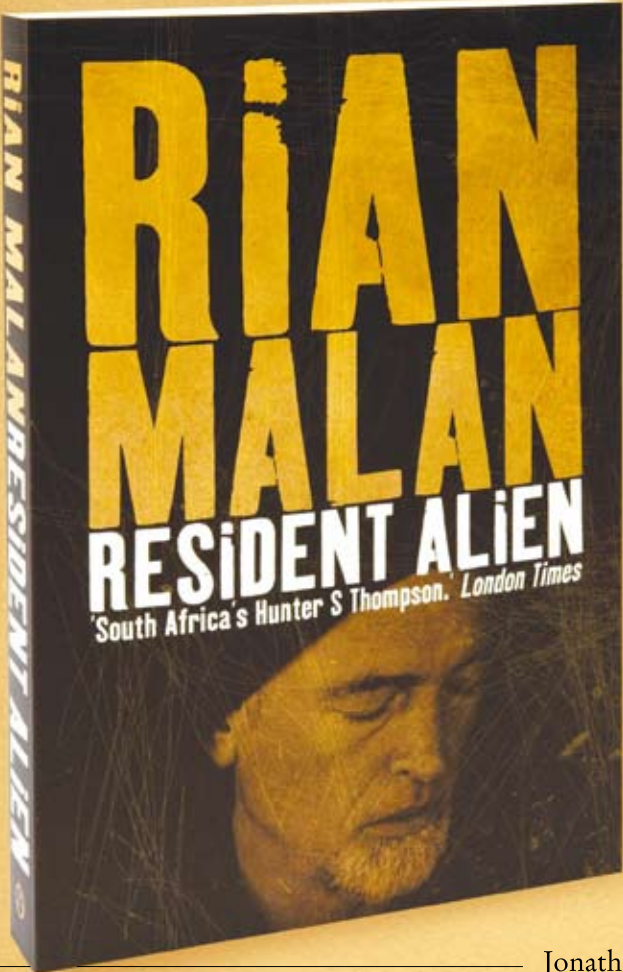
If they govern like they actually say they will, they will slash spending on social programs, angering the public furiously, and completely alienating their only real remaining base, old white people.

Which leaves, to my mind, only a third option, kinda like the one Hitler brought to the Weimar Republic, then suffering from similar tendencies toward economic despair, political oscillation and ineffective governance. That's pretty drastic, but I guess it comes down to the question of just what one thinks these people are capable of.

As for me, I say keep you passport current. **CT**

*David Michael Green is a professor of political science at Hofstra University in New York. More of his work can be found at his website, [www.regressiveantidote.net](http://www.regressiveantidote.net).*

**This is a country steeped in violence, political stupidity, racism, sexism, homophobia, and beliefs in every kind of magic, including – especially – religion**




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# A bomber jacket doesn't cover the blood

**Norman Solomon** questions Obama's convoluted pep talk to his troops in Afghanistan

**The man in the bomber jacket doesn't press the buttons that fire the missiles and drop the warheads, but he gives the orders that make it all possible**

**P**resident Obama has taken a further plunge into the kind of war abyss that consumed predecessors named Johnson, Nixon and Bush.

On Sunday, March 28, during his first presidential trip to Afghanistan, Obama stood before thousands of American troops to proclaim the sanctity of the war effort. He played the role deftly – a commander in chief, rallying the troops – while wearing a bomber jacket.

There was something candidly macabre about the decision to wear that leather jacket, adorned with an American Eagle and the words “Air Force One.” The man in the bomber jacket doesn't press the buttons that fire the missiles and drop the warheads, but he gives the orders that make it all possible.

One way or another, we're used to seeing presidents display such tacit accouterments of carnage. And the president's words were also eerily familiar: with their cadence and confidence in the efficacy of mass violence, when provided by the Pentagon and meted out by a military so technologically supreme that dissociation can masquerade as ultimate erudition – so powerful and so sophisticated that orders stay light years away from human consequences.

The war becomes its own rationale for continuing: to go on because it must go on.

A grisly counterpoint to Obama's brief Af-

ghanistan visit is a day in 1966 when another president, in the midst of escalating another war, also took a long ride on Air Force One to laud and boost the troops.

In South Vietnam, at Cam Ranh Bay, President Johnson told the American soldiers: “Be sure to come home with that coonskin on the wall.” Then, too, thousands of soldiers responded to the president's exhortations by whooping it up. And then, too, the media coverage was upbeat.

In a cover story, *Life* quoted a corporal who called Johnson's visit the “best morale booster Cam Ranh's ever had.”

The magazine piece, written by an eminent journalist of the era, Shana Alexander, went on: “Certainly the corporal was right and so was [White House press secretary Bill] Moyers when he later compared the day to a sermon, in that so much of the real meaning is not in what the preacher says but in what his listeners hear.”

The article concluded that it had been a “wild and quite wonderful day.”

Fast forward 44 years.

“There's going to be setbacks,” President Obama told the troops at Bagram Air Base. “We face a determined enemy. But we also know this: The United States of America does not quit once it starts on something.”

The applause line lingered as the next words directly addressed the clapping troops: “You don't quit, the American armed servic-

es does not quit, we keep at it, we persevere, and together with our partners we will prevail. I am absolutely confident of that.”

The president added: “And we’ll be there for you when you come home. It’s why we’re improving care for our wounded warriors, especially those with PTSD and traumatic brain injuries. We’re moving forward with the post-9/11 GI Bill so you and your families can pursue your dreams.”

Those words provide a kind of freeze frame for basic convolution: The government will help veterans with PTSD and traumatic brain injuries to pursue their dreams.

In the realm of careful abstraction, where actual people are rendered invisible, best not to acknowledge how much better it would be

if those veterans could pursue their dreams without suffering from PTSD and traumatic brain injuries in the first place.

But such human realities are for private suffering, not public discourse.

The next morning, the front page of the *New York Times* reported that the president’s visit to Afghanistan “included a boisterous pep rally with American troops.” **CT**

*Norman Solomon is national co-chair of the Healthcare Not Warfare campaign, launched by Progressive Democrats of America.*

*His books include **War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death**. For more information, go to: [www.normansolomon.com](http://www.normansolomon.com).*

**Best not to acknowledge how much better it would be if those veterans could pursue their dreams without suffering from PTSD and traumatic brain injuries in the first place**



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# Have a nice world war, folks!

**John Pilger** describes the increasing American war front across the world: from Afghanistan to Africa and Latin America, a Third World War in all but name

According to an American general, the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan is not so much a real war as a “war of perception”. Thus, the recent “liberation of the city of Marja” from the Taliban’s “command and control structure” was pure Hollywood

**H**ere is news of the Third World War. The United States has invaded Africa. US troops have entered Somalia, extending their war front from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Yemen and now the Horn of Africa. In preparation for an attack on Iran, American missiles have been placed in four Persian Gulf states, and “bunker-buster” bombs are said to be arriving at the US base on the British island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

In Gaza, the sick and abandoned population, mostly children, is being entombed behind underground American-supplied walls in order to reinforce a criminal siege. In Latin America, the Obama administration has secured seven bases in Colombia, from which to wage a war of attrition against the popular democracies in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Paraguay. Meanwhile, the secretary of “defence” Robert Gates complains that “the general [European] public and the political class” are so opposed to war they are an “impediment” to peace. Remember this is the month of the March Hare.

According to an American general, the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan is not so much a real war as a “war of perception”. Thus, the recent “liberation of the city of Marja” from the Taliban’s “command and control structure” was pure Hollywood. Marja is not a city; there was no Taliban

command and control. The heroic liberators killed the usual civilians, poorest of the poor. Otherwise, it was fake. A war of perception is meant to provide fake news for the folks back home, to make a failed colonial adventure seem worthwhile and patriotic, as if The Hurt Locker were real and parades of flag-wrapped coffins through the Wiltshire town of Wooten Bassett were not a cynical propaganda exercise.

“War is fun”, the helmets in Vietnam used to say with bleakest irony, meaning that if a war is revealed as having no purpose other than to justify voracious power in the cause of lucrative fanaticisms such as the weapons industry, the danger of truth beckons. This danger can be illustrated by the liberal perception of Tony Blair in 1997 as one “who wants to create a world [where] ideology has surrendered entirely to values” (Hugo Young, the *Guardian*) compared with today’s public reckoning of a liar and war criminal.

## **No threat**

Western war-states such as the US and Britain are not threatened by the Taliban or any other introverted tribesmen in faraway places, but by the anti-war instincts of their own citizens. Consider the draconian sentences handed down in London to scores of young people who protested Israel’s assault on Gaza in January last year. Following demon-

strations in which paramilitary police “kettled” (corralled) thousands, first-offenders have received two and a half years in prison for minor offences that would not normally carry custodial sentences. On both sides of the Atlantic, serious dissent exposing illegal war has become a serious crime.

Silence in other high places allows this moral travesty. Across the arts, literature, journalism and the law, liberal elites, having hurried away from the debris of Blair and now Obama, continue to fudge their indifference to the barbarism and aims of western state crimes by promoting retrospectively the evils of their convenient demons, like Saddam Hussein. With Harold Pinter gone, try compiling a list of famous writers, artists and advocates whose principles are not consumed by the “market” or neutered by their celebrity.

Who among them have spoken out about the holocaust in Iraq during almost 20 years of lethal blockade and assault? And all of it has been deliberate. On 22 January 1991, the US Defence Intelligence Agency predicted in impressive detail how a blockade would systematically destroy Iraq’s clean water system and lead to “increased incidences, if not epidemics of disease”.

So the US set about eliminating clean water for the Iraqi population: one of the causes, noted Unicef, of the deaths of half a million Iraqi infants under the age of five. But this extremism apparently has no name.

#### More nuance

Norman Mailer once said he believed the United States, in its endless pursuit of war and domination, had entered a “pre-fascist era”. Mailer seemed tentative, as if trying to warn about something even he could not quite define. “Fascism” is not right, for it

invokes lazy historical precedents, conjuring yet again the iconography of German and Italian repression. On the other hand, American authoritarianism, as the cultural critic Henry Giroux pointed out recently, is “more nuance, less theatrical, more cunning, less concerned with repressive modes of control than with manipulative modes of consent.”

This is Americanism, the only predatory ideology to deny that it is an ideology. The rise of tentacular corporations that are dictatorships in their own right and of a military that is now a state with the state, set behind the façade of the best democracy 35,000 Washington lobbyists can buy, and a popular culture programmed to divert and stultify, is without precedent. More nuanced perhaps, but the results are both unambiguous and familiar.

Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponeck, the senior United Nations officials in Iraq during the American and British-led blockade, are in no doubt they witnessed genocide. They saw no gas chambers. Insidious, undeclared, even presented wittily as enlightenment on the march, the Third World War and its genocide proceeded, human being by human being.

In the coming election campaign in Britain, the candidates will refer to this war only to laud “our boys”. The candidates are almost identical political mummies shrouded in the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes. As Blair demonstrated a mite too eagerly, the British elite loves America because America allows it to barrack and bomb the natives and call itself a “partner”. We should interrupt their fun. **CT**

*John Pilger* recently received the Sydney Peace Prize. His latest book, **Freedom Next Time**, is now available in paperback

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# 28 nations with no shame

**Sherwood Ross** details the countries that have helped the US detain, interrogate and torture suspects in their ‘war’ on terror

**Francis Boyle, professor of international law at the University of Illinois, Champaign, termed the detention policies used by the US “Crimes against Humanity”**

**T**wenty-eight nations have cooperated with the US to detain in their prisons, and sometimes to interrogate and torture, suspects arrested as part of the US “War on Terror.”

The complicit countries have kept suspects in prisons ranging from public interior ministry buildings to “safe house” villas in downtown urban areas to obscure prisons in forests to “black” sites to which the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been denied access.

According to published reports, an estimated 50 prisons have been used to hold detainees in these 28 countries. Additionally, at least 25 more prisons have been operated either by the US or by the government of occupied-Afghanistan in behalf of the US, and 20 more prisons have been similarly operated in Iraq.

As the London-based legal rights group Reprieve estimates the US has used 17 ships as floating prisons since 2001, the total number of prisons operated by the US and/or its allies to house alleged terrorist suspects since 2001 exceeds 100. And this figure may well be far short of the actual number.

Countries that held prisoners in behalf of the US based on published data are Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Libya, Lithuania, Mauritania, Morocco, Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Ara-

bia, Syria, Somalia, South Africa, Thailand, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, Yemen, and Zambia. Some of the above-named countries held suspects in behalf of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); others held suspects in behalf the US military, or both.

Francis Boyle, professor of international law at the University of Illinois, Champaign, termed the detention policies used by the US “Crimes against Humanity”:

“These instances of the enforced disappearances of human beings and their consequent torture, because they are both widespread and systematic, constitute Crimes against Humanity in violation of the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court, which have been ordered by the highest level officials of the United States government ... ”

Referring to President Bush and his principal advisers, Boyle continued, “Since these criminal activities took part in several states that are parties to the ICC Rome Statute, that renders these US government officials subject to prosecution by the International Criminal Court on the grounds of territoriality of the offense, even though the United States is not a party to the Rome Statute.”

According to Human Rights Watch, as of Jan., 2004, the US held detainees from 21 different countries including Algeria, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Israeli-occupied Gaza and West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malay-



sia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and Yemen.

The nations that cooperated with the US to detain these prisoners have done so even though detainees commonly were held – in the words of an Associated Press report of Sept. 18, 2006 – “beyond the reach of established law.” Efforts by this reporter to learn from the Pentagon the total number of prisoners held captive and related information proved futile.

However, in Feb., 2005, Maj. Gen. Donald Ryder, Army Provost Marshal General, said, “In all, roughly 65,000 people have been screened for possible detention, and about 30,000 of those were entered into the system, at least briefly, and assigned internment serial numbers.” Possibly, to date, the US and its allies have detained 100,000 suspects or more.

It is not known whether the customary legal rights of any of these tens of thousands of captives have been honored. But given the absence of due process, trials, and convictions compared to the vast numbers of those detained, the “War on Terror” takes on the appearance of a monumental fraud.

As Jane Mayer wrote in *The Dark Side* (Anchor Books), “Seven years after the attacks of September 11, not a single terror suspect held outside of the US criminal court system has been tried. Of the 759 detainees acknowledged to have been held in Guantanamo, approximately 340 remained there, only a handful of whom had been charged. Among these, not a single ‘enemy combatant’ had yet had the opportunity to cross-examine the government or see the evidence on which he was being held.” Similarly, Nick Turse of *TomDispatch.com* reported US intelligence officials themselves estimated that 70-90% of prisoners detained in Iraq “had been arrested by mistake.”

According to the German weekly *Der Spiegel* in a Dec. 10, 2005, article: “It is likely that nobody will ever know how many terror suspects abducted by the CIA have died in the torture chambers of Egyptian, Alge-

rian, Syrian, or Saudi Arabian prisons.”

It was “because of the gruesome treatment of prisoners that made it expedient to remove suspects as much as possible from the responsibility of American judges. This practice gave birth to the Guantanamo prisoner camp, as well as a whole range of so-called black sites, or secret interrogation areas, where the CIA keeps its most valuable prisoners under continuous observation,” *Der Spiegel* said.

Writing in the *Washington Post* on Nov. 2, 2005, Dana Priest put it this way: “It is illegal for the government to hold prisoners in such isolation in secret prisons in the United States, which is why the CIA placed them overseas, according to several former and current intelligence officials and other US government officials. Legal experts and intelligence officials said that the CIA’s internment practices also would be considered illegal under the laws of several host countries, where detainees have rights to have a lawyer or to mount a defense against allegations of wrongdoing.”

In a concise observation that appears to summarize the US campaign of detention, Patrick Quinn of the Associated Press wrote, “Captured on battlefields, pulled from beds at midnight, grabbed off streets as suspected insurgents, tens of thousands now have passed through American detention, the vast majority in Iraq. Many have said they were often interrogated around the clock, then released months or years later without apology, compensation, or any word on why they were taken.”

Clive Stafford Smith, legal director of British human rights group Reprieve, told the UK *Guardian* June 2, 2008: “By its own admission, the US government is currently detaining at least 26,000 people without trial in secret prisons, and information suggests up to 80,000 have been ‘through the system’ since 2001. The US government must show a commitment to rights and basic humanity by immediately revealing who these people are, where they are, and what has been done to them.” Note: The

**“It is illegal for the government to hold prisoners in such isolation in secret prisons in the United States, which is why the CIA placed them overseas, according to several former and current intelligence officials and other US government officials”**

## THE WAR MACHINE 3

Former detainees allege they were “regularly beaten, subjected to blaring music twenty-four hours a day, prevented from sleeping, stripped naked and forced to assume what interrogators term ‘stress positions’”

UN Commission on Human Rights asserts prolonged incommunicado detention itself can “constitute a form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or even torture.”

A brief look at the prison operations of America’s accomplices follows:

**AFGHANISTAN:** Human Rights First says since Nov., 2001, the US has operated approximately 25 detention facilities in Afghanistan. Secret prisons at Bagram Air Force Base include the “Dark Prison” and “Salt Pit.” It was in Salt Pit in Nov., 2002, that guards stripped an Afghan prisoner naked, chained him to the concrete floor and left him in below-zero temperatures all night. He was dead in the morning, *Der Spiegel* reported.

Other prisons include Rissat and Rissat2, north of Kabul, and Prison Number 3. At Kandahar Air Force Base, US army officers hung prisoners from the ceiling for days. At times, the prison held up to 40 detainees. Other Afghan sites include transient facilities near Asadabad, Gereshk, Jalalabad, Tycze, Gardez, and Khost. A federal Grand Jury in North Carolina indicted CIA contractor David Passaro for allegedly beating detainee Abdul Wali to death at Khost in June, 2003. Officials there also told the family of Sher Mohammed Khan he was killed by snakebite when his body showed marks of abuse.

Another base, according to the Feb. 15, 2010, issue of the *Nation*, is Rish-Khor, an Afghan army facility atop a mountain overlooking Kabul. The magazine also reported there are nine Field Detention Sites the Red Cross is aware of that “are enveloped in a blanket of official secrecy.” There may, however, “be other sites whose existence on the scores of US and Afghan military bases that dot the country have not been disclosed,” writes the magazine’s Anand Gopal. At Bagram, Gopal wrote, former detainees allege they were “regularly beaten, subjected to blaring music twenty-four hours a day, prevented from sleeping, stripped naked and forced to assume what interrogators term ‘stress positions.’” It is routine to hold

prisoners at Bagram for two or three years without access to lawyers, Red Cross, or their families. And the official US detention center in Kandahar is known among former inmates as “Camp Slappy.”

**AZERBAIJAN:** prisoners have been detained in behalf of the US in Baku, the capital. The country is known for imprisoning journalists and other critics, some of whom have been tortured and murdered.

**ALGERIA:** The US transferred prisoners there from Guantanamo. Amnesty International has warned against transfer of prisoners to Algeria based on the country’s history of torture and warned “Algeria has become a prime ally of the United States (US) and other governments preoccupied with the so-called War on Terror.” According to *Wikipedia*, Manfred Nowak, a special reporter on torture, has catalogued in a 15-page U.N. report that the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and other nations have violated international human rights conventions by deporting terrorist suspects to countries such as Algeria.

**BOSNIA:** the Eagle Base in Tuzla is a black site. The British *Telegraph* said Eagle is part of a US military facility where alleged Al-Qaeda members were tortured.

**DIEGO GARCIA (UK):** a British possession in the Indian Ocean the US has transformed into a powerful military base to dominate the Middle East and Asia. Reportedly, the CIA has a facility there that was used in 2005-06 to hold Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, a Syrian-Spanish national. According to *Reprive*, “the UK has a significant military and administrative presence on Diego Garcia, which has its own independent administration run by the East Africa Desk of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London.” *Reprive* further stated, “In October, 2003, *Time* magazine cited interrogation records from the US prisoner Hambali that had reportedly been taken on the island,

while respected international investigators at the Council of Europe and the United Nations expressed similar suspicions. US officials went on to make seemingly careless public statements confirming the use of Diego Garcia for secret detentions.”

**DJIBOUTI:** said to have three CIA-run prisons, according to the *Guardian*. The former French foreign legion base Camp Lemonnier is a US facility at Djibouti-Ambouli International Airport.

**EGYPT:** said to operate six prisons in behalf of the CIA, where numerous victims have been rendered, one of them being the General Intelligence Directorate in Cairo. US officials are alleged to have participated in interrogation/torture sessions there where prisoners are hung from hooks and electrical shocks administered. On June 13, 2004, the UK *Observer* reported, “Egypt has also received a steady flow of militants from American installations.” The paper also identified Mulhaq al-Mazra prison as a facility used in behalf of the US

**ETHIOPIA:** has held detainees on behalf of CIA. US agents interrogated one man there for three months. An investigation by the Associated Press published April 3, 2007, found, “CIA and FBI agents hunting for al-Qaida militants in the Horn of Africa have been interrogating terrorism suspects from 19 countries held at secret prisons in Ethiopia, which is notorious for torture and abuse.” Three prisons are used for such purposes, the report said.

**GAMBIA:** in Banjul, the capital, safe houses in a residential area were used to jail Bisher Al-Rawi. He was also jailed in Guantanamo where he was said to be subjected to cold temperatures and had his prayer rug taken away when he tried to use it as a blanket.

**GUANTANAMO:** In addition to Camp Delta, a military prison, this base is the site of “Camp No” about a mile to the north, that

is either CIA or under Joint Special Operations Command. It was to this camp, according to *Harper’s*, where three prisoners were taken and never again seen alive. In 2006, the UN called for closing Guantanamo. According to the *Miami Herald’s* Carol Rosenberg, (Jan. 29, 2010) Guantanamo has held about 770 prisoners since it opened eight years ago and nearly 580 have been released over the years. What’s more, a review by DOD and five other agencies agreed unanimously that “roughly 110” more are eligible for release, meaning there was not enough evidence on 690 of the 770 prisoners to prosecute them – further proof, if any is needed, of the fraudulent nature of the War on Terror. Amnesty International called for Guantanamo detainees to be either released from their “super max” high security cells or allowed to stand trial. Irene Khan, Amnesty International’s general secretary, termed Guantanamo “the gulag of our time.”

**IRAQ:** The US and its allies have operated at least 20 prisons. In 2006, Human Rights First documented 98 deaths in US custody there, including five in CIA custody. Every detainee in Iraq “is detained because he poses a security threat to the government of Iraq, the people of Iraq, or coalition forces,” said a spokesman for US-led detainee operations in Iraq, Army Lt. Col. Keir-Kevin Curry. This statement is hard to credit as virtually all of the tens of thousands of persons arrested have never been charged with an offense and the vast majority of them have been let go.

Scott Horton wrote in *Harper’s* that the US “is holding 19,000 Iraqis at its two main detention centers, at Camp Cropper and Camp Bucca.” Horton noted Iraqi law requires any detention to be justified before a magistrate in a matter of only a few days but the US has “complete contempt for the requirements of Iraqi law.” It should be noted that Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki’s government complained US detention violates Iraq’s national rights. In March, 2006, UN

Horton noted Iraqi law requires any detention to be justified before a magistrate in a matter of only a few days but the US has “complete contempt for the requirements of Iraqi law”

**At the notorious Abu Ghraib, Ms. Umm Taha, an Iraqi woman detainee, told of tortures she witnessed. Soldiers made prisoners stand one leg “then they kicked them to make them fall to the ground”**

Secy.-Gen. Kofi Annan said the extent of arbitrary detention in Iraq is “not consistent with provisions of international law governing internment on imperative reasons of security.” Since, as of this January, the US is said to hold only 5,000 detainees in Iraq, apparently tens of thousands of persons have been released without ever being charged. Between June, 2004, and Sept., 2006, alone, the US released some 18,700 Iraqi detainees, according to a reliable source.

This points to a massive conspiracy to deprive innocent people of their rights by the US on a scale not seen since the US interned its own Japanese-American population during World War II. “It was hard to believe I’d get out,” Baghdad shopkeeper Amjad Qassim al-Aliyawi, told the Associated Press after his release, without charge. “I lived with the Americans for one year and eight months as if I was living in hell.” It was in the US Forward Operating Rifles Base in Al Asad where Abdul Jaleel was murdered in Jan., 2004, after being beaten and tied by his hands to the top of a door frame. At the US detention facility in Al Qaim, Baghdad, former Iraqi Major-General Abed Hamad Mowhoush, was tortured and smothered to death in Nov., 2003. At Camp Bucca, in the southern desert, said to hold 9,500, detainees were forcibly showered with cold water and exposed to cold air. At Site 4, a prison run by Iraq’s Ministry of Interior and which in May, 2006, held some 1,431 detainees, there was evidence of systematic physical and psychological abuse and in a prison in the Green Zone run by Baghdad Brigade detainees suffered severe ill treatment.

At the notorious Abu Ghraib, Ms. Umm Taha, an Iraqi woman detainee, told of tortures she witnessed. Soldiers made prisoners stand one leg “then they kicked them to make them fall to the ground.” She said she watched GI Lynndie England use a rubber glove to snap the detainees on their genitals. “The soldiers also made all the men lay on the ground, face down, spread their legs, then men and women soldiers alike kicked the detainees between their legs. I can still

remember their screaming.” Ms. Taha was interviewed by Nagem Salam, an American journalist, according to *Islam Online* of June 14, 2004. At its peak occupancy in 2004, Abu Ghraib, also known also known as the Baghdad Central Correctional Facility, was said to hold 7,000 prisoners.

At Al-Jadiriya prison, in Baghdad many prisoners were detained off the books, and at least 168 unlawfully detained were abused there. Among the main detention facilities in Iraq are Camp Redemption and Camp Ganci, both located at Abu Ghraib, as well as Camp Cropper, near the Baghdad Airport. Other major facilities include Camp Bucca in Umm Qasr and Talil Air Force Base south of Baghdad, also known as Whitford Camp. Additional Iraqi bases where prisoners were held included Al-Rusafa, Al-Kadhimiyya, and Al-Karkh, in Baghdad and Camp Falcon, near Baghdad; the Al-Diwaniyya Security Detainee Holding Area; Ashraf Camp MEK near Al-Ramadi; FOB Tiger in Anbar province; an FOB near Al-Asad, outside Mosul; a temporary holding camp near Nasiriyah; an FOB in Tikrit, in northern Iraq; Al-Qasr al-Jumhuri and Al-Qasr al-Sujood. Another facility, Camp Sheba, is under British command.

According to *GlobalSecurity.org*, Camp Whitehorse is a Marine-run detention site near Nasiriyah in Southern Iraq: “Prisoners were held at Whitehorse until they could be interrogated by a Marine ‘human exploitation team,’ which would determine whether the detainees should be released or transferred elsewhere. Prisoners were forced to stand 50 minutes of every hour, in heat sometimes topping 120 degrees, for up to 10 hours at a time. Prisoners were forced to stand until interrogators from the Human Exploitation Team arrived. If the team failed to get the information it wanted, prisoners were forced to continue standing.”

*GlobalSecurity.org* reported further, “In October 2003 the US military charged eight US Marine reservists, including two officers, with brutal treatment of Iraqi prisoners of war that may have resulted in the death of

one Iraqi man. The eight fought in Iraq as part of the First Marine Division and were detailed to guard prisoners at Camp Whitehorse. Military prosecutors allege that an Iraqi man named Nagem Sadoon Hatab died at Camp Whitehorse in early June 2003 following a possible beating by US guards.”

**ISRAEL:** “Thanks to the Israeli paper *Haaretz*,” wrote Tom Engelhardt of *Tom-Dispatch.com* of Nov. 2, 2006, “we learned for the first time that at least some CIA rendition flights stopped at Ben-Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv on their way to and from Cyprus, Jordan, Morocco, and other spots east and west, north and south – and that the first case ‘of the United States handing Israel a world jihadi suspect’ in a rendition operation has been confirmed.”

**JORDAN:** Abducted men rendered by CIA were held in Jordan’s General Intelligence Department (GID) in Amman. One detainee said his experience was “beyond description.” On June 13, 2004, the UK Observer reported prisoners were also held “in desert locations in the east of the country.” Al Jafr Prison, in the southern Jordanian desert, has held prisoners for the US. In the Israeli publication *Ha’aretz*, an article in Oct., 2004, said the CIA was holding 11 high-level Al Qaeda prisoners incommunicado in Jordan. The Jordanian government flatly denies there are any US detention facilities in Jordan. One of the 11 is said to have been Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged mastermind of the hijacked airliner attacks on New York and Washington. Citing international intelligence sources, *Ha’aretz* said: “Their detention outside the US enables CIA interrogators to apply interrogation methods that are banned by US law, and to do so in a country where cooperation with the Americans is particularly close, thereby reducing the danger of leaks.”

**KENYA:** Detained 84 captives for the US in Nairobi with no opportunity to challenge their detention. One captive, Mohamed Ez-zoueck, a British national, was detained at

three different police stations in Nairobi, and also at a military police station located near Kiunga. Suspects “disappeared” in 2007 in the region were believed to have been interrogated by the CIA and FBI.

**KOSOVO:** CIA-operated Camp Bondsteel, a black site; was said by some, including an official of the European Commission on Human Rights, to be similar in design to Guantanamo. The British *Telegraph* reported alleged members of Al-Qaeda were questioned and tortured at Bondsteel.

**LIBYA:** Since 2004, for example, the CIA has handed five Libyan fighters to authorities in Tripoli. Two had been covertly nabbed by the CIA in China and Thailand, while the others were caught in Pakistan and held in CIA prisons in Afghanistan, Eastern Europe and other locations, according to Libyan sources, Craig Whitlock reported in the *Washington Post* of October 27, 2007.

**LITHUANIA:** The CIA operated a prison in a riding academy in Antaviliai, on the outskirts of capital Vilnius. Lithuania held eight terror suspects there for the CIA.

**MAURITANIA:** CIA reportedly operated one detention facility there. In an article in the June 25, 2007, the *New Yorker*, investigative reporter Seymour Hersh wrote: “I was told by the former senior intelligence official and a government consultant that after the existence of secret C.I.A. prisons in Europe was revealed, in the *Washington Post*, in late 2005, the Administration responded with a new detainee center in Mauritania. After a new government friendly to the US took power, in a bloodless coup d’état in August, 2005, they said, it was much easier for the intelligence community to mask secret flights there.”

**MOROCCO:** Held CIA detainees at a prison in al-Temara. The CIA rendered Binyam Mohamed, a British citizen, to Morocco, where he was moved around to three different

“Their detention outside the US enables CIA interrogators to apply interrogation methods that are banned by US law, and to do so in a country where cooperation with the Americans is particularly close, thereby reducing the danger of leaks”

## THE WAR MACHINE 3

**When the Canadian government found Arar was tortured, the Prime Minister apologized to him and Canada paid him \$10.5-million in compensation plus legal fees**

prisons. Abou Elkassim Britel, an Italian and Moroccan, was tortured at al-Temara. The prison is located in a forest five miles outside of Rabat, the capital. It was in Morocco that Binyam Mohamed, an Ethiopian-born British resident arrested in Pakistan in 2002 was tortured by interrogators who sliced his penis with a scalpel and later transferred him to Guantanamo Bay. He was freed in Feb., 2009, without charge and allowed to return to England.

The London *Sunday Times* reported Feb. 12, 2006, that Morocco “is one of America’s principal partners in the secret ‘rendition’ programme in which the CIA flies prisoners to third countries for interrogation.” The paper said Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have compiled dossiers “detailing the detention and apparent torture of radical Islamists at the DST’s current headquarters, at Temara, near Rabat.” DST is the Moroccan secret police.

**PAKISTAN:** Human Rights Watch said men claimed the US tortured them when detained there in behalf of the CIA. Several hundred suspects were seized in Pakistan in 2001-2002 and held in prisons in Kohat and Peshawar. Prisoners also held in an old fortress outside of Lahore; in the military barracks in Islamabad. It was in Islamabad that Moazzam Begg was held and severely tortured. At one villa in central Peshawar run by US authorities, prisoners were beaten regularly. Another facility in Peshawar was underground where Americans did all the interrogating. A black prison was also reported to be in Alzai. Seymour Hersh received a report in May, 2005 of “800-900 Pakistani boys 13-15 years of age in custody.”

**POLAND:** The CIA operated a black prison from 2003 to 2005 where eight “high value” detainees were held in the village of Kiejkuty. One of them was said to be Khalid Sheik Mohammed, alleged 9/11 mastermind, who was severely tortured.

**QATAR:** The UK *Observer* reported on June

13, 2004, “Scores more (terror suspects) are thought to be at a US airbase in the Gulf state of Qatar ... ”

**ROMANIA:** Three CIA detention centers operated there, including one in downtown Bucharest and one in Timisoara.

**SAUDI ARABIA:** Ahmed Omar Abu Ali, was convicted in US federal court in Nov., 2005, on charges of conspiracy to commit terrorism. Amnesty International said his trial was flawed as prosecution relied largely on evidence obtained when he was flogged and beaten by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Interior’s General Intelligence while imprisoned with apparent US knowledge. In Saudi Arabia, the *Observer* reported on June 13, 2004, “CIA agents are allowed to sit in on some of the interrogations.”

**SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC:** The CIA rendered a number of captives to Far Falestin prison. Canadian Maher Arar was held there where he was tortured with cables and electrical cords. When the Canadian government found Arar was tortured, the Prime Minister apologized to him and Canada paid him \$10.5-million in compensation plus legal fees. The *Observer* reported June 13, 2004, “In Syria, detainees sent by Washington are held at ‘the Palestine wing’ of the main intelligence headquarters and a series of jails in Damascus and other cities.”

**SOMALIA:** Suleiman Abdallah, never charged, was arrested in Somalia and held there for a short time by warlord Mohammed Dere, allegedly working for the US, and later interrogated by CIA and FBI. Another captive, Mohamed Ezzoueck, a British subject, was held at the Army base in Baidoa, Somalia, but never charged.

**SOUTH AFRICA:** *Guardian* reported Jan. 23, 2009, that South Africa has two CIA “black sites.”

**THAILAND:** One of the first CIA black sites

known as “Cat’s Eye” is located outside of Bangkok. Al-Qaeda operatives were flown there to be interrogated and tortured, including waterboarding. Abu Zubaydah and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri were videotaped there. Some 92 videotapes were made and stored and subsequently destroyed by the CIA. In 2005 ABC News reported Zubaydah was held in an unused warehouse on an air-base where he was made to stand in a cold cell and waterboarded.

**UZBEKISTAN:** The *New York Times* reported in May, 2005, the US had sent dozens of suspects to Tashkent.

**YEMEN:** US handed over prisoners, including some from its Bagram prison, to Yemen, where they allegedly were tortured.

**ZAMBIA:** According to the *Guardian* of Jan. 23, 2009, Zambia is one of countries with a CIA secret prison facility.

In addition to the prisons in the above-cited nations, the US operates a number of illegal floating prisons.

**US PRISON SHIPS:** On June 2, 2008 the *Guardian* reported, “The US has admitted that the Bataan and Peleliu were used as prison ships between December 2001 and January 2002”.

Reprieve says the US may have used 17 ships as “floating prisons” since 2001. Detainees are interrogated on ships and may be rendered to other, undisclosed locations. Reprieve expressed concern over the time the USS Ashland spent off Somalia in early 2007. According to the *Guardian*, “At this time many people were abducted by Somali, Kenyan and Ethiopian forces in a systematic operation involving regular interrogations by individuals believed to be members of the FBI and CIA. Ultimately more than 100 individuals were ‘disappeared’ to prisons in locations including Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Guantanamo Bay. Reprieve believes prisoners may have also been held

for interrogation on the USS Ashland and other ships in the Gulf of Aden during this time.”

The US Navy, through a spokesman, said, “There are no detention facilities on US navy ships” but Commander Jeffrey Gordon told the *Guardian* some individuals had been put on ships “for a few days” during initial days of detention.

Reprieve quoted one prisoner released from Guantanamo who was on one of the US ships who said there were 50 other prisoners in cages in the bottom of the ship and they were beaten even more severely than in Guantanamo. Clive Stafford Smith, Reprieve’s legal director, is quoted as saying, “They choose ships to try to keep their misconduct as far as possible from the prying eyes of the media and lawyers. We will eventually reunite these ghost prisoners with their legal rights.”

From all of the above, it would be difficult to conclude anything other than that the US, with the help of a score of other nations, illegally seized and then processed countless innocent persons from the Middle East who were held incommunicado in scores of facilities where they were abused, tortured, denied all legal rights, and where approximately 100 of them that we know of died in Iraq alone, probably the victims of homicide.

Professor Boyle of the University of Illinois said he would submit the findings of this article to the Prosecutor of the ICC in support of his previous Complaint calling on the ICC to open “an international criminal investigation of these (President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, etc.) former US governmental officials.” **CT**

*Sherwood Ross is an award-winning journalist who formerly reported for the Chicago Daily News and worked as a columnist for several wire services. Ross wishes to express his gratitude to the journalists whose works he quoted for their original research that exposed the conditions in prisons described above.*

**“At this time many people were abducted by Somali, Kenyan and Ethiopian forces in a systematic operation involving regular interrogations by individuals believed to be members of the FBI and CIA. Ultimately more than 100 individuals were ‘disappeared’ to prisons in locations including Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Guantanamo Bay?”**

# Who you gonna bomb next, eh?

**Joe Bageant** has the answers to all of life's questions, especially those emanating from Canada

**You don't have to know much about the system to realize the powers that be always have the ability to simply move the goalposts when it suits them**

Hi Joe,

**G**reetings from one of the attic dwellers in Canada. We've been mocked as being eternally uninvited to the party going on downstairs. However, lately it seems more like someone has called in the cops to break up the bash. Canadians probably obsess over "America" even more than the Europeans and pretty much every other country, and why wouldn't we? You guys are the 800-pound gorilla in the global room, and when things start going to shit down there, you can bet it's going to hit the fan up here too.

I was a year old when Vietnam ended, and I'm wondering how low the national mood was back then compared to today. Vietnam was obviously an epic American ass-kicking, and the sense I get from some of your articles is that many Americans are finally waking up to the fact that they've been getting kicked in the teeth by their own governments and corporations for another 35 years since then. In clinical terms, you would be looking at a major PTSD patient whose shattered delusions of grandeur have been twisted into an ugly rage spiral – all of which is now being expressed in, um, the Tea Party Movement?

Joe, many questions come to mind, but one of the most pressing is this: can you

point readers to some kindred spirits of yours on the web who write in the same mold?

And, do you see any Hunter-esque gonzos coming down the pike? If he sensed a new rot creeping into the scene back in the early 80s, his ashes must be doing the funky chicken over Obama not even bothering to coat the horseshit with honey these days.

Little Bush made it easy for Obama to give away the store. The Cheney-Rove brain trust decided to put it all out in the open, damn the torpedoes, and the trick worked. Official White House policy, officially posted on the official White House website, officially listed criminal government actions that would have put Nixon in a fucking gas chamber. You don't have to know much about the system to realize the powers that be always have the ability to simply move the goalposts when it suits them. But BushCo seemed to be saying something else altogether, something to the effect of: "The goalposts don't even exist. And, for any of you legal Luddites who think the 'rule of law' does exist, or at least should exist, well, it only exists inasmuch as our legal flunkies interpret that it exists. Which is to say, the rule of law doesn't exist in any other way than we say it exists. Try to think of it as the Rule of the Rulers of Law. Or something like that. Whatever floats your boat. We don't fucking care anyway."



Following an act like that, Obama can now take one long, protracted piss on the American public, and he doesn't even have to call it rain.

It could all lead to electoral disaster, but if Dems are going to rule like Repubs anyway, does it really matter all that much?

One last question Joe, just wondering where you're at with the Doomer type stuff out there these days – obviously impossible to predict timelines for these sorts of things, but if it does go bad at some point and the food trucks stop running, where do you see all that American civilian and military firepower gunning for first?

**Cheers,  
Ryan**

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**Dear Ryan,**

Well, in 1975 when the war ended, America was a different country. Damned near everyone was quite happy to see it over, some because they were glad to see an end of the horror and expense, others because it had become boring television. All we have left to document that war for your generation is what the media said at the time. Which is rather hyperbolic and full of gaps. Many of us who protested and whatever, felt that ending the war was a pyrrhic victory. Sixty thousand dead, 160,000 wounded and at least a million on the other side. Not to mention the wasted resources that could have done so much to lift the American people toward what we could have been, an educated, self-realized people. I feel my generation, or at least the best among them, were on the cusp of that before the war.

Anyway, the right wing ideologues and their following made big noises about “if we had only put more resources into it, and turned the generals loose to fig – yada, yada.” They spread that shit around until most knee jerk non-thinkers had it stamped on the tip of their tongues as their official answer to any question regarding the war

we couldn't win.

You could go down to the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars club and listen to 'em piss and moan about how the politicians fucked up what should have been a certain victory. Even then, about half of us at the VFW and the American Legion Halls were out back smoking pot. And mocking the old guys saying all that shit, mostly the World War II vet set, whom we called “Big Vet.”

As might be expected, all the New York intellectuals were doing their usual jerking off about the “meaning” of the war. As if any war meant anything but death for the anonymous “little people,” both yellow and Caucasian, and profits for the big dogs. People like Norman Mailer were making essentially the same arguments you mentioned, that Nam shattered illusions and was a blow to white masculinity and all that stuff. The average American scarcely knew who Mailer was.

Only intellectuals worry about such things as American masculinity, as if all of our peckers were linked together in some sort of sort of unified field.

To my mind the most important effect of the Vietnam War was that the 14-year war conditioned Americans to accepting ongoing warfare as an ordinary backdrop to their lives. Since then we've always been at war somewhere to some degree or another. Its language has penetrated the way we think. Corporations launch a marketing “offensive,” We declare a “war on drugs.” Likewise, the language of capitalist finance and war meld. Twenty thousand dead civilians become “collateral” damage. The aggregated corpses become “damage.” The cumulative result has been the Orwellian Newspeak so nicely summed up by Gore Vidal in the phrase “Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace.”

The history of the era had to be rewritten to keep the military industrial complex and its associated rackets in business, lest we all end up unarmed, peace loving, educated people. So starting with the countercultural movement, starting with Newt Gingrich,

**To my mind the most important effect of the Vietnam War was that the 14-year war conditioned Americans to accepting ongoing warfare as an ordinary backdrop to their lives. Since then we've always been at war somewhere to some degree or another**

## THE WAR MACHINE 4

The same old crew of elites has always been pissing on the citizenry down here. They've just had different presidents holding their dicks for them

the Heritage Foundation, et al, tens of millions were spent rewriting the Sixties era as the beginning of the end of America. Since then the neocon forces have perfected misinformation to the point of stirring up more meanness in this country than I would have ever thought possible Even the John Birchers are making a comeback.

And the Teabaggers? Looks to me like its national base, if it really has one – it's hard to tell how much is neocon media manipulation and how much is real – are pretty much the same ignorant characters as always. The frustrated, ill educated uninformed people who want to have less government but more benefits, and to pay for operating the country with tax cuts.

Writers in the gonzo-esque mold? I really don't know any more than you do on that matter. I'd say James Howard Kunstler for one. You may not think of Jim that way, but if he were writing his stuff in 1970, he would have been seen as gonzo. But I'm not sure just who is out there. I really don't cruise the web as much as you might think.

But Hunter was one of a kind. Realistically speaking, Matt Taibbi is probably as good as Hunter was in many respects. But Hunter was the first. Taibbi is better than Hunter in nailing down the facts, but strains too hard at times to be entertaining (who doesn't?) Still, I have a lot of respect for Taibbi. Also, Hunter's political position inasmuch as he had one other than personal freedom, might be called armed and drugged-out libertarian. It was a different era. If Hunter were starting out today, I doubt he could get published by mainstream mags and book publishers. Publishers' legal fears and all.

Regarding "rulers" who do not give a fuck: Nobody in either party has cared for the past 30 years. Only the Democrats feel compelled to keep up the charade. You are wrong about the way the legal system of lackeys works. When it comes to twisting the interpretation of the law so you can steal from the people, violate privacy or otherwise move the Constitutional goalposts, don't blame that on the politicians. We have

a Supreme Court for that purpose.

I don't know why everyone seems so outraged at how we've been pissed on by the Obama administration. Actually, it's a long standing tradition. The same old crew of elites has always been pissing on the citizenry down here. They've just had different presidents holding their dicks for them. I wouldn't worry too much about it "leading to electoral disaster?" Our electoral process IS a disaster. The electoral college is designed to thwart the popular vote. And regarding "If the Dems are going to rule like the Republicans anyway." Neither party rules. Corporations do the ruling. Politicians conduct the public sing-along about democracy.

Like anyone else who has soberly observed this age of peak everything, and the avaricious clowns in charge of our future, I'm a doomer. Even if Abe Lincoln, FDR or Gandhi were in charge at this point, I'd be a doomer. But with enough booze, I can gut it out in relative cheer.

As for making predictions, I try to avoid it. You see, I am in the racket of appearing as if I might know these sorts of things, so publishers will pay me money. It's a delicate balancing act. Readers believe way too much of what I say, and my wife doesn't believe anything I say. Fortunately, my dog is a good listener and never comments, unless there is bacon involved.

And finally, your question as to who we Americans will bomb next. The possibilities are endless. Given that up there in Canada you don't carry guns, I kinda like the idea of bombing you guys. Maybe we could win a war for a change. Barring that, maybe Australia. The place is so big and empty I doubt we'd hit anybody. Hell, it would take 'em a year to notice it. But I'm sure God, Wall Street and the Pentagon and will let us know when the time comes.

**CT**

**In art and labor,  
Joe**

*Joe Bageant is the author of the best selling **Deer Hunting With Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War** (Random House,*

# How to fight a better war (next time)

Tom Engelhardt has some suggestions for harrassed generals

Iraq remains a mess from which the US military seems increasingly uninterested in withdrawing fully and Afghanistan a disaster area, but it's never too soon to think about the next war. The subject is already on the minds of Pentagon planners. The question is: Are they focusing on how to manage future wars so that they won't last longer than the American Revolution, the Civil War, and World War II combined?

There's reason to worry, especially since the lessons of both Iraq and Afghanistan are clear: it takes years after a war has been launched for the US military to develop tactics that lead to stasis. ("Victory" is a word that has gone out of fashion.)

Here, then, are three modest suggestions for recalibrating the American way of war. All are based on a simple principle – "preventive war planning" – and are focused on getting the next war right before it begins, not decades after it's launched.

## 1. Make the Apologies in Advance

Who can doubt that the American way of war has undergone changes since, in December 2001, a B-52 and two B-1B bombers using precision-guided weapons essentially wiped out a village celebrating a wedding in Eastern Afghanistan? Of 112 Afghans in that wedding party, only two women survived. Similarly, in August 2008, in the village of

Azizabad in Herat Province, at least 90 Afghans, including 60 children, were killed in a series of US air strikes, while in May 2009, up to 140 Afghan civilians died in a US bombing attack in Farah Province.

Understandably, such "incidents" have done little to endear the US and its allies to Afghans. Until recently, the US military would initially deny that civilians had even died; if the incident refused to go away, military spokespeople would then admit to small numbers of civilian deaths (often blamed on the Taliban), while launching an "investigation" and waiting for the hubbub to die away. Apologies or "regrets" came late and grudgingly, if at all (along with modest payments to the relatives of the dead). Back then, being American and at war in distant lands meant never having to say you were sorry.

More recently, Afghan war commander General Stanley McChrystal has changed the rules, curbing air strikes (though not drone strikes), warning his troops to prevent civilian deaths, and instituting an instant expression of "regrets" for such deaths. One thing, however, has changed only marginally: the civilian deaths themselves.

In mid-February, for instance, 12 civilians died when two US rockets slammed into a compound near the city of Marja in Helmand Province. The following day, five Afghan civilians digging at the side of a road

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in Kandahar Province were killed in an air strike after being mistaken for insurgents planting a roadside bomb. Then, in Uruzgan Province, US Special Forces troops in helicopters struck a convoy of mini-buses, killing up to 27 civilians, including women and children.

After each of these incidents, regrets were quickly expressed, investigations launched. In the case of the mini-buses, McChrystal apologized to Afghan President Hamid Karzai personally and then went on Afghan television to make his apology public. (“I pledge to strengthen our efforts to regain your trust to build a brighter future for all Afghans. Most importantly, I express my deepest, heartfelt condolences to the victims and their families. We all share in their grief and will keep them in our thoughts and prayers.”)

Unfortunately, a policy of repeated apology is unlikely to prove much more successful than the previous stonewalling tactic as long as civilians die, which they will, given the American style of war. It may be too late to correct this in Afghanistan, but the next war is another story. My suggestion is simple: in the future, the US military should issue a blanket apology before going to war, and the first waves of US planes should not drop bombs but abjectly worded leaflets. These would take responsibility in advance for future civilian deaths and pre-apologize for them.

There is a partial precedent for this. In both the Korean and Vietnam wars, American planes regularly dropped leaflets warning peasant farmers that they were living in “free fire zones” and should beware or move out. In this case, the pamphlets would make clear that the United States is going after “the evil-doers” and admit that, despite our ever more precise weaponry, we will unfortunately kill a certain percentage of you in the process. (“The US military expresses our deepest, heartfelt condolences to the future victims and their families. We will all share in their grief and, when they die, will keep them in our thoughts and

prayers.”) We should also announce in advance at least a \$1,500 solatium payment for any relative, spouse, or child who perishes, as well as carefully calibrated sums for the loss of limbs, eyes, and the like.

After this, whenever civilians die, the military would simply refer interested parties to the prewar statement. This should guarantee a cleaner, more effective way of war.

### **2. Pre-Build the Bases, Prisons, and Embassy Complexes**

Thanks to nine years in Afghanistan and seven in Iraq, it's easier to grasp how the American way of war actually works. A striking (if little discussed) aspect of it is the base-building that accompanies it. In the years of fighting, the Pentagon built several hundred bases in each country, ranging from tiny outposts to massive American “towns.” It also constructed multiple prisons and holding centers (some secret), and for each war, a nearly billion-dollar regional command center, which we still inaccurately call an “embassy.” The one in Islamabad, Pakistan, is only now under construction.

Much of this was done on the fly and in response to events. For the next war, it would be more logical to prepare in advance. Again, there is a partial precedent. In recent years, the US has pre-positioned equipment at small bases and other locations around the world, so that, should a sudden desire to intervene arise, the means are relatively close at hand. This strategy should be significantly expanded. The Pentagon and the US Intelligence Community could agree on the four most likely places for future interventions. Say, Yemen, Colombia, Nigeria, and Kyrgyzstan, and start laying the groundwork now.

The usual private contractors – Fluor, DynCorp, and KBR – should be rounded up to build the necessary 1,400 bases and accompanying prisons under a global multi-billion dollar LOGCAP contract to be divided among them. At the same time, the State Department would put those future mega-

embassies out for bid to US architectural firms so that the now-typical fortress-like designs (with their near-billion-dollar price tags) would be ready to go.

With full-scale base-prison-embassy complexes ready in four strategically located regions, future invasions would have a reasonable shot at not dragging out for decades.

### 3. Pick the Right Natives

It's noticeable that the US military always seems to get stuck with the wrong natives. Take the recent campaign in Marja:

Afghan National Army (ANA) troops are regularly described as unable to read maps, incapable of “planning a complicated patrol” or resupplying themselves, poor at small unit maneuvering, poorly trained, refusing to stand night guard duty and sometimes even to fight, high on drugs, riddled with corruption, unable to aim their weapons, “years away from functioning effectively on their own,” and as C.J. Chivers of the *New York Times* recently summed matters up, totally inadequate when it comes to “transporting troops, directing them in battle and coordinating fire support [or] arranging modern communications, logistics, aviation and medical support.”

And keep in mind that the soldiers sent into Marja were reportedly the best the ANA has available. All this, despite multi-billions of dollars and years of effort invested in Afghan army training. (And the Afghan police, for multi-billions more, make the Afghan army look good.)

On the other hand, perhaps a few hundred Taliban fighters stayed in Marja and fought. Descriptions of them invariably reflect grudging admiration. They are considered capable of planning and executing complex small-unit maneuvers as well as “sustained and complex attacks,” of resupplying themselves, of “surprisingly accurate” sniper fire, and of not being corrupt. In Marja, it was repeatedly said that “out-numbered and outgunned” Taliban fighters were “mounting a tougher fight than ex-

pected” or engaging in “determined resistance,” that they represented, in the words of Centcom commander General David Petraeus, a “formidable” force.

For those old enough to remember the Vietnam War, you could replace such descriptions of “our” Afghans with “our” Vietnamese and “their” Afghans with “their” Vietnamese without breaking stride. One explanation for this is that indigenous people react differently when fighting a foreign occupying force rather than aiding it. However, as US forces are incapable of occupying a country thanks to our exceptionally good intentions (of which we are well aware), another explanation makes better sense: In the kinds of countries we're likely to invade, there are evidently two races (or the equivalent) of natives – think of them as like the Eloi and the Morlocks in H.G. Wells's novel *The Time Machine* – and we always pick the wrong one.

So before the next invasion, we should make use of small teams of anthropologists and social scientists from the US Army's Human Terrain System, already trained to help the military with local cultural problems. They should be inserted in the country or region in question to identify which natives are best suited for learning small-unit maneuvering and the other skills over which the enemy always seems to have such a monopoly. Of course, a fourth planning possibility would involve not launching such wars in the first place. But that path would conflict with a basic American can-do spirit that this country prizes, so suggestions 1 through three are undoubtedly a more practical way to proceed. **CT**

*Tom Engelhardt, co-founder of the American Empire Project, runs the Nation Institute's TomDispatch.com. He is the author of **The End of Victory Culture**, a history of the Cold War and beyond, and a novel, **The Last Days of Publishing**. He also edited **The World According to TomDispatch: America in the New Age of Empire** (Verso, 2008).*

**For those old enough to remember the Vietnam War, you could replace such descriptions of “our” Afghans with “our” Vietnamese and “their” Afghans with “their” Vietnamese without breaking stride. One explanation for this is that indigenous people react differently when fighting a foreign occupying force rather than aiding it**

# War with the ghosts

What are Britain's nuclear weapons for, and who controls them?  
asks **George Monbiot**

**As usual, the government is preparing for the last war, building a fantastical Maginot Line against ghost armies that haunt the official imagination**

Sharing Britain's nuclear deterrence with France is out of the question. Last month the government slapped down a French offer to reduce the costs of our submarine patrols, by taking turns to prowl the same seas rather than duplicating the effort and occasionally crashing into each other. This proposal, it said, would cause "outrage", on the grounds that it's an unacceptable erosion of sovereignty. Using a system leased from the US, on the other hand, presents no such difficulty. When the government says our sovereignty is threatened, it means that another nation might disrupt the orders it receives from Washington.

So we must maintain the pretence that this is ours alone, and sustain our extravagant doctrine of "continuous at-sea deterrence". Deterrence against what? Nazis? Aliens? Killer jellyfish? Our Trident missiles, due to be replaced and deployed at a cost of several tens of billions, have no visible strategic purpose. They are the reification of a fantasy: a fantasy that the United Kingdom is still a defining world power and that our enemies present an existential threat. As usual, the government is preparing for the last war, building a fantastical Maginot Line against ghost armies that haunt the official imagination.

Let's begin with the sovereignty issue. When I once made the mistake of stepping into a Blockbuster video shop, I found myself walking past aisle after aisle of Hollywood

movies. Then I came across a tiny section labelled "foreign", which contained about a dozen European films. Either Hollywood's hegemony was such that the US was no longer perceived as another country or Blockbuster had adopted the US definition of foreign and imported it 4,000 miles into the UK. The same confusion governs this country's defence policy. The other side of the Channel is forrin. The other side of the Atlantic isn't.

As Dan Plesch shows in his report on British weapons systems, we have no independent deterrent<sup>3</sup>. Since 1943, when the UK joined the Manhattan Project, our nuclear weapons programme has relied on crumbs from the US table. The US has granted us a franchise on parts of its programme, which it has graciously allowed us to rebrand with the Union flag.

Our Trident missiles are currently leased from the United States. The warheads they carry are based on a US design (the W-76) and manufactured at the Atomic Weapons Establishment in Berkshire. Its factory is a copy of a nuclear plant at Los Alamos and it is two-thirds owned by the US companies Lockheed-Martin and Jacobs Engineering. The firing system is designed and built in the US; so is the missile guidance system. The missiles are aimed with the help of US satellites. The subs themselves are designed and built in the UK, but use US components and US reactor technology. There might be the odd shaving brush and plastic cup on board that was de-

signed and manufactured entirely in the UK, but that's about the limit of our deterrent's independence.

Our dependence doesn't end there. In 2003 the then UK defence secretary, Geoff Hoon, announced that he would restructure the armed forces to make them "inter-operable" with those of the US. The idea that our government, which has renounced sovereign control of its forces, could launch a nuclear attack without the blessing of – or instructions from – the United States is ludicrous. Yet it will not contemplate even sharing patrols with France.

Both the government and the opposition assert their virility by rejecting offers of power-sharing from Europe, while accepting offers of subordination from the US. Never do they find themselves obliged to explain why. Those who most loudly proclaim themselves patriots are the first to demand that we prostrate ourselves before the United States.

So to the second issue, the question put by Field Marshall Lord Carver: "Trident – what the bloody hell is it for?" The Defence green paper contends that the system's purpose is to "deter and prevent nuclear blackmail and acts of aggression against our national interests that cannot be countered by other means" Let's spend a moment unpacking that.

It's true that other states (eight to be precise) possess nuclear weapons, though none is currently willing or able to use them against us. This could change. But states possess nuclear weapons because other states possess them or might acquire them. Every nuclear state uses the same argument as the UK's: it might be blackmailed by someone else with nuclear weapons.

The only certain means of preventing nuclear blackmail is multilateral disarmament. The only route to multilateral disarmament is for the nuclear powers to show that they are serious about junking their weapons. The non-proliferation treaty commits the nuclear powers "to pursue negotiations in good faith on ... nuclear disarmament". In return, other nations promise not to acquire nuclear weapons. By failing to honour their side of the bargain in the name of defending themselves

from proliferation elsewhere, the nuclear nations invite other countries to proliferate.

But the very power of these weapons defuses the threat they present. The consequences of using a nuclear weapon are such that other nations know you're not really going to do it. The only question you have to ask yourself is this: if a country subject to someone else's nuclear blackmail launches its nuclear weapons, is it more or less likely to get nuked? Everyone knows the answer, which is why nuclear weapons are useless as a credible strategic threat. They might have some use against a non-nuclear power, but in that case the nuclear blackmailer is you, not the enemy. As WH Auden noted in his poem *The Quest*, "In theory they were sound on Expectation,/Had there been situations to be in;/Unluckily they were their situation".

A government serious about preventing nuclear blackmail would be ready to bring something decisive to the non-proliferation review in New York in May. The UK's claim that we're working towards full multilateral disarmament while investing £70-odd billion in nuclear rearmament doesn't exactly have the ring of conviction. Our government sticks to this course even as President Obama insists that he will "take concrete steps towards a world without nuclear weapons". It clearly doesn't believe him, or it wouldn't be investing in a new weapons programme. It will be interesting to see how quickly the UK's nuclear deterrent collapses if the US dismantles its own Trident missiles.

This is the only force which will kill our nukes. The opinions of parliament, where MPs launched one of their biggest revolts when asked to approve a new Trident programme, and the public, which has turned sharply against rearmament, count for nothing. Only when the US orders it to do so will our government decide, autonomously and of its own volition, that our sovereign interests are best served by abandoning our nuclear programme. Until then, as social services are cut, this fairytale budget won't be touched. The government must please its imaginary friends and fight its imaginary enemies. **CT**

**Both the government and the opposition assert their virility by rejecting offers of power-sharing from Europe, while accepting offers of subordination from the US**

**George Monbiot's latest book is *Bring On The Apocalypse***

# Invictus in reverse

Dave Zirin on South Africa and the World Cup soccer finals

**Welcome to South Africa, a remarkable place of jagged contrasts: rich and poor; black and white, immigrant and everyone else**

**Y**ou see it the moment you walk off the plane: a mammoth soccer ball hanging from the ceiling of Johannesburg's O.R. Tambo International Airport festooned with yellow banners that read, "2010 Let's Go! WORLD CUP!" If you swivel your head, you see that every sponsor has joined the party – Coca Cola, Anheuser-Busch – all branded with the FIFA seal. It's when your head dips down that you see another, less sponsored, universe. Even inside this gleaming state-of-the-art airport, men ranging in age from 16-60 ask if they can shine your shoes, carry your bags, or even walk you to a cab. It's the informal economy fighting for breathing room amidst the smothering sponsorship. Welcome to South Africa, a remarkable place of jagged contrasts: rich and poor; black and white, immigrant and everyone else. On a normal week, it's the dispossessed and the self-possessed fighting for elbow room. But the 2010 World Cup, which starts in less than 90 days, has taken these contrasts and propelled them into conflict.

The present situation in South Africa could be called "Invictus in reverse." For those who haven't had the pleasure, the film *Invictus* is about the way Nelson Mandela used sport, particularly the near all-white sport of rugby to unite the country after the fall of apartheid. The coming World Cup has in contrast, provoked the camouflage of ev-

ery conflict to present the image of a united nation to the world. As Danny Jordaan, the World Cup's lead South African organizer said, "People will see we are African. We are world-class." Note that the concern is about what the world sees, not what South Africans see. What South Africans see, as one young man told me, is, "Football ... looting our country." The contrasts are becoming conflicts because the government at the behest of FIFA, is determined to put on a good show, no matter the social cost.

There are the dispossessions as thousands have been forced from their homes into makeshift shantytowns, to both make way for stadiums and make sure that tourists don't have to see any depressing scenes of poverty. The United Nations even issued a complaint on behalf of the 20,000 people removed from the Joe Slovo settlement in Cape Town, called an "eyesore" by World Cup organizers.

There is the crackdown on people who make their living selling goods by the stadiums. Regina Twala who has been vending outside soccer matches for almost 40 years, has been told that she and others must be at least one kilometer from the stadiums at all times. She said to the *Sunday Independent*, "They say they do not want us here. They do not want us near the stadium and we have to close the whole place." In addition, FIFA has pushed the South African govern-



ment to announce that they would arrest any vendors that sell products emblazoned with the words “World Cup” or even the date “2010.” Samson, a trader in Durban, said to me, “This is the way we have always done business by the stadium. Who makes the laws now: FIFA?”

Samson was only referencing the threats toward vendors, but he could have been speaking about the series of laws South Africa has passed to prepare for the tournament. Declaring the World Cup a “protected event”, the government, in line with FIFA requirements, has passed by-laws that “spell out where people may drive and park their cars, where they may and may not trade or advertise, and where they may walk their dogs.” They’ve made clear that beggars or even those found of using foul language (assumedly off the field of play) could be subject to arrest.

**Assassinations**

Then there are the assassinations. In a story that has garnered international news but little buzz in the United States, two people on a list of 20, have been assassinated for “whistle-blowing” on suspected corruption in the construction of the \$150 million Mbombela Stadium. The *Sunday World* newspaper attained the list, which included two journalists and numerous political leaders. There are accusations swirling that the list is linked to the ruling African National Congress, which the ANC has denied in bizarre terms, “The ANC ... wants to reiterate its condemnation of any murder of any person no matter what the motive may be,” said ANC spokesperson Paul Mbenyane. It’s never a good sign when you have to make clear that you are anti-murder.

All of these steps – displacements, crack-downs on informal trade, even accusations

of state-sponsored assassinations – have an echo for people from the days of apartheid. It’s provoked a fierce, and wholly predictable resistance. In a normal month, South Africa has more protests per capita than any nation on earth. But when you factor in the World Cup crackdown, a simmering nation can explode.

Over 70,000 workers have taken part in strikes connected to World Cup projects since the preparations have begun, with 26 strikes since 2007.

On March 4, more than 250 people, in a press conference featuring representatives from four provinces, threatened to protest the opening game of the Cup unless their various demands were met. These protests should not be taken lightly. A woman named Lebo said to me, “We have learned in South Africa that unless we burn tires, unless we fight police, unless we are willing to return violence on violence, we will never be heard.”

Patrick Bond from the Center Civil Society in Durban said to me that protests should be expected: “Anytime you have three billion people watching, that’s called leverage.” Indeed. There is a scene in *Invictus* where Freeman’s Mandela says, “I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul. I am the master of my fate.” The people of South Africa still consider themselves unconquerable: whether they face apartheid, FIFA, or their current government. But FIFA insists with equal insistence that the World Cup will brook no dissent. In 90 days, we’ll find out who masters the fate of this beloved country. **CT**

*Dave Zirin is the author of the forthcoming Bad Sports: How Owners are Ruining the Games we Love (Scribner). Contact him at [edgeofsports@gmail.com](mailto:edgeofsports@gmail.com).*

**We have learned in South Africa that unless we burn tires, unless we fight police, unless we are willing to return violence on violence, we will never be heard”**

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# Meddling where we oughtn't meddle

America couldn't win its war on alcohol, so why does it think it'll win the war on drugs and, more important, why is Mexico caught in the crossfire? asks **Fred Reed**

**If Mexicans had to choose between the drug lords, who are often seen as counter-culture heroes, and the US, seen as an enemy too dangerous to be openly called an enemy, many would go with their compatriots in the drug trade**

**M**exico, if left alone, would be a reasonably successful and stable country of the upper Third World. It isn't Haiti, isn't Bangladesh, isn't a dying patient with multiple tubes in every orifice. If not strong-armed into chaos, it would be all right.

But the United States won't leave it alone. Washington is pushing it to wage its "war on drugs." And, as usual, Washington has no idea what it is doing. Nor does it care. Should untoward consequences follow, it will be surprised, this being the characteristic condition of American foreign policy.

Untoward consequences are quite available. The narcotrafficantes that Mexico is supposed to fight for Washington are a formidable armed force. They have unlimited money, which they use to buy heavy weapons, and which they use to corrupt the government of a comparatively poor country. Mexico does not have the wherewithal to fight them. The army here is small and poorly armed. This is reasonable since Mexico has neither territorial ambitions nor enemies. Except, in effect, the United States.

The government is outgunned by the narcos. Further, the traffickers have the advantage of being dispersed and invisible. The situation is, or quickly could be, exactly that faced by the US in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan: narcos can appear from nowhere, blow up police stations, assassinate

judges, or kill a dozen teenagers at a party. Then they disappear.

Thus they can destabilize the nation and hold the population hostage. This doesn't bother Americans, who barely know where Mexico is. It bothers Mexicans, who know their people are dying in an exported American war.

Bear in mind that anti-Americanism thrives here and throughout Latin America. Much of it is justified; some of it isn't. The US population, the most comprehensively ignorant of the advanced world, knows nothing of the reasons or of the countries. But the hostility is real. Shrugging it off could prove a mistake.

If Mexicans had to choose between the drug lords, who are often seen as counter-culture heroes, and the US, seen as an enemy too dangerous to be openly called an enemy, many would go with their compatriots in the drug trade. A repertoire of narcocorridos, songs glorifying the narcos, exists. Los Tigres del Norte in Sinaloa have specialized in these.

Although Mexico doesn't have America's festering antagonisms – blacks hate whites hate browns hate men hate women hate Jews – there are groups, particularly in Chiapas, who are potential insurgents. If they should ally themselves with the narcos and go to the mountains, or set up cells in the cities, the result would be a long, bloody

civil war: Afghanistan on the US border. This is not Freddian fantasy. Thoughtful Mexicans worry about it.

The Mexican army cannot handle an uprising of any magnitude. The Pentagon would then intervene to “help” Mexico. Que dios nos ayude.

The Pentagon is working toward intervention, whether it know that it is or not. There is something called the Merida Initiative, in which the US supplies money and advice to transform Mexican society to combat the narcos. The colonels in the Five-Sided Squirrel Cage really believe they can reform the Mexican judiciary and infuse the police with virtuous fervor for American ideals. I spoke to a field-grade American officer about this. He had taken a six-month intensive course in Spanish at the Defense Language Institute and spoke less Spanish than my daughter did after two weeks here. The money would be used to reform the Mexican government, he said, which would then make short work of the narcos. He explained this with the earnest mission-orientedness that officers display when they are about to do something senseless.

I didn’t say, “Give me a freaking break,” because I knew it would accomplish nothing. You don’t “reform” countries you don’t understand by solemn brainless enthusiasm. The money would vanish like water in dry sand. Mexico does not want to be remade in the image of the United States, for remarkably good reasons. The more the US meddles, the less legitimate the government that permits it will be. Not a good idea.

Why does the military regularly misestimate the nature of the Third World? Because soldiers live, and think, in a rigid, conformist, orderly world in which good (us) and evil (them) are starkly distinct, in which one gives orders and things happen, in which all are on the team and working toward a common goal. Officers are insular, self-righteous, ruthless (after all, they are fighting Evil) and clueless. The workings of the Third World are the polar opposite of orderliness of the military. The colonels are

instantly lost in the complex relationships, informal arrangements, family loyalties and invisible politics of Latin America. And they do not understand that when they intervene, they are not the good guys.

This is why we hear again and again from some buzz-cut horse’s ass with stars on his shoulders about how we are trying so hard to “help the Afghan people.”

One might ask: Why are drugs Mexico’s problem? Americans, huge numbers of them, want drugs. If they didn’t want drugs, the narcos couldn’t sell the stuff. But the American government doesn’t want its citizens to have drugs. Fine. Let the government attack its own citizens. Leave others out of it.

Washington isn’t going to rid the US of drugs any more than it rid the country of alcohol. Popular demand is far too great. The US crawls with crank labs, open-air crack markets, meth cookers, fields of marijuhweenie too large not to have been noticed by state authorities. California talks of legalizing grass in defiance of the Feds. All God’s chillun love drugs – good ol’ boys, Ivy League students, their professors, high-school kids, middle-class suburbanites, congressman, musicians, and several Republicans. Mexico is going to change this? They must be smoking something good in DC.

A friend recently told me of being in a boat off Florida with several honeys in bikinis aboard. A Coast Guard cutter pulled alongside because the guys wanted to look at the babes. My buddy, being sociable, holstered, “What are you guys doing?”

“We’re looking for drugs.”

“Oh. We’ll follow you.”

Whereupon the Coast Guardies broke out laughing. Even the cops don’t really care.

Mexico can’t fix things, if indeed they are broken. Leave the place alone. **CT**

*Fred Reed has worked on staff for Army Times, The Washingtonian, Soldier of Fortune, Federal Computer Week, and The Washington Times. His web site is [www.fredoneverything.net](http://www.fredoneverything.net)*

**The colonels in the Five-Sided Squirrel Cage really believe they can reform the Mexican judiciary and infuse the police with virtuous fervor for American ideals**

# Informed consent

Young people really ought to be told what they're fighting for before they enlist in the military, writes **William Blum**

**Don't ever ask any of your officers what we're fighting for. Even the generals don't know. In fact, the generals especially don't know. They would never have reached their high position if they had been able to go beyond the propaganda we're all fed**

**A**bout half the states in the US require that a woman seeking an abortion be told certain things before she can obtain the medical procedure. In South Dakota, for example, until a few months ago, staff was required to tell women: "The abortion will terminate the life of a whole, separate, unique, living human being"; the pregnant woman has "an existing relationship with that unborn human being," a relationship protected by the US Constitution and the laws of South Dakota; and a "known medical risk" of abortion is an "increased risk of suicide ideation and suicide." A federal judge has now eliminated the second and third required assertions, calling them "untruthful and misleading."

I personally would question even the first assertion about a fetus or an embryo being a human being, but that's not the point I wish to make here. I'd like to suggest that before a young American man or woman can enlist in the armed forces s/he must be told the following by the staff of the military recruitment office:

"The United States is at war [this statement is always factually correct]. You will likely be sent to a battlefield where you will be expected to do your best to terminate the lives of whole, separate, unique, living human beings you know nothing about and who have never done you or your country any harm. You may in the process lose an arm

or a leg. Or your life. If you come home alive and with all your body parts intact there's a good chance you will be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Do not expect the government to provide you particularly good care for that, or any care at all. In any case, you may wind up physically abusing your spouse and children and/or others, killing various individuals, abusing drugs and/or alcohol, and having an increased risk of suicide ideation and suicide. No matter how bad a condition you may be in, the Pentagon may send you back to the battlefield for another tour of duty. They call this 'stop-loss'. Your only alternative may be to go AWOL. Do you have any friends in Canada? And don't ever ask any of your officers what we're fighting for. Even the generals don't know. In fact, the generals especially don't know. They would never have reached their high position if they had been able to go beyond the propaganda we're all fed, the same propaganda that has influenced you to come to this office."

Since for so many young people in recent years one of the determining factors in their enlistment has been the economy, this additional thought should be pointed out to them – "You are enlisting to fight, and perhaps die, for a country that can't even provide you with a decent job, or any job at all."

*"I fear for us all, but I especially fear for those already poor. How much lower can they go without being cannon fodder or electric*

*chair fodder or street litter or prison stuffing or just plain lonely suicide?” – Carolyn Chute, novelist, Maine USA*

**Where seldom is heard a discouraging word ... like “bribery”**

I really did not know that I could still be so surprised, even shocked, by corruption in the Congress of the United States. I thought my coating of cynicism was already more than thick enough to be impervious to any new revelations. I was wrong. Consider the following.

Seven members of the House of Representatives steered hundreds of millions of dollars in largely no-bid contracts to clients of a lobbying firm, PMA Group. In fiscal year 2008 alone, the seven lawmakers sponsored \$112 million worth of “earmarks” (construction and other projects paid for by the government) for PMA clients while accepting more than \$350,000 in contributions from the firm’s clients and lobbyists.

Such behavior should be investigated by the House ethics committee, should it not? And it was. The Committee on Standards of Official Conduct issued a report stating unanimously that the Congressmembers had not violated any rules or laws. “Simply because a member sponsors an earmark for an entity that also happens to be a campaign contributor does not, on these two facts alone, support a claim that a member’s actions are being influenced by campaign contributions.”

Ethics watchdogs issued sharp denunciations, citing portions of the report that showed that the private companies themselves thought that their donations helped them win earmarks.

One of the seven Congressmembers investigated was Peter J. Visclosky (D-Ind.) The Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE), a government agency not composed of members of Congress, which conducts preliminary reviews, found probable cause that Visclosky sought contributions in exchange for steering federal contracts to contributors. The OCE was in possession of e-mails suggesting that Visclosky’s fundraisers were spe-

cifically targeted toward PMA’s clients who were seeking earmarks. Even though the OCE recommended that the more powerful House ethics committee subpoena Visclosky and his staff to answer questions under oath about his earmarking practice, the members of the House committee chose not to subpoena Visclosky or any of the pertinent records.

Wait, it gets better – The FBI actually raided the PMA offices as part of an investigation into whether the company had directed illegal campaign contributions to lawmakers who helped clients obtain earmarks, and in 2009 a federal grand jury issued subpoenas to Visclosky, one of his former aides, and his political committees. But nothing – apparently nothing – could move the members of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct of the United States House of Representatives to condemn their comrades.

This is the kind of Congressional corruption that drives so many Americans – on the right and on the left – to think of forming a new party. At times, the thought hits me as well. But two factors interfere. One, the overwhelming role played by money in American electoral campaigns can trump the best of intentions. Wealthy elites have no need for any other party. The Democrats and Republicans serve their needs just fine, thank you.

And two, ideology. Gathering together a lot of people who are turned off by Congressional venality and amorality sounds good until the ideological shit hits the fan. There will undoubtedly be a wide range of ideological leanings in any such group because people who are serious about third parties like to be “non-sectarian” or “non-exclusionary”, but this typically leads to serious friction, disputes and splits. Even if you specify something like “the United States should get out of Afghanistan as soon as possible”, that can still take various conflicting forms; people’s politics are complicated, not to mention confused. To those who like to tell themselves and others that they don’t have any particular ideology I say this: If you have thoughts about why the world is the way it is, why

**Seven members of the House of Representatives steered hundreds of millions of dollars in largely no-bid contracts to clients of a lobbying firm, PMA Group**

## ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

**What would it take for free health care to reach the shores of the world's only superpower? Well, a president who believed in it and who had some backbone. But every passing day brings us fresh evidence that the man has no backbone**

society is the way it is, why people are the way they are, what a better way would look like, and if your thoughts are at all organized, that's your ideology, even if it's not wholly conscious as such. Better to organize those thoughts as best you can, become very conscious of them, and consciously avoid getting involved with a political party that is incompatible. It's like a bad marriage.

Things are indeed polarizing in America. There's The Tea Party on the right and The Coffee Party on the left. On the face of it, The Tea Party scarcely makes any sense. A seemingly burgeoning new movement semi-hysterically marching and screaming that their beloved free enterprise is threatened by the "socialist" Barack Obama. (What next, that he's a committed "Marxist" or "communist"? They've probably already said that; if you're going to be dumb you may as well go all the way and be retarded.)

A group of more mainstream conservatives gathered February 17 at a Virginia estate once owned by George Washington and called for a return to the principles of Washington's time to fight the political battles that lie ahead. They produced a declaration, "The Mount Vernon Statement: Constitutional Conservatism: A Statement for the 21st Century". It is a short statement, a mere 546 words, yet the idea of "limited government" or "self-government" is referred to seven times. These people, no less than the Teapartyers, are obsessed with the idea that government intrusion into society of virtually any kind is harmful, or at least much inferior to what could be derived from "free enterprise, the individual entrepreneur, and economic reforms grounded in market solutions", as they put it. This is standard and familiar conservative doctrine to be sure, but now feeding and powering a whole new generation of right-wing activists.

To counter the arguments of these activists, progressives need to present their own doctrine about the role and value of government in people's lives, a concise summary of which I just happen to have prepared in my essay: "The US invades, bombs and kills

for it ... but do Americans really believe in free enterprise?" It was written several years ago, as the examples I use make clear, but this matters not for the ideological principles have not changed. The essay concludes: "Activists have to remind the American people of what they've already learned but seem to have forgotten: that they don't want more government, or less government; they don't want big government, or small government; they want government on their side."

### **Paraguay, Honduras and Barack Obama**

During his campaign for the presidency of Paraguay, former bishop Fernando Lugo promised to bring health care to the millions unable to afford it. A month after Lugo took office in August 2008, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare (MSPBS) gradually began to make some public health services free, waiving fees for office, outpatient and emergency room visits. Later, hospital admission fees were eliminated, along with charges for intensive care, post-op incision care, treatment in an infant incubator, oxygen therapy, surgery and other services. In 2009, fees were removed for diagnostic tests in all specialties, and for dental and ophthalmological services. Almost all public health services in Paraguay are now free of charge. "What we are doing is making health care a right, regardless of a person's ability to pay," said the director general of the MSPBS.

After 61 years of rule by the right-wing Colorado Party, the Paraguayan left needs to institute various reforms to make sure that free health care is sustainable in the long term.

So what would it take for free health care to reach the shores of the world's only superpower? Well, a president who believed in it and who had some backbone. But every passing day brings us fresh evidence that the man has no backbone. The Republicans, or certain Democrats, or a powerful lobby, or Israel applies a little pressure and the man buckles. Like a shack in Haiti during a quake.

As to his beliefs ... In May of last year I

wrote in this report: “The problem, I’m increasingly afraid, is that the man doesn’t really believe strongly in anything, certainly not in controversial areas. He learned a long time ago how to take positions that avoid controversy, how to express opinions without clearly and firmly taking sides, how to talk eloquently without actually saying anything, how to leave his listeners’ heads filled with stirring clichés, platitudes, and slogans. And it worked. Oh how it worked! What could happen now, as President of the United States, to induce him to change his style?”

How long before Fernando Lugo lets slip some critical remarks about the behemoth to the north that tosses Paraguay into the ODE (Officially Designated Enemy) dumpster along with Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, et al.? Undoubtedly, there are any number of old-time right-wing military officers in Paraguay who are just itching to duplicate what happened in Honduras. I can

hear them now – “We don’t need no stinkin’ socialist government with its stinkin’ communist free health care” – and just waiting for someone at the Pentagon to casually nod his head.

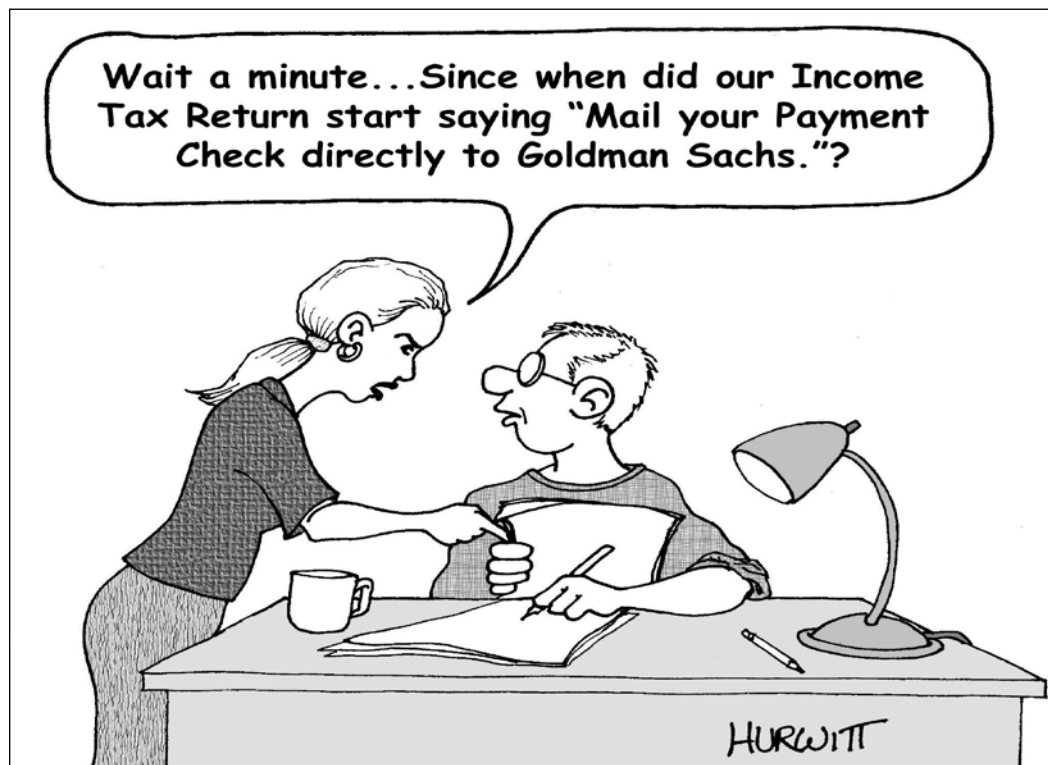
And if that happens, the Obama administration will embrace the Paraguayan caudillos just as they’ve done with the Honduran golpistas, the latest show of support being the announcement by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton of the resumption of aid and her urging Latin American countries to recognize the new Honduran government, despite its serious and daily violations of human rights. **CT**

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

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**HURWITT’S EYE**

Mark Hurwitz



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