

SAM PIZZIGATI | THE END OF MASS AFFLUENCE
SHERWOOD ROSS | THE UNITED LOONEY BIN OF AMERICA
CRAIG MURRAY | KILLING SIRTE TO SAVE IT

SEPTEMBER 2011

ColdType

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Last month's riots in London showed how Western governments react under crisis in much the same way as the foreign dictators they're so keen to overthrow. Prime Minister David Cameron's calls to clamp down on social media and Blackberry messaging and for draconian prison sentences for what would normally be treated as minor offences are a worrying indicator of how fine the gap is between democracy and fascism in these nervous first decades of the 21st Century. In our coverage of the riots we have reports from **Felicity Arbuthnot**, who lives in the heart of the riot-hit area of the city, and **John Pilger**, who looks behind the headlines at the causes of the unrest, which were conveniently glossed over by most of Britain's frenzied media – with the notable exception of the *Guardian* – wallowed in a sea of rage and hypocrisy.

Tony Sutton, Editor

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Dispatch from the London trenches

Felicity Arbuthnot, whose home is in one of the areas hit most by London's August riots, tells of bravery, compassion and hope amidst the devastation

"Stuff happens and it's untidy, and freedom's untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things." – Donald Rumsfeld on Iraq looting (April 11, 2003.)

According to millionaire politicians living off the British state, courtesy of the British taxpayers, those responsible for the recent riots on London's streets were the "feral" youth, "black youth", "low life scum living off the State", lazy, feckless, people from sink estates.

The neighbourhoods from which trouble erupted are "poor," and "deprived", those living there are "unemployed", "barely literate" and from "urban wastelands."

Here, where I live in the east end of London, terrible things did happen. Large franchises and small businesses went up in flames or were comprehensively looted and then trashed. In scenes echoed across the country, shops – especially stores that held tempting displays of designer clothes, sportsgear and electrical goods – were stripped and then destroyed. Cars were rarely stolen, instead they were torched.

Inexplicably, health food outlet Holland and Barret had a tell-tale boarded window. "What did they take from here?" I asked. "Two large jars of protein tablets and a lot of packets of dried apricots", said the as-

sistant with a grin: "Perhaps their energy was flagging."

Two minutes up the road was an encapsulation of tragedies repeated throughout the country. Shiva Kandiah is the embodiment of what makes this part of London special. He gradually built up his aptly named Convenience Store over 11 years. Open from early till late, locals could pay bills, top up mobile phones, send and receive money via Western Union, and buy anything from coffee to London travel tickets, tacos to tequila, newspapers to nut crunch.

His lovingly nurtured little business was a stripped, burned hulk. The varying payment machines lay – melted – in a pile inside the door. He walked towards me, this upright, gracious man, with a look in his eyes that should have been seen by those who did this. The questions vanished, I could only put my hands on his shoulders and gulp: "I am so sorry, so, so sorry." There was just one thought: "But you must have known some of those who did this?"

"Yes, yes, yes." The pain, incomprehension, broken trust, was palpable.

In the short time I had been in the shop, a beautifully written letter had been stuck to the outside of the door. One line read: "You, your shop and the people who hung out there, were the closest thing to a community we had."

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And the same mix of people – of all colours and from all walks of life, were cleaning up the bewildering debris across London and across England, as had created it, bringing brooms and brushes from home. Many spontaneously-painted boards were nailed over broken windows in bright colours, cheerily camouflaging destruction.

An appeal started for Mr Kandiah – whose stock was uninsured (cost prohibitive) raised £13,000 in little over 24 hours. In 48 hours it raised enough to replace most of the damaged and stolen stock had been reached.

In nearby Tottenham, 89-year-old Aaron Biber’s looted barber’s shop was reopened, the money to restock it raised in under a week. Instant appeals were launched on networking sites for clothes, bedding and food for those who had lost their homes.

These generous actions were replicated nationwide. Countless thousands of brightly coloured “post it” notes appeared on pavements and boarded businesses, tiny messages of solidarity and hope to the area and its people.

Finally, Prime Minister David Cameron, London Mayor Boris Johnson (a man who could transform a possie of priests, pacifists and nuns to rioters in moments) and Home Secretary Theresa May straggled reluctantly home from their holiday villas in sunny climes.

They chastised the police, Cameron condemned violence as “utterly unacceptable.” – ironically, at the same time as, under his instructions, Royal Air Force bombs were falling in support of looters, arsonists and violent rioters in Libya.

Did the police make mistakes? Certainly, during the near instantaneous eruption of massive violence; they are human. But, along with the fire and ambulance services, they were the ones running into burning buildings while others were running out – as Cameron et al were sunning in their holiday retreats.

Mayor Johnson told how he watched scenes of the unrest on a television at Calgary airport. Despite the shock, however, he said he was determined that it would not deter people traveling for the 2012 Olympics, due to take place just down the road from the carnage. Initially, there were no words of comfort for the terrified, injured, displaced and front line emergency services. Days later, he pitched up – booted and suited – in Tottenham for a photo-op, surrounded by police security, wielding a broom.

Tottenham has a large population of African descent. Fortunately, they were seemingly unaware of the opinions of them and the continent from which their ancestors originated when, commenting on a visit by Tony Blair to the Congo, Johnson wrote several years earlier: “No doubt the AK47s will fall silent, and the pangas will stop their hacking of human flesh, and the tribal warriors will all break out in watermelon smiles to see the big white chief touch down in his big white British taxpayer-funded bird.”

There was some current taxpayer funding, as one correspondent noted of David Cameron: “ ... addressing the recalled Parliament as he spits venom at the youth of Britain, it was interesting to note that all recalled MPs had been told by email to make sure they claim their full expenses of having to return from holidays.”

This, as banks and mortgage companies announced that there would not be even temporary mortgage freeze for those whose homes and businesses had burned down.

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Guarding the hospital

In the midland city of Birmingham, the Children’s Hospital staff formed a human chain around it to prevent attack by approaching rioters. When Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg eventually showed up in the city, he arrived in a reinforced limo, venturing out surrounded by Special

Branch officers. As he talked of making those responsible clean up the mess (already done) in orange jump suits, he was booed. His own juvenile past, incidentally, is not quite arson free, for Clegg had admitted setting fire to two greenhouses as a schoolboy of 16, the same age as many of the rioters.

Birmingham, however, brought forward a voice of sanity which rang round the nation and the world. Three young men, Haroon Jahan, Shazad Ali, Abdul Musavir, were “standing outside the shops where everyone goes”, attempting to protect them from looters. They were mown down by a car and died.

After spending the night at his dying son Haroon’s bedside, Tariq Jahan, his father, returned home, stood on a wall and told the crowd: “I lost my son. Blacks, Asians, whites – we all live in the same community. Why do we have to kill one another? Why are we doing this? Step forward if you want to lose your sons. Otherwise, calm down and go home. Please.”

When an estimated 20,000 came to pay their last respects to the three young men, in the city’s Summerfield Park, they came and left in dignified quiet and calm. At this Muslim farewell, one speaker prior to the funeral prayer was Alan Blumenthal from the nearby Synagogue. The people were, he said: “beacons of light.” One man flew from Saudia Arabia because he had been so touched by the tragedy and Mr Jahan’s reaction to it.

Here comes Harry

As politicians and dignitaries trailed round the country, getting in the way, looking earnest for the cameras, guards and flunkies in tow, communities were busy rebuilding. There is a long way to go, but as Planet Westminster pontificates, the real world is carefully, painstakingly regenerating. Seldom have the “great and the good” seemed more irrelevant.

Perhaps the ultimate irony was that Prince Harry, no stranger to the odd bit of unruliness himself, memorably photographed on the appropriated motor bike of a local in Afghanistan, took time from Apache flight training and his plans to return there to destroy people and property on industrial scale – went to Manchester.

Surrounded by Royal Protection Officers, he toured a city much of which resembled a war zone itself. The 240-retail outlets of the Arndale Centre (motto: “Whatever you’ve got in mind, we’ve got it inside”) were widely damaged. The Prince said he was “shocked” at what he saw, and that police had to face, rocks and bricks raining down from rioters. Then he returned to an air base in rural Suffolk to resume training to rain bullets and missiles on the poorest of the poor.

So who was it who ran riot over swathes of England (not Scotland, or Wales). The mix seems to have been broadly consistent, wherever trouble erupted: the criminal, opportunist, neglected (children reported as young as six and seven) the organized, unemployed, employed and the unexpected. People, it seemed, from all walks of life.

An elegant “Olympic Ambassador” was charged with violent disorder, burglary and attacking a police car. She was to meet and greet visitors in 2012 and had previously been photographed with Mayor Johnson, Sports Minister Richard Caborne, and former M.P., now Olympic Authority Chairman, Lord Sebastian Coe.

The accused, and often savagely convicted, included a primary school teaching “mentor”, university students, Oxford University law graduate, aspiring ballerina, an accounts clerk, postman, lifeguard, scaffolder, model, estate agent, a brace of chefs, a millionaire’s daughter and a 70-year-old.

Desperate to be seen doing something, one Cameron response was to demand restrictions on social networking web sites. He seemed again to miss the irony as, during January’s first uprising in the Middle

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East when Egypt moved to block social media. Cameron called Facebook and Twitter “the entitlement of people everywhere, (from) Tahrir Square (to) Trafalgar Square.” Not now, it seemed, from Tottenham to Trafalgar Square.

At the height of the chaos, when I was walking the couple of miles home – a bus for once would have been preferable, but they were burning or headed for safety – I saw many groups of 20-30 youths, only their eyes visible through balaclavas or black scarves wrapped “SAS” or “Special Services” style round their faces. Perhaps they’d been watching too many war videos.

I attempted invisibility. At the rear of a shuttered 24-hour food superstore, I saw a group smashing their way in. Turning back down a temporarily unaffected side street, I banged on the window of a local pub where customers were inside, behind locked doors. They called the police, asking me in, “until things calm down.”

It was dusk. A walk in the dark was a no-brainer. I left.

Minutes away, Mr Kandiah’s shop and street were being looted and torched. As this happened, Father Rob Wickham, a priest from nearby St John at Hackney ⁷ and the Bishop of Stepney, the Rt. Revd., Adrian Newman, walked past the burning cars, through smoke and a chaotic mob of looters, trying to defuse the situation, successfully negotiating for an ambulance to be allowed to transport a badly injured woman to hospital.

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The enemy within

It was humbling for some commentators to see the lead taken by the much-abused Muslim community in dealing with the violence. In 2003, people went from across the Western world to become human shields in Iraq in an attempt to prevent war. In 2011 the Muslim community acted as human shields against another kind of violence. In

East London and elsewhere, Turkish and Kurdish shop owners, some holding kebab knives prominently, stood their ground, protecting businesses and properties.

After twenty years of a steady political drip, drip of the “Muslim threat”, the cultural “enemy” came from within. There was not a hijab, niqab, abaya or dish dasha amongst the rioters. There were many, however, among the protectors and peacemakers. Faces were covered across the country though, with scarves and balaclavas. Perhaps they should be banned.

As a final thought, I wonder if Mr. Cameron recalls the then-Defence Secretary, Geoffrey Hoon’s statement on looting, to Parliament on 8th April 2003, and how his fellow politicians rocked with mirth. Hoon told the House of Commons that most looting had so far been confined to Iraqi citizens “liberating” items and “redistributing wealth amongst the Iraqi people.”

To laughter, he said: “I regard such behaviour perhaps, as good practice ...” ⁸

In Libya, as I write this, looters are being shown taking furniture and goods away in wheelbarrows, stripping homes, buildings and offices.

Of London looting, Cameron said in Parliament: “I want to make it very clear. I get it. This stuff matters.” Further: “Looting and senseless violence must stop.” On August 22, Moussa Ibrahim, Libya’s government spokesman, spoke passionately of NATO-backed “liberators”, “Burning houses, burning cars, looting shops, stealing our money.”

In England, it appears, criminal behaviour is a national tragedy but in Libya and other invaded lands not only does “stuff” not matter, but looting is “good practice”, – with Britain’s finest seemingly assisting in enabling it. Do these people ever wonder what they are teaching our children? **CT**

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Felicity Arbuthnot is a freelance journalist specialising in social and environmental issues

Insurrection in London

John Pilger argues that while crime does feed on riots, it does not ignite them

On a warm spring day, strolling in south London, I heard demanding voices behind me. A police van disgorged a posse of six or more officers, who waved me aside. They surrounded a young black man who, like me, was ambling along. They appropriated him; they rifled his pockets, looked in his shoes, inspected his teeth. Their thuggery affirmed, they let him go with the barked warning there would be a next time.

For the young at the bottom of the pyramid of wealth and patronage and poverty that is modern Britain, mostly the black, the marginalised and resentful, the envious and hopeless, there is never surprise.

Their relationship with authority is integral to their obsolescence as young adults. Half of all black British youth between the ages of 18 and 24 are unemployed, the result of deliberate policies since Margaret Thatcher oversaw the greatest transfer of wealth from the bottom to the top in British history. Forget plasma TVs, this was panoramic looting.

Succumbing to propaganda

Such is the truth of David Cameron's "sick society", notably its sickest, most criminal, most feral "pocket": the square mile of the City of London where, with political approval, the banks and super-rich have

trashed the British economy and the lives of millions. This is fast becoming unmentionable as we succumb to propaganda once described by the American black leader Malcolm X thus: "If you're not careful the newspapers will have you hating the oppressed and loving the people doing the oppressing."

As they lined up to buy their class bigotry and hypocrisy in parliament, barely a handful of MPs spoke this truth. Heirs to Edmund Burke's 18th century rants against the "mob rule" of a "swinish multitude", not one referred to previous rebellions in Brixton, Tottenham and Liverpool in the 1980s when Lord Scarman reported that "complex political, social and economic factors" had caused a "disposition towards violent protest" and recommended urgent remedial action.

Instead, Labour and Liberal bravehearts – among them the Labour MP Hazel Blears; remember her notorious expenses? – called for water cannon and everything draconian. None made the obvious connection between the greatest inequality since records were kept, a police force that routinely abuses a section of the population and kills with impunity and a permanent state of colonial warfare with an arms trade to match: the apogee of violence.

It hardly seemed coincidental that on the day before Cameron raged against

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“phony human rights”, NATO aircraft – which include British bombers sent by him – killed a reported 85 civilians in a peaceful Libyan town.

These were people in their homes, children in their schools. Watch the BBC’s man on the spot trying his best to dispute the evidence of his eyes, just as the political and media class sought to discredit the evidence of a civilian bloodbath in Iraq as epic as the Rwanda genocide. Who are the criminals?

This is not in any way to excuse the violence of the rioters, many of whom were opportunistic, mean, cruel, nihilistic and often vicious in their glee: an authentic reflection of a system of greed and self-interest to which scores of parasitic money-movers, “entrepreneurs”, Murdochites, corrupt MPs and bent coppers have devoted themselves.

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Forbidden word

On 4 August, the BBC’s Fiona Armstrong – aka Lady MacGregor of MacGregor – interviewed the writer Darcus Howe, who dared use the forbidden word, “insurrection”.

Armstrong: “Mr. Howe, you say you are not shocked [by the riots]? Does this mean you condone what happened?”

Howe: “Of course not ... what I am concerned about is a young man Mark Duggan ... the police blew his head off.”

Armstrong: “Mr. Howe, we have to wait for the official enquiry to say things like that. We don’t know what happened to Mr. Duggan. We have to wait for the police report.”

On 8 August, the Independent Police Complaints Commission acknowledged there was “no evidence” that Duggan had fired a shot at police. Duggan was shot in the face on 4 August by a police officer with a Heckler and Koch MP5 sub-machine gun – the same weapon supplied by Britain to dictatorships that use them against

their own people. I saw the result in East Timor where Indonesian troops also blew the heads off people with these state-of-the-art weapons supplied by both Tory and Labour governments.

An eyewitness to Duggan’s killing told the *Evening Standard*, “About three or four police officers had [him] pinned on the ground at gunpoint. They were really big guns and then I heard four loud shots. The police shot him on the floor.”

This is how the Metropolitan Police shot dead Jean Charles de Menezes on the floor of a London Underground train. And there was Robert Stanley and Ian Tomlinson, and many more. The police lied about Duggan’s killing as they have lied about the others. Since 1998, more than 330 people have died in police custody and not one officer has been convicted. Where is the political and media outrage about this “culture of fear”?

“Funny, too,” noted the journalist Melanie MacFadyean, “that the police did nothing while some serious looting went on – surely not because they wanted everyone to see that cutting the police force meant more crime?”

Still, the brooms have arrived. In an age of public relations as news, the clean-up campaign, however well-meant by many people, can also serve the government’s and media goal of sweeping inequality and hopelessness under gentrified carpets, with cheery volunteers armed with their brand new brooms and pointedly described as “Londoners” as if the rest are aliens. The otherwise absent Boris Johnson waved his new broom.

Another Etonian, the former PR man to an asset stripper and current prime minister up to his neck in Hackgate, would surely approve. **CT**

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John Pilger’s latest film, “The War You Don’t See”, is now available on DVD at Amazon.co.uk. His web site is www.johnpilger.com

The day Canada's public broadcaster lost its soul

Tim Knight is concerned about the fall in broadcasting standards at the CBC, Canada's national television service

The date was July 7, 2011 – the day Canada pulled its troops out of Afghanistan after nine years of pointless bloody war. One hundred and sixty-one Canadian soldiers and civilians died in the war. By the close of this day we'd lost more troops per capita in Afghanistan than any of the other 21 coalition nations – including the United States which started the war. Canada's Afghan war, it's longest-ever, cost some \$18-billion.

July 7, 2011 was an historic, momentous day for our nation. A day to remember. A day to show respect. A day to mourn. A day, perhaps, to celebrate.

Yet you wouldn't have had a clue about this day's significance if you watched the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) flagship news program on the evening of July 7, 2011.

The National devoted its entire first section to blanket coverage of Will and Kate, Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, smiling sweetly and shaking hands at the Calgary Stampede, arguably the world's biggest rodeo.

This, after endless, excruciating weeks of CBC News fawning over these two pretty celebrities who had never actually done anything of note except get married and come visit us on their honeymoon. (The National, in particularly parlous economic times, had

already spent a hugely expensive week in London covering that wedding live.)

So – the thirteenth day of the Will and Kate tour of Canada was lead story on The National. Then, after a long commercial break, came a murder trial in Florida, floods in China, a stadium collapse somewhere and a dust storm in Arizona.

Only after all this entirely meaningless celebrity-adoring, foreign crime and weather, did The National report on the end of Canada's mission to Afghanistan – the sixth story in its lineup, reported not from brutal, battered Kandahar, but voiced-over from Toronto, using free pool video.

Part reason for the decision, according to a CBC journalist who shall be nameless was: "National Defence was very conflicted about how to wrap the mission and was getting cool responses from Ottawa."

Other sources claimed the Defence Department wanted a classic farewell parade with marching bands and all the traditional pomp and ceremony, banners, drums and pipes, the military adores. Ideally, a patriotic speech from the Prime Minister. If not, it would settle for the Minister of Defence. In fact, the end of the war turned out to be a very low-key affair and no Canadian politician showed up to say goodbye. Apparently the government – all too aware that most Canadians had long lost any enthusiasm

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for a foolish war which ended sans victory, not even a truce – decided Canadian troops would slip away with as little fanfare, ceremony and publicity as possible.

Sceptics believe CBC News went along with the politicians.

July 7, 2011 was the day I finally lost all respect for The National.

I really, really didn't want to write this story. The National is in my blood, a truly significant part of my life. Back in the seventies, I wrote for, reported for, then produced the program. Back in those days we weren't perfect, but we were fiercely protective of The National's journalistic integrity, its rigorous journalistic standards, its mission to bring understanding of the world we live in, its dedication to reporting news that truly mattered. We believed absolutely that The National was the best damn newscast in the whole damn world.

Over the years since, however, I've watched it decline from proud, damn-the-torpedoes, public service journalism, to just another pointless, hungry-for-ratings, TV news program, no better than the private networks. (At least the privates have the excuse that they aren't Canada's public broadcaster, directly subsidized by Canadian taxpayers and aren't, therefore, mandated to "serve to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada.")

In a cruelly ironic touch, The National's campaign to persuade Canadians to watch the news we pay for was designed by very expensive American news doctors.

If you really want more Canadians to watch, those doctors advised, don't spend your money on all that expensive international crap. Nobody cares. If you must run international stuff, you can get most of it for free from other broadcasters and do the voice-over here in Canada. Anyway, viewers don't want you explaining the world they live in. They want "human" stories. They want celebrities. Crime sells. Disasters sell. Accidents sell. Weather sells. Floods sell. Fires

sell. Get with it Canadians!

The result – CBC's The National today. A once-proud public service news program that's lost its soul, its journalistic innocence.

The warning signs have loomed for years. I base my opinion on watching The National, on and off, for the last 30 years or so. But also from notes (nine pages, 4,000 words) written after screening it every night for seven consecutive evenings, then re-screening the next day.

My research is based on only one program, CBC's flagship The National. But I believe this criticism – with local variations – is valid for almost all TV news here and in most other countries.

Recognize any of these problems in your TV News?

- A patronizing chief-anchor-for-life who can read a teleprompter without stumbling, yet almost never actually seems to feel the scenes he describes. Unless it's politics, his speciality, he rather obviously doesn't care what's in the stories, doesn't see the scenes, doesn't feel the emotions. Has no genuine human response. As a result, of course, neither does the viewer.

As interviewer, he delights in long speeches, presenting his own very important view of the matter before finally getting to his question. In one interview the question droned on for 40 seconds, another lasted 30 seconds.

- Fill-in anchors, most of whom communicate no better than the ageing king, specialize in perkiness and fake smiles, never sound (or look) like real people thinking aloud and talk down to us like elementary school teachers.

And how they emote! Presumably that's because it's such a big studio and the cameras are so far away. Someone should tell them they don't have to push their voices like fairground barkers because it's not the faraway cameras that record their voices, but lavalier microphones pinned right there on their chests.

- Writing that lacks insight, knowledge,

wit, clarity and style. Writing filled with clichés, codes, bromides and jargon. Writing that too often tells the entire story in the anchor's introduction, then has the reporter repeat identical information in the body of the story.

- Reporters who announce in a most unnatural manner, confuse speed and volume with energy and authority.

- Reporters who believe their own dulcet tones are far more interesting and important than the views of real people who were actual players in the story. As a result, endless reporter narrations, leaving time for only the briefest of responses from interviewees.

- Reporters who never learned storytelling and still follow old newspaper style – starting the story at the end, the climax, then working back to the context through which the story could be understood.

- Reporters who seem to have no idea that good storytelling is almost always a chronological journey (context, dramatic development, moving inexorably to climax. In that order.) Why? Because in real life, cause usually precedes effect. And, anyway, life is chronological. Storytelling brings life, drama and meaning to stories – whether about a couple who've just lost their home, or an analysis of the 9/11 attack on the twin towers.

- Reporters who believe asking puzzled people-in-the-street silly questions about matters in which they have no expertise is keeping in touch with the masses.

- Editing that randomly places reporter narration over cuts. But the human eye is more powerful than the ear. So when there's a new scene after a cut the viewer stops listening to the aural information while trying to make sense of the new visual. When viewers are forced to make a choice, video always tops audio.

- Story after story that are merely events, are cheap and easy to shoot, have no meaning, bring no understanding, illustrate nothing of value.

- A weather section at the end of the pro-

gram that takes up precious minutes and is entirely useless as an explanation of the weather over six time zones in the world's second largest country.

- And, of course, the aforementioned concentration on often-meaningless “human” stories the news doctors promise will make Canadians watch, thus increasing ratings and, no doubt, bringing glory to CBC executives.

- And much, much more.

I don't really blame the CBC journalists – that dwindling band of digitally-stained wretches – who serve The National as best they can. In fact, CBC News still has a few of the finest, most dedicated journalists in all Canada. When they can get airtime, the CBC's handful of travel-worn foreign correspondents are among the very best in the world. Its investigations into wrongdoing are exceptional, if too occasional.

In the main, however, Canada's public broadcasting flagship The National is no longer in service to the Canadian people. It would rather fawn over such as Will and Kate, than tell truth to power. It's forgotten that as journalism goes, so goes democracy.

Simply put, the senior executives responsible for The National have gone rotten, abandoned the organization's mandate and, in their rabid race for ratings, lost their journalistic focus and with it their journalistic integrity.

That sad, obsequious, pandering, insolent evening of July 7, 2011 was the inevitable result.

CT

Tim Knight is a freelance Toronto documentary film-maker and communications consultant. He's won Emmy and Sigma Delta Chi awards for journalism and has worked for ABC, NBC and PBS and for 10 years was executive producer and lead trainer for CBC TV Journalism Training. His most recent book, "Storytelling and the Anima Factor" [Amazon and lulu.com], is now in its second edition. Knight can be reached at www.TimKnight.org.)

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This essay was originally published in a shorter version on the Establishment-oriented and usually conservative Canadian Journalism Foundation's J-Source website at http://www.timknight.org/Site/The_National.html

Airport screening: Repression or discretion?

America's airport security staff are an international joke. **William John Cox** looks at what's wrong and offers some solutions to the problems

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Air travelers dare not complain. TSA standards focus additional scrutiny on travelers who are "very arrogant" and express "contempt against airport passenger procedures"
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Google "TSA stupidity" and you will find that almost one-and-a-half million websites have something to say about the subject. If the United States is to avoid another major terrorist attack on its air transportation system without placing greater restrictions on the civil liberties of air travelers, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) had better get smart.

Everyone who travels by air in the United States has a depressing story to tell about airport screening. Media stories of a gravely ill 95-year-old grandmother forced to remove her adult diaper before being allowed on a plane and viral videos showing terrified children being intimately touched by TSA agents are more than depressing. They are a chilling commentary on the police state increasingly accepted by the American public in the name of security.

Air travelers dare not complain. TSA standards focus additional scrutiny on travelers who are "very arrogant" and express "contempt against airport passenger procedures."

Is such repression the only choice? Or, can TSA officers be trained to exercise the necessary discretion to detect would-be terrorists, while allowing innocent travelers to swiftly and safely pass through screening?

A reasonable and practical balance in airport security screening policy must be

obtained before another terrorist attack results in even greater repression.

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Today's TSA

Shocked that poorly-trained airport security guards allowed terrorists armed with box cutters to board and use four passenger airplanes as flying missiles of mass destruction, Congress established the TSA two months after 9-11.

Fifty thousand Transportation Security Officers (TSO) were quickly hired and rushed through one-week training courses. Although these officers are now federal employees and receive improved training, they are still security guards. Even so, as "officers" of Homeland Security, they exercise great power over the flying public.

TSA transformed contract screening guards into quasi-law enforcement officers and provided uniform training and policies; however, the TSA was organized as a top-down directed organization which allows very little discretion to individual officers. It's "one size fits all" approach to screening results in well intended, but often outrageous conduct by its agents.

In an attempt to prevent collective bargaining and to avoid adding Democratic-leaning permanent workers to the federal bureaucracy, the Republican-controlled Congress exempted TSA employees from

most federal civil service laws. Instead, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the TSA administrator were given virtually unlimited authority to create a personnel system. This action was to have a number of unintended consequences.

Although legislation has been introduced to bring TSA officers into the federal civil service, the TSA administrator retains absolute control over the personnel system. Exercising this power, administrator John Pistole granted some bargaining rights earlier this year.

While Pistole's order provides greater job protection to officers, it does nothing to improve the existing TSA personnel selection system. As presently constituted, the employment process perpetuates mediocrity and limits the ability of TSA managers to hire and promote the most qualified officers.

Currently TSA job applicants primarily use the Internet to identify job announcements for TSA airport operations at more than 450 airports, complete applications and take an online test to measure their ability to operate screening equipment.

All English-speaking US citizens over the age of 18 with a high school diploma, a GED, or one year of experience as a security officer or x-ray technician, meet the basic requirements for TSA officers, as long as they are current in their payment of income taxes and child support.

The main problem is that, once applicants meet these minimum requirements and pass a physical examination, drug screening and perfunctory background investigation, they are lumped together with all other applicants in a hiring pool for each job site.

Unlike general civil service rules, there are no ranked lists of the most qualified applicants within these pools.

Under the personnel standards established by the TSA administrator, local managers are required to select officers from the hiring pool based on the earliest applicant

first, irrespective of their additional qualifications. Thus, a local TSA manager must hire a high-school dropout with a GED and no experience who applied one day before a college graduate with a degree in criminal justice and who earned his or her way through college working for the campus police department. While some managers conduct oral interviews of candidates, only in rare cases are they allowed to reject candidates who meet the minimum qualifications.

Laboring under a flawed selection process and making the best of available candidates, TSA has identified three basic ways to achieve mission effectiveness: baggage inspection, passenger screening and, most recently, behavior observation.

Although every checked bag is not hand inspected, passengers are not allowed to lock baggage unless special TSA locks are used. As a result most bags are inspected by inspectors who are either working alone or under limited supervision.

There have been some recent improvements in baggage security; however, the *New York Press* reports that "according to Transportation Security Administration records, press reports and court documents, . . . approximately 500 TSA officers" have been "fired or suspended for stealing from passenger luggage since the agency's creation. . . ."

Every passenger is personally screened before boarding commercial aircraft and the majority of TSA officers are deployed to handle this task. Having a mission in which officers "literally touch passengers" and their most private possessions "requires a workforce of the best and brightest" according to Nico Melendez, TSA Public Affairs Manager of the Pacific Region.

Unfortunately, because of low hiring standards and minimum training, many, if not most, screening officers possess poor people skills and manage to offend a large portion of the flying public on a daily basis.

Seeking to emulate the Israeli model of

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Many screening officers possess poor people skills and manage to offend a large portion of the flying public on a daily basis

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The result is that screaming children are being felt up by strangers and the sick and elderly are publicly humiliated
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“identifying the bomber, rather than the bomb,” TSA deployed Behavior Detection Officers (BDO) in 2007 under its Screening of Passengers by Observation Techniques (SPOT) program. Officers randomly ask passengers questions, such as “Where are you traveling,” while looking for facial cues that might indicate deception or terrorist intent, leading to additional questioning and closer inspection of baggage.

Thousands of BDOs are now working in hundreds of airports and the program is being expanded; however, they are generally selected from screening personnel and only given two weeks of training before being deployed.

There has been no scientific validation of the program and, although there have been hundreds of criminal arrests, most have been for documentation issues, such as immigration violations and outstanding warrants.

Would improved personnel selection procedures of TSA officers better insure the safety of the flying public and reduce the incidence of civil rights violations?

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Building a Better TSA

The essential question is whether TSA officers are security guards or police officers when it comes to the manner in which they lay hands on the bodies and belongings of passengers. The difference in the two roles being the manner and extent to which they make decisions.

Security guards with minimal training cannot be expected to exercise discretion in critical matters. They are told exactly what or what not to do. The result is that screaming children are being felt up by strangers and the sick and elderly are publicly humiliated.

On the other hand, even with the “mandatory” criminal laws passed in the past 30 years, America’s free society still requires the exercise of arrest, prosecution and sentencing discretion in the criminal justice

system, if there is to be individual justice in an individual case.

TSA must rethink the manner in which its officers are hired and trained to allow greater discretion, without an unacceptable rise in the risk of a terrorist attack.

The TSA has been moving in this direction with its “risk-based intelligence-driven screening process”; however, its steps have been hesitant and unsure, as it has staggered from incident to increasingly negative incident.

Melendez believes the key to successful screening is a workforce capable of implementing a risk-based screening process based upon updated software and equipment and ready access to an improved data base.

So, how can a marginally trained group of 50,000 security guards be converted into a professional workforce, which has the intellectual ability and training to use sophisticated detection equipment and computer data bases and which allows TSA officers to decide which sick person or young child should be allowed to proceed without a mandatory body search?

Selection. A former high-level TSA manager, who declined to be publicly identified, firmly believes that TSA could build an elite organization, if local managers were simply allowed to rank the hiring pools by qualifications, rather than having to hire the candidate who filed the earliest application.

Certainly there is a need to avoid discrimination in hiring and to create a “diverse and inclusive” workforce that is reflective of the public it serves; however, police departments have used a civil service process for decades that involves testing and interviews to establish priority lists to ensure the employment and promotion of the most qualified candidates.

Among the federal law enforcement agencies, the FBI moves applicants through a multi-phase selection process in which advancement depends upon “their compet-

itiveness among other candidates”; Secret Service applicants must pass several examinations and a series of in-depth interviews; and ATF applicants who pass entrance exams and assessment tests have to successfully complete a “field panel interview.”

The current recession and high unemployment rate has resulted in a gigantic pool of highly-qualified and well-educated people who are looking for work. At the same time, TSA has been experiencing a fairly high turnover of employees, even though it offers a generous salary and benefit package. Given all of this, there is a golden opportunity to improve the quality of the TSA workforce, particularly as it relates to the ability of its officers to exercise discretion.

A recent informal survey of airport car rental employees revealed that all of them were college graduates; however, they generally earned less and had fewer benefits than the TSA officers who worked in the same building.

In fact, most national car rental companies require all applicants to have college degrees. Avis says, “College graduates, start your engines” in its attempt to attract “energetic pro-active college graduates who are eager to accelerate their careers in a fast-paced environment.” Enterprise “prefers” college degrees since applicants will “be involved in a comprehensive business skills training program that will help you make crucial business decisions. . . .”

Clearly it is neither necessary nor appropriate for all TSA applicants to be college graduates; however, local TSA managers should be allowed to consider levels of education, as well as length and quality of relevant experience, in establishing priority lists for hiring replacement officers and for promoting officers to supervisory or BDO positions.

Revised personnel policies that rank applicants by qualifications for these advanced positions would also allow TSA managers to directly hire more qualified candidates, such as retired police officers, for positions

requiring a higher level of decision making.

Training. Currently, most training of TSA officers is conducted through online applications of standardized instruction. While such training may be adequate to communicate rule-based procedures to security guards, it is inadequate to teach the more finely nuanced insights required for officers to safely exercise discretion in individual cases.

Behavior Detection Officers and supervisors are currently selected from the ranks of TSOs and receive as little as two weeks of additional training upon promotion. However, a successful risk-based screening process involving critical thinking requires more intensive development and training.

Obviously, TSA can’t fire 50,000 officers and start all over again from scratch, but surely there is a way to safely maintain the basic security guard approach to screening yet allow for higher levels of discretion during the process?

Assuming that TSA managers are allowed to more effectively promote officers and to select supervisors and Behavior Detection Officers from outside the organization, and further that TSA could improve the training of supervisors and BDOs, they could begin to exercise the quality of discretion which would allow small children and elderly grandmothers to safely pass through security without impermissible assaults.

TSA should consider establishing regional training academies at the larger facilities around the country to provide classroom training for newly-appointed supervisors and BDOs into the nature of policy, the concept of rational profiling and the exercise of security discretion in a free society.

Policy. The concept of policy, as differentiated from procedures and rules, is that policies are intended as broad guidelines for the exercise of discretion allowing decision makers some flexibility in their application.

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One criticism of the TSA Behavior Detection program involved Newark BDOs known as “Mexican hunters” was that they concentrated on Hispanic-appearing individuals, resulting in a large number of arrests for immigration violations
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The exercise of critical discretion will fail in the absence of effective policies. This was recognized by the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals in its Report on the Police in 1973:

“If police agencies fail to establish policy guidelines, officers are forced to establish their own policy based on their understanding of the law and perception of the police role. Errors in judgment may be an inherent risk in the exercise of discretion, but such errors can be minimized by definitive policies that clearly establish limits of discretion.”

We are all aware of the insidious and repressive nature of racial profiling that has been practiced by some law enforcement agencies. Indeed, one criticism of the TSA Behavior Detection program involved Newark BDOs known as “Mexican hunters” was that they concentrated on Hispanic-appearing individuals, resulting in a large number of arrests for immigration violations.

Well-considered policies can allow BDOs to productively direct their attention to the most suspicious candidates for extended questioning, rather than to mindlessly and repetitively ask every single traveler where they are going.

With improved policy guidance and greater discretion, BDOs might actually identify and stop a real threat, but they will only offend even more travelers if they continue to follow rote procedures.

Perhaps most importantly, such polices can provide commonsense guidelines for qualified decision makers at each screening station to allow obviously harmless grandmothers and children to avoid intrusive body contact, while focusing attention on those individuals more likely to be a terrorist.

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The Right Direction
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According to TSA 101, a 2009 overview of the TSA, the agency seeks to evolve itself “from a top-down, follow-the-SOP culture

to a networked, critically-thinking, initiative-taking, proactive team environment.”

TSA Administrator John Pistole wants “to focus our limited resources on higher-risk passengers while speeding and enhancing the passenger experience at the airport.”

On June 2, 2011, Pistole testified before Congress that “we must ensure that each new step we take strengthens security. Since the vast majority of the 628 million annual air travelers present little to no risk of committing an act of terrorism, we should focus on those who present the greatest risk, thereby improving security and the travel experience for everyone else.”

It appears TSA is moving in the right direction and John Pistole may be the person to keep in on course. Prior to his appointment by President Obama in May 2010, he served as the Deputy Director of the FBI and was directly involved in the formation of terrorism policies.

Most significantly, his regard for civil rights was suggested by his approval of FBI policy placing limits on the interrogation of captives taken during the “war on terror.” The policy prohibited agents from sitting in on coercive interrogations conducted by third parties, including the CIA, and required agents to immediately report any violations.

Hopefully, Mr. Pistole will exercise his authority to bring about improved selection and training of TSA personnel and will promulgate thoughtful screening policies which will result in a safer and less stressful flying experience for everyone.

CT
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William John Cox is a retired prosecutor and public interest lawyer, author and political activist. He authored the portions of the Police Task Force Report on the role of the police and policy formulation for the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals in 1973. He can be contacted at u2cox@msn.com.

More lost by the second

Killing foreign people in their beds will not make us safer, says **Kathy Kelly**

It's a bit odd to me that with my sense of geographical direction I'm ever regarded as a leader to guide groups in foreign travel. I'm recalling a steaming hot night in Lahore, Pakistan when Josh Brolier and I, having enjoyed a lengthy dinner with Lahore University students, needed to head back to the guest lodgings graciously provided us by a headmaster of the Garrison School for Boys. We had boarded a rickshaw, but the driver had soon become terribly lost and with my spotty sense of direction and my complete ignorance of Urdu, I couldn't be any help. My cell phone was out of juice, and I was uncertain anyway of the needed phone number. I bumped and jostled in the back seat of the rickshaw, next to Josh, as we embarked on a nightmare of travel over unpaved, rutted roads in dizzying traffic until finally the rickshaw driver spotted a sign belonging to our school – the wrong campus, we all knew – and eager to unload us, roused the inhabitants and hustled us and our bags into the street before moving on.

We stood inside the gate, staring blankly at a family that had been sound asleep on cots in the courtyard. In no time, the father of the family scooped up his two children, gently moving them to the cot he shared with his wife so that Josh and I would have a cot on which to sit. Then he and his spouse disappeared into their humble living quarters. He reappeared with a fan and an extension cord, wanting to give us some relief from the blis-

tering night heat. His wife emerged carrying a glass of tea for each of us. They didn't know us from Adam's house cat, but they were treating us as family – the astonishing hospitality that we'd encountered in the region so many times before. Eventually, we established with our host that we were indeed at the wrong campus, upon which he called the family that had been nervously waiting for our errant selves.

This courtyard scene would return to my mind when we all learned of the US Joint Special Operations (JSO) Force night raid in the Nangarhar province, on May 12, 2011. No matter which side of the Afghanistan/Pakistan border you are on, suffocating hot temperatures prevail day and night during these hot months. It's normal for people to sleep in their courtyards. How could anyone living in the region not know this? Yet the US JSO forces that came in the middle of the night to the home of a 12 year old girl, Nilofer, who had been asleep on her cot in the courtyard, began their raid by throwing a grenade into the courtyard, landing at Nilofer's head. She died instantly. Nilofer's uncle raced into the courtyard. He worked with the Afghan Local Police, and they had told him not to join that night's patrol because he didn't know much about the village they would go to, so he had instead gone to his brother's home. When he heard the grenade explode, he may well have presumed the Taliban were attacking the home. US troops killed him as soon as they saw him.

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FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

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People in Nad Ali are expected to embrace closer relations with the United States and its troops after the deaths at our hands of seven children, children they knew aged one to seven, who had committed no crime
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*Kathy Kelly
(Kathy@vcnv.org)
co-coordinates
Voices for Creative
Nonviolence. A
Voices delegation is
presently visiting,
in Kabul, with The
Afghan Youth Peace
Volunteers. Both
groups are helping
organize for the
October 6, 2011
"Stop the Machine!
Create a New World!"
campaign to end
wars*

Later, NATO issued an apology.

"The raids occur 'every night. We are very miserable,' said Roshanak Wardak, a doctor and a former member of the national Parliament." I am reading a McClatchy news report, dated August 8th of this year. "Residents of the Tangi Valley area, in eastern Wardak Province, about 60 miles southwest of Kabul, issued similar complaints about the night raids in their vicinity, charging that they have killed civilians, disrupted their lives and fueled popular support for the Taliban."

Imagine it. People in an Afghan village pass sleepless nights, anxious that their home might be targeted by a US led night raid. Villagers are enraged when they hear stories of elders and imams being roughed up and detained, of wives and children being killed, of belongings stolen and property destroyed. Increasingly, the US military battles against the so-called insurgency are creating a stronger resistance as more Afghans fight back.

In Helmand province, in Nad Ali, the district governor told a *New York Times* reporter of an incident in the spiral of violence: a NATO foot patrol came under fire from a family home on August 5, 2011, killing a soldier and wounding an Afghan interpreter. The NATO troops called in an airstrike. NATO is now investigating a report that the airstrike killed eight civilians, seven of them children. "The home belonged to Mullah Abdul Hadi, 50, a local imam who Afghan officials say was helping the Taliban," said Mr. Shamlani. "He was killed along with one of his two wives and his seven children, all younger than 7 years old."

People in Nad Ali are expected to embrace closer relations with the United States and its troops after the deaths at our hands of seven children, children they knew aged one to seven, who had committed no crime.

Now comes the US determination to seal a "Strategic Partnership Declaration" with its client Afghan government. Many expect such an agreement to allow the US to establish permanent military bases, a permanent occupation that will provoke resistance groups there to declare perpetual war.

The Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers, a group of young people dedicated to ending wars and inequalities in their country, write in their August 9 statement: "The US-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Declaration will perpetuate 'terrorism' and bring it to everyone's doorsteps: "The 'partnership' will allow permanent joint US-Afghanistan military bases to launch and project hard power. The 'extreme' Taliban will conveniently 'use' these bases as a stand-alone reason for their 'holy jihad.' We cannot forget that one of Osama Bin Laden's reasons for attacking the US on September 11th was the presence of US military bases in Saudi Arabia. ... This Strategic Partnership Declaration will kill any chance for our madness to slow down and our violence to calm down. ... It will doom ordinary Americans and Afghans to permanent terrorism. ... Why can't we quiet our nerves, look deep inside humanity, and begin healing?"

Everyone wants to be safe, but I think of the Lahore family taking us into their sleeping courtyard and their home that night, knowing nothing of these crazy Americans who had been dropped on their doorstep. We had woken them up but they chose to stay awake and take care of us. Americans seem to respond to our endless wake-up calls from Afghanistan by just going, every time, back to sleep, rather than work to make the situation better. I think of the night raids, families being woken up to horror somewhere every night in the region, children killed sleeping, in our efforts to make ourselves more safe, and an ever escalating conflict arising from the violence.

We are lost, and we're getting ever more so. If we see a sign here in the darkness, an opportunity to make contact with the people around us, we should take it gratefully. The letter from my Afghan Youth friends is another sign for me that we do not belong in the Afghan home forever, occupying it at gunpoint. However groggily we may have awoken or reawoken to this dreadful situation and our role in it, we must free our Afghan hosts of their overstaying guests, and get the US safely back to where it should be. **CT**

An intrusion of reality

Caught between Columbian drug producers and US drug consumers, Mexico is fighting a losing battle for its soul, writes **Fred Reed**

Things change, usually for the worse, and always against the innocent. (This truth is a principle of curmudgeonry.) When I came to Mexico some eight years ago, it was a peaceful, moderately successful upper-Third-World country – middle-class, barely literate, and as democratic as the United States, which is to say barely. Things were improving, though often they had a long way to go. The young were visibly healthier than preceding generations. The birth rate was in sharp decline. Women entered the professions in substantial and growing numbers.

And it was safe. Expats sat over coffee at the plaza laughing at people back in the States, insular, fearful, ignorant of the world outside their borders. (For recent college graduates, Mexico is a country south of the United States. “South” is down on maps.) Mexico, they believed, was most astonishingly perilous. Don’t drink the water, avoid ice. Salads were thought especially lethal. The Federales would kill you for sport, like squirrels. On any given day, you would probably be shot several times by bandidos. It was nonsense.

Then Vicente Fox left office, and Felipe Calderon came in. He declared war on the narcotraficantes. Why he did this, I don’t know, since Mexico didn’t have a drug problem. My guess is that Washington pushed him into it, but I don’t know.

Unfortunately Mexico, which neither produces nor uses a lot of drugs, lies between Colombia, which produces vast amounts of drugs, and Americans, who want vast amounts of drugs. Washington does not want Americans to have vast amounts of drugs. Neither did it want to lose votes by imprisoning white users of drugs, such as college students, high-school students, professors, Congressmen, lawyers, and blue-collar guys driving bulldozers. The answer was to make Mexico fight Washington’s wars.

But Mexico couldn’t fight the narcos, because the United States was actually on the side of the traficantes. Does this sound counter-intuitive? What happened was that the narcos gave the Americans the huge quantities of drugs they wanted, and in return Americans gave the narcos huge amounts of money and military-grade weaponry: chiefly AKs, but also grenades and the occasional RPG. The Mexican police, lightly armed, barely paid, and utterly corrupt, could do nothing against these odds. The narcos had a further argument: Do what we say, and we will give you money. Otherwise, we will kill your family.

You figure it out.

The Mexican army doesn’t do a whole lot better. It is chiefly a disaster-relief outfit since it has nobody to fight. Mexico doesn’t want to invade Guatemala, and has not for

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NARCO-STUPIDITY

**Various beheaded
or chopped-up
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meth labs**

some time been openly invaded by America, though truculo-louts north of the border urge this bright idea.

So Washington, to keep Americans from doing what in fact they are contentedly doing with no restriction and little inconvenience – using every drug know to man or beast – is wrecking yet another country.

The killing was for some time largely in the northern tier of states, Chihuahua, Tamaulipas, Durango, and of course Sinaloa, but now, in the states of Mexico, Guerrero, Michoacan and Jalisco, decapitated bodies are strewn about like cherry blossoms in spring.

Jalisco, a state in west-central Mexico, contains Guadalajara, Lake Chapala, and me. Along the north shore of Lake Chapala lie Chapala, Ajijic, Jocotepec, and lesser towns inhabited by lots of expat gringos. These towns, as I say, were quiet when I arrived. You could wander home at two in the morning with little concern and a beer in hand.. But now the narcos have arrived. Ergo:

A few weeks back in downtown Chapala there was a firefight with automatic weapons. A few days ago a police car on the local by-pass was attacked with automatic weapons. A few days more ago three bodies, buried by kidnappers, were found in Joco, and three local police were arrested for complicity.

Various beheaded or chopped-up former people have surfaced locally, as well as a couple of meth labs. I could go on.

So far, gringos have not been targets. This may last. It may not. Still, things are out of control and getting crazier. For example, in Guerrero the narcos told the teachers in the schools of Acapulco to hand over half their pay in protection money, at which point many dozens of schools closed as teachers declined to attend. This comes close to qualifying the country as a disaster area which, without the narco wars, it wasn't even close to being.

What does this mean for Americans? It

depends on the Americans. If gringos begin to be attacked here, there will probably be a mass exodus back to the Northern Rubber Room. A few are already bugging out.

For Mexico, such a remigration would be a catastrophe. To simplify and approximate vigorously, Mexican law requires expats to have incomes of a thousand bucks a month. Most have a lot more.

I read that a million gringos live in Mexico. So, a thousand times a million times twelve is, well, a bunch of money annually. Losing it would unhelph the local economy, and probably send people toward the Rio Bravo in bathing suits.

Most Americans don't care at all what happens in Mexico, or anywhere else they can't see. However, it is hard to figure the advantage of having a major trading partner turn into Afghanistan with better music.

Conservative bozos of immoderate idiocy fantasize, as mentioned, of sending the Marines. Oh sure, that will work. The Pentagon couldn't win a rigged lottery, much less a war. Mexico, especially in the godawful, broken, infernally impassible mountains where the dream-weed grows, is perfect for displaying the clownish incapacity of the Nintendo military. The GIs don't know the territory, most don't know the language, the people, or the culture, but they can yell "Ooo-rah!" really well. That's because it has only two syllables.

Nothing can change things except the utter collapse of the US economy and the burning of its cities, a singularity the other side of which is not visible. Any possible solution would require a decision. The US no longer does decisions. It can neither stop the drug traffic nor legalize it. It can neither win wars nor abandon them, neither make money nor stop spending it, neither stop immigration nor assimilate the immigrants. Washington can beat its thumb with a hammer, yes, and notice that it hurts, but it can't stop beating its thumb. That would take a decision, and Washington doesn't do decisions.

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

Who controls the decision-makers?

Guess where 20% of America's decision-makers spent their summer holidays this year?, writes **Philip Girdali**

August is generally a quiet month for news, but riots in Britain, continuing conflict in Libya and Syria, and concerns that Israel and the United States might be preparing some military moves against Iran have generated a bit of unease. Israel has also decided to take advantage of the summer holidays to help along the peace process by building another 1,600 housing units in what used to be called Arab East Jerusalem. No surprise there, as the Israeli government announced its plans when peripatetic Vice President Joe Biden visited last year. You might recall that Joe got tough with the Israelis at that time by refusing to have dinner with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who repaid the favor by dressing down the president and allowing Congress to grovel before him on a state visit in May.

But what happens in the Middle East will eventually have to be resolved in the Middle East, even if the incumbent in the White House sometimes thinks otherwise. After all, the Israel-Palestine conflict ultimately will have to be worked out by Arabs and Jews even if a collateral result is trashing America's reputation and depleting its treasury along the way. Likewise, America will someday have to figure what its genuine interests might be and act accordingly after the soldiers and money run out. Then it will be lights out for international regime-

change, democracy-promotion, nation-building, and peace-processing.

Two recent news stories relate to the United States government and how it has been corrupted by its deference to Israel and wasted tax dollars pandering to the Lobby, almost as if it cannot help itself.

The first story, that 20 percent of the House of Representatives will be spending its recess holiday on American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) tours of Israel, does not seem to have made the mainstream news, though it has been reported extensively in the alternative media. The visits are on top of a previous tour by more than 20 congressmen in April, and yet another group will be going in December. The current tours, one consisting of 26 Democratic congressmen headed by House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer of Maryland, and two others of 55 Republicans, one led by House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, are ostensibly intended to provide Congress with a "deeper understanding" of the situation in the Middle East. For "deeper understanding" one might easily substitute "Israeli viewpoint."

Less reported than the visit itself has been the comportment of the congressmen while in Israel, which has been something akin to unconditional surrender. Hoyer, a committed Christian Zionist who is on his 12th trip to Israel, reassured Israelis that Washington's financial challenges "will not have

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Cantor was not yet majority leader of the House, but his offer to support a foreign leader against the president of his own country went unchallenged and did not impede his political ascent
.....

any adverse effect on America's determination to meet its promise to Israel." Hoyer means that it will be okay to cut Medicare and adversely affect the commitment to America's elderly, but Israel's \$3 billion plus per year, largely used to buy weapons that it does not need, will be untouched. He also gave the green light for Israel to build its new houses in East Jerusalem, a viewpoint that runs counter to what the White House is apparently saying but which might just as well be a signal to the Israeli government that Washington does not really care if the houses are built or not. Or that it certainly doesn't care enough to do anything about it with an election coming up next year.

Both Hoyer and his Republican counterpart Eric Cantor took the opportunity to warn the Palestinian leadership that Congress will eliminate all aid if it goes ahead with plans to declare statehood at the UM in September. Some might recall that in November 2010, Cantor met privately with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and pledged that the Republican Party would serve as a "check" against any unwelcome initiatives by President Obama. At the time Cantor was not yet majority leader of the House, but his offer to support a foreign leader against the president of his own country went unchallenged and did not impede his political ascent.

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Crosshead

The second story comes from Hillary Clinton's State Department, where the Office of International Religious Freedom in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor has awarded a \$200,000 grant to the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) "to conduct a project that documents anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial, and Holocaust glorification in the Middle East. This grant will enable MEMRI to expand its efforts to monitor the media, translate materials into ten languages, analyze trends in anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial

and glorification, and increase distribution of materials through its website and other outlets. Through translations and research, MEMRI aims to inform and educate journalists, government leaders, academia, and the general public about trends in anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial in the Middle East and South Asia, thus generating awareness and response to these issues."

Supporters of Israel would no doubt argue that congressional visits to Israel are not necessarily bad and that it is completely proper to look into anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. The problem is that it is difficult to discern a genuine United States interest in such goings-on, which are symptomatic of the special treatment of Israel and Israeli interests in general all across the government. Such treatment frequently comes with a price tag attached for the rest of us. What possible interest do the American people have in anti-Semitism in Asia? Why are congressmen drawn to Israel like moths to the flame, so much so that fully 10 percent of all international trips made by congressmen are to Israel?

Critiquing the two stories separately, the sponsored trip to Israel is not free in the sense that it is part and parcel of the dominance of Congress by Israeli interests. Congressmen are, in theory at least, elected by their constituents and handsomely compensated to do what is beneficial for the United States, not for a foreign country. But the Israel Lobby knows that it is a good investment to take a new congressman on an all-expenses-paid visit to Israel where he will be educated in Tel Aviv's view of the Middle East and the Muslim world. If the congressman is alert to the politics involved, he will understand that openly sympathizing with Israel's "plight" will result in financial and media support back in the US and he will welcome AIPAC's position papers that tell him how to vote on key issues. If he balks, he will be made to understand that opposing measures favored by Israel could result in his being confronted by a well-funded

challenger when he seeks reelection. That kind of stick-and-carrot persuasion makes it easy to produce a tame congressman who will give you his vote, because he knows that crossing the Lobby is asking for trouble.

The second story, about MEMRI, the recipient of the State Department grant, is also of interest. Why is it important? After all the money probably amounts to what most people on Capitol Hill regard as chump change, certainly not enough to buy a wheel off the F-35 air-superiority fighter, which comes in at a cool \$133 million per unit. The Pentagon has ordered 2,443 of them, and they sure will come in handy if Canada tries to invade. But just like the untouchable Pentagon budget, it is more important to recognize the political context of the MEMRI contract, that the money is being provided at a time when every other program is being cut. It is a token of commitment on the part of Hillary Clinton and her cohorts, revealing a constituency that she and the White House consider to be so important that it must be appeased. Among other things, the never-ending search for anti-Semitism serves as confirmation of the perpetual victimhood of the state of Israel, justifying whatever action Tel Aviv chooses to take to “protect itself.”

Clinton describes herself as a liberal Democrat, but MEMRI is a neocon stronghold, so what gives? What we are seeing is the neoconization of foreign policy across the board and in both political parties, much of it driven by Israeli citizens or dual nationals. MEMRI was founded by former Israeli intelligence officers and once included Meyrav Wurmser, an Israeli-born Zionist who is now ensconced at the Hudson Institute, a leading neocon think tank. Her husband, David, who was born in Switzerland, was a foreign policy adviser to former Vice President Dick Cheney. Many believe that MEMRI has been agenda-ridden from the start, occasionally mistranslating and cherry-picking the most extreme press reports to support an anti-Arab agenda. Thanks

to Hillary Clinton, it is now being funded by the United States government to begin a hunt for anti-Semites and Holocaust deniers worldwide. It will certainly find them, even if it has to be inventive to do so. One might well ask why the State Department is wasting money tracking such people all over the globe and what benefit the American people will derive from the search, but don't expect an answer any time soon.

Americans who like Israel and everything that pertains to it are certainly free to express their views, but there is something unseemly and even grotesque about the continuous promotion of foreign interests ahead of those of the United States. MEMRI produces material that supports the propaganda line of the Israeli government as well as domestic Islamophobes, while AIPAC is a lobby dedicated to maintaining uncritical US government support for a foreign country.

It can be argued that Washington entered into at least one foreign war because of the many groups, including AIPAC and MEMRI, that are part of the Israel Lobby. Hillary Clinton just might consider a better use for the \$200,000, and the congressmen who accept the junkets and who will vote at Israel's beck and call should be asking themselves whose interests they are really serving. George Washington famously warned about entangling foreign alliances, but one suspects that Hillary Clinton and those who surround her are too busy looking forward to heed the past. And what would our first president think about the 81 congressmen going off to obtain guidance from a foreign government? He would probably think it unimaginable, in the Republic that he helped establish, that the people would not rise up in anger and throw the bums out. Would that it were so.

CT

Philip Giraldi is a former CIA counter-terrorism specialist and military intelligence officer who served 18 years in Turkey, Italy, Germany, and Spain. He is Executive Director of CNI (the Council for National Interest)

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There is something unseemly and even grotesque about the continuous promotion of foreign interests ahead of those of the United States

Welcome to the United Looney Bin of America

An interview from the past convinces **Sherwood Ross** that there's a thick layer of stupidity at play in American political decision-making

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President Obama appears willing to rat out the elderly on Social Security and Medicare as too costly while he authorizes new CIA drone attacks on Pakistan
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Has the United States gone mad, waging war in the Persian Gulf while society crumbles?" Seymour Melman asked rhetorically when I interviewed him for the *Progressive* 19 years ago.

Even though Melman, a professor emeritus at Columbia University's school of industrial engineering, died in 2004, his question still haunts our society, as the American War Machine since then has only gained in momentum, immensity, universality and cruelty.

To answer Melman: "Yes, we have gone mad." That's because presidents and Pentagon chiefs start new wars even before they finish fighting the old ones! Who can recall a time in our history when the US initiated aggressive wars against five nations (Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Libya, Yemen)?

Between 1947 and 1989, Melman said, the US spent \$8.2 trillion (in 1982 dollars) on the military. When I said I couldn't grasp a figure that large, Melman replied, "Think of it this way: In 1982, the total money value of all America's manufacturing, industry and its infrastructure amounted to \$7.3 trillion. You could have replicated the largest part of everything made by people in this country with what the military got." (Everything made by everybody? All the houses? All the highways? All the schools? All the hospitals? A new America? Everything?)

Melman went on to say, "Half of every dollar you pay in Federal taxes goes into the military account. Pentagon contractors are awash in billions while the infrastructure that underpins our economy collapse around us and human misery spreads everywhere."

Fast-forward: Today, the Pentagon still gets roughly half of every tax dollar. The War Resisters League estimates 54% of the pie goes to the military compared with 30% for all human resources, 11 percent for general government and 5% for physical resources.

Defense contractors are awash in profits while lines lengthen at soup kitchens, foreclosed families sleep in shelters, 20 million are jobless or underemployed, food stamp use sets records, summer jobs for teens have vanished, and President Obama appears willing to rat out the elderly on Social Security and Medicare as too costly while he authorizes new CIA drone attacks on Pakistan.

The Pentagon budget does more than absorb tax dollars. It punishes the civilian sector in many ways. For instance, it has siphoned off so much scientific talent the US has long since fallen behind Japan and Germany in innovative technologies. "We're paying the price for building colossal military power," Melman said. "It's set in motion a process of technical, industrial and human deterioration. We're losing millions

of productive jobs because US firms with US factories can't even hold our home markets against foreign competition."

"While the Pentagon turns out B-2 bombers at \$865 million a copy, foreign creators are flooding our markets with cars, bikes, tape recorders, shoes, machine tools, movie cameras, calculators, TV sets, and integrated microcircuits." Melman said that 19 years ago and it holds true today.

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Working for government

One reason the US fell behind, Melman explained, is that "about 30 percent of the nation's engineers, scientists and technicians work directly or indirectly for the military. The loss to the civilian economy is incalculable." Consumer electronics, he said, "declined dramatically while the Government employs thousands of electronic engineers in its military labs."

That was true when Melman spoke and it is true today. We have an army of death scientists toiling away in germ warfare labs (\$50 billion wasted on this nauseating research alone since 9/11), in space warfare labs, in nuclear warfare labs, in electronic warfare labs, as well as in labs specializing in conventional ways to kill people.

Melman said one reason for the continuing dominance of the MIC is that the US "is now a military form of state capitalism in which top managers of the military forces and their economy have dominant power – economic, political and military." Translation: the Pentagon rules!

Today, Melman might add the Pentagon spends more for war than all 50 states spend for all peaceful purposes; that the Pentagon's armed forces are bigger than the next dozen countries combined; that the Pentagon leads the world in arms sales; and that the Pentagon operates 800 overseas bases for "defense" when, in fact, they are used, like Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, for aggression.

As of January 1 this year, the National

Priorities Project of Northampton, Mass., says, the Pentagon has spent \$445 billion to wage war in Afghanistan and \$815 billion for Iraq, for a total of \$1.26 trillion. This at a time when the American Society of Civil Engineers reckons \$2.2 trillion is needed to restore our infrastructure. Example: 33% of all roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Does the Pentagon need to spend \$19.3-billion on atomic energy when the same sum could pay 295,000 elementary school teachers?

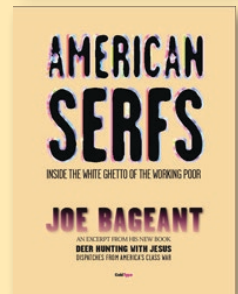
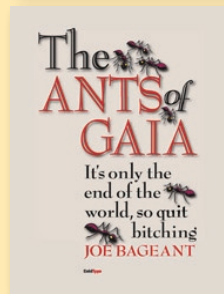
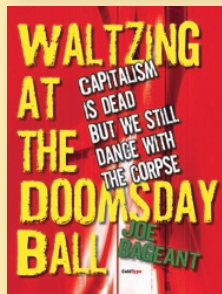
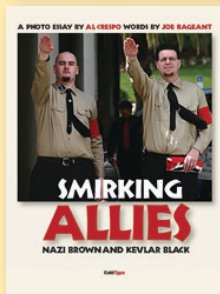
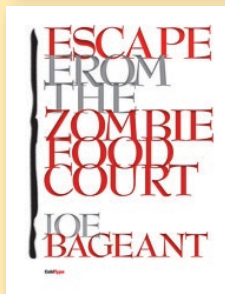
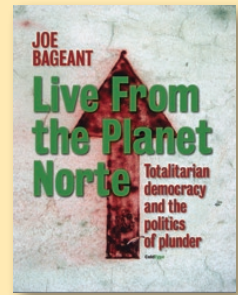
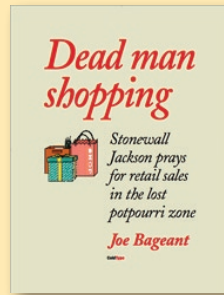
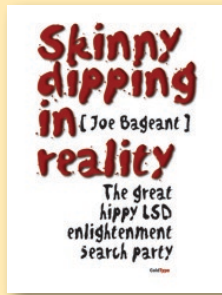
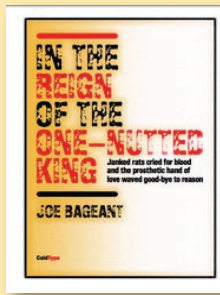
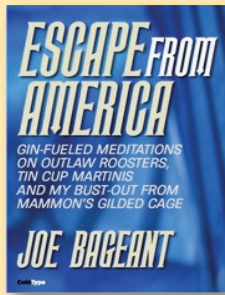
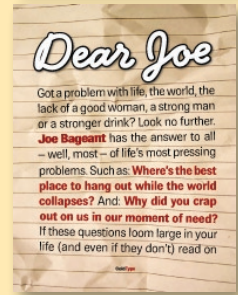
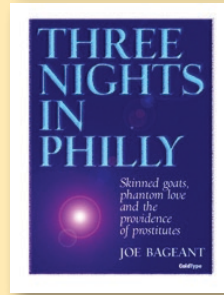
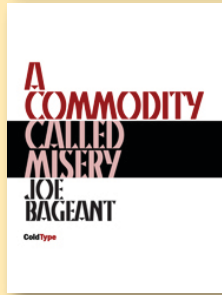
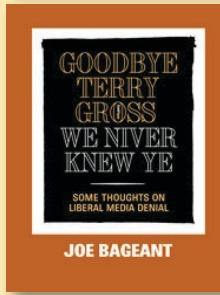
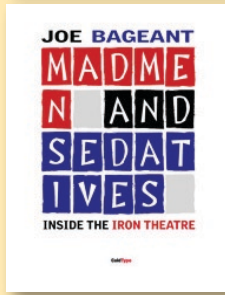
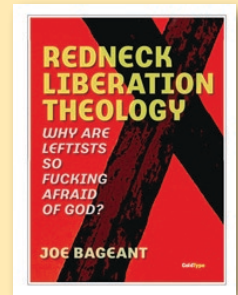
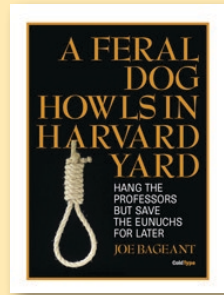
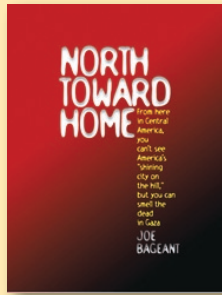
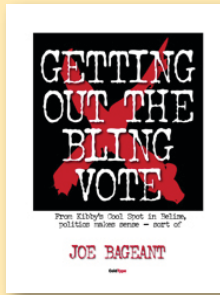
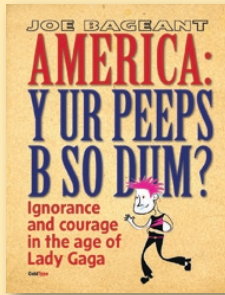
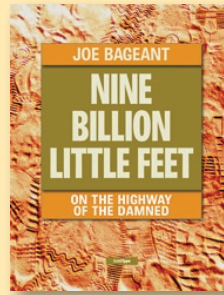
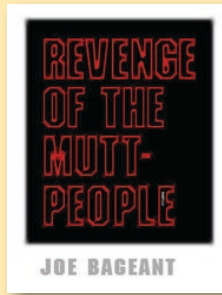
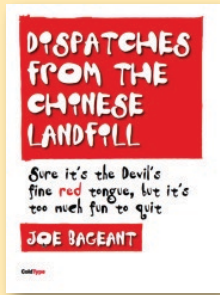
Cutting the Pentagon down to size and converting to civilian economy will require "a new coalition of working people, professionals, trade associations, mayors – all suffering from the prosperity of the military-industrial complex, all needing a turn away from militarism." "What we need," Melman concluded, "is a political opposition that would take down the entire military system."

We saw the faintest stirrings of hope for change in June when the US Conference of Mayors passed a resolution to spend at home the \$125 billion the Pentagon is wasting this year waging wars in the Middle East. In depressed Detroit, the unemployment level is 38% and Rep. John Conyers(D-Mich.) blames the White House's lack of leadership for the lack of job creation. Given our infrastructure needs alone, why isn't there a job or job-training for every person who is willing to work?

To support President Obama's medieval war-making is what Professor Melman would rightly have called "mad." It fits the dictionary definition of insanity as "utterly senseless" and "irrational." It also fits the view of insanity which observes that the insane repeat their mistakes over and over. That's today's war machine, bigger and deadlier than ever. If the US was an individual that displayed hostile tendencies, started fights and attacked innocent people based on its fantasies and lies, what would we call such a person? Welcome to the United Loony Bin of America. **CT**

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The Pentagon operates 800 overseas bases for "defense" when, in fact, they are used, like Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, for aggression
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Sherwood Ross runs a public relations firm for good causes and contributes articles regularly from his Anti-War News Service. All donations cheerfully accepted. Reach him at sherwoodross10@gmail.com



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The grubby species

David Michael Green looks at the political shenanigans taking place in the US, and finds little to give him any hope for a brighter future

Nobility is a bitch, and a real seductive one at that.

I'm capable of some serious cynicism, but these days I kinda wish I had a lot more of it. I kinda wish I had born and raised in a more cynical time. Then maybe I wouldn't get my heart broken so often.

That's a funny thing to say about the time I grew up in, in a way. It was the era of Vietnam and Watergate, the era of police attack dogs and burning cities. My Lai, Kent State, Nixon, Watts. What's uglier than that? And can't one make a very compelling case that these are significantly better times today? I mean, after all, the government isn't beating and murdering our kids on America's streets. And while we're still fighting wars (of course), there are a lot less casualties on either side these days. Aren't things better?

No. They're worse. What's absent today from the America of my younger days is hope and understanding. Back then, everyone understood there was a struggle going on, and lots of people did just that. And they generated enormous successes, ranging from changing both racial civil rights laws and norms, to doing the same for gender equality, to demanding cleaner government, to improving the New Deal social safety net, to ending the Vietnam war, to distributing the national wealth more fairly, to changing environmental consciousness

and law, and more.

It was a painful process, but one that came with an outstanding record of achievement, a record which therefore justified the sense of hope. There was solid and robust empirical evidence to prove that having high expectations for the country was not some pollyannaish exercise in naivete.

That's all gone. It's been replaced by something far worse than a tired stasis. And, really, when you consider the present picture in its full glory, you're left with something beyond despair. For this is not only a story of deceit and hypocrisy, of rampant greed, of sociopathic disdain for the lives of others, but, finally, also a story of complete betrayal and the predatory exploitation of innocent people.

Finding the truth

As in any crime story, it's crucial to understand the who, what, when, why and how in order to unravel the true tale, and to have any hope for crime prevention and remediation in the future.

The 'what' of this crime scene is crucial, and so many people still don't understand it (despite the rampant prevalence of CSI dramas all across the television dial – or perhaps because of it). It's been said that the perfect crime is one of which the victim isn't even cognizant. That's all too true

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here. This lack of comprehension of what has been done, who did it, and why is the single most depressing feature of American politics today. How can 300 million people hallucinate so deeply all at once? Is there really that much LSD to go around? Or do we just get our drugs from the end of a cable nowadays?

There's really only one main theme to the story of American politics in the last century (if not more), and that is the question of the distribution of wealth. This is particularly true of the last three decades, a period during which other important things – not least including wars and civil rights struggles – transpired, but were ultimately peripheral to the real story. And yet people still don't understand this central concept and the crime committed around it.

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Banana republic

A hundred years ago the distribution of wealth in this country looked like that of any standard issue banana republic. The rich had almost everything, and all of the rest of us barely got by, working (alongside our children) long hours in horrid conditions, for low pay, no benefits and zero respect for us as humans deserving of an equal regard for our welfare, happiness, opportunities, fortunes and basic dignity.

We were 'human resources' (though the term was not in use until the ethos was revived in the present era), who were to be used and abused in the processing of natural resources, and discarded when our usefulness ceased. This approach to class relations within the society produced the expected result: wealthy Americans lived long and highly comfortable lives, while the rest of us resembled something nearer to characters out of Hobbes.

But then Franklin Roosevelt, easily the most transformative figure in American history, gave us a New Deal, which was quite literally that. Roosevelt and his fellow travelers in and out of government changed

the essential terms of political economy in America, such that it was no longer a game entirely for the benefit of the wealthy. Mind you, those rich folks still did real well, thank you very much, and it is correctly argued that Roosevelt actually saved capitalism from capitalists – so, when it comes to FDR, we're not talking about Leon Trotsky here. But Roosevelt's program changed the rules of labor relations, taxation, government spending, regulation and so on, a reform that had the ultimate effect of redistributing wealth in America, so that the richest among us no longer had it all.

And, in the process, this massive sea change in public policy also created a giant middle class that had not existed before, and launched an era of prosperity in this country that may have no equal across all of human history.

Which brings us to the 'who' of this murder mystery. They are the predatory plutocrats who hated FDR and the New Deal then, and have not stopped doing so down to this day. They despised Roosevelt so much for being "a traitor to his class" that many of them had to refer to him as "that man", because they couldn't bear to actually spit out his name.

These people, with their infantile obsession for acquisition coming right out of some Freud 101 textbook, have never gone away. But they were marginalized during the half-century of the New Deal era. In fact, they were marginalized by the core mainstream of even the Republican Party. Dwight Eisenhower referred to them – in particular, to those who wanted to abolish Social Security twenty years after its launch – as "stupid".

Eisenhower's comment points to another answer to the 'who' question here. Plutocrats need agents to commit their crimes for them. That includes cadres of cops and soldiers who are either clueless as to their place in the scheme of things, or satisfied to be bought off for a few shekels and/or a pittance of prestige in the social hierarchy.

In the contemporary context, however, it mostly means politicians. In our time these (alleged) people are little more than kabuki dancers, who job is to maintain a layered set of illusions. On top is the idea of political debate, as if there was fundamentally any difference between the two parties in America. As if Harry Reid and Barack Obama get up every day wondering how they can spend their waking hours fighting off Republican intransigencies to make life better for you and me.

At the next level down is the idea of patriotism and the national interest. This facade brainwashes us to believe that while we may disagree with leaders of the other party, at least they are well meaning patriots who just happen to be wrong-headed – but right-hearted! – in their prescription for what ails the country. Finally, we have the last veil, the democracy ruse, where we are told that our government is responsive to the public will. Never mind all that corporate money washing around in the system – it doesn’t actually effect anything. It’s one person, one vote. Where your representatives are concerned, you count every bit as much as the CEO of Goldman Sachs.

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Elaborate diversion

Almost without exception, our contemporary political class serves the function of acting out this tawdry little soap opera, this elaborate diversionary scheme. That’s why there’s so much overlap between Madison Avenue and Hollywood and Washington, America’s politicians are B-rate actors (sometimes literally), playing a role in a lame white-hat-versus-black-hat pseudo-drama filmed on a soundstage called Washington, and doing the commercials in-between as well. But it wasn’t always thus. We used to have (at least some) limits, and we used to have (at least some) politicians genuinely committed to the public interest.

That crucial difference gives us the ‘when’ to this tale. For fifty years there was a

broad consensus in America around the values of the New Deal and the lessons learned from the period preceding it. That consensus began unraveling in the 1980s, and has continued to do so ever since. The essential narrative of the last thirty years is the story of the dismantling of the New Deal, and with it the broad and shared prosperity that Americans once enjoyed. This process has occurred piecemeal, because it had to, because in fact both the deal of the New Deal era and the values it personifies are highly popular with the American public.

So the ‘how’ was to lie, cheat and steal in order for the rich to redress the ‘crime’ of the New Deal and get ‘their’ money back. Trade deals that seemed on their surface plainly to be disastrous for American workers – perhaps because that is exactly what they were – were sold to us as beneficial. Union busting, a la Reagan and PATCO, was made to seem an act of necessary national toughness.

And who needed unions, anyhow? Didn’t we already have good wages? Deregulation – hey, what a great idea! Let Wall Street banks do whatever they want – you know, like in the 1920s! They didn’t call ‘em “roaring” for nuthin’, pal! Tax slashing for millionaires and billionaires was another big winner. It’ll trickle-down to the rest of us when these job-creators create jobs, it won’t cost the government any revenues, and it will jump-start the economy.

So what if regressives went zero for three on those claims? We have to cut taxes even more! And then there are the diversions to keep you voting for the kleptocrats at every turn, such as foreign evil-doers (Oooooohhh, Saddam! Very scary! Noriega! Plenty bad man! Castro! An athiest, for Christ’s sake!), job-stealing Mexicans (you would have wound up being a rich attorney – even though you didn’t go to law school, or even college – but some sneaky wetback crossed the border and took your job), and predatory gays who want to deflower your innocent daughter – er, well, something like that.

.....
Deregulation – hey, what a great idea! Let Wall Street banks do whatever they want – you know, like in the 1920s! They didn’t call ‘em “roaring” for nuthin’, pal!

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pass his limp body
around the jail cell
one more time**
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Really, you have to give this country credit where credit is due. No contemporary developed nation in the world can touch us where political stupidity is concerned. We're the best at that! American exceptionalism, man! Take that, you cheese-eating European socialists! Having repudiated the rampant regressivism of the last president – a shit-kicker Texas Republican governor who made his bones frying people on death row – and having spent four years with more of precisely the same politics (except with much more niceness) from our present Social Worker-in-Chief, we are now very likely to turn again next to an even more radical version of the Bush debacle, that being the current shit-kicker Texas Republican governor, Rick Perry.

I mean, it all might even have a certain entertainment value to it if Americans had any sense of irony whatsoever. Alas, that is far from the case, and this will all somehow make perfect sense to voters in 2012. The Democrat who governs like a Republican couldn't do squat to fix the crises created by the Republicans, so we'll need to get an even more Republican Republican in there to do it right! Far, far right.

I have to confess that I am deeply despondent about politics today, in a way I don't remember feeling, even during the ugliest days of George W. Caligula. It was awful then, but those actions and ethics were only a natural extension of what had already been going on within the GOP for twenty years. Each successive wave of thuggish animals was uglier than the last (as continues to be the case today), from Reagan to Gingrich to Bush.

The Obama presidency, on the other hand, has been crushing to the spirit, and more so because even disappointed liberals still don't get it, thinking he's a wimp or a lousy poker player, when in fact he is – like Clinton before him – just another kleptocrat, come to sell out not just the country, but also the ideology of liberalism and the political party which once embod-

ied those principles. That's quite a trifecta, really. Most horror story politicians would be satisfied just to wreck their country in the name of personal narcissism. Obama is additionally destroying a set of crucial and hard-won ideas along with a political party in the bargain.

He is the anti-FDR in every meaning of that term. FDR saved the country. Obama is burying it. FDR created the Democratic Party as we (used to) know it, once probably the most formidable political machine in American history. Obama is dragging it curbside. FDR gave America its social contract. Obama is dismantling it. FDR reveled in the hatred of the greedy thuggish scum who despised him. Obama keeps hoping they'll like him and invite him over for a beer if only he lets them pass his limp body around the jail cell one more time. FDR was America's greatest president. Obama is undoubtedly one of its worst.

This cuts deep, man. Perhaps I should have been used to it after eight years of Clinton (whose adoration to this day by Democrats is a thing of sad wonder and another unrelenting source of despondency) and the absolute nothingburgeriness of Nancy Pelosi and crew following the 2006 election. Just the same, I'm having an "Et tu, Brute?" moment as I watch the complete sell-out of 300 million people by a handful of traitors. I'll give Obama credit for achieving one goal, though. This is a truly bipartisan act of treason. Good for him. Working together with Republicans seems very important to this president.

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Where's the hope?

Meanwhile, though, what is there to do, say and think when the avenues for seeking solutions – hell, even for just ending our suicidal tendencies – all seem to be closing up at once, and every iteration of American politics is about losing more of what matters? Like I said, it's getting harder and harder to have hope, and even to care.

I guess at some point if stupid people want to do stupid things to themselves, you gotta let them. I kinda wish the rest of us weren't dragged down the toilet with them, though. That's just rude.

It's even tempting to think that a Republican sweep in 2012 would be good for the country. Since conservative prescriptions can only continue the destruction they've begun, perhaps this disaster could mark the repudiation of the ideology forever. 'Course, that's what some of us thought in 2008, and now it is only worse. Far worse. Who could have imagined that, after a decade of Bush, regressivism and disaster that two years later the right would be back with the tea party and stronger than ever? Kafka? Dali? Timothy Leary?

The most disheartening thing about the American political condition is the degree to which people don't get what has happened to them, and still continues to happen, destroying the body politic. It's as if you were staring at an x-ray of a giant tumor in your belly, and nevertheless still sat there in befuddled consternation, wondering what the hell was making you feel so ill.

It's as if you then thought to yourself, "Oh, what the hell, I guess I'll just drink a keg or two of this here Tumor Growth Potion. Maybe that will cure me." In the latest sign of this diagnostic idiocy, voters in Wisconsin recently had the opportunity to respond to the tumor that is their Republican governor, through the mechanism of recall elections. The results were hardly a ringing endorsement for sanity, or even self-protection from the predators for whom Scott Walker and his party (as well as most of the other party) skills.

That's really depressing.

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Understanding the experiment

What is most disheartening is that Americans don't even understand the experiment they've been subjected to these last thirty years. They seem to get the fact that

it has failed, but they don't know what "it" is. How many people know that regressives have won more or less every single economic policy battle of the last three decades, from taxes to trade to labor relations to deregulation to privatization to subsidies and beyond?

How many Americans know this? How many know, to simply choose the most obvious example (but the same logic applies across the board), that taxes are far lower in America today than they have been for almost a century? And how can they possibly reject this regressive experiment in political economy if they don't even know that it has been conducted?

One reason they don't know, of course, is that nobody is telling them this. Sure, there are a couple of real liberals in Congress and even a socialist senator. But the real truth is that there is absolutely no left in America today, as a serious political movement. None. Liberalism hasn't had a real voice in America for thirty years, perhaps forty. What we have today, instead, is an insane tea party right, whom people like Eisenhower would have utterly abhorred.

Then we have the 'mainstream' GOP, like John Boehner, who are simply yesterday's regressive tea party revolutionaries, and who therefore look moderate only through (faux) comparison to the Michele Bachmanns and Allen West's of this world.

Then you have the so-called 'centrist' or moderate Democrats in Congress, who can always be relied upon to provide any non-GOP votes necessary to stuff the plutocratic stocking with Xmas gifts, not to mention the one in the White House who signs the bill a day or two later. Finally, there are the Nancy Pelosis and Chuck Schumers of our political firmament, whose job it is to provide the image of an opposition to oligarchy and the military-industrial complex. "We'll shut down the war as soon as we get control of Congress", they say. Until they actually do win majorities, that is, when it becomes, "Oh, did we say that?"

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Fox News only makes sense if you're stupid. Similarly, more tax cuts for billionaires as a solution to an economy and a federal budget wrecked by tax cuts for billionaires only makes sense if no one else is out there pointing out that this particular imperial monarch is standing before us buck naked

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Sadly, however, while commentators and the voting public are starting to recognize that Obama is not one of us, they have not yet realized the full truth, which is that he is one of them
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And so on. Like I said, there is no one out there – and hasn’t been for over a generation – who is leading the progressive charge, or even trumpeting the liberal narrative, to counter the absurdly manifest lies of the right. Fox News only makes sense if you’re stupid. Similarly, more tax cuts for billionaires as a solution to an economy and a federal budget wrecked by tax cuts for billionaires only makes sense if no one else is out there pointing out that this particular imperial monarch is standing before us buck naked (if you catch my drift). I wouldn’t mind quite as much that my country was committing national suicide if I thought that was the intention. In fact, it’s more like murder by giving poisoned lollipops to middle-aged babies who gleefully grab for them. Hence my despondency.

If there is a small ray of hope out there, it is that more people are beginning to catch on. There has been a large spate of articles in the media lately with the theme of Obama’s complete ineptitude and insignificance as a serious political force. Liberals are by and large finally, amazingly, beginning to understand that he is not a liberal champion by any stretch of the imagination.

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Orwellian bullshit

That’s progress, at least, over reading for the last two years that Obama is a liberal or socialist or has a far-left agenda. What sickening, Orwellian, bullshit that is. Sadly, however, while commentators and the voting public are starting to recognize that Obama is not one of us, they have not yet realized the full truth, which is that he is one of them. As if somebody else picked Larry Summers and Tim Geithner and Bob Gates to serve in his cabinet. As if someone else decided to bail-out Wall Street while doing nothing about jobs or mortgages. As if there was another guy in the White House who tripled American forces in Afghanistan, or maintained Guantánamo in its fully operational state. This is what is, ultimately, so

sickening about our current political condition. As a country, we don’t even know what it is.

If there is another slightly larger a ray of hope on the horizon, it is the premise that there is a breaking point out there somewhere. We’re seeing it in Israel (though, of course, the US media declines to cover the story), where huge swaths of the population have been on the streets protesting against – not Palestinians – but rather plutocratic plundering and the diminished lives it has left them with. We’ve seen that right across the Arab Spring countries, and in Greece and Britain.

Just the other day someone correctly noted that, “There is no excuse for violence, no excuse for looting, no excuse for thuggery, and those who are responsible must know that they will be brought to justice. I think this is about sheer criminality.”

I couldn’t agree more, except that I was thinking it applies to the greedy bastard thugs whose sheer criminality, looting and – yes – violence has brought the world’s economy to its knees, rather than to the response to that on the streets of London, which was what Tory Home Secretary Theresa May meant when she made that comment. In any case, maybe we’re seeing the beginnings of the breaking point. Perhaps people are at last starting to say Basta! to impoverishment of the many in order to serve the greed of the few.

Maybe such restored political nobility will even come to America.

Maybe it isn’t the entire human species that tramples on nobility in its grubby pursuit of greed, but just Homo Sapien Americanus.

And maybe even we children of the Neanderthal can do better, if pushed hard enough. **CT**

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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.

Election march of the trolls

The class war is over. We lost. The corporations won, says **Chris Hedges**

We have begun the election march of the trolls. They have crawled out of the sewers of public relations firms, polling organizations, the commercial media, the two corporate political parties and elected office to fill the airwaves with inanities and absurdities until the final inanity – the 2012 presidential election. Journalists, whose role has been reduced to purveyors of court gossip, whether on Fox or MSNBC, descend in swarms to report pseudo-events such as the Ames straw poll, where it costs \$30 to cast a ballot.

And then, almost immediately, they blithely inform us that the Iowa poll is meaningless now that Rick Perry has entered the race. The liberal trolls, as they do in every election cycle, are beating their little chests about the perfidiousness of the Democratic Party and Barack Obama. It is a gesture performed not to effect change but to burnish their credentials as moralists.

They know, as do we, that they will trot obediently into the voting booth in 2012 to do as they are told. And everywhere the pulse of the nation is being assiduously monitored through polls and focus groups, not because our opinions matter, but because our troll candidates understand that by parroting back to us our own viewpoints they can continue to spend their days lapping up corporate money with other trolls

in the two houses of Congress, the White House, the Supreme Court and television studios where they chat with troll celebrity journalists.

The only commodity the troll state offers is fear. The corporate trolls, such as the Koch brothers, terrify the birthers, creationists, militia lovers, tea party militants, right-to-life advocates, Christian fascists and God-fearing red-white-and-blue patriots by proclaiming that unless they vote for Perry or Mitt Romney or Michele Bachmann or some other product of the lunatic fringe of our political establishment, the American family will be destroyed, our children will be corrupted and the country will turn socialist.

Barack Obama, who they whisper is a closet Muslim, will take away their guns, raise their taxes and bring homosexual couples into kindergartens.

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Message of doom

For those, usually liberals, still rooted in a reality-based world, one that believes in evolutionary science, the corporate trolls offer a more refined, fear-based message of impending doom: If you abandon the Democrats we will be governed by Bible-thumping idiots who will make us chant the Pledge of Allegiance in mass rallies and teach the account of Genesis as historical

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Underneath it all runs the mantra chanted in unison by all the trolls—terror, terror, terror. The troll establishment spins us like windup dolls and laughs all the way to the bank
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There is no economic, political or environmental reform, from campaign finance to environmental controls, that can be implemented to impede the march of the corporate state
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and biological fact in our nation's schools.

And underneath it all runs the mantra chanted in unison by all the trolls—terror, terror, terror. The troll establishment spins us like windup dolls and laughs all the way to the bank. What idiots, they think. And every election cycle we prove them right.

“The only people who grasp the distinction between reality and appearance, who grasp the laws of conduct and society, are the ruling groups and those who do their bidding; scientific, technical elites who elucidate the laws of behavior and the functions of society so that people might be more effectively, albeit unconsciously, governed,” wrote James W. Carey in *Communication as Culture*.

The trolls dominate or have neutralized every major institution in the country on behalf of their corporate paymasters. The press, education, Wall Street, labor and our political parties are managed by trolls or have been destroyed by them.

Sometimes these trolls speak like liberals. Sometimes they speak like conservatives. Sometimes they are secular. Sometimes they are Christians. But the language they use is a cover for the relentless march toward a totalitarian capitalism and a kingdom where the trolls, if not the rest of us, live happily ever after.

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War on Social Security

Rick Perry and John Boehner overtly make war on Social Security. Barack Obama and Nancy Pelosi say they would like to save Social Security but are sadly powerless before the decisions of a congressional super committee they helped form.

The result, of course, is the same. We get to choose the rhetoric and manner in which we are deceived and disempowered. Nothing more.

All cloying appeals to the Obama administration to use stimulus money to build public works such as schools, libraries, roads, clinics, public transit and reclaiming

dams, as well as to create jobs, are about as effective as writing heartfelt appeals in the era of the old Soviet Union to Uncle Joe Stalin. The trolls have gamed the system. There is no economic, political or environmental reform, from campaign finance to environmental controls, that can be implemented to impede the march of the corporate state. The rot and corruption at the top levels of our financial and political systems, coupled with the increasing deprivation felt by tens of millions of Americans, are volatile tinder for revolt. And the trolls are prepared for this too.

They have put in place draconian state controls, including widespread internal surveillance, to silence our anemic left. They know how to direct the rage of the right wing toward the last pockets of the cultural, social and political establishment that cling to traditional liberal values, as well as toward the most vulnerable among us including Muslims, undocumented workers and homosexuals. They will make sure we consume ourselves.

A society is in serious trouble when its political pariahs have at the core of their demands a return to the rule of law. This inversion, with our political and cultural outcasts demanding a respect for law, highlights the awful fact that the most radical and retrograde forces within the body politic have seized control.

These forces demand that we serve the dictates of the marketplace. They are destroying all legal impediments to corporate exploitation and pwnprofit, as well as dismantling the regulatory agencies that once protected the citizen. They defend torture, offshore penal colonies, black sites and kidnapping (they call it “extraordinary rendition”) of state enemies. They protect and abet financial fraud. They wage pre-emptive war. They refuse to restore habeas corpus. Without warrants, they monitor, eavesdrop on and wiretap tens of millions of citizens. They order the assassination of US citizens. They deny due

process. They give corporations the status of persons. They ignore the suffering of the unemployed and the poor, slashing basic social service programs while doling out hundreds of billions in taxpayer funds to corporations. On these key issues, the only ones that really matter, there is no disagreement among trolls from either the self-identified left or the self-identified right. All their public disputes in the election cycle are a carnival act.

Dissent denied

All conventional forms of dissent, from electoral politics to open debates, have been denied us. We cannot rely on the institutions that once made piecemeal and incremental reform possible. The only route left is to disconnect as thoroughly as possible from the consumer society and engage in acts of civil disobedience and obstruction. The more we sever ourselves from the addictions of fossil fuel and the consumer society, the more we begin to create a new paradigm for community.

The more we engage in physical acts of defiance – as Bill McKibben and others did recently in front of the White House to protest the building of the Keystone XL pipeline, which would increase the flow of “dirty” tar sands oil from Alberta, Canada, to refineries on the Gulf of Mexico – the more we can keep alive a new, better way of relating to each other and the ecosystem.

Most important, we must stop being afraid. We have to turn our backs for good on the Democrats, no matter what ghoulish candidate the Republicans offer up for president. We have to defy all formal systems of power. We have to listen closely to the moral voices in our society, from McKibben to Noam Chomsky to Wendell Berry to Ralph Nader, and ignore feckless liberals who have been one of the most effective tools of our disempowerment. We have to create monastic enclaves where

we can retain and nurture the values being rapidly destroyed by the wider corporate culture and build the mechanisms of self-sufficiency that will allow us to survive. The corporate coup is over. We have lost. The trolls have won. We have to face our banishment.

In William Shakespeare’s play “Coriolanus” the Roman consul is deposed by the mob. Coriolanus, whatever his faults, turns on those who thrust him from power to declare a valediction we should deliver to our class of ruling trolls and all those who remain in their embrace.

Brutus:

There’s no more to be said, but he is banish’d,
As enemy to the people and his country:
It shall be so.

Citizens:

It shall be so, it shall be so.

Coriolanus:

You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate
As reek o’ the rotten fens, whose loves I prize
As the dead carcasses of unburied men
That do corrupt my air, I banish you;
And here remain with your uncertainty!
Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts!
Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes,
Fan you into despair! Have the power still
To banish your defenders; till at length
Your ignorance, which finds not till it feels,
Making not reservation of yourselves,
Still your own foes, deliver you as most
Abated captives to some nation
That won you without blows! Despising,
For you, the city, thus I turn my back:
There is a world elsewhere. **CT**

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We have to turn our backs for good on the Democrats, no matter what ghoulish candidate the Republicans offer up for president
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Chris Hedges is a weekly Truthdig columnist and a fellow at The Nation Institute. His newest book is “The World As It Is: Dispatches on the Myth of Human Progress”

The lairds of learning

George Monbiot cannot understand how academic publishers manage to gain almost feudal powers over education

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The material they publish was commissioned and funded not by them but by us, through government research grants and academic stipends. But to see it, we must pay again, and through the nose
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Who are the most ruthless capitalists in the Western world? Whose monopolistic practices makes WalMart look like a corner shop and Rupert Murdoch look like a socialist? You won't guess the answer in a month of Sundays. While there are plenty of candidates, my vote goes not to the banks, the oil companies or the health insurers, but – wait for it – to academic publishers. Theirs might sound like a fusty and insignificant sector. It is anything but. Of all corporate scams, the racket they run is most urgently in need of referral to the competition authorities.

Everyone claims to agree that people should be encouraged to understand science and other academic research. Without current knowledge, we cannot make coherent democratic decisions. But the publishers have slapped a padlock and a Keep Out sign on the gates.

You might resent Murdoch's paywall policy, in which he charges £1 for 24 hours of access to the *Times* and *Sunday Times*. But at least in that period you can read and download as many articles as you like. Reading a single article published by one of Elsevier's journals will cost you \$31.50 (1). Springer charges €34.95 (2), Wiley-Blackwell, \$42 (3). Read ten and you pay ten times. And the journals retain perpetual copyright. You want to read a letter printed in 1981? That'll be \$31.50 (4).

Of course, you could go into the library (if it still exists). But they too have been hit by cosmic fees. The average cost of an annual subscription to a chemistry journal is \$3,792 (5). Some journals cost \$10,000 a year or more to stock. The most expensive I've seen, Elsevier's *Biochimica et Biophysica Acta*, is \$20,930 (6). Though academic libraries have been frantically cutting subscriptions to make ends meet, journals now consume 65% of their budgets (7), which means they have had to reduce the number of books they buy. Journal fees account for a significant component of universities' costs, which are being passed to their students.

Murdoch pays his journalists and editors, and his companies generate much of the content they use. But the academic publishers get their articles, their peer reviewing (vetting by other researchers) and even much of their editing for free. The material they publish was commissioned and funded not by them but by us, through government research grants and academic stipends. But to see it, we must pay again, and through the nose.

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Astronomical returns

The returns are astronomical: in the past financial year, Elsevier's operating-profit margin was 36% (£724m on revenues of £2 billion) (8). They result from a stranglehold on the market. Elsevier, Springer and Wiley,

who have bought up many of their competitors, now publish 42% of journal articles (9).

More importantly, universities are locked into buying their products. Academic papers are published in only one place, and they have to be read by researchers trying to keep up with their subject. Demand is inelastic and competition non-existent, because different journals can't publish the same material. In many cases the publishers oblige the libraries to buy a large package of journals, whether or not they want them all. Perhaps it's not surprising that one of the biggest crooks ever to have preyed upon the people of Britain – Robert Maxwell – made much of his money through academic publishing.

The publishers claim that they have to charge these fees as a result of the costs of production and distribution, and that they add value (in Springer's words) because they "develop journal brands and maintain and improve the digital infrastructure which has revolutionized scientific communication in the past 15 years." (10) But an analysis by Deutsche Bank reaches different conclusions. "We believe the publisher adds relatively little value to the publishing process ... if the process really were as complex, costly and value-added as the publishers protest that it is, 40% margins wouldn't be available." (11) Far from assisting the dissemination of research, the big publishers impede it, as their long turnaround times can delay the release of findings by a year or more (12).

What we see here is pure rentier capitalism: monopolising a public resource then charging exorbitant fees to use it. Another term for it is economic parasitism. To obtain the knowledge for which we have already paid, we must surrender our feu to the lairds of learning.

It's bad enough for academics, it's worse for the laity. I refer readers to peer-reviewed papers, on the principle that claims should be followed to their sources. The readers tell me that they can't afford to judge for themselves whether or not I have represented the research fairly. Independent researchers who

try to inform themselves about important scientific issues have to fork out thousands (12). This is a tax on education, a stifling of the public mind. It appears to contravene the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which says that "everyone has the right freely to ... share in scientific advancement and its benefits." (13)

Open-access publishing, despite its promise, and some excellent resources such as the Public Library of Science and the physics database arxiv.org, has failed to displace the monopolists. In 1998 the *Economist*, surveying the opportunities offered by electronic publishing, predicted that "the days of 40% profit margins may soon be as dead as Robert Maxwell." (14) But in 2010 Elsevier's operating profit margins were the same (36%) as they were in 1998 (15).

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Can't stop reading

The reason is that the big publishers have rounded up the journals with the highest academic impact factors, in which publication is essential for researchers trying to secure grants and advance their careers (16). You can start reading open-access journals, but you can't stop reading the closed ones.

Government bodies, with a few exceptions, have failed to confront them. The National Institutes of Health in the US oblige anyone taking their grants to put their papers in an open-access archive (17). But Research Councils UK, whose statement on public access is a masterpiece of meaningless waffle, relies on "the assumption that publishers will maintain the spirit of their current policies." (18) You bet they will.

In the short-term, governments should refer the academic publishers to their competition watchdogs, and insist that all papers arising from publicly-funded research are placed in a free public database (19). In the longer term, they should work with researchers to cut out the middleman altogether, creating, along the lines proposed by Bjorn Brembs, a single global archive of academic literature

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The reason is that the big publishers have rounded up the journals with the highest academic impact factors, in which publication is essential for researchers trying to secure grants and advance their careers

EDUCATION BONANZA

The knowledge monopoly is as unwarranted and anachronistic as the Corn Laws

and data (20). Peer-review would be overseen by an independent body. It could be funded by the library budgets which are currently being diverted into the hands of privateers. The knowledge monopoly is as unwarranted and anachronistic as the Corn Laws. Let's throw off these parasitic overlords and liberate the research which belongs to us. **CT**

Notes

1. I sampled costs in these Elsevier journals: Journal of Clinical Epidemiology; Radiation Physics and Chemistry and Crop Protection, all of which charge US\$31.50. Papers in a fourth publication I checked, the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, cost US\$35.95.
2. I sampled costs in these Springer journals: Journal of Applied Spectroscopy, Kinematics and Physics of Celestial Bodies and Ecotoxicology, all of which charge Eur34.95.
3. I sampled costs in these Wiley-Blackwell journals: Plant Biology; Respirology and Journal of Applied Social Psychology, all of which charge US\$ 42.00.
4. I went into the archive of Elsevier's Applied Catalysis, and checked the costs of the material published in its first issue: April 1981.
5. Bjorn Brembs, 2011. What's Wrong with Scholarly Publishing Today? II. <http://www.slideshare.net/brembs/whats-wrong-with-scholarly-publishing-today-ii>
6. http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/506062/bibliographic
7. The Economist, 26th May 2011. Of goats and headaches. <http://www.economist.com/node/18744177>
8. The Economist, as above.
9. Glenn S. McGuigan and Robert D. Russell, 2008. The Business of Academic Publishing: A Strategic Analysis of the Academic Journal Publishing Industry and its Impact on the Future of Scholarly Publishing. Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship, volume 9, number 3.

- http://southernlibrarianship.icaap.org/content/vo9no3/mcguigan_g01.html
10. Springer Corporate Communications, 29th August 2011. By email. I spoke to Elsevier and asked them for a comment, but I have not received one.
 11. Deutsche Bank AG, 11th January 2005. Reed Elsevier: Moving the Supertanker. Global Equity Research Report. Quoted by Glenn S. McGuigan and Robert D. Russell, as above.
 12. John P. Conley and Myrna Wooders, March 2009. But what have you done for me lately? Commercial Publishing, Scholarly Communication, and Open-Access. Economic Analysis & Policy, Vol. 39, No. 1. www.eap-journal.com/download.php?file=692
 13. Article 27. <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a27>
 14. The Economist, 22nd January 1998. Publishing, perishing, and peer review. <http://www.economist.com/node/603719>
 15. Glenn S. McGuigan and Robert D. Russell, as above.
 16. See Glenn S. McGuigan and Robert D. Russell, as above.
 17. <http://publicaccess.nih.gov/>
 18. <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/2006statement.pdf>
 19. Danny Kingsley shows how a small change could make a big difference: "Currently all universities collect information about, and a copy of, every research article written by their academics each year. ... But the version of the papers collected is the Publisher's PDF. And in most cases this is the version we cannot make open access through digital repositories. ... the infrastructure is there and the processes are already in place. But there is one small change that has to happen before we can enjoy substantive access to Australian research. The Government must specify that they require the Accepted Version (the final peer reviewed, corrected version) of the papers rather than the Publisher's PDF for reporting." <http://theconversation.edu.au/how-one-small-fix-could-open-access-to-research-2637>
 20. Bjorn Brembs, as above.

George Monbiot's latest book is "Bring On The Apocalypse". This piece first appeared in London's Guardian newspaper.

Madison Ave declares the end of mass affluence

In deeply unequal USA, if you don't make \$200,000 a year, you don't matter, says **Sam Pizzigati**

The chain-smoking ad agency account execs of *Mad Men*, the hit cable TV series set in the early 1960s, all want to be rich some day. But these execs, professionally, couldn't care less about the rich. They spend their nine-to-fives marketing to average Americans, not rich ones. *Mad Men's* real-life ad agency brethren, 50 years ago, behaved the exact same way – for an eminently common-sense reason: In mid-20th century America, the entire US economy revolved around middle class households. The vast bulk of US income sat in middle class pockets.

The rich back then, for ad execs, constituted an afterthought, a niche market.

Not anymore. Madison Avenue has now come full circle. The rich no longer rate as a niche. Marketing to the rich – and those about to gain that status – has become the only game that really counts.

“Mass affluence,” as a new white paper from *Ad Age*, the advertising industry's top trade journal, has just declared, “is over.”

The *Mad Men* 1960s America – where average families dominated the consumer market – has totally disappeared, this *Ad Age* New Wave of Affluence study details. And Madison Avenue has moved on – to where the money sits.

And that money does not sit in average American pockets. The global economic recession, *Ad Age* relates, has thrown “a spot-

light on the yawning divide between the richest Americans and everyone else.”

Taking inflation into account, *Ad Age* goes on to explain, the “incomes of most American workers have remained more or less static since the 1970s,” while “the income of the rich (and the very rich) has grown exponentially.”

The top 10 percent of American households, the trade journal adds, now account for nearly half of all consumer spending, and a disproportionate share of that spending comes from the top 10's upper reaches.

“Simply put,” sums up *Ad Age's* David Hirschman, “a small plutocracy of wealthy elites drives a larger and larger share of total consumer spending and has outsize purchasing influence – particularly in categories such as technology, financial services, travel, automotive, apparel, and personal care.”

America as a whole, the new *Ad Age* study pauses to note, hasn't quite caught up with the reality of this steep inequality. Americans still “like to believe in an egalitarian ideal of affluence” where “everyone has an equal shot” at “amassing a great fortune through dint of hard work and ingenuity.”

In actual life, the new *Ad Age* study points out, “the odds of someone's worth amounting to \$1 million dollars” have shrunk to “1 in 22.”

The new *Ad Age* white paper makes no

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The rich no longer rate as a niche. Marketing to the rich – and those about to gain that status – has become the only game that really counts

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If you want to be a successful advertising exec in a deeply unequal America, start studying up on 20-somethings making over \$100,000 a year
.....

value judgments about any of this. The ad industry's only vested interest: following the money, because that money determines who consumes.

"As the very rich become even richer," as *Ad Age* observes, "they amass greater purchasing power, creating an increasingly concentrated market for luxury goods and services as well as consumer goods overall."

In the future, if current trends continue, no one else but the rich will essentially matter – to Madison Avenue.

"More than ever before," the new *Ad Age* paper bluntly sums up, "the wealthiest households will be the households with significant disposable income to spend."

On the one hand, that makes things easy for Madison Avenue. To thrive in a top-heavy America, a marketer need only zero in on the rich. On the other hand, a real challenge remains: How can savvy Madison Avenue execs identify – and capture the consuming loyalties of – people on their way to wealth?

Before the Great Recession, the Madison Avenue conventional wisdom put great stock in the \$100,000 to \$200,000 income demographic, a consuming universe populated largely by men and women 35 years and older. These "aspirational" households, ad men and women figured, could afford a taste of the good life. They rated as a worth-

while advertising target.

Targeting this \$100,000 to \$200,000 cohort, the new *Ad Age* report contends, no longer makes particularly good marketing sense. These consumers don't "feel rich" today and won't likely "graduate into affluence later on."

Only under-35s who make between \$100,000 and \$200,000, says *Ad Age*, will likely make that graduation. This under-35 "emerging" tier will have "a far greater chance of eventually crossing the golden threshold of \$200,000 than those who achieve household income of \$100,000 later in life."

So that's it. If you want to be a successful advertising exec in a deeply unequal America, start studying up on 20-somethings making over \$100,000 a year.

The ad industry, with this new affluence report, seems to have the future all figured out. And those of us who don't make \$200,000 a year, and don't have much chance of ever making it, what about us? No need to worry. Who needs purchasing power? We have *Mad Men* reruns. **CT**

.....
Sam Pizzigati, the co-editor of *Inequality*. *Org*, also edits *Too Much*, the Institute for Policy Studies weekly on excess and inequality where this article originally appeared.



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69 years after Dieppe, truth is still a casualty

The World War II battle at Dieppe was a disaster, despite the propaganda of lords and politicians, writes **Don North**

“If any question why we died, tell them because our fathers lied.” – Rudyard Kipling. Epitaphs of the war.

The template for unashamed deceit of the news media in wartime is the disastrous raid on Dieppe August 19, 1942. The controversy over the lessons learned at Dieppe continue to this day, perhaps proof that unless truthful, the “first rough draft of history” lives on without aggressive scholarship or journalism.

At the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, Ontario there is a citation on the wall of an official display; “Some insist that the lessons learned at Dieppe contributed to the success of later allied landings including Normandy. Others insist that the raid was poorly planned and an avoidable blunder.” It seems the Canadian preference is to “choose your own version of history on Dieppe.”

Of the many authoritative books on the raid, one of the best is *The Dieppe Raid* by the late British historian Robin Neillands. He cuts through the censorship and propaganda that have fogged understanding of Dieppe by calling it “a false concept aided by soldiers, politicians and journalists who came to believe their own censored reports. Neillands wrote, “Many of the lessons of Dieppe were quite fundamental, there was no need to learn them again at such a terrible cost. The Dieppe commanders failed to remember

that loyalty should flow down as well as up; their loyalty was due to the nameless soldiers in the landing craft as much as to their superiors and dictates of the Service. “There were people dying on those stony beaches; they deserved better of their commanders. Those who seek glory in war will not find it on the beaches of Dieppe. Those who seek tales of valour need look no further.”

Dieppe, about 100 miles east of the D-Day beaches of Normandy, was the first large-scale daylight assault on a strongly held objective in Europe. It would be the greatest amphibious landing since Gallipoli during WWI and the first time in history tanks would be landed on enemy held beaches.

Vanity and ambition

The principal architect of Dieppe was Lord Louis Mountbatten, a close relative of the British Royal family and a favourite of Winston Churchill, who had appointed him Chief of Combined Services. Mountbatten, known to his friends as “Dickie,” was famous for his vanity and unbridled ambition. It was often said of him that the truth, in his hands was swiftly converted from what it was to what it should have been.

With Churchill’s blessing, Mountbatten pushed through the raid over the objections of Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery and many officers of the allied military establish-

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ment who felt it was ill-advised.

Dieppe was the first big propaganda exercise of modern warfare. At that time military public relations was a new-fangled notion, foreign to most senior British and Canadian officers. However Lord Mountbatten's eager PR team took an opportunistic view. Included on his staff were two American publicists from Hollywood, Major Jock Lawrence and Lt. Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., son of the film star. Twenty one war correspondents and photographers were allowed to accompany the raid. What they in fact witnessed was a tragic and costly fiasco. What they wrote, after vetting by Mountbatten's censors was largely fiction. For instance, the *Toronto Star* headline story first reporting the raid was datelined August 22, 1942 by Ross Munro, Canadian Press:

LIKE FIREWORKS SAYS ROYAL'S
SERGEANT OF BATTLE AT DIEPPE
WEDNESDAY'S DAWN CAME WITH
ROARING CRESCENDO OF FIRING

"In the grimmest and fiercest operation of the war since British troops swarmed out of Dunkirk, the Canadian's assaulting Dieppe gave the German elite coastal defense men a sample of the courage the Dominion's fighting men display when they are assigned to battle."

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Self-serving analysis

Years later, Mountbatten himself would frame the more pleasing conventional wisdom about Dieppe, declaring: "I have no doubt that the Battle of Normandy was won on the beaches of Dieppe. For every man who died in Dieppe, at least 10 more must have been spared in Normandy in 1944."

Mountbatten's self serving-analysis would remain a common lens through which to see the Dieppe raid, putting a rosy glow around the deaths, wounding and capture of more than half the landing force as it failed to accomplish a single objective.

I learned the truth of Dieppe from two veterans of the Royal Regiment of Canada

who landed at "Blue Beach" that fateful August 19th. Private Roy Jacques, of Surrey, B.C. told me: "There were 5,000 of us from the 2nd Canadian Division, 1,000 British commandos and 50 US Army Rangers. In less than ten hours battle, after hitting the beach, 1,380 of us had been killed.

"I was captured along with 2,000 others, mostly wounded by the Germans, and spent the rest of the war at Stalag Stargard." Jacques survived the war and later became a respected journalist and news director of CKWX radio in Vancouver."

Roy died last year at age 95.

Another friend and veteran of Dieppe was Private Joe Ryan, 90, of Mississauga, Ontario, also of the Royal Regiment. Ryan and I returned to Dieppe for the 65th anniversary of the landing in 2007. As we walked the landing beach and the Canadian cemetery, he told me: "That's my beach, Don. The tide was about the same as it is now when we ran across those damn rocks tripping and falling. See that old German pillbox is still there overgrown with weeds."

In the cemetery Ryan pointed with his cane and said: "There's the grave of my signalman. Rolly Ward and I hit the beach together, but Rolly didn't get up again. I took his watch and brought it back to his mother who never did believe he had been killed at Dieppe."

Joe and I argued about the role of the press at Dieppe. Ross Munro of the Canadian Press had been in the same landing craft as Joe but did not venture onto the beach where piles of the dead were mounting. "Those newsmen were drunken bastards and we wouldn't have anything to do with them. Munro was a coward who never left the landing craft."

I tried to convince Joe that Munro had a good view of the embattled beach from the landing craft and was able to survive and return to England with his eyewitness story, which he could not have done if killed or captured by the Germans.

However, Ross Munro and the other reporters were subject to draconian censorship

by Mountbatten's command and their published reports bore little resemblance to the facts.

Three years later after the war ended, Ross Munro wrote a book *Gauntlet to Overlord*, in which he described the Dieppe landing without censorship.

"They plunged into about two feet of water and machine-gun bullets laced into them.

"Bodies piled up on the ramp. Some staggered to the beach and fell. Looking out the open bow over the bodies on the ramp, I saw the slope leading up to a stone wall littered with Royal casualties. They had been cut down before they had a chance to fire a shot. It was brutal and terrible and shocked you almost to insensibility to see the piles of dead and feel the hopelessness of the attack at this point. The beach was khaki-coloured with the bodies of the boys from Central Ontario."

Raid a complete failure

Munro concluded in his book that the raid was a complete tactical failure, that everything that could have gone wrong did so, that "looking back, it seems to me to have been an incredibly risky task with only a gambler's chance of success." But Munro, years after, still bought Lord Mountbatten's pitch that "Losses must be seen in the light of valuable experience gained. The battle of D-Day was won on the beaches of Dieppe."

Classified papers in the British archives released thirty years later show that Mountbatten may have even duped Churchill and his War cabinet into believing Dieppe was a success. "The raid had gone off very satisfactorily. The planning had been excellent, air support faultless, and naval losses extremely light. Of the 6,000 men involved, two thirds returned to Britain and all I have seen are in great form."

Proof that Mountbatten's command planned to use Dieppe as a propaganda tool whatever happened can be found in the

Combined Operations files in the archives at Kew near London. Using the code name for the raid, a memorandum entitled "Jubilee Communiqué Meeting" makes clear that Mountbatten planned to appeal to "lessons learned" before any were actually learned:

"In case the raid is unsuccessful the same basic principles must hold. We cannot call such a large-scale operation a "reconnaissance raid."

"We cannot avoid stating the general composition of the force, since the enemy will know it and make capital of our losses and of any failure of the first effort of Canadian and US troops.

"Therefore, in the event of failure, the communique must then stress the success of the operation as an essential test in the employment of substantial forces and equipment.

"We then lay extremely heavy stress on stories of personal heroism – through interviews, broadcasts, etc. – in order to focus public attention on bravery rather than objectives not attained."

The press releases issued following the raid virtually quoted the memorandum:

"Vital experience has been gained in the employment of substantial numbers of troops in an assault, and in the transport of heavy equipment."

Lord Louis Mountbatten throughout his life worked to enhance his place in history for his leadership of the Dieppe raid.

Brian Loring Villa, when he was a professor of history at the University of Ottawa, wrote *Unauthorized Action: Mountbatten and the Dieppe Raid*. Villa claims Mountbatten convinced Churchill to replace his original critical account of the raid in his war history, *The Hinge of Fate*, with a more positive one written by Mountbatten himself. In 1974, in a speech to British war veterans he accused the Canadians of changing his original plan to a frontal attack. (In 1979, Mountbatten was assassinated by the Irish Republican Army in a bombing of his fishing boat off the coast of Ireland.)

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After years of books glorifying Dieppe, the evidence published by Robin Neillands, renowned for deflating the myths of military history, cut like a cleaver in Canada when he wrote, "one lesson that cannot be questioned as having an influence on all Allied staffs for the rest of the war is that ineffectual staffs like the Canadians get many people killed very fast." Neillands concluded: "Mistakes were made that could have been avoided had the people involved in this operation known more about amphibious warfare. At every level they did not know what they were doing. When the Canadians and the Royal Marine Commandos went ashore, they were going to their deaths – and most of them probably realized that fact as their landing craft took them into the assault."

War correspondent Ross Munro went home to Canada to become editor of the *Vancouver Sun*, with few regrets about his intrepid war reporting so distorted by Mountbatten and Churchill's censors. "You get very deft and skilled at telling the story honestly and validly despite the censorship. I never really felt, except maybe on the Dieppe raid, that I was really cheating the public at home."

Frank Gillard of the BBC was one correspondent at Dieppe who regretted his coverage. Writing on the 40th anniversary of Dieppe he recalled: "I am almost ashamed to read my report, but it was that or nothing. It was a day of wrangling, fist with one censor and then with another, until our mutilated and emasculated texts, rendered almost bland under relentless pressure, was released 24 hours after our return. It was all so stupidly frustrating. There was sheer folly at Dieppe, but that was at the planning level. Those who had to execute these misguided orders against impossible odds showed gallantry and heroism of the highest order. Given half a chance, we could have presented Dieppe in terms that would have evoked pride along with the sorrow. But PR handling of Dieppe was as great a disaster as the operation itself."

One journalist who covered the Dieppe landing was pleased with his story. A reporter for the *Deutsche Alleghenies Zeitung* visiting a nearby Luftwaffe airbase wrote: "As executed, the venture mocked all rules of military logic and strategy."

Even Hitler's Reich Minister of Propaganda, Dr. Josef Goebbels, in a radio interview monitored by the BBC sounded rational compared to British claims of victory at Dieppe. "We have no doubt it is possible with this kind of news reporting to deceive and lead astray one's own nation for a time, but we do doubt that one can alter any of the facts by such methods."

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Curious, crazy, responsible

American author Quentin Reynolds who covered the Dieppe raid for i wrote, "The correspondents of the Second World War were a curious, crazy, yet responsible crew. For the sake of the war effort, and because the war against Hitler was considered a just one, they did what was required of them."

Dieppe, where 1,380 were killed and 2,000 taken prisoner, showed how well the system worked.

History is to the human race what reason is to the individual. Both extend our ability to think past the narrow present, and if they are distorted – for whatever reason – future misjudgements are inevitable.

Truth can be painful, as the foot soldiers and their survivors know who wish to cling to the positive spin of terrible events. My friends Roy Jacques and Joe Ryan went to their graves last year comforted by the false claims of Lord Mountbatten that those who fought and died at Dieppe paved the way for victory in Normandy two years later.

They can be forgiven, as can be relatives and friends of those who died at Dieppe who desperately searched for meaning in their sacrifice and loss. It takes exceptional courage to make truthful judgements in wartime. They were honoured and remembered, as

the Dieppe veterans are every year in the Canadian cemetery at Dieppe. Moving among the graves marked with a maple leaf and the date August 19, as he does every year, Alain Menué of the Dieppe memorial association, laid wreaths and flowers. “We in Dieppe remember their sacrifice. Even though there are few lines now in the history books about the battle, it is important to remember the defeats as well as the victories. Sadly now we find many young people in France are not interested to remember the war.”

Dieppe, after 69 years is still a cautionary tale against false patriotism. Glorified history can make war more palatable to the public, which can encourage its use again, often too readily and without regard to the real human consequences. One lesson firmly learned from Dieppe is for us to read news articles about war with a measure of scepticism and to understand that the powerful will do what they can to spare themselves from accountability, miscalculations and hubris.

Today although there is no draconian censorship of war news from Afghanistan, there is still pressure on reporters and news organizations to put the best face on events, not to be too negative. There is also a desire to give some meaning to the Afghan war and the parallel conflict in Iraq, to argue that the more than 6,195 American soldiers who have died, did not die in vain. But sometimes the sacrifice of soldiers is more to advance – or protect – the reputations of political and military leaders.

The news from Afghanistan last week was grim. Fifty Americans have died so far in August, including 30 from the crash of a Chinook helicopter. And the rate of suicides of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans is near par with those killed on the battlefield. In the eulogies to fallen soldiers there is a tendency to mark unnecessary deaths as justification for still more unnecessary deaths.

Meanwhile, from senior military leaders like General David Petraeus, former US commander in Afghanistan and Iraq – now

elevated to CIA director – we hear a constant mantra of “there is progress in Afghanistan.”

Dieppe was a case of deceitful manipulation of the press into reporting a defeat as a victory. In Afghanistan today, however, it is a case of American journalists being almost absent from the war with a few exceptions like Rajiv Chandrasekaran and Greg Jaffe of the *Washington Post* and the Associated Press which maintains a Kabul bureau.

Dwindling public interest in a ten year old war and shrinking budgets of news organizations has made embedding journalists difficult.

Last month the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard issued a report “The war without end is a war with hardly any news coverage.” The lengthy report says: “TV coverage averages 21 seconds per newscast. One critic quoted says the lack of sustained American TV reporting of Afghanistan is the most irresponsible behaviour in all the annals of war journalism.”

The main lesson from Dieppe may be that if the “first rough draft of history” as reported in the news media is distorted, it can live on indefinitely unless there is aggressive scholarship and journalism to counter it. The question from America’s open-ended wars after the 9/11 attacks may be: what happens when journalists are not even there to write the first draft? **CT**

Don North has covered conflicts from Vietnam and Central America to Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. Don, a Canadian writer, has interviewed dozens of veterans of the Dieppe raid and researched it in the British Archives, Imperial War Museum and the Canadian War Archives. This article for Cold Type was drawn from his unpublished book “Inappropriate Conduct” dealing with press coverage in WWII. North’s recent documentary “Yesterday’s Enemeis” examines the lives of FMLN guerillas who he knew during the civil war in El Salvador

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Libya's place in the world in which we live

The people of Libya are being 'liberated' by NATO's Holy Triumvirate. William Blum thinks they may be forgiven for wondering why

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The Holy Triumvirate – The United States, NATO and the European Union – recognizes no higher power and believes, literally, that it can do whatever it wants in the world, to whomever it wants, for as long as it wants, and call it whatever it wants, like “humanitarian”
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“Why are you attacking us? Why are you killing our children? Why are you destroying our infrastructure?”

– Television address by Libyan Leader Muammar Gaddafi, April 30, 2011

A few hours after that plea NATO hit a target in Tripoli, killing Gaddafi's 29-year-old son Saif al-Arab, three of Gaddafi's grandchildren, all under twelve years of age, and several friends and neighbors.

In his TV address, Gaddafi had appealed to the NATO nations for a cease-fire and negotiations after six weeks of bombings and cruise missile attacks against his country.

Well, let's see if we can derive some understanding of the complex Libyan turmoil.

The Holy Triumvirate – The United States, NATO and the European Union – recognizes no higher power and believes, literally, that it can do whatever it wants in the world, to whomever it wants, for as long as it wants, and call it whatever it wants, like “humanitarian”.

If The Holy Triumvirate decides that it doesn't want to overthrow the government in Syria or in Egypt or Tunisia or Bahrain or Saudi Arabia or Yemen or Jordan, no matter how cruel, oppressive, or religiously intolerant those governments are with their people, no matter how much they impoverish and torture their people, no matter how

many protesters they shoot dead in their Freedom Square, the Triumvirate will simply not overthrow them.

If the Triumvirate decides that it wants to overthrow the government of Libya, though that government is secular and has used its oil wealth for the benefit of the people of Libya and Africa perhaps more than any government in all of Africa and the Middle East, but keeps insisting over the years on challenging the Triumvirate's imperial ambitions in Africa and raising its demands on the Triumvirate's oil companies, then the Triumvirate will simply overthrow the government of Libya.

If the Triumvirate wants to punish Gaddafi and his sons it will arrange with the Triumvirate's friends at the International Criminal Court to issue arrest warrants for them.

If the Triumvirate doesn't want to punish the leaders of Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Jordan it will simply not ask the ICC to issue arrest warrants for them. Ever since the Court first formed in 1998, the United States has refused to ratify it and has done its best to denigrate it and throw barriers in its way because Washington is concerned that American officials might one day be indicted for their many war crimes and crimes against humanity. Bill Richardson, as US ambassador to the UN, said to the world in 1998 that the Unit-

ed States should be exempt from the court's prosecution because it has "special global responsibilities". But this doesn't stop the United States from using the Court when it suits the purposes of American foreign policy.

If the Triumvirate wants to support a rebel military force to overthrow the government of Libya then it does not matter how fanatically religious, al-Qaeda-related, executing-beheading-torturing, monarchist, or factionally split various groups of that rebel force are at times, the Triumvirate will support it, as it did certain forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, and hope that after victory the Libyan force will not turn out as jihadist as it did in Afghanistan, or as fratricidal as in Iraq. One potential source of conflict within the rebels, and within the country if ruled by them, is that a constitutional declaration made by the rebel council states that, while guaranteeing democracy and the rights of non-Muslims, "Islam is the religion of the state and the principle source of legislation in Islamic Jurisprudence."

Adding to the list of the rebels' charming qualities we have the Amnesty International report that the rebels have been conducting mass arrests of black people across the nation, terming all of them "foreign mercenaries" but with growing evidence that a large number were simply migrant workers. Reported Reuters (August 29): "On Saturday, reporters saw the putrefying bodies of 22 men of African origin on a Tripoli beach. Volunteers who had come to bury them said they were mercenaries whom rebels had shot dead." To complete this portrait of the West's newest darlings we have this report from the *Independent of London* (August 27): "The killings were pitiless. They had taken place at a makeshift hospital, in a tent marked clearly with the symbols of the Islamic crescent. Some of the dead were on stretchers, attached to intravenous drips. Some were on the back of an ambulance that had been shot at. A few were on the ground, seemingly at-

tempting to crawl to safety when the bullets came."

If the Triumvirate's propaganda is clever enough and deceptive enough and paints a graphic picture of Gaddafi-initiated high tragedy in Libya, many American and European progressives will insist that though they never, ever support imperialism they're making an exception this time because ...

- The Libyan people are being saved from a "massacre", both actual and potential. This massacre, however, seems to have been grossly exaggerated by the Triumvirate, al Jazeera TV, and that station's owner, the government of Qatar; and nothing approaching reputable evidence of a massacre has been offered, neither a mass grave or anything else; the massacre stories appear to be on a par with the Viagra-rape stories spread by al Jazeera (the Fox News of the Libyan uprising). Qatar, it should be noted, has played an active military role in the civil war on the side of NATO. It should be further noted that the main massacre in Libya has been six months of daily Triumvirate bombing, killing an unknown number of people and ruining much of the infrastructure. Michigan U. Prof. Juan Cole, the quintessential true-believer in the good intentions of American foreign policy who nevertheless manages to have a regular voice in progressive media, recently wrote that "Qaddafi was not a man to compromise ... his military machine would mow down the revolutionaries if it were allowed to." Is that clear, class? We all know of course that Sarkozy, Obama, and Cameron made compromises without end in their devastation of Libya; they didn't, for example, use any nuclear weapons.

- The United Nations gave its approval for military intervention; i.e., the leading members of the Triumvirate gave their approval, after Russia and China cowardly abstained instead of exercising their veto power; (perhaps hoping to receive the same courtesy from

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the US, UK and France when Russia or China is the aggressor nation).

● The people of Libya are being “liberated”, whatever in the world that means, now or in the future. Gaddafi is a “dictator” they insist. That may indeed be the proper term to use for the man, but it must still be asked: Is he a relatively benevolent dictator or is he the other kind so favored by Washington? It must also be asked: Since the United States has habitually supported dictators for the entire past century, why not this one?

The Triumvirate, and its fawning media, would have the world believe that what’s happened in Libya is just another example of the Arab Spring, a popular uprising by non-violent protestors against a dictator for the proverbial freedom and democracy, spreading spontaneously from Tunisia and Egypt, which sandwich Libya. But there are several reasons to question this analysis in favor of seeing the Libyan rebels’ uprising as a planned and violent attempt to take power in behalf of their own political movement, however heterogeneous that movement might appear to be in its early stage. For example:

1. They soon began flying the flag of the monarchy that Gaddafi had overthrown
2. They were an armed and violent rebellion almost from the beginning; within a few days, we could read of “citizens armed with weapons seized from army bases” and of “the policemen who had participated in the clash were caught and hanged by protesters
3. Their revolt took place not in the capital but in the heart of the country’s oil region; they then began oil production and declared that foreign countries would be rewarded oil-wise in relation to how much each country aided their cause
4. They soon set up a Central Bank, a rather bizarre thing for a protest movement
5. International support came quickly, even beforehand, from Qatar and al Jazeera

to the CIA and French intelligence

The notion that a leader does not have the right to put down an armed rebellion against the state is too absurd to discuss.

Not very long ago, Iraq and Libya were the two most modern and secular states in the Mideast/North Africa world with perhaps the highest standards of living in the region. Then the United States of America came along and saw fit to make a basket case of each one. The desire to get rid of Gaddafi had been building for years; the Libyan leader had never been a reliable pawn; then the Arab Spring provided the excellent opportunity and cover. As to Why? Take your pick of the following:

● Gaddafi’s plans to conduct Libya’s trading in Africa in raw materials and oil in a new currency – the gold African dinar, a change that could have delivered a serious blow to the US’s dominant position in the world economy. (In 2000, Saddam Hussein announced Iraqi oil would be traded in euros, not dollars; sanctions and an invasion followed.)

● A host-country site for Africom, the US Africa Command, one of six regional commands the Pentagon has divided the world into. Many African countries approached to be the host have declined, at times in relatively strong terms. Africom at present is headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany. According to a State Department official: “We’ve got a big image problem down there. ... Public opinion is really against getting into bed with the US. They just don’t trust the US.”

● An American military base to replace the one closed down by Gaddafi after he took power in 1969. There’s only one such base in Africa, in Djibouti. Watch for one in Libya sometime after the dust has settled. It’ll perhaps be situated close to the American oil wells. Or perhaps the people of Libya will be given a choice – an American base or a NATO base.

● Another example of NATO desperate

to find a *raison d'être* for its existence since the end of the Cold War and the Warsaw Pact.

- Gaddafi's role in creating the African Union. The corporate bosses never like it when their wage slaves set up a union. The Libyan leader has also supported a United States of Africa for he knows that an Africa of 54 independent states will continue to be picked off one by one and abused and exploited by the members of the Triumvirate. Gaddafi has moreover demanded greater power for smaller countries in the United Nations.

- The claim by Gaddafi's son, Saif el Islam, that Libya had helped to fund Nicolas Sarkozy's election campaign could have humiliated the French president and explain his obsessiveness and haste in wanting to be seen as playing the major role in implementing the "no fly zone" and other measures against Gaddafi. A contributing factor may have been the fact that France has been weakened in its former colonies and neo-colonies in Africa and the Middle East, due in part to Gaddafi's influence.

- Gaddafi has been an outstanding supporter of the Palestinian cause and critic of Israeli policies; and on occasion has taken other African and Arab countries, as well as the West, to task for their not matching his policies or rhetoric; one more reason for his lack of popularity amongst world leaders of all stripes.

- In January, 2009, Gaddafi made known that he was considering nationalizing the foreign oil companies in Libya. He also has another bargaining chip: the prospect of utilizing Russian, Chinese and Indian oil companies. During the current period of hostilities, he invited these countries to make up for lost production. But such scenarios will now not take place. The Triumvirate will instead seek to privatize the National Oil Corporation, transferring Libya's oil wealth into foreign hands.

- The American Empire is troubled by

any threat to its hegemony. In the present historical period the empire is concerned mainly with Russia and China. China has extensive energy investments and construction investments in Libya and elsewhere in Africa. The average American neither knows nor cares about this. The average American imperialist cares greatly, if for no other reason than in this time of rising demands for cuts to the military budget it's vital that powerful "enemies" be named and maintained.

- For yet more reasons, see the article "Why Regime Change in Libya?" by Ismael Hossein-zadeh, and the US diplomatic cables released by Wikileaks – Wikileaks reference 07TRIPOLI967 11-15-07 (includes a complaint about Libyan "resource nationalism")

A word from the man the world's mightiest military powers have been trying to kill:

"Recollections of My Life", written by Col. Muammar Gaddafi, April 8, 2011, excerpts:

Now, I am under attack by the biggest force in military history, my little African son, Obama wants to kill me, to take away the freedom of our country, to take away our free housing, our free medicine, our free education, our free food, and replace it with American style thievery, called "capitalism," but all of us in the Third World know what that means, it means corporations run the countries, run the world, and the people suffer, so, there is no alternative for me, I must make my stand, and if Allah wishes, I shall die by following his path, the path that has made our country rich with farmland, with food and health, and even allowed us to help our African and Arab brothers and sisters to work here with us ... I do not wish to die, but if it comes to that, to save this land, my people, all the thousands who are all my children, then so be it. ... In the West, some have called me "mad", "crazy". They know the truth but continue to lie, they know that our land is independent and free, not in the colonial grip.

CT

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"if Allah wishes, I shall die by following his path, the path that has made our country rich with farmland, with food and health, and even allowed us to help our African and Arab brothers and sisters to work here with us"

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William Blum is the author of: "Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2"; "Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower"; "West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir"; "Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire". Signed copies may be purchased, at www.killinghope.org

Killing Sirte to save it

The UN's mandate to NATO was to protect civilians from slaughter. So why are they doing the opposite?, asks **Craig Murray**

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The disconnect between the UN mandate to protect civilians while facilitating negotiation, and NATO's actual actions as the anti-Gadaffi forces' air force and special forces, is startling
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There is no cause to doubt that, for whatever reason, the support of the people of Sirte for Gadaffi is genuine. That this means they deserve to be pounded into submission is less obvious to me. The disconnect between the UN mandate to protect civilians while facilitating negotiation, and NATO's actual actions as the anti-Gadaffi forces' air force and special forces, is startling.

There is something so shocking in the Orwellian doublespeak of NATO on this point that I am severely dismayed. I suffer from that old springing eternal of hope, and am therefore always in a state of disappointment. I had hoped that the general population in Europe is so educated now that obvious outright lies would be rejected. I even hoped some journalists would seek to expose lies.

I was wrong, wrong, wrong.

The "rebels" are actively hitting Sirte with heavy artillery and Stalin's organs; they are transporting tanks openly to attack Sirte. Yet any movement of tanks or artillery by the population of Sirte brings immediate death from NATO air strike.

What exactly is the reason that Sirte's defenders are threatening civilians but the artillery of their attackers – and the bombings themselves – are not? Plainly this is a nonsense. People in foreign ministries, NATO, the BBC and other media are well aware

that it is the starkest lie and propaganda, to say the assault on Sirte is protecting civilians. But does knowledge of the truth prevent them from peddling a lie? No.

It is worth reminding everyone something never mentioned, that UNSCR 1973 which established the no fly zone and mandate to protect civilians had "the aim of facilitating dialogue to lead to the political reforms necessary to find a peaceful and sustainable solution;"

That is in Operative Para 2 of the Resolution

Plainly the people of Sirte hold a different view to the "rebels" as to who should run the country. NATO have in effect declared being in Gadaffi's political camp a capital offence. There is no way the massive assault on Sirte is "facilitating dialogue". It is rather killing those who do not hold the NATO approved opinion. That is the actual truth. It is extremely plain.

I have no time for Gadaffi. I have actually met him, and he really is nuts, and dangerous. There were aspects of his rule in terms of social development which were good, but much more that was bad and tyrannical. But if NATO is attacking him because he is a dictator, why is it not attacking Dubai, Bahrain, Syria, Burma, Zimbabwe, or Uzbekistan, to name a random selection of badly governed countries?

"Liberal intervention" does not exist.

What we have is the opposite; highly selective neo-imperial wars aimed at ensuring politically client control of key physical resources.

Wars kill people. Women and children are dying now in Libya, whatever the sanitised media tells you. The BBC have reported it will take a decade to repair Libya's infrastructure from the damage of war. That in an underestimate. Iraq is still decades away from returning its utilities to their condition in 2000.

I strongly support the revolutions of the

Arab Spring. But NATO intervention does not bring freedom, it brings destruction, degradation and permanent enslavement to the neo-colonial yoke. From now on, Libyans like us will be toiling to enrich western bankers. That, apparently, is worth to NATO the reduction of Sirte to rubble. **CT**

Craig Murray is a former British Ambassador and author of the war on terror memoir, "Murder in Samarkand" – published in the US as "Dirty Diplomacy". His website is www.craigmurray.org.uk

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Libya's next fight

Now Gaddafi has gone, it's time to discover NATO's true intentions in Libya, writes **Ramzy Baroud**

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While Libyans fought against brutality, guided by a once distant hope of freedom, democracy and liberation from the grip of a clownish and delusional dictator, NATO calculations had nothing but a self-serving agenda in mind
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At a press conference in Tripoli on August 26, a statement read aloud by top Libyan rebel commander Abdel Hakim Belhadj was reassuring. Just a few months ago, disorganized and leaderless rebel fighters seemed to have little chance at ousting Libyan dictator Moammar Gaddafi and his unruly sons.

But despite vague references to “pockets of resistance” throughout Tripoli, and stiffer battles elsewhere, Libya’s National Transitional Council (NTC) is moving forward to extend its rule as the caretaker of Libyan affairs. In his conference, Belhadj declared full control over Tripoli, and the unification of all rebel fighter groups under the command of the military council.

Listening to upbeat statements by rebel military commanders, and optimistic assessments of NTC members, one gets the impression that the future of Libya is being entirely formulated by the new Libyan leadership. Arab media, led by Al Jazeera, seemed at times to entirely neglect that there was a third and most powerful party involved in the battle between freedom-seeking Libyans and the obstinate dictator. It is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, whose decisive and financially costly military intervention was not charitable, nor was it a moral act. It was a politically and strategically calculated endeavor, with multifaceted objectives that simply cannot be scrutinized in one article.

However, one needs to follow the intense discussion under way in Western media to realize the nature of NATO’s true intentions, their expectations and the bleak possibilities awaiting Libya if the new leadership doesn’t quickly remove itself from this dangerous NATO alliance.

While Libyans fought against brutality, guided by a once distant hope of freedom, democracy and liberation from the grip of a clownish and delusional dictator, NATO calculations had nothing but a self-serving agenda in mind.

In his brilliant and newly released book, *Postmodern Imperialism: Geopolitics and the Great Game*, Eric Walberg charts NATO’s role following the end of the Cold War. NATO “has become the centerpiece of the (US) empire’s military presence around the world, moving quickly to respond to US needs to intervene where the UN won’t as in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq and now Libya.”

The massive NATO expansion in the last two decades, to include new members, to enter into new “Partnerships for Peace,” and to carry out various “Dialogue” with entities outside its immediate geographic sphere required the constant reinvention of NATO and the redefinition of its role around the globe. “NATO’s victory” in Libya – a “regime change from the air” as described by some – is certain to ignite the imagination of the relatively dormant neoconservative ideas of

regime change at any cost.

Indeed, it might not be long before NATO's intervention in Libya becomes a political-military doctrine in its own right. US President Barack Obama, and other Western leaders are already offering clues regarding the nature of that doctrine. In a statement issued August 22 from Martha's Vineyard, where Obama was vacationing, the US president said: "NATO has once more proven that it is the most capable alliance in the world and that its strength comes from both its firepower and the power of our democratic ideals." It's difficult to underline with any certainty how this gung-ho mentality coupled with democracy rhetoric is any different from President George W. Bush's justification of the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Many commentators in the US and other NATO countries are already treating Libya as another military conquest, similar to that of Afghanistan and Iraq, a claim that Libyans would find most objectionable. Such ideas are not forged haphazardly, however, since the language used by NATO leaders and their treatment of post-Gaddafi Libya seem largely consistent with their attitude toward other invaded Muslim countries.

In a written statement cited widely in the media, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton began laying down the rules, by which the "new Libya" will be judged before the international community (meaning the US, NATO and their allies.)

"We will look to them to ensure that Libya fulfills its treaty responsibilities, that it ensures that its weapons stockpiles do not threaten its neighbors or fall into the wrong hands, and that it takes a firm stand against violent extremism."

Worse, the al-Qaida card had already been placed into NATO's new game. The centrality of that card will be determined based on the political attitude of the new Libyan leadership. The insinuation of al-Qaida's involvement in the Libyan uprising is not new, of course; it dates back to March when "top NATO commander and US Adm. James

Stavridis said he had seen 'flickers' of an al-Qaida presence among the rebels," reported the London *Telegraph* (Aug. 26).

Now, Algeria, a US-ally in the so-called war on terror is waving that very card to justify its refusal to recognize the NTC.

Injection of "fighting extremism" as a condition for further US and NATO support, and the refusal of access to tens of billions of dollars in Western bank accounts, could prove the biggest challenge to the new Libyan leadership, one that is greater than Gaddafi's audio rants or any other.

NATO understands well that a "failure" in its new Libya project could spoil a whole array of interests in the Arab region, and could hinder future use of Obama's blend of firepower and democracy ideals. Mainstream intellectuals are busy drawing parallels between Libya and other NATO adventures.

John F. Burns, writing in the *New York Times* (Aug. 22), discussed some of the seemingly eerie similarities between post-Gaddafi Libya and post-Saddam Iraq. In an article titled: "Parallels Between Qaddafi and Hussein Raise Anxiety for Western Leaders," Burns wrote: "The list (of parallels between both experiences) sounded like a rule book built on the mistakes critics have identified as central to the American experience in Iraq." Burn's line of logic is consistent with a whole new media discourse that is building momentum by the day.

Tuning back to Arabic media however, one is confronted with almost an entirely different discourse, one that refers to NATO as "friends," to whom the Libyan people are "grateful" and "indebted." Some pan-Arab TV channels have been more instrumental than others in introducing that faulty line of logic, which could ultimately bode terrible consequences for Syria, and eventually turn the Arab Spring into an infinite winter.

The Libya that inspired the world is capable of overcoming NATO's stratagems, if it becomes aware of NATO's true intentions in Libya and the desperate attempt to thwart or hijack Arab revolts.

CT

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Ramzy Baroud (www.ramzybaroud.net) is an internationally-syndicated columnist and the editor of *PalestineChronicle.com*. His latest book is "My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story" (Pluto Press, London)

Have we become the enemies of freedom?

Ten years after the destruction of 9-11, America has failed miserably in its attempts to bring justice to the people who died, says **John W. Whitehead**

.....
Long before the bodies buried under the rubble were recovered, the Bush administration was hard at work hatching plans that would push America down a path of destruction marked by ill-fated foreign policies, corporate primacy, a draconian security regime and an emerging surveillance sta
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"We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason, if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine; and remember that we are not descended from fearful men. Not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate, and to defend causes that were for the moment unpopular. This is no time for men... to keep silent, or for those who approve. We can deny our heritage and our history, but we cannot escape responsibility for the result. There is no way for a citizen of a republic to abdicate his responsibilities."--Edward R. Murrow (March 9, 1954)

When the World Trade Center crumbled to the ground on September 11, 2001, it took with it any illusions Americans might have harbored about the nation's invincibility, leaving many feeling vulnerable, scared and angry. Yet in that moment of weakness, while most of us were still reeling from the terrorist attacks that claimed the lives of some 3,000 Americans, we managed to draw strength from and comfort each other.

Suddenly, the news was full of stories of strangers helping strangers and communities pulling together. Even the politicians put aside their partisan pride and bickering and held hands on the steps of the Capitol, singing "God Bless America." The rest of

the world was not immune to our suffering, acknowledging the fraternity of nations against all those who take innocent lives in a campaign of violence. United against a common enemy, inconceivable hope rising out of the ashes of despair, we seemed determined to work toward a better world.

Sadly, that hope was short-lived.

Long before the bodies buried under the rubble were recovered, the Bush administration was hard at work hatching plans that would push America down a path of destruction marked by ill-fated foreign policies, corporate primacy, a draconian security regime and an emerging surveillance state. With no clear plan except to oust the Taliban and their Al-Qaeda affiliates, Bush haphazardly invaded Afghanistan. The rush to invade Afghanistan, a country that most Americans knew nothing about, would signify the beginning of the longest war in American history.

It would not be long before the Bush administration turned its sights on Iraq (in fact, former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill alleged that discussions about occupying Iraq began as early as January and February 2001). Congress marched in lockstep with Bush and his cronies and approved the Iraq War overwhelmingly. Despite the fact that Saddam Hussein had no connection to the 9/11 attacks and Iraq possessed no weapons of mass destruction, the American war ma-

chine went into overdrive in an effort to incite American allies and the United Nations to wage war against Iraq.

Meanwhile, just a month after the 9/11 attacks, Congress passed the nefarious USA Patriot Act, which gutted the Bill of Rights. The Patriot Act gave the President unprecedented and unconstitutional powers to spy on, monitor and police American citizens. A clever title, public fear, and congressional ineptitude made the Patriot Act a shoo-in. And it was passed without debate and without our so-called representatives even having read the legislation. In this way, through so-called democratic measures, America began a terrible antidemocratic decade.

A new but dangerous era was dawning in America, bringing with it death and destruction for American soldiers and Iraqi and Afghani civilians. It would be an era of corporate domination at the expense of social services and working class citizens. It would be an era of pat-downs, SWAT team raids, unlawful imprisonment and torture. Yet blinded by hatred, choked with fear and grief, Americans closed their eyes to the emerging threat posed by their own government.

Desperate for certainty in a world that was anything but, most Americans fell in line with the president's leadership, leaving those who questioned the president's authority to be subdued and labeled unpatriotic. The media, having long since abdicated its role as a watchdog, quickly became the mouthpiece of the war machine.

Under cover of its "war on terrorism" and in blatant violation of constitutional and international law, the Bush Administration opened the door to a host of shadowy dealings involving extraordinary renditions, unlawful imprisonment and torture.

Meanwhile, the US established penal colonies in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and Abu Ghraib in Iraq where prisoners not charged with any crime nor brought before any court could be kept in isolation, save for the attentions of certain depraved and socio-

pathic members of the intelligence agencies and armed forces who delighted in subjecting their detainees to all manner of torture. These atrocities further damaged America's already tarnished reputation and deepened anti-American sentiment worldwide.

Ten years after 9/11, we have failed miserably in our attempts to bring about justice for our countrymen who died that day. Even Osama bin Laden's demise offers little consolation when compared to the injustices we have been forced to endure by our own government. Moreover, by eschewing international law and the core values contained within the Bill of Rights, America has, in many regards, become the enemy of freedom.

Indeed, whatever success America has had in routing out terrorists over the past decade has been overshadowed by the new society in which we live. Suspicion, fear and ignorance are the new norms. We have made enemies of one another. We allow government agents to pat-down our children when we want to ride in an airplane. We stand by when transit authorities shut off cell phone service in order to disrupt protests. The news fails to report the thousands of SWAT team raids that take place every year, endangering and sometimes murdering people for victimless crimes. We turn the people we don't agree with or understand – be they Muslim or Christian, Republican or Democrat – into fictitious boogymen who want to destroy our livelihood.

Ten years after the world as we knew it came to a sudden end, we find ourselves charting hostile territory. While we were distracted by military carnage overseas and color-coded terror alert systems here at home, the economy has crumbled at the hands of corporate oligarchs, reckless bankers and a national debt escalating due to the costs of endless wars, pork-barrel spending and a lack of fiscal restraint. Corporations continue to rake in profits and benefit from taxpayer-funded bailouts, while middle- and working-class Americans struggle to make ends meet.

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The right to be considered innocent until proven guilty has been usurped by a new norm in which all citizens are suspects in a surveillance state. And the right to travel has been subjected to draconian security measures that fail to make us safer
.....

Our government leaders, gridlocked by partisan politics and the endless quest to get re-elected, have altogether failed in their duty to represent us and our vital interests. Our military, tasked with policing America's global military empire, has been stretched to the breaking point. The police presence in America has exploded, with unconstitutional and brutal police tactics increasingly condoned by the courts. The right to be considered innocent until proven guilty has been usurped by a new norm in which all citizens are suspects in a surveillance state. And the right to travel has been subjected to draconian security measures that fail to make us safer.

I highly doubt this is the America that the victims of 9/11 would have wanted to live in.

Fifty years ago, in his farewell address, President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned the American people to beware of the military-industrial complex which threatened to bankrupt our economy and destroy society. We failed to heed his warning.

Just a few years earlier, the renowned television journalist Edward R. Murrow had warned Americans not to buy into the government's campaign of fear-mongering by turning on each other. Although in the short term some seemed to listen, it was not long before, in our complacency and intolerance, we failed to heed the warning.

Ten years ago, we found ourselves being

warned once again. In a stirring speech on the floor of the House of Representatives, Rep. Barbara Lee, the only member of Congress to vote against the resolution to wage war against Afghanistan, urged caution and diligence in deciding how to approach the issue of international terrorism. Quoting a clergy member who spoke at a 9/11 memorial service she said, "As we act, let us not become the evil that we deplore."

Thus, as we approach this anniversary, we owe it to those who lost their lives on 9/11 and in the war-filled years since to do more than offer up amorphous patriotic tributes to their courage. Rather, let this anniversary be a wake-up call to a sleeping nation to rouse ourselves from a spirit of complacency and take our government leaders to task.

The politicians will not act unless they are pushed. Thus, it will be up to us to confront the abuses of our government. Let us dismantle our military empire. Let us take care of our poor, our downtrodden. Let us push back against the surveillance state. Let us put human dignity above corporate profits. If not now, then when? **CT**

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John W. Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His new book "The Freedom Wars" (TRI Press) is available online at www.amazon.com. He can be contacted at johnw@rutherford.org

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The children of aftermath

Adults remember a world before 9-11, writes **William Rivers Pitt**, but we should spare a thought for those too young to have known anything but war

3,000-some poems
 Disguised as people
 On an almost too-perfect day
 Must be more than poems
 In some asshole's
 Passion play
 So now it's your job
 And it's my job
 To make it that way
 To make sure
 They didn't die in vain
 Shhhh...
 Baby listen
 Hear the train?

- Ani DiFranco, "Self Evident"

All across America, there are classrooms filled with fifth graders who only know the World Trade Center from pictures. They have achieved the final perfection of George Orwell's vision – we have always been at war with Eurasia – because they have never known a world where their country has not been at war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As with the Towers, some of these children only know a parent from pictures, because that parent was killed in those wars. They know what anthrax is, what an IED is, what WMD stands for. They know about fear, for it was fed to them, literally, with mother's milk. For them, it has always been

this way.

These children have never known a country that was not in an economic recession, for their country's economy has been tottering on its feet like a punch-drunk prizefighter for the last ten years. Theirs is a country that has always tapped phones in secret, always imprisoned people without trial or due process of law, always tortured, always lived in a cocoon of fear and hatred that serves to justify virtually any act, no matter how barbarous or criminal or wrong. Politicians, in their world, have always used threats of terrorism to frighten, to control, to change the subject, to win elections, and to make money for themselves and their friends. There are no consequences for such vicious acts. For these children, it has always been this way.

They know about barbecues and baseball games, because those are still here. They know about video games and the internet, about skinned knees and summer vacation, but they also know so many savage things the rest of us consider "new," things that didn't exist ten years ago which are terrible and strange to us. For them, it has always been this way, and if the rest of us are not very careful, very vigilant, and very active, it will always be this way.

What will become of these children as they quest into adolescence and then adulthood? Theirs is a world formed by the im-

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Are these children being taught to know a lie when they hear it, or will they only grow to know how to march in locked step to the beat of whichever drummer has the largest microphone and the fattest bankroll?
.....

plication of imminent violence that could strike at any moment, violence that might be hiding in a car, in a backpack worn by a stranger, in an unattended bag on a street corner, in an airplane tracing white contrails across the sky. Are these children being taught to know a lie when they hear it, or will they only grow to know how to march in locked step to the beat of whichever drummer has the largest microphone and the fattest bankroll?

I was a teacher the year these children were born. September 11 was the first day of school, and I was the first person in the building to see what was happening. I bolted from my office to tell the administrators, and then ran to the library storage closet where they kept a television on a rolling cart. Analog TV signals still existed back then, and I was able to find a clear news channel by manipulating the antennas. A crowd gathered behind me, teachers and students alike, to watch the second plane strike, to watch the smoke pour forth, to watch people jumping into that perfect blue sky, to watch as one tower, and then the other, swayed and finally fell.

.....
Stories to tell

I know what that day did to me. I know what it did to my students, my colleagues, and my friends. We all have a story to tell about that day. The fifth-graders in those classrooms have no such luxury...and yes, I say "luxury," because it is a balm to share stories with those who have experienced the same trauma. It puts a frame around the unreason of the event, puts order to the chaos, and reminds us that we are not, in fact, alone in our pain.

The fifth-graders in those classrooms, however, live in a world of aftermath. It has always been this way for them, and so there is nothing to talk about.

We adults have indulged ourselves in self-absorption and self-analysis as this wretched anniversary has approached, and

this is entirely just and proper. Every newspaper in the country has been carrying stories about those who survived, those who did not, and those of us who have slogged through these last ten years with ashes in our hair and tears on our cheeks. The vast difference between Before and After, to us, is staggering, horrifying, and altogether disorienting even to this day, but we can share it with each other and try, as best we can, to make sense of it all.

For them, for the children of aftermath, there is no such luxury. There is no Before and After, but only Now, and how things are. They are wide open to the lies, to the fear, to the influence and innuendo of low men. They are only ten years old, and they have known horror all their lives. They don't know anything different.

We do.

I have been at a loss, lo these last ten years, to figure out exactly what it takes to shake 21st century America out of its well-entrenched somnambulism. I don't think this bit of drivel will serve that purpose any more or less than the rest of the work I have done over the entirety of this foul decade. I ask only this: put aside your own pain on this day, and remember the children who have known only this. Make sure they know, really and truly know, that it has not always been this way, and so it does not always have to be this way.

Whisper to them as they slip into sleep, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

In this, we are, all of us, saved. **CT**

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William Rivers Pitt is an editor and columnist at www.truthout.org. He is also author of "War on Iraq: What Team Bush Doesn't Want You to Know" and "The Greatest Sedition Is Silence" and "House of Ill Repute: Reflections on War, Lies, and America's Ravaged Reputation." He lives and works in Boston. This essay was first published at www.truth-out.org

9-11 was a national job

The Twin Towers weren't destroyed by aircraft, but were blown apart by high explosives. Now let's find out who did it, says Philip Kraske

Ten years on, let's dispense with the gnarled arguments, the nitpicking, the straw men raised and wrecked. Let's bypass the dreary crazies, nod at the outraged, and shrug off the naive who state with the simplicity of a theorem that Our Government Would Never Do a Thing Like That. Enough of them.

After ten years of investigations, let's invoke the commonest of common sense and say what is clear: the destruction of the Twin Towers resulted from the acutely-timed detonations of pre-placed explosives. Nothing else explains the instant and utter pulverizing of 220 floors of foot-thick concrete. Nothing else explains the searing heat of the dust clouds that gushed through Manhattan. Nothing else explains the near free-fall speed of the towers' plunges, each of a thousand steel beams shearing and snapping on cue with no more resistance than air offers to a falling stone. If the Twin Towers were rigged beforehand, then so was the entire attack. Let's begin there.

The culprits are unknown; they always are in these cases. Mohammed Atta and his colleagues, who by every account had more in common with the Keystone Kops than James Bond, may be safely disqualified: they barely had the skills to fly jetliners, much less pull off a demolition operation. Their role, as they sneaked around to meetings and flight-training classes, thinking

themselves secret and clever, was to serve as scapegoats.

Who then? Michael Ruppert, in a complicated argument, accuses Vice President Cheney of being at the helm that day. Alan Sabrosky points at the swift, infallible Israelis. The diligent young men who produced the movie *Loose Change* say it was the neo-cons. The rabble's chant has it that "9-11 was an inside job," as if the fighter pilots around Washington had been called together a week in advance and advised that, come next Tuesday, table tennis in the lounge would really be the better part of valor.

Yet we only need to look at the packaging of the event and its gargantuan aims to discover the guilty. Terror, as John le Carré reminds us, is theater. It wasn't enough to ram the buildings with jetliners, counting on the quick reflexes of cameramen who might or might not catch the moment, and even then out of focus and poorly framed. And smoking skyscrapers, secretaries waving hankies from the windows -- what is that but the merest police-beat story? And afterwards, the fires put out, the buildings would have been repaired and businesses re-started.

No, airliners hitting buildings was not enough. For the aim was to give the tectonic plates of history a good old country shove and move America into a new era of fear at home and conquest abroad. Even at the ter-

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Who had the means, the organization, the local knowledge? The military and the security services. And that, sad to say, is as close as we'll ever get to naming 9-11's "intellectual authors"
.....

rible risk of detection, the buildings had to be destroyed, come crashing down live and in color, with fifty cameras rolling. That's theater. That's shoving history.

So if we want to look for culprits, let's ask: Who could combine such Hollywood showmanship and Shakespearean ambition? Only the high mandarins of American foreign policy, many of them bitterly impatient in the late 90s with Bill Clinton's reluctance to take superpowerdom out of the garage and onto the open road. Who could recruit the right people, open the right doors, and quietly distribute the millions necessary? Only the most well-connected folks in the land. Who had the means, the organization, the local knowledge? The military and the security services. And that, sad to say, is as close as we'll ever get to naming 9-11's "intellectual authors."

But in a certain sense, it doesn't matter much. The guilt of 9-11 spreads across the entire nation, though certainly thicker in some places than others. As Vaclav Havel said at his inauguration as president of Czechoslovakia, "When I talk about the contaminated moral atmosphere ... I am talking about all of us. We had all become used to the totalitarian system and accepted it as an unchangeable fact and thus helped to perpetuate it. In other words, we are all -- though naturally to differing extents -- responsible for the operation of the totalitarian machinery. None of us is just its victim. We are all also its co-creators ... We have to accept this legacy as a sin we committed against ourselves."

Yes, the weasels of 9-11 -- a fitting name; let's use it -- have retired by now, protected by steel and electronics and, most important of all, the silence of their enablers. Some of the latter stay mum out of a dire patriotism -- "The nation needs to heal, sir." -- but surely most of them out of fear. I'm talking first about the guys who quietly wired the buildings, the guys who let them in and then went back to the sports report, the other guys who equipped them, and the

accountants who noticed the missing stock and figured it must have been mice who ate it. Everyone kept their head down.

I'm also talking about diplomats who noticed odd meetings, forensic specialists who fudged reports, air-traffic controllers who knuckled under to gag orders, airline officials who quietly rescheduled a few assignments, the government employees warned off flights, intelligence officials who made sure that local agents stayed off the trail of the hijackers -- the list is long. And nobody talked. 9-11 was not an inside job -- not in the least. It was a home-grown, true-blue national effort.

It has to be said, of course, that a few brave people, such as Susan Lindauer, have tried to get the word out about the irregularities they witnessed. But compared to the hundreds of individuals who must hold greater or lesser pieces of the jigsaw, they are a tiny fraction.

So let's give the weasels their due: they've won. They pulled off a huge and complex secret operation in plain view, and ten years on, the official legend of 9-11 is intact: Bin Laden, suicide pilots, box cutters, weakened beams, dust clouds, Ground Zero. The weasels have kept the whole 9-11 controversy out of the public mind and on the Internet, where it has faded into a curiosity, like Area 51 or sightings of Elvis.

Of course, the weasels got their usual helping hand from the mainstream media. They nurtured the legend and neglected any contradictions. The discovery -- before the year 2001 was over -- that six of the famous nineteen hijackers were alive and well sent ripples through the British media. In America, however, not a line, not a word, not a syllable was uttered. In 2009, a team of scientists, after two years of work, published a paper demonstrating that traces of an exotic high explosive permeated the WTC dust blown all over Manhattan: prima facie evidence of controlled demolition. Big news in Denmark, with TV interviews of the Danish scientist, Neils Harrit, who had

participated; not even a news brief in the United States.

Surely not all reporters took the gag order lying down. Imagine the dismissals, the silencing, the spiking of stories, the burned sources, the newsroom wars between reporters who saw Pulitzers for the taking and lame-faced editors who rubbed their necks and repeated the orders handed down from above. The years passed, the revelations mounted. Nobody dared touch the legend. Sweetened with a couple of Hollywood puddings, it has now dried and hardened and turned into history, like Washington crossing the Delaware.

Nobody dared. Not the *Times*, not the *Post*, the *Journal*, the *Monitor*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, nor even those knights in shining armor on 60 Minutes. There were no ten-part series, no teams of scrappy reporters, no Jack Andersons, no Murrows, no Deep Throats, Woodwards or Bernsteins. The media as one took the government at its word. At most, an occasional doubting article buried on page six below the fold was offered as a sop to fairness. But the writer who wished to “explain,” “debunk,” “shred” the doubts -- and in the most sneering terms possible -- found a receptive market for his work.

Once more with feeling: 9-11 was anything but an inside job. It was a national effort.

The true touch of genius, it seems to me, was The Word -- the one selected to ensure the success of the legend, the one flung to every corner of the earth even as the buildings burned. This aspect has gone largely unnoticed by the 9-11 truth movement. What word? Let me quote from my novel *Mockery*. Here is a conversation between the narrator -- Sam Walker -- who is investigating a gamed presidential election, and the director of a public relations firm, whose name is Laura Prestini.

“The press needs us more than we need them. Surprised? It’s true. They need”—Laura’s perfect fingernails popped up from the

armrests and scratched quotation marks in the air—“the story. That’s how they pay their mortgages. Like I always say: the goal of PR is to put the frame.”

“The frame?”

“Just the key word or phrase. PR puts the frame and the reporters paint in it.”

I shrugged. “That’s a bit condescending, if you ask me.”

“Look, I did my thesis on this. There are loads of historical examples.” She drank and put down her glass with a smart clack on the agate coaster. “The Kennedy assassination, for example. Kennedy slumped against Jackie. Bullshit. He didn’t slump, he jerked back—probably from a bullet hitting him, but we’ll never know for sure. But ‘slumped’ is the word everyone remembers. You can even find ‘slumped’ in history textbooks. And then there’s the classic: 9-11. C’mon, Sam: what’s the frame there?”

I was still trying to take all this in. “No... no idea.”

“Yes, you do. C’mon: when you think of the Twin Towers and 9-11, what’s the first word that comes to mind?”

“I don’t know... ‘Collapse’?”

“Of course! Collapse. Which says what? That the buildings couldn’t take the impacts or the fires or whatever. Or at least that the basic problem was the buildings. And that’s that. It doesn’t matter now if ten thousand scientists sign on to the towers falling as a result of demolition explosives. It doesn’t matter a bit. Until they make a full-scale, frontal attack to refute the word ‘collapse,’ forget it: they’re not going to move public opinion one inch.”

Charles Colson was wrong. You don’t need to grab people by the balls. Just get the words right; hearts and minds will quickly follow.

Thank goodness for the Internet.

The weasels who did the JFK assassination had their one slip: somehow a spectator got footage of the crucial moment; without it the alternative theories of the crime would never have prospered. The weasels

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Once more with feeling: 9-11 was anything but an inside job. It was a national effort

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Yes, three thousand people died on 9-11, but if Carlos the Jackal had been in charge, that number would have been ten times greater
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who did 9-11 had theirs: the Internet, which in 2001 was nothing compared to the phenomenon that it is now. And here again we can make a guess about their identity. They must have all been over fifty, from conservative backgrounds, none from technology or telecommunications, people who still treated computers as advanced typewriters and had no vision of the rising technology.

Internet allowed truthers around the world to hook up through webpages, blogs, and YouTube. And it allowed them to spread word of their investigations to a global audience. It's pleasant to think that, for a while at least, this must have ruined an evening brandy or two amongst the weasels. They had known that the burning towers would be filmed from every angle; that anyone who worked in controlled demolition would immediately see something very different from other people; that architects would scratch their heads and engineers consult their computer models.

But the weasels were still thinking in terms of the JFK assassination. They figured the second-guessers and conspiracy freaks would take years to document their suspicions and longer to rouse the public; and by then Afghanistan and Iraq would have been taken and tamed, Iran would have capitulated before the prospect of a two-front invasion from those countries, and the American-ordered abundance of oil on the market would have brought gasoline to where it belonged: rivers of it in the West, trickles in the East, and all at 1960s prices. Anyone who muttered about 9-11 would be silenced with the retort that it was the best thing that had happened to America since the GI Bill.

That, I would bet, was the line used to sell the operation to The Highest in the Land; who, as long as we're near the subject, replied, "Okay, do it, but with a minimal of loss of life." Hence the first airplane hit the North Tower well before 9 a.m., before most people had arrived at work. Hence all four airplanes took off loaded to between a quarter and a half their capacity (well below the

national average of 70-75 percent). Hence the aircraft that hit the Pentagon made a 330-degree sweep around the building to hit the side that was largely deserted due to construction work. Yes, three thousand people died on 9-11, but if Carlos the Jackal had been in charge, that number would have been ten times greater.

But though the Internet gave the weasels a start, they knew they would ultimately win out. Americans, more than most peoples, never question their government in matters of national security. They question lobbyists and influence and politicians lining their pockets. But where matters of state are concerned, suspicion does not form part of our political culture.

The armed forces, despite a history of cover-ups and stupendous blunders, enjoy an almost religious veneration. Unless the operation hit a snag -- and the weasels had contingency legends galore, like "Let's roll!" on Flight 93 -- they knew that Americans would dismiss any talk that their own people were behind the attacks.

And the weasels were right: their countrymen swallowed hook, line and Osama, squirmed away from doubters like a child from the doctor's needle, and especially, classically, effortlessly, thoughtlessly, "moved on" -- that quintessential American phrase that once connoted pioneer stoicism and now refers only to the national flight from reality, patent in both our burning obsession with celebrities and our sleepy indifference to war. So the truth of 9-11 stayed on the Internet, "e-cheek by e-jowl with on-line blackjack and Mayberry R.F.D. hobbyists," to quote my novel one last time.

And America has reaped the fruits of this "sin we committed against ourselves": hopeless debt, cureless recession, endless military conflicts of every shade between war and wary. It is impossible to discuss terrorism in anything approaching realistic terms. Just try mentioning to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta that Al Qaeda is now a shadow of its past form; it makes no differ-

ence to him. Military and security services comprise one of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy, and those people, to whom the legend of 9-11 is a great comfort in these hard economic times, will not be denied their paychecks.

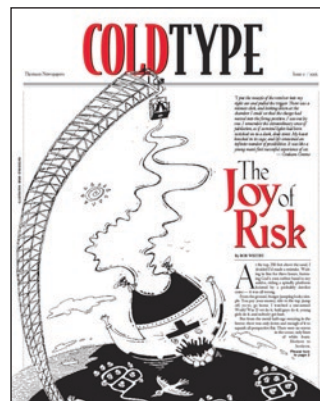
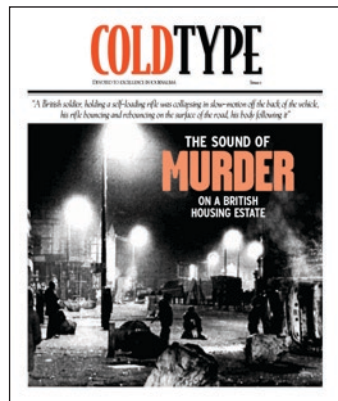
Just think what America would be today if, say, the *Times* and the *Post* had stood up to the weasels and had gone after 9-11 tooth and nail. Democracy might have made a comeback against our venal plutocracy. Our reputation for fair play and the rule of law might have flourished, rather than our reputation for casual waterboarding and wire-taps. At the end, we have passed, as both the great political commentator William Pfaff and former *Times* reporter Chris Hedges have noted, into an Orwellian society, a society controlled by lies and threat and

force, where electronic surveillance of normal citizens is the order of the day. 9-11 was that fatal shove down the slippery slope.

But let's not blame our political class too much, for 9-11 was no inside job. Everyone who was tapped to help, did – and then kept silent; everyone else closed their eyes. 9-11 was a coast-to-coast national effort. That approaching thunderstorm is history's judgment. **CT**

Philip Kraske is from Minnesota but has lived in Madrid, Spain, since the mid-80s. He teaches English in Madrid companies and does occasional translation. He is also the author of three novels: "Flight in February", "Mockery", and "The Magnificent Mary Ann". His fourth novel, "Gray and its Consequences", will appear later this year

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