

PRISON AS DISNEYLAND | CHRIS HEDGES
WAISTBAND REACHING COULD GET YOU KILLED | JOHN ESKOW
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ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 92



Dougie Wallace
finds chaos
in a London
suburb where
reality merges
into scenes of
crazy fantasy

The Wild Wild East

PLUS: EXCERPTS FROM NEW BOOKS ON THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND DRONE WARFARE, BY THOMAS GEOGHEGAN AND GRÉGOIRE CHAMAYOU



Cover Photo:
Dougie Wallace,
from his book,
"Shoreditch Wild Life"

ColdType

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Alcatraz: Prison as Disneyland

Chris Hedges joins a group of sightseers on a trip to America's most notorious prison, where he finds a distorted account of history

I took the ferry from Pier 33 on San Francisco's Embarcadero to Alcatraz. I stepped onto the island from the gangway, walked up the hill to the old prison entrance and was given a portable audio guide. I spent two hours going through the corridors and cells where horrific suffering and trauma crushed human beings. Alcatraz purportedly had the highest insanity rate of any federal penitentiary of its era.

I was regaled through the headset with stories about famous Alcatraz inmates including Al Capone, Robert "Birdman" Stroud and George "Machine Gun" Kelly, escape attempts, the 1946 armed uprising that was ruthlessly put down by the Marine Corps, and intrepid FBI agents who hunted down the nation's most notorious criminals and brought them to justice. In this binary, cartoon narrative of good guys and bad guys, of cops and gangsters, even the repugnant J. Edgar Hoover was resurrected as a virtuous symbol of law and order.

At the end of the tour – 5,000 people a day, some 1.4 million a year, visit the prison – we were funneled into the gift shop. It was possible to buy T-shirts, replica blue prisoner shirts, replica tin prison cups and other Alcatraz souvenirs. We were encouraged to take cards from a wooden rack and mail them to foreign governments on behalf of selected prisoners of conscience. The message was clear: In the United States those

in prison deserve it; in foreign lands they are imprisoned unjustly. The Disneyfication of Alcatraz is the equivalent of turning one of Stalin's gulags into a prison-themed amusement park. Prisons are institutionalized evil. And whitewashing evil is a moral monstrosity.

The Alcatraz narrative as presented by the National Park Service ignores the savagery and injustice of America's system of mass incarceration, in which we today imprison 25 percent of all the world's prisoners although Americans are only 5 percent of the global population. It ignores our decades-long use of torture, isolation and trauma to turn prisoners into psychological cripples. It ignores that most prisoners are poor and never had adequate legal defense. It ignores how people of color in our urban "internal colonies" are worth nothing on the streets but, in cages, each generates \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year for corporations. It ignores that prisoners are repeatedly punished and given longer sentences not for crimes they committed while free but for amorphous infractions such as "disrespect" and "agitation" done in prison. It ignores the prison system's one-sided "justice" that denies prisoners a fair hearing. It ignores that a guard is God, that he or she can verbally and physically abuse a prisoner without repercussions. It ignores that prisons are despotic fiefdoms. It ignores the

The Alcatraz narrative as presented by the National Park Service ignores the savagery and injustice of America's system of mass incarceration, in which we today imprison 25 percent of all the world's prisoners

JAIL TALES

To anyone who has worked or been in a prison, the physical and psychological structure of Alcatraz – where there was no attempt at rehabilitation and usually a fifth of the population of about 250 was rotated in and out of isolation cells – is chillingly familiar

daily humiliation, despair and pain of those trapped inside. It ignores that prisoners who initially believe in the system, who think justice is possible, are usually the first to have psychological breakdowns or commit suicide. It ignores – and here is the greatest crime – the deep and profound humanity of many of the prisoners themselves, who are as caring, intelligent and loving as those outside the walls. It ignores, finally, who we are as a nation, how callous and brutal we are to the dispossessed and how we revel in stories of violence and human degradation. This excitement, and this fictitious narrative of good and evil, is possible only if we see prisoners as less than human. And this is a task perfected to an art at Alcatraz by the National Park Service, and by popular culture. Anyone who truly grasped what took place at Alcatraz, and what is taking place in prisons across the country, would weep.

I thought, as I stepped away from the gaggles of tourists and stood alone in an open cell, of the students I teach in prison. How would they have reacted? What would they have felt about the tourists who lapped up the stories of crime and retribution? What trauma and pain would they have experienced upon stepping once again into an isolation cell? My students think of themselves as slaves – under the 13th Amendment prisoners are forced to work for no pay or perhaps for as little as a dollar a day. They see prisons as replicating the power structure of plantations. And listening to the audio-guide stories would, for them, be like a former slave taking a tour of his or her old plantation while being fed tales of shiftless and lazy “Negroes” in the cotton fields and the gallantry of Southern whites.

To anyone who has worked or been in a prison, the physical and psychological structure of Alcatraz – where there was no attempt at rehabilitation and usually a fifth of the population of about 250 was rotated in and out of isolation cells – is chillingly familiar. Prisoners as soon as they arrived

at Alcatraz were forced to strip and stand naked before the guards. This ritual, repeated daily in prisons across the country, is primarily a rite of humiliation, a way to deny prisoners their dignity. Prisoners must be broken. Forcing prisoners to stand naked before the guards begins the process. Those who resisted authority in Alcatraz – and resisting authority often meant merely talking back to a guard – were thrown into isolation cells known as “the Hole.” This too is a contemporary experience.

In Alcatraz on the bottom tier of the three-tier D Block were four isolation cells. I walked into one. This is where men were locked for up to 19 days in total darkness, denied a bath and had no change of clothes. The toilet was, for a long time, an eight-inch hole in the floor. The prison often reverberated with the screams of inmates being beaten by guards in darkened isolation cells in D Block. And when those in isolation were released they were often disoriented and psychologically impaired. Many, weak and barely able to walk, were taken directly to the prison infirmary, suffering at times from pneumonia after sleeping for over two weeks on wet concrete. There were some who never left the Hole alive.

At Alcatraz there was one place worse than the Hole – the dungeon. It was not on the tour. Prisoners, if they were not broken in isolation, were hauled to a staircase in front of A Block that led downward to a heavy steel door. Behind the door were the old gun ports from the prison’s days as a fortress and later an Army prison that held Native Americans who had resisted being herded, and, during World War I, conscientious objectors. Prisoners were stripped and chained to the wall in one of two rooms near the old gun ports. They were given a bucket for a toilet that was emptied once a week. They were fed primarily bread.

The psychological destruction of prisoners was common, as it is in today’s prisons. Capone, who suffered from dementia caused by syphilis and compounded by abusive



Alcatraz: From top security prison to tourist trap.

Photo: Mattias Olsson

treatment, was reduced to idiocy. Guards reported finding him crouched in fear in the corner of his cell or lying on his cot weeping. At the end of his time in prison he sometimes babbled in unintelligible sounds and was incontinent. He would sit on his cot for hours in a near-catatonic state or get up at night and manically arrange and rearrange his magazines, repeatedly dress and undress or make his bed over and over.

Another prisoner, Rufe Persful, suffered from frequent delusions – he claimed there was an alligator in his cell. He attempted on several occasions to make a noose out of his sheet. He eventually took a hatchet off the side of a prison fire truck and nonchalantly hacked four fingers from one of his hands in the view of the guards. He also had intended to hack off his feet and his other hand, he told the deputy warden later in the infirmary. He was not declared insane by the prison authorities.

Joe Bowers, who robbed a post office of \$16.63 and was sentenced to 25 years, cut his throat with a piece of glass from his eyeglasses but survived. He repeatedly butted his head against his cell door. He was shot to death when he partly scaled a fence in front of guards and ignored warnings to

climb down.

Ed Wutke committed suicide by using the blade of a pencil sharper to cut his jugular vein.

The park service omits these stories, and many more like them, from the tour.

If an inmate did not have a prison job at Alcatraz he spent 23 or 24 hours a day in a cell, a practice that remains common throughout the US prison system.

Even guards knew of prisoners who should never have been imprisoned. George H. Gregory, in his book “Alcatraz Screw: My Years as a Guard in America’s Most Notorious Prison,” tells of a prisoner he calls Kevin.

“Kevin, a young black kid, was involved in some clothing-room fights. He was in prison because he did a favor for a person he didn’t know. Kevin had worked in a theater in a southern state. A man came in, handed him a small package, and told him to give it to a person who would come in and ask for it. Kevin didn’t know what was in the package. He was arrested and convicted of handling dope.

“Kevin told me the story of his arrest and the thirty days he spent in quarantine. The kid was put in a dormitory with a group of

Guards reported finding Al Capone crouched in fear in the corner of his cell or lying on his cot weeping. At the end of his time in prison he sometimes babbled in unintelligible sounds and was incontinent

JAIL TALES

Prisons expose the dark heart of America. They expose the lie of impartial justice. They expose the raw forms of coercion, the physical and psychological torture we have institutionalized and directed mostly against our poor

aggressive studs. Unable to defend himself, he was raped five times the first night.”

Relatives who visited prisoners endured a gantlet of body searches and verbal abuse from the guards. This ritual too is familiar to those who visit today’s prison population. Being with prisoners was made so unpleasant that many family members never went back, and the situation is unchanged.

I stood in the visitation room at Alcatraz and looked at a circle on the wall. It was three inches in diameter and perforated with tiny holes. The only way to be heard through the holes was to shout, meaning everyone around you, including the guards, could hear the conversation. If the prisoner and the visitor wanted to see each other they had to stand up and look through a thick, narrow strip of glass, but when in that position they could no longer talk to each other. The system was intentionally designed for maximum frustration and embarrassment.

“Actually, there were very few visits during all the years I was on Alcatraz,” Ernie Lopez remembered in his memoir, “To Alcatraz, Death Row, and Back.” “I didn’t receive one until I had been there nine years. This was not uncommon.”

Letters from outside were reduced to three or four cryptic lines by the guards, who handed the brief note to the prisoner and destroyed the letter itself. Some prisoners never received letters that were mailed to them. The infirmary was primitive and poorly equipped. Seriously ill prisoners who were deemed escape risks were sent there to die rather than be transferred to a federal prison hospital. A dentist came only once every three months. The food, former prisoners say, was rancid, although the audio tour assured listeners it was plentiful and of high quality.

Decades in prison reduce prisoners to glassy-eyed wrecks who hold conversations with themselves and shuffle in a daze down prison corridors. Younger prisoners see these specters wandering the prison and tremble. They wonder if that is their fate.

Robert Stroud, known as the “Birdman” after he adopted, cared for and published books about birds while he was a prisoner at Leavenworth, ended up at Alcatraz. Stroud, who had become nationally known for his studies of sick birds, was prohibited from rebuilding his bird sanctuary at the California institution. He was serving a life sentence for stabbing a guard to death in 1916 after the guard taunted him and stripped of his visitation privilege, meaning he could no longer see his younger brother. He was sent to Alcatraz in 1942. Of the 54 years he spent in prison, 42 were in solitary confinement.

“I remember watching him through the window when he was taken to the yard, all by himself, every week, for the one hour he was allowed outside,” Lopez wrote. “I would see him walking by himself, an old man pacing back and forth across the tiny yard. He was hunchbacked by then, and he would wear a green visor that gamblers often wear. He was a very intelligent man who knew five or six languages well, and he got As on all the courses that he took by mail from Stanford University.”

Prisons expose the dark heart of America. They expose the lie of impartial justice. They expose the raw forms of coercion, the physical and psychological torture we have institutionalized and directed mostly against our poor. Prisons are about state-sanctioned sadism and dehumanization. That is the story of Alcatraz. It is the story of all prisons in America. But it is a story the state does not want you to hear. These institutions were and are consciously designed to deform and destroy souls. And for “whoever destroys a soul,” the Talmud reminds us, “it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world.”

CT

Chris Hedges, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, writes a regular column for *Truthdig* every Monday. Hedges’ most recent book, written with Joe Sacco, is “*Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*”

Walking Wilbur

Dell Franklin takes his dog for a stroll in an upmarket seaside town

My mostly part-time woman of over 25 years, Colleen, and my full-time dog, Wilbur, and I made a getaway two-day trip to luxurious, upper-than-up-scale Carmel-by-the-Sea to celebrate our birthdays. I found Wilbur in a Labrador rescue shelter down south last Thanksgiving. He's a hefty, floppy Chocolate Lab with a white beard. He was around eight when I got him, had been in the shelter more than seven months, weighed around 63 pounds, his coat more dun than brown, and he was wild and suspicious of strangers and dogs, with a left front fang pulled, his fleas so bad when they found him abandoned in San Pedro that he had chewed off his original coat and grown a new one.

When I brought him to the sleepy sleepy, dog-crazy California town of Cayucos, he was hyper-vigilant, and so aggressive (like he'd been in prison) I couldn't take him to the Morro Bay dog park, where he fought, and had to walk him in places where there were no dogs. His abandonment issue was so severe he wouldn't let me out of his sight. But eventually he calmed down and adjusted and became a model citizen at the dog park. He now weighs 85 pounds and his coat is a rich chocolate and he nuzzles strangers and plays with other dogs and goes out of his way to make friends with neighbor cats.



Wilbur and his master prowled the streets of Carmel-By-The-Sea, the bejeweled local dogs and their owners avoiding eye contact.

When a friend visits, he tries to climb atop them, lay his head on their chest, and gazes up with sad, needy eyes, a shameless glutton for affection.

After we settled in our cozy third-story room with private balcony and an ocean view of Carmel-By-The-Sea, I decided to

ON THE BEACH

The bejeweled dogs, like their masters, avoided eye contact and marched by an anxious-to-make-friends Wilbur and me as if we didn't exist and were perhaps a plague

take Wilbur for a walk before a sauna, swim in the pool, shower, and booze hour. We started off down San Carlos Street, headed for the main downtown drag, Ocean Avenue. An athletically thin woman in designer sweat suit, ball cap and shades headed toward us on the same side of the street. She began looking nervous as we approached, Wilbur pulling because he wanted to nuzzle and sniff her two immaculate toy poodles who looked to have come from a dog show.

The woman hastily – one hand holding a cell phone, the other a double leash – dragged her yipping dogs across the street like a frightened hare as Wilbur quickly dragged me to the tree where the poodles had pissed and lifted his leg. I waved to the woman, but apparently she was no longer aware of my presence and skittered away.

We continued on. A slender man around my age with a mincing walk, whose sparkling leash pulled a small pedigree of Asian extraction, saw me coming and darted across the street as Wilbur continued to pull me along like a cork, even though I weigh 190. I finally reached the main drag, which was aflow with Asian and European tourists, a few American tourists, and locals, flawlessly tanned, sporting \$200 haircuts and a thousand bucks of casual wear, who carried tote bags, cell phones and walked manicured mini canines almost as spiffy as their masters.

Avoided eye contact

I noticed that the bejeweled dogs, like their masters, avoided eye contact and marched by an anxious-to-make-friends Wilbur and me as if we didn't exist and were perhaps a plague. I admit to having worn a \$3 pair of thrift store shorts and a dollar T-shirt, and haven't had a haircut since last Christmas, and won't shave until we go to the five-star French restaurant tonight, but still, in Cayucos, all us locals make eye contact with each other and our

dogs, who are beseeching in their need for a pet, a nuzzle, perhaps a biscuit; while their masters engage in small town chit-chat, the dogs smiling and sniffing.

Up and down the main drag we plunged, big old Wilbur clearing a path as Carmel-By-The-Sea denizens (among the highest dog owning population per capita in the country) avoided Wilbur and me and scurried to the edges of the sidewalk and sometimes into the street!

When Wilbur decided to take a shit at a manicured bush on the sidewalk, I was embarrassed, quickly pulled him away, and he was docile as I explained this was not Cayucos, this was Carmel-By-The-Sea, where there were no price tags on any items in any of the myriad galleries and boutiques, not even in the drug store, and it was low class and a poor reflection on your master to shit in the street, even if I did sport a poop bag.

Wilbur held on, though he did pee on everything (I saw no foo-foo poodles and rare breeds peeing) and we continued our prowl, making sure to journey in our ram-bunctious way to the end of the business section before starting back up the other side of the street, where a local cop on foot flashed us the stink eye as Wilbur lunged at a Cocker Spaniel with fur combed clear to his paws, the master wincing as I held him back.

Finally we veered off the crowded main drag and entered a side street and headed to a residential area, where Wilbur dumped a good load into a bush so dense I could not recover his turds, which was just as well, because I had no intention of toting around a bag of shit in trendy Carmel-By-The-Sea.

We emerged near the post office, across from Friar Tuck's diner, to the side of La Dolce Vita restaurant, and spotted two park benches in a tiny area with one tree. I was limping badly at this point from recent knee surgery, and Wilbur was wind-ed.

“Let’s take a load off our feet, Wilbur,” I said. “We still got a few blocks back to the room.”

We sat down, me lounging on the bench, Wilbur on his hind legs. Not ten seconds passed when I spotted a beautiful middle-aged woman coming out of the post office, perfectly coiffed, though dressed as if gardening. From across the street she smiled at us, then reached into a very slick SUV, where she retrieved a package and headed toward us in full stride. Wilbur straightened, tail wagging frantically as the woman handed me a bag of treats and immersed herself in Wilbur, who lay his face upon her breast and gave her the needy, sad eyes. The bag held super-nutritional organic beef jerky.

“Oh what a beautiful Chocolate Lab,” she gushed. “What’s his name?”

“Wilbur.”

“Oh, what a perfect name – he is a Wilbur.” She smiled at me. “I think Wilbur will enjoy his treats.”

“Well, thank you. Wilbur’s very

pleased.” I fed him a beef jerky and he devoured it.

“Oh thank you, for letting me meet Wilbur.”

They hugged some more, but then she had to leave, so wished us a good day, and drove off.

Wilbur and I headed back to our room. More masters and dogs avoided us. So what. Wilbur had chewed four treats and wanted more. When we reached the hotel and our room, I told Colleen everything, ending with the wonderful, beautiful Samaritan giving us treats.

“Oh for God’s sake,” she scoffed, long suffering. “The woman probably felt sorry for Wilbur, the poor thing being with a homeless-looking, crazy old man.” **CT**

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Dell Franklin lives in a beach shack in Cayucos, California with his dog Wilbur. He writes for the Rogue Voice, and is currently serializing his baseball memoir, “A Ball Player’s Son,” on a weekly blog, which can be reached at <http://kelsoswing.blogspot.com>

Wilbur and I headed back to our room. More masters and dogs avoided us. So what

KEEP JOE BAGEANT'S MEMORY ALIVE – DOWNLOAD, READ AND SAVE HIS ESSAYS – COLLECTED IN PDF FORMAT AT
<http://coldtype.net/joe.html>

Time to kick the drone habit

At least someone will go to prison for America's drone attacks. Unfortunately, that person is peace activist **Kathy Kelly**

The judge paged through a four page summary of past convictions and agreed that I hadn't yet learned not to break the law

On December 10, International Human Rights Day, federal magistrate Matt Whitworth sentenced me to three months in prison for having crossed the line at a military base that wages drone warfare. The punishment for our attempt to speak on behalf of trapped and desperate people, abroad, will be an opportunity to speak with people trapped by prisons and impoverishment here in the US

Our trial was based on a trespass charge incurred on June 1, 2014. Georgia Walker and I were immediately arrested when we stepped onto Missouri's Whiteman Air Force where pilots fly weaponized drones over Afghanistan and other countries. We carried a loaf of bread and a letter for Brig Gen. Glen D. Van Herck. In court, we testified that we hadn't acted with criminal intent but had, rather, exercised our First Amendment right (and responsibility) to assemble peaceably for redress of grievance.

A group of Afghan friends had entrusted me with a simple message, their grievance, which they couldn't personally deliver: please stop killing us.

I knew that people I've lived with, striving to end wars even as their communities were bombed by drone aircraft, would understand the symbolism of asking to break bread with the base commander. Judge Whitworth said he understood that we oppose war, but he could recommend over 100

better ways to make our point that wouldn't be breaking the law.

The prosecution recommended the maximum six month sentence. "Ms. Kelly needs to be rehabilitated," said an earnest young military lawyer. The judge paged through a four page summary of past convictions and agreed that I hadn't yet learned not to break the law.

What I've learned from past experiences in prison is that the criminal justice system uses prison as a weapon against defendants who often have next to no resources to defend themselves. A prosecutor can threaten a defendant with an onerously long prison sentence along with heavy fines if the defendant doesn't agree to plea bargain.

Plea bargains

In his article "Why Innocent People Plead Guilty," Jed S. Rakoff draws attention to the institution of plea bargaining which now ensures that less than 3% of federal cases go to trial at all. "Of the 2.2 million US people now in prison," Rakoff writes, "well over 2 million are there as a result of plea bargains dictated by the government's prosecutors, who effectively dictate the sentence as well."

"In 2012, the average sentence for federal narcotics defendants who entered into any kind of plea bargain was five years and four months," Rakoff writes, "while the average

sentence for defendants who went to trial was sixteen years.”

It’s one thing to read about the shameful racism and discrimination of the US criminal justice system. It’s quite another to sit next to a woman who is facing ten or more years in prison, isolated from children she has not held in years, and to learn from her about the circumstances that led to her imprisonment.

Many women prisoners, unable to find decent jobs in the regular economy, turn to the underground economy. Distant relatives of mine knew plenty about such an economy several generations ago.

They couldn’t get work, as Irish immigrants, and so they got into the bootlegging business when alcohol was prohibited. But no one sent them to prison for 10 years if they were caught.

Women prisoners may feel waves of guilt, remorse, defiance, and despair. In spite of facing extremely harsh punishment, harsh emotions, and traumatic isolation, most of the women I’ve met in prison have shown extraordinary strength of character. When I was in Pekin Prison, we would routinely see young men, shackled and handcuffed, shuffling off of the bus to spend their first day in their medium-high security prison next door. The median sentence there was 27 years. We knew they’d be old men, many of them grandfathers, by the time they walked out again.

US leads the world

The US is the undisputed world leader in incarceration, as it is the world leader in military dominance. Only one in 28 of

drone victims are the intended, guilty or innocent, targets. One third of women in prison worldwide, are, at this moment, in US prisons. The crimes that most threaten the safety and livelihood of people in the US of course remain the crimes of the powerful, of the corporations that taint our skies with carbon and acid rainfall, peddle weapons around an already suffering globe, shut down factories and whole economies in pursuit of quick wealth, and send our young people to war.

Chief Executive Officers of major corporations that produce products inimical to human survival will most likely never be charged much less convicted of any crime. I don’t want to see them jailed. I do want to see them rehabilitated

Each time I’ve left a US prison, I’ve felt as though I was leaving the scene of a crime. When I return to the US from sites of our war making, abroad, I feel the same way. Emerging back into the regular world seems tantamount to accepting a contract, pledging to forget the punishments we visit on impoverished people. I’m invited to forget about the people still trapped inside nightmare worlds we have made for them.

On January 23, 2015, when I report to whichever prison the Bureau of Prisons selects, I’ll have a short time to reconnect with the reality endured by incarcerated people. It’s not the rehabilitation the prosecutor and judge had in mind, but it will help me be a more empathic and mindful abolitionist, intent on ending all wars. **CT**

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Kathy Kelly is a co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence – <http://vcnv.org>

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Of drone strikes and suicide bombs

Tim Holmes wonders why drone strikes are considered acceptable to our political leaders, while suicide bombings are not

Where Bush began by kidnapping, Obama assassinates

Clinical”, “surgical”, “targeted”, “precision”. As US massacres-by-drone continue across the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia, their ugly accomplice is the bastardisation of language. Human rights group Reprieve have just calculated the number of innocent victims each drone strike claims, posing the question: by what standards are 1,150 civilians – almost half a World Trade Centre – an acceptable price for 41 “terrorist suspects”? How is this “surgical precision”?

That’s assuming the targets are who we are told. In almost every case, we are forced to take the US government at its word.

The media play along. Yet if Russia or Iran bombed Western “terrorists” day in, day out, would journalists take their word for it? Would we allow such attacks to continue all but unnoticed?

Instead, the US presents itself as a surgeon at the operating table – as do the press. A choice metaphor transforms brutal violence into humanitarian aid: if cutting someone open is gruesome, “surgery” sounds friendly – a temporary, restorative, proportionate act for the patient’s good.

The contrast with Western discourse on “terrorism” – that is, Muslim retaliation against the West – could hardly be more blatant. “They” are barbarians; their killings wilful, bloodthirsty, indiscriminate.

In 2001, the Guardian contrasted

“the west’s commitment to do everything possible to avoid civilian casualties and the terrorists’ proven wish to cause as many civilian casualties as possible ... Let them do their worst, we shall do our best, as Churchill put it. That is still a key difference.”

In fact, US policy resembles Israel’s war crimes under brutal megalomaniac Ariel Sharon – who, in one infamous incident, dropped a one-tonne bomb on a densely-populated civilian area in Gaza, claiming to target one man.

As Israel-Palestine scholar Norman Finkelstein points out, if Hamas bombed a bus, claiming “we meant only to target the bus, not the passengers”, people would laugh. Yet from Israel and Western governments, we take the same absurdities deadly seriously.

In 2001, Bush’s lawless kidnapping and torture at Guantanamo Bay horrified and disturbed the world.

Now, imprisonment without trial continues – and alongside it, execution without trial. Where Bush began by kidnapping, Obama assassinates.

Drone strikes have butchered 28 innocent people for every “suspect” targeted. Is that morally acceptable?

If so, why not an attack that kills 4 jihadists and 52 civilians? Applying the moral logic of drone strikes, we would have to declare it a great success.

Yet this is a description of the 7 July 2005



ISIS claim this twin-explosion on 8th October in southeastern Kobane was not caused by airstrikes but was executed by suicide bomber Abu Talha al-Ansari *(Photo: Karl-Ludwig Poggemann)*

To imagine that our governments would use drone strikes in America or Britain is laughable. We would have no difficulty recognising them as acts of terror

bombings in London.

We commit grave acts of terror on a single pretext: that our targets might commit grave acts of terror.

How do our governments get away with it? Why do drone strikes prompt so little response?

The first answer is that they are invisible. They take place in distant, unfamiliar countries, and we see almost no footage.

The second is propaganda. The Pentagon labels victims “enemy combatants” – when mentioning them at all. Rather than challenge the label, the media echoes it.

The third is racism. To imagine that our governments would use drone strikes in America or Britain is laughable. We would have no difficulty recognising them as acts of terror; their perpetrators would be tried and punished.

Yet so little value do we assign lives in Yemen, Somalia and Pakistan that deliberate mass executions barely raise an eyebrow.

Even this, though, casts Obama’s policy in too kind a light.

In some cases there is no evidence that our targets are “terrorist suspects” at all.

Second, the US undertakes “signature strikes”: NSA spies tease out “suspicious patterns of behaviour” in their data; anyone fagged up is executed. (Reprieve’s latest figures omit these cases.)

Third, the Pentagon conducts “double-tap” strikes, hitting the same area twice in quick succession, bombing anyone trying to help the victims of the first attack.

Fourth, as the *New York Times* discovered, the White House “counts all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants ... unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent”. “Shoot first, ask questions later”; “guilty until proven innocent”: these used to be scathing, satirical phrases. Under Obama, they are policy.

Just as they would here, drone strikes in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia make people angry and want to hit back. So to commit mass murder, the Western public pays twice – both today, in public funds, and tomorrow, in the inevitable violent backlash against us.

CT

Time Holmes blogs at <http://timholmesblog.wordpress.com/about/>

Democracy's moment of truth

Stan Winer tells how the unscrupulous and cynical actions of politicians are creating a damaging collective identity crisis in Western society

If society values nothing and trusts nobody, then constructive social and political change is impossible

If truth is the first casualty of war, then trust must surely be the first casualty of peace, including the present “post-Cold War” period. In fact, the Cold War and post-Cold War eras are so closely entwined that it is futile to disassociate one from the other. The same applies to truth and trust. They are virtually inseparable. But there is no mistaking the social, psychological and political consequences of these twin casualties.

So often have politicians asserted their “right” to lie, to manage the news and contrive to deceive the public in times of both war and peace, that large numbers people in the world’s leading *democracies* no longer believe what politicians say about anything, regardless of which particular political party is in power at any given time. Governance is seen as an essentially bureaucratic, managerial affair – with politics having been reduced to mere personal parliamentary point scoring by the political elite.

As a result, many people have lost trust in political institutions and beliefs, and even with one another. Political disengagement has replaced the once prevalent idea that people are connected through common systems of meaning. Any sense of hope and idealism are these days rarely invested in a belief of political change, and individuals rarely develop their identities through some form of socio-political attachment.

Gone is popular participation in civic af-

fairs and public debate about moral values, ethics and our essential humanity, replaced by fear of mass surveillance and a retreat into the safety of cynicism. Cynicism has become woven into the very fabric of Western culture; and a cynic, as Oscar Wilde once observed, is “a person who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing”.

Uncritical cynicism can only intensify notions of powerlessness rather than aid any meaningful transformation. If society values nothing and trusts nobody, then constructive social and political change is impossible. The cause of human progress becomes retarded; unscrupulous political leaders are encouraged to continue lying as they have always done in the past, but now without even bothering to hide it.

There has of course always been some degree of skepticism about politics and politicians – but that was something quite different from today’s automatic perception that they are *all* liars and cheats. It seems that most people nowadays don’t even care if public officials lie to them. Many even expect it. This is not mere, healthy questioning of those in authority. It reflects an historic phenomenon of the times: mass cynicism as evidenced by a precipitous drop in voter turnout. It is a defining characteristic of contemporary times

Ironically, the dramatic decline in voter turnout is most noticeable in countries that have always been the loudest in trumpeting the virtues of democracy as “the will of the

people”, while any other political system is labeled “authoritarian” and hence “evil”. In America, the world’s leading proponent of democracy, voter turnout at the last five elections has averaged only 53.8 percent, compared with an average of 71.6 percent over the same five election years a century earlier, long before the advent of technology to “make voting easier”.

Most recently, the “will of the people”, which American democracy is supposed to exemplify, has been contradicted by the fact that voter turnout in the United States 2014 midterm elections was the lowest ever seen in any election cycle since World War II. According to the United States Election Project, just 36.4 percent of the voting-eligible population cast ballots, thus continuing a steady decline in voter participation since 1964, when voter turnout was at nearly 49 percent.

Canada has not fared much better. In Canada’s 2011 election, there were 24,257,592 electors listed; of these, the Conservative party, led by Stephen Harper received a total of only 5,835,270 votes or a meager 24.1 percent of the total potential votes. Still, his premiership is accepted obligingly as reflecting the democratic will of the Canadian people.

As for the United Kingdom, it has seen voter turnout drop in its last three elections held in 2001, 2005 and 2010, with voter turnout having fallen to a modern-day low of 59.4 percent in the 2001 elections, compared with a peak of 86.8 percent in 1910.

Even in Australia, which is one of the few countries in the world where voting is compulsory, there has been a significant loss of belief in a meaningful vote. Large numbers of Australians have thumbed their nose at the law and chosen not to exercise their vote. A study conducted by the Australian National University in partnership with the Social Research Centre, found satisfaction with democracy slumped from 86 per cent in 2007 to 72 percent in June 2014. The number of Australians who believed it made a difference which party was in power plunged from 68 per cent to 43 per cent in the same period.

In “newly democratised” South Africa, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party’s 2014 election victory came from a distinct minority of potential voters. The real winner, as has been the case since the country’s first democratic elections in 2004, was the stay away “vote”. Almost 13 million potential voters decided not to participate in the 2014 elections, while the 11.5 million that did vote for the ANC are purported to represent “the people” and a “triumph of democracy”.

Even collective institutions such as the European Union (EU) have seen a similar pattern of apathy and disillusionment. The May 2014 European Parliament election saw the lowest voter turnout on record. Official figures, published on the Parliament website, show that turnout struggled to reach 42.54% in 2014, reflecting the lowest public enthusiasm for the EU since 1979, when elections were first held.

Today’s mood of disenchantment with politics and politicians may seem like an apparently recent phenomenon, but it did not arrive fully-f edged and out of the blue. It developed gradually and fragmentarily: Watergate; the “secret” bombing of Cambodia; the Iran-Contra affair; US-Nato’s “humanitarian” wars to “save lives” in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and in Libya; Iraq’s non-existent “weapons of mass destruction”; Syria’s “use” of chemical weapons. All were signposts along the West’s path to perfidy, accompanied by a corresponding loss of voter confidence. The current frenzy about hordes of “Russian tanks” invading eastern Ukraine together with the “Putin-did-it” hysteria over the shooting down of Malaysian flight MH17 are unlikely to induce any significant change of pattern.

The old French saying *C’est la guerre* – such is war – captures the notion that war is dirty and bloody, yet sometimes worth it. But that rings hollow today. For many people the very notion of a truth that is worth fighting and dying for has been called into question, and many have become increasingly uncomfortable with the idea of supporting a political cause, whatever that cause is officially claimed

Today’s mood of disenchantment with politics and politicians may seem like an apparently recent phenomenon, but it did not arrive fully-f edged and out of the blue. It developed gradually and fragmentarily

MATTER OF TRUST

Most people in the world's democracies today find it difficult to believe in politics or in politicians, and many don't believe in anything much at all

to be. Public mistrust has become institutionalised, a habit. It is all around us. Most people don't even care if public officials lie to them. Many seem to expect it.

Each new revelation of lies and political intrigue on the part of those in power has merely bolstered public cynicism. "So what? They all do it", is a common response. Others simply don't want to know about the lies, because to know about them but still do nothing will mean they have become silent accomplices of liars.

Official lies have perhaps reinforced what were already dominant trends in the public mind long before today's golden age of deception. Each new revelation of lying and of political intrigue on the part of those in power has merely bolstered public cynicism. But today's public mood is not just anti-politician, it is also anti-politics – an institutionalised mistrust that is corrosive of democracy and of public life. This ethos of cynicism, voter apathy and mistrust does not distinguish between good and bad governance – all government policy statements are treated as lies. It is taken for granted by vast sections of the public that governments will lie to us if they possibly can, and whether or not they actually do so does not even matter any more. We assume we are being lied to because, most of the time, we are in fact being lied to.

No wonder Western societies are coming apart at the seams. Trust is the bond that holds society together, and trust is based on truth. Not to be duped is of vital importance to a society's existence; and it is central to a healthy cultural identity. Yet most people in the world's democracies today find it difficult to believe in politics or in politicians, and many don't believe in anything much at all. People are disillusioned. This is not mere, healthy questioning of those in authority. It reflects a culture of fear and vulnerability, a destructive phenomenon of the age, based on cynicism and something akin to rampant paranoia – a sense that we are all powerless victims at the mercy of dark forces. Official lying, directly or indirectly, has eroded public trust and it has resulted in a loss of individual

reference points.

The fallout from such a crisis of credibility is doing as much damage to the collective psyche of the Western society of nations as has been done to the legitimacy of democratic governance at a national level. The cultural effects of this can be recognised in the fact that many ordinary people feel it is pointless to commit oneself to anything except one's own self interest. They have arrived from a worldview ordered around blind faith in "democratic" governance to a psycho-social phenomenon in which large numbers of people today experience some form of free-floating doubt and anxiety about everything.

This is democracy's moment of truth: the moral certainties of the past have become seriously eroded, while no new moral consensus has emerged. The moral high ground has been exchanged for a culture of cynicism and incipient paranoia. Public disenchantment with politics has bred outright skepticism about any attempt by the political elite to exercise anything even vaguely resembling integrity. People experience historic events as being beyond their control and they tend to see real or imagined conspiracies behind everything. The perceived truth of any one conspiracy theory lends credence to all the others, eating away at whom we trust and what we believe in, and this provides more fuel for the mass escape to cynicism.

The mainstream media, meanwhile, dutifully reinforces the depths of moral confusion that characterise contemporary times. Its corrosive effects seep into our personal lives, inducing a philosophy of futility and focusing people on the banal and superficial; leaving most folk today without any resolve with which to respond decisively to events. Far from people being united in a common cause, it is more a case of do nothing, say nothing – with everybody suspicious of the person next door. Clearly, if one can speak of a collective identity crisis, of a period of radical discontinuity in a people's sense of who and what they are, the present comes close to having attained that condition. **CT**

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Stan Winer is a veteran journalist and researcher based in South Africa. He is the author of "Between the Lies: Rise of the media-military-industrial complex" (London: Southern Universities Press, 2004, revised edition 2007). His website is <http://truth-hertz.net>

Breaking the silence

Scotland is finally confronting the lords who have held the nation down. It's time England did the same, says **George Monbiot**

Bring out the violins. The land reform programme announced by the Scottish government is the end of civilised life on earth, if you believe the corporate press. In a country where 432 people own half the private rural land, all change is Stalinism. The *Telegraph* has published a string of dire warnings, insisting, for example, that deer stalking and grouse shooting could come to an end if business rates are introduced for sporting estates. Moved to tears yet?

Yes, sporting estates – where the richest people in Britain, or oil sheikhs and oligarchs from elsewhere, shoot grouse and stags – are exempt from business rates: a present from John Major's government in 1994. David Cameron has been just as generous with our money: as he cuts essential services for the poor, he has almost doubled the public subsidy for English grouse moors, and frozen the price of shotgun licences, at a public cost of £17m a year.

But this is small change. Let's talk about the real money. The Westminster government claims to champion an entrepreneurial society, of wealth creators and hard-working families, but the real rewards and incentives are for rent. The power and majesty of the state protects the patrimonial class. A looped and windowed democratic cloak barely covers the corrupt old body of the nation. Here peaceful protestors can still be arrested un-

der the 1361 Justices of the Peace Act. Here, the Royal Mines Act 1424 gives the Crown the right to all the gold and silver in Scotland. Here the Remembrancer of the City of London sits behind the Speaker's chair in the House of Commons, to protect the entitlements of a Corporation that pre-dates the Norman conquest. This is an essentially feudal nation.

It's no coincidence that the two most regressive forms of taxation in the UK – council tax banding and the payment of farm subsidies – both favour major owners of property. The capping of council tax bands ensures that the owners of £100 million flats in London pay less than the owners of £200,000 houses in Blackburn. Farm subsidies, which remain limitless as a result of the Westminster government's lobbying, ensure that every household in Britain hands £245 a year to the richest people in the land. The single farm payment system – under which landowners are paid by the hectare – is a reinstatement of a mediaeval levy called feudal aid: a tax the vassals had to pay to their lords.

If this is the government of enterprise, not rent, ask yourself why capital gains tax (at 28%) is lower than the top rate of income tax. Ask yourself why principal residences, though their value may rise by millions, are altogether exempt. Ask yourself why rural landowners are typically excused capital gains tax, inheritance tax and the first five

Farm subsidies, which remain limitless as a result of the Westminster government's lobbying, ensure that every household in Britain hands £245 a year to the richest people in the land

HIGHLAND SPRING

Scotland is rudely interrupting the constructed silences that stifle political thought in the United Kingdom. This is why the oligarchs who own the media hate everything that is happening there

years of income tax. The enterprise society? It's a con, designed to create an illusion of social mobility.

The Scottish programme for government is the first serious attempt to address the nature of landholding in Britain since David Lloyd George's budget of 1909. Some of its aims hardly sound radical until you understand the context. For example it will seek to discover who owns the land. Big deal. Yes, in fact, it is. At the moment the owners of only 26% of the land in Scotland have been identified.

Walk into any *mairie* in France or *ayuntamiento* in Spain and you will be shown the cadastral registers on request, on which all the land and its owners are named. When *The Land* magazine tried to do the same in Britain, it found that there was a full cadastral map available at the local library, which could be photocopied for 70p. But it was made in 1840. Even with expert help, it took the magazine several weeks of fighting official obstruction and obfuscation and cost nearly £1000 to find out who owns the 1.4 km around its offices in Dorset. It discovered that the old registers had been closed and removed from public view, at the behest of a landed class that wishes to remain as exempt from public scrutiny as it is from taxes. (The landowners are rather more forthcoming when applying for subsidies from the rural payments agency, which possesses a full, though unobtainable, register of their agricultural holdings). What sort of nation is this, in which you cannot discover who owns the ground beneath your feet?

The Scottish government will consider breaking up large land holdings when they impede the prospects of local people. It will provide further help to communities to buy the land that surrounds them. Compare its promise of "a fairer, wider and more equitable distribution of land" to the Westminster government's vision of "greater competitiveness, including by consolidation": which means a continued increase in the size of land holdings. The number of holdings in

England is now falling by 2% a year, which is possibly the fastest concentration of ownership since the acts of enclosure.

Consider Scotland's determination to open up the question of property taxes, which might lead to the only system that is fair and comprehensive: land value taxation. Compare it to the fable of a mansion tax proposed by Ed Miliband, which, though it recoups only a tiny percentage of the unearned income of the richest owners, has so outraged the proprietorial class that some of them have threatened to leave the country. Good riddance.

The Scottish government might address the speculative chaos which mangles the countryside while failing to build the houses people need. It might challenge a system in which terrible homes are built at great expense, partly because the price of land has risen from 2% of the cost of a house in the 1930s to 70% today. It might take land into public ownership to ensure that new developments are built by and for those who will live there, rather than for the benefit of volume housebuilders. It might prevent mountains from being burnt and overgrazed by a landowning class that cares only about the numbers of deer and grouse it can bag and the bragging rights this earns in London clubs. As Scotland, where feudalism was not legally abolished until 2000, becomes a progressive, modern nation, it leaves England stuck in the pre-democratic past.

Scotland is rudely interrupting the constructed silences that stifle political thought in the United Kingdom. This is why the oligarchs who own the media hate everything that is happening there: their interests are being exposed in a way that is currently impossible south of the border.

For centuries, Britain has been a welfare state for patrimonial capital. It's time we broke it open, and broke the culture of deference that keeps us in our place. Let's bring the Highland Spring south, and start discussing some dangerous subjects. **CT**

George Monbiot's book "Feral" was recently released in paperback format. This article was originally published in the Guardian newspaper

A nation built on the rule of lawlessness

Rick Salutin points out that, contrary to what President Obama says, the US and the rule of law are not good friends

Barack Obama looked at his most clueless, responding to the riots and rage in Ferguson, Missouri. He hasn't seemed so callow since the BP oil spill. Like he just wished it was over and could get on to the delights of his post-presidency. Or back to immigration reform and stalling that damn pipeline.

Using his slow voice, as if he's explaining something so basic that it's hard to understand, he declared that the US is a "nation built on the rule of law" and added next day, he has "no sympathy" for those who go violent. The problem with this, at least for those in the streets, is the US is not a nation of laws and resorts to official violence and/or illegality routinely.

In US inner cities, this means surviving your dealings with cops. It is agony for a dad to tell his son, as Michael Brown Sr. had to, that you must defer to police, no matter what's true or lawful. My own dad's version was, "Even when they're wrong, they're right," though we were middle class and he was talking about school authorities.

In my thirties I spent lots of time around the criminal courts in relation to dozens of strike-related charges. We became used to police simply concocting their stories well after making arrests. For well-bred left-wing union supporters, it was shocking. We'd sometimes "confront" cops over how they could be so brazen. It was like an encoun-

ter between alien species. Maybe that's changed, or will, due to body cams etc., but not for Michael Jr.

The lawlessness though is more extensive – as in global. The US attack on Afghanistan was scantily justified; the invasion of Iraq, not at all. The disastrous attack on Libya and the ongoing drone strikes received perfunctory justifications at best. It's as if it wasn't even worth the trouble.

Lawlessness also pervades the US economy, more or less legally. Banks lied to and defrauded homebuyers, creating a bubble that led to a catastrophe. (The oft-mentioned "near catastrophe" applies to the banks, not the buyers.)

Nothing has changed since. Banks now routinely pay billions in fines, which they build into their costs, since profits far outpace them. No major banker has gone to jail over this. People who miss a payment or jump a subway turnstile do their time. It's the theme of Matt Taibbi's book, "The Divide". I'm not screaming for social justice here. I'm talking about fatuous claims praising a society built on laws.

The version that riles me most is deregulation, a weasel word for lawlessness. Deregulation means you abolish rules or simply ignore them. The banks deregulated through Bill Clinton. But environmental rules, food safety, drug and workplace controls have been formally deregulated or, in

It is agony for a dad to tell his son, as Michael Brown Sr. had to, that you must defer to police, no matter what's true or lawful

AFTER FERGUSON / 1

Ferguson protesters trashed some buildings and blocked traffic. That's pitiable compared to lawlessness by police, governments and the finance sector

a subtler way, allowed to lapse through cut-backs in staff, inspection and enforcement.

It's especially here that Canadians have nothing to gloat about. Our government mugged the Kyoto accord and their own environmental procedures. They've eliminated rules and the agencies that enforce them. In November they cancelled mandatory recycling for mercury-containing bulbs, making it voluntary by the producers. Maybe we should try that with armed robbery. The arrests in Burnaby over the Kinder Morgan pipeline are all about slacking off on the rules. They avoid spending allotted funds for veterans' mental health or manufacturing, then recycle that money to pay down the deficit. This is fiscal vigilante law.

Ferguson protesters trashed some buildings and blocked traffic. That's pitiable compared to lawlessness by police, governments and the finance sector. What's really

breathtaking is how most ordinary citizens continue to law-abide.

Obama and others like pointing to Martin Luther King Jr. as the model for peaceful protest. But King wasn't a law-abider, he was a lawbreaker. He just did it non-violently, a preferable term to peaceful. His reasons were both pragmatic and principled. There was no way for protesters to match the firepower of the protestees – then or now. But more tellingly: you turn into them if you mirror their methods and then nothing's been gained. In these protests I heard cries I hadn't heard in a long time – Revolution!... By any means necessary! That's not nostalgia, it's despair, and loss of hope for change by normal, lawful means. **CT**

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Rick Salutin is an author and activist based in Toronto. This article was originally published in the Toronto Star.



East London Photo Stories Book Four

SHOREDITCH WILD LIFE

DOUGIE WALLACE

"... a slightly demented parallel reality, a pocket of weirdness and colour" – Michael Smith

Published by **Hoxton Mini Press**
<http://hoxtonminipress.com> Price £14

See an excerpt from the book on
Pages 34-38 of this issue of ColdType

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We are the enemy

That's the main lesson in the aftermath of the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, writes **John W. Whitehead**

"If you dress police officers up as soldiers and you put them in military vehicles and you give them military weapons, they adopt a warrior mentality. We fight wars against enemies, and the enemies are the people who live in our cities – particularly in communities of color." – Thomas Nolan, criminology professor and former police officer

Should police officer Darren Wilson be held accountable for the shooting death of unarmed citizen Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, on August 9, 2014?

That the police officer was white and his victim black should make no difference. In a perfect world, it would not matter. In an imperfect world such as ours, however, racism is an effective propaganda tool used by the government and the media to distract us from the real issues.

As a result, the national dialogue about the dangers of militarized, weaponized police officers being trained to act like soldiers on the battlefield, shooting first and asking questions later, has shifted into a largely unspoken debate over race wars, class perceptions and longstanding, deep-seated notions of who deserves our unquestioning loyalty and who does not.

Putting aside our prejudices, however, let's not overlook the importance of Ferguson

and this grand jury verdict. Tasked with determining whether Wilson should stand trial for Brown's shooting, the grand jury ruled that the police officer will not face charges for the fatal shooting.

However, the greater question – whether anything will really change to rein in militarized police, police shootings, lack of accountability and oversight, and a military industrial complex with a vested interest in turning America into a war zone – remains unanswered.

Ferguson matters because it provides us with a foretaste of what is to come. It is the shot across the bow, so to speak, a warning that this is how we will all be treated if we do not tread cautiously in challenging the police state, and it won't matter whether we're black or white, rich or poor, Republican or Democrat. In the eyes of the corporate state, we are all the enemy.

This is the lesson of Ferguson.

Remember that in the wake of the shooting, Ferguson police officers clad in body armor, their faces covered with masks, equipped with assault rifles and snipers and riding armored vehicles, showed up in force to deal with protesters. Describing that show of force by police in Ferguson, Senator Claire McCaskill, Democrat of Missouri, stated, "This was a military force, and they were facing down an enemy."

Yes, we are the enemy. As I point out in

Ferguson matters because it provides us with a foretaste of what is to come. It is the shot across the bow, a warning that this is how we will all be treated if we do not tread cautiously in challenging the police state

AFTER FERGUSON / 2

Rubbing salt in our wounds, in the wake of Ferguson, police agencies not only continued to ramp up their military arsenals but have used them whenever possible

my book, “A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State”, since those first towers fell on 9/11, the American people have been treated like enemy combatants, to be spied on, tracked, scanned, frisked, searched, subjected to all manner of intrusions, intimidated, invaded, raided, manhandled, censored, silenced, shot at, locked up, and denied due process.

There was a moment of hope after Ferguson that perhaps things might change. Perhaps the balance would be restored between the citizenry and their supposed guardians, the police. Perhaps our elected officials would take our side for a change and oppose the militarization of the police. Perhaps warfare would take a backseat to more pressing national concerns.

That hope was short-lived.

It wasn't long before the media moved on to other, more titillating stories. The disappearance of a University of Virginia college student and the search for her alleged abductor, the weeks-long man-hunt for an accused cop killer, the Republican electoral upset, a Rolling Stone expose on gang rapes at fraternity parties, Obama's immigration amnesty plan, and the rape charges against Bill Cosby are just a few of the stories that have dominated the news cycle since the Ferguson standoff between police and protesters.

It wasn't long before the American public, easily acclimated to news of government wrongdoing (case in point: the national yawn over the NSA's ongoing domestic surveillance), ceased to be shocked, outraged or alarmed by reports of police shootings. In fact, the issue was nowhere to be found in this year's run-up to Election Day, which was largely devoid of any pressing matters of national concern.

And with nary a hiccup, the police state marched steadily forth. In fact, aided and abetted by the citizenry's short attention span, its easily distracted nature, and its desensitization to anything that occupies the news cycle for too long, it has been busi-

ness as usual in terms of police shootings, the amassing of military weapons, and the government's sanctioning of police misconduct. Most recently, Ohio police shot and killed a 12-year-old boy who was seen waving a toy gun at a playground.

Rubbing salt in our wounds, in the wake of Ferguson, police agencies not only continued to ramp up their military arsenals but have used them whenever possible. In fact, in anticipation of the grand jury's ruling, St. Louis police actually purchased more equipment for its officers, including “civil disobedience equipment.”

Just a few weeks after the Ferguson show-down, law enforcement agencies took part in an \$11 million manhunt in Pennsylvania for alleged cop killer Eric Frein. Without batting an eye, the news media switched from outraged “shock” over the military arsenal employed by police in Ferguson to respectful “awe” of the 48-day operation that cost taxpayers \$1.4 million per week in order to carry out a round-the-clock dragnet search of an area with a 5-mile-radius.

The Frein operation brought together 1,000 officers from local, state and federal law enforcement, as well as SWAT teams and cutting edge military equipment (high-powered rifles, body armor, infrared sensors, armored trucks, helicopters and unmanned, silent surveillance blimps) – some of the very same weapons and tactics employed in Ferguson and, a year earlier, in Boston in the wake of the marathon bombing.

The manhunt was a well-timed, perfectly choreographed exercise in why Americans should welcome the police state: for our safety, of course, and to save the lives of police officers.

Opposed to any attempt to demilitarize America's police forces, the Dept. of Homeland Security has been chanting this safety mantra in testimony before Congress: Remember 9/11. Remember Boston. Remember how unsafe the world was before police were equipped with automatic weapons, heavily armored trucks, night-vision gog-

gles, and aircraft donated by the DHS.

Contrary to DHS rhetoric, however, militarized police – twitchy over perceived dangers, hyped up on their authority, and protected by their agencies, the legislatures and the courts – have actually made communities less safe at a time when violent crime is at an all-time low and lumberjacks, fishermen, airline pilots, roofers, construction workers, trash collectors, electricians and truck drivers all have a higher risk of on-the-job fatalities than police officers.

Moreover, as Senator Tom Coburn points out, the militarization of America’s police forces has actually “created some problems that wouldn’t have been there otherwise.” Among those problems: a rise in the use of SWAT team raids for routine law enforcement activities (averaging 80,000 a year), a rise in the use and abuse of asset forfeiture laws by police agencies, a profit-driven incentive to criminalize lawful activities and treat Americans as suspects, and a transformation of the nation’s citizenry into suspects.

Ferguson provided us with an opportunity to engage in a much-needed national dialogue over how police are trained, what authority they are given, what weaponry they are provided, and how they treat those whom they are entrusted with protecting.

Caught up in our personal politics, prejudices and class warfare, we have failed to answer that call. In so doing, we have played right into the hands of all those corporations who profit from turning America into a battlefield by selling the government mine-resistant vehicles, assault rifles, grenade launchers, and drones.

As long as we remain steeped in ignorance, there will be no reform.

As long as we remain divided by our irrational fear of each other, there will be no overhaul in the nation’s law enforcement system or institution of an oversight process whereby communities can ensure that local police departments are acting in accordance with their wishes and values.

And as long as we remain distracted by misguided loyalties to military operatives who are paid to play the part of the government’s henchmen, there will be no saving us when the events of Ferguson unfold in our own backyards.

When all is said and done, it doesn’t matter whose “side” you’re on as far as what transpired in Ferguson, whether you believe that Michael Brown was a victim or that Darren Wilson was justified in shooting first and asking questions later.

What matters is that we not allow politics and deep-rooted prejudices of any sort to divert our efforts to restore some level of safety, sanity and constitutional balance to the role that police officers play in our communities. If we fail to do so, we will have done a disservice to ourselves and every man, woman and child in this country who have become casualties of the American police state. **CT**

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John W. Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and author. He is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute and editor of GadflyOnline.com. His latest book “A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State” (SelectBooks) is available at amazon.com

We have played right into the hands of all those corporations who profit from turning America into a battlefield by selling the government mine-resistant vehicles, assault rifles, grenade launchers, and drones

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Waistband-reaching could get you killed

John Eskow on the bizarre compulsion of black men to “reach for their waistbands” when confronted by gun-toting cops

In 2011, fully half of all the young black men shot by LA cops were cut down because—again, if police accounts are to be believed— they too were “reaching for their waistbands”

If police accounts are to be believed, there is a bizarre urge among young, unarmed black men to provoke their own murder by “reaching for their waistbands” when cops are aiming service revolvers at them.

At the end of November, we heard Officer Darren Wilson claim that one of the reasons he killed Michael Brown was that the young man “reached for his waistband,” and – in what I guess was just an incredibly weird coincidence – we heard Cleveland police claim they killed a 12-year-old kid with a toy gun because he also “reached for his waistband.”

But this odd compulsion is not a new one. In 2011, fully half of all the young black men shot by LA cops were cut down because – again, if police accounts are to be believed – they too were “reaching for their waistbands.” The epidemic also spread to Houston, where multiple police accounts cite the same excuse. Oscar Grant, the young man killed by Oakland cops on a subway platform – and the subject of the movie “Fruitvale Station” – was shot for the exact same reason.

If police accounts are to be believed, this compulsion only exists among young black men. I have been approached by angry or frustrated cops several times in my life—twice as an angry young protestor, eager to

defy them – and have never felt even the slightest urge to reach for my waistband. Maybe white skin contains a protein that protects against this terrible compulsion?

And exactly what is it that these dead young men were hoping to find in those waistbands? Given the Cosby-condemned fashion of wearing saggy jeans, these kids have to reach pretty far down to reach their waistbands – a posture which would leave them completely defenseless against an armed cop. What a powerful compulsion this must be!

I’ve spent a good amount of time on police ridearounds in New Orleans. If you want to see young black men, New Orleans at 3am is a good place to do so. I remember one night as my cop hosts were rolling up slowly on a kid they suspected of a robbery: no shirt, Saints cap, saggy jeans exposing his boxer shorts. The kid sauntered on with an exaggerated cool: he knew the cops were watching him, and the cops knew that he knew. One of the cops poked my elbow, chuckled, and said: “Watch this. That kid’s gonna break.” “When?” I asked. “The second he reaches down to hitch up his drawers.” As I watched, another cop counted down: “Three seconds to drawa-hitchin’. Two...one...”

At just that second, the kid reached down,

hitched up his drawas, and “broke” – took off sprinting down an alley. They pursued him for a while, then lost interest. It was the only time I ever saw any gesture that was even vaguely waistband-related, and the kid only did it so that he could run without being tripped by his low-slung Levis.

Two weeks later, one of the cops in that squad car – a funny guy, a seemingly decent guy, you would’ve liked him – was briefly suspended, pending the investigation of an “incident” in which he shot and killed a young black man in the black man’s own back yard.

The kid had reached for his waistband, if police accounts are to be believed.

My old squad-car host was cleared in a few days and returned to duty.

This has gone on far too long. I am going to take my own mixed-race son to a neurologist today, if not sooner, to have him checked for traces of this horrible Waistband-Reaching Syndrome. I’m concerned that, one day, it could get him killed . . . if police accounts are to be believed. **CT**

.....
John Eskow is a writer and musician. He wrote or co-wrote the movies Air America, The Mask of Zorro, and Pink Cadillac, as well as the novel “Smokestack Lightning”. He is a contributor to “Killing Trayvons: an Anthology of American Violence”

I am going to take my own mixed-race son to a neurologist today, if not sooner, to have him checked for traces of this horrible Waistband-Reaching Syndrome

HURWITT’S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



The ghosts of Vietnam

Their voices are being heard again, but which of them should we believe? asks **Danny Schechter**

These two films, all these years later, mirror the cultural and political divides of the time

It's been nearly 40 years since what the American media called the "Fall of Saigon" and the Vietnamese referred to as the "Liberation". I saw it then as the "Fall of Washington."

The ghosts of Vietnam are back, thanks to two filmmakers with very different takes. The first is Tiana of South Vietnamese origin, and the second is Rory Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy's youngest daughter.

Tiana is finishing a movie called "The General and Me", on her unlikely conversations (for someone from a virulently anti-communist family) with North Vietnam's legendary General Giap, aka the "Red Napoleon," aka the man whose military doctrines defeated the French Army and later the Americans.

Giap created the Vietnamese Army at Ho Chi Minh's request, and without training became a military genius. Tiana has two other self-promoted US "geniuses" in her movie, too: pathetic walk-ons by US General William Westmoreland and Defense Secretary Robert MacNamara, who cannot conceal his contempt for her.

Kennedy's highly-hyped "Last Days in Vietnam" depicts the hurried evacuation of US soldiers and as many of their Vietnamese conscripts in a long and bloody war that was lost almost from its earliest days. Rather than look at the reasons for that loss, she has, with support from HBO and

PBS's American Experience series, tried to present a heroic picture of Americans in their last days in Saigon, coping with a mad ambassador and in some cases rebelling against US policy.

These two films, all these years later, mirror the cultural and political divides of the time. One film, in effect, rationalises the war, portraying the American military as compassionate, while the other, for one of the first times, offers the side that Americans never hear.

Even if her Uncle JFK did escalate the war, despite his back and forth doubts, a member of the Kennedy family is still treated as a cultural icon in a culture that can't remember detail of what happened yesterday much less forty years. Rory's work has been acclaimed; Tiana's has not yet been seen. She calls this forgetting deliberate, "Namnesia."

Gerald Perry writes in *Arts Fuse*: "The mushy reviews of "Last Days in Vietnam" (a 94% Rotten Tomatoes approval rating) are extraordinarily similar. They praise filmmaker Rory Kennedy for documenting a forgotten moment of American history, the chaotic days in 1975 when the US raced to leave Saigon and South Vietnam steps ahead of the advancing North Vietnamese Army. And the critics are pumped up with pride at the stories Kennedy has uncovered of brave and noble American soldiers and a

few anti-establishment American diplomats who helped evacuate many South Vietnamese – by boat, plane, and helicopter – who presumably would be enslaved or murdered by the Communist North Vietnamese.

What hardly anyone observed is that Kennedy, daughter of peacenik Robert Kennedy, is offering a flag-waving whitewash of the war in Vietnam. The North Vietnamese are characterized, with no exceptions, as Isis-like warriors murdering all their opposition on the way from Hanoi to Saigon. And, after entering Saigon, annihilating those who oppose them or sending their enemies to re-education camps. The South Vietnamese? This amazed me: there is not any mention of the much-documented corruption of the various puppet governments, and of the South Vietnamese army as a coercive instrument of torture and killings. Each South Vietnamese ex-soldier, including a high-ranking officer, who is interviewed is allowed to tell his shiny story. There's no blood attached to any of them.

“This did not surprise me. In 1976, the anniversary of the American Revolution, I published a small book featuring the views of Vietnam's top military strategists including General Vo Nguyen Giap called “How We Won The War.”

Surely, that story is historically more significant than how we cut tail and ran.

I wrote then: “The American press was never much help in our efforts to find out more about those remarkable Vietnamese people who have now managed to out-organize, out fight, and defeat a succession of US backed regimes. When the US media did recognize the other side's existence, they did so with disdain, distortion and denigration...the US never came to terms the fact it was defending a government which had no support and attempting to crush one that did.”

A group of LA-based film critics later wrote to PBS: “Rory Kennedy's egregiously unbalanced, out-of-context, dubiously propagandistic “Last Days in Vietnam” is cur-

rently in theatrical release, a production of the PBS series, An American Experience. We are appalled by the extraordinarily one-sided nature of Kennedy's rewrite of history that only shows the US government's and the Republic of Vietnam's side of the story, and never offers the points of view of the millions of Americans who opposed the war and of those who fought on the side of the National Liberation Front and North Vietnam.”

So much for “balance!”

The protest was all for nought. Public Television retreated into its files of knee-jerk form letters and responded to criticisms of one program with a defense that cited all the programs they did, most decades old, while announcing that a new multi-million dollar series on Vietnam by Ken Burns is in the works. Typical! They avoided details like these:

- Rory focused on the story of efforts to save allied officers and their families in a Saigon (“Arvin”) Army known for its corruption and brutality.

- It cited atrocities allegedly committed by the Communists like the “Hue Massacre,” an event thoroughly investigated and exposed as false by US Vietnam Scholar Gareth Porter.

- It cited violations of the Paris Peace agreement by the North without mentioning the many more egregious and concealed violations by the US-backed South Vietnamese forces.

- It showed the madness and mania of US Ambassador Graham Martin as if he was an exception to a history of earlier US officials who escalated the war with massive casualties. It offered no historical context or background.

- It implied that all the people of Saigon would be butchered or imprisoned; that was not the case.

- It referenced escaping ships racing to ConSon Island without mentioning that that Island off the coast of Saigon hosted, like Guantanamo today, was a brutal pris-

The North Vietnamese are characterized, with no exceptions, as Isis-like warriors murdering all their opponents on the way from Hanoi to Saigon

TWO VOICES

The Obama Administration, aided by its Secretary of State, John Kerry, once the leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, had turned into an apologist for the American role in the war

on camps filled with “tiger cages” where Vietnamese opponents of the military regime were kept, killed and tortured.

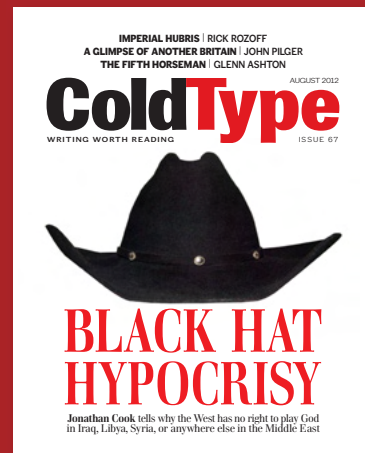
• Perry asks: “Where in this documentary are the anti-war voices of those who were American soldiers in Vietnam and became disillusioned by the terrible things we did there? Who in this film speaks of our random bombing of North Vietnam? Of the massacre at My Lai? And for the CIA, where is mention of the heinous tortures of South Vietnamese under CIA director William Colby? As for Kissinger, it’s madly frustrating to see his self-serving rhetoric go completely unchallenged. Where are you, Errol Morris, when needed? Instead, the world’s number one war criminal at large (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Chile, etc.) is a welcome and honored guest to this documentary commissioned by PBS’s American Experience.”

And, on and on.

Its been 40 years. What have we learned? The Obama Administration, aided by its Secretary of State, a Vietnamese speaker no less, named John Kerry, once the leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, had turned into an apologist for the American role in the war, and an arms salesman to Vietnam which fears the Chinese today more than the Americans.

Whose voice should we listen to? Rory Kennedy with her slick well funded mockumentary of history or Tiana who is struggling to bring Vietnamese voices and a deliberately buried history to life? **CT**

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Danny Schechter reported in North and South Vietnam in 1974, and returned in 1997. He has written widely on the issues of the war. He edits Mediachannel.org and blogs at Newsdissector.net. Comments to Dissector@mediachannel.org



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War by media and the triumph of propaganda

John Pilger tells how the mainstream media has stopped providing us with information and is now in the business of disseminating propaganda

Why has so much journalism succumbed to propaganda? Why are censorship and distortion standard practice? Why is the BBC so often a mouthpiece of rapacious power? Why do the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* deceive their readers?

Why are young journalists not taught to understand media agendas and to challenge the high claims and low purpose of fake objectivity? And why are they not taught that the essence of so much of what's called the mainstream media is not information, but power?

These are urgent questions. The world is facing the prospect of major war, perhaps nuclear war – with the United States clearly determined to isolate and provoke Russia and eventually China. This truth is being turned upside down and inside out by journalists, including those who promoted the lies that led to the bloodbath in Iraq in 2003.

The times we live in are so dangerous and so distorted in public perception that propaganda is no longer, as Edward Bernays called it, an “invisible government”. It is the government. It rules directly without fear of contradiction and its principal aim is the conquest of us: our sense of the world, our ability to separate truth from lies.

The information age is actually a media age. We have war by media; censorship by

media; demonology by media; retribution by media; diversion by media – a surreal assembly line of obedient clichés and false assumptions.

This power to create a new “reality” has building for a long time. Forty-five years ago, a book entitled “The Greening of America” caused a sensation. On the cover were these words: “There is a revolution coming. It will not be like revolutions of the past. It will originate with the individual.”

I was a correspondent in the United States at the time and recall the overnight elevation to guru status of the author, a young Yale academic, Charles Reich. His message was that truth-telling and political action had failed and only “culture” and introspection could change the world.

Within a few years, driven by the forces of profit, the cult of “me-ism” had all but overwhelmed our sense of acting together, our sense of social justice and internationalism. Class, gender and race were separated. The personal was the political, and the media was the message.

In the wake of the cold war, the fabrication of new “threats” completed the political disorientation of those who, 20 years earlier, would have formed a vehement opposition.

In 2003, I filmed an interview in Washington with Charles Lewis, the distinguished American investigative journalist.

The world is facing the prospect of major war, perhaps nuclear war – with the United States clearly determined to isolate and provoke Russia and eventually China

WHOSE TRUTH?

Had journalists done their job, had they questioned and investigated the propaganda instead of amplifying it, hundreds of thousands of men, women and children might be alive today

We discussed the invasion of Iraq a few months earlier. I asked him, “What if the freest media in the world had seriously challenged George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld and investigated their claims, instead of channeling what turned out to be crude propaganda?”

He replied that if we journalists had done our job “there is a very, very good chance we would have not gone to war in Iraq.”

That’s a shocking statement, and one supported by other famous journalists to whom I put the same question. Dan Rather, formerly of CBS, gave me the same answer. David Rose of the *Observer* and senior journalists and producers in the BBC, who wished to remain anonymous, gave me the same answer.

In other words, had journalists done their job, had they questioned and investigated the propaganda instead of amplifying it, hundreds of thousands of men, women and children might be alive today; and millions might not have fled their homes; the sectarian war between Sunni and Shia might not have ignited, and the infamous Islamic State might not now exist.

Even now, despite the millions who took to the streets in protest, most of the public in western countries have little idea of the sheer scale of the crime committed by our governments in Iraq. Even fewer are aware that, in the 12 years before the invasion, the US and British governments set in motion a holocaust by denying the civilian population of Iraq a means to live.

Those are the words of the senior British official responsible for sanctions on Iraq in the 1990s – a medieval siege that caused the deaths of half a million children under the age of five, reported Unicef. The official’s name is Carne Ross. In the Foreign Office in London, he was known as “Mr. Iraq”. Today, he is a truth-teller of how governments deceive and how journalists willingly spread the deception. “We would feed journalists factoids of sanitised intelligence,” he told me, “or we’d freeze them out.”

The main whistleblower during this terrible, silent period was Denis Halliday. Then Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations and the senior UN official in Iraq, Halliday resigned rather than implement policies he described as genocidal. He estimates that sanctions killed more than a million Iraqis.

What then happened to Halliday was instructive. He was airbrushed. Or he was vilified. On the BBC’s *Newsnight* programme, the presenter Jeremy Paxman shouted at him: “Aren’t you just an apologist for Saddam Hussein?” The *Guardian* recently described this as one of Paxman’s “memorable moments”. Last week, Paxman signed a £1 million book deal.

The handmaidens of suppression have done their job well. Consider the effects. In 2013, a ComRes poll found that a majority of the British public believed the casualty toll in Iraq was less than 10,000 – a tiny fraction of the truth. A trail of blood that goes from Iraq to London has been scrubbed almost clean.

Rupert Murdoch is said to be the godfather of the media mob, and no one should doubt the augmented power of his newspapers – all 127 of them, with a combined circulation of 40 million, and his Fox network. But the influence of Murdoch’s empire is no greater than its reflection of the wider media.

The most effective propaganda is found not in the Sun or on Fox News – but beneath a liberal halo. When the *New York Times* published claims that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, its fake evidence was believed, because it wasn’t Fox News; it was the *New York Times*.

The same is true of the *Washington Post* and the *Guardian*, both of which have played a critical role in conditioning their readers to accept a new and dangerous cold war. All three liberal newspapers have misrepresented events in Ukraine as a malign act by Russia – when, in fact, the fascist led coup in Ukraine was the work of the United

States, aided by Germany and Nato.

This inversion of reality is so pervasive that Washington's military encirclement and intimidation of Russia is not contentious. It's not even news, but suppressed behind a smear and scare campaign of the kind I grew up with during the first cold war.

Once again, the evil empire is coming to get us, led by another Stalin or, perversely, a new Hitler. Name your demon and let rip.

The suppression of the truth about Ukraine is one of the most complete news blackouts I can remember. The biggest Western military build-up in the Caucasus and eastern Europe since world war two is blacked out. Washington's secret aid to Kiev and its neo-Nazi brigades responsible for war crimes against the population of eastern Ukraine is blacked out. Evidence that contradicts propaganda that Russia was responsible for the shooting down of a Malaysian airliner is blacked out.

And again, supposedly liberal media are the censors. Citing no facts, no evidence, one journalist identified a pro-Russian leader in Ukraine as the man who shot down the airliner. This man, he wrote, was known as The Demon. He was a scary man who frightened the journalist. That was the evidence.

Many in the western media have worked hard to present the ethnic Russian population of Ukraine as outsiders in their own country, almost never as Ukrainians seeking a federation within Ukraine and as Ukrainian citizens resisting a foreign-orchestrated coup against their elected government.

What the Russian president has to say is of no consequence; he is a pantomime villain who can be abused with impunity. An American general who heads Nato and is straight out of Dr. Strangelove – one General Breedlove – routinely claims Russian invasions without a shred of visual evidence. His impersonation of Stanley Kubrick's General Jack D. Ripper is pitch perfect.

Forty thousand Ruskies were massing on the border, according to Breedlove. That was good enough for the *New York Times*,

the *Washington Post* and the *Observer* – the latter having previously distinguished itself with lies and fabrications that backed Blair's invasion of Iraq, as its former reporter, David Rose, revealed.

There is almost the *joi d'esprit* of a class reunion. The drum-beaters of the *Washington Post* are the very same editorial writers who declared the existence of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction to be "hard facts".

"If you wonder," wrote Robert Parry, "how the world could stumble into world war three – much as it did into world war one a century ago – all you need to do is look at the madness that has enveloped virtually the entire US political/media structure over Ukraine where a false narrative of white hats versus black hats took hold early and has proved impervious to facts or reason."

Parry, the journalist who revealed Iran-Contra, is one of the few who investigate the central role of the media in this "game of chicken", as the Russian foreign minister called it. But is it a game? As I write this, the US Congress votes on Resolution 758 which, in a nutshell, says: "Let's get ready for war with Russia."

In the 19th century, the writer Alexander Herzen described secular liberalism as "the final religion, though its church is not of the other world but of this". Today, this divine right is far more violent and dangerous than anything the Muslim world throws up, though perhaps its greatest triumph is the illusion of free and open information.

In the news, whole countries are made to disappear. Saudi Arabia, the source of extremism and western-backed terror, is not a story, except when it drives down the price of oil. Yemen has endured twelve years of American drone attacks. Who knows? Who cares?

In 2009, the University of the West of England published the results of a ten-year study of the BBC's coverage of Venezuela. Of 304 broadcast reports, only three men-

An American general who heads Nato and is straight out of Dr. Strangelove – one General Breedlove – routinely claims Russian invasions without a shred of visual evidence

WHOSE TRUTH?

I doubt that anyone paid the *Washington Post* and many other media outlets to accuse Edward Snowden of aiding terrorism

tioned any of the positive policies introduced by the government of Hugo Chavez. The greatest literacy programme in human history received barely a passing reference.

In Europe and the United States, millions of readers and viewers know next to nothing about the remarkable, life-giving changes implemented in Latin America, many of them inspired by Chavez. Like the BBC, the reports of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian* and the rest of the respectable western media were notoriously in bad faith. Chavez was mocked even on his deathbed. How is this explained, I wonder, in schools of journalism?

Why are millions of people in Britain are persuaded that a collective punishment called “austerity” is necessary?

Following the economic crash in 2008, a rotten system was exposed. For a split second the banks were lined up as crooks with obligations to the public they had betrayed.

But within a few months – apart from a few stones lobbed over excessive corporate “bonuses” – the message changed. The mugshots of guilty bankers vanished from the tabloids and something called “austerity” became the burden of millions of ordinary people. Was there ever a sleight of hand as brazen?

Today, many of the premises of civilised life in Britain are being dismantled in order to pay back a fraudulent debt – the debt of crooks. The “austerity” cuts are said to be £83 billion. That’s almost exactly the amount of tax avoided by the same banks and by corporations like Amazon and Murdoch’s News UK. Moreover, the crooked banks are given an annual subsidy of £100bn in free insurance and guarantees – a figure that would fund the entire National Health Service.

The economic crisis is pure propaganda. Extreme policies now rule Britain, the United States, much of Europe, Canada and Australia. Who is standing up for the majority? Who is telling their story? Who’s keeping record straight? Isn’t that what journalists are meant to do?

In 1977, Carl Bernstein, of Watergate fame, revealed that more than 400 journalists and news executives worked for the CIA. They included journalists from the *New York Times*, *Time* and the TV networks. In 1991, Richard Norton Taylor of the *Guardian* revealed something similar in this country.

None of this is necessary today. I doubt that anyone paid the *Washington Post* and many other media outlets to accuse Edward Snowden of aiding terrorism. I doubt that anyone pays those who routinely smear Julian Assange – though other rewards can be plentiful.

It’s clear to me that the main reason Assange has attracted such venom, spite and jealousy is that WikiLeaks tore down the facade of a corrupt political elite held aloft by journalists. In heralding an extraordinary era of disclosure, Assange made enemies by illuminating and shaming the media’s gatekeepers, not least on the newspaper that published and appropriated his great scoop. He became not only a target, but a golden goose.

Lucrative book and Hollywood movie deals were struck and media careers launched or kick-started on the back of WikiLeaks and its founder. People have made big money, while WikiLeaks has struggled to survive.

None of this was mentioned in Stockholm on 1 December when the editor of the *Guardian*, Alan Rusbridger, shared with Edward Snowden the Right Livelihood Award, known as the alternative Nobel Peace Prize. What was shocking about this event was that Assange and WikiLeaks were air-brushed. They didn’t exist. They were unpeople. No one spoke up for the man who pioneered digital whistleblowing and handed the *Guardian* one of the greatest scoops in history. Moreover, it was Assange and his WikiLeaks team who effectively – and brilliantly – rescued Edward Snowden in Hong Kong and sped him to safety. Not a word.

What made this censorship by omission so ironic and poignant and disgraceful was

WHOSE TRUTH?

that the ceremony was held in the Swedish parliament – whose craven silence on the Assange case has colluded with a grotesque miscarriage of justice in Stockholm.

“When the truth is replaced by silence,” said the Soviet dissident Yevtushenko, “the silence is a lie.”

It’s this kind of silence we journalists need to break. We need to look in the mirror. We need to call to account an unaccountable media that services power and a psychosis that threatens world war.

In the 18th century, Edmund Burke described the role of the press as a Fourth Estate checking the powerful. Was that ever true? It certainly doesn’t wash any more. What we need is a Fifth Estate: a journalism that monitors, deconstructs and counters propaganda and teaches the young to be agents of people, not power. We need what

the Russians called perestroika – an insurrection of subjugated knowledge. I would call it real journalism.

It’s 100 years since the First World War. Reporters then were rewarded and knighted for their silence and collusion. At the height of the slaughter, British prime minister David Lloyd George confided in C.P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*: “If people really knew [the truth] the war would be stopped tomorrow, but of course they don’t know and can’t know.”

It’s time they knew.

CT

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This article is a transcript of John Pilger’s address to the Logan Symposium, “Building an Alliance Against Secrecy, Surveillance & Censorship”, organised by the Centre for Investigative Journalism, London, on 5-7 December, 2014.

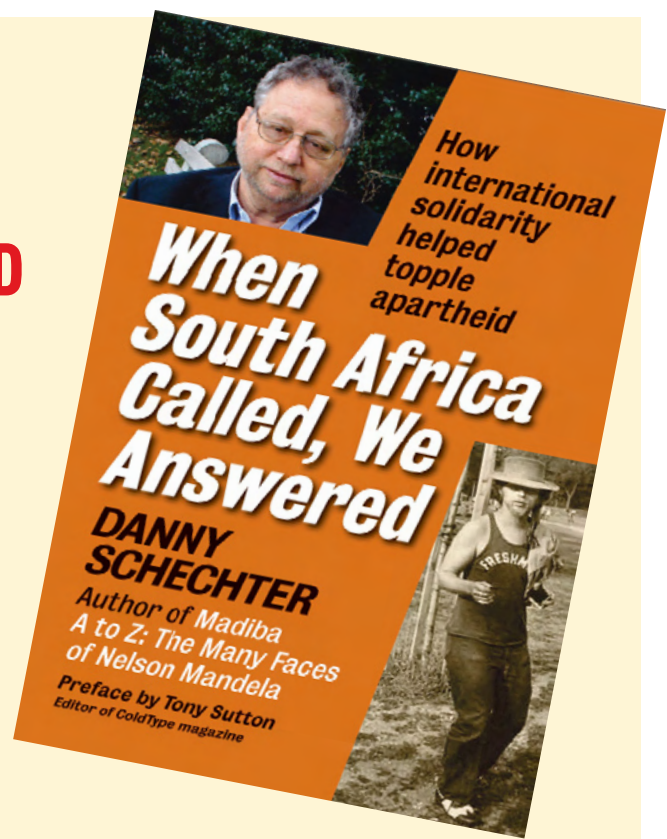
John Pilger is now ‘crowd funding’ his latest movie, “The Coming War”, at <http://indiegogo.com/projects/john-pilger-the-coming-war-documentary>

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The Wild Wild East

Dougie Wallace finds chaos in a London suburb where reality merges into scenes of crazy fantasy

Text by **Michael Smith**

Messy, absurd, hilarious, and full to the brim with the joy of being alive on a sunny weekend in Shoreditch, the pictures in Dougie Wallace's new book, "Shoreditch Wild Life," fizz with the throbbing life-force of this peculiar square mile of East London. Big black blokes dressed head to pointy toe in gold lame, a girl squatting in cowboy boots with a plastic pint glass, who has the look of someone who's not quite sure what party she's at anymore, wasted women who look like the best kind of trouble, and all the while there's a crashed car upside down in the street while the party gets madder all around it: in short, total fucking chaos, a chaos I've never seen so condensed into one square mile anywhere else. I didn't know people lived like this before I moved to Shoreditch as a young man, and now, all these years later, as somebody who's much more likely to be walking his dog round the park than stuck five hours into a drinking session come Saturday evening, I still can't quite believe they do.

As much as he captures the mad night out, Dougie also gets the morning after – specifically, the equally off-kilter, spontaneous street theatre of Brick Lane market. Is the girl striking a pose for a fashion shoot or just for the passers



The State History Museum in
Moshkov's check
out of displays
featuring Lenin,
Marx, and the
whole communist
party



IN THE FRAME



by? What, really, is the difference anyhow? These streets are one big fashion parade. They feel like a slightly demented parallel reality, a pocket of weirdness and colour, the Ditch beyond the Roman wall of the City where all the tat and f otsam Shore up, the no-man's-land where everything mad and messy collides: roll up, roll up, come and get your plastic pink f amingoes, two for the price of one! There's lots of pink in these photos, and lots of gold lame: glamour on the cheap, creating glamour out of nothing, which says a lot about the spirit of Shoreditch.

Dougie's work is often about mismatches and juxtapositions: the head-on collision of the trendies and the old East End market traders, a car crash of different sensibilities that don't belong together, an old bloke selling stuff off his stall with a motorbike helmet on, surrounded by stolen bikes and trendy graffiti, pensioners with walking sticks in 90s rave clothes, horrified





All human life is here and then some . . . photos from Dougie Wallace's book "Shoreditch Wild Life" (Hoxton Mini Press)

IN THE FRAME



old Bangladeshi ladies bemused by the rake-thin young chap at a bus stop wearing the bindi and little Indian dress. Ultimately, I think, “Shoreditch Wild Life” is about the adventure of getting lost in cities: the strangeness of looking at the streets, the kaleidoscope bloom of the f lower market, a sensory overload, a world far too complex and full of difference to possibly understand, especially if you’re a bit all over the shop come Sunday morning.

For a moment it seems as if a poster of a lady in a pimped-up sports car miraculously comes to life, and she steps out onto streets strewn with cigarette multi-packs and cardboard boxes. Fantasy merges with reality, just as it probably did for Dougie one bleary-eyed Sunday morning, all the wrong connections joining up into wonderful, impossible scenes, at least for the brief split-second of a photograph. **CT**

● See more of Dougie Wallace’s photographs at <http://dougiewallace.com>





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Clashing on torture

Ray McGovern comes to-face with the ex-House Intelligence chief and refuses to let him get away with his defence of torture

I had been trying hard to decode for the TV audience the bull-excrement coming from Hoekstra and others quoted on the program

When you get an opportunity like this, don't fall back – I heard my Irish grandmother telling me as I took my place at the table to discuss the mid-December report on US torture with a former congressional committee chairman whose job it was to prevent such torture.

Almost rubbing shoulders with me on my right was former House Intelligence Committee chair (2004-2007) Pete Hoekstra, a Republican from Michigan. Central China TV had asked both of us to address the findings of the Senate Intelligence Committee report on CIA torture. I said yes, of course, since I was highly interested in how Hoekstra, with his front seat for the saga of “Enhanced Interrogation Techniques,” would try to ‘splain it all.

Here was a unique chance to publicly confront a malleable, moral dwarf who had been in a uniquely powerful position to end the torture. The moment was also an odd one, for Hoekstra seemed oblivious to his gross misfeasance and dereliction of duty. Or how his behavior might look to non-torture aficionados.

Hoekstra took over the House intelligence “oversight” committee in 2004 when former chair, Porter Goss, a Republican from Florida, was picked as the perfect – as in fully-briefed-and-complicit – functionary to become director of the CIA, replacing “slam-

dunk” George Tenet. Tenet left in disgrace in July 2004, still vainly seeking those notional Iraqi “weapons of mass destruction”.

Early in December, amid the unfolding torture scandal, Hoekstra went on CCTV America's daily talk show, “The Heat,” to offer a heated defense of what he insisted on still calling “enhanced interrogation techniques.” My opportunity for a blunt exchange with him over exactly what the House Intelligence Committee knew came near the end of the show.

I had already been trying hard to decode for the TV audience the bull-excrement coming from Hoekstra and others quoted on the program. At one point, as luck would have it, the moderator asked me about the CIA's fear-driven argument that the “urgency” of preventing additional terrorist attacks justified short-cuts like torture.

A hat tip here to my VIPS colleague Larry Johnson, who had called my attention earlier that day to the actual time sequence involving the capture and interrogation of detainee Abu Zubaydah, noting that if that scenario reflected “time-urgency,” we are all in serious trouble.

After FBI interrogators, using the traditional rapport-building approach to Abu Zubaydah, extracted a good deal of useful information from him in April 2002, Washington (for reasons not yet fully clear) ordered the FBI to hand him to CIA officials. They

kept him in solitary confinement, asking him no questions, from mid-June until August 4, 2002, giving time for torture-friendly lawyers in Washington to come up with legal justifications to “authorize” waterboarding and other abusive techniques. Zubaydah was then waterboarded 83 times, yielding no useful intelligence.

Clashing with Hoekstra

As the program neared its end, the host turned back to me and asked me to respond to former Vice President Dick Cheney’s ardent defense of the torture program. I focused my criticism on Cheney as the “eminence grise” behind the Bush administration plunge into the “dark side.”

But I also saw an opportunity to press Hoekstra on his knowledge and complicity, though I framed my question to give him an out on direct knowledge about the grisly torture techniques, from waterboarding and hanging people from ceilings to forced nudity and “rectal rehydration.”

“I don’t know if he [Cheney] checked with you, Congressman Hoekstra, he really should have, but I’m amazed if you were either unaware of these things or whether you condoned them,” I said, addressing Hoekstra only inches away.

“I think I’ve been very open,” Hoekstra responded, indicating that he did know and did approve.

McGovern: “You condoned them. My God!”

Hoekstra: “I explained this to you. Members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats, leadership on both sides, Gang of Eight ...”

McGovern: “Thought that torture was okay?”

Hoekstra: “Thought that the enhanced interrogation techniques ...

McGovern: “That’s torture.”

Hoekstra: “... were appropriate.”

McGovern: “Let’s not use these sobriquets. This was torture.”

Hoekstra: “No, the Justice Department

... characterized them as legal. To say that you were aghast that we heard, no.”

McGovern: “I’m aghast that you were briefed on it. You’re supposed to be overseeing these things, you should stop these things. ... You were co-opted.”

Hoekstra: “No, we weren’t. Republicans and Democrats were fully briefed on these programs and we agreed with them.”

I still thought I’d give the former congressman a path out of the pro-torture corner that he was painting himself into, by suggesting that he might be simply embarrassed that he had been misled by the CIA and the Bush administration, that he had been kept in the dark about the darkest of the dark side, but Hoekstra just kept painting.

McGovern: “You were lied to and you’re ashamed to admit that you were lied to.”

Hoekstra: “I’m not ashamed that I was lied to. I’m admitting that these programs were briefed to us. I’ve talked to my staff going back and said after this ‘revelation’ came out ...how much of what is in this Dianne Feinstein report, this partisan report, this Democrat report, how much did we know? Ninety to 95 percent.”

McGovern: “Oh, my God! What a terrible admission! Aren’t you ashamed?”

Hoekstra: “No, I’m not ashamed.”

McGovern: “My God!”

Then, Hoekstra tried to suggest that I was being disloyal to my former colleagues at the CIA as if the few senior officials who pushed for the torture and the few – mostly contractors – who carried it out were representative of most CIA personnel among whom I had served for 27 years. Hoekstra was waving a red flag, so I played the bull, forsaking the usually obligatory deference and politeness. I let him have it.

Hoekstra: “I reached a different conclusion as did many of your colleagues at the CIA ...”

I still thought I’d give the former congressman a path out of the pro-torture corner that he was painting himself into, by suggesting that he might be simply embarrassed that he had been misled by the CIA and the Bush administration

CLASH OF FUNDAMENTALS

For some reason, US media remain uninterested in my blunt commentary on the subject of torture

McGovern: “These are not my colleagues! These are thugs hired by Dick Cheney!”

Hoekstra: “These are people you walked away from. These are heroes for America...”

McGovern: “These are thugs headed by Dick Cheney!”

Hoekstra: “...who are protecting America.”

That was when the host politely brought the program to a conclusion.

Limited US viewing

Few Americans are likely to be among those who saw “The Heat” on December 11, 2014, or will see it on YouTube. But there is some consolation in the claim that, according to CCTV, a billion Chinese-speakers normally watch the dubbed-into-Mandarin version of this program, and not only in China. Even if the actual number is only half that, well, that will amount to about 500,000 viewers more than the audience in the United States. Some solace.

Since December 9, when the Senate report was released, I also have been interviewed on Canadian TV, Aljazeera, Russian TV, Sky News (UK), two taped Russian prime-time Sunday evening TV programs, Radio Scotland (BBC), Radio New Zealand, and three Radio Pacifica programs. Some of the above hosted me as many as four times, and I have had to turn down, or refer to others, additional invitations (yes, all of these from abroad, as well).

For some reason, US media remain uninterested in my blunt commentary on the subject of torture. As the CCTV interview indicated, I cannot be counted on to be pleasant when discussing torture, particularly with those who could have, and should have, prevented it.

Which reminds me that after my four-minute impromptu debate with Donald Rumsfeld in Atlanta on May 4, 2006, I was asked by CNN’s Paula Zahn, “How long have you had this personal animus toward the Secretary of Defense? And why did you fol-

low him all the way down to Atlanta?”

No personal animus, I could honestly explain to Paula; I just have this thing about folks who start wars of aggression and enable torture (the sobriquet “enhanced interrogation techniques” was not put into the public lexicon until four months later).

As for following Rumsfeld “all the way down to Atlanta,” I explained that I had gotten to Atlanta the day before – very pleased to have been honored with the ACLU’s National Civil Liberties Award (won the previous year by Coretta Scott King). The chance to attend Rumsfeld’s speech was just a bonus.

But I must confess. I do have a personal beef with Hoekstra, who, in 2006, pulled one of the dirtiest tricks I ever encountered personally. Without telling other members of the House Intelligence Committee, he added to the draft Intelligence Authorization Act for FY’07 (HR5020) a provision enabling the government to strip intelligence veterans of their government pensions. HR5020 passed the full House, but Congress opted instead for a continuing resolution.

So maybe it is more a case of Hoekstra having some animus toward my veteran intelligence colleagues and me, who had been exposing the torture overlooked (if not blessed) by his committee. His attempt to make revoking our pensions legal came shortly after March 2, 2006, when – as a matter of conscience in protest against torture – I went to his House office and returned the Intelligence Commendation Medallion given me at retirement for “especially meritorious service,” explaining “I do not want to be associated, however remotely, with an agency engaged in torture.”

On December 11, after time ran out for “The Heat,” I took the opportunity to let Hoekstra know very directly that we were very much aware of his low-life move against us.

Earlier, when the CCTV moderator, in in-

roducing me, had noted that I had returned my Intelligence Commendation Medallion over the issue of CIA torture, I was sorely tempted to ask Hoekstra why he sent me neither acknowledgment nor reply to my letter. But I quickly decided that it would likely be easier – and far more important – to call him to task on his unconscionable misfeasance in condoning torture itself, than on the dirty trick he almost succeeded in pulling on my former intelligence officers and me.

So I waited until we ran out of time to tell him we are aware of what he had tried to do and what we thought of it, and suggested that the sooner he went back to Michigan the better it would be for honest people in Washington.

Letter to Hoekstra

Below is the letter I gave Hoekstra in April 2006. Actually, I had to give it to his aides; there were indications that he was hiding in his inner office, but they said he was not. Perhaps he was at CIA being briefed on “Enhanced Interrogation Techniques.”

March 2, 2006

Dear Congressman Hoekstra:

As a matter of conscience I am returning the Intelligence Commendation Award medallion given me for “especially commendable service” during my 27-year career in CIA. The issue is torture, which inhabits the same category as rape and slavery — intrinsically evil. I do not wish to be associated, however remotely, with an agency engaged in torture.

Reports in recent years that CIA personnel were torturing detainees were highly disturbing. Confirmation of a sort came last fall, when CIA Director Porter Goss and Dick Cheney – dubbed by the Washington Post “Vice President for Torture” – descended on Sen. John McCain to demand that the CIA be exempted from his amendment’s ban on torture. Subsequent reports implicated agency personnel in several cases of prisoner abuse

in Iraq, including a few in which detainees died during interrogation.

The obeisance of CIA directors George Tenet and Porter Goss in heeding illegal White House directives has done irreparable harm to the CIA and the country – not to mention those tortured and killed. That you, as Chair of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, show more deference to the White House than dedication to your oversight responsibilities under the Constitution is another profound disappointment. How can you and your counterpart, Sen. Pat Roberts, turn a blind eye to torture – letting some people get away, literally, with murder – and square that with your conscience?

If German officials who were ordered to do such things in the 1930s had spoken out early and loudly enough, the German people might have been alerted to the atrocities being perpetrated in their name and tried harder to stop them. When my grandchildren ask, “What did you do, Grandpa, to stop the torture,” I want to be able to tell them that I tried to honor my oath, taken both as an Army officer and an intelligence officer, to defend the Constitution of the United States – and that I not only spoke out strongly against the torture, but also sought a symbolic way to dissociate myself from it.

We Americans have become accustomed to letting our institutions do our sinning for us. I abhor the corruption of the CIA in the past several years, believe it to be beyond repair, and do not want my name on any medallion associated with it. Please destroy this one.

Yours truly,
Ray McGovern

CT

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Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served as an Army Infantry/Intelligence officer and then as a CIA analyst for a total of 30 years, and is now a member of the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)

I waited until we ran out of time to tell him we are aware of what he had tried to do and what we thought of it, and suggested that the sooner he went back to Michigan the better it would be for honest people in Washington

Why one boss isn't worth 175 employees

Michael Meacher tells Britain's Parliament why it's time for a law limiting the excesses of corporate pay

Official statistics show that average weekly pay in June this year was £477, while the average annual take-home remuneration among the FTSE 100 chief executives was £83,000 a week

I moved a motion on the floor of the [British] House of Commons on November 27 arguing that the near-quadrupling of the gap between top and bottom ratios should be drastically reduced:

Michael Meacher (Oldham West and Royton, Labour)

I beg to move,

That this House calls on the Government to set guideline targets for remuneration which over time reduce the ratio between top and bottom incomes in large organisations to no more than 50 to 1.

Even at this rather late hour, when the first debate would normally be drawing to a close, I am nevertheless grateful to the Backbench Business Committee for granting this debate on inequality – not least because the excesses of extreme inequality are increasingly seen as a serious, moral, economic and social problem, yet the issue has not received the attention in this House that it clearly deserves.

It is worth saying at the outset that concern over this matter is not the preserve of the political left. In this past month, Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, and Janet Yellen, the chair of the US Federal Reserve, have both argued that the enormous growth in inequality over the past few decades was not only wrong morally but was having increasingly baleful economic con-

sequences. Then there were the strictures of Christine Lagarde, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, arguing that the current explosion of inequality was now acting as a brake on growth. They all say that inequality fosters fear, creates too much demand for credit to compensate for squeezed living standards, drives asset price bubbles, catalyses financial instability, and, by displacing too much risk on those who cannot bear it, undermines the legitimacy of capitalism.

The facts on ballooning inequality are broadly well understood. Official statistics show that average weekly pay in June this year was £477, while the average annual take-home remuneration among the FTSE 100 chief executives was £4.3 million, or £83,000 a week. The ratio between their remuneration and the remuneration of the average UK worker is therefore about 175:1. That needs to be put into perspective. In 1998, according to the High Pay Centre think-tank, a FTSE 100 boss was typically paid 47 times more than their workers. In other words, in just 16 years, the gap between top incomes and the average wage has nearly quadrupled. The obvious question then is: is all this justified? In fact, there is rather little correlation between the surge in executive remuneration and company performance; sometimes, there is even a negative correlation.

The director of the High Pay Centre, Deborah Hargreaves, explains the phenomenon. She says:

“The only reason why their pay has increased so rapidly compared to their employees is that they are able to get away with it.”

They are able to get away with it largely because of the structural divide in the way in which pay is determined in this country. For manual workers, it is by collective bargaining. That has dramatically declined in the past 30 years, leading to a very sharp fall in the share of wages in GDP from 65% to about 53%. For white-collar workers, it is by private contracts, which are laid down by the employers. But for chief executives in the boardroom, it is by remuneration committees, specifically chosen by the board itself, which largely operate on the principle of “you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.” That is not a system that carries credibility across the whole spectrum of the work force.

One might even question why such elaborate devices are needed for top executives to secure a maximum uplift in pay, since one would have thought that £80,000 a week was far beyond what is necessary for the most comfortable lifestyle. Indeed, one could reduce a £2.5 million income by almost 95% and the recipient would still be in the top 1% of all earners in the UK. That is a staggering fact.

Are incomes 10 or 20 times more than the earnings of those already considered very, very rich strictly necessary? The only answer seems to be that these turbo-charged salaries have almost nothing to do with performance and everything to do with chief executive officers keeping up with each other in a status race. In other words, rather as in the end of the Victorian period, which we are getting closer to now, the very rich constantly demand yet more wealth to show it off in order to demonstrate where they stand in the pecking order.

Does that matter? The apologists for in-

equality have always traditionally argued that it does not because it does no harm to other people. Peter Mandelson notoriously argued that new Labour was “intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich”.

But he did add “as long as they pay their taxes.”

That was partly on the grounds that wealth would then trickle down to everyone else, but it has not trickled down; it has gushed up as if from a geyser. According to the Sunday Times rich list, the richest 1,000 persons in this country – just 0.003% of the adult population – have doubled their collective wealth in the six years since the crash, from a staggering £250 billion to more than £500 billion. Moreover, that does harm other people. It leads to smouldering resentment, which can at times explode if triggered by a sudden event, such as the five days of rioting after Mark Duggan was shot in August 2011. It undermines trust and solidarity and it weakens the social fabric of communities. Above all, it has been shown unequivocally by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett in “The Spirit Level” that across all countries – it is not just the UK – the greater the inequality, the greater the degree of social pathology in terms of homicide levels, crime and violence, mental illness, imprisonment, teenage pregnancies, obesity, maths and literary educational scores, life expectancy, infant mortality and many others.

It is not just the poor who suffer, although they certainly suffer the most; those impacts extend widely across the whole society. It is not just the social impacts of inequality that damage society, but the economic ones as well. It weakens aggregate demand, which is serious at times like the present when all the other potential sources of demand – Government expenditure, business investment and net exports – are negative.

Andy Haldane, the chief economist at the Bank of England, recently summed up the economic impacts of excessive inequality. He said that “there is rising evidence

One could reduce a £2.5 million income by almost 95% and the recipient would still be in the top 1% of all earners in the UK

AGAINST PLUTOCRACY / 2

Corporate power and the greed and self-interest that go with it have increased dramatically over the past three decades and they are still increasing

that extreme inequality harms, durably and significantly, the stability of the financial system and growth in the economy. It slows development of the human, social and physical capital necessary for raising living standards and improving wellbeing. That penny is starting to drop among policymakers and politicians.”

I hope that his last comment was right.

What should be done? The terms of the motion suggest that the Government should set guidelines for remuneration that, over time, reduce the ratio between top and bottom incomes in large organisations to no more than 50:1. That would still allow top incomes to reach nearly £24,000 a week or £1.25 million a year. I think that that is justified on two grounds. First, in the period when capitalism flourished most in the UK – that is, the three decades after the war – the ratio was 40:1 or less. Secondly, the most successful dynamic economies with the highest long-term growth figures and the greatest social cohesion in the past 40 years – I am thinking of Japan up to the 1990s, the east Asian tiger economies, Sweden, Norway and Singapore, among others – all had a ratio of less than 50:1.

Of course, there are other ways of moving towards the same objective. The Business Secretary introduced new regulations that became operative this year, empowering shareholders with a binding veto over company executive pay policy. Despite his good intentions and the shareholder spring that peaked in 2012, that has not ever been called on, partly because the holdings and voting rights on pay are controlled by very wealthy fund managers and the work force have no say in the process at all. That suggests that the structure of incentives and

pressures needs to be recalibrated.

I have already quoted Deborah Hargreaves’s remark that executive pay soars because they can get away with it. Corporate power and the greed and self-interest that go with it have increased dramatically over the past three decades and they are still increasing. That needs to be redressed. There are several measures that could help. One is the mandatory publication of company pay ratios, as is already operated by John Lewis, where the ratio is 75:1, and TSB bank, where it is 65:1. Another would be to strengthen the coverage of trade union collective bargaining, which has shrunk dramatically over the past 30 years from 82% to a wholly inadequate 23%.

A further measure would be to increase the prevalence of work-force-wide profit sharing. In my view, the most effective mechanism would be the introduction in all large companies of what I would call an enterprise council, made up of representatives of all the main grades of employees and meeting at least once a year to open up the books, look at all the company’s activities, consider how failures could be corrected and performance improved, think about the financial implications of depreciation, investment, stock control, dividends and so on and then examine the bids for pay increases across the company over the next year. That would strengthen the cohesion and solidarity of the company, greatly improve morale and productivity and almost certainly enhance profitability. I commend that, and all the other measures I have proposed, to the House. **CT**

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Michael Meacher is the Labour Party MP for Oldham West and Roysen in England.

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Israel – America’s biggest frenemy

The Jewish State in the Levant is a burden we shouldn’t have to bear, writes **Justin Raimondo**

On November 24, 2014, the deadline for the closing of a deal with Iran regarding their nuclear program, no one should have been surprised that Israel was marking this deadline with a threat to attack Iran regardless of the outcome of the negotiations. As the *Jerusalem Post* reported on its front page:

“Israel has issued a stark, public warning to its allies with a clear argument: Current proposals guarantee the perpetuation of a crisis, backing Israel into a corner from which military force against Iran provides the only logical exit.”

This is a lie, and is widely recognized as such: the Israelis don’t have the military capacity to take out all the Iranian nuclear sites without American assistance. Aside from that, however, they never attack those capable of hitting back in any significant way, so we can write off this latest threat as just so much kvetching. Yet one has to wonder: is this the way an ally is supposed to act – never mind one that we enjoy a purported “special relationship” with?

The reality is that Israel is our biggest frenemy.

For decades the Israelis have lived off our largesse without having to offer anything of value in return – unless Israeli interference in American politics is considered of value. We’ve handed them over \$3 billion a year in tribute, stood by while they subjected their

Palestinian helots to conditions not seen since South Africa’s apartheid, and smiled tolerantly, as one would at an obstreperous child, while they noisily spat in our faces at every opportunity. And what have we got in return? Insults, interference, and outright threats – not to mention one of the most effective (and obnoxious) spying operations conducted on our soil by a foreign power.

For years, the War Party has been accusing Tehran of running a secret nuclear weapons program, although no convincing evidence of this has ever been produced. The Israelis and their international assets – notably the MEK terrorist group – have done their best to doctor up convincing forgeries, albeit to no avail. They’ve run all kinds of interference in order to prevent the normalization of US-Iranian relations. Their goal: to ensure that Israel’s regional monopoly on nuclear weapons remains intact.

Aside from North Korea, Israel is the only nuclear power that has managed to get away with thumbing its nose at the international community over this issue. The Iranians submitting themselves to a strict inspections regime will doubtless turn the world’s attention to the weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Israel’s leadership – a political class increasingly seen as extremist by outsiders. Steadfastly refusing to sign the Nonproliferation Treaty, along with North Korea, the Israelis have managed

Aside from North Korea, Israel is the only nuclear power that has managed to get away with thumbing its nose at the international community over this issue

FRIENDS LIKE THESE

The Israelis think they can get away with torturing the Palestinians, provoking endless wars, and engaging in the kind of blatant racism that gets Hungary sanctioned as an “illiberal” state

to maintain what is referred to as “nuclear ambiguity,” but there is absolutely nothing ambiguous about the destructive power of their arsenal.

“Ambiguity” is not a concept that applies to Israel these days. There’s no doubt about where they stand – or what they are becoming. Their latest shtick: taking out the part about being a democracy in their Basic Law, and putting in “no Arabs need apply.” Or, as the *Age* puts it: “

“The proposal would mean Israel would no longer be defined in its Basic Laws as ‘Jewish and democratic’ but instead as ‘the national homeland of the Jewish people.’”

What the great Israeli classical liberal Yeshayahu Leibowitz rightly called the “Judeo-Nazi” trend in that country’s political life has now come to the forefront: they aren’t pretending to be the Gallant Little Democracy of the Middle East any more. Nope, they’re coming out of the closet as ethno-religious fanatics, just like their opposite numbers a few kilometers away in the Islamic State. In tandem with the new law, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced the introduction of legislation stripping “anti-Israel” Arab activists of their Israeli citizenship, along with their entire families. And so the Jewish State of Israel in the Levant – JSIL – is born.

In the past, the Israel lobby has offered a number of arguments in favor of maintaining the US-Israeli “special relationship.” And while strategic military and geopolitical factors were a big part of their routine during the cold war era, with the collapse of communism this became less important and so a new party line was trotted out: the claim that we share important values with the Israelis, especially those associated with liberal democracy, i.e. tolerance, diversity, etc. Yet the truth of the matter is that Israel is no longer a liberal democracy: indeed, as they tighten the screws on their Palestinian untermenschen, the Jewish State in the Levant is becoming the mirror image of its authoritarian Arab neighbors.

In politics as in real estate, the dominant factor is location, location, location. In choosing the Middle East as the site of their “Jewish nation,” the early Zionists ensured that their state would eventually lose touch with its European roots and become just another Oriental despotism. The Jewish settlers are said to have transformed the land, but in reality the opposite occurred: the land transformed them.

The Israelis think they are immune from condemnation: they think they can get away with torturing the Palestinians, provoking endless wars, and engaging in the kind of blatant racism that gets Hungary sanctioned as an “illiberal” state. And given the behavior of the political class in America and the West, they have every reason to think this kind of “Israeli exceptionalism” is going to hold, but they are living inside an illusion.

The Israel lobby is losing its grip: the American people – previously inclined to support Israel no matter what – show signs of waking up to the danger posed by our Israel-centric foreign policy. In Europe, where the Israel lobby has always been weaker, they are in real trouble. The Israelis’ recent slaughter in Gaza has done much to open the eyes of a new generation to real the nature of the Jewish State in the Levant. That’s why the boycott and divestment campaign aimed at Israel is taking hold, despite the frantic efforts of Israel’s amen corner to smear and even outlaw it. (Yes, the illiberal policies of the Jewish State in the Levant are even seeping into the United States – a revolting prospect, indeed.)

Israel today is a tyranny on the order of the old South Africa, with one added factor: they are armed with nuclear weapons. As such, the Israelis represent a threat to the peace of the world, one far more dangerous than Iran will ever be.

Their pernicious influence on American politics is the biggest arrow in the War Party’s quiver. In the end, as Americans rebel against the regime of perpetual war, this will be their undoing. **CT**

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World of fantasy

An excerpt from *Only One Thing Can Save Us: Why America Needs A New Kind Of Labor Movement*, the new book by **Thomas Geoghegan**

I ndeed, as I sit here at my desk, I'm still getting over the shock. At last, in my old age, I saw a true strike, big and breathless, right in front of my eyes, right in my hometown. For ten days in September 2012, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) was on strike, and it was covered around the world. Shortly after it ended, I had lunch with a friend, a scholarly professor, who gave an impartial thoughtful analysis.

"Well," I said, "what did you think of the strike?"

"I loved the strike!" he said.

See? That's thoughtful. And that's what I thought: I loved the strike! Before, I'd been wondering if I'd ever see one again.

Of course, a strike is a risky thing, and God knows, in my youth as a lawyer for the United Mine Workers, I saw many of them go awry, but . . . it's still hard to imagine a labor movement without them.

Nunc dimittis, as Simeon says in the Gospel – although, unlike him, I'd like to stick around.

Believe me, I had nothing to do with this strike and had no role in the bargaining. I didn't even get one of those 26,000 red T-shirts:

one for every striker. I was just a bystander.

But for the previous two years, somewhat to my surprise, I had been one of the lawyers for the CTU. Our little firm filed the CTU's suit in federal court to stop teachers from being not just "laid off" but in effect fired, where they had no right of recall of any kind. Do you think it's hard to get rid of a tenured teacher?

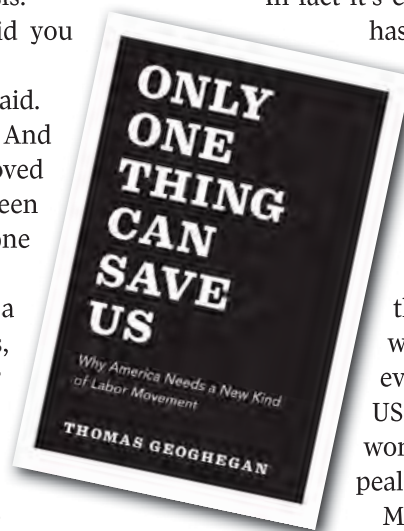
In fact it's easy. The board of education has been laying off thousands of teachers – some of the very best in the system – and bringing in raw rookies off the street to fill positions that the laid off teachers could fill.

Two years ago, to stop these effective firings, we went to court for the CTU. We even won an injunction in the US district court, and then we won again in the US court of appeals. But in the end we lost.

Most of these teachers, by the way, had "excellent" and "superior" evaluations. Some were really the elite of the elite – teachers who mentored other teachers. Why would they get rid of the best teachers and bring in new hires off the street?

Money, of course, but it was

The board of education has been laying off thousands of teachers – some of the very best in the system – and bringing in raw rookies off the street to fill positions that the laid off teachers could fill



**ONLY ONE THING
CAN SAVE US**

Why America Needs
a New Form Of Labor
Movement

Thomas Geoghegan

The New Press

\$ 25.95

The Sunday night before the strike I had worried, since I'm a lawyer, and they are my clients, and I'm supposed to worry

also to break the CTU, or to make clear to every teacher that she could be tossed out at any time.

Oh, I wish we'd won that case!

And, now disgusted, the teachers – the clients I had failed – were on strike. Of course, the right to recall was only one of many issues. The strike really arose from a feeling that the mayor and his liberal billionaire friends wanted to fire teachers en masse and privatize the public schools.

In that sense, it was a political strike, like the strikes that fill up the streets in Paris. And that's why people like me said, "I love the strike." We loved the strike because it was giving the finger to Rahm Emanuel, Obama, the whole managerial culture they represent: Bill Gates, Jamie Dimon, Penny Pritzker, Bain Capital, Teach for America, and that whole bunch.

Stephen Lerner of the SEIU argues that the only strikes that work now, like the 2012 Houston janitors' strike, are political strikes, which are not just for the strikers but for the entire community.

Well, the CTU strike was a brilliant political strike, and it worked because it was not simply a strike for more money, tenure, or a better evaluation system. It worked because a lot of people – above all, parents who had kids in the public schools – saw it as a strike in favor of good old-fashioned neighborhood public schools.

A few days after the strike, I dropped in for dinner at Tre Kronor, a little offbeat Swedish restaurant, and tacked up on the billboard under the map of Sweden there was a message from the CTU to all the diners: "Thank you for supporting the strike."

It was assumed the diners supported the strike, and they probably did. That was the moment I really knew the CTU had won.

The Sunday night before the strike I had worried, since I'm a lawyer, and they are my clients, and I'm supposed to worry. Ah . . . a strike? But Monday morning I woke up and walked past Blaine Elementary School and

then Lake View High School, and it was a glorious late-September morning. I took my morning walk, and I saw all these teachers outside in red T-shirts, which made me admire whoever the quartermaster general of the CTU may be: they all looked so good! And they had their Starbucks cups, since this was the North Side, and it seemed impossible that these teachers of first graders and kindergartners at Blaine would be so pumped up, pumping their signs:

"CTU"

"We want smaller class sizes!" (I still see that sign planted in a neighbor's front yard.)

"Honk if you want more arts education."

And people did honk. They drove past the Music Box, with all the Iranian films showing, and they honked. They honked from tractor-trailers. They honked from BMWs. They honked from all sorts of cars. Thank God, I thought: they're honking.

Our side is going to win!

But this was only the first day, and later that day I spoke to a teacher, a very thoughtful, Seven Sisters type of woman who seemed anything but political. She was worried.

"I worry how the media will portray us."

I could tell she was already f agging.

It's hard to be on strike after 8:30 or 9:00 a.m. That jolt of Starbucks wears off. It's exhausting to stand around and do nothing all day. On Election Day I used to work the polls, and it's much the same thing. Precisely because there is nothing to do, and because the sugar highs keep wearing off, many a striker is a wreck at the end of the day; it's hard to imagine getting up the next day and having nothing to do again. For the sake of solidarity, I was tempted to get in my car and drive from one school to the next and wave to the strikers. It seemed treason to sit in the office.

Besides, I was curious to get a gander: it's shameful to say, but for all the time I spent on our CTU case, I had very little idea how teachers looked. Some on the picket line looked

like those joggers in spandex who cut in front of me at Whole Foods, some looked like Trotskyite intellectuals, and a few just looked like your good old uncle Charlie (albeit your uncle Charlie who watches Rachel Maddow every night), but all of them were on strike or had voted for a strike – not just 60 percent, or 70 percent, or even 85 percent, but way over 90 percent (and remember, there are 26,000 teachers). That’s what made this a different kind of strike: it was a strike by my neighbors, the kind who end up running the condo board. Who could be against them?

Of course, there were endless press stories about the unfairness to parents who had no place to send the kids, but polls showed that the large majority of the parents supported the strike.

True, most white parents were against the strike, but most white parents send their kids to private schools. Black and Latino parents whose kids go to public school, some of whom actually need the free breakfast programs, were largely in favor of the strike.

Why not? They know that some of the first-grade teachers have up to forty kids in a class. They don’t have the wherewithal to send their kids to faraway charters and leave work early to pick them up after school. Still, the news media struggled mightily to rattle them – “No one cares about your chil-

dren” – but most parents seemed to grasp the teachers were striking because in fact they did care.

Children supported the strike.

Children held up picket signs saying, “I Don’t Like You, Rahm.”

But it was a young teacher who held up the meanest one:

“Rahm Likes Nickelback.” A spokesman for the mayor had to issue a statement that he did not. **CT**

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Thomas Geoghegan is a practicing attorney and the author of several books, including “In America’s Court: How a Civil Lawyer Who Likes to Settle Stumbled into a Criminal Trial”, “Which Side Are You On?: Trying to Be for Labor When It’s Flat on Its Back”, “See You in Court: How the Right Made America a Lawsuit Nation”, and “Were You Born on the Wrong Continent?: How the European Model Can Help You Get a Life”, all published by The New Press. He has written for *The Nation*, the *New York Times*, and *Harper’s*. He lives in Chicago.

Of course, there were endless press stories about the unfairness to parents who had no place to send the kids, but polls showed that the large majority of the parents supported the strike



WORDS and PICTURES

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Will Germany and Russia save Europe?

Pepe Eskobar wonders if Europe is heading for another disastrous war and what can be done to prevent it

It's pointless to compare the strategic nuclear capabilities of the US and Russia based on numbers, but not on quality

Are the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Russia on a mad spiral leading to yet another war in Europe? Is it inevitable? Far from it.

The US-propelled vassal currently starring in the oligarch dance in Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, recently advanced the proposition that Ukrainians in the near future, after his “reforms”, will be asked to vote on whether to join NATO.

Let's be serious here. Many of you will be familiar with the concept of “shatter belt” – territories and peoples that historically have been squeezed between the Germanic Eagle and the Russian Bear.

As we stand, the whole shatter belt – apart from Ukraine and Belarus – has signed up to NATO. A new Berlin wall, this time US-built – from the Baltics to the Black Sea now runs through Kiev. Were Ukraine to become a NATO member in an albeit remote future, the shatter belt buffer zone would disappear. This means NATO – essentially the US – planted right on Russia's western border.

Washington has just announced that it will be pre-positioning more military vehicles in Europe to be used in exercises or “potential military operations”. This is perfectly in tune with the relentless US Think Tankland spin that NATO and the US will be “forced” to balance their commitment to security in Eastern Europe against potential

Russian “aggression”.

As Ukraine, the Baltic states and Poland persist in compounded hysteria about such “aggression”, the option of a post-MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) US-Russia nuclear war, terrifying as it must be, is now – casually – back on the discussion table. At least there's a countercurrent: strands of informed Americans are wondering why the US should be paying for Europe's defense when European GDP is larger than that of the US.

Wanna play war, boy?

Now for the “threat” of nuclear war in Europe – bogus or otherwise. It's pointless to compare the strategic nuclear capabilities of the US and Russia based on numbers, but not on quality.

Take the compounded GDP of US, Germany, France and the UK and compare it to Russia; it's a victory by landslide. Then examine the strategic nuclear scenario, and it's a totally different story. GDP alone does not “win” anything.

War paranoia

Washington/Wall Street elites are now deep into nuclear war paranoia. A Council on Foreign Relations study basically “found out” what *Pravda* had already reported. Other pieces such as this at least hint at the obvious – glaring US strategic shortcomings.

Consider some of the basics:

Russian ICBMs armed with MIRVs travel

at about 18 Mach; that is way faster than anything in the US arsenal. And basically they are unbeatable.

The S-400 and S-500 are double trouble. Moscow has agreed to sell the S-400 surface-to-air missile system to China. The bottom line is this will make Beijing impermeable to US air power, ICBMs and cruise missiles. Russia, for its part, is already focusing on the state-of-the-art S-500 – which essentially makes the Patriot anti-missile system look like a V-2 from World War II.

The Russian Iskander missile travels at Mach 7 – with a range of 400 kilometers, carrying a 700 kilogram warhead of several varieties, and with a circular error probability of around five meters. Translation: an ultimate lethal weapon against airfields or logistic infrastructure. The Iskander can reach targets deep inside Europe.

And then there's the Sukhoi T-50 PAK FA. Talk about a real near-future game-changer.

NATO clowns dreaming of a war on Russia would have to come up with an ironclad system to knock out the Iskanders. They don't have any. Additionally, they would have to face the S-400s, which the Russians can deploy all over the spectrum.

Think of a hefty batch of S-400s positioned at the enclave of Kaliningrad; that would turn NATO air operations deep inside Europe into an absolutely horrendous nightmare. On top of it, good ol' NATO fighter jets cost a fortune. Imagine the effect of hundreds of destroyed fighter jets on a European Union already financially devastated and austerity-plagued to death.

As if this was not enough, no one knows the exact extent of NATO's strategic capabilities. Brussels is not talking. Extra-officially, these capabilities are not exactly a marvel. And Russian intelligence knows it.

Still assuming those NATO clowns would insist on playing war, Moscow has already made it very clear Russia would use their awesome arsenal of 5,000-plus tactical nuclear weapons – and whatever else it takes – to defend the nation against a NATO con-

ventional attack. Moreover, a few thousand S-400 and S-500 systems are enough to block a US nuclear attack.

None of this hair-raising Apocalypse Now scenario is even taking into account the Russia-China alliance – the major, game-changing Eurasian story of the 2010s.

Just in case the “pivoting to Asia” gang starts harboring funny ideas about the Middle Kingdom as well, China is massively investing in bouncing lasers off satellites; satellite-hitting missiles; silent submarines that surface beside US aircraft carriers without prior detection; and a made-in-China anti-missile missile that can hit a reentering satellite moving faster than any ICBM.

In a nutshell, Beijing knows the US surface fleet is obsolete – and undefendable. And needless to add, all of these Chinese modernizing developments are proceeding way faster than anything in the US.

A modest proposal

The spin by the Washington establishment has been relentless: Russia is expanding towards a 21st century empire.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov explained how this is undiluted rubbish. What has actually happened is that Moscow deftly called the Brzezinski-inspired bluff in Ukraine – with all its overtones. No wonder the Empire of Chaos is furious.

And yet there is a solution to defuse the current, hysterical rush to war logic. I have examined in some detail how Washington is playing Russian Roulette. Now it's time to advance a modest proposal – as it has been floated by a few concerned analysts from the US, Germany and Asia.

Essentially, it's very simple. It's up to Germany. And it's all about undoing Stalin.

Stalin, at the outset of World War II, took East Prussia from Germany and moved the eastern part of Poland into Ukraine. Eastern Ukraine was originally from Russia; it is part of Russia and was given by Lenin to Ukraine.

So let's have East Prussia returned to Ger-

Moscow has already made it very clear Russia would use their awesome arsenal of 5,000-plus tactical nuclear weapons – and whatever else it takes – to defend the nation against a NATO conventional attack

WAR GAMES

There would be no more chaos manipulated to justify a crusade against bogus Russian "aggression"

many; the eastern part of Poland returned to Poland; and eastern Ukraine as well as Crimea – which Khrushchev gave to Ukraine – returned to Russia.

Everyone get their share. No more Stalin. No more arbitrary borders. That's what the Chinese would define as a "triple win" situation. Of course, the Empire of Chaos would fight it to death; there would be no more chaos manipulated to justify a crusade against bogus Russian "aggression".

The ball is in Germany's court. Now it's up

to East Prussians to present the facts to Angela Merkel. Let's see if she's able to get the message. **CT**

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Pepe Escobar's new book, just out, is "Empire of Chaos". He is also the author of "Globalistan: How the Globalized World is Dissolving into Liquid War" (Nimble Books, 2007), "Red Zone Blues: a snapshot of Baghdad during the surge" (Nimble Books, 2007), and "Obama does Globalistan: (Nimble Books, 2009).

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Counterinsurgency from the air

An excerpt – Chapter 11 – from the new book,
A Theory Of The Drone, by **Grégoire Chamayo**

“Air power contains the seeds of our own destruction if we do not use it responsibly. We can lose this fight”. – General Stanley A. McChrystal

When Ernesto “Che” Guevara wrote these lines, in 1960, they were still true:

“One of the favorite arms of the enemy army, supposed to be decisive in modern times, is aviation. Nevertheless, this has no use whatsoever during the period that guerrilla warfare is in its first stages, with small concentrations of men in rugged places. The utility of aviation lies in the systematic destruction of visible and organized defenses; and for this there must be large concentrations of men who construct these defenses, something that does not exist in this type of warfare.”

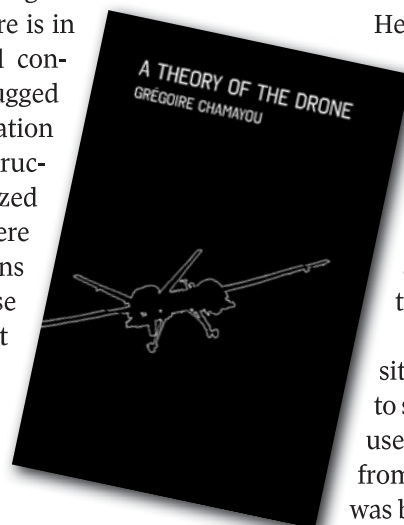
Up until very recently, in what used to be called the “imperialist camp,” strategists of counterinsurgency warfare subscribed to Guevara’s opinion. Against bunches of furtive combatants, as skilled at hiding in the mazes of the landscape as in the recesses of society, aerial

weapons were considered totally impotent or – worse still – counterproductive. In the absence of concentrations of troops detectable from the sky, bombing inevitably implied a bloodbath among the civilian population. But in reality the reasons for rejecting this doctrine were less moral than strategic: while the declared objective of counterinsurgency warfare was to rally the civilian population, the use of blind violence was likely to have the opposite effect, driving civilians into the arms of the enemy.

Hence the theoretical marginalization of aerial weaponry in this form of strategy. As late as 2006, the American army’s Counterinsurgency Field Manual devoted no more than a few pages to aerial weaponry, relegating them to an appendix.

In practice, however, the situation was already beginning to swing the other way. With the use of drones rapidly spreading, from the 2000s onward aviation was becoming one of the essential weapons in American counterinsurgency operations. A few strategists set about theorizing this silent changeover: their aim was to make military practice selfaware, whatever the cost of a major doc-

Against bunches of furtive combatants, as skilled at hiding in the mazes of the landscape as in the recesses of society, aerial weapons were considered totally impotent or – worse still – counterproductive



**A THEORY OF
THE DRONE**

Grégoire Chamayo

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An insurgent confronted by an army of drones no longer has any target to attack

trinal upset.

Deploring the time lag between theory and practice, Air Force strategists began to call for the explicit adoption of a doctrine of aerial counterinsurgency. These supporters of airpower clashed head-on with the orthodox theorists of groundcentered counterinsurgency, “an outworn paradigm . . . too narrowly focused,” which “relegates airpower to the support role while the ground forces do the real work.”² In opposition to that archaic world, it would be necessary to accept the evidence and fully come to terms with the new air-centered strategy in which drones have already become the foremost instrument. However much certain insurgents remained, as Carl Schmitt put it, essentially “telluric,”³ contemporary counterinsurgents had become “stratospheric.” Guerrilla warfare has always posed problems for major powers, which regularly become bogged down in asymmetrical conflicts. Instead of direct confrontation, insurgents, in order to compensate for their provisional weakness, favor skirmishes and ambushes. By striking, then immediately withdrawing, they remain elusive. The drone seems to provide a tardy resolution to this historical problem: in a radically absolute form, it turns against the guerrillas their own long-established principle, namely, deprive the enemy of an enemy. An insurgent confronted by an army of drones no longer has any target to attack. “We pray to Allah that we have American soldiers to kill. These bombs from the sky we cannot fight,” said Maulvi Abdullah Hajazi, an Afghan villager reacting to American strikes.⁴ American officers delight in those words; they consider the statement as confirming the implacable efficacy of their new weapon.

In making combat impossible and transforming armed combat into execution, the aim is to annihilate the very willpower of those opposing them. As Charles Dunlap, a major general in the US Air Force, explains, “Death per se does not extinguish the will to fight in such opponents; rather, it is the

hopelessness that arises from the inevitability of death from a source they cannot fight.”⁵ He goes on to say, “The precision and persistence of today’s airpower creates opportunities to dislocate the psychology of the insurgents.” The idea is not a new one. In the twentieth century, Sir John Bagot Glubb had already expressed it in very similar terms when speaking of the aerial bombing by means of which the British put down native rebellions in the interwar period: “Their tremendous moral effect is largely due to the demoralization engendered in the tribesman by his feeling of helplessness and his inability to reply effectively to the attack.”

It is fighting by means of terror, and no attempt is made to disguise the fact. Says Dunlap, “American precision airpower is analogous (on a much larger and more effective scale) to the effect that insurgents try to impose . . . through the use of improvised explosive devices.”⁸ The point could not be made more clearly: at a tactical level (and setting aside technological sophistication), drone strikes are equivalent to bomb attacks. They constitute the weapons of state terrorism.

Air force strategists are well aware of the objections that theorists of the “historical channel” of counterinsurgency never fail to raise. What the latter urge, in so many words, is to remember the lessons of the past: what is being presented as a new strategy has already been tried out, with remarkably disastrous results. The doctrine of “air control” is no different from that behind the Royal Air Force (RAF) air raids used after World War I to “disrupt and destroy village to force the local populace to adhere to British mandates.”

That policy ended in bitter failure. An assessment made by a British officer in 1923 describes perverse effects strangely similar to those seen today, three generations later, in the same regions of the world: “By driving the inhabitants of the bombarded area from their homes in a state of exasperation,

dispersing them among neighboring clans and tribes, with hatred in their hearts at what they consider 'unfair' methods of warfare, these attacks bring about the exact political results which it is so important, in our own interests, to avoid viz. the permanent embitterment and alienation of the frontier tribes."

As Angelina Maguinness, an intelligence officer at US Special Operations Command, somewhat prophetically pointed out, in view "of the historical lessons from the implementation of RAF air control, it is interesting that prominent airpower theorists would offer airpower as an alternative to large ground forces in COIN strategy." In more emphatic terms, she goes on to reproach the partisans of the air-centered model for making a fundamental mistake about the very essence of counterinsurgency strategy:

"[Airpower theorist Phillip] Meilinger fails to consider the nature of insurgency and COIN. If the center of gravity is the population and the population resides, operates, and identifies itself in the ground dimension, then it is foolish to assume the US can modify the nature of COIN warfare to that which it wants to fight and still succeed. . . . Insurgencies are by nature primarily ground-oriented; thus, effective COIN campaigns are primarily oriented in this manner as well."

This debate over the respective merits of ground and air warfare is of a quasi-metaphysical nature: can counterinsurgency rise to the level of an aero-policy without losing its soul? There is of course a risk that in the course of the operation, the strategy – together with politics – may be lost in the clouds.

The partisans of counterinsurgency with drones claim to have succeeded in avoiding the mistakes of the past, and all thanks to the progress of technology. To be sure, in the past "the negative effects of imprecise weapons and collateral damage appear to have more than counteracted the tactical

advantages" of aviation. In fact, they go on to say, it was those unfortunate historical experiences that lent credibility to "the truism that COIN is about boots on the ground and that airpower is counterproductive."¹³ But all that is now behind us: the drone is a highly technological instrument.

The twofold revolution in persistent surveillance and in the precision of targeting, they declare, has consigned those old objections to the dustbins of history.

As Hannah Arendt warned us, the problem of political lying is that the liar himself ends up believing his lies. Certainly the overall impression here seems to be that of a discursive self-intoxication. As a result of repeatedly proclaiming that drones and other surgical strikes are so accurate that they cause no more than negligible collateral damage, supporters of that strategy seem truly to have come to believe that all serious adverse effects have been eliminated. However, the facts won't go away, and their message is quite the opposite.

David Kilcullen is certainly no pacifist. This former advisor to General David Petraeus in Iraq is today considered to be one of the United States' most eminent experts in the doctrine of counterinsurgency. In 2009 he, alongside Andrew McDonald Exum, co-signed an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* calling for a moratorium on drone strikes in Pakistan. Their diagnosis was simple: those operations were dangerously counterproductive for American interests.

People were congratulating themselves on short-term tactical successes without seeing that they would pay dearly for them at a strategic level.

In the first place, they pointed out, the end effect of such strikes was to drive the civilian population into the arms of the extremist groups that on the whole appeared "less ominous than a faceless enemy that wages war from afar and often kills more civilians than militants." They went on to declare: "The drone strategy is similar to French aerial bombardment in rural Algeria

People were congratulating themselves on short-term tactical successes without seeing that they would pay dearly for them at a strategic level

Che Guevara, and many others. From their cursory reading of theories of revolutionary warfare they had, for their own purposes, noted the following fundamental thesis: the struggle is above all political

in the 1950s, and to the ‘air control’ methods employed by the British in what are now the Pakistani tribal areas in the 1920s. The historical resonance of the British effort encourages people in the tribal areas to see the drone attacks as a continuation of colonial era policies.”

Second, this anger and tendentious radicalization of public opinion were not limited to the region suffering such strikes.

In a globalized world, armed violence produces transnational repercussions, and the widely shared perception is that of a hateful power that is both cowardly and contemptuous. Beware of a backlash.

Third, and perhaps above all: “The use of drones displays every characteristic of a tactic – or, more accurately, a piece of technology – substituting for a strategy.”¹⁸ Their final diagnosis was that by resorting on a massive scale to a technological gadget that took the place of a genuine strategy, the state ran the risk of a rapid stupefying political effect.

What is in fact at stake here, deep down in these internal debates within the US military apparatus, is nothing less than an understanding of politics. To understand this fully, a very brief and partial genealogy of the doctrines being torn apart here may be necessary.

This genealogy starts with a number of French strategists who were attempting to elaborate a counterrevolutionary strategy and had dipped into the works of Mao Zedong,

Che Guevara, and many others. From their cursory reading of theories of revolutionary warfare they had, for their own purposes, noted the following fundamental thesis: the struggle is above all political. David Galula, who taught in military schools across the Atlantic after serving in Algeria, condensed those theories into a canonical formula: “The battle for the population is a major characteristic of the revolutionary war.”¹⁹ Like guerrilla warfare, counterinsurgency warfare is above all political. Its

center of gravity is the local population, who must be disconnected from the enemy and won over to one’s cause. The strategic aim is to marginalize the enemy and deny it its popular base. Once that is achieved, the victory is won.

For those who adhere to this notion – Kilcullen, for example – the antagonism between insurgency and counterinsurgency is seen as “a struggle to control a contested political space.” This cannot be engineered from outside; in order to reconquer the terrain, which is both geographical and political, you have to be there, on the spot. A terrain cannot be controlled vertically, from the skies, only horizontally, on the ground. This is particularly true when the actual “terrain” is human, namely, the population itself, starting with what it thinks, believes, and perceives. The art of counterinsurgency, meanwhile, is “‘political warfare’ in which the perception of the action and its political results are more important than tactical successes on the field of battle.”²² What is at stake are the perceived political effects of the military operations upon the population, and it is those effects that determine the pertinence of the tactics and weapons employed. As the time-honored expression has it, conquering the “hearts and minds” of the population presupposes mobilizing a whole vast spread of “military, political, economic, psychological and civic” means, among which open force is not always necessarily the principal component.²³ Those fine words, of course, should be set in comparison to the corresponding historical practices.

The fact remains that it is this fundamentally politicomilitary understanding of counterinsurgency, paradoxically inherited from a revolutionary Marxist understanding of armed violence, that today causes the advocates of the demographic- and territory-centered orthodox doctrine to reject the promotion of the drone to the position of being the almost exclusive weapon of American-style counterinsurgency.

When Kilcullen opposes the technological fetishism of the drone, it is in the name of that strategic conception, following directly in the footsteps of Galula. “At the operational level counterinsurgency remains a competition between several sides, each seeking to mobilize the population in its cause,” he writes. “The people remain the prize.”

As the counterinsurgency specialists see it, what is happening is a dangerous paradigm switch that undermines both the strategy of the American armed forces and their own institutional position within those forces. To those specialists, the dronization of operations signals the preeminence of the antiterrorism paradigm over that of counterinsurgency.

Originally, they explain, the two expressions were virtually synonymous, differing only in the way they were used. The “antiterrorism” label was, on account of its negative connotations, used mostly as a rhetorical means of delegitimizing adverse insurrectional movements. It was in the 1970s in Europe, faced with the actions of the Red Army Faction and the Red Brigades, that antiterrorism progressively turned itself into an independent paradigm, founded upon different principles that broke away from the classic doctrinal framework of counterinsurgency. The differences are significant.

Whereas counterinsurgency is essentially politico-military, antiterrorism fundamentally has to do with policing and security.

This fundamental divergence in orientation is reflected in several other distinctive features.

First, there is a difference in the way that the enemy is conceived. Whereas the first paradigm regards insurgents as the “representatives of deeper claims at the heart of society” (and it is important to understand the reasons for this, in order to counteract them effectively), the second one, by labeling them “terrorist,” regards them above all as “aberrant individuals,” dangerous figures, quite simply mad, or as incarnations

of pure evil.

With these new labels, the targets are no longer political adversaries to be opposed, but criminals to be apprehended or eliminated. Whereas counterinsurgency strategy aims above all to “defeat the insurgents’ strategy, rather than to ‘apprehend the perpetrators’ of specific acts,” antiterrorism adopts a strictly opposite way of proceeding: its policing logic individualizes the problem and reduces its objectives to neutralizing, on a case-by-case basis, as many suspects as possible. Whereas counterinsurgency is population-centered, antiterrorist action is individual-centered. It is a matter not of cutting the enemy off from the population but solely of rendering it impossible for him personally to do any more harm. In these circumstances, the solution lies in tracking such people down one by one, regardless of the social or geopolitical reasons for the antagonism they express. Within the categories of policing, political analysis dissolves.

Antiterrorism, which is both moralizing and Manichean, abandons any real analysis of the roots of hostility and its own effects upon it. The binary nature of good and evil is no longer just a rhetorical ploy but is imposed as an analytical category, to the detriment of any consideration of the complexity of strategic relations. Whereas counterinsurgency strategy implies (apart from brute force) compromise, diplomatic action, pressure, and agreements, all of which operate under constraint, antiterrorism excludes any political impact upon the conflict. “We do not negotiate with terrorists” is the key phrase in radically nonstrategic thought.

Dronized manhunting represents the triumph, both practical and doctrinal, of antiterrorism over counterinsurgency.

According to this logic, the total body count and a list of hunting trophies take the place of a strategic evaluation of the political effects of armed violence. Successes become statistics.

Their evaluation is totally disconnected from their real effects on the ground.

Whereas counterinsurgency is essentially politico-military, antiterrorism fundamentally has to do with policing and security

Evidence provided by a Pakistani Taliban leader, Baitullah Mehsud, illustrates the apparent truth of that thesis: “I spent three months trying to recruit and only got 10–15 persons. One US attack and I got 150 volunteers”

The partisans of orthodox doctrine are uneasy: as they see it, in the middle or long term, this reorientation is bound to produce effects that are strategically catastrophic for American interests. Drones are without doubt excellent at pulverizing bodies from a distance but are totally unsuited to winning over “hearts and minds.” As Peter Matulich writes, “The current use of drones in counter-terrorism strikes in Pakistan is contrary to the effective COIN doctrine the US has developed over the past ten years. . . . [Drone operations as they currently stand are of limited use if not counterproductive.

Drones alone are incapable of facilitating the populationcentric goals of COIN. Their use in ‘clearing’ operations produces negative effects including collateral damage and the militarization of local populations. This not only alienates populations but can fuel further insurgency.”

Evidence provided by a Pakistani Taliban leader, Baitullah Mehsud, illustrates the apparent truth of that thesis: “I spent three months trying to recruit and only got 10–15 persons.

One US attack and I got 150 volunteers.” This pattern seems to have been forgotten by the American forces, which is particularly surprising since it appears printed in black and white in the military’s own handbooks: “Confrontational military action, in exclusion, is counter-productive in most cases; it risks generating popular resentment, creating martyrs that motivate new recruits, and producing cycles of revenge.” But is it really a case of forgetfulness?

Perhaps, but perhaps not; for, as defenders of the orthodox doctrine fear, it is perfectly possible that the proposed reorganization of airpower may in fact be far more radical, purely and simply doing away with the political aspects of classic counterinsurgency theory. Thus Dunlap insistently stresses that the official doctrine tends to “overemphasize what ‘hearts and mind-winning’ efforts by occupying troops can

achieve.” Furthermore, he pleads that it is important not to “undervalue the function of force in suppressing intractable insurgents.” “Where historically there was much discussion about the effect, or the lack thereof, of airpower on the civilian populations of hostile nations, now the issue is very different: it focuses on the psychological impact on the insurgents themselves, not the civilian population.”

What we are witnessing here is a redistribution of priorities: the yield from a policy designed to terrorize and eradicate now takes precedence over any consideration of its political effects on the population. So what if the drones make the population turn away from us? Who cares? What do the “hearts and minds” of villagers in Waziristan or anywhere else matter? And in any case, unlike in the old colonial wars, the objective is no longer to conquer a territory but simply to eliminate from afar the “terrorist threat.”

Seen in this light, the intensive recourse to drones takes on new meaning. Richard Andres, an Air Force special advisor, reports that the tactical limitation of the old air weapons was that “they could not kill or suppress insurgents fast enough to overcome enemy recruiting.” Reading between the lines, we should understand that an armada of hunter-killer drones at last does possess that capacity: it can win that race and eliminate individuals at least as fast as new ones are recruited.

The strategic plan of air counterinsurgency is now clear: as soon as a head grows back, cut it off. And never mind if, in a spiraling development of attacks and reprisals that is hard to control, the perverse effect of that prophylactic measure is to attract new volunteers. From this point of view, the objection that drone strikes are counterproductive because they allow the enemy, in a classic pattern of action and repression, to recruit more volunteers no longer applies. Never mind if the enemy ranks thicken, since it will always be possible to neutral-

ize the new recruits as fast as they emerge. The cull will be repeated periodically, in a pattern of infinite eradication.

Once antiterrorism overtakes counter-insurgency, we are led to understand, the sufficient aim becomes a regular elimination of emerging threats, which takes the form of a periodic reaping: “Kill enough of them and the threat goes away. . . . However, the ‘kill list’ . . . never gets shorter, the names and faces are simply replaced.” Caught up in an endless spiral, the eradication strategy is, paradoxically, destined never to eradicate. The very dynamics of its perverse effects prevent it from ever fully decapitating a hydra that regenerates itself ceaselessly as a result of the strategy’s own negativity.

The partisans of the drone as a privileged

weapon of “antiterrorism” promise a war without losses or defeats.

What they fail to mention is that it will also be a war without victory. The scenario that looms before us is one of infinite violence, with no possible exit; the paradox of an untouchable power waging interminable wars toward perpetual war. **CT**

Caught up in an endless spiral, the eradication strategy is, paradoxically, destined never to eradicate

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Tony Blair's dodgy award

Felicity Arbuthnot is shocked by a recent award to the former British PM, whose illegal war caused the deaths of so many children

Between Madeleine Albright's admission that "over half a million children had died", and Blair's tenure from 1997 to the invasion six years later, another half a million children died

"If anything happened to one of my children I would go mad with grief." (Tony Blair after Omagh bombing, August 1998)

When the Orwellian-named "Middle East Peace Envoy" Tony Blair was named "Philanthropist of the Year" by GQ Magazine in September, for "his tireless charitable work" (tell that to the dismembered, dispossessed, traumatized of Iraq, and Afghanistan), there was widespread disbelief. Although mind-stretching, the GQ award was hardly a heavyweight accolade, coming from a publication with, seemingly, a strange fetish for David Beckham's knickers and little grounding in reality.

The magazine's editor, in lauding Blair's "achievements", included his "reconciling the three Abrahamic faiths." Hmm, he may know about men's knickers, but he clearly has not heard of Iraq. Receiving the award, Blair said, "I feel the pulse of progress beating a little harder," a variation on his tacky, less-than-humble, thoughts on his work in Northern Ireland, "This is no time for sound bites, but I feel the hand of history on my shoulder."

Then came the Big One . . .

On 19th November, 2014, the Butcher of Baghdad, Master of the Dodgy Dossier, and Sanctions Endorser of 13 years of embargo that condemned an average of 6,000 chil-

dren a month to death (UN figures) was awarded Save the Children's Global Legacy Award at an event held at The Plaza in New York.

Lest we forget, Blair is a former British Prime Minister (May, 1997-June 2007) and Leader of the Opposition (July, 1994 - May 2007). In both roles, he emphatically endorsed the Iraq embargo, thereby contributing, along with Madeleine Albright, to the silent infanticide of Iraq's children. Then came the dodgy Downing Street dossier quoted by Colin Powell at the UN to justify the invasion of Iraq, followed by the subsequent holocaust, which caused as many as one and a half million deaths in a country where nearly half the population was children.

Between Madeleine Albright's admission on May 12, 1996, that "over half a million children had died", and Blair's tenure from 1997 to the invasion six years later, another half a million children died.

Now, Save The Children - whose commitment is "No Child Born to Die" - honours this tyrant!

"From the beginning of humankind there has been brutality, conflict, intrigue, the destructive obsession with a narrow self-interest", said Blair in acceptance (1) of the award, as he also heaped praise on USAID and "the magnificent American and British military" along with Save The Children and

other NGOs for their work in Africa (2.)

That's the same USAID whose decades-long interstepping with the CIA is a dark, shocking saga (3.) And the same US and UK military which, in destroying Iraq, left five million orphans, a million widows and five million displaced. Those same organisations were now in Africa, he said, "setting up treatment centres, tirelessly providing shelter, hygiene and education", of which facilities they had bombed back to a pre-industrial age in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Watch out Africa.

"We're all in it together"

Why this shameful lauding of a man who should be answering to a modern-day Nuremberg Tribunal and upon whom the Chilcot Inquiry is still to release its findings?

A look at the organisation's leadership might help explain things:

The chief executive of Save the Children, Justin Forsyth was, in 2004, "recruited to No 10 (Downing Street) by Tony Blair", later becoming Strategic Communications and Campaigns Director to Gordon Brown, Blair's successor (4). Brown had been Chancellor of the Exchequer under Blair and wrote the cheques for the ten years of illegal UK bombing of Iraq before the invasion and the destruction of the country.

According to Save the Children's chief executive Jasmine Whitbread, Forsyth played a key role in Blair's selection for the award, indeed it seems he also delivered the invitation. (*Guardian*, 28th Novem-

ber 2014.)

Jonathan Powell, Blair's most longstanding political aide (1995-2007) and his Chief of Staff, both while he was Leader of the Opposition and Prime Minister, joined the board of Save the Children International in 2013.

Sam Sharpe chief financial officer of Save The Children, "worked for nearly 30 years with the UK Government development programme", including under Tony Blair. And Fergus Drake, director of global programmes since 2009, previously "worked for the Office of Tony Blair in Rwanda advising President Kagame."

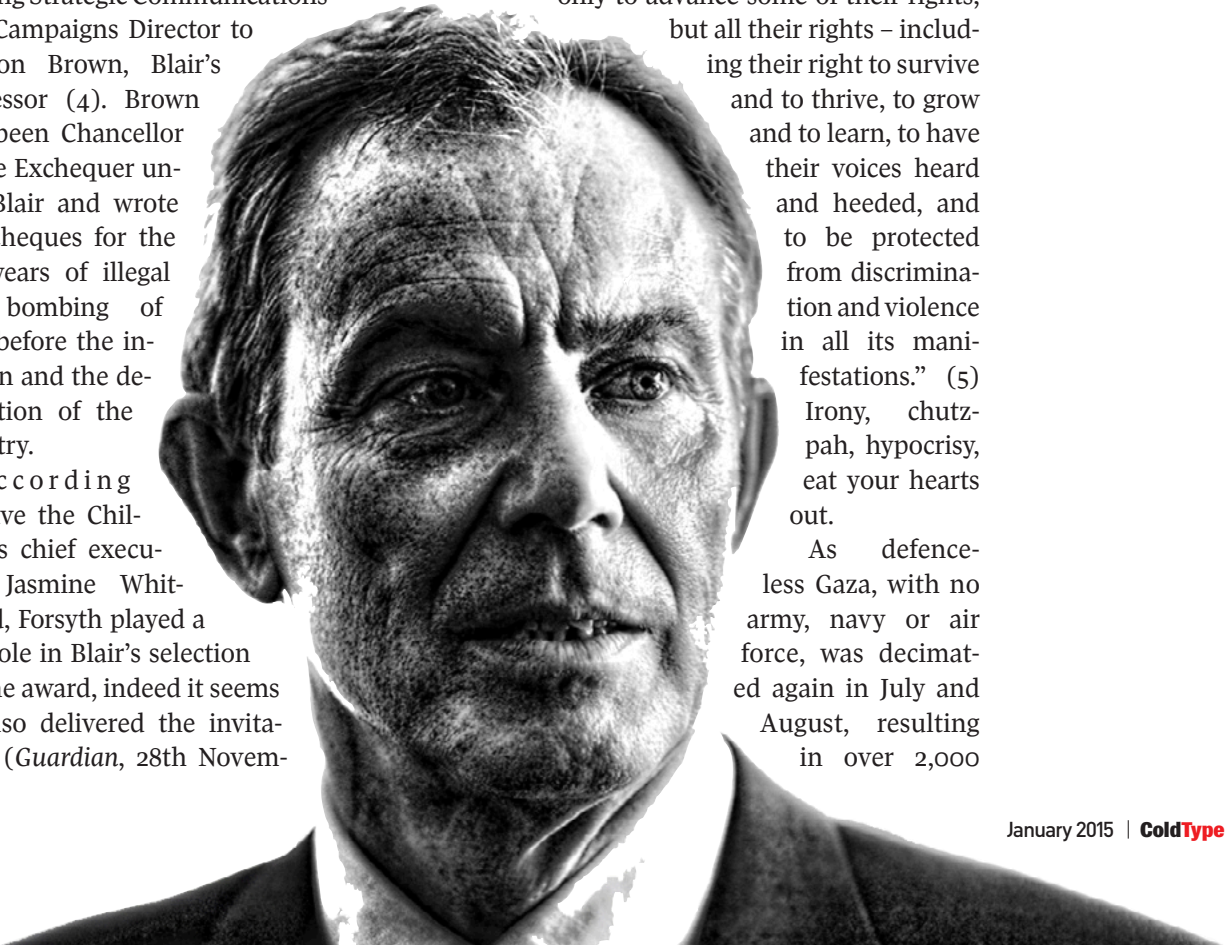
Slight conflict of interest there, I'd think.

The day after Blair's award, Save The Children, with UNICEF and other aid agencies released a statement headed, "On the 25th anniversary of the Convention on The Rights of the Child - Stepping up the global effort to advance the rights of every child."

Its commitments were "... not only to some children, but to all children ... not only to advance some of their rights, but all their rights - including their right to survive and to thrive, to grow and to learn, to have their voices heard and heeded, and to be protected from discrimination and violence in all its manifestations." (5) Irony,chutzpah, hypocrisy, eat your hearts out.

As defenceless Gaza, with no army, navy or air force, was decimated again in July and August, resulting in over 2,000

Blair fed his posh pad in Jerusalem and gave a two month early "surprise birthday party" for his wife in one of his seven UK mansions, safely out of the firing line and said nothing about saving Gaza's children, or indeed anyone else



SAVING FACE

Saving children seems to be somewhat of a selective process at this agency which operates in “more than 120 countries”

deaths, including nearly 500 children, “Peace Envoy” Blair fled his posh pad in Jerusalem and gave a two-month-early “surprise birthday party” for his wife in one of his seven UK mansions, safely out of the firing line, and said nothing about saving Gaza’s children, or indeed anyone else. He has subsequently been silent about 475,000 souls living in emergency conditions, 17,200 destroyed homes and 244 damaged schools.

Incidentally, if you are considering donating to Save the Children, give generously. Mr Forsyth and his colleagues struggle along on about £160,000 a year and the Chief Executive makes do on £234,000 annually (6.)

Don’t mention the war

Saving children seems to be somewhat of a selective process at this agency which operates in “more than 120 countries.” In November 2003, the *Guardian* reported that “Senior figures at Save the Children US ... demanded the withdrawal of ... criticism and an effective veto on any future statements blaming the invasion for the plight of Iraqi civilians suffering malnourishment and shortages of medical supplies.”

Fast forward to another US extrajudicial assassination, the man purported to be Osama bin Laden in May 2011, in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Save The Children “had been under suspicion ever since a doctor accused of assisting the CIA in its search for the al-Qaida leader claimed that Save the Children had introduced him to US intelligence officers.” (7.)

Dr Shakil Afridi, currently serving 33 years in jail, was “accused of setting up a bogus hepatitis B vaccination campaign in the Abbottabad area to try to pinpoint bin Laden’s exact location”, via DNA samples which “were to be tested by the CIA for genetic matches to Bin Laden.”

Save The Children, which emphatically denied employing or paying Dr Afridi or indeed having a vaccination programme in Abbottabad, was expelled from Pakistan in

September 2012. Despite those denials, internal mails on the dispute obtained by the Center for Investigative Reporting in Pakistan (8) which can be read in full (9) make interesting reading.

Now, Save The Children has appointed British Prime Minister David Cameron’s wife Samantha as “Ambassador” for Syria. Since the organization is not trusted in Syria, she reports from neighbouring countries. Cameron’s Britain is among countries arming and training the beheading, hand chopping, crucifying bands of Syrian insurgents. It’s worth remembering that 33% of Syria’s population is 0-14, while the population’s median age is 23.3.

Cameron, a Blair admirer, is on record as taking the advice of the former PM, who is enthusiastic for another illegal invasion in Syria, while having “no regrets” over the war on Iraq. Blair told the Chilcot Inquiry on 29th January 2010 that he would make the same decisions again.

As Save The Children lauds Blair and trumpets the Rights of the Child, the organisation should reflect upon the horror he has wrought. In Iraq, malnutrition has stunted the physical or intellectual development of one in four children. There are an estimated 35,000 infant deaths annually, while three million suffer post traumatic stress disorder. (War Child: “Mission Unaccomplished”, 2013.)

On addition, the use of depleted uranium (DU) weapons will haunt future generations for ever. DU has a half life of 4.5 billion years and will still be poisoning humanity, fauna and flora, when the sun goes out. Radioactive and chemically toxic, it has been linked with the spiraling numbers of birth defects and cancers in the country since the 1991 onslaught.

At the time of the war on Iraq, the UK Atomic Energy Authority warned the government that if 50 tonnes of the residual dust remained “in the region” there would, they estimated, be half a million extra cancer deaths “by the end of the century” (ie

2000). And, according to one study (10), Tony Blair's war has left 300 contaminated sites identified so far, with more than 300,000 DU rounds estimated to have been fired. Total volume used is currently estimated at 400 tonnes (almost certainly a massive underestimate) added to an upper estimate from 1991 of 750 tonnes.

Damage limitation?

Save the Children may be mortally wounded by its decision to honour Blair. Leaked emails confirm a desperate damage limitation exercise by Jasmine Whitbread, the organisation's chief executive. They were, she said, "trying to contain the situation and stop things escalating further." Staff across the world had expressed "concerns." Staff reportedly signed an outraged petition and subscriptions have been cancelled in droves.

Perhaps one letter encapsulates the anger at Save The Children for their aberrant action, as calls for a boycott echo around the world:

Dear Save the Children,

I am outraged that "Save the Children" has seen fit to contribute to the impunity, whitewashing and rehabilitation of one of the most serious war criminals of our time, Tony Blair, by awarding him a Save the Children Global Legacy Award. As Prime Minister, Mr. Blair was warned consistently and repeatedly by FCO legal advisers that to invade Iraq would constitute the crime of aggression, which the judges at Nuremberg called the "supreme international crime" because it "contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole." In Mr. Blair's case, the "accumulated evil" now includes hundreds of thousands of people killed, cities and villages reduced to rubble and the destruction of an entire society.

This award is especially horrifying coming from Save the Children, because Mr. Blair is legally culpable in the deaths of tens of thousands of children killed in Iraq, mainly by coalition air strikes ...

I am bccing this email to about a thousand people, and I hope that all who receive it will take note and, in future, direct their efforts to help children to ... other organizations who are not complicit in whitewashing the mass murder of children in Iraq.

With all due (but greatly diminished) respect – Nicolas J S Davies, Author of "Blood On Our Hands: the American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq." **CT**

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Notes

1. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/tony-blair-honoured-with-save-the-childrens-global-legacy-award-at-charity-gala-attended-by-ben-aff-eck-and-lassie-9873596.html>
2. <http://www.tonyblairoffice.org/news/entry/tony-blair-presented-with-save-the-childrens-global-legacy-award/>
3. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/cia-front-usaid-spreading-democracy-gearing-up-in-ukraine-suharto-ii/5381174>
4. <http://blogs.savethechildren.org.uk/author/jforsyth/>
5. http://www.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/CRC_25_Joint_UNICEF_CSO_Statement.pdf#overlay-context=news
6. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2550648/Fury-234-000-salary-boss-Save-Children-Charity-chiefs-huge-wages-reined-say-MPs.html>
7. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/sep/05/pakistan-voluntarysector>
8. <http://cirp.pk/e-mail.htm>
9. <http://defence.pk/threads/leaked-emails-ot-save-the-children-confirms-pakistan-full-of-cia-agents.268832/>
10. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/19/us-depleted-uranium-weapons-civilian-areas-iraq>
11. <http://www.amazon.com/Blood-Our-Hands-American-Destruction/dp/193484098X>

"In Mr. Blair's case, the 'accumulated evil' now includes hundreds of thousands of people killed, cities and villages reduced to rubble and the destruction of an entire society"

Was Nelson Mandela a communist?

The former South African president died without answering a key political question. **Trevor Grundy** went to a conference that tried to find the answer

What was his legacy and was he, or was he not, a member of the South African Communist Party's central committee in the early 1960s?

We're now well into the post-Mandela age but it seems we still can't get enough of a man so often described as the world's best known secular saint. Those who love him, love him so fiercely that debate is often out of the question. But, as George Orwell said in an essay he wrote about Gandhi (Reflections on Gandhi), "Saints should always be judged guilty until proved innocent."

So, even if you've read Stephen Ellis's "External Mission – The ANC in Exile 1960-1990", eagerly page-turned "The Hidden Thread – Russia and South Africa in the Soviet Era", by Irina Filatova and Appolon Davidson, devoured "Mandela – The Official Biography", by Anthony Sampson, absorbed "The Lusaka Years – The ANC in Exile", by Hugh Macmillan and flicked your way through a dozen or so other books about South Africa's first black president, two important and unanswered questions stay with us: What was his legacy and was he, or was he not, a member of the South African Communist Party's central committee in the early 1960s?

A seminar at The Senate (London University) on December 5, 2014, was titled "Nelson Mandela: Myth and Reality", and was described by the former Trotskyite activist and author Paul Trehwela, as 'historic.'

One of its main organisers, the BBC's Keith Somerville, said that a year on from Nelson Mandela's death, the one-day seminar gave



Nelson Mandela: Communist or not? That is the question.

academics, politicians, journalists, historians and members of the public a chance to step back from the emotion and the building up of the image of a saint, who – in a way – couldn't be emulated elsewhere because he is almost too lofty.

"We have, at last, managed to open up a lot of issues that nobody wanted to talk about at the time of his death," he said. "Nobody wanted to be seen as spitting on his grave. Now people aren't seen as doing that. They're seen as people who are looking at someone who is a much revered, much admired, but far from perfect character. And I think he

would never have described himself as a perfect character. And so, we have been able to look at him from a whole new different series of perspectives, with different views being presented and discussed that will help to open the way for a really in-depth look over the next few years at the real Mandela and his lasting legacy.”

More than 100 people were there – almost all of them Europeans with African credentials, but also men and women who left the so-called “Dark Continent” for new and much safer lives in Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and different parts of Europe.

For many of them, Mandela’s alleged membership of the SACP in the late 1950s/early 1960s remains a burning issue.

At a time when South Africa is riddled with corruption, plagued by crime and mounting public concern that the African Nationalist Congress (ANC) led government of Jacob Zuma plans to curtail the freedom of the press in 2015, one wonders why this is such an obsession.

Does it really matter?

Of what possible importance, of what possible relevance was this to South Africa in the second decade of the 21st Century, asked Dr Moses Anafu, former head of the Africa section at the London-based Commonwealth Secretariat. “I don’t understand why it is so important whether he was a Communist or not. Maybe – and only maybe – Mandela was a Communist. Well and good. If he wasn’t, that’s his own business.”

Anafu was reacting to earlier speeches by European academics, Professor Stephen Ellis of the University of Leiden (Netherlands) and Dr Hugh Macmillan of the University of Cape Town and Africa Studies Centre, Oxford University (England).

Ellis is the former editor of *Africa Confidential* magazine, which is seen in some British and African Left-wing/socialist circles as a publication with a remarkable ability to anticipate what the British Government is

thinking about Africa.

In his widely read book, “External Mission – The ANC in Exile 1960-1990”, (Hurst & Company, London, 2012) Ellis insists that Mandela was not only a member of the Communist Party in 1961 but that he had also been co-opted onto the membership of the SACP’s Central Committee. Ellis said it is important to know this and to understand the way the SACP gave birth to and then structured the armed wing of the ANC’s military wing, Spear of the Nation (Umkhonto we Sizwe).

But not once did Mandela admit to being a member of the SACP. He made no mention of it in his autobiography “Long Walk to Freedom”, neither does Sampson in the official biography.

So far, only Ellis and the Russian writers Filatova and Davidson have highlighted this possibility.

I asked Ellis if what he says and writes is true, had the Mandela Myth been based on a lie?

He replied: “Mandela, for various reasons, denied at his trial that he was a member of the SACP. He was on trial for so many serious offences and he was going to minimize the seriousness of what he had done. And he carried on denying it all through his life. I think it’s a pity in many ways that after he’d become president and a world figure and the Cold War was over that he didn’t actually tell us more about his exact relationship with the Communist Party in his early days. But he chose not to.”

Ellis told the seminar that it is most important to know the truth about Mandela’s membership of the SACP – partly because it validates the language it uses today – language familiar to readers of George Orwell’s book “1984”.

He said: “It’s one indication of the degree to which, after Mandela was sent to prison in 1962, the SACP came to exert a very strong influence – I would say control – over the ANC. South Africa is still one of the few countries in the world where people talk this

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INTO THE PAST

Had Mandela's membership of the SACP been widely known overseas, the ANC would never have received the support that it did – both financially and morally – from Europe and America

Marxist jargon. I mean, political actors from the mid-20th century talk about the patriotic bourgeoisie, the national democratic revolution, the proletariat, the two-stage revolution. This vocabulary is simply not adequate to discuss the problems of South Africa in the 21st century. So, I think, that if you're interested to know how it (South Africa) got stuck with this vocabulary, you need to look at the nature of the relationship quite clearly. Until you appreciate history and how the ANC came to adopt some key Marxist concepts, above all a Marxist/Leninist vocabulary, you can't understand why the South African public is so ill-equipped to discuss the real problems in their country today."

He said that had Mandela's membership of the SACP (which served Moscow so well, so obediently and for such a long time) been widely known overseas, the ANC would never have received the support that it did – both financially and morally – from Europe and America. He said: "Since the end of the Cold War, non-one has wanted to come to terms with South Africa's history. Part of the reason is that Mandela denied his membership of the Communist Party right up to the time of his death". And Ellis said that "a cold response" from the ANC meets anyone attempting to unravel the "truth" about Mandela's membership of the SACP.

He said his book had been greeted with "a very eloquent silence" by the ANC, adding, "Anyone who starts to inquire seriously into their history . . . well, they sooner or later direct a volley of abuse at you and the aim, of course, is to discredit you and prevent any discussion. If you looked objectively at what the SACP in the 1960s and 1970s was up, you could find that it manipulated the ANC. That's what they are afraid of people finding out about them."

He said several members of the SACP claimed Nelson Mandela became a member of the SACP in 1960. "It is," he said, "entirely credible that Nelson Mandela was co-opted onto the Central Committee of the SACP to work closely with Joe Slovo and Walter Sisulu

(two of the SACP's best known leaders, one white the other black) and others in establishing Umkhonto we Sizwe after the SACP's 1960 National Conference".

In response, Hugh Macmillan (author of "The Lusaka years – The ANC in exile in Zambia", published by Jacana, South Africa in 2013) said that all this reminded him of what the South African government said about Mandela at the time of his trial in 1962 which led to his incarceration for 27 years.

Said Macmillan: "This claim is linked with what I see as a revival of the apartheid government's legend that the SACP, acting on the instructions of Moscow and/or Peking decided to launch the armed struggle and – to again quote Stephen Ellis – bounced the ANC into this. And the implication is that the ANC was pushed into armed struggle against its will, or better judgment, by the SACP. And I don't think there's any reason to believe this. There was a lot of pressure towards sabotage and armed struggle coming from below and, more importantly, the ANC was in intense competition with the Pan Africanist Congress and the PAC made a move towards armed struggle before the ANC and leaders of the ANC were well aware that they were in a competition for radicalism."

It was the PAC that alerted the world to life under apartheid by organizing the burning of passes (needed by all Africans to move anywhere in their own country) in March 1960. It led to the Sharpeville Massacre (69 black people shot dead). Macmillan said: "I am alarmed that a new kind of orthodoxy is gaining ground and it is based largely on an article by Stephen Ellis and on the book he recently published. In the article he claimed that he had proved beyond reasonable doubt that Mandela was a member of the SACP. It is being accepted – if there is such a thing – as a historic fact. And I simply don't think that it is".

Meeting the media

Whether or not Mandela had ever been a Communist was the day's number one topic, thought two journalists Peter Biles (ex-BBC

in South Africa) and Richard Dowden (ex-*Independent* newspaper journalist in South Africa) provided light relief with amusing stories and some anecdotes about Mandela and his meetings with the Press.

But after I'd left the room, where a million words had bounced around like tennis balls, and went out to enjoy several glasses of white wine with men who only a few hours earlier looked as if they were ready to slaughter one another, I realised how it was not the words of either Ellis or Macmillan that rattled around in my brain but those of a young South African called Khalo Matabane, who makes documentaries and lives in Cape Town. His film, "Nelson Mandela: The Myth and Me", had kicked off the day's proceedings.

"Perhaps we'll never understand you," we heard him almost whisper as the young Mandela – who strongly resembled Joe Louis in his prime – waved to his followers outside a courtroom. "You are our imagination and the truth about you lies in your contradictions."

Thoughts on his legacy

And on the train back home I listened to what I'd recorded. What Ellis and Macmillan said seemed rather remote, but what Matabane said was explosive. While admiring Mandela for his courage, for the long years he spent in prison and his refusal to compromise his principles, Matabane had this to say about the great man's legacy:

"For me, I think there were tactical errors where he focused too much on trying to understand the enemy and sort of humanise the enemy and show the enemy the light and all those kind of things, which were amazing gestures. But actually his mandate should have been on the majority of Africans who are poor and marginalised. That's where he should have spent his time. That's my criticism. I feel that he spent so much time trying to say 'You can find your humanity inside yourself', and I'm not sure that has worked for South Africa."

He repeated it several times . . . Mandela

should have spent much more time listening to ordinary people, hearing their stories and how they had suffered under apartheid. Mandela, who should have listened to the poor and the wretched and said to them, "Your story matters". Mandela had surrounded himself with so many dubious characters and today South Africa is sitting on a "time bomb" because of high unemployment, corruption and the emergence of men and women ready to take advantage of mass dis-satisfaction and lack of belief in the ANC – the political system in general.

And on racial reconciliation in the once massively acclaimed "rainbow nation"?

"There's a number of white South Africans who do not feel that something wrong happened to South Africa who today tell you to move on. "Some of them saw my documentary and said – 'Oh, you're stuck in the past'. They have no sense of responsibility like, 'Oh, we did wrong and our grandchildren have benefitted and are who they are today because we benefitted because of apartheid'. They fail to see that their house in Cape Town costing £1 million pounds or £10 million is because of apartheid. There is no sense of acknowledgment. The danger in South Africa today is that the guys on the Left with the right kind of rhetoric are playing on sentiments that the ANC didn't transform enough. The present frustration is opening up a door and all sorts of people will come in and say, "We'll make sure there is economic justice for you."

I listened again. "The guys on the Left with the right kind of rhetoric." And I remembered what Professor Ellis had said.

The debate, like the African revolution, continues. **CT**

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Trevor Grundy is a British based journalist who lived and worked as a reporter and broadcaster in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa from 1966-1996. Today he is an author and researcher based in Kent, Southern England. He may be contacted at trevor.grundy@zen.co.uk

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US exceptionalism and US torture

William Blum on lies, hypocrisy, propaganda and amnesty

**No one does
brainwashing
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In 1964, the Brazilian military, in a US-designed coup, overthrew a liberal (not more to the left than that) government and proceeded to rule with an iron fist for the next 21 years. In 1979 the regime passed an amnesty law blocking the prosecution of its members for torture and other crimes. The amnesty still holds.

That's how they handle such matters in what used to be called The Third World. In the First World, they have no need for such legal niceties. In the United States, military torturers and their political godfathers are granted amnesty automatically, simply for being American, solely for belonging to the "Good Guys Club".

So now, with the release of the Senate Intelligence Committee report on CIA torture, we have further depressing revelations about US foreign policy. But do Americans and the world need yet another reminder that the United States is a leading practitioner of torture? Yes. The message can not be broadcast too often because the indoctrination of the American people and Americophiles all around the world is so deeply embedded that it takes repeated shocks to the system to dislodge it. No one does brainwashing like the good ol' Yankee inventors of advertising and public relations.

The public also has to be reminded yet again that – contrary to what most of the media and Mr. Obama would have us all believe – the president has never actually banned torture per se, despite saying recently that he had "unequivocally banned torture" after taking office.

Shortly after Obama's first inauguration, both he and Leon Panetta, the Director of the CIA, explicitly stated that "rendition" was not being ended. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported at the time: "Under executive orders issued by Obama recently, the CIA still has authority to carry out what are known as renditions, secret abductions and transfers of prisoners to countries that cooperate with the United States."

The English translation of "cooperate" is "torture". Rendition is simply outsourcing torture. There was no other reason to take prisoners to Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Somalia, Kosovo, or the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia, amongst other torture centers employed by the United States. Kosovo and Diego Garcia – both of which house large and very secretive American military bases – if not some of the other locations, may well still be open for torture business, as is the Guantánamo Base in Cuba.

Moreover, the key Executive Order referred to, number 13491, issued January 22, 2009, "Ensuring Lawful Interrogations", leaves a major loophole. It states that humane treatment, including the absence of torture, is applicable only to prisoners detained in an "armed conflict". Thus, torture by Americans outside an environment of "armed conflict" is not explicitly prohibited. But what about torture within an environment of "counter-terrorism"?

The Executive Order required the CIA to use only the interrogation methods outlined in

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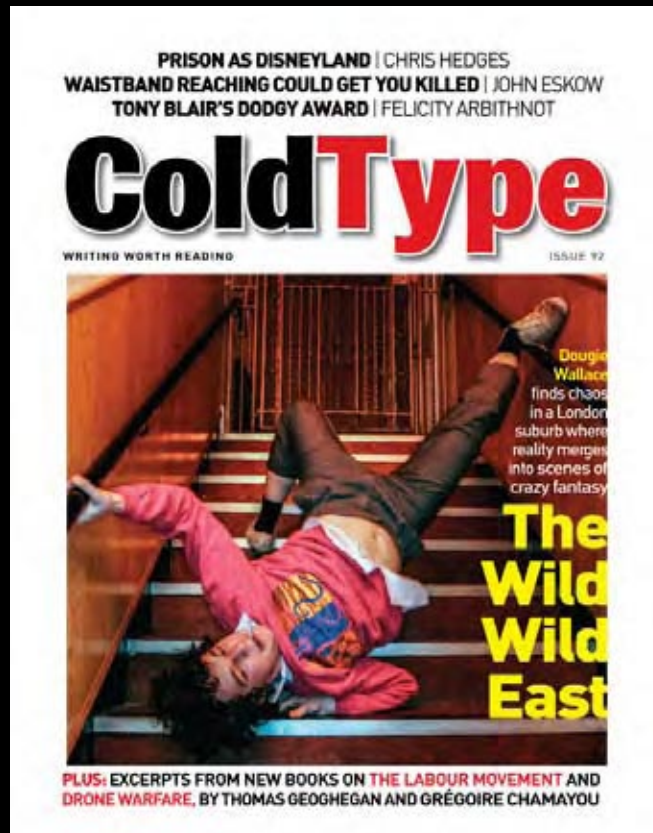
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The debate, like the African revolution, continues. **CT**

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Trevor Grundy is a British based journalist who lived and worked as a reporter and broadcaster in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa from 1966-1996. Today he is an author and researcher based in Kent, Southern England. He may be contacted at trevor.grundy@zen.co.uk

"They fail to see that their house in Cape Town costing £1 million pounds or £10 million is because of apartheid"

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