

IN THE PATH OF CATASTROPHE | CHELLIS GLENDINNING
'GOOD' FASCISTS VERSUS 'BAD' FASCISTS | NEIL CLARK
WHEN IDIOTS REIGN | CHRIS HEDGES

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING | PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

ISSUE 140

THE VIEW FROM MARS

We were watching them – but were
the aliens also watching us?



Read all of our Back Issues



Find us at www.coldtype.net/reader.html
or at www.issuu.com/coldtype



The Martians are coming / Pages 16-20



After the storm / Pages 34-41

BIG READS

4. **'Good' fascists versus 'bad' fascists**
By Neil Clark
7. **Checking with the neighbours**
By Fida Jiryis
12. **When idiots reign**
By Chris Hedges
16. **The view from Mars**
By Peter Mitchell
21. **Theresa May's narrative of British victimhood**
By Ian Dunt
24. **How fake conservatives will destroy Britain**
By George Monbiot
26. **Forbidden questions for the US media**
By Andrew J. Bacevich
32. **Syria is the dam against more bloody chaos**
By Jonathan Cook
34. **In the path of catastrophe**
By Chellis Glendinning

INSIGHTS

43. **The truth behind the warrior myth** – Thomas S. Harrington
44. **Trump could have saved thousands of jobs** – Chuck James
45. **The barrel bomb conundrum** – Craig Murray
46. **Canada should apologise for Palestine role** – Yves Engler
47. **Cheeseburgers and a theory of taxation** – Greg Palast



Cover Photograph:
Peter Mitchell
From the book, A Refutation of
the Viking 4 Space Mission

ColdType

7 Lewis Street
Georgetown
Ontario
Canada L67 1E3

Telephone
905-702-8526

Contact ColdType
Write to Tony Sutton,
the Editor, at
editor@coldtype.net

Subscribe
For a FREE subscription
to ColdType, please
send an e-mail to:
editor@coldtype.net
writing 'Subscribe'
in the title header

Back Copies
Download back copies
of ColdType at
www.coldtype.net/reader.html
or at
www.issuu.com/coldtype

© ColdType 2017



Victory Day 2017, Red Square, Moscow.

Photo: Dmitry Terekhov

‘Good’ fascists versus ‘bad’ fascists

As Russia celebrates the defeat of the Nazis in 1945, **Neil Clark** examines the West’s double standards in the present-day fight against fascism

The absolutely crucial role of the Red Army in defeating the Nazi aggressors is not just ignored, but in a disgusting example of Cold War 2.0 revisionism, the Soviets are held equally responsible – along with the Nazis – for starting WWII

On May 9, Russia celebrated Victory Day to mark the 72nd anniversary of the defeat of the Nazis in the Great Patriotic War. Perhaps this is a good time to reflect upon the way some nations are letting their guard down when it comes to fascism.

There was a special military parade on Red Square and commemorations in other Russian cities. But I’m afraid it didn’t get too much coverage in the West. In recent years, the 27-million Soviet citizens who died in World War Two have been airbrushed out of history. They have become the forgotten victims of Hitler’s genocidal wars of aggression.

In fact, there’s never been a time since WWII when Western double standards regarding the fight against fascism – both historical and contemporary – have been so

glaring, or so obscene.

On the one hand, the elites warn us 24/7 of the dangers of the far right in France, and raise the spectre of the German dictator with a funny moustache to stop people in Western countries from voting for anti-globalist nationalist or neo-nationalist parties. On the other hand, they side with fascists, neo-Nazis and unashamed Hitler-lovers in Ukraine. The absolutely crucial role of the Red Army in defeating the Nazi aggressors is not just ignored, but in a disgusting example of Cold War 2.0 revisionism, the Soviets are held equally responsible – along with the Nazis – for starting WWII.

Ukraine is the CIA theme park (to use John Pilger’s memorable phrase) where the shiny New World Order “liberal” corporate



fascism of today meets the old fascism of yesteryear.

It was recently reported that a 94-year-old Jewish Red Army veteran, Boris Steckler, is under investigation for the death in a 1952 gun battle of a nationalist Ukrainian insurgent, Nil Khasevych, who had been accused of collaborating with the Nazis.

Eduard Dolinsky, director of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee, was quoted in the Guardian newspaper as calling the murder investigation an “injustice.” He said that Khasevych’s actions, not Steckler’s, should be condemned. “He was an active fighter when they destroyed Jews and Poles. . . . It’s the Ukrainian Insurgent Army [UIA] that committed a war crime.”

Dolinsky’s right. But no one in the Western corridors of power is listening. Just imagine for a moment if the Russian authorities had announced it was investigating a Jewish man – six years away from his 100th birthday – for the killing of a man from a group accused of carrying out horrific crimes with the Nazis over 60 years ago. You can be sure Establishment commentators would be falling over themselves in a rush to file their “outraged” articles showing how it proved Russia was anti-Semitic and how the far right was in control. There would be, I’m sure, renewed calls by outraged opinion-formers for boycotts of next year’s football World Cup. “Zero

tolerance of fascism and anti-Semitism!” would be the cry.

But it was in Western ally Ukraine, so there’s silence. And certainly no calls for boycotts of the Eurovision Song Contest in Kiev. Heaven forbid.

It’s not as if the Steckler case is a one-off.

The UIA, of which Khasevych was a member, was complicit – along with the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) – in committing acts of ethnic cleansing and genocide against Poles and Jews during WWII. More than 100,000 members of the second Polish Republic perished. But guess what? In 2015, the Ukrainians introduced a new law making it a criminal offence to question the legitimacy of their actions – and those of the OUN.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center condemned the move, but normally vocal anti-fascist pundits in the West – who have been known to label people with opposing opinions “genocide deniers,” kept schtum. They know the rules of the game.

Again, just imagine if this had happened in Russia, or any other “Official Enemy” country.

Rehabilitating Nazism – and criminalising criticism of those who collaborated with it – is fine, so long as the country’s government is pro-Western and anti-Russian.

Judeophobia’s ok, too – so long as those

What determines whether you’ll be denounced as a fascist nowadays is not your programme or your rhetoric, or how much you admire Hitler and Mussolini, but how useful you are to the trans-national elite

Western Hypocrisy

More than 40 people were killed when Ukrainian neo-Nazi thugs committed their vile act, but the atrocity is barely mentioned in the West

responsible don't like Putin.

If Marine Le Pen had wanted to lose the epithet "fascist" then – let's face it – all she had to do was to declare her love of a neo-con foreign policy and say she wanted to bomb Syria and "turn the screws" on Moscow. Then she would have been hailed as a "strong and stable" leader.

What determines whether you'll be denounced as a fascist nowadays is not your programme or your rhetoric, or how much you admire Hitler and Mussolini, but how useful you are to the trans-national elite. If you aid their cause, you'll get a free pass, even if you have a tattoo of Adolf on your biceps and goose-step down the street every morning with a swastika armband.

Think of the number of times you've read articles in Britain, the US and in other Western countries, warning of the dangers of the Hungarian far-right Jobbik party – and indeed attacking the conservative nationalist government of the "Viktator" Viktor Orban; and compare it to the number of pieces you've seen attacking the anti-Semitic far right in neighbouring Ukraine and the fierce clampdown on free speech and political association there.

What's the difference? Jobbik – and Orban's administration – want better relations with Moscow, ultranationalists in Ukraine want confrontation. Anti-Semitism and right-wing extremism in one country is worth a lot of column inches; in another, it's not worth any.

Ukrainian authorities have been happily banning respected public figures from the country for holding the "wrong" views on Crimea and Western liberals don't say a word. In 2016, no less a personage than Mikhail Gorbachev was banned from Ukraine for five years for – wait for it – "the public support of Crimea's annexation." And American tough-guy actor Steven Seagal was banned by Kiev – also for five years – and accused of – I kid ye not – "committing socially dangerous activities . . . that contradict the interests of maintaining Ukraine's security." Fellow actor Gerard Depardieu has also been banned. Im-

agine the outcry if an "official enemy" country was doing this?

Meanwhile as Britain's Morning Star newspaper reports, the third anniversary of the Odessa trade union massacre has passed, "with still no prospect of justice for the victims from the Kiev authorities." More than 40 people were killed when neo-Nazi thugs committed their vile act, but the atrocity is barely mentioned in the West. It's 10,000-1 that Hollywood will make a film about it.

Why? Because it was the "right" kind of far-right extremists who did it – i.e. anti-Russian ones.

The West wanted the old government in Ukraine out, and could only do that with the help of neo-Nazis, who could give the Maidan protests their cutting edge. The staunchly pro-Israel US Senator John McCain – the man who labelled Hungary's Orban a "neo-fascist dictator" – had no qualms in sharing a platform with the ultra-nationalist Oleg Tyahnybok, who had written in the past of Ukraine being run by a "Muscovite-Jewish" mafia and had called for more to be done to halt the "criminal activities" of "organised Jewry."

Imagine if a left-wing, anti-war figure had shared a platform with someone who had publicly expressed views such as these. But McCain did – and his fellow neocons were strangely silent.

How hypocritical of the holier-than-thou Western establishment to warn us about fascism in one European country, but to condone or support much more violent forms of it in another. And how utterly despicable to rewrite the history of WWII and cast the country which suffered the most in the conflict – the Soviet Union – as being its co-instigator.

Zero tolerance for fascism? Try telling that to the Western elites. **CT**

.....
Neil Clark is a journalist, writer, broadcaster and blogger. He has written for many newspapers and magazines in the UK and other countries. This article was first published at www.rt.com

Checking with the neighbours

For Palestinians, life in Israel and life in the West Bank is a choice between two systems of Israeli aggression, writes **Fida Jiryis**

“I’ll take it!” I said, glancing round the empty apartment. The lady didn’t smile or show any sign of agreement. I was beginning to feel uneasy. She’d looked up at me questioningly when I knocked on the open door of her office a few minutes earlier. Something about me must have given me away.

The new blocks of flats were in a perfect location, halfway between my village and Nahariyya, a small seaside town in the Galilee. I’d be close to my parents, my work and the beach. I’d driven past many times while they were under construction, and as soon as they were advertised for rent I was impatient to have a look. I’d finish work every day and go jogging on the beach . . .

“Can I help you?” the lady had asked, still measuring me up.

“Yes, I’d like to see one of the apartments you’ve advertised for rent.”

My accent gave me away; I was an Arab. She looked uncomfortable. I was used to this. I’d just smile and pretend I hadn’t noticed. She fiddled around with a bunch of keys and escorted me out of the office, towards one of the blocks. “We have one here,” she said.

I was a little disappointed when she opened the door. The apartment was bright and new, but it was very small. “Do you have anything larger?” I asked.

“No, this is all that’s available.”

“OK.” One couldn’t argue with the system. Well, I could, but I wouldn’t get anywhere. “How much is the rent?”

“Uh, I need to ask you something first. Where are you from?”

This being Israel, I didn’t pause to consider the inappropriateness of the question. “Fassouta. It’s a village about 20 minutes from here. Near Ma’alot,” I ventured, referring to a Jewish town near my village. It would have been pointless to mention an Arab town.

“Right.” She nodded, frowning. “I’ll need to ask you to bring two references with your application, then I’d need to check with the neighbours.”

“The neighbours?”

“Yes. I need to ask them if it’s OK for you to live here, because, well, no apartments have been given to Arabs here. But if the neighbours are OK with it, we can proceed. I’ll just put the application through quietly,” she added, lowering her voice to imply that she would have to make an exception.

I swallowed, thanked her and left. That was the end of it. I wouldn’t get permission from the neighbours to rent an apartment. This was one of the many reasons I found myself, not long afterwards, moving to Ramallah in the West Bank, part of the Occupied Territories.

More than one-and-a-half million Palestin-

My accent gave me away; I was an Arab. She looked uncomfortable. I was used to this. I’d just smile and pretend I hadn’t noticed

An Arab In Israel

As Palestinians in Israel, we spend every minute of our lives paying for the fact that we are not Jewish

ians live in Israel, not in the West Bank and Gaza, but in Israel itself, in the Galilee in the north, the Triangle in the centre and the Naqab (Negev) in the south. After the wiping out of Palestine in 1948, about 15 percent of the Palestinian population remained in the new state of Israel. On the surface, we are far more privileged than our brethren in the West Bank and Gaza; having Israeli citizenship and a passport means that we can vote, we have access to good education, public healthcare and social benefits, and we can travel easily, although we can't visit some Arab countries. We don't live in an occupied zone surrounded by checkpoints, with the constant threat of clashes, Israeli army incursions and settler violence. We are free to study almost anything we choose, in a country with a large job market. But this is a façade behind which is a system of rampant structural and institutional discrimination. As Palestinians, we spend every minute of our lives paying for the fact that we are not Jewish.

When I lived in my family's village of Fassouta, in the Galilee, I was reminded every morning as I drove to work of my people's dispossession. First, I had to drive through the remains of Suhmata and Dayr El-Qasi, two Palestinian villages that were destroyed in 1948. All that remains of Suhmata is a mass of shrubs and some stones that survived the Israeli bulldozers when they ploughed the village into the ground. In the miracle of Israel's creation, Dayr El-Qasi was turned into Elqosh, a Jewish village, some of whose residents live in houses that were not destroyed in 1948, perhaps because they appreciate the Arab architecture. The Palestinians of Dayr El-Qasi and their descendants have lived in refugee camps in Lebanon ever since.

Some of the Palestinians of Suhmata became internally displaced persons, and a few of them live in Fassouta and other nearby villages. They visit the site of Suhmata once a year, on Nakba Day, to commemorate their village. Which is worse: being far away

from your old home, or having to drive past every day and see its ruins while not being allowed to return?

It was only thanks to a fluke of fate that I wasn't living in a refugee camp an hour or two's drive away. My village is very close to the Lebanese border, and each time I looked over the hills into Lebanon, I had the surreal feeling of their being so close, yet so far away. There isn't much security for the Palestinians who remained; some members of the Israeli government and various academics regularly call for the expulsion of Israel's Arab citizens through "demographic transfer" – code for forced displacement – the ultimate aim being to achieve the "purity" of the Jewish state.

After Dayr El-Qasi and Suhmata, I would drive past Kfar Vradim, an opulent Jewish community, whose rows of neat villas, lush gardens, fountains and wide pavements contrast sharply with our narrow streets full of potholes. The differences between Arab villages and Jewish communities in Israel, often lying right next to each other, are so marked that one can immediately tell which is which. There are two reasons for this. The first is that Palestinian villages evolved over hundreds of years, while the new Jewish communities were built in a methodical way, their homes all alike. They seem to have fallen from the sky, and I see only ugliness in this beauty and order, because my mind unwittingly turns to how they came to be there.

Second, the budget allocated for infrastructure and economic development in Arab towns and villages is a fraction of that allotted to Jewish ones. It's the same with the budgets for health, education, housing and employment; the list goes on. The state would explain this by pointing out that government budgets are based on the amount of tax revenue collected by each local authority, including business and property taxes. Since the number of employment initiatives and businesses in Arab municipi-

palities is a bare minimum, there is much less tax collected than from Jewish communities. Thus, rather than funding economic development projects in Arab areas, the government allocates smaller budgets to them and the vicious cycle continues.

In 1966, my father, Sabri Jiryis, wrote *The Arabs in Israel*, a book describing the life of the Palestinians in Israel and their systematic oppression by the state. The core message of the book still applies today, 50 years later. Israel's military rule over the Palestinians in Israel has long ended, but its attitudes to its Palestinian citizens remain largely unaltered.

By the time I got to work, I would already be in a state of deep alienation, and my interactions there didn't help. I was the only Arab among 30 or so Jewish employees, and I always had the feeling that I was lucky to be there – as though I had no right to such a job. Although many Palestinians hold professional jobs in Israel, the majority survive through menial or marginal work. Construction and manufacturing are two of the largest employers of Palestinians. Palestinians are largely excluded from senior or well-paying positions in private corporations or public institutions; few Arab engineers work in the Electricity Authority or telecommunications companies, and they are excluded from the defence and aviation industries, among others. I had been so conditioned to the near-impossibility of finding a good job that, when I got one, I could hardly believe it. My family and friends were astounded when I told them my salary; what was normal by Jewish standards was considered a fortune in our community.

I often overheard my Jewish colleagues talking about their military service. Most of them were called away for a few weeks from time to time to do reserve army duty. There were heated political discussions about the then recent Oslo Accords and Israel's relationship with the Palestinians. Throughout all this, I was silent and

extremely uncomfortable. I was born in Lebanon and, in 1983, when I was ten years old, my mother was killed when the PLO's Research Centre in Beirut was bombed. In 1995, I came to Israel as a result of the Oslo Accords. I couldn't help wondering, as I looked round the room at my colleagues, how many of them had served in Lebanon during the 1982 invasion. But I pushed these thoughts away. I was back here now, and I needed the job.

A friendship blossomed with an older British colleague, who was Jewish and had moved to Israel as a teenager and married an Israeli. One day, I invited her and her husband to my home in Fassouta. She gladly accepted, but the visit was tense and uncomfortable. Conversation was strained, each topic I brought up received a lukewarm response, and they ate and left as quickly as possible. I cleared the plates away afterwards feeling puzzled and deflated. At work the next day, she apologised, telling me her husband had a high rank in the Israeli army and was uncomfortable visiting an Arab home.

I was stunned by her forthrightness, but appreciated being told the truth. Except in a few cities, Palestinians and Jewish Israelis live deeply segregated lives. Social division isn't the only problem caused by this stratification. Palestinian communities are not only kept separate from Jewish ones: they are kept within strict boundaries by the Israeli government. The government does not often allow new building zones in Arab towns and villages. Thousands of Arab homes are under threat of demolition by the state for being located outside permitted zones. Fassouta, for example, has 11,000 dunums (one dunum equals 1,000 square metres) within the jurisdiction of its local council, but only 650 dunums have been approved by the government for new building since 1988. The result is overcrowding; many have to move elsewhere. But many Jewish communities forbid Pal-

Palestinian communities are not only kept separate from Jewish ones: they are kept within strict boundaries by the Israeli government

An Arab In Israel

A colleague, in her late twenties like me, announced loudly at the lunch table that the government was making a mistake in not “going in there [Gaza] and obliterating everything – people, trees, cats, dogs, everything

estinians to live or even work in them.

One day, one of my colleagues stood in the doorway of my small office, beaming, coffee cup in hand. He had always been friendly. He leaned against the door, studying me quizzically as he drank his coffee. Then he said, rather thoughtfully: “You’re not like other Arabs, eh? You’ve made something of yourself.” I wondered if he thought he was paying me a compliment in singling me out from my crude, backward race. “I tell you, you Christians,” he said, lowering his voice as though sharing a secret, “you’re different. We have no problems with you!”

At the end of the day, I’d arranged to meet my cousin for a trip to a mall in Haifa. We chattered in her little car, Arabic music playing, exchanging village gossip and news of the upcoming wedding season. For a while, I was transported out of the reality of life in Israel. But the dream shattered the minute we drove into the car park. Hebrew signs were everywhere. Inside the mall, there wasn’t a single sign in Arabic, though the mall served mostly Palestinian shoppers from the surrounding villages, and Arabic is the second official language of the state.

We walked into a shop and felt that familiar nervousness in speaking our language. But I wasn’t about to talk to my cousin in Hebrew. As we looked at the clothes, we chatted in Arabic, though our voices subconsciously dropped. Seeing an assistant, I pointed to a dress, asking her for the right size to try on. “Those are the last pieces!” the sour-faced woman snapped, and walked off.

I turned away uncomfortably, but we weren’t surprised by the response. Rudeness is a known characteristic of the country, and for some reason Israelis are amused by this. But the chutzpah of Israelis’ dealings with each other and the rest of the world is one thing; the chutzpah, loaded with a tacit dislike and contempt, used when dealing

with Palestinians is another. When a more cheerful-looking assistant bounded up to us to help, we were grateful.

I tried on the dress. “Wow!” the assistant exclaimed as I came out of the fitting room. Then she added: “You’re so beautiful; one would never think you were an Arab!” I returned the dress and left the shop. It’s not possible to live in Israel for even one day and forget that we are us and they are them. In most of my interactions with Israelis, I feel barely concealed hostility, cautious suspicion or, at best, an attitude of benevolent tolerance.

As my cousin and I lined up for burgers, I glanced curiously at the Jewish Israeli family near us, crowding at the shawarma stall. Palestinians didn’t seem to exist in this country, but our food was sought after. The shawarma had a kosher label. We were bending over backward trying to integrate, and the state was happy for us to operate our falafel and shawarma stalls and do other menial jobs, but that was the limit of our usefulness.

A few years later, I went to the UK to do an MBA. Afterwards, back in Fassouta, I had to find a job. I still had an Arab name and no army number (Palestinians are exempt from military service in the Israeli army). Months later, I still had no job. Finally, in desperation, and with mounting debts to pay off, I took one I didn’t want.

The job was in Karmiel, a Jewish town in the Galilee built on land confiscated from three Arab villages: Deir al-Asad, Bi’na and Nahf. I blocked this out daily as I went to work; I desperately needed the job, and I also needed to cope with the mental and emotional trauma of being back in Israel. The Second Intifada was raging in the West Bank and Gaza, and, every night, I watched the horrors unfold on the news. I had nightmares full of bloodied corpses and the wailing of victims’ families. During the day, I could barely focus on anything. At work, I’d

hear my Jewish colleagues talk about “battering them,” and gleefully discussing Israel’s victories. I couldn’t respond. A colleague, in her late twenties like me, announced loudly at the lunch table that the government was making a mistake in not “going in there and obliterating everything – people, trees, cats, dogs, everything – and solving the problem once and for all.”

The alienation, of course, exists on a communal level, not just a personal one. Each year, on Israeli Independence Day, many Palestinians are overtaken by such depression that we elect simply to stay at home. While Jewish Israelis are out flag-waving, having parties and barbecues, we are commemorating our destroyed villages, remembering our dead and those who cannot come home. Each year is a painful reminder that another year has gone by and nothing has changed. The entire country is even more plastered in Israeli flags for weeks before and weeks after.

For decades, it was illegal to raise a Palestinian flag in Israel. Palestinian citizens of Israel are still not referred to as Palestinians by the Israeli establishment, but by a great oxymoron of a term, “Israeli Arabs,” carefully concocted to imply that Israel was always there and we were always a minority group within it, and to erase our Palestinian identity and make us nameless “Arabs,” a race that includes citizens of 22 countries.

Several more names have been created to describe us, some by our Arab brethren, among them “1948 Arabs;” “Arabs inside the Green Line” (of the 1949 armistice between Israel and the neighbouring Arab countries; can you imagine using this definition to introduce yourself to someone?); and my favourite, “Arabs of Inside,” which would evoke a puzzled response from anyone outside this mess. The explanation for all these names is as pitiful as it is useless: the refusal of some Arabs to recognise Israel and to call it by its name – another case of sticking one’s

head in the sand.

I thought about Israel’s definition of itself as Jewish and democratic, and wondered, what if you’re not Jewish? The answer seemed to be, well, you should leave.

Eventually I did. I moved to Ramallah in the West Bank, part of the Occupied Territories. I soon realised I’d jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire. It took a while for this to register. My initial feelings on visiting Ramallah were euphoric. My heart fluttered along with the Palestinian flag that I saw on rooftops and in front of official buildings. I gazed at the government ministries with a sense of pride; here were elements of Palestinian sovereignty, here was a fragment of Palestine, all was not lost! There were no Hebrew signs, people spoke Arabic and were friendly and welcoming. It was almost like a different country.

Despite all this, the reality of Israeli military control and Palestinian dispossession is much more blatant here. It’s evident in the humiliation involved in waiting in endless queues at the checkpoints, in the violent clashes that happen every day, in the sprawling, illegal Jewish settlements gobbling up our land, in the frustration of movement restrictions, in the constant feeling of insecurity. The Palestinians are doing Israel a colossal favour by calling this an occupation. It’s not a temporary state of affairs, but a systematic dispossession just like that of 1948, only at a slower pace.

For Palestinians, the choice between life in Israel and life in the West Bank is a choice between two systems of Israeli aggression, different only in their manifestations. Both are deadly and soul-crushing. Most Palestinians are losing hope that there is a way out of this mess.

CT

Fida Jiryis is a Palestinian writer based in Ramallah. This essay, first published in the London Review of Books – www.lrb.co.uk – is adapted from one in Kingdom of Olives and Ash, to be published by Fourth Estate

The reality of Israeli military control and Palestinian dispossession is much more blatant here. It’s evident in the humiliation involved in waiting in endless queues at the checkpoints, in the violent clashes that happen every day, in the sprawling, illegal Jewish settlements gobbling up our land

When idiots reign

Donald Trump embodies the essence of this decayed, intellectually bankrupt and immoral world. And we are his victims, writes **Chris Hedges**

It is inevitable that for the final show we vomited a grotesque figure like Trump. Europeans and Americans have spent five centuries conquering, plundering, exploiting and polluting the earth in the name of human progress

The idiots take over in the final days of crumbling civilisations. Idiot generals wage endless, unwinnable wars that bankrupt the nation. Idiot economists call for reducing taxes for the rich and cutting social service programmes for the poor, and project economic growth on the basis of myth. Idiot industrialists poison the water, the soil and the air, slash jobs and depress wages. Idiot bankers gamble on self-created financial bubbles and impose crippling debt peonage on the citizens. Idiot journalists and public intellectuals pretend despotism is democracy. Idiot intelligence operatives orchestrate the overthrow of foreign governments to create lawless enclaves that give rise to enraged fanatics. Idiot professors, “experts” and “specialists” busy themselves with unintelligible jargon and arcane theory that buttresses the policies of the rulers. Idiot entertainers and producers create lurid spectacles of sex, gore and fantasy.

There is a familiar checklist for extinction. We are ticking off every item on it.

The idiots know only one word – “more.” They are unencumbered by common sense. They hoard wealth and resources until workers cannot make a living and the infrastructure collapses. They live in privileged compounds where they eat chocolate cake and order missile strikes. They see the state as a projection of their vanity. The Ro-

man, Mayan, French, Habsburg, Ottoman, Romanov, Wilhelmine, Pahlavi and Soviet dynasties crumbled because the whims and obsessions of their ruling idiots were law.

Donald Trump is the face of our collective idiocy. He is what lies behind the mask of our professed civility and rationality – a sputtering, narcissistic, blood-thirsty megalomaniac. He wields armies and fleets against the wretched of the earth, blithely ignores the catastrophic human misery caused by global warming, pillages on behalf of global oligarchs and at night sits slack-jawed in front of a television set before opening his “beautiful” Twitter account. He is our version of the Roman emperor Nero, who allocated vast state expenditures to attain magical powers, the Chinese emperor Qin Shi Huang, who funded repeated expeditions to a mythical island of immortals to bring back the potion that would give him eternal life, and a decayed Russian royalty that sat around reading tarot cards and attending séances as their nation was decimated by war and revolution brewed in the streets.

Five centuries of devastation

This moment in history marks the end of a long, sad tale of greed and murder by the white races. It is inevitable that for the fi-



FACE OF OUR COLLECTIVE IDIOCY: Donald Trump wields armies and fleets against the wretched of the earth.

Photo: Tiburi

nal show we vomited a grotesque figure like Trump. Europeans and Americans have spent five centuries conquering, plundering, exploiting and polluting the earth in the name of human progress. They used their technological superiority to create the most efficient killing machines on the planet, directed against anyone and anything, especially indigenous cultures, that stood in their way. They stole and hoarded the planet's wealth and resources. They believed that this orgy of blood and gold would never end, and they still believe it. They do not understand that the dark ethic of ceaseless capitalist and imperialist expansion is dooming the exploiters as well as the exploited. But even as we stand on the

culmination of our evolutionary past, on the cusp of extinction we lack the intelligence and imagination to break free from our evolutionary past.

The more the warning signs are palpable – rising temperatures, global financial meltdowns, mass human migrations, endless wars, poisoned ecosystems, rampant corruption among the ruling class – the more we turn to those who chant, either through idiocy or cynicism, the mantra that what worked in the past will work in the future, that progress is inevitable. Factual evidence, since it is an impediment to what we desire, is banished. The taxes of corporations and the rich, who have deindustrialised the country and turned many of our cities into wastelands, are

Even as we stand on the cusp of extinction we lack the intelligence and imagination to break free from our evolutionary past

Magical Thinking

Magical thinking is not limited to the beliefs and practices of pre-modern cultures. It defines the ideology of capitalism. Quotas and projected sales can always be met. Profits can always be raised. Growth is inevitable. The impossible is always possible

cut, and regulations are slashed to bring back the supposed golden era of the 1950s for white American workers. Public lands are opened up to the oil and gas industry as rising carbon emissions doom our species. Declining crop yields stemming from heat waves and droughts are ignored. War is the principal business of the kleptocratic state.

Walter Benjamin wrote in 1940 amid the rise of European fascism and looming world war: “A Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.”

Magical thinking

Magical thinking is not limited to the beliefs and practices of pre-modern cultures. It defines the ideology of capitalism. Quotas and projected sales can always be met. Profits can always be raised. Growth is inevitable. The impossible is always possible. Human societies, if they bow before the dictates of the marketplace, will be ushered into capitalist paradise. It is only a question of having the right attitude and the right technique.

When capitalism thrives, we are assured, we thrive. The merging of the self with the capitalist collective has robbed us of our agency, creativity, capacity for self-

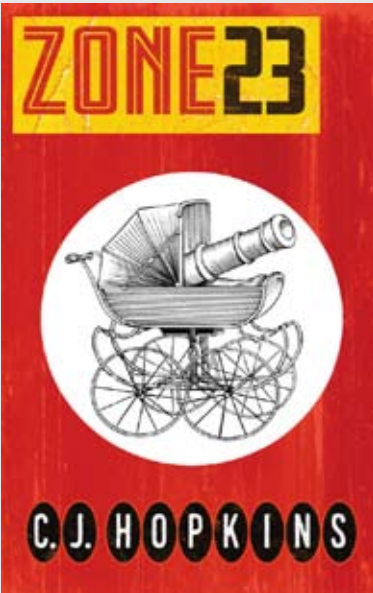
reflection and moral autonomy. We define our worth not by our independence or our character but by the material standards set by capitalism – personal wealth, brands, status and career advancement. We are moulded into a compliant and repressed collective.

This mass conformity is characteristic of totalitarian and authoritarian states. It is the Disneyfication of America, the land of eternally happy thoughts and positive attitudes. And when magical thinking does not work, we are told, and often accept, that we are the problem. We must have more faith. We must envision what we want. We must try harder. The system is never to blame. We failed it. It did not fail us.

All of our systems of information, from self-help gurus and Hollywood to political monstrosities like Trump, sell us this snake oil. We blind ourselves to impending collapse. Our retreat into self-delusion is a career opportunity for charlatans who tell us what we want to hear. The magical thinking they espouse is a form of infantilism. It discredits facts and realities that defy the glowing cant of slogans such as “Make America great again.” Reality is banished for relentless and baseless optimism.

Half the country may live in poverty, our civil liberties may be taken from us, militarised police may murder unarmed citizens in the streets and we may run the world’s largest prison system and murderous war machine, but all these truths are studiously ignored. Trump embodies the essence of this decayed, intellectually bankrupt and immoral world. He is its natural expression. He is the king of the idiots. We are his victims. **CT**

.....
Chris Hedges has reported from more than 50 countries and has worked for The Christian Science Monitor and The New York Times, for which he was a foreign correspondent for 15 years. This essay was first published at www.truthdig.com



ZONE 23

C.J. Hopkins

A darkly comic dystopian satire about being human, all-too-human, featuring two of the most endearing, emotionally messed-up Anti-Social anti-heroes that ever rebelled against the forces of Normality

Published by Snoggsworthy, Swaine & Cormorant Paperbacks, a division of Consent Factory Publishing

Buy it at Amazon.com – \$15.99 (US and Canada)

https://www.amazon.com/Zone-23-C-J-Hopkins/dp/3000555269/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8

Seventy years ago, on 1 January 1947, the UK coal industry was nationalised. It is difficult to believe that an industry which then employed nearly 700,000 miners in 970 pits is no more.

The pits have all gone but something remarkable is happening.

An industry which over two centuries witnessed bitter industrial disputes, disasters and the creation of rich, diverse cultures in the different coal mining communities continues to inspire through new films, paintings, photographs, books, plays, dance and music.

This is the focus of *The Flame Still Burns: The Creative Power of Coal* which has full colour illustrations and specially commissioned chapters.

www.cpb.org.uk



ISBN 978-1-898240-09-9

Price £9.99

THE FLAME STILL BURNS

The Creative Power of Coal

Edited by Granville Williams

In The Picture



Eric Massheder. Saturday, March 8, 1975. Vulcan Street, Leeds. If Eric leaves his job, he loses the house, which is tied to the dripping refinery where he has worked for the past 21 years.



Mr and Mrs Hudson, Wednesday, August 14, 1974. Seacroft Green, Leeds. I liked the way the ladder is propping up the wall. They have just moved into a new shop on the same spot.

Photographs © Peter Mitchell

The view from Mars

We were watching them, but were the aliens also watching us? And if so, what did they see? **Peter Mitchell** has the answers

For a brief time after its Vietnam war debacle, the US government found the search for life on other planets more palatable than the killing of civilians on Earth. Its most successful operation of this post-'Nam period, the Viking 2 Mission of 1976, involved dropping observation vehicles on the surface of Mars to photograph the alien landscape and seek evidence of little green men – and women. However, the many thousands of photographs beamed from Mars to Earth revealed no buildings, no canals, no ruined dwellings, no life; just a barren, red-dusted, landscape.

Meanwhile, the conspiracy theorists,

as usual, claimed the government was lying: Yes, they ranted, there *were* aliens on Mars (perhaps they were hiding when the US dropped by), and they had commissioned their own survey of Earth. This far-fetched revelation caught the imagination of English photographer Peter Mitchell, who wondered what images a Martian travelling around the mysterious Planet Leeds with a camera might send back to its home. The result was a groundbreaking exhibition, **A New Refutation of the Viking Space Mission** – first displayed in 1979 – in which Mitchell interspersed photographs of Mars from the Viking Mission with his own shots of the urban landscape of the industrial North of England, mainly showing people outside their homes and workplaces, usually staring curiously at the camera.

Now, 38 years later, following a reprise display in Arles, France, that exhibition is

A NEW REFUTATION OF THE VIKING 4 SPACE MISSION

Peter Mitchell

RRB Publishing, Bristol, England – £35
www.rrbphotobooks.com





Mrs McCarthy and her daughter, Saturday, June 7, 1975. Sanley Road, London. Not only nature's remedy, but also purveyors of "certain things" in the discreet manner.

In The Picture

Photographs © Peter Mitchell



Keith, Sandra and the kids. Sunday, June 25, 1978. Closing time, Portland Street, Sheffield. There was a postcard on the wall showing two well-endowed females . . . One says, "Is he going to focus?" and her friend replies (looking horrified), "I hope not."

being repeated in Britain, and the images have been gathered by Bristol-based RRB Publishing into a book of the same title.

It's easy to understand the surprise Mitchell's Martians must have felt when they 'landed' on Planet Leeds, for that is the feeling his 40-year-old photographs invoke today. They portray a vastly different world to ours: we've become the aliens, peering incredulously into a strange world where there are no credit cards, no

instant access to cash, no iPhones or iPads, no internet, no giant TV sets. Those things we now take for granted were part of a rose-tinted utopian dream which is now rapidly transforming into a dystopian nightmare.

The diverse and varied workplaces of the '70s are also startling, as the bulk of British industry was either exported years ago to low-wage third worlds or simply disappeared. What happened to the spoon factories, the hay dealers, the herbalists, the dye works, the scale &



Dirty Bookshop, Sheffield, 1978. I went back when it was open, and pictures of dirty bookshop men are definitely out. I've always thought there was something nasty about open-crotch panties anyway.

weight makers, and the woodturners? What became of Mr and Mrs Hudson's precariously-balanced newsagent shop (cover), Mr Massheder's dripping refinery (see page 16), or the Rugby Cabinet Co Ltd? When was music last heard blasting from the Sir Yank Henry Disco in Leeds? And what, I wonder, happened to South Yorkshire Books (above), a long-unlamented dirty bookshop, tucked away in Sheffield. Typical of the sleazy establishments that were once relegated to backstreets, where custom-

ers would cast a guilty glance around before entering, hoping their neighbours and friends wouldn't be in sight, this store's demise would have been enthusiastically welcomed by the local Mother Grundies. But I wonder what they'd think of the shop's brazen successors, the insidious iPorn emporiums, whose merchandise would, 40 years ago, have invited a heavy-booted invasion by the local constabulary's porn squad and seriously-long jail sentences for the sellers.

In The Picture



Ready Mixed Concrete Ltd. Monday, July 18, 1977. Ellis Road, Leeds. This shot took two hours. Cleaning the truck, removing the oil drums, breaking out the new overalls, etc. Management liked the picture but regretted the truck door was open . . . the firm's name didn't show.

Yes, the past was grimy and often tough, but it doesn't take a great stretch of the imagination to see why an alien teleported from Planet Leeds of the 1970s to the present might prefer the old days. The North of England never realised the dream of that previous generation: Optimism metamorphosed into gloom and despair, as well-paying jobs became zero-hour contracts, social services were shattered; and town centres decayed, their retailers replaced by loan sharks, betting shops and charity stores.

What changes will that Martian explorer find 40-years hence? It seems, he – and we – may not have to wait that long to find out. NASA's website tells us the US is, "working to send humans to Mars in the 2030s . . . Orion will carry astronauts into deep space. We'll also conduct a robotic Mars sampling mission, and test techniques for landing on and living on the Red Planet."

Hopefully, those wily Martians are already planning their return to Planet Leeds. Stay tuned. – **Tony Sutton**

Theresa May's narrative of British victimhood

Ian Dunt explains how the Conservative party lost contact with reality when it expropriated the crazy policies of the far right

One thing is clear after this month's UK council elections – the Conservative party has taken the Ukip vote wholesale.

Ukip is dead. But in reality it is more powerful than ever. It has transcended its physical body and its soul has entered the Conservative party. Its spiritual victory required the end of its physical form.

This has been happening for a long time. Theresa May opened the last Conservative Party conference by announcing a hard Brexit outside the single market and the customs union. Then the party unveiled plans to phase out foreign doctors, cut down on foreign students, jail landlords unless they check tenants' residency papers and "name and shame" firms for hiring foreign staff. The prime minister ended the gathering with an attack on "citizens of nowhere."

Since then, May has cultivated the nativist vote assiduously. She has nurtured the narrative of an enemy within – sometimes the Lords, sometimes Labour or the Lib Dems, sometimes judges, sometimes citizens of nowhere, sometimes journalists or liberal elitists – who are trying to stop Brexit, but who, more than that, are fundamentally incompatible with the reality of what it is to be British and decent and hard-working. She has encouraged talk of "the will of the people," as if the nation spoke with one single voice on all matters – a harking back to

a 1950s when everyone came together and thought the same and looked the same. She has promoted the idea of shadowy foreign forces out to undermine the UK. She has traded in a narrative of imagined British victimhood.

This is straight out the Ukip handbook. It is not just the policies she has stolen, but the tone, the storyline, the emotional tenor of how Ukip thinks about itself and its country.

This has proved extremely beneficial to May. She has united the right under Brexit. But that is a domestic recalibration of support. It has no contact with reality. The real danger does not come now, but when that type of vision clashes with the real world. Because the key aspect of Ukip's policies and their narratives remain: They are wrong and they are mad.

Critics of the approach May has taken to Brexit may be aghast at these results, but they should remember that May has achieved it merely by extending the period in which she can avoid reality. She has now managed to expand this period directly into the Article 50 period – a deeply irresponsible waste of limited negotiating availability which she has not been at all pulled up on due to the obedience of the Brexit-supporting press. But reality is coming on June 9. The nature of the problem May is facing has not changed, there is no evidence she is up

It is not just the policies Theresa May has stolen, but the tone, the storyline, the emotional tenor of how Ukip thinks about itself and its country



Theresa May

Caricature: DonkeyHotey – www.flickr.com/photos/donkeyhotey/28452193475/in/photolist-JpNku8-KmdVRV

The bad deal, which is all Europe is prepared to offer, will make May look weak and ineffectual, beaten by Brussels bureaucrats on the budget, on EU citizens' rights, on trade arrangements, on the nature of the transitional deal

to handling it, and the Ukip image she has adopted will actually make it harder to triumph.

May has an impossible task in these talks. She needs to show they will be a success, but Europe must show they are not. So Britain faces either no-deal or a bad deal. There are no other options. Even the Brexiters barely pretend otherwise. Their rhetoric was swung very quickly from a world of endless promises to one in which they daily insist how comfortable they are with WTO terms.

The bad deal, which is all Europe is prepared to offer, will make May look weak and ineffectual, beaten by Brussels bureaucrats on the budget, on EU citizens' rights, on trade arrangements, on the nature of the transitional deal. The no-deal outcome would be catastrophic, a national humiliation on the scale of Suez.

Either way, she has promised a lot and shown no ability to deliver on it. The British-victimhood-against-tyrannical-Europe shtick may be doing her wonders at home – and God help us, we should ask ourselves what happened that this type of sub-tinpot dictatorship babble now makes for a compelling message in this country – but all it does is poison our partners against us while adding seats to a majority which, despite what she says, will provide no further leverage in negotiations.

Even if it didn't put backs up, her Ukip-inspired siege mentality rhetoric remains strategically inept. The Europeans leaked a lunchtime chat to a German newspaper. Big deal. Worse things happen in Westminster by Monday afternoon. The leak – far from being intended to affect the UK election – was sent to a German newspaper and not

picked up on until a British reporter read and tweeted it. May had a range of possible responses, but she went full nuclear, standing outside Downing Street warning of a foreign plot against Britain.

So what does she do next time there's a leak? Pull the foreign plot angle again? There's no higher level of rhetoric to go for. She has simultaneously aggravated her partners and limited her future responses. And that is just one of the strategic errors she has committed before talks even begin. The emotional victimhood rhetoric of the Ukip right has proved to be highly seductive to the British electorate, but it is totally counter-productive when it comes to actual trade talks.

Whether it's no-deal or a bad deal, the

hope and faith May is currently amassing is about to be pulverised. Where does it go then? That is what critics need to ask themselves. The question is no longer what happens on June 8. It is what happens when a Ukip prime minister meets a better prepared, better organised, better briefed negotiating partner who deals in real-world outcomes rather than nationalist bedtime stories.

Ukip is effectively in power. We are about to find out just how catastrophically unhelpful its programme really is. **CT**

.....
*Ian Dunt is the editor of www.politics.co.uk.
His book – *Brexit: What The Hell Happens Now?* – is available from Canbury Press -
www.canburypress.com*

The emotional victimhood rhetoric of the Ukip right has proved to be highly seductive to the British electorate, but it is totally counter-productive when it comes to actual trade talks

Get your **FREE** subscription to **ColdType**

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



How fake conservatives will destroy Britain

If Theresa May wins the election, she will be empowered to pulp all that real patriots know is precious and beautiful about this country, writes **George Monbiot**

Capital knows only the future, never the past. It rushes towards the prospect of future gains. All that lies in its path must be swept away, regardless of the value people might attach to it

Conservatism takes three main forms. Inclusive conservatism seeks to protect objects of value for the benefit of everyone. These might include great urban vistas, or national parks, or wildlife, or works of art, or great institutions, such as the NHS and the BBC. This is the conservatism governments invoke when a nation goes to war.

Exclusive conservatism, by contrast, resists change that would assist the great majority, on behalf of a privileged elite. This is the form – fighting the universal franchise, workers' rights, progressive taxation and the welfare state – that has prevailed in the United Kingdom for most of its history.

Then there is a third form, which calls itself conservatism but is nothing of the kind: tearing down everything to clear a path for capital. This is the form that prevails today in Britain, in the United States and across much of the world. Its mission is the destruction of the norms, the values, the institutions, the public properties and the public protections that impede the scope for profit-taking.

Capital knows only the future, never the past. It rushes towards the prospect of future gains. All that lies in its path must be swept away, regardless of the value people might attach to it. Modern conservative governments see their mission as facilitating this process. If Theresa May's govern-

ment is re-elected, its opportunities for doing so will exceed those that Donald Trump is discovering in America.

The reason is as follows. In converting European law into UK law through the so-called great repeal bill, the government will grant itself the power, as its white paper states, "to correct the statute book where necessary." "Correcting the statute book" will come to be seen as one of the great political euphemisms of our time.

The corrections will take the form of secondary legislation, which means using something called a statutory instrument. The government estimates that 800 to 1,000 of these instruments will be required – on top of the usual total – and their impact will be profound, as they are dealing with huge issues. In practice, there is almost nothing parliament can do to challenge them. As the Brexit analyst Ian Dunt points out, the bill is "shaping up to be the single biggest executive power grab in Britain's postwar history."

Statutory instruments cannot be amended. Due to a combination of government control over the parliamentary timetable and a number of arcane and archaic procedures, hardly any have been blocked in the 70 years of their existence. Already their power is freely abused. They are supposed to be reserved for technical matters: straightening out laws in ways that don't alter our

relationship to the state. Increasingly, they are used to sneak more significant changes through parliament. As the journalist Jane Fae reports, 1,900 a year were used, on average, by the last Labour government (a high enough number, which probably incorporated plenty of abuses); under the Conservatives this has risen to more than 3,000.

After promising “an outright ban” on fracking under national parks, David Cameron’s government reversed the promise by smuggling a statutory instrument through parliament. This is likely to set the pattern, in a new Conservative government, for “correcting the statute book,” not least because, May’s administration explains, parliamentary scrutiny will have to be “balanced” by “the speed of this process.” Dunt observes that “nearly half a century of workers’ rights, environmental standards, health and safety laws, consumer protections, animal rights, and countless other areas are now at the mercy of Conservative ministers, who can use a rainy Friday afternoon, when everyone is down the pub, to finally start rubbing out bits of law they never liked.”

The promise of Brexit was that we would regain sovereignty over our affairs. But May’s plans will achieve the opposite. Sovereignty will reside in the executive, while parliamentary scrutiny is curtailed. Nothing will be safe from what modern conservatives gleefully describe as creative destruction.

We can see where this is going. The billionaire press pours scorn on environmental and workplace legislation. The National Farmers’ Union, in its election lobbying document, demands that the neonicotinoid pesticides linked to the wiping out of bees and other wildlife – and currently banned by EU law – can be used here again. The government sees planning laws and wildlife havens as impediments to business. It uses every possible excuse not to act on air pollution: any concession must be extracted with the pickaxe of European law. Prominent Conservatives ridicule those who try to protect the character and charms of the

nation as “the Green Blob.”

In pursuit of ever closer union with Trump’s America, the government is likely to offer up any national standards and peculiarities it deems necessary to secure a trade deal. This is why it chose as trade secretary Liam Fox, who represents in its purest form the Conservative urge to smash the crockery.

I remember being struck by the thought – when lying with a group of dreadlocked anarchists at the foot of an iron age hill fort in 1994, in the path of an earth mover commissioned by John Major’s government – that we were the conservatives and they were the destructives. We were seeking to defend the fabric of the nation while they, with their road schemes joining the dots between scheduled ancient monuments, chalk downlands, water meadows and woodlands, were trying to pulp it. They claimed to be patriots, but we loved this country more than they did.

There is no incompatibility between an inclusive conservatism and the defence of public investment, public services, workers’ rights, gender equality and the interests of ethnic minorities. I find it hard to see how anyone can love people without also loving the living world that gave rise to us, or can love our civilisation without loving what remains of those that came before.

If Theresa May wins, hers will not be a normal Conservative government, even by the weird and ever-shifting standards of 21st century normality. Through the powers she grants herself, it threatens to become a maelstrom of destruction on behalf of the party’s funders and associates. Unlikely as our prospects are, we must do all we can to stop her from regaining office. Conservatives arise, and defend your country from those who abuse your name. **CT**

.....
George Monbiot’s latest book, *How Did We Get Into This Mess?*, is published by Verso. This article was first published in the *Guardian* newspaper. Monbiot’s web site is www.monbiot.com

The promise of Brexit was that we would regain sovereignty over our affairs. But Theresa May’s plans will achieve the opposite

Forbidden questions for the US media

Andrew J. Bacevich highlights twenty-four key issues that neither the Washington elite nor the US media consider worth their bother

As practiced in the United States, with certain honourable (and hence unprofitable) exceptions, journalism remains superficial, voyeuristic, and governed by the attention span of a two-year-old

Donald Trump's election has elicited impassioned affirmations of a renewed commitment to unvarnished truth-telling from the prestige media. The common theme: you know you can't trust him, but trust us to keep dogging him on your behalf. The New York Times has even unveiled a portentous new promotional slogan: "The truth is now more important than ever." For its part, the Washington Post grimly warns that "democracy dies in darkness," and is offering itself as a source of illumination now that the rotund figure of the 45th president has produced the political equivalent of a total eclipse of the sun. Meanwhile, National Public Radio fundraising campaigns are sounding an increasingly panicky note: give, listener, lest you be personally responsible for the demise of the Republic that we are bravely fighting to save from extinction.

If only it were so. How wonderful it would be if President Trump's ascendancy had coincided with a revival of hard-hitting, deep-dive, no-holds-barred American journalism. Alas, that's hardly the case. True, the big media outlets are demonstrating both energy and enterprise in exposing the ineptitude, inconsistency, and dubious ethical standards, as well as outright lies and fake news, that are already emerging as Trump era signatures. That said, pointing out that the president has (again) uttered a falsehood, claimed credit for a nonexistent achievement, or abandoned

some position to which he had previously sworn fealty requires something less than the sleuthing talents of a Sherlock Holmes. As for beating up on poor Sean Spicer for his latest sequence of gaffes – well, that's more akin to sadism than reporting.

Apart from a commendable determination to discomfit Trump and members of his inner circle (select military figures excepted, at least for now), journalism remains pretty much what it was before November 8 last year: personalities built up only to be torn down; fads and novelties discovered, celebrated, then mocked; "extraordinary" stories of ordinary people granted 15 seconds of fame only to once again be consigned to oblivion – all served with a side dish of that day's quota of suffering, devastation, and carnage. These remain journalism's stock-in-trade. As practiced in the United States, with certain honourable (and hence unprofitable) exceptions, journalism remains superficial, voyeuristic, and governed by the attention span of a two-year-old.

As a result, all those editors, reporters, columnists, and talking heads who characterise their labours as "now more important than ever" ill-serve the public they profess to inform and enlighten. Rather than clearing the air, they befog it further. If anything, the media's current obsession with Donald Trump – his every utterance or tweet treated as "breaking news!" – just provides one additional excuse for highlighting trivia, while slighting

issues that deserve far more attention than they currently receive.

To illustrate the point, let me cite some examples of national security issues that presently receive short shrift or are ignored altogether by those parts of the Fourth Estate said to help set the nation's political agenda. To put it another way: Hey, Big Media, here are two dozen matters to which you're not giving faintly adequate thought and attention.

1. Accomplishing the "mission" – Since the immediate aftermath of World War II, the United States has been committed to defending key allies in Europe and East Asia. Not long thereafter, US security guarantees were extended to the Middle East as well. Under what circumstances can Americans expect nations in these regions to assume responsibility for managing their own affairs? To put it another way, when (if ever) might US forces actually come home? And, if it is incumbent upon the United States to police vast swaths of the planet in perpetuity, how should momentous changes in the international order – the rise of China, for example, or accelerating climate change – affect the US approach to doing so?

2. American military supremacy – The United States military is undoubtedly the world's finest. It's also far and away the most generously funded, with policymakers offering US troops no shortage of opportunities to practice their craft. So why doesn't this great military ever win anything? Or put another way, why in recent decades have those forces been unable to accomplish Washington's stated wartime objectives? Why has the now 15-year-old war on terror failed to result in even a single real success anywhere in the Greater Middle East? Could it be that we've taken the wrong approach? What should we be doing differently?

3. America's empire of bases – The US military today garrisons the planet in a fashion without historical precedent. Successive administrations, regardless of party, justify and perpetuate this policy by insisting that positioning US forces in distant lands fosters peace, stability, and security. In the present

century, however, perpetuating this practice has visibly had the opposite effect. In the eyes of many of those called upon to "host" American bases, the permanent presence of such forces smacks of occupation. They resist. Why should US policymakers expect otherwise?

4. Supporting the troops – In present-day America, expressing reverence for those who serve in uniform is something akin to a religious obligation. Everyone professes to cherish America's "warriors." Yet such bountiful, if superficial, expressions of regard camouflage a growing gap between those who serve and those who applaud from the sidelines. Our present-day military system, based on the misnamed All-Volunteer Force, is neither democratic nor effective. Why has discussion and debate about its deficiencies not found a place among the nation's political priorities?

5. Prerogatives of the commander-in-chief – Are there any military actions that the president of the United States may not order on his own authority? If so, what are they? Bit by bit, decade by decade, Congress has abdicated its assigned role in authorising war. Today, it merely rubber stamps what presidents decide to do (or simply stays mum). Who does this deference to an imperial presidency benefit? Have US policies thereby become more prudent, enlightened, and successful?

6. Assassin-in-chief – A policy of assassination, secretly implemented under the aegis of the CIA during the early Cold War, yielded few substantive successes. When the secrets were revealed, however, the US government suffered considerable embarrassment, so much so that presidents foreswore politically motivated murder. After 9/11, however, Washington returned to the assassination business in a big way and on a global scale, using drones. Today, the only secret is the sequence of names on the current presidential hit list, euphemistically known as the White House "disposition matrix." But does assassination actually advance US interests (or does it merely recruit replacements for the terrorists it liquidates)? How can we measure its costs, whether direct or indirect? What dangers and

Does assassination actually advance US interests (or does it merely recruit replacements for the terrorists it liquidates)?

Searching For Truth

What purpose is served by indulging the pretence that Israel does not have nuclear weapons?

vulnerabilities does this practice invite?

7. The war formerly known as the “Global War on Terrorism” – What precisely is Washington’s present strategy for defeating violent jihadism? What sequence of planned actions or steps is expected to yield success? If no such strategy exists, why is that the case? How is it that the absence of strategy – not to mention an agreed upon definition of “success” – doesn’t even qualify for discussion here?

8. The campaign formerly known as Operation Enduring Freedom – The conflict commonly referred to as the Afghanistan War is now the longest in US history – having lasted longer than the Civil War, World War I, and World War II combined. What is the Pentagon’s plan for concluding that conflict? When might Americans expect it to end? On what terms?

9. The Gulf – Americans once believed that their prosperity and way of life depended on having assured access to Persian Gulf oil. Today, that is no longer the case. The United States is once more an oil exporter. Available and accessible reserves of oil and natural gas in North America are far greater than was once believed. Yet the assumption that the Persian Gulf still qualifies as crucial to American national security persists in Washington. Why?

10. Hyping terrorism – Each year terrorist attacks kill far fewer Americans than do auto accidents, drug overdoses, or even lightning strikes. Yet in the allocation of government resources, preventing terrorist attacks takes precedence over preventing all three of the others combined. Why is that?

11. Deaths that matter and deaths that don’t – Why do terrorist attacks that kill a handful of Europeans command infinitely more American attention than do terrorist attacks that kill far larger numbers of Arabs? A terrorist attack that kills citizens of France or Belgium elicits from the United States heartfelt expressions of sympathy and solidarity. A terrorist attack that kills Egyptians or Iraqis elicits shrugs. Why the difference? To what extent does race provide the answer to that question?

12. Israeli nukes – What purpose is served

by indulging the pretence that Israel does not have nuclear weapons?

13. Peace in the Holy Land – What purpose is served by indulging illusions that a “two-state solution” offers a plausible resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? As remorselessly as white settlers once encroached upon territory inhabited by Native American tribes, Israeli settlers expand their presence in the occupied territories year by year. As they do, the likelihood of creating a viable Palestinian state becomes ever more improbable. To pretend otherwise is the equivalent of thinking that one day President Trump might prefer the rusticity of Camp David to the glitz of Mar-a-Lago.

14. Merchandizing death – When it comes to arms sales, there is no need to Make America Great Again. The US ranks number one by a comfortable margin, with long-time allies Saudi Arabia and Israel leading recipients of those arms. Each year, the Saudis (per capita gross domestic product \$20,000) purchase hundreds of millions of dollars of US weapons. Israel (per capita gross domestic product \$38,000) gets several billion dollars worth of such weaponry annually courtesy of the American taxpayer. If the Saudis pay for US arms, why shouldn’t the Israelis? They can certainly afford to do so.

15. Our friends the Saudis (I) – Fifteen of the 19 hijackers on September 11, 2001, were Saudis. What does that fact signify?

16. Our friends the Saudis (II) – If indeed Saudi Arabia and Iran are competing to determine which nation will enjoy the upper hand in the Persian Gulf, why should the United States favour Saudi Arabia? In what sense do Saudi values align more closely with American values than do Iranian ones?

17. Our friends the Pakistanis – Pakistan behaves like a rogue state. It is a nuclear weapons proliferator. It supports the Taliban. For years, it provided sanctuary to Osama bin Laden. Yet US policymakers treat Pakistan as if it were an ally. Why? In what ways do US and Pakistani interests or values coincide? If there are none, why not say so?

18. Free-loading Europeans – Why can't Europe, "whole and free," its population and economy considerably larger than Russia's, defend itself? It's altogether commendable that US policymakers should express support for Polish independence and root for the Baltic republics. But how does it make sense for the United States to care more about the well-being of people living in Eastern Europe than do people living in Western Europe?

19. The mother of all "special relationships" – The United States and the United Kingdom have a "special relationship" dating from the days of Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. Apart from keeping the Public Broadcasting Service supplied with costume dramas and stories featuring eccentric detectives, what is the rationale for that partnership today? Why should US relations with Great Britain, a fading power, be any more "special" than its relations with a rising power like India? Why should the bonds connecting Americans and Britons be any more intimate than those connecting Americans and Mexicans? Why does a republic now approaching the 241st anniversary of its independence still need a "mother country"?

20. The old nuclear disarmament razz-matazz – American presidents routinely cite their hope for the worldwide elimination of nuclear weapons. Yet the US maintains nuclear strike forces on full alert, has embarked on a costly and comprehensive trillion-dollar modernisation of its nuclear arsenal, and even refuses to adopt a no-first-use posture when it comes to nuclear war. The truth is that the United States will consider surrendering its nukes only after every other nation on the planet has done so first. How does American nuclear hypocrisy affect the prospects for global nuclear disarmament or even simply for the non-proliferation of such weaponry?

21. Double standards (I) – American policymakers take it for granted that their country's sphere of influence is global, which, in turn, provides the rationale for the deployment of US military forces to scores of countries. Yet when it comes to nations like China,

Russia, or Iran, Washington takes the position that spheres of influence are obsolete and a concept that should no longer be applicable to the practice of statecraft. So Chinese, Russian, and Iranian forces should remain where they belong – in China, Russia, and Iran. To stray beyond that constitutes a provocation, as well as a threat to global peace and order. Why should these other nations play by American rules? Why shouldn't similar rules apply to the United States?

22. Double standards (II) – Washington claims that it supports and upholds international law. Yet when international law gets in the way of what American policymakers want to do, they disregard it. They start wars, violate the sovereignty of other nations, and authorise agents of the United States to kidnap, imprison, torture, and kill. They do these things with impunity, only forced to reverse their actions on the rare occasions when US courts find them illegal. Why should other powers treat international norms as sacrosanct since the United States does so only when convenient?

23. Double standards (III) – The United States condemns the indiscriminate killing of civilians in wartime. Yet over the last three-quarters of a century, it killed civilians regularly and often on a massive scale. By what logic, since the 1940s, has the killing of Germans, Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese, Laotians, Cambodians, Afghans, and others by US air power been any less reprehensible than the Syrian government's use of "barrel bombs" to kill Syrians today? On what basis should Americans accept Pentagon claims that, when civilians are killed these days by US forces, the acts are invariably accidental, whereas Syrian forces kill civilians intentionally and out of malice? Why exclude incompetence or the fog of war as explanations? And why, for instance, does the United States regularly gloss over or ignore altogether the noncombatants that Saudi forces (with US assistance) are routinely killing in Yemen?

24. Moral obligations – When confronted with some egregious violation of human

Washington claims that it supports and upholds international law. Yet when international law gets in the way of what American policymakers want to do, they disregard it

Searching For Truth

.....
Andrew J. Bacevich
is the author of
*America's War for
the Greater Middle
East: A Military
History*, now out
in paperback. His
next book will be an
interpretive history
of the United States
from the end of the
Cold War to the
election of Donald
Trump. This essay
was
first published at
www.tomdispatch.com

rights, members of the chattering classes frequently express an urge for the United States to “do something.” Holocaust analogies sprout like dandelions. Newspaper columnists recycle copy first used when Cambodians were slaughtering other Cambodians en masse or whenever Hutus and Tutsis went at it. Proponents of action – typically advocating military intervention – argue that the United States has a moral obligation to aid those victimised by injustice or cruelty anywhere on Earth. But what determines the pecking order of such moral obligations? Which comes first, a responsibility to redress the crimes of others or a responsibility to redress crimes committed by Americans? Who has a greater claim to US assistance, Syrians suffering today under the boot of Bashar al-Assad or Iraqis, their country shattered by the US invasion of 2003? Where do the Vietnamese fit into the queue? How about the Filipinos, brutally denied independence and forcibly incorporated into an American empire as the 19th-century ended? Or African-Americans, whose ancestors were imported as slaves? Or, for that matter, dispossessed and disinherited Native Americans? Is there a statute of limitations that applies to

moral obligations? And if not, shouldn't those who have waited longest for justice or reparations receive priority attention?

Let me suggest that any one of these two dozen issues – none seriously covered, discussed, or debated in the American media or in the political mainstream – bears more directly on the wellbeing of the United States and our prospects for avoiding global conflict than anything Donald Trump may have said or done during his first 100 days as president. Collectively, they define the core of the national security challenges that presently confront this country, even as they languish on the periphery of American politics.

How much damage Donald Trump's presidency wreaks before it ends remains to be seen. Yet he himself is a transient phenomenon. To allow his pratfalls and shenanigans to divert attention from matters sure to persist when he finally departs the stage is to make a grievous error. It may well be that, as the Times insists, the truth is now more important than ever. If so, finding the truth requires looking in the right places and asking the right questions. **CT**

THE BEST OF FRONTLINE

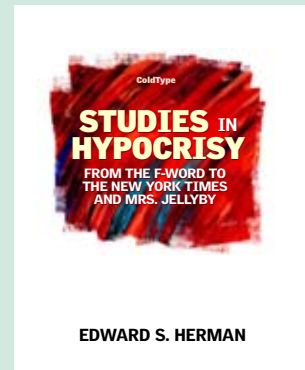
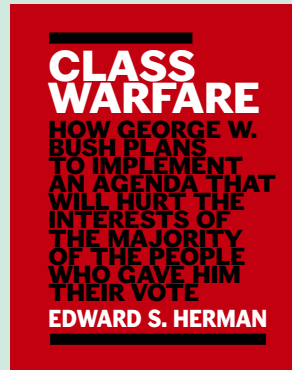
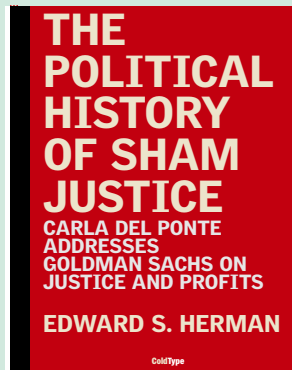
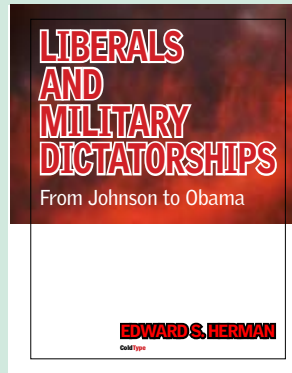
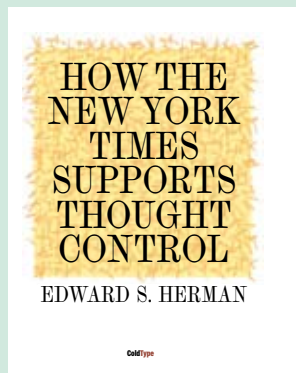
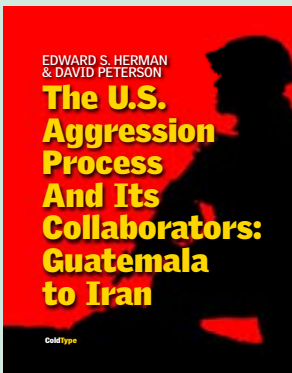
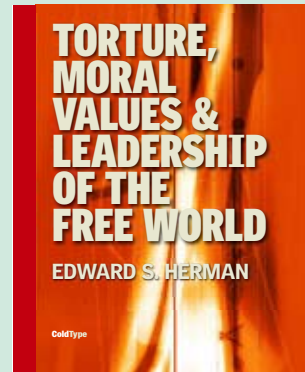
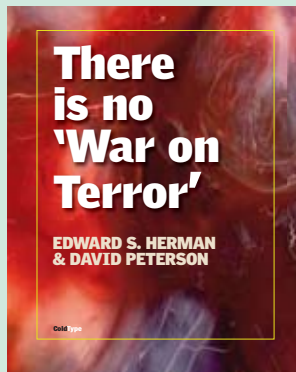
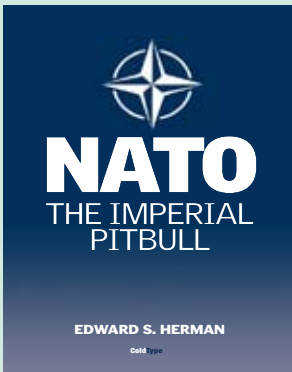
Read the best stories
from the magazine
that helped
change the face of
apartheid
South Africa at ...

www.coldtype.net/frontline.html



READ THE BEST OF EDWARD S. HERMAN

Don't miss ColdType's collection of 37 essays by **Edward S. Herman**, one of the most-respected political commentators of our generation



Download them at www.coldtype.net/herman.html

or read them online at <https://issuu.com/coldtypeextras>

Syria is the dam against more bloody chaos

Jonathan Cook tells how the Middle East's 'agents of anarchy' plan more death and destruction, this time in Lebanon and Iran

Today, Israel's vision of the region is shared by other key actors, including Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, and Turkey

A decade ago I published a book, *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations*, that examined Israel's desire to Balkanise the Middle East, using methods it had refined over many decades in the occupied Palestinian territories. The goal was to unleash chaos across much of the region, destabilising key enemy states: Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. The book further noted how Israel's strategy had influenced the neoconservative agenda in Washington that found favour under George Bush's administration. The neocons' destabilisation campaign started in Iraq, with consequences that are only too apparent today.

My book was published when efforts by Israel and the neocons to move the Balkanisation campaign forward into Iran, Syria and Lebanon were stumbling, and before it was clear that other actors, such as ISIS, would emerge out of the mayhem. But I predicted – correctly – that Israel and the neocons would continue to push for more destabilisation, targeting Syria next, with disastrous consequences.

Today, Israel's vision of the region is shared by other key actors, including Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, and Turkey. The current arena for destabilisation, as I warned, is Syria. But if successful, the Balkanisation process will undoubtedly move on and intensify against Lebanon and Iran.

Although commentators tend to focus

on the “evil monsters” who lead the states targeted for destruction, it is worth remembering that, before their disintegration, most were also oases of secularism in a region dominated by medieval sectarian ideologies, whether the Wahhabism of Saudi Arabia or the Orthodox Judaism of Israel.

Syria's Bashar Assad, Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Libya's Muammar Gaddafi are or were ruthless and brutal in the way all dictators are, against opponents who threaten the regime. But before their states were targeted for “intervention,” they also oversaw societies in which there were high levels of education and literacy, well-established welfare states, and low levels of sectarianism. These were not insignificant achievements (even if they are largely overlooked now) – achievements that large sections of their populations appreciated, even more so when they were destroyed through outside intervention.

These achievements were not unrelated to the fact that the regimes were or are more independent of the US than the US and Israel desired. The rulers of these states, which comprise disparate sectarian groups, had an interest in maintaining internal stability through a carrot and stick approach: benefits for those who submitted to the regime, and repression for those who resisted. They also made strong alliances with similar regimes to limit moves by Israel and the US to dominate the region. Balkanisation has been

a powerful way to isolate and weaken them, so the process can be expanded to other renegade states.

This is not to excuse human rights violations by dictatorial regimes. But it is to concentrate on an even more important issue. What we have seen unfolding over the past 15 years is part of a lengthy process – often described in the West as a “war on terror” – that is not designed to “liberate” or “democratise” Middle Eastern states. If that were the case, Saudi Arabia would have been the first state targeted for “intervention.”

Rather, the “war on terror” is part of efforts to violently break apart states that reject US-Israeli hegemony in the region, so as to maintain US control over the region’s resources in an age of diminishing access to cheap oil.

Although it is tempting to prioritise human rights as the yardstick according to which the parties should be judged, by now there should be little doubt that the conflicts unfolding in the Middle East are not about the promotion of rights.

Syria offers all the clues we need. The agents trying to overthrow Assad in Syria are no longer civil society groups and democracy activists. They were too small in number and too weak to bring about change or threaten the Assad regime. Instead, whatever civil war there may initially have been has transformed into a proxy war. (In a closed society like Syria, it is of course almost impossible to know what drove the initial opposition – was it a fight for greater human rights, or growing dissatisfaction with the regime concerning other issues, such as food shortages and population displacements that were themselves a consequence of long-term processes triggered by climate change?)

A coalition of the US, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Turkey and Israel exploited those initial challenges to the Syrian regime, seeing them as an opening. They did not do so to help democracy activists but to advance their own, largely shared agendas. They used Sunni jihadist groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS

to advance their interests, which depend on the break-up of the Syrian state and its replacement by a void that empowers them while disempowering their enemies in the region.

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states want Iran and its Shia allies weakened; Turkey wants a freer hand against Kurdish dissident groups in Syria and elsewhere; and Israel wants to foster the forces of sectarianism in the Middle East to undermine pan-Arab nationalism, thereby ensuring its regional hegemony will go unchallenged.

The agents trying to stabilise Syria are the regime itself, Russia, Iran and Hizbollah. Their concern is to use whatever force is necessary to repel the agents of anarchy and restore the regime’s dominance. Neither side can be characterised as “good.” There are no “white hats” in this gunfight. But there is clearly a side to prefer if the yardstick is minimising not only the current suffering in Syria but also future suffering in the region.

The agents of stability want to rebuild Syria and strengthen it as part of a wider Shia bloc. In practice, their policy would achieve – even if it does not directly aim for – a regional balance of forces, similar to the stand-off between the US and Russia in the Cold War. It is not ideal, but it is far preferable to the alternative policy pursued by the agents of anarchy. They want key states in the Middle East to implode, as has already happened in Iraq and Libya and has been partially achieved in Syria.

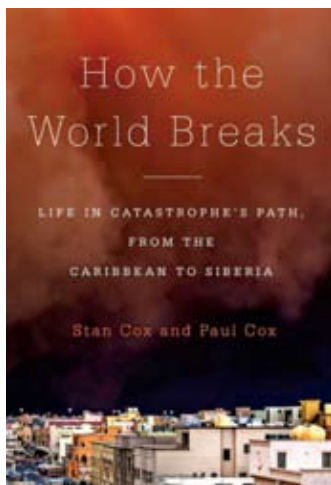
We know the consequences of this policy: massive sectarian bloodspilling, huge internal population displacement and the creation of waves of refugees who head towards the relative stability of Europe, the seizure and dispersal of military arsenals that spur yet more fighting, and the inspiration of more militant and reactionary ideologies like that of ISIS. If Syria falls, it will not become Switzerland. And if it falls, it will not be the end of the “war on terror.” Next, these agents of anarchy will move on to Lebanon and Iran, spreading more death and destruction. **CT**

The “war on terror” is part of efforts to violently break apart states that reject US-Israeli hegemony in the region, so as to maintain US control over the region’s resources in an age of diminishing access to cheap oil

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

In the path of catastrophe

Stan Cox and **Paul Cox** discuss the destructive force of nature with **Chellis Glendinning**



HOW THE WORLD BREAKS

Life In Catastrophe's Path:
From The Caribbean To Siberia

Stan Cox and Paul Cox

The New Press

\$17.30 (amazon.com)

The reader of the new book *How the World Breaks* must be agile, for it demands that one navigate between several modes of consciousness in order to face the reality of human input into the “weather on steroids” that is routine these days.

How the World Breaks takes us on a long tour, but not one launched with vacation or adventure in mind; rather it books us in at one disaster site, then another, and another.

Led by our guides, Stan and Paul Cox, we visit the scene of 2013’s Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines, in which entire settlements were washed away and 6,300 people killed; Java, where a mud volcano caused by gas drilling plastered 2.5 square miles of fields and villages with 40 feet of wet clay, cost 40,000 people their homes, and caused property losses of more than \$1-billion; Kansas, where, in 2007, a 205 mile-per-hour tornado flattened an entire town, destroying 1,000 buildings; and more.

However, just as the book takes us on this bleak journey, it also presents an electrifying, can’t-put-down detective novel exploring the whats, hows, whens, and whys of each catastrophe. And lest we become too diverted by intrigue, *How the World Breaks* is



a sober investigation of the economics, politics, science, and psychology of a disaster’s origins, progression, and aftermath. Taken together, the landscape of climate change becomes a disquieting documentation of the mess we inhabit.

Stan Cox is the perfect person to write such a tome. A former government wheat geneticist, he is now research coordinator at



the Land Institute in Salina, Kansas. He is a fervent advocate for sustainable agriculture, and is the author of books that explore the environmental impacts of air conditioning and of corporate food/medicine production, as well as rationing as one answer to capitalism's out-of-control consumerism.

The second perfect person to craft such a book is anthropologist and development/

disaster writer Paul Cox. He lives in Copenhagen, Denmark, where he works for European and African development organisations while writing independently in such publications as *Disasters and the New Inquiry*. He also happens to be Stan's son.

I delved into *How the World Breaks* on a spring day boasting brutal unseasonal rains in a small city in the Andes. I needed no

Above: Debris lines the streets of Tacloban, in the Philippines after the 2013 typhoon disaster.

Photo: Eoghan Rice
– Trócaire / Caritas

Interview

The book is about how and why disasters happen, but the explanations aren't all our own; we don't have one big model or answer

more than to pull the blanket to my chin to know the magnitude of this book's importance, so I asked Stan and Paul to join me for an online conversation.

Chellis Glendinning: What is *How the World Breaks about*? And how did you end up working on it as father and son?

Stan Cox: It started after a disaster with many explanations: Superstorm Sandy. In 2012, following that calamity, my editors at the New Press asked me if I'd be interested in writing one on the increasingly unnatural nature of natural disasters. I had no direct experience in that world, but I knew there was much to be written about their increasingly human causation. I decided to write to Paul, who had studied the anthropology of disaster.

He started his response with, "Wow, that's a pretty huge topic," and discussed the debates among disaster researchers and policy-makers about vulnerability, resilience, inequality, and adaptation, along with what he called "the big issue: climate change itself, or the whole complex of pressures and vulnerabilities that it fits into." I thought, "Oh, oh, this is going to be a much bigger book than I expected, and I don't think I can do it without Paul.

Paul Cox: The title is a bit misleading – by design. The book is about how and why disasters happen, but the explanations aren't all our own; we don't have one big model or answer. Instead we were interested in all the explanations that spring up around disasters and, crucially, who embraces which explanations.

CG: How did you start?

SC: We resolved not to restrict ourselves to just climatic events, but to include hazards that emerge from the ground, sky, and sea. Since so-called "natural disasters" are social/political/economic phenomena linked to

increasingly unnatural hazards, we dropped the term "natural disaster." We wrote of "geoclimatic" hazards and disasters instead, and we hope that term catches on. We also realised that this could turn out to be a boring book if we made it an armchair study of UN policy debates, studies on risk reduction, international climate negotiations, etc. Instead, we decided to build our analysis on stories from the scenes of actual disasters.

PC: The subtitle, "Life in Catastrophe's Path, from the Caribbean to Siberia," might represent the book better than the title does. Since this seems to be the life of the future, we wanted to consider what such a life looks like – for rich and poor.

SC: From mid-2013 through early 2015, we studied and visited a dozen or so communities around the world whose inhabitants were struggling to recover from disasters. We benefited from the help provided by my wife, Paul's stepmother, Priti Gulati Cox – especially with the trips in India where she could translate not only language but much else. Priti also drew maps for each of the disasters.

CG: My guess is that New Press doesn't have the funds to send a couple of investigators around the world. How did you get to all those places?

SC: You guess right. We didn't have big travel budgets ourselves, so we made modest travel plans. In 2013 Priti and I were already going to Mumbai, India, for a family visit, and we figured that if Paul joined us, we could talk with slum residents about the 2005 catastrophic flood they'd lived through. From there, we could go to the Philippines – which is famous for cultural adaptation to the world's worst frequency and variety of geoclimatic hazards – and on to East Java, Indonesia, site of a human-caused mud volcano.

Soon after we made those plans, the

Indian Himalaya was ravaged by unprecedented monsoon floods and landslides. Two months before we set out for Asia, Typhoon Yolanda hit the Philippines in probably the most powerful storm landfall ever recorded. Were we superstitious, we might have decided at that point not to make any more travel plans! But the fact is that you can throw a dart at a map, and there has probably been – or will soon be – one or more terrible disasters somewhere near where the dart sticks. So we included Tacloban in the Philippines and the Garhwal region in India in our tour.

Paul had ridden out Superstorm Sandy when he was living in New Jersey and had helped with Occupy Sandy; then he found himself back in the area around the second anniversary of the disaster. For me, there were short drives to two tornado towns: Greensburg, Kansas, and Joplin, Missouri. And living in Copenhagen, Paul could easily get to the Netherlands and Russia.

PC: Our biggest concern was not to put ourselves in situations where we would be a burden on anyone. We worried most about that in Tacloban, where bodies were still being recovered when we arrived. We rode in on a public bus and spent the day in the city, staying out of the way of the relief activity and speaking only with people who were interested in talking with us.

CG: *Tell me about what happened on the island of Montserrat.*

SC: Montserrat is a papaya-shaped island five by ten miles in size, located 250 miles southeast of Puerto Rico. It's a British Overseas Territory – in other words, a colony. The first Europeans to settle there were Irish Catholics in 1632. By the early 1800s, the slave population was 6,500. Britain abolished slavery in 1833, but Montserrat remained under white minority rule until the 1960s.

In recent decades, the island has been the most disaster-plagued place in the Caribbean outside Haiti. Its residents were still re-

covering from 1989's Hurricane Hugo when the long-dormant Soufrière Hills volcano exploded in 1995. For two years the island was punished with volcanic violence, including explosive eruptions, fast-moving floods of steam, ash, gravel, and rock; and downpours of ash that covered everything. The eruption remains active to this day, with continuous release of gases that have been punctuated by ashfalls in 2003, 2006, and 2010. Almost two-thirds of the island, including now-buried former capital Plymouth, remain uninhabitable. Before the eruption the population was more than 10,000. It's now 4,000. Many people emigrated, and those who remained had to move up to the previously undeveloped northern part of the island.

CG: *I don't recall hearing about this.*

SC: We first became interested in Montserrat because of a British-funded development project aimed at generating electricity with geothermal energy from beneath the same volcano that had almost destroyed the island – a classic case of a silver lining. But that turned out to be a minor story. The bigger part was the failure of both the British parliament and a series of island governments to rebuild decent housing and good livelihoods and help the people get back on their feet.

CG: *It's typical in the Caribbean for volcanoes to lie dormant for centuries, and then when they do start shooting sparks, steam, fiery rock, and sulphur/methane/carbon-dioxide gas, the episode can last for a year. But this volcanic activity has gone on for 20 years! How does detrimental human activity contribute to the activation of volcanic activity, particularly these irregular and unpredictable explosions?*

SC: We talked with Rod Stewart of the Montserrat Volcano Observatory, and he said this volcano is unique for the length of its eruption. There's no ready explanation for it,

You can throw a dart at a map, and there has probably been – or will soon be – one or more terrible disasters somewhere near where the dart sticks

Interview

The volcano loomed above, belching huge clouds of steam and sulphur dioxide. Below we could see the area that people are barred from entering for safety reasons

and he won't hazard a guess as to when the eruption will end. Human activity is a factor in volcanic disasters generally. Volcanic slopes like the one where most Montserratians lived before 1995 are attractive places to settle: the soils are fertile, the landscape is beautiful, and there is often employment in tourism. People may be able to live and work on those slopes for 350 years without problem – but there's always a risk.

CG: One thing that surprised me is the islanders' desire to boost the economy with "disastourism."

PC: Ha! We sort of made up that word, although I assume we aren't the first. Unlike nearby islands like Antigua and St. Kitts, Montserrat has no good harbour, so it has never been a major cruise destination. But before Hugo and the Soufrière Hills eruption, ferries, small cruise boats, and private craft would visit the Plymouth pier. Many North Americans bought houses and spent winters there.

CG: Did you see the disaster area?

SC: Priti and I went into the zone in the south that had been opened to daytime entry. The volcano loomed above, belching huge clouds of steam and sulphur dioxide. Below we could see the area that people are barred from entering for safety reasons: a broad gray plain ringed by mangled, abandoned structures. Across that expanse there was no visible sign that the city centre of Plymouth lay 50 feet below.

CG: It sounds almost like a sacred place.

SC: Yes – we stood there in utter silence for a long while, as our minds struggled to piece together a rational image from the post-apocalyptic landscape. After that, we wandered into long-abandoned houses. In one, plates and pans, now covered in volcanic ash, were still sitting in dish drains where they'd

been abandoned years ago. Another neighbourhood was being reclaimed by tropical vegetation, and we noticed a man who was sweeping dust and ash out of a house. He wasn't interested in talking. I decided that "disastourism" isn't all it's cracked up to be.

CG: You visited one scene of destruction after another. What was that like?

PC: What always confronted me first was awareness that what I feel is only a shadow of the experience of the disaster.

CG: You felt a sort of timidity then? Or perhaps awe?

PC: More like caution: just as there is much more of the volcano down under the ground, there is so much more human experience wrapped up in a disaster than one can possibly know. Some things can't be communicated if you weren't there. But other things can. At least that was our assumption in writing a book. Often my second feeling was déjà vu. That is to say: awareness of repetitions and patterns. This awareness can feel like a betrayal of the uniqueness of the pain and the place, but as writers it was essential to our job. There are patterns to how the ground can shift; that's what makes seismology possible. There are only so many ways the roof can come off a house; that's why we have engineering. And, likewise, there are certain ways people deal with pain and shock and re-establish hope; that's the basis of psychology. Disasters knot these patterns up together, even if no two events are wholly alike.

CG: In my work as a psychotherapist, I specialise in recovery from personal trauma. Some people say to me, "Isn't it depressing?" Yet I never feel down because I am working with people who want to heal and therefore have the wherewithal and spirit to heal – so being their partner in the process becomes an uplifting experience. I am struck with

how you begin the book with a testimony to renewal.

SC: That first story occurred in the Indian Himalaya, and our trip there was probably the most disturbing experience we had. Paul suggested we begin and end the book with it because the floods there were in many ways the most spectacular and tragic of all the disasters we wrote about. Those who survived have been put to the ultimate test of emotional strength and perseverance – with virtually no help from outside.

PC: It was depressing. Yet the story with which we begin the book, Ramala Khumriyal's personal experience, was a hopeful one. In June, 2013, a natural dam holding back a large lake 12,000 feet up in the Himalayas melted. The entire lake emptied within minutes, and the busy pilgrimage site of Kedarnath, a mile down slope, was buried by water, mud, and rock. Ramala barely escaped up the mountainside with his six children; as they fled, they looked back to see thousands being swept to their deaths. With roads and footpaths destroyed, they had to find their way home through the landslide-scoured mountains. It took them six days.

Once they had to cross a river on a fallen tree trunk, inches above the still-raging flood. Many people did not make the crossing, but Ramala's family did. This, he said, was the last of many tests they'd received from Lord Shiva, who resides in these mountains and is worshiped at Kedarnath. Ramala and his children had passed all the tests, and in this he found the hope he expressed to us.

SC: By the time we arrived, Ramala had become co-owner of a new startup! Before he'd run a tea shop in Kedarnath, but he had no desire to return there. So with assistance from Adarsh Tribal, a young outsider working for the aid group iVolunteer, Ramala and another man started a soap-making business. Adarsh helped them get the necessary

ingredients up to the mountain. It was a low-tech operation, and their product was top-notch. They used a vegetarian recipe – without tallow – and that was a selling point in a pious Hindu region.

PC: The closest we reached to Kedarnath was the village where the pilgrimage footpath begins, Gaurikund. The road having washed away, we had to cling to rocks and tree roots for the final kilometre to get even that far. We were talking to people who were playing carom in front of the only open shop on the half-main-street – the other half had fallen into a chasm along with a number of hotels. Our discussion paused when two outsiders came along the street leading a pair of donkeys. One was wearing a well-tailored wool jacket and the other was carrying a camera. They silently continued towards the start of the pilgrims' footpath – and returned ten minutes later. As they passed the second time, the cameraman explained to a local that the visitor was on a government fact-finding mission from New Delhi. He was supposed to report on the state of things in Kedarnath, but he'd just gone to the trailhead so he could have his photo taken on the back of a donkey with snowy peaks in the background. Our hosts thought this was a fitting demonstration of the extent of their government's sympathy; Adarsh, who was interpreting, couldn't even translate the obscurities they used!

SC: The floods and landslides had not only cut Kedarnath and Gaurikund off from the rest of the world; they had wreaked ruin along the 100-mile road that leads up the valley from the plains.

PC: We experienced pure terror on the jeep ride up and back, especially where the road had become a thin shelf hanging off the mountain face and we could see right through potholes down to the valley floor!

CG: *The psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton spoke*

Two outsiders came along the street leading a pair of donkeys. One was wearing a well-tailored wool jacket and the other was carrying a camera

Interview

The rest of the world has pledged to carry the Paris climate agreement forward without the US, but even if they do fulfil their emissions commitments, under the agreement those commitments would still allow warming of 2.7 to 3.5 degrees Celsius, which in itself would trigger planet-wide catastrophe

of a loss of belief in the future among survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and, as the nuclear arms race grew to threaten the entire planet, generalised this response to include all of us. How do you feel now that you know intimately what so many still living in non-disaster bubbles “know” only by watching videos and reading newspapers? I ask this with a view towards the ultra-right presidency of Donald Trump, with his troupe of oil executives and climate-change naysayers.

PC: I don't think we know that much more than people watching videos and reading newspapers.

CG: *I'm amazed to hear you say that.*

PC: Reporters and videographers are good at communicating pain, and disasters are among their most powerful material. If someone can see all that pain and rationalise their way out of being affected, I don't think it's because they haven't seen something that we've seen.

We write about various forms of rationalisation, and about something like a loss of belief in the future, but that doesn't always look the way you expect. Take the idea of resilience – which has been spectacularly popular in recent years. The resilience doctrine rationalises that disaster is inherent in everything, and that the most people can hope for is to get better at bouncing back. At heart this attitude has little to promise for the future. This discourse has been thoroughly critiqued, and we join that critique. But the resilience doctrine is really the stuff of global neoliberal governance, of UN conferences and development cooperation regimes. You could say it's the sort of “globalist” project that the Clintons were accused of furthering.

The election happened in the middle of this conversation with you, Chellis, and we felt it like an earthquake. Or maybe it was more like a forest fire; the fuel had been building up for many years. Up until Election Day, we thought our biggest worries

were well-intentioned international initiatives that would actually make life worse or be band-aids on the catastrophes of climate change. We were concerned about an abundance of optimism that says climatic disaster can be endured if our economies just keep growing.

CG: *Astonishing – and yet denial does help people feel better.*

PC: Now it feels like we were the ones in denial! We wrote in the book that climate change optimism would be “what we will have to worry about when we don't have to worry about climate-change denial anymore.” As it turns out, we still have to worry about it – and also about resurgent zero-sum nationalism, triumphant oligarchies, and fascism. We face a lack of regard for common humanity that's based on forthright racism.

SC: We set out to share stories of communities on the front lines of the ecological crisis in hopes of influencing US citizens and our government's policies. But far too many people don't want to hear about anyone's predicament but their own – enough of them to make the November 8 political temper tantrum succeed. Those angry Americans had no regard for the consequences to be suffered by vulnerable people and communities here or elsewhere.

The rest of the world has pledged to carry the Paris climate agreement forward without the US, but even if they do fulfil their emissions commitments, under the agreement those commitments would still allow warming of 2.7 to 3.5 degrees Celsius, which in itself would trigger planet-wide catastrophe. The past couple of years have shown that unforeseen political and social change can come suddenly and dramatically, and that's certainly what we're going to need now – but in the opposite direction.

PC: “Sudden and dramatic” are also the qualities that make a disaster a disaster, as distinct

from the general, slower trend of climate change. And there is often a hope expressed that if a disaster comes along that's just bad enough, it will shock societies into transformation. Please understand that it's not what we are hoping for: we are anti-disaster! Besides, the scholarship on possible links between disasters and political change is tentative about shocks causing positive change. If we can draw a conclusion from our research, it is this: when positive change happens in the aftermath of a disaster, it's because the people affected are ready for change and have the power to see it through.

SC: Until there is deep political and economic transformation to roll back climate change, communities like the ones we wrote about will keep paying the price. Remedies we put forward – such as a fund to protect people in the global South from the disastrous impact of the North's carbon dioxide – had no chance in the political world that existed even before November 8. But we weren't devising a political strategy; we were

saying, "Look, this is what it would take to deal with coming disasters. We have to talk about what's necessary, not just what politicians and corporations will accept today."

Likewise with emissions reduction. We have to insist that the only way to head off climate catastrophe is to eliminate fossil-fuel burning on a timetable much more rapid than Paris's. Now, in this toxic political atmosphere, many on our side will stop discussing that necessity and seek small compromises instead.

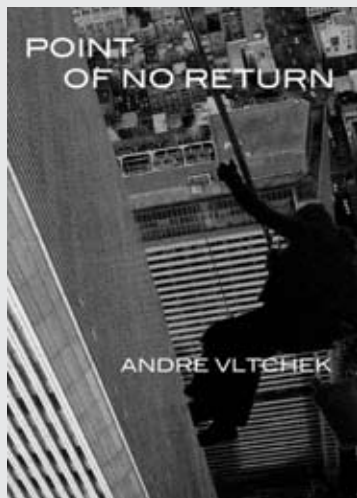
CG: Is there anything that heartens you?

SC: Yes. I'm heartened by declarations from cities and states around the world that commit to forging ahead on climate, no matter what Washington does. That, and a lot of rebellious political activity, will have to do for now.

CT

.....
Chellis Glendinning is the author of seven books, including "Chiva: A Village Takes On the Global Heroin Trade." Her web site is www.chellisglendinning.org

When positive change happens in the aftermath of a disaster, it's because the people affected are ready for change and have the power to see it through



POINT OF NO RETURN

Andre Vltchek

"**Point Of No Return** shows the world through the eyes of a war correspondent, working in conflict zones avoided by the mainstream media, unveiling the dire state of today's world, its disparities and brutal post-colonial arrangement – including the imperialist push for Western hegemony. . . . It deserves a wide readership and serious critical appraisal."

– Tony Christini

"**Point of No Return** is riveting." – Paulin Cesari (Le Figaro)

"André Vltchek is a writer, the real thing, of the same calibre and breed as Hemingway and Malraux." – Catherine Merveilleux

Paperback: 364 pages · Publisher: Mainstay Press; 2 edition (April 15, 2013)

Buy it at Amazon.com \$26.90

www.amazon.com/Point-No-Return-Andre-Vltchek/dp/0977459071/



London Review
OF BOOKS

Subscribe Now

24 Issues for just \$49.95

Connect with the world's most entertaining
writers and critics.

Subscribe today and you will receive:

- The *London Review of Books* magazine delivered **direct to your door**
- **FREE** unfettered access to the searchable online **digital archive**
- The latest issues **FREE** on your iPad, iPhone or Android device through the **LRB app**, so you can take the LRB everywhere you go

www.mylrb.com

ColdType Insights

The truth behind the warrior myth

Soldiers and the police are not really as brave as we are led to believe, says **Thomas S. Harrington**

We are living in a society dominated by the shadow of war and soldiering. Indeed, it would seem that this outlook, with its emphasis on winning at all costs, has impregnated every corner of our civic space. However, this seeming indebtedness to the warrior ethos might be a lot more superficial and less fulsome than at first might appear to be the case.

Writing in 1921, Jose Ortega y Gasset, invoking a juxtaposition articulated previously by Herbert Spencer, compared the “ética del guerrero” (the warrior ethos) with that of the “ética industrial” (industrial ethos). But whereas the English philosopher deemed the latter outlook as being superior to the former, the Spanish thinker argued forcefully that the mindset of the warrior had much more to offer to a culture.

It was not so much that Ortega liked war itself. Indeed, he would show himself to be quite cowardly when intense social and military conflict finally arrived at his doorstep in the mid-1930s. What attracted Ortega to this point of view

was its emphasis on commitment, of throwing caution to the wind in the service of an idea or cause. As he said in *Invertebrate Spain*: “The industrial spirit is guided by an eagerness to avoid risk while the warrior sprouts from a magnificent hunger for danger.”

He then went on to suggest, referring implicitly to the tottering army of his own country, that while the “military man” of today thinks about himself, (and expects others to pay homage to him) as a true warrior, he is, more often than not, a person dominated by the ethos of industrialism with its concomitant lack of resolve before true danger. In short, they are fake warriors, people who value the comforts of safety and steady benefits much more than they do the bravery they and their slavish supporters constantly tell us is their stock in trade.

It is an interesting idea to ponder in the present-day United States. For example, we are constantly being told how our now fully militarised police forces are filled with “heroes” who “put their lives on the line” in order to insure our safety. It’s a nice sound bite. But the statistics tell a

very different story. They show us that when our vaunted heroes in blue get anywhere close to danger they consistently value their lives (and the rich benefit packages that go with them) over those of the citizens they are hired to protect and serve. How? By using their overwhelming advantage of lethal force to “take out” those, as they like to say, “don’t comply” immediately with their often stupid and demeaning commands.

Were they really the true brave warriors they and the media constantly tell us they are, which is to say, people who throw caution to the wind before danger (and who thus rightly garner the moral accolades for doing so), they would see their job as restraining themselves to the very last moment – and exposing themselves to the highest possible amount of vital uncertainty – before taking out their guns.

For the last century and a quarter, the citizens of the so-called developed world have used professional athletes as a cuddly domestic simulacrum of the warrior class. The bargain between us was that they would subject their bodies to extraordinary stresses and dangers and we, in return, would reward them greatly for this courage, this willingness to accept the possible ravages to their future wellbeing. In other words, danger and the possibility of mutilation lay at the very heart of the agreement.

Now, however, as sports has turned into big-business, our “war-

riors” (and/or the people who profit from them) are demanding all sorts of new rules designed to vouchsafe their personal safety, and from there, their already inflated earning capabilities. Baseball is perhaps the worst offender here. Gone now are the takeout slide, the collision at home plate and the brush back pitch. Like Ortega’s Spanish soldiers of 100 ago, they are rapidly becoming warriors in name only.

We see the same pattern among US war-making elites. They constantly demand that we reward them for putting their lives on the line when, in fact, they themselves are incredibly reluctant to do so. The wide-scale institutionalisation of the high altitude bomber and the drone as the prime approaches to conflict bear eloquent witness the spread of the industrial ethos among the so-called warrior caste.

When it comes time for them to

actually fight people on the ground, they do not do it terribly well. This should come as no surprise. “Businessmen” dressed in camouflage will almost always lose to true warriors defending the house, families and cultures.

This should be borne in mind by decision-makers as they invade other countries. Unfortunately, they are so drunk on the own self-serving narratives of heroism, that they cannot do so. They cannot admit to themselves that they little more than risk averse marauders and that, in the long run, people such as them always lose to true warriors with a visceral compelling reason to take up arms. **CT**

.....
Thomas S. Harrington is a professor of Hispanic Studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, and the author of Public Intellectuals and Nation Building in the Iberian Peninsula, 1900–1925: The Alchemy of Identity, published in 2014 by Bucknell University Press.

Indianapolis jobs that are staying – for now – even embellishing it to the point of flat-out lying.

As he stood in front of Carrier employees waiting to hear about their fate, he claimed he’d saved 1,100 jobs, which wasn’t true.

I’m the local union rep. When I called Trump out on that lie, he went berserk with a series of over-the-top Twitter attacks. I can see why he’s a little defensive. For over a year, he’s talked the talk about saving jobs and stopping offshoring. But he doesn’t have much to show for it.

The fact of the matter is Trump could have stopped the entire UTC rip-off dead in its tracks and saved every last one of those 1,250 jobs now headed to Mexico. As president, he has tremendous power in dealing with federal contractors, of which UTC is among the biggest, with over \$6.5-billion in federal contracts last year. But instead of punishing UTC, Trump has rewarded them. Since Trump took office, UTC – Carrier’s parent company – has pulled down another 15 new contracts.

From Lyndon Johnson to Barack Obama, American presidents have directed federal contractors – as a condition of their receiving US tax dollars – to change how they operate. Presidents have leaned on contractors to stop discrimination in hiring, pay a living wage, and establish sick leave programs, among other policies.

So Trump had the power from day one to stop federal contractors from shipping US jobs overseas if they wanted to keep getting our tax dollars. But he didn’t.

UTC isn’t the only bandit here.

Trump could have saved thousands of jobs

On day one, Trump could have saved thousands of US jobs. But he didn’t, writes union leader **Chuck Jones**

The New York Times recently ran a front-page story about 700 United Technologies Corp. workers who are seeing their jobs shipped off to Mexico.

Along with their UTC Carrier counterparts in Indianapolis – who are losing 550 of their jobs to Mexico

– this shift leaves 1,250 devastated state households in its wake.

Donald Trump made saving the Indianapolis Carrier jobs a cornerstone of his presidential campaign. Reminded of his pledge after the election, Trump cut a deal with UTC and made a lot of hay out of the 700

Over half of the nation's top 50 federal contractors have shipped jobs overseas, a new Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch study has revealed. In fact, the study shows that the top 100 contractors last year shipped out almost 60,000 jobs.

Even these numbers are pretty conservative, since they cover only job losses certified under one narrow government program for workers hit by overseas trade. Besides the 5,716 jobs UTC has sent away, General Electric offshored 8,700; Honeywell, 5,470; and Hewlett Packard, 5,331. These are hugely profitable outfits whose only motivation to move jobs away is greed.

For those tens of thousands of workers and their families that are left behind, it's now a matter of survival. Take a time out from all the numbers to get a picture of what we're talking about here. I've seen

what happens when plants close or have huge permanent layoffs.

We're talking about often middle-aged workers in an employment environment that's hungry for young hires. What jobs most of these men and women, black and white, will end up with next are a couple of bucks over minimum wage, if that – just a fraction of what they'd been supporting their families on.

Here's what follows for a lot of them: First, the car gets repo'd. Then, the family falls apart, or the house gets foreclosed on. Finally, alcoholism and even suicide start picking them off.

All it takes to stop this job-bleeding from our federal contractors is an executive order. I don't care if he signs it in Mar-a-Lago. **CT**

.....
Chuck Jones is the president of Steelworkers Local 1999 in Indianapolis.

sands of civilians in Yemen, or to Israel to drop on children in Gaza.

If a bomb were to drop near me, I would much prefer it to be a barrel bomb as it would be less likely to kill me than the UK and US manufactured variety. If however my guts were to be eviscerated by flying hunks of white hot metal, I would not particularly care what kind of bomb it was. The blanket media use of "barrel bomb" as though it represents something uniquely inhumane is a fascinating example of propaganda, especially set beside the repeated ludicrous claims that British bombs do not kill civilians.

It is, of course, only part of the media distortion around the Syria debacle. Western intervention is aimed at supporting various Saudi-backed jihadist militias to take over the country, irrespective of the fact that they commit appalling atrocities. These the media label "democratic forces." At the same time, we are attacking other Saudi controlled jihadists on the grounds that they are controlled by the wrong kind of Saudi. You see, chopping off the heads of dissidents and gays is OK if you are one of the Saudis who directly controls the Saudi oil resources. It is not OK if you do it freelance and are one of the Saudis who is merely acting at the covert behest of the other Saudis who control the Saudi oil resources.

I do hope that is clear. **CT**

.....
Craig Murray is an author, broadcaster and human rights activist. He was British Ambassador to Uzbekistan from August 2002 to October 2004 and Rector of the University of Dundee from 2007 to 2010. www.craigmurray.org.uk

The barrel bomb connundrum

Craig Murray wonders why the Western media get so worked-up over Syria's amateur weapons

Almost every mainstream media article or broadcast on the United States aerial massacre of Syrian government troops, manages to work in a reference to barrel bombs as though this in some way justifies or mitigates the US action.

It is a fascinating example of a propaganda meme. Barrel bombs are being used by Syrian govern-

ment forces, though on a pretty small scale. They are an improvised weapon made by packing conventional explosive into a beer barrel. They are simply an amateur version of a conventional weapon, and they are far less "effective" – meaning devastating – than the professionally made munitions the UK and US are dropping on Syria, or supplying to the Saudis to kill tens of thou-

Canada should apologise for Palestine role

Yves Engler tells the part Canadian generals and politicians played in “the reconquest of Palestine” 100 years ago

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, a crass expression of colonial thought that Canada helped realise.

Just before capturing Jerusalem in late 1917, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour proclaimed support for a Jewish homeland on land occupied mostly by Muslim and Christian Palestinians. In a letter to Walter Rothschild and the Zionist Federation of Great Britain, Balfour wrote, “His Majesty’s government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object.”

Balfour later explained his thinking. “In Palestine we do not propose to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country. ... The four great powers are committed to Zionism and Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long tradition, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desire and prejudices

of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land.”

At war with the crumbling Ottoman Empire, in January 1916 Britain and France signed a secret accord to divvy up the Ottoman-controlled Middle East. Fresh from leading the First World War Anglo-French conquest of German West Africa, Québec City-born Lt-Gen. Charles Macpherson Dobell commanded a force that attempted to seize Gaza during the Sinai and Palestine campaign. As many as 400 Canadians (about half recruited specifically for the task) also fought in British General Edmund Allenby’s Jewish Legion that helped conquer modern day Israel/Palestine. The Federation of Zionist Societies of Canada mobilised Jews to join Allenby’s Jewish Legion, which won sometimes beleaguered Jewish communities’ praise.

During the two decades after the Balfour Declaration, the British empire provided the Zionist movement with the necessary protective umbrella to thrive. Spurred on by British support, between 1919 and

1921, Canadians raised \$458,000 (\$5.8-million in 2016 dollars) to support projects colonising Palestine. At the end of the 1920s, Canadians raised \$1-million for a Jewish National Fund project to pay an absentee landlord in France for 7,500 acres of coastal territory between Haifa and Tel Aviv, which would displace over 1,000 (mostly nomadic) Bedouin whose descendants had lived on the land for hundreds of years. Citizens of a British dominion, elite Canadian Jews were more active Zionists than their U. counterparts during this period. Many Canadian political leaders were overjoyed by the Balfour Declaration. Several years after the First World War, Conservative Party leader Arthur Meighen, a Christian Zionist, claimed, “of all the results of the (war), none was more important and more fertile in human history than the reconquest of Palestine and the rededication of that country to the Jewish people.” A dozen years later, Prime Minister R.B. Bennett told a coast to-coast radio broadcast for the launch of the United Palestine Appeal that the Balfour Declaration and the British conquest of Palestine represented the beginning of the fulfilment of biblical prophecies.

Three decades after the release of the declaration, Canada’s representative on the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, which was dispatched to the region to propose a solution for the Brit-

GET YOUR FREE SUBSCRIPTION TO COLDTYPE

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

ish mandate, challenged members of UNSCOP who failed to recognise the legitimacy of the Balfour Declaration. In response to criticism of his proposal to give the Zionist movement a larger piece of land than they officially requested, Canadian Supreme Court justice Ivan C. Rand argued, “that since Britain had not fulfilled its obligations to the Jews, they deserved to be compensated by the United Nations.”

The Palestinian Authority and

over 100,000 Brits recently petitioned London to apologise for the Balfour Declaration. The centennial is also a good time to mark Canada’s contribution to Palestinians’ loss.

CT

.....
Yves Engler is a Montreal-based activist and author. He has published eight books, the most recent being Canada in Africa – 300 Years of Aid and Exploitation. His web site is www.yvesengler.com

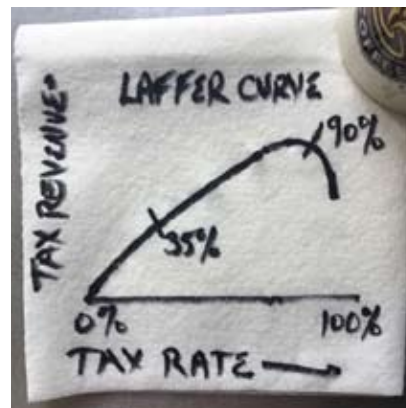
Cheeseburgers and a theory of taxation

Greg Palast tells how a diagram hastily scribbled on the back of a napkin by his Chicago mentor confused Donald Trump

Donald Trump claims his big tax cut will pay for itself based on his D-student misunderstanding of the “Laffer Curve.” Economist Art Laffer, my mentor at the University of Chicago, showed how cutting taxes could produce more tax revenue, a theorem he famously drew on a napkin.

Laffer drew the Curve for me – also on a napkin. (I can’t make this up: Art was addicted to cheeseburgers and always scribbled diagrams as he talked and chowed down. The note on the right is a replica of what he showed me – he used the original to wipe up.)

One napkin was shown to Ronald Reagan who, foreshadowing Trump, was too thick to understand it. Like Trump, the Gipper thought that it proved that, “the lower the tax, the more tax rev-



BURGER-FRIENDLY: The Laffer Curve.

enue collected.” George Bush Sr. called that “voodoo economics.”

Not voodoo, no; but here’s the key – pay attention, A students! – it’s a CURVE. When “marginal” tax rates are ABOVE 90 percent, cutting to, say, 85 percent, will actually produce more tax revenue from increased business activity. But at

the lower end of the curve, with taxes below 40 percent as they are now, there’s no tax gain – just the opposite, the Laffer Curve shows tax collections will collapse.

Cutting the corporate rate to 15 percent from 40 percent will cause a \$4 trillion-dollar tax loss – which non-corporations, that is, working class schmucks who voted for Trump, will have to make up.

Take a look . . . then wipe that cheese off your chin.

And that ain’t the bottom of the stupid and venal oozing from the Oval Office. The Donald’s tax plan includes opening new loophole called, “territoriality.” To translate from the pigs’-Latin, this means that the US can no longer collect taxes on profits of US corporations on their foreign operations.

In other words, THIS IS A MASSIVE TAX BREAK FOR MOVING A FACTORY OVERSEAS. Shifting your plastics factory from Midland, Michigan to Monterey, Mexico means you no longer pay taxes on it. Hey, wasn’t this the guy who said he’d TAX companies that leave the USA?

Well, it looks like he’ll make Mexico great again.

But maybe Trump is no tax dunce – but one very brilliant business man who knows how to dupe his troops. After all, he’s a casino magnate who makes his money by fleecing those suckers in the red trucker hats. Trump knows: the house always wins.

CT

.....
Greg Palast’s latest movie is The Best Democracy Money Can Buy: A Tale of Billionaires & Ballot Bandits. His web site is www.gregpalast.com

ColdType

www.coldtype.net

For a **FREE** subscription, write to:
editor@coldtype.net
(write *Subscribe* in Subject Line)

