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JOHN PILGER:

Assange, Clinton & the War on Truth

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7 Lewis Street, Georgetown, Ontario, Canada LG7 1E3

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Tomorrow belongs to the Corporatocracy

CJ Hopkins explains why, barring violent revolution, global capitalism 'will continue to restructure the planet to conform to its ruthless interests'

The negligible American neo-Nazi subculture has been blown up into a biblical Behemoth inexorably slouching its way towards the White House to officially launch the Trumpian Reich

In October, 2016, I wrote a divisive essay in which I suggested that political dissent is being systematically pathologised. In fact, this process has been going on for decades, but it has been significantly accelerated since Britain's Brexit referendum and the Rise of Trump (or, rather, the Fall of Hillary Clinton, as it was Americans' lack of enthusiasm for eight more years of corporatocracy with a sugar coating of identity politics, and not their enthusiasm for Trump, that mostly put the clown in office.)

In the year since writing that piece, we have been subjected to a concerted campaign of corporate media propaganda for which there is no historical precedent. Virtually every major organ of the Western media apparatus (the most powerful propaganda machine in the annals of powerful propaganda machines) has been relentlessly churning out variations on a new official ideological narrative designed to generate and enforce conformity. The gist of this propaganda campaign is that "Western democracy" is under attack from a confederacy of Russians and white supremacists, as well as "terrorists" and other "extremists" from which it has been under attack for the last 16 years.

I've been writing about this campaign for a year now, so I'm not going to re-hash all the details. Suffice to say we've

gone from Russian operatives hacking the American elections to "Russia-linked" persons "apparently" setting up "illegitimate" Facebook accounts, "likely operated out of Russia," and publishing ads that are "indistinguishable from legitimate political speech" on the Internet. This is what the corporate media is presenting as evidence of "an unprecedented foreign invasion of American democracy," a handful of political ads on Facebook.

In addition to the Russian hacker propaganda, since August we have also been treated to relentless white supremacist hysteria and daily reminders from the corporate media that "white nationalism is destroying the West." The negligible American neo-Nazi subculture has been blown up into a biblical Behemoth inexorably slouching its way towards the White House to officially launch the Trumpian Reich.

At the same time, government and corporate entities have been aggressively restricting (and in some cases eliminating) fundamental civil liberties such as freedom of expression, freedom of the press, the right of assembly, the right to privacy, and the right to due process under the law. The justification for this curtailment of rights (which started in earnest in 2001, following the September 11 attacks) is to protect the public from the threat of "ter-

rorism,” which apparently shows no signs of abating. As of now, the United States has been in a State of Emergency for more than 16 years. The UK is in a virtual State of Emergency. France is now in the process of enshrining its permanent State of Emergency into law. Draconian counter-terrorism measures have been implemented throughout the EU. Not just the notorious American police, but police throughout the West have been militarised. Every other day we learn of some new emergency security measure designed to keep us safe from “the terrorists,” the “lone wolf shooters,” and other “extremists.”

Conveniently, since the Brexit referendum and unexpected election of Trump (which is when the capitalist ruling classes first recognised that they had a widespread nationalist backlash on their hands), the definition of “terrorism” (or, more broadly, “extremism”) has been expanded to include not just Al Qaeda, or ISIS, or whoever we’re calling “the terrorists” these days, but anyone else the ruling classes decide they need to label “extremists.” The FBI has designated Black Lives Matter “Black Identity Extremists.” The FBI and the DHS have designated Antifa “domestic terrorists.” Hosting corporations have shut down several white supremacist and neo-Nazi websites, along with their access to online fundraising. Google is algorithmically burying leftist news and opinion sources such as Alternet, Counterpunch, Global Research, Consortium News, and Truthout, among others. Twitter, Facebook, and Google have teamed up to cleanse the Internet of “extremist content,” “hate speech,” and whatever else they arbitrarily decide is inappropriate. YouTube, with assistance from the ADL (which deems pro-Palestinian activists and other critics of Israel “extremists”) is censoring “extremist” and “controversial” videos, in an effort to “fight terrorist content online.” Facebook is also collaborating with Israel to thwart “extremism,” “incitement of violence,”

and whatever else Israel decides is “inflammatory.” In the UK, simply reading “terrorist content” is punishable by 15 years in prison. More than 3,000 people were arrested last year for publishing “offensive” and “menacing” material.

Whatever your opinion of these organisations and “extremist” persons is beside the point. I’m not a big fan of neo-Nazis, personally, but neither am I a fan of Antifa. I don’t have much use for conspiracy theories or a lot of the nonsense one finds on the Internet, but I consume a fair amount of alternative media, and I publish in CounterPunch, The Unz Review, ColdType, and other non-corporate journals. I consider myself a leftist, basically, but my political essays are often reposted by right-wing and, yes, even pro-Russia blogs. I get mail from former Sanders supporters, Trump supporters, anarchists, socialists, former 1960s radicals, anti-Semites, and other human beings, some of whom I passionately agree with, others of whom I passionately disagree with. As far as I can tell from the emails, none of these readers voted for Clinton, or Macron, or supported the TPP, or the debt-enslavement and looting of Greece, or the ongoing restructuring of the Greater Middle East (and all the lovely knock-on effects that has brought us), or believe that Trump is a Russian operative, or that Obama is Martin Luther Jesus-on-a-stick. What they share, despite their opposing views, is a general awareness that the locus of power in our post-Cold War age is primarily corporate, or global capitalist, and neoliberal in nature. They also recognise that they are being subjected to a massive propaganda campaign designed to lump them all together (again, despite their opposing views) into an intentionally vague and undefinable category comprising anyone and everyone, everywhere, opposing the hegemony of global capitalism, and its non-ideological ideology (the nature of which I’ll get into in a moment).

As I wrote in that essay a year ago, “a

The definition of “terrorism” (or, more broadly, “extremism”) has been expanded to include not just Al Qaeda, or ISIS, or whoever we’re calling “the terrorists” these days, but anyone else the ruling classes decide they need to label “extremists”

Consolidating Power

In capitalist society, everything, everyone, every object and sentient being, every concept and human emotion, is worth exactly what the market will bear . . . no more, no less, than its market price. There is no other measure of value

line is being drawn in the ideological sand.” This line cuts across both Left and Right, dividing what the capitalist ruling classes designate “normal” from what they label “extremist.” The traditional ideological paradigm, Left versus Right, is disappearing (except as a kind of minstrel show), and is being replaced, or overwritten, by a pathological paradigm based upon the concept of “extremism.”

Although the term has been around since the fifth century BC, the concept of “extremism” as we know it today developed in the late 20th-century and has come into vogue in the last three decades. During the Cold War, the preferred exonyms were “subversive,” “radical,” or just plain old “communist,” all of which terms referred to an actual ideological adversary. In the early 1990s, as the USSR disintegrated, and globalized Western capitalism became the unrivalled global-hegemonic ideological system that it is today, a new concept was needed to represent the official enemy and its ideology. The concept of “extremism” does that perfectly, as it connotes, not an external enemy with a definable ideological goal, but rather, a deviation from the norm. The nature of the deviation (eg, right-wing, left-wing, faith-based, and so on) is secondary, almost incidental. The deviation itself is the point. The “terrorist,” the “extremist,” the “white supremacist,” the “religious fanatic,” the “violent anarchist” . . . these figures are not rational actors whose ideas we need to intellectually engage with in order to debate or debunk. They are pathological deviations, mutant cells within the body of “normality,” which we need to identify and eliminate, not for ideological reasons, but purely in order to maintain “security.”

A truly global-hegemonic system such as contemporary global capitalism (the first of this kind in human history), technically, has no ideology. “Normality” is its ideology . . . an ideology which erases it-

self and substitutes the concept of what’s “normal,” or, in other words, “just the way it is.” The specific characteristics of “normality,” although not quite arbitrary, are ever-changing. In the West, for example, 30 years ago, smoking was normal. Now, it’s abnormal. Being gay was abnormal. Now, it’s normal. Being transgender is becoming normal, although we’re still in the early stages of the process. Racism has become abnormal. Body hair is currently abnormal. Walking down the street in a semi-fugue state robotically thumbing the screen of a smartphone that you just finished thumbing a minute ago is “normal.” Capitalism has no qualms with these constant revisions to what is considered normal, because none of them are threats to capitalism. On the contrary, as far as values are concerned, the more flexible and commodifiable the better.

See, despite what intersectionalists will tell you, capitalism has no interest in racism, misogyny, homophobia, xenophobia, or any other despotic values (though it has no problem working with these values when they serve its broader strategic purposes). Capitalism is an economic system, which we have elevated to a social system. It only has one fundamental value, exchange value, which isn’t much of a value, at least not in terms of organising society or maintaining any sort of human culture or reverence for the natural world it exists in. In capitalist society, everything, everyone, every object and sentient being, every concept and human emotion, is worth exactly what the market will bear . . . no more, no less, than its market price. There is no other measure of value.

Yes, we all want there to be other values, and we pretend there are, but there aren’t, not really. Although we’re free to enjoy parochial subcultures based on alternative values (ie, religious bodies, the arts, and so on), these subcultures operate within capitalist society, and ultimately conform to its rules. In the arts, for exam-

ple, works are either commercial products, like any other commodity, or they are subsidised by what could be called “the simulated aristocracy,” the ivy league-educated leisure classes (and lower class artists aspiring thereto) who need to pretend that they still have “culture” in order to feel superior to the masses. In the latter case, this feeling of superiority is the upscale product being sold. In the former, it is entertainment, distraction from the depressing realities of living, not in a society at all, but in a marketplace with no real human values. (In the absence of any real cultural values, there is no qualitative difference between Gerhard Richter and Adam Sandler, for example. They’re both successful capitalist artists. They’re just selling their products in different markets.)

The fact that it has no human values is the evil genius of global capitalist society. Unlike the despotic societies it replaced, it has no allegiance to any cultural identities, or traditions, or anything other than money. It can accommodate any form of government, as long as it plays ball with global capitalism. Thus, the window dressing of “normality” is markedly different from country to country, but the essence of “normality” remains the same. Even in countries with state religions (such as Iran) or state ideologies (such as China), the governments play by the rules of global capitalism like everyone else. If they don’t, they can expect to receive a visit from global capitalism’s Regime Change Department (ie, the US military and its assorted partners).

Which is why, despite the “Russiagate” hysteria the media have been barraging us with, the West is not going to war with Russia. Nor are we going to war with China. Russia and China are developed countries, whose economies are entirely dependent on global capitalism, as are Western economies. The economies of every developed nation on the planet are inextricably linked. This is the nature of the global

hegemony I’ve been referring to throughout this essay. Not American hegemony, but global capitalist hegemony. Systemic, supranational hegemony (which I like to prefer “the Corporatocracy,” as it sounds more poetic and less post-structural).

We haven’t really got our minds around it yet, because we’re still in the early stages of it, but we have entered an epoch in which historical events are primarily being driven, and societies reshaped, not by sovereign nation states acting in their national interests but by supranational corporations acting in their corporate interests. Paramount among these corporate interests is the maintenance and expansion of global capitalism, and the elimination of any impediments thereto. Forget about the United States (ie, the actual nation state) for a moment, and look at what’s been happening since the early 1990s. The US military’s “disastrous misadventures” in Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Syria, and the former Yugoslavia, among other exotic places (which have obviously had nothing to do with the welfare or security of any actual Americans), begin to make a lot more sense. Global capitalism, since the end of the Cold War (ie, immediately after the end of the Cold War), has been conducting a global clean-up operation, eliminating actual and potential insurgencies, mostly in the Middle East, but also in its Western markets. Having won the last ideological war, like any other victorious force, it has been “clear-and-holding” the conquered territory, which in this case happens to be the whole planet. Just for fun, get out a map, and look at the history of invasions, bombings, and other “interventions” conducted by the West and its assorted client states since 1990. Also, once you’re done with that, consider how, over the last 15 years, most Western societies have been militarised, their citizens placed under constant surveillance, and an overall atmosphere of “emergency” fostered, and

Even in countries with state religions (such as Iran) or state ideologies (such as China), the governments play by the rules of global capitalism like everyone else. If they don’t, they can expect to receive a visit from global capitalism’s Regime Change Department (ie, the US military and its assorted partners)

Consolidating Power

Short of some sort of cataclysm, like an asteroid strike or the zombie apocalypse, or, you know, violent revolution, global capitalism will continue to restructure the planet to conform to its ruthless interests

paranoia about “the threat of extremism” propagated by the corporate media.

I’m not suggesting there’s a bunch of capitalists sitting around in a room somewhere in their shiny black top hats planning all of this. I’m talking about systemic development, which is a little more complex than that, and much more difficult to discuss intelligently because we’re used to perceiving historico-political events in the context of competing nation states, rather than competing ideological systems . . . or non-competing ideological systems, for capitalism has no competition. What it has, instead, is a variety of insurgencies, the faith-based Islamic fundamentalist insurgency and the neo-nationalist insurgency chief among them. There will certainly be others throughout the near future as global capitalism consolidates control and restructures societies according to its values. None of these insurgencies will be successful.

Short of some sort of cataclysm, like an asteroid strike or the zombie apocalypse, or, you know, violent revolution, global capitalism will continue to restructure the planet to conform to its ruthless interests. The world will become increasingly “normal.” The scourge of “extremism” and “terrorism” will persist, as will the general atmosphere of “emergency.”

There will be no more Trumps, Brexit referendums, revolts against the banks, and so on. Identity politics will continue to flourish, providing a forum for leftist activist types (and others with an unhealthy interest in politics), who otherwise might become a nuisance, but any and all forms of actual dissent from global capitalist ideology will be systematically marginalised and pathologised.

This won’t happen right away, of course. Things are liable to get ugly first (as if they weren’t ugly enough already), but probably not in the way we’re expecting, or being trained to expect by the corporate media. Look, I’ll give you a dollar if it turns out I’m wrong, and the Russians, terrorists, white supremacists, and other “extremists” do bring down “democracy” and launch their Islamic, white supremacist, Russo-Nazi Reich, or whatever, but from where I sit it looks pretty clear . . . tomorrow belongs to the Corporatocracy. **CT**

CJ Hopkins is an award-winning American playwright, novelist and satirist based in Berlin. His plays are published by Bloomsbury Publishing (UK) and Broadway Play Publishing (USA). His debut novel, *ZONE 23*, is published by Snoggsworthy, Swaine & Cormorant. He can be reached at www.jhopkins.com or www.consentfactory.org

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Decoding Israel's apartheid

Jonathan Cook tells how newspaper ads offer employment help for new immigrants to Israel – but only if they're Jewish

Did the law in Britain and the United States allow apartheid South Africa to advertise job opportunities to white Britons and Americans that were not also available to those countries' black citizens? And was it possible for the apartheid regime to hold "employment recruitment" sessions for whites-only in London and Manchester, in an effort to bolster its white population?

And even if British and US law allowed them to do such things, can we imagine that these practices would have passed without eliciting noisy protests outside the careers advice meetings and questions in each country's legislature?

Yet this is exactly what is happening right now in the US and Europe in a different context: Israel. And so far there has been not a peep. Yes, Israel is singled out, but the exceptionalism works to its advantage, not to its detriment.

The Jewish Agency, an international Zionist organisation with semi-governmental status in Israel, is currently publicising in the UK's Jewish Chronicle newspaper job opportunities in Israel for British citizens – but only if they are Jews. Those interested can attend meetings in London and Manchester, organised by the Agency's Global Service Centre.

Israel has been far more careful about concealing the nature of its apartheid poli-

cies than South Africa was. It intentionally uses language as a tool of deception. Its racist ads do not explicitly refer to "Jews," which might make the rest of us deeply uncomfortable. Instead, it adopts code words for "Jews" that only those who can benefit will understand.

'Olim' and the Law of Return

To decode this and similar adverts, we need to understand how Israel originally engineered an apartheid structure of citizenship, embedded in a piece of foundational legislation known as the 1950 Law of Return. It entitles every Jew in the world – but only Jews – to immigrate to Israel. Some three millions Jews have benefited from the legislation.

Separate legislation, the Citizenship Law of 1952, applies to non-Jews. Under pressure from the United Nations, Israel passed this additional law to allow a small number of Palestinians who managed to survive the mass expulsions of the 1948 war – or what Palestinians call the Nakba, Arabic for "Catastrophe" – to gain a belated Israeli citizenship.

However, the same legislation denied the right to bring any of the 750,000 Palestinian refugees who had been recently forced into exile, or their descendants, back to their homes in what had become the state of Israel. Many of these refugees

The same legislation denied the right to bring any of the 750,000 Palestinian refugees who had been recently forced into exile, or their descendants, back to their homes in what had become the state of Israel

Unequal Opportunities

That “Any UK citizen” in the advertisement sounds egalitarian, until one understands that the qualifier referring to “aliyah” means it applies only to Jews

continue to languish in camps across the Middle East.

For nearly seven decades, the Citizenship Law has prevented all forms of non-Jewish immigration to Israel, except one. Non-Jews can enter a lengthy naturalisation process, but only if they marry an Israeli citizen. In practice, only a few dozen non-Jews manage to get citizenship this way a year. And most Palestinians living outside Israel, and many citizens of Arab countries, are explicitly barred from this marriage route under a 2003 amendment to the Citizenship Law.

Meanwhile, under the Law of Return, many hundreds of thousands of Jews have immigrated to Israel. They are said to have made “aliyah,” the Hebrew word for “ascend,” suggesting that such Jews have responded to a biblical commandment in moving to Israel. The Hebrew noun for Jews who “ascend” is “oleh” in the singular and “olim” in the plural. With this information, one can decode the Jewish Agency’s racist advertisement.

Not everyone can be ‘olim’

The headline asks British citizens whether they are “making aliyah” – in other words, whether they are entitled to come to Israel as a Jew under the Law of Return. This advert offers job opportunities only to them – or, as it states in the first line of text, to “British new olim.”

Here is the advert’s most deceptive line: “Any UK citizen interested in making Aliyah can now schedule a meeting with an employment adviser. Meetings are conducted regularly in London and Manchester.” That “Any UK citizen” sounds egalitarian, until one understands that the qualifier referring to “aliyah” means it applies only to Jews.

Similar advertisements are doubtless being published in the American and European media. Certainly, the Jewish Agency is offering migration and employment advice only to Jews in the United States

THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR ISRAEL

מכון יהודי לעלייה לישראל

Making Aliyah? Let's talk jobs

Aliyah just got easier for UK citizens ... Find your first job in Israel with help from the Jewish Agency.

The Jewish Agency is now offering personalized employment assistance to all British new Olim.

Get started finding your first job in Israel:

- New programme to connect Olim to the labour market in Israel.
- Personalised employment and career consulting sessions.
- Regular contact with large employers and recruitment companies in Israel.
- Help liaising with relevant government bodies in relation to professional licensing procedures.

Any UK citizen interested in making Aliyah can now schedule an appointment with a Jewish Agency employment adviser. Meetings are conducted regularly in London and Manchester; meetings elsewhere can also be scheduled (usually in person, virtually in exceptional cases).

For more information and to schedule a meeting click here >>

Or contact The Jewish Agency's Global Centre on 0800-454-8384 (toll free)

Jews ONLY: The newspaper advertisement posted by the Jewish Agency for Israel.

and across Europe – and has done so for decades.

As Moshe Machover, a Israeli-British professor of logic who was recently expelled from the British Labour party, has noted, some of these jobs are likely to be in the settlements, built by Israel on Palestinian land and in violation of international law. Israel and the Jewish Agency are known to offer incentives to encourage new immigrants to head to the occupied territories. One recent survey found that about 12 percent of American Jews immigrating chose a West Bank settlement as their home.

Contrast the laissez-faire attitude in Britain to these clearly racist ads with the crackdown last month on an advertising campaign intended for London’s underground. It would have highlighted Palestinian opposition to the Balfour Declara-



BANNED AD: Transport for London would not allow ads highlighting Palestinian opposition to the Balfour Declaration to be posted on London’s underground railway.

tion, a promise by the British government exactly 100 years ago to create a Jewish “national home” in Palestine.

Transport for London rejected the ads because they “did not comply fully with our guidelines,” according to a spokesman. One clause reportedly allows bans in cases where “images or messages . . . relate to matters of public controversy or sensitivity.” But, it seems, there is nothing controversial or sensitive about recruiting British Jews to Israel and the settlements, even as millions of Palestinians are still denied the right to return to their homes after nearly 70 years.

The world has largely turned a blind eye to the apartheid regime inside Israel, often because it has not grasped the nature of the systematic and institutionalised segregation enforced by Israel – highlighted in nearly 70 laws that explicitly discrimi-

nate based on whether citizens are Jewish or not.

But at least those racist laws are enforced either inside Israel or in the occupied territories.

Here, we are talking about the complicity of western states in allowing racist adverts to be published and racist meetings to be held on their own soil, even though the fundamental tenets of their non-discrimination and equal opportunities legislation are surely being flouted. And still, not a word is being said about it. **CT**

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

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Why should staff lose out when business goes bust?

We must change corporate laws so those controlling corporations may be held personally liable for money owed to their employees, writes **Linda McQuaig**

Whatever competitive pressures Sears Canada faced along with other big retailers, its controlling shareholders almost certainly made the company's demise more likely with their decision to pay out more than \$2.7-billion in dividends since 2005

Suddenly jobless after two decades as a sales manager for now-defunct Sears Canada, Rose Dalessandro found herself unable to pay for dental appointments for her two children. She could blame her financial difficulties and the demise of the once-mighty Canadian retail giant on the usual suspects – poor management, globalisation, the rise of internet shopping.

But it might be more accurate to blame Eddie Lampert, the billionaire US financier who is the company's largest shareholder as chairman of Chicago-based Sears Holding Corp.

The downfall of Sears Canada seems tragic and unnecessary, and the devastating blow to its employees should not have been allowed to happen. Once the leading department store in Canada, it was innovative and successful, with an extensive distribution network based on its early years in the catalogue and home delivery business.

Of course, many big players have gone under in the dog-eat-dog retail market of recent years. But, whatever competitive pressures Sears Canada faced along with other big retailers, its controlling shareholders almost certainly made the company's demise more likely with their decision to pay out more than \$2.7-billion in dividends since 2005 to themselves and other

shareholders.

Those dividends went heavily to its largest shareholder, Sears Holding, controlled by Lampert, according to Bloomberg and the Globe and Mail.

Forbes currently estimates Lampert's wealth at \$1.65-billion US, and describes the source of his fortune as "Sears, self made."

Sears Canada might well have survived if some of the \$2.7-billion paid out in dividends had been redirected into updating and redesigning its more than 130 stores to attract a new generation of shoppers.

If the company felt unable to compete, it could have, at least, set aside enough money to pay its employees severance and fully fund the company pension plan. Instead, it left some 12,000 workers without severance and a shortfall of \$270-million in its pension fund, leaving 18,000 retirees uncertain about collecting future benefits.

The media has devoted considerable attention to the story, and there's been good reporting highlighting the role of Lampert in the Sears Canada demise. There has been less focus on solutions. Indeed, there's been a tendency to lament the plight of the Sears workers and even rail against human greed, but to resign ourselves to all this as a sad but inevitable aspect of today's capitalism.

This sense of resignation is weird. We're



Above: Closed Sears store in Monkton, New Brunswick.



Right: The boss's 288ft mega yacht.

by no means helpless to prevent this sort of fiasco.

Make them pay

No, I'm not advocating the overthrow of capitalism, but rather something easier – changing our corporate laws so that those controlling corporations can be held personally liable for money owed to their employees.

If, for instance, Eddie Lampert were personally liable for his employees' severance and pensions, he would have likely covered these costs from corporate funds before paying out \$509-million in dividends in 2013.

"That's what he would have done," insists Harry Glasbeek, professor emeritus at Osgoode Hall Law School and author of *Class Privilege: How Law Shelters Shareholders and Coddles Capitalists*.

Holding people responsible for their actions and their debts isn't some far-fetched, ultraleft idea. On the contrary, it's a basic principle of Canada's legal system, Glasbeek notes. But we abandon this basic legal principle when it comes to laws governing corporations – by limiting the legal liability of those who control corporations. "This 'limited liability' is an extraordinary privileging of one class of people," Glasbeek says.

It wasn't always this way. Wealthy capi-

talists used to be personally responsible for unpaid wages when their businesses went under. But capitalists fought hard in the late 19th- and early 20th-century to win the right to limit their liability. At first they won only a partial limit, but over the years US and Canadian courts have extended that limit.

The change was fiercely resisted on the grounds that it would leave vulnerable employees in dire situations – like the situations faced today by thousands of Sears ex-workers.

Over the years, countless workers have found themselves similarly disempowered.

The Sears Canada tale is particularly epic, with a loyal workforce and a cartoon capitalist in Eddie Lampert – a hedge fund manager who reportedly owns three lavish homes and 288-foot mega yacht, believed to be among the world's biggest. (Who would have guessed?)

Of course, there will always be greedy capitalists. But we don't have to continue to provide special legal privileges that allow them to simply turf long-time employees, and then sail off into the sunset scot-free. **CT**

.....
Linda McQuaig is an author and journalist whose column appears monthly in the Toronto Star. You can follow her on twitter @LindaMcQuaig

If Eddie Lampert were personally liable for his employees' severance and pensions, he would have likely covered these costs from corporate funds before paying out \$509-million in dividends in 2013

Clinton, Assange and the war on truth

John Pilger writes about the media support for Hillary Clinton's score-settling book on her failed attempt to win the US presidency, and especially its defamation of Julian Assange and WikiLeaks

The lost leader was, above all, "absolutely a feminist," according to the New York Times. The thousands of women's lives this "feminist" destroyed while in government – Libya, Syria, Honduras – were of no interest

On October 16, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation aired an interview with Hillary Clinton: one of many to promote her score-settling book about why she was not elected President of the United States.

Wading through the Clinton book, *What Happened*, is an unpleasant experience, like a stomach upset. Smears and tears. Threats and enemies. "They" (voters) were brainwashed and herded against her by the odious Donald Trump in cahoots with sinister Slavs sent from the great darkness known as Russia, assisted by an Australian "nihilist," Julian Assange.

In *The New York Times*, there was a striking photograph of a female reporter consoling Clinton, having just interviewed her. The lost leader was, above all, "absolutely a feminist." The thousands of women's lives this "feminist" destroyed while in government – Libya, Syria, Honduras – were of no interest.



In *New York* magazine, Rebecca Traister wrote that Clinton was finally "expressing some righteous anger." It was even hard for her to smile: "so hard that the muscles in her face ache." Surely, she concluded, "if we allowed women's resentments the same bearing we allow men's grudges, America would be forced to reckon with the fact that all these angry women might just have a point."



Art: DonkeyHoley - www.flickr.com/photos/donkeyholey/6299019650



Art: DonkeyHoley - www.flickr.com/photos/donkeyholey/35182104576

Drivel such as this, trivialising women’s struggles, marks the media hagiographies of Hillary Clinton. Her political extremism and warmongering are of no consequence. Her problem, wrote Traister, was a “damaging infatuation with the email story.” The truth, in other words.

The leaked emails of Clinton’s campaign manager, John Podesta, revealed a direct

connection between Clinton and the foundation and funding of organised jihadism in the Middle East and Islamic State (IS). The ultimate source of most Islamic terrorism, Saudi Arabia, was central to her career.

One email, in 2014, sent by Clinton to Podesta soon after she stepped down as US Secretary of State, discloses that Islamic State is funded by the governments of Saudi

Clinton’s problem, wrote Traister, was a “damaging infatuation with the email story.”

The truth, in other words

Cover Story

What Clinton fails to say – and her interviewer fails to remind her – is that in 2010, WikiLeaks revealed that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had ordered a secret intelligence campaign targeted at the United Nations leadership, including the Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon and the permanent Security Council representatives from China, Russia, France and the UK

Arabia and Qatar. Clinton accepted huge donations from both governments for the Clinton Foundation.

As Secretary of State, she approved the world's biggest ever arms sale to her benefactors in Saudi Arabia, worth more than \$80-billion. Thanks to her, US arms sales to the world – for use in stricken countries like Yemen – doubled.

This was revealed by WikiLeaks and published by the New York Times. No one doubts the emails are authentic. The subsequent campaign to smear WikiLeaks and its editor-in-chief, Julian Assange, as “agents of Russia,” has grown into a spectacular fantasy known as “Russiagate.” The “plot” is said to have been signed off by Vladimir Putin himself. There is not a shred of evidence.

Smear and censorship

The ABC Australia interview with Clinton is an outstanding example of smear and censorship by omission. I would say it is a model.

“No one,” the interviewer, Sarah Ferguson, says to Clinton, “could fail to be moved by the pain on your face at that moment [of the inauguration of Trump] . . . Do you remember how visceral it was for you?”

Having established Clinton's visceral suffering, Ferguson asks about “Russia's role.”

Clinton: *I think Russia affected the perceptions and views of millions of voters, we now know. I think that their intention coming from the very top with Putin was to hurt me and to help Trump.*

Ferguson: *How much of that was a personal vendetta by Vladimir Putin against you?*

Clinton: *. . . I mean he wants to destabilise democracy. He wants to undermine America, he wants to go after the Atlantic Alliance and we consider Australia kind of a . . . an extension of that. . .*

The opposite is true. It is Western armies that are massing on Russia's border for the first time since the Russian Revolution 100 years ago.

Ferguson: *How much damage did [Julian*

Assange] do personally to you?

Clinton: *Well, I had a lot of history with him because I was Secretary of State when, ah, WikiLeaks published a lot of very sensitive, ah, information from our State Department and our Defence Department.*

What Clinton fails to say – and her interviewer fails to remind her – is that in 2010, WikiLeaks revealed that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had ordered a secret intelligence campaign targeted at the United Nations leadership, including the Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon and the permanent Security Council representatives from China, Russia, France and the UK.

A classified directive, signed by Clinton, was issued to US diplomats in July 2009, demanding forensic technical details about the communications systems used by top UN officials, including passwords and personal encryption keys used in private and commercial networks.

This was known as Cablegate. It was lawless spying.

Clinton: *He [Assange] is very clearly a tool of Russian intelligence. And, ah, he has done their bidding.*

Clinton offered no evidence to back up this serious accusation, nor did Ferguson challenge her.

Clinton: *You don't see damaging negative information coming out about the Kremlin on WikiLeaks. You didn't see any of that published.*

This was false. WikiLeaks has published a massive number of documents on Russia – more than 800,000, most of them critical, many of them used in books and as evidence in court cases.

Clinton: *So I think Assange has become a kind of nihilistic opportunist who does the bidding of a dictator.*

Ferguson: *Lots of people, including in Australia, think that Assange is a martyr for free speech and freedom of information. How would you describe him? Well, you've just described him as a nihilist.*

Clinton: *Yeah, well, and a tool. I mean he's a tool of Russian intelligence. And if he's such*

a, you know, martyr of free speech, why doesn't WikiLeaks ever publish anything coming out of Russia?

Again, Ferguson said nothing to challenge this or correct her.

Clinton: *There was a concerted operation between WikiLeaks and Russia and most likely people in the United States to weaponise that information, to make up stories . . . to help Trump.*

Ferguson: *Now, along with some of those outlandish stories, there was information that was revealed about the Clinton Foundation that at least in some of the voters' minds seemed to associate you . . .*

Clinton: *Yeah, but it was false!*

Ferguson: . . . with the peddling of information . . .

Clinton: *It was false! It was totally false! . . .*

Ferguson: *Do you understand how difficult it was for some voters to understand the amounts of money that the [Clinton] Foundation is raising, the confusion with the consultancy that was also raising money, getting gifts and travel and so on for Bill Clinton, that even Chelsea had some issues with? . . .*

Clinton: *Well you know, I'm sorry, Sarah, I mean I, I know the facts . . .*

The ABC interviewer lauded Clinton as “the icon of your generation.” She asked her nothing about the enormous sums she creamed off from Wall Street, such as the \$675,000 she received for speaking at Goldman Sachs, one of the banks at the centre of the 2008 crash. Clinton's greed deeply upset the kind of voters she abused as “deplorable.”

Clearly looking for a cheap headline in the Australian press, Ferguson asked her if Trump was “a clear and present danger to Australia,” and got her predictable response.

Clinton danger

This high-profile journalist made no mention of Clinton's own “clear and present danger” to the people of Iran whom she once threatened to “obliterate totally,” and the 40,000 Libyans who died in the attack on Libya in 2011 that Clinton orchestrated.

Flushed with excitement, the Secretary of State rejoiced at the gruesome murder of the Libyan leader, Colonel Gaddafi.

“Libya was Hillary Clinton's war,” Julian Assange said in a filmed interview with me last year. “Barack Obama initially opposed it. Who was the person championing it? Hillary Clinton. That's documented throughout her emails . . . there's more than 1700 emails out of the 33,000 Hillary Clinton emails that we've published, just about Libya. It's not that Libya has cheap oil. She perceived the removal of Gaddafi and the overthrow of the Libyan state – something that she would use in her run-up to the general election for president.

“So in late 2011 there is an internal document called the Libya Tick Tock that was produced for Hillary Clinton, and it's the chronological description of how she was the central figure in the destruction of the Libyan state, which resulted in around 40,000 deaths within Libya; jihadists moved in, ISIS moved in, leading to the European refugee and migrant crisis.

“Not only did you have people fleeing Libya, people fleeing Syria, the destabilisation of other African countries as a result of arms flows, but the Libyan state itself was no longer able to control the movement of people through it.”

This – not Clinton's “visceral” pain in losing to Trump nor the rest of the self-serving scuttlebutt in her ABC interview — was the story. Clinton shared responsibility for massively de-stabilising the Middle East, which led to the death, suffering and flight of thousands of women, men and children.

Ferguson raised not a word of it. Clinton repeatedly defamed Assange, who was neither defended nor offered a right of reply on his own country's state broadcaster.

In a tweet from London, Assange cited the ABC's own Code of Practice, which states: “Where allegations are made about a person or organisation, make reasonable efforts in the circumstances to provide a fair opportunity to respond.”

This high-profile journalist made no mention of Clinton's own “clear and present danger” to the people of Iran whom she once threatened to “obliterate totally,” and the 40,000 Libyans who died in the attack on Libya in 2011 that Clinton orchestrated

Cover Story

Today, Assange remains a political refugee from the war-making dark state of which Donald Trump is a caricature and Hillary Clinton the embodiment

Following the ABC broadcast, Ferguson's executive producer, Sally Neighbour, re-tweeted the following: "Assange is Putin's bitch. We all know it!"

The slander, since deleted, was even used as a link to the ABC interview captioned 'Assange is Putins (sic) b****. We all know it!'

In the years I have known Julian Assange, I have watched a vituperative personal campaign try to stop him and WikiLeaks. It has been a frontal assault on whistleblowing, on free speech and free journalism, all of which are now under sustained attack from governments and corporate internet controllers.

The first serious attacks on Assange came from the Guardian which, like a spurned lover, turned on its besieged former source, having hugely profited from WikiLeaks' disclosures. With not a penny going to As-

sange or WikiLeaks, a Guardian book led to a lucrative Hollywood movie deal. Assange was portrayed as "callous" and a "damaged personality."

It was as if a rampant jealousy could not accept that his remarkable achievements stood in marked contrast to that of his detractors in the "mainstream" media. It is like watching the guardians of the status quo, regardless of age, struggling to silence real dissent and prevent the emergence of the new and hopeful.

Today, Assange remains a political refugee from the war-making dark state of which Donald Trump is a caricature and Hillary Clinton the embodiment. His resilience and courage are astonishing. Unlike him, his tormentors are cowards. **CT**

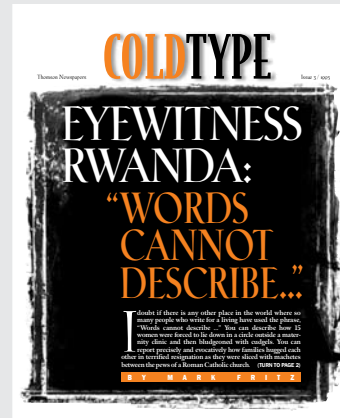
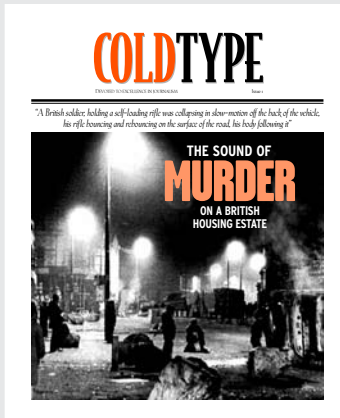
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Spanish Harlem revisited

The photographs of **Joseph Rodriguez** capture the spirit of a people who survived poverty, gentrification and replacement in the New York City's oldest barrio

When Brooklyn-raised photographer Joseph Rodriguez first debuted his body of work shot in Spanish Harlem in the 1980s, it changed the face of documentary photography. Grit, elegy, celebration, pride, lurking cataclysm – all embedded in the portrait of a place and the people.

Now, three decades later, Rodriguez and New York's powerHouse Books are revisiting that groundbreaking series: unearthing huge new caches of images, and re-editing and showcasing the body of work in a beautiful, deluxe monograph, reframing the project as one that pushed beyond documentary into the realm

of fine art. More than 30 years since the project began, **Spanish Harlem: El Barrio in the 80s** finally brings this unparalleled endeavour to fruition.

Spanish Harlem, New York's oldest barrio, is the US mecca where Puerto Ricans first established themselves in the 1940s. One of America's most vital centres of Latino culture, Spanish Harlem is home to 125,000 people, half of whom are Latino.

Shot in the mid-to-late 80s, Joseph Rodriguez's photographs bring us into the core of the neighbourhood, capturing a spirit of a people that survives despite the ravages of poverty, and more



recently, the threat of gentrification and displacement. In a now-distant landscape littered with abandoned buildings, ominous alleyways, and the plague of addiction, the residents of Spanish Harlem persevered with flamboyant style and gritty self-reliance.

The heart of the work comes from Rodriguez's intimacy and access. The trust and familiarity he built with his subjects – repeated visits with no camera, then no photographing, then little by little, a peek here, a shot there – allowed him to transcend surface level sheen and exploitation to capture images that reveal the essence of the neighbourhood and of the era.

That access paired with a sharp eye for detail and composition, and the practiced and disciplined ability to find the perfect moment, led to the creation of an entirely

Photographs from Spanish Harlem: El Barrio in the 80s, by Joseph Rodriguez

In The Picture



Photographs from Spanish Harlem: El Barrio in the 80s, by Joseph Rodriguez





unique and breathtaking narrative. From idyllic scenes of children playing under the sprinklers on the playground, or performing the Bomba Plena on “Old Timer’s Day,” to shocking images of men shooting up speedballs and children dying of AIDS, Rodriguez reveals a day in the life of the barrio in the 1980s. **CT**

Joseph Rodriguez was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. He worked for Black Star photo agency, and print and online news organisations including National Geographic, the New York Times Magazine, Mother Jones, Newsweek, Esquire, and Stern magazine. He is the author of Spanish Harlem, part of the “American Scene” series, published by the National Museum of American Art/ DAP., as well as East Side Stories: Gang Life in East Los Angeles, Juvenile, Flesh Life Sex in Mexico City, and Still Here: Stories After Katrina,



SPANISH HARLEM: El Barrio In The 80s

Joseph Rodriguez

Published by powerHouse Books
www.powerhousebooks.com

Price \$25.47 (Amazon)

Weinstein is a symptom of Hollywood problems

John Wight says we should be critical of the corruptness of the whole movie industry, not just the abuses committed by one of its most-feted leaders

I arrived in Hollywood determined to establish a career as a screenwriter and ended up spending over three years sleeping on the mattress on the floor of a tiny studio apartment just off Hollywood Boulevard, scraping a living as a nightclub doorman and extra in TV shows and movies

The only surprise concerning the exposure of Hollywood movie mogul Harvey Weinstein as a serial abuser of women is that anybody could possibly be surprised. We are after all talking about a town, industry and culture which not only produces monsters, but also goes out of its way to cultivate and worship them.

Sympathy for Mr Weinstein is notably in exceedingly short supply among family members, former friends, associates, and fellow studio execs in Hollywood – not to mention high profile political figures within the US liberal political community whose “loyalty” and friendship he’d cultivated over the years with the judicious use of campaign donations. All of them have scrambled for cover, treating a man they once revered as a veritable sun king as something akin to radioactive waste overnight. Even his wife and brother have thrown him under the bus.

It describes an astounding and vertiginous fall from grace to befall a man who for decades was so synonymous with Hollywood and the movie industry he was considered infallible, one of the very few movie executives with the ability to make and ruin careers with a phone call.

But lost in what has now become a feeding frenzy of condemnation – to the point where it is hard to escape the whiff of opportunism on the part of those who’ve jumped on a bandwagon that has reached

warp speed – is that Weinstein’s contemptible abuse of women, far from the exception or an aberration has long been the norm in Tinsel Town.

“Hollywood is a place where they’ll pay you a thousand dollars for a kiss and fifty cents for your soul,” Marilyn Monroe famously averred – and who can argue with a woman whose star once shone brighter than any other in that rarefied world, only for it to fall under the crushing weight of the brutal exploitation she suffered, feeding inner demons that ultimately destroyed her?

In my 2013 book, *Dreams That Die*, I recount my own experience of living and working in Hollywood between 2000 and 2005. I arrived determined to establish a career as a screenwriter and ended up spending over three years sleeping on the mattress on the floor of a tiny studio apartment just off Hollywood Boulevard, scraping a living as a nightclub doorman, extra in TV shows and movies, including on one movie where I was Ben Affleck’s double/stand in, working and hoping to catch a break in my own chosen career.

It’s the same existence lived by countless thousands of young men and women who arrive in Hollywood from all over the US and beyond, determined to “make it” and see their dream come true. The toll it takes – the loss of dignity that comes with subjecting yourself to abuse from those

higher up the food chain – is impossible to properly quantify, but take a toll it most certainly does unless you are able to stop yourself drowning in the culture of vomit which is the reality that belies the image of fame, glamour, and untrammelled wealth commonly associated with this part of the world and industry.

If I had been under the naïve belief that I could write movies that would make a difference, it was soon knocked out of me by the manager I had. From his wrist dangled a Rolex bigger than the jalopy I used to roll up outside his office in every week to be told that my latest script was a “piece of shit” and that I needed to start writing movies that weren’t so “anti-American.”

Working on TV shows and movies as an extra you are provided with an understanding of how a caste system works. In my time I saw extras in tears as they were being escorted off the set of the sitcom *Friends* by security guards for turning up five minutes late after taking three buses to get there, begging to be allowed to stay because they needed the paltry fifty bucks (the daily rate back then for a non-union extra) to pay the rent. I saw extras so poor they stole food from the catering truck to take home, and I witnessed old men and women being yelled at by production assistants in their early twenties for missing their marks during a scene.

And, yes, the legions of young women were ripe for other kinds of abuse, too.

This is not to assert that there are no decent people or people in positions of influence in Hollywood with integrity. There are. But they are outnumbered in my experi-



Harvey Weinstein: Tip of a very large iceberg

Photo: David Shankbone

I saw extras so poor they stole food from the catering truck to take home, and I witnessed old men and women being yelled at by production assistants in their early twenties for missing their marks during a scene. And, yes, the legions of young women were ripe for other kinds of abuse, too

ence by the other kind.

Harvey Weinstein is the tip of a very large iceberg when it comes to abuse in the movie business. He is the rotten product of a rotten culture dominated by sociopaths, people who are given unlicensed power over other human beings – most of them desperate to forge careers in this most brutal and unforgiving of businesses, and thus ripe for spiritual, emotional, and psychological slaughter.

Brando said it best: “Most of the successful people in Hollywood are failures as human beings.”

CT

*John Wight is the author of a politically incorrect and irreverent Hollywood memoir – *Dreams That Die* – published by Zero Books. He’s also written five novels, which are available as Kindle eBooks. You can follow him on Twitter at @JohnWight1*

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The free speech of fools

Danny Katch offers some remedial lessons about the meaning of free speech to the University of Florida administration following a Nazi's appearance

The horrifying absurdity of using freedom of speech as a cover for fascism was made clear by the far-right Portland terrorist Jeremy Christian at his arraignment hearing for murdering two anti-racist train passengers earlier this year

Here's a multiple-choice quiz – choose between the following definitions of “freedom of speech:

a. An important civil liberty that needs to be constantly fought for in a society dominated by the rich and powerful, who would like nothing more than to silence the voices of the oppressed, exploited and dissenters.

Or b. A magic phrase that grants people who blurt it out the licence to attack or harm whoever they want without consequences.

It won't surprise readers that the small but growing fascist movement in the United States is pushing for “b.” Over the past year, the far right has held a number of “free speech” rallies that are, in reality, testing grounds for how many people they can publicly assemble and launch violent attacks on people of colour and leftists.

The horrifying absurdity of using freedom of speech as a cover for fascism was made clear by the far-right Portland terrorist Jeremy Christian at his arraignment hearing for murdering two anti-racist train passengers earlier this year. “Free speech or die, Portland,” Christian said. “You got no safe space. This is America. Get out if you don't like free speech.”

It really shouldn't be that hard to tell the difference between free speech, as in the fundamental democratic right, and free speech, as in the amoral, we'll-attack-whomever-we-

want manifesto of the far right. But the leaders of America universities seem to be having a very hard time spotting the difference.

At Cleveland State University, President Ronald Berkman responded to a spate of flyers from a group called Fascist Solutions that call on LGBT students to kill themselves by saying that the school “will continue to protect free speech to ensure all voices may be heard.” Over in New York City, a dean at Columbia University told Fox News that he's so committed to free speech, he'd invite Adolph Hitler “to engage in a debate and discussion” – which is precisely the type of robust sharing of ideas that the architect of the holocaust was known for.

But the University of Florida (UF) has to take the prize for ivory tower stupidity – at least for now – after the way it handled the October 19 campus visit by one of the biggest names in neo-fascism, Richard Spencer. The UF administration claimed that because of free speech, it was obligated not only to host Spencer – who invited himself to campus, with no connections to any student group – but to impose a virtual state of martial law on the campus and spend an estimated \$500,000 on security, in order to stop anti-racist students and workers on campus from expressing their own speech directly to Spencer's face.

Despite the intentions of the UF administration and Governor Rick Scott, who ac-

tually declared a state of emergency in advance of Spencer’s speech, protesters came out in large numbers, both on the streets and inside the venue where Spencer spoke. Like the anti-racists in Boston, Portland and the Bay Area, among other places, these counter-demonstrators made it clear that Spencer’s hateful ideology is as widely despised in Florida as anywhere else.

But that only makes it more absurd in retrospect how far the authorities went to accommodate a hateful racist and his followers. UF had initially refused to hold an event for Spencer in September, until President W. Kent Fuchs – showing the kind of “profile in courage” we’ve been taught is how to confront the Nazis – apparently changed his mind “after being threatened with a lawsuit.”

Dr. Clay Calvert, a UF professor and “First Amendment expert,” told the Huffington Post that Fuchs had no choice. “Private universities could exclude Spencer without First Amendment issues,” Calvert said. But the “First Amendment is triggered” at public universities that deny a platform to a speaker, even if they spout “offensive rhetoric” – unless the speaker incites violence.

Apparently, it was too big a leap for Fuchs and other administrators to make the case that Richard Spencer – one of the main organisers of this summer’s weekend orgy of Nazi violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, which ultimately cost the life of Heather Heyer – has a history of inciting violence.

But wait, there’s more: The day before the event, UF made a mockery of its supposed commitment to free speech by declaring that, because he had paid \$10,000 to rent a hall, Spencer would be able to decide which journalists and audience members would be permitted to attend his speech.

“They’ve rented the facility,” university spokeswoman Janine Sikes announced. “It’s their event, so that’s why they can have whomever they want.”

This makes no sense. If the university felt obligated to let a Nazi speak in the

name of a free exchange of ideas, it could have hosted him at no charge and let him be vigorously challenged. But if UF officials are saying that Spencer paid for the space so he can do what he wants, then this isn’t a matter of free speech, but of choosing to do business with a fascist. You don’t get to take \$10,000 from Nazis and then proclaim your noble commitment to free speech.

We’re living in a time when actual free speech rights are as precarious as ever – consider, for example, the autocrat in the White House who orders professional football team owners to fire players who take a knee during the national anthem. Or the FBI targeting supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement as dangerous “extremists.”

On college campuses, the great liberal leaders of intellectual life are instituting draconian crackdowns of their own on student protest and faculty dissent. But when does the University of Florida choose to take a stand for civil liberties? When a Nazi offers to pay \$10,000 a pop for the “right” to foment violence.

Are these college administrators being dumb or cynical? I would have been tempted to go with cynical – until I heard a quote from President Fuchs about the impact of the Spencer circus: “The one thing that comes out of this, though, is it is prompting a great discussion around race and religion and the value of diversity of that on a university campus.”

Now that’s some brilliant advice from a leader of higher learning: While you’re hiding from the swarms of cops and the fascist thugs paying \$10,000 to take over campus, take a moment to have an invigorating discussion about campus diversity. **CT**

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Danny Katch is a New York-based activist, journalist, and comedian. The author of “America’s Got Democracy! The Making of the World’s Longest Running Reality Show.” he is a columnist for Socialist Worker - www.socialistworker.org - where this article was first published.

If UF officials are saying that Spencer paid for the space so he can do what he wants, then this isn’t a matter of free speech, but of choosing to do business with a fascist. You don’t get to take \$10,000 from Nazis and then proclaim your noble commitment to free speech

A military success story of the strangest sort

David Petraeus finally finds an answer to his own question, writes **Tom Engelhardt**

Six days into a lightning campaign, his division suddenly found itself stopped 30 miles southwest of the city of Najaf by terrible weather, including a blinding dust storm, and the unexpectedly “fanatical” attacks of Iraqi irregulars

“Tell me how this ends?”

It took 14 years, but now we have an answer. It was March 2003, the invasion of Iraq was under way, and Major General David Petraeus was in command of the 101st Airborne Division heading for the Iraqi capital, Baghdad. Rick Atkinson, Washington Post journalist and military historian, was accompanying him. Six days into a lightning campaign, his division suddenly found itself stopped 30 miles southwest of the city of Najaf by terrible weather, including a blinding dust storm, and the unexpectedly “fanatical” attacks of Iraqi irregulars. At that moment, Atkinson reported, “[Petraeus] hooked his thumbs into his flak vest and adjusted the weight on his shoulders. ‘Tell me how this ends,’ he said. ‘Eight years and eight divisions?’ The allusion was to advice supposedly given the White House in the early 1950s by a senior Army strategist upon being asked what it would take to prop up French forces in South Vietnam. Petraeus’s grin suggested the comment was more droll quip than historical assertion.”

Certainly, Petraeus knew his history when it came to American interventions in



distant lands. He had entered West Point just as the American war in Vietnam was beginning to wind down and did his doctoral dissertation – *The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam: A Study of Military Influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era* – at Princeton in 1987 on that conflict. In it, he wrote, “Vietnam



cost the military dearly. It left America's military leaders confounded, dismayed, and discouraged. Even worse, it devastated the armed forces, robbing them of dignity, money, and qualified people for a decade. . . . Vietnam was an extremely painful reminder that when it comes to intervention, time and patience are not American virtues

in abundant supply.”

So no wonder he was well acquainted with that 1954 exchange between President Dwight D. Eisenhower and former Korean War commander General Matthew Ridgeway about the French war in Vietnam. Perhaps, the “droll quip” aspect of his comment lay in his knowledge of just how badly

**General David
Petraeus at the US
Embassy in Kabul,
Afghanistan.**

Photo: S.K. Vemmer/
Department of State

Nixon's Children

Four months after Petraeus ended his stint in Mosul, the police chief he had trained there went over to the insurgents and it became a stronghold for them

Ridgeway underestimated both the years and the troop numbers that the American version of that war would eat up before it, too, ended in disaster and in a military as riddled with protest and as close to collapse as was imaginable for an American force of our era.

In his thesis, Petraeus called for the military high command to be granted a far freer hand in whatever interventions the future held. In that sense, in 1987, he was already mainlining into a 21st-century world in which the US military continues to get everything it wants (and more) as it fights its wars without having to deal with either an obstreperous citizen army or too many politicians trying to impose their will on its actions. And by the way, though his Najaf comments have regularly been cited as if they were *sui generis*, as the Ridgeway reference indicates, he was hardly the first American military commander or political figure to appropriate Joan of Arc's question in Bernard Shaw's play Saint Joan: "How long, oh Lord, how long?"

As Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist David Halberstam recounted in his history of the Vietnam years, *The Best and the Brightest*, for instance, President Lyndon Johnson turned to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Earle Wheeler in a June 1965 meeting and asked of the war in Vietnam, "What do you think it will take to do the job?"

Wheeler's answer echoed Ridgeway's 11 years earlier, though in the escalatory mode that was typical of Vietnam: "It all depends on what your definition of the job is, Mr. President. If you intend to drive the last Vietcong out of Vietnam it will take seven hundred, eight hundred thousand, a million men and about seven years. But if your definition of the job is to prevent the communists from taking over the country, that is, stopping them from doing it, then you're talking about different gradations and different levels. So tell us what the job is and we'll answer it."

Not so long after that moment on the

outskirts of Najaf, the 101st Airborne made its way to Baghdad just as the burning and looting began, and that would only be the prologue to David Petraeus's war, to his version of eight years and eight divisions. When an insurgency (actually several) broke out in Iraq, he would be dispatched to the northern city of Mosul (now a pile of rubble after its 2017 "liberation" from the Islamic State in Washington's third Iraq War). There, he would first experiment with bringing back from the Vietnam experience the very strategy the US military had hoped to be rid of forever: "counterinsurgency," or the winning of what in that war had regularly been called "hearts and minds." In 2004, Newsweek was already hailing him on its cover with the dramatic question: "Can This Man Save Iraq?" (Four months after Petraeus ended his stint in that city, the police chief he had trained there went over to the insurgents and it became a stronghold for them.)

By the time the occupation of Iraq turned into a full-scale disaster, he was back at Fort Leavenworth running the US Army's Combined Arms Center. During that period, he and another officer, Marine Lieutenant General James Mattis – does that name ring any bells? – joined forces to oversee the development and publication of Field Service Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency Operations. It would be the first official counterinsurgency (COIN) how-to book the military had produced since the Vietnam years. In the process, he became "the world's leading expert in counterinsurgency warfare." He would famously return to Iraq in 2007, that manual in hand, with five brigades, or 20,000 US troops, for what would become known as "the surge," or "the new way forward," an attempt to bail the Bush administration out of its disastrous occupation of the country. His counterinsurgency operations would, like the initial invasion, be hailed by experts and pundits in Washington (including Petraeus himself) as a marvel and a success of the first order, as a true turning point in Iraq and in the war on terror.

A decade later, with America's third Iraq War ongoing, you could be excused for viewing the "successes" of that surge somewhat differently.

In the process, Petraeus (or "King David" as he was supposedly nicknamed by Iraqis during his stint in Mosul) would become America's most celebrated, endlessly featured general, and go on in 2008 to head US Central Command (overseeing America's wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq). In 2010, he would become the US Afghan commander, largely so that he could perform the counterinsurgency miracles in Afghanistan he had supposedly performed in Iraq. In 2011, he became Barack Obama's CIA director only to crash and burn a year later in a scandal over a lover-cum-biographer and the misuse of classified documents, after which he morphed into a go-to expert on our wars and a partner at KKR, a global investment firm. In other words, as with the three generals of the surge generation now ascendant in Washington, including Petraeus's former COIN pal James Mattis (who also headed US Central Command), he presided over this country's failing wars in the Greater Middle East.

And only recently, 14 years after he and Atkinson were briefly trapped outside Najaf, in his role as a pundit and prognosticator on his former wars, he finally answered – and not quippingly either – the question that plagued him then. Though his comments were certainly covered in the news (as anything he says is), in a sense no one noticed. Asked by Judy Woodruff of the PBS News Hour whether, in Donald Trump's America, it was "smart" to once again send more US troops surging into Afghanistan, he called the Pentagon's decision "heartening," even as he warned that it wasn't a war that would end any time soon.

Instead, after so many years of involvement, experience, thought, and observation, in a studio without a grain of sand, no less a dust storm in sight, he offered this observation: "But this is a generational struggle.

This is not something that is going to be won in a few years. We're not going to take a hill, plant a flag, [and] go home to a victory parade. And we need to be there for the long haul, but in a way that is, again, sustainable. We have been in Korea for 65-plus years because there is an important national interest for that. We were in Europe for a very long period of time, still there, of course, and actually with a renewed emphasis now, given Russia's aggressive actions. And I think that's the way we need to approach this."

In proposing such a "generational struggle" to be handed on to our children, if not grandchildren, he's in good company. In recent times, the Pentagon high command, too, has been adopting a "generational approach" to Afghanistan and assumedly our other wars across the Greater Middle East and Africa. Similarly, the scholars of the Brookings Institution have urged on Washington's policymakers what they call "an enduring partnership" in Afghanistan: "The US-Afghan partnership should be recognized as generational in duration, given the nature of the threat and the likely longevity of its future manifestations."

Even if, under further questioning by Woodruff, Petraeus wouldn't quite cop to a 60-year Afghan war (that is, to a war lasting at least until 2061), his long-delayed answer to his own question of the 2003 invasion moment was now definitive. Such American wars won't end. Not now. Maybe not ever. And in a way you can't be much blunter or grimmer than that in your assessment of the "successes" of the war on terror.

Adulatory profiles

Until James "Mad Dog" Mattis hit Washington in 2017, no American general of our era was ever written about as much as, or in a more celebratory fashion, than David Petraeus. Adulatory (if not fawning) profiles of him are legion. Even today, in the wake of barely avoided felony and other charges (for, among other things, lying to the FBI) –

His long-delayed answer to his own question of the 2003 invasion moment was now definitive. Such American wars won't end. Not now. Maybe not ever. And in a way you can't be much blunter or grimmer than that in your assessment of the "successes" of the war on terror

Nixon's Children

Sustained economic growth on a planet that is not growing means crashing through environmental limits

he pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor in the handling of classified documents and was sentenced to two years of probation and a fine – he may still be this country's most celebrated general.

But why exactly the celebration? The answer would have to be that he continues to be lauded and considered a must-quote expert because in Washington this country's war on terror and the generalship that's accompanied it are now beyond serious analysis or reconsideration. Sixteen years after the invasion of Afghanistan, as America's wars continue to spread across the Greater Middle East and Africa, its generals – thanks in part to Donald Trump and the need for “adult day care” in the White House – are still treated like the only “adults in the room” in our nation's capital, like, in short, American winners.

And yet consider recent events in the central African country of Niger, which already has an operating US drone base, another under construction, and about 800 American troops quietly but permanently stationed there. It's also a country that, until this moment, not an American in a million would have been able to locate on a map. On October 4th, four Green Berets were killed and two others wounded during a “routine training mission” there. Patrolling with Nigerian troops, they were ambushed by Islamic militants – whether from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb or a new branch of ISIS remains unclear. That officially makes Niger at least the eighth country, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Somalia, and Libya, to be absorbed into Washington's war on terror and, in case you hadn't noticed, in none of them has that war ended and in none have US forces triumphed.

And yet you could comb the recent mainstream coverage of the events in Niger without finding any indication that those deaths represented a modest new escalation in the never-ending, ever-spreading war on terror.

As was inevitable, in Iraq and Syria, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's Islamic “caliphate” is fi-

nally collapsing. The city of Mosul is back in Iraqi hands, as is Tal Afar, and more recently the town of Hawija (with a rare mass surrender of ISIS militants). Those were the last significant urban areas controlled by ISIS in Iraq, while in Syria, the “apocalyptic ruins” of the Islamic State's “capital,” Raqqa, are also largely in the hands of forces allied with and supported by the air power of the US military. In what are now the ravaged ruins of Syria and Iraq, however, such “victories” will inevitably prove as hollow as were the “successful” invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq or the “successful” overthrow of Libyan autocrat Muammar Gaddafi. Meanwhile, the Islamic State may have spread its brand to another country with US forces in it. And yet, across a vast swath of the planet, the wars of David Petraeus, James Mattis, and the other generals of this era simply go on and on in a region being fractured and devastated (and whose vast numbers of displaced refugees are, in turn, helping to fracture Europe).

Worse yet, it's a situation that can't be seriously discussed or debated in the United States because, if it were, opposition to those wars might rise and alternatives to them and the by-now brain-dead decisions of those generals, including newly heightened air wars and the latest mini-surge in Afghanistan, might become part of an actual national debate. So think of this as a military success story of the strangest sort – success that can be traced directly back to a single decision, now decades old, made by a long-discredited American president, Richard Nixon. Without returning to that decision, there is simply no way to understand America's 21st-century wars. In its own way, it would prove an act of genius (if, at least, you wanted to fight never-ending wars until the end of time).

In any case, credit, when owed, must be given. Facing an antiwar movement that wouldn't go away and, by the early 1970s, included significant numbers of both active-duty servicemen and Vietnam veterans,

the president and his secretary of defense, Melvin Laird, decided to try to cut into its strength by eliminating the draft. Nixon suspected that young men not endangered by the possibility of being sent into the Vietnam War might be far less eager to demonstrate against it. The military high command was uncertain about such a move. They worried, with reason, that in the wake of Vietnam it would be hard to recruit for an all-volunteer military. Who in the world, they wondered, would want to be part of such a discredited force? That was, of course, a version of Nixon's thinking turned upside down, but the president moved ahead anyway and, on January 27, 1973, conscription was ended. There would be no more draft calls and the citizen's army, the one that had fought World War II to victory and had raised such a ruckus about the grim and distasteful war in Vietnam, would be no more.

In that single stroke, before he himself fell prey to the Watergate scandal and resigned his presidency, Nixon functionally created a legacy for the ages, paving the way for the American military to fight its wars "generationally" and lose them until hell

froze over with the guarantee that no one in this country would seem to care a whit. Or put another way, can you truly imagine such silence in "the homeland" if an American draft were continually filling the ranks of a citizen's army to fight a 16-year-old war on terror, still spreading, and now considered "generational"? I doubt it.

So as American air power in places like Yemen, Somalia, and Afghanistan is ramped up yet again, as the latest mini-surge of troops arrives in Afghanistan, as Niger enters the war, it's time to put generals David Petraeus, James Mattis, H.R. McMaster, and John Kelly in context. It's time to call them what they truly are: Nixon's children. **CT**

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Tom Engelhardt is a co-founder of the American Empire Project and the author of The United States of Fear as well as a history of the Cold War, The End of Victory Culture. He is a fellow of the Nation Institute and runs TomDispatch.com. His latest book is Shadow Government: Surveillance, Secret Wars, and a Global Security State in a Single-Superpower World. This essay first appeared at www.tomdispatch.com

Nixon functionally created a legacy for the ages, paving the way for the American military to fight its wars "generationally" and lose them until hell froze over with the guarantee that no one in this country would seem to care a whit



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's approach to Palestinians:

“beat them up, not once but repeatedly, beat them up so it hurts so badly, until it's unbearable.”

PalestineAdvocacyProject.org



A kind of justice for Ahmed Timol

Ahmed Timol didn't commit suicide, but was murdered by South Africa's apartheid police force. It took 46 years to find the truth, writes **Mark Waller**

The police said Timol had dived out of the police station window after having distracted his interrogators – a physical impossibility, not least for someone incapacitated by days of torture

It's taken 46 years for some sort of justice to prevail in the case of Ahmed Timol, the anti-apartheid activist killed in police custody when South Africa was under racist white rule.

Timol was a member of the South African Communist Party (SACP), which was banned by the apartheid regime. In October 1971, he was arrested for being in possession of the communist party newsletter *Inkululeko-Freedom* and other material. A few days later he was dead.

The initial inquest, held in 1972, found that the 29-year-old activist had committed suicide by jumping from the tenth floor of the main police station in Johannesburg, then called John Vorster Police Station. The court exonerated the security police, which had been interrogating Timol, from any wrongdoing. It even ruled that Timol had been treated with compassion by the cops.

But on October 12 the High Court sitting in Pretoria ruled that Timol had been brutally tortured up to his death by teams of secret police interrogators working in relay, and that he was pushed or thrown from the tenth floor or the roof of the police station. The judgement was greeted with applause

in the sweltering, packed courtroom.

Judge Billy Mothle told the court: "Timol did not jump out of the window of room 1026 but was either pushed out of the window or from the roof of the John Vorster Police Station. Thus he did not commit suicide but was murdered."

The judge said the security police went to great lengths to conceal the truth of Timol's death, but left gaping anomalies that were uncovered during the re-examination of the case. One was the assertion that Timol had dived out of the police station window after having distracted his interrogators – a physical impossibility, not least for someone incapacitated by days of torture.

"The sub-standard and sloppy manner in which the investigation of Timol's death was conducted supported the view that there was clear intent to cover-up the incident through

a fabricated version of suicide."

The new inquest was the result of efforts over many years by the Timol family to review the 1972 judgment. Following the judgement, Timol's brother Mohamed told SA's Eyewitness News (EWN) that the court ruling reflected what South Africa should stand for.



Timol shortly before police interrogators murdered him

“The Timol family has been driven, not by vengeance but by the pursuit of the truth and justice and this is what democratic South Africa should be.”

Imtiaz Cajee, Ahmed Timol's nephew, author of the book, *Timol, A Quest for Justice*, has called on the National Prosecuting Authority to re-open all inquests concerning the killing of political activists. “We'd like to view the reopened Timol inquest as the beginning and definitely not the end,” EWN reported.

Under the apartheid regime, which was waging a prolonged battle against a broad liberation movement fighting for equality and political freedom, the judiciary regularly connived with the security police to cover up political murders, many of them carried out at the notorious John Vorster police station.

Most of those involved in Timol's interrogation and killing are now dead and never had to answer for their crime. The mendacious verdict of the original inquest that “no person alive” killed Timol carries an ironic truth today. Only one of the police officers who was with Timol before he died is still alive. He stuck to the cover-up story of the 1972 inquest verdict and is now liable for prosecution.

The new inquest, which opened at the end of June, was hampered by the incomplete record of the original inquest, as 600 pages of the 1000-page court record had disappeared by the time the Timol family had managed to get hold of it by court order. The missing material covered all the police testimony given at the 1972 hearing. Despite this, Mothle pointed out in his ruling, there was sufficient new evidence to cast doubt on the 1972 verdict.

Judge Mothle said that the findings of the new Timol inquest open the way for inquests into 400 other deaths at the hands of the security police during apartheid that were either never accounted for or covered up. This was the first time that an inquest of its kind has been re-opened despite the ample opportunity since the advent of democ-



COMMUNIST PARTY supporters outside the High Court in Pretoria awaiting the judgment in the re-opened Timol inquest.

Photo: Mark Waller

racy in South Africa in 1994 to re-examine cases from the apartheid era.

For advocate Howard Varney, who represented the Timol family in court, the case exposes the ugly connivance by the police under apartheid to conceal their crimes. But, Varney wrote recently, it also exposes “a shameful story of great neglect, as the authorities in our new democratic order failed or declined to take action while the key suspects were still alive. It regrettably points to a design on the part of the authorities to permit the perpetrators of the past to avoid a reckoning with the truth, and escape justice.”

Following the new ruling on Timol's death, the organisation he worked for in the underground, the SACP, stated that it “unwaveringly supports the Timol family and will deepen its campaign towards a wider programme to seek justice for all. Everyone who was killed by or disappeared at the behest of the apartheid regime must be accounted for.”

CT

Mark Waller is a freelance journalist and translator, currently living in South Africa. He is co-editor of www.spectre-online.org where this article was first published.

The findings of the new Timol inquest open the way for inquests into 400 other deaths at the hands of the security police during apartheid that were either never accounted for or covered up

In The Picture



Dog daze!

Photographer **Dougie Wallace** tells why he prefers working with dogs to humans: 'They don't chase me down the street demanding I delete the photo'

Growing up in Glasgow, I'd often see stray dogs. However, if one was being carried or pushed in a pram, it would always be by a slightly batty old woman. For the rest of us, dogs were simply man's best friends.

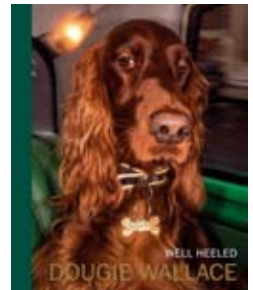
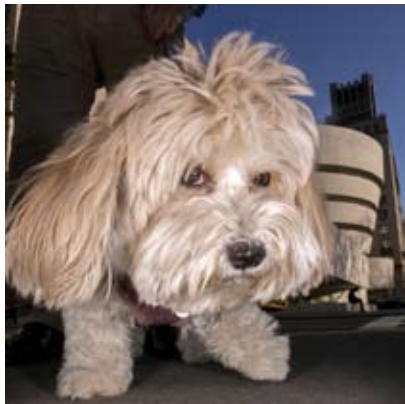
I stumbled upon the strange world of pet parents while on assignment in Italy, where I noticed groomed and preened dogs being paraded around the streets at dusk. Somewhere between growing up in Glasgow and hitting the streets of Milan, it seems, dogs had been elevated to fashion item status.

Back in London, I found myself increasingly drawn to dogs rather than their owners. My pursuit of them took me to New York and Tokyo, and I realised that anthropomorphic 'parents' spend as much money on accessorising and grooming their 'offspring' as they do on themselves.

Even so, it was the dogs and their canine traits that jumped out at me: their claws, paw pads, incisors, drool-drenched beards and wet noses. I began to capture the streets from a dog's eye view that we bipeds wouldn't normally see.

In Tokyo, what is often referred to as 'extreme humanising' seems to have reached its zenith. I couldn't help wondering if there was a correlation between the drop in the birth rate and all the furry babies being pushed around in prams. Humans want love, and their dogs give it to them unconditionally. Some would argue this justifies the pampering.

As a photographer, I particularly like it that they don't know what a camera is; they never chase me down the street demanding I delete the photo. I would love to own one, but I do fear their paw prints on my travel plans. **CT**



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Insectageddon!

The shocking collapse of insect populations hints at a global ecological meltdown, writes **George Monbiot**

The impact on wildlife of changes in farming practice (and the expansion of the farmed area) is so rapid and severe that it is hard to get your head round the scale of what is happening

Which of these would you name as the world's most pressing environmental issue? Climate breakdown, air pollution, water loss, plastic waste or urban expansion? My answer is none of the above. Almost incredibly, I believe that climate breakdown takes third place, behind two issues that receive only a fraction of the attention.

This is not to downgrade the danger presented by global heating – on the contrary, it presents an existential threat. It is simply that I have come to realise that two other issues have such huge and immediate impacts that they push even this great predicament into third place.

One is industrial fishing, which, all over the blue planet, is now causing systemic ecological collapse. The other is the erasure of non-human life from the land by farming.

And perhaps not only non-human life. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, at current rates of soil loss, driven largely by poor farming practice, we have just 60 years of harvests left. And this is before the Global Land Outlook report, published in September, found that productivity is already declining on 20 percent of the world's cropland.

The impact on wildlife of changes in farming practice (and the expansion of the farmed area) is so rapid and severe that it is hard to get your head round the scale of

what is happening. A study published last month in the journal Plos One reveals that flying insects surveyed on nature reserves in Germany have declined by 76 percent in 27 years. The most likely cause of this Insectageddon is that the land surrounding those reserves has become hostile to them: the volume of pesticides and the destruction of habitat have turned farmland into a wildlife desert.

It is remarkable that we need to rely on a study in Germany to see what is likely to have been happening worldwide: long-term surveys of this kind simply do not exist elsewhere. This failure reflects distorted priorities in the funding of science. There is no end of grants for research on how to kill insects, but hardly any money for discovering what the impacts of this killing might be. Instead, the work has been left – as in the German case – to recordings by amateur naturalists.

But anyone of my generation (ie in the second bloom of youth) can see and feel the change. We remember the “moth snowstorm” that filled the headlight beams of our parents' cars on summer nights (memorialised in Michael McCarthy's lovely book of that name). Every year I collected dozens of species of caterpillars and watched them grow and pupate and hatch. This year I tried to find some caterpillars for my children to raise. I spent the whole summer looking



VANISHING: Pesticide use by farmers is killing the insects that pollinate the crops.

Photo: Tony Sutton

and, aside from the cabbage whites on our broccoli plants, found nothing in the wild but one garden tiger larva. Yes, one caterpillar in one year. I could scarcely believe what I was seeing – or rather, not seeing.

Insects, of course, are critical to the survival of the rest of the living world. Knowing what we now know, there is nothing surprising about the calamitous decline of insect-eating birds. Those flying insects – not just bees and hoverflies but species of many different families – are the pollinators without which a vast tract of the plant kingdom, both wild and cultivated, cannot survive. The wonders of the living planet are vanishing before our eyes.

Well, I hear you say, we have to feed the world. Yes, but not this way. As a UN report published in March explained, the notion that pesticide use is essential for feeding a growing population is a myth. A recent

study in *Nature Plants* reveals that most farms would increase production if they cut their use of pesticides. A study in the journal *Arthropod-Plant Interactions* shows that the more neonicotinoid pesticides were used to treat rapeseed crops, the more their yield declines. Why? Because the pesticides harm or kill the pollinators on which the crop depends.

Farmers and governments have been comprehensively conned by the global pesticide industry. It has ensured its products should not be properly regulated or even, in real-world conditions, properly assessed. A massive media onslaught by this industry has bamboozled us all about its utility and its impacts on the health of both human beings and the natural world.

The profits of these companies depend on ecocide. Do we allow them to hold the world to ransom, or do we acknowledge that

Flying insects – not just bees and hoverflies, but species of many different families – are the pollinators without which a vast tract of the plant kingdom, both wild and cultivated, cannot survive

Global Onslaught

We should stop using land that should be growing food for people to grow maize for biogas and fuel for cars

the survival of the living world is more important than returns to their shareholders? At the moment, shareholder value comes first. And it will count for nothing when we have lost the living systems on which our survival depends.

To save ourselves and the rest of the living world, here's what we need to do:

1. We need a global treaty to regulate pesticides, and put the manufacturers back in their box.

2. We need environmental impact assessments for the farming and fishing industries. It is amazing that, while these sectors present the greatest threats to the living world, they are, uniquely in many nations, not subject to such oversight.

3. We need firm rules based on the outcomes of these assessments, obliging those who use the land to protect and restore the ecosystems on which we all depend.

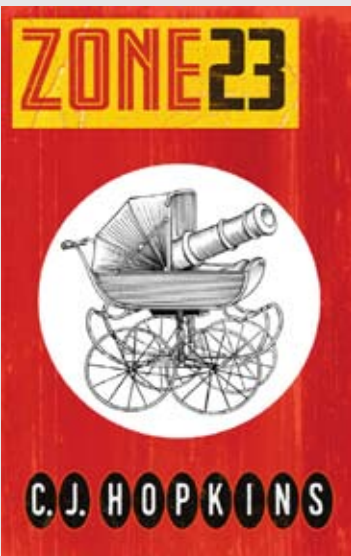
4. We need to reduce the amount of land used by farming, while sustaining the production of food. The most obvious way is

greatly to reduce our use of livestock: many of the crops we grow and all of the grazing land we use are deployed to feed them. One study in Britain suggests that, if we stopped using animal products, everyone in Britain could be fed on just 3-million of our 18.5-million hectares of current farmland (or on 7-million hectares if all our farming were organic). This would allow us to create huge wildlife and soil refuges: an investment against a terrifying future.

5. We should stop using land that should be growing food for people to grow maize for biogas and fuel for cars.

Then, at least, nature and people would have some respite from the global onslaught. And, I hope, a chance of getting through the century. **CT**

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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



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ColdType Insights

Sick society: celebrating war rather than peace

A recent fight over war memorials in Ottawa makes **Yves Engler** wonder why we need so many celebrations of killing

Why do we build monuments to war rather than to its absence? I wondered about this when reading about a recent tussle in Ottawa over the location for yet another celebration of people killing each other.

Last month the Canadian War Museum (CWM) complained to the National Capital Commission about the planned site of the National Memorial to Canada's Mission in Afghanistan.

The government wants to put the Afghan Memorial between Vimy Place Road and the museum to the west of Parliament Hill. But the CWM believes the Afghan monument will "detract from the architectural vision" of the museum.

They are also concerned people might think the memorial is part of their institution, which could undermine CWM's goal of being seen as a "centre of scholarly excellence"

rather than simply a hub of militarist propaganda.

Whoa, Nelly! Those horses left the barn long ago. The scope of pro-war propaganda in this country is



The Canadian War Museum in Ottawa.

huge, and CWM has long been part of it.

Each year, tens of millions of dollars in public money is spent on war memorials. The Afghan Memorial is just the latest addition to Ottawa's long list of war shrines, which includes the Korean War Monument, National War Memorial, National

Victoria Cross Memorial, Veterans Memorial Highway, National Aboriginal Veterans Monument, Boer War Memorial, etc.

The federal government spends tens of millions of dollars on these and the more than 7,500 memorials registered with Veterans Affairs' National Inventory of Military Memorials across the country.

These odes to militarism are generally silent about the Libyans, Afghans, Serbians, Iraqis, Koreans, Germans, South Africans, Sudanese and others killed by Canadian Forces.

They focus almost exclusively on "our" side, which reinforces a sense that Canada's cause is righteous. But Canadian soldiers have only fought in one morally justifiable war: the Second World War.

Part war memorial and part veteran commemoration, the War Museum re-opened in 2005.

The \$136-million institution includes the Royal Canadian Legion Hall of Honour and is

designed for light to shine on the headstone of the Unknown Soldier at 11 am on Remembrance Day.

In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson writes: "tombs of Unknown Soldiers... saturated with ghostly national imaginings."

With \$65 million a year in mostly public funds, CWM says it “helps tell the story of Canada’s military history to Canadians through its collections, its research, its exhibitions, and its public and education programs.”

Its re-launch was highly successful and 500,000 visitors a year have passed through the new museum, which dates to 1880 when the Canadian militia began displaying military artefacts and archival materials.

A 55,000-square-foot building, CWM houses a large collection of war art and Canadian Forces Artists Program works. The museum also has an arrangement with the Department of National Defence to showcase obsolete military equipment and CWM supports the Legion’s Lest We Forget Project, which introduces students to archives from the First and Second World Wars. Top weapons makers have also co-sponsored exhibits and speakers series at the museum.

CWM regularly partners with the more than 60 Canadian Forces museums across the country. According to a Canadian Forces Administrative Order, “the role of CF Museums is to preserve and interpret Canadian military heritage in order to increase the sense of identity and esprit de corps within the CF and to support the goals of the Department of National Defence.”

While it presents itself as scholarly, CWM has caved to military extremists. After shaping its development, the some veteran groups objected to a small part of a multi-faceted Second World War exhibit, which questioned “the efficacy and the morality of the ... massive

bombing of Germany’s industrial and civilian targets.” The campaign led to a new display that glossed over a bombing campaign explicitly designed to destroy German cities.

The war shrines’ battle over space in Ottawa offers a glimpse into the ever-growing world of militarist memorials. But these monuments and museums are only a small part of a vast military propaganda system.

With the largest PR machine in the country, the Canadian Forces promotes its worldview through a history department, university, journals, book publishers, think tanks, academic programs and

hundreds of public relations officers. Every year hundreds of millions of dollars in public money is spent promoting the Canadian Forces and militarism.

Maybe it is time for a Ministry of Peace with a budget big enough to properly celebrate those glorious times in human history when we lived together in harmony. **CT**

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*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*

An ominous trend: The pivot to video

News organisations are moving from text to video. Is this what readers want? No, but advertisers do, writes **Jeff Nygaard**

On the front Business Page of the June 1 New York Times appeared the headline, New York Times, Moving to Trim Editing Layers, Offers Buyouts to News Employees. “The buyouts are meant primarily for editors,” says the Times, and if not enough people take the buyouts, the top editors said, they “would turn to layoffs.”

Layoffs are now the norm in the nation’s newsrooms, as the Internet continues to displace traditional, or “legacy,” news operations. More than 68,000 workers were employed in the newsrooms of US newspapers in 2006. By 2015 that number had declined to 41,400, a

drop of 40 percent in just 10 years. Keep in mind that most journalism in the US is still done by newspapers, with TV, radio, and online news mostly commenting on what newspapers uncover.

“The offer [of buyouts] comes as The Times continues its shift from a legacy print operation to a more digitally focused newsroom,” the Times continues, adding that “A ‘print hub,’ which handles the tasks involved in producing the printed newspaper on a nightly basis, was created [at the Times] in 2015 in an effort to free editors to focus on the digital audience, but the process of shedding longtime habits

Insights

built around daily print deadlines continues to evolve. As its digital audience has grown, The Times has focused on publishing articles online quickly, placed an emphasis on visual journalism and invested in so-called service journalism with its acquisition in October of the product-review websites The Wirecutter and The Sweethome.”

That list of three things that the nation’s Newspaper of Record is “focusing on” says an awful lot! So let’s go through it point by point.

Focus #1: “Service journalism” provides advice or “consumer-oriented content.” This would be things like reviews, “best of” lists, “news you can use,” that sort of thing. It’s based on consumption, entertainment – anything but involvement in the democratic process. It’s basically marketing.

Focus #2: “Publishing articles online quickly.” Speed encourages automatic thought and crowds out most deeper thinking, which takes time. Now combine that with the other item on that Times list, which is. . .

Focus #3: “An emphasis on visual journalism.” This really is the main point, as far as media analysts like myself are concerned. The emphasis on the visual is part of the new normal in journalism. People in the news business talk about a “pivot to video,” which refers to what the news site BuzzFeed describes as “the massive industry shifts toward entertaining video” and away from the written word. Brian Feldman, writing on the tech website Select All, describes it thusly: “Pivoting to video’ for media companies means, usually, allocating resources away from written journalism and to-

ward the scripting, filming, editing, and publishing of videos.” Feldman also notes that “pivoting to video” has become “a slick way to describe something else: layoffs.”

Perhaps you are familiar with the Millennial-oriented news website “Mic.com” A Business Insider headline on August 17th read, Mic Is Laying off Staff as it Prepares for a Pivot to Video.

A headline in BILLBOARD Magazine last June said MTV Restructuring News Department, Shifting to Emphasis on Video. I know, I know: MTV started out as being all about video! But Billboard tells us that they shifted in 2015 “toward long-form journalism, think pieces, a staff made up of a majority of women and minorities and a coterie of well-regarded writers, editors and journalists.” Well, that all sounds good, but “Now, that direction is coming to an end, as sources tell Billboard the new restructuring will include a stronger emphasis on video rather than a focus on reporting and longform.” Note the assumption here (I think it’s true) that one can have EITHER an “emphasis on video” OR “a focus on reporting.” On condition of anonymity, a former employee told Billboard that, “It’s curious that a pivot into video involves firing everyone in the video department.” It’s not so curious if you imagine that the content of the new videos will be less “reporting” and more marketing.

The Hollywood Reporter did not use the word “pivot,” but they reported in July that the digital news organisation VICE Media “is laying off at least 60 employees as it focuses on expanding its video operations internationally.”

The journalism organisation the Poynter Institute ran a headline in June about the digital news site Vocativ, which told us that Vocativ Lays off Entire Editorial Staff in Shift to Video.

So why is this “pivot to video” happening? Is it because news “consumers” are demanding it? Well, not really. Bloomberg News, in an August 29th article, quoted Josh Marshall, publisher of Talking Points Memo, saying that “No site is ‘pivoting to video’ because of audience demand. They are pivoting to video because the industry is in the midst of a monetisation crisis.” That is, they’re trying to figure out how to make money doing online news.

Reporter Zach Schonfeld, writing in the June 30 online edition of Newsweek magazine, begins his article by saying, “There’s a video at the top of this article. I know. I’m sorry. It’s probably set to autoplay too, which means it’ll scream at you whether you want it to or not. . . I didn’t make this decision. My employer says the video has to be there, because video advertising is central to this company’s revenue model, along with every other digital media company’s revenue model. Banner ads don’t work anymore, and the solution, handed down by frantic media executives, is video. More video. Lots of video. A chicken in every pot and a video in every tab.”

Here’s Brian Feldman again; this time he’s writing in New York Magazine in June: Advertisers, he says, “prefer to buy ads against video content [rather] than text, the thinking being that consumers are more likely to sit down and pay attention to an ad when it precedes a video they

want to watch than they would be if the ad simply appears next to an article they're reading."

The Bloomberg piece I mentioned above was headlined, Publishers Are Making More Video – Whether You Want It or Not." And, sure enough, as I was reading the article – or at least attempting to – an annoying little video which could not be turned off was playing in the corner of the screen. And I have an "ad blocker" that's supposed to stop this sort of thing!

In regard to "whether we want it or not," the Pew Research Center reported in October 2016 that younger people, especially, do not want it. Reporting on a major national survey, Pew reports that "When it comes to technology's influence on America's

young adults, reading is not dead – at least not the news. When asked whether one prefers to read, watch or listen to their news, younger adults are far more likely than older ones to opt for text, and most of that reading takes place on the web." Meanwhile, advertisers say, Pivot to Video!

But really, other than being annoying, is this industry-wide "pivot to video" anything to worry about? I think it is, as it is a great example of how the structure of our digital media system – built as it is to please advertisers – ends up having a propaganda effect.

CT

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Jeff Nygaard is the editor of Nygaard Notes – www.nygaardnotes.org – where this article first appeared.

military equipment? Even the people we slaughter all over the world insist upon good-looking guns and bombs.

And the best in the world. Of course. That's what makes us all proud to be Americans. And what makes the rest of humanity just aching with jealousy.

And in case you don't fully appreciate that, notice that he adds that it's the best ANYWHERE in the world.

And in case you still don't fully appreciate that, notice that he specifies that our equipment is the best in the world BY FAR! That means that no other country is even close! Just imagine! Makes me choke up. He's twice blessed. His fans like the idea that their president is no smarter than they are. This may well serve to get the man re-elected, as it did with George W. Bush.

The wisdom, wit and beauty of Donald Trump

Hi's words suggest that Trump is no smarter than his voters. That fact may well get him re-elected, writes **William Blum**

Capturing the wisdom and the beauty of Donald J. Trump in just one statement escaping from his charming mouth: "Our military has never been stronger. Each day, new equipment is delivered; new and beautiful equipment, the best in the world – the best anywhere in the world, by far."

Here the man thinks that everyone will be impressed that the American military has never been stronger. And that those who, for some unimaginable reason, are not impressed with that will at least

be impressed that military equipment is being added EACH DAY. Ah yes, it's long been a sore point with most Americans that new military equipment was being added only once a week.

And if that isn't impressive enough, then surely the fact that the equipment is NEW will win people over. Indeed, the newness is important enough to mention twice. After all, no one likes USED military equipment. And if newness doesn't win everyone's heart, then BEAUTIFUL will definitely do it. Who likes UGLY

The strange world of Russian trolls

Webster's dictionary: troll – verb: To fish by running a baited line behind a moving boat; noun: A supernatural creature of Scandinavian folklore.

Russian Internet trolls are trying to stir up even more controversy over National Football League players crouching on one knee ("taking a knee") during the national anthem, said Senator James Lankford (R-Okla.), warning that the United States should expect such divisive efforts to escalate in the next election.

"We watched even this weekend," Lankford told the Washington Post, "the Russians and their troll farms, and their Internet folks, start hash-tagging out 'take a knee' and also hash-tagging out 'Boycott NFL.'" The Russians' goal, he said, was "to try to raise the noise level in America to try to make a big issue, an even bigger issue as they're trying to just push divi-

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siveness in the country. We've continued to be able to see that. We will see that again in our election time."

Russia "causing divisiveness" is a common theme of American politicians and media. Never explained is WHY? What does Russia have to gain by Americans being divided? Do they think the Russians are so juvenile? Or are the Americans the childish ones?

CNN, on October 12, claimed that Russia uses YouTube, Tumblr and the Pokemon Go mobile game "to exploit racial tensions and sow discord among Americans," while the Washington Post (October 12) reported that "content generated by Russian operatives was not aimed only at influencing the election. Many of the posts and ads intended to divide Americans over hot-button issues such as immigration or race."

Imagine . . . the American public being divided over immigration and race . . . How could that be possible without Russian trolls?

The Post (October 9) reported that the Russian trolling operation resides "in a large gray building north of the St. Petersburg city center . . . There, young people work 12-hour shifts and make between \$800 and \$1,000 a month, "an attractive wage for former students and young people. It is impossible to get inside the building, and there are multiple entrances, making it hard to tell who is a troll and who is not."

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest are among the many Internet sites that we are told have been overrun by Russian trolls. The last named is a site that specialises in home decor, fashion and recipes. Have the Russians gone mad? Or are the American accusations the kind of stuff that is usually called – dare I say

it? – "propaganda"?

"How much the trolls affected the outcome of the US election is unclear," the Post had to admit. "But their omnipresence is evident on Twitter and in the comments section of publications like the Washington Post, where trolls can be found criticising news stories, lambasting other posters and accusing one another of being trolls."

Are you starting to chuckle?

At one point, the Post reported that Facebook "identified more than 3,000 advertisements purchased in a Russian-orchestrated campaign to influence the American public's views and exploit divisions around contentious issues." And Congressional investigators said that some of the Facebook ad purchases had "obvious Russian fingerprints, including Russian addresses and payments made in rubles," and that "accounts traced to a shadowy Russian Internet company had purchased at least \$100,000 in ads during the 2016 election season."

But, at other times the Post told us that Facebook had pointed out that "most of the ads made no explicit reference in favour of Trump or Clinton," and that some ads were purchased after the election. We've been told, moreover, that Facebook Chief Security Officer Alex Stamos's team "had searched extensively for evidence of foreign purchases of political advertising but had come up short."

In any event, we have to wonder: What political savvy concerning American elections and voters do the Russians have that the Democratic and Republican parties don't have?

I have read numerous references to these ads but have yet to come across a single one that quotes the exact wording of even one advertise-

ment. Is that not odd? To add to the oddness, in yet another Washington Post article (September 28) we are informed that "some of the ads promoted African American rights groups, including Black Lives Matter, while others suggested those same groups posed a growing political threat, according to people familiar with the material."

Politico, a Democratic Party-leaning journal, reports that Russian-funded Facebook ads backed Green Party candidate Jill Stein, Democrat Bernie Sanders, and Republican Donald Trump. Who and what is behind these peculiar goings-on?

More fun and games: the Department of Homeland Security in September notified Virginia and 20 other states about Russian efforts to hack their election systems in 2016.

Earlier this year, UK Foreign Minister Boris Johnson declared, apparently without embarrassment: "We have no evidence the Russians are actually involved in trying to undermine our democratic processes at the moment. We don't actually have that evidence. But what we do have is plenty of evidence that the Russians are capable of doing that."

At a September 27 Congressional hearing, FBI Director Christopher Wray joined this proud chorus, testifying: "One of the things we know is that the Russians and Russian state actors are trying to influence other elections in other countries." Mr. Wray forgot to name any of the other countries and the assembled Congress members forgot to ask him for any names.

Perhaps the main reason for questioning charges of Russian interference in the 2016 US election is that Russian President Putin would have

been risking that the expected winner, Hillary Clinton, would have been handed a personal reason to take revenge on him and his country. But that's just being logical and rational, two qualities Cold War II has no more use for than Cold War I did.

Know thine enemy

The Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency issued a report in June entitled *Russia: Military Power: Building A Military To Support Great Power Aspirations*. Here's an excerpt: "Moscow seeks to promote a multi-polar world predicated on the principles of respect for state sovereignty and non-interference in other states' internal affairs, the primacy of the United Nations, and a careful balance of power preventing one state or group of states from dominating the international order. To support these great power ambitions, Moscow has sought to build a robust military able to project power, add credibility to Russian diplomacy, and ensure that Russian interests can no longer be summar-

ily dismissed without consequence. . . . Russia also has a deep and abiding distrust of US efforts to promote democracy around the world and what it perceives as a US campaign to impose a single set of global values."

Great power aspirations, indeed. How dare those Russkis promote a multipolar world, respect for state sovereignty, non-interference, the United Nations, and balance of power? It's all straight out of Lenin's play-book, 100th anniversary edition.

As to the US promoting democracy around the world . . . Oh right, that's what the Pentagon calls Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, the Philippines, Honduras, Turkey, et al. **CT**

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

quotes: It is solely that it is most revealing and undeniable, especially to the most incredulous, to let presidents, prime ministers and military leaders speak for themselves. I have always found through writing, tutoring, speaking engagements and general argument that it has the strongest impact, far more than journalistic opinion or dialogue from me could possibly have. And if people in power say much the same thing, there's sure to be a policy in there somewhere. Although some of the quotes that follow are dated, it is essential to realise that the plans, policies, actions and ideology of the highest US and British political and military leaders quoted here have not only not changed, but are increasingly more inhuman, predatory, warlike, not only murderous but genocidal.

"We tell them: sit down and stop trying to impose your political system on the whole world by force. Stop dreaming that you are going to change the world; stop dreaming that you are going to halt the course of history . . . solve your problems through negotiation. If they want to maintain capitalism in their own countries, let them maintain it for as long as they want. That is their own business. We are not going to go to the United States to make a revolution there or to impose socialism on them. In an academic discussion we can prove to them that socialism is better, more humane, more rational and fairer than capitalism, but we cannot go there and tell them: change your social system. Roast yourselves on that fire for as long as you want. It will not be forever, but that is not our business. Nobody will ever want to change the capitalist system by force,

Peaceful existence or American dominance?

No matter what our leaders tell us, it wasn't the communists who sought to rule the world, writes **Brian Mitchell**

It was always US and other capitalist anti-communist and Cold War propaganda that claimed that the Soviet and "world communist" aim was "export of revolution." This was never true. No communist or Marxist has ever made such a ridicu-

lous claim, nor has any communist leader, and it has never been policy of any communist party, while export of capitalism has always been the aim of capitalism and imperialism.

Regarding my heavy use of

Insights

to impose socialism in Europe, in Japan, in the United States, in Canada, in Australia; nobody will ever want to do that. . . . Sit down and discuss, and save a third of what you are spending on the madness of war and give us back what you are stealing from us.” – *Fidel Castro, speaking on Third World Debt, Havana 1985.*

“The victorious proletariat cannot impose on any other country its own idea of a happy life without doing damage to its own victory.” – *Karl Marx.*

“The Government of the USSR considers that, despite the differences in the economic systems and ideologies, the co-existence of these systems and a peaceful settlement of differences between the USSR and the United States are not only possible, but also doubtless necessary in the interests of general peace. . . . The export of revolution is nonsense. . . . Without the support of millions, the best minority is impotent. . . . Every country makes its own revolution if it wants to, and if it does not want to, there will be no revolution. . . . We Marxists believe that revolution will occur in other countries as well. But it will come at a time when it is considered possible or necessary by the revolutionaries in these countries. . . . to assert that we desire to bring about revolution in other countries by interfering with their way of life is to speak of something that does not exist, and which we have never preached.” – *Josef Stalin, 1936.*

“The history of a social system will be decided not by rockets, not by atomic and hydrogen bombs, but by

the fact of which social system ensures greater material and spiritual benefits to man. . . . It is not true that we regard violence and civil war as the only way to remake society... The Communist system must be based on the will of the people, and if the people should not want that system, then that people should establish a different system. . . . If you feed the people just with revolutionary slogans they will listen today, they will listen tomorrow, they will listen the day after tomorrow, but on the fourth day they will say: To hell with you!” – *Soviet President Nikita Krushchev.*

“Communists are convinced that the future belongs to socialism. Such is the march of history. But this does not at all mean that we are going to engage in the ‘export of revolution,’ in the interference in the affairs of other countries. The ‘export of revolution’ is altogether impossible. Socialism grows only on the soil of objective requirements of the social development of each particular country.” – *Soviet President Yuri Andropov, June 15 1983.*

“We’re not advocating subversive ideas. We’re not advocating, as I have said, a social revolution. . . . We cannot suggest socialism as a prerequisite [for negotiations]. We’re not recommending socialism, but of course neither are we advising against it.” – *Fidel Castro, at Meeting on the Foreign Debt of Latin America and the Caribbean. Havana, Aug 3 1985.*

“To the greatest extent tolerated by the Soviet Government, we should distribute books, magazines, newspapers and movies among the Soviets, beam radio broadcasts to the

USSR. . . . Within the United States, communist penetration should be exposed and eliminated.” – *Report on American relations with the Soviet Union, Special Council to the Press, 1946.*

“While we have become increasingly international in our thinking, multinational in our commerce, and independent on global issues, the Soviet Union still emphasises the primacy of sovereignty and national independence.” – *Marshal Schulman, US Soviet Affairs Adviser to the Secretary of State, to the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee, Oct 16 1979.*

“We are being told that we can sit down and negotiate with this enemy of ours, and that there’s a little right and a little wrong on both sides. How do you compromise between good and evil? How do you say to this enemy that we can compromise our belief in God and his dialectical determinism (sic)?” – *US President Reagan in the 1960s.*

“We must not allow . . . our well-planned and steady rebuilding of America’s defences to be overcome by a child-like hope for detente with a country whose sole aim is and always has been world domination.” – *US Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, 1986. [So US policy isn’t world domination?!]*

“A war with the Soviet Union appears to me to be unavoidable. The idea of peaceful coexistence is simply humbug.” – *US General Kenny, Sept 1954.* **CT**

Brian Mitchell is a London-based author and journalist. He is a former trade union organiser and teacher.

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