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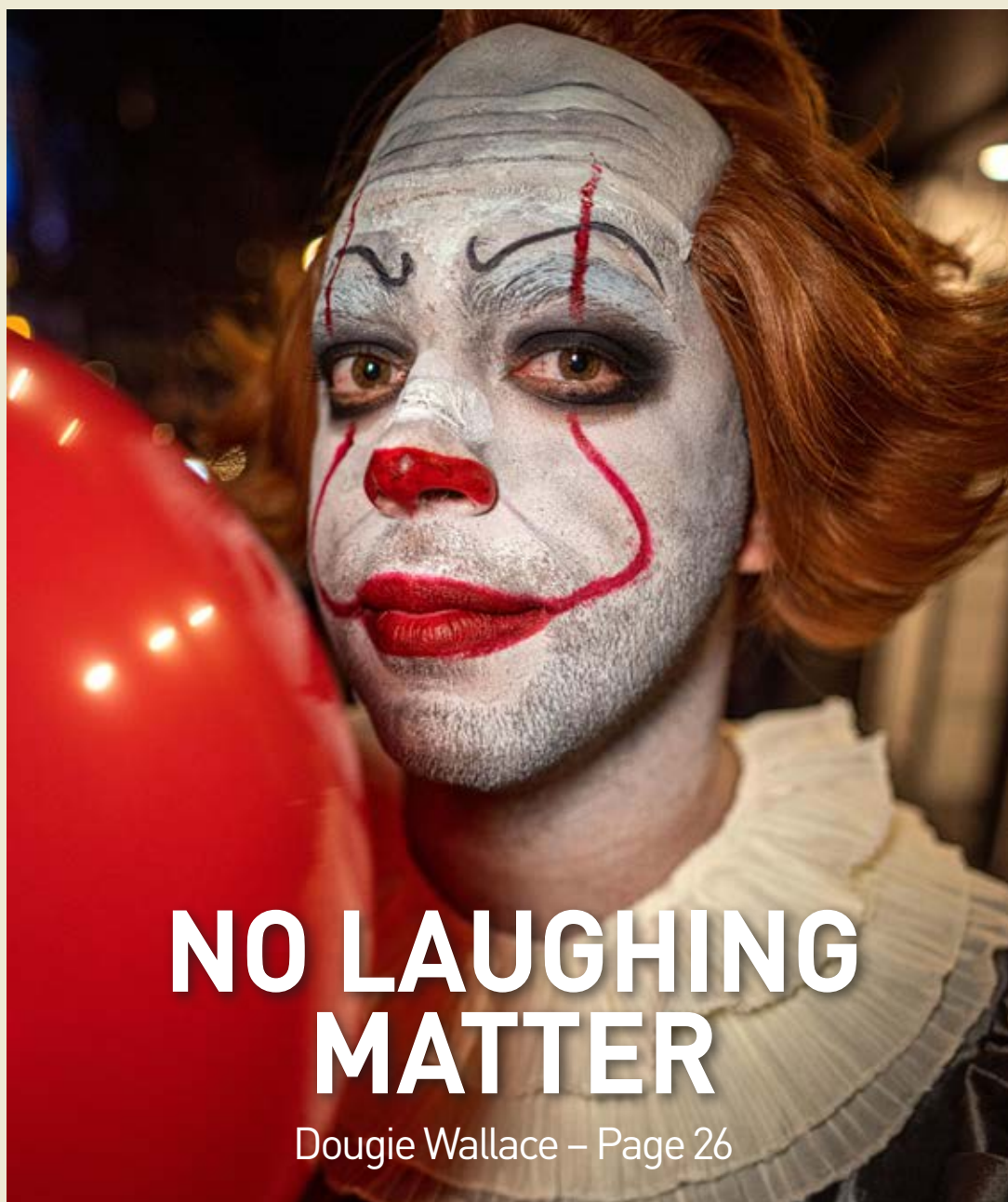
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ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

June 2023



**NO LAUGHING
MATTER**

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INSIGHTS



Greg Koenderman

[A breakfast table in America. TOM and JANE are eating breakfast and drinking coffee. JANE is reading the news on her tablet while TOM works on a crossword puzzle.]

JANE: [Sips coffee, sighs] Another mass shooting.

TOM: [Not looking up] Mmm, yeah. Des Moines.

JANE: No, *another* one.

TOM: Not the one in Des Moines?

JANE: No, that was earlier this morning.

TOM: Ohh, the Chicago one you mean?

JANE: No that was yesterday, I'm talking about the one in Palm

Caitlin Johnstone

TOM AND JANE EAT BREAKFAST

Springs.

TOM: Ohh, I think I saw something about that on Twitter. The synagogue?

JANE: No, this one's a preschool.

The synagogue was last night in Baltimore.

TOM: A preschool? Jesus. What kind of sick fuck shoots up a preschool?

JANE: One of the kids I guess. There was some dispute about snack time.

TOM: Oh man. Did they catch him?

JANE: Her. Live shoot-out with the police right now. They're having trouble because the girl's got some kinda machine gun and body armour. They tried to bribe her with some apple juice but the kid's not having it.

TOM: Ah, man. Come on kid, give

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it up, you know they're sending in the killbots next.

JANE: [*Looks up*] I highly doubt a four year-old girl knows about killbots, Tom.

TOM: Okay well hell, I don't know what kids know these days. How the hell's she know how to use a machine gun?

JANE: Pete was shooting the neighbours' cats by that age.

TOM: Yeah, with a *rifle*! Machine guns aren't for kids. And you gotta shoot cats, cats suck.

JANE: I like cats.

TOM: They're stupid.

JANE: They're not stupid.

TOM: Yeah they are, they're idiots. Tell 'em what to do and they just stare at you like a dope. Tell a dog what to do and they hop right on it.

JANE: That means cats are smarter.

TOM: Ha! Good point.

JANE: Who's smarter, the blindly obedient animal or the one who just ignores your commands?

TOM: Yup, yeah, you've got me there. [*Sips coffee.*] *Dogs* are idiots.

JANE: Dumb, obedient idiots.

TOM: Crap, I gotta get going. Gotta lay off the entire third floor today.

JANE: Huh? Why?

TOM: Dunno, boss told me to.

JANE: Oh okay.

TOM: Anything else big in the news?

JANE: Looks like the Russians are killing babies for no reason and we're gonna have to go to war.

TOM: Killing babies for no reason?

JANE: Yep, just putting 'em in microwaves, feeding 'em to sharks, launching 'em outta catapults. Just killing them.

TOM: Is that true?



JANE: It has to be. It's in the news.

TOM: Man. I hate Russians.

[*Enter PETE, age 20, clearly miserable.*]

JANE: Well look who it is.

TOM: Hey Pete, you gonna put in that application I gave you?

PETE: Nah.

TOM: What? Why not?

PETE: Don't wanna work there.

JANE: Oh Pete.

TOM: What's wrong? You think you're too good to work at the fish poison factory?

PETE: Uhh... Yeah.

JANE: Oh, okay your highness.

TOM: What the hell, son? What's your problem with the fish poison factory?

PETE: They literally manufacture fish poison.

TOM: So??

JANE: They're an aquatic pest!

PETE: They are not, that's just some bullshit they made up to sell fish poison.

TOM: Oh where the hell are you getting this garbage? The internet?

JANE: Alex Jones I bet.

PETE: It's true, fish are a completely harmless animal who make up an important part of the ecosystem. They've just created an artificial demand for fish poison by an aggressive ad campaign and got the government to deregulate it after spending millions on corporate lobbying.

TOM: Oh bullshit! I've had it with these conspiracy theories, Pete! I've had it with your attitude! Why can't you just go turn gears at the fish poison factory like a normal young man? You're a goddamn embarrassment to this family.

[*PETE throws up his hands and storms off.*]

TOM: [*Calls after him*] You're gonna feel like a real asshole when there's a fish infestation and we all get the plague!

JANE: Such a disappointment.

TOM: Why can't he just be normal like us?

JANE: It needed to be said.

TOM: Ah shit I gotta run.

JANE: Get going, handsome.

TOM: Third floor folks aren't gonna fire themselves.

JANE: Grab some fish poison on your way home? We're all out.

TOM: You got it toots.

[*They kiss. Exit TOM. JANE goes back to reading the news.*]

JANE: [*Sips coffee.*] Oh god, those poor Chinese. Glad I don't live in a backward, crazy country like them.

[*CURTAIN*] **CT**

Caitlin Johnstone is a blogger who is based in Melbourne, Australia. Her website is www.caitlinjohnstone.com

INSIGHTS

George Monbiot

HARSH NEW LAWS FOR AN UNEQUAL SOCIETY

The more unequal a society becomes, the more oppressive its laws must be. This, I think, explains new acts that would not be out of place in a police state. So vague and broad are the powers granted to the UK police under last year's Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act and this year's Public Order Act that it is no longer clear where their abuse begins and ends.

At two o'clock on the morning of the coronation of King Charles III, the Metropolitan police, using the Police Act, arrested three people in Soho for carrying rape alarms. The police claimed they were acting on intelligence that rape alarms might be used to frighten the horses that would later be parading elsewhere.

The people they arrested were volunteers working for Westminster city council as "Night Stars", helping to stop the sexual harassment of women. They give rape alarms to women who might need them. The alarms are funded by the Home Office. Night Stars volunteers wear pink tabards emblazoned with the logo of their partner organisation ... the Metropolitan police. Yet the three volunteers who were arrested were cuffed for three hours and held for 14 before being released on bail.

Why would the police arrest their own partners? What was the "intelligence" on which they were acting? If they were really worried

about rape alarms being misused, why did they not simply confiscate them? It looks to me like the old *paso doble* between police and press. Two weeks before, the *Mail on Sunday* had run a front-page story headlined "Extremists' vile plot to spook King's horses with rape alarms: Fears protesters planning to sabotage Charles' Coronation could cause 'serious injuries or even deaths' ... as eco-zealot groups



Coronation protest.

set to join forces to cause chaos".

The *Mail* produced precisely zero evidence that environmental or republican activists were planning such a thing. But if the police wanted to find people carrying these devices, they knew where to go. The arrests were used by the *Mail* as a vindication of its story. Though Westminster council had explained to the newspaper that those arrested were its volunteers, the *Mail* described them as "militant activists ... arrested over a plot to throw

rape alarms at horses during King Charles's Coronation".

Were it not for the patient work of the journalist Mic Wright, that's how the story would have stood. Police and press are two tails of the same beast. The head of media at the Metropolitan police is a former crime reporter at the *Daily Mail*.

The new laws were also used pre-emptively to arrest campaigners from Republic and Just Stop Oil, and a journalist filming them, to thwart their vile plot to wear dangerous T-shirts and hold seditious placards. For good measure, Animal Rising said the police had rounded up some of its activists at a training session miles away from the coronation. Safer to arrest everyone who might dissent.

These laws have been introduced just as public trust in the police has collapsed. Louise Casey's report, released in March, found the Metropolitan police to be institutionally racist, misogynistic and homophobic. Yet the police have now been granted discretionary powers so broad that they can shut down any protest, on the vaguest suspicion that it might prove to be "disruptive". It's a green light for even greater abuses.

The Police Act 2022 was bad enough, redefining "serious disruption" so widely that it could be applied to almost any situation, greatly increasing the penalties for acts of peaceful protest and creating a new and remarkably vague offence of "intentionally or recklessly causing public nuisance", with a penalty of up to 12 months in prison. Half the people arrested at or around the coronation were detained on this charge. But the Public Order Act 2023 is much worse.

The new offences it creates have

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been designed to allow the police to shut down every form of effective protest. If you chain yourself to the railings or attach yourself to anything or anyone else you could be jailed for 51 weeks. If you carry equipment that the police claim could be used for such a purpose, you could also be breaking the law: at the coronation, protesters were arrested for the possession of string and luggage straps.

The act imposes blanket bans on protests against new roads, fracking or any other oil and gas works. If, as the anti-roads protester Swampy famously did, you dig a tunnel – or even enter one – you can be imprisoned for three years.

The act greatly expands the police power of suspicionless stop and search, which has been used to such discriminatory effect against black people. Anyone can now be searched if a police inspector or any other senior officer “reasonably believes” protests might happen somewhere in the area, or that someone somewhere might be carrying a “prohibited object”. If you resist a search, you can be imprisoned for 51 weeks.

The act introduces “serious disruption prevention orders”, whose purpose seems to be to take out what the police call “aggravated activists”: experienced campaigners and organisers, without whom coherent protests don’t happen. The orders impose sweeping restrictions on these people, preventing them from attending or encouraging protests, confining them to particular places, forcing them to report to police stations, prohibiting them from associating with others. They can extend, if the police and courts so choose, effectively to house arrest. They blur the line between civ-

il standards of proof and criminal punishment: an order can be applied on a mere “balance of probabilities”, but if you breach its terms you can be imprisoned for 51 weeks. The order can last for two years, then be renewed for a further two.

The orders are among several forms of pre-emptive control and punishment permitted by the act. It necessitates a great widening of police surveillance, to identify people deemed likely to commit one of the new crimes. It has been introduced while the undercover policing inquiry, which continues to reveal appalling abuses by police spying on

peaceful campaigners continues. They can do what they want to us now.

These are the state-of-emergency laws you would expect in the aftermath of a coup. But there is no public order emergency, just an emergency of another kind, that the protesters targeted by this legislation are trying to stop: the collapse of Earth systems. We are being compelled by law to accept the destruction of the living world. **CT**

George Monbiot's website is www.monbiot.com.. This article first appeared in the Guardian.

Joseph P. Laycock

HORROR FAN PRIEST AND 'THE POPE'S EXORCIST'

Sony Pictures has released “The Pope’s Exorcist,” a horror film inspired by the life of the Rev. Gabriele Amorth. Amorth served as the exorcist for the Diocese of Rome from 1986 until his death in 2016 at the age of 91.

Catholic exorcism was once extremely rare in the United States and much of Europe, and Amorth played a major role in normalising the practice. In 1990, he founded the International Association of Exorcists, or the IAE, a Catholic group that advocates for the practice of exorcism and trains new exorcists.

This group has been critical of the way Amorth and his ministry are portrayed in the film. In March, the IAE released a statement condemning the film as “splatter horror”. More importantly, the IAE



Detail from film poster

Russell Crowe in the role of the real-life Vatican priest, Gabriele Amorth.

warned that the film sensationalised exorcism and failed to convey the suffering of those in need of this ritual. However, the Rev. Edward

INSIGHTS

Siebert, one of the film's executive producers, defended it by pointing out that it depicted a priest in a positive light.

Amoth was a polarising figure who had a complicated relationship with horror movies. Having researched the history of exorcism, I find it appropriate that a horror film about his life is drawing controversy.

Amorth sometimes boasted of having performed as many as 160,000 exorcisms. He also attracted controversy for saying yoga and Harry Potter books can cause demonic possession. In his autobiography, "An Exorcist Tells His Story", Amorth wrote, "It is thanks to movies that we find a renewed interest in exorcisms". In other words, exorcism made a comeback because horror movies helped spark public demand for the ritual.

On this point, Amorth is in agreement with religion scholar Michael Cuneo, who argued that "The Exorcist" is largely responsible for revitalising exorcism. When that film came out in 1973 requests for exorcisms surged. The church, which had regarded exorcism as a source of embarrassment, lacked the experience and training to accommodate this demand. But church authorities have increasingly warmed to exorcism, viewing it as an asset rather than a liability.

Unsurprisingly, Amorth named "The Exorcist" as his favourite film, commenting, "Of course, the special effects are exaggerated. But it is a good film, and substantially exact, based on a respectable novel which mirrored a true story." Amorth became an exorcist a decade after the film, and his career evolved along-

side horror films. He introduced the 2011 horror film "The Rite" when it premiered at a film festival in Umbria. Like "The Pope's Exorcist," "The Rite" is a Catholic horror film inspired by the life of a real priest, Gary Thomas, who travelled to Rome to study exorcism.

"The Exorcist" was directed by Oscar winner William Friedkin. A year after Amorth's death, Friedkin unveiled his 2017 documentary, "The Devil and Father Amorth", showing Amorth performing an actual exorcism.

Variety noted that Catholic exorcism and horror films now seemed intertwined "like a loop."

"The Pope's Exorcist" takes great liberties with Amorth's story, earning comparisons to the "Indiana Jones" franchise and "The DaVinci Code." But "The Exorcist" was also polarising in its day, with some

Catholics praising it as a "deeply spiritual film" and others comparing it to pornography.

The Rev. Vincent Lampert, an IAE member, criticised "The Pope's Exorcist" for focusing more on Satan than Amorth and his ministry. But condemnation from the IAE has ironically boosted media coverage of "The Pope's Exorcist" and has likely compelled more people to see the film. Opening weekend sales were so good that Sony Pictures has announced a sequel is already in development.

For now, the complicated synergy between horror films and actual exorcists shows no sign of abating. **CT**

Joseph P. Laycock is Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Texas State University. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com.

Binoy Kampmark

THE HYPOCRISY OF WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Selecting days for commemoration serve one fundamental purpose. Centrally, they acknowledge the forgotten or neglected, while proposing to do nothing about it. It's the priest's confession, the chance for absolution before the next round of soiling.

These occasions are often money-making exercises for canny businesses: the days put aside to remember mothers and fathers, for instance. But there is no money to be made in saving writers, publishers, whistleblowers, and journalists

from the avenging police state.

World Press Freedom Day, having limped on for three decades, is particularly fraught in this regard. It remains particularly loathsome, not least for giving politicians an opportunity to leave flimsy offerings at its shrine. These often come from the powerful, the very same figures responsible for demeaning and attacking those brave scribes who do, every so often, show how the game is played.

Every year, we see reactions of ten uneven, and almost always

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hypocritical. The treatment of *Wall Street Journal* journalist Evan Gershkovich is the stellar example for 2023. Here was the caged victim-hero scribbler, held in the remorseless clutches of the Russian Bear.

It gave US Secretary of State Antony Blinken an opportunity to do the usual cartwheel. “Far too many governments use repression to silence free expression, including through reprisals against journalists for simply doing their jobs,” goes his May 3 press statement. “We again call on Russian authorities to immediately release Wall Street reporter Gershkovich and all other journalists held for exercising freedom of expression”. What, then, of the Australian publisher and founder of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange?

With unintended, bleak irony, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) also thought it fitting to rope in the Secretary at a World Press Freedom Day event organised in conjunction with the *Washington Post*. Talking to his interlocutor, the Post’s David Ignatius, Blinken spoke of efforts to “fight back and push back around the world to help journalists, who – in one way or another, are facing intimidation, coercion, persecution, prosecution, surveillance.” This seemed grimly comical, given that the United States, through its agencies, has engaged in intimidation, coercion, persecution, prosecution and surveillance against Assange, whose scalp they continue to seek with salivating expectation.

In the course of the event, Ignatius and Blinken encountered Code Pink activists Medea Benjamin and

Tinghe Barry. Both were keen to test the Secretary’s lofty assessments about Washington’s stance on free expression and journalistic practice. “Excuse me, we can’t use this day without calling for the freedom of Julian Assange”, exclaimed Benjamin, storming the stage where the two men were engaged in bland conversation. A bemused Ignatius duly approved of Benjamin’s eviction by three burly minders, seeing it all as part of “free expression”.

Barry’s own assessment of the



Shireen Abu Akleh graffiti on the West Bank barrier in Bethlehem

whole show summed matters up. “Two hours and not one word about journalist Shireen Abu-Akleh, who was murdered by Israeli occupation forces in Palestine, not one word about Julian Assange.”

Others from the US State Department were also found wanting. A department press briefing from Vedant Patel, principal deputy spokesperson, opened with comments about World Press Freedom Day. He echoed the belief in “the importance of a free press. It’s a – we believe a bedrock of democracy.”

Then came a question from Matt Lee of Associated Press: Did the State Department regard Assange “as a journalist who is – who should

be covered by the ideas embodied in World Press Freedom Day?”

Patel’s response did not deviate from the views of his superiors. “The State Department thinks that Mr Assange has been charged with serious criminal conduct in the United States, in connection with his alleged role in one of the largest compromises of classified information in our nation’s history.”

With dutiful adherence to a narrative worn and extensively disproved in Assange’s extradition trial proceedings, Patel spoke of ac-

tions that “risked serious harm to US national security to the benefit of our adversaries” (there was none) and subjected “human sources to grave and imminent risk of serious physical harm and arbitrary detention” (no evidence has ever been adduced by the Department of Justice on this point).

When confronted with Gershkovich’s detention

as a precedent the US was potentially emulating regarding the publisher, Patel insisted the cases were “very, very different.” The US did not “go around arbitrarily detaining people, and the judicial oversight and checks and balances that we have in our system versus the Russian system are a little bit different.”

Patel has obviously not familiarised himself with those totemic, lugubrious reminders of the US justice system: Alexandra Detention Center (ADC) and the ADX Florence Supermax prison. Or, for that matter, discussions within the US intelligence services on how to abduct or assassinate Assange, where checks and levers are conspicuous-

Dan Palraz

INSIGHTS

ly absent.

Then came a White House briefing that same day, where the issue of Assange's treatment, inconveniently for the Biden administration, reared its head. But not before the utterance of slushy remarks from White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre. "It is not an exaggeration to say that the free press is essential to our democracy and democracies everywhere." With the opening platitude came concern for Gershkovich and Austin Tice, whose "wrongful detentions we see around the world that we must stand up and call out."

Enter Steven Portnoy of CBS News, who addressed Jean-Pierre on precisely that point. "Advocates on Twitter today have been talking a great deal about how the United States has engaged in hypocrisy by talking about how Evan Gershkovich is held in Russia on espionage charges but the United States has Espionage Act charges pending against Julian Assange."

In being asked to respond to the criticism, Jean-Pierre, without batting an eyelid, asked what that criticism was. "Well, the criticism is that – the argument is that Julian Assange is a journalist who engaged in the publication of government documents," came Portnoy's response. By accusing Assange of crimes under the Espionage Act of 1917, the US was "losing the moral high ground when it comes to the question of whether a reporter engages in espionage as a function of his work."

Jean-Pierre, evidently not well-briefed on the pitfalls and vicissitudes of World Press Freedom Day, merely stated that she would not "speak to Julian Assange and that case from here."

After three decades, it may be time to forget the importance of this curious bauble of communications, not because of the sincerity of some of its advocates who genuinely seek to protect the lot of journalists, but because of the propagandists who willingly prosecute a case against

Fourth Estate when it comes to national security and crude self-interest. **CT**

Binoy Kampmark was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He currently lectures at RMIT University.



Thomas Good

CYNTHIA MURRAY: "Without frontline workers like my coworkers and me, there would be no profits for those CEOs."

Cynthia Murray

CEOs RETIRE IN COMFORT. WE DESERVE THE SAME

Our tax laws shouldn't protect giant CEO retirement accounts when my coworkers and I can't afford to save at all.

I'll be turning 67 soon. I'd love to be able to retire on my birthday. I'd celebrate by spending the afternoon at the mall with my daughter and then start planning little trips

to visit relatives.

But even after 22 years of working for Walmart, America's largest employer, I can't afford to retire any time soon.

Walmart does offer a 401(k) with matching funds. But with a high-deductible health plan and at my wage of just \$16.83 an hour, I haven't been able to save much at all for what

INSIGHTS

should be my “golden years.”

Lots of my fellow Walmart associates are in the same boat. I know this from talking to my co-workers – and because companies have to report how many employees have zero balances in their 401(k) plans. At Walmart, 46 percent have not one dime in their accounts.

The situation for my top boss, Walmart CEO Doug McMillon, could not be more different. Would you believe he has more than \$169-million in his company retirement account?

These huge gaps are not even unusual. I just read a new report by the Institute for Policy Studies and Jobs With Justice. They list 22 executives who are set to get monthly retirement checks worth more than what their typical workers make in an entire year.

What’s more, these so-called “top hat” accounts are allowed to grow to massive proportions tax-free – far beyond what any of their workers could legally contribute to a 401(k).

That is, if workers could afford to contribute in the first place. At most

of the companies on this list – including Hyatt, Home Depot, Target, Chipotle, Tyson Foods, McDonald’s, and Petco – more than a third of employees with 401(k) plans have zero balances.

It’s just not right for CEOs to have such huge nest eggs while many of their employees have to put off retirement. Seriously – who’s really putting the sweat and blood into these companies? Without frontline workers like my coworkers and me, there would be no profits for those CEOs.

Walmart founder Sam Walton understood this. He’s often quoted saying, “If you want the people in the stores to take care of the customers, you have to make sure you’re taking care of the people in the stores.”

What can CEOs do to take care of their frontline workers? They need to raise wages, give us at least two weeks paid leave, and ensure we have affordable health care benefits. That way workers can stay healthy, put food on our tables, keep roofs over our heads – and save money for retirement.

CEOs and other high-earners should also contribute more to So-

cial Security so we can expand benefits for low-income families.

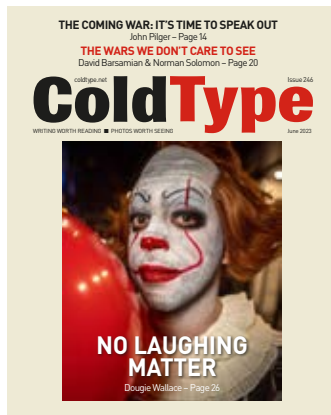
Right now people making more than \$1-million a year stop paying the payroll taxes that fund this critical retirement benefit in February. They should pay all year like the rest of us. And Congress should scrap those tax-free executive retirement accounts and put the savings into Social Security.

I don’t have big fantasies for my retirement – no sailing around on yachts or staying at fancy resorts. What’s really important to me is my family.

I’ve missed so many holidays and other gatherings over the years because I had to work. Now I’d simply like to make up for that by spending more time with relatives, including my grandson, who just graduated from college.

In the world’s richest country, it doesn’t seem like a lot to ask. **CT**

Cynthia Murray is a Walmart Associate in Maryland and a board member of United for Respect, a nonprofit labor advocacy organization. This article was distributed by www.OtherWords.org.



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INSIGHTS

W.J. Astore

LEGAL DRUG ADS AND ANTI-RUSSIA MESSAGING

Mobsters are known for breaking kneecaps to bend people to their will. Marketers break into heads with repetitive and manipulative advertising, images, and narratives. They are mobsters of the mind.

I thought of this after watching all those repetitive (and largely interchangeable) ads for “legal” prescription drugs. Rarely do they show the often serious conditions they allegedly treat. Instead it’s image after image of people enjoying life, whether at amusement parks, the beach, dancing, or what-have-you. It’s as if drug companies are selling happiness pills whose only side effect is experiencing the best day of your life.

Meanwhile, as images spill into your head of eternal bliss, a narrator quietly intones about potential serious side effects, even possible death in the case of one drug I’ve seen advertised.

Drug ads are the worst. People wonder why Americans take so many illegal drugs and why we have so many drug addictions – well, just look at all the ads for legal drugs, and how they’re advertised as making people incandescently happy. It’s all about the messaging: the repetition of powerful feel-good imagery, with drugs as panaceas.

Speaking of repetition, something similar is true of political manipulation. To cite one example: Russia. Has there ever been a worse “drug” with more serious side effects than Russia? Russia keeps hacking our elections! Russia is led by war criminals! Russia is raping Ukraine! Over and over again, the mainstream media encourages us to hate Russia and Vladimir Putin. Is this truly all we need to know about Russia? As Sting sang, don’t the Russians love their children too? (Back in the 1980s, the media

didn’t go easy on Sting for his alleged naïveté and pro-Russian sentiments.)

Whether it’s drug advertisers, the mainstream media, or the US government for that matter, America is infested with various “ministries of truth” that are driven by a mobster-like mentality. They may not break your kneecaps, but they nevertheless find ways to break into your mind.

Now you’ll excuse me while I pop a few pills while denouncing Russia. And China too, perhaps? **CT**

William J. Astore, a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF) and professor of history, is a senior fellow at the Eisenhower Media Network (EMN), an organisation of critical veteran military and national security professionals. He blogs at www.bracingviews.com.

HURWITT’S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



John Pilger

THE COMING WAR: IT'S TIME TO SPEAK UP

Silences filled with a consensus of propaganda contaminate almost everything we read, see and hear. War by media is now a key task of mainstream journalism

In 1935, the Congress of American Writers was held in New York City, followed by another two years later. They called on “the hundreds of poets, novelists, dramatists, critics, short story writers and journalists” to discuss the “rapid crumbling of capitalism” and the beckoning of another war. They were electric events which, according to one account, were attended by 3,500 members of the public with more than a thousand turned away.

Arthur Miller, Myra Page, Lillian Hellman, Dashiell Hammett warned that fascism was rising, often disguised, and the responsibility lay with writers and journalists to speak out. Telegrams of support from Thomas Mann, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, C Day Lewis, Upton Sinclair and Albert Einstein were read out.

The journalist and novelist Martha Gellhorn spoke up for the homeless and unemployed, and “all of us under the shadow of violent great power.”

Martha, who became a close friend, told me later over her customary glass of Famous Grouse and soda: “The responsibility I felt as a journalist was immense. I had witnessed the injustices and suffering delivered by the Depression, and I knew, we all knew, what was coming if silences were not broken.”

Her words echo across the silences today: they are silences filled with a consensus of propaganda that contaminates almost everything we read, see and hear. Let me give you one example:

On March 7, the two oldest newspapers in Australia, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, published several pages on “the looming threat” of China. They coloured the Pacific Ocean red. Chinese eyes were martial, on the march and menacing. The Yellow Peril was about to fall down as if by the weight of gravity.

No logical reason was given for an attack on Australia by China. A “panel of experts” presented no credible evidence: one of them is a former director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, a front for the Defence Department in Canberra, the Pentagon in Washington, the governments of Britain, Japan and Taiwan and the West’s war industry.

“Beijing could strike within three years”, they warned. “We are not ready”. Billions of dollars are to be spent on American nuclear submarines, but that, it seems, is not enough. “Australia’s holiday from history is over”: whatever that might mean.

There is no threat to Australia, none. The faraway “lucky” coun-

try has no enemies, least of all China, its largest trading partner. Yet China-bashing that draws on Australia’s long history of racism towards Asia has become something of a sport for the self-ordained “experts”. What do Chinese-Australians make of this? Many are confused and fearful.

The authors of this grotesque piece of dog-whistling and obsequiousness to American power are Peter Hartcher and Matthew Knott, “national security reporters” I think they are called. I remember Hartcher from his Israeli government-paid jaunts. The other one, Knott, is a mouthpiece for the suits in Canberra. Neither has ever seen a war zone and its extremes of human degradation and suffering.

“How did it come to this?” Martha Gellhorn would say if she were here. “Where on earth are the voices saying no? Where is the comradeship?”

The voices are heard in the *samizdat* of this website and others. In literature, the likes of John Steinbeck, Carson McCullers, George Orwell are obsolete. Post-modernism is in charge now. Liberalism has pulled up its political ladder. A once somnolent social democracy, Australia, has enacted a web of new laws



Coming to your main street? The world is being propagandised by government and media into a potentially devastating nuclear war.

protecting secretive, authoritarian power and preventing the right to know. Whistleblowers are outlaws, to be tried in secret. An especially sinister law bans “foreign interference” by those who work for foreign companies. What does this mean?

Democracy is notional now; there is the all-powerful elite of the corporation merged with the state and the demands of “identity.” American admirals are paid thousands of dollars a day by the Australian tax payer for “advice.” Right across the West, our political imagination has been pacified by PR and distracted by the intrigues of corrupt, ultra low-rent politicians: a Boris Johnson or a Donald Trump or a Sleepy Joe or a Volodymyr Zelensky.

No writers’ congress in 2023 worries about “crumbling capitalism” and the lethal provocations of “our” leaders. The most infamous of these,

Tony Blair, a prima facie criminal under the Nuremberg Standard, is free and rich. Julian Assange, who dared journalists to prove their readers had a right to know, is in his second decade of incarceration.

The rise of fascism in Europe is uncontroversial. Or “neo-Nazism” or “extreme nationalism”, as you prefer. Ukraine as modern Europe’s fascist beehive has seen the re-emergence of the cult of Stepan Bandera, the passionate anti-Semite and mass murderer who lauded Hitler’s “Jewish policy”, which left 1.5-million Ukrainian Jews slaughtered. “We will lay your heads at Hitler’s feet”, a Banderist pamphlet proclaimed to Ukrainian Jews.

Today, Bandera is hero-worshipped in western Ukraine and scores

of statues of him and his fellow-fascists have been paid for by the EU and the US, replacing those of Russian cultural giants and others who liberated Ukraine from the original Nazis.

In 2014, neo Nazis played a key role in an American bankrolled coup against the elected president, Viktor Yanukovich, who was accused of being “pro-Moscow”. The coup regime included prominent “extreme nationalists” – Nazis in all but name.

At first, this was reported at length by the BBC and the European and American media. In 2019, *Time* magazine featured the “white supremacist militias” active in Ukraine. NBC News reported, “Ukraine’s Nazi problem is real”. The immolation of trade unionists in Odessa was filmed and documented.

Spearheaded by the Azov regi-

ment, whose insignia, the “Wolfsangel,” was made infamous by the German SS, Ukraine’s military invaded the eastern, Russian-speaking Donbass region. According to the United Nations 14,000 in the east were killed. Seven years later, with the Minsk peace conferences sabotaged by the West, as Angela Merkel confessed, the Red Army invaded.

This version of events was not reported in the West. To even utter it is to bring down abuse about being a “Putin apologist”, regardless whether the writer (such as myself) has condemned the Russian invasion. Understanding the extreme provocation that a NATO-armed borderland, Ukraine, the same borderland through which Hitler invaded, presented to Moscow, is anathema.

Journalists who travelled to the Donbass were silenced or even hounded in their own country. German journalist Patrik Baab lost his job and a young German freelance reporter, Alina Lipp, had her bank account sequestered.

In Britain, the silence of the liberal intelligentsia is the silence of intimidation. State-sponsored issues like Ukraine and Israel are to be avoided if you want to keep a campus job or a teaching tenure. What happened to former Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn in 2019 is repeated on campuses where opponents of apartheid Israel are casually smeared as antisemitic.

Professor David Miller, ironically the country’s leading authority on modern propaganda, was sacked by Bristol University for suggesting publicly that Israel’s “assets” in Britain and its political lobbying exerted a disproportionate influence worldwide – a fact for which the evidence is voluminous.

The university hired a leading QC to investigate the case indepen-

What happened to Jeremy Corbyn in 2019 is repeated on campuses where opponents of apartheid Israel are casually smeared as antisemitic

dently. His report exonerated Miller on the “important issue of academic freedom of expression” and found “Professor Miller’s comments did not constitute unlawful speech”. Yet Bristol sacked him. The message is clear: no matter what outrage it perpetrates, Israel has immunity and its critics are to be punished.

A few years ago, Terry Eagleton, then professor of English literature at Manchester University, reckoned that “for the first time in two centuries, there is no eminent British poet, playwright or novelist prepared to question the foundations of the Western way of life.”

No Shelley spoke for the poor, no Blake for utopian dreams, no Byron damned the corruption of the ruling class, no Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin revealed the moral disaster of capitalism. William Morris, Oscar Wilde, HG Wells, George Bernard Shaw had no equivalents today. Harold Pinter was alive then, “the last to raise his voice”, wrote Eagleton.

Where did post-modernism – the rejection of actual politics and authentic dissent – come from? The publication in 1970 of Charles Reich’s bestselling book, “The Greening of America”, offers a clue. America then was in a state of upheaval; Richard Nixon was in the White House, a civil resistance, known as “the movement”, had burst out of the margins of society in the midst of a war that touched almost everybody. In alliance with the

civil rights movement, it presented the most serious challenge to Washington’s power for a century.

On the cover of Reich’s book were these words: “There is a revolution coming. It will not be like revolutions of the past. It will originate with the individual.”

At the time I was a correspondent in the United States and recall the overnight elevation to guru status of Reich, a young Yale academic. The *New Yorker* had sensationally serialised his book, whose message was that the “political action and truth-telling” of the 1960s had failed and only “culture and introspection” would change the world. It felt as if hippydom was claiming the consumer classes. And in one sense it was.

Within a few years, the cult of “me-ism” had all but overwhelmed many people’s sense of acting together, of social justice and internationalism. Class, gender and race were separated. The personal was the political and the media was the message. Make money, it said.

As for “the movement”, its hope and songs, the years of Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton put an end to all that. The police were now in open war with black people; Clinton’s notorious welfare bills broke world records in the number of mostly blacks they sent to jail.

When 9/11 happened, the fabrication of new “threats” on “America’s frontier” (as the Project for a New American Century called the world) completed the political disorientation of those who, 20 years earlier, would have formed a vehement opposition.

In the years since, America has gone to war with the world. According to a largely ignored report by the Physicians for Social Responsibility, Physicians for Global Survival and the Nobel Prize-winning International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, the number

killed in America's "war on terror" was 'at least' 1.3 million in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan.

This figure does not include the dead of US-led and fuelled wars in Yemen, Libya, Syria, Somalia and beyond. The true figure, said the report, "could well be in excess of 2 million [or] approximately 10 times greater than that of which the public, experts and decision makers are aware and [is] propagated by the media and major NGOs."

"At least" one million were killed in Iraq, say the physicians, or 5 percent of the population.

The enormity of this violence and suffering seems to have no place in the Western consciousness. "No one knows how many" is the media refrain. Blair and George W. Bush – and Straw and Cheney and Powell and Rumsfeld et al – were never in danger of prosecution. Blair's propaganda maestro, Alistair Campbell, is celebrated as a "media personality."

In 2003, I filmed an interview in Washington with Charles Lewis, the acclaimed investigative journalist. We discussed the invasion of Iraq a few months earlier. I asked him, "What if the constitutionally freest media in the world had seriously challenged George W. Bush and Donald Rumsfeld and investigated their claims, instead of spreading what turned out to be crude propaganda?"

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

I put the same question to Dan Rather, the famous CBS anchor, who gave me the same answer. David Rose of the *Observer*, who had promoted Saddam Hussein's "threat", and Rageh Omaar, then the BBC's Iraq correspondent, gave me the same answer. Rose's admirable contrition at having been "duped," spoke for many reporters bereft of his courage to say so.

It was during Barack Obama's two terms that American foreign policy flirted seriously with fascism. This was almost never reported

Their point is worth repeating. Had journalists done their job, had they questioned and investigated the propaganda instead of amplifying it, a million Iraqi men, women and children might be alive today; millions might not have fled their homes; the sectarian war between Sunni and Shia might not have ignited, and Islamic State might not have existed.

Cast that truth across the rapacious wars since 1945 ignited by the United States and its "allies" and the conclusion is breathtaking. Is this ever raised in journalism schools?

Today, war by media is a key task of so-called mainstream journalism, reminiscent of that described by a Nuremberg prosecutor in 1945:

"Before each major aggression, with some few exceptions based on expediency, they initiated a press campaign calculated to weaken their victims and to prepare the German people psychologically... In the propaganda system... it was the daily press and the radio that were the most important weapons."

One of the persistent strands in American political life is a cultish extremism that approaches fascism. Although Trump was credited with this, it was during Barack Obama's two terms that American foreign policy flirted seriously with fascism. This was almost never reported.

"I believe in American excep-

tionism with every fibre of my being", said Obama, who expanded a favourite presidential pastime, bombing, and death squads known as "special operations" as no other president had done since the first Cold War.

According to a Council on Foreign Relations survey, in 2016 Obama dropped 26,171 bombs. That is 72 bombs every day. He bombed the poorest people and people of colour: in Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan.

Every Tuesday – reported the *New York Times* – he personally selected those who would be murdered by hellfire missiles fired from drones. Weddings, funerals, shepherds were attacked, along with those attempting to collect the body parts festooning the "terrorist target."

A leading Republican senator, Lindsey Graham, estimated, approvingly, that Obama's drones had killed 4,700 people. "Sometimes you hit innocent people and I hate that", he said, but we've taken out some very senior members of Al Qaeda.'

In 2011, Obama told the media that the Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi was planning "genocide" against his own people. "We knew..." he said, "that if we waited one more day, Benghazi, a city the size of Charlotte [North Carolina], could suffer a massacre that would have reverberated across the region and stained the conscience of the world."

This was a lie. The only "threat" was the coming defeat of fanatical Islamists by Libyan government forces. With his plans for a revival of independent pan-Africanism, an African bank and African currency, all of it funded by Libyan oil, Gaddafi was cast as an enemy of Western colonialism on the continent in which Libya was the second most modern state.

Destroying Gaddafi's "threat"

and his modern state was the aim. Backed by the US, Britain and France, NATO launched 9,700 sorties against Libya. A third were aimed at infrastructure and civilian targets, reported the UN. Uranium warheads were used; the cities of Misurata and Sirte were carpet-bombed. The Red Cross identified mass graves, and Unicef reported that “most [of the children killed] were under the age of ten.”

When Hillary Clinton, Obama’s secretary of state, was told that Gaddafi had been captured by the insurrectionists and sodomised with a knife, she laughed and said to the camera: “We came, we saw, he died!”

On 14 September 2016, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee in London reported the conclusion of a year-long study into the NATO attack on Libya which it described as an “array of lies” – including the Benghazi massacre story.

The NATO bombing plunged Libya into a humanitarian disaster, killing thousands of people and displacing hundreds of thousands more, transforming Libya from the African country with the highest standard of living into a war-torn failed state.

Under Obama, the US extended secret “special forces” operations to 138 countries, or 70 percent of the world’s population. The first African-American president launched what amounted to a full-scale invasion of Africa.

Reminiscent of the Scramble for Africa in the 19th-century, the US African Command (Africom) has since built a network of supplicants among collaborative African regimes eager for American bribes and armaments. Africom’s “soldier to soldier” doctrine embeds US officers at every level of command from general to warrant officer. Only pith helmets are missing.

It is as if Africa’s proud history of liberation, from Patrice Lumumba

There was a threat to China from the United States; some 400 US military bases formed an arc along the rim of China’s industrial heartlands

to Nelson Mandela, has been consigned to oblivion by a new white master’s black colonial elite. This elite’s “historic mission”, warned the knowing Frantz Fanon, is the promotion of “a capitalism rampant though camouflaged.”

In the year NATO invaded Libya, 2011, Obama announced what became known as the “pivot to Asia”. Almost two-thirds of US naval forces would be transferred to the Asia-Pacific to “confront the threat from China”, in the words of his defence secretary.

There was no threat from China; there was a threat to China from the United States; some 400 American military bases formed an arc along the rim of China’s industrial heartlands, which a Pentagon official described approvingly as a “noose.”

At the same time, Obama placed missiles in Eastern Europe aimed at Russia. It was the beatified recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize who increased spending on nuclear warheads to a level higher than that of any US administration since the Cold War – having promised, in an emotional speech in the centre of Prague in 2009, to “help rid the world of nuclear weapons.”

Obama and his administration knew full well that the coup his assistant secretary of state, Victoria Nuland, was sent to oversee against the government of Ukraine in 2014

would provoke a Russian response and probably lead to war. And so it has.

I am writing this on 30 April, the anniversary of the last day of the longest war of the 20th-century, in Vietnam, which I reported. I was very young when I arrived in Saigon and I learned a great deal. I learned to recognise the distinctive drone of the engines of giant B-52s, which dropped their carnage from above the clouds and spared nothing and no one; I learned not to turn away when faced with a charred tree festooned with human parts; I learned to value kindness as never before; I learned that Joseph Heller was right in his masterly *Catch-22*: that war was not suited to sane people; and I learned about “our” propaganda.

All through that war, the propaganda said a victorious Vietnam would spread its communist disease to the rest of Asia, allowing the Great Yellow Peril to its north to sweep down. Countries would fall like “dominoes.”

Ho Chi Minh’s Vietnam was victorious, and none of the above happened. Instead, Vietnamese civilisation blossomed, remarkably, in spite of the price they paid: three million dead. The maimed, the deformed, the addicted, the poisoned, the lost.

If the current propagandists get their war with China, this will be a fraction of what is to come. Speak up. **CT**

John Pilger has twice won Britain’s highest award for journalism and has been International Reporter of the Year, News Reporter of the Year and Descriptive Writer of the Year. He has made 61 documentary films and has won an Emmy, a BAFTA and the Royal Television Society prize. His Cambodia Year Zero is named as one of the ten most important films of the 20th-century. His website is www.johnpilger.com

“A powerful, necessary indictment of efforts to disguise the human toll of American foreign policy.”

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

WAR MADE INVISIBLE

Read this searing new exposé of how the U.S. military, with the help of news media, conceals its perpetual war

“*War Made Invisible* will provide the fresh and profound clarity that our country desperately needs.”

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“Cutting through this manufactured ‘fog of war,’ Norman Solomon eloquently casts sunlight, the best disinfectant, on the propaganda that fuels perpetual war. *War Made Invisible* is essential reading in these increasingly perilous times.”

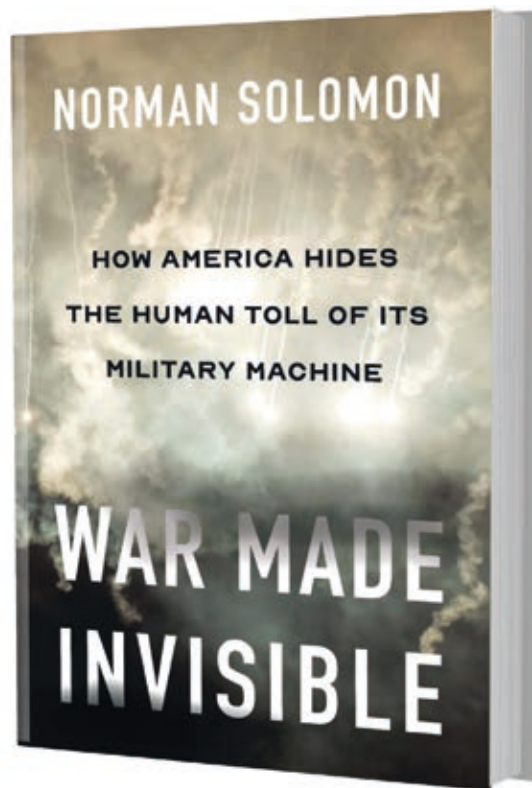
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—**Janine Jackson**, program director, Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting



“The great African writer Chinua Achebe recounts an African proverb that holds that ‘until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.’ In Norman Solomon’s gripping and painful study of what the hunter seeks to make invisible, the lions have found their historian, who scrupulously dismantles the deceit of the hunters and records what is all too visible to the lions.”

—**Noam Chomsky**



thenewpress.com

David Barsamian / Norman Solomon

THE WARS WE DON'T CARE TO SEE

A discussion of Norman Solomon's new book, *War Made Invisible*

The following is excerpted and adapted from David Barsamian's recent interview with Norman Solomon at AlternativeRadio.org.

David Barsamian: American Justice Robert Jackson was the chief prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials. He made an opening statement to the Tribunal on November 21, 1945, because there was some concern at the time that it would be an example of victor's justice. He said this: "If certain acts of violation of treaties are crimes, they are crimes whether the United States does them or whether Germany does them, and we are not prepared to lay down the rule of criminal conduct against others which we would not be willing to have invoked against us."

Norman Solomon: It goes to the point that, unless we have a single standard of human rights, a single standard of international conduct and war, we end up with an Orwellian exercise at which government leaders are always quite adept but one that's still intellectually, morally, and spiritually corrupt. Here we are, so long after the Nuremberg trials, and the supreme crime of aggression, the launching of a war, is not only widespread

but has been sanitised, even glorified. We've had this experience in one decade after another in which the United States has attacked a country in violation of international law, committing (according to the Nuremberg Tribunal) "the supreme international crime", and yet not only has there been a lack of remorse, but such acts have continued to be glorified.

The very first quote in my book *War Made Invisible* is from Aldous Huxley who, 10 years before the Nuremberg trials, said, "The propagandist's purpose is to make one set of people forget that certain other sets of people are human". Here we are in 2023 and it's still a challenge to analyse, illuminate, and push back against that essential purpose of propagandists around the world and especially in our own country where, in an ostensible democracy, we should have the most capacity to change policy.

Right now, we're in a situation where, unfortunately, across a lot of the political spectrum, including some of the left, folks think that you have to choose between aligning yourself with US foreign policy and its acts of aggression or Russian foreign policy and its acts of aggression. Personally, I think it's both appropriate and necessary to condemn war on Ukraine, and Washington's

hypocrisy doesn't in any way let Russia off the hook. By the same token, Russia's aggression shouldn't let the United States off the hook for the tremendous carnage we've created in this century. I mean, if you add up the numbers, in the last nearly twenty-five years, the country by far the most responsible for slaughtering more people in more lands through wars of aggression is... yes, the United States of America.

Barsamian: What's your assessment of the war coverage of PBS and NPR? You know, a rarified, polite media where people speak in complete sentences without any shouting. But have they presented dissident voices to challenge the hegemonic assumptions you just cited when it comes to American war policies?

Solomon: The style there is different, of course, but consider it just a long form of the very same propaganda framework. So, you can listen to a 10-minute segment on *All Things Considered* or a panel discussion on the *PBS NewsHour* and the style and civility, the length of the sentences, as you say, may be refreshing to the ear, but it also normalises the same attitudes, the same status-quo assumptions about American foreign policy. I won't say never, but in my



Soround from an M2A3 fighting vehicle during an integrated night live-fire exercise at Camp Adazi, Latvia.

experience, it's extremely rare for an NPR or PBS journalist to assertively question the underlying prerogatives of the US government to attack other countries, even if it's said with a more erudite ambience.

You've got NPR and PBS unwilling to challenge, but all too willing to propagate and perpetuate the assumption that, yes, the United States might make mistakes, it might even commit blunders – a popular word for the US invasion of Iraq that resulted in literally hundreds of thousands of deaths. Still, the underlying message is invariably that yes, we can (and should) at times argue over when, whether, and how to attack certain countries with the firepower of the Pentagon, but those decisions do need to be made and the US has the right to do

so if that's the best judgment of the wise people in the upper reaches of policy in Washington.

Barsamian: Jeff Cohen, the founder of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), has talked about the guest list on such PBS and NPR programs. There's a golden Rolodex of what he calls "formers" – former undersecretaries of state, former lieutenant colonels, retired generals, et al. But what about dissident voices like Medea Benjamin, yourself, or Noam Chomsky?

Solomon: Over the years, FAIR has done a number of studies ranging from commercial networks to NPR and the *PBS NewsHour*, and found that, particularly when issues of

war and peace are on the table, it's extremely rare to have opponents of US military action on the air, sometimes below one percent of the interviewees. And this is considered "objective journalism" and goes hand in hand with a deeper precept, usually unspoken but certainly in play in the real world: that if an American journalist is in favour of our wars, that's objectivity, but if opposed, that's bias.

I'm sometimes asked: Why do journalists so often stay in line? They're not, as in some other countries, going to be hauled off to prison. So, what makes them feel compelled to be as conformist as they are? And a lot of the explanation has to do with mortgages and the like – hey, I want to pay for my children's college education, I need financial

security, so on and so forth.

To my mind, it's a tremendous irony that we have so many examples of very brave journalists for American media outlets going into war zones, sometimes being wounded, occasionally even losing their lives, and then the ones who get back home, back to the newsrooms, turn out to be afraid of the boss. They don't want to lose their syndicated columns, their front-page access. This dangerous dynamic regiments the journalism we get.

And keep in mind that, living in the United States, we have, with very few exceptions, no firsthand experience of the wars this country has engaged in and continues to be engaged in. So, we depend on the news media, a dependence that's very dangerous in a democracy where the precept is that we need the informed consent of the governed, while what we're getting is their uninformed pseudo-consent. Consider that a formula for the warfare state we have.

Barsamian: At the White House Correspondents' dinner President Biden said, "Journalism is not a crime. The free press is a pillar, maybe the pillar of a free society." Great words from the White House.

Solomon: President Biden, like his predecessors in the Oval Office, loves to speak about the glories of the free press and say that journalism is a wonderful aspect of our society – until the journalists do something he and the government he runs really don't like. A prime example is Julian Assange. He's a journalist, a publisher, an editor, and he's sitting in prison in Great Britain being hot-wired for transportation to the United States. I sat through the two-week trial in the federal district of northern Virginia of CIA whistleblower Jeffrey Ster-

The USA is good at pointing fingers at Russia or countries that invade some other nation, but when the US does it, it's another thing entirely

ling and I can tell you it was a kangaroo court. That's the court Julian Assange has a ticket to if his extradition continues.

And what's his so-called crime? It's journalism. WikiLeaks committed journalism. It exposed the war crimes of the United States in Iraq through documents it released, through the now-notorious video that came to be called "Collateral Murder," showing the wanton killing of a number of people on the ground in Iraq by a US military helicopter. It provided a compendium of evidence that the United States had systemically engaged in war crimes under the rubric of the so-called War on Terror. So, naturally, the stance of the US government remains: this man Assange is dangerous; he must be imprisoned.

The attitude of the corporate media, Congress, and the White House has traditionally been and continues to be that the US stance in the world can be: do as we say, not as we do. So, the USA is good at pointing fingers at Russia or countries that invade some other nation, but when the US does it, it's another thing entirely. Such dynamics, while pernicious, especially among a nuclear-armed set of nations, are reflexes people in power have had for a long time.

More than a century ago, William Dean Howells wrote a short story called "Editha." Keep in mind that this was after the United States had been slaughtering hundreds of

thousands of people in the Philippines. In it, a character says, "What a thing it is to have a country that can't be wrong, but if it is, is right, anyway!"

Now, here we are in 2023 and it's not that different, except when it comes to the scale of communications, of a media that's so much more pervasive. If you read the op-ed pages and editorial sections of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and other outlets of the liberal media, you'll find such doublethink well in place. Vladimir Putin, of course, is a war criminal. Well, I happen to think he is a war criminal. I also happen to think that George W. Bush is a war criminal, and we could go on to all too many other examples of high US government officials where that description applies no less than to Vladimir Putin.

Can you find a single major newspaper that's been willing to editorialise that George W. Bush – having ordered the invasion of Iraq, costing hundreds of thousands of lives based on a set of lies – was a war criminal? It just ain't gonna happen. In fact, one of the things I was particularly pleased (in a grim sort of way) to explore in my book was the rehabilitation of that war criminal, providing a paradigm for the presidents who followed him and letting them off the hook, too.

I quote, for instance, President Obama speaking to troops in Afghanistan. You could take one sentence after another from his speeches there and find almost identical ones that President Lyndon Johnson used in speaking to American troops in Vietnam in 1966. They both talked about how US soldiers were so compassionate, cared so much about human life, and were trying to help the suffering people of Vietnam or Afghanistan. That pernicious theme seems to accompany almost any US war: that, with the best of intentions, the US is seeking

to help those in other countries. It's a way of making the victims at the other end of US firepower – to use a word from my book title – *invisible*.

This is something I was able to do some thinking and writing about in my book. There are two tiers of grief in our media and our politics from Congress to the White House – ours and theirs. Our grief (including that of honorary semi-Americans like the Ukrainians) is focused on those who are killed by official enemy governments of the United States. That's the real tier of grief and so when the media covers, as it should, the suffering of people in Ukraine thanks to Russia's war of aggression, their suffering is made as real as can be. And yet, when it's the US slaughtering people in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere, that's something else entirely. When it comes to the people at the other end of US weaponry, the civilians, hundreds of thousands of them directly slaughtered, and millions indirectly killed by US warfare, their tier of grief isn't, with rare exceptions, on the media map. Those human beings just don't matter.

Here in the USA, people find this unpleasant to hear or even think about. But our own humanity has been besmirched, damaged, undermined by such silences, which, in many ways, represent the most powerful propaganda of all. We need to break that silence.

Barsamian: The media landscape is radically changing from podcasts to blogs to all kinds of new media. Will that help?

Solomon: Technology's never going to save us. Robert McChesney, the scholar of media history, has written eloquently about this. Every advance in technology was accompanied by these outsized promises that therefore we will have democracy.

When it comes to the people at the other end of US weaponry, hundreds of thousands of them directly slaughtered ... their grief isn't on the media map

That's going back to the first telegraphs, then radio, then broadcast TV, then cable television. At every step, people were told, hey, this technology means that no longer do we have a top-down relationship to power, we can make the changes happen ourselves. And yet as we've seen with all of those technologies, and this includes the Internet, technology never freed anybody.

Barsamian: What's to be done? What practical steps would you recommend?

Solomon: I believe in organising as the key element in turning around such dire circumstances, including corporate power, class war waged from the top down, and the militarisation of our society and our foreign policy. That means a shift in mindset to see that we're not consuming history off the shelf like Wonder Bread. As the saying goes, whatever your first major concern may be, your second should be the media. We need to build media organisations and support the ones that are doing progressive work, support them financially, support them in terms of spreading the word and also of learning more about how to – and actually implementing how to – organise both people we know and those we don't. And I think that's pretty antithetical to the messages the media regularly sends us, because really, the main messages from, say, televi-

sion involve urging us to go out and buy things (and maybe vote once in a while). Well, we do need to go out and buy things and we certainly should vote, but the real changes are going to come when we find ways to work together to create political power both inside and outside the electoral arena.

When you look at the corruption of the Federal Communications Commission, for instance, that's not going to change until different people are in office – and we're not going to get different people in office until we elect them to overcome the power of Big Money. And there's also the real history that we need to be reminded of: that everything we have to be proud of in this country was a result of people organising from the bottom up and generating social movements. That's truly where our best future lies. **CT**

Barsamian: You conclude War Made Invisible with a quote from James Baldwin.

Solomon: “Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” **CT**

David Barsamian is the founder and host of the radio program *Alternative Radio* and has published books with Noam Chomsky, Arundhati Roy, Edward Said, and Howard Zinn, among others. His latest book with Noam Chomsky is *Notes on Resistance* (Haymarket Books).

Norman Solomon is co-founder of *RootsAction.org* and executive director of the *Institute for Public Accuracy*. His books include *War Made Easy*, *Made Love*, *Got War*, and *War Made Invisible* (The New Press). He lives in the San Francisco area. This interview was first published at www.tomdispatch.com.

Sam Pizzigati

THE DECADES THAT CREATED THE MIDDLE CLASS

A labour surge in the middle of last century changed the face of America, redistributing wealth by taxing the rich and lifting up working families. It's time to reinvigorate that spirit again

Amazing things can happen when societies realise they don't need an awesomely affluent top-level class of citizens. What sort of amazing things? Take what happened in the United States between 1940 and 1960, as economists William Collins and Gregory Niemesh do in a just-published research paper, "Income Gains and the Geography of the US Home Ownership Boom, 1940 to 1960", on America's mid-century home ownership boom.

Over a mere 20-year span, the United States essentially birthed a "new middle class". The share of US households owning their own homes, Collins and Niemesh note, jumped an "unprecedented" 20 percentage points. By 1960, most American families lived in housing they owned "for the first time since at least 1870" – for the first time, in effect, since before the Industrial Revolution.

This home ownership surge, the two economists posit, rested in large part on an equally unprecedented surge in worker earnings. Median annual incomes in the mid-20th-century "nearly doubled" as Americans realised wage gains "both large on average and widely spread across workers".

This "widespread and sustained

increase in the level of income", Collins and Niemesh detail, "allowed more people to afford and select into owner-occupied housing than in previous generations".

What brought about that "widespread and sustained" income increase? That question lies beyond the scope of the new Collins-Niemesh paper. But not much mystery surrounds the answer. The years of the mid-20th-century saw a vast expansion of America's trade union movement. The struggles of new unions – in major basic industries ranging from auto to steel – essentially forced the rich to begin sharing the wealth workers were creating.

This massive mid-century labor surge also changed the face of the American political landscape. Union-backed lawmakers put in place programmes that helped average families on a wide variety of fronts, everything from making mortgages affordable to expanding access to higher education.

And those union-backed lawmakers helped pay for those new programmes by raising taxes on America's wealthiest. Between 1940 and 1960, the federal tax rate on income in the nation's top tax bracket consistently hovered around 90 percent.

That worker-friendly world of the mid-20th-century has, of course, long since disappeared. Over the past half-century, we've witnessed an enormous redistribution – upwards – of the nation's income and wealth.

Back in 1982, in the early stages of that redistribution, *Forbes* began publishing an annual compilation of the nation's 400 grandest private fortunes. The initial *Forbes 400* list included just 13 billionaires. Their combined wealth: \$92-billion. Over the next four decades, *Forbes* notes, the combined net worth of America's richest 400 would rise to "a staggering \$4.5-trillion – making them nearly 50 times better off than their 1982 counterparts, far outpacing the consumer price index's near tripling".

Overall wealth in the United States, the Federal Reserve relates, now totals \$140-trillion. The bottom half of Americans hold just \$4-trillion of that.

The United States, adds the *New York Times* in a new analysis, is approaching an unprecedented "intergenerational transfer of wealth" that "will largely reinforce" this current record inequality. Households worth over \$5-million, the Boston-based Cerulli Associates financial research firm calculates, make up just 1.5 percent of total US



Thing of the past? Middle class housing is rapidly becoming out of reach for cash-strapped families in the US.

households. Between now and 2045, this tiny share of the nation's households will account for 42.5 percent of expected wealth transfers.

Making that top-heavy transfer even worse: Under existing US tax law, wealthy married couples can pass on to their heirs as much as \$26-million without paying a penny in federal estate tax.

Meanwhile, observes a top research exec at the Vanguard Group, tens of millions of American workers aging into their seventies can't afford to retire. "All but the most wealthy" among us, Vanguard's Fiona Greig tells the *New York Times* reporter Talmon Joseph Smith, appear to be – to some degree – financially unprepared for retirement.

Smith's conclusion? The head-

The challenge we confront today? We need to do more than create a much more equitable distribution of income and wealth

line over his economic preview published in May tells it all: "The Greatest Wealth Transfer in History Is Here, With Familiar (Rich) Winners".

But our upcoming transfer of generational wealth doesn't have to play out that way. The vast 1940-to-1960 expansion of America's middle class, we need to keep in mind, didn't just happen. Advocates for greater equality made it happen. Back before the Great Depression, those advocates confronted a mald-

istribution of income and wealth just as severe as the maldistribution we confront today. They battled for greater equity, and their success in that battle held up for a generation.

The challenge we confront today? We need to do more than create a much more equitable distribution of income and wealth. We need to create a much more equitable distribution of income and wealth that can last. **CT**

Sam Pizzigati writes on inequality for the Institute for Policy Studies. His latest book: *The Case for a Maximum Wage (Polity)*. Among his other books on maldistributed income and wealth: *The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970 (Seven Stories Press)*.



Dougie Wallace

NO LAUGHING MATTER

High times and low tolerance as British youngsters face crackdown

Who would think that a few small balloons could cause so much trouble? These innocent-looking child's toys, when paired with canisters of laughing gas have become the focus of heated public debate in Britain, pitting denizens of morality and public safety against youngsters seeking nothing more than good old-fashioned fun.

Rather than addressing the real issues facing the country, such as the dreadful state of the economy,







the government has decided the balloons are a dangerous gateway drug that will lead to chaos and destruction and must be criminalised – after overturning the recommendations of two independent reviews.

This reflects a disturbing pattern of performative politics, in which public perception is prioritised over expert opinion. Politicians would like us to believe the real reason for anti-social behaviour in public parks is laughing gas which, after cannabis, is the most commonly-used recreational drug among 16-to 24-year-olds in England, and not government cuts in funding for youth services over the past 13 years.

It's already illegal to give or sell either drug, so criminalising possession would cause even more damage by forcing users to buy from criminal gangs.





Meanwhile, on the streets of London's Soho, where the real action happens, you'll meet party people and free spirits who see the balloons as harmless and enjoyable, a way to let off steam and have a good time without causing harm. To them, the fun balloons are no more dangerous than a selfie or a tuk-tuk ride.

And I'm in the middle of it all, capturing the chaos and confusion of the Soho scene with a wry smile and a raised eyebrow.

After all, who could have predicted that a few little balloons could cause such a fuss? It's almost as if we've forgotten that Soho has been a centre of hedonism and debauchery for centuries and that the balloons are just the latest in a long line of harmless indulgences. **CT**

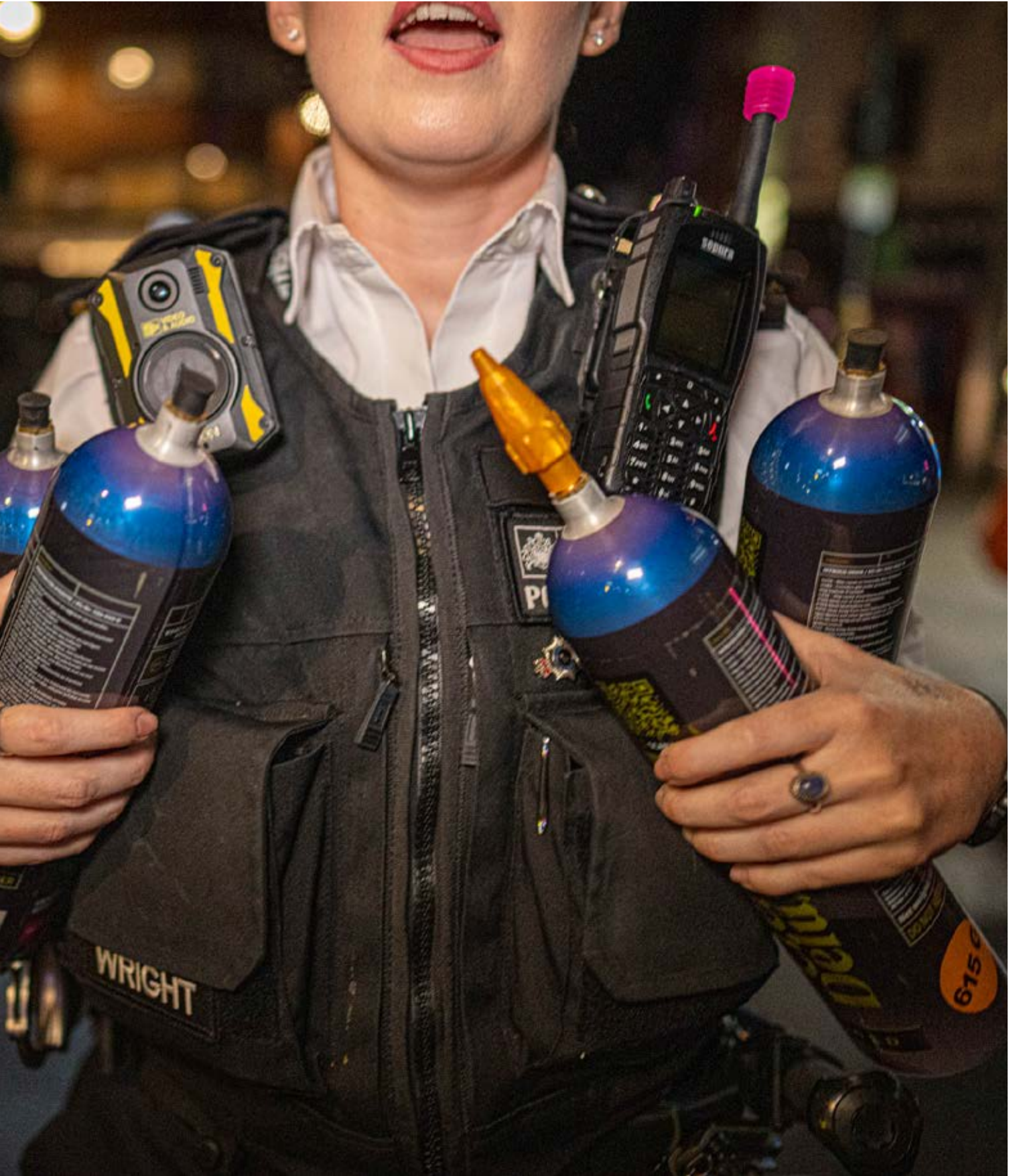


Dougie Wallace is a London-based street photographer. He has published six photobooks, the latest of which, *East Ended*, was recently released by Dewi Lewis – www.dewilewis.com

These, and other photos from this series, are available as a 32-page zine – *No Laughing Matter* – published by Bump Books, at www.bumpbooks.com

● See more of Dougie Wallace's work at www.dougiwallace.com





Jonathan Cook

BRITISH WARMONGERING DRIVES EUROPE TOWARDS UKRAINE CATASTROPHE

From lobbying for fighter jets to supplying depleted uranium, the UK is making sure escalation is the only way forward

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky made an unexpected trip to Britain in May during a whistle-stop tour of European capitals, pleading for more powerful and longer-range weapons to use in his war against Russia.

What was hard to ignore once again was the extent to which the UK is playing an outsize role in Ukraine.

Last year, shortly after the start of the war, the then-prime minister, Boris Johnson, hurried to Kyiv – presumably on Washington’s instructions – apparently to warn Zelensky off fledgling peace talks with Moscow.

At around the same time, the Biden administration made clear it favoured an escalation in fighting, not an end to it, as an opportunity to “weaken” Russia, a geo-strategic rival along with China.

Since then, the UK has been at the forefront of European efforts to entrench the conflict, helping to lobby for the supply of weapons, training and military intelligence to Ukrainian forces.

British tanks and thousands of tank shells – including, controversially, some made from depleted uranium – are being shipped out.

Last month, the UK added hundreds of long-range attack drones to the inventory. And an unspecified number of £2-million-a-blast Storm Shadow cruise missiles, with a range of nearly 300km, have started arriving. Ben Wallace, Britain’s defence secretary, said the missiles were already in use, adding that Kyiv alone was deciding on the targets.

Storm Shadow allows the Ukrainian military to strike deep into Russian-annexed parts of Ukraine – and potentially at Russian cities, too.

A recent leak revealed that the Pentagon had learned through electronic eavesdropping of Zelensky’s eagerness for longer-range missiles so that his forces were “capable of reaching Russian troop deployments in Russia”.

Britain now pays little more than lip service to the West’s claim that its role is only to help Ukraine defend itself from Russian aggression. The supply of increasingly offensive weapons has turned Ukraine into what amounts to a proxy battleground on which the Cold War can be revived.

During Zelensky’s May visit to

the UK, Johnson’s successor, Rishi Sunak, effectively acted as an arms broker for Ukraine, joining with the Netherlands in what was grandly dubbed an “international coalition” to pressure the Biden administration and other European states to supply Kyiv with F-16 fighter jets.

Washington appeared not to need much cajoling. Three days later, Biden dramatically changed tack at a G7 summit in Japan. He effectively gave a green light for US allies to supply Ukraine not only with US-made F-16s but similar fourth-generation fighter jets, including Britain’s Eurofighter Typhoon and France’s Mirage 2000.

Administration officials surprised European leaders by suggesting the US would be directly involved in the training of pilots outside Ukraine.

After a highly staged “surprise” visit by Zelensky to the summit, Biden said he had been given a “flat reassurance” that the jets would not attack Russian territory.

British officials, meanwhile, indicated that the UK would start training Ukrainian pilots within weeks.

No 10 has made clear that Sunak’s purpose is to build “a new Ukrainian air force with Nato-standard F-16 jets” and that the prime minister believes “Ukraine’s rightful place is in



Brothers-in-arms: Rishi Sunak and Volodymyr Zelensky meet on February 8.

Nato”.

These statements seem intended once again to block any potential path towards peace. President Vladimir Putin repeatedly spoke out against Nato’s growing, covert involvement in neighbouring Ukraine before Russia launched its invasion 15 months ago.

It is hard to imagine that the UK is heading off-script. More likely, the Biden administration is using Britain to make the running and soften up Western publics as Nato becomes ever more deeply immersed in the military activities of Russia’s neighbour.

Ukraine is being gradually turned into the very Nato forward base that first set Moscow on course to invade.

At the same time, Britain appears

to be exploiting the Ukraine war as a showcase for its weaponry. After the US, it has been the largest supplier of military equipment to Ukraine.

It was reported in the third week of May that UK arms exports hit a record £8.5-billion, more than double last year’s total. The last time Britain was so successful at selling weapons was in 2015, at the height of the Syrian war.

Europe’s weapons largesse is, we are told, the precondition for Ukraine to mount a long-awaited counter-offensive to take back territory Russia has seized in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine.

Speaking candidly in Florence last month, Josep Borrell, the European Union’s top diplomat, ruled out peace talks. Ukraine needed massive supplies of arms because otherwise “Ukraine will fall in a matter of days”, he said.

Borrell’s warning not only suggested the precariousness of Ukraine’s situation but implied that, out of desperation, its leaders might be prepared to approve ever riskier combat scenarios.

And thanks to British meddling, the heavy toll of casualties as the war rages on – among the Ukrainian population and Russian soldiers, as well as potentially inside Russia’s borders too – may be felt not just over the coming months but for decades to come.

In March, the website Declassified.org broke the story that some of the thousands of tank shells Britain is supplying to Kyiv are made of depleted uranium (DU), a radioactive heavy metal produced as waste from nuclear power plants.

Keir Starmer's opposition Labour party has said it "fully supports" the UK government's supply of these armour-piercing shells to Ukraine, despite the long-term risk they pose to those exposed to the chemically toxic contamination left behind.

DU shells fragment and burn when they hit a target. One analyst, Doug Weir, from the Conflict and Environment Observatory, told Declassified that the ammunition produces "chemically toxic and radioactive DU particulate [microscopic particles] that poses an inhalational risk to people".

Nonetheless, British ministers insist the threat to human health is low – and worth the risk given the military gains in helping Ukraine to destroy Russian tanks.

As Declassified has highlighted, however, a growing body of evidence following the use of such shells by the US in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s and by Britain and the US in Iraq a decade later undermines these reassurances.

Italian courts have upheld compensation claims against the country's military in more than 300 cases where Italians who served in the police or as soldiers in Bosnia and Kosovo have died of cancer after being exposed to DU.

Many thousands more Italian former service-people are reported to have developed cancers.

In 2001 Tony Blair's government downplayed the role of DU in Italy's deaths to avoid upsetting the new administration of George W Bush. Both leaders would soon approve

The Guardian does not name Hersh in its report or the fact that his highly placed source fingered the US for the Nord Stream sabotage

the use of DU rounds in Iraq, though the UK admitted a "moral obligation" to help clean up some of the contamination afterwards.

The West has taken little interest in researching the effects of DU weapons in Iraq, even though local civilian populations have been the most exposed to its contamination. DU shells were used extensively during both the 1991 Gulf war and more than a decade later during the US and British-led occupation of Iraq.

Iraqi government statistics suggest the rates of cancers leapt 40-fold between the period immediately before the Gulf war and 2005.

The city of Fallujah, which the US devastated after the 2003 invasion, is reported to suffer "the highest rate of genetic damage in any population ever studied". Birth defects are said to be roughly 14 times the rate in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki regions of Japan, where the US dropped atomic bombs.

In 2018 the British government reclassified a 1981 report into the dangers of DU weapons by the Ministry of Defence's Atomic Weapons Research Establishment it had made available three years earlier.

Meanwhile, James Heappey, the armed forces minister, has misleadingly suggested that international bodies such as the World Health Organisation and the United Nations have found no long-term health or environmental hazards associated with DU weapons.

But as Weir told Declassified in March: "None of the entities cited by

the MoD has undertaken long-term environmental or health studies in conflict areas where DU weapons have been used."

In other words, they simply don't know – and possibly don't care to find out.

Weir added that the WHO, UN and International Atomic Energy Agency had all called for contaminated areas to be clearly marked and access restricted, while at the same time recommending that risk awareness campaigns be targeted at nearby communities. British officials have also recruited the Royal Society to their efforts to claim DU is safe – as the US did earlier, in the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, citing two of its reports published in 2001 and 2002.

However, the Royal Society has vocally distanced itself from such claims. A spokesperson told Declassified that, despite the British government's assertions, DU was no longer an "active area of policy research".

Back in 2003, the Royal Society rebuked Washington, telling the Guardian that soldiers and civilians in Iraq "were in short and long term danger. Children playing at contaminated sites were particularly at risk."

At the same time, the chairman of the Royal Society's working group on depleted uranium, Professor Brian Spratt, warned that corroding shells could leach DU into water supplies. He recommended removing ordinance and conducting long-term sampling of water supplies.

By lobbying for more overtly offensive weapons and introducing DU shells into the war, Britain has raised the stakes in two incendiary ways.

First, it is driving the war's logic towards ever greater escalation, including nuclear escalation.

Russia itself possesses DU weapons but is reported to have avoided using them. Moscow has long warned that it regards use of DU in Ukraine in nuclear terms: as the equivalent of a “dirty bomb”.

In March Putin responded to the UK’s decision to supply DU tank shells by vowing to move “tactical” nuclear weapons into neighbouring Belarus. Meanwhile, his defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, said it put the world “fewer and fewer steps” away from “nuclear collision”.

But Britain is also creating a situation where a catastrophic move, or miscalculation, by either Russia or Ukraine is becoming ever more likely, as recent events highlighted only too clearly.

Russia struck a military ammuni-

tion depot in western Ukraine, creating a giant fireball. Rumours suggested the site may have included British DU shells.

Whether true or not, it is a reminder that Moscow could hit such a storage site, intentionally or accidentally, spreading contamination widely over a built-up area.

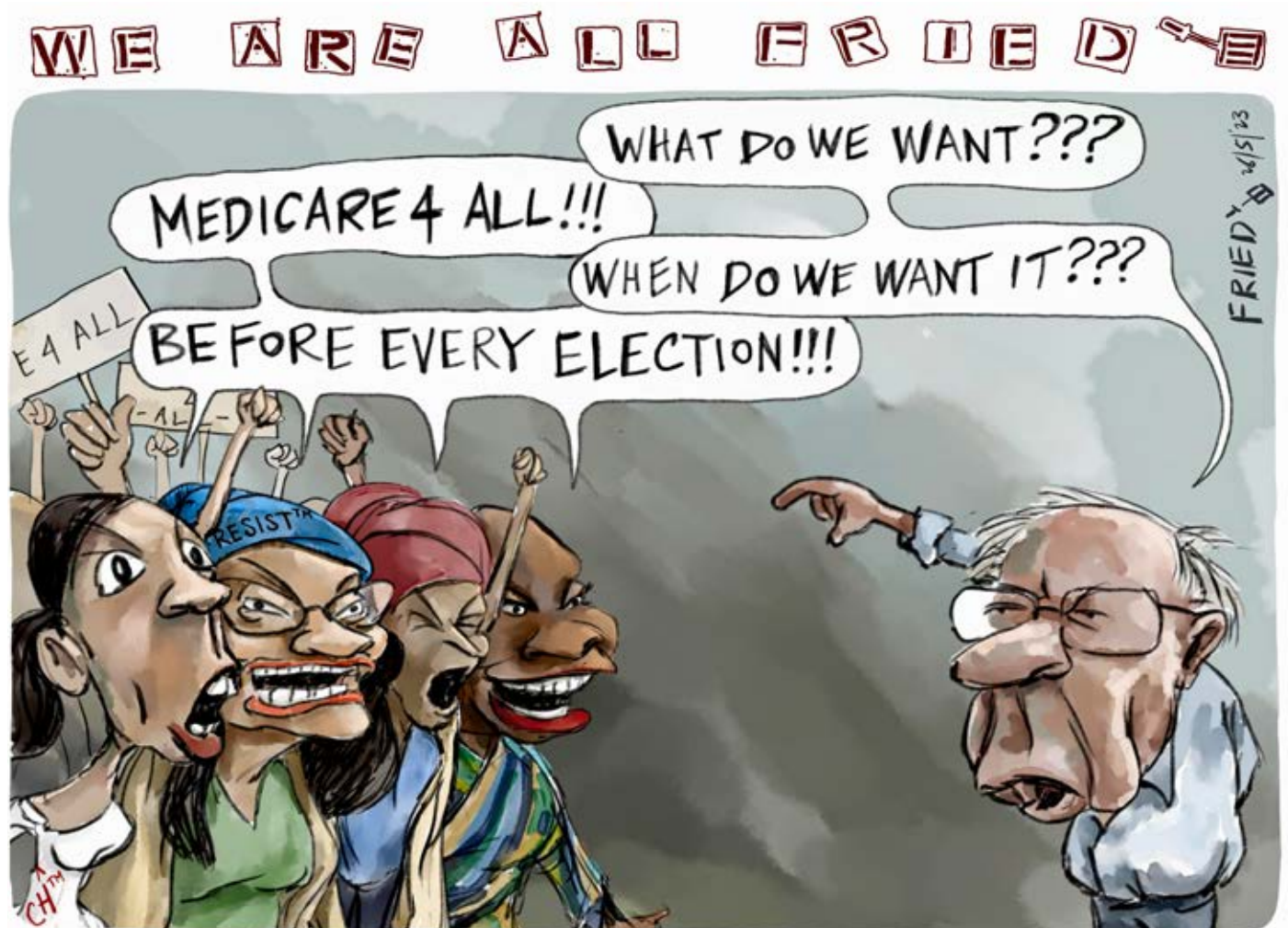
With Ukraine soon to be in possession of a full array of offensive weapons, largely courtesy of the UK – not only long-range drones, cruise missiles and tanks but fighter jets – it is not hard to imagine terrifying scenarios that could quickly bring Europe to the brink of nuclear conflict.

Moscow hits a DU ammunition depot, exposing a large civilian population to toxic contamination.

Ukraine retaliates with air strikes deep inside Russia. The path to a nuclear exchange in Europe has never looked closer.

Those who warned that peace talks were urgently needed rather than an arms race in Ukraine are looking more prescient by the day. For how much longer can their voices continue to be silenced, not only by western leaders but by the western media too? **CT**

Jonathan Cook is the author of three books on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and a winner of the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His website and blog can be found at www.jonathan-cook.net. This article first appeared at www.declassifieduk.org.



Greg Koenderman

Karen Greenberg

AMERICA'S CONTINUING QUEST TO HIDE TORTURE

The story won't go away until the US officially acknowledges the crimes that they would instantly denounce if committed by other countries

In the Blindman's Buff variation of tag, a child designated as "It" is tasked with tapping another child while wearing a blindfold. The sightless child knows the other children, all able to see, are there but is left to stumble around, using sounds and knowledge of the space they're in as guides. Finally, that child does succeed, either by bumping into someone, peeking, or thanks to sheer dumb luck.

Think of us, the American public, as that blindfolded child when it comes to our government's torture programme that followed the 9/11 disaster and the launching of the ill-fated war on terror. We've been left to search in the dark for what so many of us sensed was there.

We've been groping for the facts surrounding the torture programme created and implemented by the administration of President George W. Bush. For 20 years now, the hunt for its perpetrators, the places where they brutalised detainees, and the techniques they used has been underway. And for 20 years, attempts to keep that blindfold in place in the name of "national security" have helped sustain darkness over light.

From the beginning, the torture programme was enveloped in a language of darkness with its secret "black sites" where savage interro-

gations took place and the endless blacked-out pages of documents that might have revealed more about the horrors being committed in our name. In addition, the destruction of evidence and the squelching of internal reports only expanded that seemingly bottomless abyss that still, in part, confronts us. Meanwhile, the courts and the justice system consistently supported those who insisted on keeping that blindfold in place, claiming, for example, that were defence attorneys to be given details about the interrogations of their clients, national security would somehow be compromised.

Finally, however, more than two decades after it all began, the tide may truly be turning.

Despite fervid attempts to keep that blindfold in place, the search has not been in vain. On the contrary, over these last two decades, its layers have slowly worn away, thread by thread, revealing, if not the full picture of those medieval-style practices, then a damning set of facts and images relating to torture, American-style, in this century. Cumulatively, investigative journalism, government reports, and the testimony of witnesses have revealed a fuller picture of the plac-

es, people, nightmarish techniques, and results of that programme.

The fraying of that blindfold took endless years, starting in December 2002, when *Washington Post* writers Dana Priest and Barton Gellman reported on the existence of secret detention and interrogation centres in countries around the planet where cruel, unlawful techniques were being used against war-on-terror captives in American custody. Quoting from a 2001 State Department report on the treatment of captives, they wrote, "The most frequently alleged methods of torture include sleep deprivation, beatings on the soles of the feet, prolonged suspension with ropes in contorted positions and extended solitary confinement."

Less than a year later, the American Civil Liberties Union, along with other groups, filed a Freedom of Information Act request (the first of many) for records pertaining to detention and interrogation in the war on terror. Their goal was to follow the trail leading to "numerous credible reports recounting the torture and rendition of detainees" and our government's efforts (or the lack thereof) to comply "with its legal obligations with respect to the infliction of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment."

Then, in 2004, the blindfold began to show some initial signs of wear.



A Witness Against Torture activist holds a sign designed by Shepard Fairey (Obey Giant) on a hill overlooking Guantánamo Bay.

That spring, CBS News's 60 Minutes II showed the first photographs of men held at Abu Ghraib, an American-controlled prison in Iraq. They were, among other things, visibly naked, hooded, shackled, and threatened by dogs. Those pictures sent journalists and legal advocates into a frenzied search for answers to how such a thing had happened in the wake of the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq. By that fall, they had obtained internal government documents exempting any war on terror captives from the usual legal protections from cruelty, abuse, and torture. Documents also appeared in which specific techniques of torture, renamed "enhanced interrogation techniques" (EITs), were authorized by top officials of the Bush administration. They would be used on prisoners in secret CIA locations around the world (119 men in 38 or more countries).

None of this, however, yet added

up to "Tag! I found you!"

Before George Bush left office, Senator Dianne Feinstein began a congressional investigation into the CIA interrogation programme. In the Obama years, she would battle to mount a full-scale one into the torture programme, defying most of her colleagues, who preferred to follow President Obama's advice to "look forward as opposed to looking backwards."

But Feinstein refused to back down (and we should honour her courage and dedication, even as we witness the present drama of her insistence on remaining in the Senate despite a devastating process of aging). Instead of retreating, Feinstein only doubled down and, as chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, launched an in-depth investigation into the torture programme's evolution and the grim treatment of prisoners at what came to be known as "CIA black sites."

Feinstein's investigator, Daniel Jones, spent years reading through six million pages of documents. Finally, in December 2014, her committee issued a 525-page "executive summary" of his findings. Yet his full report – 6,700 pages with 35,300 footnotes – remained classified on the grounds that, were the public to see it, national security might be harmed. Still, that summary convincingly laid out not just the widespread use of torture but how it "proved not to be an effective means of obtaining accurate information." In doing so, it dismantled the CIA's justification for its EITs which rested on "claims of their effectiveness."

Meanwhile, Leon Panetta, Obama's director of the CIA, conducted an internal investigation into torture. Never declassified, the Panetta Review, as it came to be known, reportedly found that the CIA had inflated the value of the information it had got with the use of torture tech-

niques. For example, in the brutal interrogation of the alleged mastermind of 9/11, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the Agency claimed that those techniques had elicited information from him that helped thwart further terrorist plots. In fact, the information had been obtained from other sources. The review reportedly acknowledged that EITs were not as effective as the CIA had claimed.

In those years, bits of light from the cultural world began to illuminate the dark horror of those enhanced interrogation techniques. In 2007, after President Bush had acknowledged the use of just such “techniques” and had moved 14 detainees from the CIA’s black sites to Guantánamo, his infamous offshore prison of injustice in Cuba, documentary filmmaker Alex Gibney directed “Taxi to the Dark Side”. It told the story of Dilawar, a taxi driver in Afghanistan who died in American custody after severe mistreatment. That film would be one of the earliest public exposés of cruelty and mistreatment in the war on terror.

But such films didn’t always yield doses of light. In 2012, for instance, “Zero Dark Thirty”, a movie heavily influenced by CIA advisers, argued that those harsh interrogations had helped keep America safer – specifically by leading US authorities to bin Laden, a meme often repeated by government officials. In fact, reliable information leading to bin Laden had been obtained without those techniques.

Increasingly, however, films began to highlight the voices of those who had been tortured. “The Mauritanian”, for example, was based on “Guantánamo Diary”, a memoir by Mohamedou Ould Slahi, a tortured Mauritanian held at that prison for 14 years. Slahi, never charged, was finally released and returned to Mauritania. As *New York Times* reporter Carol Rosenberg summed up his experience, “The confessions he

Nothing captures the futility of the blindfold – or sometimes even the futility of lifting it – more than Zubaydah’s story, which was at the heart of the story

made under duress [were] recanted [and] a proposed case against him [was] deemed by the prosecutor to be worthless in court because of the brutality of the interrogation.”

Last year, award-winning documentary filmmaker Alex Gibney once again gave us a film on torture, “The Forever Prisoner”, focused on a Guantánamo detainee, Abu Zubaydah, whose real name is Zayn al-Abidin Muhammed Husayn. On him, the CIA first tested its harsh interrogation techniques, claiming he was a leading member of al-Qaeda, an assumption later disproved. He remains one of only three Gitmo detainees neither charged by the military commissions at that prison, nor cleared for release.

Nothing captures the futility of the blindfold – or sometimes even the futility of lifting it – more than Zubaydah’s story, which was at the heart of the story of torture in these years. The Senate Select Committee’s 525-page executive summary referred to him no less than 1,343 times.

Captured in Pakistan in 2002 and first taken to a series of black sites for interrogation, Zubaydah was initially believed to be the third highest-ranking member of al-Qaeda, a claim later abandoned, along with the allegation that he had even been a member of that terrorist organisation. He was the detainee for whom

enhanced interrogation techniques were first authorised by National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, relying in part on the Justice Department’s greenlighting of such techniques as “lawful” rather than as torture (legally forbidden under both domestic and international law). Joe Margulies, Zubaydah’s lawyer, summarized the horrific techniques used on him this way:

“His captors hurled him into walls and crammed him into boxes and suspended him from hooks and twisted him into shapes that no human body can occupy. They kept him awake for seven consecutive days and nights. They locked him, for months, in a freezing room. They left him in a pool of his own urine. They strapped his hands, feet, arms, legs, torso, and head tightly to an inclined board, with his head lower than his feet. They covered his face and poured water up his nose and down his throat until he began to breathe the water, so that he choked and gagged as it filled his lungs. His torturers then left him to strain against the straps as he began to drown. Repeatedly. Until, just when he believed he was about to die, they raised the board long enough for him to vomit the water and retch. Then they lowered the board and did it again. The torturers subjected him to this treatment at least eighty-three times in August 2002 alone. On at least one such occasion, they waited too long and Abu Zubaydah nearly died on the board.”

In addition, as Dexter Filkins reported in the *New Yorker* in 2016, Zubaydah lost his left eye while in CIA custody.

As the Feinstein committee’s torture report makes clear, CIA personnel present at that black site cabled back to Washington the importance of erasing any information about the nature of Zubaydah’s interrogation, implicitly acknowledging just how wrongful his treat-

ment had been. The July 2002 cable asked for “reasonable assurance that [Abu Zubaydah] will remain in isolation and incommunicado for the remainder of his life.” CIA higher-ups assured the agents that “all major players are in concurrence that [Abu Zubaydah] should remain incommunicado for the remainder of his life.”

Sadly enough, that promise has been kept to this very day. In 2005, CIA officials authorized the destruction of the tapes of Zubaydah’s questioning and, never charged with a crime, he is still in Guantánamo.

And yet, despite the promise that he would remain incommunicado, with each passing year we learn more about what was done to him. In October 2021, in fact, in the *United States v. Zubaydah*, the justices of the Supreme Court for the first time openly discussed his treatment and Justices Sonia Sotomayer, Neil Gorsuch, and Elena Kagan publicly used the word “torture” to describe what was done to him.

Elsewhere as well, the blindfold has been shredded when it comes to the horror of torture, as ever more of Zubaydah’s story continues to see the light of day. This May, the *Guardian* published a story about a report done by the Center for Policy and Research at Seton Hall University Law School that included a series of 40 drawings Zubaydah had made and annotated at Guantánamo. In them, he graphically depicted his torture at CIA black sites and at that prison.

The images are beyond grotesque and, like a cacophonous symphony you can’t turn off, it’s hard to witness them without closing your eyes. They show beating, shackling from the ceiling, sexual abuse, waterboarding, confinement in a coffin, and so much more. In one picture that he titled “The Vortex”, the techniques were combined as Zubaydah – in a self-portrait – cries out in ag-

The images are beyond grotesque and, like a cacophonous symphony you can’t turn off, it’s hard to witness them without closing your eyes

ony. Attesting to the accuracy of the scenes he drew, the faces of his torturers have been blacked out by the authorities to protect their identities.

As the *Guardian*’s Ed Pilkington reported, Helen Duffy, Mr. Zubaydah’s international legal representative, highlighted how “remarkable” it was that his drawings had ever seen the light of day even though he hasn’t “been able to communicate directly with the outside world” in all these endless years.

In the years of the Biden presidency, the international community has focused on Guantánamo in unprecedented ways. In January 2022, “after 20 years and well over 100 visits,” the International Committee of the Red Cross (the ICRC) called for the release of as many of the remaining prisoners there as possible and, more recently, raised alarm over the failing health and premature aging of its 30 aging inmates.

Recently, the United Nations carved out new ground as well. In April, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued an opinion condemning the brutality long used against Mr. Zubaydah and called for his immediate release. That group further noted that the continued detention of the prisoners at Guantánamo could potentially “constitute crimes against humanity.”

With each passing year, ever more details about Washington’s

torture programmes have come to light. Yet, even now, ferocious attempts are still being made to keep the blindfold in place. As a result, we’re left searching, arms extended, while those who have crucial information about this country’s nightmarish commitment to torture do their best to avoid us, hoping the endless passage of time will keep them out of reach until we pursuers finally run out of energy.

To this day, much still remains in darkness, while Congress and American policymakers continue to refuse to address the legacy of such wrongdoing. But as the constant dribble of information suggests, the story simply won’t go away until, someday, the United States officially acknowledges what it did – what, if others were now doing it, would be instantly denounced by the same lawmakers and policymakers. That history of torture won’t go away, in fact, until this country apologises for it, declassifies as much of the Feinstein report as possible, and provides for the rehabilitation of Abu Zubaydah and others whose physical and psychological health was savaged by their mistreatment at American hands.

It’s one thing to say, as Barack Obama told Congress a month into his presidency, that the United States “does not torture.” It’s another to expose the misdeeds of the war on terror and accept the costs as deterrence against it ever happening again. **CT**

Karen J. Greenberg, a *TomDispatch* regular, is the director of the Center on National Security at Fordham Law. Her most recent book is *Subtle Tools: The Dismantling of American Democracy from the War on Terror to Donald Trump*. Kevin Ruane and Claudia Bennett contributed research for this article, which first appeared at www.tomdispatch.com

Linda Pentz Gunter

LYING IS THE NEW BLACK

How the nuclear industry is lapping up
all manner of nuclear falsehoods

Lying is the new black. It is everywhere. It is in, and cool and entirely acceptable in the circles where judgement and ethics are permanently suspended. Disgraced (and now criminally charged) US congressman, George Santos, is the poster child of this new fashion statement. Make up something outlandish and Santos has probably claimed to have said it or done it. None of it is true. And he is still in Congress.

In this (hopefully permanently) post-Trump era, lying with impunity has become precisely that: unpunishable, even applauded, as Trump was on his CNN debacle, which consigned that network to the dustbin of what once used to be called journalism.

It's all about entertainment now, and clicks, likes, readership and ratings. And fiction. And the nuclear industry boosters are going for the Pulitzer Prize on that one. We used to say, "you couldn't make this stuff up," but the pro-nukers do. All the time.

So nuclear power is "the cheapest, safest, greenest" form of energy ever invented. It is "carbon-free." No one ever died because of a nuclear accident. Irrational fear-mongering by the anti-nuclear movement killed off nuclear power growth in

the United States. Renewables are a pipe-dream of the crunchy granola set and about as boring and superfluous. And so on and so on.

There used to be fact-checkers at media organizations. Not any more. Because all this twaddle appears in print and on the air, unchecked and unchallenged. Not only that, media outlets are no longer impartial and are, in fact, deliberately fanning the flames of deceit. Thus, *Bloomberg* could trumpet an article about the Vogtle 3 and 4 reactors in Georgia with this headline: *Nuclear Power Makes Comeback with Massive Carbon-Free Vogtle Plant in Georgia*.

This is a comeback? From what, exactly? A comeback is usually a triumphant return to greatness by a previously successful but then faded star. Actor Robert Downey Jr made a comeback. Basketball legend, Michael Jordan, made a comeback.

But Vogtle 3 and 4 are a nuclear comeback? The two reactors are more expensive than any previous reactors — far more — and will exceed at least \$35 billion when both are finally operational. That's over \$21 billion more than originally planned.

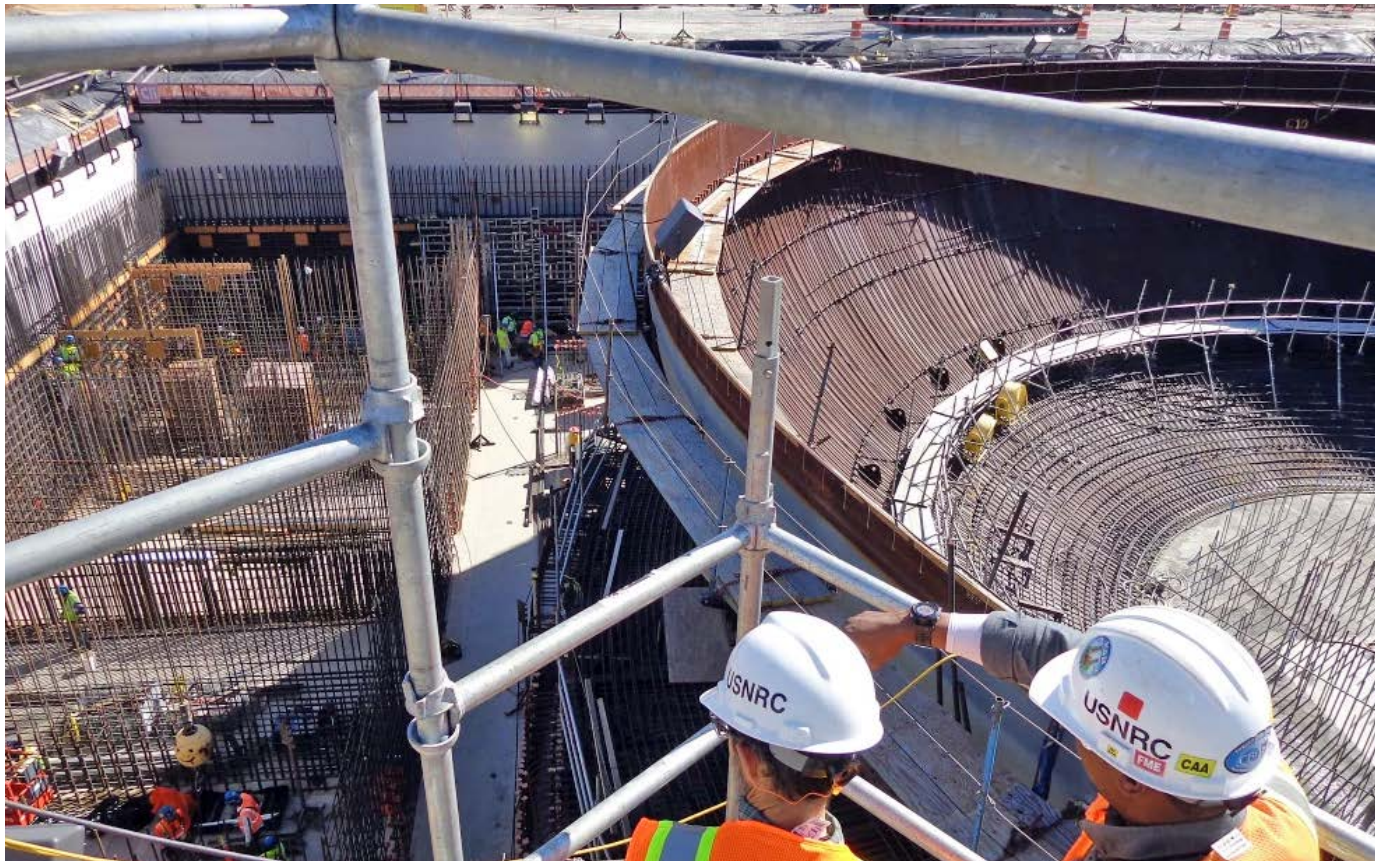
Massive? That would be the bill paid by Georgia ratepayers. As Stephanie Cooke reported recently in *Energy Intelligence*, ratepayers have already "been charged for the

financing portion — but not the actual capital costs — of Georgia Power's construction bills since 2011." This has now gone on six years longer than expected, and counting.

And, as Patty Durand, a candidate for the Georgia Public Service Commission, pointed out in a recent column in *Utility Dive*, "if all construction costs for Plant Vogtle get moved into the rate base, Georgia Power bills will increase 20% for 60 years."

Another \$2.1 billion of capital costs will be folded into the rate base once Vogtle 3 is fully operational. There will likely be a similar rate hike once Vogtle 4 starts up.

As for carbon-free, do the *Bloomberg* writers imagine that these plants just magically dropped into place like manna from heaven? Did they really not notice all the cement and steel and other manufactured parts and the trucks delivering it all, and the construction activities on the site? Do they know what fuel these reactors use (uranium) and where it comes from and what kind of carbon footprint uranium mining, milling and enrichment leave behind? Apparently not. Or, maybe calling it "carbon-free" is just, well, a lie. The Vogtle 3 and 4 project has been beset by numerous delays and technical flaws along with its cost overruns. It began more than 16 years



Calling Vogtle 3 (pictured under construction) “carbon-free” as Bloomberg News did –and many media outlets do – ignores all the carbon-intensive activities involved in manufacturing components, transporting them and constructing the plant.

ago and is still incomplete. If this is a “comeback” then during its previous go-around it must have fallen at the first fence, broken its leg and been shot on the spot. Because it really can’t get much worse than Vogtle.

Unless you are French. Then it can get positively scandaleuse. The French flagship new reactor is called the Evolutionary Power Reactor (EPR), but unless time is running backwards it’s not evolutionary. Like its American AP1000 counterpart, it has suffered years of delays at construction sites in France, Finland and the UK, and run up enormous cost over-runs.

Cost estimates for France’s twin reactor EPR project, Hinkley Point C in the UK, are now predicted to reach at least \$40 billion, making it second only to the Great Mosque of Mecca as the most expensive build-

The challenge we confront today? We need to do more than create a much more equitable distribution of income and wealth

ing in the world.

Undeterred, voilà, along comes the French small modular reactor (SMR) known as the “Nuward”. (Notice how a version of “new” has to creep into the branding here — like the “NuScale” counterpart in the United States.)

When asked about the timeline for Nuward’s first concrete pour, the company’s president and CEO, Renaud Crassous, stated blandly: “The constant timeline has been to focus

on 2030 as the best compromise between the expectation of the potential market and our ability to grow quickly to deliver this new product.”

2030? Quickly? Hello? So seven years from now, if we continue along our current path of doing too few renewables too late, by which time we will be in grave climate chaos (arguably in some parts of the world we are already there), the nuclear industry will proudly point to, drumroll, a concrete pad. But no actual reactor.

Reality check anyone? Why aren’t the editors at *Bloomberg* and the *New York Times* asking questions about time at the very least? And cost? The carbon-free part — that dominated the Bloomberg headline and which isn’t even true — is entirely irrelevant if nuclear power is too slow and too expensive. Which it is.

Instead, the media routinely publish nuclear industry jokes dressed up as journalism.

The failure of nuclear power to arrive in a timely manner — indeed the reality that it is already obsolete — was played out beautifully last month in Finland where Olkiluoto 3, having finally stuttered into life, had to be abruptly powered down due to Finland's 500 megawatt-hours of new wind-generated electricity contributing to a dramatic drop in electricity prices.

Thus, after all the waiting, the cost over-runs, the technical failures, the lawsuits and withdrawals, Olkiluoto 3 is not so much a newborn as stillborn. Too expensive, too late and effectively dead on arrival.

No matter. The nuclear industry will instead try to distract us with

Finland's Olkiluoto 3 is not so much a newborn as stillborn. Too expensive, too late and effectively dead on arrival

what they call "science". (In their Thesaurus, 'science' is a synonym for 'alchemy'.)

One such example of their "science" is a claim that new reactors will consume their own waste as fresh fuel! No need for uranium mining, they crow!

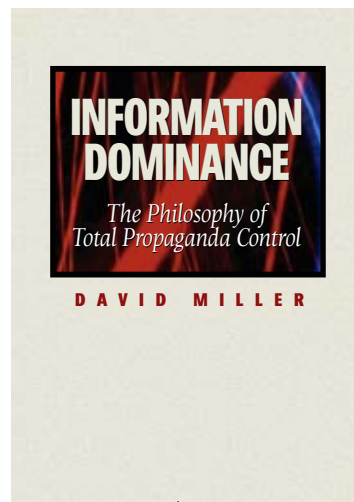
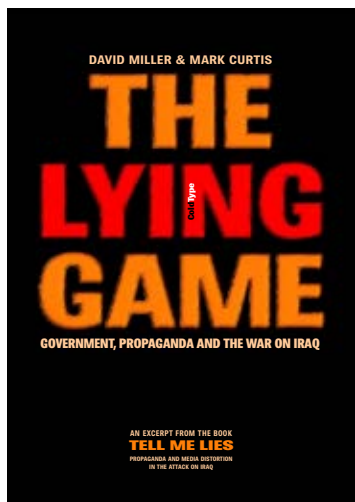
Except that the claim that a nuclear reactor could "burn" or "consume" nuclear waste is misleading.

Reactors can only use a fraction of irradiated fuel as new fuel, and separating that fraction — which requires carbon-intensive and radioactively polluting reprocessing — increases proliferation and terrorism risks.

Undeterred by, heaven forfend, actual facts, those who claim that reactors can eat their own waste won't eat their own words. Because that would be uncool. And ethical. And these days, embracing integrity and the truth is just so last year. **CT**

Linda Pentz Gunter is the international specialist at *Beyond Nuclear* and writes for and curates *Beyond Nuclear International*, *wat* at whose website — www.beyondnuclearinternational.org — this article first appeared. **CT**

FIGHTING THE INFORMATION WAR



Two important ebooks from the ColdType archives

By David Miller and Mark Curtis

The relentless propaganda war we're seeing with Russia and China in Western crosshairs is not a recent occurrence, but has been gathering steam since the media-managed US war on Iraq 20 years ago. In these **two free ebooks** from the **ColdType Archives**, two prominent writers explain the genesis of the onslaught

Read and download these important ebooks at

www.coldtype.net/Assets/pdfs/Lying.pdf and www.coldtype.net/Assets.04/Essays.04/Miller.pdf

Trevor Grundy

A FRESH LOOK AT BRITAIN'S MURKY IMPERIAL PAST

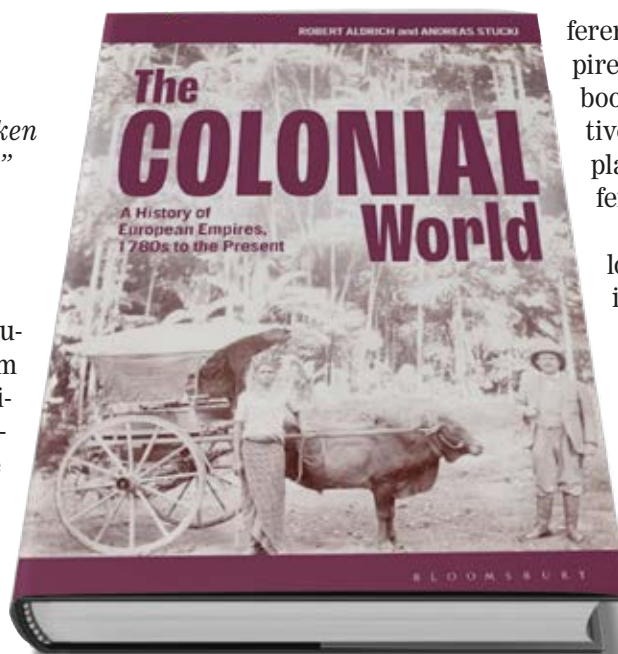
Voluminous work takes readers on an often-uncomfortable journey of self-discovery about the sins of an empire upon which 'the sun never set'

*"Poor loves. Trained to Empire.
Trained to rule the waves.
Englishmen could be proud then.
They could, George. All gone. Taken
away. By bye. All my lovely boys."*
– Connie Sachs to George Smiley
in John le Carre's *'Tinker, Tailor,
Soldier, Spy.'*

Writing a history of European colonialism represents a formidable and indeed forbidding task, as the subject covers hundreds of years and encircles the globe."

These are the opening words of "The Colonial World – A History of European Empires, 1780s to the Present" by Robert Aldrich, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Sydney, Australia, and Andreas Stucki, Ludwig and Margarethe Quidde Fellow at the German Institute in Rome, Italy.

Kristen McKenzie, Professor of History at Aldrich's university, says his colleague's book is "a masterly account full of fresh insights and engaging arguments. Their innovative structure enables Aldrich and Stucki to wield the historical lens with enviable flair. The vast topic of European empire is telescoped into comprehensible trends and themes, while still allowing for the precise focus on distinct times and places



THE COLONIAL WORLD: A History of European Empires, 1780s to the Present

Robert Aldrich and Andreas Stucki
Published by Bloomsbury
www.bloomsbury.com
UK £25

that bring the past alive. This is a history of the colonial world for the here and now."

The book weighs in at 457 pages followed by 79 pages of notes, recommended reading and an index. It is well-illustrated with several black and white period pictures from dif-

ferent parts of the European empires. Divided into three parts, the book provides varying perspectives by time period, theme and place, all of which illustrate different levels of detail.

- Part one offers a chronological overview, necessarily a broad-brush depiction of colonialism.
- Part two treats a selected number of themes, such as "Colonialism and the Body" and "The people of Empire" with examples drawn from multiple time periods.
- Part three centres on particular locations and pivots around chosen years.

Of course, no single volume can hope to provide a comprehensive account of the myriad experiences and countless themes that are part of Europe's often violent encounters with the wider world.

Aldrich and Stucki tell us from the start that difficult choices have to be made to tell a story which picks up on imperialism in the 1780s, although European colonialism had a much longer history.

And, as the authors say, a vast amount of work is still needed to paint a full picture of the story of

events that so changed billions of lives around the globe.

There is a dedicated chapter on the British dominions of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa, but the main thrust of this well-researched book deals with imperialism in the South Pacific, Ceylon, German Southwest Africa, the Dutch East Indies, Palestine and the Middle East, Algeria, the Portuguese empire in Africa, Western Sahara and Belgium's vast first privately-owned and then publicly administered empire in the Congo.

There is a special chapter on the slave trade and a series of succinct and fascinating insights into the way imperialism worked in so many different parts of the world, including the Spanish Andes in 1780, Mauritius in 1810, Cuba in 1812, India in 1875, Burma and Vietnam between 1883-5, Ceylon in 1907, German Southwest Africa in 1908, Ethiopia in 1936 at the time of the Fascist invasion, the Dutch East Indies in 1938, Palestine and the Middle East in 1946, Algeria in 1962, and the Portuguese Empire in Africa covering the wars in Angola and Mozambique that were instrumental in ending all-white rule not only in those countries but also in Rhodesia, South Africa and South West Africa (Namibia).

The continental empires within Europe, such as those of Napoleon and the Habsburgs, and the contiguous European and Asian empire of Russia are excluded as directly linked to overseas colonialism. Britain's nearby "colony" of Ireland is present only in the margins.

There are chapters dealing with imperialism and medicine and a special section on the way colonialism affected the minds of millions of people whose ethnicity was downgraded and mocked, along with their native customs, and arguably the most important of them all –

Most people in the west world didn't have the slightest idea what foreign rule did to the psyches and souls of conquered peoples

their religious beliefs.

Most people in the west didn't have the slightest idea what foreign rule did to the psyches and souls of conquered peoples.

The authors tell us that the German Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt reminded readers in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1948) that "many things that nowadays have become the speciality of totalitarian governments are only too well known from the study of history."

It was the British during the Anglo-Boer War that gave the world its first glimpse of concentration camps in which thousands of African women and children died of disease or starved to death.

"Not even concentration camps are an invention of totalitarian movements," stated Arendt.

Anti-colonial figures such as the Martinican poet and politician Aimé Césaire picked up Arendt's remarks. In the 1950s, Césaire argued that Nazism had applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved for colonial peoples. His countryman, the psychiatrist and philosopher Franz Fanon went further and stated in the early 1960s that Nazi violence had "transformed the whole of Europe into a veritable colony."

This new book is timely. The Black Lives Matter movement has raised issues about wrongs past and present

and the topping and defacement of the statues of figures once though colonial heroes has raised questions about how the past is remembered and forgotten.

The authors write, "Colonial history-writing has also been stimulated, and on occasion, dragged into debate by present-day issues, such as migration to Europe from former colonies, questions surrounding cultural practices like the wearing of headscarves by Islamic women in Western countries and attempts to define communitarian or national identities.

Research on colonial history has become more acutely sensitive to concerns about the legacies of colonialism – most notably, the long-lasting heritage of slavery – and demands by former colonies for restitution of looted artefacts and documents. Exposures of colonial violence, including torture, have forced a reconstruction of narratives about colonial benevolence."

Although there is little that is startlingly new in the book, it might well become the new bible for the young. Right now, so many people are hoping that bolted windows covered in cobwebs in airless libraries will be opened to let in clear bright light needed to understand and analyse the impact imperialism and colonialism has had on the world's most impoverished and wretched and the way it has disturbed the minds of billions of people around the world.

Some people know what happened, who made fortunes out of their slavery and where they came from. But do the rest of us? It's hard to answer because centuries of pro-empire propaganda need to be wound in before we can start the long journey of self-discovery.

Ironically, those who profited the most are now the people most publicly bleating about how guilty they feel about the billions their families

earned out of the slave trade. But it won't be easy. Pro-imperialists have ruled the roost for such a long time.

In a section devoted to early modern European colonialism, the authors remind us that one of the most exploitative conglomerates the world has ever witnessed, the East India Company, established a school in 1806 in Hertfordshire in England – Hailebury College – to train its employees, the offspring of the English ruling elite, teenage boys taught to feel they ruled the world.

If you think they've gone away, or been forced to give-up the privileges they receive while in their nappies, think again. Today, a new generation of boys and gals has moved into the world of finance, politics and journalism as easily as their ancestors slipped into the top jobs in Africa, Australia, India and Asia in a British Empire upon which the sun never set.

The company's headquarters in Leadenhall Street was one of London's most impressive buildings, where visitors could see a display of Asian objets d'art.

In India, the company constructed imposing administration buildings, warehouses, port facilities and residences. It commissioned paintings, furniture and textiles from local artisans. Among company employees, there were not only ruthless profiteers but also men who became serious scholars of Asian cultures, proficient linguists, prolific writers and avid collectors.

Hailebury produced the kind of high-spirited, adventurous, self-sufficient and ultra-confident men who lived for Empire.

Sadly, for the children of Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Stowe School, Charterhouse, Marlborough and so many more ludicrously labelled "public"

Little was known in British secondary schools about the treatment indigenous people suffered at the hands of their new masters

schools, there is no longer an empire to dance around and sing about, just a multi-cultural hotchpotch of former colonies called the Commonwealth, headed now by the newly-crowned King Charles III.

Large sections of this book do not make for pretty bedtime reading. The British treatment of Indians, Asians and Africans was loathsome and until fairly recently little known to the public. As was the British empire's treatment of the Afrikaners, South Africa's white tribe in Africa, during and after the Anglo Boer War, when thousands of men, women and children died of disease and starvation in British-designed concentration camps.

And, until recently, little was known in British secondary schools about the treatment indigenous people suffered at the hands of their new masters little more than 100 years ago. So, three cheers to Aldrich and Stucki for drawing fresh attention to the predicament of minorities within the majorities. They point out that almost all the legislation against gay people in different parts of the British empire resulted from the actions of public school-trained lawyers from the 'home' country.

The authors of this fascinating book warn that it should not be consumed in one session; it has been designed so readers can easily move

back and forth among the sections.

The book is timely because the fight against the way imperialism is taught to the young is hotting up. That, and suggestions that those whose families benefitted the most from slavery and other forms of exploitation do something practical to show their sorrow.

Indeed, just three days after a Coronation in London that cost the British taxpayers about £150 million, King Charles III was urged to go further towards offering reparative justice for the UK's role in transatlantic slavery. Academics and campaigners are calling on him to help build an understanding of the legacy of the enslavement of black people, as well as putting forward suggestions for how the UK could work towards making amends.

"He should do far more", said Brooke Newman, an associate professor of history at Virginia Commonwealth University. "He has the money, obviously, and the connections to create an independent commission to really dig into these connections."

We will wait and see what, if anything, happens.

In conclusion, this is a valuable book, one worthy of a place on the shelves of libraries in secondary schools and tertiary education colleges and universities, It is a book that knocks on doors and demands we open them. The bible tells us to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest what the gospels have to say. Those are indeed wise words, worth remembering, as you turn the pages of this new one. **CT**

Trevor Grundy is an English researcher and author who lived and worked as a journalist in different parts of Central, Eastern and Southern Africa from 1966-1996. Before that, he was a reporter at the London office of the Middle East News Agency (MENA).

John Clarke

HOW CANADA INCITES HATRED OF CHINA

Anti-Chinese racism has deep historical roots in Canada and the present effort to whip up war fever will revive this legacy

The Canadian government has expelled Chinese diplomat Zhao Wei on the grounds that he has been involved in targeting members of Conservative MP Michael Chong's family who live in Hong Kong. The *Globe and Mail* informs us that a 2021 CSIS report had suggested that Zhao Wei was collecting information on Chong's family after the MP introduced a motion in February 2021 to have the House of Commons declare China's persecution of the Uyghurs a genocide. The intelligence agency report also called Beijing the "foremost perpetrator" of foreign interference in Canada.

The *Globe and Mail* bases its claim that Chong's family has been singled out on "a national-security source" that it is refusing to reveal. For his part, Chong gave no indication that his family members have actually faced any interference. He simply noted that he has refrained from making contact with them "out of an abundance of caution."

Judging from the *Globe and Mail's* account of the report at the centre of this storm, CSIS played up the notion of unbridled Chinese interference, but rather tellingly pointed out that "China sees Canada as a key target as it's a member of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alli-

ance, which also includes the United States, Britain, Australia and New Zealand." Evidently China may not have a monopoly when it comes to interference activities.

It is clear that CSIS and the Conservatives, with the assistance of some sections of the media, have been pressuring the Liberals to take their belligerence towards China up a notch. What is striking about the allegations that led to this quite serious act is that they come from intelligence sources that by definition can't be verified. We don't know what Chinese officials have or haven't been up to. We only know what CSIS wants us to believe.

The present incident didn't come out of the blue. A sustained campaign is under way to promote the notion of a malevolent Chinese threat. A few months ago, we were being encouraged to scan the skies for menacing 'spy balloons' being sent over by Beijing. Vigorous efforts were made to shoot down these objects and they became the story of the hour.

Once it became clear that the balloon scare was full of hot air, the issue of Chinese interference in Canadian elections and internal political affairs emerged as the next sinister development. With a renewed supply of uncorroborated assertions from CSIS operatives to fuel the op-

eration, Global News led an effort to present elected Canadian politicians with Chinese family backgrounds as being "part of a Chinese foreign interference network."

On the strength of these flimsy allegations, the New Democratic Party (NDP) quite shamefully put forward a motion in the House of Commons calling for a public inquiry into electoral interference. Liberal MP Han Dong was forced to remove himself from his party's caucus and a Tory MPP in Ontario, Vincent Ke, suffered the same fate. It shouldn't be lost on us that these developments raise the ugly and disturbing trope of the "enemy within" that, once unleashed, tends to take on a life of its own.

That such determined efforts are being made to focus our attention on the supposed threat of Chinese interference raises questions about how we should view this development and what our response should be. It is first of all necessary to understand that the escalating hostility towards China is driven by considerations of global rivalry. Canada is a junior partner in a US-led alliance wary of the growing power of China. Although the US is still the dominant economic power, its main rival has



closed the gap in recent years to an extent that points towards the end of US hegemony, with the growing productive power of China taking the form of a challenge to the “traditional dominance (of the US) as a trading partner for other countries around the world.”

It must be stressed that the US, with Canada’s full support, is actively raising the stakes in challenging

its rival. Canadian warships have joined with US vessels in sailing provocatively through the Taiwan Strait, which is claimed by China as territorial waters. Regardless of the merits of this claim, it is hard to imagine the Canadian government or the media agreeing that a fleet of Chinese warships off the BC coast has every right to access international waters as they wish.

An illustration from a supplement to the French newspaper *Le Petit Journal*, of January 16, 1898 is a figurative representation of the Imperialist tendencies of Western nations towards China at the turn of the 29th-century. Now 125 years later, the West seems to be consumed by the idea that China is intent to reciprocate.

Last December, Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly announced that Canada would allocate \$400-million in military support for the Indo-Pacific, increase its naval presence and post more military attachés across the region. These Canadian actions are but part of a much larger US-led effort to build capacity for armed conflict with China.

There are many countries in the world that would count themselves lucky if the interference they experienced at the hands of Canada were limited to a few balloons overhead and a bid to influence some elected representatives. The people in Afghanistan who lived under an occupation that Canada was part of would likely feel this way. So too would those in Haiti and Honduras, whose countries brutal regimes imposed by means of coups carried out with the help of Canadian governments. Canada’s role in establishing the Lima Group in an effort to promote regime change in Venezuela was a veritable case study in interference techniques.

Anti-Chinese racism has deep historical roots in this country and the present effort to whip up war fever will undoubtedly revive this ugly legacy. Indeed, during the pandemic, hostility towards Chinese people in Canada surged. As *The Martlet* reports, “Data from the Vancouver Police Department shows a 717 per

cent increase in hate crimes targeting Asian Canadians from 2019 to 2020.” A survey of Chinese people, also conducted in Vancouver during this period, found that “Half of the participants in the study also reported being “called names, made fun of and insulted” during the pandemic”. Fomenting anti-Chinese sentiment will inevitably produce similar results.

In February, when the spy balloon hype reached its peak, former Tory Defence Minister Peter MacKay waded into the fray to opine that the floating threat to our collective safety showed that “Canada must prioritise modernising its military in the face of growing incursions from China and Russia in the Arctic”. As the austerity agenda compromises health care systems and degrades public services, we are being asked to accept the diversion of vast resources into a military build-

up and the pursuit of a global rivalry that casts the shadow of war over the world.

The contention that working class people in Canada have no interest in the game of rivalry with China does not imply that we should take the side of the Chinese government. As I have previously argued, we should fully support the many acts of working class resistance that occur constantly in China. When oppressed minorities like the Uyghurs resist, we should side with them. The movements that have taken to the streets of Hong Kong to demand democratic freedoms must also be supported.

Working class internationalism doesn't mean that the rivals of 'our' capitalists should be considered our friends. It means we must support struggles of workers and oppressed people everywhere, even when they take place in countries with govern-

ments Washington and Ottawa are at odds with. However, we have no stake in the contest over the share of global markets and profits; we should stand firm against arms build-ups and the escalating threat of catastrophic conflict. We must do all we can to counter the climate of war fervour being incited as rivalry intensifies.

The current anti-Chinese campaign has some very powerful backers and it is being pursued relentlessly. It is ugly, toxic and reactionary to the core and we need to build a united opposition to challenge and defeat it. **CT**

John Clarke was an organiser with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) for nearly three decades. He blogs at www.johnclarkeblog.com. This article was first published by Canadian Dimension.

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Vijay Prashad

WHY IT'S TIME TO SHUT DOWN THE G7

It is an undemocratic body that uses its historical power to impose its narrow interests on a world that is in the grip of a range of more pressing dilemmas

During the May 2023 Group of Seven (G7) summit, the leaders of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, near where the meeting was held. Not doing so would have been an act of immense discourtesy.

Despite many calls for an apology from the US for dropping an atomic bomb on a civilian population in 1945, US President Joe Biden has demurred. Instead, he wrote in the Peace Memorial guest book: “May the stories of this museum remind us all of our obligations to build a future of peace.”

Apologies, amplified by the tensions of our time, take on interesting sociological and political roles. An apology would suggest that the 1945 bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were wrong and that the US did not end their war against Japan by taking the moral high ground.

An apology would also contradict the US decision, backed fully by other Western powers over 70 years later, to maintain a military pres-



Japanese Prime Minister Kishida joins US President Biden and other G7 leaders at a working lunch focused on global economy, trade, and other matters during the group's meeting in Hiroshima, Japan.

ence along the Asian coastline of the Pacific Ocean (a presence built on the back of the 1945 atomic bombings) and to use that military force to threaten China with weapons of mass destruction amassed in bases and ships close to China's territorial waters.

It is impossible to imagine a “future of peace” if the US continues to maintain its aggressive military structure that runs from Japan to Australia, with the express intent of disciplining China.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was given the errand to warn China about its “economic coercion” as he unveiled the G7 Coordination Platform on Economic Coercion to track Chinese commercial activities.

“The platform will address the growing and pernicious use of coercive economic measures to interfere in the sovereign affairs of other states”, Sunak said.

This bizarre language displayed neither self-aware-

ness of the West's long history of brutal colonialism nor an acknowledgement of neocolonial structures – including the permanent state of indebtedness enforced by the International Monetary Fund – that are coercive by definition.

Nonetheless, Sunak, Biden and the others preened with self-righteous certainty that their moral standing remains intact and that they hold the right to attack China for its trade agreements.

These leaders suggest that it is

Government of Japan

perfectly acceptable for the IMF – on behalf of the G7 states – to demand “conditionalities” from debt-ridden countries while forbidding China from negotiating when it lends money.

Interestingly, the final statement from the G7 did not mention China by name, but merely echoed the concern about “economic coercion”. The phrase “all countries” and not China, specifically, signals a lack of unity within the group.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, for instance, used her speech at the G7 to put the US on notice for its use of industrial subsidies: “We need to provide a clear, predictable business environment to our clean tech industries. The starting point is transparency among the G7 on how we support manufacturing.”

One complaint from Western governments and think tanks alike has been that Chinese development loans contain “no Paris Club” clauses.

The Paris Club is a body of official bilateral creditors that was set up in 1956 to provide financing to poor countries who have been vetted by IMF processes, stipulating that they must pledge to conduct a range of political and economic reforms in order to secure any funds.

In recent years, the amount of loans given through the Paris Club has declined, although the body’s influence and the esteem its strict rules garner remain. Many Chinese loans – particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative – refuse to adopt Paris Club clauses, since, as Professor Huang Meibo and Niu Dongfang argue, it would sneak IMF-Paris Club conditionalities into loan agreements.

“All countries”, they write, “should respect the right of other countries to make their own choic-

These increasingly economically marginalised states want to use their authority, partly derived from military power, to control the world order

es, instead of taking the rules of the Paris Club as universal norms that must be observed by all”. The allegation of “economic coercion” does not hold if the evidence points to Chinese lenders refusing to impose Paris Club clauses.

G7 leaders stood before the cameras pretending to be world representatives whose views are the views of all of humanity. Remarkably, G7 countries only contain 10 percent of the world’s population while their combined Gross Domestic Product is merely 27 per cent of global GDP.

These are demographically and increasingly economically marginalised states that want to use their authority, partly derived from military power, to control the world order.

Such a small section of the human population should not be allowed to speak for all of us, since their experiences and interests are neither universal nor can they be trusted to set aside their own parochial goals in favour of humanity’s needs.

Indeed, the agenda of the G7 was plainly laid out at its origin, first as the Library Group in March 1973 and then at the first G7 summit in France in November 1975.

The Library Group was created by US Treasury Secretary George Schultz, who brought together finance ministers from France (Valéry Giscard d’Estaing), West Germany (Helmut Schmidt), and the UK (Anthony Barber) to hold private

consultations among the Atlantic allies.

At the Château de Rambouillet in 1975, the G7 met in the context of the “oil weapon” wielded by the Organisation for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1973 and the passage of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the United Nations in 1974.

Schmidt, who was appointed German chancellor a year after the Library Group’s formation, reflected on these developments: “It is desirable to explicitly state, for public opinion, that the present world recession is not a particularly favourable occasion to work out a new economic order along the lines of certain UN documents.”

Schmidt wanted to end “international dirigisme” and states’ ability to exercise their economic sovereignty.

The NIEO had to be stopped in its tracks, Schmidt said, because to leave decisions about the world economy “to officials somewhere in Africa or some Asian capital is not a good idea.”

Rather than allow African and Asian leaders a say in important global matters, UK Prime Minister Harold Wilson suggested that it would be better for serious decisions to be made by “the sort of people sitting around this table.”

The private attitudes displayed by Schmidt and Wilson continue to this day, despite dramatic changes in the world order.

In the first decade of the 2000s, the US – which had begun to see itself as an unrivalled world power – overreached militarily in its War on Terror and economically with its unregulated banking system.

The war on Iraq (2003) and the credit crunch (2007) threatened the vitality of the US-managed world order. During the darkest days of the credit crisis, G8 states, which then included Russia, asked sur-

plus-holding countries of the Global South (particularly, China, India and Indonesia) to come to their aid.

In January 2008, at a meeting in New Delhi, French President Nicolas Sarkozy told business leaders, “At the G8 summit, eight countries meet for two-and-a-half days and on the third day invite five developing nations – Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa – for discussions over lunch. This is [an] injustice to [the] 2.5-billion inhabitants of these nations. Why this third-grade treatment to them? I want that the next G8 summit be converted into a G13 summit.”

There was talk during this period of weakness in the West, that the G7 would be shut down and that the G20, which held its first summit in 2008 in Washington, DC, would become its successor.

Sarkozy’s statements in Delhi made headlines, but not policy. In a more private – and truthful – assessment in October 2010, former French Prime Minister Michel Rocard told US Ambassador to France Craig R. Stapleton, “We need a vehicle where we can find solutions for these challenges [the growth of China and India] together – so when these monsters arrive in 10 years, we will be able to deal with them.”

The “monsters” are now at the gate, and the US has assembled its available economic, diplomatic, and military arsenals, including the G7, to suffocate them.

The G7 is an undemocratic body that uses its historical power to impose its narrow interests on a world that is in the grip of a range of more pressing dilemmas. It is time to shut down the G7, or at least prevent it from enforcing its will on the international order.

In his radio address on August 9, 1945, US President Harry Truman said: “The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped

The “monsters” are now at the gate, and the US has assembled its available economic, diplomatic, and military arsenals, including the G7, to suffocate them

on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in this first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians.”

In reality, Hiroshima was not a “military base”. It was what US Secretary of War Henry Stimson called a “virgin target”, a place that had escaped the US firebombing of Japan so that it could be a worthwhile testing ground for the atomic bomb.

In his diary, Stimson recorded a conversation with Truman in June about the reasoning behind targeting this city.

When he told Truman that he was “a little fearful that before we could get ready the Air Force might have Japan so thoroughly bombed out that the new weapon [the atomic bomb] would not have a fair background to show its strength”, the president “laughed and said he understood.”

Two-year-old Sadako Sasaki was one of 350,000 people living in Hiroshima at the time of the bombings. She died 10 years later from cancers associated with radiation exposure from the bomb.

The Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet was moved by her story and wrote a poem against war and confrontation. Hikmet’s words should be a warning even now to Biden against laughing at the possibility of renewed military conflict against China:

*I come and stand at every door
But none can hear my silent tread
I knock and yet remain unseen
For I am dead for I am dead.*

*I’m only seven though I died
In Hiroshima long ago
I’m seven now as I was then
When children die they do not grow.
My hair was scorched by swirling
flame
My eyes grew dim my eyes grew
blind
Death came and turned my bones to
dust
And that was scattered by the wind.*

*I need no fruit I need no rice
I need no sweets nor even bread
I ask for nothing for myself
For I am dead for I am dead.*

*All that I need is that for peace
You fight today you fight today
So that the children of this world
Can live and grow and laugh and
play.*

CT

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