

INSIDE: BANNED FROM CANADA ● THE AMERICAN POLICE STATE ● ON THE ROAD TO ARMAGEDDON ● THE SOLDIERS WHO SERVE AND AVOID ● & MORE

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SPUTNIK

THE LAUNCH OF TECHNO-POWER

by Norman Solomon

ColdType The READER



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SPUTNIK AND THE LAUNCH OF TECHNO-POWER

BY NORMAN SOLOMON

This is an excerpt from Norman Solomon's new book "Made Love, Got War: Close Encounters with America's Warfare State."

A story could start almost anywhere. This one begins at a moment startled by a rocket. In the autumn of 1957, America was not at war ... or at peace. The threat of nuclear annihilation shadowed every day, flickering with visions of the apocalyptic. In classrooms, "duck and cover" drills were part of the curricula. Underneath any Norman Rockwell painting, the grim reaper had attained the power of an ultimate monster.

Dwight Eisenhower was most of the way through his fifth year in the White House. He liked to speak reassuring words of patriotic faith, with presidential statements like: "America is the greatest force that God has ever allowed to exist on His footstool." Such pronouncements drew a sharp distinction between the United States and the Godless Communist foe.

But on October 4, 1957, the Kremlin

announced the launch of Sputnik, the world's first satellite. God was supposed to be on America's side, yet the Soviet atheists had gotten to the heavens before us. Suddenly the eagle of liberty could not fly nearly so high.

Sputnik was instantly fascinating and alarming. The American press swooned at the scientific vistas and shuddered at the military implications. Under the headline "Red Moon Over the U.S.," Time quickly explained that "a new era in history had begun, opening a bright new chapter in mankind's conquest of the natural environment and a grim new chapter in the cold war." The newsmagazine was glum about the space rivalry: "The U.S. had lost its lead because, in spreading its resources too thin, the nation had skimmed too much on military research and development."

The White House tried to project calm; Eisenhower said the satellite "does not raise my apprehension, not one iota." But many on the political spectrum heard Sputnik's radio pulse as an ominous taunt.

"The U.S. had lost its lead because, in spreading its resources too thin, the nation had skimmed too much on military research and development"

Airborne strontium-90 from nuclear tests was falling on pastures all over, migrating to cows and then to the milk supply and, finally, to people's bones. Radioactive isotopes from fallout were becoming inseparable from the human diet

A heroine of the Republican right, Clare Boothe Luce, said the satellite's beeping was an "outer-space raspberry to a decade of American pretensions that the American way of life was a gilt-edged guarantee of our material superiority." Newspaper readers learned that Stuart Symington, a Democratic senator who'd been the first secretary of the air force, "said the Russians will be able to launch mass attacks against the United States with intercontinental ballistic missiles within two or three years."

A New York Times article matter-of-factly referred to "the mild panic that has seized most of the nation since Russia's sputnik was launched two weeks ago." In another story, looking forward, Times science reporter William L. Lawrence called for bigger pots of gold at the end of scientific rainbows: "In a free society such as ours it is not possible 'to channel human efforts' without the individual's consent and wholehearted willingness. To attract able and promising young men and women into the fields of science and engineering it is necessary first to offer them better inducements than are presently offered."

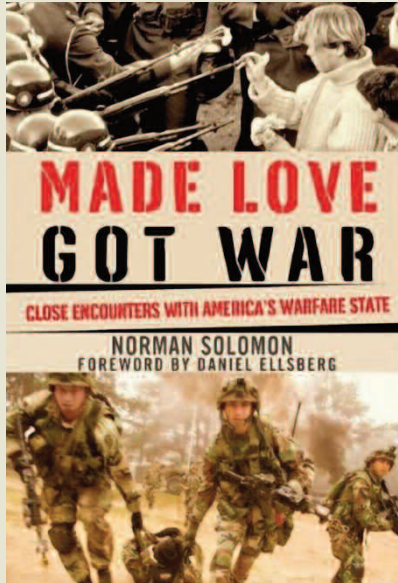
At last, in early February 1958, an American satellite – the thirty-pound Explorer – went into orbit. What had succeeded in powering it into space was a military rocket, developed by a U.S. Army research team. The head of that team, the rocket scientist Wernher von Braun, was boosting the red-white-and-blue after the fall of his ex-employer, the Third Reich. In March 1958 he publicly warned that the U.S. space program was a few years behind the Russians.

Soon after dusk, while turning a skate key or playing with a hula hoop, children might look up to see if they could spot the bright light of a satellite arching across the sky. But they could not see the fallout from nuclear bomb tests, underway for a dozen years by 1958. The conventional wisdom, reinforced by the press, downplayed fears while trusting the authorities; basic judgments about the latest weapons programs were to be left to the political leaders and their designated experts.

On the weekly prime-time Walt Disney television show, an animated fairy with a magic wand urged youngsters to drink three glasses of milk each day. But airborne strontium-90 from nuclear tests was falling on pastures all over, migrating to cows and then to the milk supply and, finally, to people's bones. Radioactive isotopes from fallout were becoming inseparable from the human diet.

Young people – dubbed "baby boomers," a phrase that both dramatized and trivialized them – were especially vulnerable to strontium-90 as their fast-growing bones absorbed the radioactive isotope along with calcium. The children who did as they were told by drinking plenty of milk ended up heightening the risks – not unlike their parents, who were essentially told to accept the bomb fallout without complaint.

Under the snappy rubric of "the nuclear age," the white-coated and loyal American scientist stood as an icon, revered as surely as the scientists of the



MADE LOVE GOT WAR

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America's Warfare State

NORMAN SOLOMON

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enemy were assumed to be pernicious. And yet the mutual fallout, infiltrating dairy farms and mothers' breast milk and the bones of children, was a type of subversion that never preoccupied J. Edgar Hoover.

The more that work by expert scientists endangered us, the more we were informed that we needed those scientists to save us. Who better to protect Americans from the hazards of the nuclear industry and the terrifying potential of nuclear weapons than the best scientific minds serving the industry and developing the weapons?

In June 1957 – the same month Nobel Prize-winning chemist Linus Pauling

published an article estimating that ten thousand cases of leukemia had already occurred due to U.S. and Soviet nuclear testing – President Eisenhower proclaimed that the American detonations would result in nuclear warheads with much less radioactivity. Ike said that “we have reduced fallout from bombs by nine-tenths,” and he pledged that the Nevada explosions would continue in order to “see how clean we can make them.” The president spoke just after meeting with Edward Teller and other high-powered physicists. Eisenhower assured the country that the scientists and the U.S. nuclear test operations were working on the public's behalf. “They say: ‘Give us four or five more years to test each step of our development and we will produce an absolutely clean bomb.’”

But sheer atomic fantasy, however convenient, was wearing thin. Many scientists actually opposed the above-ground nuclear blasts.

Relying on dissenters with a range of technical expertise, Democratic nominee Adlai Stevenson had made an issue of fallout in the 1956 presidential campaign. During 1957 – a year when the U.S. government set off thirty-two nuclear bombs over southern Nevada and the Pacific – Pauling spearheaded a global petition drive against nuclear testing; by January 1958 more than eleven thousand scientists in fifty countries had signed.

Clearly, the views and activities of scientists ran the gamut. But Washington was pumping billions of tax dollars into massive vehicles for scientific research. These huge federal outlays were

Who better to protect Americans from the hazards of the nuclear industry and the terrifying potential of nuclear weapons than the best scientific minds serving the industry and developing the weapons?

The fresh and exciting technology called television did much to turn suburbia into the stuff of white-bread legends — with scant use for the less-sightly difficulties of the near-poor and destitute living in ghettos or rural areas where the TV lights didn't shine

imposing military priorities on American scientists without any need for a blatant government decree.

What was being suppressed might suddenly pop up like some kind of jack-in-the-box. Righteous pressure against disruptive or “un-American” threats was internal and also global, with a foreign policy based on containment. Control of space, inner and outer, was pivotal. What could not be controlled was liable to be condemned.

The '50s and early '60s are now commonly derided as unbearably rigid, but much in the era was new and stylish at the time. Suburbs boomed along with babies. Modern household gadgets and snazzier cars appeared with great commercial fanfare while millions of families, with a leg up from the GI Bill, climbed into some part of the vaguely defined middle class. The fresh and exciting technology called television did much to turn suburbia into the stuff of white-bread legends — with scant use for the less-sightly difficulties of the near-poor and destitute living in ghettos or rural areas where the TV lights didn't shine.

On the surface, most kids lived in a placid time, while small screens showed entertaining images of sanitized life. One among many archetypes came from Betty Crocker cake-mix commercials, which were all over the tube; the close-ups of the icing could seem remarkable, even in black and white. Little girls who had toy ovens with little cake-mix boxes could make miniature layer cakes.

Every weekday from 1955 to 1965 the humdrum pathos of women known as housewives could be seen on *Queen for a Day*. The climax of each episode came as one of the competitors, often sobbing, stood with a magnificent bouquet of roses suddenly in her arms, overcome with joy. Splendid gifts of brand-new refrigerators and other consumer products, maybe even mink stoles, would elevate bleak lives into a stratosphere that America truly had to offer. The show pitted women's sufferings against each other; victory would be the just reward for the best, which was to say the worst, predicament. The final verdict came in the form of applause from the studio audience, measured by an on-screen meter that jumped with the decibels of apparent empathy and commiseration, one winner per program. Solutions were individual. *Queen for a Day* was a nationally televised ritual of charity, providing selective testimony to the goodness of society. Virtuous grief, if heartrending enough, could summon prizes, and the ecstatic weeping of a crowned recipient was vicarious pleasure for viewers across the country, who could see clearly America's bounty and generosity.

That televised spectacle was not entirely fathomable to the baby-boom generation, which found more instructive role-modeling from such media fare as *The Adventures of Spin and Marty* and *Annette Funicello* and other aspects of the *Mickey Mouse Club* show — far more profoundly prescriptive than descriptive. By example and inference, we learned how kids were supposed to

be, and our being more that way made the media images seem more natural and realistic. It was a spiral of self-mystification, with the authoritative versions of childhood green-lighted by network executives, producers, and sponsors. Likewise with the sitcoms, which drew kids into a Potemkin refuge from whatever home life they experienced on the near side of the TV screen.

Dad was apt to be emotionally aloof in real life, but on television the daddies were endearingly quirky, occasionally stern, essentially lovable, and even mildly loving. Despite the canned laugh tracks, for kids this could be very serious – a substitute world with obvious advantages over the starker one around them. The chances of their parents measuring up to the moms and dads on *Ozzie and Harriet* or *Father Knows Best* were remote. As were, often, the real parents. Or at least they seemed real. Sometimes.

Father Knows Best aired on network television for almost ten years. The first episodes gained little momentum in 1954, but within a couple of years the show was one of the nation's leading prime-time psychodramas. It gave off warmth that simulated intimacy; for children at a huge demographic bulge, maybe no TV program was more influential as a family prototype.

But seventeen years after the shooting stopped, the actor who had played Bud, the only son on *Father Knows Best*, expressed remorse. "I'm ashamed I had any part of it," Billy Gray said. "People felt warmly about the show and that show did everybody a disservice." Gray had come to see the program

as deceptive. "I felt that the show purported to be real life, and it wasn't. I regret that it was ever presented as a model to live by." And he added: "I think we were all well motivated but what we did was run a hoax. We weren't trying to, but that is what it was. Just a hoax."

I went to the John Glenn parade in downtown Washington on February 26, 1962, a week after he'd become the first American to circle the globe in a space capsule. Glenn was a certified hero, and my school deemed the parade a valid excuse for an absence. To me, a fifth grader, that seemed like a good deal even when the weather turned out to be cold and rainy.

For the new and dazzling space age, America's astronauts served as valiant explorers who added to the elan of the Camelot mythos around the presidential family. The Kennedys were sexy, exciting, modern aristocrats who relied on deft wordsmiths to produce throbbing eloquent speeches about freedom and democracy. The bearing was American regal, melding the appeal of refined nobility and touch football. The media image was damn-near storybook. Few Americans, and very few young people of the era, were aware of the actual roles of JFK's vaunted new "special forces" dispatched to the Third World, where – below the media radar – they targeted labor-union organizers and other assorted foes of U.S.-backed oligarchies.

But a confrontation with the Soviet Union materialized that could not be

The Kennedys were sexy, exciting, modern aristocrats who relied on deft wordsmiths to produce throbbing eloquent speeches about freedom and democracy. The bearing was American regal, melding the appeal of refined nobility and touch football

BOOK EXCERPT

Speaking from the White House, the president said: "We will not prematurely or unnecessarily risk the costs of worldwide nuclear war in which even the fruits of victory would be ashes in our mouth — but neither will we shrink from that risk at any time it must be faced."

ignored. Eight months after the Glenn parade, in tandem with Nikita Khrushchev, the president dragged the world to a nuclear precipice. In late October 1962, Kennedy went on national television and denounced "the Soviet military buildup on the island of Cuba," asserting that "a series of offensive missile sites is now in preparation on that imprisoned island." Speaking from the White House, the president said: "We will not prematurely or unnecessarily risk the costs of worldwide nuclear war in which even the fruits of victory would be ashes in our mouth — but neither will we shrink from that risk at any time it must be faced."

Early in the next autumn, President Kennedy signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty, which sent nuclear detonations underground. The treaty was an important public health measure against radioactive fallout. Meanwhile, the banishment of mushroom clouds made superpower preparations for blowing up the world less visible. The new limits did nothing to interfere with further development of nuclear arsenals.

Kennedy liked to talk about vigor, and he epitomized it. Younger than Eisenhower by a full generation, witty, with a suave wife and two adorable kids, he was leading the way to open vistas. Store windows near Pennsylvania Avenue displayed souvenir plates and other Washington knickknacks that depicted the First Family — standard tourist paraphernalia, yet with a lot more pizzazz than what Dwight and

Mamie had generated.

A few years after the Glenn parade, when I passed the same storefront windows along blocks just east of the White House, the JFK glamour had gone dusty, as if suspended in time, facing backward. I thought of a scene from *Great Expectations*. The Kennedy era already seemed like the room where Miss Havisham's wedding cake had turned to ghastly cobwebs; in Dickens' words, "as if a feast had been in preparation when the house and the clocks all stopped together."

The clocks all seemed to stop together on the afternoon of November 22, 1963. But after the assassination, the gist of the reputed best-and-brightest remained in top Cabinet positions. The distance from Dallas to the Gulf of Tonkin was scarcely eight months as the calendar flew. And soon America's awesome scientific capabilities were trained on a country where guerrilla fighters walked on the soles of sandals cut from old rubber tires.

Growing up in a mass-marketed culture of hoax, the baby-boom generation came of age in a warfare state. From Vietnam to Iraq, that state was to wield its technological power with crazed dedication to massive violence. **CT**

Norman Solomon's book "Made Love, Got War: Close Encounters with America's Warfare State" was published last month. For more information, visit: www.MadeLoveGotWar.com

BANNED FROM CANADA

BY ANNE WRIGHT

On the invitation of six members of the Canadian Parliament to speak October 25 on Canada's Parliament Hill as a member of a panel called "Peace-builders Without Borders: Challenging the Post-0/11 Canada-US Security Agenda," I arrived at the Ottawa airport in the morning of October 25 to be met by three members of Parliament and to hold a press conference at the airport.

Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Codepink Women for Peace and Global Exchange, was also invited by the parliamentarians, but had been arrested the previous day for holding up two fingers in the form of a peace sign during the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing in which Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice testified on Iraq, Iran and Israel-Palestinian issues. The October 24 committee hearing began with Codepink peace activist Desiree Fairouz holding up her red paint stained hands to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and shouting "The blood of millions of

Iraqis is on your hands." As Capitol Hill police took her out of the hearing of the House of Representatives' Committee on Foreign Affairs, Fairouz yelled over her shoulder "war criminal, take her to the Hague." Shortly thereafter two Codepinkers were arrested for just being in the room and brutally hauled out of the hearing by Capitol police. An hour later Medea and a male Codepink were arrested for no reason. Four of the five had to stay overnight in the District of Columbia jail. Medea was one of those and missed the trip to Ottawa.

I presented to immigration officials our letter of invitation from the parliamentarians that explained that Medea and I had been denied entry to Canada at the Niagara Falls border crossing on October 3, 2007 because we had been convicted in the United States of peaceful, non-violent protests against the war on Iraq, including sitting on the sidewalk in front of the White House with 400 others, speaking out against torture during Congressional hearings, and other misdemeanors. The Cana-

Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Codepink Women for Peace and Global Exchange, was also invited, but had been arrested the previous day for holding up two fingers in the form of a peace sign

After nearly four hours of interrogation, I was told by the senior immigration officer that I was banned from Canada for one year for failure to provide appropriate documents that would overcome the exclusion order I had been given in early October

dian government knew of these offenses as they now have access to the FBI's National Crime Information database on which we are listed. The database that was created to identify members of violent gangs and terrorist organizations, foreign fugitives, patrol violators and sex offenders – not for peace activists peacefully protesting illegal actions of their government.

The immigration officer directed me to secondary screening where my request to call the Members of Parliament waiting outside the customs doors was denied. My suggestion that the letter of invitation from the parliamentarians might be valuable in accessing the need for me to be in Canada was dismissed with the comment that Members of Parliament do not have a role in determining who enters Canada. I suggested that the laws enacted by the Parliament were the basis of that determination. I added that the reason I had been invited to Ottawa by parliamentarians was to be an example of how current laws may exclude those whom Canadians may wish to allow to enter. I also mentioned that Parliament might decide to change the laws that immigration officials implement. I also suggested that since Parliament provides the budget to the Immigration Services, they might notify the parliamentarians awaiting my arrival that I had been detained. The officers declined to do so citing my privacy, which I immediately waived. The parliamentarians were never notified by Immigration that I had arrived and was being detained. Only when my cell phone was returned to me by immigration officers four

hours later was I able to make contact with the parliamentarians.

After nearly four hours of interrogation, I was told by the senior immigration officer that I was banned from Canada for one year for failure to provide appropriate documents that would overcome the exclusion order I had been given in early October because of conviction of misdemeanors (all payable by fines) in the United States. The officer said that to apply for a Temporary Resident Permit (TRP) for entry for a specific event on a specific date, I must provide to a Canadian Embassy or consulate the arresting officer's report, court transcripts and court documents for each of the convictions and an official document describing the termination of sentences, a police certificate issued within the last three months by the FBI, police certificates from places I have lived in the past ten years (that includes Sierra Leone, Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia), a letter acknowledging my convictions from three respected members of the community (the respected members that I will ask to write a letter all been convicted of similar "offenses") and a completed 18 page "criminal rehabilitation" packet.

Additionally, besides obtaining the temporary resident permit, since I was being banned for a year from Canada, I would have to obtain a "Canadian Government Minister's consent." The officer said that the temporary permit and the Minister's consent normally took from 8-10 months to obtain. In the distant future, to be able to enter Canada without a TRP, I would have to

have to be “criminally rehabilitated” and be free for five years of conviction of any offense, including for peaceful protest.

The senior immigration officer took my fingerprints for Canadian records, escorted me to the airport departures area and placed me on the first plane departing for Washington, DC. In the meantime, the members of Parliament conducted the press conference and the panel without my presence but certainly using the example of what had happened to me and previously to Medea Benjamin as incidents that the parliamentarians are very concerned about, specifically their government’s wholesale acceptance of information on the FBI’s database, information that appears to have been placed there for political intimidation.

A participant on the Parliamentary panel that I was unable to attend was Monia Mazigh, the wife of Canadian citizen Maher Arar who was sent by US authorities when he transited New York’s JFK airport, to Syria where he was imprisoned and tortured for 10 months. The day before I arrived at the Ottawa airport, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice acknowledged that the United States had “not handled his case properly.” But Rice did not apologize to Arar on behalf of the Bush administration during testimony to the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee. The previous week during a video conference, both Republican and Democrat members of Congress offered apologies to Arar. Arar, an Ottawa telecommunications engineer, still has a lawsuit pending against

American officials.

Many countries have succumbed to the behind the scenes 9-11 pressure of the Bush administration to enact extensive and expansive anti-terrorism laws to increase “harmonization” and integration of security measures among countries. Unfortunately, the Canadian government is mirroring the Bush administration’s use of security measures to increase control over dissent in their country – and in other countries.

Most of the new security measures are done through administrative agreements, international joint working groups, regulations and the use of international organizations such as the G-8 and the International Civil Aviation Organization. By using administrative regulations, the U.S. and Canadian governments avoid opening up the proposed restrictions of personal privacy to public scrutiny and debate by preventing such regulations from being enacted in Congress or Parliament.

Through these agreements with Canada and other G-8 countries, the Bush administration is setting up a global infrastructure for the registration and surveillance of populations worldwide, looking at every person as a suspect and a risk, whom must in their opinion, as a precaution, be identified and tracked. Ordinary legal protections fundamental to democratic societies such as the presumption of innocence, rights against unreasonable search and seizure and rights against arbitrary detention and punishment are greatly threatened by these precautionary measures.

Countries are accepting the “precau-

The senior immigration officer took my fingerprints for Canadian records, escorted me to the airport departures area and placed me on the first plane departing for Washington, DC

The unnecessary curtailment of civil liberties and purposeful targeting of those who disagree with government policies must end

Ann Wright is a US Army veteran and former US diplomat who resigned in March, 2003, in opposition to the war on Iraq. The US Department of State has delayed publication of her new book "Dissent: Voices of Conscience." It will be published whenever the State Department finishes its search for classified materials

tionary principle" and are gathering and sharing information not only to track suspected "terrorists" but to stop dissidents from flying and/or entering other countries, to stop activists and intellectuals at borders (the Bush administration has refused visas for numerous academics from all over the world who have been invited to teach at American universities but whom have spoken and written against the Bush war in Iraq, torture and other violations of international law), to detain persons without reasonable grounds and to send persons to third countries and prisons operated by the US government, where they are detained indefinitely without charge, tortured and are sometimes murdered.

The Canada-U.S. Smart Border Agreement and Action Plan, an administrative agreement signed in December 2001, is the master document for security integration between Canada and the United States.

The agreement calls for biometric standards for identity cards, coordinated visa and refugee policy, coordinate risk assessment of travelers, integrated border and marine enforcement teams, integrated national security intelligence teams, coordinated terrorist lists, increased intelligence sharing and joint efforts to promote the Canada-US model internationally.

After 9-11 the Bush administration, under the National Security Entry-exit Registration System (NSEERS), registered and took biometric identifiers (fingerprints) of all males age 16-45 with links to Muslim and Arab countries visiting or traveling through the United

States. Next, persons applying for visas to visit the United States had to submit biometric data (fingerprints) that will be stored in a US database for 100 years through the new U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indication Technology (US-VISIT) program.

The Bush administration expanded its biometric round-up on a global scale in 2002 by requiring all countries that want to retain their visa waiver status with the U.S. to require by 2004 biometric passports through the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002. In 2004 the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) set a face recognition standard with fingerprint and iris scans as optional standards. Beginning in 2005 the United States and Canada have biometric passports with facial recognition.

We all want our countries to be safe from criminal actions. However, the unnecessary curtailment of civil liberties and targeting of those who disagree with government policies must end. I call on the US Congress to conduct hearings to determine who ordered the FBI to place peaceful, non-violence protest convictions on the international data base and for what purpose.

It feels to me like purposeful intimidation to stop dissent – but I can guarantee you, it won't work! To all those concerned about free speech, freedom to travel, ending an illegal war, stopping torture and other violations of domestic and international law, come to Washington and help us! **CT**

This article originally appeared at <http://afterdowningstreet.org>

DON'T BLAME THE CHINESE

BY STEPHEN J. LEE

An American friend called from Los Angeles yesterday. He often calls me, an Englishman, when he's feeling disillusioned with the American perspective on life. I tend to humour him by taking an outlandishly radical position on all we discuss and passing it off as the standard European point of view. This cheers him up by not only reassuring him that alternatives to prescribed American thought do exist, but by reminding him that he is closer in outlook to his countrymen than he originally thought.

His latest gripe was about American reliance on the car; more specifically the SUV. He reckoned himself to be the only person in his neighbourhood who "walks to the store" despite it being only a handful of blocks away. In keeping with tradition I greeted this with mock horror as if I had never imagined that people might use their car for any journey of less than 10 miles. I facetiously suggested that this type of wanton abuse of the environment and waste of oil would be an offence punishable by hanging in Europe. That is, I

gibed, if we were sufficiently unenlightened to persist with capital punishment. I elaborated this fictitious image of Europe, describing it as a bicycle worshipping utopia where children breathe clean air amidst majestic wind turbines, free from fear in our carless streets.

Of course the reality is that Europe is only slightly better than we imagine the USA to be in terms of attitudes towards the environment. In fact, present day Europe is only slightly better than the USA in attitudes towards a great many issues, such is the extent of European aspiration. Jealous of the American superpower we gave birth to, our moral conscience is generally clear so long as we are demonstrably more civilised than our transatlantic cousins, no matter how slightly. And so goes the relationship between the US and Europe.

"What about China?" My American friend widened the scope. Whatever good work we do to reverse the environmental problems we have caused is being undone by the rapid industrialisation of the world's most populous na-

I elaborated this fictitious image of Europe, describing it as a bicycle worshipping utopia where children breathe clean air amidst majestic wind turbines, free from fear in our carless streets

The vast majority of China's manufacturing is for external markets, principally the United States and Europe, which means that we can somewhat dictate the success of China's drive to industrialise through our consumer behaviour

tion. This notion, he told me, is frequently reported in the sections of the American press that dare give column inches to environmental issues. He directed me to the article, "Doha and Dalian" by Thomas L. Friedman which recently appeared in the comment section of the New York Times (19th September). In it, Friedman discussed the "Americanisation" of city life in Doha, Qatar and more pertinently the huge increase in heavy industry in Dalian, China. Any energy saving practices the average American can make in a day would be "eaten for breakfast" by Dalian, he suggests.

Friedman dismisses as futile such things as switching to low energy light bulbs, driving a hybrid car, and the push towards renewable energy generation in the face of Dalian's daily fuel combustion. I would agree that the value of such gestures is overplayed by certain environmentalists, but we humans like to feel that we can do something to address the greatest threat our species has yet faced, namely fossil fuel extinction and climate change. Here, Friedman and the many prophets of disempowerment who have found a platform in the mainstream press offer us nothing: no way to save the planet, no way to offset the impending crises. Well, not quite. Friedman suggests that our only hope lies in an as yet undiscovered "green" technology, "a transformational technological breakthrough in the energy space" as he puts it. Not great news.

So that's it? All that we are doing to make things better is in vain. Does that mean we should give up doing it while

we wait for the scientists to come up with something better? Surely, the question we should be asking is, if what we are doing now is not going to work, is there something else we can do now that will? Maybe there is. By luck, Friedman may actually have the answer.

Airlifting iPods

Citing as proof of America's relative impotence when it comes to reversing the cycle of climate change, Friedman quotes Peter Bakker, chief executive of TNT, the biggest express delivery company in Europe. Bakker's credibility on green issues is enhanced when Friedman informs us that "The Dow Jones Sustainability Index 2007 just listed TNT as the No. 1 company in terms of energy and environmental practices".

TNT is a long distance haulier responsible, in Bakker's own words, for the following:

"We operate 35,000 trucks and 48 aircraft in Europe. We just bought two Boeing 747s, which, when fully operational, will do nine round trips every week between our home base in Liège [Belgium] and Shanghai. They leave Liège only partly full and every day fly back to Europe as full as you can stuff them with iPods and computers. By our calculations, just these two 747s will use as much fuel each week as our 48 other aircraft combined and emit as much CO₂."

(At this point one begins to wonder at the criteria for topping the Dow Jones Sustainability Index but that's another article.)

What Bakker and Friedman are telling us here is that China's industri-

alisation relies, at least in part, on European spending patterns. In fact, the vast majority of China's manufacturing is for external markets, principally the United States and Europe, which means that we can somewhat dictate the success of China's drive to industrialise through our consumer behaviour.

Market forces

You don't have to work for 26 years as a financial reporter, like Thomas Friedman, and live in the suburbs of the city where the world bank is based, like Thomas Friedman, to see from his example that market forces can go some way to empowering us in the fight against climate change and the preparedness for fossil fuel extinction.

If the iPods and computers arriving in Liege on Monday are still on shop shelves by Tuesday, I doubt TNT will be called upon to bring another 747 full on Wednesday. And I doubt the Chinese would continue producing all this stuff if the market was to disappear. The effect: less polluting industry, less use of scarce fossil fuels and maybe even less climate change.

The impotence one may feel when reading an article such as "Doha and Dalian" may help to alleviate your guilt about failing your responsibility to the environment. It shouldn't because we,

in the "developed world", are still holding all the cards in the fight.

I'm not going to tell anybody that they can't have an iPod or a computer or a mobile phone. This is a decision one needs to make for one's self. What I will say though is if you are serious about making a difference, you can. While changing to low energy light bulbs may make a difference to the way you feel, the nobility of your gesture may well be eaten for breakfast if you then buy a laptop made in China. It is simply not true then to say you are doing all you can.

So next time you go to the store, do go on foot. Enjoy the fresh air. It's cleaner today than it will be tomorrow. And ask yourself while you're there, "is buying this product going to help or hinder the fight for our planet?" And if the answer is no, ask yourself whether that matters enough to you to stop you from buying it. If not, so be it. But don't dare go bragging to your friends about your low energy light bulbs or your hybrid car. And never tell anybody that you did all you could but the Chinese ruined everything. **CT**

Stephen J. Lee is a freelance journalist and novelist from Birmingham, England, who is living and writing in Bolivia.

If the iPods and computers arriving in Liege on Monday are still on shop shelves by Tuesday, I doubt TNT will be called upon to bring another 747 full on Wednesday

DELVE INTO OUR PAST

<http://coldtype.net/archives.html>

LIVING IN AN AGE OF SUPERBUGS

BY DANNY SCHECHTER

Has the concept of the "superbug" become a metaphor for our times, a sign that our institutions set up to solve problems are making them worse, and that our press is hopelessly behind in telling us about other superbugs and calamities threatening our world?

Nineteen thousand Americans died in hospitals and nursing homes in 2005. They were victims of a scary "superbug" – a bacterial staph infection for which there is no cure. Experts warn that we are facing a "medical typhoon" unless we act to contain this menace of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA.

When I grew up, "superbug" was a colloquial term used as shorthand for certain Volkswagen cars. Not any more. Now we have a deadly threat considered worse than SARS, AIDS and Bird Flu. The invasion of the Superbugs has moved from the science fiction channel to page one. It is a spectre that may yet define our era.

Especially frightening is that we only learned of this deadly epidemic involving a horrific flesh-eating disease two years after its serial killing spree began. Nineteen thousand people dead, may be more, and 'nobody knew nothin.' No doubt they didn't want to alarm us.

More disturbing is that all these peo-

ple died were in hospitals and nursing homes, places where they expected to get care and cures – not a life ending superbug.

And this is not the only medical super problem. Doctor Paul Farmer warned in 1999 of the spread of multi-drug-resistant TB in the prisons of the former Soviet Union. Now this is a major problem in Africa. Did you know that "One-third of the world's population, 1.7 billion people, have TB in Latent form; a person infected with the organism has a 10 percent risk of developing active TB sometime in his or her life."

Has the concept of the "superbug" become a metaphor for our times, a sign that our institutions set up to solve problems are making them worse, and that our press is hopelessly behind in telling us about other superbugs and calamities threatening our world?

A superbug of big bully WARITIS seems endemic in high places where talk of World War III and attacking Iran follows the Iraq playbook of well-orchestrated message points, A compliant

media seems willing to disseminate those as if there are no dots to connect or context to offer.

Last month, a 60 Minutes report showed millions of acres burning in the American West. Firefighters said these forest fires have been getting worse for ten years

Why are we only finding out about the ‘superbug’ of forest destruction now?

Oil is the issue

Oil is another issue. For years, the Administration scoffed at suggestions that the Iraq war was motivated by the need to control more oil reserves. The media scoffed at critics who chanted “no blood for oil” while politicians were in denial. And then, none other than former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan asserted that oil was always a main motivator. At that, the media and the government went silent as if attacked by a superbug of amnesia.

Ditto for the suggestion that oil production was peaking. Nonsense, said the oil companies when the suggestion was made. They seemed gripped by a superbug of certainty. The Peak Oil argument was dismissed by insiders as doom and gloom conspiracy speculation. And then, just this week, the Guardian cited a new report to confirm a fear that had repeatedly been dismissed by the cognoscenti: “World oil production has already peaked and will fall by half as soon as 2030, according to a report that also warns that extreme shortages of fossil fuels will lead to wars and social breakdown.”

Let’s blame this information lag on

the superbug of deception.

An Inconvenient Truth, the award-winning film featuring the award-winning politician Al Gore showed us icebergs melting. Why did it take an independent documentary to graphically show us the “superbug of climate change? Where was the news media? Perhaps “reporting” on Britney or OJ Simpson?

In 2004 and earlier, the wizards of Wall Street started underwriting subprime loans and SIVS – Structured Investment Vehicles – to transfer billions of dollars from poorer Americans to wealthier ones.

A superbug of greed invaded the world of finance.

Few journalists warned of the danger to the borrowers who are now facing foreclosures by the tens of thousands. The regulators and ratings agencies and commissars of business ethics were silent. The media pumped up the myth of a buoyant economy rather than expose the scams that would in a few short years unravel the markets and deepen inequality.

Writes Holly Sklar: “Until 2005, multimillionaires could still make the Forbes list of the 400 richest Americans. In 2006, the Forbes 400 went billionaires only. When the Forbes 400 began in 1982, it was dominated by oil and manufacturing fortunes. Today, says Forbes, “Wall Street is king.”

And what are the consequences? She writes: “The 25th anniversary of the Forbes 400 isn’t party time for America. We have a record 482 billionaires – and record foreclosures.

“We have a record 482 billionaires –

The media scoffed at critics who chanted “no blood for oil” while politicians were in denial. And then, none other than former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan asserted that oil was always a main motivator. At that, the media and the government went silent as if attacked by a superbug of amnesia

"Yesterday I was shopping at Office Depot, and guess what I found? Antibacterial pencils. Yes, it's true. I found some mechanical pencils made by PaperMate that have an antibacterial coating"

and a record 47 million people without any health insurance.

Since 2000, we have added 184 billionaires – and 5 million more people living below the poverty line."

This superbug of greed went largely undetected by the TV channels and business news outlets. Now, as a crisis ripens with parallels to 1929, we have a new superbug on the horizon: the superbug of mindless "news" designed to divert our attention from what is really happening

In the guise of reporting on business, we have Fox's new fusion of porn and patriotism pumped out by a bimocracy of chatter and well-calculated false optimism as Jim Nocera observed in the New York Times:

"One minute Fox was doing a segment that included a \$1 million diamond; the next it was giving tips on how to avoid foreclosure. It would home in on the stock market and then report on the death of a teenager in Virginia from a staph infection, reports that included several truly silly efforts to frame the tragedy as a business story. On Tuesday afternoon, while CNBC was dissecting Intel's earnings, Fox was running its "Happy Hour" show, which is set in a bar. A co-host named Cody, a dude so hip he doesn't tuck his shirt in, was interviewing a random customer about his plans for Christmas spending. "Expensive chocolates," was the man's reply.

So what superbug is at work here? Perhaps a superbug of bullshit. But it doesn't seem to matter as more money is invested in more ways to spend money and divert attention from the

dangers we face. Ads and promos legitimize this information abortion.

Clearly we need antidotes to all of these superbugs. And they have to go beyond washing your hands and/or allowing your brain to be washed. Cure-all product won't help either, writes Mike Adams on NewsTarget.com: "I think this antibacterial products sham has gone way too far. Yesterday I was shopping at Office Depot, and guess what I found? Antibacterial pencils. Yes, it's true. I found some mechanical pencils made by PaperMate that have an antibacterial coating... We've seen antibacterial hand soaps and dish soaps, shampoos and all sorts of other personal care and cleaning products. And we've seen all the bad news about this, as well, including the fact that they are completely and utterly useless at actually protecting people from germs, viruses or contagious disease."

So where should we start in combating these many superbug menaces?

Truthful disclosure might be a good beginning. More vigilant journalism would help along with a clearer appreciation that there are often unanticipated consequences of programs launched with the best of intentions.

But most of all we need a national outcry to move the masses, push the media and press the politicians to speak out before some new bacteria turns you and I into breakfast. **CT**

*News Dissector Danny Schechter edits Mediachannel.org. His new film **In Debt We Trust** investigates the superbugs of credit and debt. (IndebtweTrust.org)*

PLAYING IN THE ROUGH

BY GEORGE MONBIOT

Most human differences can be overcome, but there is one unbridgable divide. The world is split between people who play golf and people who don't. Each faction regards the other as an alien lifeform. One is astonished that any human fails to see that life without golf is not worth living. The other watches grown men in two-tone shoes dragging a bag of sticks round Telly-tubbyland, and shakes its collective head with incredulity.

I regret that I must compound the incomprehension on the other side of the golf gulf by confessing that until three weeks ago I did not know who Gary Player is. And I am sure that with much greater reason he had never heard of me either. But now we are tangled up in one of South Africa's messiest controversies.

I came across him while researching a recent column I wrote about Burma. In trying to discover which western companies have been operating there, I stumbled upon a list of the country's recent golf course developments. He was

named as the designer of the Pun Hliang course in Rangoon. His website boasted that he had turned "a 650-acre rice paddy into The Pride of Myanmar."

I asked his company who owned the land on which the course was constructed. How many people were evicted in order to build it? Was forced labour used in its construction? As his company is based in Florida, did this work break US sanctions? It refused to answer my questions. I suggested in my column that Nelson Mandela should remove his name from the charity golf tournament Player is due to host this month.

My call was taken up by Desmond Tutu and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). The Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, which claims to own the event, asked Mr Player to stand down as the tournament's guest of honour.

Player's company responded by claiming that it was in fact the joint owner of the event; he has refused to stand aside. (The controversy is still raging. Cosatu has promised to turn up

I suggested in my column that Nelson Mandela should remove his name from the charity golf tournament Player is due to host this month

Journalists in South Africa pointed me to allegations that Gary Player was used as a kind of global ambassador by the apartheid government

and protest if Player does not withdraw).

One result of the fuss is that the Gary Player Group was obliged to issue a statement about its involvement in Burma. It maintained that “The company’s decision to design the course in Burma was actually humanitarian in that it took no profit from the endeavor, but rather encouraged the developer to put the money toward creating jobs, as well as the establishment of a caddy & agronomy program. ... the company was paid expenses only.”

Converting 650 acres of rice paddy in a country suffering from malnutrition into a golf course likely to be used by the generals looks to me like an unusual object for charity, so I asked Player’s company to provide some evidence for these claims.

The same statement maintained that “Gary Player has always been a great supporter of human rights” and has “a solid record of campaigning for democracy around the world.”

To test this claim, I ordered the book he wrote in 1966, when he was 30 years old and at the peak of his remarkable career. *Grand Slam Golf* is well-written and strangely compelling: it makes the game seem almost interesting even to me. But Chapter Two contains the following statements.

“I must say now, and clearly, that I am of the South Africa of Verwoerd and apartheid ... a nation which is the result of an African graft on European stock and which is the product of its instinct and ability to maintain civilised values and standards amongst the alien barbarians ... The African may well be-

lieve in witchcraft and primitive magic, practise ritual murder and polygamy; his wealth is in cattle. More money and he will have no sense of parental or individual responsibility, no understanding of reverence for life or the human soul which is the basis of Christian and other civilised societies. ... A good deal of nonsense is talked of, and indeed thought about ‘segregation’. Segregation of one kind or another is practised everywhere in the world.”

Ambassador of apartheid

Journalists in South Africa pointed me to allegations that Gary Player was used as a kind of global ambassador by the apartheid government. In 1975 he collaborated with the Committee for Fairness in Sport, which was set up by the government to try to overcome the global sporting boycott. In 1981 he featured on the UN’s blacklist of sports people breaking the boycott. So I asked Player’s company questions about these incidents as well.

All this is a long time ago, and Gary Player’s attitude towards the apartheid regime is very different today. But another human rights issue is still current. There is a real problem with golf, and it is not confined to the dress sense of the participants. All over the world, the construction of golf courses is associated with dispossession and environmental destruction. You’ll find a flavour of the controversies it stirs up in Aberdeenshire in Scotland at the moment, where Donald Trump is promoting a project to create the “world’s greatest golf course” on a site of special scientific interest.

One study suggests that an 18-hole course requires, on average, 22 tonnes of chemical treatments (mostly pesticides) every year: seven times the rate per hectare for industrial farming. Another shows higher rates of some cancers, such as non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (which has been associated with certain pesticides), among golf course superintendents. Courses consume staggering amounts of water. Many of them are built on diverse and important habitats, such as rainforests or wetlands. In some countries people have been violently evicted to make way for them.

Golf course battles

The problem is particularly acute in South East and East Asia, where golf is big business, and land rights and the environment are often ignored by governments. There are hundreds of accounts of battles between peasant farmers or indigenous people and golf course developers. In one case in the Philippines in 2000, two farmers resisting a course planned for their lands were mutilated and dismembered then shot dead.

Player's companies, which have a turnover of hundreds of millions of dollars, have designed eight golf courses in China, one in Taiwan, nine in the Philippines, one in Malaysia, seven in Indone-

sia and one in Burma. At least two of the courses in Indonesia were built during the Suharto dictatorship, when the ruling family was alleged to have had a commercial interest in most golf course development. So I asked the Gary Player Group whether Suharto or his relatives had a stake in any of the projects he designed. As I was unable to find any position statements about environmental policy or land rights on the group's website, I asked whether it had produced such policies, and if so, how they are enforced. For the second time, the group has refused to answer any of my questions.

I realise that in writing this article I might have made the great golf gul even wider. I am sorry about that. But I did try hard to get the other side to state its case. I don't want to start a new golf war, but I do want some answers. **CT**

Update: Nelson Mandela removed his name from the event at the beginning of November

George Monbiot's latest book "Heat" is now out in paperback.

This essay originally appeared in London's Guardian newspaper. For a footnoted version, visit <http://www.monbiot.com>

At least two of the courses in Indonesia were built during the Suharto dictatorship, when the ruling family was alleged to have had a commercial interest in most golf course development

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DEMOCRACY? GOOD IDEA. DIDN'T WORK

BY FRED REED

The program is pure mind-control, as much as anything Goebbels or the Soviet Union employed

Diversity. Always diversity. I learn that the University of Delaware has instituted mandatory indoctrination of students to make them appreciate diversity. Delaware is going to eradicate racism, sexism, and all. It's going to make the world safe for diversity.

I thought diversity just meant that you had to buy a new bicycle three times a year.

From the university's training material, "A RACIST: A racist is one who is both privileged and socialized on the basis of race by a white supremacist (racist) system. The term applies to all white people (i.e., people of European descent) living in the United States, regardless of class, gender, religion, culture or sexuality. By this definition, people of color cannot be racists, because as peoples within the U.S. system, they do not have the power to back up their prejudices, hostilities, or acts of discrimination..."

The program is pure mind-control, as much as anything Goebbels or the Soviet Union employed. In training sessions, the student must confess to bad-

thought, outline his diversity-failings in detail, and abase himself before a thought-leader. Progress in good-thought will be monitored and records kept.

You must learn that you are an oppressor, and you must be reformed. We will tell you what to think. It is for your own good....

The national symptoms roll on. The United States is in the middle of a portentous abandonment, rapid now, of the ideas that led to the founding of the country, and certainly of what were previously regarded as the purposes of a university. It is the strangest damned thing I have seen. America's never lived up to its ideals – who or what does? – but it actually tried to and at least said it wanted to. Often it succeeded. Now it deliberately reverses all it stood for.

Curious. Usually it is a government that imposes control over the population. Extreme governments of the right seek absolute control over behavior, and those of the left, over thought. But it is usually the government.

In America the universities do it –

help do it, I should say, since government, too, works against what the country was. No gauleiter or commissar from Washington tells the universities what to inculcate. There is no need. All by themselves they abandon the notion of teaching the young to think for themselves. The tone is Marxist in its contempt for students, almost hostility: They are dough to be shaped. Behind this is the devouring passive aggression of minor minds who have found themselves in power.

How must this appear to the students at Delaware? The young I suspect do not know that things were not always thus. I went to a small, very Republican, Southern college these many years ago. In those days communism was thought poorly of. Yet in my survey course on philosophy, we learned what Marx thought, not what to think about Marx. The readings represented his ideas fairly. For further knowledge, go to the library. We were expected to come to our own conclusions, and did. A different world.

Imaginary racism

I find it fascinating that it is the white professoriate that so intently imposes belief in an imaginary racism, that so fervently reviles whites. Apparently academic liberalism is an auto-immune disease. The smugness would curdle milk.

The document of the University of Delaware that sets out the program runs to 99 painful pages, couched in the sorry English of the half-educated who want to sound learned. It contains transcripts of some of the one-on-one

sessions of indoctrination. The example below was described as the worst interview, meaning that the student didn't respond as desired. I have no idea who she was, but she has my whole-hearted admiration. Records the inquisitor:

"When she [the student], left I read the exercise. This is what it stated:

1) When were you first made aware of your race?

"That is irrelevant to everything. My race is human being."

2) When did you discover your sexual identity?

"That is none of your damn business."

3) Who taught you a lesson in regards to some form of diversity awareness? What was that lesson?

"My grandparents sometimes made racial comments. And what the hell does that have to do with anything?"

4) When was a time when you confronted someone regarding an issue of diversity? What was the confrontation about? If you haven't, why not?

"Why would I do something like that? Diversity exists. I like it. Leave it at that."

5) When was a time you felt oppressed? Who was oppressing you? How did you feel?

"I am oppressed every day on the basis of my undying and devout feelings for the opera. Regularly passersby throw stones at me and jeer me with cruel names. Because of this I am exiled and often contemplate suicide. Unbearable adversity. But I will overcome, hear me, you rock-loving majority. (This is called 'sarcasm.')"

I went to a small, very Republican, Southern college these many years ago. In those days communism was thought poorly of. Yet in my survey course on philosophy, we learned what Marx thought, not what to think about Marx

LIFE ON CAMPUS

Why this rush toward enforced conformity and regimentation? I figure it's something in the water. Or maybe the country is just ready for thought-policed authoritarianism

Etc.

If the antics of Delaware were merely the clownishness of the faculty of a second-rate diploma mill, they might be amusing. But the whole country appears to yearn for regimentation, for authority. As the Democrats attack a nonsensical fantasy of racism, so the Republicans flail at imaginary terrorists twisting in their inner fog. They eagerly revoke habeas corpus, monitor email, use NSA against the citizenry, start wars on fraudulent grounds, and openly advocate torture. (Has any other country done the latter?)

Portable guard towers?

The following from a friend in DC:

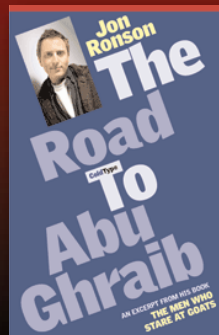
“Went to the Marine marathon this morning and will go to the finish line later today, perfect weather for it. But so bizarre, cops everywhere, police boats in the Potomac, helicopters buzzing around. And something I haven't seen before, police dogs sniffing around and portable guard towers, like at the corners of prison yards, set up on high places with guys in armor and big rifles. Lots of them in the carillon. Possibly the highest security I have ever seen.”

More police with more powers, swat-

ted-out, more militarized. (For a foot race.) Recorded warnings in subways to watch other passengers and turn them in if they behave strangely. More cameras everywhere. Blast-proof trashcans on Metro. Surly border guards, increasingly intrusive in their questioning, keep records of the books you read. Shoe searches at airports, confiscation of toothpaste and shampoo. Warrantless tapping of telephones. Warrantless searches on the subways of New York, with no pretense of probable cause.

Why this rush toward enforced conformity and regimentation? I figure it's something in the water. Or maybe the country is just ready for thought-policed authoritarianism. Neither Bush nor Delaware could do it if the country weren't complicit. We're getting there. Oh yes. What fun. **CT**

Fred Read has worked on staff for Army Times, The Washingtonian, Soldier of Fortune, Federal Computer Week, and The Washington Times. He has worked as a police writer, technology editor, military specialist, and authority on mercenary soldiers. He is by all accounts as looney as a tune. Fred's web site is <http://fredoneverything.net>



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BUSH'S SHAMELESS WAR ON CHILDREN

BY MICHAEL I. NIMAN

It seems someone around the White House recently told George W. Bush about vetoes – a tool he never once used when Republicans ran both houses of Congress. Last year's arrival of Democrats, at least in name, on the Hill appears to have changed that. Thrilled with his sharp new veto pen, it seems Bush has his tricycle all oiled up for a 15-month joyride. His most noticeable piece of road kill to date, victim of veto number four, is the bill to fund health insurance for children of lower-income families – and let's forget, for the moment, why they're low income, or why their parents don't have similar rights to healthcare.

The bill, which Congress passed in October, expands a child health program which currently serves 6.6 million poor kids.

The expanded program will offer healthcare to approximately 10 million uninsured children, including those whose working parents don't receive health insurance from their employers and don't qualify for Medicare. The bill funds the program for the next five

years at a cost of approximately \$7 billion per year. By comparison, according to a study commissioned by the American Friends Service Committee, that's roughly how much the Iraq War costs us every 11 days.

The veto means the program, instead of expanding, dies – like a sick child without healthcare. The Bush White House had earlier proposed an alternative plan which would have limited the number of children covered and initiated a one-year waiting period before children with no healthcare could join the program.

Little Johnny, I guess, just needs to learn patience. Children need to understand the value of cancer treatment – they can't have everything handed to them the moment their doctors want it.

Creeping Bolshevism

Vetoing healthcare for kids fits right in line with the man who once comically mocked a death row inmate's pleas for mercy before signing her death warrant. It's just one more small piece of fodder for those who argue that Bush is

Children need to understand the value of cancer treatment – they can't have everything handed to them the moment their doctors want it

VETO THIS!

The feds can subsidize Exxon-Mobil when they search for oil to sell to us at record-breaking prices, earning more profits than anyone has ever before in history. That's okay. Money for kids' healthcare, however, means the jackboot of Bolshevism is stamping down upon us

psychotically sadistic. Sick children should pay for their own healthcare just like everyone else – there's no free ride for the lazy here in America. In vetoing the bill, Bush argued that it was fiscally irresponsible and a move toward socialism.

So let's start with the socialism argument: Healthcare for poor sick kids is the forbearer of a red menace lurking just around the corner. But the socialism of publicly funded highways, police forces and US military bases in over 50 countries is cool. And so are subsidies to rich corporations and bailouts for greedy bankers.

It's pretty simple – the feds can subsidize Exxon-Mobil when they search for oil to sell to us at record-breaking prices, earning more profits than anyone has ever before in history. That's okay. Money for kids' healthcare, however, means the jackboot of Bolshevism is stamping down upon us.

Then there's the issue of fiscal responsibility. Seven billion dollars a year for kids' health is irresponsible – this from the administration that just surpassed the New Deal's expansion of government.

The only difference is that the New Deal gave us social services, rebuilt the economy and created real jobs and a real future for the nation.

The Bad Deal, by comparison, is just giving us a police state, insane endless wars and environmental devastation (ever look at the environmental impact of the US military?) while making us more and more vulnerable to violence, disease and an environmental holocaust.

Waffles and spaghetti

Let's look at where Mr. Fiscal Responsibility's government is spending our money. We can start with \$141 million per year for abstinence education programs. Journalist Barbara Ehrenreich recently reported in *The Progressive* that one program training teachers in abstinence education tells them that they should “Bring to class frozen waffles and a bowl of spaghetti noodles without sauce” to use as visual aids. The program goes on to explain how “research has found that men's brains are more like waffles” while “women's brains, on the other hand, are more like spaghetti.”

Get it? Little Johnny has to keep his johnson in his pants, cause, well, waffles and spaghetti don't mix, sauce or no sauce. It's then up to his Sunday school teacher to make the more difficult argument that waffles shouldn't bone waffles either, and spaghetti's will burn in hell. That's \$141 million for some really confused kids – who, by the way, according to a congressionally mandated study, are no more likely to be abstinent than kids who learned about the birds and the bees instead of waffles and spaghetti.

That \$141 million is still less than the \$146 million that the Government Accountability Office reports high-ranking officials, particularly those working for the Ashcroft-Gonzales State Departments, spent upgrading their taxpayer-funded plane tickets to first class.

Then there are the everyday expenses of running the Bush White House, such as \$200 million this August for George W. Bush's five-day trip to

Australia. It seems his entourage brought three Boeing 747s and five military transport planes to haul 20 vehicles and two helicopters. The White House staff, presidential advisors and Secret Service agents accompanying Bush totaled 300 people, though I suppose the exact breakdown of how many of each there were is classified. The Sydney Morning Herald referred to this menagerie as “Bush’s Traveling Circus.”

\$1,270,000,000,000

And of course there are all the smaller “brushfire” wars around the world we must fund, such as “Plan Colombia,” with a price tag of \$1 billion a year. Most of this money goes directly to that oppressive regime’s military, ostensibly to fund the “War on Drugs.”

Bush’s drug czar, John Waters, however, recently, in an interview with the Associated Press, said operations in Colombia “have had little impact on the flow of cocaine on American streets.” The War on Drugs, like the War on Terror, or any future wars such as a War on Persnickety Journalists, is as endless as the human rights abuses and misappropriations of federal funds that they justify.

Of course, US funding for Colombia’s military pales in comparison with the \$91 billion American taxpayers have spent to prop up the Israeli military and government since that nation’s 1949 formation.

The granddaddy of all boondoggles is, however, that great black hole we

continue to shovel money and lives into – the war against Iraq. Using numbers from the Congressional Research Service and the Congressional Budget Office, The American Prospect magazine estimates the total cost of the Iraq war, including expenses such as caring for those wounded veterans lucky enough to get federally funded care, will total out at \$1.27 trillion.

This figure, which amounts to over one thousand billion, needs to be written out. It’s \$1,270,000,000,000, or \$4,233 for each and every person alive in the US today.

Where is this money going? An Inspector General’s audit found, for example, that it’s quite common to come across stacks of “bricks” comprising crisp, new \$100 bills piled up in the offices and living quarters of US officials in Iraq, where multimillion dollar government “contracts” are often paid in cash.

With US dollars going from the printing press straight to the streets of Baghdad, it’s no wonder the greenback has fallen in value lower than Canada’s “loonie” for the first time in over a generation. It’s even falling against Cuba’s peso. Way to go, George!

This is all good sound policy, however. It’s healthcare for children that’s going to bankrupt us. If we don’t stand up against the little tykes today, they’ll be ruling our country tomorrow. **CT**

Dr. Michael I. Niman is a regular contributor to ColdType. His essays are archived at www.mediastudy.com

The War on Drugs, like the War on Terror, or any future wars such as a War on Persnickety Journalists, is as endless as the human rights abuses and misappropriations of federal funds that they justify

THE MOTHER OF ALL PRETEXTS

BY URI AVNERY

From early childhood we learned about the pioneers, many of them sons and daughters of well-to-do and well-educated families, who left behind a comfortable life in Europe in order to start a new life in a far-away and – by the standards of the time – primitive country

When I hear mention of the “Clash of Civilizations” I don’t know whether to laugh or to cry. To laugh, because it is such a silly notion. To cry, because it is liable to cause untold disasters. To cry even more, because our leaders are exploiting this slogan as a pretext for sabotaging any possibility of an Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation. It is just one more in a long line of pretexts.

Why was the Zionist movement in need of excuses to justify the way it treated the Palestinian people?

At its birth, it was an idealistic movement. It laid great weight on its moral basis. Not just in order to convince the world, but above all in order to set its own conscience at rest.

From early childhood we learned about the pioneers, many of them sons and daughters of well-to-do and well-educated families, who left behind a comfortable life in Europe in order to start a new life in a far-away and – by the standards of the time – primitive country. Here, in a savage climate they

were not used to, often hungry and sick, they performed bone-breaking physical labor under a brutal sun.

For that, they needed an absolute belief in the rightness of their cause. Not only did they believe in the need to save the Jews of Europe from persecution and pogroms, but also in the creation of a society so just as never seen before, an egalitarian society that would be a model for the entire world. Leo Tolstoy was no less important for them than Theodor Herzl. The kibbutz and the moshav were symbols of the whole enterprise. But this idealistic movement aimed at settling in a country inhabited by another people. How to bridge this contradiction between its sublime ideals and the fact that their realization necessitated the expulsion of the people of the land?

The easiest way was to repress the problem altogether, ignoring its very existence: the land, we told ourselves, was empty, there was no people living here at all. That was the justification that served as a bridge over the moral abyss.

Only one of the Founding Fathers of the Zionist movement was courageous enough to call a spade a spade. Ze'ev Jabotinsky wrote as early as 80 years ago that it was impossible to deceive the Palestinian people (whose existence he recognized) and to buy their consent to the Zionist aspirations.

We are white settlers colonizing the land of the native people, he said, and there is no chance whatsoever that the natives will resign themselves to this voluntarily. They will resist violently, like all the native peoples in the European colonies. Therefore we need an "Iron Wall" to protect the Zionist enterprise.

Two moralities

When Jabotinsky was told that his approach was immoral, he replied that the Jews were trying to save themselves from the disaster threatening them in Europe, and, therefore, their morality trumped the morality of the Arabs in Palestine.

Most Zionists were not prepared to accept this force-oriented approach. They searched fervently for a moral justification they could live with.

Thus started the long quest for justifications – with each pretext supplanting the previous one, according to the changing spiritual fashions in the world. The first justification was precisely the one mocked by Jabotinsky: we were actually coming to benefit the Arabs. We shall redeem them from their primitive living conditions, from ignorance and disease. We shall teach them modern methods of agriculture and bring them advanced medicine. Everything – ex-

cept employment, because we needed every job for the Jews we were bringing here, which we were transforming from ghetto-Jews into a people of workers and tillers of the soil.

When the ungrateful Arabs went on to resist our grand project, in spite of all the benefits we were supposedly bringing them, we found a Marxist justification: It's not the Arabs who oppose us, but only the "effendis". The rich Arabs, the great landowners, are afraid that the glowing example of the egalitarian Hebrew community would attract the exploited Arab proletariat and cause them to rise against their oppressors.

That, too, did not work for long, perhaps because the Arabs saw how the Zionists bought the land from those very same "effendis" and drove out the tenants who had been cultivating it for generations.

The rise of the Nazis in Europe brought masses of Jews to the country. The Arab public saw how the land was being withdrawn from under their feet, and started a rebellion against the British and the Jews in 1936. Why, the Arabs asked, should they pay for the persecution of the Jews by the Europeans? But the Arab Revolt gave us a new justification: the Arabs support the Nazis. And indeed, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, was photographed sitting next to Hitler. Some people "discovered" that the Mufti was the real instigator of the Holocaust. (Years later it was revealed that Hitler had detested the Mufti, who had no influence whatsoever over the Nazis.)

World War II came to an end, to be

The Arab public saw how the land was being withdrawn from under their feet, and started a rebellion against the British and the Jews in 1936. Why, the Arabs asked, should they pay for the persecution of the Jews by the Europeans?

SABOTAGING PEACE

A sceptic might ask: How did it happen that the wonderful Western culture gave birth to the Inquisition, the pogroms, the burning of witches, the annihilation of the Native Americans, the Holocaust, the ethnic cleansings and other atrocities without number

followed by the 1948 war. Half of the vanquished Palestinian people became refugees. That did not trouble the Zionist conscience, because everybody knew: They ran away of their own free will. Their leaders had called upon them to leave their homes, to return later with the victorious Arab armies. True, no evidence was ever found to support this absurd claim, but it has sufficed to soothe our conscience to this day.

It may be asked: why were the refugees not allowed to come back to their homes once the war was over? Well, it was they who in 1947 rejected the UN partition plan and started the war. If because of this they lost 78% of their country, they have only themselves to blame.

Then came the Cold War. We were, of course, on the side of the “Free World”, while the great Arab leader, Gamal Abd-al-Nasser, got his weapons from the Soviet bloc. (True, in the 1948 war the Soviet arms flowed to us, but that’s not important.) It was quite clear: No use talking with the Arabs, because they support Communist tyranny.

But the Soviet bloc collapsed. “The terrorist organization called PLO”, as Menachem Begin used to call it, recognized Israel and signed the Oslo agreement. A new justification had to be found for our unwillingness to give back the occupied territories to the Palestinian people.

Finding the arch-enemy

The salvation came from America: a professor named Samuel Huntington wrote a book about the “Clash of Civ-

ilizations”. And so we found the mother of all pretexts. The arch-enemy, according to this theory, is Islam. Western Civilization, Judeo-Christian, liberal, democratic, tolerant, is under attacked from the Islamic monster, fanatical, terrorist, murderous.

Islam is murderous by nature. Actually, “Muslim” and “terrorist” are synonymous. Every Muslim is a terrorist, every terrorist a Muslim.

A sceptic might ask: How did it happen that the wonderful Western culture gave birth to the Inquisition, the pogroms, the burning of witches, the annihilation of the Native Americans, the Holocaust, the ethnic cleansings and other atrocities without number – but that was in the past. Now Western culture is the embodiment of freedom and progress.

Professor Huntington was not thinking about us in particular. His task was to satisfy a peculiar American craving: the American empire always needs a virtual, world-embracing enemy, a single enemy which includes all the opponents of the United States around the world. The Communists delivered the goods – the whole world was divided between Good Guys (the Americans and their supporters) and Bad Guys (the Commies).

Everybody who opposed American interests was automatically a Communist – Nelson Mandela in South Africa, Salvador Allende in Chile, Fidel Castro in Cuba, while the masters of Apartheid, the death squads of Augusto Pinochet and the secret police of the Shah of Iran belonged, like us, to the Free World.

When the Communist empire collapsed, America was suddenly left without a world-wide enemy. This vacuum has now been filled by the Muslim-Terrorists. Not only Osama bin Laden, but also the Chechnyan freedom fighters, the angry North-African youth of the Paris banlieus, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, the insurgents in the Philippines.

Thus the American world view rearranged itself: a good world (Western Civilization) and a bad world (Islamic civilization). Diplomats still take care to make a distinction between “radical Islamists” and “moderate Muslims”, but that is only for appearances’ sake. Between ourselves, we know of course that they are all Osama bin Ladens. They are all the same.

This way, a huge part of the world, composed of manifold and very different countries, and a great religion, with many different and even opposing tendencies (like Christianity, like Judaism), which has given the world unmatched scientific and cultural treasures, is thrown into one and the same pot.

This world view is tailored for us. Indeed, the world of the clashing civilizations is, for us, the best of all possible worlds.

We're the good guys

The struggle between Israel and the Palestinians is no longer a conflict between the Zionist movement, which came to settle in this country, and the Palestinian people, which inhabited it. No, it has been from the very beginning a part of a world-wide struggle which does not stem from our aspirations and

actions. The assault of terrorist Islam on the Western world did not start because of us. Our conscience can be entirely clean – we are among the good guys of this world.

This is now the line of argument of official Israel: the Palestinians elected Hamas, a murderous Islamic movement. (If it didn't exist, it would have to be invented – and indeed, some people assert it was created from the start by our secret service.) Hamas is terroristic, and so is Hizbullah.

Perhaps Mahmoud Abbas is not a terrorist himself, but he is weak and Hamas is about to take sole control over all Palestinian territories. So we cannot talk with them. We have no partner. Actually, we cannot possibly have a partner, because we belong to Western Civilization, which Islam wants to eradicate.

In his 1896 book “Der Judenstaat”, Theodor Herzl, the official Israeli “Prophet of the State”, prophesied this development, too.

This is what he wrote in 1896: “For Europe we shall constitute (in Palestine) a part of the wall against Asia, we shall serve as a vanguard of culture against barbarism.”

Herzl was thinking of a metaphoric wall, but in the meantime we have put up a very real one. For many, this is not just a Separation Wall between Israel and Palestine. It is a part of the worldwide wall between the West and Islam, the front-line of the Clash of Civilizations. Beyond the wall there are not men, women and children, not a conquered and oppressed Palestinian population, not choked towns and villages

When the Communist empire collapsed, America was suddenly left without a world-wide enemy. This vacuum has now been filled by the Muslim-Terrorists

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like Abu-Dis, a-Ram, Bil'in and Qalqilia. No, beyond the wall there are a billion terrorists, multitudes of blood-thirsty Muslims, who have only one desire in life: to throw us into the sea, simply because we are Jews, part of Judeo-Christian Civilization.

With an official position like that –

who is there to talk to? What is there to talk about? What is the point of meeting in Annapolis or anywhere else?

And what is left to us to do – to cry or to laugh? **CT**

Uri Avnery is an Irgun veteran turned Israeli peace activist

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IF NOT NOW, WHEN? IF NOT HERE, HERE? IF NOT YOU, WHO?

BY WILLIAM BLUM

I used to give thought to what historical time and place I would like to have lived in. Europe in the 1930s was usually my first choice. As the war clouds darkened, I'd be surrounded by intrigue, spies omnipresent, matters of life and death pressing down, the opportunity to be courageous and principled. I pictured myself helping desperate people escape to America. It was real Hollywood stuff; think "Casablanca".

And when the Spanish Republic fell to Franco and his fascist forces, aided by the German and Italian fascists (while the United States and Britain stood aside, when not actually aiding the fascists), everything in my imaginary scenario would have heightened – the fate of Europe hung in the balance. Then the Nazis marched into Austria, then Czechoslovakia, then Poland ... one could have devoted one's life to working against all this, trying to hold back the fascist tide; what could be more thrilling, more noble?

Miracle of miracles, miracle of time machines, I'm actually living in this

imagined period, watching as the Bush fascists march into Afghanistan, bombing it into a "failed state"; then Iraq: death, destruction, and utterly ruined lives for 24 million human beings; threatening more of the same endless night of hell for the people of Iran; overthrowing Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Haiti; bombing helpless refugees in Somalia; relentless attempts to destabilize and punish Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Gaza, and other non-believers in the empire's god-given mission.

Sadly, my most common reaction to this real-life scenario, daily in fact, is less heroic and more feeling scared or depressed; not for myself personally but for our one and only world. The news every day, which I consume in large portions, slashes away at my *joie de vivre*; it's not just the horror stories of American military power run amok abroad and the injustices of the ever-expanding police state at home, but all the lies and stupidity which drive me up the wall.

I'm constantly changing stations, turning the TV or radio off, turning the

It's not just the horror stories of American military power run amok abroad and the injustices of the ever-expanding police state at home, but all the lies and stupidity which drive me up the wall

Educate yourself and as many others as you can, increasing the number of those in the opposition until it reaches a critical mass, at which point ... I can't predict the form the explosion will take

newspaper page, to escape the words of the King of Lies and the King of Stupidity – those two twisted creatures who happen to occupy the same humanoid body – and a hundred minions.

Nonetheless, I must tell you, comrades, that at the same time, our contemporary period also brings out in me a measure of what I imagined for my 1930s life. Our present world is in just as great peril, even more so when one considers the impending environmental catastrophe (which the King of Capitalism refuses to confront lest it harm the profits of those who lavish him with royal bribes). The Bush fascist tide must be stopped.

Usually when I'm asked "But what can we do?", my reply is something along the lines of: Inasmuch as I can not see violent revolution succeeding in the United States (something deep inside tells me that we couldn't quite match the government's firepower, not to mention their viciousness), I can offer no solution to stopping the imperial beast other than: Educate yourself and as many others as you can, increasing the number of those in the opposition until it reaches a critical mass, at which point ... I can't predict the form the explosion will take.

I'm afraid that this advice, whatever historical correctness it may embody, is not terribly inspiring. However, I've assembled four wise men to add their thoughts, hopefully raising the inspiration level. Let's call them the "patron saints of lost causes".

I.F. Stone: "The only kinds of fights worth fighting are those you are going to lose because somebody has to fight

them and lose and lose and lose until someday, somebody who believes as you do wins. In order for somebody to win an important, major fight 100 years hence, a lot of other people have got to be willing – for the sheer fun and joy of it – to go right ahead and fight, knowing you're going to lose. You mustn't feel like a martyr. You've got to enjoy it."

Howard Zinn: "People think there must be some magical tactic, beyond the traditional ones – protests, demonstrations, vigils, civil disobedience – but there is no magical panacea, only persistence."

Noam Chomsky: "There are no magic answers, no miraculous methods to overcome the problems we face, just the familiar ones: honest search for understanding, education, organization, action that raises the cost of state violence for its perpetrators or that lays the basis for institutional change – and the kind of commitment that will persist despite the temptations of disillusionment, despite many failures and only limited successes, inspired by the hope of a brighter future."

Sam Smith: "Those who think history has left us helpless should recall the abolitionist of 1830, the feminist of 1870, the labor organizer of 1890, and the gay or lesbian writer of 1910. They, like us, did not get to choose their time in history but they, like us, did get to choose what they did with it. Knowing what we know now about how these things turned out, but also knowing how long it took, would we have been abolitionists in 1830, or feminists in 1870, and so on?"

Anti-Semitism. Don't settle for imitations.

“The cleanliness of this people, moral and otherwise, I must say, is a point in itself. By their very exterior you could tell that these were no lovers of water, and, to your distress, you often knew it with your eyes closed. ... Added to this, there was their unclean dress and their generally unheroic appearance. ... Was there any form of filth or profligacy, particularly in cultural life, without at least one Jew involved in it? ... nine tenths of all literary filth, artistic trash, and theatrical idiocy can be set to the account of a people ... a people under whose parasitism the whole of honest humanity is suffering, today more than ever: the Jews.”

Now who can be the author of such abominable anti-semitism?

- a) Hasan Nasrallah, leader of Hezbollah in Lebanon;
- b) John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, authors of “The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy”;
- c) Osama bin Laden;
- d) Jimmy Carter; e) Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of Iran;
- f) Norman Finkelstein, author of “The Holocaust Industry”.

Each one has been condemned as anti-Semitic. Are you having a problem deciding?

Oh, excuse me, I forgot one –

- g) Adolf Hitler.^[1]

Does that make it easier? I'll bet some of you were thinking it must have been Ahmadinejad.

The Webster's Dictionary defines “anti-Semite” as “One who discriminates against or is hostile to or preju-

dated against Jews.” Notice that the state of Israel is not mentioned.

The next time a critic of Israeli policies is labeled “anti-semitic” think of this definition, think of Adolf's charming way of putting it, then closely examine what the accused has actually said or written.

It may, however, be past the time for such a rational, intellectual pursuit; ultra-heated polarization reigns supreme with anything concerning the Middle East, particularly Israel.

In March, at a conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in Washington, one of the speakers, an American “Christian Zionist”, asserted: “It is 1938, Iran is Germany and Ahmadinejad is the new Hitler.” The audience responded with a standing ovation, one of seven for his talk.^[2]

Then, in May, former Israeli Prime-Minister and current Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu declared that “It's 1938 and Iran is Germany. And Iran is racing to arm itself with atomic bombs. ... [While Ahmadinejad] denies the Holocaust he is preparing another Holocaust for the Jewish state.”^[3]

Not to be outdone in semi-hysterical propaganda, Israel's president, Shimon Peres, has compared an Iranian nuclear bomb to a “flying concentration camp”.^[4]

So why hasn't Iran at least started its holocaust by killing or throwing into concentration camps its own Jews, an estimated 30,000 in number? These are Iranian Jews who have representation in Parliament and who have been free for many years to emigrate to Israel but

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The above is but a small sample of the hatred, anger, and stupidity spewed forth against Ahmadinejad for several years now. A number of people on the American left, who should know better, have joined this chorus

have chosen not to do so.

For your further apocalyptic enjoyment, here are a couple more of Zionism's finest envoys speaking about Iran. Former Speaker of the House in the US Congress, Newt Gingrich: "Three nuclear weapons is a second Holocaust. We have enemies who are quite explicit in their desire to destroy us. They say it publicly, on television, on Web sites. [They are] fully as determined as Nazi Germany, more determined than the Soviet Union, and these enemies will kill us the first chance they get."^[5]

And Norman Podhoretz, leading neo-conservative editor of Commentary magazine, in an article entitled "The Case for Bombing Iran": "Like Hitler, [Ahmadinejad] is a revolutionary whose objective is to overturn the going international system and to replace it in the fullness of time with a new order dominated by Iran and ruled by the religio-political culture of Islamofascism. ... The plain and brutal truth is that if Iran is to be prevented from developing a nuclear arsenal, there is no alternative to the actual use of military force – any more than there was an alternative to force if Hitler was to be stopped in 1938."^[6]

Though so often condemned, Hitler actually arrived at a number of very perceptive insights into how the world worked. One of them was this:

"The great masses of the people in the very bottom of their hearts tend to be corrupted rather than consciously and purposely evil ... therefore, in view of the primitive simplicity of their minds, they more easily fall a victim to a big lie than to a little one, since they

themselves lie in little things, but would be ashamed of lies that were too big."^[7]

Ahmadinejad arrived in New York September 24 to address the United Nations. At Columbia University he was introduced by the school's president as a man who appeared to lack "intellectual courage", had a "fanatical mindset", and may be "astonishingly undereducated".^[8] How many people in the audience, I wonder, looked around to see where George W. was sitting.

"If I were the president of a university, I would not have invited him. He's a holocaust denier," said Hillary Clinton, once again fearlessly challenging the Bush administration's propaganda.^[9]

The above is but a small sample of the hatred, anger, and stupidity spewed forth against Ahmadinejad for several years now. A number of people on the American left, who should know better, have joined this chorus. I therefore would like to repeat, and update, part of something I wrote in this report last December, which was entitled "Designer Monsters".

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is a man seemingly custom-made for the White House in its endless quest for enemies with whom to scare Congress, the American people, and the world, in order to justify the unseemly behavior of the empire. The Iranian president, we are told, has declared that he wants to "wipe Israel off the map". He has said that "the Holocaust is a myth". He held a conference in Iran for "Holocaust deniers". And his government passed a new law requiring Jews to wear a yel-

low insignia, à la the Nazis. On top of all that, he's aiming to build nuclear bombs, one of which would surely be aimed at Israel. What right-thinking person would not be scared by such a man?

However, like with all such designer monsters made bigger than life during the Cold War and since by Washington, the truth about Ahmadinejad is a bit more complicated.

According to people who know Farsi, the Iranian leader has never said anything about "wiping Israel off the map". In his October 29, 2005 speech, when he reportedly first made the remark, the word "map" does not even appear. According to the translation of Juan Cole, American professor of Modern Middle East and South Asian History, Ahmadinejad said that "the regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time." His remark, said Cole, "does not imply military action or killing anyone at all"^[10], which of course is what would make the remark sound threatening.

At the December 2006 conference in Teheran ("Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision"), the Iranian president said: "The Zionist regime will be wiped out soon, the same way the Soviet Union was, and humanity will achieve freedom."^[11] Obviously, the man is not calling for any kind of violent attack upon Israel, for the dissolution of the Soviet Union took place peacefully.

Moreover, in June 2006, subsequent to Ahmadinejad's controversial speech, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, stated: "We have no problem with the world. We are not a threat

whatsoever to the world, and the world knows it. We will never start a war. We have no intention of going to war with any state."^[12]

As for the Holocaust myth, I have yet to read or hear words from Ahmadinejad saying simply, clearly, unambiguously, and unequivocally that he thinks that what we know as the Holocaust never happened. He has instead commented about the peculiarity and injustice of a Holocaust which took place in Europe resulting in a state for the Jews in the Middle East instead of in Europe. Why are the Palestinians paying a price for a German crime? he asks. He argues that Israel and the United States have exploited the memory of the Holocaust for their own purposes. And he wonders about the accuracy of the number of Jews – six million – allegedly killed in the Holocaust, as have many other people of all political stripes, including Holocaust survivors like Italian author Primo Levi. (The much publicized World War One atrocities which turned out to be false made the public very skeptical of the Holocaust claims for a long time after World War Two.) Ahmadinejad further asks why European researchers have been imprisoned for questioning certain details about the Holocaust.

Which of this deserves to be labeled "Holocaust denial"?

The conference gave a platform to various points of view, including six members of Jews United Against Zionism, at least two of whom were rabbis. One was Ahron Cohen, from London, who declared: "There is no doubt whatsoever, that during World War II

Obviously, the man is not calling for any kind of violent attack upon Israel, for the dissolution of the Soviet Union took place peacefully

"I'm not saying that it [the Holocaust] didn't happen at all. This is not the judgment that I'm passing here."

there developed a terrible and catastrophic policy and action of genocide perpetrated by Nazi Germany against the Jewish People." He also said that "the Zionists make a great issue of the Holocaust in order to further their illegitimate philosophy and aims," indicating as well that the figure of six million Jewish victims is debatable. The other rabbi was Moshe David Weiss, who told the delegates: "We don't want to deny the killing of Jews in World War II, but Zionists have given much higher figures for how many people were killed. They have used the Holocaust as a device to justify their oppression." His group rejects the creation of Israel on the grounds that it violates Jewish religious law in that a Jewish state can't exist until the return of the Messiah.^[13]

Another speaker was Shiraz Dossa, professor of political science at St. Francis Xavier University in Canada. In an interview after the conference, he described himself as an anti-imperialist and an admirer of Noam Chomsky, and said that he "was invited because of my expertise as a scholar in the German-Jewish area, as well as my studies in the Holocaust. ... I have nothing to do with Holocaust denial, not at all." His talk, he said, was "about the war on terrorism, and how the Holocaust plays into it. ... There was no pressure at all to say anything, and people there had different views."^[14]

Clearly, the conference – which the White House called "an affront to the entire civilized world"^[15] – was not set up to be a forum for people to deny that the Holocaust literally never took place at all.

As to the yellow star story of May 2006 – that was a complete fabrication by a prominent Iranian-American neo-conservative author, Amir Taheri.

Ahmadinejad, however, is partly to blame for his predicament. When asked directly about the Holocaust and other controversial matters he usually declines to give explicit answers of "yes" or "no". I interpret this as his prideful refusal to accede to the wishes of what he regards as a hostile Western interviewer asking hostile questions. The Iranian president is also in the habit of prefacing certain remarks with "Even if the Holocaust happened ...", a rhetorical device we all use in argument and discussion, but one which can not help but reinforce the doubts people have about his views. However, when Ahmadinejad himself asks, as he often has, "Why should the Palestinians have to pay for something that happened in Europe?" he does not get a clear answer.

In any event, in the question and answer session following his talk at Columbia, the Iranian president said: "I'm not saying that it [the Holocaust] didn't happen at all. This is not the judgment that I'm passing here."

That should put the matter to rest. But of course it won't. Two days later, September 26, a bill (H. R. 3675) was introduced in Congress "To prohibit Federal grants to or contracts with Columbia University", to punish the school for inviting Ahmadinejad to speak. The bill's first "finding" states that "Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has called for the destruction of the State of Israel, a critical ally of the United

States.”

That same day, comedian Jay Leno had great fun ridiculing Ahmadinejad for denying that the Holocaust ever happened “despite all the eye-witness accounts”.

How long before the first linking of Iran with 9-11? Or has that already happened? How long before democracy and freedom bombs begin to fall upon the heads of the Iranian people? All the charges of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial, along with other disinformation, are of course designed to culminate in this new crime against humanity.

I wonder, in discussing these matters, if I’m running the risk of once again being called “anti-Semitic” by some Internet readers. No one is safe from such charges these days. It should be noted that Hugo Chavez, president of Venezuela, was accused last year of anti-semitic behavior by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency of New York and the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, important members of the Israel lobby. The accusation was based on a highly egregious out-of-context reading of some remarks by Chavez.^[16] One doesn’t have to be particularly conspiracy minded to think that this was done in collusion with Bush administration officials. As the Reagan administration in 1983 flung charges of anti-Semitism against the Sandinista government of Nicaragua, led by Daniel Ortega, who heads it again today.^[17] Stay tuned. Daniel, watch out.

One final thought. On the Democratic Party’s failure to stand up to the Bush fascist tide. Here, from the first-

person account of a German living under Hitler in the 1930s, his observation about the leading German political party, the Social Democrats, the Democratic Party of its time: The Social Democrats, he wrote, “had fought the election campaign of 1933 in a dreadfully humiliating way, chasing after the Nazi slogans and emphasizing that they were ‘also nationalist’. ... In May, a month before they were finally dissolved, the Social Democratic faction in the Reichstag had unanimously expressed their confidence in Hitler and joined in the singing of the ‘Horst Wessel Song,’ the Nazi anthem. (The official parliamentary report noted: ‘Unending applause and cheers, in the house and the galleries. The Reichschancellor [Hitler] turns to the Social Democratic faction and applauds.’)”^[18] **CT**

NOTES

- [1] Adolf Hitler, “Mein Kampf” (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1971, original version 1925), Vol. 1, chapter 2, pp 57-8; chapter 4, p.150
- [2] The Forward (Jewish newspaper in New York), March 16, 2007 <http://www.forward.com/articles/pastor-hailed-bibi-dissed-pollard-rejected-whil/>
- [3] Haaretz.com (Israeli newspaper), <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/787766.html>
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] The Jerusalem Post, Jan 23, 2007
- [6] Commentary Magazine (New York), June 2007
- [7] “Mein Kampf”, op. cit., Vol. 1, chapter 10, p.231
- [8] Washington Post, September 25,

How long before the first linking of Iran with 9-11? Or has that already happened? How long before democracy and freedom bombs begin to fall upon the heads of the Iranian people?

ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

The monks have not made any socialist or anti-imperialist demands. There are no American bases whose removal they've called for.

2007, p.1

[9] Washington Post, September 25, 2007, p.6

[10] Informed Comment, Cole's blog, May 3, 2006

www.juancole.com/2006/05/hitchens-hacker-and-hitchens.html

For a word-by-word breakdown of Ahmadinejad's remark, in Farsi and English, see: Global Research, January 20, 2007,

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=viewArticle&code=NOR20070120&articleId=4527>

[11] Associated Press, Dec 12, 2006

[12] Letter to Washington Post from M.A. Mohammadi, Press Officer, Iranian Mission to the United Nations, June 12, 2006

[13] nkusa.org/activities/Speeches/2006Iran-ACohen.cfm;

Telegraph.co.uk, article by Alex

Spillius, December 13, 2006; Associated Press, December 12, 2006

[14] Globe and Mail (Toronto), December 13, 2006

[15] Associated Press, December 12, 2006

[16] Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, www.fair.org/index.php?page=2805

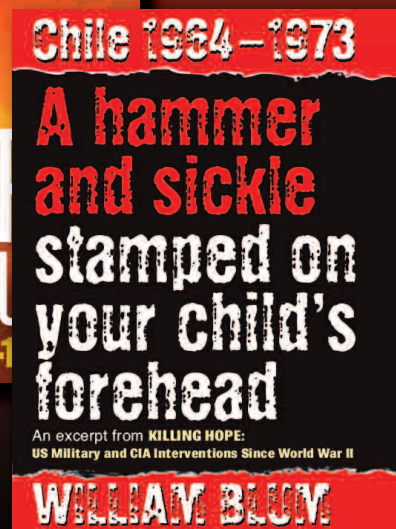
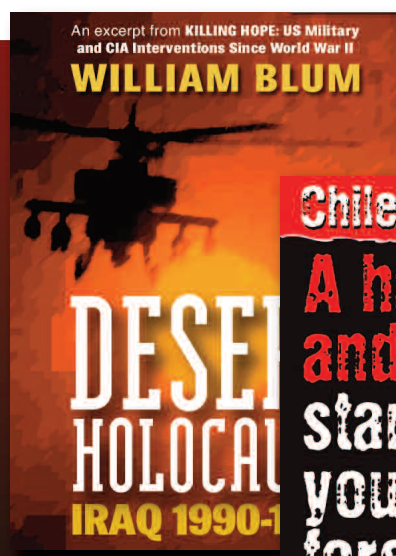
[17] Holly Sklar, "Washington's War On Nicaragua" (1988), p.243

[18] Sebastian Haffner, "Defying Hitler" (English edition, New York, 2000), pp.130-1

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

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BURMA, DEMOCRACY AND HYPOCRITES

BY JOHN PILGER

Addressing a London meeting, 'Freedom Writ Large', organised by PEN and the Writers Network of Burma, John Pilger pays tribute to Aung San Suu Kyi and the writers of Burma, 'the bravest of the brave', and describes the hypocrisy of Western leaders who claim to back their struggle for freedom.

The news is no more from Burma. The young monks are quiet in their cells, or they are dead. But words have escaped: the defiant, beautiful poetry of Aung Than and Zeya Aung; and we know of the unbroken will of the journalist U Win Tin, who makes ink out of brick powder on the walls of his prison cell and writes with a pen made from a bamboo mat – at the age of 77. These are the bravest of the brave.

What honour they bring to humanity with their struggle; and what shame they bring to those whose hypocrisy and silence helps to feed the monster that rules Burma.

When I began to write this, I had planned to quote a moving passage from my last interview with Aung San Suu

Kyi, but I decided not to – because of something Suu Kyi said to me when I last spoke to her. “Be careful of media fashion,” she said. “The media like this sentimental version of life that reduces everything down to personality. Too often this can be a distraction.”

I thought about that, and how typically self effacing it was, and how right she was. For the greatest distraction is the hypocrisy of those political figures in the democratic West, who claim to support the Burmese liberation struggle. Laura Bush and Condoleeza Rice come to mind. “The United States,” said Rice, “is determined to keep an international focus on the travesty that is taking place in Burma.” What she is less keen to keep a focus on is that the huge American company, Chevron, on whose board of directors she sat, is part of a consortium with the junta and the French company, Total, that operates in Burma’s offshore oil fields. The gas from these fields is exported through a pipeline that was built with forced labour and whose construction involved Halliburton, of which Vice President Cheney was Chief Executive.

For many years, the Foreign Office in

The gas from these fields is exported through a pipeline that was built with forced labour and whose construction involved Halliburton, of which Vice President Cheney was Chief Executive

IGNORING EVIL

When did Brown or Blair ever use their close connections with business – their platforms at the CBI and in the City London, among the bankers of Brussels - to name and shame those British companies that make money on the back of the Burmese people?

*John Pilger's latest book, **Freedom Next Time**, has just been published in paperback. This article was first published in *New Statesman*. His new movie is **The War on Democracy***

London promoted business as usual in Burma. When I interviewed Suu Kyi a decade ago I read her a Foreign Office press release that said, "Through commercial contacts with democratic nations such as Britain, the Burmese people will gain experience of democratic principles." She smiled sardonically and said, "Not a bit of it."

In Britain, the official public relations line has changed; Burma is a favourite New Labour's "cause"; Gordon Brown has written a chapter in a book about his admiration of Suu Kyi. How well his platitudes reflect on his counterfeit liberalism. When the uprising broke out in Rangoon, he referred to the sanctity of the "universal principles of human rights". Then he wrote a letter to PEN about Burma's writers; it waffles about prisoners of conscience and is a distraction: indeed part of his current, grand theme of distraction about "returning liberty" when of course none will be returned without a fight. Hands can be wrung; letters to PEN can be spun; nothing can be done. As for Burma, the essence of Britain's compliance and collusion has not changed. British tour firms – like Orient Express and Asean Explorer – are able to make a handsome profit on the suffering of the Burmese people. Aquatic – a sort of mini Halliburton – has its snout in the same trough, with all those companies that make a nice earner from Burmese teak.

When did Brown or Blair ever use their close connections with business – their platforms at the CBI and in the City London, among the bankers of Brussels - to name and shame those British companies that make money on the back of the Burmese people? When did a British

prime minister call for the European Union to plug the loopholes of arms supply to Burma, stopping, for example, the Italians from supplying military equipment? The reason ought to be obvious. The British government is itself one of the world's leading arms suppliers, especially to regimes at war with their neighbours, democracies or dictatorships, who cares? The dictator of Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah, whose tyranny gorges itself on British arms, just received a state visit. On October 25, the Brown government approved Washington's latest fabricated prelude to a criminal attack on Iran – as if the horrors of Iraq and Afghanistan were not enough for the "liberal" lion-hearts in Downing Street and Whitehall.

And when did a British prime minister call on its ally and client, Israel, to end its long and sinister relationship with the Burmese junta. Or does Israel's immunity and impunity also cover its supply of weapons technology to Burma and its reported training of the junta's most feared internal security thugs? Of course, that is not unusual. The Australian government – so vocal lately in its condemnation of the junta – has not stopped the Australian Federal Police from training Burma's internal security forces in at the Australian-funded Centre for Law Enforcement Co-operation in Indonesia.

Those who care for freedom in Burma and Iraq and Iran and Saudi Arabia and beyond must not be distracted by the posturing and weasel pronouncements of our leaders, who themselves should be called to account as accomplices. We owe nothing less to Aung San Suu Kyi, to Burma's writers and to all the bravest of the brave. **CT**

THE AMERICAN POLICE STATE

BY CHRIS HEDGES

Last month, a Dallas jury caused a mistrial in the government case against the United State's largest Islamic charity. The action raises a defiant fist on the sinking ship of American democracy.

If we lived in a state where due process and the rule of law could curb the despotism of the Bush administration, this mistrial might be counted a victory. But we do not. The jury may have rejected the federal government's claim that the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development funneled millions of dollars to Middle Eastern terrorists. It may have acquitted Mohammad el-Mezain, the former chairman of the foundation, of virtually all criminal charges related to funding terrorism (the jury deadlocked on one of the 32 charges against el-Mezain), and it may have deadlocked on the charges that had been lodged against four other former leaders of the charity, but don't be fooled.

This mistrial will do nothing to impede the administration's ongoing contempt for the rule of law. It will do nothing

to stop the curtailment of our civil liberties and rights. The grim march toward a police state continues.

Constitutional rights are minor inconveniences, noisome chatter, flies to be batted away on the steady road to despotism. And no one, not the courts, not the press, not the gutless Democratic opposition, not a compliant and passive citizenry hypnotized by tawdry television spectacles and celebrity gossip, seems capable of stopping the process. Those in power know this. We, too, might as well know it.

The Bush administration, which froze the foundation's finances three months after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and indicted its officials three years later on charges that they provided funds for the militant group Hamas, has ensured that the foundation and all other Palestinian charities will never reopen in the United States. Any organized support for Palestinians from within the U.S. has been rendered impossible. The goal of the Israeli government and the Bush administration — despite the charade of peace negotia-

The Bush administration has ensured that the foundation and all other Palestinian charities will never reopen in the United States

CONTEMPT FOR LAW

A jury in Tampa, Chicago or Dallas can dismiss the government's assaults on individual rights, but the draconian restrictions put in place because of the mendacious charges remain firmly implanted within the system. It is the charges, not the facts, which matter

tions to be held at Annapolis – is to grind defiant Palestinians into the dirt. Israel, which has plunged the Gaza Strip into one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, has now begun to ban fuel supplies and sever electrical service. The severe deprivation, the Israelis hope, will see the overthrow of the Hamas government in Gaza and the reinstatement of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who has become the Marshal Pétain of the Palestinian people.

The Dallas trial – like all of the major terrorism trials conducted by this administration, from the Florida case against the Palestinian activist Dr. Sami al-Arian, which also ended in a mistrial, to the recent decision by a jury in Chicago to acquit two men of charges of financing Hamas – has been a judicial failure. William Neal, a juror in the Dallas trial, told the Associated Press that the case “was strung together with macaroni noodles. There was so little evidence.”

Charges, not facts

Such trials, however, have been politically expedient. The accusations, true or untrue, serve the aims of the administration. A jury in Tampa, Chicago or Dallas can dismiss the government's assaults on individual rights, but the draconian restrictions put in place because of the mendacious charges remain firmly implanted within the system. It is the charges, not the facts, which matter.

Dr. al-Arian, who was supposed to have been released and deported in April, is still in a Virginia prison because he will not testify in a separate case be-

fore a grand jury.

The professor, broken by the long ordeal of his trial and unable to raise another million dollars in legal fees for a retrial, pleaded guilty to a minor charge in the hopes that his persecution would end. It has not.

Or take the case of Canadian citizen Maher Arar, who in 2002 was spirited away by Homeland Security from JFK Airport to Syria, where he spent 10 months being tortured in a coffin-like cell. He was, upon his release, exonerated of terrorism. Arar testified before a House panel last month about how he was abducted by the U.S. and interrogated, stripped of his legal rights and tortured. But he couldn't testify in person. He spoke to the House members on a video link from Canada. He is forbidden by Homeland Security to enter the United States because he allegedly poses a threat to national security.

Those accused of being involved in conspiracies and terrorism plots, as in all police states, become nonpersons. There is no rehabilitation. There is no justice.

“He was never given a hearing nor did the Canadian consulate, his lawyer, or his family know of his fate,” Amnesty International wrote of Arar. “Expulsion in such circumstances, without a fair hearing, and to a country known for regularly torturing their prisoners, violates the U.S. Government's obligations under international law, specifically the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.”

You can almost hear Dick Cheney yawn.

The Bush administration shut down the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development six years ago and froze its assets. There was no hearing or trial. It became a crime for anyone to engage in transactions with the foundation.

The administration never produced evidence to support the charges. It did not have any. In the “war on terror,” evidence is unnecessary. An executive order is enough. The foundation sued the government in a federal court in the District of Columbia. Behind closed doors, the government presented secret evidence that the charity had no opportunity to see or rebut. The charity’s case was dismissed.

The government has closed seven Muslim charities in the United States and frozen their assets. Not one of them, or any person associated with them, has been found guilty of financing terrorism. They will remain shut.

George W. Bush can tar any organization or individual, here or abroad, as

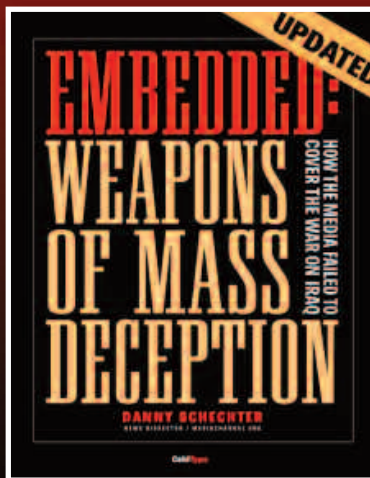
being part of a terrorist conspiracy and by fiat render them powerless. He does not need to make formal charges. He does not need to wait for a trial verdict. Secret evidence, which these court cases have exposed as a sham, is enough.

The juries in Tampa, Chicago and Dallas did their duty. They spoke for the rights of citizens. They spoke for the protection of due process and the rule of law. They threw small hurdles in front of the emergent police state. But the abuse rolls on.

I fear terrorism. I know it is real. I am sure terrorists will strike again on American soil. But while terrorists can wound and disrupt our democracy, only we can kill it. **CT**

Chris Hedges is the former Middle East bureau chief for The New York Times and the author of War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning. His latest book is American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America

George W. Bush can tar any organization or individual, here or abroad, as being part of a terrorist conspiracy and by fiat render them powerless. He does not need to make formal charges



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THE SOLDIERS WHO SEARCH AND AVOID

BY DAHR JAMAIL

"We would go find an open field and park, and call our base every hour to tell them we were searching for weapons caches in the fields and doing weapons patrols and everything was going fine"

Iraq war veterans now stationed at a base at Watertown, New York, say that morale among U.S. soldiers in the country is so poor, many are simply parking their Humvees and pretending to be on patrol, a practice dubbed "search and avoid" missions.

Phil Aliff is an active duty soldier with the 10th Mountain Division stationed at Fort Drum in upstate New York. He served nearly one year in Iraq from August 2005 to July 2006, in the areas of Abu Ghraib and Fallujah, both west of Baghdad.

"Morale was incredibly low," said Aliff, adding that he joined the military because he was raised in a poor family by a single mother and had few other prospects. "Most men in my platoon in Iraq were just in from combat tours in Afghanistan."

According to Aliff, their mission was to help the Iraqi Army "stand up" in the Abu Ghraib area of western Baghdad, but in fact his platoon was doing all the fighting without support from the Iraqis they were supposedly preparing

to take control of the security situation.

"I never heard of an Iraqi unit that was able to operate on their own," said Aliff, who is now a member of the group Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). "The only reason we were replaced by an Iraqi Army unit was for publicity."

Aliff said he participated in roughly 300 patrols. "We were hit by so many roadside bombs we became incredibly demoralised, so we decided the only way we wouldn't be blown up was to avoid driving around all the time."

"So we would go find an open field and park, and call our base every hour to tell them we were searching for weapons caches in the fields and doing weapons patrols and everything was going fine," he said, adding, "All our enlisted people became very disenchanted with our chain of command."

Aliff, who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), refused to return to Iraq with his unit, which arrived in Kirkuk two weeks ago. "They've already lost a guy, and they

are now fostering the sectarian violence by arming the Sunnis while supporting the Shia politically ... classic divide and conquer.”

Aliff told IPS he is set to be discharged by the military next month because they claim his PTSD “is untreatable by their doctors”.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the number of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans seeking treatment for PTSD increased nearly 70 percent in the 12 months ending on Jun. 30. The nearly 50,000 VA-documented PTSD cases greatly exceed the 30,000 military personnel that the Pentagon officially classifies as wounded in both occupations.

VA records show that mental health has become the second-largest area of illness for which veterans of the ongoing occupations are seeking treatment at VA hospitals and clinics. The total number of mental health cases among war veterans increased by 58 percent; from 63,767 on Jun. 30, 2006, to 100,580 on Jun. 30, 2007, according to the VA.

Other active duty Iraq veterans tell similar stories of disobeying orders so as not to be attacked so frequently.

“We’d go to the end of our patrol route and set up on top of a bridge and use it as an over-watch position,” Eli Wright, also an active duty soldier with the 10th Mountain Division, told IPS. “We would just sit with our binoculars

and observe rather than sweep. We’d call in radio checks every hour and say we were doing sweeps.”

Wright added, “It was a common tactic, a lot of people did that. We’d just hang out, listen to music, smoke cigarettes, and pretend.”

The 26-year-old medic complained that his unit did not have any armoured Humvees during his time in Iraq, where he was stationed in Ramadi, capital of the volatile Al Anbar province.

“We put sandbags on the floors of our vehicles, which had canvas doors,” said Wright, who was in Iraq from September 2003 until September 2004. “By the end of our tour, we were bolting any metal we could find to our Humvees. Everyone was doing this, and we didn’t get armoured Humvees in country until after we left.”

Other veterans, like 25-year-old Nathan Lewis, who was in Iraq for the invasion of March 2003 until June of that year while serving in the 214th field artillery brigade, complained of lack of training for what they were ordered to do, in addition to not having armoured Humvees for their travels.

“We never got training for a lot of the work we did,” he explained. “We had a white phosphorous mortar round that cooked off in the back of one of our trucks, because we loaded that with some other ammo, and we weren’t trained how to do it the right way.”

“It was a common tactic, a lot of people did that. We’d just hang out, listen to music, smoke cigarettes, and pretend”

DELVE INTO OUR PAST

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WAR GAMES

"They pay Iraqi kids to bring them things and spread the word that they are not doing anything and to please just leave them alone"

The "search and avoid" missions appear to have been commonplace around much of Iraq for years now.

Geoff Millard served nine years in the New York Army National Guard, and was in Iraq from October 2004 until October 2005 working for a general at a Tactical Operation Centre.

Millard, also a member of IVAW, said that part of his duties included reporting "significant actions", or SIGACTS, which is how the U.S. military describes an attack on their forces.

"We had units that never called in SIGACTS," Millard, who monitored highly volatile areas like Baquba, Tikrit and Samarra, told IPS. "When I was there two years ago, there were at least five companies that never had SIGACTS. I think 'search and avoids'

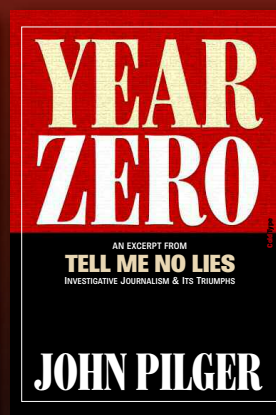
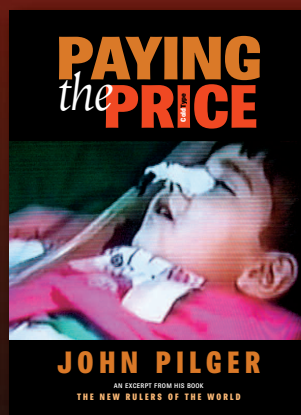
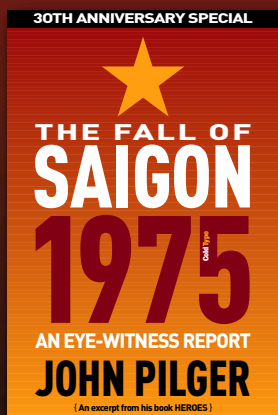
have been going on there for a long time."

Millard told IPS "search and avoid" missions continue today across Iraq.

"One of my buddies is in Baghdad right now and we email all the time," he explained, "He just told me that nearly each day they pull into a parking lot, drink soda, and shoot at the cans. They pay Iraqi kids to bring them things and spread the word that they are not doing anything and to please just leave them alone." **CT**

Dahr Jamail's new book is "*Beyond The Green Zone: Dispatches from an Unembedded Journalist in Occupied Iraq.*" This article originally appeared at his web site, <http://www.dahrjamailiraq.com>

THE BEST OF JOHN PILGER



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ON THE ROAD TO ARMAGEDDON

BY FELICITY ARBUTHNOTT

Reminder to the crusading Armageddonists "Thou shalt not kill." Exodus 20: 13

They are at it again. Remember when Milosovic was labelled "the butcher of Belgrade", the new Hitler?

Then Saddam Hussein was "the butcher of Baghdad" and, of course, the most dangerous man since Hitler – with weapons of mass destruction which could be unleashed on the world "in forty five minutes".

Colin Powell lied to the U.N., about the danger Iraq posed to the planet; George Bush lied to anyone who would listen; Tony Blair lied to Parliament and aides concocted dossiers so dodgy they were laughable. Yet despite the millions who marched, protested and knew the lies for what they were, there were millions who bought fiction as fact.

And here we go again. Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (wait for "the tyrant of Tehran") threatens the planet, is supplying weapons to Iraq's resistance, is destabilising the region

and the paradise that is occupied Iraq.

While there are indeed plenty of Iranians or Iranian sympathisers in Iraq, they came in with the occupiers. Many in high places in Iraq's corrupt, militia driven, American puppet government, speak Farsi, not Arabic.

The increasingly hysterical claims regarding Iran, the latest threat to life as we know it, is being brought to you by the very same warmongers who wrought the duplicity that resulted in Iraq's murderous decimation: the hawks' nest which is the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and their friends.

A glance at the AEI website lists those including:

Paul Wolfowitz ("entrepreneurship and development"),
 Michael Rubin ("Arab democracy"),
 Richard Perle ("defence ...intelligence"),
 Joshua Muravchik ("global democracy"),
 John Bolton ("foreign policy"),
 Lynne Cheney, whose husband, as ever, is believed a driving force behind the attack plan ("culture and

Aides concocted dossiers so dodgy they were laughable, yet despite the millions who marched, protested and knew the lies for what they were, there were millions who bought fiction as fact

THE CRAZIES ARE BACK

Britain's Prime Minister Brown "refuses to rule out" joining the US military intervention – to decimate for "democracy" and plunder resources

education”), Michael Ledeen (latest book: “The Iranian Time Bomb: The Mullah Zealots Quest for Destruction”), Danielle Pletka (“Vice President for foreign and defence policy studies”) who, writing in the “Wall Street Journal” (28th September 2007) referred to Iran’s “illegal nuclear weapons ... Washington’s impotence” and “clear information of a link to a weapons of mass destruction programme”. This in spite of the International Atomic Energy Authority finding no indication of such programmes.

It all sounds chillingly familiar.

Interestingly, an item on the Institute’s list of “Research Projects” is “Global Investment in Iran”. Surely a matter for Iran – or does the AEI already regard Iran’s oil fields and assets as their fiscal frolic zone?

Orchestration is continuing apace:

“Even as we are succeeding in Iraq” (really?) “Iran is working against us ... we will not achieve peace in the region if we ignore this threat”, writes Ledeen.

Further, there are clear plans to liberate Iran’s women, Afghan style: “Since 1979, Iran has changed from a society where women could attend university and have careers, to one where they are second class citizens ... sold as slaves ...”. writes Diana Furchgott-Roth in the New York Sun (14th September 2007.)

There must be two Irans: “Literacy is well over ninety percent, even in the rural areas and in 2005, more than sixty five percent of students entering university were women. The voices that come through most strongly on the Iranian

blogosphere are those of this educated, young generation.” Over sixty five percent of this country of seventy million are under thirty years old.

“I feel cold when I think about a possible war against my homeland”, wrote one blogger: “My picture of war hasn’t come from Hollywood movies, I have seen the pain, the kids tears, bloody streets ...” In a picture showing a meeting of the Tehran Photographers Association, the venue is packed with vibrantly dressed women – and one man. (See : Inside Iran, New Internationalist, March 2007: www.newint.org)

Iran is not perfect, but where is? Britain’s Prime Minister Brown “refuses to rule out” joining the US military intervention – to decimate for “democracy” and plunder resources. According to the Sunday Telegraph (1st October 2007), a dossier is being drawn up on Iran’s violations of International Law, as with Iraq. “Violations of International Law”? Two countries, Britain and America have not alone violated, but torn up International Law. Yet again, who guards the guards?

Can a nation, which even invaded Grenada (which has no armed forces, main exports: bananas, nutmeg, mace; a war for nutmegs?) in 1983, totalling a psychiatric hospital (24th anniversary, 25th October) population 94,103 (1994) v. United States, population 260,713,000 (1994) because it was a “threat”, be trusted?

But the war drums are beating: “WE MUST bomb Iran”, is the header for Josua Muravchik’s Los Angeles Times article (19th June 2007.)

He begins with quotes straight from

the Pentagon's Iraq propaganda handbook: "...since the country's secret nuclear programme was brought to light ... the path of diplomacy and sanctions has led nowhere." Tehran has "spurred" a "string of concessions"; the UN Security Council was derelict in its duty toward the Iranian threat.

The completion of Iran's nuclear arsenal grows closer daily, this "premier state sponsor of terrorism" could "slip nuclear material to terrorists". The bomb Iran doesn't have, would, of course "constitute a dire threat to Israel's six million population". No mention of Israel being the fifth largest nuclear power on earth, without a blink towards the non-proliferation treaty, or indeed even an admission of having such weapons.

However Iran's non-weapons: "would spell finis to the entire non-proliferation system". The "...global struggle" with Iran is "akin" to the forty year one with the Soviet Union and – wait for it – "a clash of civilisations".

"The only way to forestall these frightening developments is by the use of force ... by an air campaign against Tehran's nuclear facilities. We have considerable information about these facilities; by some estimates they comprise about 1,500 targets.... What should be the timing of such an attack? If we did it next year, that would give time for U.N. diplomacy to further reveal its bankruptcy ..." is Murachik's conclusion. "Deja vu, all over again."

Not mentioned, anywhere, in the demented rhetoric regarding an attack on Iran, is the "A" word: Armageddon. "Likely targets for saturation bombing"

(that look likely to involve tactical nuclear weapons) "are the Bushehr nuclear power plant" (where Russian and other foreign national technicians are present) "a uranium mining site at Saghand" (near a major city, Yazd) "the uranium enrichment facility at Natanz, a heavy water plant and radioisotope facility at Arak, the Arkedan Nuclear Fuel Unit, the Uranium Enrichment Facility and Nuclear Technology Centre in Isfahan, the Tehran Nuclear Research Centre, the Tehran Molybdenum, Iodine and Xenon Radioisotope Production Facility a reportedly dismantled uranium enrichment plant at Lashkar Abad and the Radioactive Waste Storage Units in Karaj and Anarak" (Wayne Madsen: http://www.endtimesreport.com/Attack_on_Iran.html)

These were facilities, many begun after the US/UK overthrow of Iran's democratically elected, democratic Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953, after he had nationalised the country's oil. The coup was engineered by the CIA's Kermit Roosevelt, grandson of Theodore. General Norman Schwartzkopf's father then travelled to Iran, to help train Savak, the murderous, ruthless, secret police of America's friend, the Shah.

However, modern history aside, forget global warming.

Consider the enormity of the seemingly proposed attack, apart from the unimaginable horror of those fried and irradiated in the immediate vicinity and surrounding countries (including "allied", troops throughout the region.).

This is a succinct description of what

No mention of Israel being the fifth largest nuclear power on earth, without a blink towards the non-proliferation treaty, or indeed even an admission of having such weapons

THE CRAZIES ARE BACK

Will the millions who believed the last great lie, be fooled again? If they are not, will it make any difference, in the illegal space the US and UK Administrations inhabit?

the explosion of just one nuclear power plant, Chernobyl, generated in 1986: “Irradiated human cells splinter into fragments called micronuclei ... a definitive pre-cursor of cancer. During the nuclear reactor disaster at Chernobyl, the ... radiation released was the equivalent of four hundred atomic bombs ... Exposed Russians quickly developed blood cell micronuclei ...” (The Radiation Poisoning of America, Amy Worthington, 9 Oct 2007: <http://www.globalresearch.ca>)

The plight of the children and the Chernobyl region’s cancers 21 years on, have become an ongoing, tragic, global health study, as Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the residents of the Pacific islands, after the British and French nuclear tests.

Chernobyl’s radiation traversed the globe within days. In the highlands of the U.K., Wales and Cumbria, livestock straying in affected areas are still inedible and unsaleable. Chernobyl was doused from the air with fire retardant, by crews of whom, despite being protected by heavily leaded cockpit floors, it has been reported not one has survived the resultant cancers. If Chernobyl was the equivalent of 400 atomic bombs, see the above list and do the maths. Don’t forget to add the “coalition’s” democratic nuclear weapons dropped on them.

Norman Podhoretz, one of the founding fathers of neo-conservatism in the United States, is gung-ho, another one reportedly urging Bush to bomb Iran. He told Bush: “You have the awesome responsibility to prevent another holocaust. You are the only one

with the guts to do it.”(Sunday Times, 1st October 2007.) A holocaust by any other name ...

Mohammad Mossadegh and Saddam Hussein made fatal mistakes. They nationalised their countries’ oil. Saddam Hussein finally tied the noose around his neck, when he switched Iraq’s oil revenues out of US Dollars and into Euros in 2000.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has also vowed to switch from US Dollars and move to a currency “further east”.

As with Iraq, is this really about a nuclear threat? Will the millions who believed the last great lie, be fooled again? If they are not, will it make any difference, in the illegal space the US and UK Administrations inhabit?

On the ground in the Middle East (or in this case on the water) it seems not. Here is a communication from a Landing Signals Officer (an LSO directs carrier aircraft whilst landing) on a carrier attack group that is planning and staging a strike group deployment in the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world’s most strategically vital oil routes, which is controlled by Iran.

The LSO is convinced Iran will be attacked, commenting that “... all Air Operation Planning and Asset Tasking are finished [meaning] all targets have been chosen, prioritized and tasked to specific aircraft, bases, carriers, missile cruisers ...”

Further, the LSO comments, there is deep disquiet amongst senior officers about “staging a massive attack on Iran”. However, “I have seen more than one senior Commander disappear ...”; it’s weird, because everyone who has

“disappeared” has questioned this mission.

How limited would the attack be?

“I don’t think it’s limited at all. We are shipping in and assigning every Tomahawk, we have an inventory. I think this is going to be massive and sudden (with) thousands of targets. I believe no American will know when it happens, until after it happens.”

The LSO ponders that discussing a secret attack is “treason” but is so concerned “something tells me to tell it anyway.”

“Yes, we are going to hit Iran big time. Whatever political discussion that is going on is window dressing ... a red herring. I see what’s going on here below deck, in the hangers and weapons bay – and I have a sick feeling about how it is going to turn out.”

Would the US Administration really endanger the entire planet?

Here is a story told to me by Bernard Lown, one of co-founders of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) during the Reagan era – <http://www.ippnw.org>

Lown worked closely with another eminent fellow cardiac surgeon, the (then) USSR’s Yevgeny Chazov. Since physicians know no borders, they had formed a friendship, then a movement, which bridged the cold war, the Reagan “Evil Empire” (re. the Soviet Union) nonsense and, within two years, had doctors and surgeons from 82 countries spreading the word, that even cardiac arrest paled against nuclear war.

In 1995, IPPNW collectively won the Nobel Peace Prize. Since Lown trav-

elled, lecturing, to the USSR frequently and had built trust over many years at all levels, the US State Department asked if he would engage in some unofficial diplomacy. Relations between the two countries were far worse than most realised. After one such visit to Moscow, I met Lown in Paris. We sat in dappled Spring sun, at a pavement breakfast café – fresh squeezed orange, coffee, croissants.

“I came back two days ago and went to talk (at the State Department) of the concerns in Moscow. Afterwards, a senior official – a household name (he declined to divulge who) walked me to the exit. As we neared the exit, he put his arm round my shoulders:

‘Don’t worry, Professor Lown, if there is a nuclear war, we will be the first ones to rise up and meet Jesus in the sky.’” Lown, used to the vagaries of the unwell, responded: “Tell me, does anyone else in this building feel as you do?”

“Oh yes, many of us do.”

The swathe of “household names”, from the Reagan era, are now in the Bush Administration and the American Enterprise Institute.

The Armageddonists are back. The world should be very afraid. **CT**

Felicity Arbuthnot is a journalist and activist who has visited the Arab and Muslim world on numerous occasions. She has written and broadcast on Iraq, her coverage of which was nominated for several awards. She was also senior researcher for John Pilger’s award-winning documentary, “Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq”

“Don’t worry, Professor Lown, if there is a nuclear war, we will be the first ones to rise up and meet Jesus in the sky”

SAN DIEGO: A CITY DIVIDED BY FIRE

BY JUSTIN AKERS CHACON

Driven by a desire to preserve wealth for the region's richest inhabitants, the local political power structure continued to starve funding for fire prevention measures

As the popular saying goes, Interstate 8 divides San Diego County between the haves to the north and the have-nots to the south.

But the Great Firestorm of 2007 – which has scorched half a million acres, destroyed 2,300 structures and displaced several hundred thousand people – has revealed the even deeper fissures cutting through a place that calls itself “America’s finest city.”

While the fires were still burning, the Republican chain of command – from George Bush to San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders – declared “mission accomplished” in the effort to save the victims and put an end to the Hurricane Katrina syndrome. But in the Republicans’ carefully orchestrated victory tour, the reality facing most San Diegans was left out.

The Southern California wildfires didn’t discriminate among who they affected on the basis of wealth or property values. But the preparations for dealing with the disaster certainly did, and so did the relief effort.

Hundreds of thousands of San Diego inhabitants have been excluded, ignored or persecuted during and after the fires – and they will be forced to bear the costs of a systemic social failure into the foreseeable future.

Learned nothing

According to former San Diego fire Chief Jeff Bowman, county officials learned nothing from the 2003 fires that devastated the area.

Driven by a desire to preserve – and expand – wealth for the region’s richest inhabitants, who have come to rely on private services to meet their own personal needs, the local political power structure continued to starve funding for fire prevention measures.

Bowman, a lifelong Republican, said that “San Diego practices the biggest don’t-tax-me campaign I’ve seen,” a philosophy he describes as “we can do more for less.” Bowman quit in 2006 over the unwillingness of the city to fund \$100 million in new fire stations and equipment.

The city now has fewer than 1,300

firefighters (the same number as five years ago), who have not received a pay raise in four years. It has only one water-dropping helicopter and lacks a countywide infrastructure to provide regional rapid response to fires.

As UC-San Diego Professor Steve Erie explained to the Los Angeles Times, “developers own most of the city councils. In Poway, in Escondido, what they do is put homeowners in harm’s way. They’re able to control zoning processes, and they’re frequently behind initiatives that say no new taxes, no new fire services. It’s insanity.”

The situation bears all the hallmarks of the pro-free market philosophy of neoliberalism – a drive to shrink the public sector, privatize government services and utilize state power to redistribute money to the rich.

Short-term profits and wealth are traded for long-term calamity – and when environmental catastrophes take place, the cost of relief and recovery is transferred to the those most affected.

As author Naomi Klein explained to the Los Angeles Times, “What we have is a dangerous confluence of events: under-funded states, increasingly inefficient disaster response, a loss of faith in the public sphere...and a growing part of the economy that sees disaster as a promising new market.”

That could be seen clearly when the fires struck last month. As most people evacuated or held out until the flames were licking at their doorways, some homeowners in the fire zone’s most affluent zip codes were able to enjoy special security.

Mansions insured by American In-

ternational Group – which only covers millionaires – brought in a private army named Firebreak Spray Systems to protect their homes. Expert firefighters blanketed whole estates with state-of-the-art flame retardants that preserved certain houses, while others were incinerated.

For the wealthy residents of San Diego County who weren’t directly affected, the fires have been little more than an inconvenience. One La Jolla doctor described her difficulty finding entertainment for her family while the county burned. “[She] went through the list: the beach, the tennis club and local parks were all quickly rejected because of air quality,” the San Diego Union-Tribune reported. “They finally decided on Chuck E. Cheese.”

Deprived of paychecks

For working class families, whether they lived in the path of the fire or not, the consequences were much more dire. Most workplaces in the region shut down, some for a whole week, depriving people of much-needed paychecks.

As one displaced worker asked a volunteer at a donation center, “What can we do once we return home, and we’re asked to pay our rent? I haven’t been able to work all week, and I couldn’t come up with all of my rent money. I’m afraid of being evicted when I get back to my apartment. I’m also concerned with not having enough money to buy food while I get another job.”

The failure of prevention and preparedness was revealed immediately when the fires struck – and stands in

Mansions insured by American International Group – which only covers millionaires – brought in a private army named Firebreak Spray Systems to protect their homes

The Department of Homeland Security warehouses tens of thousands of immigrants, many in jails constructed along the border – rivaling the Federal Bureau of Prisons as one of the world's largest jailors

stark contrast to the government's seemingly limitless funds for war abroad and border militarization at home.

Faced with a shortage of firefighters, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and his administration press-ganged 2,600 prison inmates to battle the fire – about one-quarter of the total number of firefighters at one point.

About 1,500 National Guard troops and four UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters were pulled from the border region, where some 6,000 soldiers currently serve as an auxiliary to the U.S. Border Patrol as part of Operation Jumpstart – a multibillion-dollar federal effort to curb the migration of needed workers.

According to the Defense Department, another 47,000 National Guard troops are currently in Iraq and Afghanistan, used for war abroad rather than disaster relief in their respective states.

Border militarization has only succeeded in increasing the number of deaths among migrants as people cross far from cities in dangerous terrain. Nearly 5,000 men, women and children have died crossing the border since 1994 – and four more (that we know of) have been added to that number as a result of the shifting wildfires.

Meanwhile, the Department of Homeland Security has dramatically expanded its immigrant incarceration infrastructure. It now warehouses tens of thousands of immigrants, many in jails constructed along the border – rivaling the Federal Bureau of Prisons as one of the world's largest jailors.

If the fires and the government response revealed the shift of resources away from prevention and preparation, they also showed the expansion of institutions of repression, particularly in the approach taken by San Diego law enforcement toward immigrant evacuees.

Immigrant status

County Sheriff Bill Kolender vowed to set up checkpoints to identify the immigration status of evacuees returning to their homes – with the stated intention of turning over anyone without documentation to the Border Patrol. Two hundred Border Patrol agents were integrated into local law enforcement to assist in the effort, and Border Patrol units were sent to some evacuation centers to conduct “on-site immigration inspections.”

An emergency response protest, organized in a matter of hours after the announcement of the checkpoints, drew nearly 100 activists representing a dozen groups, who called for an end to the detentions, raids and deportations.

As people began fleeing their homes, some hotels in north county reduced their prices for evacuees, but the reduced rates were still \$100 a night or more – far too expensive for any but the well to do. This was another way that the rich victims were separated from the poor – those who were turned away by the high prices of the hotels ended up at the evacuation centers.

After San Diego's Qualcomm Stadium was opened up to evacuees from around the county, thousands of displaced families converged on the home

of the Chargers. A quick walk through the corridors of the facility revealed the generosity of ordinary San Diegans.

People donated food; schools donated books, toys and other materials; and teachers gave their own time to organize activities for children. Also present were musicians, artists, masseurs and throngs of volunteers, offering help and services.

But the festival-like atmosphere was soon offset by the fears of evacuees. A survey of the 10,000 people housed in tents and on rows of cots revealed mostly poor people – disproportionately people of color – who were already thinking past this temporary shelter toward a future of uncertainty.

Any sense of community was shattered on the third day when police and Border Patrol agents detained a Mexican family for allegedly “looting” donated goods. In a scene eerily reminiscent of the overt racism directed at Black survivors of Hurricane Katrina, the extended family of 12 (including several children, one of whom was a U.S. citizen) was accused of “taking too much” by other evacuees, who summoned police.

After being questioned for three hours and unable to show proof of legal residence, the police called in the Border Patrol to conduct an “on-the-spot” immigration inspection. A news cameraman was physically prevented from filming the incident, and a Spanish-speaking volunteer seeking to translate for the family was harassed.

Ultimately, the family was briskly deported to Tijuana – after law enforcement officials reported the family had

“admitted” they intended to resell the goods.

Immigration rights activists spoke to the family, and “they say emphatically that they never confessed to this,” says a report filed by prominent immigration lawyer Andrea Guerrero for the Immigrants Rights Consortium. “There are no witnesses to this alleged confession...”

“All of the local media outlets regurgitated the law enforcement line about looting, despite being advised by witnesses that they had seen something to the contrary.”

Immigrant rights activist Irma Cordova was outraged at what she saw when she investigated the conditions for Latinos at the stadium. “Once they arrive,” she said, “some are treated like criminals simply for looking Latino, and in some cases for not being able to communicate in English. It’s unbelievable to me how in a time of crisis, some people can still be so hateful and racist.”

In response, the Immigrant Rights Consortium set up a separate reception center, offering services for the immigrant community while monitoring the actions of police and immigration agents.

Millions left behind

Before the fires, San Diego County had implemented a “reverse 9-11” evacuation system” that notified more than 500,000 inhabitants and facilitated their relocation.

But millions more were left behind – inevitably, those lower down in the social pecking order.

According to ABC News, 2 million

In a scene eerily reminiscent of the overt racism directed at Black survivors of Hurricane Katrina, the extended family of 12 (including several children, one of whom was a U.S. citizen) was accused of “taking too much” by other evacuees, who summoned police

CALIFORNIA BURNING 1

In most cases, these have-nots were simply ignored or factored out of evacuation plans; in some, unscrupulous employers chose profits over the well being of those who worked for them

undocumented workers living and working in the 24 fire zones stretching from Los Angeles to San Diego were excluded from coordinated evacuation efforts. Their segregation and second-class status kept them “off the grid.”

Around San Diego County, migrant workers remained – and in some cases, were forced to remain – in the fields while surrounding areas were evacuated. In most cases, these have-nots were simply ignored or factored out of evacuation plans; in some, unscrupulous employers chose profits over the well being of those who worked for them.

San Diego’s tomato business is worth about \$88 million annually – it underpins more than a few of the area’s multimillion-dollar estates, while many of the agricultural workers live hidden away in canyons, without running water, electricity or access to the “reverse 9-11” calls.

On the ground, evacuation efforts prioritized the wealthiest suburbs, while poor communities were often left to their own devices.

Jesus Gomez from Oaxaca was working at a nursery when the Witch Creek fire came into sight from the east. His crew kept working while wind whipped smoke and ash into their eyes. “They gave us masks, but still, our eyes were filling with dirt and ashes,” he told National Public Radio. “So we kept working until the police came in.”

Enrique Morones, founder of the Border Angels organization, which provides water, food and other necessities to migrant workers living clandestinely in makeshift camps, witnessed similar

scenes as he delivered aid to farmworkers.

On entering one wealthy agricultural suburb named Rancho Peñasquitos, he learned that some growers kept their workers in the field while the rest of the town was evacuated. With thick plumes of gray smoke poisoning the air, workers continued to pluck tomatoes along the neatly ordered rows. “People were driving by in Jaguars and Mercedes, callously ignoring the farmworkers, who don’t have cars, papers or anywhere to go,” he said.

Many workers didn’t want to leave for fear of being deported from an evacuation center, Morones said. Others were scared of being fired from their jobs. “When there’s an emergency such as the fires, you want to have the full confidence of people,” Morones said. “If you create a climate of fear, then people will be afraid, and lives will be lost.”

Morones brought a team of doctors to help treat the workers, many of whom were suffering from eye and lung irritation. The group later transported some farmworkers to safe houses after the grower was confronted and closed the farm.

Bypassed in the evacuation

Native Americans were another marginalized group who felt the disproportionate effect of the disaster. The Rincon and La Jolla Native American reservations were some of the hardest-hit communities, but were bypassed in initial evacuation efforts.

On the Rincon, 350 people sought refuge on the reservation’s casino grounds as fires engulfed at least 65

homes, structures and precious cultural artifacts. “We were left behind, nobody here to help,” Councilwoman Stephanie Spencer told the San Diego Union-Tribune.

On the La Jolla reservation, more than 20,000 acres and 50 homes were consumed by the flames. A 52-person volunteer fire squad was formed immediately after the fires began, but they were fighting fires elsewhere when their own homes fell into the path of the spreading blaze. As acting tribal chief Joseph Ruise explained to the Los Angeles Times, “Since the resources are so thin, we developed our own [fire crew]...a lot of us just decided to stay.”

In the end, it was other Native American groups that pulled together to fill the void. The Pechanga Reservation opened up its 522-room hotel to other tribes, offering food and shelter. Evacuees included those from Rincon and La Jolla, as well as the Pauma, Mesa Grande and San Pascual tribes.

Other groups were also left behind in threatened areas. In the small community of Portrero in east San Diego County – which recently made headlines as the potential site for a new training facility for the Blackwater mercenary company – the poorest of the town’s 600 residents never received an evacuation order.

According to a group of student activists who visited the site, Portrero was without electricity and phone service in many cases, and lacking basic essentials. To make matters worse, local law enforcement agencies blockaded the road leading into town.

Adrian Del Rio, one of the volun-

teers, said the sheriff tried to prohibit their aid caravan from entering Portrero, asking, “Why do you want to go in there? They’re just a bunch of drug addicts,” according to Del Rio.

When the volunteers got through the police roadblock, they encountered one trailer park with 150 units, still full of residents. “They said they were never told to evacuate, and many of them didn’t have the means to,” Del Rio said. “They were hungry and desperate.”

Demonizing immigrants

While latino immigrants were largely excluded from the rescue efforts, there was no shortage of media time devoted to demonizing them. News stories in the local press perpetuated stories about “looting illegals” and even entertained claims that immigrants were to blame for deliberately setting fires.

But one story that was completely ignored has to do with the way the Latino community came together to help out fellow San Diegans.

Activists and community members turned historic Chicano Park – located in the heart of a Latino immigrant community – into a bustling collection and distribution center. Over the course of several days, truckloads of food, water, clothes, toys and goods were distributed across the county, regardless of ethnicity or citizenship status.

Motivation came with need, according to organizer Greg Morales. “I was sure that those who lived beside me in the barrios of San Diego felt much like me,” he said. “Yet it seemed that the media had presented San Diego as a ‘white-only’ environment in which only

According to a group of student activists who visited the site, Portrero was without electricity and phone service in many cases, and lacking basic essentials. To make matters worse, local law enforcement agencies blockaded the road leading into town

CALIFORNIA BURNING 1

In the end, so much food aid and so many volunteers came in from around the county that major depots stopped accepting donations by the third day of the fires

the people north of [Interstate 8] were of concern or in a position to help and make a contribution.”

All told, the community relief effort distributed more than 100 truckloads of goods to those in need – in contrast to the Red Cross, which fell in line with institutionalized racial profiling, requiring all recipients of aid at its centers to show documentation. In the end, so much food aid and so many volunteers came in from around the county that major depots stopped accepting donations by the third day of the fires.

Disrupting Minutemen

These acts of solidarity at a time of tragedy didn't stop the anti-immigrant Minutemen from trying to disrupt the efforts. Small groups of vigilantes repeatedly taunted and threatened volunteers, often right in front of police officers. With no “angle” to attack the efforts, they tried to provoke violence and accused organizers of looting the donations from elsewhere.

This outpouring of racism and anti-immigrant hate stands in contrast to the actions of people south of the border. Mexican authorities sent four fire engines to San Diego and offered electricity after fires cut a main power link from Arizona and threatened the power

corridor that connects San Diego to the rest of California.

As Capt. Marco Antonio Garambullo, fire department director of the city of Tecate, told the Associated Press, “It is very important for Mexico to cooperate with the United States in situations like these because these fires affect the environment on both sides.”

The fires of 2007 revealed two San Diegos – and demonstrated how natural disaster both unites and divides society based on existing divisions of class, ethnicity and citizenship status. For a diverse community of activists, it was a testament to the power of ordinary people to come together and organize for a common cause.

To prepare for future natural disasters – and to prevent the man-made injustices that follow in their wake – we must continue to organize against the class inequality and institutional racism that were revealed so clearly by this one. **CT**

Justin Akers Chacón is co-author, with Mike Davis, of “No One Is Illegal: Fighting Violence and State Repression on the U.S.-Mexico Border.” This essay was first published in Socialist Worker at <http://www.socialistworker.org>

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WHEN NATURE AND CAPITALISM COLLIDE

ALAN MAAS INTERVIEWS MIKE DAVIS

*Mike Davis's latest book is **In Praise of Barbarians**, a collection of essays about war and empire published by Haymarket Books. Among his books that focus on Southern California, Davis' **City of Quartz** is a social history of Los Angeles that dissects its economy and political relations. In **Ecology of Fear**, he develops these themes in light of a series of natural and man-made disasters. His other books include **Planet of Slums**, which documents the scale of poverty among the increasingly urban population of the less developed world, and **Late Victorian Holocausts: Elf nion Famine and the Making of the Third World**. Alan Macs is editor of *Socialist Worker**

Alan Macs: The media verdict on the disaster in San Diego seems to be that the federal government and the state and local authorities did a great job, and everyone who evacuated to the Qualcomm football stadium is getting the royal treatment. What's left out of this picture?

Mike Davis: There's been a fractal class bias at absolutely every level of the coverage. If you look at the international news, it's all about the fires threatening Malibu. If you look at the coverage in San Diego, what gets the attention is the Witch Creek fire threatening Republican north county, rather than the Harris fire threatening more Democratic south county.

There are a lot of invisible victims who aren't enjoying backrubs and nouvelle cuisine down at Qualcomm stadium. This has turned into a carefully managed, semi-hysterical celebration of Republican values – all drawing a marked contrast to New Orleans. The Copley- and Murdoch-controlled media – which is the media, largely, in San Diego – is congratulating us that we have leaders with such fine law enforcement and military experience.

Meanwhile, Arnold Schwarzenegger was going around the stadium, saying people are happy, and everything's wonderful – they have yoga, they have massage, they can get Padres autographs. When a newswoman had the

This has turned into a carefully managed, semi-hysterical celebration of Republican values – all drawing a marked contrast to New Orleans

Some of the victims of this fire are people living in trailers or shacks, or on modest ranches. But their agony isn't what the news focuses on. Instead, the news is focused on the solidly Republican suburbs and country mansions

temerity to confront him, he grabbed her arm so hard that it looked like he was going to break it, and he started shouting at her, "All you have to do is look around here and see how happy people are."

The only discordant note is from Duncan Hunter, the right-wing Republican presidential candidate, who seems to think he's in Iwo Jima and not San Diego County. He's been blasting the authorities for not letting the Marines fight the fire – though the Marines have very little capability to do that.

But the consistent representation is – to use the words of Geraldo Rivera – that this is the "anti-Katrina." Or as another Republican said, "We have a civilized evacuation."

Alan Macs: Can you talk more about the invisible victims?

Mike Davis: There are basically four different kinds of society in the backlands of San Diego and Southern California.

First, there are the native Californians. San Diego has more Indian reservations than any county in the country, and I think five or six reservations have been burned or evacuated.

Then, there are the bikers and construction workers – ordinary working people, Mexican as well as anglo, who have lived in traditional small towns for generations. This is the kind of society I grew up in, on the edge of the back country in eastern San Diego County.

In addition, there are the new subdivisions – sprawling planned communi-

ties, some of them with biotech companies and so on, along the corridor of the I-15 freeway, which links San Diego with Riverside to the north. These have been some of the worst hit areas.

Finally, there are the luxury lifestyles – castles and Beverly Hills-like subdivisions somehow smuggled into the depths of some of the deepest canyons and most inaccessible back country.

Recently, I had a reunion with some of the guys I grew up with 50 years ago and haven't seen since the Vietnam War. And we were incredulous at all the mansions on brush-covered hilltops where we had hunted rabbits as kids – in areas where wildfires were bound to occur.

Throughout this back country, there's a long-running, low-intensity class struggle of the blue-collar residents trying to preserve not just rural lifestyles, but to be able to afford to live here – against the encroachment of the McMansions, the subdivisions and the traffic jams. It's polo versus rodeo.

Some of the victims of this fire are people living in trailers or shacks, or on modest ranches. But their agony isn't what the news focuses on. Instead, the news is focused on the solidly Republican suburbs and country mansions.

Rancho Santa Fe, which is partially burned, is one of the five or six richest communities in the United States. Chalmers Johnson's wife Sheila told me that she heard what happened in Rancho Santa Fe was that when the rich people fled, they locked their electronic gates to keep looters out – forgetting that this would also keep the firefighters out. The firefighters couldn't get in,

and some of these unbelievably gigantic homes burned to the ground.

Alan Macs: As always, the media are focused on how the fires started, rather than the deeper causes. Can you talk about some of the factors like development and climate change?

Mike Davis: The Los Angeles Times had an article that said climate change wasn't a factor in the fires. This is probably balderdash. Everything that's happening, including the dramatic number of mega-fires in the rest of the West, accords with the simulations generated in the climate models used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Not only are extreme events becoming more common, but it's possible that the base climate of the Southwest and most of the rest of the West is itself changing. One of my old buddies who I saw at the reunion just retired from the state park service as a ranger, and he's horrified by what he sees happening. He says that the pine forests in the San Bernardino Mountains are dead – they're just fuel.

In other words, what we're seeing are not simply extreme events, but epochal changes in the environment and vegetation.

On the other hand, the tendency – even among people who a few years ago were denying climate change – to blame everything on the climate is a kind of one-stop response that avoids any political responsibility.

The truth is that much of the fire de-

struction is the result of political decisions, backed up by the power of developers and real estate interests, to override any public opposition to controlling growth in the backlands and the spread of luxury lifestyles like a fungus across the landscape.

After the 2003 fire, a coalition of backlands people and environmentalists put an initiative on the ballot in San Diego to restrict development in the back country. They were crushed. They got outspent by 10- or 20-to-1 by an opposition that was supposed to be led by farmers. But when our local muckraking paper, the San Diego Reader, investigated, it turned out the opposition was funded by the large developers who want to open up the whole countryside to pink stucco and tile roofs. The problem is essentially unsolvable unless you're willing to deal with the political economy of land ownership and land inflation.

Property values have risen along the coast to such an incredible extent. In San Diego County, only 12 percent of the population earns enough to buy the median new house – at least before the mortgage meltdown.

So people are forced inland. But people who live on the coast are either so wealthy, or their wealth has been so augmented by the rise in property values, that they're now buying second homes. Increasingly, you see these second homes throughout the back country – and not just cabins, but 4,000-square-foot houses.

So although I think climate change is a crucial part of the background, the real essence of the problem is this

Much of the fire destruction is the result of political decisions, backed up by the power of developers and real estate interests, to override any public opposition to controlling growth in the backlands and the spread of luxury lifestyles like a fungus across the landscape

He pointed out that the city government doesn't hesitate to throw tens of millions of dollars in tax subsidies to the Spanos family, extremely conservative Republicans who own the Chargers, or to John Moores, the Padres owner and Clinton supporter, for whom the city built a stadium

sprawl that's ultimately driven by the lack of any real social regulation over land speculation and land inflation. And that, of course, is exactly the same issue that the Karl Marx of California, Henry George, was addressing in the 1870s.

Alan Macs: When wildfires struck southern California in 2003, you pointed out how the Republican power structure's obsession with keeping taxes low starved the local government for revenue, leaving San Diego County the only large county in the state without a unified fire department. Has this aspect of the situation changed at all?

Mike Davis: Nothing has changed. The response to the devastation of 2003 was a series of thunderous "no" votes against controlling growth or enlarging firefighting resources.

The one positive thing was that an outspoken maverick named Mike Aguirre was elected city attorney partially because he appealed to people about the deterioration of services.

He pointed out that the city government doesn't hesitate to throw tens of millions of dollars in tax subsidies to the Spanos family, extremely conservative Republicans who own the Chargers, or to John Moores, the Padres owner and Clinton supporter, for whom the city built a stadium. Meanwhile, you have potholes in your street, the fire chief quit because he's so frustrated with the lack of resources, and there's no affordable housing.

Recently, Aguirre has been crucified in the local newspapers, where we're totally at the mercy of Copley press, except for one of the weeklies. They've been crusading against Aguirre because he dared to come out and say we need water conservation measures. I'm not sure my kids can even remember what rain looks like, but the mayor of San Diego, Jerry Sanders, who's now being lionized as a great hero, said that was alarmist nonsense.

So you end up with this irony – the very Republicans who should be wearing sackcloth or running to hide in Paraguay are instead being treated like American heroes, whose conservative values have triumphed over tragedy.

All of this is drawn in a continuous, invidious and basically racist comparison with New Orleans and the victims of Katrina – even though, with the exception of blue-collar people in the eastern part of the country, the scale of loss isn't close to the same magnitude.

Alan Macs: Some right-wingers – like Duncan Hunter, the Republican presidential contender and representative to Congress from the San Diego area – are using the fires as an excuse to renew calls to militarize firefighting and essentially expand the domestic reach of the Pentagon.

Mike Davis: Duncan Hunter is a one-trick pony. He's saying exactly the same thing he did in 2003 – to send in the Marines, like we need to storm the beaches. And of course, people are pointing out in the background that

the reason aircraft didn't fly was because there were gusts of wind up to 70 miles an hour.

You just push a button, and you get the same response from him. But it's very sinister to watch him, Brian Bilbray and Darrell Issa, the three suburban San Diego Republicans, smiling and gloating over this chaos.

Another dimension – homeland security linkage of all this – is that the Bush administration has sent in the FBI. There's a big arson investigation of the fires in northern San Diego County and Orange County. They're probably going to have trouble blaming Iran for the fires. But I wouldn't be surprised if an undocumented immigrant is arrested at some point. Among the communities that burned, Escondido in north county is notorious nationally for trying to outlaw renting homes to people without proper papers. And there are other communities, like Fallbrook and Poway, where the Minutemen come to spit at Mexican day laborers in front of Home Depot. But as my witty friend Sheila Johnson again pointed out, it's going to be very ironic, because the same Mexican workers they're trying to deport are going to be the very people they beg to rebuild their homes.

Alan Macs: You've made the point that disasters like these won't be solved with a technical or scientific fix, but by taking up the political and social questions involved. Why?

Mike Davis: The solution has to lie in changing power relations within com-

munities and within the region. In truth, the issues of affordable housing, job creation for youth, protecting the environment and dealing with congestion are all part of a single fabric.

The problem in the past has been that groups like the Sierra Club tend to be focused just on the open space and environmental side of it. They haven't given answers to people who are worried about growth or jobs. Nobody's making the elementary point that we need massive reinvestment in the inner cities, and making communities more environmentally stable, and more conservation and restoration work in the hills.

What's needed is a populist politics that relates these issues and shows that at the end of the day, you have to fight to try to change the balance of power.

Once again, the Democrats are missing an opportunity because they're not prepared to take on the real issues. They're too gutless to attack the invidious comparison of the wildfires to New Orleans, or the self-celebration of these corrupt Republicans.

It may partially be the bias of the media, but on five local TV stations, I've yet to see a Democrat. That's because they just yield the ground, just as over the war and everything else of fundamental importance. And besides, most of the Democrats here get money from the same developers. **CT**

Alan Macs is editor of Socialist Worker, where this interview was first published. Find it at <http://www.socialistworker.org>

As my witty friend Sheila Johnson again pointed out, it's going to be very ironic, because the same Mexican workers they're trying to deport are going to be the very people they beg to rebuild their homes

SHOUTING AT THE DEVIL!

BY JASON MILLER

Not only do we embrace the inevitability of our human frailties; we willfully and perpetually embrace a system that ensures that the worst elements of the human psyche will predominate

“America touts itself as the land of the free, but the number one freedom that you and I have is the freedom to enter into a subservient role in the workplace. Once you exercise this freedom you’ve lost all control over what you do, what is produced, and how it is produced. And in the end, the product doesn’t belong to you. The only way you can avoid bosses and jobs is if you don’t care about making a living. Which leads to the second freedom: the freedom to starve.”

*—Tom Morello of
Rage Against the Machine*

Fuck you, capitalism! Does my profanity offend? If so, accept my sincere apologies for having the audacity to use a vulgar expletive in reference to the malignant force that is raping the Earth and murdering its sentient inhabitants.

Then take my ‘deeply sincere’ pleas for forgiveness, and with the aid of an unlubricated rod of significant diameter, ram them firmly up the collective asses of the ruling elite in the United States. Capitalism, capitalism. How do I loath

thee? Let me count the ways...

1. Few would argue with the conclusion that greed, selfishness, ruthlessness, and egocentrism are qualities that all of us possess, to varying degrees of course. Equally compelling is the argument that nearly all of us are capable of acting with kindness, compassion, justice, honesty, generosity, and empathy.

Yet, despite the sweeping epidemic of unnecessary suffering caused by torrential waves of avarice, self-centeredness, and brutality, our filthy moneyed elite, their well-compensated sycophants, and countless millions of deeply inculcated members of the working class defend the sacred cow of capitalism with the zeal of the Sicari.

What a brilliant way to conduct human affairs and organize ourselves socioeconomically! Not only do we embrace the inevitability of our human frailties; we willfully and perpetually embrace a system that ensures that the worst elements of the human psyche will predominate AND which reward those who act the most reprehensibly.

2. One of the idiocies advanced as a logical argument to justify the continued existence of the abomination of capitalism is that while it may be flawed, it is still better than any alternative. If capitalism is the best humanity can do, it's time to cash in our chips and leave Earth to our non-human animal counterparts.

They may not have opposable thumbs and formidably sized frontal lobes, but at least they don't engage in the systematic destruction of themselves and the rest of the planet. However, before we act too hastily and engage in mass Seppuku, perhaps it would make more sense to implement a mass reorganization of our socio-economic structure, basing the new paradigm on far more egalitarian, sustainable, democratic, just, and rational principles. Or we could just keep destroying each other and the planet....

3. Capitalismo has raped Central and South America nearly to death. But, unlike the "Land of the Free," most of those horribly victimized nations have a vibrant, thriving, and well-organized Left to stand in opposition to the scourge of humanity and the Earth.

US-sponsored death squads, torture, disappearances, privatization, "free" trade, deregulation, union busting, evisceration of social programs, coups, and vilification of leaders with the audacity to defy the status quo of avarice on steroids have assailed our southern neighbors since we in the United States (the self-appointed champions of capitalism) began our wholesale exploitation, imperialism, and neoliberalism by

"acquiring" half of Mexico. Let's see now. Remind me again. How many invasions has that "dire threat" to humanity named Hugo Chavez launched? How much "collateral damage" has he inflicted?

4. Capitalism is an anachronism that long ago outlived its usefulness (except to the morally rotten parasites comprising our de facto aristocracy) and has proven itself to be an abject failure as a means of human interaction and organization. It's one step removed from feudalism, for Christ's sake! (Oops! Sorry, I forgot about mercantilism – the transition to capitalism made such a difference).

One of humanity's strengths is our capacity to evolve. Given that, why in the hell do we stubbornly cling to a system that enables a fraction of a percent of the population to live in OBSCENE opulence while 35,000 of our fellow human beings die of starvation-related causes each day? Are the rest of us truly inane enough to believe that asinine myth that any of us has a REALISTIC chance of becoming the next Bill Gates, if we "just work hard enough." Or that there is an ounce of moral virtue in pursuing the accumulation of excessive wealth?

5. Resting upon the "pillars" of greed, selfishness and hyper-competitiveness, capitalism is irrational and unstable. Crisis and resource wars are chronic and inevitable. How could we expect it to be otherwise? Unleashing some of the ugliest aspects of the human spirit and creating artificial shortages in a

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LAST (ANGRY) WORDS

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world of abundance (by allowing a select few to hoard most of the resources as “their property”), capitalism doesn’t exactly engender an environment of peace and brotherly love.

While our filthy ruling plutocracy has allowed a degree of socialism to diminish their power to rape, pillage and plunder, they only did so to quell social unrest during times of serious instability (i.e. The New Deal). Meanwhile, reactionary elements in our “democracy” are consistently scheming to eliminate the use of public monies to actually benefit the public.

Witness George Bush’s ongoing demands for an open purse to fund our insanely bloated military and the war crimes we are committing in Iraq. Compare that to his recent refusal to spend an additional \$35 billion to provide health care for 3.9 million children. Bush and the moneyed interests for whom he is fronting are inflicting gaping wounds upon humanity and the Earth. How much more obvious could it be? (And this administration isn’t an aberration; they are simply bold enough to reveal their agenda – that’s the scary part).

6. Thanks to our slightly adulterated yet plenty virulent infestation of capitalism, the United States is not the “Christian nation” it touts itself to be. While we certainly abide by the Golden Rule in the sense that “he who has the gold makes the rules,” there is little about the manner in which we conduct ourselves as a nation (particularly in terms of foreign policy) of which the person meeting the Biblical description of Jesus Christ would have approved.

Let’s just run through a few highlights. We have killed millions of Iraqis via two invasions and barbaric economic sanctions (the sanctions alone killed over half a million children – they’re on your tab, Bill Clinton) – and these are people who NEVER attacked us nor posed a true threat to our “national security.” We arm and support Israel, the diseased enforcer of the mental illness known as Zionism. Ethnic cleansing. Now there’s a spiritually nourishing Christian pastime for you. We revere, idolize, and empower talented, “beautiful” people whose moral evolution came to a screeching halt at about age five. They are our CEOs, politicians, celebrities, athletes, billionaires, pundits, and Wall Streeters whose smug, hubristic “all-American” mugs, talking heads, and ‘surgically enhanced’ bodies are blasted into our homes 24/7 via Fox, CNN, ABC, and a host of other disseminators of the fetid garbage of infotainment.

Sorry folks. Calvinism is about as close as our culture comes to the compassion and love modeled by Christ. And with John Calvin in the saddle, we fall significantly short of that mark. As his unwitting disciples, we are imbued with cynicism and self-hatred (we are, after all, “original sinners”), a sadistic desire to inflict ample doses of punishment for the smallest of transgressions (hence the US having the largest prison population in the world—comprised largely of non-violent drug offenders) and the notion that being rich means one has acquired God’s stamp of approval. (Thoughts of camels, needles, and kingdoms of heaven keep throwing

me into a horrid state of cognitive dissonance in my desperate efforts to be a good little capitalist by embracing Part III of the Calvinist doctrine.....).

Somehow I don't think Christ had capitalism in mind when he preached the Sermon on the Mount.....

7. Let's consider sustainability and consumerism for a moment, shall we? Two more of capitalism's noxious, life-extinguishing qualities are its demand for infinite growth and its unavoidable "dilemma" of excess production.

Problem number one is insoluble, but we can simply let our grandchildren worry about our insane insistence on maintaining a system demanding infinite resources from a finite world. As for excess production, that one is simple. We have the most advanced agit-prop industry (Madison Avenue) and the most powerful delivery devices (the mainstream media) in the history of humanity churning out alluring appeals to consumers to buy what they don't need, can't really afford, and may never even use. Surplus schmurplus....

8. As an "added bonus" to the wounds it inflicts upon humanity as a collective, capitalism also causes serious character malformations in individuals. As infants and young children, human beings naturally believe themselves to be the center of the universe. In order to "succeed" (and sometimes just survive) in the rat race of capitalism, as we mature we begin viewing our narcissism as an attribute.

Rather than shedding it, we nurture it with the tenderness of the most de-

voted of mothers. Looking out for number one, careerism, an obsession with winning, acquisitiveness, and putting money and appearances ahead of principles and people are considered to be virtues in this violently seething cesspool we euphemistically call a culture.

9. Perhaps most disturbing of all is the way in which capitalism's relentless advocates have managed to bamboozle billions of people into equating it with democracy. Diabolical to its core, but sheer genius nonetheless. Concluding that capitalism and democracy are somehow synonymous is a bit like saying that Dick Cheney and the milk of human kindness relate to one another in even a very remote fashion. (Have you seen the myriad pictures of his evil grimaces floating around the Internet? He doesn't even attempt to mask his malevolence).

Capitalism is naturally hierarchal, authoritarian, and brutal. Corporations, the legal vehicles for the plutocracy to maximize their profits while minimizing liability, are structured as tyrannies. What the hell is democratic about dog eat dog, law of the jungle, and every man for himself? Besides, if we uber-capitalists here in the United States are truly "democratic," and we "elected" a depraved idiot like W to what is ostensibly the most powerful position in the world, what does that say about us?

George Bush, Dick Cheney, et al aren't anomalies or accidents. They are the naked face of savage capitalism evolved to its ultimate and inevitable

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state, which is embodied by corporatism, monopolism, cronyism, imperialism, and fuck-everyone-but-the-richism.

One exceptionally virtuous person, Archbishop Don Helder Pessoa Camara, who was a progenitor of Liberation Theology and an unwavering champion of the poor, once remarked, “To examine capitalism is to indict it.”

Unfortunately, capitalism remains the 800 pound gorilla in the room. There is little doubt that its countless millions of fiercely loyal minions amongst the working class and poor will continue heeding their indoctrination, daring us to pry their copies of Atlas Shrugged “from their cold dead hands.”

And we can count on the fact that the likes of the Mars heirs, Richard Mellon Scaife, and their ilk are not destined to experience profound spiritual awakenings anytime soon.

Yet there is hope. Capitalism exists in a state of perpetual crisis. Inequality is on the rise, globally and domestically. Our lords and masters are beginning

to fall victim to their own hubris as they practice their predations more and more overtly. Palliatives can only delay the system’s inevitable collapse for so long. Sooner rather than later the deepening undercurrent of social unrest will burst the levees of injustice asunder.

Relative to what’s coming, the Great Depression was a mere warm-up. Yet in adversity there lies opportunity. Our US gulag, often referred to as the prison industrial complex, will serve as excellent quarters for the irredeemable scum stalking the corridors of power in DC, and the rest of the parasites atop the capitalist pyramid.

Or perhaps things will take a more Jacobin turn, and we won’t need to waste any more precious resources on these predatory sociopaths.... Fuck you, capitalism; fuck you. **CT**

Jason Miller is Cyrano’s Journal Online’s associate editor – <http://www.bestcyrano.org> and publishes Thomas Paine’s Corner within Cyrano’s at <http://www.bestcyrano.org/thomaspaine>

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