

IMPERIAL HUBRIS | RICK ROZOFF
A GLIMPSE OF ANOTHER BRITAIN | JOHN PILGER
THE FIFTH HORSEMAN | GLENN ASHTON

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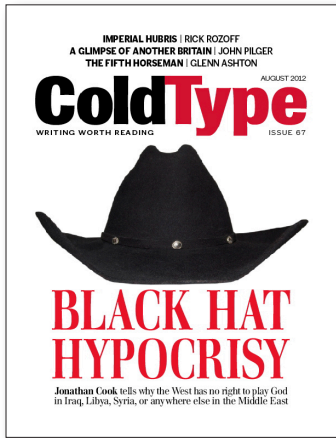
WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 67



BLACK HAT HYPOCRISY

Jonathan Cook tells why the West has no right to play God in Iraq, Libya, Syria, or anywhere else in the Middle East



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Violence begets violence

John W. Whitehead tries to make sense of the latest American massacre

*“In a world gushing blood day and night, you never stop mopping up pain.” – Aberjhani, *The River of Winged Dreams**

*“Violence is as American as cherry pie.”
– H.R. Schiffman*

The fact that 24-year-old neuroscience student James Holmes had the wherewithal to turn himself into a lethal killing machine is tragic but far from surprising. Frankly, I’m almost surprised it doesn’t happen more often, given that we’re not only raising young people on a diet of violence but indoctrinating them into a worldview that sees violence as a means to an end, whether it’s a SWAT team crashing through a door or the Avengers taking on invading alien armies. By the time a child reaches 18, it is estimated that he or she will have witnessed 200,000 acts of violence, including 40,000 murders on television.

Violence begets violence. Not only is violence contagious, however, but it’s imploding on America, a nation plagued by violence – in our homes, in our schools, on our streets and in our affairs of state, both foreign and domestic. Violence permeates our entertainment culture with its glamorization of death and destruction in reality TV shows such as *Cops* and *Dog the Bounty Hunter*, movies such as *The Dark Knight*

Rises and the upcoming *Gangster Squad* (in which a gangster opens fire in a movie theater), and video games such as *Soldier of Fortune*.

Violence has become our government’s calling card, starting at the top and trickling down, from President Obama’s “kill list” to the more than 80,000 SWAT team raids carried out every year on unsuspecting Americans by heavily armed, black-garbed commandos.

Our nation has one of the highest murder rates and levels of incarceration of all industrialized nations in the world. We even export violence, with one of this country’s most profitable exports being weapons. All too often, these same weapons fall into the hands of our enemies.

America is now seen as a violent empire with continual wars that stretch back to at least the beginning of the twentieth century. We send our young men and women off to fight these questionable wars in far-flung places, only to have them return broken, shell-shocked and battling bouts of violence, depression and suicide.

This brings us to the events of July 20, 2012, when a 24-year-old gunman, dressed as the Joker and wearing a gas mask and black SWAT gear, walked into a crowded Denver movie theater, set off two gas canisters and opened fire on the crowd assembled for the midnight showing of *The Dark*

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Knight Rises, leaving 12 dead and nearly 60 injured.

The media, true to form, is subjecting us to every grisly detail of the shootings. You can't turn on the television without seeing this tragedy used as grist for prime-time ratings. In its feeding frenzy, the media has succeeded in glamorizing death and destruction to such an extent that shooting sprees have gained a notorious appeal – a way for people who, in life, may never have rated a second glance to attain celebrity status in death.

Yet even with the 24-hour coverage, we have more questions than answers, and speculation is rife. And the biggest question of all looms large: who or what is to blame?

Politicians want to blame the tragedy on easy access to guns. Their solution? Gun control and zero tolerance policies. But these are just cosmetic band-aids, doomed to failure, because if someone really wants to wreak havoc, they'll find a way to obtain a weapon.

Sociologists want to blame it on the steady diet of violence that permeates everything in our culture. We have been caught in the grip of a cycle of violence that started with the government's televised attack on a Waco compound in April 1993, in which 79 adults and children were killed. Two years later, to the day, the Oklahoma City bombing left 168 people dead. Four years after that, on April 20, 1999, two teenagers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, opened fire on classmates and teachers at Columbine High School, killing 12 students and one teacher and leaving 24 others wounded.

Then, on April 16, 2007, we had the Virginia Tech massacre, in which 23-year-old Seung-Hui Cho walked into a university building on the Virginia Tech campus, chained the doors shut and opened fire on students and teachers alike, leaving 32 dead and many more injured before turning the gun on himself.

Most recently, in February 2012, teenager T. J. Lane – reportedly a victim of bullying

and something of a social outcast – walked into a Cleveland high school and opened fire in the cafeteria, killing two students and wounding three others.

The instinctive response to this latest Denver shooting spree will be to appease the public by adopting measures that provide the appearance of increased security. However, enacting tighter gun policies and increasing police surveillance and patrols will accomplish little more than propelling us the final step of the way into a police state.

It may be that Denver gunman James Holmes was simply a deeply disturbed individual, but we cannot ignore the fact that he was also a product of American culture. Thus, the question is not so much “Why is there a Holmes?” but “Why aren't there more Holmeses, Chos, McVeighs and Klebolds?”

To borrow from Shakespeare, the fault is not in our stars but in ourselves. We are a society that is armed to the teeth. Our culture glorifies violence. Even security guards at shopping malls carry weapons. Our government is especially guilty of using violence as a quick fix. How can we teach nonviolence if our government leaders subscribe to violence?

In one of his classic essays, C.S. Lewis aptly described the absurdity of the mixed messages being sent to our young people. More than 60 years later, his words continue to resonate:

All the time – such is the tragi-comedy of our situation – we continue to clamour for those very qualities we are rendering impossible. You can hardly open a periodical without coming across the statement that what our civilization needs is more “drive”, or dynamism, or self-sacrifice, or “creativity”. In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.

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A glimpse of another Britain

John Pilger on letters that illuminate two Britains, and how the London Olympics is being used to rehabilitate Tony Blair, the invader of Iraq

This is a story of two letters and two Britains. The first letter was written by Sebastian Coe, the former athlete who chairs the London Olympics Organising Committee. He is now called Lord Coe. In the *New Statesman* of 21 June, I reported an urgent appeal to Coe by the Vietnam Women's Union that he and his IOC colleagues reconsider their decision to accept sponsorship from Dow Chemical, one of the companies that manufactured dioxin, a poison used against the population of Vietnam. Code-named Agent Orange, this weapon of mass destruction was "dumped" on Vietnam, according to a US Senate report in 1970, in what was called Operation Hades. The letter to Coe estimates that today 4.8 million victims of Agent Orange are children, all of them shockingly deformed.

In his reply, Coe describes Agent Orange as "a highly emotional issue" whose development and use "was made by the US government [which] has rightly led the process of addressing the many issues that have resulted". He refers to a "constructive dialogue" between the US and Vietnamese governments "to resolve issues".

They are "best placed to manage the reconciliation of these two countries." When I read this, I was reminded of the weasel letters that are a specialty of the Foreign Office in London in denying the evidence of crimes of state and corporate power, such

as the lucrative export of terrible weapons. The former Iraq Desk Officer, Mark Higson, called this sophistry "a culture of lying".

I sent Coe's letter to a number of authorities on Agent Orange. The reactions were unerring. "There has been no initiative at all by the US government to address the health and economic effects on the people of Vietnam affected by dioxin," wrote the respected US attorney Constantine Kokkoris, who led an action against Dow Chemical. He noted that "manufacturers like Dow were aware of the presence and harmfulness of dioxin in their product but failed to inform the government in an effort to avoid regulation."

According to the War Legacies League, none of the health, environmental and economic problems caused by the world's most enduring chemical warfare has been addressed by the US. Non-government agencies have helped "only a small number of those in need". A "clean up" in a "dioxin hot spot" in the city of Da Nang, to which Coe refers, is a sham; none of the money allocated by the US Congress has gone directly to the Vietnamese or has reached those most severely disabled from the cancers associated with Agent Orange.

For this reason, Coe's mention of "reconciliation" is profane, as if there were an equivalence between an invading superpower and its victims. His letter exempli-

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fies the London Olympics' razor-wired, PR and money-fuelled totalitarian state within a state, which you enter, appropriately, through a Westfield mega shopping mall. How dare you complain about the missiles on the roof of your flats, hectored a magistrate to 86 residents of London's East End. How dare any of you protest at the "Zil car lanes", reminiscent of Moscow in the Soviet era, for Olympic apparatchiks and the boys from Dow and Coke.

With the media in charge of Olympics excitement, as it was for 'Shock and Awe' in Iraq in 2003, now enter the man who played a starring role in making both spectacles possible.

On 11 July, a so-called Olympics evening – "a coming together of the Labour tribe", declared the Labour Party leader Ed Milliband – celebrated its "star guest" Tony Blair and his 2005 "gift" of the Games and "provided the perfect opportunity for Blair's return to frontline politics", reported the *Guardian*. The organiser of this contrivance was Alistair Campbell, chief spinner of the bloodbath Blair and he gifted to the Iraqi people. And just as the victims of Dow Chemical are of no interest to the Olympic elite, so the epic criminality of Labour's star guest was unmentionable.

The source of the Olympics' chaotic security is also unmentionable. As established studies in Britain have long conceded, it was the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the rest of the "war on terror" that served to recruit new jihadists and bolster other forms of resistance that led directly to the London bombs of 7/7.

These were Blair's bombs. In his current rehabilitation, courtesy of his Olympics "legacy", there is the additional spin that Blair's huge post-Downing Street wealth is concentrated on charities.

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Decency, moderation and determination
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The second letter I mentioned was sent to me by Josh Richards who lives in Bristol. In

March 2003, Josh and four others set out to disable an American B-52 bomber based at RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire, before it could bomb Iraq. So did four other people. It was a non-violent action faithful to the Nuremberg principles that a war of aggression was the "paramount war crime". Josh was arrested and charged with planning to lay explosives. "This was based on the ludicrous idea," he wrote, "that some peanut butter I had on me was actually a bomb component. The charge was later abandoned after the Ministry of Defence performed extensive tests on my Tesco crunchy nut peanut butter."

During two trials and two hung juries, Josh was finally acquitted. It was a landmark case in which he spoke in open court about the genocidal embargo imposed upon Iraq by the British and US governments prior to their invasion and the false justifications of the "war on terror".

His acquittal meant that he had acted in the name of the law and his intention had been to save lives.

The letter Josh wrote to me included a copy of my book, *The New Rulers of the World*, which, he pointed out, had provided him with the facts he needed for his defence. Meticulously page-marked and highlighted, it had accompanied Josh on a three-year journey through courtrooms and prison cells.

Of all the letters I have received, Josh's epitomises a decency, modesty and determination of moral purpose that represent another Britain and antidotes to poisonous Olympic sponsors and rehabilitated warmongers. During these extraordinary times, such an example ought to give others heart and inspiration to reclaim this receding democracy.

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John Pilger has twice won Britain's highest award for journalism. In 2009, he was awarded Australia's human rights prize, the Sydney Peace Prize. His latest film is "The War on Democracy."
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Favoured groups

Governments and their institutions exist merely to further and secure the interests of certain groups at the expense of all others, says **John Kozy**

“Liquidate labor, liquidate stocks, liquidate the farmer, liquidate real estate. It will purge the rottenness out of the system.” – Herbert Hoover’s treasury secretary Andrew Mellon

Governments have never existed to solve problems domestic or international. Governments and their institutions exist merely to further and secure the interests of favored groups, but We the People are never the favored group.

Paul Krugman recently wrote that, “[The] fact is that the Fed, like the European Central Bank, like the US Congress, like the government of Germany, has decided that avoiding economic disaster is somebody else’s responsibility.

“None of this should be happening. As in 1931, Western nations have the resources they need to avoid catastrophe, and indeed to restore prosperity – and we have the added advantage of knowing much more than our great-grandparents did about how depressions happen and how to end them. But knowledge and resources do no good if those who possess them refuse to use them.

“And that’s what seems to be happening. The fundamentals of the world economy aren’t, in themselves, all that scary; it’s the almost universal abdication of responsibility that fills me, and many other economists,

with a growing sense of dread.”

Krugman and most other Americans are fond of blaming social problems on the personal failings of individuals rather than on the systemic failings of institutions. It is people borrowing more than they can afford rather than banks lending too loosely or consumers saving too little rather than businesses paying too little to enable consumers to save that causes all of the problems. But borrowing and lending and saving and income are not independent variables. People are persons with personal failures but banks are institutions with systemic failures, and the systemic failures can entice people to engage in activities that may look like personal failures but are not. Krugman and many others assume that governments and their institutions exist to solve the problems people face. When the problems persist, these people again assume that it is because those in government just aren’t doing their jobs. But there is very little historical evidence to support this view.

The government of Louis XVI made scanty attempts to solve the problems of the French people which ultimately led to the French Revolution. The various governments in the United States in the early 1800 made few attempts to resolve the problems raised by slavery in American society and the Supreme Court made any resolution of them impossible which led to the Civil War.

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Western European nations are treating the debt crisis similarly. There is only one resolution: the Southern European states must merely do what the Northern ones say regardless of how it affects the peoples of Southern Europe
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Emperor Franz Joseph of Austro-Hungary made no effort to resolve the ethnic problems his empire faced in the Balkans which ultimately led to the First World War. Great Britain and France made no attempts to ameliorate the problems Germany faced as a result of the conditions imposed on it by the Treaty of Versailles which then resulted in the Second World War. No government has made much of an attempt to resolve the problems created in the Levant by the creation of Israel, and instability, slaughter, and war have prevailed ever since. Now a third world war, an atomic conflagration, may be in the offing.

Domestic and international conflicts are being exacerbated world-wide by similar failures at problem resolution. The Western nations and Israel are not making any serious attempts to resolve their problems with Iran. The only possibility of resolving the problems in Western minds is for Iran to merely conform to what the Western world wants. Western European nations are treating the debt crisis similarly. There is only one resolution: the Southern European states must merely do what the Northern ones say regardless of how it affects the peoples of Southern Europe. And the American Congress is paralysed by each party's insistence that its way is the only way.

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Simple answer

So what is really going on? What are Krugman and others missing? The answer is as plain as sunlight on a cloudless day.

Governments have never existed to solve problems, domestic or international. Governments and their institutions exist merely to further and secure the interests of favored groups. For instance, each nation's foreign policy always consists of "protecting our interests" somewhere or other. Whose interests are "our interests"? Why the favored group's, of course. And who are the favored groups? Well, it all depends.

The favored group of European govern-

ments is international investors, not the common people of a single European nation. The Greeks can be damned so long as the investors get repaid even though the common people of Greece did not borrow one euro from international investors, the Greek government, which has no income it doesn't take from ordinary Greeks, did, and the investors were not only willing but anxious to lend. The favored group of the Mubarak government in Egypt was the Egyptian military that even after the overthrow of Mubarak is still trying to secure its interests. The favored group in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen is a royal family. In Iraq and Iran, a religious sect is favored. Every one of these governments except, perhaps, Iceland has shown a willingness to kill those common people who are never the favored group.

The United States of America is an extreme case. The Democrats in Congress have their favored groups; so do the Republicans. But the common people is not the favored group of either party, although the politicians pay homage to it. America is comprised of a mass of groups, some favored, some not.

Even though the nation's founders warned the colonists about the danger of factions, every issue in America attracts a faction, and sometime or other, government favors one or more of them. Americans have pro and an anti-immigration factions. Within these, there are pro and anti-Asian factions, pro- and anti-Latino factions and within these, Central and South American and Cuban factions. There are pro- and anti-gun control factions, abortion factions, contraception factions, labor factions, business factions, healthcare factions, free and regulated market factions, free trade and protectionist factions, global warming and anti-global warming factions, more and less taxation factions, big and small government factions, federal and states' rights factions, imperialist and anti-imperialist factions, religious and anti-religious factions. Fac-

tions here; factions there; disagreement everywhere! Where Americans once believed united we stand, divided we fall, today they believe division secures our group's special interests. And the moneyed groups have made this work by using raw power and bribery.

But the nation? Oh, well, its seams are all coming apart. The nation doesn't matter to factions; only the interests of the favored group does. And that is why American society does not work. It is a nation whose people do not live together; they merely live side by side, where neighbors who have lived side by side for years break into violent conflict over the most trivial of things: a barking dog, a crowing rooster, a loud party, a minor inconvenience as, for instance, a parked car, children playing in someone's yard, a tree-limb extending over a property line, a sign or even an American flag on a pole, the color of a house, the height of a lawn and the kind of plants in it – just some of the recent neighborly conflicts I have observed.

Reveling in conflict

America is a nation comprised of people who revel in conflict. Even the legal system is adversarial. Our cities, or at least parts of them, are war zones. More people are killed daily in America than in Afghanistan. Since Americans can't get along with each other why would anyone expect them to get along with the rest of the world? What makes anyone believe Americans care if Sunni and Shi'as get along?

The human condition will never improve until governments everywhere begin governing for the people, all the people, and none but all the people. So long as governments govern for the benefit of special groups, antagonisms, dislikes, and hatred will prevail; the Earth will seethe with conflict.

Some will say it's just human nature, that human beings have a dark side rooted

in greed that cannot be extirpated. If so, we are just like ants where workers and soldiers live merely to provide for queens and their entourages of drones who exist merely to produce more ants, where common people are but beasts of burden that exist for the sake of the greedy. Perhaps this view is accurate, but the best of humanity has never thought so. Only Machiavelli's *The Prince* among thousands of works is renowned for this view (although Ayn Rand may be catching up). Religious and humanitarian works that contest it abound.

The trouble is we have too many people like Paul Krugman. Generally his heart seems to be in the right place; he seems to genuinely care about what happens to people, but he never goes far enough. He and those like him seem never to be able to mine an argument deep enough to find the source of its lode. They stop digging when they get to something that fits their preconceptions, as, for instance, personal human failures.

During an interview on Internet radio, I was once asked, being a veteran, why soldiers fight. The host, I am certain, expected some profound response such as for God and country, for human dignity, for the rights and freedoms our people enjoy. But I merely answered, because they're there!

When we take perfectly normal young Americans off the street and send them into battle, we do not presume that they are inherently killers. After all, killers are bad people. Yet we send these good young men and women off to kill and they do. When they return, we again do not assume they are killers. We expect them to return to being perfectly normal young men and women. So do bankers do what they do because they're bad people or because they're bankers and banking requires it? Are politicians corrupt because they are bad people or are they corrupt because politics requires it?

People, ask yourselves this question. Do our institutions make us what we are? If our institutions promote greed, will we be

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greedy, if our institutions promote killing will we be killers, if our institutions promote bribery, will we be bribed, if our institutions promote corruption, will we be corrupt? What will we be when our institutions promote goodness and how can we build such institutions?

The Romans had an expression – *cui prodest?* – meaning “who stands to gain?” Who advocates a specific view isn’t important; what is important is who stands to gain from it.

Only then can who the view favors be known. But in today’s world, *cui prodest?* is too general a question. It is too easy to conjure up arguments that purport to show that many or even all gain. That everyone gains from tax cuts for the rich can be argued *ad infinitum*.

But who stands to gain the most financially can’t. It always has a specific answer, and if you want to know who the government’s favored group is at any time, that is the question that must be answered. When the answer is some group other than the common people, the view must be rejected; otherwise, the human condition is mired in the mud of hate and will never improve, conflict will persist, and the human race will very likely exterminate itself and perhaps life itself.

Jefferson knew that merchants had no country. And that the business of America is business has often been voiced by the established elite and endorsed by the Republican party. The Congress is in gridlock because the Republicans do not care what happens to America or the American people, just so long as their favored constituents’ interests are preserved.

That is what Paul Krugman and others like him fail to understand. That is why the models of economists, even if any turn out to work, are of no consequence. The only models that matter are those that advance and secure the interests of the favored group. Can the problem of unemployment be solved? Nobody in power really cares!

Can the problem of world-wide poverty be solved? Nobody in power really cares! Can peace ever prevail between human beings? Nobody in power really cares! The dead require no benefits, and a very small government will suffice.

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Postscript

Since drafting this piece, I have discovered that three political scientists, Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, have provided empirical evidence for my thesis in *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Their views are summarized in a piece by Daniel Little:

“What is really interesting about this analysis is that it implies that the sizzling rhetoric coming from the right – personal attacks on the President, anti-gay rants, renewed heat around abortion and contraception – is just window dressing. By the evidence of voting records, what the right really cares about is economic issues favoring the affluent – tax cuts, reduced social spending, reduced regulation of business activity, and estate taxes. This isn’t to say that the enraged cultural commentators aren’t sincere about their personal belief – who knows? But the policies of their party are very consistent, in the analysis offered here. Maybe the best way of understanding the extremist pundits is as a class of well-paid entertainers, riffing on themes of hatred and cultural fundamentalism that have nothing to do with the real goals of their party.”

There you have it. The people are viewed by the establishment as chickens to be broiled for lunch. **CT**

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John Kozy is a retired professor of philosophy and logic who writes on social, political, and economic issues. After serving in the US Army during the Korean War, he spent 20 years as a university professor and 20 years working as a writer. His on-line pieces can be found on www.jkozy.com

The mother of all deceptions

William Bowles reads some lessons from a revolutionary past

“There – it sickens one to have to wade through this grimy sea of opportunism. What a spectacle of shuffling, lies, vacillation and imbecility does this Game Political offer to us? I cannot conclude without an earnest appeal to those Socialists, of whatever section, who may be drawn towards the vortex of Parliamentarism, to think better of it while there is yet time. If we ally ourselves to any of the presen[t] parties they will only use us as a cat’s-paw; and on the other hand, if by any chance a Socialist slips through into Parliament, he will do so at the expense of leaving his principles behind him; he will certainly not be returned as a Socialist, but as something else; what else is hard to say. As I have written before in these columns, Parliament is going just the way we would have it go. Our masters are feeling very uncomfortable under the awkward burden of GOVERNMENT, and do not know what to do, since their sole aim is to govern from above. Do not let us help them by taking part in their game. Whatever concessions may be necessary to the progress of the Revolution can be wrung out of them at least as easily by extra-Parliamentary pressure, which can be exercised without losing one particle of those principles which are the treasure and hope of Revolutionary Socialists”. – William Morris, the Commonweal, Volume 1, Number 10, November 1885, p. 93.[1]

Written 127 years ago under the heading of ‘Moves in the game political’ in Morris’s own weekly publication the *Commonweal*, his statement could have been written today, except of course, not a single person of ‘note’ on the left, would ever have the balls to make such a statement about our ‘hallowed institution’, Parliament. Even less, dare to diss our ‘sainted Parliamentary Socialists’ as being nothing more than fakes who sold our inheritance for a mess of pottage.

Morris’s understated wit and acid sarcasm peppered his weekly observations on the events of late Victorian Britain’s capitalism, just as much a two-party system then as now. Morris’s observations were of course, ignored by the left of his day just as they are still ignored today by what’s left of the left.

So what does this tell us about our current predicament? First, it’s obvious that we do not have a left, of any kind. Yes, by all means individuals of various flavours do exist with some idea of what’s going on and why, but by and large we have what remains of a left that was created in Morris’s day and one that still thinks it’s 1885 judging by the apparently blind belief the left has in the capitalist version of democracy, what Morris called Parliamentarism.

It was around the time that Morris wrote the words reproduced here that the leader-

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The giant cartels that dominate and control the economy in the interests of a few shareholders would have to be dismantled
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ship of the organised working class chose the route of reforming capitalism, theoretically via the Parliamentary process rather than the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist order.

And after all, Morris's mistrust of a professional political class is well borne out by events of his day and ours: corruption, thievery and fraud on a grand scale let alone the obvious fact that the political class is now well and truly bought and paid for by corporate capitalism. A deal sewn up while the populace was busy being turned into 'property-owning democrats' during the Thatcher era by privatizing public housing and selling it for a song.

Morris's vision of socialism has, for obvious reasons, been dismissed as 'utopian' and worse, all but written out of Morris's history as a revolutionary socialist. Instead, he has become ace wallpaper designer and all round Renaissance Man but not someone who also advocated violent revolution, not because he wanted to but, as Morris was wont to point out, those who rule will never relinquish their power voluntarily. An observation borne out by events, over and over again.

So what is so 'utopian' about Morris's vision of a small, sustainable, locally based and owned economy? It sounds remarkably like what today we would call a Green vision of the future, television is full of shows advocating just this. But mainly it's Morris's rejection of State Socialism that got him air-brushed out of our socialist past as well as his nostalgic yearnings for our lost history of creative work; no less real now as then.

Morris felt that nothing more in the way of governance was needed than a local one administered by the inhabitants (or those hired on their account). Utopian? Well yes in the sense that such an arrangement would never be permitted under capitalism. But is it workable?

As the sustainable 'movement' gathers pace, it all the more resembles Morris's self-administering local commonwealth with its

small scale production serving local needs. A process made all the more necessary given the deliberate de-industrialization/de-skilling undertaken by successive governments. All of it predicted by the way, or at least noted as it happened by the very people being laid off.

But for this to happen, the giant cartels that dominate and control the economy in the interests of a few shareholders (that are not even human but instead consist of vast stock portfolios owned by insurance companies and banks) would have to be dismantled.

Of course, it's an immense task and perhaps one of the reasons (though not the main one) as to why those early socialists opted for the 'Parliamentary Road to Socialism'. Well, 1945 was as close as we ever got to some kind of half-arsed, reformed capitalism with a socialist face but it wasn't to last long; by 1980 it was all over. A mere thirty-five years during which time we did make valuable gains in certain areas but the fundamentals haven't altered: what the Lord giveth, the Lord can take away, as we are learning to our collective cost.

Looking around, with imperialism on the literal warpath around the planet, wielding weapons that likely would have made Morris's blood run cold, he would nevertheless recognise our world as it once again most closely resembles his own. A world of rampant imperialist capitalism, unrestrained by a powerful counterforce with the end of the Soviet Period and once again falling apart at the seams as its internal contradictions spin it out of control.

Strikingly, Morris would have also instantly recognised the financial speculators who have caused such havoc in the pursuit of filthy lucre, as his own age was littered with these self-same parasites.

But I contend that Morris' vision of self-sustaining local communities is even more doable today than it was in his time, not that it can be done overnight, it would have to be an ongoing process of transformation.

For example, let's start with the banks by busting them up and creating a network of local banks designed to finance local development and serve the community. What's so difficult about this? And why, when our 'publicly-owned' media alleges to debate the economic crisis are such ideas never entertained?

There are unfortunately other, even larger obstacles in our path. The step advocated above would never be allowed by global capital. Busting up Barclays Bank for example, would incur the wrath of the US/UK financial cartel and threaten to undermine the credibility not only of the 'austerity' drive but of the illusory importance that the banks play in preserving civilization as we know it. Worse still, we'd have to bust them all up and only the State can do this, thus we are back where started: taking over state power (only to abolish it once the reign of capital is removed according to Morris).

"So goes on merrily the political disruption of our present system. Far more grim than this bad joke of Parliament and representation is the process of its economical breakup. All over the country an attempt is being made to stimulate trade by the huge advertisements called exhibitions; and royalty is playing its due part in a commercial country by opening these, and so killing, if possible, two birds with one stone - exciting loyalty on the one hand, and trying to get it to spend money on the other. The success on the commercial side is not yet great, and trade is still 'dull' - a word which covers something of the same suffering as the conventional phrases used in describing a battle. 'The enemy annoyed our advance much:' we all know, if we choose to think, the kind of misery that such phrases cover, and in our commercial war it is, I repeat, much the same: - (ibid), *Notes on Passing Events*, Volume 2, Number 21, 5 June 1886, p. 73.

Again, I suppose it should not need repeating that Morris's experience of capitalism was almost exactly the same as ours;

that crises, small, large and cataclysmic, are intrinsic to capitalism and occur with monotonous regularity, the latest being perhaps the last hurrah of a system so devastating in its technological power that it now threatens the very existence of the ecosystem that keeps us all alive. That it persists at all is some kind of miracle made possible only by persuading us that there is no alternative.

In any case it would seem to me that we have reached a critical juncture in the evolution of Representational Parliamentary democracy and the role it has played in maintaining capitalism. A vision inherited by successive generations of socialists as an alternative path to socialism. A juncture moreover that has been entirely overlooked by the left that still behaves as though it were still 1885, never mind 1945.

However, the ruling political class and its allies in the media, have realised just how bankrupt the system is but without signing their own metaphorical death warrants, there is nothing much they can or want to do about it except tinker and repress all those who oppose our very English fascism by one means or another.

Clearly it's not possible to reform Parliament and the democratic process from within. We need only view the attempts that have been made by the same people who need 'reforming'. Our entrenched political class will never relinquish power voluntarily, there's too much at stake.

Increasingly, it looks like the only way forward is community by community given that we have neither trade unions or political parties around which to unite and with which to project our demands, at least at present. Not that trade unions aren't an important voice but they no longer occupy a central role in the majority of workers' lives.

This is the dilemma and why the left is bereft of ideas and of any kind of legitimacy, for the left is also a product of the same thinking that has created our professional, political class and one that has its roots

.....
Our entrenched political class will never relinquish power voluntarily, there's too much at stake

TOWARDS REVOLUTION

.....
**It's the notion
of community
that's at the heart
of my vision**
.....

in a no longer existent industrial working class. It sees the way forward through utilising the same mechanisms and the same centralising powers as those it would seek to replace.

If a significant minority have lost all faith in the political process and clearly they have, why should they put their trust in a left that operates in the same manner, even if with a different end in mind?

The seeds of change already exist within our local communities and have always existed in some form or other but as discrete endeavours, disconnected from the wider issues. But focusing them around a community, a geographical location contextualizes the issues and makes it possible to share experiences with other communities. It's where we live and work; where we entertain and educate ourselves and cure our illnesses and where 'austerity' plays itself out on a daily basis.

What form it would take is still not clear in my mind let alone how individual communities could work together but I assume that a revolutionized local council could eventually form the basis for the transformation. Whatever, it's obvious, especially to the political class that the current setup is irretrievably broken, let alone totally compromised, hence the endless and vain exhortations in our complicit media to 'restore legitimacy to the political order'.

And, to be a little more realistic, such a

project is one that will have to be built over time and crucially, it's identifying the starting point. Somehow, I get the feeling that it's the notion of community that's at the heart of my vision. What is the idea of 'community' based upon if not that there exists a communality of interests; shared goals and aspirations as well as needs. And for many, increasingly where they live is often the only place they feel that they are, or could be, a part of something larger than themselves.

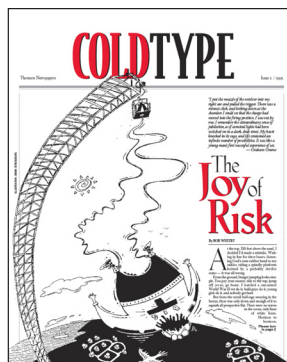
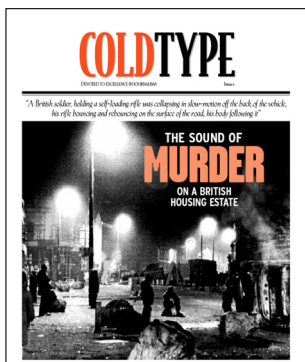
It's an idea that Tory halfwit Cameron has tried to exploit with his 'Big Society' PR stunt, knowing full well that as a people, we have no control over our rulers actions but yearn desperately to belong to something that we are a part of and have some control over. Ultimately the shopping mall just doesn't cut it, especially when you're broke

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*William Bowles is a London-based activist.
His website is www.williambowles.info*
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Notes

1. The book, 'Journalism – Contributions to the Common Weal 1885-1890' by William Morris, edited by Nicholas Salmon is published as part of the William Morris Library by Thoemmes Press, 1996. Find it second-hand online for about £14. Also, check out the late Nicholas Salmon's Morris Archive housed on Marxist.org



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Black hat hypocrisy

The West has no right to play God in Iraq, Libya, Syria, or anywhere else in the Middle East, says **Jonathan Cook**

In a traditional cowboy movie, we know what to do: we look for the guy wearing the white hat to be sure who to cheer, and for the one wearing the black hat to know who deserves to die, preferably gruesomely, before the credits roll. If Hollywood learnt early to play on these most tribal of emotions, do we doubt that Washington's political script-writers are any less sophisticated?

Since 9/11, the United States and its allies in Europe have persuaded us that they are waging a series of "white hat" wars against "black hat" regimes in the Middle East. Each has been sold to us misleadingly as a "humanitarian intervention". The cycle of such wars is still far from complete.

But over the course of the past decade, the presentation of these wars has necessarily changed. As Hollywood well understands, audiences quickly tire of the same contrived plot. Invention, creativity and ever greater complexity are needed to sustain our emotional engagement.

Declarations by Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu aside, there are only so many times we can be convinced that there is a new Hitler in the Middle East, and that the moment is rapidly approaching when this evil mastermind will succeed in developing a doomsday weapon designed to wipe

out Israel, the US, or maybe the planet.

In 1950s Hollywood, the solution for audience ennui was simple: *High Noon* put the noble sheriff, Gary Cooper, in a black hat, and the evil gunslinger in a white one. It offered a veneer of complexity, but in reality the same good guy-bad guy formula played out along familiar lines.

If Washington required a new storyline after the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, it did not have to work hard to write one. It was assisted by the rapid changes taking place in the political environment of the Middle East: the so-called Arab Spring. Washington could hardly have overlooked the emotionally satisfying twists and turns presented by the awakening of popular forces against the deadening hand of autocratic regimes, many of them installed decades ago by the West.

Same agenda

The reality, of course, is that the US and its allies are pursuing the same agenda as before the Arab Spring: that is, they are looking to preserve their own geo-political interests. In that regard, they are trying to contain and reverse dangerous manifestations of the awakening, especially in Egypt, the most populous and influential of the Arab states, and in the Gulf, our pipeline to the

Declarations by Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu aside, there are only so many times we can be convinced that there is a new Hitler in the Middle East



In Libya, the US and its allies in Nato took off the white hat and handed it to the so-called rebels, comprising mostly tribes out of favour with Gadaffi

world's most abundant oil reserves.

But for Washington, the Arab Spring presented opportunities as well as threats, and these are being keenly exploited.

Both Afghanistan and Iraq followed a model of "intervention" that is now widely discredited and probably no longer viable for a West struggling with economic decline. It is not an easy sell to Western publics that our armies should single-handedly invade, occupy and "fix" Middle Eastern states, especially given how ungrateful the recipients of our largesse have proven to be.

Humanitarian wars might have run into the sand at this point had the Arab Spring not opened up new possibilities for "intervening".

The Arab awakening created a fresh set of dynamics in the Middle East that countered the dominance of the traditional military and political elites: democratic and Islamist forces were buoyed with new confidence; business elites spied domestic economic opportunities through collaboration with the West; and oppressed ethnic, religious and tribal groups saw a chance to settle old scores.

Not surprisingly, Washington has shown more interest in cultivating the latter two groups than the first. In Libya, the US and its allies in Nato took off the white hat and handed it to the so-called rebels, comprising mostly tribes out of favour with Gadaffi.

The West took a visible role, especially in its bombing sorties, but one that made sure the local actors were presented as in the driving seat. The West was only too happy to appear as if relegated to a minor role: enabling the good guys.

After Libya's outlaw, Muammar Gadaffi, was beaten to death by the rebels last year, the credits rolled. The movie was over for Western audiences. But for Libyans a new film began, in a language foreign to our ears and with no subtitles. What little information has seeped out since suggests that Libya is now mired in lawlessness, no better than the political waste lands we ourselves

created in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hundreds of regional militias run the country, extorting, torturing and slaughtering those who oppose them.

Few can doubt that Syria is next on the West's hit list. And this time, the script-writers in Washington seem to believe that the task of turning a functioning, if highly repressive, state into a basket case can be achieved without the West's hand being visible at all. This time the white hat has been assigned to our allies, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, who, according to the latest reports, are stoking an incipient civil war not only by arming some among the rebels but also by preparing to pay them salaries too, in petro-dollars.

Narrative complexity

The importance to Western governments of developing more "complex" narratives about intervention has been driven by the need to weaken domestic opposition to continuing Middle East wars. The impression that these wars are being inspired and directed exclusively from "inside", even if by a heterogeneous opposition whose composition remains murky to outsiders, adds a degree of extra legitimacy; and additionally, it suggests to Western publics that that the cost in treasure and casualties will not be born by us.

Whereas there was a wide consensus in favour of attacking Afghanistan, Western opinion split, especially in Europe, over the question of invading Iraq in the same manner. In the post 9/11 world, the villain in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden, seemed a more credible threat to Western interests than Saddam Hussein. The critics of Operation Shock and Awe were proven resoundingly right.

The Arab awakenings, however, provided a different storyline for subsequent Western intervention – one that Washington had tried weakly to advance in Iraq too, after Saddam's WMD could not be located. It was

no longer about finding a doomsday person or weapon, but about a civilising mission to bring democracy to oppressed peoples.

In the era before the Arab Spring, this risked looking like just another ploy to promote Western interests. But afterwards, it seemed far more plausible. It mattered little whether the local actors were democratic elements seeking a new kind of politics or feuding ethnic groups seeking control of the old politics for their own, vengeful ends. The goal of the West was to co-opt them, willingly or not, to the new narrative.

This move effectively eroded popular opposition to the next humanitarian war, in Libya, and looks like it is already achieving the same end in Syria.

Certainly, it has fatally undermined effective dissent from the left, which has squabbled and splintered over each of these humanitarian wars. A number of leading leftwing intellectuals lined up behind the project to overthrow Gadaffi, and more of them are already applauding the same fate for Syria's Bashar Assad. There is now only a rump of critical leftwing opinion steadfast in its opposition to yet another attempt by the West to engineer an Arab state's implosion.

If this were simply a cowboy movie, none of this would be of more than incidental interest. Gadaffi was, and Assad is, an outlaw. But international politics is far more complex than a Hollywood script, as should be obvious if we paused for a moment to reflect on what kind of sheriffs we have elected and re-elected in the West. George Bush, Tony Blair and Barack Obama probably have more blood on their hands than any Arab autocrat.

Many on the left are struggling to analyse the new Middle East with anything approaching the sophistication of Washington's military planners. This failure derives in large part from a willingness to allow the war-merchants to blur the meaningful issues – on the regimes, the opposition groups and the media coverage – related to each “humanitarian intervention”.

Yes, the regimes selected for destruction are uniformly brutal and ugly towards their own people. Yes, the nature of their rule should be denounced. Yes, the world would be better off without them. But this is no reason for the West to wage wars against them, at least not so long as the world continues to be configured the way it is into competing and self-interested nation states.

Human rights records

Nearly all states in the Middle East have appalling human rights records, some of them with even fewer redeeming features than Gadaffi's Libya or Assad's Syria. But then those states, such as Saudi Arabia, are close allies of the West. Only the terminally naïve or dishonest argue that the states targeted by the West have been selected for the benefit of their long-suffering citizens. Rather, they have been chosen because they are seen as implacably opposed to American and Israeli interests in the region.

Even in the case of Libya, where Gadaffi's threat to the West was far from clear to many observers, Western geo-political interests were, in fact, dominant. Dan Glazebrook, a journalist specialising in Western foreign policy, has noted that shortly before the West turned its sights on Libya Gadaffi had begun galvanising African opposition to Africom, the Africa command established by the US military in 2008.

Africom's role is to organise and direct African troops to fight to ensure, in the words of a US Vice-Admiral, “the free flow of natural resources from Africa to the global market”. In overthrowing Gadaffi, Africom both removed the main challenger to its plan and put into effect its mission statement: not a single US or European soldier died in the operation to unseat Gadaffi.

Highlighting the hypocrisy at the heart of the interventionist agenda should not be dismissed as simple whataboutery. The West's mendacity fatally undermines the rationale for intervention, stripping it of any

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semblance of legitimacy. It also ensures that those who are our allies in these military adventures, such as Saudi Arabia, are the ones who will ultimately get to shape the regimes that emerge out of the rubble.

And yes too, the peoples of the Arab world have the right to live in freedom and dignity. Yes, they are entitled to rise up against their dictators. Yes, they have the right to our moral sympathy, to our advice and to our best efforts at diplomacy in their cause. But they have no right to expect us to go to war on their behalf, or to arm them, or to bring their governments down for them.

This principle should hold because, as the world is currently configured, humanitarian intervention guarantees not a new moral order but rather the law of the jungle. Even if the West could be trusted to wage just wars, rather than ones to promote the interests of its elites, how could we ever divine what action was needed to achieve a just outcome – all the more so in the still deeply divided societies of the Middle East?

Is the average Libyan safer because we pulverised his or her country with bombs, because we crushed its institutions, good and bad alike, because we left it politically and socially adrift, and because we then handed arms and power to tribal groups so that they could wreak revenge on their predecessors? It is doubtful. But even if the answer is unclear, in the absence of certainty we are obliged to follow the medical maxim: “First, do no harm”.

.....
God complex

It is the height of arrogance – no, more a God complex – to be as sure as some of our politicians and pundits that we deserve the gratitude of Iraqis for overthrowing Saddam Hussein at the likely cost of more than a million Iraqi lives and millions more forced into exile.

Societies cannot have democracy imposed from without, as though it were an item to be ordered from a lunch menu. The

West’s democracies, imperfect as they are, were fought for by their peoples over centuries at great cost, including horrific wars. Each state developed its own checks and balances to cope with the unique political, social and economic conditions that prevailed there. Those hard-won freedoms are under constant threat, not least from the very same political and economic elites that so vociferously campaign for humanitarian interventions abroad.

The reality is that greater freedoms are not awarded by outside benefactors; they are struggled for and won by the people themselves. No modern society achieved democracy except through a gradual, painful struggle, where lessons were learnt, often through error, where reverses and setbacks were plentiful, and where lasting success came with the realisation by all sides that legitimacy could not be secured through violence. If we owe other societies struggling for freedom anything, it is our solidarity, not access to our government’s arsenals.

In fact, the West’s duty is not to intervene more but to intervene far less. We already massively arm tyrannies such as those in the Gulf so that they can protect the oil that we consider our birthright; we offer military, financial and diplomatic cover for Israel’s continuing oppression of millions of Palestinians, a major cause of political instability in the Middle East; and we quietly support the Egyptian military, which is currently trying to reverse last year’s revolutionary gains.

Popular support for humanitarian wars could not be maintained without the spread of propaganda masquerading as news by our corporate-owned media. Over the past decade they have faithfully marketed the Middle East agendas of our war-making governments. As the fanciful pretext for each war is exposed, the armchair generals assure us that the lessons have been learnt for next time. But when the script is given a makeover – and the white hat passed to a new lawman – the same discredited media

pundits justify war yet again from the safety of their studios.

This is another reason to tread cautiously. In the case of Syria, the source of the certainty expressed by our newsrooms is often no more than a one-man outfit in the British city of Coventry known as the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. If Rami Abdulrahman did not exist, our interventionist governments and their courtiers in the media would have had to invent him. The Observatory produces the anti-regime news needed to justify another war.

This is not to argue that Assad's regime has not committed war crimes. Rather, it is that, even were "humanitarian interventions" a legitimate undertaking, we have no consistently reliable information to make an assessment of how best we can intervene, based on the "news" placed in our media by partisan groups to the conflict. All that is clear is that we are once again being manipulated, and to a known end.

These are grounds enough to oppose another humanitarian war. But there is an additional reason why it is foolhardy in the extreme for those on the left to play along with West's current agenda in Syria, even if

they genuinely believe that ordinary Syrians will be the beneficiaries.

If the West succeeds in its slow-motion, proxy intervention in Syria and disables yet another Arab state for refusing to toe its line, the stage will be set for the next war against the next target: Iran.

That is not an argument condoning Assad's continuing rule. Syrians should be left to make that decision. But it is an admonition to those who justify endless meddling in the Middle East in the service of a Western agenda. It is a caution against waging wars whose destructive power is directed chiefly at civilians. It is a warning that none of these humanitarian wars is a solution to a problem; they are only a prelude to yet more war. And it is a reminder that we have no right to play God.

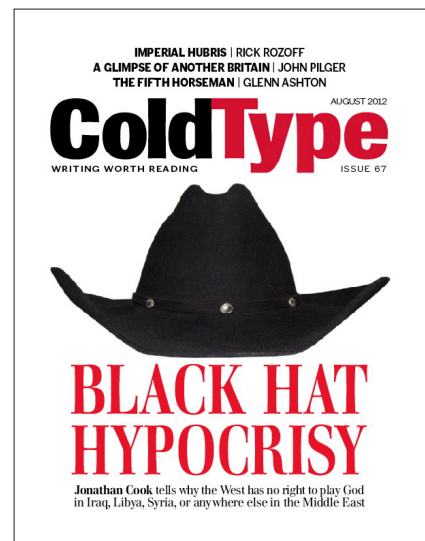
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Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His latest books are "Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East" (Pluto Press) and "Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human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

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Why we fight

The men and women in despair who rise up against the corporate onslaught don't do it to save themselves. They do it because it is right, says **Chris Hedges**

.....
They wake each day to defy, often in small, unseen acts of revolt, the intractable poverty, the despair and violence, by nurturing life
.....

I park my car in the lot in front of the rectory of Sacred Heart in Camden, N.J., and walk through a gray drizzle to Emerald Street. My friend Lolly Davis, whose blood pressure recently shot up and whose kidneys shut down, had been taken to a hospital in an ambulance but was now home.

I climb the concrete steps to her row house and ring the bell. There is an overpowering stench of garbage in the street. Her house is set amid other brick and wooden residences, some of which have been refurbished under Monsignor Michael Doyle's Heart of Camden project at Sacred Heart, a Roman Catholic parish. Other structures on Davis' street sit derelict or bear the scars of decay and long abandonment.

Lolly's grandson, nicknamed Boom Boom or Boomer, answers the door. He tells me his grandmother is upstairs. I enter and sit on a beige chair in the living room near closed white blinds that cover the window looking out on Emerald Street. The living room has a large flat screen television and two beige couches with brown and burnt-red floral patterns that match the chair.

There is a stone fireplace with a mantel crowded with family photos. Her grandson, one of numerous children from the neighborhood whom she adopted and raised, yells upstairs to let Lolly know I have arrived.

Lolly, 69, appears at the top of the stairs. Clutching the railing, she makes her way gin-

gerly down the steep wooden steps. Boomer, who is 21 and recently completed a special education program at a high school, goes back to the kitchen, where he was making himself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Lolly's two Chihuahuas, Big Pepsi Cola and Little Pepsi Cola, father and son who get into frequent growling matches, scamper around the room.

I have interviewed Lolly several times over the past two years for the new book, *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*, that I wrote with the cartoonist Joe Sacco.

In the book, Joe, who also spent time with her, illustrates the story of Lolly's life. Lolly radiates the indomitable and magnificent strength of the women and men who rise up in the pockets of poverty and despair we reported from, whether in Camden, Pine Ridge, S.D., the coal fields of southern West Virginia or the produce fields in Florida. They resist not because they will succeed in reversing the corporate onslaught against them, or even save themselves or their communities from poverty, but because it is right. They wake each day to defy, often in small, unseen acts of revolt, the intractable poverty, the despair and violence, by nurturing life. They often can do little to protect the lives, especially the lives of children, that are daily crushed and destroyed. But they refuse to bow before the forces of oppression or neglect. And in that defiance they achieve grandeur.

"The poor have to help the poor," Lolly

says, “because the ones who make the money are helping the people with money.”

Camden’s plight is worse than that of Youngstown, Ohio, or Detroit, worse than that of east New York or Watts. It is a dead city. It makes and produces nothing. It is the poorest city in the United States and is usually ranked year after year as one of the most, and often the most, dangerous. Camden is one of our many internal colonies in North America beset with the familiar corruption and brutal police repression that characterize the despotic regimes I covered as a reporter in Africa and Latin America. The per capita income in the city is \$11,967, and nearly 40 percent of the residents live below the poverty line.

Large swaths of Camden lie empty and abandoned. There are more than 1,500 derelict, abandoned row houses, empty shells of windowless brick factories and gutted and abandoned gas stations. There are overgrown vacant lots filled with garbage and old tires and rusted appliances. There are neglected, weed-filled cemeteries and boarded-up storefronts. There are perhaps a hundred open-air drug markets, most run by gangs such as the Bloods, the Latin Kings, Los Nietos and MS-13 (Mara Salvatrucha). Knots of young Hispanic or African-American men in black leather jackets, who can occasionally be seen flipping through wads of cash, sell weed, dope and crack to customers, many of whom drive in from the suburbs, in brazen defiance of the law.

The drug trade is perhaps the city’s only thriving business. A weapon is never more than a few feet away from the drug set, usually stashed behind a trash can, in the grass or on a porch, always within easy reach. Camden is a city awash in guns, easily purchased across the river in Philadelphia, where Pennsylvania gun laws are lax. The guns are kept for protection from rival gangs that send out groups to prey on rival drug dealers, stealing their drugs and cash. To be poor is to face the awful fact that nonviolence is a luxury that few on the streets can afford.

When Joe and I were working on the book in Camden a federal grand jury charged a lo-

cal cop nicknamed “Fat Face” and some of his colleagues with planting drugs on suspects, bribing prostitutes with drugs for information, lying on police reports, beating up suspects and conducting searches without warrants. Three of the city’s mayors have gone to prison for corruption in the last couple of decades. The school system and the police department have been taken over by the state. The deeper the descent the more the criminal class and the city authorities become indistinguishable, a smaller version of what has been replicated by corporations across the nation. Camden may have an African-American mayor, just as America may have an African-American president, but the faces and races of political leaders are no impediment to the ruthless cannibalizing of the country by corporate capitalism.

Military brothers

Lolly was born over the river in Philadelphia, in the Nicetown neighborhood, in 1942. She was the youngest of nine boys and six girls in the family. Two brothers and one sister remain alive. All of her brothers would go into the military, fighting in the Korean or Vietnam war. Her father was a carpenter and her mother took care of the children. She hands me a photocopy of a photograph of her mother, a strikingly beautiful woman radiant in a sundress. Her mother, who had white, Cherokee and black ancestry, was nicknamed “Hollywood” because of her beauty and elegance. Her fair skin meant that at times she was mistaken for being white. The woman in the old black-and-white picture has dark curls. The promise of life is written across her broad, joyous face.

Lolly’s childhood centered on the First Century Gospel Church in Philadelphia. The church, which was racially integrated and had a white pastor, believed in the power of prayer to heal sickness. Members were not allowed to visit doctors, including eye doctors. No one in the church, no matter how poor his or her eyesight, wore glasses.

Lolly’s mother, born and raised in New Cas-

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tle, Pa., lost her own mother when she was five. Lolly's grandfather remarried a year later, and the family moved to Bedford, Va. It was in Virginia that Lolly's mother met her father, who was half black and half Cherokee. They lived in Virginia until 1936, when they moved to a black section of Philadelphia, in Nicetown. Her mother studied to be a nurse, but her father forbade her to practice because of the strictures of the church. Some of the whites, Lolly remembers, lived in large, fine houses on Erie Street.

"My mother corresponded with a church in Philadelphia," Lolly says. "She had gotten sick. And so she had written the pastor and told him she was sick. This was the First Century Gospel Church of Philadelphia. They told her they would pray 'round 12 o'clock and for her to pray right along with 'em, and she did. And my father came home that day and saw my mother hangin' up clothes. And she said she was healed. They decided then to come up to Philadelphia."

"My father and my mother were God-fearin' parents," she says. "We went to church every Sunday, and every Wednesday evening we was at church. I had a sister I was named after. Her name is Mary Lolly. She was two years old when she died. She come down with a bad cold. I guess it was penomia. We had two beds in the girls' room. The boys' room had two beds and a bunk bed, so there was four beds in the boys' room. When I came along I was at the end. Then my mother, she adopted a little boy. I raised him after [my mother] passed away the day before he turned seven. I was 19. It was the 30th of May and we had the funeral. She died of diabetes. My mother was 60 years old."

"I left the church when I got older," she says. "I couldn't understand why you couldn't wear glasses, couldn't go to the doctor, but they went to the dentist. I'm thinkin' [when] you go to the dentist and get a tooth pulled isn't that medication?"

"I never knew my grandparents on my father's side," she says. "I never knew my grandparents on my mother's side, except my step-grandmother. My father raised his sisters and

his brothers. His parents passed away, but he never would talk about what happened. He never said nothin' 'bout what happened to our grandparents on my father's side."

"The hardest part of my childhood was in the wintertime," she says. "My father was a carpenter, but we never had our lights out; he always paid the bill. He saved when he worked in the summertime. He made sure he put money away to pay the rent and the public service bills. Food was the hardest. I 'member one time I was 'bout 5 years old. My sisters and brothers was in school. I come down and tell my mother I was hungry. And she said, 'OK, wait, wait.' So she made me some toast. I ate that. An' then when my sisters and brothers came home from school that afternoon we had oatmeal. I 'member that night tellin' my mother I was hungry, that that oatmeal didn't fill me up. That was the first and only time I remember bein' hungry. The next day was payday. My father came home and [had] bought food and everything, groceries and stuff. I had been near hungry, but that was the only time I can really say I was really, really bein' hungry."

Her father would travel in the winter to the Pocono Mountains and hunt pheasants, rabbits, groundhogs and even bear for food.

"We had groundhog many a day," Lolly says.

When her mother became gravely ill, the family called the pastor to come to the house to pray.

"The pastor came up that Saturday to see her, and I had to read the Bible to us every night," she says. "My mom had a black Persian cat. This cat had to have breakfast with my mom every day. Whatever my mother didn't eat, the cat would eat it. When my mother would finish eating, she would take her cup of tea and pour a little in a saucer and feed it to the cat. One day I came in there and I took her plate. I went in the kitchen and heard this noise. I went back in the room, she had fell. I called my older sister [at her home], and I told her; I had a hard time getting [my mother] up, you know. My sister came over that day. She took my mother [to her home]. My sister said

it's too much for me to take care of the house, cook dinner for everybody and take care of my mother at the same time. When my father came home I had the suitcase packed, me and my little brother with me, and we went to my sister's house. My mother said I was the only one who could lift her. Everyone else hurt her. When we go there my mother said, 'I knew you would come.'"

"The night she died, I was sitting with her," Lolly says. "I said mama you can't talk, I said do you want some water, shake your head yeah, she shook her head yeah. So I gave her some water and then she died. The whole sky lit up, like fireworks. Goodnight, dada. Everybody up there know what to do. Somebody called the pastor."

Lolly was left to care for her adopted seven-year-old brother. Her mother had taken in the boy after a neighbor told her that an infant was being left alone in an apartment all day while the mother worked. Lolly, her father and her little brother moved to Camden after her mother died in 1961.

Caring for others

"It don't have to be blood all the time for someone to be your family," she says. "And that's what I tell my children. They don't have to be your blood. I have one [Boom Boom]. ... I've had him since he was three days old. My neighbor was talking about having an abortion. I told her, 'Are you ready to stand before God and tell him the reason that you got rid of that baby?' She said, 'No.' I said, 'Give the child to me.' I never asked her for a penny after that, for anything."

Lolly started working at Sears. She met a man named James Nipples, nicknamed "Nick," who was in the Coast Guard. They fell in love. She and Nick had their first daughter in 1964. When Nick got out of the Coast Guard he found a job at Campbell's Soup. They moved into an apartment together, an arrangement that ended when Lolly came home and found Nick with another woman. She moved to an apartment of her own on Washington Street in

Camden. Eventually she and Nick reconciled, moved into an apartment together and had a second daughter, Tammy.

"Nick was scared to death of my father," Lolly says. "My father was a tall man. He had big hands. That's what Nick said. He was always respectful to my dad. They used to call him banana fingers. And my father was respectful to him."

They planned to marry in September 1970, but Nick was shot to death on August 30 in the middle of a quarrel in a bar.

"I was pregnant with my last daughter, fourth daughter, when he got killed," she says. "Baby girl, that's Cheryl. His [Nick's] mother, she said, 'I was coming up for the wedding, ... [instead] I come up and bury my son.'"

Struggling with war's violence

All of Lolly's brothers came home from the wars struggling to cope with the violence they had seen or participated in.

"My older brother Gilbert, he was in the Army," she says. "My second oldest brother, Wilfred, he was in the Army. He used to have a heart trouble, and they sent him home. My youngest brother, one I was next to, Virgil, he was in the Marines. He was in Vietnam twice. He went back. He came out the service. He says, 'There's nothing out here [in civilian life]; and he signed up, and they sent him right back. He drunk himself to death I guess. My older brother, he died too, because of the liver. Mostly all my brothers were drunk.'"

On May 13, 1975, Lolly's seven-year-old daughter complained that her throat hurt and she could not swallow. Lolly rushed her to a hospital, and the child died there.

"I almost lost my mind," Lolly says. "I would hear her laughing. I would look upstairs. I would see my daughter jump up on the bed. I knew she wasn't there. You know what I mean? I thought, people gonna say I'm crazy. One night I was laying in bed. I always left the bathroom light on. That toilet would constantly run. Constantly run. I was praying. I was crying. But I never asked God why, I never

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"I was praying. I was crying. But I never asked God why, I never asked him why, why my daughter had to die, I never asked him why"

The riots in August 1971 dealt Camden a near-fatal blow. The word spread among African-Americans as the city erupted that they should hang something red in their windows if they wanted their homes spared from arson attacks

asked him why, why my daughter had to die, I never asked him why. I heard my father, who had died six months before my daughter, just like I'm talking to you right now. My father said, 'Didn't I tell you don't worry about her? Don't worry, Tammy's all right ... she's with me.' And I believe he's in heaven. Everything just got all light."

"What time of the night was that?" I ask.

"Oh," she says, "that gotta be like 1 or 2 in the morning."

"I got up like it was a new day," she says. "Like everything, like the sun just came up, you know, and everything was all right, my nerves calmed on down."

"I took other people's kids," Lolly says. "My house, this is the quiet house I've ever had. This house is quiet compared to where I used to live at. Because, I never know, I wake up in the morning and come downstairs I never know who is in my house. I always have family move in, and they weren't paying no rent. No nothing. I did everything for myself. I used to go junking, and I used to have little yard sales. I raised my brother Robin. ... [My sister-in-law] had a daughter, and her daughter had four kids. I raised them from 1993 to going on 1997. Four boys. It was all in my house. I had six at the time. I was a baby sitter to two other kids. The young man that was here, I had him off and on since he was three days old. I raised him and his brother. His grandmother had custody of him. She sent for me and I went to see her. She had cancer. She asked will I raise them, and I said yeah. I rode over in the morning, come home, I would go by the house, get the kids, I would feed her dinner, nobody was there to help her. I would feed her dinner and everything, wash her clothes, do the dishes, all that. I'd take the boys, bring them home, help with the homework, wash their clothes at my house, hang their clothes. Next morning at 5 o'clock I would get them boys up, get them dressed."

"I had two white kids," she says. "Chris and Hope. They were my neighbors on Almond Street. Hope was a girl. Chris was a boy. Hope was older. They were 4 or 5. Their mother and

father lived on our street. She started messing with this black guy, and she left. Well anyway, [their father] had to work, he had nobody to take care of the kids. I told him bring the kids on, I'll take care of the kids. So then they started staying at my house. And finally he took them, he took them back to his parents. Four, five, six, seven, eight kids, nine kids. But I always had kids staying at my house, even the kids in the neighborhood. When they had problems with their parents they'd come to my house, I had to straighten everything out."

Decline of a city

Camden fell into grim decline in the 1960s as industries that had once provided employment, including a shipyard that at its height provided 36,000 jobs, packed up and left. The riots in August 1971 dealt Camden a near-fatal blow. The word spread among African-Americans as the city erupted that they should hang something red in their windows if they wanted their homes spared from arson attacks. Lolly immediately informed her white neighbors to hang red in their windows to save their homes.

"My brother came into the house, and told me, put red in the window because they're going to firebomb the house," Lolly says. "I said, 'Oh my goodness! Oh, my goodness!' I went across the street and I told my friend Gigi, 'Look, y'all gotta put some red in the window.' I said, 'Y'all can't tell nobody where you heard from, because they gonna kill me, you know.' So they put [up a] red Christmas sock. I put my brother's red underwear. I go tape [it] in my window, tape in my window."

"Stores moved out" in the aftermath of the riots, Lilly says. "J.C. Penney left. ... Five-and-10 closed up downtown. ... All the supermarkets, we had Acme, we have an Acme no more."

"Everything is gone," she adds. "Camden went downhill." **CT**

Chris Hedges' latest book is "Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt," co-authored with artist and writer Joe Sacco

Fred's guide to economics

Conservatives like competition as long as they are winning, and when they aren't they want the government to buy their stuff, writes **Fred Reed**

Today I'm going to explain economics, society, and the pursuit of happiness. When I'm through, there won't be any questions left. You will know everything. Whole university departments will shutter their doors. And good riddance.

A friend of mine is an ardent fan of capitalism, also called "free enterprise" if you are trying to sell it to the rubes, or "codified robbery" by those familiar with its workings. Anyway, this friend had an actual degree in economic theory. He said things like "commoditized debenture yields" and "mezzanine tranche bundles" and "annualized perturbivity swaps." I was so impressed I almost gave him my wallet right there.

I've nothing against speaking in tongues, but some of it was too many for me. For example, he kept saying that businesses didn't want the government to interfere with them, which he called "distorting the market." Well, I can understand it. I don't want the government interfering with me either, especially in the midst of a burglary. But I was puzzled. If businessmen didn't want the government interfering in the market, I asked, why did they send thousands of lobbyists to Washington to make the government interfere in the market? He changed the subject. I guess he was distracted.

Of course, as Milton Friedman said, "There's no such thing as a free market." (That may not be exactly what he said. It's what he

would have said had he understood economics better.) I think Milton was right. I mean, as soon as capitalists start making money, they buy the government, and engage in carnal intercourse with it, and pretty soon the chiefs of corporations are in government, and great motingator alpha-crats of government get on corporate boards, and form the roaring mother of interlocking directorates, and so you get Enron and the sub-primes and nobody's got a house. The freer the market, the quicker it happens. A lack of laws favors the smart, the avaricious, and the remorseless.

Ronald Reagan, an amiable goof but not the Killer Kowalski of intellect, said of the free market (I think it was he) that "a rising tide floats all boats." Thing is, I keep reading that the rich are getting lots richer, and the middle class, what is left of it, is getting poorer. I guess they don't have boats. Maybe we need a federal program. Maybe No Boat Left Behind.

It's confusing. Conservatives say that it's wrong to take money from those who produce and give it to those who don't. Then they take money from those who produce and give it, great bags of it, to the military, which never earned a nickel and produces nothing but corpses and amputees. It looks to me like a choice between welfare queens, colonels or indigent mothers. I prefer the kind that wants free cheeseburgers, but that's just me I guess.

Which brings us, panting, to Obamacare. It probably won't work, because the govern-

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Conservatives say that it's wrong to take money from those who produce and give it to those who don't. Then they take money from those who produce and give it, great bags of it, to the military, which never earned a nickel and produces nothing but corpses and amputees

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Actually capitalists like competition as long as they are winning, and when they aren't they want the government to buy their stuff. Why do you think America has such a rocking arms industry?
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ment can't do anything right, and the private sector will steal the government blind. Anyway, conservatives don't like the idea of national health care. They pass around the internet stories about some woman in Canada who had to give herself a C-section with a chainsaw because there weren't any doctors.

Well, maybe. Or maybe when you underfund national health care, probably because of bribes from the chainsaw manufacturers, you get too few doctors. Anyhow, when they start in on how awful national health care is, I always want to say, "Yes, no doubt. My faith in you is without limit. But, just out of curiosity you understand, can you name two hospitals in France? Give me any three facts about health care in Japan? A brief comparison of medicine in Denmark and Finland? In short, do you have the slightest idea of what you are talking about?" But I don't ask. It would be like poisoning goldfish.

Now, America has two examples of socialized medical care, the VA system and the military system. Since it would be intelligent to examine these to see how well they work, nobody does. The VA hospitals ain't great, being over-affirmative-actioned and underfunded, since the Pentagon has more enthusiasm for making new cripples than caring for old ones.

The military system is another thing. The first question you are asked in a military hospital is, "What is wrong with you?" instead of "How are you going to pay for this?" Because the doctors are on salary, they don't gouge. Nor do they refuse to treat you because of the mounds of stupid federal paperwork required for things like Medicare. Nor in the military system do insurance companies hunt, like starving ferrets on the trail of a mouse, for reasons not to pay. While insurance companies won't pay claims if they can help it, they will assuredly pay Congress not to ask awkward questions, so no comparisons with the military hospitals will be made.

The military system works, God help us. You show your ID card, they fix you. You need something expensive? You get it. You

don't need a pricey scan to pay for the new seventy-five-button, six-hundred brake horsepower MRI machine? You don't get it. When I last covered the military, which is an already-functioning, easily studied system that works under American cultural conditions, it was competitive cost-wise with the private sector. Let us avert our eyes.

Next, why do the cognitively challenged say that Obama is a socialist? The man is an arch-conservative. (I'm not sure what arches have to do with it, but never mind.) He bailed out Wall Street, the beating heart of predatory capitalism, and then carefully didn't prosecute those who masterminded the sub-prime scam. Socialists hate Wall Street. Obama breast-feeds it. And he sends the military to bomb every country he has heard of, which is very conservative. He is ideally qualified to be president of Guatemala.

Whew. Now a final gem of crystalline truth before I turn to things of greater cosmic import, such as listening to Bob Dylan with Vi. Conservatives and capitalists (What's the difference? All conservatives are capitalists, and all capitalists are conservatives) say they like competition. Bracing stuff, it is, not like lazy old socialism.

Actually they like competition as long as they are winning, and when they aren't they want the government to buy their stuff. Why do you think America has such a rocking arms industry? Easy: Because the arms companies can't make it in a truly competitive world. For example, Lockheed gave up the manufacture of civilian airliners to be a kept woman of the Pentagon. Arms manufacturers don't have to compete with Samsung and Daewoo, which would probably make Pentagon toys for a third the price. Don't think so? Make the experiment.

Yes, yes, I know. This tirade is for naught. The arms makers will continue giving oral satisfaction to the withering udder of the Great Federal Cow with the ardor of a lonely sheep herder. But I subscribe to the principle that a leper is happiest when he understands why his fingers are falling off. **CT**

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Fred Reed has worked for Army Times, The Washingtonian, Soldier of Fortune, Federal Computer Week, and The Washington Times. His web site is www.fredoneverything.net
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The fifth horseman

Glenn Ashton on G8 corporate power and the theft of Africa's commodities

A dangerous international game is being played in the name of assisting Africa to feed itself. What is portrayed as charitable largesse has more in common with reinvigorating neo-colonialism than feeding Africans. This is in fact a misanthropic, multi-pronged raid by the G8 to control African commodities, land and seeds.

Africa presently occupies an interesting niche amongst the emerging, tripartite global realpolitik. First are longstanding, yet waning, relationships between Africa and its European colonial powers – Spain, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, Italy and most particularly France and England. Second is the expanding post Second World War relationship between Africa and the global superpower of the USA. Thirdly there is the increasingly important influence of the rapidly emerging BRICS alliance, with South Africa posing as regional superpower along with Brazil, India and China. These three blocs often have conflicting, and conflicted, roles in the development and exploitation of Africa.

Nowhere else is this more apparent than in the field of agriculture. African agriculture remains in the doldrums, beset by twin curses. On the one hand lies its huge vulnerability to climatic variability, which will be exacerbated by climate change. On the other are the market-disrupting impacts of food subsidies amongst the developed world. These

combine to render the precarious business of farming in Africa even more treacherous than it needs to be.

The past decade has seen the rise of a third threat, that of land grabs across the continent. Some emanate from corporate speculators and investors, others from nation states, particularly amongst the oil-rich but infertile Middle East, but also from the Far East, Europe and the USA. This trend has already created significant local hardships documented by watchdog groups like Grain and Action Aid. Africa has ceded an estimated 40-50 million hectares to foreign interests over the past decade or so.

Now a fourth, possibly more ominous threat has arisen. Some background: In July 2009 at the G8 meeting at L'Aquila, just north of Rome, US\$ 22 billion was pledged to support and improve African agriculture over the following three years. Of course this is a pittance compared to the estimated \$250 – \$350 billion annually paid in market distorting agricultural subsidies within the OECD. However, \$22 billion could at least go some way to addressing some of the profound systemic problems facing African agriculture.

The galling reality is that only around half the pledged amount was disbursed within the three-year time frame. Worse yet, only 12% of that amount was new money which would not have been donated anyway.

Accordingly, a Faustian bargain was made

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African agriculture remains in the doldrums, beset by twin curses: its huge vulnerability to climatic variability, which will be exacerbated by climate change, and market-disrupting impacts of food subsidies in the developed world

Well, who did Obama bring to the party to save Africa? Monsanto, DuPont, Syngenta, Bayer and BASF, the world's largest seed and agricultural chemical companies, with nary a verifiably charitable bone in their collective corpus

at the June 2012 G8 meeting by President Obama. Instead of delivering on commitments, he changed tack and roped in a \$3 billion “pledge of corporate assistance” for African Agriculture. Introducing “The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition” Obama made a hugely condescending – yet sinister – promise that corporations would somehow magically assist Africa to overcome its systemic production challenges, when the G8, the green revolution and pretty much everything else has failed to date.

To pile cynicism onto condescension Obama then warned that African nations would have to make “tough reforms” and “refine policies in order to improve investment opportunities,” in order that they could attract this investment. From an African perspective this appears indistinguishable from previous externally imposed structural adjustment policies. This looks just like neo-colonial “Change, or else,” paternalism writ large. If it quacks like a duck is it a duck?

Well, who did Obama bring to the party to save Africa? For starters we have Monsanto, DuPont, Syngenta, Bayer and BASF, the world's largest seed and agricultural chemical companies, all deeply involved in genetically modified crops, industrial agriculture and patenting of crops and foods, with nary a verifiably charitable bone in their collective corpus.

Surely it is cynical to reject such expertise, such seed wizardry, I hear the cynics cry? Perhaps, but we must be absolutely clear about one central issue. Private corporations have one primary goal: Profit. Everything else is secondary. Corporate largesse is predicated solely by self-interest.

Largest seed company

This hints at why Pioneer Hi-Bred, a DuPont subsidiary and the world's second biggest seed company after Monsanto, was recently given the green light to purchase Africa's largest remaining independent seed company, Pannar. This South African based seed

multinational, with a presence in at least 14 African nations, as well as South America and the USA, was a rich jewel indeed.

This merger was initially rejected by the South African Competition authorities. Subsequently it was authorised by the Competition Appeals Court, after the deal was cynically sweetened to “benefit” South Africa. The result is that South Africa's seed industry is now effectively controlled by a duopoly of two US multinationals, Monsanto and Pioneer. Pioneer openly states its wish to expand into Africa; Pannar provides the ideal framework. Who controls the seed, controls the food.

The South African Department of Agriculture bizarrely considers this merger as beneficial. Yet this is understandable when contemplating this department's remarkable ineptitude in addressing national food security. Instead of concentrating on change they have unconditionally supported the corporate controlled, industrialised agricultural value chain, while lamenting that South African agriculture remains untransformed.

Such naïve posturing is not the case elsewhere in Africa. Apparently anticipating Obama's announcement of “The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition,” a letter from a representative African farmers union, endorsed by African entrepreneurs and development experts presciently enquired, “I ask you to explain how you could possibly justify thinking that the food security and sovereignty of Africa could be secured through international cooperation outside of the policy frameworks formulated in an inclusive fashion with the peasants and the producers of the continent.” In other words, how about not imposing unilateral, imperial decrees on Africa, yet again, President Obama?

The letter continued, “This is why we must build our food policy on our own resources as is done in the other regions of the world. The G8 and the G20 can in no way be considered the appropriate fora for de-

isions of this nature.” But will the G8, the OECD and the corporate free-riders listen? Not bloody likely. Not when there is an entire continent up for grabs. The very agencies who decry corruption are apparently happy to facilitate it.

Is it a coincidence that the G8 corporate “sponsors” include Kraft, Intersnack and Olam (the world’s largest cashew trader), along with the world’s leading cashew processing machine manufacturer Oltremare? Surely they are just “assisting” cashew nut production in Mozambique? Self interest? Never!

That must also be why Mars, the world’s largest chocolate company, Kraft (again!) which recently bought out Cadbury and Cote D’or, along with US chocolate giant Hershey and of course the predominant international cocoa trader Armajaro are “assisting” African cocoa production. Self interest? Never!

Even cursory analysis indicates how the apparent largesse of this new G8 corporate brotherhood is little less than a \$3 billion fire sale of the African agricultural market to the biggest players in the game. Most of them are already players; this “alliance” is simply a huge lever to legitimise a World Economic Forum (WEF), free-market inspired, sleight of hand trick to appear to help Africa while really helping themselves.

Surely, I hear, this is all exaggeration?

Well, no. Bunge, Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland – the world’s biggest food commodity traders – consistently demonstrate predation before beneficence. Obama’s corporate cotton assistance package has all of the main cotton traders who demonstrate scant concern about how US cotton subsidies have decimated the African industry.

What about Rabobank, actively involved in land acquisitions in the ongoing African land-grab? Rabobank also has close relationships with Rothschild, Morgan Stanley and is the major shareholder in Agri-Sar, which has the “monetisation of water” as an investment goal. Surely these corporate interventions are to the benefit of African agriculture?

There can be no denial that Africa certainly requires as much agricultural assistance as it can get. Africa has the potential to provide vast variety and volumes of food. And yes, there are many good people involved in some programmes to help Africa feed itself – and the world. But to impose new, faux green revolution on top of the failed previous one is not a solution. Neither are a set of novel, corporate enforced, G8 and WEF inspired structural adjustments going to benefit Africa.

If problems with African agriculture are going to be addressed, how about starting with trade distorting OECD agricultural subsidies? Neither can USAid continue to disrupt local economies by dumping subsidised food into African markets – it must adopt the European model of purchasing local food for redistribution. Likewise European companies cannot continue to usurp vast tracts of land to grow “green” fuel to fool their consumers they are following sustainable practices.

The real problem is the intractable relationship engendered in the corporate political nexus. If nothing else, Obama has done us all a favour by alerting us to the pernicious nature of this relationship with this latest, cynical offer to assist Africa with his “New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition.”

The reality is that yet again Africa is being coerced to opening up its doors to exploitation portrayed as assistance. If any good is to come of this latest neo-colonial onslaught, Africa must demonstrate authoritative leadership to direct how this assistance is provided. Yet given the inherently corrupt relationship between corporations and political power, this is a slim hope. Yet again Africa stands at risk of being corrupted by a system corrupt to its very core.

CT

Glenn Ashton is a South African writer and researcher working in civil society. More of his work can be viewed at www.ekogaia.org. This article was originally published by the South African Civil Society Institute at www.sacsis.org.za

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Even cursory analysis indicates how the apparent largesse of this new G8 corporate brotherhood is little less than a \$3 billion fire sale of the African agricultural market to the biggest players in the game

Drone me down on the killing floor

Pepe Eskobar reviews an important book on drone warfare

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**And the winner of
the Humanitarian
Oscar for
Best Targeted
Assassination
with No Collateral
Damage goes to...
the Barack Obama
White House
death squad**
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*Lord knows, I should'a been gone
Lord knows, I should'a been gone
And I wouldn't've been here,
down on the killin' floor
- **Howlin' Wolf**, *Killing Floor**

As convenient as it is for someone in a cubicle in the Nevada desert to press a button and incinerate a Pashtun wedding party in North Waziristan, now, with only a click, anyone can download a 359 KB file available on Amazon for only \$8.99 – including free wireless delivery – and learn everything there is to learn about All Things Drone.

It's fitting that *Terminator Planet: The First History of Drone Warfare, 2001-2050* has been put together by Tom Engelhardt – editor, MC of the TomDispatch website and “a national treasure”, in the correct appraisal of University of Michigan professor Juan Cole – and TomDispatch's associate editor Nick Turse, author of the seminal 2008 study *The Complex: How the Military Invades Our Everyday Lives*.

This is essentially Tom and Nick's revised and updated body of work detailing the uber-dystopian Dronescape over the past few years – spanning everything from secret Drone Empire bases to offshore droning; a Philip Dick-style exercise on a more than plausible drone-on-drone war off East Africa in 2050; and a postscript inimitably titled, “America as a Shining Drone Upon a Hill”. It does beat fic-

tion because it's all fact-based.

This digital file becomes even more crucial now that US and world public opinion knows US President Barack Obama is the certified Droner-in-Chief; the final judge, jury and digital Grand Inquisitor on which suspicious Muslim (for the moment, at least, they are all Muslims) will get his paradise virgins via targeted assassination.

Obama owns his newspeak-drenched “kill list”. He decides on a “personality strike” (a single suspect) or a “signature strike” (a group). “Nominations” are scrutinized by Obama and his associate producer, counter-terrorism czar John Brennan. The logic is straight from Kafka; anyone lurking around an alleged “terrorist” is a terrorist. The only way to know for sure is after he's dead.

And the winner of the Humanitarian Oscar for Best Targeted Assassination with No Collateral Damage goes to... the Barack Obama White House death squad.

Targeted – and dissolved – throughout this grim process are also a pile of outdated concepts such as national sovereignty, set-in-stone principles of US and international law, and any category which until the collapse of the Soviet Union used to define what is war and what is peace. Anyway, those categories started to be dissolved for good already during the Bush administration – which “legalized” widespread CIA and Special Ops torture sessions and death squads.

Any self-respecting jurist would have to draw the inevitable conclusion; the United States of America is now outside international law – as rogue a state as they come, with The Drone Empire enshrined as the ultimate expression of shadow war.

Incinerate the faithful

Reading Terminator Planet inevitably evokes the incestuous interaction between Hollywood and the Pentagon. Even discounting the trademark wacky paranoia of Hollywood screenwriters and producers, a simple re-run of both the Robocop and Terminator series reveals this may end up badly.

And we’re not even talking about a Revolt of the Drones – yet. In 2010 there was already a hint of juicy possibilities to come, when a RQ-170 Sentinel crash-landed in Western Iran via sophisticated jamming, and was duly reverse-engineered, to the delight of Iranians, Russians and the Chinese. The Pentagon hysterically denied it had been outmaneuvered.

The notion that a Drone Empire may win definitive control over what the Pentagon used to call the “arc of instability” between the Middle East and Central Asia – at the behest of Big Oil – is eminently laughable.

As laughable as the notion that a Drone Empire active in AfPak, Yemen, Somalia and soon in all points across the “arc of instability” will save the homeland from jihad, Sharia law, a new Caliphate set up by a bunch of fanatics, and all of the above.

Especially now that the Pentagon itself ditched the rhetoric – and is focused on a “pivoting” to face the potential peer competitor that really counts, China.

And US Army brigades (and Special Ops commandos) from 2013 onwards will be rotated all around the world – with an emphasis in Africa – according to a Pentagonese “regionally aligned force concept.”

And Southcom has announced that Predator, Reaper and Global Hawk drones will be deployed in Central and South America for

“anti-drug operations, counter-insurgency and naval vigilance”.

As much as *The Drone Empire* is global, drones can only be effective if ground intelligence is effective. A simple example is enough. Ultimately, in AfPak, it’s not Obama that decides on his “kill list”. It’s the Pakistani ISI – which relies the info that suits its contingencies to the CIA. And this while the Pentagon and the CIA keep working under the galactic illusion of absolute supremacy of American technology – when they cannot even neutralize an inflation of cheap, ultra low-tech IEDs.

Americans must also worry about the Inland Drone Empire – as the pitifully unpopular US Congress and President Obama have now fully authorized their “integration” into American airspace by 2015; by 2020, they will number at least 30,000. For the moment, the Pentagon has “only” 7,000 drones (ten years ago there were less than 50).

Predictably, massive corporate lobbying by drone manufacturers such as General Atomics was key for the approval of the new legislation. There’s even a drone caucus, with 55 Congressmen (and expanding), and a global lobby with 507 corporate members in 55 countries, the Association for Unmanned Vehicles International, which essentially sets the rules.

The Orwellian – and Philip Dick – overtones are inescapable; this is all about 24/7 drone surveillance of large swathes of the US population via radar, infrared cameras, thermal imaging, wireless “sniffers” and, crucially, crowd-control weapons. You’d better monitor the skies very closely before you even start thinking about protesting. And wait for the imminent arrival of nuclear-powered drones, which can go on non-stop for months, and not only days.

Tom and Nick’s digital file is absolutely essential reading for contextualizing the lineaments of an already de facto surveillance state, where everyone is a suspect by definition, and the only “winner” is the military-industrial complex. Welcome to Motown as Dronetown: “Nowhere to run to, baby, nowhere to hide...” Obama and the Dronellas, anyone?

This is all about 24/7 drone surveillance of large swathes of the US population via radar, infrared cameras, thermal imaging, wireless “sniffers” and, crucially, crowd-control weapons

Pepe Escobar is the author of *Globalistan: How the Globalized World is Dissolving into Liquid War* (Nimble Books, 2007) and *Red Zone Blues: a snapshot of Baghdad during the surge*. His most recent book, just out, is *Obama does Globalistan* (Nimble Books, 2009). This article was first published at Asia Times

Who should we put on our kill list?

Luke & Marti Hiken are not sure where to stop ...

.....
We tried to imagine whether we actually could come up with a valid list of who our real enemies should be: capitalists, weapons manufacturers.... There were so many targets to consider
.....

Now that Obama and his handlers at the Pentagon have informed us that it is legal, appropriate and acceptable to have a “kill list,” we’ve actually warmed up to the subject. After all, if Obama can have a kill list, so should every good American. We sat down and thought about those we would put on a “kill list” if we ever got the chance. We tried to imagine whether we actually could come up with a valid list of who our real enemies should be: capitalists, weapons manufacturers.... There were so many targets to consider.

We started out with the worst of the worst – those who destroyed the American economy and impoverished the people of the US: Wall Street bankers, Pentagon weapons manufacturers, military contractors and mercenaries.

Then we started to think about the individuals who were at the forefront of destroying our government: the Koch Brothers, the Walton family. We pondered the impact that the Bush family, Cheney, Abrams, and the murderers who inhabited the White House for the last many years have had on the country. We considered the monsters who deprived the American people of health care, social security and a livable wage. The list kept growing....

We recognized immediately that we should destroy individuals who had been particularly virulent in their destruction

of our nation, but we also wanted to make sure that there were symbolic targets who deserved to die as well: corporate CEOs who had eviscerated successful businesses for their own profit; insurance companies that had undermined the public’s access to health care and necessary services; sexist, homophobic opportunists, who had caused the death and humiliation of thousands of our fellow citizens; whoring politicians, who pandered to the rich at the expense of the people.

Quickly, we came to understand that we needed more unmanned drones to destroy our enemies. But, we also realized that the creators of the unmanned drones should themselves be destroyed. What a conundrum! While Obama has chosen Muslims as his favorite group to kill, we select torturers, such as John Yoo and Jay Bybee. However, rather than add low-level prison guards to our list, we instead narrowed it down and decided to only assassinate those responsible for establishing the policy that legitimized torture. Surely we didn’t want to expand our kill list in an indiscriminate manner.

We found it difficult to identify and limit judges and prosecutors, a particularly difficult group to identify, who were responsible for selling the country to the highest bidders. Slime like Scalia, Alito and Thomas would certainly top anyone’s kill list that

cared about truth or justice in the legal system. The difficulty lay in distinguishing between these activist right-wingers and the typical Superior Court judge who spent every day of the week sentencing African Americans and racial minorities to life sentences in prison.

Equally difficult was figuring out which of the Pentagon maniacs should be held accountable for our permanent wars, dependence upon weapons of mass destruction, and for attempting to subjugate the entire world for our insane imperialist agenda. After all, soldiers are supposed to fight and kill, so why should we hold them responsible for doing so in the context of modern warfare?

As we trudged our way through an ever-expanding list of those to kill, we considered the religious hypocrites and fanatics who spend their lives enriching themselves at the expense of the rest of us. We were becoming weary from trying to ensure that

the individuals we chose to kill were worthy of being on our list.

After weeks of fine-tuning our choices, we ended up right where we started: this is a road without an end. Once we took it upon ourselves to decide who should live or die, we had lost any right to choose any one individual. We concluded we should spare even Obama, given that he is as clueless about the implications of his kill list as he is merciless. **CT**

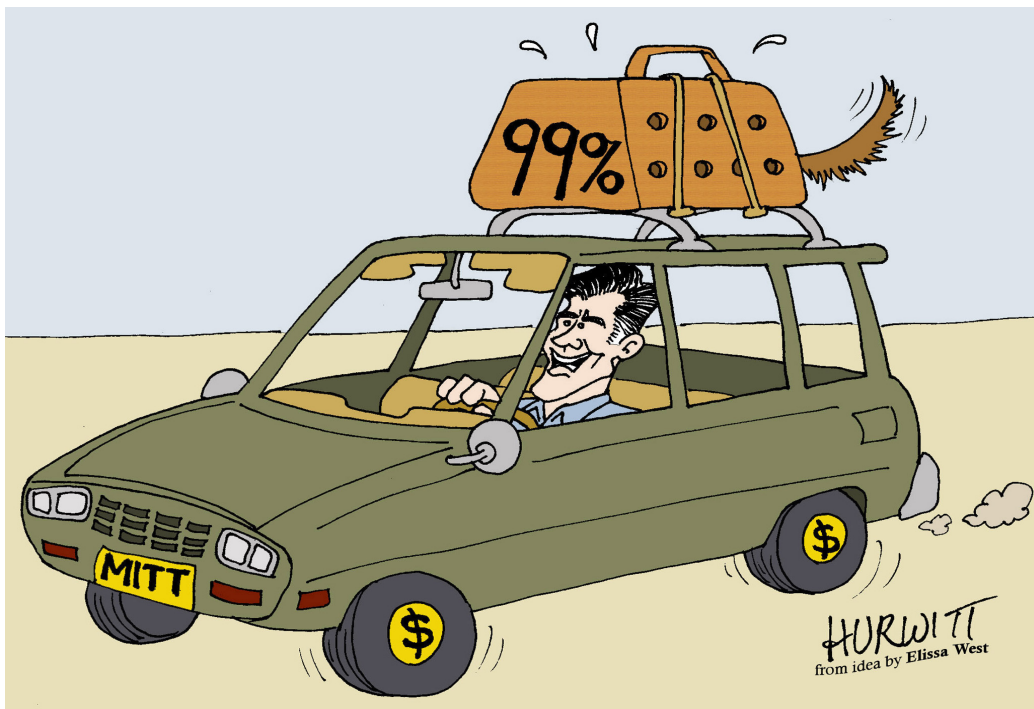
***Marti Hiken** is the director of Progressive Avenues. She is the former Associate Director of the Institute for Public Accuracy and former chair of the National Lawyers Guild Military Law Task Force. She can be contacted at info@progressiveavenues.org, 415-702-9682.*

***Luke Hiken** is an attorney who has engaged in the practice of criminal, military, immigration, and appellate law.*

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After weeks of fine-tuning our choices, we ended up right where we started: this is a road without an end

HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



Resisting drones in Missouri

Brian Terrell prepares for another day in court

.....
Besides protesting at Whiteman, from which killer drones engage in combat in Afghanistan by remote control, our contingent of activists from around the Midwest acted at Kansas City's new nuclear weapons plant and at the military prison at Fort Leavenworth
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The United States District Courthouse in Jefferson City, Missouri, is a modern and graceful structure sitting on a bluff over the Missouri River. Less than a year old, it is a virtual temple in white marble, granite and glass, its clean lines all the more immaculate in contrast to its nearest neighbor, the crumbling 19th century hulk of the derelict and empty Missouri State Penitentiary, now a tourist attraction and occasional movie set. Set into the floor of the courthouse rotunda, executed in marble and bronze, is the image of the Great Seal of the United States, the eagle with arrows in one talon and olive leaves in the other, circled by a quote from the Bible, from the prophet Amos, "Let Justice Flow Like A River."

Even the wide Missouri's current gets a bit sluggish in the summer months and justice was flowing just as slowly through the high ceilinged halls of the courthouse on June 6, the day appointed for me, Mark Kenney and Ron Faust to answer to the charge that we "did enter a military installation for a purpose prohibited by law." Aside from our arraignment there was little else going on in the building that day and but for our small party of defendants, attorneys and friends, the big new courthouse was almost as quiet and deserted as the abandoned old prison across the street.

Mark, Ron and I had been summonsed

here by the powers after having been apprehended on April 15 at Whiteman Air Force Base. Our action was part of the "Trifecta Resista" nonviolence training and direct actions at three locations around the Kansas City area. Besides protesting at Whiteman, from which killer drones engage in combat in Afghanistan by remote control, our contingent of activists from around the Midwest acted at Kansas City's new nuclear weapons plant and at the military prison at Fort Leavenworth where suspected Wikileaks whistleblower Pfc. Bradley Manning had been held for trial.

At the Whiteman base, Ron, Mark and I attempted, on behalf of a larger group of protestors, to deliver an "indictment" to Brigadier General Scott A. Vander Hamm, the base's commander. Our indictment charged the chain of command, from President Obama to General Vander Hamm to the drone crews at Whiteman "with the following crimes; extrajudicial killings, violation of due process, wars of aggression, violation of national sovereignty, and the killing of innocent civilians." It noted the fact that "extrajudicial targeted killings by the use of unmanned aircraft drones by the United States of America are intentional, premeditated and deliberate use of lethal force in violation of US and international human rights law" and demanded that these crimes immediately cease.

Our polite request to the base sentries for directions to headquarters to deliver the indictment was denied and our way blocked by military police who handcuffed us and took us away. Our 30 or so companions, clearly exercising the constitutionally-protected right to peaceably assemble for the redress of grievances, were chased off the property by about 50 Air Force personnel in full riot gear who performed a carefully if grotesquely choreographed drill routine, complete with goosesteps and synchronized grunts and beating of clubs on shields. Reminiscent of a Monte Python sketch or of the “Springtime for Hitler” dance number in the Mel Brooks’ musical “The Producers,” this performance (since seen by thousands on a YouTube video taken that day) reveals a government literally scared silly by its own citizens.

In court, Mark pleaded guilty to the charge. Before accepting this plea from a defendant representing himself, Judge Matt J. Whitworth patiently questioned Mark to be sure that he knew what rights he was waiving by pleading guilty. Did Mark know, the judge asked, that if he pleaded “not guilty,” he would have the right to a full trial, to present evidence, to call or subpoena witnesses on his behalf, and to cross-examine any witness that the government might bring in to testify against him? Mark was told of his right to be represented in these proceedings by an attorney and that the court would appoint one if he could not afford one.

Mark replied that he was aware of all this, but he told Judge Whitworth that these rights simply do not exist anymore. The Obama administration had not only claimed for itself the prerogative to arrest and indefinitely imprison any suspected “terrorist” without trial, but also to target noncitizens and citizens alike and to order their executions by missile bearing drones anywhere in the world, with no more “due process” than the president’s determination. Mark asked to be sentenced immediately.

Judge Whitworth agreed and asked the

probation office to prepare a presentence report, listing Mark’s previous “crimes,” his employment, education, family and other factors which might inform a sentence. A few hours later we were back in court, where the Assistant US Attorney, citing Mark’s dozen or so previous arrests for protests, asked the judge to keep him in prison for four months, allowing that he might be spared the maximum six month sentence in consideration for his guilty plea, saving the trouble of a trial. Mark for his part said that as a disciple of Jesus he had no other choice but to act as he had done. Citing difficulties his family will face in his absence, Mark asked only for a few weeks’ time before surrendering himself to prison.

Judge Whitworth sentenced Mark to four months in prison. The judge proclaimed his commitment to the security of the base and also cited the valuable warplanes and other weapons the Air Force keeps at Whiteman that need protection. As judges are prone to do, Judge Whitworth indulged in a bit of spiritual direction as well, assuring Mark that “the good Lord would rather have you protest off the base and stay out of trouble. When you trespass, you are only hurting yourself.”

I do not presume to know what, if any, spiritual tradition Judge Whitworth follows, but he should be informed before he offers such counsel that Mark’s good Lord bids him not to stay on the sidelines avoiding inconvenience and suffering for himself. The Lord Mark serves calls him to solidarity with those who suffer, even to the point of taking up his own cross. The God whose words are cast in bronze on the floor of the courthouse rotunda regards the weapons amassed at Whiteman Air Force Base not as resources to be protected by riot police or defended by putting the likes of Mark behind walls, but as swords waiting to be beaten into plowshares by the hands of faithful women and men.

Ron and I pleaded not guilty and were given a trial date of September 5, a date that

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In this case, we are in US District Court and the prosecution will be handled by a young captain in the Air Force Judge Advocate General Corps, acting as a Special Assistant United States Attorne
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Brian Terrell is executive director of the Catholic Peace Ministry, based in De Moines, Iowa

might be changed in the next few weeks. This will be my third trial for resisting drone warfare, once in Nevada at Creech Air Force Base and once in New York, at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base near Syracuse. After more than three decades as a peace and human rights activist, these two trials out of many have evoked the most dramatic, intense and unpredictable trials and I expect no different in Jefferson City.

The other “drone trials” I participated in in Nevada and New York were prosecuted by local assistant district attorneys, who have “no dog in this race,” as they say, arguing before state courts where judges can too easily claim to be neutral arbiters of the facts. In this case, we are in US District Court and the prosecution will be handled by a young captain in the Air Force Judge Advocate General Corps, acting as a Special Assistant United States Attorney. “Going federal” raises the stakes: witness Mark’s four months compared with my one night of “time served” in Las Vegas and my ten days in a New York jail this past winter. Federal prosecutors also have more case law at their disposal empowering them to limit

testimony, to exclude the domestic and international laws that make drone warfare a criminal, legally preventable act. They have more power to shut us up. Still, I appreciate the clarity that speaking in US District Court will bring this fall, addressing the Air Force and the US Empire more directly than at my previous trials.

Ron will be represented by Ruth O’Neill, attorney and Catholic Worker from Columbia, MO, and I will represent myself with assistance from Kansas City, KS, attorney, Henry Stoeber, both experienced resistance lawyers (Henry is awaiting trial himself for his part in the nuke weapons segment of the “Trifecta Resista” – a trial at which he will be represented by Ruth!) and both good friends. We are lining up expert witnesses and collecting evidence for our coming trial. My best hopes for the courtroom are that we can keep from being distracted by the minutiae of a falsely alleged “trespass” and keep focused on the infinitely more serious crimes committed by our drones in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and other places known and unknown. **CT**

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America says 'Yes' to mass murder

Michael Hampton discovers that his countrymen don't really care who gets killed when the drones attack foreign lands

A majority of Americans, it seems, approve of drone strikes against terrorists, even if they kill innocent bystanders.

The Pew Global Attitudes Project poll found that while most people worldwide disapprove of the tactic, 62 percent of Americans approved of the drone strikes, while 28 percent disapproved. While 74 percent of Republicans approved, surprisingly, 60 percent of independents and 58 percent of Democrats also approved.

Around the rest of the world, nearly everyone registered disapproval of the drone strikes, not only in Muslim countries but in most of Europe as well.

What's the difference?

The drone strikes, started by George W. Bush and greatly expanded by Barack Obama, are ostensibly meant to target terrorists in surgical strikes. The reality, widely reported worldwide but rarely in US media, is that all too often these strikes kill innocent civilians in addition to, or even instead of, the intended targets.

Obama, it was revealed May 29 in the *New York Times*, takes it upon himself to personally review and approve every drone strike because he wants to take moral responsibility for them.

Yet the method by which the CIA counts civilian casualties is so flawed as to be completely unbelievable, except perhaps by a

president who desperately needs to soothe his own conscience over the hundreds of innocent men, women and children who have died at his orders, and of course by a credulous American press which long ago lost the skepticism required of journalists when dealing with government and accept at face value anything in a government press release, no matter how ludicrous.

Worse, some of the drone strikes are so-called "signature" strikes, targeted not at any particular individual, but at unknown people who are doing things that indicate they might be terrorists, such as loading fertilizer into a truck.

These strikes carry a high risk of killing innocent people, as anyone who has walked through airport security can understand. But under the CIA's methodology, any adult male gets counted as a militant, even if it was just a farmer who was preparing to plant his crops.

To be fair, there are still some skeptical journalists out there. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism maintains its own data on civilian deaths from drone strikes; it shows the number of civilian deaths to be at least 551, and possibly much higher.

Government officials have a hard time admitting to any civilian deaths, of course.

There are certainly terrorists and other enemies of the US being killed in these strikes. But by killing the innocent, the

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Only a minority of people show any concern over Obama's killing of innocent people abroad in the name of the war on terror (oops, we aren't supposed to say that anymore)
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strikes themselves are manufacturing more enemies.

Haykal Bafana, a lawyer in Yemen, writes on Twitter, "Dear Obama, when a US drone missile kills a child in Yemen, the father will go to war with you, guaranteed. Nothing to do with Al Qaeda."

This is not just some guy's rant.

Robert Grenier, former head of the CIA's counterterrorism center, echoed the warning last month. "One wonders how many Yemenis may be moved in future to violent extremism in reaction to carelessly targeted missile strikes, and how many Yemeni militants with strictly local agendas will become dedicated enemies of the West in response to US military actions against them."

"We're setting a standard for all other nations that when they're ready if they want to, they can send drones at the United States," Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-Calif.) said on CNN's State of the Nation. "What goes around comes around, and those drones are going to come right back at us."

It's even questionable whether the drone strikes are even legal, since the administration has claimed the so-called Authorization for the Use of Military Force passed in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks as the legal basis for the strikes.

Rep. Dennis Kucinich sent a letter to the White House, cosigned by 25 other members of Congress including two Republicans, demanding "the process by which 'signature' strikes are authorized and executed (drone strikes where the identity of the person killed is unknown); mechanisms used by the CIA and JSOC to ensure that such killings are legal; the nature of the follow-up that is conducted when civilians are killed or injured; and the mechanisms that ensure civilian casualty numbers are collected, tracked and analyzed.

"We are concerned that the use of such 'signature' strikes could raise the risk of killing innocent civilians or individuals who may have no relationship to attacks on the United States," write Kucinich et al. "Our

drone campaigns already have virtually no transparency, accountability or oversight. We are further concerned about the legal grounds for such strikes under the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force.

"The implications of the use of drones for our national security are profound. They are faceless ambassadors that cause civilian deaths, and are frequently the only direct contact with Americans that the targeted communities have. They can generate powerful and enduring anti-American sentiment."

So we come full circle. Only a minority of people show any concern over Obama's killing of innocent people abroad in the name of the war on terror (oops, we aren't supposed to say that anymore). Perhaps the people who approve of the drone strikes simply don't know. Or perhaps, like Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), they don't care. "I am not concerned," he said.

Am I completely wrong in thinking that most Republicans only care about the innocent if they happen to be unborn? And that most Democrats don't care about the innocent, so long as it's their guy killing them?

Let's be perfectly clear. Killing an innocent person is wrong, whether you're the lowest criminal or the highest .. excuse me, president of the United States.

What should worry you even more than that, though, is that in a few years, those drones and their missiles are coming home, and they will be used here in the US against Americans.

Police chiefs all over the country are drooling at the prospect of getting hold of their own drones – to be used only for aerial surveillance, of course, and not to kill people by remote control. At least not right away. That part comes later, after you all are accustomed to seeing the things flying around.

As for me, I think it's time to move to a place near an airport flight path, where it hopefully won't be safe to operate a drone... **CT**

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This article was first published at www.homelandstupidity.us

Dude, that is so killer

David Swanson on progressives, kill lists and the slaughter of innocents

Are you aware, I asked a friend, that the guy you're registering new voters to vote for keeps a list of people he intends to kill? Oh well, he replied, you know.

Do I, now?

Weaponized drones should be banned, I tell a group of progressives. What? Oh no, drones are better than armies, because with drones nobody gets killed.

Is that so? Just how far do progressives have left to progress exactly?

How can we shake people out of their acceptance of murder, I ask peace activists. Easy. We'll trumpet the news of the 2,000th US death in Afghanistan.

We will?

Can you imagine the response of Afghans who've lost many, many times that number of lives, who've seen many, many times THAT number made refugees, who've watched their nation be destroyed, their people traumatized, their families ripped apart, their children's bodies ripped apart? Hell, can you imagine the response of a human being who cared about other human beings even if they were Afghans, to the news that the war is objectionable because 2,000 people had now died?

People?

Who gets to be people?

And what the fuck are those of us who believe this entire cultural direction is as

depraved as anything yet seen on earth? Are we people too?

We, some of us, headed over on Flag Day to protest a pro-war rally with messages of peace. And what did most of our group want? Good patriotism. Benevolent nationalism. Reclaiming of the flag for what it's never been. Privileging nation over family, neighborhood, town, county, region, or continent because we should never allow the warmongers and xenophobes to appropriate the symbols of warmongering and xenophobia. Those are OURS dammit!

Where do I hop out of this handbasket, and has anyone noticed that the frogs we keep slandering felt the heat and hopped out long ago?

Every one of those 2,000 dead Americans is a tragedy and a murder. What of the far greater number of US troops dead from suicide, the far greater number alive but ruined, the 3 million Americans locked up in cages, the 136,000 of those – at a minimum – who are innocent of the crimes for which they've been locked up? Why in the world is the United States not bombing itself to improve its human rights record? What of the 24,000 people in the United States dying from the burning of coal every year? What of the far greater numbers dying from unsafe work conditions, from automobiles, from senseless small-scale violence, from a broken but marvelously profitable health-

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Why in the world is the United States not bombing itself to improve its human rights record?
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The future almost certainly holds foreign strikes of retaliation for US drones conducted under the same legal standard, or absence thereof, established by the US but against the US with foreign drones
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care system? What of the horrors facing the other 95% of humanity, including those living under our wars and those living under our banks?

Obama's drones are killing people in nations where the United States had no troops on the ground, contemplated no troops on the ground, declared no war, but may soon have to put troops on the ground to follow through on the logic of, and confront the damage and hostility created by, the drones. Drones are facilitating seemingly easy and consequence-free murder in numerous nations. They are an escalation, not a de-escalation, of violence. The choice is between law enforcement and murder, not murder that risks US deaths and murder that only kills foreigners and kills fewer of them.

In fact, drones do risk US deaths. They are likely to produce blowback in a major way. They have produced blowback already. The future almost certainly holds foreign strikes of retaliation for US drones conducted under the same legal standard, or absence thereof, established by the US but against the US with foreign drones. If drone murders become the new normal, expect to see them where you don't want them as well as where you do. Expect our militarized police to use drones at home in ways established abroad as doable without serious objection from us. And expect to see even more US military suicides. Drone "pilots" PTSD rates are shooting through the roof, because they see their victims.

US wars are one-sided slaughters. They're murder by drone or mass-murder by army. A tiny fraction of the deaths, under 5 percent, are treated by the US media as the entire death count. Who wouldn't want to eliminate those deaths with drones, other than someone who gave a rat's ass about the killing of human beings? Or someone who'd been part of the killing, stopped and thought about it, and had a break down?

At Flag Day, a giant inflatable soldier palled around with cub scouts, while boy

scouts, ROTC child-soldiers-in-waiting, fresh recruits, and veterans all the way up to the very old listened to a Brigadier General talk about the glory, honor, and legality of war. Then a Marine hacked a cake in half with a sword, exactly as if slicing through a prisoner's neck. Cheers. Cheers. Cheers for wars.

But where are the non-murder jobs for those kids? Non-killing jobs cost less than military jobs. Military spending is hollowing out our economy to the point where we spend enough on recruitment efforts per new recruit to have given a crowd of young people jobs just with the money spent convincing one of them to take a gig as an assistant assassin. Call it something else if you want, but look at who your commander in chief is when you take that oath to perform the utterly impossible task of simultaneously obeying the Constitution, the President, and whoever gives you an order.

Senator Carl Levin says that cutting 0.05% of a military budget that has doubled this decade will endanger us all. His funders smirk. His pimp nods. And good progressives look at each other uncertainly. We wouldn't want to endanger our non-xenophobically defined Homeland, would we? Maybe we should stick to promoting Elizabeth Warren for Senate, along with her lies pushing war with Iran, and her claims that the Pentagon and the spy agencies have it wrong, that Iran really is building nuclear weapons and threatening our sacred patria. And I say that with good patriotism.

Let the bankers pay for part of the next war. That should set things right. The important thing is to register more voters. Shifting to an election campaign focus has worked out so well in Wisconsin and Egypt that anybody would be crazy not to jump on board. And if you end up working your tail off for a sociopath with a kill list, oh well, you know?

In the words of the great John Lennon, imagine all your tiny little country treating the rest of the world as expendable. **CT**

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David Swanson's books include "War Is A Lie." He blogs at davidswanson.org and warisacrime.org and works for the online activist organization rootsaction.org

This is racism, pure and simple

‘Residence’ camps in the Negev Desert worry **Uri Avnery**

We shall not be a normal people, until we have Jewish whores and Jewish thieves in the Land of Israel,” our national poet, Haim Nahman Bialik, said some 80 years ago.

This dream has come true. We have Jewish murderers, Jewish robbers and Jewish whores (though most prostitutes in Israel are imported by international slave traders from Eastern Europe through the Sinai border).

But Bialik was too unambitious. He should have added: We shall not become a normal people until we have Jewish Neo-Nazis and Jewish concentration camps.

The central news item nowadays in all our electronic and print media is the terrible danger of “illegal” African migrants.

African refugees and job seekers are drawn to Israel for several reasons, none of which is an ardent belief in Zionism.

The first is geographical. Israel is the only country with a European standard of living that can be reached from Africa without crossing a sea. Africans can easily reach Egypt, and then they have only to cross the Sinai desert to get to the Israeli border.

The desert is the home of Bedouin tribes for whom smuggling is an age-old occupation. Whether Libyan weapons for Hamas in Gaza, Ukrainian women for the brothels

of Tel Aviv or job seekers from Sudan – for good money – the Bedouin will get them all to their destinations. On the way they may hold them for ransom or rape the women.

The Africans – mainly from North and South Sudan and Eritrea – are attracted by the Israeli labor market. Israelis ceased to do menial jobs long ago. They need people to wash dishes in posh restaurants, clean their homes and carry heavy loads in markets.

For years, Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza undertook these jobs. After the intifadas, our government put an end to this. The Africans filled their place.

They are, of course, paid what Israelis consider hunger wages, but enough to enable the migrants to send money back to their families. Small sums of dollars look like fortunes back home.

To enable them to send the money, the migrants lead dogs’ lives. Almost all of them are single men, crammed into dirty old houses in the slums of Tel Aviv and other towns, ogling at the local girls, getting drunk for recreation.

The Israeli inhabitants of these slums, the poorest of the poor, hate them. They accuse them of all kinds of crimes, including rape, violent quarrels and murder. They also believe that they carry dangerous diseases that are almost unknown in Israel, such as

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With Israel's Jewish population amounting to 6.5 million, and Arab citizens making 1.5 million more, it is easy to depict the migrants as a terrible danger to the Jewishness of the state
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malaria and tuberculosis. Unlike Israelis, they have not been inoculated at birth.

All these accusations are, of course, vastly exaggerated. But one can understand the Israeli slum-dwellers who have to live with poor foreigners with whom they have no communication.

In such circumstances, racism flourishes. The Africans are easily recognized by their skin. The usual racist verbiage – “They rape our women”, “They are all carrying deadly diseases”, “They are like animals” – abounds, added to a special Israeli one: “They endanger the Jewish State”.

There are now about 60,000 Africans in Israel, to which must be added about 3,000 newcomers every month. There are also large numbers of (“legal”) Thais who work in agriculture, Chinese and Romanians in the building industry, Filipinos aiding the sick and elderly.

With Israel's Jewish population amounting to 6.5 million, and Arab citizens making 1.5 million more, it is easy to depict the migrants as a terrible danger to the Jewishness of the state.

As a swamp draws mosquitos, such a situation draws rabble-rousers and hate-mongers. And we have no lack of these.

Recently, riots erupted in Tel Aviv's Hatikva quarter, one of the affected slums. Africans were attacked, African-owned shops looted.

As if drawn by magic, within record time all the well-known fascist agitators appeared on the scene, inciting the crowd against the Africans and leftist “bleeding hearts.”

The most media attention was given to a Likud member of Parliament, Miri Regev. Not satisfied with the usual epithets, she shouted that the Africans were “a cancer.”

This expression, lifted from the lexicon of Goebbels, shocked many throughout the country. Regev is not only a pretty woman, but also a former chief spokesperson of the Israeli Army (appointed by former Chief of Staff Dan Halutz, of the disastrous Lebanon War 2 fame, remembered for his remark

that, when dropping a bomb on a residential quarter, he feels nothing but a “slight bump on the wing”).

Regev hit the headlines with her speech and was rewarded with numerous TV interviews, in which she distinguished herself by using the language once attributed to fisherwomen. (No insult to fisherwomen intended.) She was, to put it bluntly, disgusting.

About disgust I have a personal hobby. Every week I choose – strictly for myself – the most disgusting person in Israeli public life. For the last few consecutive weeks my chosen laureate was Eli Yishai of the Oriental Orthodox party Shas.

Shas is totally dominated by one person: Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. He hires and fires the party's political leadership. His word is law. When the last leader was sent to prison for stealing, Rabbi Ovadia produced Eli Yishai from nowhere.

As interior minister, Yishai has served mainly as a conduit of government money to his party's institutions. In all other functions he has failed dismally. It is strongly rumored that in his forthcoming report about the Carmel Forest fire, the State Comptroller is going to recommend his dismissal for gross incompetence.

For Yishai, the anti-African hysteria is a gift from his God. After telling the public that the migrants are criminals, carry diseases and endanger the Jewish state, he declared war on them.

Now the whole country is mobilized. Every day, the number of deported Africans heads the news. Yishai's special “immigration police” are photographed pushing Africans into police vans. Yishai himself appears daily on TV to boast of his accomplishments.

The Knesset is discussing a bill that would impose stiff prison terms (five years!) plus a fine of half a million shekels (100 thousand euros!) on anyone employing an “illegal” worker. Fortunately this law is yet in the works and will not apply to the wives of the Defense Minister (Ehud Barak) and the

Attorney General (Yehuda Weinstein) who were caught employing illegal migrants at their homes. (Their husbands, of course, knew nothing about it.)

Most of all, Yishai brags about the huge manhunt now in progress. Africans cover in their miserable homes, not daring to go out into the streets. At night they are alert to every noise, fearing the dreaded knock of the immigration police on their doors.

Trouble is, most of the 60,000 Africans come from Eritrea and North Sudan, where the migrants cannot be sent back, because the Supreme Court has forbidden it. Their repatriation would put their lives in danger. This leaves only the citizens of the new state of South Sudan, which has been liberated with the help of Israeli military advisers and arms. They are now being rounded up, in the full glare of publicity, to be deported.

What about the others? The government is now feverishly at work building huge tent camps in the arid Negev desert, in the middle of nowhere, in which tens of thousands of migrants will be imprisoned for three years in what cannot but be inhuman conditions. Since no foreign country is ready to take them in, they will probably stay there for much longer. As of now, there is no water or sanitary conditions, women and children (born in Israel and Hebrew speaking) will

be housed separately. In the summer, temperatures will easily reach 40 degrees Centigrade. Life inside the tents will be hell.

Yishai and his colleague have a flair for laundered language. The migrants are called “infiltrators,” deportation is called “returning,” the prison camps will be called “residence camps.” Not concentration camps, God forbid.

I am aware that in several “civilized” countries, migrants are treated as badly, or worse. This does not comfort me in the least.

I am also aware that there is a real problem that has to be solved, but not this way.

As a citizen of a state that calls itself “Jewish,” or even “the state of the Holocaust survivors,” I am disgusted.

I have heard innumerable times about Nazi Jew-hunts, as well as American lynch mobs and Russian pogroms. There is no comparison, of course, but the pictures are popping up in my mind. Can’t help it.

Our treatment of the African refugees and migrants has nothing to do with the old conflict with the Arabs. It cannot be justified with arguments that concern the war and national security.

This is racism, pure and simple. **CT**

Uri Avnery is an Israeli writer and activist

The government is now feverishly at work building huge tent camps in the arid Negev desert, in the middle of nowhere, in which tens of thousands of migrants will be imprisoned for three years in what cannot but be inhuman conditions

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Obama's second Latin America coup

Shamus Cooke looks at recent events that led to the fall of a president

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It's obvious the President's real crimes are that he chose to ally himself more closely with Paraguay's left, which in reality means the working and poor masses
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The recent coup against Paraguay's democratically elected president is not only a blow to democracy, but an attack against the working and poor population that supported and elected President Fernando Lugo, whom they see as a bulwark against the wealthy elite who've dominated the country for decades.

The US mainstream media and politicians are not calling the events in Paraguay a coup, since the president is being "legally impeached" by the elite-dominated Paraguayan Congress. But as economist Mark Weisbrot explains in the *Guardian*:

"The Congress of Paraguay is trying to oust the president, Fernando Lugo, by means of an impeachment proceeding for which he was given less than 24 hours to prepare and only two hours to present a defense. It appears that a decision to convict him has already been written...The main trigger for the impeachment is an armed clash between peasants fighting for land rights with police...But this violent confrontation is merely a pretext, as it is clear that the president had no responsibility for what happened. Nor have Lugo's opponents presented any evidence for their charges in today's "trial." President Lugo proposed an investigation into the incident; the opposition was not interested, preferring their rigged judicial proceedings."

What was the real reason the right-wing Paraguayan Senate wanted to expel their demo-

cratically elected president? Another article by the *Guardian* makes this clear:

"The president was also tried on four other charges: that he improperly allowed leftist parties to hold a political meeting in an army base in 2009; that he allowed about 3,000 squatters [landless peasants] to illegally invade a large Brazilian-owned soybean farm; that his government failed to capture members of a [leftist] guerrilla group, the Paraguayan People's Army... and that he signed an international [leftist] protocol without properly submitting it to congress for approval. The article adds that the president's former political allies were "...upset after he gave a majority of cabinet ministry posts to leftist allies, and handed a minority to the moderates...The political split had become sharply clear as Lugo publicly acknowledged recently that he would support leftist candidates in future elections."

It's obvious the President's real crimes are that he chose to ally himself more closely with Paraguay's left, which in reality means the working and poor masses of the country who, as in other Latin American countries, choose socialism as their form of political expression.

Although Paraguay's elite lost control of the presidency when Lugo was elected, they used their stranglehold over the Senate to reverse the gains made by Paraguay's poor. This is similar to the situation in Egypt: when the old regime of the wealthy elite lost their president/dictator, they used their control of the

judiciary in an attempt to reverse the gains of the revolution.

Is it fair to blame the Obama administration for the recent coup in Paraguay? Yes, but it takes an introductory lesson on US-Latin American relations to understand why. Paraguay's right wing – a tiny wealthy elite – has a long-standing relationship with the United States, which has backed dictatorships for decades in the country – a common pattern in most Latin American countries.

The United States promotes the interests of the wealthy of these mostly-poor countries, and in turn, these elite-run countries are obedient to the pro-corporate foreign policy of the United States (*The Open Veins of Latin America* is an excellent book that outlines the history).

Paraguay's elite is incapable of acting so boldly without first consulting the United States, since neighboring countries are overwhelmingly hostile to such an act because they fear a US-backed coup in their own countries. Paraguay's elite has only the military for internal support, which for decades has been funded and trained by the United States. President Lugo did not fully sever the US military's links to his country. According to Wikipedia, "The US Department of Defense (DOD) provides technical assistance and training to help modernize and professionalize the [Paraguay] military..."

In short, it is not remotely possible for Paraguay's elite to act without assurance from the United States that it would continue to receive US political and financial support; the elite now needs a steady flow of guns and tanks to defend itself from the poor of Paraguay.

The Latin American countries surrounding Paraguay denounced the events as they unfolded and made an emergency trip to the country in an attempt to stop them. What was the Obama administration's response? *Business Week* explains: "As Paraguay's Senate conducted the impeachment trial, the US State Department had said that it was watching the situation closely.

"We understand that Paraguay's Senate has

voted to impeach President Lugo," said Darla Jordan, a spokeswoman for the US State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs... "We urge all Paraguayans to act peacefully, with calm and responsibility, in the spirit of Paraguay's democratic principles."

Obama might as well have said: "We support the right-wing coup against the elected president of Paraguay." Watching a crime against democracy happen – even if it is "watched closely" – and failing to denounce it makes one complicit in the act. The State Department's carefully crafted words are meant to give implicit support to the new illegal regime in Paraguay.

Obama acted as he did because Lugo turned left, away from corporate interests, towards Paraguay's poor. Lugo had also more closely aligned himself with regional governments which had worked towards economic independence from the United States. Most importantly perhaps is that, in 2009, President Lugo forbade the building of a planned US military base in Paraguay.

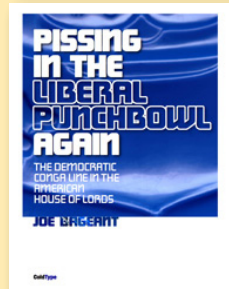
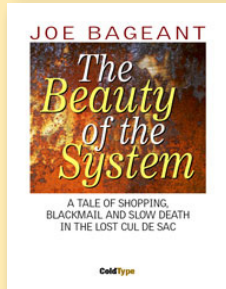
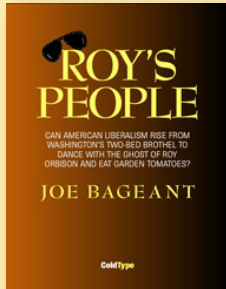
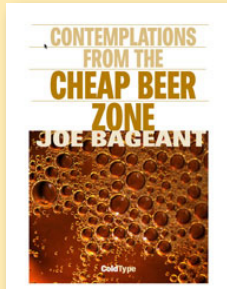
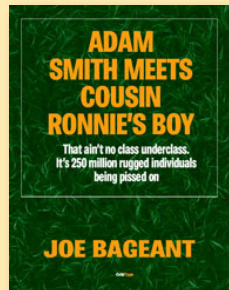
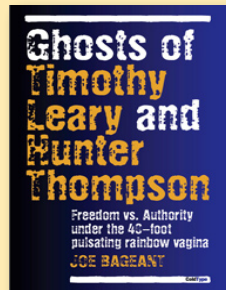
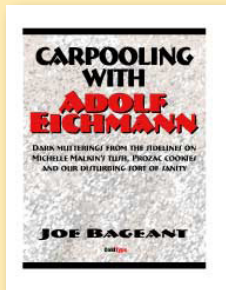
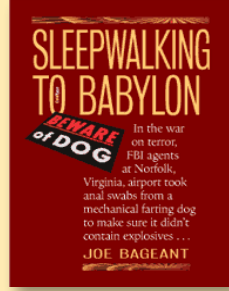
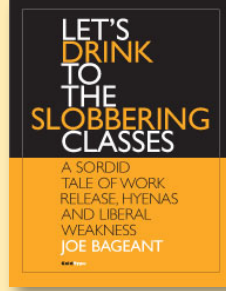
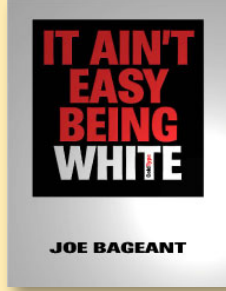
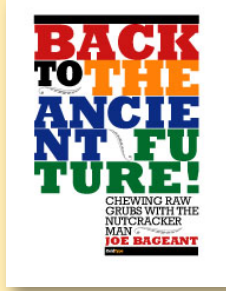
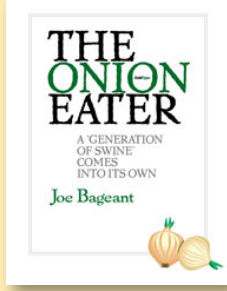
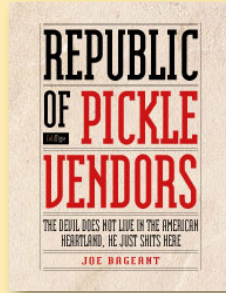
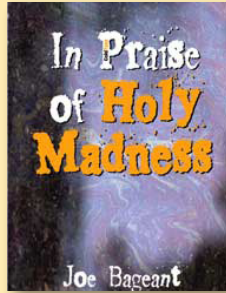
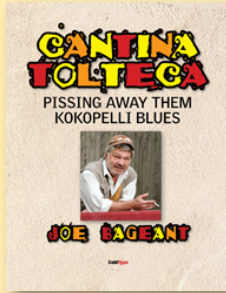
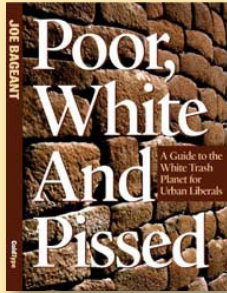
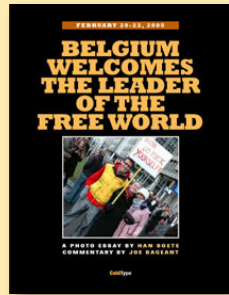
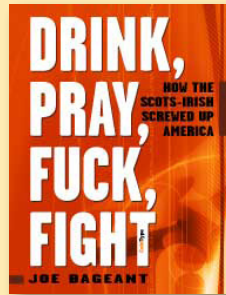
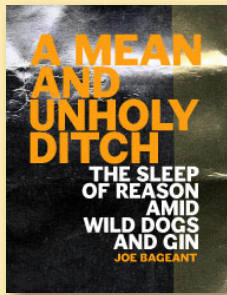
What was the response of Paraguay's working and poor people to their new dictatorship? They amassed outside of the Congress and were attacked by riot police and water cannons. It is unlikely that they will sit on their hands during this episode, since President Lugo had raised their hopes of having a more humane existence.

President Lugo has unfortunately given his opponents an advantage by accepting the rulings that he himself called a coup, allowing himself to be replaced by a Senate-appointed president. But Paraguay's working and poor people will act with more boldness, in line with the social movements across Latin America that have struck heavy blows against the power of their wealthy elite.

President Obama's devious actions towards Paraguay reaffirm which side of the wealth divide he stands on. His first coup in Honduras sparked the outrage of the entire hemisphere; this one will confirm to Latin Americans that neither Republicans nor Democrats care anything about democracy.

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Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, Occupy activist, and writer for Workers Action – www.workerscompass.org, where this was first published



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It's just parchment. Get over it

David Michael Green finds the US constitution a little over-rated

In June, America engaged in one of its perennial paroxysms of constitutional cogitation – this time over the Obama health care bill – with (mostly) predictable results.

Four of the great legal priests on our High Temple's Council of Scriptural Interpretation said that, yes, the Affordable Care Act was within the boundaries of what a small collection of men riding horseback to a meeting in Philadelphia one summer two-and-a-quarter centuries ago allow us to do today as a continent-wide superpower society of 300 million people in the age of atom bombs, space travel, heart transplants and genetic engineering. George and John and Thomas say it's okay, we can have health care. Whew. That's a relief.

But then four other priests insisted, "Oh, no, this is fundamentally not allowed. Not at all."

And one apparently went both ways, voting against it before he was for it.

Such, in "the greatest country in the world" – as regressives, doing their national equivalent of Allahu Akbar, seek to assuage their insecurities and reassure themselves by constantly shouting at the rest of us – is the way we determine whether tens of millions of children will or will not receive pediatric care. This – by pondering what would John Hancock do? – is how we figure out whether one-sixth of our population deserves to have

their lives lengthened by early cancer detection and intervention, or must instead resort to 'treatment' of their already metastasized masses in hospital emergency rooms.

The very fact of this debate and the questions on which it turns tells you far more than you'd care to know about just how great your greatest country is, the one which spends vastly more on health care than any other, but delivers the least to its citizens. But that is the subject of an essay (or six) for another day.

Today's rant is on the destructive dogmas and horrid habits of our national addiction to the practice of constitutionalism itself.

By that, I don't mean the fact that law in America is ultimately decided by five unelected, politically insulated and almost entirely unremovable individuals, meeting in secret and doing who knows what underneath their black robes. I have addressed the wisdom of that profoundly undemocratic process, known as judicial review, [previously](#).

Though that's not our concern here, the absurdity of the process as demonstrated so emphatically once again nevertheless cannot go without being briefly noted. How anyone can argue with a straight face that judicial review of legislation in America – especially in our hyper-polarized era, where presidential elections are as much about loading up the courts as they are about executive branch policies – is not entirely political, but purely

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CONSTITUTIONAL FOLLIES

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about ‘finding’ the constitutionality of issues, is quite beyond me. I guess it’s just a massive coincidence that the votes of Supreme Court are almost always entirely predictable based on ideology, eh? I guess it’s also just a quirk of legal quantum mechanics that conservative justices always find their way to the conservative ruling, no matter what principles they need to invoke to get there.

If, for example, the question is whether the federal government has the power under the commerce clause to smash state law on medical marijuana, Scary Scalia explicitly says, “Hell, yes, the feds can do just about anything they want!” Anything except, as it turns out, providing people with health care. Then, it’s abundantly clear to the very same good judge, that the national government has no such power according to the very same provision of the Constitution.

Anyone who would still today deny that the Supreme Court is little short of a profoundly non-democratic mini-legislature is simply lying to you, and probably lying to themselves as well. The very ideological predictability of the justices’ votes, and the way they obliterate any principle in their way makes that emphatically clear, as does the swaggering aggressive activism of the regressive majority of the Court in cases like *Bush v. Gore* or *Citizens United*.

As, for that matter, does the rage in the regressive community focused on John Roberts for his defection from Tory orthodoxy. Does anyone seriously think that these people have a problem with his ‘legal reasoning’, as opposed to his ultimate vote? Let’s not be ridiculous. They’re angry because a guy on the conservative team defected to the enemy, and legal principles have nothing whatsoever to do with it. It’s like the friends and family of a Red Sox fan who suddenly starts rooting for the Yankees.

By the way, the vote itself also demonstrates the pure politicization of the judicial process. By the available evidence, the good tool Roberts appears to have been all set to have voted his ideology in this case, just as he has in the

past, and just as we’d expect him to have done on this issue. But then something happened, and he switched votes. I can tell you what that something was, and why it effected John Roberts and not, say, Anthony Kennedy, who is normally considered the ideological swing vote (though never, it should be noted, when there is real money on the table). What happened was that the rising crescendo of criticism of the Court for its ideological bias, its massive overreach, and the horrific decisions it has been rendering, such as those creating the Bush presidency and the monstrosity of corporate-owned government, got to him. If there was a single development that switched Roberts’ vote, it was the *New York Times* front page article published in recent weeks detailing poll data which demonstrate that America’s admiration for the Court is way down, at historic lows. This is why it was Roberts who switched, and not one of the associate justices. His name will forever be attached to this court, and he didn’t want history to record that it was the Roberts Court that ruined the historically well-regarded institution. He didn’t want ‘Roberts Court’ to show up on the same list as *Dred Scott* and *Plessy v. Ferguson*. By taking a hit on this big issue once, he can now go back to stuffing plutocracy down our throats, as he assuredly will, but henceforth with an historic alibi in his pocket. In other words for the next thirty years we’ll be hearing: “Hey, you can’t say my vote is always just a shill for the corporatist oligarchy – look how I voted on Obamacare!”

But I digress (and digress some more).

Our current system of jurisprudence – which is often really our current system of legislation – is wrong on all sorts of levels. It was, to begin with, a bad idea for these justices to be deciding health care policy in America. And it was an even worse idea for them to be doing so on the basis of attempting (or pretending to be attempting) to decipher the Founders’ thoughts about the provision of health care to the public, more than a century before governments anywhere ever contemplated providing such services, and

two centuries before it became the norm in developed countries.

But what's really wrong, at the foundation of this pyramid of bad practices, is the whole notion of constitutionalism itself. Somehow we've gotten it into our heads that we as a twenty-first century contemporary society are only permitted to do what the Constitution of the late eighteenth century permits us to do. I, for one, don't see the wisdom in that at all, and I say that for a number of good reasons.

To begin with, it is a fool's errand to believe that we can ascertain the intentions of the Founders on a huge raft of contemporary issues which – like radar itself, would have been completely off their screens in the pre-industrial, let alone pre-post-industrial, agrarian society in which they lived. Even the Founders themselves – the very people who wrote the document in question – began debating about what the Constitution permits immediately after ratification, notably the 1790 row between Hamilton and Madison over whether a federal bank was permitted.

That particular debate – between two key authors of the Constitution a mere one year after it was ratified – suggests a second problem with the notion of constitutionalism as the foundational mechanism for policy-making. Namely, that the document is written in vague enough language in many places so as to permit multiple interpretations on given questions, each sometimes equally valid. Not for nothing, for example, is one of the key provisions of the document referred to as the “elastic clause”.

So already, any rationale for making decisions on everything from health care to pornography to torture to racial equality in this fashion is on the shakiest of grounds on the basis of these two critiques alone. But there are other reasons for rejecting this approach as well.

Americans love and revere their constitution, but my guess is very few of them could begin to tell you why, and among that handful, even fewer still could defend the laudable

characteristics they might be able to identify in any sort of comparative contest against alternative possibilities. It's quite a lot like religion. If you feed a society “Allah, Allah, Allah” non-stop, 99 percent of its members are gonna turn out to be good Muslims (some of them quite fervent) without thinking about it one way or the other (and the other one percent will, I assure you, be very quiet about their doubts). You can even go “Jesus, Santa, Jesus, Santa” if you want, and then come along ten years later and say “Just kidding about the Santa part – but the Jesus thing is totally real!”, and that's exactly the set of beliefs you'll get, almost no one ever looking askance.

And that's pretty much how we do our knee-jerk constitutional adoration in this country, as well.

But, truth be told, it's actually not such a very good document, if we're honest about it. I know you're not supposed to say that, but then again if we occasionally told the truth in America we wouldn't be in the mess we're in right now either. So I will.

The first thing to notice about the Constitution, looked at dispassionately, is what is not in it. It is, in terms of actual content, very little of a moral statement at all. It does include some guaranteed freedoms as something of an afterthought in the Bill of Rights, but it does not otherwise have any substantive content, especially on any serious ethical or philosophical issues.

Moreover, on the great moral question of democratic inclusion, the prescriptions of the Constitution are highly wanting (though some – but not all – of this may be fairly excused by the ethos of the historical moment). There is no room for women here, nor for less-than-wealthy men, nor for non-whites. I don't know about you, but if you want me to be impressed with any given manifesto or political statement, it needs to stand for something at least a bit novel and profound.

So what is in the document, then, if not some secular equivalent of the Ten Commandments? It is essentially a blueprint for

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CONSTITUTIONAL FOLLIES

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**In a parliamentary,
unitary (non-
federalist)
democracy,
power resides in
parliament. Period**
.....

a governing structure, and little else of note. The Constitution says who decides in American society, how they come to occupy those positions, and how these positions relate to each other in terms of their powers. That's just about it, really.

Now, if that happened to represent some brilliant form of governing structure, far superior to all the others, then I might be persuaded that our national reverence for this centuries old document was well founded. In point of fact, however, I would argue rather the opposite is true here. Though I think the Constitution represents a fairly clever bit of engineering on the part of the Founders, given the goals and parameters of their moment, those aren't goals I particularly share, nor can they be fairly argued to be very much helpful to national governance in our time.

For the key thrust of the regime created by the Founders in the Constitution is the dilution of power. Their task was to come up with a government of stronger power than the failing Articles of Confederation, but they were adamant that it not be too strong, so they found three ways to spread power out. First, vertically, by sharing power between the states and the federal government. Second, horizontally, within the federal government, by means of separation of powers across independent branches of policy-making and implementing institutions, otherwise known as the idea of 'checks and balances'. And, third, by expressly limiting the powers that the federal government possessed over the public and over the states, as itemized in the Bill of Rights.

It was a fairly clever bit of engineering considering the needle the Founders had to thread between strength and weakness at their specific historical moment, but is it a particularly efficient or otherwise felicitous form of government for our purposes today? I dunno – can you say 'gridlock', dude? Do Americans seem remotely enamored with their government today?

This is a governing structure that is designed to mostly be incapable of doing any-

thing, other than when very, very broad consensus exists across all the governing institutions. The diffusion of power also means that assigning responsibility is rather difficult as well. If you're unhappy with your government today, who do you blame? Democrats? Republicans? The President? Congress? The Courts? And if you have a hard time affixing blame, how can you choose a different alternative as a remedy?

I would argue that this is a form of government – one in which so many veto points guarantee relative inaction – only well suited to a people who are paranoid about the supposed perils of governmental powers. It's true that probably no other culture on the planet fits that description as well as American society, but that said, it seems to me that there comes a point at which the dysfunctionality of weak government outweighs any benefits. Besides which, the small government limitations in place today seem only to apply to making it difficult for our government to provide benefits for its citizens, like health care. When it comes to the really ugly stuff (and the stuff that the Founders were concerned about) – like unrestrained warfare, warrantless spying on citizens, endless incarceration without due process, and now even assassination of citizens on the president's unilateral whim – there's no small government to be found anywhere in sight, anyhow. And, by the way, do the other democracies of the world – those not possessing the power-diffusing principles of governance America has – suffer from totalitarian regimes controlling their subjects' lives in some sort of nightmare right out of Orwell? Is that what you see in Sweden? Canada? New Zealand?

Which reminds us that there is a better way, actually. In a parliamentary, unitary (non-federalist) democracy, power resides in parliament. Period. Which also means that responsibility resides there as well. There are no checks and balances, no competing institutions, no great secular scripture on high to consult, and no gridlock. If you don't like the way things are going in your country, you

know who to blame, and what to do about it at the next election.

And this reminds us further, then, that American ultra-reverence for the US Constitution is even more misplaced. The main thing – indeed, just about the only thing – that the document does is to spell out the governing structure for the society. I’d say that’s undeserving of reverence enough but if, in doing so, it prescribes a fairly dysfunctional one, why must we always genuflect in its direction every time we need to make a decision more than two centuries later? If it doesn’t even do the one thing it was designed to do so very well, why in the world should it be controlling our lives?

There are two great ironies here. One is that I suspect that we take the Founders a whole helluva lot more seriously than they took themselves. They referred to their regime-creating enterprise as an “experiment”, and they meant that rather literally. Not only did they not think their Constitution walked on water, they didn’t really have much of a clue as to whether it could work. And there were good reasons to adopt such a healthy skepticism.

First because they had gotten it wrong very recently, and not once, but twice. They had tried monarchy and abandoned it as a failure. They then substituted the Articles of Confederation, a governing design so flawed it barely lasted a decade. Moreover, if you look at what actually transpired at the constitutional convention, you see all sorts of ideas and debates and compromises flying around amongst the delegates. The point is, it’s not like these people were hand-delivered an instruction manual for good governance by the Supreme Being. They knew that they weren’t, so how come we don’t?

The other great irony here is that our twenty-first century slavish reverence for the diktats of the Constitution (or what some of us claim to be able to decipher as its diktats) does a massive disservice to the one great thing that the Founders actually did contribute in penning the document.

In truth, it’s not the contents of the Constitution that are to be greatly admired, for all the reasons noted above. This was a significantly flawed document in 1787, and is even more so today. What really matters is not what they did so much as that they did it. The really amazing thing about the Founders and the Enlightenment movement of which they were leading lights, was the transition they provided to the concept of self-rule, and to the notion of governance based on the principle of reason, or rational analysis based on empirical observation. This idea was almost wholly foreign to their time, and their broader ethos that humans could be trusted to think for themselves and govern themselves was truly a gigantic leap out of the dark ages and into modernity. Indeed, Enlightenment ideas arguably represent the most significant development in all of human history.

For this, I truly admire the confidence, courage and ingenuity of Founders’ generation, and I’m truly grateful for their contribution. In light of this, then, how much more absurd and sad is it that we – centuries further down the road – dishonor their contribution by continually trying to make policy on the basis of interpreting some über-text written by some quasi-deities from a wholly different culture and time, instead of following their prime directive and thinking for ourselves?

I’m pretty confident that the Founders would agree that in slavishly seeking to decipher their ancient words and letting those govern us today, we have in fact missed the very core essence of what they were trying to say.

Justice Antonin Scalia, one of the most destructive forces in American history, not long ago had a message for liberals and other patriots still smarting from the judicial coup he engineered which put another of the most destructive forces in our history into the White House for eight years: “Get over it” said the nice judge.

I’d like to return the favor with respect to his brand of regressivism masked as constitutional originalism: It’s just parchment, people. Get over it.

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I suspect that we take the Founders a whole helluva lot more seriously than they took themselves. They referred to their regime-creating enterprise as an “experiment”, and they meant that rather literally

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David Michael Green is a professor of political science at Hofstra University in New York. More of his work can be found at his website, www.regressiveantidote.net.

CT

The promised land

This is the fate of young people today: excluded, but forbidden to opt out, writes **George Monbiot**

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To be young in the post-industrial nations today is to be excluded. Excluded from the comforts enjoyed by preceding generations; excluded from jobs; excluded from hopes of a better world; excluded from self-ownership
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Hounded by police and bailiffs, evicted wherever they stopped, they did not mean to settle here. They had walked out of London to occupy disused farmland on the Queen's estates surrounding Windsor Castle. Perhaps unsurprisingly, that didn't work out very well. But after several days of pursuit, they landed two fields away from the place where modern democracy is commonly supposed to have been born.

At first this group of mostly young, dispossessed people, who (after the 17th century revolutionaries) call themselves Diggers 2012, camped on the old rugby pitch of Brunel University's Runnymede campus. It's a weed-choked complex of grand old buildings and modern halls of residence, whose mildewed curtains flap in the wind behind open windows, all mysteriously abandoned as if struck by a plague or a neutron bomb. The diggers were evicted again, and moved down the hill into the woods behind the campus: pressed, as if by the ineluctable force of history, ever closer to the symbolic spot.

From the meeting house they have built and their cluster of tents, you can see across the meadows to where the Magna Carta was sealed almost 800 years ago.

Their aim is simple: to remove themselves from the corporate economy, to house themselves, grow food and build a

community on abandoned land. Implementation is less simple. Soon after I arrived, on a sodden day, an enforcer working for the company which now owns the land came slithering through the mud in his suit and patent leather shoes with a posse of police, to serve papers.

Already the crops the settlers had planted had been destroyed once; the day after my visit they were destroyed again. But the repeated destruction, removals and arrests have not deterred them.

As one of their number, Gareth Newnham, told me, "if we go to prison we'll just come back ... I'm not saying that this is the only way. But at least we're creating an opportunity for young people to step out of the system."

To be young in the post-industrial nations today is to be excluded. Excluded from the comforts enjoyed by preceding generations; excluded from jobs; excluded from hopes of a better world; excluded from self-ownership.

Those with degrees are owned by the banks before they leave college. Housing benefit is being choked off. Landlords now demand rents so high that only those with the better jobs can pay.

Work has been sliced up and outsourced into a series of mindless repetitive tasks, whose practitioners are interchangeable. Through globalisation and standardisation,

through unemployment and the erosion of collective bargaining and employment laws, big business now asserts a control over its workforce almost unprecedented in the age of universal suffrage.

The promise the old hold out to the young is a lifetime of rent, debt and insecurity. A rentier class holds the nation's children to ransom. Faced with these conditions, who can blame people for seeking an alternative?

But the alternatives have also been shut down: you are excluded yet you cannot opt out. The land – even disused land – is guarded as fiercely as the rest of the economy. Its ownership is scarcely less concentrated than it was when the Magna Carta was written. But today there is no Charter of the Forest (the document appended to the Magna Carta in 1217, granting the common people rights to use the royal estates).

As Simon Moore, an articulate, well-read 27-year old, explained, “those who control the land have enjoyed massive economic and political privileges. The relationship between land and democracy is a strong one, which is not widely understood.”

As we sat in the wooden house the diggers have built, listening to the rain dripping from the eaves, the latest attempt to reform the House of Lords was collapsing in parliament.

Almost 800 years after the Magna Carta was approved, unrepresentative power of the kind familiar to King John and his barons still holds sway. Even in the House of Commons, most seats are pocket boroughs, controlled by those who fund the major parties and establish the limits of political action.

Through such ancient powers, our illegitimate rulers sustain a system of ancient injustices, which curtail alternatives and lock the poor into rent and debt. This spring, the government dropped a clause into an unrelated bill so late that it could not be properly scrutinised by the House of Commons, criminalising the squatting of abandoned

residential buildings.

The House of Lords, among whom the landowning class is still well-represented, approved the measure.

Thousands of people who have solved their own housing crises will now be evicted, just as housing benefit payments are being cut. I remember a political postcard from the early 1990s titled “Britain in 2020”, which depicted the police rounding up some scruffy-looking people with the words, “you’re under arrest for not owning or renting property”. It was funny then; it is less funny today.

The young men and women camping at Runnymede are trying to revive a different tradition, largely forgotten in the new age of robber barons.

They are seeking, in the words of the Diggers of 1649, to make “the Earth a common treasury for all ... not one lording over another, but all looking upon each other as equals in the creation.” The tradition of resistance, the assertion of independence from the laws devised to protect the landlords’ ill-gotten property, long pre-date and long post-date the Magna Carta. But today they scarcely feature in national consciousness.

I set off in lashing rain to catch a train home from Egham, on the other side of the hill. As I walked into the town, I found the pavements packed with people. The rain bounced off their umbrellas, forming a silver mist.

The front passed and the sun came out, and a few minutes later everyone began to cheer and wave their flags as the Olympic torch was carried down the road. The sense of common purpose was tangible, the readiness for sacrifice (in the form of a thorough soaking) just as evident. Half of what we need is here already. Now how do we recruit it to the fight for democracy? **CT**

George Monbiot's latest book is “Bring On The Apocalypse”. This piece first appeared in London's Guardian newspaper.

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Almost 800 years after the Magna Carta was approved, unrepresentative power of the kind familiar to King John and his barons still holds sway in the House of Lords

Gaming an Iran war

Danny Schechter on Washington's latest plans for reshaping the Middle East

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Kristof, like many western journalists, has had an outbreak of amnesia, if not callous blindness, forgetting how Washington often says one thing, and then does another, invoking, for example, selective concerns about human rights violations
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When we hear that the United States government is announcing a new policy, it is usually the result of a detailed process, a calculated weighing of options and scenarios in which planners seek to calculate the likely impact and reaction to policies they are advocating.

The stepped-up anti-Iranian sanctions strategy now underway was not an off the top of the head impulsive decision, but one reached through a process of careful strategizing – as in, if we do this, what are they likely to do?

It's just one step of an ongoing process with many stages that usually leads to armed conflict even if it is always presented as a way to reduce conflict.

Sometimes strategists seek to provoke the very responses they decry. Sometimes, they calibrate policies with allies; sometimes they undertake initiatives that are suggested or planned by allies, especially Tel-Aviv which has been promoting the crusade, at first loudly, threatening unilateral action, but then, quietly, maneuvering Washington publicly into the lead.

And all the time, the likely human consequences, the their real goals, are obscured and concealed. (As the old saying goes: "what a web we weave when first we practice to deceive.")

Even Nicholas Kristof, one of the most

progressive columnists on the *New York Times*, buys Washington's rationale/cover story at face value, without questions, backing tough sanctions as if they are not tied to a broader regime change strategy. He even admits ordinary Iranians are hurting but justifies it as part of an attempt to curb nuclear weapons development.

"I regret this suffering," Kristof writes, "and let's be clear that sanctions are hurting ordinary Iranians more than senior officials.

"Yet, with apologies to the many wonderful Iranians who showered me with hospitality, I favor sanctions because I don't see any other way to pressure the regime on the nuclear issue or ease its grip on power. My takeaway is that sanctions are working pretty well."

If they were working so well, they wouldn't have been escalated. Kristof, like many western journalists, has had an outbreak of amnesia, if not callous blindness, forgetting how Washington often says one thing, and then does another, invoking, for example, selective concerns about human rights violations. That has been used to justify recent armed interventions in Libya and, years ago, in Iraq, where the official propaganda stressed how that war would be a "cakewalk" and bring democracy to that country. Apparently, he does not read his own newspaper.

He apparently doesn't recall either this exchange in 2001 on CBS News with Secretary of State Madeline Albright on the impact of sanctions on Iraq. Those sanctions imposed by the Clinton Administration were justified as an "alternative" to war, not a build-up.

Journalist Lesley Stahl asked: "We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?"

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright responded: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price - we think the price is worth it."

In 2002, with the invasion of Baghdad still a year off, US agencies and departments were already planning the future of a post war-Iraq, to build on the sanctions they imposed there which experts concluded led to the deaths of as many as a million children.

Even if their expectations and hopes were not realized - and most were not, thanks to an imperial arrogance and frequent stupidity - it is still instructive to look back at the well-calculated process led by self-styled "defense" (sic) intellectuals.

Covert operation

The covert dimensions of all this scheming is still not fully understood twelve years later, but the US began by forging an integrated inter-agency strategy. They invested hundreds of hours and millions of dollars in planning an aggressive war and occupation. And then, schemed by pretending their policy was backed by the world by building a farcical "coalition of the willing" that was there for show, not as allies with genuine input.

The best way to understand the way this strategizing operates today is to appreciate how they play these war games.

Here's part of what a Defense Department document put forth, with great confidence, - or 'chutzpah', depending on your

culture, of course, about what they hoped would happen then as they detailed all of their "contingencies" and "outcomes."

"Planning in the US Government for post-war Iraq was an interagency process involving officials from the Departments of Defense, State, Justice, Treasury, Energy, and Commerce; the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Central Intelligence Agency, as well as from the staffs of the National Security Council and the Office of Management and Budget.

"DoD mid- and senior-level planners and officials engaged in multiple planning initiatives for post-war contingencies. DoD staff in the theater and in Washington evaluated a wide-range of possible outcomes, led efforts to merge and synchronize planning from various government agencies, and shaped planning for the major combat phase of the operation to allow for the best possible post-war conditions.

"Key to DoD planning for this operation was the assumption that liberating Iraq from 35 years of tyrannical rule and severe social and economic underdevelopment would be a challenging prospect."

However "challenging," this "prospect" clearly screwed up in the end at the cost of as many as a million Iraqi lives and trillions of dollars. A real democracy was not seeded; one authoritarian government displaced another. The country was plundered.

There is no guarantee that having failed once in Iraq, the bureaucracies that planned the pillage it won't try again in Iran, utilizing these same templates.

We can reasonably infer that a similar coordinated task force approach is being taken in connection with war planning against Iran, which may have a similar outcome, given how little Washington seems to have learned in the interim.

In June 2012, *Defense News* reported, "US war planners have developed "a viable contingency" for Iran that US President Barack Obama will not hesitate to authorize if the military option is the only way to pre-

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vent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons, according to a former senior Pentagon official.

“In two separate addresses at a prestigious policy conference here, Michèle Flournoy, former US undersecretary of defense for policy, publicly cautioned Israel against the destabilizing and delegitimizing effects of a premature, unilateral strike on Iran.

“Having sat in the Pentagon, I can assure you of the quality of the work that has been done. ... The military option for the president is real,” said Flournoy, who left the Pentagon in February and continues to advise the Obama re-election campaign.”

This is telling because it suggests that an attack on Iran is being gamed out as part of a re-election campaign by advisor who works in both the political and military worlds.

A President under pressure at home by adversaries and a collapsing economy seems to have become convinced that he can best run on his credentials as a unifying Commander In Chief, not a partisan politician, out to protect America against escalating rhetoric and possible attacks from Iran. (Evidence is not important; it’s the perception that matters!)

Pumping up a crisis fraught with dangers could convince even estranged supporters that it’s best to keep Obama in charge.

What this also demonstrates is how closely The US is coordinating with Israel and already assuming operational control of all the war planning scenarios which includes this latest wave of strengthened sanctions.

This seems to show also how all the hawkish threats of unilateral action by Israel pressured the White House to get in front of any possible confrontation. They are also threatening every nation to cut back on Iranian Oil imports or else.

Published reports indicate that the Pentagon now has 40,000 US troops positioned in the region, with two carrier strike groups deployed in the Arabian Gulf or as Iran would have it, the Persian Gulf.

Defense News explains: “Such military presence is part of a carefully timed strategy that, through the coming months, will continue to focus on a combination of increasingly crippling sanctions and diplomacy.”

So there you have it – the admission that sanctions are being sold as just one more step in a chain that includes public diplomacy and a related orchestrated media campaign, all “carefully timed” to have a cumulative impact. “Diplomacy” in this context does not mean dialogue or negotiations. It means lining up support and building global consensus for intervention.

Iran is increasingly being put in a no-win position in the propaganda war. Every public pronouncement Tehran makes about defending itself is being characterized in the world media as aggressive in intent, arousing fears of attacks on shipping routes while justifying a US military presence that is invariably represented as there only to protect global economic interests.

Behind all the feigned benevolence is a clear threat. “Barack Obama is a president that says what he means and does what he says. ... I can assure you we do not have a policy of containment,” says former Pentagon warrior turned campaign advisor Michèle Flournoy.

Sanctions are only a first blow in a global strategy – a prelude to a stronger fistful of options that are being readied.

How will Tehran respond? Does it understand the need for a less bellicose and more savvy media counter strategy? And in the USA, are the forces opposed to another war – this time for an obvious domestic political objective – aware enough and prepared enough to try to stop it? **CT**

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News Dissector Danny Schechter blogs for *NewsDissector.net*. His film *WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception* exposed Washington’s media campaign against Iraq and the complicity of world news organizations. This commentary first appeared on *PressTV.com*. Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org

Paying the price of speaking out

Think the US won't torture Julian Assange? Think again, writes **William Blum**

I'm sure most Americans are mighty proud of the fact that Julian Assange is so frightened of falling into the custody of the United States that he had to seek sanctuary in the embassy of Ecuador, a tiny and poor Third World country, without any way of knowing how it would turn out. He might be forced to be there for years. "That'll teach him to mess with the most powerful country in the world! All you other terrorists and anti-Americans out there – Take Note! When you fuck around with God's country you pay a price!"

How true. You do pay a price. Ask the people of Cuba, Vietnam, Chile, Yugoslavia, Iraq, Iran, Haiti, etc., etc., etc. And ask the people of Guantánamo, Diego Garcia, Bagram, and a dozen other torture centers to which God's country offers free transportation.

You think with the whole world watching, the United States would not be so obvious as to torture Assange if they got hold of him? Ask Bradley Manning. At a bare minimum, prolonged solitary confinement is torture. Before too long the world may ban it. Not that that would keep God's country and other police states from using it.

You think with the whole world watching, the United States would not be so obvious as to target Assange with a drone? They've done it with American citizens. Assange is a mere Aussie.

And Ecuador and its president, Rafael Correa, will pay a price. You think with the whole world watching, the United States would not intervene in Ecuador? In Latin America, it comes very naturally for Washington. During the Cold War it was said that the United States could cause the downfall of a government south of the border ... with a frown. The dissolution of the Soviet Union didn't bring any change in that because it was never the Soviet Union per se that the United States was fighting. It was the threat of a good example of an alternative to the capitalist model.

For example, on January 21, 2000 in Ecuador, where almost two-thirds live in poverty, a very large number of indigenous peasants rose up in desperation and marched to the capital city of Quito, where they were joined by labor unions and some junior military officers (most members of the army being of indigenous stock). This coalition presented a list of economic demands, seized the Congress and Supreme Court buildings, and forced the president to resign. He was replaced by a junta from the ranks of the new coalition. The Clinton administration was alarmed. Besides North American knee-reflex hostility to anything that look or smells like a leftist revolution, Washington had big plans for a large military base in Manta (later closed by Correa). And Colombia – already plagued by leftist

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Can it be imagined that American officials would bomb a house in an American city because they suspected that certain bad guys were present there? Well, the answer to that question is that it can be imagined because they've already done it
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movements – was next door.

The US quickly stepped in to educate the Ecuadorean coalition leaders as to the facts of Western Hemispheric imperial life. The American embassy in Quito ... Peter Romero, Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America and Western Hemispheric Affairs ... Sandy Berger, National Security Adviser to President Clinton ... Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering ... all made phone calls to Ecuadorean officials to threaten a cutoff in aid and other support, warning that “Ecuador will find itself isolated”, informing them that the United States would never recognize any new government the coalition might set up, there would be no peace in Ecuador unless the military backed the vice president as the new leader, and the vice president must continue to pursue neoliberal “reforms”, the kind of IMF structural adjustment policies which had played a major role in inciting the uprising in the first place.

Within hours the heads of the Ecuadorean army, navy and air force declared their support for the vice president. The leaders of the uprising fled into hiding. And that was the end of the Ecuadorean revolution of the year 2000.

Rafael Correa was first elected in 2006 with a 58% majority, and reelected in 2009 with a 55% majority; his current term runs until August 2013. The American mainstream media has been increasingly critical of him. The following letter sent in January to the *Washington Post* by the Ecuadorean ambassador to the United States is an attempt to clarify one of the issues.

Letter to the Editor:

We were offended by the Jan. 12 editorial “Ecuador’s bully,” which focused on a lawsuit brought by our president, Rafael Correa, after a newspaper claimed that he was guilty of ordering troops to fire on innocent citizens during a failed coup in 2010. The president asked the publishers to release their evidence or a retraction. When they refused, he sued, as any

citizen should do when recklessly wronged.

No journalist has gone to prison or paid a significant fine in the five years of the Correa presidency. Media criticism – fair and unfair, sometimes with malice – of the government appears every day. The case involving the newspaper is on appeal. When the judicial process ends, the president has said, he will waive some or all of the penalties provided he gets a retraction. That is a common solution to libel and slander cases in the United States, I believe.

Your writer uses obnoxious phrases such as “banana republic,” but here is the reality of today’s Ecuador: a highly popular, stable and progressive democracy for the first time in decades.

Nathalie Cely, Washington

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No shelter from the drones of infinite justice or the bacteria of enduring freedom

Afghanistan president Hamid Karzai said recently that he had had an argument with Gen. John Allen, the top US commander in Afghanistan, about the issue of American drone attacks in Afghanistan, following yet another deadly airstrike that killed a number of civilians. Karzai asked Allen an eminently reasonable question: “Do you do this in the United States?” The Afghan president added: “There is police action every day in the United States in various localities. They don’t call an airplane to bomb the place.”

Karzai’s question to Allen was rhetorical of course, for can it be imagined that American officials would bomb a house in an American city because they suspected that certain bad guys were present there? Well, the answer to that question is that it can be imagined because they’ve already done it.

In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. On May 13, 1985, a bomb dropped by a police helicopter burned down an entire block, some 60 homes destroyed, 11 dead, including several small children. The police, the mayor’s office, and the FBI were all involved in this

effort to evict an organization called MOVE from the house they lived in.

The victims were all black of course. So let's rephrase our question. Can it be imagined that American officials would bomb a house in Beverly Hills or the upper east side of Manhattan? Stay tuned.

And what else can we imagine about a society that's been super militarized, that's at war with much of the world, and is convinced that it's on the side of the angels and history? Well, the Boston transit system, MBTA, recently announced that in conjunction with Homeland Security they plan to release dead bacteria at three stations during off-hours this summer in order to test sensors that detect biological agents, which terrorists could release into subway systems. The bacterium, bacillus subtilis, is not infectious even in its live form, according to the government.

However, this too has a precedent. During five days in June, 1966 the Army conducted a test called "A Study of the Vulnerability of Subway Passengers in New York City to Covert Attack with Biological Agents". Trillions of bacillus subtilis variant niger were released into the subway system during rush hours, producing aerosol clouds. The report on the test noted that "When the cloud engulfed people, they brushed their clothing, looked up at the grate [at street level] and walked on." The wind of passing trains spread the bacteria along the tracks; in the time it took for two trains to pass, the bacteria were spread from 15th Street to 58th Street. It is not known how many people later became ill from being unsuspecting guinea pigs because the United States Army, as far as is known, exhibited no interest in this question.

For the planned Boston test the public has not been informed of the exact days; nor is it known how long the bacteria might linger in the stations or what the possible danger might be to riders whose immune system has been weakened for any reason.

It should be noted that the New York sub-

way experiment was only one of many such experiments. The Army has acknowledged that between 1949 and 1969, 239 populated areas from coast to coast as well as US overseas territories were blanketed with various organisms during tests designed to measure patterns of dissemination in the air, weather effects, dosages, optimum placement of the source, and other factors. Such testing was supposedly suspended after 1969.

Government officials have consistently denied that the biological agents used could be harmful despite an abundance of expert and objective scientific evidence that exposure to heavy concentrations of even apparently innocuous organisms can cause illness, at a minimum to the most vulnerable segments of the population – the elderly, children, and those suffering from a variety of ailments. "There is no such thing as a microorganism that cannot cause trouble," George Connell, assistant to the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, testified before the Senate in 1977. "If you get the right concentration at the right place, at the right time, and in the right person, something is going to happen."

The United States has used biological weapons abroad as well, repeatedly, not for testing purposes but for hostile purposes. So what will the land which has the highest (double) standards say when such weapons are used against it? Or when foreign drones hit American cities? Or when American hi-tech equipment is sabotaged by a cyber attack as the US has now admitted doing to Iran? A year ago the Pentagon declared that "computer sabotage coming from another country can constitute an act of war. ... If you shut down our power grid, maybe we will put a missile down one of your smokestacks," said a US military official.

Barack Obama, his mother, and the CIA

In his autobiography, *Dreams From My Fathers*, Barack Obama writes of taking a job at some point after graduating from Colum-

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bia University in 1983. He describes his employer as “a consulting house to multinational corporations” in New York City, and his functions as a “research assistant” and “financial writer”.

Oddly, Obama doesn't mention the name of his employer. However, a *New York Times* story of October 30, 2007 identifies the company as Business International Corporation. Equally odd is that the *Times* did not remind its readers that the newspaper itself had disclosed in 1977 that Business International had provided cover for four CIA employees in various countries between 1955 and 1960.

The British journal, *Lobster* – which, despite its incongruous name, is a venerable international publication on intelligence matters – has reported that Business International was active in the 1980s promoting the candidacy of Washington-favored candidates in Australia and Fiji. In 1987, the CIA overthrew the Fiji government after but one month in office because of its policy of maintaining the island as a nuclear-free zone, meaning that American nuclear-powered or nuclear-weapons-carrying ships could not make port calls. After the Fiji coup, the candidate supported by Business International, who was much more amenable to Washington's nuclear desires, was reinstated to power – R.S.K. Mara was Prime Minister or President of Fiji from 1970 to 2000, except for the one-month break in 1987.

In his book, not only doesn't Obama mention his employer's name; he fails to say exactly when he worked there, or why he left the job. There may well be no significance to these omissions, but inasmuch as Business International has a long association with the world of intelligence, covert actions, and attempts to penetrate the radical left – including Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) – it's reasonable to wonder if the inscrutable Mr. Obama is concealing something about his own association with this world.

Adding to the wonder is the fact that his

mother, Ann Dunham, had been associated during the 1970s and 80s – as employee, consultant, grantee, or student – with at least five organizations with intimate CIA connections during the Cold War: the Ford Foundation, Agency for International Development (AID), the Asia Foundation, Development Alternatives, Inc., and the East-West Center of Hawaii. Much of this time she worked as an anthropologist in Indonesia and Hawaii, being in good position to gather intelligence about local communities.

As one example of the CIA connections of these organizations, consider the disclosure by John Gilligan, Director of AID during the Carter administration (1977-81). “At one time, many AID field offices were infiltrated from top to bottom with CIA people. The idea was to plant operatives in every kind of activity we had overseas, government, volunteer, religious, every kind.” And Development Alternatives, Inc. is the organization for whom Alan Gross was working when arrested in Cuba and charged with being part of the ongoing American operation to destabilize the Cuban government.

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How the owners of a society play with their property
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The Supreme Court of the United States has just upheld the constitutionality of President Obama's health care law, the Affordable Care Act. Liberals as well as many progressives are very pleased, regarding this as a victory for the left.

Under the new law, people can benefit in one way or another depending on the following factors:

Their age; whether their income is at or below 133 percent of the federal poverty level; whether their parents have a health plan; whether they use tobacco; what state they live in; whether they have a pre-existing medical condition; whether they qualify to buy health insurance through newly-created market places known as “exchanges”;

and numerous other criteria ... They can obtain medical insurance in a “competitive insurance market” (emphasis on the “competitive”); they can perhaps qualify for various other kinds of credits and tax relief if they meet certain criteria ... The authors of the Act state that it will save thousands of dollars in drug costs for Medicare beneficiaries by closing a coverage gap called the “donut hole” ... They tell us that “It keeps insurance companies honest by setting clear rules that rein in the worst insurance industry abuses.”

That’s a sample of how health care looks in the United States of America in the 21st century, with a complexity that will keep a small army of lawyers busy for years to come. Ninety miles away, in the Republic of Cuba, it looks a bit different. If you feel sick you go to a doctor. You’re automati-

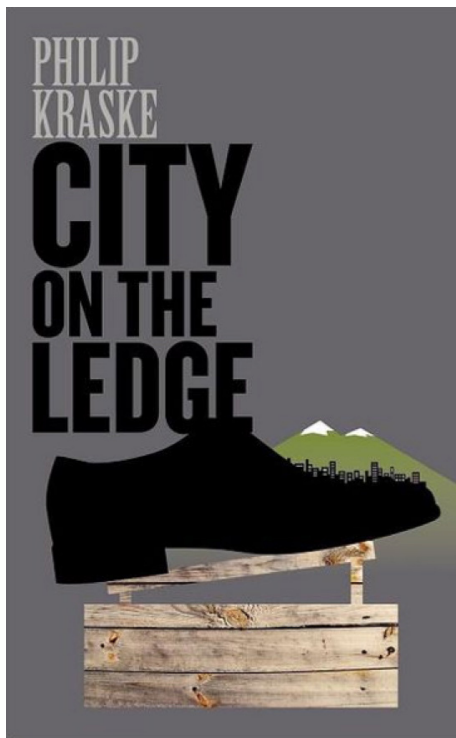
cally qualified to receive any medical care that’s available and thought to be suitable. The doctor treats you to the best of his or her ability. The insurance companies play no role. There are no insurance companies. You don’t pay anything. You go home.

The Affordable Care Act will undoubtedly serve as a disincentive to the movement for single-payer national health insurance, setting the movement back for years. The Affordable Care Act was undoubtedly designed for that purpose.

CT

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”; “Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire”

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In Cuba, if you feel sick you go to a doctor. You’re automatically qualified to receive any medical care that’s available and thought to be suitable. The doctor treats you to the best of his or her ability



CITY ON THE LEDGE

PHILIP KRASKE

Quito, Ecuador. In this unknown Andean capital ladled along the ledge of a volcano, an eruption is taking place. After centuries of oppression, the workers are on strike against the banana plantations. And if Ecuador, the top banana exporter in the world and the bargain basement of the industry, raises its price, then so will the others. Set against the emerald majesty of the Andes, full of local color, **City on the Ledge** witnesses the machinations of politicians, spies, diplomats, and lovers to pull off a revolution, or kill it before it can bloom.
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The longest war: Beating lies and indifference

Kathy Kelly on the packaging of wars as humanitarian assistance

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My mother would almost certainly join the majority of US people, in tolerating wars, or at least enduring them with a general indifference to any accounts of the human suffering the wars might cause
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In April of 2003, I returned from Iraq after having lived there during the US Shock and Awe bombing and the initial weeks of the invasion. Before the bombing I had traveled to Iraq about two dozen times and had helped organize 70 trips to Iraq, aiming to cast light on a brutal sanctions regime, with the “Voices in the Wilderness” campaign. As the bombing had approached, we had given our all to helping organize a remarkable worldwide peace movement effort, one which may have come closer than any before it to stopping a war before it started. But, just as we’d failed to lift the vicious and lethally punitive economic sanctions against Iraq before the war, we also failed to stop the war and the devastating civil war it created.

So it was April and I’d returned home, devastated at our failure. My mother possessed ample reserves of Irish charm, motherly wisdom, and – when it came to politics – an analysis consistent with that of Fox News. She knew I was distraught and, aiming to comfort me, she said in her soft, lilting voice: “Kathy, dear, what you don’t understand is that the people of Iraq could have gotten rid of Saddam Hussein a long time ago, and they ought to have done so, and they didn’t. So we went in there and did it for them.” She clearly hoped I could share her relief that the US could lend a helping hand in that part of the world. “And they ought to be grateful,

and they’re not.”

My mother, then in her eighties, was actually quite anti-war, but she was also against evil dictators. If a war could be packaged as necessary to achieving humanitarian goals, then my mother would almost certainly join the majority of US people, over the past decade or so, in tolerating wars or at least enduring them with a general indifference to any accounts of the human suffering the wars might cause.

Although the war in Afghanistan is often referred to as the longest war in US history, the multistage war in Iraq, beginning in 1991 and inclusive of 13 years of continual bombardment and nightmarish, generation-wasting economic warfare waged through militarily-enforced sanctions, constitutes the longest war, one which in real terms is of course ongoing.

John Tirman (MIT) attempted in his book *The Deaths of Others* (Oxford University Press, 2011) to understand how US people could be so indifferent to the suffering caused by US military actions. He was following up on his seminal study of Iraq war casualties, released by John Hopkins and printed in the *Lancet*, which had concluded that in the three and a half years following Shock and Awe, the war and its effects had killed upwards of 660,000 Iraqis. This credible report, backed by prestigious academic institutions, had been ignored by the government, and thus also by

the media, allowing a disinterested public to avoid learning information they'd mostly been careful not to ask for.

His eventual explanation focuses on how hard US war planners (and war profiteers) have worked to overcome "the Vietnam Syndrome," which is to say the healthy democratic rejection of the Vietnam War, which authorities across the liberal-to-conservative spectrum have tended to see as a sort of disease to be eliminated. The inoculation campaign had been very effective. By creating an all-volunteer army, by carefully regimenting and "embedding" reporters and relentlessly emphasizing "humanitarian" goals to be achieved by any exercise of our power overseas, the US military-industrial complex has been able to ensure that the majority of US people won't rise up in protest of our wars. If the public can be persuaded that a war is essentially humanitarian, Tirman believes their indifference can be counted on, in spite of the number of US soldiers killed or maimed or psychologically disabled by their wartime experiences, regardless of the drain on US economies however stricken or depressed, and without any apparent concern for or even awareness of the horrendous consequences borne by the communities overseas that are the targets of our massively armed humanitarianism.

A few years ago, many people disenchanted with the Iraq and Afghan wars placed hope in Barack Obama as someone who would uphold the laws – including international law – ratified by US Congresses past against international aggression and war crime, ending abuses by the US military, its private-sector contractors, and the CIA that have so contributed to worldwide hostility against the US and have arguably greatly lessened our security. But the Obama administration, in its de facto continuation of both wars, in its massive escalation of targeted assassinations worldwide and its secrecy about drone warfare against Pakistan, has repeatedly shown our government's unshakeable allegiance to militarists and radically right-wing advocates

of corporate power we're often now asked to call "centrists."

I think we in the peace and antiwar movements find ourselves stalemated. Groups are outspent and outmaneuvered by military and corporate institutions with power to undercut whatever clout our movements might have developed because these two complexes have now arrogated so much antidemocratic control over the media and the economy. Nonetheless, grassroots groups persist with arduous and often heroic efforts to continue educating their constituencies and reminding ordinary people that the defense industry is not providing them with any of the security that it assuredly isn't providing for people trapped in our war zones.

What direction should the peace and antiwar movements pursue now? Now, when it seems difficult to point toward substantial possible gains? Now, as the US continues to wage multiple wars and build on a weapons stockpile that already exceeds the combined arsenals of the next most militarized eighteen countries on Earth? In advance or in retreat, we have to keep resisting. Surely, we must continue basic "maintenance" tasks of outreach and education.

Voices for Creative Nonviolence tries to assist in educating the general public about people who bear the brunt of our wars, so we travel to war zones and live alongside ordinary people, trying, upon our return, to get their stories through to ordinary people in the US. We hope that by doing so we can eventually help motivate civil society into action to oppose these wars.

But while working to preserve the heart of the society, its civilization in the best meaning of that term, we know we must always organize for and participate in campaigns designed to have the greatest possible impact on policymakers now, and through them on those whose lives are so desperately at stake. That commitment is part of our message to our neighbors to reclaim their humanity through action.

It's not just each other's hearts but also

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Peace and antiwar movements are outspent and outmaneuvered by military and corporate institutions

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"We weren't sure whether or not to tell you, but mom really did hope you were working for the CIA"
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each other's minds that citizens of a democracy are called upon to exercise. We must constantly appeal to the rationality of the general public, engaging in humble dialogue so they can appeal to ours, helping people see that US war-making does not make people safer here or abroad, that in fact we are jeopardized as well – if only by the intense anger and frustration caused by policies like targeted assassination, night raids, and aerial bombings of civilians.

We should celebrate the tremendous accomplishment of Occupy Wall Street. In just 12 weeks the "99 and 1" logos reintroduced people, worldwide, to the normality of discussing, in all manner of public discussions, the fundamental unfairness of systems designed to benefit small elites at the expense of vast majorities. And the OWS movement welcomed anyone and everyone into solidarity in building towards more humane, more just, and more democratic communities.

The peace movement should participate in and encourage this remarkable network, and similar organizations that will spring up to complement it, not only to demand more jobs and better wages but also to stipulate what kinds of jobs we want and what kinds of products we want those jobs devoted to creating.

We must campaign for jobs that build our society instead of converting it into junk, that produce constructive and necessary goods and services and above all not the weapons that we employ in prisons and battlefields at home and abroad.

We must think hard about ways to democratize our country, and reverse the "unwarranted influence" over our society which, half a century ago, a Republican president was warning us already belonged to the military industrial complex. Enormous sums of money, along with human ingenuity and resources, are now being poured into developing drone warfare and surveillance to be used abroad and increasingly at home, but the more intelligence our leaders collect, the less we, the led, have access to. The drones

aren't there to help us understand the Afghan people – how they huddle together on the brink of starvation, dared to survive the capricious and uncivilized behavior of a nation gone mad on war. Have we any means of imposing civilization, not on desperate people around the world, but on those who lack it – the elites that control our military, our economy, and our government?

And honestly, I couldn't persuade my own mother. I should admit here to a recent conversation with my sisters, the oldest of whom recently shared, "We weren't sure whether or not to tell you, but mom really did hope you were working for the CIA."

We never know how we will influence others and what unexpected developments might happen. The destiny of a world of seven billion people should never be shaped by a few activists – as it currently is shaped by a remarkably few activists occupying the US Pentagon, our business centers, and the White House. We're not supposed to make any change we can securely claim credit for, we're supposed to do good for the world – to speak truth to it, to resist its oppressors, to surprise it with decency, love, and an implacability for justice – and trust it to surprise us in turn.

With eyes wide open, willing to look in the mirror, (I'm drawing from the titles of two extraordinarily impressive campaigns designed by the American Friends Service Committee), we must persist with the tasks of education and outreach, looking for non-violent means to take risks commensurate to the crimes being committed, all the while growing ever more open to links with popular movements and respectful alliances well outside our choir.

We must civilize the world by examples of clear-sightedness and courage. We're supposed to do what anyone is supposed to do: live as full humans, as best we can, in a world whose destiny we can never predict, and whose astonishingly precious inhabitants could never be given enough justice, or love, or time.

CT

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U.S. military and
economic warfare

Imperial hubris

Hilary Clinton demands Russia and China 'pay the price', writes **Rick Rozoff**

At the third meeting of the so-called Friends of Syria in Paris on July 6, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton proved once again that diplomacy is to the United States what refined dining etiquette is to a jackal.

The third such meeting, earlier versions were held in "post-revolution" Tunisia and in Turkey, a NATO member with military forces massed on Syria's border, was opened by French President Francois Hollande (who already is making his predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy appear less anomalously egregious), who declaimed, "Bashir al Assad must go...a transitional government must be set up."

The head of state of Syria's former colonial master also engaged in comic opera theatrics by observing a moment of silence for – some – of the victims in Syria and insisted that the Syrian government's "fall is inevitable." Just as Sarkozy had done last year with the governments of Ivory Coast and Libya. Just as Clinton had done with both as well and now with Syria.

But Hollande was only the compère who warmed up the audience for the true personification of 21st century imperial hubris – Clinton.

She, who in February referred to Russia and China as being despicable for blocking a resolution in the United Nations Security Council aimed at the regime change in Syria

mentioned above, abandoned any remaining element of restraint – a quality she has never been noted for, any more than for subtlety, judgment, humility, fairness and other seemingly outdated virtues – and exploited the Syrian crisis to crudely excoriate Russia and China once again.

Her shrill diatribe included an attempt to incite attendees from over 100 countries and organizations against the two alleged villains: "I ask you to reach out to Russia and China and to not only urge, but demand that they get off the sidelines and begin to support the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people."

The operative word is demand. As in *démarche*. As in *diktat*.

However, if the above suggests that she accused Russia and China of what is the international equivalent of criminal negligence, the following demonstrates that she intended something far more severe:

"I don't think Russia and China believe they are paying any price at all, nothing at all, for standing up on behalf of the Assad regime. The only way that will change is if every nation represented here directly and urgently makes it clear that Russia and China will pay a price, because they are holding up progress."

Clinton was born in a hospital on the North Side of Chicago and clearly knows cardinal rule number one of Machine poli-

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"Every nation has to either be with us, or against us. Those who harbor terrorists, or who finance them, are going to pay a price"
.....

tics there: Reward your friends and punish your enemies. Especially the second. Smite them ruthlessly and remorselessly. Crush them if possible. Teach them a lesson they – and others tempted to pursue a less than completely obedient path – will never forget. Make them “pay a price.”

Her commander-in-chief President Barack Obama, his Cardinal Richelieu, David Axelrod, and his first two White House chiefs of staff, Rahm Emanuel and William Daley (son of one long-term mayor and brother of another), all matriculated in the school of Chicago power politics where compromise is a foreign concept and negotiation isn't a word in the dictionary.

For the past 81 years Chicago's chief executive, the mayor, has belonged to the same political party, Clinton's, and currently all fifty members of the legislative body, the City Council, do as well.

Bills and city budgets are regularly passed unanimously, often with little discussion, less debate and no public input.

To be recalled the next time Clinton launches into a tirade against the government of, or elections, in other nations, as she did in relation to parliamentary elections in Russia last December, which she denounced as “neither free nor fair.”

Following the all too brief reprieve provided by the mayoralty of Harold Washington (1983-1987), the city reverted to top-down, autocratic rule, with near-absolute power wielded from the mayor's office on the 5th Floor of City Hall.

Although Chicagoans vote for members of the City Council, aldermen, the real power in the city has traditionally resided in the hands of Democratic Party ward committeemen and their precinct captains, known as ward heelers.

Politics in Chicago allow a citizen of the city only two options: He can capitulate in prostrate servility to the monolithic power structure or, in a trademark understatement by the late Chicago journalist Mike Royko, he will feel bad in the morning. If he

wakes up at all.

It is this style of strong-armed, zero-sum, take-no-prisoners, absolutist “state-craft” that has been applied first to the nation and now the world. The sort that Hillary Clinton is practicing on the international stage.

On the day before she threatened the two permanent members of the UN Security Council in the manner described, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen issued a threat of his own – to Syria – stating:

“It goes without saying that Turkey can count on NATO. NATO is of course prepared to defend Turkey if it is so necessary.”

.....
Alliance solidarity.

Clinton's latest provocation follows closely on the heels of another, her accusing Russia last month of supplying attack helicopters to the Syrian government to “escalate the conflict quite dramatically.”

Her style of abrasive, brazen, dogmatic, Manichean “diplomacy” is best indicated by a statement she made in 2001, after leaving the White House where as First Lady she was fond of employing the imperial we (as in “we are the president”) and reviving the once-discredited practice of carpetbagging in becoming a US senator from New York.

Two days after the attacks of September 11, she told Dan Rather of CBS News:

“Every nation has to either be with us, or against us. Those who harbor terrorists, or who finance them, are going to pay a price.”

She has not veered from the practice of separating the world's nations and people into those with or against her – there are no degrees in between – although her position regarding terrorists has evidently shifted with Libya last year and Syria currently.

The State Department has granted Clinton a forum from which to castigate, disparage, accuse and threaten others to her heart's content. It has in particular emboldened her to issue orders for heads of state

outside the Western world to vacate their offices and cede power to successors approved by Clinton and her nation's allies.

Last February, within mere days of the beginning of anti-government actions in Libya, she pronounced before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva: "It is time for Gaddafi to go – now, without further violence or delay."

In April she ordered President Laurent Gbagbo of Ivory Coast, who retained his office after an election whose outcome was disputed by the nation's Election Commission and the Constitutional Court – not unlike what occurred in the 2000 presidential election in the US – to leave, stating:

"The United States calls on former President Laurent Gbagbo to step down immediately. Gbagbo is pushing Cote d'Ivoire into lawlessness.

"The path forward is clear. He must leave now so the conflict may end."

In the same month she ordered Yemen's head of state, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to leave office:

"President Saleh was given a very good offer that we strongly backed. And, you know, we cannot expect this conflict to end unless President Saleh and his government move out of the way to permit the opposition and civil society to begin a transition to political and economic reform."

The "very good offer" was one initiated

by the US's main allies in the Arab world, the monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which whom the US and its NATO allies have also conspired to overthrow the governments of Libya and Syria.

In January of this year, while visiting Ivory Coast – where Gbagbo was deposed last April by French and compliant United Nations military forces and replaced by former Washington, D.C.-based International Monetary Fund official Alassane Ouattara – she renewed her demand that the Yemeni president must abdicate:

"There have been agreements with respect to the way forward that have not been fulfilled. We regret that the president has thus far failed to comply with his own commitments to leave the country, to permit elections to go forward that give the people a chance to be heard and be represented."

In October Clinton was shown an image of the battered corpse of former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi shortly after he was murdered in his hometown of Sirte and after uttering an adolescent (or preteen) "wow," stated while laughing and puffing herself up, almost squealing with self-satisfied abandon: "We came, we saw, he died."

The paraphrase of the statement attributed to Julius Caesar is not fortuitous. What Clinton at the moment embodies to the highest degree is imperial arrogance in its foulest manifestation. **CT**

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***Rick Rozoff** has been involved in anti-war and anti-interventionist work in various capacities for forty years. He lives in Chicago, Illinois. He is the manager of the Stop NATO international email list at www.groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato*

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