

NOMAD AT THE END OF THE ROAD | RIAN MALAN
NOW WE'RE BACK TO DEBTORS' PRISONS | BILL BERKOWITZ
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF A LEGEND | TONY SUTTON

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING ISSUE 75

JOHN W. WHITEHEAD ● DAVID SWANSON ● ALAN MAAS
NORMAN SOLOMON ● GEORGE MONBIOT



SECRETS.
LIES. SPIES.
DEMOCRACY?



ColdType

ISSUE 75

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America's new normal

John W. Whitehead on mass surveillance, secret courts and threats of death to whistleblowers

"The administration has now lost all credibility. Mr Obama is proving the truism that the executive branch will use any power it is given and very likely abuse it." – New York Times editorial board

"Everyone everywhere now understands how bad things have gotten – and they're talking about it. They have the power to decide for themselves whether they are willing to sacrifice their privacy to the surveillance state." – Edward Snowden, alleged source of NSA leaks

There is a deep and abiding sense of unease permeating American society. From the IRS targeting politically conservative groups to the Department of Justice targeting journalists for surveillance, from the revelation that the National Security Agency (NSA) is tracking the telephone calls of most Americans to the public spectacle of whistleblower Bradley Manning's trial, in recent weeks there has been no shortage of evidence that the new "normal" in the United States is not friendly to freedom.

The America we learned about in school, the one celebrated in songs and poems, the one to which our ancestors flocked in hopes of starting a new life based upon promises of wealth and liberty, is getting harder to find with every passing day. As I document

in my new book, *A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State* (available at Amazon.com), the American ideal of freedom and civic involvement is being replaced by a technocratic nightmare in which government bureaucrats and their allies in the corporate sector rig the rules of society in order to protect the power and privilege of a select few politicians and businessmen. All the while, the majority of the American people are kept in check via debt, imprisonment, and a vast surveillance network which keeps us monitored, controlled and marching in lock step with the government's dictates.

If any of this sounds fantastical, it's only because people haven't been paying close enough attention. Why, in the past few weeks alone, the government has doubled down on its attacks on individual liberty, government transparency, the rule of law, and basic human decency.

Top-secret order

On Wednesday, June 5, it was revealed that the NSA has been systematically collecting information on all telephone calls placed in the United States via the Verizon network. Based upon a top-secret order handed down by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISA) in April 2013, Verizon has been forced to hand over its records to

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the NSA on an “ongoing, daily basis.” While the government insists that the content of telephone conversations are not recorded, they acknowledge that telephone numbers, location data, call duration, and other unique identifiers are sent to the NSA for analysis. The NSA collects information on about 3 billion phone calls per day.

Immediately following the revelation of the secret court order allowing the NSA to record the telephone activities of Verizon customers, the *Washington Post* released a top-secret document outlining a project code-named PRISM, which involves the NSA and FBI “tapping directly into the central servers of nine leading US Internet companies, extracting audio and video chats, photographs, emails, documents, and connection logs that enable analysts to track foreign targets.” These companies include Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, Facebook, Pal-Talk, AOL, Skype, YouTube, and Apple.

PRISM was born at the tail end of President Bush’s disastrous program of warrantless surveillance. It depends in part on legislation passed by Congress in 2007 and 2008, the Protect America Act and FISA Amendments Act, which provide immunity to private companies that voluntarily cooperate with government efforts to collect private data on users. Government officials are increasingly relying upon PRISM for data collection as the program has become the “most prolific contributor to the President’s Daily Brief” and nearly one in seven intelligence reports rely primarily on information extracted via the program.

While shocking to some, these revelations are par for the course for our out-of-control government. Relying on secret orders handed down from government officials and the courts and emboldened by members of Congress with little concern for protecting the rights of the citizenry, government agents are now able to flout all safeguards to privacy while still claiming that they are technically acting within the bounds of the law.

This is no trifling matter. Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Mark Udall (D-CO) have warned that Americans are the subject of a surveillance program that knows no bounds. As Udall has warned, “there is nothing to prohibit the intelligence community from searching through a pile of communications, which may have been incidentally or accidentally collected without a warrant, to deliberately search for the phone calls or emails of specific Americans.” For his part, Wyden has asked NSA staff to disclose the number of Americans whose communications have been collected, but NSA officials continue to stonewall, even going so far as to suggest that estimating the number of Americans whose communications have been collected would violate their privacy rights.

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Government rarely tells the truth

In full damage control mode, the government wants us to believe that the surveillance is primarily directed at communications coming from foreign sources and that “reasonable procedures [are] in place to minimize collection of ‘US persons’ data without a warrant.” However, as we are learning, the government rarely tells the truth.

In typical fashion, intelligence officials spent the week attacking journalists for reporting on the NSA’s secret surveillance programs, with Director of National Intelligence James Clapper calling the leaks “reprehensible” and vowing to prosecute whomever chose to leak the information. On Sunday, former CIA employee and NSA contractor Edward Snowden came forward as the source of the NSA leaks. Speaking from Hong Kong, Snowden insisted that the information needed to be seen by the American public, in part to “send a message to government that people will not be intimidated.”

Snowden’s actions speak to the need for greater citizen action and transparency in

government, two qualities sorely lacking in America today. Typical of Beltway politics, however, rather than holding the government accountable for its systematic and illegal surveillance of American citizens, they're looking to shoot the messenger. Indeed, the heads of both the House and Senate Intelligence committees, Rep. Mike Rogers (R-MI) and Senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA) have already come out in favor of Snowden's prosecution.

This is par for the course for the Obama administration, which has relentlessly pursued whistleblowers intent on exposing government crimes. Just ask Bradley Manning, whose court martial is underway. The government plans to call over 140 witnesses to the stand in an attempt to prove that Manning knowingly "aided the enemy" when he released hundreds of thousands of

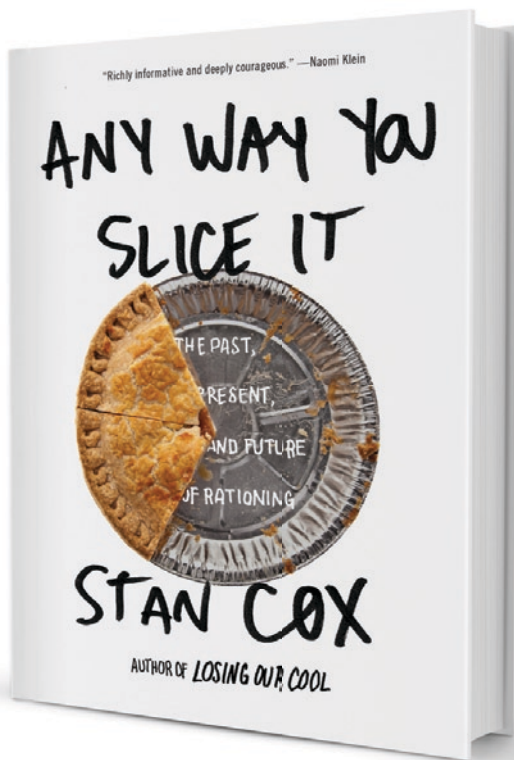
diplomatic cables outlining various government and military abuses to Wikileaks.

If the government's case succeeds, not only will Manning face life imprisonment, but whistleblowers and journalists alike who dare to hold a mirror to the bloated face of American government will find themselves targeted for censure and prosecution by government agents. Yet as veteran journalist Walter Lippmann once declared, "There can be no higher law in journalism than to tell the truth and to shame the devil."

Frankly, we should all be doing our part to shame this particular devil. **CT**

John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute and editor of GadflyOnline.com. His latest book The Freedom Wars (TRI Press) is available online at www.amazon.com

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"There can be no higher law in journalism than to tell the truth and to shame the devil"



"Richly informative and deeply courageous."
 —NAOMI KLEIN, author of *The Shock Doctrine*

"This brave book is not for the timid or those frozen by political taboos, but it is a must-read for those who want to forge real change before the ecological doomsday clock strikes midnight."
 —JEFFREY ST. CLAIR, editor of *CounterPunch* and author of *Born Under a Bad Sky*

"Stan Cox gives us the tools to talk about rationing sensibly. And if we heed him, those conversations will not only be better informed, but might even lead to a better democracy."
 —RAJ PATEL, author of *The Value of Nothing*

"Lucid and lively." —*Mother Jones*



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The National Spying-On-You Agency

The spying and security apparatus has been expanding its powers under recent governments – at the expense of all our rights, writes **Alan Maas**

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“I don’t want to live in a society that does these sort of things . . . I do not want to live in a world where everything I do and say is recorded”
.....

The shadowy and secretive National Security Agency (NSA) has been exposed to the light of day by revelations that show the vast extent of US government spying, at home and around the globe.

The truth about two outrageous surveillance programs – apparently run for years by the world’s biggest spying agency with the support of Democrats and Republicans alike – has been revealed to the world in back-to-back exposés in the *Guardian* and other publications.

Under one program, called Prism, the NSA has gained access to the systems of Google, Facebook, Apple, Microsoft, Yahoo, Skype and other giant Internet companies, allowing it to examine all kinds of information at will, including browser histories and the content of e-mails, live chats, file transfers and more.

Under the other, the National Spying-on-you Agency has apparently been collecting records for probably the majority of telephone users in the US. This “metadata” obtained from the biggest telecommunications companies is warehoused in a giant database that NSA analysts can “mine” for intelligence, again at will.

Edward Snowden has come forward to say he leaked the classified documents that were the source of these revelations. Snowden is a 29-year-old former technical

assistant for the Central Intelligence Agency, who later worked at the NSA as an employee of various defense contractors.

In an interview with *Guardian* reporters, including left-wing columnist Glenn Greenwald, Snowden described how easily the agency can violate our rights:

“The NSA has built an infrastructure that allows it to intercept almost everything. With this capability, the vast majority of human communications are automatically ingested without targeting. If I wanted to see your e-mails or your wife’s phone, all I have to do is use intercepts. I can get your e-mails, passwords, phone records, credit cards.

“I don’t want to live in a society that does these sort of things . . . I do not want to live in a world where everything I do and say is recorded. That is not something I am willing to support or live under.”

The Washington establishment reacted to Snowden’s leaks with alarm, and it’s easy to see why: Revelations of the extent of NSA surveillance will shock and anger millions of people who had no idea that the government routinely and casually violates their rights, in the name of “national security” and the “war on terror.”

What’s more, NSA spying operations have been continuous – and may have actually accelerated – from the Bush administration to the supposed civil-liberties

champions of the Obama White House. That's further proof, if more was needed, that leaders of the Democratic Party are every bit as committed as Republicans to the use of the government's repressive apparatus to defend the interests of the US state. As left-wing writer Norman Solomon put it:

"The revelations of recent days are a tremendous challenge to the established order: nonstop warfare, intensifying secrecy and dominant power that equate safe governance with Orwellian surveillance. In the highest places, there is more than a wisp of panic in rarefied air. It's not just the National Security Agency that stands exposed; it's the repressive arrogance perched on the pyramid of power."

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Menacing actions

Of the two most damning revelations – spying on Internet communications or on telephone records – it's hard to say which is more menacing.

The disclosures about phone records came first, in an exclusive *Guardian* feature by Greenwald. Snowden apparently provided an order from the secret court established under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) requiring telecom giant Verizon to give the NSA – on an "ongoing, daily basis" – records on all telephone calls in its systems, domestic or international.

The order covers a three-month period ending this coming July 19, but according to Senate Intelligence Committee Chair Dianne Feinstein, this was a routine renewal of a standing order in place for a number of years, unbeknown to the public. The order leaked by Snowden doesn't say so, but there are almost certainly similar arrangements in place with other major phone companies.

"In other words," the *Nation's* David Cole summarized, "the federal government is apparently sweeping up records on

every phone call any of us makes, without any specific basis for suspicion about any of us."

The order doesn't allow the NSA to listen to the calls, but in many ways, the records themselves are more revealing. As Ben Wizner and Jay Stanley of the American Civil Liberties Union wrote:

"Even without intercepting the content of communications, the government can use metadata to learn our most intimate secrets . . . The "who," "when" and "how frequently" of communications are often more revealing than what is said or written. Calls between a reporter and a government whistleblower, for example, may reveal a relationship that can be incriminating all on its own."

James Ball of the *Guardian* pointed out another advantage to the indiscriminate vacuuming up of all phone records:

"[C]ollection and storage of this information gives government a power it's previously lacked: easy and retroactive surveillance. If authorities become interested in an individual at a later stage, and obtain their number, officials can look back through the data and gather their movements, social network and more – possibly for several years."

Though it would probably surprise most people, information like phone records isn't covered by the Fourth Amendment's right to privacy – at least according to past court rulings. Nevertheless, the bulk collection of "metadata" flips upside down the standard procedures of government investigations – where law enforcement or prosecutors make their case to a judge about why they should have access to specific pieces of information about specific individuals or groups.

In effect, the NSA is saying: We'll take all the data you've got now – and justify examining or using any part of it after the fact.

The NSA's Prism program to eavesdrop on Internet communications is similarly stunning in its scope and implications. In

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this case, Snowden turned over to reporters a 41-slide Power Point presentation apparently used to train intelligence operatives about what information they could get from Prism.

The presentation boasts about accessing information “directly from the servers” of major Internet companies – with the goal of “extensive, in-depth surveillance on live communications and stored information,” the *Guardian* reported. “The law allows for the targeting of any customers of participating firms who live outside the US, or those Americans whose communications include people outside the US”

Thus, communications between US citizens are supposedly not to be accessed. But once again, when it comes to abiding by such restrictions, NSA operatives aren’t even accountable to a judge from the secret FISA court – and with Prism, they can look at not just records of communications, but the content itself.

Computer companies deny that they allow the NSA access to snoop. “If they are doing this, they are doing it without our knowledge,” one executive told the *Guardian*. But the Prism presentation claims the program is going strong – and getting stronger. “The document highlights that the number of obtained communications increased in 2012 by 248 percent for Skype,” the *Guardian* reported. “There was also a 131 percent increase in requests for Facebook data, and 63 percent for Google.”

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America would be stunned

Last year, Sens. Ron Wyden and Mark Udall – who have bucked the Obama administration and fellow congressional Democrats in opposing the continuation and expansion of “war on terror”-era repressive policies – wrote a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder that referenced FISA court orders, like the one requiring Verizon to turn over phone records, to warn about the growing reach of the government’s security appa-

ratus: “We believe most Americans would be stunned to learn the details of...these secret court opinions. As we see it, there is now a significant gap between what most Americans think the law allows and what the government secretly claims the law allows.

Their point applies to the National Security Agency itself, with a staff estimated at 100,000 and an immense information-gathering network that reaches into outer space. “Satellites scoop up calls and e-mails in the ether and beam the information back to earthbound receiving stations,” wrote Greenwald and other *Guardian* reporters. “One estimate suggests that each of these bases [vacuums] up roughly 1 billion e-mails, phone calls and other forms of correspondence every day, and the agency has up to 20 bases.

As one government official told the *Guardian*: “This is not science fiction. It is happening now.”

It also generally happens behind a veil of secrecy – one that now has a big rip in it, thanks to Edward Snowden. But rather than answer for the spying powers they’ve claimed for the government, US officials overwhelmingly condemned the messenger.

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper called the leaking of NSA documents “reprehensible.” He lectured in a statement: “The unauthorized disclosure of a top secret US court document threatens potentially long-lasting and irreversible harm to our ability to identify and respond to the many threats facing our nation.”

But what Snowden has done is alert ordinary people in the US and around the world to the imminent threats to their rights. He did so knowing that the US government would seek vengeance. He has fled the US for Hong Kong, knowing that he would not see his loved ones for a long time, if ever again.

Whistleblowers like Snowden, as one prominent political figure once put it, should be hailed for their “acts of courage

and patriotism, which can sometimes save lives and often save taxpayer dollars, [and] should be encouraged rather than stifled as they have been.”

If you’re wondering who said that, it was Barack Obama – during his 2008 presidential campaign, when he was challenging the Bush administration’s ruthless policies of shredding civil liberties in the “war on terror.” But during his four-plus years in office, he’s prosecuted “those same whistleblowers at double the number of all previous presidents combined,” according to Glenn Greenwald.

Tyrant’s checklist

The Bush-Obama war on whistleblowers is only one aspect of a common and continuous policy, spanning the two presidencies, that has checked off a number of points on any “aspiring tyrant’s checklist,” as Conor Friedersdorf of the *Atlantic* wrote:

- A precedent that allows the president to kill citizens in secret without prior judicial or legislative review
 - The power to detain prisoners indefinitely without charges or trial
 - Ongoing warrantless surveillance on millions of Americans accused of no wrongdoing, converted into a permanent database so that data of innocents spied upon in 2007 can be accessed in 2027
 - Using ethnic profiling to choose the targets of secret spying, as the NYPD did with John Brennan’s blessing
 - Normalizing situations in which the law itself is secret – and whatever mischief is hiding in those secret interpretations
 - The permissibility of droning to death people whose identities are not even known to those doing the killing
 - The ability to collect DNA swabs of people who have been arrested even if they haven’t been convicted of anything
 - A torture program that could be restarted with an executive order”
- That’s a far cry from Obama’s promises

in 2008 to curb the Bush administration’s abusive policies and arrogant attitude that the White House was above the law – promises that helped win him the support of millions of people sickened by the Bush years, as Edward Snowden acknowledged in his *Guardian* interview. “I did not vote for him,” Snowden said. “I voted for a third party. But I believed in Obama’s promises. I was going to disclose it [but waited because of his election]. He continued with the policies of his predecessor.”

Obama is hardly alone among the leaders of his party in defending the Big Brother state. With few exceptions, congressional Democrats sought to counter or quiet questioning about the NSA programs after the revelations. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, for example, told the *Las Vegas Sun* [18] that “everyone should just calm down and understand that this isn’t brand new. It’s been going on for some seven years.”

Then again, Reid and Obama are leaders of a party with a long record of saying one thing to win votes from working people, and then doing quite another to serve the interests of the corporate and political elite, regardless of party affiliation. As British socialist and *Guardian* columnist Richard Seymour wrote:

“Expanding the state’s ability to gather information on citizens, no matter what the justification, always increases its options...Obama’s hoarding of executive power can only be understood in the context of his mission to restore American global power, rationalize its productive base, and expand the state’s capacity to process dysfunctions. In this respect, his agenda is not fundamentally dissimilar from that of his predecessor, which is why he needs many of the same means. **CT**

Alan Maas is editor of the International Socialist – <http://internationalsocialst.org> - where this article was first published

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Reid and Obama are leaders of a party with a long record of saying one thing to win votes from working people, and then doing quite another to serve the interests of the corporate and political elite

NSA whistleblowing is a strong tradition

David Swanson meets Adrienne Kinne, the whistleblower most of us forgot

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Kinne recalls an incident in 1997 in which an American's name was mentioned, and she and her colleagues deleted every related record because they took very seriously the ban on collecting information on Americans
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A former member of US military intelligence has decided to reveal what she knows about warrantless spying on Americans and about the fixing of intelligence in the leadup to the invasion of Iraq.

Adrienne Kinne describes an incident just prior to the invasion of Iraq in which a fax came into her office at Fort Gordon in Georgia that purported to provide information on the location of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

The fax came from the Iraqi National Congress, a group opposed to Saddam Hussein and favoring an invasion. The fax contained types of information that required that it be translated and transmitted to President Bush within 15 minutes.

But Kinne had been eavesdropping on two nongovernmental aid workers driving in Iraq who were panicked and trying to find safety before the bombs dropped. She focused on trying to protect them, and was reprimanded for the delay in translating the fax.

She then challenged her officer in charge, Warrant Officer John Berry, on the credibility of the fax, and he told her that it was not her place or his to challenge such things. None of the other 20 or so people in the unit questioned anything, Kinne said.

Kinne dates this incident to the period just before the official invasion of Iraq or

possibly just after. She says that because the US engaged in so much bombing prior to the official invasion, she cannot recall for sure.

Prior to September 11, 2001, Kinne says, it was unacceptable to listen in on or collect information on Americans. The practice was barred by United States Signals Intelligence Directive (USSID) 18.

Kinne recalls an incident in 1997 in which an American's name was mentioned, and she and her colleagues deleted every related record because they took very seriously the ban on collecting information on Americans.

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Arab linguist

Kinne was serving from 1994-1998 on active duty as an Arabic linguist for military intelligence at Fort Gordon in Georgia, sending reports to and collaborating with the NSA. She served at the same station after 9-11 when she was activated as a reservist.

Kinne says that post-9-11 she and others routinely collected information on people even after identifying them as aid workers for non-governmental organizations. A common rationale was that the phones of such organizations could conceivably be seized by terrorists.

She recalled one case in which she was listening to an American talk to his British

colleague in an international aid organization. The Brit expressed concern about the American military eavesdropping, and the American replied that they couldn't possibly be doing that because of USSID 18. Kinne recalls that her colleagues got quite excited and behaved as if the American had divulged secrets by mentioning that directive.

They continued eavesdropping on the man although they were unclear at that point whether they were permitted to spy on Americans.

Shortly after this incident, however, in mid-2002, they were given a waiver to spy on Americans.

This waiver was communicated to Kinne and her colleagues orally, and she assumed that it had come from the President or someone very high up. The waiver, she says, also permitted spying on Canadian, French, German, Australian, and British citizens without probable cause.

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Spied on journalists

Many of the people, including Americans, whom Kinne spied on were journalists. These included journalists staying at a hotel in Baghdad that later showed up on a list of targets.

Again, Kinne says, she expressed concerns to her officer in charge, letting him know that the military should be informed or the journalists should be warned to move to another location.

Kinne says Berry brushed her off. He was, she says, "completely behind the invasion of Iraq. He told us repeatedly that we needed to bomb those barbarians back to kingdom come."

Berry was promoted to Chief Warrant Officer. Kinne left, went back to school, and took a job at the Veterans Administration helping some of the victims of the fixing of intelligence that she had witnessed.

And early this year she joined a tour of Vermont with activists Cindy Sheehan, John Nichols, Dan DeWalt, and veterans of the war, a tour promoting the passage of impeachment resolutions in Vermont towns, a tour that helped effect the passage of those resolutions in over 40 towns up and down the state. Kinne found the experience "life-changing", and she's now decided to tell everything she knows, and to encourage others still in the government to speak out and release documentation.

"I wish that I had said something back then, but I don't think people would have listened," Kinne said.

Kinne, who now works for the VA at White River Junction, Vermont, said that she has written to Senator Patrick Leahy, who has not replied to her. Kinne has become active in Iraq Veterans Against the War.

She said that the news of the current escalation of the war also helped move her to act. "That's the only reason why I am choosing to break whatever rules I may have just broken by telling you about it," Kinne said. "Because I think that this all needs to stop, and it needs to stop now. And the only way it's going to stop is if people start speaking out." **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. He hosts Talk Nation Radio

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**Read more by David Swanson
 in back issues of ColdType at
<http://coldtype.net/reader.html>**

Manning is guilty if the enemy is democracy

Norman Solomon says US Army whistleblower should be in line for the Nobel Peace Prize, not in the dock at a military tribunal

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"Bob Woodward, who has become one of America's richest reporters, if not the richest, by obtaining and publishing classified information far more sensitive than anything WikiLeaks has ever published"
.....

Of all the charges against Bradley Manning, the most pernicious – and revealing – is “aiding the enemy.”

A blogger at the *New Yorker*, Amy Davidson, raised a pair of big questions that now loom over the courtroom at Fort Meade and over the entire country:

- “Would it aid the enemy, for example, to expose war crimes committed by American forces or lies told by the American government?”

- “In that case, who is aiding the enemy – the whistleblower or the perpetrators themselves?”

When the deceptive operation of the warfare state can't stand the light of day, truth-tellers are a constant hazard. And culpability must stay turned on its head.

That's why accountability was upside-down when the US Army prosecutor laid out the government's case against Bradley Manning in an opening statement: “This is a case about a soldier who systematically harvested hundreds of thousands of classified documents and dumped them onto the Internet, into the hands of the enemy – material he knew, based on his training, would put the lives of fellow soldiers at risk.”

If so, those fellow soldiers have all been notably lucky; the Pentagon has admitted that none died as a result of Manning's leaks in 2010. But many of his fellow soldiers lost their limbs or their lives in US warfare made

possible by the kind of lies that the US government is now prosecuting Bradley Manning for exposing.

In the real world, as Glenn Greenwald has pointed out, prosecution for leaks is extremely slanted. “Let's apply the government's theory in the Manning case to one of the most revered journalists in Washington: Bob Woodward, who has become one of America's richest reporters, if not the richest, by obtaining and publishing classified information far more sensitive than anything WikiLeaks has ever published,” Greenwald wrote in January.

He noted that “one of Woodward's most enthusiastic readers was Osama bin Laden,” as a 2011 video from al-Qaeda made clear. And Greenwald added that “the same Bob Woodward book [*Obama's Wars*] that Osama bin Laden obviously read and urged everyone else to read disclosed numerous vital national security secrets far more sensitive than anything Bradley Manning is accused of leaking. Doesn't that necessarily mean that top-level government officials who served as Woodward's sources, and the author himself, aided and abetted al-Qaida?”

But the prosecution of Manning is about carefully limiting the information that reaches the governed. Officials who run US foreign policy choose exactly what classified info to dole out to the public. They leak like self-serving sieves to mainline journalists such as Woodward, who has divulged plenty of “Top

Secret” information – a category of classification higher than anything Bradley Manning is accused of leaking.

While pick-and-choose secrecy is serving Washington’s top war-makers, the treatment of US citizens is akin to the classic description of how to propagate mushrooms: keeping them in the dark and feeding them bullshit.

In effect, for top managers of the warfare state, “the enemy” is democracy.

Let’s pursue the inquiry put forward by *New Yorker* columnist Amy Davidson early this year. If it is aiding the enemy “to expose war crimes committed by American forces or lies told by the American government,” then in reality “who is aiding the enemy – the whistleblower or the perpetrators themselves?”

Candid answers to such questions are not only inadmissible in the military courtroom where Bradley Manning is on trial. Candor is also excluded from the national venues where the warfare state preens itself as virtue’s paragon.

Yet ongoing actions of the US government have hugely boosted the propaganda impact and recruiting momentum of forces that Washington publicly describes as “the enemy.” Policies under the Bush and Obama administrations – in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen and beyond, with hovering drones, missile strikes and night raids, at prisons such as Abu Ghraib, Bagram, Guantanamo and secret rendition torture sites – have “aided the enemy” on a scale so enormous that it makes the alleged (and fictitious) aid to named enemies from Manning’s leaks infinitesimal in comparison.

Blaming the humanist PFC messenger for “aiding the enemy” is an exercise in self-exculpation by an administration that cannot face

up to its own vast war crimes.

While prosecuting Bradley Manning, the prosecution may name al-Qaeda, indigenous Iraqi forces, the Taliban or whoever. But the unnamed “enemy” – the real adversary that the Pentagon and the Obama White House are so eager to quash – is the incessant striving for democracy that requires informed consent of the governed.

The forces that top US officials routinely denounce as “the enemy” will never threaten the power of the USA’s dominant corporate-military elites. But the unnamed “enemy” aided by Bradley Manning’s courageous actions – the people at the grassroots who can bring democracy to life beyond rhetoric – are a real potential threat to that power.

Accusations of aid and comfort to the enemy were profuse after Martin Luther King Jr. moved forward to expose the Johnson administration’s deceptions and the US military’s atrocities. Most profoundly, with his courageous stand against the war in Vietnam, King earned his Nobel Peace Prize during the years after he won it in 1964.

Bradley Manning may never win the Nobel Peace Prize, but he surely deserves it. Close to 60,000 people have already signed a petition urging the Norwegian Nobel Committee to award the prize to Manning. From many walks of life, our messages will become louder and clearer as Bradley Manning’s trial continues. He is guilty of “aiding the enemy” only if the enemy is democracy. **CT**

Norman Solomon is co-founder of RootsAction.org and founding director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His books include “War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death.”

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Blaming the humanist PFC messenger for “aiding the enemy” is an exercise in self-exculpation by an administration that cannot face up to its own vast war crimes

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The wrong state

Britain's police spy scandal shows that more surveillance will be used against us, writes **George Monbiot**

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Nine of the eleven known spies formed long-term relationships with women in the groups, in some cases fathering children with them
.....

If you are a law-abiding citizen of this country, going about your business and your personal life, you have nothing to fear.” That’s how William Hague, the foreign secretary, responded to the revelations of mass surveillance in the US and the UK. Try telling it to Stephen Lawrence’s family.

Four police officers were deployed to spy on the family and friends of the black teenager murdered by white racists. The Lawrences and the people who supported their fight for justice were law-abiding citizens going about their business. Yet undercover police were used, one of the spies now tells us, to hunt for “disinformation” and “dirt”. Their purpose? “We were trying to stop the campaign in its tracks.”

The two unfolding spy stories resonate powerfully with each other. One, gathered by Paul Lewis and Rob Evans, shows how police surveillance has been comprehensively perverted. Instead of defending citizens and the public realm, it has been used to protect the police from democratic scrutiny and stifle attempts to engage in politics.

The other, arising from the documents exposed by Edward Snowden, shows that the US and the UK have been involved in the mass interception of our phone calls and use of the internet. William Hague insists that we should “have confidence in the work of our intelligence agencies, and in their adherence to the law and democratic

values”. Why?

Here are a few of the things we have learnt about undercover policing in Britain. A unit led by a policeman called Bob Lambert deployed officers to spy on peaceful activists. They adopted the identities of dead children then infiltrated protest groups. Nine of the eleven known spies formed long-term relationships with women in the groups, in some cases (including Lambert) fathering children with them. Then they made excuses and vanished.

They left a trail of ruined lives, fatherless children, women whose confidence and trust have been wrecked beyond repair. They have also walked away from other kinds of mayhem. Then we discovered that Lambert co-wrote the leaflet for which two penniless activists spent three years in the high court defending a libel action brought by McDonalds. The police never saw fit to inform the court that one of their own had authored it.

Bob Lambert has been accused of using a false identity during a criminal trial. And, using parliamentary privilege, the MP Caroline Lucas alleged that he planted an incendiary device in a branch of Debenhams while acting as an agent provocateur. The device exploded, caused £300,000 of damage. Lambert denies the allegation.

Police and prosecutors also failed to disclose, during two trials of climate change ac-

tivists, that an undercover cop called Mark Kennedy had secretly taped their meetings, and that his recordings exonerated the protesters. Twenty people were falsely convicted.

If the state is prepared to abuse its powers and instruments so widely and gravely in cases such as this, where there is a high risk of detection, and if it is prepared to intrude so far into people's lives that its officers live with activists and father their children, what is it not prepared to do while spying undetectably on our private correspondence?

Already we know that electronic surveillance in this country has been used for purposes other than the perennial justifications of catching terrorists, foiling foreign spies and preventing military attacks. It was deployed, for example, to spy on countries attending the G20 meeting the UK hosted in 2009. If the government does this to other states, which might have the capacity to detect its spying and which certainly have the means to object to it, what is it doing to defenceless citizens?

.....
Misled Parliament

It looks as if William Hague might have misled parliament a fortnight ago. He claimed that "to intercept the content of any individual's communications in the UK requires a warrant signed personally by me, the Home Secretary, or by another Secretary of State."

We now discover that these ministers can also issue general certificates, renewed every six months, which permit mass interception of the kind that GCHQ has been conducting. Among the certificates issued to GCHQ is a "global" one authorising all its operations, including the trawling of up to 600 million phone calls and 39 million gigabytes of electronic information a day. A million ministers, signing all day, couldn't keep up with that.

The best test of the good faith of an institution is the way it deals with past abuses.

Despite two years of revelations about abusive police spying, the British government has yet to launch a full public inquiry. Bob Lambert, who ran the team, fathered a child by an innocent activist he deceived, co-wrote the McDonalds leaflet, is alleged to have lied in court and has been accused by an MP of firebombing, was awarded an MBE in 2008. He now teaches at St Andrews University, where he claims to have a background in "counter-terrorism".

The home office minister Nick Herbert has stated in parliament that it's acceptable for police to have sex with activists, for the sake of their "plausibility". Does this sound to you like a state in which we should invest our trust?

Talking to the *Observer*, a senior intelligence source expressed his or her concerns about mass surveillance. "If there was the wrong political change, it could be very dangerous. All you need is to have the wrong government in place." But it seems to me that any government prepared to subject its citizens to mass surveillance is by definition the wrong one. No one can be trusted with powers as wide and inscrutable as these.

In various forms – Conservative, New Labour, Coalition – we have had the wrong government for 30 years. Across that period its undemocratic powers have consolidated. It has begun to form an elective dictatorship, in which the three major parties are united in their desire to create a security state; to wage unprovoked wars; to defend corporate power against democracy; to act as a doormat to the United States; to fight political dissent all the way to the bedroom and the birthing pool.

There's no need to wait for the "wrong" state to arise to conclude that mass surveillance endangers liberty, pluralism and democracy. We're there already. **CT**

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George Monbiot's latest book is !!!!!!! This essay originally appeared in *The Guardian* newspaper. More of his work appears at his web site <http://monbiot.com>

.....
Any government prepared to subject its citizens to mass surveillance is by definition the wrong one. No one can be trusted with powers as wide and inscrutable as these

The power of art

This year is the 100th anniversary of three major events in labor history. Thanks to the power of art, we will not forget, writes **John O'Connor**



When Woody Guthrie wrote songs about events in labor history, it was sometimes the only way to hear the workers' point of view

“Take a trip with me in 1913 to Calumet, Michigan and the copper country...” are the opening lines of one of the most haunting, powerful and depressing songs in the Woody Guthrie catalogue: *1913 Massacre*. I learned the song from a recording by Jack Elliot, who is still to this day the best interpreter of Woody Guthrie songs. The ballad is the telling of a real event in Michigan history when on Christmas Eve in 1913, miners and their families gathered in Italian Hall for a holiday party. As Guthrie’s ballad tells it, “copper boss thugs” yelled “fire!” from outside the hall and in the ensuing moments the crowd rushed for the door at the bottom of a set of stairs where the thugs outside held the door shut, causing some 73 people, mostly children, to smother to death.

What is remarkable about this song and the story is that no one really knows exactly what happened on that tragic night outside of the fact that the deaths did occur and someone did yell “fire.” For decades, a version of the facts that contradicted Guthrie’s lyric had it that the doors at the bottom of the stairs opened inward, preventing the victims from fleeing from the building. This is what the local press reported. But the local press was controlled by the mine owners, according to Steve Lehto’s 2006 book, *Death’s Door: The Truth Behind Michigan’s Largest Mass Murder*. Lehto’s research (sup-

ported by photos) showed that the doors did, in fact, open outward, contrary to a myth so prevalent that a state historical marker declared it fact.

If it’s true that the establishment press denied the culpability of the “copper boss thugs,” what is undeniable is the power of Woody Guthrie’s song and how it brought the miner’s version of the story to the forefront of popular culture. Thousands of Americans (not to mention Woody Guthrie fans from around the globe) know no other history of this event than the one Guthrie tells. So the copper industry, with all their wealth, in the end lost the battle over the truth to a song that has been handed down to us through the singing of a few folk musicians. Steve Lehto’s book goes a long way to back up Woody Guthrie’s version of the event, though he is careful to point out the inaccuracies in the Guthrie song.

.....
Infamous tragedy

This year is also the centennial of an event that led to one of the most infamous union tragedies of the 20th century. Miners went out on strike in late 1913 in Colorado for recognition of their union and basic wage demands. Spurred by the murder of a union organizer by a guard working for the detective company known as Baldwin-Felts, the strike grew violent and the governor sent



The Ludlow massacre was an attack by Colorado national Guard and Colorado Fuel & Iron Company camp guards on a tent colony of 1,300 striking mine workers and their families on April 20, 1916. Below: Cover of the June 1914 issue of *The Masses*, depicting the massacre

in troops to suppress the miners. The violence culminated in what is known as the Ludlow Massacre, when the state militia strafed the miners' tent colony and set it on fire. "Eleven children and two women were smothered in the flames," according to Philip Taft's *The AFL in the Time of Gompers*. Again, many know the history of this tragedy from a Woody Guthrie song, *The Ludlow Massacre*, which numerous singers have recorded, bringing the tale to thousands.

The ballads that Woody Guthrie sings are ballads in the traditional sense of the word, where a story is told in verses and makes fables out of true events in history. Woody Guthrie was a master of this art form. Both ballads take their time leading to the tragic turns in each piece, slowly setting the scene and pulling the listener into the story and creating an emotional bond between the listener and the subjects of the ballad. By the end of each of these ballads, the listener can't help but be saddened and enraged.



Striking weavers

The intelligentsia of Greenwich Village in 1913 may have used some of the same approaches when they hosted a pageant to tell the story of the silk weavers who were on strike against the silk mills in Paterson, New Jersey, that year. The great pageant was put on in Madison Square Garden. At this point in history, there was a convergence of movements that contributed to a strong solidarity effort between the strikers and artists and intellectuals in New York. The feminist and suffrage movement was in full swing and people like Margaret Sanger and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn got involved. In addition, the art movement, which was in the throes of change, more often than not was seen in concert with the political revolutionary movements of the time, including the plight of labor and the activity of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), who were brought in to lead the strike. The

The ballads that Woody Guthrie sings are ballads in the traditional sense of the word, where a story is told in verses and makes fables out of true events in history

FIGHTING BACK

John Sloan, the founder of the Ashcan art movement, painted a 90-foot backdrop depicting the mills of Paterson

eight-hour day movement was gaining momentum and the Paterson strikers made a shorter work day one of their demands. The strike was inspiring for the use of songs and humor from each ethnic group of workers involved.

The strike ended badly but the pageant was a huge success. John Reed, who wrote *Ten Days That Shook the World*, organized the pageant with the backing of Mabel Dodge, a well-known patron of the arts at the time. John Sloan, the founder of the Ashcan art movement, painted a 90-foot backdrop depicting the mills of Paterson, and strikers were brought in to help dramatize the story. The sold-out extravaganza ended with thousands of workers singing *The Internationale*.



Artists, activists and intellectuals produced a pageant in 1913 in Madison Square Garden to tell the story of the weavers who were on strike against the silk mills in Paterson, New Jersey.

Today, the Botto House in Haledon, New Jersey, where IWW leaders staged massive rallies for the strikers, is the home of the American Labor Museum (www.Labor-Museum.net). A permanent exhibit of the strike features photos and artifacts from this important chapter of labor history.

Standing in front of the photos in the exhibit inside this house where Big Bill Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn addressed the throngs from the balcony gives one a sense of the greatness of this chapter in labor history. **CT**

John O'Connor, is a singer-songwriter and the recording vice president of the New York City musicians' union (AFM Local 802). This story first appeared in the May

2013 issue of *Allegro* magazine. For more information, see <http://Local802afm.org>

LORETTA NAPOLEONI

MAONOMICS

WHY CHINESE COMMUNISTS MAKE BETTER CAPITALISTS THAN WE DO

"*Maonomics* pulls few punches with its argument that in view of the considerable troubles facing western economies, China's model for modernization—albeit imperfect—should be viewed globally in a more powerful and favourable light."

—*International Affairs*

"...In urging the West to abandon its prejudices and fundamentally rethink its ideology, [Loretta Napoleoni] is asking the right questions."

—*Morning Star*

What our presidents tell our young people

William Blum wonders why his country's leaders get away with brainwashing students – and everyone else

In this season of college graduations, let us pause to remember the stirring words of America's beloved scholar, George W. Bush, speaking in Florida in 2007 at the commencement exercises of Miami Dade College: "In Havana and other Cuban cities, there are people just like you who are attending school, and dreaming of a better life. Unfortunately those dreams are stifled by a cruel dictatorship that denies all freedom in the name of a dark and discredited ideology."

How I wish I had been in the audience. I would have stood up and shouted: "In Cuba all education is completely free. But most of the young people sitting here today will be chained to a large, crippling debt for much of the rest of their life!"

As the security guards came for me I'd yell: "And no one in Cuba is forced to join the military to qualify for college financial aid, like Bradley Manning was forced!"

As they grabbed me I'd manage to add: "And Congress has even passed a law prohibiting students from declaring bankruptcy to get rid of their debt!"

And as I was being dragged away, with an arm around my neck, I'd squeeze out my last words: "Do you know that \$36 billion in student debt belongs to Americans who are 60 or older? ... (choke, gasp) ... and that students have committed suicide because of their debt?"

I don't know if Professor Bush would have found any words within his intellect to respond with, but the last words I'd hear from the students, as the handcuffs were being tightened, would be: "If you don't like it here, why dontya move to Cuba?"

Bad enough they have to pay highway-robbery tuition, but they wind up brainwashed anyhow.

Let us now turn to the current president. Here he is at the May 19 graduation ceremony at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Martin Luther King's alma mater:

"I know that when I am on my deathbed someday, I will not be thinking about any particular legislation I passed; I will not be thinking about a policy I promoted; I will not be thinking about the speech I gave, I will not be thinking the Nobel Prize I received. I will be thinking about that walk I took with my daughters. I'll be thinking about a lazy afternoon with my wife. I'll be thinking about sitting around the dinner table and seeing them happy and healthy and knowing that they were loved. And I'll be thinking about whether I did right by all of them."

And I, like Woody Allen's Zelig, would have shown up at this graduation as well, and I would have shouted out: "What about the family sitting happy and healthy around the dinner table in Pakistan or Afghanistan, and a missile – your missile – comes scream-

.....
I would have stood up and shouted: "In Cuba all education is completely free. But most of the young people sitting here today will be chained to a large, crippling debt for much of the rest of their life!"

.....
For what good reason did thousands of young Americans breathe their last breath in that backward country and why were tens of thousands of Afghans dispatched by the United States to go meet Allah?
.....

ing through the roof, reducing the precious family to bones and blood and dust. What about the nice happy and healthy families in Yemen and Iraq and Somalia, Pakistan and Libya whom you've droned and mis-siled to death? Why haven't you returned the Nobel Prize? In case you've forgotten, it was a PEACE prize!"

Oh, that taser does hurt! Please contribute to my bail fund.

.....
Pipelineistan

I have written on more than one occasion about the value of preaching and repeating to the choir on a regular basis. One of my readers agreed with this, saying: "How else has Christianity survived 2,000 years except by weekly reinforcement?"

Well, dear choir, beloved parishioners, for this week's sermon we once again turn to Afghanistan. As US officials often make statements giving the impression that the American military presence in that sad land is definitely winding down – soon to be all gone except for the standard few thousand American servicemen which almost every country in the world needs stationed on their territory – one regularly sees articles in the mainstream media and government releases trying to explain what it was all about. For what good reason did thousands of young Americans breathe their last breath in that backward country and why were tens of thousands of Afghans dispatched by the United States to go meet Allah (amidst widespread American torture and other violations of human rights)?

The *Washington Post* recently cited a Defense Department report that states: The United States "has wound up with a reasonable 'Plan B' for achieving its core objective of preventing Afghanistan from once again becoming a safe haven for al-Qaeda and its affiliates."

"Preventing a safe haven for terrorists" – that was the original reason given back in 2001 for the invasion of Afghanistan, a

consistency in sharp contrast to the ever-changing explanations for Iraq. However, it appears that the best and the brightest in our government and media do not remember, if they ever knew, that Afghanistan was not really about 9-11 or fighting terrorists (except the many the US has created by its invasion and occupation), but was about pipelines.

President Obama declared in August 2009: "But we must never forget this is not a war of choice. This is a war of necessity. Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which al Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans."

Never mind that out of the tens of thousands of people the United States and its NATO front have killed in Afghanistan not one has been identified as having had anything to do with the events of September 11, 2001.

Never mind – even accepting the official version of 9/11 – that the "plotting to attack America" in 2001 was devised in Germany and Spain and the United States more than in Afghanistan. Why didn't the United States bomb those countries?

Indeed, what actually was needed to plot to buy airline tickets and take flying lessons in the United States? A room with a table and some chairs? What does "an even larger safe haven" mean? A larger room with more chairs? Perhaps a blackboard? Terrorists intent upon attacking the United States can meet almost anywhere. At the present time there are anti-American terrorist types meeting in Libya, Syria, Turkey, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, London, Paris, and many other places. And the Taliban of Afghanistan would not be particularly anti-American if the United States had not invaded and occupied their country. The Taliban are a diverse grouping of Afghan insurgents whom the US military has come to label with a single name; they are not primarily international jihadists like al-Qaeda

and in fact have had an up-and-down relationship with the latter.

The only “necessity” that drew the United States to Afghanistan was the desire to establish a military presence in this land that is next door to the Caspian Sea region of Central Asia – reportedly containing the second largest proven reserves of petroleum and natural gas in the world – and build oil and gas pipelines from that region running through Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is well situated for such pipelines to serve much of South Asia and even parts of Europe, pipelines that – crucially – can bypass Washington’s bêtes noire, Iran and Russia. If only the Taliban would not attack the lines. Here’s Richard Boucher, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, in 2007: “One of our goals is to stabilize Afghanistan, so it can become a conduit and a hub between South and Central Asia so that energy can flow to the south.”

Since the 1980s all kinds of pipelines have been planned for the area, only to be delayed or canceled by one military, financial or political problem or another. For example, the so-called TAPI pipeline (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) had strong support from Washington, which was eager to block a competing pipeline that would bring gas to Pakistan and India from Iran. TAPI goes back to the late 1990s, when the Taliban government held talks with the California-based oil company Unocal Corporation. These talks were conducted with the full knowledge of the Clinton administration, and were undeterred by the extreme repression of Taliban society. Taliban officials even made trips to the United States for discussions. 4

Testifying before the House Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific on February 12, 1998, Unocal representative John Maresca discussed the importance of the pipeline project and the increasing difficulties in dealing with the Taliban:

“The region’s total oil reserves may well

reach more than 60 billion barrels of oil. Some estimates are as high as 200 billion barrels ... From the outset, we have made it clear that construction of the pipeline we have proposed across Afghanistan could not begin until a recognized government is in place that has the confidence of governments, leaders, and our company.”

When those talks with the Taliban stalled in 2001, the Bush administration reportedly threatened the Taliban with military reprisals if the Afghan government did not go along with American demands. On August 2 in Islamabad, US State Department negotiator Christine Rocca reiterated to the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, Abdul Salam Zaeef: “Either you accept our offer of a carpet of gold [oil], or we bury you under a carpet of bombs.” The talks finally broke down for good a month before 9-11.

The United States has been serious indeed about the Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf oil and gas areas. Through one war or another beginning with the Gulf War of 1990-1, the US has managed to establish military bases in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.

The war against the Taliban can’t be “won” short of killing everyone in Afghanistan. The United States may well try again to negotiate some form of pipeline security with the Taliban, then get out, and declare “victory”. Barack Obama can surely deliver an eloquent victory speech from his teleprompter. It might even include the words “freedom” and “democracy”, but certainly not “pipeline”.

“We are literally backing the same people in Syria that we are fighting in Afghanistan and that have just killed our ambassador in Libya! We must finally abandon the interventionist impulse before it is too late.” – Congressman Ron Paul, September 16, 2012

How it all began: “To watch the courageous Afghan freedom fighters battle modern arsenals with simple hand-held weapons is an inspiration to those who love freedom.

.....
Through one war or another beginning with the Gulf War of 1990-1, the US has managed to establish military bases in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan

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And if all else fails with Iran ... Nuke the bastards! That may be the only way they'll learn what a horrible weapon a nuclear bomb is, a weapon they shouldn't be playing around with
.....

Their courage teaches us a great lesson – that there are things in this world worth defending. To the Afghan people, I say on behalf of all Americans that we admire your heroism, your devotion to freedom, and your relentless struggle against your oppressors.” – President Ronald Reagan, March 21, 1983
.....

A modest proposal

Washington's sanctions against Iran are a wonder to behold, seriously hampering Tehran's ability to conduct international commerce, make payments, receive money, import, export, invest, travel ... you name the hardship and the United States is trying to impose it on the government and the people of Iran. In early May a bipartisan bill was introduced in Congress aimed at stopping Iran from gaining access to its billions of dollars in euros kept in overseas banks – money that represents up to a third of Tehran's total hard-currency holdings. In addition, Congress is looking to crack down on a weakness in current sanctions law that allows Iran to replenish its hard-currency accounts by acquiring gold through overseas markets.

Washington has as well closed down Iran's media operations in the United States, is putting great pressure on Pakistan to cancel their project to build a pipeline to import natural gas from Iran, and punished countless international companies for doing business with Iran.

After a plane crash in Iran in 2011, the *Washington Post* reported: “Plane crashes are common in Iran, which for decades has been prevented from buying spare parts for its aging fleet by sanctions imposed by the United States.”

There are many more examples of the sanctions of mass destruction.

All this to force Iran to abandon any program that might conceivably lead someday to a nuclear weapon, thus depriving Israel of being the only nuclear power in the Mid-

dle East. The United States doesn't actually say this. It instead says, explicitly or implicitly, that a nuclear Iran would be a danger to attack the US or Israel, without giving any reason why Iran would act so suicidal; at the same time Washington ignores repeated statements from various Israeli and American officials that they have no such fear.

Now, a group of US lawmakers is proposing a more drastic remedy: cutting off Iran entirely from world oil markets. Oil sales provide Iran with the bulk of its foreign-currency earnings. The plan would require all countries to stop buying oil from Iran or risk losing access to the US banking system.

And Iran ignores it all, refusing to bend. Islamic fanatics they are.

I have a much simpler solution. Why not cut off all exports of food to Iran? Worldwide. And anything that goes into producing food – seed, fertilizer, farm equipment, etc. Let's see how good they are at ignoring it when their children's bellies start to balloon. And medicines and medical equipment as well! Let's see how good they are at producing whatever they need themselves.

Officials at The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that as many as 6,000 Iraqi children died each month in the early 1990s primarily due to the sanctions imposed by the US, the UK and others. As proof of the lasting effectiveness and goodness of that policy, today blessed peace reigns in Iraq among its citizens.

And if all else fails with Iran ... Nuke the bastards! That may be the only way they'll learn what a horrible weapon a nuclear bomb is, a weapon they shouldn't be playing around with.

In recent times Iraq, Libya, Syria and Iran have been the prime forces standing in the way of USraeli Middle East domination. Thus it was that Iraq was made into a psychotic basket case. Libya's welfare state was wiped out and fundamentalists have imposed Islamic law on much of the coun-

try. The basketizing of Syria is currently in process. Iran's basketizing has begun with draconian sanctions, the way the basketizing of Iraq began.

It's worth noting that Iraq, Syria, and Libya were the leading secular states of the Middle East. History may not treat kindly the impoverishment and loss of freedoms that the US-NATO-European Union Triumvirate has brought down upon the heads of the people of these lands.

.....
What are we going to do about our sociopathic corporations?

Scarcely a day goes by in the United States without a news story about serious ethical/criminal misbehavior by a bank or stock brokerage or credit-rating agency or insurance agency or derivatives firm or some other parasitic financial institution. Most of these firms produce no goods or services useful to human beings, but spend their days engaged in the manipulation of money, credit and markets, employing dozens of kinds of speculation.

Consider the jail time served for civil disobedience by environmental, justice and anti-war activists, in contrast to the lifestyle enjoyed by the wicked ones who crashed

the financial system and continue to fund the wounding of our bleeding planet.

The federal and state governments threaten to sue the financial institutions. Sometimes they actually do sue them. And a penalty is paid. And then the next scandal pops up. And another penalty is paid. And so it goes.

Picture this: A fleet of police cars pulls up in front of Bank of America's Corporate Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. A dozen police officers get out, enter the building, and take the elevator to the offices of the bank's top executives. Minutes later the president and two vice-presidents – their arms tightly bound in handcuffs behind their back – are paraded through the building in full view of their employees who stare wide-eyed and open-mouthed. The sidewalk is of course fully occupied by the media as the police encircle the building with tape saying "No trespassing. Crime scene."

But remember, just because America has been taken over by mendacious mass-murdering madmen doesn't mean we can't have a good time **CT**

.....
William Blum's latest book is America's Deadliest Export – Democracy: The Truth About US Foreign Policy and Everything Else

.....
Consider the jail time served for civil disobedience by environmental, justice and anti-war activists, in contrast to the lifestyle enjoyed by the wicked ones who crashed the financial system and continue to fund the wounding of our bleeding planet



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Confessions of an obituary aficionada

Bolivia-based psychotherapist and author **Chellis Glendinning** discusses the fine art of biography-after-the-fact

.....
The obituary may have replaced the biography, using the most telling incidents of a lifetime to reveal the blistering whole of a person's story
.....

I'm a daily reader of the *New York Times* obituaries. There, I said it. And yes, this little habit of mine has been going on for decades. Needless to say, in that time I've witnessed a surfeit of notable crossings into the unknown. Simone de Beauvoir. Picasso. Katherine Hepburn. Anwar Sadat. Indira Gandhi. Mercedes Sosa. And, in the process, I've gained an education in the fine art of biography-after-the-fact.

For example, I'm an admirer of Fred Astaire – and of Fred Astaire's NYT obit. Placing him in the era of America's immigration rush, vaudeville, and the rise of Hollywood talkies, it covers his working-class upbringing, attendance at dance school, how he stayed so lithe, film successes, marriages, praise from colleagues, and why he put away his tap shoes.

The essay is capped off with his philosophy of hoofing: "The search for what you want is like tracking something that doesn't want to be tracked." The obit itself is as elegant as Fred Astaire in a tuxedo skipping across the linoleum.

Which brings us to the obituary as literary form. While the death notice began as a titillating little gossip crumb in early-1700s England, Melanie Johnson's *The Dead Beat: Lost Souls, Lucky Stiffs, and the Perverse Pleasures of Obituaries* informs us that we have arrived at the Golden Age of the Obituary. In addition, says Johnson, while the earliest

obit writers perceived the job as the lowest-entry-rung of a hopefully rising journalistic career, today's writers accomplish the mythic feat of blending "empathy and detachment; sensitivity and bluntness."

But, we might ask, from where springs this mad dash toward minimalism? True, invention of the six-word narrative, short-short fiction, and "smoke long" (a tale whose enjoyment lasts the length of a cigarette) parallels the fascination.

The cell phone, whose text-messaging lines allow but forty characters, could be a culprit. In this era of flash-technologies, life has become too hurried and fragmented for lolling about for days on end with *Sense and Sensibility*.

Whatever the sociology of this literary development, in a mere 100-500 words, the obituary may have replaced the biography, using the most telling incidents of a lifetime to reveal the blistering whole of a person's story; perhaps, we might consider, its practitioners have become today's bards.

Nonetheless, in not-so-Golden-Age circles, to be an aficionada, as I am, is still not an accepted social status. If ever my little secret happens to come up in conversation, the incredulous demand to know why, and I'm never able to formulate an explanation that saves me from assignment to the "Goth" category.

That is... until my own friends' life sto-

ries began to appear like confetti in a ticker tape parade in those same revered pages – and in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Santa Fe New Mexican*, *Washington Post*, *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, *By What Authority*, *Orion*, *La Jornada*, *CounterPunch*...

Feminists, writers, filmmakers, anti-nuclear activists, farmers, historians, ecologists, bioregional activists, folk singers, yoga teachers, technology critics, philosophers, they – and I could see that death was no longer going to be something that happened occasionally and to someone else. It was the flame-eyed, snake-coifed Gorgon in the room – right here and right now.

The passing that threw me over was that of John Ross. The news came via an email announcement from his colleagues in San Francisco, reporting that the doctors had done all they could to prolong his time and, by choice, he had left his room in a Mexico City hotel for Lake Patzcuaro where he had lived on and off for fifty years. It wasn't that we hadn't had sufficient notice of the possibility, yet I sat in my chair for some time, as stunned as a bird slamming into a glass window.

Bona fida character

Red-diaper baby, the first journalist to venture into the Chiapas selva to report on the Zapatistas, human shield against the war in Iraq, author of books documenting left-wing history in the US, jazz poet: Ross was a bona fide character. Toothless and almost blind from conflict generated during his various political exploits, he could guzzle cheap wine like nobody's business and recite poetry into the wee hours. He was obnoxious as all get-out, and he had liver cancer.

Ross took the rail-runner from Albuquerque to Santa Fe to visit me while on a book tour for his monstrous tribute to Mexico City, *El Monstruo*. His mission was to swig espresso, buy a really cool cane to bolster his failing leg, and (needless to say) talk politics. I was on the verge of moving to

Bolivia, and he reached into the suitcases of memory to regale me with his encounters with now-President Evo Morales. Although neither of us said a word, when he mounted the aluminum steps for the return journey, we knew it would be the last time we would be together. I clung to the vision of this brave warrior as he hobbled to grab the overhead bar and plop his wiry body into a seat.

The news of his passing in January 2011 struck me in a way that even my own mother's death did not. I could not imagine – or accept – a world without John Ross.

Maybe I was still reeling from Ross' passing when Richard Grossman's metastatic melanoma flared up. Grossman was what one might call a "sweetheart with an edge." Caring in friendship, he also boasted something of an uncouth penchant for sticking his face into stretch limousines and loudly decreeing the shame of the owners in a world of gross inequity.

He was best known for his contribution to progressive thought for the "legal" mechanism corporations rely on to perpetrate injustice and exploitation: they enjoy the same rights as individual people do. He had also fought for workers' rights in the context of the environmental movement, jumpstarted organizations to push citizen rights, designed a school for teaching democracy, and spearheaded court cases to challenge the "rights" of corporations.

Grossman and I had had a habit of talking on the phone for hours each week – Río Grande Valley to the Catskills – about history and politics. He had a fondness for growing opium poppies, and since cultivating such a crop was illegal in the US (and, incidentally, since I had written a book about the global heroin trade), he reveled in referring to his delicate blossoms with code words and a tone of devilish irony.

Two weeks before he died, in November of 2011, Grossman was talking up a storm about his new lawsuit in Pennsylvania; he had just done an interview for *Corporate Crime Reporter* proposing a law to strip away

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Toothless and almost blind from conflict generated during his various political exploits, he could guzzle cheap wine like nobody's business and recite poetry into the wee hours

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One afternoon in October of 2011, probably very slowly as Azen always moved at the pace of a snail in a Buddhist retreat, she walked into her beloved, juniper-spotted Tesuque desert and blasted her skull to bits with a bullet
.....

500 years of Constitutional protections for corporations – and out of the blue he offered financial help to salve my housing problems in Bolivia. His last email to me capped off with: “Be Good, Be Bad, Be Historical.” And then the calls and letters stopped...

Rebekah Azen’s suicide hit like the clang of an alarm clock: “SAD NEWS FROM SANTA FE” announced the note from a friend-in-common. Upon arriving in New Mexico from Wisconsin, Azen had sought roots with a Native clan at San Felipe Pueblo that she called her “family,” and by the time I met her in the 1990s, she was hot on the trail of the visionary philosophies of what she called the two Henrys: Thoreau and George.

Her particular outrage had to do with theft of land and home, drawing parallels between the colonization of indigenous peoples and the housing hardships of the working class – and she wrote abundantly on the topic in *Green Fire Times*. Of late, she had been suffering from an ill-explained illness, although her diligent work in the anti-electromagnetic radiation movement, and her constant complaints about her librarian job at the *Santa Fe New Mexican* where she was daily barraged by wi-fi, gave the sense that she had electro-hypersensitivity, otherwise known as microwave sickness.

One afternoon in October of 2011, probably very slowly as Azen always moved at the pace of a snail in a Buddhist retreat, she walked into her beloved, juniper-spotted Tesuque desert and blasted her skull to bits with a bullet.

I couldn’t get over the courage that such an act took. Maybe it was desperation: she hadn’t been able to sleep for months. But being that she was an ally with whom I had navigated the labyrinthine passageways of philosophy and literature, not to mention Cochiti Pueblo’s wind-sculpted Tent Rocks – and who had come to me in my moment of need – I knew her spirit: that exit was the handy work of one intrepid voyager.

Then Thomas Naylor surprised us with

a stroke, and on December 12, 2012, the family chose to remove the life-support technologies. That decision would have pleased Thomas: he was a raving critic of mass technologies and of the authoritarian institutions they reflected, facilitated, and propagated. After a successful career as an economics/computer science professor at Duke University, he moved to Vermont and authored a series of books on decentralism, including *Downsizing the USA*.

I met him in 2008. I had written an essay for *CounterPunch* entitled “Techno-Fascism,” and it turned out that Naylor had been using that same term. He sent me a packet containing a four-page hand-scrawled letter, a pile of articles, and a book he had written called *Secession*. And so it came to be that Naylor, brimming with Mississippi gentility and rousing political arguments, drew me into the swirl of mad farmers, musicians, historians, sheep herders, and political philosophers who were demanding that the state of Vermont secede from the United States of America.

His activism was inflamed by old-fashioned ethical outrage, and he waxed emotional when it came to the immorality of remaining within a US that was ruining the planet with its technologies and killing people with its imperialist wars.

Right before his death, he was organizing an assembly of the small nations of the world to discuss their role in addressing the injustices caused by imperial nations and gain worldwide backing for secession movements, to be held in Liechtenstein in 2013. But then, unexpectedly, he was gone.

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Impacts of dirty chemicals

One angle on this incessant bombardment of obituaries is that today’s culprits to the final demise tend not so much toward what in my grandmother’s day was called “natural causes” as they do toward the impacts of the dirty chemicals and abrasive technologies over-running planet Earth. Pesticides.

Nuclear power plant leakages. Preservatives. Dioxin-infused tampons. Cell-tower and satellite emissions of electromagnetic radiation. Carbon monoxide. Asbestos. Chemical hormones. Heavy metals. I do not feel just the wells of grief at these deaths; I feel unnerved and discombobulated by the untimely and unnecessary theft of lives – and wisdom – from our midst.

And there is something else. Now, after reading so many of my own friends' life endeavors in encapsulated form, I finally understand why I have relished the NYT obituaries all these years.

As we know, the end of an individual's life bold-facedly reveals that person's participation in an era. Yet too, and perhaps more notably for the longings of the human psyche, it offers up the wide view we all seek so that we can make meaning of life. And more importantly still, it proposes a frame.

When the dreaded skeleton-laden-with-roses-and-gauze snatches away a comrade, we are able to see with utter clarity what

that person did with this life, what her challenges and burdens were, how he mounted them, what she did with ease, what he attempted against all odds. No matter how illuminated or bewildered, how fulfilled or unfinished, how healed or how wounded, the frame reveals that each person is in reality a hero.

The irritations and disappointments we may have felt at personality quirks fall away; whether the most introverted of poets, the most inspiring of orators, or the crankiest of curmudgeons, the final marking unveils each of us as a wondrous creature in the eyes of Creation. **CT**

Chellis Glendinning lives in Bolivia. She is a psychotherapist specializing in treatment of traumatic stress and the author of six books. Her book, "Off the Map: An Expedition Deep into Empire and the Global Economy" won the US National Press Women book award in 2000. In Bolivia she writes for Los Tiempos. This essay was first published at <http://WildCulture.com>

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No matter how illuminated or bewildered, how fulfilled or unfinished, how healed or how wounded, the frame reveals that each person is in reality a hero

BENDIB'S WORLD

Khalil Bendib, OtherWords.org



In the footsteps of a legend

The philosopher Samuel Johnson claimed London as the centre of all that is good about life. A wet and curmudgeonly **Tony Sutton** begs to differ. Here's why . . .

My Johnson-inspired enthusiasm for a day in the big city during a 10-hour break between flights began to wane almost from the moment I stepped into the subway carriage at Heathrow Airport

“Never, ever, trust a philosopher, no matter how old or revered. Especially if he’s a moralist and poet as well.” That’s what my Mom told me when I was a snot-nosed whippersnapper growing up in the wilds of rural England. “Instead”, she advised, “trust yourself, your feelings, your heart and, most important, your feet.”

She was probably not aiming her barbs at fabled London diarist Samuel Johnson, who told his chronicler James Boswell way back in 1777, “Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life.”

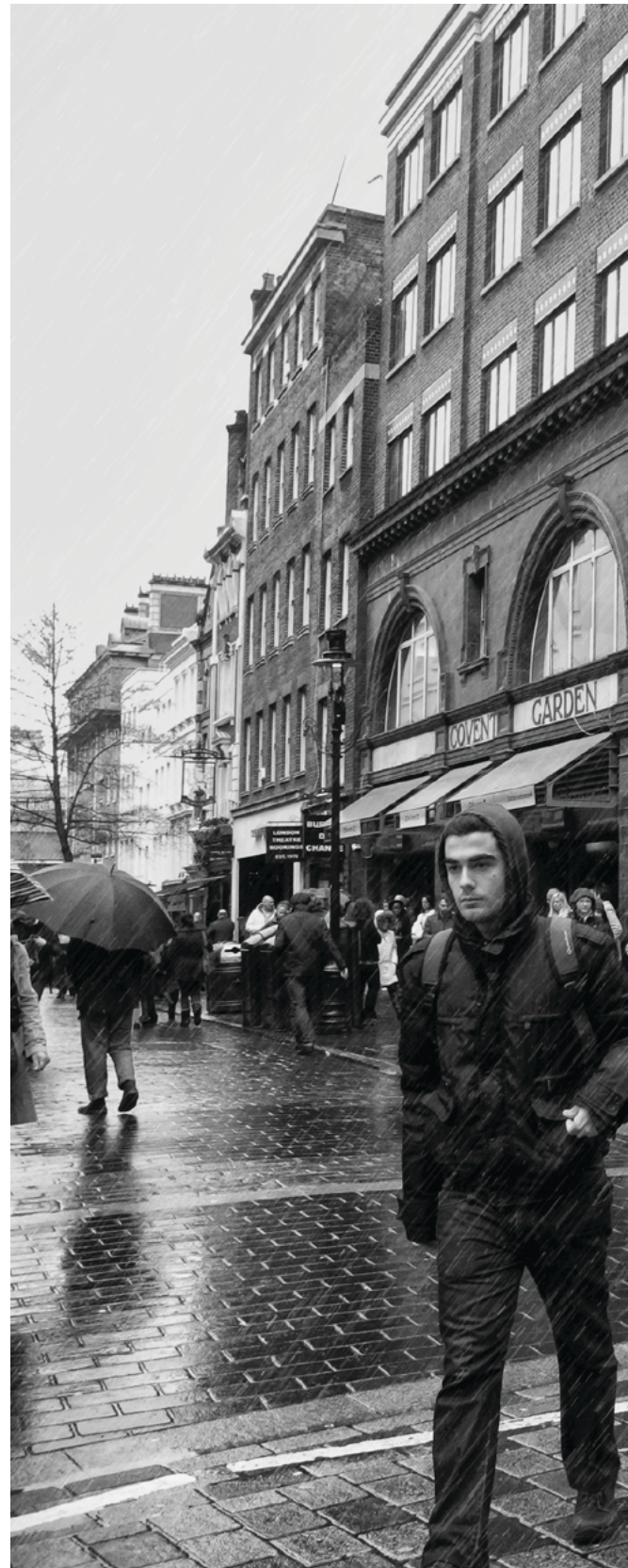
But I bet he wasn’t suffering lack of sleep, hunger, jetlag and sore feet from staggering round the city in the rain while weighed down with a backpack full of computers and books when he said that.

Well, I was. And my Johnson-inspired enthusiasm for a day in the big city during a 10-hour break between flights from Toronto to South Africa began to wane moments after I stepped into the subway carriage at Heathrow airport.

“Welcome to the 150th anniversary of London Underground,” greeted a cheerfully disembodied female voice as I hopped aboard, hoping for a speedy ride to Central London where I calculated I would be just in time for breakfast at my favourite restaura-

Right: Covent Garden – wet and wild

(Photos: Tony Sutton)







Above: Travelling on the Tube is fine, so long as you're not weighed down by heavy bags – or kids

Right: Leicester Square – hardy tourists enjoy coffee in the rain

rant. Should have known better. After 150 years of trying, London Underground still can't get its damn trains to run on time when I'm on them. "Apologies", said the voice on the intercom moments later and then every five minutes of the almost 2-hour journey, "due to work on the tracks, this train goes no further than Hyde Park Corner. Change at blah, blah, blah." Bugger, bugger, bugger. That probably means goodbye to breakfast. Should have eaten the bilge on the plane . . .

Ah, the Tube. It's wonderful: the Victorian tiling in the older stations is stunning; the service is fast, cheap and usually reliable. And it's hell: the stairways and vertigo-inducing escalators are fiendish obstacles for anyone

with a suitcase. That misery is compounded 10-fold if you're manoeuvring a suitcase, stroller, *and* two howling kids in the maw of a claustrophobic rush-hour mob.

But, tell me, where else could you walk along an eerie underground pathway knowing the merest flicker of a ceiling lamp will conjure deliciously demented visions in which Jack the Ripper lurks around every corner waving a blade dripping with gore?

Two transfers later, I emerge from my nightmare at Oxford Circus and start a brisk walk to Soho. Whoosh, the sky darkens, rain lashes down. "Just a small shower. Won't last. Be over in a few minutes, Luv," says an over-cheerful woman as we huddle in a shop





Berwick Street Market. The alleyway at the top right leads to Paul Raymond's iconic strip club

doorway. She's right. Sort of. The sun peers through the gloom. I walk on. Then, a minute later, there's another downpour. And so it continues until I arrive at the restaurant. Closed. Of course. No breakfast. Obviously.

Wander along the streets. Soaked, cold, eyes half-closed, backpack heavier with each stride. Starving. Check my watch. Almost eleven. Wonder how long before the fish 'n' chip shop at Berwick Street Market will open. Have coffee. Buy book. Shudder nostalgically as I pass Raymond's Revue Bar, the first – and only – strip club I visited during a previous existence in London.

11:45. First customer of the day. I choose a window table in the just-opened fish shop.

Cod, chips and a pot of tea, please. Perfect. Outside, the sun blazes. London's gleaming. Later, I rise to leave. Rain. Again . . .

Dodging showers in Soho, Chinatown and Covent Garden, I browse the ever-dwindling bookstores of Charing Cross Road. Decide to buy a book, but it's too big for my backpack. I'll buy it later, on Amazon . . .

What now? Surrender. Wet, tired, demoralised, defeated, I board the westbound Tube at Leicester Square. Staring blankly at fellow passenger-zombies while drinking expensively tasteless cups of coffee for five long hours at Heathrow suddenly seems more fun than traipsing London in sodden misery.

Yes, I know. The country and its capital



are reckoned for crap weather, but it gets worse every time I pass through. Is it climate change? Or the tired tears of disillusioned travelers seeking a city that no longer exists, except in idealistic imagination and long-faded memory? I don't know the answer, but I can offer some curmudgeonly advice to others inclined to take note of those long-uttered, and best forgotten, words of old Sam Johnson, philosopher, formerly of this city: If you're planning to relieve jetlag and tedium with a few hours in wet and wild London on your next trip, do what I'm going to do in future – check the weather first! If it says rain, buy an extra book, find a comfortable seat next to the airport coffee shop. And don't

plant one well-heeled foot outside. Relax. You won't miss a thing.

But, wait. Another thought's bothering me. What if it's not London that's at fault? Or the weather? Perhaps I'm missing something? For what was it Samuel Johnson said just *before* that famous quote, “*When a man gets tired of London...*” Hmm, (sound of fingers fumbling through large book of quotations) here it is . . . “*Why, sir, you find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave London...*”

Shit! The old fool was talking about *me!*

CT

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Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net – is the editor of ColdType

Surrender: The Heathrow train thunders into Leicester Square station. Goodbye London, airport here I come

Obama and the 'Yes-You-Can' terrorists

Barry Lando on idealism, hypocrisy and the prevention of terror

.....
There is no evidence that the two men of Nigerian parents were part of al-Qaeda or any sophisticated terrorist network
.....

President Obama's speech, announcing his intent to reign in America's global war on terror is playing out with a certain grisly irony here in England, a country reeling from the latest terrorist act.

The media here is filled with ghastly images of a man, clad in a jacket and woolen cap, glaring at the camera, a knife and meat cleaver in his bloody hand – just after he and his partner hacked to death and tried to behead a young British soldier in Woolwich in southeast London.

What is particularly alarming is the similarity of these two newest terrorist murderers in the name of Islam to the two brothers who bombed the Boston Marathon last month, to the 23 year-old son of Algerian immigrants, who shot down seven people in France a little more than a year ago.

In England, as in the earlier attacks in the US and France, the terrorist killings provoked a wave of horror and outrage across the country. Islamic leaders denied such dastardly deeds had anything to do with the true faith. The murders were condemned as the totally senseless, cowardly act of unhinged killers, their minds deranged by radical Islamist claptrap.

"Britain will never buckle," said Prime Minister David Cameron. "The terrorists will never win because they can never beat the values we hold dear."

In fact, however, as one of the two killers

in Woolwich talked to a horrified onlooker before the police arrived, in his own mind, at least, their actions were quite rational. They were in retaliation for Britain's participation in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"We swear by almighty Allah we will never stop fighting you until you leave us alone," the man with the meat cleaver said. "Your people will never be safe. The only reason we have done this is because Muslims are dying by British soldiers every day. We must fight them as they fight us. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. I apologize that women had to witness this today but in our lands our women have to see the same."

He went on, "So what if we want to live by the Sharia in Muslim lands? Why does that mean you must follow us and chase us and call us extremists, kill us?"

"Rather, your lot are extreme. You are the ones. When you drop a bomb, do you think it picks on a person? Or rather your bomb wipes out a whole family?"

The investigation in London is just getting underway, but there is no evidence that the two men of Nigerian parents were part of al-Qaeda or any sophisticated terrorist network. One of them had converted from Christianity to Islam, but they were what the British authorities call "self-starters, "a potentially far more dangerous threat to Britain and the West than al-Qaeda itself.

They were almost certainly swayed by

radical Islamic clerics in England or via the Internet, such as the fiery English-language sermons delivered by Anwar al-Alwaki, an Al Qaeda preacher based in Yemen. An American citizen, he was killed in a drone strike in 2011. But the West's dilemma is that his call for wannabe jihadis to launch whatever bloody attacks they can conjure, echoes on – as does the motto “Just Do It.”

That's also the story behind the bombings at the Boston Marathon, perpetrated by the two young Tsarnaev brothers, immigrants from the restless Muslim nation of Chechnya. Here again, there is yet no evidence that they received any serious terrorist training or were acting as agents of any sophisticated network. Like the two men in Woolwich, they were freelancers – carrying out their own murderous schemes, inspired by nationalist-cum-religious sentiments, abetted by on-line instructions about bomb-making.

Their motives? The surviving brother, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was determined to make them clear. As he lay bleeding from his wounds, hidden from the police inside a boat in the back yard of a Charleston home, he wrote a message on the interior wall of the cabin.

The note said the bombings were in retaliation for US military action in Afghanistan and Iraq, and called the Boston victims “collateral damage” in the same way innocent victims have been in the American-led wars. “When you attack one Muslim, you attack all Muslims,” Tsarnaev wrote.

Again, in March 2013, France was traumatized by the murderous outburst of another young Muslim in Toulouse. Mohammed Merah, 23, first gunned down three French soldiers – one of them Muslim – then three days later he methodically shot four more people – a rabbi and three students at a nearby Jewish School.

He attacked the military base, Merah later told police, because of France's involvement in Afghanistan; and the Jewish school because “The Jews kill our brothers and sisters in Palestine.” He was also outraged, he said,

by France's ban of the full veil.

As in Woolwich and Boston, the immediate suspicion was that Merah was somehow linked to al-Qaeda; but it turned out that it wasn't. As I blogged at the time, Merah had been to Pakistan and Afghanistan, but there was no evidence that this former petty criminal was part of any serious terrorist network.

That being the case, how on earth can the authorities in the US and Europe deal with the threat of such “Just-Do-It” jihadis?

Since 2005, for instance, British security services have prevented more than a dozen terrorist plots on British soil, including a scheme to blow up airliners with liquid-based bombs, to targeting shopping centers and nightclubs with fertilizer-based explosives, to taking out the London stock exchange. But the two Woolwich killers slipped through.

This, despite the fact that, according to reports here, both of them had been on an MI-5 watch list. One had apparently been arrested while attempting to travel to Somalia to join a radical Islamic group.

But after that, what should the authorities have done? Hold him for life? Let him go but keep him under constant surveillance? With some 2.5 million people of Muslim descent in England, many of them unemployed, alienated from their government and its tendency to follow the lead of the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Middle East. How do you keep a handle on them all?

French authorities also singled out Mohammed Merah for special attention after his trips to Pakistan and Afghanistan. But Merah shared space on that watch-list with some 600 other radicals from right to left just in the Toulouse area alone. Don't forget, there are more than five million people of Muslim descent in France, many of them also bitter, unemployed, poorly housed.

French authorities have also foiled terrorist plots over the past few years, but there is no way they could have predicted that a young man like Mohammed Merah, who

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As he lay bleeding from his wounds, hidden from the police inside a boat in the back yard of a Charleston home, he wrote a message on the interior wall of the cabin

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Merah had earlier tried to enlist in the French army, presumably to go to Afghanistan to fight against Islamic radicals
.....

first turned to Salafism in a French prison, would migrate from radical “attitude” into full-blown terrorism. Indeed, apparently before he set out to avenge his Moslem brothers for France’s military role in Afghanistan, Merah had earlier tried to enlist in the French army, presumably to go to Afghanistan to fight against Islamic radicals.

Thus, there are certainly other precipitating factors – apart from ideology alone – that transform young men and women into terrorists. The elder Tsarnaev brother in Boston, for instance, had been a promising amateur boxer. He was apparently radicalized when the people running the Golden Gloves championships restricted admission to American citizens only. That decision meant the end to Tsarnaev’s boxing career and turned him towards religious extremism.

But, the only real common ground among

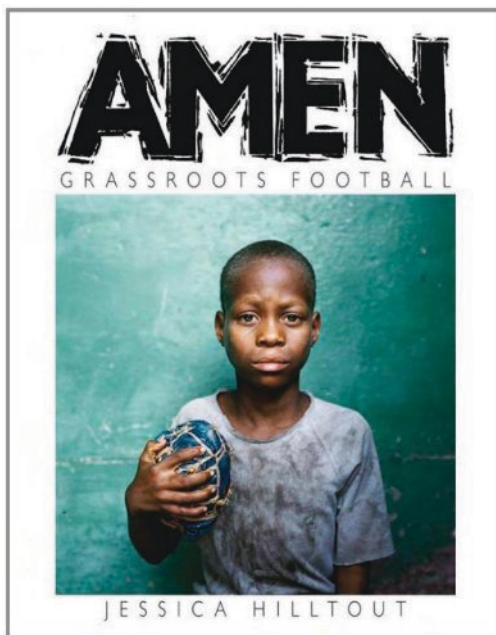
the terrorist killers has been the statements they’ve issued themselves: Their bloody actions, they’ve all claimed, are retribution for the policies of the US and its allies in the Middle East and Central Asia, the lurid pictures of collateral damage from Drone strikes, and the continued shame of Guantanamo.

Ironically, all those actions were supposedly undertaken to make the US and its allies safe from terrorism.

Will the apparent shift in America’s policy announced by President Obama change that fatal dynamic? It depends on whether or not he now backs up his high-flying rhetoric with concrete action. **CT**

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Barry Lando is the author of *Web of Deceit, the History of Western Complicity in Iraq, from Churchill to Kennedy to George W. Bush*

IN AFRICA, FOOTBALL IS NOT A RELIGION. BUT IT IS EVERYTHING A RELIGION SHOULD BE.



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What we need to learn about Woolwich

British government officials claim it diminishes Lee Rigby's life to talk about why he was the target of a horrific attack. **Eamonn McCann** disagrees

“The only reasons we have done this is because Muslims are dying every day. This British soldier is an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth . . . I apologize that women had to witness this today, but in our land, our women have to see the same . . . Tell your government to bring our troops back so you can all live in peace.”

“Your” Government. “Our” troops. This was a man apparently doubtful about his British identity, and who made a distinction between the British people and their government.

A month on, the image of Michael Adebolajo, right hand dripping with blood, left hand gripping the meat cleaver he had used to hack Fusilier Lee Rigby to death, is etched into memories everywhere.

He hadn't fled the scene, but stood his ground, inviting passersby to film him, seemingly anxious to explain why he and Michael Adebowale had carried out the atrocity. Neither man made any threatening move toward Ingrid Loyau-Kennett, who, just as steadily as himself, had stood her ground no more than a yard in front of him.

Loyau-Kennett told the *Daily Telegraph*: “He was not high, he was not on drugs, he was not an alcoholic or drunk, he was just distressed, upset. He was in full control of his decisions and ready to do everything he wanted to do.”

The butchery of Fusilier Rigby may have been horrible, sickening, unjustifiable. But it wasn't irrational: Adebolajo and Adebowale had been making a political point.

Virtually every mainstream commentator shrinks from this perspective. Many seem angered that any explanation is offered other than the psychopathology of the perpetrators and the presumed evil of their ideology.

Not the right time

Alternatively, it's argued that even if the killers' motivation had a rational element, this is not the time to discuss it. Not the time to ask what truth there might be in the claim that “in our land, our women have to see the same.” The wrong circumstances in which to mention torture and murder by Western troops in Iraq, or the killing by drones of Afghan or Pakistani villagers standing too close to a supposed fighter selected for death by Barack Obama.

It dishonors the memory of Fusilier Rigby, it's implied, to argue that there was more to his death than an ambush by homicidal cutthroats.

This is the direct opposite of the truth. We diminish the life of Fusilier Rigby and belittle the grief of those left behind if we refuse to identify the reasons he was done to death. The reasons include the fact that

It's argued that even if the killers' motivation had a rational element, this is not the time to discuss it

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Western governments seem implacably determined to learn no lessons when it comes to relations with Muslims
.....

“Muslims are dying every day” at the hands of Western forces.

Media attention over the past month has understandably focused on the distraught incomprehension of the family and friends of Fusilier Rigby. We rarely encounter equivalent coverage of the agony of the families of Muslim victims of the West. If we did, we might be as moved by their suffering as we are by the suffering of the bereaved of Woolwich. Politically, that would never do.

Western governments seem implacably determined to learn no lessons when it comes to relations with Muslims. June 4 will mark the 100th anniversary of the death of Emily Davison under the hooves of the king’s horse during the Derby.

Like scores of other campaigners for votes for women, she had been force-fed while in prison – for throwing a stone at Lloyd George wrapped in paper, bearing the words, “Rebellion against tyrants is obedience to God.”

Read the accounts of the suffragettes’ experience alongside accounts of the force-feeding of hunger strikers at Guantánamo Bay. Word for word, they could be swapped. A majority of the Guantánamo Bay prisoners have been declared innocent of any crime. But there’s hardly a hullabaloo about

their detention without trial, much less about the torture being inflicted on them.

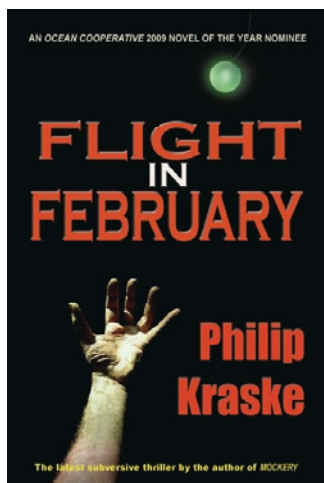
Their religion is a factor in this. If dozens of white Christians were being treated so anywhere in the world, there would be uproar at the UN, with Western delegations raising the roof.

Within days of the Woolwich killing, Britain and France were calling for more arms to be poured into Syria. In response, Vladimir Putin – whose repression of Chechnya has easily matched the savagery of the West toward other Muslim lands – pledged to supply the other side with advanced missile systems.

Yet again, Muslim lives are regarded as worthless in the power plays of outside states. And, still, lengthy discussions of the implications of the Woolwich atrocity focus mainly on the question of what’s to be done about . . . Muslim extremists.

It is doing the likes of Home Secretary Theresa May an unwarranted favor to allow that the law-and-order response of the Home Office might be based on mere ignorance and stupidity. **CT**

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Eamonn McCann is author of War And Peace In Northern Ireland. This column first appeared in the Belfast Telegraph.



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‘Resist these dark times’

Kathy Kelly has some sensible advice from an Afghan mother

When she was 24 years old, in 1979, Fahima Vorgetts left Afghanistan. By reputation, she had been outspoken, even rebellious, in her opposition to injustice and oppression; and family and friends, concerned for her safety, had urged her to go abroad.

Twenty-three years later, returning for the first time to her homeland, she barely recognized war-torn streets in urban areas where she had once lived. She saw and felt the anguish of villagers who couldn't feed or shelter their families. No less able to accept such unjust suffering than she'd been half her life before, Fahima decided to make it her task to help alleviate the abysmal conditions faced by ordinary Afghans living at or below the poverty line – by helping to build independent women's enterprises wherever she could. She trusted in the old adage that if a person is hungry it's an even greater gift to teach the person how to fish than to give the person fish.

Recently, our small delegation of Afghan Peace Volunteers in Kabul traveled around the city with her to visit several clinics and “shuras,” or women's councils that she has opened.

The first clinic we visited has been here since 2006. Two women, a doctor and a midwife, told us that they are part of a staff who work in three shifts to keep the clinic

open “24-7.” Not one of their patients has died while being treated at the clinic.

Next we visited two villages, one Pashtun and the other Tajik, on the outskirts of Kabul.

“Why did you pick this village?” asked Jake Donaldson, a doctor from Ventura, CA who recently joined us here in Kabul. “I didn't pick them,” Fahima exclaimed. “They picked me.”

A year previously, the villagers had asked her to build a clinic and a literacy center. She had told them that if they would agree to organize a women's cooperative and pool their resources to hire teachers, midwives and nurses, she would build the physical building and help with supplies.

In each village, we visited a newly constructed building which will house a clinic, a women's cooperative for jewelry-making, tailoring, and canning, a set of literacy classes for children and adults, and even a public shower which families can sign up to use. A young teacher invited us to step inside his classroom where about fifty children, girls and boys, were learning their alphabet in the first week of a literacy class. Several villagers proudly showed us the well they had dug, powered by a generator. The well will help them irrigate their land as well as supply clean drinking water for the village.

Before we left, a male village elder described to Fahima how valuable her work

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She trusted in the old adage that if a person is hungry it's an even greater gift to teach the person how to fish than to give the person fish

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“Resist these
‘dark times’,
resist war and
weapons, educate
yourselves, and
work together in
friendship”
.....

has been for his village. Fahima seemed to blush a bit as she gratefully acknowledged his compliment.

Such appreciative words, along with the children’s eager expressions, seem to be the main compensation for her tireless work. “I and the board members of The Afghan Women’s Fund are 100% volunteers,” Fahima assures me. “Our board members are people of tremendous integrity.”

On the day before our tour, Fahima had come to the Afghan Peace Volunteer home to speak to the seamstresses who run a sewing cooperative here and encourage them to hold on at all costs to their dignity. She urged them never to prefer handouts to hard work in self-sustaining projects. Fahima had helped the seamstresses begin their cooperative effort at the Volunteer house when she purchased sewing machines for them a little over a year ago.

“Not all of the projects I’ve tried to start have worked out,” said Fahima. “Sometimes people are hampered by conservative values and some families don’t want to allow women to leave their homes. Most often, it is war or the security situation that prevents success.”

She firmly believes that war will never

solve problems in her country – or anywhere else, for that matter.

Fahima is outspoken, even blunt, as she speaks about warlords and war profiteers.

She has good reason to be bitter over the cruelties inflicted on ordinary Afghans by all those interested in filling their own pockets and expanding control of Afghanistan’s resources. She advises the Afghan Peace Volunteers with the voice and love of a mother. “The world is gripped by a class war in which the 1% elite, irrespective of nationality or ethnicity and including the Afghan and US/NATO elite, have been ganging up to control, divide, oppress and profit from us, the ordinary 99%. Resist these ‘dark times’, resist war and weapons, educate yourselves, and work together in friendship.”

Fahima’s spirit of youthful rebellion clearly hasn’t been snuffed out by age or experience. Her practical compassion is like a compass for all of us who learn about her work.

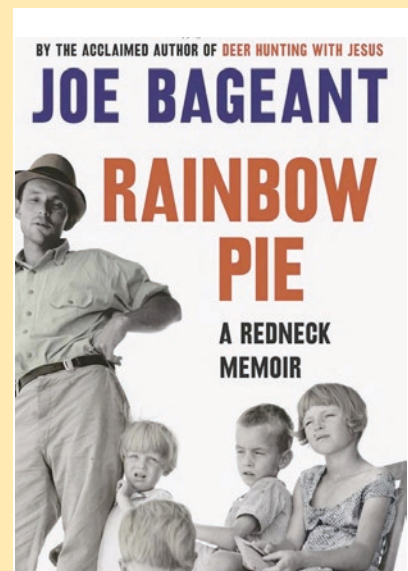
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Kathy Kelly coordinates *Voices for Creative Nonviolence* (www.vcnv.org). She is living in Kabul for the month of May as a guest of the Afghan Peace Volunteers – <http://ourjourneytosmile.com/blog>

JOE BAGEANT **Rainbow Pie: A Redneck Memoir**

Bageant writes about the rural white underclass, not as an anthropological study of an exotic tribe, but as his very own people. Set between 1950 and 1963, combining personal recollections, family stories, and historical analysis, this book leans on Maw, Pap, Ony Mae, and other members of this dirt poor Scots-Irish family to chronicle the often heartbreaking postwar journey of 22 million rural Americans moving from their small subsistence farms into the cities, where they became the foundation of a permanent white underclass.

\$11.51 Amazon.com



There's a war on ordinary people ...

... And feminists are needed at the front, writes **John Pilger**

As editor of the London *Daily Mail* in 1970s and '80s, David English invented a newspaper for those urgently seeking membership of the English middle classes. Whether his readers ever achieved their ambitions was beside the point; their prejudices and illusions were reflected, often brilliantly. Women were central to his project. The *Mail* became "their" paper, boasting a new "media feminism" that subtly divided men and women into opposing camps and added a dash of moral panic.

This is now standard media practice. "Most weeks some lovely, caring berks tell me I am a man-hating witch," wrote Suzanne Moore recently in the *Guardian*, "so let's get it out there. Sometimes I am. The acceptable kind of suck-it-up feminism (I love men really!) is hard to sustain after yet more abuse stories... Do I think all men are rapists? No. Do I think all women can be raped. Yes?"

How quickly the broad brush of blame is applied to a rash of dreadful murder and kidnap cases. Throw in an abduction in Cleveland, Ohio, and the arrest of "yet another TV personality"; and, according to Cynthia Cockburn and Ann Oakley, this represents "the profound, extensive and costly problem of male sexual violence."

Part of the problem, another commentator insinuates, is that men don't care as

much as women because they don't use Twitter enough to express their abhorrence of rape and kidnap. This all adds up to a "crisis in masculinity" requiring men to join in a "conversation" about their social and moral deficiencies on terms already decided.

I am reminded of the elevation of Australian prime minister Julia Gillard to feminist hero following a speech she gave last October attacking Tony Abbott, the opposition leader, for his misogyny. Almost no one mentioned Gillard's hypocrisy – her stripping of benefit from the poorest single parents, mostly women, her inhuman treatment of refugees, including the detention of children, and her campaign against stricken indigenous Australians, forcing them off their land in defiance of international law. Under her watch, more Australian soldiers have died in colonial wars than under any recent prime minister.

About face

That Gillard might be an old-fashioned class warrior and militarist was not news. The same could be said of many of the "progressive" female Labour MPs who entered Westminster with the first Blair administration in 1997 and supported their leader's almost immediate legislated attack on single mothers on benefit, and his numerous violent ad-

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 "It is like Chernobyl here; the genetic effects are new to us; the mushrooms grow huge; even the grapes in my garden have mutated and can't be eaten"

.....
For Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, sending innocent British citizens to Guantanamo was “the best way to meet our counter terrorism objective”
.....

ventures abroad, notably the bloodbath in Iraq. Harriet Harman, a self-declared feminist and currently Labour’s deputy leader, comes to mind.

The problem with media-run “conversations” on gender is not merely the almost total absence of male participants, but the suppression of class. It is tempting to say real politics are missing, too, but bourgeois boundaries and prescriptions are real enough. Thus, gender, like race, can be presented in isolation. Class is a forbidden word; and gender subordinate to class is heresy. The *Daily Mail* model is built on this.

There is indeed a crisis among men – actually ordinary men and women – and it is not their masculinity that is to blame, but the neutering of any credible resistance to a sociopathic system now given the Orwellian title of “austerity”.

With honourable exceptions, the bourgeois media club relegates and distracts from the fact that a full-blooded class war is under way. Ask the women and men in Greece, Spain and Portugal who face Robo-cop police in defence of their right to basic decencies: jobs, education, medicine, even food.

Ask the young people in state schools in Britain who have no hope of attending university; a recent survey found 11 to 16 year olds had “given up” because they knew their families could not afford higher education. Ask the family of Stephanie Bottrill, a disabled grandmother in the West Midlands, who took her own life in despair at the assault on housing benefit known as the “bedroom tax”.

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Government abuse

The killers and kidnappers whose trials apparently require wall-to-wall voyeuristic coverage are no less violent and no less abusive of children than a government that drives people to suicide, that sends young soldiers to kill or have their legs blown off in Afghanistan and that arms and supports

fanatics in Syria and Saudi Arabia.

In incisive articles published mostly on *opendemocracy.net*, Heather McRobie describes how simultaneous war and “austerity” policies have exacerbated all kinds of abuse, including domestic violence. She lists “the most pitiless decimations of the country’s social goods” – from cuts in public sector jobs to the closure of emergency hospital departments and domestic violence shelters and courts. “In media discussion of economic issues circa 2008,” she wrote, “women were largely Sex and the City caricatures of white prosperity, frivolity, recession-triggering over-spenders.” Behind these gender stereotypes lay the fake “empowering” of poor women in the United States.

Persuaded to buy their own homes with rotten sub-prime mortgages, African-American women and their families fell into a chasm of debt. A report by United and Fair Economy, a non-profit group, estimates the total loss to Americans of colour who took out sub-prime loans as between \$164bn and \$213bn.

Seven of Obama’s top Wall Street campaign donors profited from these juicy deals, as did the major British banks – until the “bubble” burst and their “toxic” debts were picked up taxpayers, and the poor.

The imposition of this criminal debt on ordinary people is a breathtaking scandal. Why has it not been challenged with any seriousness? Where is the political opposition? Class is your answer. The style may be different from that of the Tory toffs in power, but most Labour MPs are from the new bourgeoisie. This unrepresentative managerial and professional class exercises also power right across the trade union bureaucracy; and it dominates the media. Once again, it’s time to ask: whose side are you on?

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John Pilger’s documentaries have won academy awards in both the UK and the US. His website is <http://johnpilger.com>

Now we're back to debtors' prisons

Once they were considered a 19th century relic, now they're back and wreaking havoc in the US, writes **Bill Berkowitz**

In the 1990s, Jack [Dawley's] drug and alcohol addictions led to convictions for domestic violence and driving under the influence, resulting in nearly \$1,500 in fines and costs in the Norwalk Municipal Court. Jack was also behind on his child support, which led to an out-of-state jail sentence. After serving three and a half years in Wisconsin, Dawley, now sober for 14 years, is still trying to catch up with the fines he owes, and it has continue[d] to wreak havoc on his life.

Tricia Metcalf is a mother with sole custody of two teenagers. In 2006, Metcalf was convicted of passing multiple bad checks. The fines mounted into the thousands. Unable to pay the total amount owed, Tricia entered into a payment plan of \$50 per month."

Although she's worked temporary jobs, a long-term job has been hard to find. "Whenever Tricia missed a payment, a warrant was issued and she was taken to jail.

The stories of Jack Dawley and Tricia Metcalf are only two of several compelling accounts in the ACLU's new report, *The Outskirts of Hope: How Ohio's Debtors' Prisons Are Ruining Lives And Costing Communities*.

The jailing of people unable to pay fines and court costs is no longer a relic of the 19th century American judicial system. Debtors' prisons are alive and well in one-third of the states in this country.

In 2011, Marie Diamond of Think Progress wrote: "Federal imprisonment for unpaid debt has been illegal in the US since 1833. It's a practice people associate more with the age of Dickens than modern-day America. But as more Americans struggle to pay their bills in the wake of the recession, collection agencies are using harsher methods to get their money, ushering in the return of debtor's prisons."

In 2010, the ACLU did a study titled *In For A Penny: The Rise Of America's New Debtors' Prisons*, which revealed the use of debtors prison practices in five states, Louisiana, Michigan, Ohio, Georgia and Washington.

Outskirts of hope

In his 1964 State of the Union address, President Lyndon B. Johnson said: "Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope – some because of their poverty, and some because of their color, and all too many because of both. Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity."

Nearly 50 years after Johnson's address, which launched the "War on Poverty," "poverty in America has not dissipated," the ACLU's report states that "the number of people living in poverty in Ohio grew by 57.7% from 1999 to 2011, with the largest increase coming from suburban counties."

This year's ACLU report – which takes its

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"As more Americans struggle to pay their bills in the wake of the recession, collection agencies are using harsher methods to get their money, ushering in the return of debtor's prisons"

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**If you are thinking
that debtors'
prisons must be
unconstitutional,
you are right**
.....

name from a phrase in Johnson's speech – points out that many poor Ohioans convicted of a criminal or traffic offense and sentenced to pay a fine that an affluent defendant may simply pay, find the fine unaffordable. This launches the beginning of a protracted process that may involve contempt charges, mounting fees, arrest warrants, and even jail time. "The stark reality is that, in 2013, Ohioans are being repeatedly jailed simply for being too poor to pay fines."

According to the report, Ohio courts in Huron, Cuyahoga, and Erie counties "are among the worst offenders. In the second half of 2012, over 20% of all bookings in the Huron County Jail were related to failure to pay fines. In Cuyahoga County, the Parma Municipal Court jailed at least 45 people for failure to pay fines and costs between July 15 and August 31, 2012. During the same period in Erie County, the Sandusky Municipal Court jailed at least 75 people for similar charges."

If you are thinking that debtors' prisons must be unconstitutional, you are right. The ACLU report points out that the US Constitution, the Ohio Constitution, and Ohio Revised Code prohibit debtors' prisons.

"The law requires that, before jailing anyone for unpaid fines, courts must determine whether an individual is too poor to pay. Jailing a person who is unable to pay violates the law, and yet municipal courts and mayors' courts across the state continue this draconian practice," says the report.

The phenomenon of jailing people because they are unable to pay their fines and/or court costs isn't limited to Ohio. CBS Money Watch's Alain Sherter recently reported that "Roughly a third of US states today jail people for not paying off their debts, from court-related fines and fees to credit card and car loans, according to the American Civil Liberties Union. Such practices contravene a 1983 United States Supreme Court ruling that they violate the Constitution's Equal Protection Clause."

Jack Dawley: "You'd go do your ten days,

and they'd set you up a court date and give you another 90 days to pay or go back to jail . . . It was hard for me to obtain work, so I fell back into the cycle of going to jail every three months."

"I tried to pay my fines several times in multiple ways," Tricia Metcalf said. "I had even gone to churches and asked if there was any way they could help. There was nothing I could do. I asked the judge about community service." She even sold personal possessions, including her only mode of transportation to keep up with paying the fines. "Since 2006, Tricia has been incarcerated five times for failure to pay fines," causing major disruptions for her family.

There are several other compelling personal stories in the report.

Perhaps the most irrational aspect of the growing use of debtors' prisons during tough economic times when counties are stretched beyond their financial capabilities, is that they "actually waste taxpayer dollars by arresting and incarcerating people who will simply never be able to pay their fines, which are in any event usually smaller than the amount it costs to arrest and jail them."

The ACLU is calling on the Ohio Supreme Court "to institute administrative rules to ensure that all courts properly determine whether a person can afford to pay her criminal fines, in order to ensure that those who are unable to pay are not incarcerated for these debts."

" . . . Until the state Supreme Court takes action, thousands of Ohioans will continue to be relegated to the outskirts of hope, where the crime of poverty sentences them to a vicious cycle of incarceration, burdensome fees, and diminishing optimism for a better life. Our constitution – and our conscience – demand that Ohio courts do better."
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Bill Berkowitz is a longtime observer of the conservative movement, documenting the strategies, players, institutions, victories and defeats of the American Right

Two heroes: Mandela and Snowden

Danny Schechter sees contrasts in the lives of South African icon Nelson Mandela and US whistleblower Edward Snowden

It's been called "The Long Goodbye" with the world press updating their updates hourly on Nelson Mandela's health status, with lots of speculation about when he will die. Now that he has been diagnosed as "critical," He may not have long.

The massive media interest in Mandela is a remarkable tribute to a very special man who helped undo apartheid while thrilling the world with his courage as the prisoner who became a president.

Widely accepted heroes in the world are in short supply these days as we can see also from the media treatment of whistleblower Edward Snowden, who many also view as a hero – a majority of those surveyed – while, curiously, a majority of the media punditocracy takes a more cynical view.

Many of our "thought leaders" ask if he isn't really a traitor to be prosecuted rather than an information liberator to be hailed. The host of the "Meet The Press" program even asked Glenn Greenwald who has been reporting on the story, "Why shouldn't you be in jail."

Media insiders in high place tend to be deferential and protective of government officials and detest rebels. They are part of the establishment, not critics of it.

Clearly these two stories are very different, but there are some parallels that almost no one in the media has commented on.

Both men are heroes to those who believe in freedom – the right to be free from racist laws

in one case, and onerous spying in another.

Both men stood up against the powers to be. One was prosecuted and jailed; the other soon may be. One was leader of a radical movement and political liberation fighter. The other is an electronic liberation guerrilla, but also seen a part of a loose anarchistic affinity network that includes Bradley Manning, Wikileaks, Anonymous and many politically-conscious activists.

Mandela was branded a terrorist for years, and hidden from media view. He was tried for treason, and acquitted in a widely condemned trial in an apartheid era court that, in retrospect, may have been fairer than the ones Manning and his band of brothers faces.

Snowden has been denounced for treason and is in the media eye, but is also the target of top politicians and the media sycophants that take them seriously and who question his motives and impact.

South Africa's President Jacob Zuma, who has, in many ways, betrayed Mandela's moral mandates, nevertheless says his country not only admires him but also **needs** him:

"We need him to be with us," he said. "We are all feeling it, that our president, the real father of democracy in South Africa is in the hospital." Snowden's followers seem to be expressing a similar need for someone like the crafty Snowden to challenge Big Brother.

What many in the media chose not to remind us is that South Africa's "real father of de-

.....
Both men are heroes to those who believe in freedom – the right to be free from racist laws in one case, and onerous spying in another

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AP quoted Paul Eckel, then a senior CIA operative, as boasting that Mandela's capture "was one of our greatest coups"
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mocracy" was actually caught and imprisoned, thanks to a tip from the very forces Snowden is fighting. It was the CIA that had been tracking Mandela – with the less sophisticated surveillance technologies available then – and who tipped South Africa's secret police as to his whereabouts

A June 10th, 1990, *New York Times* report quoted an "unidentified retired official who said that a senior CIA officer told him shortly in after Mr. Mandela's arrest, 'We have turned Mandela over to the South African security branch. We gave them every detail, what he would be wearing, the time of day, just where he would be.' "

AP quoted Paul Eckel, then a senior CIA operative, as **boasting** that Mandela's capture "was one of our greatest coups." There were some earlier press reports in the 80's about this CIA role, too. but they never triggered the scandal they should have.

Somehow, it was considered acceptable then that a secret US agency was in collusion with a white racist state battling freedom fighters. This is a connection between Snowden and Mandela that may explain why American "intelligence" tends so often to be on the wrong side, or maybe just is the wrong side.

More recently, cables released by Wikileaks published by five leading newspapers worldwide exposed private conversations with Mandela about his desire to meet Margaret Thatcher and correct her attitudes towards the South African struggle.

Another released cable exposed plans by then State President F. W. de Klerk to free Mandela before those plans were made public.

Now the tables seem to have turned, at least in some respects, because of the courage of whistleblowers who took on a government committed to massive spying.

Despite his many detractors in the intelligence 'business,' and its supporters in Congress and rationalizers in the press, Snowden's actions seems to have turned him into a popular figure, writes Gary Stamper: "Edward Snowden...is coming across as the all-American hero according to a poll today that showed

70% support for him and his actions with the American public. Compare that with the popularity of Congress which is mostly calling for Snowden's Bradley Manning moment. If he continues to elude the CIA and American Security Apparatus can't catch him soon, his stock will soar as Americans pretty much love a heroic underdog.

"One of the reporters from the *Guardian* newspaper who arranged with Snowden to meet in Hong Kong for interviews told the Associated Press that he had been contacted by 'countless people' offering to pay for 'anything [Snowden] might need.' "

The 94-year-old Mandela and 29-year-old Snowden come from different parts of the world and fought differently in different eras.

Already, Congressman Ron Paul, the libertarian who Snowden supported with a campaign donation is fearing for his life, saying, "I'm worried about, somebody in our government might kill him with a cruise missile or a drone missile... we live in a bad time where American citizens don't even have rights and that they can be killed, but the gentlemen is trying to tell the truth about what's going on."

The while world is watching as Snowden eludes capture. Mandela, when underground, had been branded the 'Black Pimpernel' as he avoided capture until the CIA turned him in. And millions of Mandela's supporters are bracing for the end of his life because of his age and an infirmity he contacted in prison.

Snowden knows his travails may just be starting as he becomes an international outlaw, but one with access to secrets that the powerful want to keep secret. He faces many challenges to stay one step ahead of his pursuers who are indignant because he has so far outmaneuvered him

In their own ways, and in their own times, both Mandela (whose exploits will be featured in a major motion picture, out this fall) and Snowden have seized the public imagination.

Both are Rebels of Our Times. Both were denounced and denigrated for opposing governmental abuse, and yet remain widely respected and admired.

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News Dissector
Danny Schechter has made many films and TV programs about South Africa. He is currently working on the "Making and Meaning of Long Walk To Freedom"
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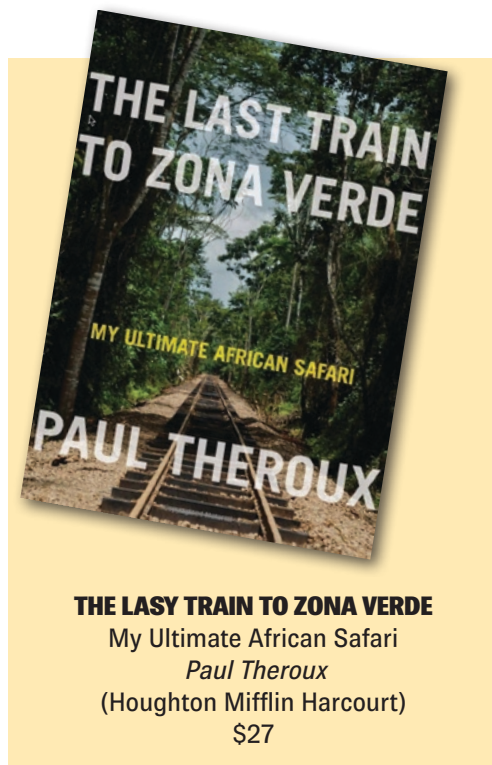
A nomad at the end of the road

“I am not an Afro-pessimist,” writes Paul Theroux in his new book. His bleak account of the continent suggests otherwise, writes **Rian Malan**

“He’s good,” says my friend Kevin Bloom, “but is he one of us?” By “us,” Kevin means an African. We’re in a Johannesburg bar, discussing the arrival of a new African travel yarn from Paul Theroux, whose *Dark Star Safari* was widely read and discussed here a decade ago – partly because of its pungent denunciations of African dysfunction but also because it struck some of us as slightly excessive.

Kevin, for instance, argues that if you study Mr Theroux’s work carefully, you’ll realize he’s just another fastidious foreigner with little tolerance for the horrors that attend travel in Africa – heat, germs, delays, chaos, corruption and threats of violence. I take a more charitable view, pointing to a passage in *Dark Star* where Mr Theroux sets off down “the worst road in Africa” on a cattle truck. In the next several pages, he is pummelled, bruised, choked by dust, shot at by bandits and eventually stranded in a fly-blown hellhole when the truck breaks down. His fellow travellers are suicidal. Mr Theroux says, “I laughed and drank and another Tusker and thought, I love this place.”

What can I say? I love Paul Theroux. *Mosquito Coast* was one of the great novels of the 20th century. The travel books (15 so far) have been inspirational to me. *Sir Vidia’s Shadow*, about Mr Theroux’s friendship



THE LAST TRAIN TO ZONA VERDE
My Ultimate African Safari
Paul Theroux
(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)
\$27

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In the next several pages, he is pummelled, bruised, choked by dust, shot at by bandits and eventually stranded in a fly-blown hellhole when the truck breaks down
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with the novelist V.S. Naipaul, was also a tremendous book about Africa. Mr Theroux and Mr Naipaul met in Uganda in 1965, in the first rosy flush of black Africa’s independence. Mr Theroux was a Peace Corps liberal, keen to say the right things about the dark continent’s bright prospects in the post-colonial era. Mr Naipaul, on the other hand, took one look and snorted, “Uganda will go back to bush.”

Ah! Such fearless contempt for bourgeois

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To view game from the back of an elephant can be a heady experience, apparently, but Mr Theroux is far too sardonic to be impressed by any of this upper-class tourist frippery. The real Africa lies ahead, and he knows it will be ugly
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convention! Young Paul was hugely impressed. He trotted along behind the great man, jotting down his *pensees*, and eventually became his close friend. But when the two fell out in the late 1990s, Mr Theroux denounced Sir Vidia as a bit of a racist. “He was mistaken about so much,” wrote Mr Theroux. “He made confused statements about Africa and seemed to regard the continent as a jungle of jitterbugging ‘bush men.’”

Mr Naipaul’s problem, said Mr Theroux, was that he didn’t understand Africa: Its cities were abominable, but its bush was benign. As if to prove his case, Mr Theroux made village life an important subtheme in *Dark Star Safari*. “In the bush lay Africa’s essence,” he wrote, and it was a sweet and honourable essence. But even then the bush was retreating, overrun by progress and soaring populations. By the time Mr Theroux returned to Africa to work on his new book, there were 200 million more Africans to contend with, an increase of 25 percent in just a decade. Disappointment was inevitable.

Last Train to Zona Verde opens in Cape Town, where Mr Theroux languishes between satin sheets in a luxury hotel, noshing “pepper-crusting Wagyu steak with the black truffle vinaigrette” while contemplating a little slumming. He’d visited the city a decade earlier and was now eager to see if there were any signs of progress. And lo: Some hovels have been replaced by real houses; do-gooders have made a success of their slum-side business school; and poor black children are less likely to stone passing trains. Mr Theroux frets that the city might be fighting a losing battle, given the rate at which indigents are flooding in, but for the moment, Cape Town is beset by “a general sense of uplift.”

From there, Mr Theroux makes his way to Tshumkwe in Namibia, where he will spend time with the last surviving San, or Bushmen. Mr Theroux says he’s always

been fascinated by these tiny, half-naked hunter-gatherers, and he gets a thrill from traipsing through the veld in their wake, digging up edible plants and starting fires the Stone Age way. He knows this is an illusion, a reenactment of a way of life that became extinct decades ago, but he’s beguiled anyway.

Also beguiling is the view from the deck at Abu Camp, just over the border in Botswana. Mr Theroux sits in the dusk, eating sushi as “elephants approach in the golden light, framed by dark trees and the pinky purple sky.” Again, the sight is magical – and, again, an illusion. The elephants are foundlings from zoos and circuses, tamed and trained to carry tourists into the nearby Okavango Swamp. To view game from the back of an elephant can be a heady experience, apparently, but Mr Theroux is far too sardonic to be impressed by any of this upper-class tourist frippery. The real Africa lies ahead, and he knows it will be ugly.

The author’s aim is to travel overland to Timbuktu, the fabled walled city of Mali. The route passes through at least one war zone, two simmering rebellions and great swathes of terra incognita. It is brave even to contemplate such a journey; almost insane to do so at the age of 70. “I consoled myself by thinking that the unlikely sight of an old man traveling alone in Africa meant that anyone who saw me would laugh me off as a crank,” says Mr Theroux.

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Target Timbuktu

The owners of the border hostelry where he spends his last night cannot believe that a white man intends to proceed on foot into Angola. Nobody has ever done such a thing, they say, and for good reason: “It’s a nightmare!” And so it was. A pack of jeering youths trailed Mr Theroux around the no-man’s-land between border posts, demanding money. Almost as scary were officials who relished the chance to intimidate a lone Yankee. As he escapes at last into

Angola, Mr Theroux takes a parting shot at those who fly into Africa's international airports and return full of praise for the country's manners and modernity: "You do not have the slightest idea."

After that, Mr Theroux secures a seat in a northbound taxi and soon discovers "a world of roadblocks and mobs, of terrible roads or no roads at all, a world of lies and scamming and crooked policemen." The driver drinks himself into a stupor, and by sunset they're stranded. There are no buses, no passing cars, nothing to eat save the offering of an old crone with a plastic bucket, at the bottom of which lie three pieces of chicken, "skinless, shiny-sinewed, and dark as kippers, as if they'd been smoked," and covered with teeming black flies.

But what can you do? Mr Theroux buys a chunk, eats it and settles down to sleep in the car. In the distance, drums are beating around a bonfire. He has blundered into some of that old bush magic – a rite of initiation for nubile girls – and for a moment, he's happy. "It was wonderful," he says. "The kind of luck I had always depended on."

The stare of hungry eyes

But it doesn't last. Mr Theroux is developing a powerful antipathy towards Angola, ruled by socialists who name their streets after Castro and Ho Chi Minh but loot their nation's oil wealth for themselves. The elite lives in luxury; everyone else is desperate. Mr Theroux cannot eat for the disconcerting stare of hungry eyes. He cannot stand the heat, the dirt, the stench, the ceaseless blare of rap music and the sing-song jabber of Chinese traders, some 70,000 of whom have recently settled in Angola's hinterland. In Mr Theroux's view, the Chinese are plunderers, allied to the dictators and offhand to the point of rudeness with ordinary Africans. "Theirs is a racket like those of all previous colonizers," says Mr Theroux, working himself up toward a climactic Jeremiad.

Locals keep telling him that Angola is a victim of its history – four centuries of slavery and colonialism, followed by a civil war that left the landscape strewn with bombed-out hulks of Russian and South African tanks. Mr Theroux clocks the argument but soon discards it. "Another African city, another horror," he writes. "Glary light, stinking diesel fumes, broken fences. . . ." And so it goes, the mood darkening with each passing mile until, on page 347, I encounter a sentence that strikes me dumb: "I am not an Afro-pessimist."

I'm like, what?

The previous chapter is titled, "This is what the world will look like when it ends." In the very next paragraph, Mr Theroux reverts to his theme, lamenting the spread of "the awful, poisoned, populous Africa; the Africa of cheated, despised people; of seemingly unfixable blight." So what then to make of his forlorn little outbreak of optimism? I suspect it's a last glimpse of Mr Theroux's young self, the Peace Corps volunteer who fell hopelessly in love with Africa at the age of 22. And that self is about to expire. The end comes at Luanda's railway station, where Theroux is struck by the following epiphany:

"I was the man bewitched by the Patagonian Express and the Trans-Siberian, who had written, 'Ever since childhood, I have seldom heard a train go by and not wished I was on it' – yet here was a brand-new Chinese-made train, lit up, on a line that could bear me in relative comfort into zona verde – the green zone of Angola's bush, the site of the last few wild animals in the country and of the sort of village life that always seemed a consolation. My lifelong idea of supreme happiness was being a passenger on a train rattling through the night to a distant place unknown to me. But I thought, Not this time. And, thinking it, I was joyous – this was the end of my trip."

With that, Paul Theroux boards a plane and flies home.

As I closed *Last Train to Zona Verde*, I

The elite lives in luxury; everyone else is desperate. Mr Theroux cannot eat for the disconcerting stare of hungry eyes. He cannot stand the heat, the dirt, the stench, the ceaseless blare of rap music and the sing-song jabber of Chinese traders

BOOK REVIEW

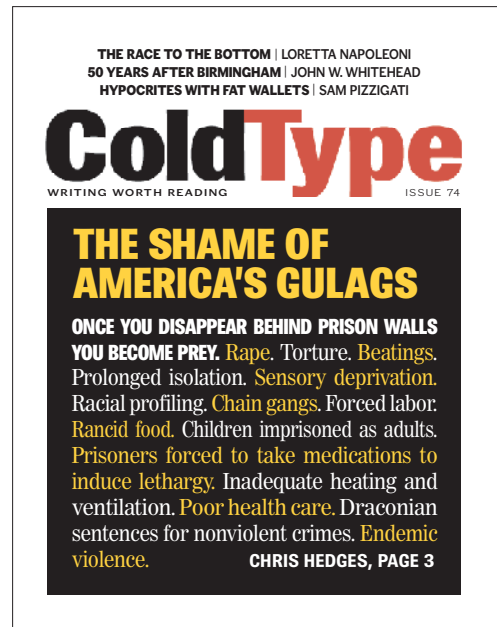
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I have been down
the road that
broke his spirit.
Like Mr Theroux,
I saw the heat
and dust, the
roadblocks, the
infuriating delays
.....

found myself thinking about V.S. Naipaul. I suspect he will admire the brain-rattling momentum of Mr Theroux's prose and the Wagnerian fury of his diatribes. But he'll also chuckle at the recollection of passages in *Sir Vidia's Shadow* where Mr Theroux accuses him of being mistaken about so many things African. With this book, Mr Theroux has forfeited the right to mock anyone else's Afro-phobia.

Which is not to diminish his courage as a traveler. I have been down the road that broke his spirit. Like Mr Theroux, I saw the

heat and dust, the roadblocks, the infuriating delays. Like Mr Theroux, I vowed that I would henceforth leave this to someone else – “Someone younger perhaps, hungrier, stronger, more desperate,” as he puts it. I was in my thirties then. Mr Theroux was 70 when he set out for Zona Verde. And that makes him an honorary African. **CT**

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Rian Malan's latest collection of journalism is "The Lion Sleeps Tonight and Other Stories of Africa." This review originally appeared in the Wall Street Journal



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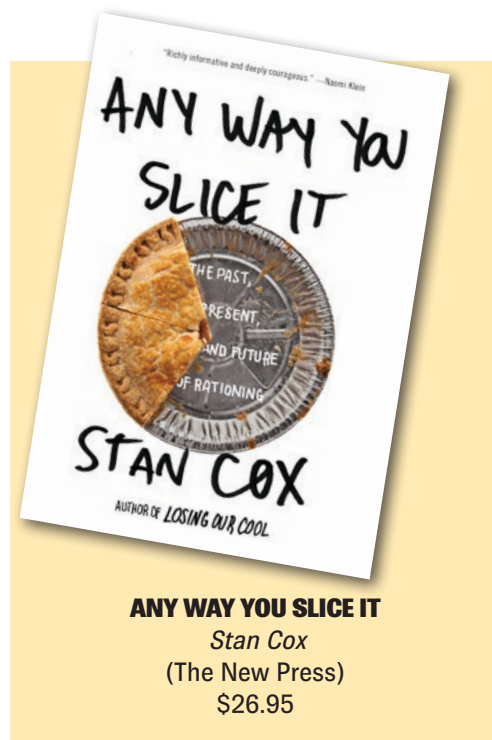
Sharing the future

An excerpt from *Any Way You Slice It*, the new book by Stan Cox

On the afternoon of September 11, 2001, I left work at a little after 5 p.m. Driving home, I was surprised to see long lines of cars stretching into the street at every gas station I passed. At some stations, police were having to direct traffic. What was going on? This was Salina, Kansas; the embattled East Coast was thirteen hundred miles away. The national news was on the car radio, and there was nothing about a threat to petroleum supplies. What did people know that I didn't know? I even took a glance at my own car's gas gauge but then decided I had better just go home.

I soon learned that the gas rush was not just a Kansas phenomenon. A station owner in Milwaukee told a reporter, "It's probably never been this busy. Ever. It's unbelievable!" Some drivers in Oklahoma City were lining up to pay \$5 a gallon – almost four times the prevailing rate at the time – to fill their tanks. At stations around Des Moines, where lines of as many as eighty-five cars were forming, rumors circulated of \$8 gas in Boston. Drivers in Iowa and Minnesota were seen loading pickup-truck beds with 55-gallon drums and trash cans and pumping gas into them.

A Kentucky psychologist later explained the irrational fuel rush as a knee-jerk reaction: "Those people had been at work all day, not able to do anything, thinking about



For many of us not directly affected by the attacks on New York and Washington, the seemingly instinctive first reaction had been to get in line to stock up on fuel

previous incidents that had caused gas shortages." Another psychologist speculated, "They wanted to have a sense of control, not feel stranded or trapped in any way" By the next day, Americans seeking a way to render aid were lining up for hours at blood-donation centers. But for many of us not directly affected by the attacks on New York and Washington, the seemingly instinctive first reaction had been to get in line to stock up on fuel. Images of past scarcity and conflict had welled up in our collective mem-

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Praising residents of his city as “the best shoppers in the world,” Mayor Giuliani called on them to start spending money on food, entertainment, and consumer goods again”
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ory, and those recollections had brought little reassurance that America would be able to deal fairly with whatever scarcity might come next. Drivers middle-aged and older undoubtedly recalled the 1970s, when gas pumps ran dry and stations became battlegrounds. Back then, station owners could have shortened the lines by doubling or tripling their prices, but the government wouldn't allow that. Instead, there were weekend closings, gallon limits, minimum-purchase requirements, and alternate-day access based on license-plate numbers. As the White House and Congress were considering per-vehicle gas quotas as a last resort, the oil suddenly resumed flowing, the lines vanished, and America once again picked up its growth in consumption not just of gasoline but of all resources. Through the 1980s and 1990s, it was a top priority of political leaders to keep the economy fueled up by reassuring us that whatever calamity might come our way – war, terrorism, hurricane, earthquake, flood, or disease epidemic – our capacity to consume would not be interrupted by shortages. The reaction of motorists on 9/11 indicated that we didn't quite buy those reassurances.

In the days following the attacks, New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani provided his own suggestion to those not directly involved in emergency operations. Praising residents of his city as “the best shoppers in the world,” he called on them to start spending money on food, entertainment, and consumer goods again. Tony Blair, the British prime minister, echoed that advice: “People in this country ask what should they do at a time like this. The answer is that they should go about their daily lives: to work, to live, to travel, and to shop.” In a speech two weeks after the attack, President George W. Bush encouraged Americans to “get on the airlines, get about the business of America.” As the years passed and the list of official foreign enemies grew, that message persisted. In a news conference in late 2006, Bush assured Americans that his ad-

ministration and the Pentagon had gained control in both the war in Iraq and a dispute with Iran. Therefore, he said, “I encourage you all to go shopping more.” Responding to the clamor for patriotic consumerism, the syndicated columnist Marsha Mercer lamented, “The president hasn't asked ordinary Americans to sacrifice at all. . . . ‘I want to do something to help,’ a nurse told me the other day. ‘I don't want to shop.’ ” But today, more than a decade after 9/11, more than three decades since the era of oil embargoes and gas lines, and, it appears, well into an era of ecological crisis, no movement for shared responsibility and sacrifice has emerged.

The spiral of production and consumption that built today's world cannot spin upward forever. It may begin winding down because some combination of fuels, ores, building materials, soils, water, or food becomes depleted. It could wind down because the atmosphere-, land-, and water-based ecosystems that provide both tangible necessities and myriad unseen benefits become degraded. Or maybe we ourselves will attempt to restrain the growth spiral by preemptively limiting resource consumption and curbing climatic and ecological disruption. In the process, societies will face a vexing two-part puzzle: How can we reduce the burden we place on the Earth's ecological and mineral resources while at the same time ensuring that everyone can consume enough resources to maintain a good quality of life? To do both will require thoroughgoing changes in the way economies function.

People don't like even thinking about entire economies practicing restraint. In 2007, the *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman wrote, “One thing that always struck me about the term ‘green’ was the degree to which, for so many years, it was defined by its opponents – by the people who wanted to disparage it. And they defined it as ‘liberal,’ ‘tree-hugging,’ ‘sissy,’ ‘girlie-man,’ ‘unpatriotic,’ ‘vaguely French.’ ”

Friedman declared it his intention to give “green” a more macho definition, to make it, in his words, “geostrategic, geoeconomic, capitalistic and patriotic.” His macho approach hasn’t caught on, nor have we found a green vision that is tough-minded and practical and can’t be hijacked by big business. Meanwhile, green behavior continues to trigger equal and opposite reactions in those who hold different beliefs. In the years leading up to the automobile industry’s 2008–9 crash, an especially intense area of eco-conflict concerned choice of personal transportation. There arose a war of words (and sometimes spray paint and tire irons, on both sides) between Hummer owners and their critics (the latter often branded as “tofu-eating Prius drivers,” and many did in fact own hybrid cars). That conflict grew, according to marketing researcher Marius Luedicke and colleagues, into a “nationalistic morality play.” While critics accused Hummer owners of “exhibiting a reckless degree of selfishness and an unconscionable level of social irresponsibility,” Hummer owners accused their critics of being in league with an incongruous assortment of opponents whom they regarded as “hostile to their rugged individual ideals,” including “communists, PETA members, terrorists, and liberals.”

Current enthusiasm for “conspicuous conservation” (or “going green to be seen”) among consumers who can afford it has been harnessed by marketers to increase sales of green products. However, green consumers risk being regarded by others as self-righteous pains in the neck. There’s no need to lose sleep over the unfair caricatures of greenness propagated by anti-greens, but what about the much larger segment of the population who may be less than inspired by attitudes like that of the ecomarketing executive who boasted to a *New Yorker* reporter, “I do daily yoga with my wife. We live in an energy-efficient house with solar-panel appliances. We use organic linens and towels”? Those are all fine practices, but you

don’t have to be a Hummer-driving oil executive to bristle at that style of example setting. The ecofriendly *Slate* columnist Emily Bazelon had an especially strong reaction: “Don’t you want to punch this guy? I do.” Research shows that sometimes people really do become irritated with those who act responsibly, even when it’s done completely out of personal motivation, with no boasting or intentional example setting. Rightly or wrongly, we tend to interpret the good deeds of others as implicit criticism of our own actions (or inaction) and that creates ill will.

Public displays of green abstinence can be just as frustrating as the flaunting of green consumption. In an online chat about the column in which she had criticized the yoga- and-towel-consuming executive (and in which she was self-critical as well; the piece ran under the subtitle “Is My Hybrid Turning My Kids into Eco-Snobs?”), Bazelon heard from a commenter in Kensington, Maryland, who, in an effort to show how to avoid ecosnobbery, painted a grim picture indeed:

Environmentalism is hard, it is not fun. It requires pretty much being uncool and old-fashioned. But it is worth it. The fleet of bikes my family uses to get around was pulled from the garbage. So were some of our furniture, building materials, television, several vacuum cleaners and assorted computer equipment. We actually sew our clothes to patch holes and extend their useful life indefinitely. We compost. I use the dishwasher on the lawn. . . . There is nothing to be snobby about in being green. It is about being humble, not showing off consumer excess, using less and living simpler, more selfless lives. Your kids, like mine, actually will hate it.

Bazelon responded, “But here’s my question for you: if it’s grim and a slog, and we portray it that way, won’t most people de-

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“If it’s grim and a slog, and we portray it that way, won’t most people decide to do nothing at all?”

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While it’s true that talk of a tough future can induce apathy and inaction, the obvious mismatch between the scale of looming ecological crises and the limited nature of most of the lifestyle-based recommendations for solving them can be just as demobilizing. If a good citizen need only install a “smart” thermostat, empty the dishwasher on the lawn, and keep tires properly inflated, then the situation may appear to be under control. Like the “global war on terror” – in which our only assignment as civilians was to “be aware of your surroundings” and go shopping – the global ecological crisis has so far meant no significant sacrifices or even adjustments by the US public. It’s not because people in general are “unaware, hypnotized, selfish, and lazy,” as some environmental activists have been accused of characterizing us. It’s just that we’re still looking for a common struggle in which to join – a struggle for fairness, resilience, and resourcefulness, in which everyone is playing by the same rules.

The question of consumption reaches its stickiest point when it comes to the basic necessities of life. When there is a shortage of essential goods, and a portion of the population struggles even to meet minimum requirements, some very tough choices have to be made. In this book, I will examine what happens when society finds it necessary to limit consumption but decides collectively that it is not acceptable simply to have supplies dwindle, allow prices to rise, and let people scramble for what they need. I will ask if it is possible to devise a fair, objective, transparent system for averting both privation and excess. In other words – to use what has been called a “six-letter four-letter word” – this is a book about how rationing happens today and how we might ration more fairly in the future.

.....
The price we pay

The high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) express

lane has long been a feature of urban freeways around the world. In the traditional version of the HOV lane, only vehicles with two or more occupants are allowed entry, thereby providing an incentive to carpool, conserve fuel, and reduce air pollution. In the 1990s, some cities opened HOV lanes to non-carpoolers if they paid a toll, and, in 2004, California cities began admitting solo drivers if they were in hybrid, electric, and other more fuel-efficient vehicles. In 2011, the notoriously traffic-choked city of Atlanta attempted to lure more drivers into its HOV lanes by converting some stretches into “high-occupancy toll” (HOT) lanes. Under the new regime, solo drivers on a busy sixteen-mile-long stretch of Interstate 85 are now eligible to use the express lane if they buy an electronic “PeachPass” through which they are automatically assessed a fee that ranges between one and ninety cents per mile – the heavier the HOT traffic, the higher the toll. But now, two-occupant vehicles also must pay. Only vehicles with three or more occupants – the rarest of rare sights in Atlanta – may enter free of charge. The lanes, once used to promote conservation, have thereby been redirected almost entirely toward congestion relief and revenue generation.

The scheme has brought little congestion relief, however, and the high-tech “Lexus lanes,” as they are often called, have been highly controversial. When HOT lanes made their Atlanta debut in October 2011, drivers veered away from them by the tens of thousands. Very few were willing to buy a pass even if it allowed them to sail past nonpaying traffic. With two-occupant cars now forced to squeeze over into the regular traffic, congestion worsened and commutes stretched even longer. HOT traffic then did begin to pick up, growing steadily over the next few months, and the cost of using the lane rose accordingly, surpassing \$4.75 for the full sixteen miles in early 2012. Ninety-four percent of drivers were still using the free lanes, where traffic continued to crawl

along as slowly as ever, and cars in the HOT lanes moved at an average of only six to nine miles per hour faster. One driver complained, “So, you’re paying four dollars to be stuck in traffic still when you could just drive in the regular lanes and you’re going to be stuck in traffic anyway.” Furthermore, it was estimated that 20 percent of drivers in the toll lane were cheaters who carried with them neither a PeachPass nor two other passengers. Needless to say, no fuel was conserved.

The logic of the HOT lane is straightforward enough. By adjusting fees, authorities can move toward “getting the price right” – in this case, to determine the rates that will induce the desired number of drivers to shell out a few bucks for a faster trip at a given time of day. One driver, a lawyer, told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, “It’s awesome. I’m glad [other drivers] hate it. They can stay out of it – that’s why it’s moving.” The HOT system and the HOV system it replaced are both means of rationing scarce driving space, but HOV applies what is called the criterion of reciprocity – in this case, distributing the resource to those who carpool to conserve resources – while HOT rations space according to drivers’ willingness to pay the toll, with a dash of reciprocity for those phantom three-occupant cars. But during rush hour under either system, most drivers are subjected to another timetested rationing device: waiting in line. Although it can be argued that the classic HOV lane is unfair because it favors commuters who can afford hybrid cars or happen to live and work under circumstances that allow them to carpool, it is the HOT lane’s pay-or-crawl requirement that has inspired outrage.

Prices are the key to efficiency in market economies. They direct resources toward more profitable uses by industry; then, once industry has turned out commodities, prices ration the commodities among consumers. That is said to provide maximum benefit to society as a whole, because the ways in which people spend their money

reflect what they believe will increase their own well-being. But do markets really zero in on the optimum distribution? “The thesis that efficiency maximizes welfare,” the economist Mark Sagoff has written, “states a specious tautology, since ‘welfare’ and ‘efficiency’ are both defined in terms of ‘willingness-to-pay’ ”; furthermore, willingness to pay can be expressed only by those with the ability to pay. And it has long been well known that when consumers make purchases, they are not simply expressing preferences that spring from somewhere deep within. Back in 1958, for example, the Harvard economist Edward Mason argued that in the then-new era of the giant corporation and “managerialism,” consumers often did not even have the chance to express their preferences. Rather, their purchasing patterns were being largely dictated by those from whom they were buying. This didn’t fit the theory of classical economics, in which, Mason wrote, “‘tastes’ or ‘wants’ on the demand side and, on the supply side, technological and resource limitations to production were ‘given data’ ” and the test of an economic system “lay in the efficiency with which it accomplished, within these limitations, the satisfaction of human wants.” In the twentieth century, things had changed:

In an economy whose supreme talent is devoted not only to the creation of the new product but to making the customer like it, [consumer] sovereignty turns out to be limited indeed. The consumer may have a biological need for food but not necessarily in cellophane wrapping; he may have a culturally determined desire for transportation, but he can presumably get there without fins on his car. . . . If this is so, what happens to the doctrine of consumer sovereignty and the tests of the efficiency of an economic system that are cast in terms of its capacity to satisfy human wants? The measuring rod turns out to be highly elastic – to be extended or shrunk at the whim of those

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"It's kind of discouraging to see stuff like this happen, but that's part of life and economics"
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who manage the system.

In many situations, markets turn out to be highly inefficient, and they fail. In other situations, even when the economy is operating at high efficiency, it can produce results that "may well be thoroughly unequal and nasty," in the words of the noted economist Amartya Sen. When resources go to the high bidders, the economic tide may rise, but only for those who have a boat – and yachts always rise the fastest.

Consider quinoa. Three to four thousand years ago, farmers in South America took a wild plant species with edible seeds called *Chenopodium quinoa* and, through observation and selective breeding over many generations, increased the yield and size of the plants' seeds, thereby giving their continent, and eventually the world, a new grain crop. Today, with its tastiness, high nutritional value, and association with an exotic ancient civilization, quinoa grain has become popular in North America and Europe as an alternative to cereal grains such as wheat and rice. In 2011, the *New York Times* reported from Bolivia that "demand for quinoa is soaring in rich countries, as American and European consumers discover the 'lost crop' of the Incas. The surge has helped raise farmers' incomes here in one of the hemisphere's poorest countries. But there has been a notable trade-off: fewer Bolivians can now afford it, hastening their embrace of cheaper, processed foods and raising fears of malnutrition in a country that has long struggled with it." The problem was that health-conscious consumers in the global North had stimulated exports of quinoa, driving up prices in its region of origin. The *Times* noted that although Bolivia's malnutrition rate as measured nationwide has fallen in recent years, the rate of chronic malnutrition in children has risen, specifically in quinoa-growing areas. Asked about the situation, the president of the Quinoa Corporation of Los Angeles responded with cool rationality: "It's kind of discouraging

to see stuff like this happen, but that's part of life and economics."

Countless such situations illustrate the principle that even when markets work as intended and at high efficiency, they allocate resources "toward those who have money and unmet wants, not toward those who have unmet needs," in the words of the ecological economist Joshua Farley. One of Farley's choice examples of prices in action concerns a pharmaceutical compound called eflornithine, which kills the parasite that causes East African sleeping sickness. The company Hoechst Marion Roussel began to manufacture the drug in 1990, but soon after Hoechst was bought by the pharmaceutical giant Aventis in 1995, the new owners noted the inadequate profits generated by eflornithine and began phasing it out. By 1998, little or no supply remained; approximately three hundred thousand people contracted sleeping sickness that year in Africa, with tens of thousands dying. Farley writes:

Although the only other treatment for second-stage sleeping sickness [a concoction that is, according to one observer, essentially "arsenic dissolved in antifreeze"] is extremely painful to administer, often ineffective, and often lethal, Aventis could not profit from selling [eflornithine] to poor Africans and discontinued production for that purpose. At the same time, however, Bristol Myers Squibb and Gillette were profitably producing eflornithine to remove unwanted facial hair in women. Aventis and Bristol Myers Squibb agreed to again produce eflornithine for the treatment of African sleeping sickness only after the NGO Médecins Sans Frontières threatened to publicize the issue.

Had the market been left to its own devices, he notes, the rationing function of prices would have reserved eflornithine exclusively for cosmetic purposes rather

than for saving lives. Another of Farley's cautionary tales is the 2001 electricity crisis in California, which triggered "rolling blackouts" and financially crippled power utilities. When energy trading companies, led by Enron Corporation, created shortages in the state's recently deregulated power industry, they caused wholesale electricity prices to jump by as much as 800 percent, with economic turmoil and suffering the result. The loss to the state was estimated at more than \$40 billion. That same year, Brazil had a nationwide electricity shortfall of 10 percent, which was proportionally larger than the shortage in California. But the Brazilian government avoided inflation and blackouts simply by capping prices and limiting all customers, residential and commercial, to 10 percent lower consumption than that of the previous year, with severe penalties for exceeding the limit. No significant suffering resulted. The California crisis is viewed as one of America's worst energy disasters, but, says Farley, "No one even remembers a 'crisis' in Brazil in 2001."

Rationing of water to those who can afford to spend the most has had profound consequences around the world. The more extreme the wealth gap, it seems, the more unfair the allocation. From a survey of tropical tourist destinations in Africa and Asia, the London-based nonprofit Tourism Concern concluded in a 2012 report that "tourism development is negatively impacting the quality, availability and accessibility of freshwater for local people, amounting to an infringement of their water and sanitation rights." In Zanzibar, for example, resort hotels and guesthouses sited in three coastal villages consume 180 to 850 gallons of water per room per day (with the more luxurious hotels consuming the most), while local households have access to only 25 gallons per day for all purposes. Each of the villages depends on a small electric pump for its supply, and the power is often interrupted; meanwhile, the hotels employ more powerful, higher-volume pumps, with the result

that water pressure in the villages is further reduced. In southern India, luxury tourist houseboats that ply the scenic backwaters of Kerala are using the waterways not only for transportation (leaking gas and oil in the process) but also as a toilet and garbage receptacle. Most local people depend on the backwaters for all their water needs and for the fish they eat; now pollution is rendering their water undrinkable, and their fish often tastes like kerosene. And in the Gambia, on the west coast of Africa, tourist hotels are supplied with ample water through systems of oversized pipes and can store it in large reserve tanks, while 75 percent of households in the area have no piped water at all.

In these few examples spanning four continents, the distorted distribution of food, drugs, energy, and water is striking. Ill effects of rationing by price are especially troubling when, as in these cases, they affect commodities that in certain quantities are recognized as necessities – and that people often desire to acquire them in much larger quantities. In times of scarcity, whether encountered or created, governments sometimes build a floor under consumption to secure basic needs at the bottom of the economy, and they often find it necessary also to put a ceiling in place as well, to conserve resources that would otherwise be consumed in excess by some. In other words, they practice rationing by means other than price. The mechanisms for nonprice rationing are many and varied. The more familiar include rationing by queuing, as at the gas pump in the 1970s; by time, as with day-of-week lawn sprinkling during droughts; by lottery, as with immigration visas and some clinical trials of scarce drugs; by triage, as in battlefield or emergency medicine; by straight quantity, as governments did with gasoline, tires, and shoes during World War II; or by keeping score with a nonmonetary device such as carbon emissions or the points that were assigned to meats and canned goods in war-

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time. Whether to ration by price and, if not, the choice among other means of rationing can have profound consequences. Any way you slice it, the manner in which we share the burden of scarcity is something that arises from conscious choices. Resources don’t decide for themselves where to go.

As we will see, rationing of household consumption does not work as a primary means of limiting total resource use; rather, it is a measure that becomes necessary when the use of resources “upstream,” in production, is limited. Should shortages strike on continental or global scales sometime in the future, or if governments should begin treating fossil fuels as if they are scarce, as part of an effort to curb ecological disruption, then rationing by price could create intolerable hardship for many. If it becomes clear that nonprice rationing is necessary, societies can learn from past experience; wartime provides many of the most-discussed examples, but, as we will see, there are many others. Nonprice rationing has so far been employed chiefly as a response to temporary scarcity in specific geographical areas. Might we one day face global, persistent scarcity and along with it the prospect of formal rationing? It is not just a hypothetical question. We are seeing a continuous stream of research-journal articles and news stories, and shelves full of books, anticipating a future racked by ecological breakdown, resource depletion, and scarcity.³⁰ Be assured that this book isn’t one of those; in my view, the healthiest approach to the forecasts of gloom and doom hanging over us is to weigh them seriously but then move on quickly to consider what can be done. What societies have done before and what we could do in the future in four crucial realms of life – energy, water, food, and medical care – will be the subjects of the chapters that follow.

The Great Recession of 2009 brought the long-disdained word “austerity” back into wide usage, but it’s now defined as a narrow form of frugality that only governments, not

corporations or individuals, must practice. Governments are told that they can no longer live beyond their means. Fair enough; that logic is typically applied only to fiscal means, however, while rarely acknowledging that governments and corporations are also living beyond their ecological means. Protests across North America and Europe since 2009 have rightly condemned government austerity measures that protect the fortunes of the richest 1 percent while ignoring the needs of working people and the unemployed. When the demands of those popular movements have focused on restoring the middle-class dream of ever-expanding affluence, they have ignored the fact that limitless economic growth is neither possible nor desirable. When they have focused more on redistribution of resources, they have been more consistent with the need to construct a fairer economy within ecologically necessary boundaries (even if that need is not explicitly recognized).

Meanwhile, attempts to limit greenhouse emissions through a combination of weak treaties and market mechanisms have continued to stumble over issues of fairness. Those efforts have failed because, as the economist James K. Galbraith argues, “polite” approaches do not go far enough, and explicit planning is required. Whether we see it or not, he adds, “in the modern world, planning happens: it is what corporations exist to do. The only issue, therefore, is whether the planning function is to be left entirely in the hands of private corporations . . . or whether the government and the larger public are entitled to play a role.”

Although in today’s political world, Galbraith notes, “syphilis, leprosy, and planning more or less rank together” in popularity, we may be living in a very different world before long.³¹ If we allow the future to be created by veiled corporate planning, the fairly predictable consequence will be resource conflicts between the haves and have-nots – or rather, among the haves, the hads, and the never-hads. Even if we wrest

planning out of corporate hands, it is not so obvious what to do next or what the consequences will be. Nevertheless, we can try to foresee those consequences, with some help from past and current efforts to plan rationally.

For now, none of that is happening. And it is not just a witless devotion to consumption for the sake of consumption that is responsible for our resisting any attempt at restraint. It's quite possible (indeed very common, I would guess) to be simultaneously concerned about the fate of the Earth and worried that the necessary degree of restraint just isn't achievable. We've been painted into a corner by an economy that has a bottomless supply of paint. Overproduction, the chronic ailment of any mature capitalist economy, creates the need for a culture whose consumption is geared accordingly. The converse holds true as well. If consumer rationing (nonprice rationing, that is) were employed in the resource-limited world of the future, its role would not be to curb overproduction and overexploitation of resources directly; rather, it would be as a necessary response to externally imposed limits on production and prices of consumer goods. It would be a means of ensuring that everyone has enough in those times of scarcity when the laws of supply and demand fail.

Whenever there's a ceiling on overall availability of goods, no one is happy. And when a consumer unlucky enough to be caught in such a situation is confronted with explicit rationing – a policy that she experiences as the day-to-day face of that scarcity – it's no wonder that rationing becomes a

dirty word. That has always been true, but an economy that is as deeply dependent on consumer spending as ours would view explicit rationing as a doubly dirty proposition. In America, freedom of consumption has become essential to realizing many of our more fundamental rights – freedom of movement, freedom of association, ability to communicate, satisfactory employment, good health care, even the ability to choose what to eat and drink – and no policy that compromises those rights by limiting access to resources is going to be at all welcome. If we do make a serious effort to corral the national and world economies within ecologically supportable boundaries, the method we choose for divvying up the resources that humanity can afford to consume must be a method we can all live with. In fact – considering the many tragic consequences of rationing by ability to pay in a world with such enormous imbalances of economic power – we might even find that we can devise ways of sharing scarce resources that produce a happier, better-fed, healthier, more comfortable, and more secure world than the one we inhabit today. But such methods cannot be expected to pop up spontaneously. That is why it is important to examine how nonprice rationing works, on paper and in the real world, and to find out if it will be possible to paint our society out of its corner. **CT**

Stan Cox is also the author of Sick Planet: Corporate Food and Medicine; Losing Our Cool: Unfortunate Truths About Our Air-Conditioned World (And Finding New Ways To Get Through The Summer)

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Overproduction, the chronic ailment of any mature capitalist economy, creates the need for a culture whose consumption is geared accordingly

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Syria, sarin, Libya, lies

Media vigilance in the wake of government war-mongering and propaganda is still as miserable as ever, reports **David Edwards**

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Findings which Thomson found 'so staggeringly, mind-blowingly at odds with reality' that they left him 'speechless' apparently did not merit a TV audience
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Last month, a CoMres poll supported by Media Lens interviewed 2,021 British adults, asking: 'How many Iraqis, both combatants and civilians, do you think have died as a consequence of the war that began in Iraq in 2003?'

An astonishing 44% of respondents estimated that less than 5,000 Iraqis had died since 2003. 59% believed that fewer than 10,000 had died. Just 2% put the toll in excess of one million, the likely correct estimate.

In October 2006, just three years into the war, the *Lancet* medical journal reported 'about 655,000 Iraqis have died above the number that would be expected in a non-conflict situation, which is equivalent to about 2.5% of the population in the study area'.

In 2007, an Associated Press poll also asked the US public to estimate the Iraqi civilian death toll from the war. 52% of respondents believed that fewer than 10,000 Iraqis had died.

Noam Chomsky commented on the latest findings:

'Pretty shocking. I'm sure you've seen Sut Jhally's study of estimates of Vietnam war deaths at the elite university where he teaches. Median 100,000, about 5% of the official figure, probably 2% of the actual figure. Astonishing – unless one bears in mind

that for the US at least, many people don't even have a clue where France is. Noam' (Email to Media Lens, June 1, 2013. See: Sut Jhally, Justin Lewis, & Michael Morgan, *The Gulf War: A Study of the Media, Public Opinion, & Public Knowledge*, Department of Communications, U. Mass. Amherst, 1991)

Alex Thomson, chief correspondent at Channel 4 News, has so far provided the only corporate media discussion of the poll. He perceived 'questions for us on the media that after so much time, effort and money, the public perception of bloodshed remains stubbornly, wildly, wrong'.

In fact the poll was simply ignored by both print and broadcast media. Our search of the Lexis media database found no mention in any UK newspaper, despite the fact that CoMres polls are deemed highly credible and frequently reported in the press.

Although we gave Thomson the chance to scoop the poll, he chose to publish it on his blog viewed by a small number of people on the Channel 4 website. Findings which Thomson found 'so staggeringly, mind-blowingly at odds with reality' that they left him 'speechless' apparently did not merit a TV audience.

Les Roberts, lead author of the 2004 *Lancet* study and co-author of the 2006 study, also responded:

'This March, a review of death toll estimates by Burkle and Garfield was published

in the *Lancet* in an issue commemorating the 10th anniversary of the invasion. They reviewed 11 studies of data sources ranging from passive tallies of government and newspaper reports to careful randomized household surveys, and concluded that something in the ballpark of half a million Iraqi civilians have died. The various sources include a wide variation of current estimates, from one-hundred thousand plus to a million.'

Roberts said of the latest poll:

'It may be that most British people do not care what results arise from the actions of their leaders and the work of their tax money. Alternatively, it also could be that the British and US Governments have actively and aggressively worked to discredit sources and confuse death toll estimates in hopes of keeping the public from unifying and galvanizing around a common narrative.' (Email to Media Lens, June 12, 2013.)

Indeed, the public's ignorance of the cost paid by the people of Iraq is no accident. Despite privately considering the 2006 *Lancet* study 'close to best practice' and 'robust' the British government immediately set about destroying the credibility of the findings of both the 2004 and 2006 *Lancet* studies. Professor Brian Rappert of the University of Exeter reported that government 'deliberations were geared in a particular direction – towards finding grounds for rejecting the [2004] *Lancet* study without any evidence of countervailing efforts by government officials to produce or endorse alternative other studies or data'.

Unsurprisingly, the same political executives who had fabricated the case for war on Iraq sought to fabricate reasons for ignoring peer-reviewed science exposing the costs of their great crime. More surprising, one might think, is the long-standing media enthusiasm for these fabrications. The corporate media were happy to swallow the UK government's alleged 'grounds for rejecting' the *Lancet* studies to the extent that a recent *Guardian* news piece claimed that

the invasion had led to the deaths of 'tens of thousands of Iraqis'.

Syria – Dropping Del Ponte

A natural counterpart to the burying of evidence of 'our' embarrassing crimes is the hyping of the crimes of official enemies.

Thus, the media would have us believe that as many, or more, people have died in Syria during two years of war than have died in ten years of mass killing in Iraq (the favoured media figure is around 100,000 Iraqis killed). The *Times* reports 'as many as 94,000 deaths' in Syria. (Anthony Lloyd, 'War in Syria has plumbed new depths of barbarity, says UN,' the *Times*, June 5, 2013)

Reuters reports:

'The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights [SOHR], an opposition group, said on Tuesday that at least 94,000 people have been killed but the death toll is likely to be as high as 120,000.'

Figures supplied by SOHR, an organisation openly biased in favour of the Syrian 'rebels' and Western intervention is presented as sober fact by one of the world's leading news agencies. No concerns here about methodology, sample sizes, 'main street bias' and other alleged concerns thrown at the *Lancet* studies by critics. According to Reuters itself, SOHR consists of a single individual, Rami Abdulrahman, the owner of a clothes shop, who works from his 'two bedroom terraced home in Coventry'.

As we noted last month, clearly inspired by the example of Iraq, Western governments and media have bombarded the public with claims of Syrian government use of chemical weapons. In April, the *Independent's* Robert Fisk judged the claims 'a load of old cobblers'.

The state-media propaganda campaign was rudely interrupted on May 6 by former Swiss attorney-general Carla Del Ponte, speaking for the United Nations independent commission of inquiry on Syria. Del Ponte said, 'there are strong, concrete sus-

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Readers will recall that intelligence indicating the existence of Iraqi WMD was also said to have been 'limited but persuasive'
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picious but not yet incontrovertible proof of the use of sarin gas, from the way the victims were treated. This was use on the part of the opposition, the rebels, not by the government authorities'.

She added:

'We have no, no indication at all that the Syrian government have used chemical weapons.'

Lexis finds 15 national UK newspaper articles mentioning Del Ponte's claims since May 6. There has been one mention since the initial coverage (May 6-8) on May 11, more than one month ago. In other words, this is a good example of the way an unwelcome event is covered by the media but not retained as an integral part of the story.

On May 30, local Turkish media and RT News also reported that Syrian 'rebels' had been caught in a sarin gas bomb plot:

'Turkish security forces found a 2kg cylinder with sarin gas after searching the homes of Syrian militants from the Al-Qaeda linked Al-Nusra Front who were previously detained, Turkish media reports. The gas was reportedly going to be used in a bomb.'

This was another badly 'off-message' story that was again given minimal coverage, not pursued and instantly buried. Lexis records no UK newspaper mentions. A senior journalist told us privately that he and his colleagues felt the story was 'right' but that the 'Turks are closing [it] down.' (Email to Media Lens, June 7, 2013)

This month, yet more unsubstantiated claims of possible Syrian government use of sarin generated a front page BBC report with the remarkable headline

.....
'World "must act" over Syria weapons'

And yet a BBC article indicated the lack of certainty:

'There is no doubt Syria's government has used sarin during the country's crisis, says France's foreign minister . . . But he did not specify where or when the agent had been deployed; the White House has said

more proof was needed.'

A UK government statement observed merely: 'There is a growing body of limited but persuasive information showing that the regime used – and continues to use – chemical weapons.'

Readers will recall that intelligence indicating the existence of Iraqi WMD was also said to have been 'limited but persuasive'.

As Peter Hitchens notes in the *Daily Mail*, UK government policy is being 'disgracefully egged on by a BBC that has lost all sense of impartiality'.

The *Guardian* quoted 'a senior British official':

'Are we confident in our means of collection, and are we confident that it points to the regime's use of sarin? Yes.'

Is the case closed, then? The official added: 'Can we prove it with 100% certainty? Probably not.'

The *Guardian* also quoted 'A senior UK official' who said it 'appeared possible that Syrian army commanders had been given the green light by the regime to use sarin in small quantities'. 'Possible', maybe, but the *Guardian* failed to explain why anyone would trust 'a senior UK official' to comment honestly on Syria, or why anyone would trust an anonymous UK official after Iraq.

Adding to the confusion, the *Guardian* quoted Paulo Pinheiro, who chairs a UN commission on human rights abuses in Syria. According to Pinheiro it had 'not been possible, on the evidence available, to determine the precise chemical agents used, their delivery systems or the perpetrator'.

Jonathan Marcus, BBC diplomatic correspondent, wrote:

'This is potentially a game changer: The French government now believes not only that the nerve agent sarin has been used in Syria, but that it was deployed by "the regime and its accomplices"'

In a recent interview, *Guardian* journalist Glenn Greenwald commented:

'I approach my journalism as a litigator.

People say things, you assume they are lying, and dig for documents to prove it.’

Perhaps the BBC’s Marcus could take a leaf from Greenwald’s book of journalism and dig for evidence to show that the French government is lying when it says it ‘believes’ that sarin has been used by the Syrian enemy. After all, the US, UK and French governments also ‘believed’ Iraq was a ‘serious and current’ threat to the world.

Far less gung-ho than the relentlessly warmongering BBC, a *Telegraph* headline read: ‘US unmoved by French evidence of sarin use in Syria.’

Chuck Hagel, the US defence secretary, said: ‘I have not seen that evidence that they said that they had and I have not talked to any of our intelligence people about it.’

The US officials’ comments ‘appeared to expose a growing a widening gap between the US and France over how to respond to Syria’s two-year civil war,’ the *Telegraph* noted.

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Libya – Slouching towards truth

If the record of government and media lying on Iraq fails to inspire scepticism in regard to claims made about Syria, then we might also consider the example of the Western war on Libya from March-October, 2011.

In his excellent book, *Slouching Towards Sirte*, Maximilian Forte of Concordia University, Montreal, recalls President Obama’s March 28, 2011 justification for Nato’s military intervention in Libya that had begun on March 19:

‘If we waited one more day, Benghazi . . . could suffer a massacre that would have reverberated across the region and stained the conscience of the world.’ (Forte, *Slouching Towards Sirte – NATO’s War on Libya and Africa*, Baraka Books, digital version, 2012, p.661)

But when French jets bombed Libyan government forces retreating from Benghazi, they attacked a column of 14 tanks, 20 armoured personnel carriers, some trucks

and ambulances. Forte comments:

‘That column clearly could have neither destroyed nor occupied Benghazi, a city of nearly 700,000 people . . . To date no evidence has been furnished that shows Benghazi would have witnessed the loss of “tens of thousands of lives”.’ (Forte, pp.662-663)

Professor Alan J. Kuperman, professor of public affairs at the University of Texas, observed:

‘The best evidence that Khadafy did not plan genocide in Benghazi is that he did not perpetrate it in the other cities he had recaptured either fully or partially – including Zawiya, Misurata, and Ajdabiya, which together have a population greater than Benghazi.

‘Libyan forces did kill hundreds as they regained control of cities. Collateral damage is inevitable in counter-insurgency. And strict laws of war may have been exceeded.

‘But Khadafy’s acts were a far cry from Rwanda, Darfur, Congo, Bosnia, and other killing fields. Libya’s air force, prior to imposition of a UN-authorized no-fly zone, targeted rebel positions, not civilian concentrations. Despite ubiquitous cellphones equipped with cameras and video, there is no graphic evidence of deliberate massacre. Images abound of victims killed or wounded in crossfire – each one a tragedy – but that is urban warfare, not genocide.

‘Nor did Khadafy ever threaten civilian massacre in Benghazi, as Obama alleged. The “no mercy” warning, of March 17, targeted rebels only, as reported by the *New York Times*, which noted that Libya’s leader promised amnesty for those “who throw their weapons away.” Khadafy even offered the rebels an escape route and open border to Egypt, to avoid a fight “to the bitter end.”’

On February 23, 2011, just days into the Libyan uprising, Amnesty International sparked a media frenzy when it began condemning Libyan government actions, noting ‘persistent reports of mercenaries being brought in from African countries by the

.....
When French jets bombed Libyan government forces retreating from Benghazi, they attacked a column of 14 tanks, 20 armoured personnel carriers, some trucks and ambulances

US Ambassador Susan Rice also asserted that Gaddafi was supplying his troops with Viagra to encourage mass rape. No evidence was supplied

Libyan leader to violently suppress the protests against him’.

A few days later, Human Rights Watch reported that they had ‘seen no evidence of mercenaries being used in eastern Libya. This contradicts widespread earlier reports in the international media that African soldiers had been flown in to fight rebels in the region as Muammar Gaddafi sought to keep control’.

Genevieve Garrigos, president of Amnesty International France, later commented:

‘Today we have to admit that we have no evidence that Gaddafi employed mercenary forces . . . we have no sign nor evidence to corroborate these rumours.’ (Forte, p.685)

Garrigos repeated that Amnesty’s investigators never found any ‘mercenaries,’ agreeing that their existence was a ‘legend’ spread by the mass media.

Revolving door

Forte describes ‘the revolving door between Amnesty International-USA and the US State department’. In November 2011, Amnesty International-USA appointed Suzanne Nossel as its executive director. From August 2009 to November 2011, Nossel had been the US State Department’s Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of International Organisation Affairs.

Luis Moreno-Ocampo, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, caused more outrage when he told the world’s media that there was ‘evidence’ that Gaddafi had distributed Viagra to his troops in order

‘to enhance the possibility to rape’ and that Gaddafi had ordered mass rape. Moreno-Ocampo insisted:

‘We are getting information that Qaddafi himself decided to rape’ and that ‘we have information that there was a policy to rape in Libya those who were against the government’.

US Ambassador Susan Rice also asserted that Gaddafi was supplying his troops with Viagra to encourage mass rape. No evidence was supplied.

Forte notes that US military and intelligence sources quickly contradicted Rice, telling NBC News that ‘there is no evidence that Libyan military forces are being given Viagra and engaging in systematic rape against women in rebel areas’.

Cherif Bassiouni, who led a UN human rights inquiry into the situation in Libya, suggested that the Viagra and mass rape claim was the product of ‘massive hysteria’. Bassiouni’s team ‘uncovered only four alleged cases’ of rape and sexual abuse.

As Forte writes with bitter irony, the propaganda surrounding the Libyan war demands ‘vigilance and scepticism in the face of the heady claims of our own inherent goodness which can only find its highest expression in the form of aerial bombardment’. (Forte, pp.69-70)

Alas, vigilance and scepticism are in short supply within the corporate media. **CT**

David Edwards is the co-editor of Medialens, the Briytish media watchdog – [jttp://medialens.org](http://medialens.org)

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Sapping Assad's strength

Israel stirs the pot in Syria, says **Jonathan Cook**

For much of the past two years Israel stood sphinx-like on the sidelines of Syria's civil war. Did it want Bashar al-Assad's regime toppled? Did it favour military intervention to help opposition forces? And what did it think of the increasing visibility of Islamist groups in Syria? It was difficult to guess.

In recent weeks, however, Israel has moved from relative inaction to a deepening involvement in Syrian affairs. It launched two air strikes on Syrian positions last month, and at the same time fomented claims that Damascus had used chemical weapons, in what looked suspiciously like an attempt to corner Washington into direct intervention.

This month based on renewed accusations of the use of the nerve agent sarin by Syria, the US said it would start giving military aid directly to the opposition.

With suspicions of Israeli meddling growing, prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu was finally forced last week to deny as "nonsense" evidence that Israeli forces are operating secretly over the border.

Nonetheless, the aura of inscrutability has hardly lifted, stoked by a series of leaks from Israeli officials. Their statements have tacked wildly between threats to oust Assad one moment and denials that Israel has any interest in his departure the next.

Is Israel sending out contradictory signals to sow confusion, or is it simply confused itself?

The answer can be deduced in the unappealing outcomes before Israel whoever emerges triumphant. Israel stands to lose strategically if either Assad or the opposition wins decisively.

Assad, and before him his father, Hafez, ensured that for decades the so-called separation of forces line between Syria and Israel, after the latter occupied the Golan Heights in 1967, remained the quietest of all Israel's borders.

A taste of what might happen should the Syrian regime fall was provided in 2011 when more than 1,000 Palestinians massed in the no man's land next to the Golan, while Assad's attention was directed to repressing popular demonstrations elsewhere. At least 100 Palestinians crossed into the Heights, with one even reaching Tel Aviv.

Following intensified fighting between the rebels and the Syrian army over Quneitra, a town next to the only crossing between Israel and Syria, UN peacekeepers from Austria started pulling out because of the dangers.

Briefly the opposition forces captured Quneitra, offering a reminder that any void there would likely suck in Palestinian militants and jihadists keen to settle scores with Israel. That point was underlined by one Israeli official, who told the Times of London: "Better the devil we know than the demons we can only imagine if Syria falls into chaos, and the extremists from across the Arab world gain a foothold there."

For that reason, the Israeli military is re-

.....
Tony Blair is a strange choice indeed, given that the Palestinian leadership has publicly dismissed him as "Israel's defence attorney"

ISRAEL'S RESPONSE

.....
"We are not animals that only want food. We are a people struggling for freedom".
.....

ported to considering two responses familiar from Lebanon: invading to establish a security zone on the other side of the demarcation line, or covertly training and arming Syrian proxies inside the same area.

Neither approach turned out well for Israel in Lebanon, but there are indications – despite Netanyahu's denial – that Israel is already pursuing the second track.

According to the *New York Times*, Israel is working with Syrian villagers not allied to Assad or the opposition and offering "humanitarian aid" and "maintaining intense intelligence activity". In an interview with the Argentinian media last month, Assad accused Israel of having gone further, "directly supporting" opposition groups inside Syria with "logistical support", intelligence on potential targets and plans for attacking them.

If the future looks bleak for Israel with Assad gone, it looks no brighter if he entrenches his rule.

A strong Assad means Syria will continue to play a pivotal role in maintaining a military front opposed to Israeli hegemony in the Middle East. That in turn means a strong Iran and a strong Hizbullah, the Shia militia in Lebanon.

Hizbullah's formidable record in guerrilla warfare is the main reason Israel no longer occupies south Lebanon. Similarly, Hizbullah's arsenal of rockets is a genuine restraint on greater Israeli aggression towards not only Lebanon but Syria and Iran too.

Israel's air strikes in early May appear to have targeted shipments through Syria of more sophisticated weaponry for Hizbullah, probably supplied by Iran. Longer range missiles and anti-aircraft systems are seen as "game-changing" by Israel precisely because they would further limit its room for offensive manoeuvres.

Israel will be equally stymied if Assad stays in power and upgrades his anti-aircraft defences with the S-300 system promised by Russia.

Either way, Israel's much vaunted ambition to engineer an attack on Iran to prevent what it claims is Tehran's goal of developing a nuclear bomb – joining Israel in the club of Middle Eastern nuclear-armed states – would probably

come at too high a price to be feasible.

So what does Israel consider in its interests if neither Assad's survival nor his removal is appealing?

According to some well-placed Israeli commentators, the best Israel can hope for is that Assad holds on but only just. That would keep the regime in place, or boxed into its heartland, but sapped of the energy to concern itself with anything other than immediate matters of survival. It would be unable to offer help to Hizbullah, isolating the militia in Lebanon and cutting off its supply line to Iran.

In closed-door discussions, analyst Ben Caspit has noted, the Israeli army has put forward as its "optimal scenario" Syria breaking up into three separate states, with Assad confined to an Alawite canton in Damascus and along the coast.

A long war of attrition between Assad and the opposition has additional benefits for Israel following the decision by Hizbullah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, to draft thousands of fighters to assist the Syrian army. Protacted losses could deplete Hizbullah's ranks and morale, while fighting is likely to spill over from Syria into Lebanon, tying up the militia on multiple fronts.

But there is a risk here too. If Hizbullah performs well, as it did in defeating the rebels this month at the town of Qusayr, its position in Lebanon could be strengthened rather than weakened. And in that situation Assad's debt to Hizbullah would only deepen.

Such calculations are doubtless exercising Israeli military minds.

The greatest danger of all is that yet more parties get drawn in, turning the conflict into a regional one. That would be the likely outcome if Israel chooses to increase its interference, or if the US comes good with its recent threats to increase military aid to the opposition or impose a no-fly zone over parts or all of Syria.

Either way, Israel might see the transformation of Syria in to a new mini-cold war theatre as advantageous.

However, the Israeli sphinx isn't offering any answers quite yet.

CT

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Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His latest book is "Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East" (Pluto Press). His website is <http://jonathan-cook.net>
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Hypocrisy and the mayor

Nima Shirazi looks into the not-so-complex world of New York mayor Michael Bloomberg

At the end of May, a threatening letter laced with the deadly chemical ricin was sent from Shreveport, Louisiana to New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg as a response to the mayor's outspoken support for stricter gun control laws. Two identical letters, also containing the lethal substance, were addressed to both President Barack Obama and the head of the Washington D.C. lobbying group, Mayors Against Illegal Guns, which is managed and funded by Bloomberg himself.

The contents of the letters are clearly the work of a right-wing gun nut and read as follows:

"You will have to kill me and my family before you get my guns. Anyone wants to come to my house will get shot in the face. The right to bear arms is my constitutional, god-given right and I will exercise that right till the day I die. What's in this letter is nothing compared to what I've got planned for you."

Despite lethally targeting civilians and non-military officials far from any active battlefield, no one is referring to these acts as terrorism. Not the press, not the intended victims. No one.

In fact, Bloomberg himself was non-plussed by the whole ordeal, telling reporters, "I'm not angry. There are people who I would argue do things that may be irrational, do things that are wrong, but it's a very

complex world out there and we just have to deal with that."

Yes, Mike, it is a very complex world.

This world is so complex, in fact, that an easily identifiable act of terrorism isn't considered terrorism for one simple reason: it probably wasn't committed by a Muslim, but rather by some white guy in the South.

Clearly, white guys who send murderous mail are merely acting irrationally and doing something wrong, while potential violence by members of the Muslim faith presents a singular threat to our civilized society. So much so, in fact, that Michael Bloomberg himself believes our own laws and the bedrock of that very society are not good enough to defend against such a scourge to humanity.

Earlier last month, however, following the horrific Boston Marathon bombing, Bloomberg declared that the American obsession with privacy, civil rights and basic freedoms was antiquated and trite when compared to the dire threat posed by hypothetical barbarian hordes of 'Islamists.'

At a press conference at the Lower Manhattan Security Initiative, Bloomberg said, "The people who are worried about privacy have a legitimate worry. But we live in a complex world where you're going to have to have a level of security greater than you did back in the olden days, if you will. And our laws and our interpretation of the Con-

.....

Clearly, white guys who send murderous mail are merely acting irrationally and doing something wrong, while potential violence by members of the Muslim faith presents a singular threat to our civilized society.

.....

COMPARING THREATS

.....
**Bloomberg's
targeting of
Muslims isn't his
only method of
rooting out the evil
that lurks in the
hearts of brown
men**
.....

stitution, I think, have to change.”

Yes, how complex it is.

So complex that, although a 2010 study by Duke University and the University of North Carolina found that Islamic terrorism accounted for only six percent of all terrorist attacks in the United States between 1980 and 2005, while a 2012 analysis by the Center for American Progress reported that a whopping “[fifty-six percent of domestic terrorist attacks and plots in the US since 1995 have been perpetrated by right-wing extremists,” Michael Bloomberg has made it his duty to illegally spy on and harass Muslim communities in the New York Metro area.

Bloomberg has presided over a massive, illegal covert domestic surveillance and ethno-religious profiling program that has targeted, alienated and traumatized Muslims throughout the Northeast, despite the fact that, following the September 11, 2001 attacks, more Americans have been killed in right-wing terrorist plots than by Islamic terrorists.

“NYPD surveillance has impacted every facet of American Muslim life,” explains Nermeen Arastu, a volunteer attorney with the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), which co-authored a March 2013 report entitled, “Mapping Muslims: NYPD Spying and Its Impact on American Muslims.”

“The program has stifled speech, communal life and religious practice and criminalized a broad segment of American Muslims,” Arastu added. “The isolationism that comes with being a ‘spied on’ community means that American Muslims are getting a fundamentally inferior opportunity to exercise their constitutional rights.”

But, for Mayor Mike, just because a white guy tries to kill you via the postal service doesn't mean white people in general deserve to be spied on, rounded up, marginalized, and profiled. Keep calm and carry on, he says. These things happen.

As I write this, on Chris Jansing's MSNBC

show, *USA Today's* Washington Bureau Chief Susan Page said it was “probably not fair to taint the entire gun rights movement with the actions of this disturbing letter because there is a serious debate and two sides to it when it comes to the issue of guns.” Jansing agreed. “Yeah, and it's unfortunate that, for a few, it comes to this,” she said.

Not fair. Unfortunate.

Last year, Bloomberg defended his Muslim surveillance program, claiming, “Everything the NYPD has done is legal, it is appropriate, it is constitutional,” and invoking that sacred strawman, 9/11, “We have not forgotten the lesson of that terrible day on 9/11,” he insisted, sanctimoniously adding, “We have to keep this country safe . . . Remind yourself when you turn out the light tonight.”

Bloomberg's insistence that, “We don't target individuals based on race or religion. We follow leads,” is fascinating because, just six months after he said that, the Associated Press' report on court testimony by the NYPD stated, “In more than six years of spying on Muslim neighborhoods, eavesdropping on conversations and cataloguing mosques, the New York Police Department's secret Demographics Unit never generated a lead or triggered a terrorism investigation.”

But Bloomberg's targeting of Muslims isn't his only method of rooting out the evil that lurks in the hearts of brown men.

A month ago, the billionaire mayor defended his racist Stop-and-Frisk policy by invoking – what else? – the ever-looming conversation-ender: the constant scourge and fear of terrorism. “Look at what's happened in Boston,” he said. “Remember what happened here on 9/11. Remember all of those who've been killed by gun violence and the families they left behind.”

Again he even claimed that our own laws and efforts not to discriminate against certain communities are making us less safe. “God forbid terrorists succeed in striking our city because of a politically driven law that undermines the NYPD's intelligence

gathering efforts,” he said.

The editors of the *New York Times* were unmoved by Bloomberg’s fear-mongering defense of racial profiling. “Mayor Michael Bloomberg trotted out shopworn, discredited arguments this week,” they wrote, “while defending the constitutionally suspect police program under which hundreds of thousands of innocent New Yorkers have been detained and questioned on the streets every year.”

They note, “[G]uns were seized in only 0.15 percent of all stops. In addition, only 5.4 percent of all stops resulted in an arrest, and about 6 percent led to a summons. This means that in nearly 90 percent of cases, the citizens who were stopped were doing nothing illegal. In some cases, prosecutors declined to automatically prosecute arrests made in connection with the program because they knew that the stops were illegal.”

In 2011, 84 percent of all those stopped under the NYPD’s Stop-and-Frisk rampage where black and Hispanic, despite respectively representing 23 and 29 percent of New York City’s total population.

Under Michael Bloomberg’s reign, minority communities have been collectively punished for the criminal actions of a few. In his complex world, blacks and Latinos are all potential gun-toting killers, while all Muslims are jihadists-in-training. Yet, an actual gun-toting lunatic who tries to murder Bloomberg is an anomaly, an aberration, nothing to be concerned with. Simply

something “we just have to deal with.”

But terrorism? No, never. Not if the perpetrator is white.

Glenn Greenwald, a former constitutional lawyer and currently a columnist for Britain’s *Guardian* newspaper, has been addressing this double standard for years. “Terrorism,” he writes, “is simultaneously the single most meaningless and most manipulated word in the American political lexicon. The term now has virtually nothing to do with the act itself and everything to do with the identity of the actor, especially his or her religious identity. It has really come to mean: ‘a Muslim who fights against or even expresses hostility towards the United States, Israel and their allies.’”

So while the NYPD continues to terrorize minority communities and the FBI continues to foil phony Muslim terror plots that it itself devises, plans and funds, rest assured that all the well-armed and well-represented white folks in our noble nation will continue to live free from suspicion, scrutiny, and surveillance no matter how much postal poison they send and mass shootings they carry out.

Maybe it’s not complex after all, maybe it’s just complexion. **CT**

Nima Shirazi is co-editor of the Iran, Iraq and Turkey pages for the online magazine Muftah. His political analysis can be found on his blog, Wide Asleep in America. He tweets @WideAsleepNima.

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“In some cases, prosecutors declined to automatically prosecute arrests made in connection with the program because they knew that the stops were illegal”



Sanctifying Pedro

On the road with **Fred Reed**

.....
A Japanese car born in Canada, torn from the womb of some clicking cybernetic factory, sent to the slave marts of the United States, and sold into perpetual servitude to me
.....

OK, early afternoon, rolling at a steady 75 over the great, flat, dry lands of northern Mexico pocked with dry brown scrub like frozen mortar explosions and white, white clouds all cottony in blue, blue sky that looks as if it might want to swallow the earth. We are sailing toward Nogales on the Arizona border to make an honest man of Peter, our trusty 2006 Corolla.

Peter is a sign of the times. Globalization. A Japanese car born in Canada, torn from the womb of some clicking cybernetic factory, sent to the slave marts of the United States, and sold into perpetual servitude to me, who drove him to central Mexico. There's probably some sort of civil rights issue here. I'd send a letter to EEOC, except they probably don't have anyone who can read.

Anyway, the wind rushes cool through the window and I've got a forty-ounce Tecate between my knees, Lola Beltrán croons from the radio and it is a Very Mexican Moment. In Mexico you can do seventy-five because the cops don't care and as long as the driver isn't drunk, they probably figure the passenger ought to be. I mean, why waste an opportunity?

Deep in the tortuous entrails of the Mexican bureaucracy is embedded the idea that at a certain point a gringo has to become Permanente, which is some sort of migratory thing, and then you can't have US plates

on your chariot. At his point Peter is nattily attired in South Dakota tags. Half the gringo expats in Mexico have South Dak plates. It's because you can register in South Dakota by mail, and the Mexicans don't care whether the tags are expired. There are places along the shore of Lake Chapala in central Mexico where you could think you were in Lincoln, or whatever is the capital of South Dakota.

.....
Peter becomes Pedro

So much for the flat part of north Mexico. Some time later – this isn't real chronological – we got Peter his Mexican nationality, at which point he became Pedro. We also discovered that Nogales, like most border burgs, was a dismal collection of superb pot holes. We had decided that since we were up north we might as well go to la Barranca del Cobre, Copper Canyon. To do this we had to go to Los Mochis, at one end of this phenomenal god-like trench.

To get there you drive forever through the Sierra Madre Occidental, narco country, dry brown mountains with roads twisted enough to make Liberace seem straight. I did sixteen straight hours of this, being of one blood with the bleary-eyed crazed transcontinental drivers of the Sixties, except that she does it without chemical alterants. I'm not sure that's proper. Anyway, curves, curves, and high precipices, so that you

could write your memoirs before you hit bottom. Swoosh, swoosh, always pulling gs.

Something about hot, wild, gnarled country without rules and laws appeals deeply to men and certain Mexican women. Nobody is there. You are alone with the world. It isn't that you want to do anything bad, or anything at all. It's that you could do it, if you thought of it. Nobody is watching.

At one point we stopped on a narrow winding road with no more shoulders than an accountant, and did nothing. Dry brown emptiness and scrub and isolation stretching forever. For twenty minutes there was no sound but the wind. No vehicle passed.

I thought of something that Alexander Solzhenitsyn said. Having escaped the Soviet Union, where the government constantly spied on citizens, he found himself alone in his car, parked by some empty road out west. He stood by the road in sprawling desert and reflected, amazed, that nobody knew where he was, and nobody cared. Today he would be tracked by cell phone, his email read, his web browsing recorded and analyzed, and his use of his credit card duly stored.

I'm rambling. Twelve hours a day on the road will do that to you, even if you aren't dropping speed. Especially if you aren't dropping speed.

You have to go to Copper Canyon. Wait. Don't. If too many people go, there'll be a theme park about Pancho Villa, and fat people will come from Rhode Island with their shrieking larvae drifting toward functional illiteracy. They should be encouraged to go to Disney World, or a sausage-packing plant.

Nothing, anywhere, approaches the great, gaping, deep, rocky hugeness of the Barranca. The Grand Canyon is more gorgeous, but by comparison a minor dent, a pockmark, in the earth. Everywhere are sheer drops of hundreds of feet to giant pines that look like dots in the distant earth. Rock formations rise vertically forever like huge buildings, shattered pediments and cracked capitals.

Over it hangs a somber quiet broken only by the wind. I hope the human race dies before it can screw up this place.

I wondered how existence seemed to the Tarahumara Indians, some of whom still live in the canyon, and how it must have seemed a thousand years ago when there was nothing but the canyon. It would have been easy to believe in God or gods, to feel ourselves in the presence of something bigger than ourselves, something that might even be able to get along without us.

Nah.

We wandered the rim a bit, feeling very small, and then drove off into reality toward Torreon.

Thank you, Mz Garmin

Having again driven all day, we pulled into Torreon at two a.m. and looked for the Calvete Hotel, at which we had made a reservation online. The night was darker than an anchorman's mind, the city low and industrial with only gas stations and convenience stores as outposts of light. Like schizophrenics we obeyed the little voice that ruled us, the woman trapped in a Garmin GPS. "A la izquierda en Lopez Mateos, entonces..." Yeah, OK, lady. Yes ma'am. Bossy little dominatrix.

Turn by turn we burrowed deeper into the bleakness of tire warehouses and empty lots. I was impressed, though uneasy. The small square lady hanging on the windshield knew even the obscurest streets, and named them correctly. It did seem odd though that a major hotel would live among warehouses.

Finally she announced that we had arrived at the Calvete Hotel. It was a diesel repair shop. Maybe Garmin needs to try a bit harder. **CT**

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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