

FATHER KNOWS BEST | JOE BAGEANT
REVISITING THE MINERS' STRIKE | GRANVILLE WILLIAMS
THE FORGOTTEN COUP | JOHN PILGER

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 84



THE BATTLE FOR UKRAINE

J.P. SOTTILE • DIANA JOHNSTONE • SASHA MAKSYMENKO • ALAN
PIASCIK • RANDALL AMSTER • NORMAN SOLOMON • FRED REED



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ColdType

ISSUE 84 / APRIL 2014

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Editor: Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net

Write a letter, read a book . . .

Readers give their opinions on Duncan Mangham's photographs, Useful Idiots, priestly abuse in Ireland – and exposing tyrants

Good news for readers of ColdType. Starting this issue, we're giving away a new e-book, "The Watchman's File", by Barry Lando, for every letter we publish on these pages.

Lara Marlowe, correspondent for the *Irish Times*, says of the book, "Not since John le Carré's *Little Drummer Girl* has there been such a nailbitingly suspenseful novel about the Middle East. Only a veteran investigative reporter with Lando's intimate knowledge of the US and Israel could have written 'The Watchman's File', which is rooted in historic precedent and is frighteningly credible."

Write a letter and see if you agree with Lara. But, first read this issue – beginning with these letters:

Tony Sutton, Editor

Useful idiots

Another stimulating issue of *ColdType* – very much appreciated. One little niggle I have is the uncritical use of the phrase "Lenin's useful idiots" in the otherwise interesting article on Doris Lessing by Trevor Grundy. This is used innumerable times in the European media, usually by liberal and right wing political commentators (as obviously it fits into the idea of Lenin as a Machiavellian manipulator par excellence who was 'no better than Stalin'), including here in Denmark. I have attempted to track down the origins of the phrase with little success, even asking the 'establishment Sovietologists' who use it to give me a reference in Lenin's works where he uses to phrase – they cannot. Does Mr Grundy know better?

– **Stephen Parsons, Sønderborg, Denmark.**

● Sorry, Stephen, I can't help. I, and a few thousand other



"Sadly, it would appear that the majority of rural black folk in South Africa has only had unfulfilled promises for the past 20 years, while many politicians and their cronies have become exceedingly wealthy . . ."

journalists, thought Lenin said it or wrote it. Apparently he didn't, although he might have thought it. Who knows? Despite the phrase being attributed to Lenin, Grant Harris, senior reference librarian at the Library of Congress, tells us: "We have not been able to identify this phrase among Lenin's published works." I will use the phrase sparingly in the future – **Trevor Grundy**

Where are they now?

Duncan Mangham's photo essay, *Freedom's Children* (*ColdType*, March), was a very interesting piece of work – it would be interesting to follow up on these subjects to see how the children's lives have benefited, or otherwise, following the radical political changes in the country. Sadly, it would appear that the majority of rural black folk in South Africa has only had unfulfilled promises for the past 20 years, while many politicians

LETTERS TO COLDTYPE

and their cronies have become exceedingly wealthy and have lost sight of the fact that a politician works for the people, not the other way round!

Many black people phone the various radio stations saying the houses built for them by the apartheid regime were far superior to the “RDP” houses with all their defaults now being built by black entrepreneurs with multi-million rand contracts, and that rural schooling was more disciplined and of a higher standard than that being given today! Who knows the truth but it is sickening for someone like me who is apolitical to see all the corruption, blatant exploitation and police violence of a black on black nature. It has to stop.

The upcoming national election on May 7 will be the first one in which the so-called “Born Free” generation can participate. Apparently, there are several million of them and they could have a major impact on what after all is their future, but the sad reality is many of them have had a favoured and cushy life with plenty of bursary money for good education, preferred job opportunities due to the still prevailing affirmative action initiative, but apartheid was not part of their life experiences. They are relatively disinterested in politics and, as a result, there is great apathy with the majority not even bothering to register for voting. So the current nonsense will probably continue – unbelievable!

– **Richard Jones, Johannesburg, South Africa.**

● *It's amazing how the new South Africa came, over 20 years, to look so similar to the one it replaced. George Orwell's classic "Animal Farm" is perhaps as relevant today as it ever was, and not only to South Africans – Editor*

ColdType rocks

Thank you so much for your enjoyable e-mag. So many people whinge about Muslims being biased towards (you know who). So, from really professional investigative journalists, *ColdType* is definitely helpful in showing the world who the tyrants are out there. Your articles really opened up my eyes and a few others who

won't admit it. I keep forwarding these articles to people but they still believe in mainstream media. Well, you can only change if you want to. I salute all those who made great sacrifices in bringing this info to the world and may you grow from strength to strength. We lack a few of you guys here in South Africa, or we are not hearing from them. God speed and know that you have the gratitude and admiration from someone on the tip of Africa who is a great and grateful fan.

– **Ebrahiem Astrie, Port Elizabeth, South Africa**

● *Good to hear from you, Ebrahiem. I thought South Africa still had a very vocal media. I know it used to be very vibrant, because I cut my teeth in radical journalism in Joburg in the seventies and eighties, with magazines such as Jim Bailey's Drum, Frontline and working with many of the anti-apartheid alternative media. – Editor*

Church abuse

“The whole ordeal lasted about an hour, but it seemed like an eternity. When I was eventually released I was that mad that I just wanted to kill him and I caused the cattle to stampede from a barn close by. He just got out of the way in time, but gave me a terrible beating afterwards. He accused me of startling the animals.” When I read statements such as this from Alan Rodgers’ story about sex abuse in Catholic homes in Northern Ireland (*ColdType* March), my blood boils. When will the Pope and his henchmen in Rome take real action to stop this evil? How many more tales of abuse must be read before we get more than political posturing? As an atheist, I don't believe in religious mumbo-jumbo, but there ought to be is a Hell, and I know who should be first in line: the evil men who commit these crimes and the leaders who fail to stop them.

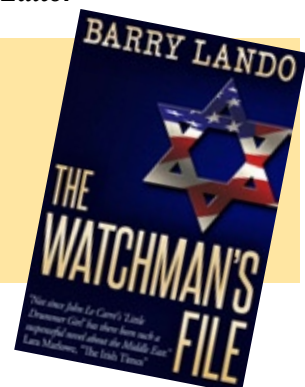
– **John Francis, Vancouver, Canada.**

● *And it's not just the Catholic priests. Remember the abuse at native schools that rocked the Anglican Church in Canada a few years ago? – Editor*

WRITE A LETTER, READ AN E-BOOK . . .

We'd love to read your comments about this, and previous, issues of *ColdType*. Each letter we publish will earn the writer a FREE copy of Barry Lando's acclaimed novel, **THE WATCHMAN'S FILE**, in pdf format

Please send your comments to editor@coldtype.net



Setting the Orgreave record straight

An excerpt, by **Granville Williams**, from a new book on the 30th anniversary of the British miners' strike of 1984–85 shows how police falsified statements after the Battle of Orgreave, when 95 miners were charged with rioting

"We had a very fortunate collision of timing, the right elements being at the right time to bring it altogether and strike a chord."

– Dan Johnson



Sometimes television programmes can catch the mood of the time and stimulate action by individuals and institutions. The BBC *Inside Out* programme on Orgreave which went out in the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire region on 22 October 2012 did just that. The core of the programme was the revelation by BBC reporter, Dan Johnson, that a batch of South Yorkshire Police (SYP) witness statements for miners arrested at Orgreave [on June 18, 1984, during the miners' strike] demonstrated the extent of police fabrication of the evidence.

The programme was aired just one month after the Hillsborough Independent Panel (HIP) report [into the 1989 disaster when 96 soccer fans were killed], which triggered a stream of announcements that ensured the behaviour of SYP was rarely out of the news in the weeks

following. On 14 September, two days after the panel's report was published, West Yorkshire Chief Constable, Norman Bettison, a SYP chief inspector at the time of the Hillsborough disaster, issued a statement saying fans 'made the job of the police... harder than it needed to be' and then issued a second statement in which he apologised for appearing to partially blame supporters. On 12 October

the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) said it was launching the biggest-ever inquiry into police behaviour in the wake of the HIP report and on 24 October Bettison resigned as chief constable of West Yorkshire with immediate effect. Three weeks after the *Inside Out* programme SYP self-referred their conduct at Orgreave to the IPCC mentioning the programme and naming the reporter Dan Johnson personally in the referral.

I first met Dan Johnson at a national Union of Mineworkers' weekend school in Scarborough in December 2008. I mentioned that I was trying to pin down at

The core of the programme was the revelation by BBC reporter, Dan Johnson, that a batch of South Yorkshire Police witness statements for miners arrested at Orgreave demonstrated the extent of police fabrication of the evidence



**Settling Scores::
The Media, The Police
& the Miners' Strike**

Edited by
Granville Williams

Campaign for Press &
Broadcasting Freedom

Price: £6.99

THE MINERS' STRIKE – 30 YEARS ON

For his student dissertation he had spoken to one of the miners who was at Orgreave, one of those charged, tried and acquitted, and he remembered that he had all the statements, not just the ones relating to his own arrest but the ones relating to everybody's arrest

which pit the hilarious snowman incident really occurred. Dave Douglass tells it like this in *All Power to the Imagination*:

“The miners of Silverwood, having been told they were confined to six pickets only, built themselves a seventh comrade in the shape of a large snowman, wearing for good measure a plastic policeman's helmet.

“Next morning, Chief Inspector Nesbitt appears on the scene and seeing the jeering miners and their steely eyed companion, ordered the constables to knock it down. This order brought rebellion to the police ranks as PCs declined to, ‘look so fucking stupid knocking down a snowman’. ‘Very well,’ shouts the irate Nesbitt, jumping in his Range Rover and charging off to demolish the snowman, as pickets ran laughing for cover.

“Maybe it was a trick of the light, or maybe a twinkle glistened in the icy countenance on the snowman's fixed expression – we shall never know, as the Range Rover made contact and came to a dead stop, smashing front grill, bumper and headlamps and hurling the shocked Nesbitt into the steering wheel. PCs found excuses to walk away or suppress body-shaking laughter while pickets fell about on the ground with side splitting mirth. The snowman had been constructed around a three foot high two foot thick concrete post!”

Dan contacted John Nesbitt, at the time of the strike the SYP chief superintendent who arrested NUM President Arthur Scargill at Orgreave on 30 May 1984. Nesbitt's name was always associated with the story but he told Dan the incident never happened. Nesbitt cited as evidence the fact that the South Yorkshire Police Authority ordered an inspection of all Range Rovers for damage and they couldn't find anything. He conceded, however, that his association with the story caused him some career problems.

Dan Johnson was born in Barnsley. “I

grew up with the stories about the strike, took an interest, and always had a sense there was unfinished business there, something had not been told to people's satisfaction,” he said. (1) His interest in the miners' strike (he was born half way through it) developed whilst studying for a geography degree at Leeds University when he was researching energy policy. His dissertation was on the miners' strike, with a focus on police tactics. He also did a couple of articles about pit closures for the student paper. Later, after a post-graduate journalism course at City University, he got work with Radio Sheffield covering the decline of coal mining, the closure of Rossington pit and later Maltby.

Making the programme

The idea for the programme came from an article by David Conn in *The Guardian*. It made the connection between the SYP behaviour at Hillsborough and the way miners described their actions at Orgreave and other events during the miners' strike. (2) “But Conn had not nailed it,” Dan said. “There wasn't any evidence to actually prove it. I was thinking about it and I know the *Inside Out* team were thinking about it separately. It was only when the Hillsborough panel report was published and there was that clear evidence about police statements being changed and the prime minister gave a full apology and announced the steps that would be taken to remedy the injustice that we heard mutterings ‘that's not the first time statements were altered by SYP’ but again the question was ‘how do you prove it – where's the evidence?’”

The idea that the statements had been altered sparked a tiny flicker in his mind. For his student dissertation he had spoken to one of the miners who was at Orgreave, one of those charged, tried and acquitted, and he remembered that he had all the





“As soon as you start looking through them you realised the second one is the same as the first one and the third one the same as the second – you start recognising the pattern”

TV reporter Dan Johnson with the bundle of documents that contained the evidence of police collusion, the same phrasing appearing in many of the statements.

statements, not just the ones relating to his own arrest but the ones relating to everybody’s arrest. Dan had looked at these way back in 2005-06 for his dissertation, thought them very interesting, a bit of history, flicked through them, and gave them back. But after the Hillsborough report he thought ‘that’s it’ – the former miner had got the evidence and he managed to get in touch with him and obtain the statements.

“There were 120 original statements mouldering away in a garage, quite stained and smelly, but definitely the genuine article, with just one page missing. As soon as you start looking through them you realised the second one is the same as the first one and the third one the same as the second – you start recognising the pattern,” Dan said.

He pays tribute to the people he worked with on the programme, particularly the ‘very good’ researcher, Lucy Smickersgill. “The *Inside Out* team really came into its

own, being able to go through the statements, analyse exactly what phrases are repeated and how many times,” he said. “They did a cross reference to how many officers had used exactly the same phrases word for word and which force those officers were from. They pieced together an analytical breakdown of how much repetition there was.”

The statements also gave the names of the officers. The next task was tracking down the officers named in the statements. Dan recalls the overwhelming impression that the police didn’t want to talk about it. Some were very angry about being contacted.

One in particular he remembers: “I went round to his house, he lived locally and his wife answered the door, and I just explained what we were doing and asked if he could get in touch. She obviously rang him straight away and he rang me from work as I was driving away: ‘What are you doing knocking on my door, interfering with



THE MINERS' STRIKE – 30 YEARS ON

The police version of events at Orgreave was that there had been a violent assault on the police and there had been no choice but to send in the mounted police

my wife. You've no right. How have you found me? This is absolutely atrocious. I am astounded that the BBC is trying to hunt people down to talk about these issues 30 years on. Disgraceful. No, I do not want to talk about it. Leave me alone – your approach is definitely unwelcome.”

A few spoke anonymously and a couple were willing to appear on camera and talk about their statements. One in particular described how he was sent into a room and a CID officer came in and said, “Here's the way you start your statement.” His claim was that all the CID officer was doing was setting the scene, giving them a generic description of what happened at Orgreave that day, but that he wrote down his own details of the arrests he made.

Although Dan hasn't had any contact with the police officers since he says, “I have a suspicion they may feel regret for being involved now they realise the impact the programme has had.”

The other key element for a credible programme involved the former miners whose names were on the witness statements. Some had passed away, but others didn't want to be interviewed. Of the miners contacted it was evenly split between those willing to participate and those strongly against it. “When some of the miners don't want to be involved you start questioning the whole thing then,” Dan said. “You think are we actually pursuing a worthy aim here? Having grown up with these stories and hearing that an injustice was done



Michael Mansfield: “The police had no idea of the extent to which their unlawful activities were being filmed.”

at Orgreave it was a little bit frustrating when you say ‘I am trying to highlight this and address it’. I don't know if it was because it was personally difficult to revisit some of this stuff or because they don't think it will achieve anything, or they think so much time has passed and they have so little faith in the system that they want to leave it alone. It was very pleasing in the end that some of those who didn't want speak to us, when they saw the programme, contacted us to say ‘good job, wish I had done.’”

The programme fell into place then. “We needed to tell the history of the strike, the key events, and fill in the background to Orgreave for people who didn't know the story. That was enough for us to sell the programme,” he said.

The programme

Dan Johnson's introduction links the two events of Hillsborough and Orgreave: “While Hillsborough resonated around the world, what happened at Orgreave has been left as a footnote in history,” he says.

A rapid summary of the key events of the miners' strike up to Orgreave in June 1984 follows, placing events at Orgreave in the context of a previous miners' victory – the closure of the coking plant in Birmingham during the 1972 strike. (3) “Saltley acted as a template for the picketing at Orgreave 10 years later only this time the miners placed a police force and a government determined not to be beaten,” he comments. Ten thousand miners were at Orgreave on 18 June with at least five



thousand police from many different police forces from across the country, there to stop the miners shutting the coking plant. Dramatic footage of the mounted police charge is interspersed with commentary from Yvette Vanson (who made the powerful *Battle of Orgreave* in 1985), the former Hadfield Colliery miner Dave Douglass and two police officers.

Michael Mansfield represented several miners in the first Orgreave trial of miners held in Sheffield in 1985. In the programme he points out that police video footage of events that day show a completely different picture to the one the BBC and most other media broadcast. The police version was that there had been a violent assault on the police and there had been no choice but to send in the mounted police. But there were also a lot of independent monitors, with notebooks, cameras and one with a movie camera in a tree. Mansfield says, "The police had no idea of the extent to which their unlawful activities were being filmed. Putting the combination of that package together you had a record, an almost unchallengeable record, of a completely different version of events."

Stef Wysocki, a former Derbyshire miner, gives his shocking testimony of his treatment that day when he was arrested: "I hadn't done anything so I didn't think I would get charged. When I was arrested at the top of the hill there were a lot of photos of me with no injuries but when I got to



Stef Wysocki: "I was punched, kicked, prodded, you name it. I walked in and I was nearly carried out."

the bottom of the hill I'd got injuries while I was in their custody...Bruises, facial cuts, bleeding. I was marched down the field, both arms behind my back, and when we got to the police line I was banged onto the police shields, they bounced me off, the shields opened and I was punched, kicked, prodded, you name it. I walked in and I was nearly carried out."

When the miners were put on trial in Sheffield the case collapsed in spectacular style after 16 weeks when it became clear the police evidence wasn't reliable. Dan Johnson compares the fabri-

cation of police witness statements at Orgreave and Hillsborough and says that the manipulation of police witness statements at Orgreave appeared to be even more manipulated than at Hillsborough. He cites one example where 31 officers from four different forces used this identical phrase:

'As we stood there in the line a continuous stream of missiles came from the pickets into the police line... there were no shields being used at this point'. He asks, based on the extensive fabrication of evidence in the statements, whether it was the intention of the police to present evidence to support a charge of riot – which carried severe penalties – rather than a public order offence, which would mean a fine.

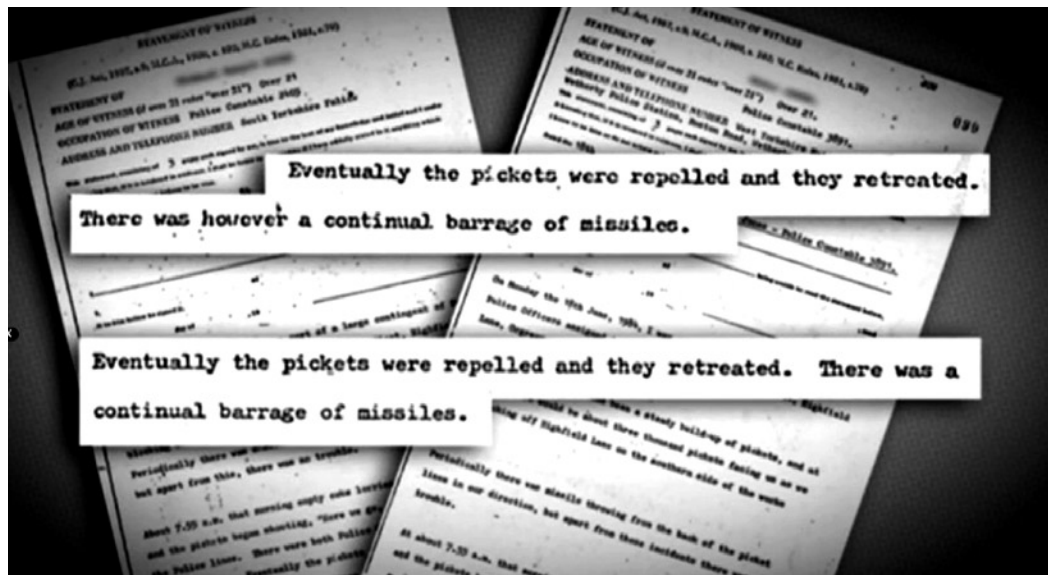
Vera Baird, who also represented miners at the trial, comments on the behaviour of SYP detectives who told police officers what to write: "You can see in a way that they were trying to set the scenario but what they were actually doing was 'teeing

"Not a single police officer was prosecuted, even the one caught on camera beating a defenceless miner to the ground in one famous case. Not a single police officer prosecuted, not a single police officer even disciplined"



THE MINERS' STRIKE – 30 YEARS ON

Mark George, a Sheffield barrister, after analysing the statements, concludes the level of repetition in the statements provided enough evidence for the charge of attempting to pervert the course of justice



Different statements, same words: Part of the evidence of Yorkshire police collusion, exposed by the reporting of Dan Johnson for the BBC programme, *Inside Out*.

up', perverting the course of justice."

In the final section of the programme Michael Mansfield points to the miscarriage of justice at Orgreave: "Not a single police officer was prosecuted, even the one caught on camera beating a defenceless miner to the ground in one famous case. Not a single police officer prosecuted, not a single police officer even disciplined."

Mark George, a Sheffield barrister and an independent voice with no previous involvement in the Orgreave case, after analysing the statements, concludes the level of repetition in the statements provided enough evidence for the charge of attempting to pervert the course of justice.

The impact of the programme

On the same evening the *Inside Out* programme went out an hour-long special *Panorama* programme was to be shown at 10.35pm investigating what the BBC knew about Jimmy Savile, his actions and the events around the dropping of the Corporation's own *Newsnight* investigation into the subject. The *Panorama* programme led all

the bulletins but the Orgreave programme got some good pre-publicity. *Breakfast News*, *Look North* and *The Guardian* ran it that morning. The *Today* programme and 5 Live ran it as well as local radio stations. Yvette Cooper, Labour MP for the former mining areas Pontefract and Castleford and Shadow Home Secretary, mentioned it in Parliament and said it needed investigation. Lunchtime national news ran it with a plug to watch it. Local papers ran it the next day or later in the week. But the big outcome from the programme was, as Dan Johnson, "Three weeks after SYP did self-referral to the IPCC and the programme and I were mentioned in the referral so it's pretty obvious what sparked the SYP decision."

He thinks the programme was, "A good example of regional current affairs television, and I don't see that going on anywhere else. The BBC is doing this and is able to shout about it on wider platforms. It is the only place I can see that I could make films like this. There have been cuts to regional news and current affairs but *Inside Out*



hasn't lost its capacity to make programmes though they are often now shared more widely across regions."

The programme won the regional O2 media award for Scoop of the Year in May 2013 and the Royal Television Society Best Factual Programme award in June 2013.

Broader issues

Dan Johnson's Orgeave programme stands out as a good example of regional investigative journalism which makes a difference. However, local and regional journalism, both print and broadcast, have been subjected to huge pressures, particularly since the recession of 2008. These pressures have been due to commercial greed and short-sightedness by regional newspaper groups, successive governments' deregulatory policies which have seen the effective dismantling of ITV's regional structure that sustained vibrant news and current affairs programming, and the ideological assault on the BBC licence fee in 2010 by the then Culture Secretary, Jeremy Hunt.

Regional newspaper groups up to the 2008 recession were incredibly profitable, but a combination of declining sales, loss of advertising revenue though the economic downturn and increasing Internet competition has led regional newspaper groups to cut jobs, close titles and pursue policies which make it increasingly difficult for local and regional newspapers to fulfil their vital democratic role as local watchdogs. In July 2009 Bedworth, a small former mining town in the Midlands, lost its weekly newspaper, the *Bedworth Echo*. It was one of nearly 50 which its owner Trinity Mirror closed over 18 months in 2008-09. Bedworth became a 'town without news'. In 1972 when Pete Lazenby started on the *Yorkshire Evening Post* (YEP) there were 200 journalists working across the YEP and the *Yorkshire Post*. When he left there were 60. In the 15 months up to January 2014 30% of

the journalists on the papers were lost. The papers are owned by Johnston Press, one of the big four regional newspaper groups. In February 2014, Newsquest, another of the big-four regional newspaper groups, provoked votes for industrial action by journalists on papers like the *Northern Echo*, *Darlington and Stockton Times* and *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* over an ill-conceived plan to move sub-editing operations of these papers to a central hub 270 miles away in Newport, South Wales. (4)

ITV Yorkshire is a pale shadow of what used to be an independent ITV franchise, Yorkshire Television or YTV, which served the region well. It is now part of a single ITV structure for England and Wales and any sense of a strong journalistic presence in the Yorkshire region has been diminished. The broadcasting regulator Ofcom has allowed ITV to reduce its public service obligations to provide high-quality, well-resourced news and current affairs for all ITV regions. In Yorkshire it means that the single *Calendar* programme at 6.00pm is required to carry more news originating not from the region but from ITV/ITN News in London.

The BBC too is still coming to terms with a shabby, behind-closed-doors deal on the licence fee in October 2010. During 48 hours Mark Thomson BBC Director General, Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt and the chair of the BBC Trust Sir Michael Lyons

In 1972 when Pete Lazenby started there were 200 journalists working at the Yorkshire Evening Post and the Yorkshire Post. When he left there were 60



Click on the link below to read an excerpt from *SHAFTED*, Granville Williams's previous book on the British miners' strike

<http://www.coldtype.net/Assets.09/pdfs/0309.Shafted.pdf>



THE MINERS' STRIKE – 30 YEARS ON

If we value our local and regional media we have to speak out in their defence

agreed to freeze the licence fee until 2017 while taking on £340 million extra spending commitments for the BBC World Service, the roll-out of broadband in rural areas and funding local TV and online services. (5) The consequence of the deal was job losses and a 20 per cent spending cut across the BBC.

If we value our local and regional media we have to speak out in their defence. Journalists, who have no control over the decisions made by top management, show up every day, doing their best to produce good quality reporting. They're often frustrated and even angry at the obstacles placed in front of them. Despite the low pay and high stress of their jobs, they still want to do their best. And at their best they hold local politicians, the police and bullying bosses to account. They are a voice for people angry at bureaucratic incompetence and in



support of local campaigns for traffic crossings and swimming baths. As the song says, "You're gonna miss me when I'm gone." **CT**

NOTES

1. Interview with Dan Johnson, 24 January 2014.
2. David Conn, 'Hillsborough and Battle of Orgreave: one police force, two disgraces', *The Guardian*, 12 April 2012.
3. For my personal recollections of the events at Saltley Gate see 'Forty Years After: What's In A Name?': <http://www.saltleygate.co.uk>
4. *The Economist*, 'The town without news' 23 July 2009; Red Pepper, 'An industry gutting itself', Feb/Mar 2014; *Press Gazette*, 5 February 2014.
5. www.nuj.org.uk/documents/bbc-cuts-there-is-an-alternative

WATCH THE MOVIE:

Watch the Inside Out programme at: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xukkmm_orgreave-bbc-battle-for-orgreave_news

SETTLING SCORES

THE MEDIA, THE POLICE AND THE MINERS' STRIKE

edited by *Granville Williams*

Published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom for the 30th anniversary of the 1984-85 UK miners' strike *Settling Scores* pinpoints unfinished business from the miners' strike, and the search for truth and justice for miners, their families and the hard-pressed coalfield communities.

Nick Jones reveals what he found in the government Cabinet papers released on 3 January 2014; Tony Harcup uses Freedom of Information to find out how the BBC got it so wrong in its reporting of the Battle of Orgreave on 18 June 1984; Ray Riley, a former miner, analyses the source of the savage police tactics deployed against the miners at Orgreave.

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25 years after Exxon Valdez: The real culprit

As BP gets permission to drill for oil in the Gulf of Mexico, **Greg Palast** remembers the company's role in the Exxon Valdez disaster

Two decades ago I was the investigator for the legal team that sold you the bullshit that a drunken captain was the principal cause of the Exxon Valdez disaster, the oil tanker crackup that poisoned over a thousand miles of Alaska's coastline 25 years ago on March 24, 1989.

The truth is far uglier, and the real culprit – British Petroleum, now BP – got away without a scratch to its reputation or to its pocket book. And because BP's willful negligence, prevarications and fraud in the Exxon Valdez spill cost the company nothing, its disdain for the law, for the environment and for the safety of its workers was repeated in the Gulf of Mexico with deadly consequences, resulting, two decades later, in the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Just last month, the Obama administration authorized BP to return to drilling in the Gulf. It would be worth the time of our ever-trusting regulators to take a look at my Exxon Valdez BP files. They would see a decades-long pattern of BP's lies, bribes and cover-ups that led, inexorably, to the Deepwater Horizon blowout – and that continue today within BP's worldwide oil operations.

Here is a sample from my files on BP from the original Exxon Valdez fraud and racketeering investigation:

Fraud No. 1: The emergency sucker boat fraud

Containing an oil spill – preventing spilled

crude from spreading to the shore – is not rocket science. As the principal owner of the Alaska Pipeline and Terminal, BP, not Exxon, was designated by law to prevent oil spilled by the Exxon Valdez from hitting the beach. It was BP's disastrous failures, more than Exxon's, that allowed the oil to devastate Alaska's coast.

To contain a spill all you need are rubbers and suckers. It works like this: If a tanker, oil rig or pipe bursts open, you surround it with a giant rubber skirt known as "boom." Then you suck the oil out through vacuum hoses on board special "containment" ships. The containment ship, which lays out the boom and skimmer hoses, is the firetruck of oil spills. You simply don't let tankers out of port unless a containment ship is ready to roll. It's against the law. But the law has never meant much to BP.

In May 1977, as the first tankers left Valdez, BP executives promised the state of Alaska that no tanker would leave port unless there were two containment barges at the ready and loaded with boom, with one placed near Bligh Island. In fact, on March 24, 1989, when the Exxon Valdez ran aground, right at Bligh Island, the containment barge was far away in Valdez, locked in a dry dock, its boom and hoses under Alaskan ice. As a result, by the time the emergency oil spill vessel got to the stricken ship, the oil slick was a hundred miles in circumference and beyond control.

As the principal owner of the Alaska Pipeline and Terminal, BP, not Exxon, was designated by law to prevent oil spilled by the Exxon Valdez from hitting the beach

WHO'S TO BLAME?

The night the Exxon Valdez grounded, Chugach Natives watched from the beach at nearby Tatitlek Village as the tanker headed into the reef

Two decades later, I watched fireboats uselessly spraying the burning oil on the Deepwater Horizon. Once again there were no BP skimmer barges, no boom surrounding the rig. Just as in Alaska, the promised spill containment operation was a con. By the time the Navy set out 400 miles of rubber boom days later, the slick was already as big as Cuba and slathering the Gulf shores.

Recently, Chevron and other big oil giants, now drilling the Gulf, have printed a series of full-page ads in papers across America touting their new state-of-the-art oil spill containment operations. Hey, thanks. But these are the same vessels BP and its fellow Gulf drillers promised before the Deepwater Horizon blew apart.

Fraud No. 2: Ghost crews

There's no sense having a firetruck without firemen. And so, years before the Exxon Valdez grounding, Alyeska, the oil company consortium headed by BP, promised the US Department of the Interior and the US Congress, under oath, that the oil shipper would employ a trained and equipped crew around the clock to jump from helicopters, if needed, to contain an oil spill. My clients, the Chugach Natives of Alaska, agreed to give up ownership of the land under the Port of Valdez to the oil companies in return for those jobs.

The night the Exxon Valdez grounded, Chugach Natives watched from the beach at nearby Tatitlek Village as the tanker headed into the reef. They could have prevented the disaster – but they were helpless: BP had fired them. In my team's investigation for the Chugach, we discovered that, to save money, BP's Alyeska simply drew up lists of nonexistent emergency spill response workers or wrote down names of untrained, unequipped dockworkers: an imaginary crew to man phantom emergency ships.

Fraud No. 3: Phantom Equipment

And the rubber boom? That was a phantom as well. BP's Alyeska had promised that too,

in writing. The equipment was supposed to be placed along the tanker route including Bligh Island – exactly the spot where the Exxon Valdez grounded.

And so, it was no surprise to me that 21 years later in the Gulf there were neither skimmers nor boom at the site of the Deepwater Horizon. The equipment was there, as in Alaska, only on paper. Indeed, part of BP's Gulf Coast response plan was a photocopy of the Alaska plan, including ways to wash down Arctic seals.

Cover-up, threats and bribery

Did BP's top executives and partners know of the ghost response teams and phantom equipment ruse? Yes, we have the documents and insiders' testimony. Just three examples from my bulging file cabinet:

In a confidential letter dated April 19, 1984, Capt. James Woodle, BP's commander of the port at Valdez, warned that “due to a reduction in manning, age of equipment, limited training and lack of personnel, serious doubt exists that [we] would be able to contain and clean up effectively a medium or large size oil spill.”

In response, BP threatened him with a file on his marital infidelities (fabricated), fired him, then forced him to destroy his files. Ten months before the Exxon Valdez spill, BP's Alyeska chief, Theo Polasek, told a secret meeting of the top executives of the Alaska group oil companies (including BP, Exxon and ConocoPhillips) that containing an oil spill “at the mid-point of Prince William Sound [is] not possible with present equipment.” But no change was made. Polasek was denied the funds needed to protect the mid-Sound – exactly where the tanker grounded.

In September 1984, before the Exxon Valdez disaster, BP's shipping broker, Charles Hamel, was so concerned at what he saw as an immediate danger in Alaska that he flew by Concorde to London to warn BP's chiefs of the looming emergency. In response, BP hired ex-CIA operatives to tap Hamel's phone and intercept his mail. BP's black ops

team even ran a toy truck with a microphone into the air vents of a building where he was speaking with a congressman. (Ultimately, BP's spooks were captured by a team of Navy SEALs.)

BP gets off cheap

The team of attorneys representing the Natives and fishermen whose lives were destroyed by the tanker spill chose to hold back the true and ugly story of systematic fraud and penny-pinching negligence by BP and its partners. We focused instead on the simpler story of human frailty and error – “drunken skipper hits reef.”

We didn't have a choice: Oil company chiefs had told our clients – Natives who were out of cash, isolated and desperate – that they wouldn't get a dime unless we agreed not to use the “f-word”: fraud. Exxon would withhold payment for 20 years. We buried the fraud charges – yet Exxon still didn't pay for 22 years. By then, a third of the Natives and fishermen in the lawsuit were dead.

And BP? Who said crime doesn't pay? BP walked away with a nominal payment to Alaska's Natives, fishermen and towns of \$125 million – 100 percent of it covered by insurance. And that's what led, years later, to the incineration of 11 men on the Deepwater Horizon and 600 miles of Gulf coastline still poisoned today.

BP and other oil companies have a clear motive for these safety games: skimmer barges, crews, equipment and operations cost billions of dollars a year worldwide to man and maintain. It's cheaper to lie, cover up and buy the favor of politicians and regulators. In London, BP executives told me on camera of their systematic bribery of presidents and their minions in the new Caspian Sea oil states. (Bribery charges against one bagman were dropped when in 2010 the National Security Agency acknowledged that it had authorized the bribes.)

But it's not just “over there” that BP spreads its largesse. BP's original sweetheart oil leases in the Gulf and the light hand of

regulators were doubtless the result of favors – monetary and sexual – that the company lavished on US regulatory agents at the Minerals Management Service, an agency that President Obama shuttered in response to the Deepwater Horizon blowout.

There's also the monetary and political love laid upon America's powerful. Although a foreign company, BP's chief in Alaska, Bob Malone, became a co-chairman and fundraiser for George W. Bush's election campaign.

Polluted shores, polluted politics

In 2010 for the UK's Channel 4 Television, I returned to Alaska with filmmaker Richard Rowley. In the quiet rivulets of the islands within Prince William Sound, we picked up gobs of oil with the telltale chemical markers of the Exxon Valdez. Then we flew to the Gulf Coast with Alaskan oil spill biologist Rick Steiner – and found miles and miles of BP's oil oozing under beaches the company and the Obama administration had already declared clean.

Yet just last week, BP was awarded more tracts to drill in the Gulf even as its onetime vice president for Gulf exploration, David Rainey, stands trial on felony charges of obstruction of Congress.

It is clear that neither BP, its partners nor this administration can be trusted to safely punch more miles-deep holes in the Gulf of Mexico. As long as oil companies can pad their bottom line by scoffing at the law, as long as they can cheaply pollute the political process, the next disaster is not a matter of if, but when.

CT

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Greg Palast's investigation of BP opens his latest film, “Vultures and Vote Rustlers.” www.palastinvestigativefund.org/?id=65
Prerelease editions are available on DVD and download for a donation to Palast's foundation for investigative reporting. And read the complete untold story of the Exxon Valdez and Deepwater Horizon disasters in Palast's “Vultures' Picnic,” BBC Newsnight's Culture Program's Book of the Year.

In London, BP executives told me on camera of their systematic bribery of presidents and their minions in the new Caspian Sea oil states

A kuffiya for Tony Benn

Ramzy Baroud pays tribute to the British warrior who ‘immatured with age’

Harold Wilson and his camp invested heavily in assigning Benn the responsibility of the successive defeats experienced by the Labor Party at the hands of the Conservatives

Long before the Boycott, Sanctions and Divestment campaign inched slowly from the fringes of global solidarity with Palestinians to take center stage, Tony Benn had been advocating a boycott of Israel with unrestricted conviction, for years.

“Britain should offer its support for this strategy by stopping all arms sales to Israel, introducing trade sanctions and a ban on all investment there together with a boycott of Israeli goods here and make it a condition for the lifting of these measures that Israel complies with these demands at once,” Benn wrote in his blog on April 19, 2002, under the title “A STATE OF PALESTINE NOW”. The ‘strategy’ of which Benn spoke was for Arafat to declare a state, and for ‘friendly nations’ to recognize it.

Yes, the title was all in caps. It was as if Benn, a principled British left wing politician, had wanted to loudly accentuate his insistence that the Palestinian people deserved their rights, freedom and sovereignty. He was as bold and courageous as any man or woman of true values and principles should always be. He remained uncompromising in matters of human rights and justice. This international warrior left a challenging space to fill when he passed away at the age of 88, on Thursday, March 13.

Following the news of his death, British

media was awash of reports about Benn and his long legacy of being a stubborn politician and uncompromising advocate for human rights. Frankly, there was less emphasis on the latter and much more on the former, despite the fact that Benn understood politics was a platform to quarrel with moral dilemmas. The parliament was a platform to serve the people, not to conspire with other politicians for the sake of one’s party. For some politicians, it is all about winning elections, not using office to carry out a morally-grounded mandate to serve the people. Benn was different, thus there was the love-hate relationship Britain had with him.

True to form, British media immediately conjured up a few buzzwords by which it attempted to define Benn’s legacy. He had ‘immatured with age,” was one of them. It was a remark made by Harold Wilson, Benn’s fiercest rival in the Labor Party, in reference to Benn’s becoming more of a radical left-winger as he grew older. Some in the media simply love axioms and catchphrases, for it spares journalists the pain of exhaustive research. Wilson and his camp invested heavily in assigning Benn the responsibility for the successive defeats experienced by the Labor Party at the hands of the Conservatives. Indeed, Margaret Thatcher and then John Major won four elections in a row,

and between them changed the face of British economy and quashed major labor unions. But blaming Benn for splitting the party is unfair.

Compare Tony Benn's legacy with that of Tony Blair. The first was principled to the core, boldly challenged US hegemony in the world, and fought hard for Britain's poor, working class and against unhindered globalization that made states vulnerable to the inherent disparity of the global economic system.

Blair stood for the opposite: a self-serving politician, devoid of any morality, and was rightly dubbed Bush's poodle for heeding to the US military adventurism, mainly in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Benn, even from the point of view of those who disagreed with him, was always seen, and will always be remembered as a man of high values. Blair had been discredited by his own peers even before he was forced to concede office. One can imagine that Israeli media is the one likely to remember Blair with much fondness.

Although Benn seemed guided by the same high moral values that accompanied him throughout the over 50 years in which he served as an MP in the British parliament, when he retired in 2001 he seemed ready to take on even bigger challenges. His task morphed from that of a fierce politician at home, fighting for the very definition of the Labor Party, to an internationalist, taking on the most difficult of subjects, and never bowing down.

Following the US-British so-called 'war on terror' – designed around economic and strategic interests – Benn rose to greater prominence, not as another TV celebrity 'expert', but as a fierce opponent to the US and his own government's wholesale slaughter of hundreds of thousands of innocent people. Since then, the man never stayed away from the streets. He spoke with passion and mesmerized audiences in his beautiful, immaculate English. Most important about the timing of Benn's cou-

rageous stances was the fact that back then, all public discourses related to the wars were saturated with fear. But, whenever Benn spoke, he pushed the narrative up to higher degrees of audacity.

I listened to him once speak at Trafalgar Square in London. He wore a kuffiya, the traditional Palestinian headscarf. He spoke of Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine, as if their peoples were his own. Thousands of us applauded with so much enthusiasm. It was as if his words alone were the salvation that would free Arab nations from the bondage of military occupation and war. But at times, words live in a sphere of their own where they multiply, and when repeated often enough, can change the world.

"The main responsibility for the appalling crimes being perpetrated against the Palestinians must be equally shared between Jerusalem and Washington for successive American governments have funded Israel, armed Israel and used their veto at the Security Council to protect Israel from being forced to comply with what world opinion wanted," he said in 2003, in an interview with Egypt-based *Al Ahram*.

True, Benn was not the only British politician who spoke with such candor about the shared responsibility of crimes committed against Palestinians, but few went as far as he did.

The next time there is a rally for Palestine, there ought to be an empty chair with a Palestinian kuffiya, and the name of Tony Benn. It is a Palestinian tradition to honor its heroes, even those with a splendidly beautiful British accent. **CT**

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Tony Benn was principled to the core, boldly challenged US hegemony in the world, and fought hard for Britain's poor, working class and against unhindered globalization

Lights, cameras, arrest

John W. Whitehead reveals how more and more Americans are being thrown in jail for filming 'out of control' police officers

Mary Musselman, also a Florida resident, is being held in jail without bond for "feeding wild animals?"

Once again, the US government is attempting to police the world when it should be policing its own law enforcement agencies. We've got a warship cruising the Black Sea, fighter jets patrolling the Baltic skies, and a guided-missile destroyer searching the South China Sea for the downed Malaysia Airlines flight. All the while, back home in the US, our constitutional rights are going to hell in a hand basket, with homeowners being threatened with eviction for attempting to live off the grid, old women jailed for feeding crows, and citizens armed with little more than a cell phone arrested for daring to record police activities.

Robin Speronis now finds herself threatened with eviction from her own Florida home for daring to live off the grid, independent of city utilities such as water and electricity. City officials insist the Cape Coral resident's chosen way of life violates international property maintenance code and city ordinances. Mary Musselman, also a Florida resident, is being held in jail without bond for "feeding wild animals." The 81-year-old Musselman, on probation after being charged with feeding bears near her home, was arrested after officers discovered her leaving bread out for crows. Meanwhile, Brandy Berning of Florida was forced to spend a night in jail after recording her conversation with an officer who pulled her over

for a routine traffic stop.

Welcome to the farce that passes for law and order in America today, where, as I point out in my book, "A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State", crime is low, militarized police activity is on the rise, and Americans are being penalized for living off the grid, feeding wild animals, holding Bible studies in their back yard, growing vegetables in their front yard, collecting rain-water, and filming the police.

This latter point should really stick in your craw. Consider the irony: the government insists it can carry out all manner of surveillance on us – listen in on our phone calls, read our emails and text messages, track our movements, photograph our license plates, even enter our biometric information into DNA databases – but if we dare to return the favor, even a little, we get roughed up by the police, arrested, charged with violating various and sundry crimes (often trumped up), and forced to make restitution.

For example, George Thompson of Boston was arrested after he used his cell phone to record a police officer he describes as being "out of control."

University of Texas college student Abie Kyle Ikhinmwi was arrested after recording a police speed trap with her cell phone. Kansas teen Addison Mikkelson was arrested after filming a patrol car allegedly speeding and failing to use a turn signal.

Leon Rosby was filming a police standoff in June 2013, his cellphone in one hand and his dog's leash in the other, when three officers approached him. Anticipating a problem, Rosby placed his 2-year-old Rottweiler, Max, in his car. The LA Times reports: "As officers cuffed Rosby, the dog escaped through an open window and began to bark and lunge at officers. One officer tried to grab the dog's leash, then drew his gun and fired four shots, killing Max. Video of the incident went viral on YouTube, prompting a public outcry and drawing protesters to the Police Department headquarters." Rosby has now filed a civil rights lawsuit against the city and the three police officers.

And then there is the Baltimore man who was threatened by police after they discovered him filming them during an arrest. The local CBS station ran the footage of the ensuing confrontation, which went something like this:

"I'm allowed to do this," the man told the officer.

"Get it out of my face," the officer replied.

"I have my rights," the man said.

"You have no rights," the officer said.

But the man didn't stop rolling and was once again aggressively approached.

"Do you see the police presence here? Do you see us all? We're not [expletive] around. Do you understand? Do not disrespect us and do not not listen to us," the officer said. "Now walk away and shut your [expletive] mouth or you're going to jail, do you understand?"

After backing away, the officer came at the man a third time, appearing to grab him.

"I thought I had freedom of speech here," the man said.

"You don't. You just lost it," the officer replied.

And that, in a nutshell, is what happens when law enforcement officials – not just the police, but every agent of the government entrusted with enforcing laws, from the president on down – are allowed to discard the law when convenient. At the point where

there's a double standard at play, where the only ones having to obey the law are the citizenry and not the enforcers, then that vital "social contract" that John Locke envisioned as the basis for society breaks down. The more we allow government officials to operate outside the law, the more we ensure that the law becomes only a tool to punish us, rather than binding and controlling the government, as it was intended.

This brings me back to the problem of Americans getting arrested for filming the police. Until recently, this has primarily been a problem experienced by journalists and photographers attempting to document political protests and other disturbances involving the police. However, with the preponderance of smart phones capable of recording audio and video, individuals who dare to record police engaged in questionable or abusive activities in public are increasingly finding themselves on the receiving end of the harsh treatment they intended to document. These videos, if widely distributed, can be a powerful method of subjecting police to closer scrutiny and holding them accountable to respecting the rights of those they are supposed to serve.

Naturally, police agencies and unions have sought out legal prohibitions on such videos from being created. Massachusetts police, for instance, have invoked a state surveillance law to charge citizen video-makers criminally for their actions. Because the state surveillance law requires "two-party" consent, most kinds of public filming can be construed as illegal. Similar laws exist in California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. The law was enacted to protect private citizens from invasive surveillance, but the police have exploited it to curtail free speech that tarnishes their public image. Police claim that this regulation gives them legal justification to prohibit filming by citizens such as Jeffrey Manzelli, a journalist who recorded the police intimidating protesters at a rally and was arrested and charged under the law.

Saddled with costly lawsuits brought by

The more we allow government officials to operate outside the law, the more we ensure that the law becomes only a tool to punish us

PHOTO PLAY

The difficulty we face is that police officers are becoming increasingly thin skinned, less restrained in dealing with the public, and more inclined to conceive every word, gesture, or motion as a threat

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individuals allegedly brutalized by police who didn't appreciate their actions being filmed, a few cities across the country are attempting to adopt policies to protect citizens who film the police. In Troy, N.Y., for example, city police officers would face a fine and jail time if they stop people from legally photographing or filming them.

If adopted, the Troy ordinance, which would carry a maximum \$5,000 fine and a jail term of up to 15 days for an officer found guilty of violating it, would be the first of its kind in the country.

As part of a \$200,000 legal settlement, Indianapolis police will soon be required to remind its officers that citizens have a legal right to videotape on-duty police officers. The case arose after a 66-year-old Indianapolis resident was tackled to the ground, arrested and charged with resisting arrest, disorderly conduct and public intoxication (he was found not guilty of the charges) after he used his cellphone to record police arresting a young man in his neighbor's driveway. There is also a movement afoot to equip police with on-officer cameras that would provide footage of what an officer sees.

The courts, thus far, have favored the First Amendment rights of eyewitness filmmakers, even in the face of state efforts to outlaw such activities. In 2012, the US Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal of an Illinois eavesdropping law that makes recording law enforcement officers a first-class felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

In 2013, the US Department of Justice issued a statement of interest in the case of *Mannie Garcia v. Montgomery County, Md.*, declaring that not only do individuals have a First Amendment right to record officers publicly doing their duties, they also have Fourth and Fourteenth Amendment rights protecting them from having those recordings seized without a warrant or due process.

The Garcia case involves a journalist who was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct for filming police as they detained

two men. According to the lawsuit, police "dragged Garcia to the police car, put him in handcuffs, threw him to the ground by kicking his feet out from under him, taunted him, threatened to arrest his wife if she came too close and took his camera, and seized the memory card, which was never returned."

The problem, as the US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit recognized in *Payne v. Pauley*, is that "[p]olice officers must be more thick skinned than the ordinary citizen and must exercise restraint in dealing with the public" and "must not conceive that every threatening or insulting word, gesture, or motion amounts to disorderly conduct."

The difficulty we face is that police officers are becoming increasingly thin skinned, less restrained in dealing with the public, and more inclined to conceive every word, gesture, or motion as a threat. In an ideal world, police would recognize that, as public servants, they are rightfully subject to recording and surveillance when carrying out their public duties. Unfortunately, this is far from an ideal world.

So what are we to do?

We must continue to stand up for our rights, record police when the opportunity presents itself, and politely remind any offended officers that they are, in fact, our public servants and, as such, their behavior is subject to public scrutiny.

If they disagree and attempt to stop us from recording, we can refer them to the US Constitution, which they have sworn to uphold, which protects our right to record matters of public interest. And if they continue to insist on hauling people to jail because they don't like the idea of transparency and accountability, they can take it up with the courts.

The goal is to eventually arrive at a point where we can keep a watchful eye on our government officials, instead of the other way around. As Justice Louis D. Brandeis once observed, "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants; electric light the most efficient policeman." **CT**

The forgotten coup

John Pilger shows how the Godfather rules – from Canberra to Kiev

Washington's role in the fascist putsch against an elected government in Ukraine will surprise only those who watch the news and ignore the historical record. Since 1945, dozens of governments, many of them democracies, have met a similar fate, usually with bloodshed.

Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries on earth with fewer people than Wales, yet under the reformist Sandinistas in the 1980s it was regarded in Washington as a "strategic threat". The logic was simple; if the weakest slipped the leash, setting an example, who else would try their luck?

The great game of dominance offers no immunity for even the most loyal US "ally". This is demonstrated by perhaps the least known of Washington's coups – in Australia. The story of this forgotten coup is a salutary lesson for those governments that believe a "Ukraine" or a "Chile" could never happen to them.

Australia's deference to the United States makes Britain, by comparison, seem a renegade. During the American invasion of Vietnam – which Australia had pleaded to join – an official in Canberra voiced a rare complaint to Washington that the British knew more about US objectives in that war than its antipodean comrade-in-arms. The response was swift: "We have

to keep the Brits informed to keep them happy. You are with us come what may."

This dictum was rudely set aside in 1972 with the election of the reformist Labor government of Gough Whitlam. Although not regarded as of the left, Whitlam – now in his 98th year – was a maverick social democrat of principle, pride, propriety and extraordinary political imagination. He believed that a foreign power should not control his country's resources and dictate its economic and foreign policies. He proposed to "buy back the farm" and speak as a voice independent of London and Washington.

On the day after his election, Whitlam ordered that his staff should not be "vetted or harassed" by the Australian security organisation, ASIO – then, as now, beholden to Anglo-American intelligence. When his ministers publicly condemned the Nixon/Kissinger administration as "corrupt and barbaric", Frank Snapp, a CIA officer stationed in Saigon at the time, said later: "We were told the Australians might as well be regarded as North Vietnamese collaborators."

Whitlam demanded to know if and why the CIA was running a spy base at Pine Gap near Alice Springs, ostensibly a joint Australian/US "facility". Pine Gap is a giant vacuum cleaner which, as the whistleblower Edward Snowden recently

On the day after his election as prime minister, Gough Whitlam ordered that his staff should not be "vetted or harassed" by the Australian security organisation

HEAVY HANDS

In 1975, Whitlam discovered that Britain's MI6 had long been operating against his government

revealed, allows the US to spy on everyone. In the 1970s, most Australians had no idea that this secretive foreign enclave placed their country on the front line of a potential nuclear war with the Soviet Union. Whitlam clearly knew the personal risk he was taking – as the minutes of a meeting with the US ambassador demonstrate. “Try to screw us or bounce us,” he warned, “[and Pine Gap] will become a matter of contention”.

Victor Marchetti, the CIA officer who had helped set up Pine Gap, later told me, “This threat to close Pine Gap caused apoplexy in the White House. Consequences were inevitable... a kind of Chile was set in motion.”

The CIA had just helped General Pinochet to crush the democratic government of another reformer, Salvador Allende, in Chile.

In 1974, the White House sent Marshall Green to Canberra as ambassador. Green was an imperious, very senior and sinister figure in the State Department who worked in the shadows of America's “deep state”. Known as the “coupmaster”, he had played a played a central role in the 1965 coup against President Sukarno in Indonesia – which cost up to a million lives.

One of his first speeches in Australia was to the Australian Institute of Directors – described by an alarmed member of the audience as “an incitement to the country's business leaders to rise against the government”.

Pine Gap's top-secret messages were de-coded in California by a CIA contractor, TRW. One of the de-coders was a young Christopher Boyce, an idealist who, troubled by the “deception and betrayal of an ally”, became a whistleblower. Boyce revealed that the CIA had infiltrated the Australian political and trade union elite and referred to the Governor-General of Australia, Sir John Kerr, as “our man Kerr”.

In his black top hat and medal-laden mourning suit, Kerr was the embodiment of imperium. He was the Queen of England's Australian viceroy in a country that still recognised her as head of state. His duties were ceremonial; yet Whitlam – who appointed him – was unaware of or chose to ignore Kerr's long-standing ties to Anglo-American intelligence.

The Governor-General was an enthusiastic member of the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom, described by the Jonathan Kwitny of the *Wall Street Journal* in his book, ‘The Crimes of Patriots’, as, “an elite, invitation-only group... exposed in Congress as being founded, funded and generally run by the CIA”. The CIA “paid for Kerr's travel, built his prestige... Kerr continued to go to the CIA for money”.

In 1975, Whitlam discovered that Britain's MI6 had long been operating against his government. “The Brits were actually de-coding secret messages coming into my foreign affairs office,” he said later. One of his ministers, Clyde Cameron, told me, “We knew MI6 was bugging Cabinet meetings for the Americans.” In interviews in the 1980s with the American investigative journalist Joseph Trento, executive officers of the CIA disclosed that the “Whitlam problem” had been discussed “with urgency” by the CIA's director, William Colby, and the head of MI6, Sir Maurice Oldfield, and that “arrangements” were made. A deputy director of the CIA told Trento, “Kerr did what he was told to do.”

In 1975, Whitlam learned of a secret list of CIA personnel in Australia held by the Permanent Head of the Australian Defence Department, Sir Arthur Tange – a deeply conservative mandarin with unprecedented territorial power in Canberra. Whitlam demanded to see the list. On it was the name, Richard Stallings who, under cover, had set up Pine Gap as a provocative CIA installation. Whitlam now had the proof

he was looking for.

On 10 November, 1975, he was shown a top secret telex message sent by ASIO in Washington. This was later sourced to Theodore Shackley, head of the CIA's East Asia Division and one of the most notorious figures spawned by the Agency. Shackley had been head of the CIA's Miami-based operation to assassinate Fidel Castro and Station Chief in Laos and Vietnam. He had recently worked on the "Allende problem".

Shackley's message was read to Whitlam. Incredibly, it said that the prime minister of Australia was a security risk in his own country.

The day before, Kerr had visited the

headquarters of the Defence Signals Directorate, Australia's NSA, whose ties to Washington were, and remain, binding. He was briefed on the "security crisis". He had then asked for a secure line and spent 20 minutes in hushed conversation.

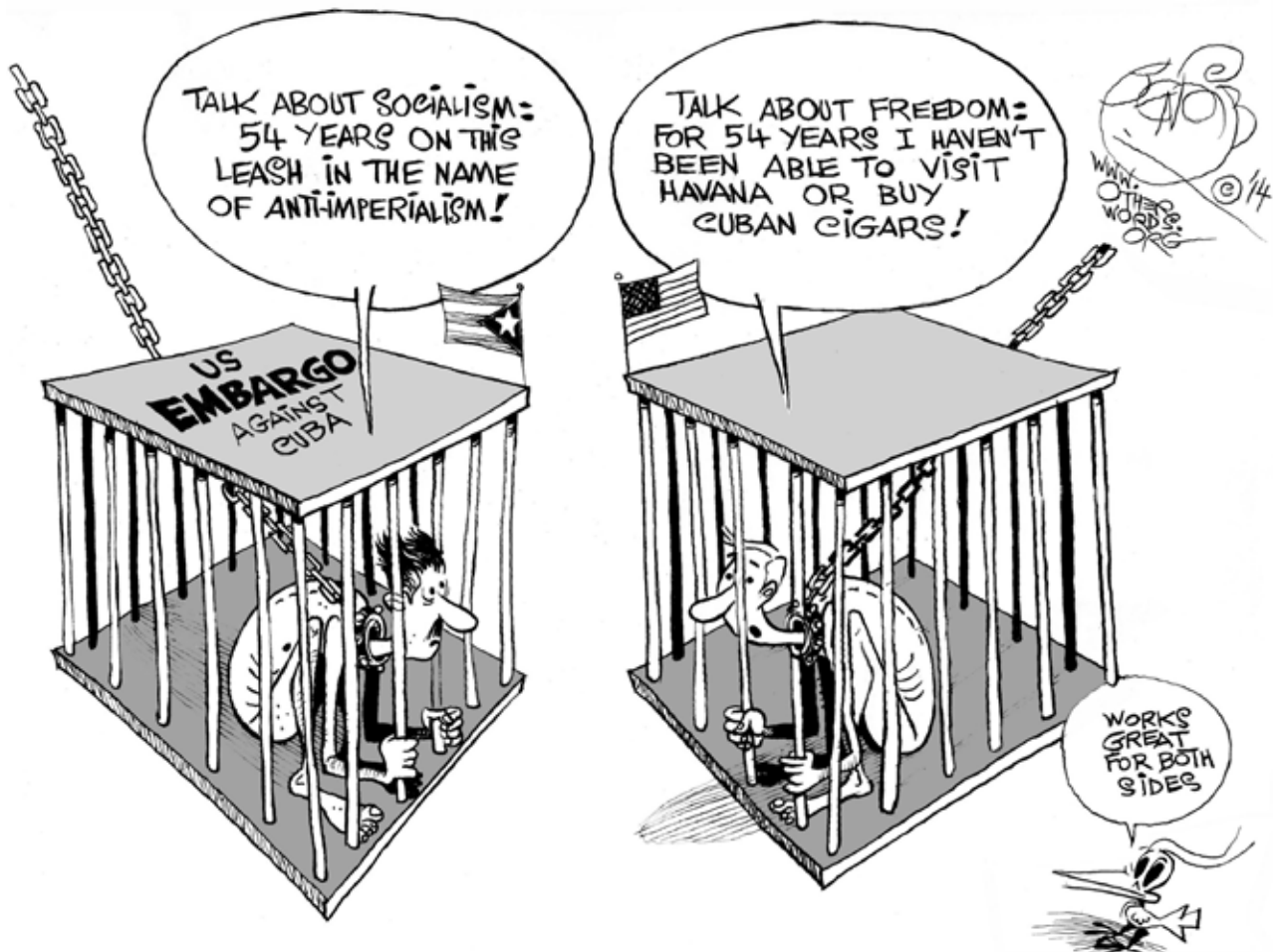
On 11 November – the day Whitlam was to inform Parliament about the secret CIA presence in Australia – he was summoned by Kerr. Invoking archaic vice-regal "reserve powers", Kerr sacked the democratically elected prime minister. The problem was solved. **CT**

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John Pilger's new film, "Utopia", opened in cinemas received glowing reviews in the UK and Australia

Shackley's message was read to Whitlam. Incredibly, it said that the prime minister of Australia was a security risk in his own country

BENDIB'S WORLD / 1

Khalil Bendib, OtherWords.org



The benefit claimants the government loves

Corrupt, irrational, destructive, counter-productive: this scarcely begins to describe Britain's farming policy, writes **George Monbiot**

Lying in a coma since December had not affected her ability to work, or her progress towards achieving her aspirations

Just as mad cow disease exposed us to horrors – feeding cattle on the carcasses of infected cattle – previously hidden in plain sight, so the recent floods have lifted the lid on the equally irrational treatment of the land. Just as BSE exposed dangerous levels of collusion between government and industry, so the floods have begun to expose similar cases of complicity and corruption. But we've heard so far just a fraction of the story.

I hope in this article to lift the lid a little further. The issues I've begun to investigate here – the corrupt practices and the irrationality of current policies – should unite both left and right in a demand for change. They should be as offensive to those who seek to curb public spending as they are to those who seek to defend it.

In July 2013, the British government imposed a £26,000 cap on the total benefits a household can receive. In the same month it was pursuing a different policy in urgent discussions in Brussels: fighting tooth and nail to prevent the imposition of a proposed cap precisely ten times that size (€300,000, or £260,000). The European Commission wanted this to be as much money as a single farmer could receive in subsidies. The British government was having none of it.

It won, with the result that this measure is now discretionary: member states can decide whether or not to cap the benefits they

give to farmers. Unsurprisingly, the British government has decided not to. The biggest 174 landowners in England take £120m between them. A €300,000 cap would have saved around £70m. If farmers were subject to the benefits cap that applies to everyone else (£26,000), the saving would amount to around £1bn. Why should the cap be imposed on the poor but not the rich?

Last month the MP Simon Danczuk read out a letter in the House of Commons that one of his constituents had received from the Department for Work and Pensions. It told her she was about to “enter the second stage of your intensive job-focused activity”. It expressed the hope that “all the activity or training intervention completed so far has not only supported you to achieve your aspirations but has moved you closer to the job market.”

Lying in a coma since December had not affected her ability to work, or her progress towards achieving her aspirations. She's in a coma because she suffered a heart attack. The heart attack, her father maintains, was brought about by extreme stress, caused by the threat of having her benefits stopped despite a mental illness so severe that she had been unable to work for 27 years.

Two days before this letter was read to the Commons, the farming minister, George Eustice, was speaking at the conference of the National Farmers' Union. He began by

paying “tribute to the great work” of its outgoing president: “thank you for what you’ve done.” Can you picture a minister in this government saying that about the head of any other trade union? The NFU’s primary work is lobbying. Yet the critical distance between government and lobbyists you would expect in a functioning democracy is non-existent.

The same goes for distance of any other kind. The address of Eustice’s ministry, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural affairs, is 17 Smith Square, London SW1. The address of the National Farmers’ Union is 16 Smith Square, London SW1. Though farmers comprise just 0.3% of the population of England and only 1.4% of the rural population, ministers treat them and their lobbyists as an idol before which they must prostrate themselves. Rural policy and farming policy are, to the government, synonymous; 98.6% of rural people are marginalised by the decisions it makes.

Eustice continued his speech by announcing that he is seeking to “slash guidance”, to “drive down the burden of farm inspections further”, and that he is “pushing hard at an EU level for sanctions and penalties to be more proportionate.” These are the sanctions and penalties imposed for breaking the conditions attached to farm subsidies. They take the form of a reduction in the benefits a farmer receives. “More proportionate” is the government’s code for smaller.

So just as the rules and penalties regulating the ordinary recipients of benefits have become so onerous that many find them almost impossible to meet, the rules and penalties attached to the benefits the rich receive are being reduced.

But how? The conditions attached to farm subsidies (which are called cross-compliance) are already so weak as to be almost non-existent. Let me give you an example. There are several rules which are meant to encourage farmers to protect their soils from compaction and erosion. Their pur-

pose is to sustain fertility, to defend water supplies and the ecology of the rivers and to prevent flooding. Not one of these measures appears to be either functional or enforceable.

All farmers receiving subsidies must complete a soil protection review. This is a booklet they fill in to show that they have thought about soil erosion and identified any problems on their land. Once every 100 years on average, an inspector from the Rural Payments Agency will visit the farm. If the inspectors identify a soil erosion problem, they have the power to ... er, offer guidance about how to rectify it. And that, in practice, is it. There are hardly any cases of this guidance being followed up with even the threat of action, let alone the imposition of any penalties. And even the guidance, Eustice now promises, will be “slashed”.

Bad enough? Oh no. Most inspectors have no expertise in soil erosion. So all they tend to do during their centennial visits is to ask the farmer whether he or she possesses a soil protection booklet. If the answer’s yes, that’s job done, even if their soil is rushing off the fields and into the rivers.

To discover whether or not farmers are causing a related problem – soil compaction through the use of heavy machinery in the wrong conditions – inspectors need to dig holes in the fields with a spade, to look at what has happened to the soil layers. But – and here you have a choice of laughing or crying – they do not possess the power to conduct an “invasive investigation” (ie digging a hole). So they are not permitted even to detect, let alone enforce, a breach of the compaction rules.

Are we there yet? Nope. Even these unenforceable non-rules are deemed too onerous for farmers growing a crop that both strips and compacts the soil faster than almost any other. Because the rows are planted so far apart, and because the soil is left bare through autumn, winter and much of the spring, maize causes more severe erosion than any other cereal crop. Yet, as I pointed

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ON THE FARM

There is just one set of rules which are effective and widely deployed: those which enforce the destruction of the natural world

out recently, maize growers are entirely and mysteriously exempted from the erosion rules.

Since then I have asked the department five more times for an explanation. While all my other questions have been answered, albeit half-heartedly, this one was not fudged or spun or mangled, but simply ignored. I've never encountered this before: a government department refusing even to acknowledge that a question has been asked. What should I conclude but that the answer is highly embarrassing? I guess that because it's almost impossible to grow maize without wrecking the soil, and because the government's plans for biogas production depend on growing maize to fuel anaerobic digesters, the only way to reconcile this conflict is to remove the crop from the regulations.

In a devastating response to claims made in the *Guardian's* letters page by the National Farmers' Union, the soil scientist Robert Palmer calculated that so much compaction and erosion is caused by maize growing that a 10-hectare field causes the run-off of 375 million litres of water. Maize expanded 24% between 2012 and 2013, much of it in sensitive catchments. This is a formula for repeated flooding.

As a result of these multiple failures by the government, even *Farmers' Weekly* warns that "British soils are reaching crisis point". Last month a farmer sent me photos of his neighbours' fields, where "the soil is so eroded it is like a rockery. I have the adjoining field ... my soil is now at least 20 cm deeper than his." In the catchment of the River Tamar in Devon, one study suggests, soil is being lost at the rate of five tonnes per hectare per year.

I could go on. I could describe the complete absence of enforceable regulations on the phosphates farmers spread on their fields, which cause eutrophication (blooms of algae which end up suffocating much of the freshwater ecosystem) when they run into the rivers. I could discuss the poorly-regulated use of metaldehyde, a pesticide

that is impossible to remove from drinking water. I could expand on the way in which governments all over Europe have – while imposing a temporary ban for flowering crops – permitted the use of neonicotinoid insecticides for all other purposes, without any idea of what their impact might be on animals in the soil and the rivers into which they wash. The research so far suggests it is devastating, but they were licensed before any such investigation was conducted.

There is just one set of rules which are effective and widely deployed: those which enforce the destruction of the natural world. Buried in the cross-compliance regulations is a measure called GAEC 12. This insists that, to receive their money, farmers must prevent "unwanted vegetation" from growing on their land. (The rest of us call it wild-life habitat). Even if their land is producing nothing, they must cut, graze or spray it with herbicides to get their money. Unlike soil erosion, compaction and pollution, breaches of this rule are easy to detect and enforce: if the inspectors see trees returning to the land, the subsidy can be cut off altogether.

Many of the places in which habitats might otherwise be allowed to recover – principally the highly infertile land in the uplands – are kept bare by this rule. It's another means by which floods are hard-wired. The government has just raised the incentive to clear such land, by announcing that hill farmers will now be paid the same amount per hectare as lowland farmers – equalising the rate upwards, not downwards.

It also seems to be on the verge of raising the amount of public subsidy paid to the owners of grouse moors by 84%. These are among the richest people in Britain. The management of their land to maximise grouse numbers involves the mass destruction of predators and the burning of blanket bogs, causing floods downstream and releasing large amounts of carbon. If this looks like the work of a self-serving club of

old school chums, that's because it is.

First we give landowners our money: vast amounts of it, uncapped and almost unconditional. Then we pay for the costs they kindly dump on us: the floods, the extra water purification necessitated by the pollution they cause, the loss of so many precious and beautiful places, the decline of the wildlife that enchants and enraptures. Expensive, irrational, destructive, counter-productive: this scarcely begins to describe our farming policies.

But it need not happen this way. Change the rules, change the incentives, support impoverished farmers to do the right thing, stop support for the rich farmers altogether, and everything else can follow. In my book "Feral" I've begun to sketch out what a functioning, lively, wonderful countryside could look like. High in the catchments, where most of the rain falls and the soil is so poor that farming is sustained only through public money, we should be paying the farmers to replant trees, which hold back the water and stabilise the soil.

To these returning forests we could reintroduce animals that have been wiped out across much or all of this land: capercaillies, wildcats, pine martens, eagles, lynx, moose, bison, even, in the Scottish Highlands, wolves. Aside from the opportunities this rewilding presents for re-enchanting our lives, experience elsewhere in Europe suggests that eco-tourism has a far higher potential for employment, for supporting communities, for keeping the schools and shops and pubs and chapels open than sheep farming does.

We should turn the rivers flowing into the lowlands into "blue belts" or "wild ways". For fifty metres on either side, the land would be left unfarmed, allowing trees and bogs to return and creating continuous wildlife corridors.

Bogs and forests trap the floodwaters, helping to protect the towns downstream. They catch the soil washing off the fields and filter out some of the chemicals which

would otherwise find their way into the rivers. A few of us are now in the process of setting up a rewilding group in Britain, which would seek to catalyse some of these changes.

Where soils are fragile and the risk of erosion is high, farmers should be encouraged to move towards regenerative or permacultural techniques: clever new methods which can produce high yields without damaging soil, water and wildlife. Last month, Rebecca Hosking, a farmer who uses regenerative techniques, published a photo of the confluence of the stream leaving her land with the stream leaving her neighbour's land. His looked like cream of tomato soup; hers was clear.

The British government currently spends – on top of the £3.6bn in farm subsidies disbursed in this country – £450m on research and development for the food and farming industries.

Much of this money could be characterised as corporate welfare. Yet a search of the British government's website finds not one mention of permaculture. Not a penny of public money is being spent on investigating its potential here.

It's not hard to see how a land which is now being pillaged, eroded, polluted and wrecked could be allowed to remain productive – even to produce more food for people than Britain does today (though perhaps less for livestock and biofuel) – while also supporting a vibrant ecosystem. It is not hard to see how public money could be spent to deliver social goods rather than social harms. But for this to happen we must insert a political crowbar between numbers 16 and 17 Smith Square, to prise the government away from the industry it is supposed to regulate.

CT

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George Monbiot's latest book is "*Feral: Rewilding The Land, The Sea and Human Life.*" This essay originally appeared in *The Guardian* newspaper. More of his work appears at his web site <http://monbiot.com>

Bogs and forests trap the floodwaters, helping to protect the towns downstream

Is my old friend a political assassin?

Tim Knight recalls an adventure in the Congo with a soldier who is now accused of killing a prime minister

Then one day Wedin casually asks if I'd like to join a small U.N. reconnaissance group flying to a town named Kasenga, in the bush 225 miles to the north, to check on a Katangese rebel force

It's not every day that you wake up to discover that your old friend might have murdered the prime minister of Sweden.

And it's not every day that you learn that the same old friend might also have bombed the Stockholm and London offices of the African National Congress (ANC).

And that he might also – on orders from the apartheid regime in South Africa – have tried to assassinate the great ANC leader, Oliver Tambo.

But that's what's just happened.

Here's how.

I'm enjoying my morning cup of tea recently when a story in Canada's *Globe and Mail* ("Hunt for Swedish PM killer takes Stieg Larsson twist") catches my attention.

"Two of the darker sides of Swedish society intersected Tuesday with the revelation that late crime novelist Stieg Larsson once sent police 15 boxes of evidence linking the unsolved murder of a former prime minister to a cabal of South African hitmen and a right-wing Swede living in the breakaway Turkish part of Cyprus."

The former prime minister is Olof Palme – who loathed South Africa's apartheid system and was a strong supporter of the ANC – assassinated in Stockholm 28 years ago.

The "right-wing Swede living in the breakaway Turkish part of Cyprus" is my old friend Bertil Wedin who does indeed live

in Kyrenia, in the Turkish part of Cyprus. I know, because he's twice invited me to visit him there.

Bertil Wedin and I go back a long way.

We meet in 1963 in Élisabethville (now Lubumbashi), capital of the Congolese breakaway province of Katanga. He wears a Swedish military uniform and the blue beret of the United Nations which is tasked with ending Katanga's secession from the Congo.

He's around my age, speaks excellent English, is tough, dogmatic, disciplined, very conservative and very military. He has the manner of a soldier who prides himself on following orders and is confident he'll win whatever battles he gets into.

I'm all of 25-years-old, in the Congo to cover the wars for United Press International.

Over many bottles of the excellent local Simba beer, the conservative Swedish soldier and the liberal English journalist do some serious disagreeing over the rights and wrongs of the U.N. intervention in the Congo and much else. Particularly the racist apartheid system in South Africa. But otherwise, we get along fine.

Then one day Wedin casually asks if I'd like to join a small U.N. reconnaissance group flying to a small town named Kasenga, in the bush some 225 miles to the north, to check on a Katangese rebel force which might or might not be advancing on Élisabethville.



U.N. officers and journalists taken for a ride on the crocodile-infested Luapula River. Left to right: Warrant Officer Bertil Wedin, Tim Knight, Major Hugo Munthe-Kaas, boat owner, U.N. pilot Lennart Edvinsson, two rebels, U.N. pilot Olle Andersson, rebel officer, rebel Commandant (wearing the major's beret).

bethville.

No journalist can ever resist such an offer.

So, one brutally hot morning, a battered U.N. de Havilland Otter takes off from Élisabethville airport and heads for Kasenga.

Officer in charge of the reconnaissance is Wedin's boss, Major Hugo Munthe-Kaas, the U.N.'s Chief of Military Intelligence in Katanga – its chief spy. He's also Norway's most decorated soldier and a famous World War II hero.

Even in the Congo heat, the major wears full Norwegian Army uniform with jacket and tie. His chest is a rainbow of military decorations. He's blond, burly and by all accounts, very, very tough.

Flying with him are Warrant Officer Wedin, who carries our only weapon, a 9mm Husqvarna pistol, in a holster at his waist. Then there's my fixer, photographer and translator Roger Asnong, a couple of Swedish U.N. pilots, and me.

The Otter bounces down on a rough grass airstrip just outside Kasenga. From there to the Territorial Commissioner's office. The major politely asks the Commissioner – who's so nervous he can hardly speak – if he knows of any rebels in the area.

That's when the gunfire starts.

I run to a window. Rebel soldiers crammed into pick-up trucks, circle the building, fire machine guns in our general direction, scream at us to come out of the building and

Rebel soldiers crammed into pick-up trucks, circle the building, fire machine guns in our general direction, scream at us to come out of the building and surrender

CONGO TALES

We're rounded up, kicked, beaten with fists and rifle butts, forced into the back of a pick-up and driven to a hut in the nearby rebel camp

surrender.

Bertil Wedin draws his pistol.

Bertil Wedin tells me later "my idea was to shoot the ones who came close to the building and take their automatic weapons so we could arm ourselves and fight back. We could have succeeded if we'd managed to get some of their guns ..."

But Wedin is a soldier. And soldiers follow orders. Strangely calm, as if it's all just a training exercise, he calls to his superior officer, Major Hugo Munthe-Kaas, who is Denmark's most decorated soldier and the U.N.'s Chief of Military Intelligence in Katanga:

"Sir, permission to return fire?"

"No. Wait for my order".

The rebels storm the Commissioner's office. One runs at Wedin, tries to grab his pistol. Wedin hits him, knocks him down. Another rebel reaches for the pistol. The major punches him, hard. The rebel falls.

I write afterwards: "This isn't real life. It's as if everything in all the world has stopped. There is no time. No past. No future. Nothing except the screaming and the white men and the black men hitting each other with fists. And the staccato rat-a-tat-tat explosions of the machine guns outside."

Wedin's pistol is out of its holster, pointing straight at the nearest rebel.

He tells me later, strangely formal: "It was now my duty to find out whether or not the major could communicate with me. Only the major had the authority to decide that I give myself up and let go of my weapon. Without knowing whether he would be able to reply, I shouted 'Major ... I request your orders.'"

The Major – who killed many German soldiers in World War II – orders Wedin to surrender. And hand over his pistol, our only weapon.

Wedin obeys.

We're rounded up, kicked, beaten with

fists and rifle butts until the rebel commandant intervenes. Then, at bayonet-point, we're forced into the back of a pick-up truck and driven to a hut in the nearby rebel camp.

We're interrogated by the commandant for hours.

Why did we come to Kasenga? Are we the U.N. advance party? When will the U.N. troops and planes start attacking? Why have U.N. soldiers come all the way across the sea to kill Katangese people?

One of the rebels mentions that it's local custom for chiefs to cut off the penises of captured enemies. All the rebels in the hut laugh.

Twice we're lined up against a wall to be executed as spies. Twice the commandant changes his mind. Instead, he says, we're to be fed to the crocodiles in the nearby Luapula River.

Back into the truck and a drive down to the river. Then into an old wooden boat pushed by an outboard motor.

And so we cruise there on the smooth, black Luapula River with the rebel commandant and a couple of his men, while the crocodiles lurk down there in the blackness,

waiting, waiting for us.

All the while, the major and the commandant talk.

Finally, the commandant makes a decision, orders the boat to return to the river bank.

We drive back to the landing strip and the beautiful de Havilland Otter crouched there on the grass waiting for us. We're going to fly back to Élisabethville.

We're going to live.

Then, without warning, angry argument breaks out. Some of the rebels still want to kill these foreign spies. They swagger and strut and shout and threaten us with their rifles.

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But it turns out the commandant is more scared of the U.N. gunships than of his own soldiers. So he announces that if there's no U.N. attack by sundown, we're free to fly away.

We wait. And watch the sun. And no-one in all of time has ever seen the sun sink so slow.

Finally, in a magnificent climax of red, gold and deep purple, the most beautiful I've ever seen in all my life, the sun slips below the horizon and it's dusk.

The white men from far away shake hands with the black men who must stay to live and fight and maybe die here in the Katanga bush. And U.N. Major Munthe-Kaas and Warrant Officer Bertil Wedin and the pilots and the journalists climb into the Otter.

And the plane takes off, climbs fast over the placid, black Luapula River where crocodiles lurk, and heads due south to Élisabethville.

A few days later, the U.N. sends troops to attack and take Kasenga.

Many rebels are killed.

Some years later, Wedin writes from Northern Cyprus where he lives now to tell me the final battle at Kasenga prevented the rebels "entering a virtually unguarded Elizabethville."

"Your role was important," he goes on. "If you had not helped us find the Kasenga-based units, the UN troops in the Elizabethville area would have left much earlier and made it possible for the rebels to move into the town and carry out a massacre. I intend to publicize facts according to which you may have saved many civilian lives."

There are reliable reports that after Kasenga,

Wedin worked as a mercenary in Africa and during South Africa's apartheid years was a spy for BOSS, the South African government's brutal Bureau for State Security.

In fact, there's little doubt that he was and is a man of extreme right-wing views.

But Wedin has denied that he murdered Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme.

He told the newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* recently "I disliked Olof Palme quite a lot, but I did not hate him."

As for the allegations that he bombed ANC offices and tried to kill ANC president Oliver Tambo:

"I am aware of my reputation: right-wing man and conservative, not liking Palme and more, but I have done nothing of all this. Not a single thing."

So, was the Bertil Wedin I knew so long ago capable of assassinating a prime minister? Could he have bombed ANC offices?

He was certainly a good soldier. He proved that by making any soldier's ultimate sacrifice – he obeyed his superior officer's order to surrender and hand over his weapon to the enemy.

That takes guts. And discipline.

How far would he go to support some extremist cause he truly believed in?

I have no idea.

But I do know Bertil Wedin had and has strong convictions.

And once upon a time, far away in the middle of a cruel war, he obeyed his superior officer's orders even though it likely meant his own death.

CT

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Wedin has denied that he had anything to do with Olof Palme's murder

READ THE BEST OF JOE BAGEANT

at: <http://coldtype.net/joe.html>

Whose revolution?

The Ukrainians may have removed an unpopular leader from power, but did they know who is about to take over their agriculture? asks **J.P. Sottile**

Cargill was decidedly confident amidst the post-EU deal chaos. It's a stark juxtaposition to the alarm bells ringing out from the US media, bellicose politicians on Capitol Hill and perplexed policymakers in the White House

On Jan. 12, a reported 50,000 “pro-Western” Ukrainians descended upon Kiev’s Independence Square to protest against the government of President Viktor Yanukovich. Stoked in part by an attack on opposition leader Yuriy Lutsenko, the protest marked the beginning of the end of Yanukovich’s four year-long government.

That same day, the *Financial Times* reported a major deal for US agribusiness titan Cargill.

Despite the turmoil within Ukrainian politics after Yanukovich rejected a major trade deal with the European Union just seven weeks earlier, Cargill was confident enough about the future to fork over \$200 million to buy a stake in Ukraine’s UkrLandFarming. According to *Financial Times*, UkrLandFarming is the world’s eighth-largest land cultivator and second biggest egg producer. And those aren’t the only eggs in Cargill’s increasingly-ample basket.

On Dec. 13, Cargill announced the purchase of a stake in a Black Sea port. Cargill’s port at Novorossiysk – to the east of Russia’s strategically significant and historically important Crimean naval base – gives them a major entry-point to Russian markets and adds them to the list of Big Ag companies investing in ports around the Black Sea, both in Russia and Ukraine.

Cargill has been in Ukraine for over two decades, investing in grain elevators and acquiring a major Ukrainian animal feed company in 2011.

And, based on its investment in UkrLandFarming, Cargill was decidedly confident amidst the post-EU deal chaos. It’s a stark juxtaposition to the alarm bells ringing out from the US media, bellicose politicians on Capitol Hill and perplexed policymakers in the White House.

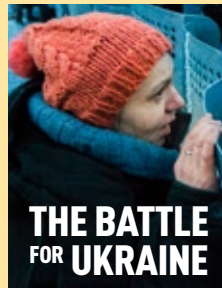
It’s even starker when compared to the anxiety expressed by Morgan Williams, President and CEO of the US-Ukraine Business Council – which, according to its website, has been “Promoting US-

Ukraine business relations since 1995.” Williams was interviewed by the *International Business Times* on March 13 and, despite Cargill’s demonstrated willingness to spend, he said, “The instability has forced businesses to just go about their daily business and not make future plans for investment, expansion and hiring more employees.”

In fact, Williams, who does double-duty as Director of Government Affairs at the private equity firm SigmaBleyzer, claimed, “Business plans have been at a standstill.”

Apparently, he wasn’t aware of Cargill’s investment, which is odd given the fact that he could’ve simply called Van A. Yuetter, Vice President for Corporate Affairs at Cargill, and asked him about his company’s quite active business plan. There is little doubt Williams has the phone number because Mr. Yuetter serves on the Executive Committee of the selfsame US-Ukraine Business Council. It’s quite a cozy investment club, too.

According to his SigmaBleyzer profile, Williams



“started his work regarding Ukraine in 1992” and has since advised American agribusinesses “investing in the former Soviet Union.” As an experienced fixer for Big Ag, he must be fairly friendly with the folks on the Executive Committee.

Big Ag luminaries

And what a committee it is – it’s a veritable who’s who of Big Ag. Among the luminaries working tirelessly and no doubt selflessly for a better, freer Ukraine are:

- Melissa Agustin, Director, International Government Affairs & Trade for Monsanto
- Brigitte Dias Ferreira, Counsel, International Affairs for John Deere
- Steven Nadherny, Director, Institutional Relations for agriculture equipment-maker CNH Industrial
- Jeff Rowe, Regional Director for DuPont Pioneer
- John F. Steele, Director, International Affairs for Eli Lilly & Company

And, of course, Cargill’s Van A. Yeutter. But Cargill isn’t alone in their warm feelings toward Ukraine. As Reuters reported in May 2013, Monsanto – the largest seed company in the world – plans to build a \$140 million “non-GM (genetically modified) corn seed plant in Ukraine.”

And right after the decision on the EU trade deal, Jesus Madrazo, Monsanto’s Vice President for Corporate Engagement, reaffirmed his company’s “commitment to Ukraine” and “the importance of creating a favorable environment that encourages innovation and fosters the continued development of agriculture.”

Monsanto’s strategy includes a little “hearts and minds” public relations, too. On the heels of Mr. Madrazo’s reaffirmation, Monsanto announced “a social development program titled “Grain Basket of the Future” to help rural villagers in the country improve their quality of life.” The initiative will dole out grants of up to \$25,000 to develop programs providing “educational opportunities, community empowerment, or small business development.”

The well-crafted moniker “Grain Basket of the Future” is telling because, once upon a time, Ukraine was known as “the breadbasket” of the

Soviet Union. The CIA ranks Soviet-era Ukraine second only to Mother Russia as the “most economically important component of the former Soviet Union.”

In many ways, the farmland of Ukraine was the backbone of the USSR. Its “fertile black soil” generated over a quarter of the USSR’s agriculture. It exported “substantial quantities” of food to other republics and its farms generated four times the output of “the next-ranking republic.”

Although Ukraine’s agricultural output plummeted in the first decade after the break-up of the Soviet Union, the farming sector has been growing spectacularly in recent years. While Europe struggled to shake-off the Great Recession, Ukraine’s agriculture sector grew 13.7% in 2013.

Ukraine’s agriculture economy is hot. Russia’s is not. Hampered by the effects of climate change and 25 million hectares of uncultivated agricultural land, Russia lags behind its former breadbasket.

According to the Centre for Eastern Studies, Ukraine’s agricultural exports rose from \$4.3 billion in 2005 to \$17.9 billion in 2012 and, harkening the heyday of the USSR, farming currently accounts for 25 percent of its total exports. Ukraine is also the world’s third-largest exporter of wheat and of corn. And corn is not just food. It is also ethanol. But people gotta eat – particularly in Europe. As Frank Holmes of US Global Investors assessed in 2011, Ukraine is poised to become Europe’s butcher. Meat is difficult to ship, but Ukraine is perfectly located to satiate Europe’s hunger.

Just two days after Cargill bought into UkrLandFarming, *Global Meat News* (yes, “Global Meat News” is a thing) reported a huge forecasted spike in “all kinds” of Ukrainian meat exports, with an increase of 8.1% overall and staggering 71.4% spike in pork exports. No wonder Eli Lilly is represented on the US-Ukraine Business Council’s Executive Committee. Its Elanco Animal Health unit is a major manufacturer of feed supplements.

And it is also notable that Monsanto’s planned seed plant is non-GMO, perhaps anticipating an emerging GMO-unfriendly European market and Europe’s growing appetite for organic foods.

Although Ukraine’s agricultural output plummeted in the first decade after the break-up of the Soviet Union, the farming sector has been growing spectacularly in recent years

Ms. Nuland spoke to the US-Ukrainian Foundation last Dec. 13, extolling the virtues of the Euromaidan movement as the embodiment of “the principles and values that are the cornerstones for all free democracies”

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When it comes to Big Ag’s profitable future in Europe, the stakes couldn’t be higher.

For Russia and its hampered farming economy, it’s another in a long string of losses to US encroachment – from NATO expansion into Eastern Europe to US military presence to its south and onto a major shale gas development deal recently signed by Chevron in Ukraine.

So, why was Big Ag so bullish on Ukraine, even in the face of so much uncertainty and the predictable reaction by Russia? The answer is that the seeds of Ukraine’s turn from Russia have been sown for the last two decades by the persistent Cold War alliance between corporations and foreign policy. It’s a version of the “Deep State” that is usually associated with the oil and defense industries, but also exists in America’s other heavily subsidized industry – agriculture.

Morgan Williams is at the nexus of Big Ag’s alliance with US foreign policy. To wit, SigmaBleyzer touts Mr. Williams’ work with “various agencies of the US government, members of Congress, congressional committees, the Embassy of Ukraine to the US, international financial institutions, think tanks and other organizations on US-Ukraine business, trade, investment and economic development issues.”

As President of the US-Ukraine Business Council, Williams has access to Council cohort – David Kramer, President of Freedom House. Officially a non-governmental organization, it has been linked with overt and covert “democracy” efforts in places where the door isn’t open to American interests – a.k.a. US corporations.

Freedom House, the National Endowment for Democracy and National Democratic Institute helped fund and support the Ukrainian “Orange Revolution” in 2004. Freedom House is funded directly by the US Government, the National Endowment for Democracy and the US Department of State. David Kramer is a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs and, according to his Freedom House bio page, formerly a “Senior Fellow at the Project for the New American Century.”

Nuland’s role

That puts Kramer and, by one degree of separa-

tion, Big Ag fixer Morgan Williams in the company of PNAC co-founder Robert Kagan who, as coincidence would have it, is married to Victoria “F*ck the EU” Nuland, the current Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs.

Interestingly enough, Ms. Nuland spoke to the US-Ukrainian Foundation last Dec. 13, extolling the virtues of the Euromaidan movement as the embodiment of “the principles and values that are the cornerstones for all free democracies.”

Nuland also told the group that the United States had invested more than \$5 billion in support of Ukraine’s “European aspirations,” meaning pulling Ukraine away from Russia. She made her remarks on a dais featuring a backdrop emblazoned with a Chevron logo.

Also, her colleague and phone call buddy US Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt helped Chevron cook up their 50-year shale gas deal right in Russia’s kitchen.

Although Chevron sponsored that event, it is not listed as a supporter of the Foundation. But the Foundation does list the Coca-Cola Company, ExxonMobil and Raytheon as major sponsors. And, to close the circle of influence, the US-Ukraine Business Council is also listed as a supporter. Which brings the story back to Big Ag’s fixer – Morgan Williams.

Although he was glum about the current state of investment in Ukraine, he’s gotta wear shades when he looks into the future. He told the International Business Times, “The potential here for agriculture/agribusiness is amazing ... production here could double. The world needs the food Ukraine could produce in the future. Ukraine’s agriculture could be a real gold mine.” Of course, his priority is to ensure that the bread of well-connected businesses gets lavishly buttered in Russia’s former breadbasket. And there is no better connected group of Ukraine-interested corporations than American agribusiness.

Given the extent of US official involvement in Ukrainian politics – including the interesting fact that Ambassador Pyatt pledged US assistance to the new government in investigating and rooting-out corruption – Cargill’s seemingly risky investment strategy probably wasn’t that risky, after all.

CT

When will America come to its senses?

Diana Johnstone reminds us of her warning about the Ukraine and regime change five years ago

“I sometimes get the feeling that somewhere across that huge puddle, in America, people sit in a lab and conduct experiments, as if with rats, without actually understanding the consequences of what they are doing.”— Vladimir Putin, 4 March 2014

Five years ago, I wrote a paper for a Belgrade conference commemorating the tenth anniversary of the start of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia.

In that paper I stressed that the disintegration of Yugoslavia had been used as an experimental laboratory to perfect various techniques that would subsequently be used in so-called “color revolutions” or other “regime change” operations directed against leaders considered undesirable by the United States government.

At that time, I specifically pointed to the similarities between the Krajina region of former Yugoslavia and Ukraine. Here is what I wrote at the time:

Where did the wars of Yugoslav disintegration break out most violently? In a region called the Krajina. Krajina means borderland. So does Ukraine – it is a variant of the same Slavic root. Both Krajina and Ukraine are borderlands between Catholic Christians in the West and Orthodox Christians in the East. The pop-

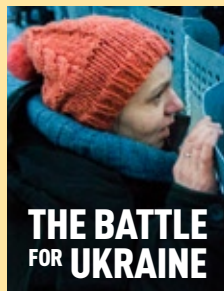
ulation is divided between those in the East who want to remain tied to Russia, and those in the West who are drawn toward Catholic lands. But in Ukraine as a whole, polls show that some seventy percent of the population is against joining NATO. Yet the US and its satellites keep speaking of Ukraine’s “right” to join NATO. Nobody’s right not to join NATO is ever mentioned.

The condition for Ukraine to join NATO would be the expulsion of foreign military bases from Ukrainian territory. That would mean expelling Russia from its historic naval base at Sebastopol, essential for Russia’s Black Sea fleet. Sebastopol is on the Crimean peninsula, inhabited by patriotic Russians, which was only made an administrative part of Ukraine in 1954 by Nikita Khrushchev, a Ukrainian.

Rather the way Tito, a Croat, gave almost the whole Adriatic coastline of Yugoslavia to Croatia, and generally enforced administrative borders detrimental to the Serbs.

As the same causes may have the same effects, US insistence on “liberating” Ukraine from Russian influence may have the same effect as the West’s insistence on “liberating” the Catholic Croats from the Orthodox Serbs. That effect is war. But instead of a small war, against the Serbs, who had neither the means nor even the will to fight the West (since they

US insistence on “liberating” Ukraine from Russian influence may have the same effect as the West’s insistence on “liberating” the Catholic Croats from the Orthodox Serbs



Of all Russia's neighbors, none is more organically linked to Russia by language, history, geopolitical reality, religion and powerful emotions

largely thought they were part of it), a war in Ukraine would mean a war with Russia. A nuclear superpower. And one that will not stand idly by while the United States continues to move its fleet and its air bases to the edges of Russian territory, both in the Black Sea and in the Baltic, on land, sea and air.

Every day, the United States is busy expanding NATO, training forces, building bases, making deals. This goes on constantly but is scarcely reported by the media. The citizens of NATO countries have no idea what they are being led into. (...)

War was easy when it meant the destruction of a helpless and harmless Serbia, with no casualties among the NATO aggressors. But war with Russia – a fierce superpower with a nuclear arsenal – would not be so much fun.”

So, now here we are five years later, and I am about to attend another commemoration in Belgrade, this time of the fifteenth anniversary of the start of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. And this time, I really have nothing to say. I have already said it, over and over. Others are saying similar things, with more authority, from Professor Stephen Cohen to Paul Craig Roberts. Many of us have warned against the dangerous folly of seeking endlessly to provoke Russia by enlisting her neighbors in a military alliance whose enemy could only be... Russia. Of all Russia's neighbors, none is more organically linked to Russia by language, history, geopolitical reality, religion and powerful emotions. The US Undersecretary of State for Europe and Eurasia, Victoria Nuland, has openly boasted that the United States has spent five billion dollars to gain influence in Ukraine – in reality, in order to draw Ukraine away from Russia and into the US military alliance. It is now no secret that Ms Nuland intrigued even against America's European allies – who had a less brutal compromise in mind – in order to replace the elected President with the American protégé she calls “Yats”, who indeed was soon installed in a far right government resulting from violent actions

by one of the very few violent fascist movements still surviving in Europe.

True, Western media do not report all the facts at their disposal. But the internet is there, and the facts are on the internet. And despite all this, European governments do not protest, there are no demonstrations in the streets, much of public opinion seems to accept the notion that the villain of this story is the Russian president, who is accused of engaging in unprovoked aggression against Crimea – even though he was responding to one of the most blatant provocations in history.

The facts are there. The facts are eloquent. What can I say that are not said by the facts?

So up to now, I have remained speechless in the face of what appears to me to be utter madness. However, on the eve of my trip to Belgrade, I agreed to answer questions from journalist Dragan Vukotic for the Serbian daily newspaper *Politika*. Here is that interview.

*Q. In your book *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO, and Western Delusions*, you have brought a different stance about NATO bombing of Yugoslavia than many of your intellectual colleagues in the West. What prompted you to make such an unpopular conclusion?*

A. Long ago, as a student of Russia area studies, I spent several months in Yugoslavia living in a student dormitory in Belgrade and made friends there. I turned to such old friends for viewpoints rather than to the sources consulted by Western reporters. And I have a lifelong interest in US foreign policy. I began my inquiry into Yugoslav conflicts by reading key documents, such as speeches of Milosevic, the Serbian Academy memorandum and works by Alija Izetbegovic, noting the inaccuracy of the way they were represented in Western media. I was never under instructions from editors, and indeed my editors soon refused to publish my articles. I was not the only experienced observer to be excluded

from Western media coverage.

Q. Although subsequent events have confirmed that the operation of illegal bombing of one country without permission of the Security Council was completely wrong, the mainstream western media and politicians still refer to successful “Kosovo model”. Can you please comment on this matter?

A. For them, it was a success, since it set a precedent for NATO intervention. They will never admit that they were mistaken.

Q. When it came to the preparation of the “humanitarian intervention” against Syria, the Obama administration reported they were studying “the NATO air war in Kosovo as a possible blueprint for acting without a mandate from the United Nations”. Please comment on this.

A. This is not surprising, since setting such a precedent was one of the motives for that air war.

Q. In one of your articles you asked the question about what the ICC stood for in the case of Libya. You recalled the “familiar pattern” with the case of ICTY and Yugoslavia. What do you really think of those instruments of international justice and their role in international relations?

A. In the context of the present world relationship of forces, the ICC like the ad hoc tribunals can only serve as instruments of United States hegemony. Those criminal tribunals are used only to stigmatize adversaries of the United States, while the main role of the ICC so far is to justify the ideological assumption that there exists an unbiased “international justice” that ignores national boundaries and serves to enforce human rights. As John Laughland has pointed out, a proper court must be the expression of a particular community that agrees to judge its own members. Moreover, these courts have no police of their own but must rely on the armed force of the United States, NATO and their client states, who as a result are

automatically exempt from prosecution by these supposedly “international” courts.

Q. What is, in your opinion, the main purpose of declaring the so-called humanitarian intervention? Does it have more to do with the domestic public opinion or with the international partners?

A. The ideology of Human Rights (a dubious concept, incidentally, since “rights” should be grounded in concrete political arrangements, not on abstract concepts alone) serves both domestic and global purposes. For the European Union, it suggests a “soft” European nationalism based on social virtue. The United States, which is more forthright than today’s Europe in proclaiming its national interest, the ideology of Human Rights serves to endow foreign interventions with a crusading purpose that can appeal to European allies and above all to their domestic opinion, as well as to the English-speaking world in general (Canada and Australia in particular). It is the tribute vice pays to virtue, to echo LaRocheffoucauld.

Q. You often use the term “US and its European satellites”. Please explain.

A. “Satellites” was the term used for members of the Warsaw Pact, and today the governments of the NATO member states follow Washington as obediently as the former followed Moscow, even when, as in the case of Ukraine, the United States goes against European interests.

Q. How do you see current goings on in Ukraine and Crimea, especially in terms of US-Russia relations?

A. US-Russian relations are determined primarily by an ongoing US geostrategic hostility to Russia which is partly a matter of habit or inertia, partly a realization of the Brzezinski strategy of dividing Eurasia in order to maintain US world hegemony, and partly a reflection of Israeli-dominated Middle East policy toward Syria and Iran. Be-

Those criminal tribunals are used only to stigmatize adversaries of the United States, while the main role of the ICC so far is to justify the ideological assumption that there exists an unbiased “international justice” that ignores national boundaries and serves to enforce human rights

COVER STORY / 2

Is Russia urging Quebec to secede from Canada so that the province can join a military alliance led by Moscow? Evidently not

tween the two major nuclear powers, there is clearly an aggressor and an aggressed. It is up to the aggressor to change course if relations are to be normal.

Simply compare. Is Russia urging Quebec to secede from Canada so that the province can join a military alliance led by Moscow? Evidently not. That would be comparable, and yet mild compared to the recent US gambit led by Victoria Nuland aimed at bringing Ukraine, including the main Russian naval base at Sebastopol, into the Western orbit.

The material reality of this political orbit is NATO, which since the end of the Soviet Union has systematically expanded toward Russia, which stations missiles whose only strategic function would be to provide the United States with a hypothetical nuclear

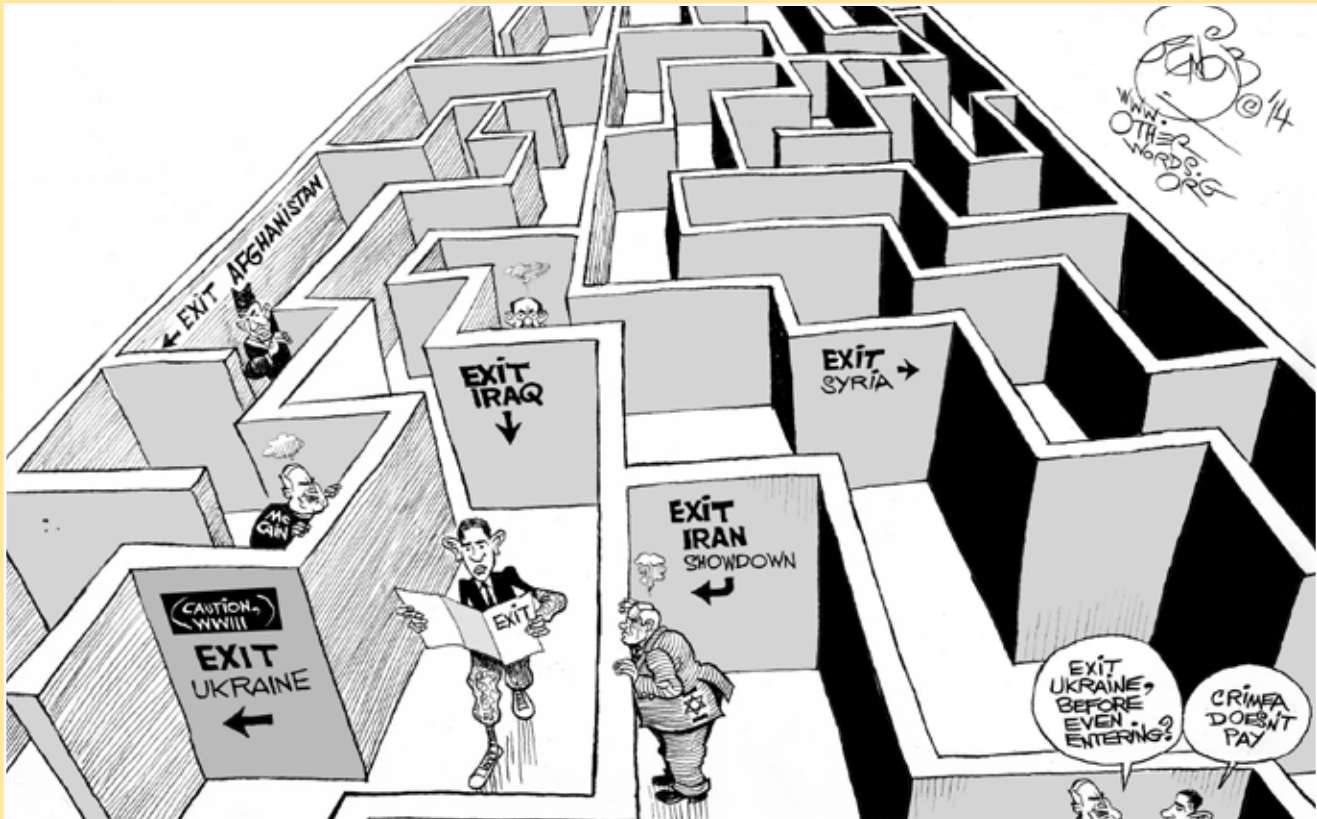
first strike capacity against Russia, and which regularly holds military manoeuvres along Russian borders.

Russia has done nothing against the United States, and recently provided President Obama with a face-saving way to avoid being voted down in Congress in regard to military action against Syria – action which was not desired by the Pentagon but only by the fraction of Israeli-oriented policy makers called “neocons”. Russia professes no hostile ideology, and only seeks normal relations with the West. What more can it do? It is up to Americans to come to their senses. **CT**

Diana Johnstone is the author of “Fools’ Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO, and Western Delusions”. She can be reached at diana.johnstone@wanadoo.fr

BENDIB’S WORLD / 2

Khalil Bendib, OtherWords.org



How about sanctions against the USA?

Which country is the most destructive and dangerous in the world today. Here's a clue. It's not Russia, writes **Andy Piascik**

As the United States imposes sanctions on Russia and moves to do likewise to Venezuela, it's essential to keep in mind which country it is that's the most destructive and dangerous in the world today. When such questions have been posed in international polls in recent decades, the answer overwhelmingly is the United States. Not Iran, North Korea, Syria, Cuba, Venezuela, Russia or any of the many other nations the ruling class and corporate media here regularly demonize, but the United States.

People in the global South know this all too well from the long and brutal history of US foreign policy. Because we live in such a closed society, however, where critical analysis of imperialism is by definition excluded from discussions in Washington and the national media, people here must search long and hard for such information. Should information of this sort seep into the mainstream, ruling elites invariably vilify it and those imparting it just as they vilify international figures they regard as enemies.

According to Washington, sanctions are being considered against Venezuela because of repressive measures and violence that is attributed almost exclusively to the government. In reality, counter-revolutionaries are responsible for the majority of those killed

including at least one death of a motorcyclist decapitated by wire strung across a street. This tactic was suggested by retired General Angel Vivas, who has become a hero of the counter-revolution for his armed defiance of the government's attempt to arrest him for the motorcyclist's death. Simultaneously, the US has imposed sanctions against Russia and is threatening military escalation in response to the incursion into Crimea.

Conveniently left out of the narrative is any connection between Russia's actions and the coup in the Ukraine led by fanatically anti-Russian neo-fascists, an effort supported by the US to the tune of \$5 billion, according to Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland. Also excluded from discussions are the many military stations the US and its allies have close to Russia,

as well as the fact that practically every member of the former Eastern bloc now belongs to NATO.

As always, these events are presented in unambiguous black and white, where we are the unquestioned good guys standing up for freedom, democracy and liberty and the other side is evil incarnate. Hillary Clinton, for example, played the always handy Hitler Card in reference to Vladimir Putin, a card that in recent decades has been applied to Noriega, Milosevic, Qaddafi, Chavez, Sadd-

Conveniently left out of the narrative is any connection between Russia's actions and the coup in the Ukraine led by fanatically anti-Russian neo-fascists



Since documenting acts of direct US aggression and additional crimes committed via financing, armaments and diplomatic support to client states would require several large libraries, let's restrict ourselves to just the 14 years of this century

am Hussein, Osama bin Laden, Assad and Ahmadinejad, to name just some. The Hitler Card has never been used against Mass Murder Inc, the US's longstanding club of dictators that includes the Somozas, Suharto, Diem, Savimbi, the Duvaliers, Mobutu and others too numerous to list, since they were loyal servants of Western business interests. And it goes without saying that the Hitler Card doesn't apply to us even though in the world today it is US foreign policy that most closely approximates the Third Reich's.

In fact, the black/white narrative collapses immediately both when today's situations are probed and when history is reviewed. Since documenting acts of direct US aggression and additional crimes committed via financing, armaments and diplomatic support to client states would require several large libraries, let's restrict ourselves to just the 14 years of this century. In 2001, the US invaded Afghanistan, ostensibly in response to the 9/11 attacks even though none of those involved was Afghan and most were Saudi. Invading Saudi Arabia wouldn't do, however, since it's a staunch and very important ally. As Noam Chomsky has documented, the Taliban offered to assist the US in tracking those responsible for 9/11, including bin Laden, on the condition the US present evidence. Because the US was determined to wage war no matter what, the offer was rejected and the invasion of Afghanistan commenced. Thirteen years and trillions of dollars later, the killing goes on, expanded under Obama to include indiscriminate drone strikes, with no end in sight.

In 2002, reactionaries representing Venezuela's Super Rich put tens of millions of dollars of funding from the CIA, USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy and undoubtedly other US sources to use by overthrowing the democratically-elected, immensely popular government of the late Hugo Chavez. The Venezuelan people immediately rose up and defeated the coup but the funding, sabotage and subversion have continued. Angry and frustrated at continual

losses at the polls and in the streets, the old oligarchs fight on absent any international support other than that of the US and neighboring Colombia. The violence that began last month is the most serious moment in Venezuela since the failed 2002 coup, and despite its complete isolation the US has ramped up its 15-year propaganda war against the Bolivarian Revolution.

In 2003, the US illegally overran Iraq, demolishing the country as well as the argument used to justify the invasion that Hussein was a powerful threat because of weapons of mass destruction. The US knew no such weapons existed and the invasion has resulted in what some international reports say is more than one million Iraqi deaths. Coming on the heels of the 1991 US invasion and the ensuing years of Sanctions of Mass Destruction, Iraq has been largely destroyed and is now plagued by bitter internal fighting. Central to that fighting is Al-Qaeda, which had absolutely no presence in Iraq but is now a formidable force thanks to the invasion.

After hammering Muammar Qaddafi for decades to turn over Libya's weapons, the US illegally invaded that country in 2011 not long after he complied. At least 50,000 people were killed as a result including Qaddafi, and Libya was plunged into chaos that continues to this day. Elsewhere in the Mideast, the US continues to support Israel's ever-expanding occupation of Palestine and again finds itself on the same side as Al-Qaeda and other terrorists in Syria as it attempts to do there what it did in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan.

Since the 1990's, the US has supported mass killer Paul Kagame in Rwanda while presenting him as a hero. In reality, the war in Rwanda began with the 1990 invasion from Uganda by the Rwandan Patriotic Front, an army Kagame soon became head of. Four years later, with peace talks underway, the RPF killed Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana by shooting down a plane on which he was returning from a negotiating session. Thus began the most horrific period in the

region, with mass killings on all sides and the US undermining peacekeeping efforts and several potential settlements so the RPF could win a complete victory.

Former UN Secretary General for one puts the blame on the US for its support of Kagame and the RPF. As reported recently in *Counterpunch* by Robin Philpot, Boutros-Gali has said that “the Rwandan genocide was 100% American responsibility.” Reports by a number of international organizations, including several by the UN, concluded that the RPF is responsible for more than one million deaths and possibly several million in Rwanda. In addition, UN and other reports have found the RPF responsible for the most serious atrocities during years of warfare in the neighboring Congo. Edward Herman has called Kagame a “double genocidist” while underscoring that the US made the killing possible and business interests benefited most from it.

In Latin America, in addition to supporting counterrevolution in Venezuela, the US continues to lavish millions on Colombia in a decades-long War on Drugs that is, in fact, a war against the people designed to destroy opposition to domination by global capital. And in 2009, the US was virtually alone in the world in recognizing the coup government that came to power in Honduras in 2009 by overthrowing democratically-elected reformer Manuel Zelaya. The coup and two fraudulent elections have restored the oligarchy’s power while opponents are being killed in alarming numbers by the military, paramilitaries and others suspected of ties to

the coup regime. The eradication of opposition is necessary to the smooth operation of mining multinationals in particular, and Western investments have increased dramatically since the coup.

US violence is not restricted to other nations. Domestically, that is best illustrated by the massive imprisonment of African-Americans. With the highest incarceration rate in the world and the vast majority of prisoners black as well as ongoing police and vigilante violence aimed almost exclusively at blacks, the US is not so different from apartheid-era South Africa. Perhaps international sanctions are in order to turn the US into a pariah, and diplomatic isolation would help the world’s most dangerous state get a dose of civilization.

The people of the US bear a special responsibility to oppose both its government’s aggression and its funding and arming of subordinates engaged in terror. During the US-financed Central American killing fields of the 1980’s, a campesino at the New York stop of her speaking tour implored people here to “help us by changing your country.” Those words echo louder than ever today and come from every part of the world; it remains to be seen whether our collective reply to those cries is in the affirmative. **CT**

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Andy Piascik is a long-time activist and award-winning author who writes for Z Magazine, Global Research, The Independent, Counterpunch and many other publications and websites. He can be reached at andypiascik@yahoo.com.

With the highest incarceration rate in the world and the vast majority of prisoners black as well as ongoing police and vigilante violence aimed almost exclusively at blacks, the US is not so different from apartheid-era South Africa

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Ordinary people

Fighting for a new future on the streets of Kiev. But will tomorrow bring any significant change. Photographs: **Sasha Maksymenko**. Words: **Tony Sutton**

Look at **Sasha Maksymenko's** grim photographs from the street riots in Kiev that led to the overthrow of President Viktor Yanukovich and, later, the takeover of the Crimea by Russia.

Look at the faces. Young. Middle aged. Old. School age to pensioners. Full of fight. Full of resolve. Full of determination. Ready to fight – and die – for their homeland.

And wonder. What they were doing in the years/weeks/days before they became street fighters, dressed in camouflage, armed with pistols, blocks of wood and petrol bombs? They were ordinary people, law-abiding citizens, pushed

towards the brink that separates civilised society from anarchy, death and destruction.

What drove them to that state? Dissatisfaction with a regime that offered no future – lies in place of hope, stagnation instead of change? A natural desire to fight back and create a better life for themselves and their families?

Or was it propaganda from outside? Foreign governments stoking the fear, dangling billions of dollars of aid, without mentioning the years of austerity that will follow? Austerity that will likely ravage the lives of these same people.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

CT

● See more of Sasha Maksymenko's photographs at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/112078056@N07/with/12159231825/>



Faces of dissent: Inside burned out buildings, armed with pistols, crates of petrol bombs and lumps of wood. Protesting in the streets, awaiting the black-clad cops who are determined to extinguish the flame of revolution



Gathering the wood for the fires that will illuminate the barricades.



First a haircut, then the revolution.



No man's land: Sometimes prayer is the only answer.



Stay calm and keep on reading.



The other faces of revolution. What do these young men feel as they prepare to fight the protests?

Imperial blowback

Russia's actions in the Crimea make Western claims of 'exceptionalism' hard to defend, writes **Randall Amster**

As to the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, among other interventions, there are echoes of anti-war perspectives to be found in the Russian President's deflection of Western criticisms

Russia's brazen annexation of Crimea presents a vexing foreign policy crisis for the Western powers. How can these actions be denounced without pointing a finger back upon their own forays and interventions?

Indeed, President Putin said as much in his recent address in the Kremlin, chiding the West for its condemnations of Russia's actions and stating that "it's a good thing that they at least remember that there exists such a thing as international law – better late than never."

Putin reinforced this view by citing the "Kosovo precedent" – which he takes as "a precedent our western colleagues created with their own hands in a very similar situation, when they agreed that the unilateral separation of Kosovo from Serbia, exactly what Crimea is doing now, was legitimate and did not require any permission from the country's central authorities."

Without validating Russia's motives and the ways in which such arguments provide rhetorical cover for its own imperial aspirations, there is a salient point here that coheres with arguments often cited by progressive voices in the West. In particular, as to the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, among other interventions, there are echoes of anti-war perspectives to be found in the Russian President's deflection of Western criticisms: "Our western partners, led by the United

States of America, prefer not to be guided by international law in their practical policies, but by the rule of the gun. They have come to believe in their exclusivity and exceptionalism, that they can decide the destinies of the world, that only they can ever be right. They act as they please: here and there, they use force against sovereign states, building coalitions based on the principle 'If you are not with us, you are against us.'

"As many pointed out at the time, the invasion of Iraq in particular foretold a world wracked by disregard for international norms and defined by the mercenary pursuits of national self-interest."

The fact that Russia is now explicitly validating these misguided principles seems to be of no moment to President Putin. A stronger argument, to be sure, would be to refuse to participate in exceptionalism-oriented policies, perhaps instead arguing for Crimean autonomy rather than its annexation. Certainly the presence of Russian troops there during an electoral referendum gives the appearance of coercion rather than liberation. If the US and its allies are to be critiqued for hypocritically advocating "democracy" through "the rule of the gun," then it is difficult to see how Russia's invocation of similar principles to justify its behavior represents more than mere cynicism and an elaborate rationalization for its own ambitions in the region.

We can thus perceive in all of this a sense of foreign policy blowback from the US-led wars and interventions of recent years. By citing Kosovo as well as Iraq and Afghanistan (among other instances, such as Libya), Putin connects the policies of the last three US Presidential Administrations, essentially constituting the period since the dissipation of the former Soviet Union.

Further, by reaching back into Crimea's status as part of Russia's "common historical legacy" and its longstanding cultural importance to Russia, an attempt is being made to turn back the clock to the halcyon days before the fall of the Berlin Wall. (No mention was made, of course, of the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan throughout the 1980s, which helped form the basis for a world in which aggressive interventions – and eventual blowback – would soon define a "new normal" for international affairs.) While perhaps not quite (yet) representing a reassembly of the Iron Curtain, the annexation of Crimea clearly presents numerous strategic implications for the balance of power both regionally and globally.

To wit, Putin specifically notes the strategic importance of Crimea as the "main base of the Black Sea Fleet" and as a potential bulwark against NATO incursions eastward. Reinforcing this mindset, Putin observes that Sevastopol (in southwestern Crimea) is a "fortress" and that Crimea's deep connections to the homeland symbolize "Russian military glory."

Not explicitly cited in Putin's speech is the centrality of Crimea as a locus for oil and gas production, which as *Businessweek* notes has already drawn the interest of Big Oil. Others have observed the importance of the region for agricultural distribution and production, and the pipelining of gas across the continent. There has been relatively little analysis of the situation in Ukraine as a "resource conflict," but in the present state of geopolitics such implications are always at hand.

"In abdicating their already-tenuous hold on moral legitimacy in international affairs,

the US and its allies have eroded one of the last potential bastions against the imminent realization of a world dominated by strategic resource acquisition as a function of security."

In this light, we can read the Crimean crisis as a form of comeuppance for policies set in motion and continually reinforced by nations in general and the US in particular, bent on promoting a form of "security" that devolves upon control of resources and a penchant for unilateralism in achieving this end.

In fact, President Obama unabashedly affirmed such policies in his speech to the UN in September 2013: "The United States of America is prepared to use all elements of our power, including military force, to secure our core interests in the region.... We will ensure the free flow of energy from the region to the world. Although America is steadily reducing our own dependence on imported oil, the world still depends on the region's energy supply, and a severe disruption could destabilize the entire global economy."

As such, President Obama was not so much announcing a new policy as validating an ongoing one: the legacy of the Bush Doctrine based on unilateral action and calculated intervention. Once these terms of engagement have been set, it becomes difficult to condemn others taking up the mantle for their own purposes.

And this, in the end, may well be the lingering retribution for the US-led wars of recent years. As many pointed out at the time, the invasion of Iraq in particular foretold a world wracked by disregard for international norms and defined by the mercenary pursuits of national self-interest.

In setting a template for the policy engagements to follow, this archetype of adventurism ushered in an era in which exceptionalism has become the norm, where the cavalier disregard of domestic and/or global objections is considered politically acceptable, and where powerful nations can exercise a free hand in determining the future of

By citing Kosovo as well as Iraq and Afghanistan, Putin connects the policies of the last three US Presidential Administrations, essentially constituting the period since the dissipation of the former Soviet Union

this archetype of adventurism ushered in an era in which exceptionalism has become the norm, where the cavalier disregard of domestic and/or global objections is considered politically acceptable

less powerful ones when strategic interests are involved. It would be hard to conceive of a more pointed version of realpolitik, and the term is doubly poignant in light of the outcomes we are seeing today.

Russia's rhetorical reliance on misguided Western policies does little more than render concrete that which has already been known and deployed by powerful interests for decades, if not longer. But the invocation of recent US-led forays and the specific use of the word "exceptionalism" in Russian discourse add a dimension that is deeply troubling for the future prospects of peace.

By making realpolitik more, well, real, the annexation of Crimea is less likely to draw a military response from the West than it is to elicit wider forms of emulation.

In abdicating their already-tenuous hold on moral legitimacy in international affairs, the US and its allies have eroded one of the last potential bastions against the imminent

realization of a world dominated by strategic resource acquisition as a function of security.

Again, none of this should be surprising by now, although we might take a moment to lament its further instantiation as the dominant modus operandi of powerful interests across the globe. Such a state of affairs asks us to revisit the past and reassess our narrowing options for the future. **CT**

Randall Amster, JD, PhD, is Director of the Program on Justice and Peace at Georgetown University, and serves as Executive Director of the Peace and Justice Studies Association. His forthcoming book Peace Ecology is due out in May from Paradigm Publishers. Previous books include Lost in Space: The Criminalization, Globalization, and Urban Ecology of Homelessness, and the co-edited volume Building Cultures of Peace: Transdisciplinary Voices of Hope and Action.

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Heard the one about international law?

Norman Solomon on White House hypocrisy and 'red-white-and-blue doublethink'

International law is suddenly very popular in Washington. President Obama responded to Russian military intervention in the Crimea by accusing Russia of a “breach of international law.” Secretary of State John Kerry followed up by declaring that Russia is “in direct, overt violation of international law.”

Unfortunately, during the last five years, no world leader has done more to undermine international law than Barack Obama. He treats it with rhetorical adulation and behavioral contempt, helping to further normalize a might-makes-right approach to global affairs that is the antithesis of international law.

Fifty years ago, another former law professor, Senator Wayne Morse, condemned such arrogance of power. “I don’t know why we think, just because we’re mighty, that we have the right to try to substitute might for right,” Morse said on national TV in 1964. “And that’s the American policy in Southeast Asia – just as unsound when we do it as when Russia does it.”

Today, Uncle Sam continues to preen as the globe’s big sheriff on the side of international law even while functioning as the world’s biggest outlaw.

Rather than striving for an evenhanded assessment of how “international law” has

become so much coin of the hypocrisy realm, mainline US media are now transfixed with Kremlin villainy.

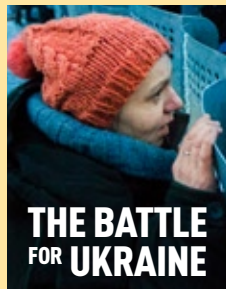
Recently, the top of the Sunday edition of the *New York Times* home page reported: “Russian President Vladimir V. Putin has pursued his strategy with subterfuge, propaganda and brazen military threat, taking aim as much at the United States and Europe as Ukraine itself.” That was news coverage.

Following close behind, a *Times* editorial appeared in print the next morning, headlined “Russia’s Aggression,” condemning “Putin’s cynical and outrageous exploitation of the Ukrainian crisis to seize control of Crimea.” The liberal newspaper’s editorial board said that the United States and the European Union “must make clear to him that he has stepped far outside the bounds of civilized behavior.”

Such demands are righteous – but lack integrity and credibility when the same standards are not applied to President Obama, whose continuation of the Bush “war on terror” under revamped rhetoric has bypassed international law as well as “civilized behavior.”

In these circumstances, major US media coverage rarely extends to delving into devotional irony or spotlighting White House hypocrisy. Yet it’s not as if large media outlets have entirely excluded key information

Today, Uncle Sam continues to preen as the globe’s big sheriff on the side of international law even while functioning as the world’s biggest outlaw



What remains is an Orwellian baseline, melding conformist ideology and nationalism into red-white-and-blue doublethink

and tough criticism.

For instance, last October the McClatchy news service reported that “the Obama administration violated international law with top-secret targeted-killing operations that claimed dozens of civilian lives in Yemen and Pakistan,” according to reports released by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Last month, just before Obama leapt to high dudgeon with condemnation of Putin for his “breach of international law,” the *Los Angeles Times* published an op-ed piece that provided illuminating context for such presidential righteousness.

“Despite the president’s insistence on placing limits on war, and on the defense budget, his brand of warfare has helped lay the basis for a permanent state of global warfare via ‘low footprint’ drone campaigns and special forces operations aimed at an ever-morphing enemy usually identified as some form of Al Qaeda,” wrote Karen J. Greenberg, director of the Center on National Security at Fordham University’s law school.

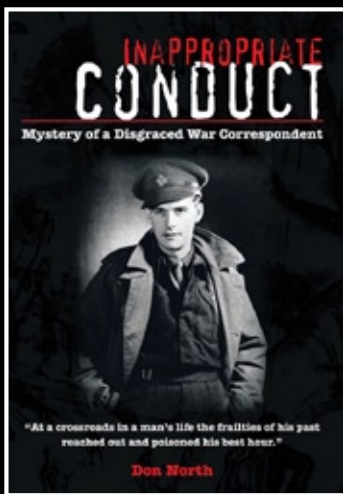
Greenberg went on to indicate the scope

of the US government’s ongoing contempt for international law: “According to Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), the Obama administration has killed 4,700 individuals in numerous countries, including Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. Obama has successfully embedded the process of drone killings into the executive branch in such a way that any future president will inherit it, along with the White House ‘kill list’ and its ‘terror Tuesday’ meetings. Unbounded global war is now part of what it means to be president.”

But especially in times of crisis, as with the current Ukraine situation, such inconvenient contradictions go out the mass-media window. What remains is an Orwellian baseline, melding conformist ideology and nationalism into red-white-and-blue doublethink. **CT**

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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.” Information about the documentary based on the book is at www.WarMadeEasyTheMovie.org.

“I went in behind the lines and emerged as a kind of agent. I went in as a reporter and came out a kind of soldier. I sometimes wish I had never gone in at all” – Paul Morton



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Pickle Boy steps up

If we want to bring those Russian rascals into line, perhaps we should let the American public elect their government, suggests **Fred Reed**

Now, about this Crimea thing: What I figure is, the top part of the Feddle Gummint got dropped on its head when it was little, and the rest is just asleep, or might as well be. We look to be ruled by a bus-station of dumb-ass rich brats in a constant state of martial priapism. I can't understand it. Out of three hundred million Americans, and lots of them went to school and can pretty much read, we get a slick minor pol out of Chicago for President and Pickle-Boy Kerry for Secretary of State, God knows why. Before that, we had Hillary, former First Housewife. Even god couldn't explain that. And they throw their weight around just like they had some.

Now Obama's threatening Russia about the Crimea. He may know where it is. I admit the possibility. We live in a strange world, and unexpected things can happen. What I can't see is, why he thinks the Ukraine is Washington's business. Last I heard, the Crimea was hung off into the Black Sea by the Isthmus of Perekop, like a hornet's nest from a peach tree.

Why do we care about it? I guess if it gets to be part of Russia, Arkansas is next to go.

Maybe it moved, though. Continental drift is a reality. It could be anywhere by now, maybe in the Gulf of Mexico. And even if it ain't, I guess we need a war with Russia over

a place that's none of our business. I mean, I don't see how we can get along without one.

Now, about being dropped oin their heads: Pickle Boy has said of the Crimea, "You don't just, in the 21st century, behave in 19th century fashion by invading another country on a completely trumped-up pretext." I reckon he hasn't heard of Iraq either. The world is full of countries, and it's hard to keep track of which ones you've wrecked.

I have a strategy. If we want to do those Russian rascals in, bring'em lower than dirt, we ought to arrange to have the American public elect their government. You know, on some kind of contract. Then they'd be ruled, like us, by a nursery full of pansies, milquetoasts, ethno-picks, growly feather-weights, diesel dykes, and sorry rich kids who never got into a school-yard fight. Russia would never recover.

We won't either.

One thing you learn in the school yard is never call a tougher kid's bluff. It might not be a bluff. Uh-oh. This Putin guy, I hear they call him Vlad the Hammer: I bet there's a reason. And Pickle Boy looks to me like a bug on an anvil. It's Little Lord Fauntleroy calling out Mike Tyson deep in the 'hood. Where Mommy can't help.

I see that Genghis Obama has sent a destroyer, the closest he can come, I guess, to

If we want to do those Russian rascals in, bring 'em lower than dirt, we ought to arrange to have the American public elect their government



Them days is gone when Washington could send the bathtub toys pretty much anywhere in the world and everybody would fall on his face and say, "Yassuh, bwana, yassuh."

a Golden Horde, to the Black Sea, grrr, woof. It's going to conduct military exercises – push-ups, maybe. Now, that's going to frighten Vlad. I guess a sense of humor is a good thing in a president. Maybe he can amuse Putin to death. I mean, by all the gods and little catfish, what does he think a tiny irritating boat like that is going to do – torpedo the Crimea? It doesn't float, Barack. It's stuck to the bottom. You can't sink it.

To put it simply enough that even the hair-salon Napoleons in the Yankee Capital might be able to understand, but most likely won't, don't make threats that the other guy knows you can't follow through on. This idea is called "brains," or sometimes "self-preservation." Them days is gone when Washington could send the bathtub toys pretty much anywhere in the world and everybody would fall on his face and say, "Yassuh, bwana, yassuh." Any third-grader in a country school in Georgia can see how things stand: Pickle Boy and the Jellyfish can (1) start a shooting war with Russia, or (2) back down and get laughed at by the whole world. Ain't any other choices that I can see. God save us from little men with big egos and no judgement.

Now, I read a lot of history. It's because I don't have to spend all my time getting elected and posing for cameras and lying. A patch of history I've always liked is World War One. It teaches you how to get into a big war that doesn't turn out like you think which is what usually happens in wars.

You start by getting a toy president, or amateur Kaiser, who doesn't know squat but you can't tell him because that's disloyal or, depending, racist. Besides, he can have you shot.

Then you let the military get the upper hand – von Tirpitz, von Schlieffen, von Petraeus, von Hagel, they're all the same. It helps if the amateur president or Kaiser wants to be a Wahhhhh! President or Kriegs Kaiser. You know how short men act. It would be less trouble to buy them a codpiece.

Then you surround him with incompetent toadies like von Bulow or Pickle Boy. Then

you tell the public about German Exceptionalism and how God meant for Germany to rule and civilize the world and everybody hates Germany because it's so wonderful so we need a bigger and bigger army. It works every time. It helps to tell people there's a Serb under everybody's bed, or a Brit, or a commie or a Islam or terrorist or something. Pretty much anything will do. I figure it must get crowded under those beds.

The final part is to get yourself in trouble by having damnfool mutual-defense treaties. You tell half the world that if anybody attacks anybody else, you are gonna jump in. Now the Kaiser had his own list of these traps. But Pickle Boy and the Obama Squad labor under the accreted load from years before. So Washington has to defend Japan, Estonia, Korea, the Philippines, Georgia (bof'em), most all of Europe, Ukraine, and lots of other places nobody ever heard of or wants to.

It just might be smarter to let the rest of the world settle its own problems.

I'd like to set these mini-Talleyrands and micro-Metternichs down and see whether they know anything at all about, say, Russia. I mean, like where it came from, how it got to be what it is, and what it wants, and why it acts the way it does. I don't mean hard questions, like what did Oleg nail to the gates of Constantinople? Could Relish Man tell me who Denikin, Kolchak, and Wrangel were? What was the NEP? Just simple Russian history. I'll bet good money they wouldn't have the tiniest underfed clue. But they can bark from under the sofa.

A wise old newspaper editor once told me: "A burro is an ass. A burrow is a hole in the ground. A reporter should know the difference." Now, I wonder why that thought just came to mind.

I remember what my Uncle Hant told Burnside before the battle of Fredericksburg: "Jinral, if you got the brains of a goddammed retarded piss-ant, you won't try to cross that river under all them guns." You couldn't take Hant anywhere in polite company. But he had a point. **CT**

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Fred Reed lives in Mexico. He has worked for *Army Times*, *The Washingtonian*, *Soldier of Fortune*, *Federal Computer Week*, and *The Washington Times*. His web site is <http://fredoneverything.net>

Silver anniversary for the World Wide Web

But do we have to celebrate Internet billionaires, too?, asks **Sam Pizzigati**

Exactly 25 years ago, the British computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee conceptually “invented” the World Wide Web and set in motion a process that would rapidly make the online world an essential part of our daily lives.

By 1995, 14 percent of Americans were surfing the Web. The level today: 87 percent. And among young adults, the Pew Research Center notes, the Internet has reached “near saturation.”

Some 97 percent of Americans 18 to 29 are now going online.

Tim Berners-Lee never saw this inequality coming. He didn’t invent the Web to get rich. He released the code to his new system for free.

But others certainly have become rich via the Web. Some 123 billionaires today, *Forbes* calculates, owe their fortunes to high-tech. The top 15 of these high-tech billionaires hold a collective \$382 billion in personal net worth.

Numbers like these don’t particularly alarm many of today’s economists. Their conventional wisdom holds that grand new technologies always bring forth grand new personal fortunes for the entrepreneurs who lead the way.

In the 19th century, the coming of the railroads created wildly-wealthy railroad tycoons. In the early 20th century, the dawn of the automobile age created huge piles of

dollars for car makers like Henry Ford.

Why should the Internet age, mainstream economists wonder, be any different? A new technology gives rise to a new cohort of rich people. The simple way of the world.

But epochal new technology doesn’t always automatically generate grand new fortunes. The prime example: television.

TV burst onto the scene even more rapidly – and thoroughly – than the Internet. In 1948, only 1 percent of American households owned a TV. Within seven years, televisions graced 75 percent of American homes.

These TV sets didn’t just drop down into those homes. They had to be designed, manufactured, packaged, distributed, and marketed. Programming had to be produced. Imaginations had to be captured. All of this demanded an enormous outlay of entrepreneurial energy.

But this outlay produced no jaw-dropping billionaire fortunes. That would be no accident. By the 1950s, the American people had put in place a set of economic rules that made the accumulation of grand new private fortunes almost impossible.

Taxes played a key role here. Income over \$400,000 faced a 91 percent tax rate throughout the 1950s. Regulations played an important role as well. In television’s early heyday, for instance, government regulations limited how many commercials could run on children’s TV programming. TV’s

Some 123 billionaires today, Forbes calculates, owe their fortunes to high-tech. The top 15 of these high-tech billionaires hold a collective \$382 billion in personal net worth

THANKS A BILLION

In an America where less than 7 percent of private-sector workers carry union cards, online corporate giants seldom ever need bargain with their employees

original corporate execs could only squeeze so much out of their new medium.

And television's early kingpins couldn't squeeze their workers all that much either. Most of their employees, from the workers who manufactured TV sets to the technicians who staffed broadcast studios, belonged to unions. TV's early movers and shakers had to share the wealth their new medium was creating.

Today's Internet movers and shakers, by contrast, have to share nothing.

In an America where less than 7 percent of private-sector workers carry union cards, online corporate giants seldom ever need bargain with their employees.

In our deregulated US economy, meanwhile, these Internet kingpins encounter precious few public-interest rules that keep them from charging whatever the market

can bear – and rigging markets to squeeze out even more.

And taxes? Today's Internet billionaires face tax rates that run well less than half the rates that early TV kingpins faced.

We can't – and shouldn't – fault Tim Berners-Lee for any of this. He freely shared, after all, his invention with the world.

"I wanted to build a creative space," Berners-Lee observed in an interview a few years ago, "something like a sandpit where everyone could play together."

Some people didn't play nice.

CT

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Sam Pizzigati, an Institute for Policy Studies associate fellow, edits the inequality weekly *Too Much*. His latest book is *The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class*.



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Father knows best

Lost, now found – another gem from the pen of **Joe Bageant**

*Joe Bageant told many stories about his time two decades ago in Idaho as a reporter and columnist for *The Idahonian*, a newspaper that has since merged with the *Moscow-Pullman Daily News*. Joe didn't save copies of his old articles and columns, but a reader has recently sent some copies. This is one of those columns, published on May 1, 1990*

Look at those old pictures of my father, just returned from Korea with his khaki hat cocked at a devilish angle, leaning on the shiny black Plymouth. He looks happy and proud. I was six. He was my absolute hero. My total respect for him was never in question.

That respect was part of a long chain of fathers and sons. For most of American history fathers could take the respect of their sons for granted. Particularly prior to World War II, when the majority of families lived on farms – before the post-war shift to the cities that changed American family culture forever. A country boy grew up watching and working with his father, with few outside distractions and little media to create other realities than the daily rhythms of life and work.

Then over the next few decades, a strange thing happened. Television came along and planted new images of family life in the American unconscious. Dads became bumbler in shows like the *Life of Riley*, and Dick

Van Dyke. The kids always caught bigger fish than dad on camping trips while dad couldn't even build a campfire. Meanwhile, you saw Lucy Ricardo and Ethel Mertz conniving to buy a new couch, and manipulate their husbands to various ends.

At the same time, kids got smart alecky, (Remember Rusty in the *Danny Thomas Show*?) drawing laughs and attention for taking cuts at dad's expense.

Ironically, even when dad was presented as a strong, wise figure, it had a vapid authenticity about it. Take Ward Cleaver. He'd draw reflectively on his pipe in his "study" (Oh yea, all those cracker box houses we grew up in had a study), then solve some trifling problem of the Beaver's in quiet, near ceremonial tones.

And exactly what did Ward do for a living, anyway? Or Ozzie Nelson, for that matter, besides wear sweaters and make milkshakes for the boys? Occasionally there were vague mentions of the insurance business, etc.

Whatever the case, when my dad would come home dead tired and dirty from working at his gas station all day, I doubt that he identified with Ward in his expensive suits or Ozzie with his milkshake maker in the kitchen. I think we both felt a strange sense of inferiority in the face of this daily deluge of an American dream that we pretty much assumed must be happening in California someplace.

Ironically, even when dad was presented as a strong, wise figure, it had a vapid authenticity about it

MORE FROM JOE

The 1950s are always painted as a mindless time that melts like candy cotton in the mouth of history. That's because, honestly speaking, the media get to re-write American social history for most of us

At the same time so many of our fathers who'd grown up in a pre-war agricultural America were very confused about how to father us. They'd grown up working with their fathers on a daily basis, sharing in important labor that decided the welfare of the entire family. And out of that, I think in most cases, was born the genuine respect that comes from learning and accomplishing something meaningful together. Maybe there weren't many heart-to-heart talks, or any talk at all. But there was the silent bond and the long slow rite of passage called earning your father's respect.

The 1950s are always painted as a mindless time that melts like candy cotton in the mouth of history. That's because, honestly speaking, the media get to re-write American social history for most of us. Especially our children. But what I saw going on was a generation of boys who had gone off to a long war, and come back men capable of the steeliest kind of dedication to making something better for their families. And they did it. They gave their families the highest lifestyle and the best educations any generation in human history ever had. They made a lot of mistakes. They had no models to guide them, and even their own fathers could not be much help in what had to get done.

I can image their horror when the 1960s

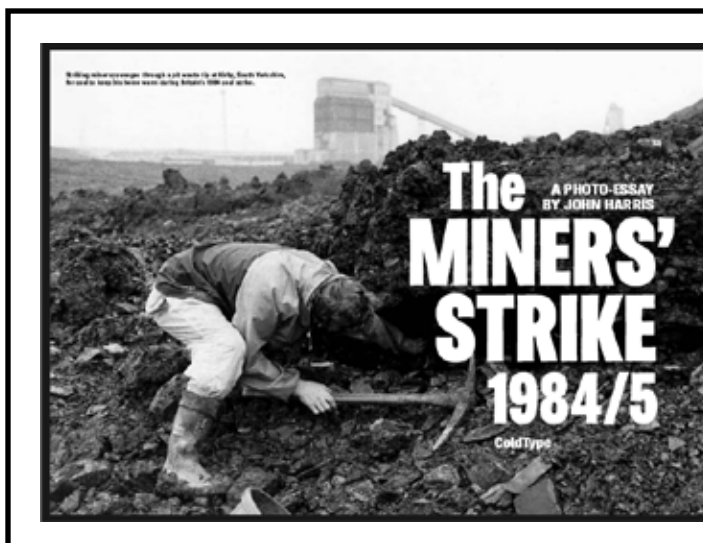
came along and their children's generation invalidated, through rejection, everything they had ever stood for. Most of our fathers could not see the gift they had given was called diversity, individuality, true social consciousness and empowerment to change things like never before.

Then in the 70s and 80s our parents got rocked and shattered by the spectra of their children's divorces. New family models emerged, and are still emerging. But almost none of them work as well as the old nuclear family model, when it comes to raising healthy, stable children.

And while millions of sincere parents today struggle to build self-esteem in their children through all the newest techniques, I wonder.

I wonder if, all things considered, these efforts can ever be equal to the self-esteem that comes from a boy looking at his father while doing meaningful work, and thinking to himself: "I am as good and worthwhile as the best man I know, because the best man I know accepts my respect." **CT**

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Joe Bageant, our favourite and most popular contributor, died on March 26, 2011. This piece is one of several of his columns unearthed from early in his prolific career. You can download and read his ColdType essays at <http://coldtype.net/joe.html>



WORDS and PICTURES

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Recalled to life

The politics of fear and poverty. **Chris Hedges** tells how a young mother became a prostitute and drug addict

I am sitting in the Red Oak Diner outside Princeton, N.J., with Christine Pagano and her friend Jeannette. They have just finished attending an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in a small room in a strip mall behind us.

Many who were at the meeting struggle to make rent or car payments. Those with jobs worry about being laid off. Some live in terror that creditors, or the state, will electronically empty their meager bank accounts for debts they owe. Some fear outstanding warrants will land them in jail. One small tremor and the fragile stability they have achieved will crumble to dust. During AA sessions they admit there are times when they want to blunt the pain again, at least for a moment, by getting drunk or high. And when the meetings are over, everyone stands up, holds hands and says the Lord's Prayer.

The rain is lashing the window next to our booth. The diner is nearly empty. Trucks on Route 206 roar past, their headlights a blur in the rainstorm. Pagano, 31, has worked all day in a deli and bakery. She was up at 6:30 a.m. Her hands are cupped around a glass of unsweetened ice tea. Her dark, auburn hair is pulled up in a neat bun. Her eyes are carefully lined with mascara.

Her drug use began when she was a 16-year-old in high school, after a classmate

confessed to the school guidance counselor that she had had sex with Pagano's stepfather. Her mother's marriage, and with it whatever stability it provided in Pagano's life, imploded.

The story about the classmate and Pagano's stepfather became public in her rural community in northern New Jersey. She felt humiliated. She began to snort heroin. She dropped out of school and worked to feed her habit. She got into a drug treatment program in 2007. She got sober. She lived in a group house in Brick, N.J., where all the residents promised not to use drugs or alcohol. She met a man who had just gotten out of prison and was also in recovery. They set out to make a life together.

She worked in a diner and got a cosmetology certificate. She and her boyfriend rented a house and bought a car. She became pregnant. After she gave birth she stayed home with her son.

"I was a new mom," she says. "I had no idea what I was doing. I was really overwhelmed. I don't remember ever really thinking about using or drinking, but I was never all right. I was never really OK with who I was. I always felt not good enough. And even as a mom, with ... this beautiful child, I never felt OK. I use to bite my nails all the time. I was very anxiety-ridden."

She and her boyfriend went regularly to meetings for those in recovery from addic-

Her drug use began when she was a 16-year-old in high school, after a classmate confessed to the school guidance counselor that she had had sex with Pagano's stepfather

HELL ON EARTH

She and her boyfriend started taking pills together. A month later they switched to heroin

tion. They stayed clean for four years.

“I remember the day that my son’s father and I decided it would be OK that we had a drink,” she says. “And it was like totally normal. We were in our house in Sussex. Our neighbor came over and she didn’t know I was in recovery. And I never bothered to tell her. And she had a bottle of wine in her hand. And we barbecued and I drank a glass of wine. ... And I did not want to drink any more. I was still pretty coherent enough that I didn’t want to be drunk, because of my son.”

She thinks her boyfriend, who was working for a tree service company and was a member of the electricians union, was secretly taking the opiate Oxycontin. He suggested they go “doctor shopping” to get pills to sell. Her boyfriend’s family had a history of addictions. His father had died in the jail on Riker’s Island in New York. His sister was a heroin addict and a prostitute who worked for a well-known New Jersey pimp called “Prince” who drove a Rolls-Royce and a white Cadillac with flashy rims and white carpeting. “He would walk into this bar in Jersey City called Ringside,” Pagano says. “He would go, ‘The champ is here.’”

From pills to heroin

She and her boyfriend started taking pills together. A month later they switched to heroin. It was cheaper. She snorted it for a week, and then her boyfriend shot her up with heroin. It was her first time with a needle.

“He called his sister and his sister told us where we could get heroin,” she says. “And she lived in the heart of Jersey City. So we went down there and in the beginning we were selling the pills to support the heroin habit. And then our heroin habit got too big for the money. This was the first time my son’s father told me that I should go out on the street with his sister.”

She accompanied her boyfriend’s sister, known by the street name “Baby” on

Jersey City’s Tonnel Avenue, Route 1 and Route 9, where there is a string of cheap motels. Pagano, who is white, wore a short, shimmering gold skirt and adopted the name “Gucci.” Prostitutes on Tonnel Avenue, which is close to the Holland Tunnel, connecting Jersey City and Manhattan, made \$50 for oral sex and \$100 for vaginal intercourse, “but if it goes any longer than 10 minutes you’re charging them more.” An hour cost \$250 and a full night cost \$1,500. To the Wall Street traders, business executives and bankers who are the area prostitutes’ main customers, money never seemed to be an issue. Their wallets were stuffed with cash. On her first night Pagano hailed men headed home to the suburbs from New York City but then burst into tears or fought them off once she was inside the cars.

“I think the first night I actually never went through with it, but I ended up making money because I was a sobbing mess in these cars and guys just gave me money,” she says. “Most of them had a lot of money ’cause they were coming from the city. So then my son’s father got the idea that if I couldn’t do it I would ... make them get a room, act like I was gonna do it – and he would kick the door in – and rob them. We did that a couple time until I couldn’t keep track of who I was robbing. And the last time I went to do it I had already robbed the guy [on an earlier night] and he started beating me up in the room.”

It took her two weeks to begin having sex with the “tricks.” She slowly began to build a regular clientele and mastered the survival skills that come with walking the street.

“A couple times I got to stay in this really nice suite that overlooked Newark Airport,” she said. “Some of them had a lot of money.”

She would buy heroin after a night’s work – she and her boyfriend together had a \$500-a-day habit – from a dealer named “Kiss.”

“Kiss would come out no matter when I called ’cause he knew he was getting his \$500 from me,” she says. She would drive home, often around 4:30 in the morning, and shoot up with her boyfriend. Her relationship with him deteriorated into that of “drug partners” and little else. They fought frequently, something they had not done while sober.

“He would throw it in my face a lot,” she says of her prostitution, “but he had no problem doing my drugs. We were no longer parents. We were no longer anything.”

But she still had her son, Liam.

“There were times where Kristen [Baby] would go out and I would sit in the car with my son,” she says. “I would have him out in my car on Tonnelle Avenue. I thought I was a good mom ’cause I would wait in the car. She would go out and she would come back and wait in the car for me to come back with money.”

She began to leave Liam with his father at night while she worked the streets.

Cops were customers

Cops, she said, were regular customers, although most refused to pay. Some threatened to arrest her if she did not give them unpaid sex.

“The first time I ever got raped actually was by a cop in Elizabeth,” she says. “He wanted to ‘trick off,’ which is normal for cops.”

“They would get you in the car because they would act like they were arresting you,” she says, “and then once they got you in the car they would tell you, ‘Oh well, if you blow me I’ll let you go.’ And you get smart after a while. I mean after a while I would let them take me to jail because they can’t – what are they gonna say? There’s nothing on videotape. What are they gonna say? They can’t. It takes you a while to learn this type of stuff.”

“We were in the back of the police car,” she says of her first rape. “He had paid me. Then he punched me in the face and he

took the money back. He pulled out his gun and told me I was gonna do whatever he told me to do. He stuck his gun up my vagina. He told me he was gonna pull the trigger if I didn’t do what he said. He wanted to treat me like a piece of shit. Ya know, he called me a bunch of names. He made me call myself a bunch of names – a dirty prostitute. At one point he made me say that I had AIDS. Yeah.”

“The only cop I remember his name from down there was a Jersey City cop, we called him Barney, I don’t know his real name,” she says. “He looked like Barney [Rubble, the cartoon character]. He was my first prostitution arrest. And the only reason he arrested me was that I was standing next to Kristen. And she was known. When they brought us in it was her 39th prostitution arrest. They [police officers] were clapping when they brought her in. Everybody knew who she was.”

On a good night Pagano made \$600 to \$700. On a bad night she made \$100. “I made the best money in snow and rain,” she says.

Some customers wanted to indulge in fetishes. “I’ve put diapers on guys,” she says. Others wanted to put on makeup and women’s clothes.

She often injected herself with heroin or smoked crack as soon as she and a client got into a hotel room. “A lot of them would do it [take drugs] with you,” she says. “A lot of them pay you to get their drugs for them.”

She learned to immediately open the glove compartment to get the name and address of the driver when she entered a vehicle. She made more money by threatening to call the customer’s wife.

She also learned what to avoid. “In Jersey City there’s a street when you go down Tonnelle Avenue,” she says. “I think it’s called Industrial Way [probably Industrial Drive]. It’s industrial parks. You never, ever, ever want to go down there. And you always knew you were in trouble if you got

Cops, she said, were regular customers, although most refused to pay. Some threatened to arrest her if she did not give them unpaid sex

HELL ON EARTH

Her boyfriend entered a bank in Jersey City in June 2010 with a backpack and a note that said he had a bomb

in a car with a guy and he started driving that way. I've jumped out of many cars. 'Cause as soon as you saw you were driving down that street, you knew you were gonna get raped."

She endured for nine months. She begged her boyfriend to help her get off the streets. He decided to rob a bank. He entered a bank in Jersey City in June 2010 with a backpack and a note that said he had a bomb. He did not cover his face. He took \$578 from a teller.

"I was driving on the Turnpike from our house down to Jersey City and I saw a big sign 'FBI wanted' with a picture of my son's father," she says. "And I pulled over on the side of the road and lost my mind."

He was arrested a month later when the FBI, the state police and US marshals kicked down the door of their house at 5:30 in the morning. He is now serving a nine-year sentence in the maximum-security federal prison at Lewisburg, Pa.

"That's when I really went off the deep end," Pagano says. "I gave up on everything."

She sent her son to live with her mother, who is a teacher. She moved in for a while with her boyfriend's sister, Baby, in Jersey City. She eventually became homeless, sleeping in an abandoned flower shop. Her drug use soared. She would be awake for six or seven days at a time. She had as many as 20 clients a day. Finally, nearly broken, she got back into rehab. She became sober again. She met a man in the program. He relapsed two weeks later and went to jail. She began drinking heavily with the mother of her baby's father.

"We were in Atlantic City one night, me and his mom," she says. "We were out all night long at some grimy bar. Some guy offered me 'dog food.' And I said, 'What the hell is dog food?' I had never heard a lot of terms before. It was heroin. I was drunk. I followed him. I got the heroin. It progresses very quickly."

She started taking the bus from William-

stown, N.J., where she was living, to Atlantic City to "trick" and buy drugs. She got arrested. When she got out of jail she decided to go to Camden. Camden was where many Atlantic City pushers got their drugs. Heroin costs \$10 a bag in Camden and \$6 a bag in Jersey City, but the Camden heroin was far more potent and provided a much longer high. And Camden was only 20 minutes from where she was living.

Camden is among the country's poorest and most crime-ridden cities. The loss of its manufacturing base has seen its population shrink from 120,000 in the 1950s to less than 80,000 today. Whole blocks lie abandoned. There are an estimated 1,500 derelict buildings. The roofs of many empty row houses, gas stations, stores and warehouses have collapsed. Basements in derelict buildings are flooded. Copper wiring, metal doors, radiators and piping have been ripped out by scavengers who sell the materials to the huge scrap yard along the Delaware River. Some 175 open-air drug markets exist in the city. Hookers, often white addicts, congregate on street corners and near the main exit ramp of the multi-lane highway that cuts through the heart of Camden.

Sent to Broadway

The first time Pagano took the bus to Camden, she walked up to the first person she saw upon her arrival at Walter Rand Transportation Center and said: "Where do you sell your ass around here?" She was told to go to Broadway. She never went home. Camden, however, was not Jersey City or Atlantic City. Her clients were not wealthy businessmen or Wall Street managers, but fellow addicts. She could not make the same kind of money. There were women on the street who would give oral sex for as little as \$5.

"They'd suck your dick for a hit of crack," she says. "Camden was like nothing I had ever seen before. The poverty is so bad. People rob you for \$5, literally for \$5.

They would pull a gun on you for no money. I would get out of cars, I would walk five feet up the road and get held up. And they would take all my money. The first time it happened to me I cried an hour. You degrade yourself. You get out of the car. And some guy pulls a gun on you.”

She scaled down her charges, eventually giving oral sex for \$20. And she found that her clients refused to let her use condoms.

“I gave up on everything at that point, I wanted to die,” she says. “I didn’t care anymore. All the guilt and the shame and leaving my son, not talking to my son, not talking to my family.”

She met a man named E-frie who had just finished an 18-year prison sentence. He gave her drugs in return for sex. He drank heavily and smoked marijuana. He taunted her for being a junkie and frequently beat her, once pushing her down a flight of stairs.

“I was still living on the streets,” she says. “I was living everywhere. Abandoned buildings. Most of my stuff was hidden all over downtown Camden. I would dig holes and bury stuff in backyards.”

She gently fingers a ring dangling from her necklace.

“My mother gave this to me from my son,” she says. “I never take it off my neck. It’s a mother-and-son ring. It’s made it through everything with me. Someone ripped my necklace off one time. I flipped out. It was the only thing that made me feel like I had my son with me. I found the ring after someone ripped it off. I used to wear it on my hand. But I would get nervous that someone would rob me over a ring. I would dig holes and bury it. I would bury it with my money.”

She put her profile on an Internet site to solicit clients. By then she had been raped as many as 20 times.

“The last time was the most brutal,” she says. “It was on Pine Street near the Off Broadway [Lounge]. There’s weeds on the side. I never took tricks off the street.

They had to be in cars. But I was sick. I was tired.”

Stabbed in the thigh

A man on the street had offered her \$20 for oral sex. But once they were in the weeds he pulled out a knife. He told her if she screamed he would kill her. When she offered some resistance he stabbed her. “He was trying to stab me in my vagina,” she says. He stabbed her thigh. “It’s kind of bad because I actually never ended up doing anything about it. It ended up turning into a big infection.”

“I had seen this episode of Oprah years ago and this girl had been raped – her survival skills kicked in and what she did was tell the guy that he didn’t have to do that to her, that he could do better,” she says. “I got outta him that he and his girlfriend had gotten into a fight and that she wouldn’t have sex with him and that somebody was gonna have sex with him that night. He made me hold his phone that had porn on it. He never really pulled his pants all the way down. And at this point I’m bleeding pretty badly. I’m lying on glass outside of this bar. I had like little bits of glass in my back. I remember being really scared. Then it just got to the point where I was just numb. I asked him if he could stop at one point so I could smoke a cigarette. He let me. I got him to put the knife down because I was being good and listening to him. He stabbed the knife in the dirt. He said, ‘Just so you know I can pick it up at any point.’ I think in his head he thought that I was scared enough. In my head I was trying to figure out how the hell I was going to get outta there. And it occurred to me one of the things he kept asking me to do was lick his butt. And he was getting off on this. The last time he turned around and asked me to do this I pushed him. I had myself set up to get up.”

She ran naked into the street. The commotion attracted the police. A passerby gave her his shirt to cover up. At 5 feet 5

She met a man named E-frie who had just finished an 18-year prison sentence. He gave her drugs in return for sex

HELL ON EARTH

Because Pagano had a raft of outstanding warrants the investigator took her to jail, but her physical condition was so bad the jail refused to accept her

inches tall she weighed only 86 pounds. Her skin was gray. Her feet were so swollen she was wearing size 12 men's slippers.

She would last four more weeks on the streets, until a private investigator hired by her mother found her in September 2012. He called her mother and handed the phone to Pagano. "I told her to leave me the fuck alone, just let me die," she says. "And she told me that she was not going to let me die out there. She said, 'You will not be sleeping on the streets of Camden tonight.'"

Jail wouldn't accept her

Because Pagano had a raft of outstanding warrants the investigator took her to jail, but her physical condition was so bad the jail refused to accept her. She was hospitalized for two weeks. She went into a methadone program that cost her mother \$20,000.

"I was so hurt and so broken," she says. "I was in shock. When it all wore off I would wake up at night screaming, sweating, I had peed myself a couple times in the middle of the night. I still have nightmares. A lot of it goes back to that last rape. A lot of it has to do with E-frie."

"I live in a shitty little apartment, at 31 years old, with a roommate, who used to be sober and is now a stripper," she says. "I have a crappy car. I will never have a prestigious job. I've never been more happy in my life."

This summer she will regain custody of her son.

She tells me about her new boyfriend, José. She speaks his name as if the fact of José is a miracle.

"He knows everything there is to ever know about me and has never judged me, never," she says. "If I'm in a funk, he says, 'Just go to the 5:30 meeting,' " referring to a daily Alcoholics Anonymous session. "He doesn't even know what the 5:30 AA meeting is."

"I struggle with God," she says. "I have to believe that I haven't been put through

this to give up. And there's been a lot of times when I wanted to do just that. I sat through Camden County jail [on an old warrant] sober. I was looking at all the same people I used to be out on the street with – being called Gucci again."

"I think the one thing I am most grateful for is that I am scared today," she says. "I'm scared of the law. I never was. I'm scared to lose what little I have. Not the material things – but I look at my son now. I remember the day that I had him and thinking this was it. And looking back I think I thought that this was gonna fix me. But it didn't. And I learned that nothing is going to fix me. Liam's not going to fix me. Those [AA] meetings are not going to fix me. They're going to help. Jeannette's going to help. All these people in my life are going to help. But the only person that can fix me is me. And that's a hard pill to swallow when you've done nothing your whole life but fuck it up. And one of the biggest things I still can't get over is that even when I'm doing something right, I still feel like I'm doing something wrong. I always have that feeling that it's not good enough. That I'm not good enough. And now here I am at 31. I have a huge criminal record. I have horrible credit. I lost a house. I lost a car. It amazes me that my mother still looks at me knowing what I've done – and she doesn't look at me any differently. And [when I go wrong] she'll be the first to tell you, 'That's not my daughter, that's what my daughter does when she's not thinking straight.'"

Liam, 5, recently learned where his dad is. Before, when he asked, Pagano had answered by saying only, "Your dad loves you very much." But eventually she had to tell him the truth. The boy cried for more than an hour. He asked his mother to play a game in which she is a cop who arrests him so he can go to prison and talk to his father. It is a game they play often.

"He's going to be 11 when [his father] gets out," she says. "Liam wants to know if

he's going to be in his life. I can't give him an answer. It's really sad that for \$578 [the father is] sitting in prison for nine years. I'm not condoning what he did. He did it. He's guilty, but nine years?"

"The system is set up for us to fail," she says. "Ten years from now I'm still just going to be a number. I'm always going to have an SBI [State Bureau of Identification] number. I'm always going to have mug shots all over the Internet. Liam's father is going to be out when he's 42 years old. And what the fuck is he going to do? And they expect people not to go back. What's he going to do? I realize everyone's got a choice, but the state won't even help me. They're not going to help him. I'm not saying people shouldn't pay for what they do. Most people don't change. I'm not going to say that they do. But some change. I fight everyday to be a better person. I fight to fit into society."

The manager of the diner comes over to tell us he is closing in 15 minutes. He looks at Pagano. He sees she is distraught. "Take your time," he says gently. We are drinking coffee, pouring in little containers of creamer and stirring it too long.

"I never thought this would be my story," Pagano says. "You couldn't have told me this. Now I cry a lot. I'm very compassionate. I never used to be. They used to call me the ice queen."

She pauses and looks down at the table, trying to recover her composure. "I look in the mirror. Half the time I still see that girl again," she says, referring to her former self. "The other half of the time I see me."

We leave the diner, darting through the rain to our cars.

One chance

The poor in America usually get only one chance. Then it is over. Those who were on the street with Pagano in Camden will most likely never have a private investigator rescue them, or have a mother pay for their drug rehabilitation. Most will live, suffer and die within the space of a few squalid city blocks. No jobs. No hope. No help. No way out. They blunt their despair through alcohol or drugs. And if they do get out, as did Pagano, they carry the chains of their past wrapped in long coils around them. Employers do not want them. Landlords will not rent them an apartment. Real estate agents will not deal with them if they seek to buy a house. Banks and credit card companies will not give them credit. They never have enough money. They probably never will. They live one step away from hell. And they know what hell feels like. This is how the bankers, bond traders and financial speculators, the ones with the packed wallets, the ones with the fancy cars and the multimillion-dollar homes in New Jersey's suburbs of Mendham, Chatham and Short Hills, the ones who paid Christine Pagano for sex during their nightly journeys to their homes and wives, want it. The hell of the poor is their paradise. **CT**

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Chris Hedges spent nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans. He has reported from more than 50 countries and has worked for The Christian Science Monitor, National Public Radio, The Dallas Morning News and The New York Times, for which he was a foreign correspondent for 15 years.

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The soccer war

Shootings lead to campaign to kick Israel out of world soccer body, writes **Dave Zirin**

To attack the players is to attack the hope that the national team will ever truly have a home

Their names are Jawhar Nasser Jawhar, 19, and Adam Abd al-Raouf Halabiya, 17. They were once soccer players in the West Bank. Now they are never going to play sports again. Jawhar and Adam were on their way home from a training session in the Faisal al-Husseini Stadium on January 31 when Israeli forces fired upon them as they approached a checkpoint. After being shot repeatedly, they were mauled by checkpoint dogs and then beaten. Ten bullets were put into Jawhar's feet. Adam took one bullet in each foot. After being transferred from a hospital in Ramallah to King Hussein Medical Center in Amman, they received the news that soccer would no longer be a part of their futures.

This is only the latest instance of the targeting of Palestinian soccer players by the Israeli army and security forces. Death, injury or imprisonment has been a reality for several members of the Palestinian national team over the last five years. Just imagine if members of Spain's top-flight World Cup team had been jailed, shot or killed by another country and imagine the international media outrage that would ensue. Imagine if prospective youth players for Brazil were shot in the feet by the military of another nation. But, tragically, these events along the checkpoints have received little attention on the sports page or beyond.

Much has been written about the psy-

chological effect this kind of targeting has on the occupied territories. Sports represent escape, joy and community, and the Palestinian national soccer team, for a people without a recognized nation, is a source of tremendous pride. To attack the players is to attack the hope that the national team will ever truly have a home.

The Palestinian national football team, which formed in 1998, is currently ranked 144th in the world by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). They have never been higher than 115th. As FIFA themselves said in assessing the state of Palestinian soccer, "Given the passion for football that burns among Palestinians, both in the Occupied Territories and the Diaspora, such lowly status hints at problems on the ground."

These "problems on the ground" consist, as chairman of the Palestinian Football Association Jibril al-Rajoub commented bluntly, of "the occupation's insistence on destroying Palestinian sport."

Over the last year, in response to this systematic targeting of Palestinian soccer, al-Rajoub has attempted to assemble forces to give Israel the ultimate sanction and, as he said, "demand the expulsion of Israel from FIFA and the International Olympic Committee." Al-Rajoub claims the support of Jordan, Qatar, Iran, Oman, Algiers and Tunisia in favor of this move, and promises

more countries to organize more support. He has also pledged to make the resolution formal when all the member nations of FIFA meet in Brazil.

Qatar's place in this, as host of the 2022 World Cup, deserves particular scrutiny. As the first Arab state to host the tournament, they are under fire for the hundreds of construction deaths of Nepalese workers occurring on their watch.

As the volume on these concerns rises, Qatar needs all the support in FIFA that they can assemble. Whether they eventually see the path to that support as one that involves confronting or accommodating Israel, will be fascinating to see.

As for Sepp Blatter, he clearly recognizes that there is a problem in the treatment of Palestinian athletes by the Israeli state. Over the last year, he has sought to mediate this issue by convening a committee of Israeli and Palestinian authorities to see if they can come to some kind of agreement about easing the checkpoints and restrictions that keep Palestinian athletes from leaving (and

trainers, consultants, and coaches from entering) the West Bank and Gaza.

Yet al-Rajoub sees no progress. As he said, "This is the way the Israelis are behaving and I see no sign that they have recharged their mental batteries. There is no change on the ground. We are a full FIFA member and have the same rights as all other members."

The shooting into the feet of Jawhar and Adam has taken a delicate situation and made it an impossible one. Sporting institutions like FIFA and the IOC are always wary about drawing lines in the sand

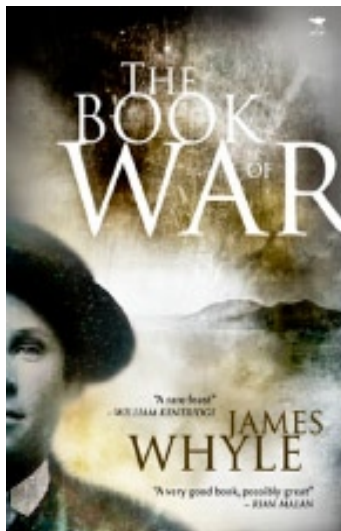
when it comes to the conduct of member nations. But the deliberate targeting of players is seen, even in the corridors of power, as impossible to ignore. As long as Israel subjects Palestinian athletes to detention and violence, their seat at the table of international sports will be never be short of precarious.

CT

Dave Zirin is the author of the forthcoming book "Brazil's Dance with the Devil" (Haymarket)

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US desperate to keep futile peace process alive

Jonathan Cook tells how the White House is shifting in favour of Israeli government's hardline position

The US outline for peace is now likely to amount to little more than a set of vague, possibly unwritten principles that both sides can assent to

For the first time since the US launched the Middle East peace talks last summer, the Palestinian leadership may be sensing it has a tiny bit of leverage.

Barack Obama met the Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas in Washington last month in what Palestinian officials called a “candid and difficult” meeting. The US president hoped to dissuade Abbas from walking away when the original negotiations’ timetable ends in a month.

The US president and his secretary of state, John Kerry, want their much-delayed “framework agreement” to provide the pretext for spinning out the stalled talks for another year. The US outline for peace is now likely to amount to little more than a set of vague, possibly unwritten principles that both sides can assent to. The last thing the US president needs is for the negotiations to collapse, after Kerry has repeatedly stressed that finding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is imperative.

The US political cycle means Obama’s Democratic party is heading this autumn into the Congressional mid-term elections. A humiliating failure in the peace process would add to perceptions of him as a weak leader in the Middle East, following what has been widely presented as his folding in confrontations with Syria and Iran.

Renewed clashes between Israel and the Palestinians in the international arena would

also deepen US diplomatic troubles at a time when Washington needs to conserve its energies for continuing negotiations with Iran and dealing with the fallout from its conflict with Russia over Crimea.

Obama, therefore, seems committed to keeping the peace process show on the road for a while longer, however aware he is of the ultimate futility of the exercise.

In this regard, US interests overlap with those of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Israel has been the chief beneficiary of the past eight months: diplomatic pressure has largely lifted; Israeli officials have announced an orgy of settlement building in return for releasing a few dozen Palestinian prisoners; and the White House has gradually shifted ground even further towards Israel’s hardline positions.

The Palestinians, on the other hand, have nothing to show for their participation, and have lost much of the diplomatic momentum gained earlier by winning upgraded status at the United Nations. They have also had to put on hold moves to join dozens of international forums, as well as the threat to bring Israel up on war crimes charges at the International Criminal Court.

Abbas is under mounting pressure at home to put an end to the charade, with four Palestinian factions warning last week that the Kerry plan would be the equivalent of national “suicide”. For this reason, the White

House is now focused on preventing Abbas from quitting – and that requires a major concession from Israel.

The Palestinians are said to be pushing hard for Israel's agreement to halt settlement building and free senior prisoners, most notably Marwan Barghouti, who looks the most likely successor to Abbas as Palestinian leader.

Some kind of short-term settlement freeze – though deeply unpopular with Netanyahu's supporters – may be possible, given the Israeli right's triumph in advancing settlement-building of late. Abbas reportedly presented Obama with "a very ugly map" of more than 10,000 settler homes Israel has unveiled since the talks began.

Setting Barghouti free, as well as Ahmad Saadat, whose PLO faction assassinated the far-right tourism minister, Rehavam Zeevi, in 2001, would be an even harder pill for the Israeli government to swallow. Cabinet ministers are already threatening a mutiny over the final round of prisoner releases. But Israeli reports suggested Washington might consider releasing Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard, possibly in return for Israel freeing more Palestinians, to keep the talks going.

Simmering tensions between the US and Israel, however, are suggestive of the intense pressure being exerted by the White House behind the scenes.

Those strains exploded into view again when Moshe Yaalon, Israel's defence minister, used a speech to lambast Washington's foreign policy as "feeble". In a similar vein, he infuriated the White House in January by labelling Kerry "obsessive" and "messianic" in pursuing the peace process. But unlike the earlier incident, Washington has refused to let the matter drop, angrily demanding an explicit apology.

The pressure from the White House, however, is not chiefly intended to force concessions from Israel on an agreement. After all, the Israeli parliament approved the so-called referendum bill, seen by the right as an insurance policy. It gives the Israeli public, raised

on the idea of Jerusalem as Israel's exclusive and "eternal capital", a vote on whether to share it with the Palestinians.

Washington's goal is more modest: a few more months of quiet. But even on this reckoning, given Netanyahu's intransigence, the talks are going to implode sooner or later. What then?

Obama and Kerry have set out a convincing scenario that in the longer term Israel will find itself shunned by the world. The Palestinian leadership will advance its cause at the UN, while conversely grassroots movements inside and outside Palestine will begin clamouring for a single state guaranteeing equality between Israeli Jews and Palestinians. Israel's vehement and aggressive opposition on both fronts will only serve to damage its image – and its relations with the US.

An unexpected voice backing the one-state solution emerged when Tareq Abbas, the Palestinian president's 48-year-old son, told the *New York Times* that a struggle for equal rights in a single state would be the "easier, peaceful way".

Bolstering Washington's argument that such pressures cannot be held in check for ever, a poll this month of US public opinion revealed a startling finding. Despite a US political climate committed to a two-state solution, nearly two-thirds of Americans back a single democratic state for Jews and Palestinians should a Palestinian state prove unfeasible. That view is shared by more than half of Israel's supporters in the US.

That would constitute a paradigm shift, a moment of reckoning that draws nearer by the day as the peace process again splutters into irrelevance. **CT**

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

Washington might consider releasing Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard, possibly in return for Israel freeing more Palestinians, to keep the talks going

killing trend: The cruise missile liberals

David Edwards takes Michael Ignatieff and other liberals to task over their bloodthirsty support for disastrous western wars

Who actually shapes foreign policy? What are their goals? How much influence does the public really have?

News that 2015 might turn out to be the first year since 1914 that British troops will not be fighting a war somewhere in the world appeared to come as a shock to many. But in fact, the British record of Permanent War stretches back much further. Seumas Milne commented in the *Guardian* that empire forces ‘were involved in violent suppression of anti-colonial rebellions every year from at least the 1760s for the next 200 years, quite apart from multiple other full-scale wars’.

One might think a rational society would try to identify and counter the institutional forces responsible for hundreds of years of continuous war. Basic questions could be asked: Who actually shapes foreign policy? What are their goals? How much influence does the public really have? In our society, as we have noted, defence issues are barely mentioned at election time, while foreign policy options among the major parties are limited to pro-war choices.

If the great and good of politics, academia and media are to be believed, there is nothing to discuss, UK policy has always been guided by humanitarian values. Winston Churchill described ‘the reputation of the British empire as a valiant and benignant force in the history of mankind’. (Quoted, Mark Curtis, “The Ambiguities of Power”, Zed Books, 1995, p.1)

A professor of government at the University of Manchester described Britain as ‘a defender of political freedom’. (Ibid, p.2)

Shortly after Nato began pounding Afghanistan in 2001, the *Guardian*’s editors commented on a speech by Tony Blair:

‘The core of the speech – intellectual as well as moral – came when he contrasted the west’s commitment to do everything possible to avoid civilian casualties and the terrorists’ proven wish to cause as many civilian casualties as possible... Let them do their worst, we shall do our best, as Churchill put it. That is still a key difference.’ (Leader, ‘Blair plays it cooler – A new tone, but few new answers,’ the *Guardian*, October 31, 2001)

Alternatively, we can turn to the official record. Released government documents indicate, for example, the thinking behind the mid-twentieth century wars in Southeast Asia. The UK, the US and France agreed that it was ‘important for the economy of Western Europe that Western Europe trading and business interests in Southeast Asia should be maintained’, since it was ‘rich in natural resources and certain countries in the area at present produce surplus food-stuffs’. (Quoted, Ibid, p.20)

Similarly: ‘The position of the rulers of the Persian Gulf might be thought of as that of independence, regulated, supervised and defined’ by the British government. (US De-

partment of State memorandum, 15 March, 1946. Quoted, *Ibid*, p.22)

Similar perspectives and motives for ‘intervention’ are revealed wherever we look and universally labelled ‘defence of democracy’.

Syria – The liberals lament

Despite hundreds of years of conflict, the documentary record, and the West’s disastrous ‘humanitarian’ wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, the Pew Research Journalism Project found last September that ‘the No. 1 message’ on CNN, MSNBC, Fox News and Al Jazeera, was ‘that the US should get involved in the conflict’ in Syria.

The surprise failure to achieve that war has been a festering wound in the psyches of cruise missile liberals everywhere ever since.

In the *New York Times* in February, establishment intellectual Michael Ignatieff, one-time favourite of the *Observer* and BBC, commented that the near-certainty that Russia would veto any UN authorisation of air power meant ‘stopping the war in Syria will stretch domestic and international legality. But if legality is not stretched, the killing will go on indefinitely... Above all, using force would make the president “own” the Syrian tragedy. So far he has tried to pretend he doesn’t have to.’

International law needs to be ‘stretched’ – more accurately, broken – so that Obama can ‘own’ the Syrian conflict; by right, presumably, of his might.

Ignatieff’s compassion for the many civilian victims in Syria quickly made way for more ‘pragmatic’ concerns:

‘The fact is he owns it already. American inaction has strengthened Russia, Hezbollah and Iran. It has turned Syria into the next front in the war with Islamic extremism. And it has put in jeopardy the stability of Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey and risks leaving a failed state next door to Israel.’

‘If the president already owns the deadly

consequences of inaction, it is only prudent now to back diplomacy with force so that the consequences do not become deadlier still.’

Like all cruise missile liberals, Ignatieff portrays himself as a man of peace reluctantly forced to endorse war as a last resort. In March 2003, the *Guardian* gave him space to write:

‘I don’t like the company I am keeping, but I think they are right on the issue... Bush is right when he says Iraq would be better off if Saddam were disarmed and, if necessary, replaced by force.’

There was no real moral argument:

‘The problem is not that overthrowing Saddam by force is “morally unjustified”. Who seriously believes that 25 million Iraqis would not be better off if Saddam were overthrown?’

In fact people far more knowledgeable than Ignatieff believed exactly that of Iraq in 2002 and 2003. No rational person can doubt it now after one million post-invasion deaths.

Again, like all cruise missile liberals, Ignatieff likes to emphasise his former leftist leanings, now discarded as hopelessly naïve:

‘During Vietnam, I marched with people who thought America was the incarnation of imperial wickedness...’

Thus, also, James Bloodworth, editor of the UK’s deceptively named Left Foot Forward blog, wrote in the *Independent* of his dismay at the 2002 coup that temporarily overthrew Hugo Chavez:

‘Looking back, I have no trouble remembering which side I was on.’

But like David Aaronovitch, Nick Cohen, the late Christopher Hitchens, Ignatieff, and many others, Bloodworth claims to have woken up to the left’s ‘blind spots’ – a hard-right satori that pretty much guarantees a job for life in the corporate media. Bloodworth’s piece asked of ‘the left’:

‘When will it acknowledge that Chavez’s socialist dream has turned into a night-

Michael Ignatieff’s compassion for the many civilian victims in Syria quickly made way for more ‘pragmatic’ concerns

For the BBC's Kim Ghattas, Hillary Clinton is 'a rock star diplomat who finally let her hair down'

mare?'

In similar vein, former BBC, now Channel 4, journalist Paul Mason earned much kudos from his enthusiasm for the Occupy movement. He commented to the *Occupy Times*:

'What unites activists and bloggers on the right and left – in the USA and increasingly here – is how little they trust or care about what the mainstream media says.'

Right on! Mason, on the other hand, cares enough about these media to actually work for them. He also appears to have swallowed their line on Western benevolence, hook, line and sinker. In an article for his Channel 4 News blog last month titled, 'How the west slipped into powerlessness,' Mason offered a view that was not exactly common currency in the Occupy movement:

'When the USA decided, last summer, it could not sell military intervention in Syria – either to its parliaments, its people or its military – it sent a signal to every dictator, torturer and autocrat in the world that only diplomats, at the time, truly understood. The British diplomat in charge of Syria, Reza Afshar, tweeted a one-word summary of the UK parliamentary vote on Syria: "Disaster!"'

Mason cited Afshar's view but also endorsed it:

'Only now are we beginning to understand how widely that judgement applied.'

Mason argued that China-Russia influence 'has succeeded in preventing any effective action against the mass slaughter in Syria'. And so, 'the west's diplomacy has become a series of "can't dos": ... can't protect Syrians from mass murder'.

We challenged Mason on Twitter and he invited us to write to him: 'feel free to email me at ITN.'

This we did, pointing out that it is simply wrong to claim that the US is not intervening in Syria. We also asked what right the US has to act as world policeman, noting that the US case for waging war without UN ap-

proval was clear: the alleged Syrian government use of chemical weapons. Given that this claim has been seriously challenged, we asked Mason what other basis he had in mind for waging war.

Finally, we asked him if the utterly horrific death toll resulting from the US-UK wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya caused him to question his view that the obstruction of a US attack was a 'disaster' for Syria. We quoted epidemiologist Les Roberts, co-author of the 2004 and 2006 Lancet studies on the Iraq death toll:

'There are a series of surveys now implying ½ million deaths is a low side estimate... I think the 650,000 estimate in the second Lancet study was low...'

'Thus, I think there is little doubt ½ million died violently. I suspect the direct and indirect deaths exceeded 1,000,000...'
(Email to Media Lens, Les Roberts, January 11, 2014)

Despite numerous email and Twitter nudges, Mason refused to reply.

In February, Kim Ghattas, BBC State Department Radio and TV correspondent, also expressed frustration at the lack of 'action' on Syria:

'So where is the public outrage about a war so chaotic and dangerous that even the UN has stopped keeping track of the death toll? Have we all become numb to the pain of others?'

Can we imagine a free and independent BBC journalist writing anything comparable of the US-UK's occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, or the bombing of Libya?

Ghattas recently authored a book titled, "The Secretary – A Journey With Hillary Clinton from Beirut to The Heart of American Power." For Ghattas, Clinton is 'a rock star diplomat who finally let her hair down'. In her BBC website article, Ghattas continued:

'There is a renewed chorus to do "something" about Syria, with appeals to people's conscience. Nobel Prize-winning physicist Stephen Hawking recently wrote:

‘“What’s happening in Syria is an abomination, one that the world is watching coldly from a distance. Where is our emotional intelligence, our sense of collective justice?”

‘In a similar vein, Nicholas Burns, a former senior state department official, asked: “How many more lives will be claimed by Syria’s ceaseless civil war before we are finally shamed to stop the killing?”

‘(Spare a thought for the North Koreans, too. A UN report out last week, too horrific even to read, compares the abuses committed [sic] by the government to Nazi Germany. I have yet to see much outrage or calls for action.)’

North Korea being another Official Enemy, and thus fair game for this kind of demonising comparison. We might also spare a thought for Iraqis still dying in large numbers, or civilians trying to survive in a country where, ‘Without a central government with any real power, Libya is falling apart’, as Patrick Cockburn notes in the *Independent*. Cockburn added a timely reminder for the likes of Ghattas, Ignatieff, Bloodworth and Mason:

‘Western and regional governments share responsibility for much that has happened in Libya, but so too should the media. The Libyan uprising was reported as a simple-minded clash between good and evil.’

Or spare a thought for people struggling to survive in Afghanistan. Or people dying under drone attack in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. Or people dying under the tyrannies ‘we’ arm and support in Egypt, Israel, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and so on.

Ghattas asked her readers:

‘But would our sense of shame and public outrage actually make a difference?

‘Lack of public pressure conveniently reinforces Mr Obama’s conclusion that it’s too difficult and politically too risky to take action in Syria, but it’s in fact up to the president to galvanise public opinion.’

According to this BBC journalist, it is the

US president’s job to ‘galvanise’ the US and UK public to fight wars – specifically, a war on Syria. Ghattas even had some helpful advice for Obama on how best to achieve the desired result:

‘In early March 2011, when the Libyan uprising turned violent, there was little appetite in the US for military action. Americans were in the same mood then as they are now about the rest of the world. By the end of March, the US was engaged in military strikes against Libya, and polls showed a plurality supported the strikes.’

The lesson?

‘People didn’t have a sudden change of heart about Libya. They were becoming more exposed to the story in the media in a consistent way and hearing clearly and repeatedly from the president and others as to why the US was involved’.

This is correct. What the public did not hear was that the assault on Libya was a major war crime, a blatant abuse of UN resolution 1973 in pursuit of regime change – illegal under international law. But for Ghattas this was a happy outcome. Ghattas made no mention of the current militia-run chaos, killing, torture and terror in Libya, for which, as Cockburn notes, Western media show ‘little interest’. Instead, Ghattas added:

‘The military operations in Libya didn’t come with guarantees, but an assessment was made that there was reasonable hope for success.’

And how accurate was that assessment in light of conditions in Libya now? Or did she just mean regime change? That illegal aim was indeed pursued successfully.

It takes a special kind of talent to use Libya to argue for Western ‘action’ to relieve civilian suffering in Syria without so much as mentioning the impact of that earlier ‘action’ on civilian suffering in Libya. **CT**

.....
David Edwards is co-editor of Medialens, the UK media watchdog, at <http://medialens.org>

Spare a thought for people struggling to survive in Afghanistan. Or people dying under drone attack in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. Or people dying under the tyrannies ‘we’ arm and support in Egypt, Israel, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and so on

A radical imagination

Chellis Glendinning is enthralled by the philosophy of Pablo Susz

Susz takes us on a journey through the philosophies that emerged from the European epochs of exploration, exploitation, and empire

Pedro Susz is like a diamond; he has many facets. It's not just that *Para una filosofía de la insubordinación* (La Paz, Bolivia: Plural Editores, 2012) reveals the rare mind that integrates erudition with vision, the intellectual with the passionate; he gives philosophical reflection on today's pressing question: how can we traverse to the other side of the confusion and cynicism overwhelming us after all these centuries of too-often futile dissent against Power – particularly when the impulse to resist has disappeared not in Falcon sedans and military airplanes, but behind the electronic screen?

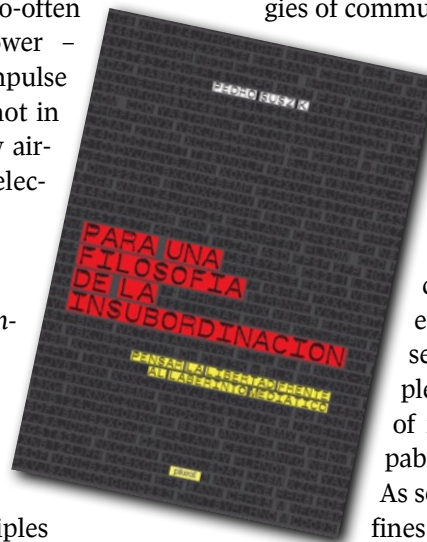
I think, therefore i am

Between the XV and XIX centuries the African continent lost more than 100,000,000 young men and women. – Pedro Susz

After laying out the principles of quantum physics as his jump-off point for our efforts toward freedom and justice, Susz takes us on a journey through the philosophies that emerged from the European epochs of exploration, exploitation, and empire. Next

we trek through ideas he calls “intermediary” such as Marx and Heidegger and then to postmodern, postcolonial, and multi/intercultural thought, all the while picking out the questions various philosophers have asked in an attempt to apply them to today's world. Susz ends with an analysis of the challenge contemporary power presents: our total and involuntary encasement by the projections of industries/technologies of communication.

He makes clear that philosophy seeks to clarify the relationship between human life, the conditions in which people live – as Foucault indicates, truth is a historical construction – and the essence of existence. The search, then, is never complete. In the end the nature of reality overpowers the capability of words to describe. As soon as one philosopher defines it, another puts the ideas to the fire of criticism. No sooner has Emmanuel Levinas touted the wonders of Liberation Theology than Slavoj Žižek points to its limitations. Heidegger is the cat's pajamas, Heidegger is passé. Frantz Fanon is too political. Etc.



Para Una Filosofía de la Insubordinación

Pedro Susz

Plural Editores,
La Paz, Bolivia

The search for truth also never ends because, due to the insatiability of Power, technology “advances,” always to favor expansion, efficiency, and control, always transforming the socio-economic conditions of survival and therefore perceptions.

The mind is amazingly fluid. Universalities exist – birth, family, community, ecology, food, sex, ceremony, song, death – shaping limitations and possibilities, but the dynamic between thought and conditions produces a diversity of perspectives. The gratefulness to Mother Earth characterizing the spiritual ideas of Native peoples may spring from the practice of receiving food directly from their own mothers and from the waters, minerals, plants, and animals of nature. What, then, do we think when we eat food from tin cans and plastic bags, made from chemicals whose names we cannot pronounce? Or when food scarcity, whose origins begin with ecological disasters and selective distribution by multinational corporations, causes starvation and riots?

The development of XV-XVII century European philosophy becomes more comprehensible. Suffering the collapse of ancient systems of land-based community, desperation from abusing their own lands, lack of sanitation, plagues, wars; uncertainty, fear, and hate – they created compensating concepts. Science based in instrumental reason and the separation of humanity from nature, actions from values. Myths of universality and the birds-eye view (characteristics of post-traumatic stress). A psychology seated in the fracturing of mind from body (likewise). The superiority of upper classes, racists, and patriarchs. The arrogance to conquer everything – all of which not only offered psychological comfort, but supported bourgeois orderliness and the administration of Power.

For the thinkers coming afterward, the task became to put words to the effects of such a debacle and propose ways to strengthen insubordination. And here we are, centuries later, still trying to confront/

dismantle/eradicate/escape/ infiltrate/ join/ reject/replace/resist/subvert/takeon/ take-over Power.

Times/spaces: a small detour

... permanent insubordination, the dare of the moment, seems to be the only form of affirming our irreversible decision to reposition the dialogue, the creativity, the imagination... –P.S.

During the 1980’s and ‘90’s the Elmwood Institute in Berkeley, California, presented a platform to develop dissident ideas. I was a member of the Council along with Fritjof Capra and Jerry Mander (both of whose work Susz mentions). Also Ernest Callenbach, Charlene Spretnak, and other thinkers/activists. In 1991, in preparation for 1992, we met with colleagues from North American indigenous communities, including Jeannette Armstrong (Okanagan) and Larry Emerson (Diné). The aim: to explore connections between our ideas – to Capra, the New Paradigm – and traditional Native philosophies. For days and nights we shared thinking on the role of community, the politics of sovereignty, the nature of the cosmos, etc. – with remarkable frequency, the Natives teaching us.

One of the shared ideas was that each creature, artifact, and inanimate object is made of energy; nothing is fixed, everything in transition. We agreed that linear time is a fantasy and that instead we exist in the presence of swirls and levels, multiplicities and synchronicities, suggesting a reality given to symbols, dreams, impenetrable mystery, chance, possibility. For us in Berkeley, the implications were spiritual and philosophical; we weren’t able to formulate applications to the collective task of achieving justice and liberation.

Our Jacques Ellul Society/Mega-technology Conferences (1989-1996) aimed to amplify ideas and strategies for action. Again, Mander and Capra. Also Theodore Rozsak, Vandana Shiva, Gustavo Esteva, etc. The ap-

One of the shared ideas was that each creature, artifact, and inanimate object is made of energy; nothing is fixed, everything in transition

BOOK REVIEW

At last – through centuries of changes and centuries of ideas about the changes – one glimpses a *dénouement* on the horizon

proach was systemic analysis, considering not just the immediate dangers of specific technologies but the functioning of mass techno-capitalist civilization as a whole. The content of our discussions is collected in the book *Turning Away from Technology* (1997): mega-technology and development; the relationship between government and promotion of new technologies; the ramifications of fragmentation and hyper-velocity; technological encasement and consciousness; etc. When computers and cellular telephones were disseminated to consumers (the saving grace of a declining Wall Street), the institute collapsed – to my mind, the victim of these new means of communicating and the disorientation that this produced among us; in the analysis of Kirkpatrick Sale, because “*We lost!*” In the end our contribution was neither education concerning this missing thread of analysis in our social-change movements nor tactics for political action; it was solidarity, a precious quality but not the expansive one we had hoped for.

We were not the only ones incapable of proposing a next step – and for good reason: technological upheaval was turning the world upside down.

Toward postmodernism

... a time in which nothing is what it seems and everything that appears is not. – P.S.

The postmodern environment was one of lightning-fast links and interlinks, actions and interactions on a screen; mediated reality; non-stop innovation; the fracturing of person from meaning, action from effect; enforced relativity of experience, ideas, and events; individualism-on-steroids; the speed-up of the clock and shrinking of space; hyper-reality based in scandal and spectacle – producing the tool of deconstruction, yes, but also solipsism, expectations of cyber-paradise, a dogma of extreme relativity, paralysis and resignation.

Susz’s exploration of this world’s way

of thinking illuminates its major points of criticism. It describes a fleeting reality without location in body, place, matrix, history, will; it affirms the de-contextualization of discourse; it encourages nihilism and narcissism; it is synonymous with neo-conservatism; etc. Frederic Jameson highlights another angle: all of postmodernism’s postulates are symptoms reflecting the experience of transnational globalization. He presents the notion, very much in line with a psychodynamic approach, that this stage has been necessary for illuminating capitalism’s masks.

Passive consumers, we

... the time we inhabit now seems the era of the revenge of the image... –P.S.

Para una filosofía de la insubordinación reads like a Paco Taibo detective novel: we sense that it is going towards something but we can’t imagine what that is – along the way creating a parallel universe of realizations in the reader. I haven’t felt such ecstasy while reading since I devoured the works of Lewis Mumford 30 years ago.

At last – through centuries of changes and centuries of ideas about the changes – one glimpses a *dénouement* on the horizon. With his early development of what Régis Debray has called “mediology,” Cornelius Castoriadis gives Susz the springboard he needs. Although Castoriadis’ declarations on the fissure between technological development and its lack of morality rings of a cost/benefit analysis that neutralizes censure, his insights into the effects of television-made remarkably early, in the 1970’s – is extraordinary: TV’s ability to perpetuate authority via imagery; its use to close off modern society from outside influences; loss of the collective/embodied agora in favor of a screen and the subsequent privatization of the individual; infantilizing of the viewer; wiping out of cultural memory; the mixing of fact with triviality until all becomes insignificant; perpetration of what Octavio Paz has

called “Complacent Nihilism”.

We are wedged, says Susz, between the media’s mega-conglomeration achieving a global uniformity of thought that would have made Hitler envious – as Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno warned in 1947, a union “of Nazism and the North American cultural industry” – and castration of the potential for resistance due to its relentless emphasis on consumerism, publicity, and entertainment. The subsequent “iconic overdose” “transforms the people (active political subjects) into the public (passive mass-media consumers).” Susz compares this “media labyrinth” with the myth of the Minotaur in which Minos traps the half-man/half-bull monster in a construction of impassable pathways – acting as dictator between people and reality; shaping ways of thinking, knowing, and feeling; drawing boundaries between what is admissible (Power) and what is not (in-subordination).

Castoriadis comes alive with his concept of “radical imagination” as the essential element for mustering trails out of the labyrinth toward socio-political change. He proposes an ontological leap toward cultures and institutions harvested from human heritage, and the scene is set for Susz’s imaginative ideas.

Electronic “Republik”

... the web, let's call it that, is constructed, woven, by a spider and, additionally, with a precise end in mind, to trap flies of the type the weaver eats. –P.S.

At last the theme of techno-manipulation of time and space arrives. I have been waiting for this with bated breath, believing it will be the Turning Point. But instead follows a chapter covering theories on the effects of television. Laino and her Piaget-inspired ideas on the mimicry of behaviors enacted on the screen. Postmodernists showing how TV promotes capitalist values of bourgeois consumerism. Etc. And then the computer.

Susz’s insights never fail to blow the mind, and the chapter “The Digital Labyrinth” is the diamond of his thinking. He launches his discussion with the observation that “nobody feels called to think about the consequences of arrival to market of the newest model of vacuum cleaner” and an investigation into the ideas of Zizek on the internet from a Marxist viewpoint.

Why is this medium so seductive? Because it echoes the established paradox of contemporary image-based culture, juxtaposing the myth of objective truth against subjective experience. Because it dares to rupture traditional social roles, for instance that adults know how to do things better than young people. And because, according to Zizek, the all-important image is available thanks to this inscrutable machine, and so it becomes as sacred as the image; also, for his skill with the keyboard, the user feels like God creating virtual reality – an ironic, Mobius Loop-like compensation for his isolation behind the screen.

But then there is the personal stress of sifting through messages from one’s 2000 “friends” and the infinite, unceasing multiplication of data, situations that Susz says produce a “new state of slavery.” There is the diminishment of the subject for lack of options offered by a controlled labyrinth telling one where to go and for lack of control over one’s own creations on the net. There is the conflict between the “freedom” of decentralization that the internet’s marketing touts and the standardization/centralization of thinking perpetrated through both cyberspace and mass media, which José Luis Sánchez Noriega calls its “ontological regime.” There is the propensity of empire to homogenize world cultures “inside the same commanding force characterized by consumerism and frivolity.”

And the unrequited promise of “digital democracy.” This rapidly becomes a myth in the context of a technology whose motive is to maintain power not just via penetration, surveillance, mining, manipulation, and

We are wedged, says Susz, between the media’s mega-conglomeration achieving a global uniformity of thought that would have made Hitler envious

BOOK REVIEW

I have learned, that differences in strategy can spring not from actual disagreement but from their positions in chronology.

influence, but through the very structure of its machination that offers “a territory seeded with multiple false options, inherited prejudices, and the fears of each user of power’s infiltration.” There are also the false promises of “capitalism without frictions,” of “the imaginary communities installed on the web, giving pabulum to the supposed crack in the media monopoly,” of the machine’s amazing memory – the “Cloud” that Susz describes as “the dungeon of collective memory loss,” which in reality is a system of factory-warehouses harboring thousands of computers devouring enough mega-watts to demand a new Hoover-size dam while vomiting toxic chemicals.

And finally, the tragic defeat of a direct relationship between the embodied subject and a world – suffering extinction of the biosphere, species, communities, cultures, wisdom – that pleads for help to save its millions-of-years of evolution.

Along the way, our author makes what he minimizes as a couple of “digressions.” In the first he presents what turns out to be an indispensable (and Jacques-Ellulian/Lewis-Mumfordian) clue: in order to comprehend the dynamics of Power, the necessity of investigating the correlation between the development of social organization and ideas with the history of technology. The second is a response to the first, covering themes of the onset of mass mechanization – such as the divorce between technical dissemination and morality; the rationalization that technology is neutral; parallels between social forms put in place to facilitate the industrial revolution and the role of media; the entanglement of technics with belief in utopia.

Dilemmas and desire

A titanic force is needed to recover the right to say NO... –P.S.

It can be no surprise that Susz identifies contemporary Power as the digital takeover. “Its weapons are not tanks, nor missiles,

nor neutrons,” José Pablo Feinmann concurs. “It’s television. Film. Journalism. Magazines. Radio. Cable channels. And most formidably, the Internet.” In his concluding chapter Susz applies his phenomenology of direct experience to what exists – these engines of consumerism and consciousness—with proposals for understanding and, with liberated software, using them better. After devouring such a stellar piece of work, I am suffering a letdown.

My focus lies on a different trajectory: roots and archetypes. Along with critique of mass techno-civilization, my spotlight is directed toward protecting/salvaging endangered qualities, forms, and practices that humans have developed for two million years. *Ergo*: I tend to see use of the cyber-technologies created to facilitate Power by transnational corporations, non-democratic governments, and the military as incongruous and yet another technological fix—not to mention the health threats posed by their dissemination of electromagnetic radiation. I have learned, though, that differences in strategy can spring not from actual disagreement but from their positions in chronology. And, of course, from the strength of diversity of personalities and perspectives. We stand face-to-face with a predicament that invades and threatens every facet of life. If we apply the insight of Diné medicine man Larry Emerson—the treatment for ills caused by empire is *the medicine created by empire*—might the very technologies created by mega-civilization carry potential to unravel its own dysfunction?

It is because of such factors that Susz’s conclusion presents, not a disappointment, but rather a challenge to widen my panorama.’

Dilemmas and Desire II

We don’t take note of reality just to register it, we do it to produce an effect... –P.S.

Another challenge arises. Still Susz does not cross into the world of the imagination. For

sure he has his suggestions on how to spark what Morris Berman has called “the re-enchantment of the world,” and with these he pulls no punches. Digital technology, he says, presents possibilities beyond modernism’s obsessive singularity and postmodernism’s excessive relativity; at the same time it echoes and supports the new forms of Power of techno-globalization.

He offers guiding principles garnered from quantum physics: 1) “... time and space are intuitive forms inseparable from consciousness;” 2) “scientific fact does not exist;” 3) we reside in a state of “not-knowing;” 4) “... each part is its own whole and, at the same time, part of a greater whole;” and 5) the radical imagination is stirred by silence and reflection. With these he launches his aikido, reclaiming/reforming the concepts of the *subject* and the *end of history* lost in the swirl of postmodernism – via the frameless, experiential, always-unfinished, virtual image – until individuals become vibrant participants in history again.

But where is his exposition based on quantum physics of a radical use of time/space toward collective liberation? Through hundreds of pages I have waited for the illumination of a quantum insubordination. But, as in *Buen vivir: Para una democracia de la Tierra* by Giuseppe de Marzo – which contains only *blank pages* – our author, in his own quantum way, leaves the invention of such ideas to the imagination of you and me...

Spring of questions

I focus...on a wide range of questions oriented toward mobilizing her/his own capacity for critique/reflection, that of the reader I mean... –P.S.

In supposing that Susz would offer up new modes of launching rebellion, have I myself been complacent? I admit I don’t know how to proceed in a way that doesn’t repeat the same old political conundrums, that are not

merely expressions of contemporary philosophies... but are *effective*.

How might we change the current obsession with time? Like a Tibetan Buddhist with her demons and deities, meditate on the forces of destruction, the quality of courage, and proud rebels of the past? Instead of shopping or aimlessly surfing the web, get together with our comrades to *make* history? Like a Luddite with his hammer, sever/scramble the sources of operation of the media, their satellite dishes, wireless antennas, and computer programs? Re-take art/craft via the traditions/visions of artists and land-based people? Participate in Slow Food and Slow Money? What would Slow Media look like? Slow Technology? In our meetings of the Jacques Ellul Society, we made a list of questions for judging technologies –for instance, what are its effects on the health of planet and person? Does it preserve or destroy biodiversity? Serve community? Produce equality – or concentrate power? Who does it benefit? How does it affect perception of our needs? Does it reduce, deaden, or enhance human creativity?

And what of the usurpation of space by the forces of Power? Might we re-dream dignity via the reuniting of mind with body, of human with nature? Launch movements without solo leaders, but with everyone equal and participating? Reflecting the Mariposa Effect, acknowledge that each radical provocation and each creation of sanctuary ricochets to all, thereby multiplying actions like springtime waterfalls? Inspired by India’s Salt Marchers and today’s cyber-whistleblowers, reject the construction of destructive public works like giant dams, oil pipelines, industrial-size mines, and towers spreading electromagnetic radiation? Join indigenous and secession movements seeking human-scale self-determination? Reclaim places “owned” by Power–farms, buildings, parks, factories, websites, ideas, interpretation – as do the hacienda-claimers in Brazil, the squatters of London, neighbors creating community gardens, hacker-jour-

Our author, in his own quantum way, leaves the invention of such ideas to the imagination of you and me...

BOOK REVIEW

After reading the book, it will be impossible to travel the labyrinths/streets/airways/television/newspapers/internet without a consciousness sorely sensitized and disquieted – but also animated

nalists divulging Power's manipulations? Margara Millan proposes that we think of cities – constructed for the circulation of capital and machines – as “spaces in dispute”; we resist the separation between city and country by defending parks, planting seeds in every crack and plot, and farming public spaces; that we challenge the velocity of time by amplifying spaces for walkers and bicycles.

Perhaps the task would require the perception of a shaman balanced between the nature of the cosmos and the laws of this world? Perhaps the result would be a politic like that of the Zapatistas – with its phenomenological confrontation in every moment (Now) in every place (Here)? With its vision of Mexico as a net of horizontal communities and its reconstruction of ancient/horizontal modes of self-government *incaracoles* / “snail shells”? With its dedication to land-based sustainability and celebration of the purity of a “future primitive”? With its Buddhist-like mindfulness and patience?

I am reminded of a conversation I had with a Keres man from Laguna Pueblo/New Mexico who had been elected his village's representative to the tribal council. Sitting on low-slung lawn chairs beneath an August full moon, Stan Lucero told me that his was the only village not using rational discussion; rather the elders consulted the spirits to determine how to vote; his job was merely to attend the council meeting to register the choice. I was brimming with envy when he turned to me. “You are fortunate,” he said. “I am bound by tradition. *You get to create the new ways.*”

Thinking as if liberation is possible

... a perception that places in each of us the capacity, the tendency, to say 'no' and to imagine that another reality is possible...
–P.S.

While *Para una filosofa de la insubordinacion* doesn't conclude with the concrete suggestions toward a quantum politic I was hoping for, while its dynamism does not achieve a grand *denouement*, the book is something else. It's a *tour d'force* of analysis of historical philosophies, presenting one particularly radiant idea: the thoughts

emerging or of interest in these times – quantum physics, ecological biology, interculturalism, Buddhism, etc. – contain the potential to shape our ideas about freedom and how we might pursue it. One thing is certain: after reading the book, it will be impossible to travel the labyrinths/streets/airways/television/newspapers/internet without a consciousness

sorely sensitized and disquieted – but also animated. Like the Zapatistas, Susz implants the idea that we begin with What Is and, with the passion of a diamond flashing light, apply a radical imagination toward a future we cannot begin to guess. **CT**

Chellis Glendinning is the author of seven books, including “When Technology Wounds”, “Off the Map: An Expedition Deep into Empire and the Global Economy” and “Chiva: A Village Takes on the Global Heroin Trade”. She may be contacted via www.chellisglendinning.org. This review was originally published at <http://counterpunch.org>

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It's what they do for a living

William Blum on America's lust for revolution

When it gets complicated and confusing, when you're overwhelmed with too much information, changing daily; too many explanations, some contradictory ... try putting it into some kind of context by stepping back and looking at the larger, long-term picture.

The United States strives for world domination, hegemony wherever possible, their main occupation for over a century, it's what they do for a living.

The United States, NATO and the European Union form The Holy Triumvirate. The Holy Triumvirate has subsidiaries, chiefly The International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization, International Criminal Court ... all help to keep in line those governments lacking the Holy Triumvirate Seal Of Approval: the IMF, WB, and WTO impose market fundamentalism, while foreign leaders who act too independent are threatened with being handed over to the ICC for heavy punishment, as the United States imposes sanctions on governments and their leaders as only the King of Sanctions can, lacking any sense of hypocrisy or irony.

And who threatens United States domination? Who can challenge The Holy Triumvirate's hegemony? Only Russia and China, if they were as imperialistic as the Western powers. (No, the Soviet Union wasn't impe-

rialistic; that was self-defense; Eastern Europe was a highway twice used by the West to invade; tens of millions of Russians killed or wounded.)

Since the end of the Cold War the United States has been surrounding Russia, building one base after another, ceaselessly looking for new ones, including in Ukraine; one missile site after another, with Moscow in range; NATO has grabbed one former Soviet Republic after another.

The White House, and the unquestioning American mainstream media, have assured us that such operations have nothing to do with Russia. And Russia has been told the same, much to Moscow's continuous skepticism. "Look," said Russian president Vladimir Putin about NATO some years ago, "is this is a military organization? Yes, it's military. ... Is it moving towards our border? It's moving towards our border. Why?"

The Holy Triumvirate would love to rip Ukraine from the Moscow bosom, evict the Russian Black Sea Fleet, and establish a US military and/or NATO presence on Russia's border. (In case you were wondering what prompted the Russian military action.) Kiev's membership in the EU would then not be far off; after which the country could embrace the joys of neo-conservatism, receiving the benefits of the standard privatization-deregulation-austerity package and join Portugal, Ireland, Greece, and Spain as

The Holy Triumvirate would love to rip Ukraine from the Moscow bosom, evict the Russian Black Sea Fleet, and establish a US military and/or NATO presence on Russia's border

ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

The irregular hollered and the giant hurled the weapon which vibrated through the air and entered the irregular's back below the shoulder blade and emerged clean through the front of his jacket

an impoverished orphan of the family; but no price is too great to pay to for being part of glorious Europe and the West!

The Ukrainian insurgents and their Western-power supporters didn't care who their Ukrainian allies were in carrying out their coup against President Viktor Yanukovich last month ... thugs who set policemen on fire head to toe ... all manner of extreme right-wingers, including Chechnyan Islamic militants ... a deputy of the ultra-right Svoboda Party, part of the new government, who threatens to rebuild Ukraine's nukes in three to six months. ... the snipers firing on the protestors who apparently were not what they appeared to be – a bugged phone conversation between Urmas Paet, the Estonian foreign minister, and EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, reveals Paet saying: “There is now stronger and stronger understanding that behind the snipers it was not Yanukovich, but it was somebody from the new coalition.” ... neo-Nazi protestors in Kiev who have openly denounced Jews, hoisting a banner honoring Stepan Bandera, the infamous Ukrainian nationalist who collaborated with the German Nazis during World War II and whose militias participated in atrocities against Jews and Poles.

The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported on February 24 that Ukrainian Rabbi Moshe Reuven Azman advised “Kiev's Jews to leave the city and even the country.” Edward Dolinsky, head of an umbrella organization of Ukrainian Jews, described the situation for Ukrainian Jews as “dire” and requested Israel's help.

All in all a questionable gang of allies for a dubious cause; reminiscent of the Kosovo Liberation Army thugs Washington put into power for an earlier regime change, and has kept in power since 1999.

The now-famous recorded phone conversation between top US State Department official Victoria Nuland and the US ambassador to the Ukraine, wherein they discuss which Ukrainians would be to Washington's

liking in a new government, and which not, is an example of this regime-change mentality. Nuland's choice, Arseniy Yatseniuk, emerged as interim prime minister.

The National Endowment for Democracy, an agency created by the Reagan administration in 1983 to promote political action and psychological warfare against states not in love with US foreign policy, is Washington's foremost non-military tool for effecting regime change. The NED website lists 65 projects that it has supported financially in recent years in Ukraine. The descriptions NED gives to the projects don't reveal the fact that generally their programs impart the basic philosophy that working people and other citizens are best served under a system of free enterprise, class cooperation, collective bargaining, minimal government intervention in the economy, and opposition to socialism in any shape or form. A free-market economy is equated with democracy, reform, and growth; and the merits of foreign investment in their economy are emphasized.

The idea was that the NED would do somewhat overtly what the CIA had been doing covertly for decades, and thus, hopefully, eliminate the stigma associated with CIA covert activities. Allen Weinstein, who helped draft the legislation establishing NED, declared in 1991: “A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA.”

NED, receives virtually all its financing from the US government (\$5 billion in total since 1991), but it likes to refer to itself as an NGO (Non-governmental organization) because this helps to maintain a certain credibility abroad that an official US government agency might not have.

But NGO is the wrong category. NED is a GO. Its long-time intervention in Ukraine is as supra-legal as the Russian military deployment there. Journalist Robert Parry has observed:

“For NED and American neocons, Yanukovich's electoral legitimacy lasted only

as long as he accepted European demands for new “trade agreements” and stern economic “reforms” required by the International Monetary Fund. When Yanukovich was negotiating those pacts, he won praise, but when he judged the price too high for Ukraine and opted for a more generous deal from Russia, he immediately became a target for “regime change.”

“Thus, we have to ask, as Mr. Putin asked – “Why?” Why has NED been funding 65 projects in one foreign country? Why were Washington officials grooming a replacement for President Yanukovich, legally and democratically elected in 2010, who, in the face of protests, moved elections up so he could have been voted out of office – not thrown out by a mob? Yanukovich made repeated important concessions, including amnesty for those arrested and offering, on January 25, to make two of his adversaries prime minister and deputy prime minister; all to no avail; key elements of the protesters, and those behind them, wanted their putsch.”

Carl Gershman, president of NED, wrote last September that “Ukraine is the biggest prize”. The man knows whereof he speaks. He has presided over NED since its beginning, overseeing the Rose Revolution in Georgia (2003), the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004), the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon (2005), the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan (2005), the Green Revolution in Iran (2009), and now Ukraine once again. It’s as if the Cold War never ended.

The current unbridled animosity of the American media toward Putin also reflects an old practice. The United States is so accustomed to world leaders holding their tongue and not voicing criticism of Washington’s policies appropriate to the criminality of those policies, that when a Vladimir Putin comes along and expresses even a relatively mild condemnation he is labeled Public Enemy Number One and his words are accordingly ridiculed or ignored.

On March 2 US Secretary of State John

Kerry condemned Russia’s “incredible act of aggression” in Ukraine (Crimea) and threatened economic sanctions. “You just don’t in the 21st century behave in 19th century fashion by invading another country on completely trumped up pre-text.”

Iraq was in the 21st century. Senator John Kerry voted for it. Hypocrisy of this magnitude has to be respected.

Love among nations

by Viktor Dedaj, Paris, France

Washington’s response, or lack of it, has confirmed the authenticity of a YouTube clip of a leaked telephone conversation between US Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and US Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt that emerged February 6. In the call, posted by an anonymous Russian source, Nuland and Pyatt discuss installing a new, pro-US government that will incorporate the fascist opposition which had been leading street protests against Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich. Even though Washington’s campaign for regime-change had been coordinated with the European Union, in the phone conversation with Pyatt, Nuland attacks the EU for being insufficiently aggressive, saying at one point, “Fuck the EU.” The same source has provided us with the text of a subsequent conversation between the EU and the US.

EU: But you said you loved me!

US: (sigh) There you go again.

EU: I left everything behind for you. Democracy, market regulations, state-owned companies, social welfare, an independent foreign policy.

US: (lighting a cigarette): pffff... Nobody forced you.

EU: I could have been an international star, you know?

US: Yeah, yeah, blah, blah ...

EU: The whole world had hope in me! Now it’s that slut, Latin America, who’s showing off with her crummy progressive policies.

US: Oh that one ... She was a hotty. I must admit it was fun at the time. But it’s over (for the time being). Now, you’re my bitch.

Those who flee them will be overtaken and have their throats slit. Any who escape will be hunted and eaten by wild beasts. And should a deserter survive these adventures and return, I will hang him

ANTI-EMPIRE REPORT

He steadied his breathing and settled the sights and a silence fell among those watching. The kid squeezed steady on the trigger and the cattle bellowed at the sound of the shot

EU: (sniffing): Seriously? You're not joking?

US: You are, you're my little bitch. Come here.

EU: Are you going to hit me?

US: What? Of course not! What's wrong with you?

EU: Latin America ... She says you're arrogant, and violent. She says that you have no friends, only interests.

US: She's crazy. Forget her. C'mon, come here my little bitch.

EU: Oh Sam ... Sam ...

A question re: Syria

There have been numerous news stories about Syrian government bombing of its civilian areas, with reports of many dead, and photos and videos of heavily damaged buildings. The source of the stories I've come across, when it's mentioned at all, is almost always some element of the "rebels"; i.e., those opposing the Syrian government.

In all these stories – Have you ever seen a photo or a video of a plane dropping bombs? Or of the bombs in the air? I'm not saying that the bombings have not taken place. I'm just wondering why there is no graphic evidence of them.

Dialogue with readers

Last month's report evoked an unusually large number of critical responses, concerning two basic issues:

1) My questioning the widely-held belief that if John F. Kennedy had not been assassinated he would have ended US military involvement in Vietnam. Those who wrote to me are convinced that in a second term as president, without the need to worry about re-election, the genuine liberal and man of peace residing inside JFK would have been free to blossom, and he would quickly have put an end to a war that he supposedly abhorred.

I had written in the report: "It appears that we'll never know with any kind of certainty what would have happened if

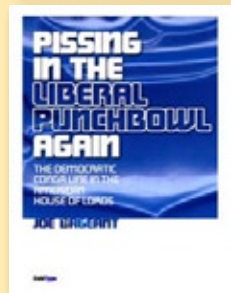
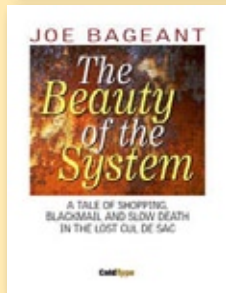
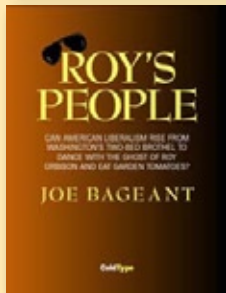
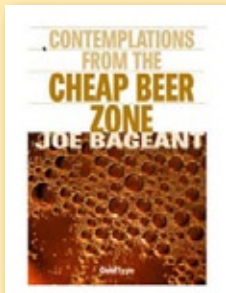
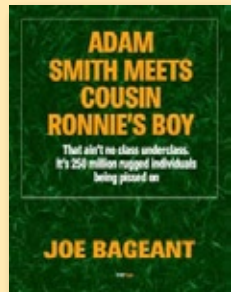
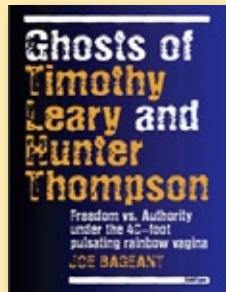
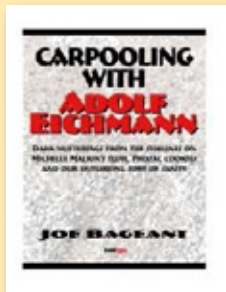
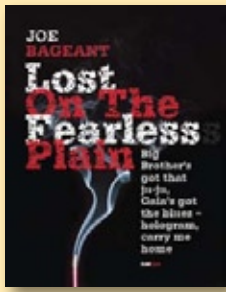
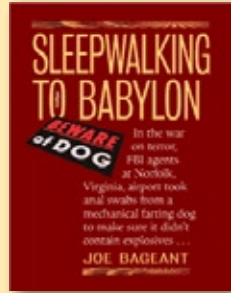
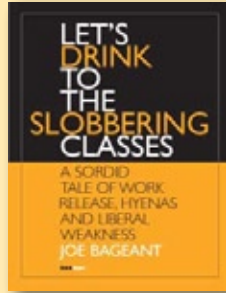
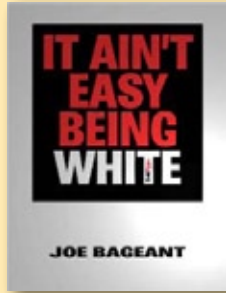
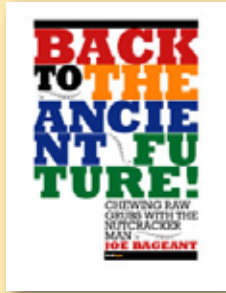
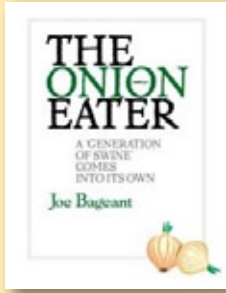
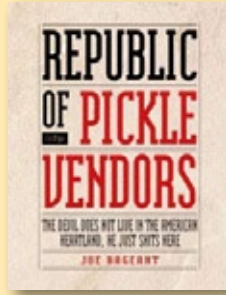
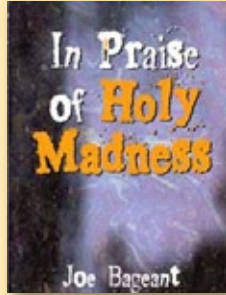
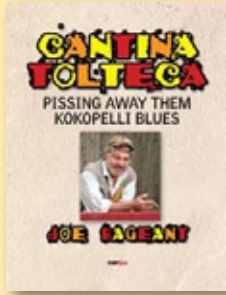
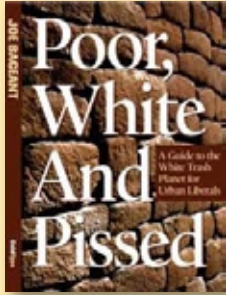
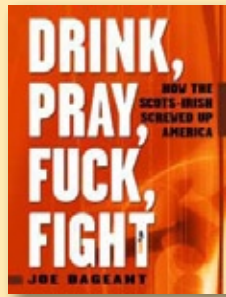
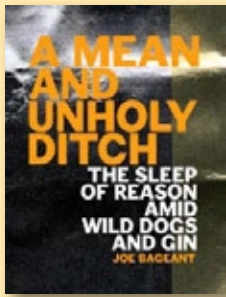
JFK had not been assassinated, but I still go by his Cold War record in concluding that US foreign policy would have continued along its imperial, anti-communist path."

As I read letter after letter challenging this assertion, the thought occurred to me: This is just what we heard for four years concerning Barack Obama – In his second term the genuine liberal and man of peace would emerge; the Nobel Peace Laureate would show why he deserved the prize. Well, do I need to go into the awful details of the man's second term, from drone assassinations to relentless persecution of whistleblowers who question his foreign policy?

2) I suggested a possible solution to the international problem of suicide bombers: Go to the very source. Flood selected Islamic societies with this message: "There is no heavenly reward for dying a martyr. There are no 72 beautiful virgins waiting to reward you for giving your life for jihad. No virgins at all. No sex at all."

I was informed by reader after reader that the whole thing about virgins is a myth. That may very well be the case, but as I pointed out to them, I was using the story metaphorically, to describe killing and dying for a religious cause, then counterposing US military men killing and dying for a "religious" cause called patriotism, nationalism or American exceptionalism. Both "causes", Islamic and American, need to be unlearned. That was my point. There's no excuse for setting off a powerful bomb in a crowded restaurant nor for dropping a powerful bomb in a residential area. **CT**

William Blum is the author of "Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II", "Rogue State: a guide to the World's Only Super Power," "West-Bloc Dissident: a Cold War Political Memoir," and "America's Deadliest Export – Democracy: The Truth About US Foreign Policy and Everything Else"



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