

THE MAN FROM CAGE ELEVEN | SÉAN MAG UIDHIR  
WHO ISN'T A FOREIGN AGENT? | JUSTIN RAIMONDO  
UNDERMINING AFRICA | YVES ENGLER

# ColdType

Issue 150

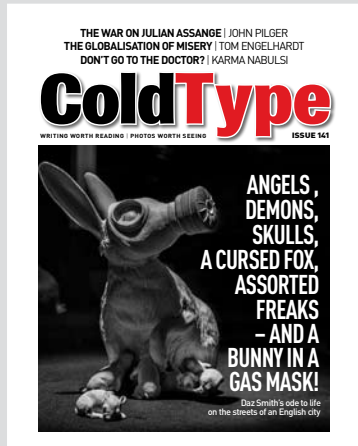
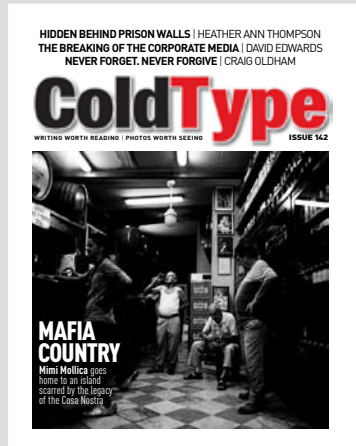
BULLSHIT,  
LIES, AND  
A FEW  
MOMENTS  
OF HONESTY



BRAZEN. BIZARRE. BARBARIC. BRIAN MITCHELL GATHERS THE COLLECTED WISDOM OF RECENT LEADERS OF THE 'FREE' WORLD

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# The Man from Cage Eleven

**Gerry Adams** announced last month that he would step down after 35 years as president of Ireland's Sinn Féin. Jailed by the British during the 1970s, he played a key role in the Good Friday Agreement that led to the disarming of the IRA and power-sharing in the north of Ireland. **Sean Mag Uidhir**, who was with Adams in Long Kesh prison, details the Sinn Féin leader's turbulent political journey

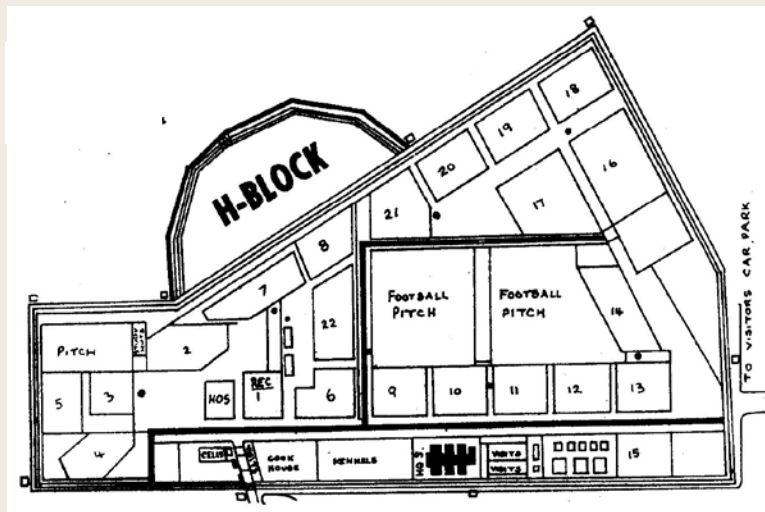
I first met Gerry Adams in 1976 when, at 19, I travelled the well-worn path from Belfast's Crumlin Road courthouse to Cage Eleven of the British government's Long Kesh prison, which held both internees and convicted prisoners with political status. In the final stages of a five-year sentence for attempting to escape from detention, Adams was already a key member of the Republican leadership: with Martin McGuinness, he had been in a delegation that had flown to London to meet British Secretary of State William Whitelaw during the truce between the IRA and the British in 1972. Ironically, the British had released him from internment to take part in those talks.

During debates and meetings in Cage Eleven, Adams confirmed his opposition to the apartheid-like discrimination and inequality that characterised the state in the north of Ireland, which was then run by

the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), in tandem with the British government. He also opposed religious sectarianism and feuding between competing IRA groups. Adams wanted Sinn Féin to become more relevant to the day-to-day struggles of workers, women, the low-paid, the unemployed, and the voiceless.

After being released from Long Kesh in 1977, Adams continued to support the IRA's armed campaign against the British state while, as Jimmy Drumm pointed out in a speech at Bodinstown that same year, acknowledging the need to establish an "irrepressible mass movement (that) will ensure support for the continuing armed struggle."

Charged with being a member of the IRA in February 1978, Adams was held in Crumlin Road jail and the H-Blocks of Long Kesh. When the case against him collapsed, he led a reorganisation of the Sinn Féin Prisoner of War department, forming a committee to handle the complaints of hundreds of Republicans who, as they were political prisoners, refused to wear prison uniforms and wore blankets in protest. They were locked up for 24 hours a day and subjected to a system of routine brutality, their plight worsening after starting a No Wash protest in March 1978 following warders' attacks on them as they went to the bathrooms.



Long Kesh, Spring 1977. The 'Cages' or 'Compounds' as they were officially known, contained only sentenced prisoners.



**Gerry Adams tells delegates at last month's Sinn Féin annual conference in Dublin that he will step down from his position as party president next year. He also said he would not be standing for re-election to the Irish parliament.** Photo: Jim Corr

Adams was also instrumental in the formation of the National H-Block Armagh Committee, a coalition that supported the prisoners' demands for:

1. political recognition;
2. the right to wear their own clothes;
3. the right not to do prison work;
4. the right to visits, parcels and letters; the right to organise educational and recreational activities; and
5. the right to free association.

Support for these demands was denied by the British government during the following two years, after which the prisoners began a hunger strike in October 1980. The strike ended two months later when Brendan

Hughes, the prisoners' leader, intervened to save the life of Sean McKenna. The British government, however, immediately reneged on commitments it had made in a document given to Adams and others who were assisting the prisoners.

Bobby Sands, then OC of the protesting prisoners, tried to persuade the prison authorities to resolve the difficulties, but when this failed, he began a hunger strike on March 1, 1981. Other prisoners joined this strike, which ended on October 3 after ten of the hunger strikers had died. The sacrifices of Sands, Francis Hughes, Ray McCreech, Patsy O'Hara, Joe McDonnell, Martin Hurson, Kevin Lynch, Kieran Doherty, Tom McElwee and

***Demands for the rights of political prisoners was thwarted by the British government during the next two years, after which the prisoners began a hunger strike in October 1980***



**Gerry Adams and Tom Hartley carry the coffin of Bobby Sands, who died on hunger-strike on May 5, 1981.**

***Adams and his colleagues Sean Keenan, Kevin Rooney and Joe Keenan were shot and wounded by a UDA gang, while travelling from a Belfast courthouse***

Mickey Devine were not in vain, however, for their action saw mass mobilisation in Ireland, Britain and in the US in support of the prisoners' demands. More than 100,000 people attended the funeral for Sands, who had been elected British parliamentary MP for Fermanagh South Tyrone in April, while on hunger strike. Four months later, his election agent, Sinn Féin's Owen Carron, was elected MP for Fermanagh South Tyrone.

In June 1981, Kieran Doherty and blanket prisoner Paddy Agnew were elected TDs in an election in the Irish republic, while a number of anti-H Block Armagh candidates were elected to councils in the north. Former Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) leader Gerry Fitt, the MP for West Belfast, lost his seat on Belfast city council after getting only 500 votes. The courage of the hunger strikers and the election results smashed the British policy of criminalisation, and Margaret Thatcher's government reluctantly gave de facto political prisoner status to detainees.

The 1981 Sinn Féin annual conference

that followed, endorsed calls by Adams, Martin McGuinness and Danny Morrison for an end to Sinn Féin's boycott of elections in the north. The following year's Assembly elections saw Adams, Danny Morrison, Martin McGuinness, Jim McAllister and Owen Carron elected on an abstentionist basis, while Adams was elected MP for West Belfast in 1983. That year he was also elected president of Sinn Féin, having been joint vice president since 1979.

In March 1984, Adams and his colleagues Sean Keenan, Kevin Rooney and Joe Keenan were shot and wounded by a UDA gang, while travelling from a Belfast courthouse. There were strong suspicions of collusion in this murder attempt as British soldiers were monitoring Adams and immediately arrested the UDA gang after the attack.

Adams retained the West Belfast seat in May 1987, and Sinn Féin published its Scenario for Peace document, which sought "to cre-

ate conditions which will lead to a permanent cessation of hostilities, an end to the long war and the development of a peaceful, united and independent Irish society.”

The next British counter-strategy to the development of Sinn Féin had already been test driven in the south, where the Irish government had banned Sinn Féin representatives from being heard over the airwaves in 1971 under Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act. The British government introduced a ban in 1988 preventing Sinn Féin’s elected representatives from being heard on British TV and radio. Despite being elected as a British MP, Adams’ words could only be heard on TV or radio when read by an actor.

This broadcasting ban coincided with an increase in gun, bomb and rocket attacks on Sinn Féin party offices and activists, and the intensification of attacks on nationalist civilians by loyalist death squads, which had been re-armed by the British intelligence services. At least 120 people were killed by loyalist death squads using weapons imported from South Africa with the assistance of agents of British military intelligence.

Political engagement with the SDLP floundered late in 1988, despite more secret meetings between Sinn Féin and the British government. In 1992, Sinn Féin proposed that the conflict could be brought to an end in its document *Towards a Lasting Peace*: “A peace process, leading to a lasting peace, must address the root causes of the conflict. A genuine and sustainable peace process must be grounded on democracy and self-determination.” The document also called on the Dublin government to act: “A Dublin strategy for peace must involve persuading the British that partition is a failure; the unionists that reunification would benefit them; the international community to support Irish national rights.”

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In 1993, Gerry Adams and John Hume published their proposals for ending conflict and establishing a path to Irish unity and national self determination. The govern-



Gerry Adams speaks at an anti-census rally on April 5, 1981.

ments responded with the Downing Street Declaration. Contacts between Adams and Hume, along with meetings with the British and Irish government, led to the IRA ceasefire of 1994. That ceasefire broke down in February 1996, with resumed hostilities continuing until July 1997, when the election of Tony Blair in Britain and Bertie Ahern in the south of Ireland paved the way for the Good Friday Agreement, which set up a power sharing administration in the north. The agreement provided for all-Ireland bodies, a referendum on Irish unity, the release of all political prisoners within two years, and reform of the justice system and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC).

Sinn Féin gained 18 MLAs in the first Northern Ireland Assembly election, although the institution, collapsed, as resistance to the Good Friday Agreement grew within David Trimble’s Ulster Unionist Party. Then, in April 2005, Adams called on the IRA to accept a democratic alternative to their armed struggle. The IRA responded three months later: “The leadership of Oglai na hEireann has formally ordered an end to the armed campaign. This will take effect from 4pm this afternoon. All IRA units have been instructed to assist the development of

***“The leadership of Oglai na hEireann has formally ordered an end to the armed campaign. This will take effect from 4pm this afternoon. All IRA units have been ordered to dump arms”***

## A Political Life

Photo © Belfast Media Group



**Bobby Storey, Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams carry the coffin at the funeral of republican activist Harry Thompson in February 2012.**

***“As the leader of Sinn Féin, in this time of crisis in our country, I am making a stand with this initiative – a stand for a better, fairer, united Ireland”***

.....  
**Sean Mag Uidhir,**  
*former editor of the North Belfast News, was a political prisoner during the Irish Troubles. He is now head of Sinn Féin publicity in the Six Counties of the north of Ireland.*

purely political and democratic programmes through exclusively peaceful means.”

In 2006, Sinn Féin engaged in talks with the two governments and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), and the St Andrew’s Agreement paved the way for the restoration of the political institutions in the north after a five-year hiatus. Sinn Féin took 28 seats in the election which followed, after which Adams nominated Martin McGuinness as Deputy First Minister.

In November 2010, Adams announced he would stand down from his West Belfast seat as Westminster MP and resign from the Assembly to stand for election to the government of the Irish republic as candidate for County Louth in the next general election. “As the leader of Sinn Féin in this time of crisis in our country,” he said, “I am making a stand with this initiative – a stand for a better, fairer, united Ireland. I believe that things can be turned around. That there is a better way.”

In another dramatic twist, he urged Martin McGuinness to run for presidency of the Irish republic later that year. McGuinness collected 243,000 votes in that election, more than 13 per cent of the vote, and took the Sinn Féin message the length and breadth of the state.

That combined with the election of a team of new Sinn Féin TDs paved the way for the election of four Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), one in each province of the national territory, in 2014, with almost half a million votes across the island.

Adams led Sinn Féin into another election in 2016, the party ending up with 23 Teachta Dála (members of the Irish parliament), and seven members of the upper house, the Seanadóirí. And he played a leading role over the last year in attempting to restore the Assembly in Belfast, which had collapsed when Martin McGuinness resigned as Deputy First Minister after the DUP failed to deal with a financial scandal and refused to introduce legislation on marriage equality, language rights, a bill of rights and the right to an inquest in legacy cases, a right enjoyed by citizens elsewhere in Britain.

McGuinness died in March this year after a short illness. At the graveside, Adams said his old friend “will continue to inspire and encourage us in the time ahead. Martin believed that a better Ireland, a genuinely new Ireland is possible.”

In February 1977, Gerry Adams set off on a long journey from Cage Eleven to transform Sinn Féin into a relevant all-Ireland political party capable of creating a country of equals. With more than half-a-million votes, 27 MLAs, 23 TDs, almost 250 councillors, seven MPs, seven Seanadóirí and four MEPs representing everyone in Ireland, a new strong all-Ireland collective leadership and a party now looking to go into government north and south, his work is almost done.

Summing up his party’s achievements at this year’s annual conference where he announced that he would step down as Sinn Féin president next year, he declared “We have recast Sinn Féin into an effective all-Ireland republican party, with clear policy and political objectives, and the means to achieve them through democratic and peaceful forms of struggle where none existed before.”

**CT**



# Moles

While in Long Kesh, **Gerry Adams** wrote regular columns for the newspaper *Republican News* which were later republished in his book, **Cage Eleven**. This excerpt is his story of a failed attempt to tunnel his way to freedom

The Derry Wans were talking about Derry. About the Bog, the Creggan and Shantallow. Your Man beside me smirked and burst into a chorus of “Danny Boy” as he slid down off the roof where we had been taking our ease and more than our share of sunshine.

I pull myself to my feet and gaze around at Long Kesh. Cage upon cage stretch away in every direction. Black tarred roofs and grey metallic ones; black roofs where new cages have replaced those burnt out and grey ones where work has yet to begin. Away to my right the motorway shimmers in the bright sunshine, and behind it green fields climb backwards to meet the horizon. The odd farmhouse dots the landscape and a whitewashed church sits comfortably between us and the motorway. The British army posts frown down on us, and nearer at hand, screws’ watchtowers roast in the heat. Cars and lorries whiz up and down the M1. Two new Brit posts monitor the open ground between the perimeter fence and the motorway itself. That’s where Hugh Coney was shot. Out there, between us and them; between Long Kesh and freedom; between motorway and concentration camp.

Did you ever dig a tunnel? Down into a shaft. A makeshift trapdoor overhead and then in. In, into clay and gravel and rocks and water, everywhere seeping water, and the pitch blackness and bad nerves making bad air taste worse.

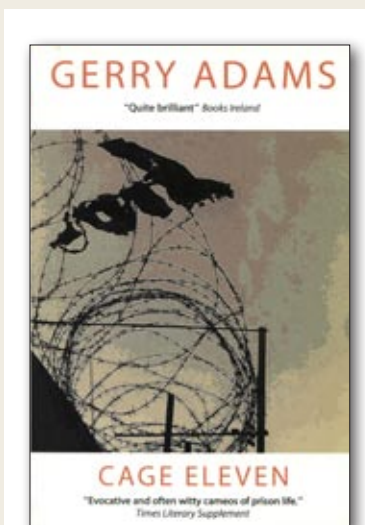
“A good trap’s the thing,” say the experts. “You must have a good trapdoor or you’re lost.”

We lost quite a few times, but then we were only amateurs. Cage Five was the place for tunnels. They

had them everywhere, but one by one they were discovered. Screws fell down them while patrolling the yard, tunnels collapsed and men were dragged back from clutching clay and clinging gravel. They used to call Cage Five “the Moles.” Other cages had tunnels, too, of course, where internees and sentenced men worked hard towards perimeter fences and freedom. But up in Cage Five, nearer the fences, bidders rarely stopped push, push, pushing, and soon below ground the cage must have been a maze of half-finished tunnels.

Hugh was shot coming out of a tunnel. You don’t hear much about it now and it’s not even a year yet. Just after the fire it was. There were tunnels in Cages Four, Two and Five, and only for the distance they would have been going in all the cages. But Cage Two’s collapsed and then Cage Four’s. They filled the shafts in again so the screws wouldn’t find them. Hard work, after digging muck out, to have to put it back again, but nobody complained. It had to be done because loose talk being loose talk, everyone knew that Cage Five must still be going.

These were pretty good days. All around us Long Kesh lay razed to the ground. Everyone sprouting beards and everyone and everything bogging with dirt. Paddy the Lad, rummaging through twisted timbers and finding souvenirs for all who wanted them. Men sleeping in the open or, like the most of us, in makeshift huts and shelters. Sing-songs at night and concerts. Paddy B. singing “Mule Train” and “The Music Man.” I wet myself one night listening to him singing “The Music Man.” And big Dominic and Billy R. conduct-



## CAGE ELEVEN

Gerry Adams

Brandon Publishing,  
Available at Amazon

## Book Excerpt

ing campfire style sing-alongs.

No visits, no parcels and few letters getting out, but up in Cage Five digging, digging, digging. I wasn't there myself, but the stories came back. Stories of flooding and collapsing, of no shoring and "bad air." Of "It's stopped, it's finished," and then: "It's started again! I wonder will they make it? We're bound to get a raid some day now, you know. It must be tight by this time." And it was, part of it under water and long twists in it to avoid obstacles, and the air must have been stinking.

We didn't know it was through until we heard the shooting. Out there it was, away to the right, between us and the M1 Between Long Kesh and freedom. We were just walking around our cage when the self-loading rifle spat out its message. We stopped for an instant. "It must be Cage Five. They've shot somebody. Head for Cage Four. Mess up the head count. Move!"

Then the long night. After the first charge which took us through the wire and over into Cage Four; after the stomach-wrenching CR gas; after the doubt, the uncertainty and the rumours; after all the digging and toiling. After everything.

"One man has been shot dead in Long Kesh." The half-seven news with its impersonal message, the message from outside brought into us on a transistor radio. "This is the end of this news bulletin."

One dead. A Brit soldier dispensing justice from the muzzle of his SLR. Lying out between us and freedom, weapon cocked, safety off, waiting for us. One POW dead or dying. Long Kesh in the news again. Hugh Conney, IRA volunteer and internee, shot dead. Out there, away to my right.

Out there close to the motorway that he was trying to reach. Out there where the cars and lorries whiz up and down the M1, past the whitewashed church, past Long Kesh, past Cage Five, past reality.

I lie back on the roof and gaze skywards. That's the only way to get a long-distance look in Long Kesh. All the horizons here are artificial, barbed-wire ones. You can't see any distance at all, except skywards. So I gaze at the distant sky and think of other escape efforts.

The tunnel from Cage Seven was inching its way towards the perimeter fence. It headed, at a worm's pace, towards the area where the H-Blocks now stand; by big Ned's reckoning it was eighty-foot long. In Cage Eight a shorter tunnel was started in the grass verge. It only had to cover thirty-odd feet, but as it was being worked

in the open, right under the screws' noses, progress was much slower. In Cage Twenty-Two as well a shaft was sunk, and the men began to edge along underground in an effort to join with the others.

Digging tunnels isn't much craic. In fact it's scary, because even in summer it's difficult to stay above the water level. Dry digging is impossible, and constant seepage makes sudden shifts in the ground inevitable. Even the shoring is unreliable and prone to collapse at the slightest touch. The water seeps in everywhere because Long Kesh is built on a bog.

The name itself comes from Ceis Fhada which translates from Gaelic as "the long ditch" or "basket." Even the new Brit term, the Maze, comes from the Irish An Má - the plain. Methinks it should have been called An tUisce - the water. At any rate, for all these reasons, I've always avoided going down tunnels. I was perfectly willing to bale out water, hide dirt, wash clothes, clean up, cut shoring, make tools or keep watch. I was even prepared to undertake the awesome job of digging through two feet of concrete floor with only the most basic of home-made chisels. Anything as long as I didn't actually have to go up the tunnel. And, anyway, I was no good at digging.

None of this made any difference, of course, because orders is orders. They say you can ask questions afterwards.

Afterwards?

So there I was, feeling foolish in a pair of shorts, letting on to be indifferent to the death that surely awaited me. Joking casually to Your Man. There was no way out of it.

Your Man went down first, disappearing slowly as the shaft swallowed him up. I followed reluctantly, feet first. Things got a bit tight when I was waist-deep in the floor. There wasn't enough room to get my arms through, so I forced my body into position forty-four (yoga, of course) and then down I slid.

There were two inches of water at the base of the shaft, cold water which lapped in little waves around my ankles. The tunnel mouth was only two feet square, and as I hunkered down I could see it narrowing as bags of returned dirt bellied their way out from the sides. Your Man's feet, toe-deep in silt, glared back at me as I resignedly began my journey.

We were soon hard at work. Slow, tortuous work. He scraped at the face with a makeshift shovel and I lay on his legs, holding him steady, doing my best to minimise

movement. Wishing I were somewhere else. We were only down for twenty minutes. I think I could have stuck it longer, lying there petrified, but then suddenly Your Man let off one of his great, slow, strangled farts. I don't want to make it sound melodramatic, but in that cramped space, far below Long Kesh's tarmacked and concreted surface, I panicked. Well, I think that's why I panicked. In any case, it was as good, as original and as believable an excuse as any other, so we shuffled our way backwards towards the shaft and the abnormality overhead.

They never let me go down again. Nobody said anything, of course. They just put me to hiding dirt. I looked disappointed, suspected Your Man of backstabbing, and offered a silent prayer of thanksgiving to St Jude.

In the meantime, things continued above and below ground, and by the end of the second week we were feeling pretty hopeful. Cage Seven had almost reached the perimeter, Eight had survived a heavy fall of rain, and we had scraped through two British army raids. The Beard and wee Owen were even planning a holiday in France; Cedric had sent all his clothes out, and Your Man talked of the propaganda that his return to the struggle would warrant. I thought quietly to myself of the safety of west Mayo and spoofed along with the rest.

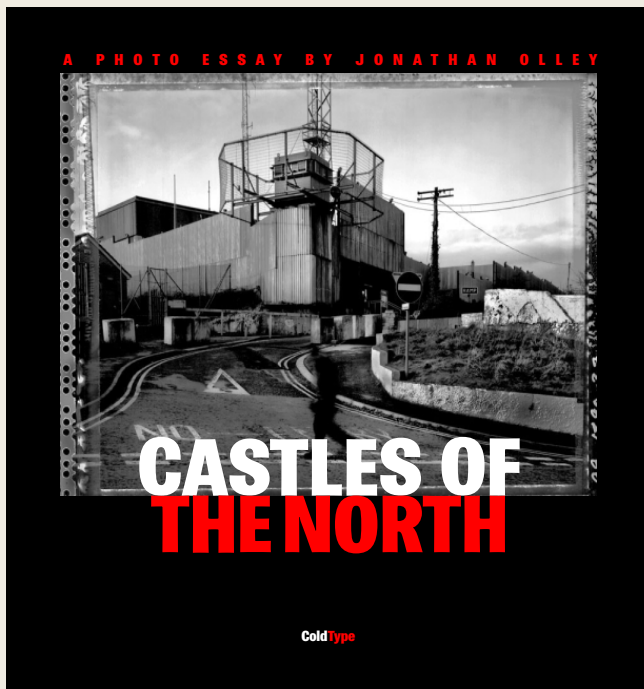
On Saturday we were moved. No warning or advance notice from the prison regime. We tried to talk our way out of it, of course, but you know the score yourself. There's a hard way and an easy way; you move or the Brits move you. We moved. As a sort of consolation we left our gaping hole in the floor unmarked and unhidden with a note for the head of prison security poking out of its mouth. That at least would get somebody into trouble – the screws are supposed to stop us digging, you see.

Our second day back here saw the start of another tunnel. The one in Seven looked a sure thing and none of us wanted to be left behind. We didn't get as far this time, of course. The shaft was only finished when it was caught. Cage Eight's collapsed a few Jays later. It nearly killed the screw who disappeared into it.

And the one in Cage Seven? The water got it. It filled up to the ceiling one night along its complete hundred-foot length. It was bound to happen: winter is no time to dig. The heavy rainfall turns the ground into silt, and apart from anything else it's a devil to hide.

Now, the summer's different. Your Man reckons that if we just keep below the hardcore we should be okay. He thinks we can manage to stay above water level that way; if we hit clay we'd be flying. The thing to do is to keep at it. Like, we've nothing else to do anyway, have we?

**CT**



## WORDS and PICTURES

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# Bullshit, lies, and a few moments of honesty

**Brian Mitchell** collates – and comments on – the brazen, bizarre and often barbaric thoughts of (mainly American) leaders of the ‘free’ world

“We should expect conflicts in which adversaries, because of cultural affinities different from our own, will resort to forms and levels of violence shocking to our sensibilities.” – *US Department of Defense, September 15 1999. [You mean nuclear weapons, chemical and biological warfare, mass bombings, cluster bombs, nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki?]*

“The defence policy of the United States is based on a simple premise: The United States does not start fights. We will never be an aggressor.” – *Ronald Reagan speech on nuclear weapons, March 23, 1983.*

## BIRDS OF A FEATHER

“Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators. . . . your city and your lands have been subject to the tyranny of strangers . . . Your wealth has been stripped from you by unjust men . . . The people of Baghdad shall flourish under institutions which are in consonance with their sacred laws.” – *General Frederick Stanley Maude, Commander of British forces in Iraq, 1917.*

“Our armies do not come into your lands and your cities as conquerors, but as liberators . . .” – *General Frederick Stanley Maude, Baghdad, 1917.*

“Our forces are friends and liberators . . . not your conquerors.” – *Tony Blair to the people of Iraq.*

“Not as tyrants have we come, but as liberators.” – *Adolf Hitler, 25 March 1938, after occupying Austria.*

“What the United States is doing in Vietnam is the most significant example of philanthropy extended by one people to another that we have witnessed in our time.” – *US News and World Report editor David Lawrence, on Vietnam, February 1966.*

“Within a decade no child will go to bed hungry.” – *US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, World Food Conference, 1974.*

“No serious challenge on the Left exists to Third Way thinking . . . we are all ‘Thatcherite’ now.” – *Tony Blair’s New Labour propaganda merchant, later Baron, then Lord, Peter Mandelson.*

“ . . . the challenge to the postmodern world is to get used to the idea of double standards. . . . when dealing with more old fashioned kinds of states . . . we need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era, force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary to deal with those who still live in the 19th-century world of every state for itself . . . when we are operating in the jungle, we must also use the laws of the jungle.” – *British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s diplomatic adviser Robert Cooper, The Observer April 7 2002.*

“Unless we all start to believe in conspiracy theories and that the officials are lying, that I am lying, that behind this there is some kind of secret state which is in league with some dark forces in the United States . . . there is simply no truth in the claims that the United Kingdom has been involved in rendition . . .” – *British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, December 13 2005. [This was all lies, of course.]*

From top: Ronald Reagan, George HW Bush, Tony Blair, George W Bush, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton

**“Just between you and me, shouldn’t the World Bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the LDCs [lesser developed countries]? I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that . . . I’ve always thought that underpopulated countries in Africa are vastly under polluted; their air quality is vastly inefficiently low compared to Los Angeles or Mexico City.”** – World Bank economist and Deputy Secretary of Treasury Lawrence Summers, in an internal memo, 1991.

**“Those who make peaceful revolution impossible, will make violent revolution inevitable.”** – US President John Kennedy in one of his rare honest moments!

**“If the only alternatives for the people of Latin America are the status quo and communism, then they will inevitably choose communism.”** – US President Kennedy, 1961, in another of his rare honest moments.

**“A world in which a few nations constitute islands of wealth in a sea of despair is fundamentally insecure. . . Those who consider themselves dispossessed will become a seedbed of upheaval.”** – Henry Kissinger. [In a very rare moment of honesty.]

**“I agree entirely that a broad objective of our policy is to remove Saddam Hussein and to do all we can to achieve that . . . If we can possibly find the means of removing him, we will.”** – Tony Blair, House of Commons, December 17 1998. Before the invasion of Iraq.

**“Thank heavens for the military industrial complex. Its ultimate aim is peace in our time.”** – US Senator Barry Goldwater.

**”Mr. President, have you approved of covert activity to destabilise the present government of Nicaragua?”** “Well, no, we’re supporting them, the – oh, wait a minute,



**I’m sorry, I was thinking of El Salvador . . . when you said Nicaragua. Here again, this is something upon which the national security interests, I just – I will not comment.”** – US President Reagan, at a press conference, Washington, February 13 1983.



**“I occasionally had to twist the arms of countries that wouldn’t do what we needed them to do.”** – US President Barack Obama.



**“No employee of the United States shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, political assassination.”** – US President Ford, Presidential Order, 1976. [This was later cancelled by President Reagan.]



**“We have never interfered in the internal government of a country and have no intention of doing so, never have had any thought of that kind.”** – Ronald Reagan, 1982.



**“We have turned Mandela over to the South African security branch. We gave them every detail, what he would be wearing, the time of day, just where he would be. They have picked him up. It is one of our greatest coups.”** – CIA officer in South Africa, Atlanta Journal and Constitution, June 11 1990.



**“No state or group of states has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state.”** – US President Truman’s Charter of the Organisation of the American States, signed in the 1950s.

**“The cries of pain, the hymns and protests of oppressed people, have summoned into convocation all the majesty of this great Government . . . of the greatest nation on earth. Our mission is at once the oldest and most basic . . . to right wrong, to do justice, to serve man.”** – US President Johnson, March 15 1965.

### CRIME, CONQUEST, AND TERRORISM

**"If there is one principle more deeply rooted in the mind of every American, it is that we should have nothing to do with conquest."** – Thomas Jefferson. 1791.

**"To initiate a war of aggression, therefore, is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime."**  
– Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, August 12 1945.

**"We must make clear to the Germans that the wrong for which their fallen leaders are on trial is not that they lost the war, but that they started it . . . no grievances of policies will justify resort to aggressive war. It is utterly renounced and condemned as an instrument of policy. Our position is that whatever grievances a nation may have, however objectionable it finds the status quo, aggressive warfare is an illegal means for settling those grievances or for altering those conditions."** – US Chief Prosecutor Robert Jackson at the Nuremberg War Crimes trials, August 12 1945. [Along with Britain, the US is now the world's biggest instigator of illegal warfare.]

**"The unlawful use of force or violence committed by a group or individual . . . whose activities transcend national boundaries, against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives."** – US FBI definition of terrorism, FBI Policy and Guidelines, February 16 1999. [Under this, their own definition, the US should have been prosecuted many thousands of times in the last two centuries by the majority of nations on earth; as one day they must.]

**"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to be free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door."** – *Inscription on the Statue of Liberty, New York City Harbour.*

**"So I ask you tonight to join me and march along the road . . . that leads to the Great Society, where no child will go unfed . . . where every human being has dignity . . ."** – *US President Johnson, May 28 1964.*

**"You can't mine coal without machine guns."**  
– *US industrialist Richard Mellon, Time, June 14 1937.*

**"We are the greatest country in the world and what we are doing is serving the role of the indispensable nation to see what we can do to make the world safer for our children and grandchildren and for those people around the world who follow the rules."** – *US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Baltimore Sun February 19 1998.*

**"Can't we just drone this guy."** – *Hilary Clinton, on Julian Assange.*

**"The illegal we do immediately. The unconstitutional**

**al takes a little longer."** – *US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.*

**"We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundations on such principles and organising such powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. . . . But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. . . . The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. . . ." – *The US Declaration of Independence.***

**“The de facto role of the US armed forces will be to keep the world safe for our economy and open to our cultural assault. To those ends, we will do a fair amount of killing.”** – US Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Peters.

**“Alabama needed a few first class funerals in order to stop integration.”** – US Governor George Wallace to the *New York Times* a week before Martin Luther King was assassinated.

**“No nation has a right to intermeddle in the internal concerns of another; that everyone has a right to form and adopt whatever government they liked best to live under.”** – George Washington, First President of the United States.

**“Any people anywhere being inclined and having the power, have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most valuable, a most sacred right – a right which we hope and believe is to liberate the world.”** – US President Abraham Lincoln.

**“Any nation’s right to a form of government and economic system of its own choosing is inalienable. . . Any nation’s attempt to dictate to other nations their form of government is indefensible.”** – US President Eisenhower, April 16 1953.

**“A world in which a few nations constitute islands of wealth in a sea of despair is fundamentally insecure . . . Those who consider themselves dispossessed will become a seedbed of upheaval.”** – US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

**“We are not doing anything to try and overthrow the Nicaraguan Government . . . because that would be violating the law.”** – US President Ronald Reagan, April 18 1985.

**“God bless the Unites States of America . . . you have sacrificed so much for people you have never met.”** – US President Obama, speech to soldiers at Fort Bragg military base, December 14 2011. **CT**

*Brian Mitchell is a London-based author and journalist. He is a former trade union organiser and teacher.*

## GOD, TRUST, AND THE BUSH FAMILY

**“I will never apologise for the United States of America, I don’t care what the facts are.”**

– US President George HW Bush, on the US Navy shooting down of an Iranian Airlines passenger plane in Iranian air space, killing nearly 300 passengers, 1988.

**“I think, that, like a lot of others who had positions of responsibility in sending someone else’s kids to war, we realise that in prayer what matters is how it might have seemed to God.”** – US President George HW Bush, Los Angeles Times, June 7 1991.

**“A world once divided into two armed camps now recognises one sole and pre-eminent power, the United States of America. And they regard this with no dread. For the world trusts us with power, and the world is right . . . They trust us to do what’s right.”** – US President HW Bush, *New York Times*, January 29 1992.

**“How do I respond when I see that in some Islamic countries there is vitriolic hatred for America? I’ll tell you how I respond . . . I’m amazed that there’s such misunderstanding of what our country is about that people would hate us. I am, like most Americans, I just can’t believe it because I know how good we are.”** – US President George W Bush, 2001.

**“Nobody likes war in America. We’re a peaceful nation.”** – US President George W. Bush, Washington, October 28 2002.

**“Free nations are peaceful nations. Free nations don’t attack each other. Free nations don’t develop weapons of mass destruction.”** – US President George W. Bush, 2003. [From this it must be assumed that the US is not a free nation. It is a thoroughly oppressive capitalist and imperialist nation. And the US has always had, and now more than ever has, and continually threatens the world with their first use, the world’s biggest arsenal of nuclear, chemical and biological and all other weapons of mass destruction.]

**“I trust God speaks through me.”** – US President George W Bush, 2004.

# Everything must go

Economic growth will destroy everything. There's no way of greening it – we need a new system, writes **George Monbiot**

***Thirty years ago, it was ridiculous to buy bottled water, where tap water is clean and abundant. Today, worldwide, we use a million plastic bottles a minute***

Everyone wants everything – how is that going to work? The promise of economic growth is that the poor can live like the rich and the rich can live like the oligarchs. But already we are bursting through the physical limits of the planet that sustains us. Climate breakdown, soil loss, the collapse of habitats and species, the sea of plastic, insectageddon: all are driven by rising consumption. The promise of private luxury for everyone cannot be met: neither the physical nor the ecological space exists.

But growth must go on: this is everywhere the political imperative. And we must adjust our tastes accordingly. In the name of autonomy and choice, marketing uses the latest findings in neuroscience to break down our defences. Those who seek to resist must, like the Simple Lifers in *Brave New World*, be silenced – in this case by the media. With every generation, the baseline of normalised consumption shifts. Thirty years ago, it was ridiculous to buy bottled water, where tap water is clean and abundant. Today, worldwide, we use a million plastic bottles a minute.

Every Friday is a Black Friday; every Christmas a more garish festival of destruction. Among the snow saunas, portable watermelon coolers and smart phones for dogs with which we are urged to fill our lives, my #extreme civilisation prize now goes to the PancakeBot: a 3-D batter printer

that allows you to eat the Mona Lisa or the Taj Mahal or your dog's bottom every morning. In practice, it will clog up your kitchen for a week until you decide you don't have room for it. For junk like this we're trashing the living planet, and our own prospects of survival. Everything must go.

The ancillary promise is that, through green consumerism, we can reconcile perpetual growth with planetary survival. But a series of research papers reveal that there is no significant difference between the ecological footprints of people who care about their impacts and people who don't. One recent article, published in the journal *Environment and Behaviour*, finds that those who identify themselves as conscious consumers use more energy and carbon than those who do not.

Why? Because, environmental awareness tends to be higher among wealthy people. It is not attitudes that govern our impacts on the planet, but income. The richer we are, the bigger our footprint, regardless of our good intentions. Those who see themselves as green consumers, the paper found, "mainly focus on behaviours that have relatively small benefits."

I know people who recycle meticulously, save their plastic bags, carefully measure the water in their kettles, then take their holidays in the Caribbean, cancelling their environmental savings 100-fold. I've



come to believe that the recycling licences their long-haul flights. It persuades people they've gone green, enabling them to overlook their greater impacts.

None of this means that we should not try to reduce our impacts, but we should be aware of the limits of the exercise. Our behaviour within the system cannot change the outcomes of the system. It is the system that needs to change.

Research by Oxfam suggests that the world's richest one percent (if your household has an income of £70,000 or more, this means you) produce around 175 times as much carbon as the poorest 10 percent. How, in a world in which everyone is supposed to aspire to high incomes, can we avoid turning the Earth, on which all prosperity depends, into a dust ball?

By decoupling, the economists tell us: detaching economic growth from our use of materials. So how well is this going? A paper in the journal PlosOne finds that while in some countries relative decoupling has occurred, "no country has achieved absolute decoupling during the past 50 years." What this means is that the amount of materials and energy associated with each increment of GDP might decline, but, as growth outpaces efficiency, the total use of resources keeps rising. More importantly, the paper reveals that, in the long term, both absolute and relative decoupling from the use of essential resources is impossible, because of the physical limits of efficiency.

A global growth rate of three percent means that the size of the world economy doubles every 24 years. This is why environmental crises are accelerating at such a rate. Yet the plan is to ensure that it doubles and doubles again, and keeps doubling in perpetuity. In seeking to defend the living world from the maelstrom of destruction, we might believe we are fighting corporations and governments and the general foolishness of humankind. But they are all proxies for the real issue: perpetual growth on a planet that is not growing.

Those who justify this system insist that economic growth is essential for the relief of poverty. But a paper in the World Economic Review finds that the poorest 60 percent of the world's people receive only five percent of the additional income generated by rising GDP. As a result, \$111 of growth is required for every \$1 reduction in poverty. This is why, on current trends, it would take 200 years to ensure that everyone receives \$5 a day. By this point, average per capita income will have reached \$1-million a year, and the economy will be 175 times bigger than it is today. This is not a formula for poverty relief. It is a formula for the destruction of everything and everyone.

When you hear that something makes economic sense, this means it makes the opposite of common sense. Those sensible men and women who run the world's treasuries and central banks, who see an indefinite rise in consumption as normal and necessary, are berserkers, smashing through the wonders of the living world, destroying the prosperity of future generations to sustain a set of figures that bear ever less relation to general welfare.

Green consumerism, material decoupling, sustainable growth: all are illusions, designed to justify an economic model that is driving us to catastrophe. The current system, based on private luxury and public squalor, will immiserate us all: under this model, luxury and deprivation are one beast with two heads.

We need a different system, rooted not in economic abstractions but in physical realities, that establish the parameters by which we judge its health. We need a world in which growth is unnecessary, a world of private sufficiency and public luxury. And we must do it before catastrophe forces our hand. **CT**

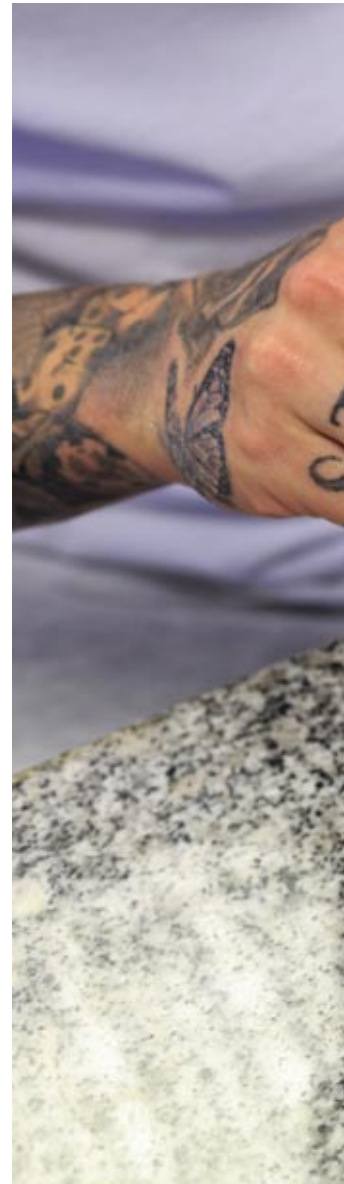
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*George Monbiot's latest book, How Did We Get Into This Mess?, is published by Verso. This article was first published in the Guardian newspaper. Monbiot's web site is [www.monbiot.com](http://www.monbiot.com)*

***A global growth rate of three percent means that the size of the world economy doubles every 24 years. This is why environmental crises are accelerating at such a rate***

## Eating Out



Castles Pie and Mash shop, London.



# East End odyssey

Stuart Freedman photographs London's last eel, pie and mash shops. **Words:** Tony Sutton

I've tasted some strange things during my travels around Britain: black pudding, haggis, tripe, brawn – which I tried a few times as a child before an adult gently explained where it came from. But I've never yet managed to open my mouth far enough to allow the passage of eels, either jellied or stewed.

Reading Stuart Freedman's latest book, **The Englishman and the Eel**, didn't diminish my resolve to avoid the aquatic delicacy, but I savoured his visual exploration of

the city's few remaining eel, pie and mash shops, a largely undocumented feature of working-class London.

Mainly found in the east end of the city and south-eastern England, they were established in the 19th-century, often selling live eels from their storefronts, fascinating – and horrifying – passers by. Most of the eel, pie and mash shops have disappeared, swept aside by the tsunami of gentrification that transformed the area into one of London's most prestigious post codes; but those



Joe, a scaffolder, visits Robins Pie and Mash shop at Southend-on-Sea. The green gunge on the plate is 'liquor' – parsley sauce.



Customer orders her pie and eels at Arments Pie and Mash shop.



Pies, mash and a huge spoonful of green parsley sauce.

## Eating Out



Simon pours sliced-up eels into containers at Mick's Eels in London.

that remain – often elaborately decorated with ornate Victorian tiling – provide a nostalgic glimpse into the area's less-affluent, past.

Freedman's photographs track the route of the eels from fishing boats on Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland to small eel processing shops in London, where they are beheaded, gutted, and chopped into bite-sized chunks. From there, the eels are delivered to the pie, mash and eel shops, where hungry customers line up in the rain to get their fill. And, for those who can't stomach the slippery critters, there are meat pies, served with mashed potato, and liberally doused in 'liquor,' a sloppy green parsley sauce.

In an essay accompanying his photos, Freedman tells of meeting Sharon and Raymond Shilling, both in their sixties, who often visit Manze's Pie and Mash Shop on Tower Bridge Road. The Shillings, writes Freedman, "are part of the 'respectable' working class that moved out to places like Essex or the Kent coast. Sharon hates pastry so just eats the eels and her husband can't stand eels so just has the pies. . . . 'Our kids like the pies but they won't touch the eels, though . . . people just won't try them

anymore.' The Shillings have identified a very real phenomenon. Eels have a long history as objects of fear and disgust . . ."

Freedman, born in London's East End, adds a nostalgic note: "For someone like me who escaped the grey London skies, the eel, pie and mash shops represent some sort of consistency and a portal back to my own past. Inside, warmth and comfort. Steam. Tea. Laughter. Families. These simple spaces hold within them the memories of a rich, largely undocumented cultural heritage of generations of working-class Londoners in a city whose only constant is change. My grandparents would still recognise these shops. They would still eat there. . . . After years away, I now too seek that comfort and a place to belong."

Having left my home town many years ago, I understand Freedman's need to link with his past. However, looking through the photographs in this delightful book, I'm still adamant that no eel, jellied or otherwise, will ever pass my lips. The pies and mash, however, are an entirely different proposition – bring them on, but with gravy instead of that green sauce, please . . .

**CT**



Piemaking at Arments Pie and Mash shop, London



Where the eels come from. Fisherman drops an eel into a barrel at Lough Neagh in Ireland.



**THE ENGLISHMAN AND THE EEL**

Photographs By Stuart Freedman

Introduced by Michael Collins

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# Bidding madness

**Dave Zirin** tells how sports tax scams laid the groundwork for Amazon's scheme to persuade cities to finance the company's new headquarters

***Boston has offered to have city employees be privatised workers when working under the auspices of Jeff Bezos's empire: his own army of the underclass***

The terrific podcast Citations Needed, hosted by Nima Shirazi and Adam Johnson, call it “lotteryism” – the grotesque process where local and state governments bid for Fortune 500 companies by offering billions of dollars in tax breaks in the hopes that they will relocate to their cities.

The most high-profile example of this right now is, of course, Amazon. Politicians across the country are offering absurd packages to attract the new “Amazon HQ2” headquarters. These enticements will gut services for those who depend on public schools, hospitals, public transportation, and basic infrastructure. This is not to say that Amazon won't bring jobs to these cities – it is making promises of thousands of permanent hires – but the pound of flesh being offered for these jobs is frightening.

Chicago has said Amazon could keep employees' income tax, a total estimated at \$1.32-billion, according to the Seattle publication *The Stranger*. New Jersey has offered a staggering \$7-billion dollars in tax breaks. Boston has offered to have city employees be privatised workers when working under the auspices of Jeff Bezos's empire: his own army of the underclass. Southern California is offering \$100-million in free land. Fresno is offering to “place 85 percent of every tax dollar generated by Amazon into a so-called

‘Amazon Community Fund.’” This would give Amazon control over where our taxes flow, which undoubtedly would be in the direction of its own well-compensated employees – think parks, bike lanes, condo development – creating a new model of gentrification, directly subsidised by the traffic tickets and meters and regressive taxation of the poor.

Fresno's economic development director Larry Westerlund told the *Los Angeles Times*, “Rather than the money disappearing into a civic black hole, Amazon would have a say on where it will go. Not for the fire department on the fringe of town, but to enhance their own investment in Fresno.” Sure would suck to have your home on fire if you live on the “fringe of town.”

This is little more than corporate theft, in collusion with often Democratic Party-led governments.

Publicly funded sports stadium scams and Olympic bidding wars laid the groundwork for it, having normalised the idea that our tax dollars exist to fund the projects of the wealthy, with benefits trickling down in ways that only produce more thirst.

Chris Heller wrote a terrifically detailed report for the *Pacific Standard* about stadium funding in which he estimated, “Over the past 15 years, more than \$12-billion in public money has been spent on privately owned stadiums. Between 1991

and 2010, 101 new stadiums were opened across the country; nearly all those projects were funded by taxpayers.”

As Neil DeMause, author of *Field of Schemes* said to me, “More recent corporate leaders have no doubt looked to the billions of dollars lavished on sports teams and decided to up their ante.”

You can see this in the cities that have offered the most gobsmacking giveaways to Amazon. Chicago is still paying off renovations to the White Sox Cellular Field, more than 25 years after it opened, as well as the Chicago Bears’ home of Soldier Field. According to the Chicago Tribune, “Nearly \$430-million in debt related to renovations at the ballpark and a major overhaul of Soldier Field, including \$36-million in payments owed this year.”

Then there is Southern California, where San Diego voters rejected pouring over a billion dollars into a new NFL stadium for the Chargers. Los Angeles then took the team and is paying \$60-million to pay for roads and “infrastructure” for a new facility that was supposed to be privately funded.

Los Angeles has also pledged \$5.3-billion to host the 2028 Olympics, a number, to judge by past Olympics, that will balloon. It is doing so despite having the highest number of chronically homeless people in the United States and, according to the US Census, more people living in poverty than any other major US city.

It is also telling that Sacramento, the state capital, is where \$272-million is be-

ing paid in taxes for the NBA Sacramento Kings’ new facility. If the Kings leave before the 35-year lease is up, that debt will still need to be paid, just as the people of Oakland will be paying for the Raiders’ stadium for years after the team moves to Las Vegas.

Then there is Boston, which tried to ram through its own multibillion-dollar bid for the Olympic games. Even though its bid was beaten back by activists, the heavy-handed efforts by politicians to sell this to the public has normalised the playing field upon which cities compete against one another.

They don’t compete to see who has the lowest poverty rate or the fewest people behind bars. They compete for businesses and the affection of 21st-century plutocrats, who promise prosperity yet deliver it only for themselves, newly arriving executives, and whatever politicians might be greased in the process.

Our love of sports laid the groundwork for the madness of “lotteryism.” We’re the frog in the slowly boiling water. And they are not content merely to cook us. We’re also their dinner. **GT**

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*Dave Zirin is sports editor of the Nation - [www.thenation.com](http://www.thenation.com) - where this article was first published. He is the author of eight books on the politics of sports, most recently, *Brazil’s Dance with the Devil: The World Cup, The Olympics, and the Fight for Democracy*. His website is [www.edgeofsports.com](http://www.edgeofsports.com)*

**Los Angeles has also pledged \$5.3-billion to host the 2028 Olympics, a number, to judge by past Olympics, that will balloon. It is doing so despite having the highest number of chronically homeless people in the United States**

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# Repeating the mistakes of my Granddad's era

Reading my granddad's Blitz reporting makes it all the sadder to see social history repeat itself, writes **Gideon Calder**

***The German bombs took people's homes on a scale, and at a speed, not seen since the first great fire of London. In the first six weeks alone, 250,000 lost their homes***

In one way, London saw the Blitz of World War II coming. European cities knew that the existence of bombers would bring this war right to them. From now on, war would mean the large-scale killing of anonymous civilians as strategic targets were hit from the sky. When the bombers first came, on September 7, 1940, the authorities were expecting unprecedented civilian fatalities – up to 1.8-million within 60 days, said one 1937 report. In the event, the eight months of the Blitz saw 43,000 lose their lives.

But what London didn't plan for was mass homelessness. The bombs took people's homes on a scale, and at a speed, not seen since the first great fire of London. In the first six weeks alone, 250,000 lost their homes. In Stepney, four out of ten houses had been destroyed

or damaged by November 11. 1.4-million people – one Londoner in every six – would be made homeless by May 1941. When it came to those surviving but displaced, it was as if “some officials had never imagined what the Blitzkrieg would be like.”

Those words came from my grandfather, Ritchie Calder – at the time, a reporter for the Daily Herald. As the Blitz hit, he was pulled around the East End in the wake of fallen bombs, giving raw reports of their impacts on the ground. He typed nightly in the thick of the fires and sirens, at one stage describing “fiery confetti spatter[ing] the papers on the desk with singe-marks.” He offered, as the journalist Tim Luckhurst has put it, “compelling stories fizzing with quotes, observations and the authentic voices of ordinary Londoners.”

The official propaganda machine was in overdrive, proclaiming London Can Take It as if the responses of emergency services, government, civilians in general and “the people's army of volunteers” were fluently in sync. My grandfather's Blitz reporting gave a far less harmonious picture. Consistently impressed by the resolve and creativity of working-class Londoners, he grew exasperated by the sclerotic, fragmented ways in which local and national authorities responded to the city's battering.

If London was “taking it,” this was too often despite, rather than because of, what

Ritchie Calder, 1940s. Photo supplied by author







Two German Dornier 17 bombers fly over south-east London on the first day of the Blitz, September 7, 1940.

Photo: Wikimedia

those in charge were up to.

In quick-spreading journalism and books (three in 1941 alone) he wrote of communities finding their own shelters when Public Assistance Committees lacked the power to provide even basic equipment, of local officials being left to deal ad hoc with impacts rippling right across London, of the hurdles posed by complex, varying boundaries between local authorities and services from water to energy, and all the time, most vividly, of the everyday human burdens borne amid these administrative gaps and failures.

There were “the gasless, the waterless, the foodless and the wifeless.” There were wardens dealing with drastic incidents through the night without respite, electric light or any provision to feed them on the job. There was clergyman Father Groser, sleeping under railway arches with the

bomb-disrupted, lighting a bonfire outside his church, breaking into an official food store to feed the homeless in the shelter he’d organised. There was Flora Solomon, “one of the most remarkable women I have ever known,” running “Communal Restaurants” which, as government caught up with their success, became endorsed by the Ministry of Food and renamed “British Restaurants.” And consistent throughout: there was the poor helping the poor as officials argued over whose budget should be used for what.

One such story – one of families being “left by a series of blunders to be bombed to death in a dockland school” – forms part of the first episode of BBC2’s new series *Blitz: The Bombs that Changed Britain*, in which Calder’s own story plays a role. In this episode, my cousin Simon and I follow the tracks of our grandfather’s reporting,

***There was clergyman Father Groser, sleeping under railway arches with the bomb-disrupted, lighting a bonfire outside his church, breaking into an official food store to feed the homeless in the shelter he’d organised***

## Lessons Unlearned



Kids rest in the rubble in the East End of London during the Blitz. Wikimedia

**Government learned much from the war about how to do things better. But we find new throwbacks to that Blitz-era sclerosis. The shambolic and dangerous roll-out of universal credit offers a masterclass in unlearned lessons about how to limit the human costs of policy**

reliving both the rich accounts of human resourcefulness and the pettiness and parochialism of local bureaucracies arguing about who was going to provide how many blankets to whom.

The ripples of that time extend all the way to now. Churchill's war cabinet, unsettled by Calder's writing, recruited him: he was put in charge of "White Propaganda" at the Political Warfare Executive. There were, as he wrote, compensations amid the bomb-disruption: seeds of new democracy, with people discovering "latent qualities of leadership," finding a voice, becoming active in the organisation of their communities.

His calls for a Welfare Board for London to coordinate the meeting of basic needs chimed with the soon-to-come Beveridge Report of 1942 – published 75 years ago – and the momentum behind the post-war creation of a concerted welfare state to take local happenstance out of the provision of vital services. His son, Angus, born in the middle of the war, became, as a social historian, an extensive, influential re-teller of the Blitz from the point of view of ordinary people.

Lessons of the time apply anew today. Much of the anger and sadness about Grenfell Tower echoes Calder's sheer incredulity at

how authorities can preside, whether due to complacency or ideology, over crises not just entirely predictable – but directly, publicly predicted.

Government learned much from the war about how to do things better. But we find new throwbacks to that Blitz-era sclerosis. The shambolic and dangerous roll-out of universal credit offers a masterclass in unlearned lessons about how to limit the human costs of policy. And local government, hollowed out by years of underfunding, operates under sustained adversity.

We live with the tendency to think downwards from market criteria, to reduce measures of value to individual costs and benefits, rather than upwards from the lives and wisdom of the people whom those models are purportedly about – so that their needs and voices are squeezed out, and the public realm depleted. The space for debate about and humane negotiation of social challenges and the public interest is shrunk. This takes an everyday toll, sometimes on a catastrophic scale. As my dad wrote in his social history of World War II, *The People's War*: "In general nothing emerges more forcibly from the Blitz than the contrast between laggard councillors, obsessed with their own prestige, and the self-sacrifice of the volunteers who strove indefatigably to remedy the position which bumbledom had created."

Grenfell's entirely avoidable disaster, and its aftermath, speaks of a similar neglect of the position and agency of ordinary people, and lack of the most basic care for their safety. "Bumbledom" is surely too generous a term for this. The Grenfell Tower Inquiry should tell us. But meanwhile the angriest, most exasperated reactions ring truest. We should have known better in 1940. In 2017, all the more so. **CT**

*Gideon Calder is senior lecturer in social sciences and social policy at Swansea University. This article was first published at [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)*



# Who's a foreign agent? In Washington, who isn't?

The government wants to make dissent the equivalent of treason. We can't let them succeed, writes **Justin Raimondo**

**Y**ou know life's become a joke when the US Department of Justice starts requiring foreign media to register as foreign agents. Will the BBC be forced to issue a disclaimer with every broadcast and web posting: "Proceed with caution - British propaganda ahead?" Don't bet the ranch on it.

Such distinctions are reserved for the current bogeyman of the moment, ie typically some marginal outlet with a small-to-minuscule audience, in this case RT, formerly Russia Today, and its companion web site Sputnik. Banned from advertising on Twitter, and the subject of an official investigation by both Houses of Congress and a special counsel, these two relatively minor state-sponsored outlets are nonetheless credited with nearly single-handedly putting Donald Trump into

the White House.

It didn't take much to create the kind of atmosphere in which a direct assault on the First Amendment goes largely unnoticed and even implicitly supported. A mysterious Russian "troll farm" amplifying the perfidious "divisiveness" of RT/Sputnik "disinformation," a few hundred thousand bucks in Facebook ads (mostly placed after the election), and the "expert" testimony of professional hysterics who traffic in the mythology of the new cold war. Such are the ingredients that go into the making of a new industry, or rather a revived one: Kremlinology.

Compared to the "experts" of yesteryear, today's Kremlinologists are a crankish lot. Bereft of any real knowledge of either Russian politics or the language, their elabo-

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rate conspiracy theories are unanchored by observable facts. Instead, we are treated to a series of mysterious “links,” and seemingly ambiguous meetings, which add up to a monumental nothing. Twitter accounts that may or may not be real human beings retweet “fake news” generated and centrally directed by Vladimir Putin, and this – so they tell us – was a meaningful and even a decisive factor in the 2016 presidential election. Yes, this nonsense is now the conventional wisdom in Washington, DC, where the foreign lobbies that matter, the ones with real power, rule the roost.

Since professors John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt have done such a thorough job documenting the power and influence of Israel's lobby in the US, the often decisive role played by AIPAC and allied groups is today largely acknowledged, even by the lobby's partisans. If you have time or inclination, it's worth looking into how AIPAC – surely not an insignificant force – and its predecessors were exempted from having to register under the terms of the Foreign Agents Registration Act. Senator William J. Fulbright and the lobby had quite a go-round during congressional hearings on the subject.

How many foreign-funded thinktanks in Washington are pushing an agenda dictated by the amount of cold hard cash flowing into their coffers from abroad? Shall we have the public pronouncements of the Alliance to Secure Democracy – funded by a baker's dozen of foreign governments – labelled with the requisite Department of Justice “disclaimer?” What about the sainted Brookings Institution, which is on the take from a couple of dubious sources? And if not, why not?

Ranked in terms of their real influence and reach, the Russians are on a par with Syria, Zimbabwe, and the office of the Orleanist Pretender to the French Throne. The lobbyists with real clout – the Saudis, the Israelis, the EU/Franco-German bloc, the China lobbies (Taiwan and the mainland), not to mention George Soros, who surely qualifies as a country – are given free rein. If the feds are

now intent on strictly enforcing the FARA, there are an awful lot of folks in the Imperial City who are going to have to come out of the closet, so to speak, and admit they're simply megaphones for foreign actors.

If we're going to start prohibiting or even limiting the activities of foreign lobbyists, then groups such as the Atlantic Council – flush with foreign cash – are going to be set back on their heels. Which is why a strict double standard is in place and will remain so.

Indeed, ordinary standards of all sort, including the rules of evidence, have been thrown underfoot in the Blame Russia stampede to such an extent that to express certain views – say, on NATO expansion, or the wisdom of carrying out provocative military exercises at the gates of Moscow – is to be labelled an “unconscious agent” of the Russian state. Which means, of course, that anyone who challenges the new cold war paradigm, and criticises US foreign policy as hegemonist, not in our interests, and dangerous, is part of the alleged Russian conspiracy to “undermine our democracy.”

Like the Kremlinologists of the 1950s, our phony “experts” are shameless opportunists looking to cash in on the latest fad: unlike their predecessors, however, none of these people actually knows anything about Russia, foreign policy, or so-called “Putinism.” The old school anti-Communist “experts” who solemnly testified before Congress that subversion was everywhere in our midst at least had some real experience: many of them were ex-Communists, who knew the ideology and its adherents inside out.

Not so this latest batch: their insubstantial visions of ghostly cyber-armies who somehow manoeuvred not only the election of Donald Trump but also pulled off Brexit, are unconvincing. Yet propaganda, to be effective, needn't be all that convincing: volume and the power of sheer repetition are often enough to achieve the desired result, which in this case is to demonise anyone who opposes the new cold war with Russia.

That's why, time after time, we see the

professional smear-mongers going after Antiwar.com, the organisation of which I am editorial director, as well as any other “alternative” media that fails to go along with the “mainstream” script. Thus I was treated to the ridiculous spectacle of seeing the Russians blamed for the Catalanian secession movement on the grounds that I – being “reliably pro-Russian” – supported the Catalan cause! The War Party wants to drive anyone who opposes their agenda out of the public square, and silence proponents of peace. The next phase of this witch-hunt is to go after Putin’s so-called “dupes” and “fellow travelers,” which means anyone who opposes our foreign policy of global intervention but can’t be directly tied to Russia.

The militarists don’t want a foreign policy debate: their whole modus operandi is to shut down debate, to delegitimise dissent from the bipartisan interventionist status quo as a Russian covert operation. You’ll notice that their favourite argument these days is that such-and-such is “divisive.” Brazen and quite clever, actually, this openly censorious quasi-authoritarian tone is really an act of desperation. Faced with the public’s overwhelming opposition to new wars, the War Party has decided to simply outlaw the opposition – that is, to shut it down in the name of curbing “foreign influence.”

As we have seen, however, what’s really going on here is the fierce competition of foreign interests. It’s a question of which foreign interests will gain the favour of the Empire, and thus the upper hand, at any given moment. In the Washington casino, every conceivable country and would-be country is represented with cash on the table, hoping the Wheel of Fashion will turn in their direction. Every interest has a place at the table – with a single exception. The lobby for America, the one pressure group that puts American interests first, is nowhere in evidence. I’m afraid it’s too much to expect that US government officials are and ought to be the front line defenders of American interests narrowly conceived.

If anyone is surprised that journalists haven’t been the first to protest the imposition of content regulations on “foreign” media, they are being naïve. The “liberal” media has been agitating for some form of censorship, whether governmental edicts against “hate speech” or corporate conformity compacts, and Russiagate has been their bread and butter. Perhaps this accounts for the tepid statement of the Committee to Protect Journalists, which declared “We’re uncomfortable with governments deciding what constitutes journalism or propaganda.”

An outright assault on the First Amendment is a mere discomfort: is that the Founders I hear weeping?

The Freedom of the Press Foundation is worried that the DOJ decision “opens up serious risk of retaliation for many brave journalists who work in Russia – both independent reporters who may get funding from the US and the US government’s own Voice of America.” So their big worry is what this will do to US government propaganda efforts: no hint that a far more important principle is at stake.

What’s in store for us is a full-fledged no-holds-barred all-out witchhunt, with the reincarnation and rebranding of the ill-favoured “House Un-American Activities Committee,” and, worse, the revival of the hysteria that made it possible. There can’t be any compromise in a fight of this kind: the enemy is out to illegalise us. They want to make dissent the equivalent of treason. We can’t let them succeed. **CT**

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***Faced with the public’s overwhelming opposition to new wars, the War Party has decided to simply outlaw the opposition – that is, to shut it down in the name of curbing “foreign influence”***

# Back to the dark ages of the Internet

**Jonathan Cook** explains why allowing corporations to slow down the Internet is a first step along the road to the elimination of alternative news sources

*Google has changed its algorithms in ways that have ensured the search engine rankings of prominent leftwing sites are falling through the floor. It is becoming harder and harder to find alternative sources of news because they are being actively hidden from view*

Can anyone still doubt that access to a relatively free and open internet is rapidly coming to an end in the west? In China and other autocratic regimes, leaders have simply bent the internet to their will, censoring content that threatens their rule. But in the “democratic” west, it is being done differently. The state does not have to interfere directly – it outsources its dirty work to corporations.

The net could soon become the exclusive plaything of the biggest such corporations, determined to squeeze as much profit as possible out of bandwidth. Meanwhile, the tools to help us engage in critical thinking, dissent and social mobilisation will be taken away as “net neutrality” becomes a historical footnote, a teething phase, in the “maturing” of the internet.

This month, the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) plans to repeal already compromised regulations that are in place to maintain a semblance of “net neutrality.” Its chairman, Ajit Pai, and the corporations that are internet service providers want to sweep away these rules, just as the banking sector got rid of financial regulations so it could inflate our economies into giant ponzi schemes. That could serve as the final blow to the left and its ability to make its voice heard in the public square.

It was political leaders – aided by the corporate media – who paved the way to

this with their fomenting of a self-serving moral panic about “fake news,” which, they argued, appeared only online, not in the pages of the corporate media – the same media that sold us the myth of WMD in Iraq, and has so effectively preserved a single party system with two faces. The public, it seems, needs to be protected only from bloggers and websites.

The social media giants soon responded. It is becoming ever clearer that Facebook is interfering as a platform for the dissemination of information for progressive activists. It is already shutting down accounts, and limiting their reach. These trends will only accelerate. Google has changed its algorithms in ways that have ensured the search engine rankings of prominent leftwing sites are falling through the floor. It is becoming harder and harder to find alternative sources of news because they are being actively hidden from view.

Google stepped up that process by “deranking” RT and Sputnik, two Russian news sites that provide an important counterweight – even if one skewed in its pro-Russia agenda – to the anti-Russia propaganda spouted by western corporate media. The two sites will be as good as censored on the internet for the vast majority of users.

RT is far from a perfect source of news – no state or corporate media is – but it is a vital voice to have online. It has become a sanctuary for many seeking alternative,

and often far more honest, critiques both of western domestic policy and of western interference in far-off lands. It has its own political agenda, of course, but, despite the assumption of many western liberals, it provides a far more accurate picture of the world than the western corporate media on a vast range of issues. That is for good reason. Western corporate media is there to shore up prejudices that have been inculcated in western audiences over a lifetime – the chief one being that western states rightfully act as well-meaning, if occasionally bumbling, policemen trying to keep order among other, unruly or outright evil states around the globe.

The media and political class can easily tap into these prejudices to persuade us of all sorts of untruths that advance western interests. To take just one example – Iraq. We were told Saddam Hussein had ties to al-Qaeda (he didn't and could not have had); that Iraq was armed with WMD (it wasn't, as UN arms inspectors tried to tell us); and that the US and UK wanted to promote democracy in Iraq (but not before they had stolen its oil). There may have been opposition in the west to the invasion of Iraq, but little of it was driven by an appreciation that these elements of the official narrative were all easily verified as lies.

RT and other non-Western news sources in English provide a different lens through which we can view such important events, perspectives unclouded by a western patrician agenda. They and progressive sites are being gradually silenced and blacklisted, herding us back into the arms of the corporate propagandists. Few liberals have been prepared to raise their voices on behalf of RT, forgetting warnings from history, such as Martin Niemöller's anti-Nazi poem, "First they came for the socialists."

The existing rules of "net neutrality" are already failing progressives and dissidents, as the developments I have outlined make clear. But without them, things will get

even worse. If the changes are approved, internet service providers (ISPs), the corporations that plug us into the internet, will also be able to decide what we should see and what will be out of reach.

Much of the debate has focused on the impact of ending the rules on online commercial ventures. That is why Amazon and porn sites such as Pornhub have been leading the opposition. But that is overshadowing the more significant threat to progressive sites and already-embattled principles of free speech.

ISPs will be given a much freer hand to determine the content we can get online. They will be able to slow down the access speeds of sites that are not profitable – which is true for activist sites, by definition. But they may also be empowered to impose Chinese-style censorship, either on their own initiative or under political pressure. The fact that this may be justified on commercial, not political, grounds will offer little succour.

Those committed to finding real news may be able to find workarounds. But this is little consolation. The vast majority of people will use the services they are provided with, and be oblivious to what is no longer available.

If it takes an age to access a website, they will simply click elsewhere. If a Google search shows them only corporately approved results, they will read what is on offer. If their Facebook feed declines to supply them with "non-profitable" or "fake" content, they will be none the wiser. But all of us who care about the future will be the poorer. **CT**

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**RT and other non-Western news sources in English provide a different lens through which we can view such important events, perspectives unclouded by a western patrician agenda**

# Repeating the big lies about socialism

**Danny Katch**, author of *Why Bad Governments Happen to Good People*, looks into the surge of anti-communist diatribes on the anniversary of the Russian Revolution

***Of course, it's the teachers' fault that 44 percent of millennials would like to live under Socialism.***

***How else could it be that America's youth – 1.5-million of whom experienced homelessness in the past year – don't appreciate the glories of capitalism?***

As official US politics continues to ping pong along between the dismal and the depraved, it's nice to be reminded every once in a while that much of this country's working class majority stands far to the left.

So I'd like to thank the witch-hunting trolls at Turning Point USA for their recent meme: New Poll: 44% of Millennials Want to Live Under Socialism. Pretty cool, huh?

Okay, that's not the entire meme. Like much of their propaganda, Turning Point sticks to a complex two-part structure, as in: "You think socialism is good. Actually it sucks!" In the case of the Millennials poll meme, the second part is a photo of a soldier aiming a gun at a child. (Good thing that could never happen in capitalist America!)

But we'll come back to that. Part one of the meme was referring to a recent YouGov poll commissioned by something called the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, whose executive director Marion Smith decried the results: "This troubling turn highlights widespread historical illiteracy in American society regarding socialism and the systemic failure of our education system to teach students about the genocide, destruction and misery caused by communism since the Bolshevik Revolution one hundred years ago."

Of course, it's the teachers' fault. How else

could it be that America's youth – 1.5-million of whom experienced homelessness in the past year – don't appreciate the glories of capitalism?

But pushing for more anti-socialist ideology is Marion Smith's job. His foundation is a state-sponsored propaganda organisation established by right-wingers in Congress – and signed into law by Bill Clinton – in 1993 to commemorate the "deaths of over 100,000,000 victims in an unprecedented imperial communist holocaust."

That very round number of "100-million killed by Communism," which is tossed around frequently on the right, may have originated with *The Black Book of Communism*. Published in France 20 years ago, *The Black Book* is a purportedly scientific examination of the very real crimes of the 20th-century regimes that called themselves communist, which comes to two outlandish and unreal conclusions.

First, communism is no different from Nazism – one is simply based on race hatred and the other on class hatred, to paraphrase Bret Stephens' concise summary in the *New York Times*.

And second, communism is actually worse, because while Hitler famously killed six-million Jews and millions more Roma, gays and others, he and other fascists didn't come near that 100-million mark.

This comparison is obviously absurd and



*At the heart of the 100-million claim is the double standard that “communism” is responsible for all the crimes committed in its name, while “capitalism” gets off scot free for all the rest*



**Comrade Lenin sweeps the Globe Clean.**

– from *Art of the October Revolution*, compiled and introduced by Mikhail Guerman (Harry H. Adams, New York)

unlikely to convince anyone who isn't ideologically devoted to anti-communism, such as Bret Stephens.

At the same time, if socialists are going to make any headway in the coming years, we're going to have to aim higher than “we're better than Nazis.” So it's worth thinking about our response to this charge, which will only get louder the more our movement grows.

As you might have guessed, at the heart of the 100-million claim is the double standard that “communism” is responsible for all the

crimes committed in its name, while “capitalism” gets off scot free for all the rest.

For example, the majority of deaths listed in *The Black Book* come from the estimation of 60-million – other sources put the number at half as many – who died from famine and repression in China, between 1958-1962, during the horrific Great Leap Forward under Mao Zedong, one of history's worst atrocities.

But it does nothing to minimise this horror to also note, as Noam Chomsky does, citing the work of Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen, that non-Communist India actu-

## Hearts & Minds

***When people today say they want socialism, they mean single-payer health care, not Siberian prisons. Right-wingers know this. They merely hope to use the bogeyman of gulags to stop the struggle for social change***

ally saw more deaths than China during the 1950s and '60s due to poverty and hunger.

Then there are the two world wars that killed more than 100-million people in the battle to determine which countries would dominate the world. Other wars for imperial domination in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and elsewhere killed many millions more.

All of these could be chapters in the Black Book of Capitalism, but that one is still being written. Almost 33-million people have died from hunger this year, while 10-million children die from a lack of health care. Another 2.7-million are killed each year by their jobs, either through workplace accidents or occupational disease.

Socialism is based on the belief that in a world of vast wealth, all of these crimes should be relegated to humanity's brutal past – from Mao's famine and Stalin's prison camps to King Leopold's murder of 10-million in the Congo, and many tens of millions more who died from slavery.

Those of us in the Americas have a special responsibility to remember and memorialise the hundreds of civilisations that were wiped out through Indian genocide.

Yet when we try to do just that by protesting the celebration of Christopher Columbus, we're accused by many of the right-wingers so concerned with documenting Stalin's atrocities in the USSR that we're being tyrannical thought police.

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Ultimately, these and other historical crimes of capital don't count to right-wingers – because they actually think that mass murder is at the heart of the socialist ideal.

“Communism's freely expressed penchant for homicide was and is an integral trait,” wrote Josh London, for the American Spectator in a review of The Black Book. “Communism's philosophy and practical politics, which promised to erase class distinctions, necessarily entailed erasing classes and the living humans that populated them.”

This is the same logic employed by white

supremacists who view those of us who want to eradicate racism as wanting to commit mass murder of all the racists.

Not only can does the programme of mass murder that London alleges appear nowhere in the writings of Marx, Lenin or other socialists, but it has nothing to do with what took place, even in the inherently violent process of the Russian Revolution, when Bolsheviks aimed to – and for a time partially succeeded in – convincing or compelling many upper-class Russians to work for the new workers' state.

It was only once the revolution was internationally isolated and internally destroyed by a state bureaucracy led by Joseph Stalin that a programme of mass murder took place – as part of a consolidation of power by Stalin that also included killing nearly every surviving leader of the Bolshevik Party from the time of the revolution.

It was this literally anti-Bolshevik and anti-communist government that then became the model for the “communism” adopted by Mao and many other would-be revolutionaries. This is the awful truth that allows anyone to even claim that “communism killed 100-million.” The collapse of the Russian Revolution began a process that in which “communism” no longer stood for liberation and justice, and instead became an ideology for governments attempting to accelerate capitalist development on the backs of workers.

Quotes from Marx and Lenin were used as justification for these hierarchical and repressive societies in the same way Mississippi slave owners justified themselves with selective quotes from the Bible, and Pentagon generals bomb Iraqi cities to smithereens while muttering something about democracy.

Obviously, when people today say they want socialism, they mean single-payer health care, not Siberian prisons. Right-wingers know this. They merely hope to use the bogeyman of gulags to stop the struggle for social change that working people des-

perately need.

We need to counter these distortions that are used to promote the right wing's agenda today – but we also need to restore the memories of the glimpses of a liberated future after the Russian Revolution and others, before the meaning of socialism and communism was twisted and subverted for most people.

SocialistWorker.org has been running a series of accounts giving a grassroots view of the Russian Revolution – the recent one about the transformation of prisoners in a Siberian penal colony after the revolution is particularly inspiring. It goes without saying that there are no inspiring stories from any point in the Nazi takeover of Germany.

Bret Stephens ended his screed with the following: “Winston Churchill wrote that when the Germans allowed the leader of the Bolsheviks to travel from Switzerland to St. Petersburg in 1917, ‘they turned upon

Russia the most grisly of all weapons. They transported Lenin in a sealed truck like a plague bacillus.’

“A century on, the bacillus isn’t eradicated, and our immunity to it is still in doubt.”

The plague that Lenin brought back to Russia was, in fact, the ideal that had already arisen in Russia itself – that the soldiers, workers and peasants who desperately wanted to stop fighting and dying in the World War I had the ability to take over the barracks, factories and estates, and make it so. That was the primordial fear of Churchill and every other member of every ruling class in history. It’s not a plague but an antidote – and one we desperately need to recover.

*It goes without saying that there are no inspiring stories from any point in the Nazi takeover of Germany*

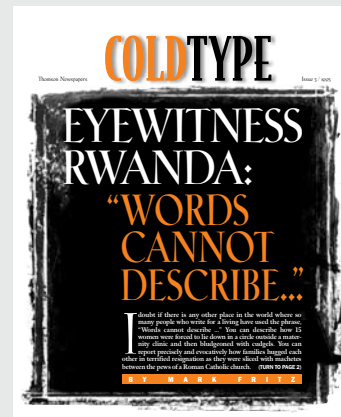
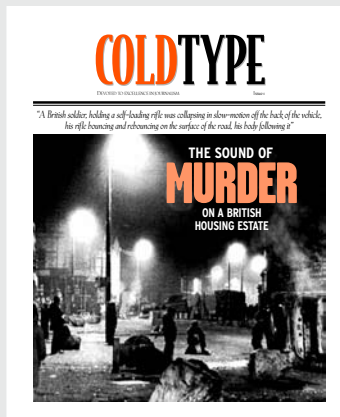
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*Danny Katch's latest book is Why Good Governments Happen To Good People. This article was first published at www.socialistworker.org.*

**BENDIB'S WORLD**

Khalil Bendib



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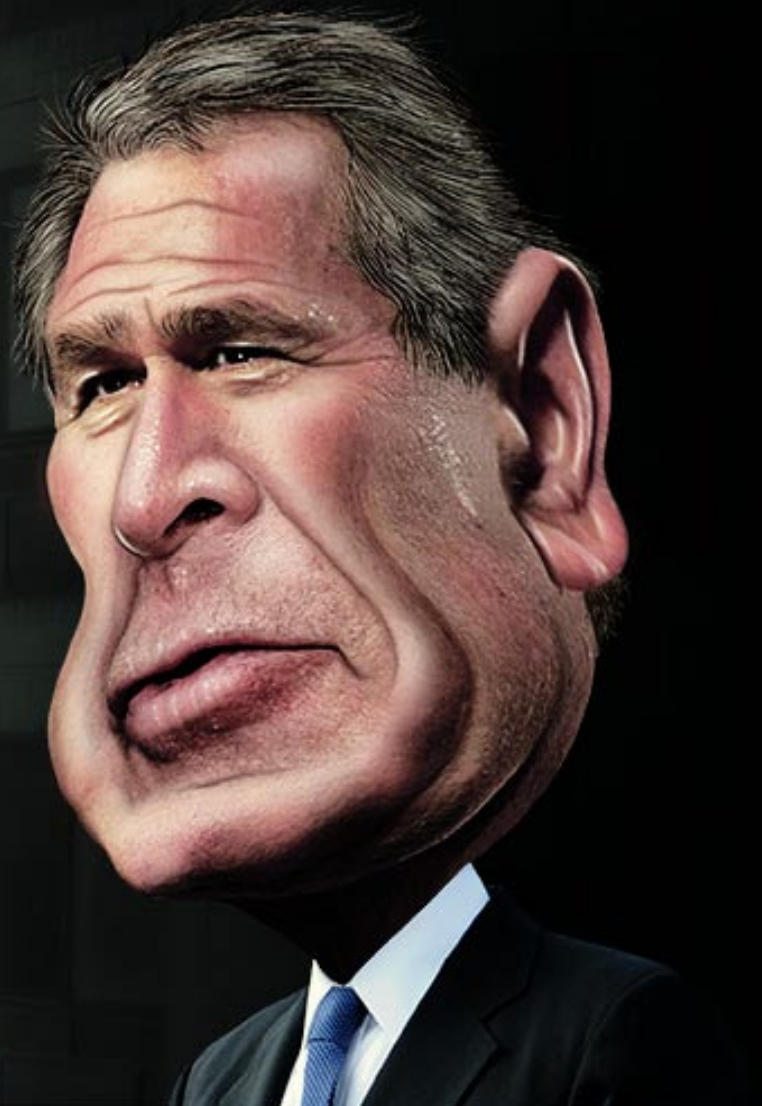


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# Why the enemy of our enemy is still a war criminal

Rebecca Gordon on the media rehabilitation of George W. Bush



He received a prestigious award from the West Point Association of Graduates. He published a “runaway” bestselling autobiography. Last February, a lavishly produced book celebrating his paintings of Americans who served in the military was, as Time put it, “burning up the Amazon charts.”

Still, the liberal media wasn’t ready to embrace George W. Bush – not at least until he made some oblique criticisms of the current tenant of his old position, suggesting that, in the present political climate, “bigotry seems emboldened.” Seems? Have you been to Charlottesville lately, Mr Bush?

The former president was less tentative on the main subject of his address to a conference on “democracy” he’d organised in New York City: the importance of free trade and the need for a large American footprint in the world. “We see a fading confidence in the value of free markets and international trade,” he said, “forgetting

that conflict, instability, and poverty follow in the wake of protectionism.” More on that speech later.

George W. Bush is hardly the first disgraced Republican president and war criminal to worm his way back into American esteem. Richard Nixon remains the leader in that department. He spent his later years being celebrated as an elder statesman and a master of realpolitik in international relations. In the process, he managed to shake off the dust of Watergate.

In those years, few even remembered that his was the first administration in which both the president and vice president resigned. In 1973, that disgraced vice president, Spiro Agnew, pleaded guilty to a felony count of tax evasion, but not before he’d bequeathed the English language a few of its most mellifluous sobriquets, among them the “nattering nabobs of negativism” and the “effete corps of impudent snobs” (aimed at those who opposed the Vietnam War).

## He's Back!

**Reagan's presidency reinforced what would become a never-ending slide in the value of real wages and his tax policies were the starting point for what has, in our own time, become not an inequality gap but an inequality chasm that has now left three men with the same amount of wealth as 160-million Americans**

Nixon's rehabilitation not only reduced the Watergate scandal in American memory, but also essentially obliterated his greater crimes, among which were these:

- while still a presidential candidate in 1968, he opened a secret back channel to the South Vietnamese government to keep it out of peace talks with the North that might have benefited his Democratic opponent;

- in the war itself, he oversaw the expansion of the CIA's Phoenix Program of torture and assassination in which, as historian Alfred McCoy has described it, "the formalities of prosecution" of suspected Viet Cong were replaced "with pump and dump – pumping suspects of information by torture and then dumping the bodies, more than 20,000 of them between 1968 and 1971;"

- he also oversaw an expansive, illegal, and undeclared war in Cambodia (which, when it was about to come to light, he described as a brief "incursion" into that country);

- he oversaw the saturation or "carpet" bombing of the North Vietnamese capital, Hanoi, and that country's major port, Haiphong;

- and he presided over the "first 9/11," the 1973 military coup that murdered Chile's elected president, Salvador Allende, ushering in years of terror and torture under General Augusto Pinochet.

And don't think that Richard Nixon is the only other example of such a post-presidential rehabilitation. Ronald Reagan is now remembered by friend and foe alike as a kind, folksy president and a wily strategist who ended the Cold War by forcing a cash-strapped Soviet Union to keep up with US defence spending and then negotiated directly with Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev. When he died in June 2004, the New York Times was typical in the largely fawning obituary it ran, describing him as "the man who restored popular faith in the presidency and the American government."

That obituary did at least mention the Iran-Contra conspiracy in which Presi-

dent Reagan approved the (illegal) sale of arms to Iran to fund his (illegal) support of the Nicaraguan Contras, the murderous rebel force that sought to overthrow that country's leftist Sandinista government. "The deception and disdain for the law," commented the obituary, "invited comparisons to Watergate, undermined Mr. Reagan's credibility, and severely weakened his powers of persuasion with Congress." An odd set of observations about a man being hailed for restoring faith in the presidency, but consistent with the contradictions inherent in any lionisation of Reagan.

Lest we forget, he was also the president who began his first term by attacking unions, starting with the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization, a move which so many years later still results in regular flight delays, thanks to a 27-year low in the number of air controllers. Reagan also inaugurated the mania for deregulation that led to the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s and ultimately to the subprime mortgage crisis and financial meltdown of 2007-2008. His presidency reinforced what would become a never-ending slide in the value of real wages and his tax policies were the starting point for what has, in our own time, become not an inequality gap but an inequality chasm that has now left three men with the same amount of wealth as 160-million Americans. (Not surprisingly, depending on who's calculating it, the United States either has the world's highest or perhaps fourth-highest Gini score, a measurement of economic inequality.)

Nixon had to wait many years for his rehabilitation and Reagan's was largely posthumous. At a vigorous 71, however, Bush seems to be slipping effortlessly back onto the national stage only nine years after leaving office essentially in disgrace. He will evidently have plenty of time to bask in history's glow before the first of those nostalgic obituaries are written. And for that, he can thank Donald Trump.

During that October 17th speech in which he criticised Trump without mentioning his name, George W. Bush touted the “Spirit of Liberty: At Home, in the World.” There, he bemoaned the degradation of political discourse by “casual cruelty,” noting that “bullying and prejudice in our public life sets a national tone, provides permission for cruelty and bigotry, and compromises the moral education of children.” Like the rest of his family, Bush does not share Trump’s aversion to immigrants, so he added that this country seems to be forgetting “the dynamism that immigration has always brought to America.”

Articles in the New York Times, the Washington Post, and even the Guardian eagerly reported Bush’s implicit criticisms of the president as a hopeful sign of resistance to Trumpism from the “responsible” Republican right. Politico simply labelled the event a “George W. Bush speech on Trumpism,” although much of it was about the decline of democracy in Europe and the value of free trade.

It’s certainly true that his speech included oblique critiques of the man who repeatedly insulted his brother Jeb as “a very low-energy kind of guy” and knocked him out of the race to be the third Bush to sit in the Oval Office, but it’s worth reading the whole address. It’s vintage W. – that is, vintage W. as a war criminal. He began, for instance, by reprising the lie that “since World War II, America has encouraged and benefited from the global advance of free markets, from the strength of democratic alliances, and from the advance of free societies.”

As Alfred McCoy demonstrates in his recent book, *In the Shadows of the American Century*, that is a particularly disingenuous description of a 70-year history in which Washington supported and, in a remarkable number of cases was directly involved in, the destruction of free societies. A list of examples would perhaps begin with the 1953 British and US-backed coup against the democratically elected Iranian Prime Minister

Mohammad Mossadegh that would install the despotic Shah in power in that country. It would certainly continue with the 1954 US and United Fruit Company coup against Jacobo Arbenz, the democratically elected president of Guatemala (an early instance of Washington’s post-World War II “encouragement” of anything-but-free-trade); the 1960 CIA-backed coup against, and the murder of, Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba; and the 1973 military coup in Chile. An honest history would also include the active “encouragement” of societies that were anything but free, including those run by juntas, dictators, or military governments in Greece, Brazil, Argentina, the Philippines, Indonesia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Uruguay, Iraq, and South Korea, to name just a few.

Of course, George W. Bush is hardly the first president to lie about the post-World War II record of the United States. Nor is he the first to suggest that “American security is directly threatened by the chaos and despair of distant places,” which he attributed in his speech to the lack of the democracy Washington put so much effort into destroying in more than 70 countries across the planet.

And don’t forget that it was precisely the pretext of a direct threat to American security that led to the most criminal lie of his career: the insistence that Iraqi autocrat Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and that the US invasion of his country was justified by a (legally questionable) case of preemptive self-defense. By initiating a war of aggression, by loosing “shock and awe” on the capital of a nation that had not attacked ours, President Bush committed a war crime. Indeed, it was the first in the list of crimes for which the leaders of Nazi Germany were indicted at Nuremberg after World War II: the ultimate crime against peace.

Few Americans have ever heard of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, but in 1928 the United States signed it and the Senate rati-

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## He's Back!

**Isn't it a little early to begin rehabilitating the man responsible for indefinite detention at Guantánamo, "enhanced interrogation techniques," and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and at least 150,000 Afghans**

fied it by a vote of 85-1. The 50 signatories of that treaty renounced war as a means of settling international disputes and, as the authors of *The Internationalists: How a Radical Plan to Outlaw War Remade the World* have argued, by implication made aggressive war a violation of international law. The US Constitution states in Article 6 that "all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land." By invading Iraq, Bush broke both international and US law.

In addition to his crimes against peace, Bush and his administration were also the authors of such traditionally recognised war crimes as torture and the use of chemical weapons. One of the uglier aspects of the US military's battle for the Iraqi city of Fallujah was its use of white phosphorus, an incendiary munition. Phosphorus ignites spontaneously when exposed to air. If bits of the chemical attach to human beings, skin and flesh burn away. The burning continues as long as there is oxygen available, sometimes right into the bone.

In short, isn't it a little early to begin rehabilitating the man responsible for indefinite detention at Guantánamo, "enhanced interrogation techniques," and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and at least 150,000 Afghans – not to mention the trillions of US dollars shoved down the memory hole in pursuit of the futile wars that followed?

The same year that the Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed, William Butler Yeats published a collection of poems called *The Tower*. It contains what many consider his masterpiece, the harrowing sonnet *Leda and the Swan*. In it, Yeats recreates the moment in Greek myth when Zeus, the ruling god of Olympus, having taken the form of a swan, rapes the helpless human woman Leda, leaving her pregnant with a daughter. That daughter became Helen of Troy, whose abduction was the *casus belli* for the Trojan War. The poet begins with the

victim's shock and awe:

*"A sudden blow: the great wings beating still  
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,  
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.*

In the final stanza, Yeats writes:  
*"A shudder in the loins engenders there  
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower  
And Agamemnon dead."*

In those brief words can be read an entire history of war and death, recounted more fully in the 15,693 lines of the *Iliad*, all somehow encapsulated in that first act of violence.

In his poem, Yeats implies that Zeus knows full well the final outcome of his act. Similarly perhaps, the "swans" of Washington in 2003, which was at that time the planet's own imperial Olympus, had more than an inkling of the broken walls, the burning roofs and towers their invasion of Iraq might engender. As early as 1996, future Vice President Dick Cheney's fellow hawks Richard Perle and Douglas Feith – who would later join the Bush administration as adviser on the Defense Policy Board and under secretary of defense for policy – helped write a report for Benjamin Netanyahu, who was then running the Israeli government for the first time. Titled *A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm*, it urged the leaders of Israel's right-wing Likud party to leave behind the nation's previous geopolitical strategy by abandoning peace negotiations with the Palestinians and using military means to actively restructure the Middle East in their favour.

"Israel," the authors argued, "can shape its strategic environment, in cooperation with Turkey and Jordan, by weakening, containing, and even rolling back Syria." Such a campaign would begin by "removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq – an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right – as a means of foiling Syria's regional ambitions." The ultimate goal was a realignment of power in the region, with



Syria destabilised, a monarchy in Iraq, and a new regional alliance among Turkey, Jordan, and Israel.

It would prove to be the geopolitical equivalent of a movie preview. In the wake of 9/11, the same cast of characters would take a similar path in Washington and, in the end, that “rolling back” operation would shake or destroy country after country from Afghanistan and Iraq to Libya and Yemen. Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Syria has certainly been destabilised in ways almost impossible to imagine, through the rise of ISIS (born in an American military prison) and a vicious, multi-sided civil war that, by early 2016, had left more than a tenth of its population killed or injured. In the process, more than 10-million people, including untold numbers of children, were turned into internal or external refugees.

Netanyahu, in fact, would reject the “clean break” proposal (perhaps because it also suggested that Israel make a clean break with its dependence on US aid), but the neocons were undeterred. In 1998, they resurrected the plan as part of a new pressure group they formed, the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), and presented it to Bill Clinton in a letter encouraging him to direct “a full complement of diplomatic, political, and military efforts” to “remove Saddam Hussein from power.”

Nor were they overly concerned about the legality of such a move, writing that “American policy cannot continue to be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council.” In other words, the country should not be “crippled” by adherence to the UN Charter, whose Article 51 prohibits unilateral war making without Security Council approval, except in cases of immediate “individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations.”

Like Netanyahu, Clinton ignored their suggestion. However, the signatories of the letter included many figures who would become key players in the Bush adminis-

tration, among them Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Undersecretaries of State John Bolton and Richard Armitage, Reagan hold-over Elliott Abrams, and Zalmay Khalilzad, who, among other roles, served as Bush’s special envoy and ambassador at large for free Iraqis. And it included, of course, Cheney adviser and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, who had prepared a draft of a 1992 Defense Planning Guidance document for President George HW Bush, in which he argued for the importance of US readiness to take unilateral military action, whether approved by the United Nations or not.

In other words, the top officials of the Bush administration took office already planning to attack Iraq. It only awaited 19 mostly Saudi terrorists hijacking four American commercial airliners on September 11, 2001. That would be the pretext to launch what has become a “generational struggle” that would eventually destroy Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen (and almost as a side dish, Afghanistan), and which now threatens to engulf the entire Greater Middle East, North Africa, and parts of Asia, from Afghanistan to the Philippines, in a set of never-ending wars and spreading terror movements.

All that suffering sprang from the actions of one feckless president and his crew. So what if – after 16 years of fruitless war, 16 years of disintegrating American infrastructure, 16 years of almost unprecedented inequality – George W. Bush does find Trump’s rhetorical style distasteful? Is that really any reason to turn a presidential war criminal into a liberal hero? **CT**

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**Rebecca Gordon** teaches in the philosophy department at the University of San Francisco. She is the author of *American Nuremberg: The US Officials Who Should Stand Trial for Post-9/11 War Crimes*. Her previous books include *Main-streaming Torture: Ethical Approaches in the Post-9/11 United States* and *Letters from Nicaragua*. This essay first appeared at [www.tomdispatch.com](http://www.tomdispatch.com)

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# How Western companies undermine Africa

The illicit outflow of billions of dollars and corporate profit shifting divert tax revenues from impoverished African states, writes **Yves Engler**

**African countries received \$162-billion in aid, loans, remittances and foreign investment but lost \$203 billion through tax avoidance, repatriation of profits and climate change costs caused by others.**

The question gets asked often: How can Africa be so poor when it receives so much aid?

The answer is simple. The world economic system sucks more out of the continent than it puts in. And tax evasion by Canadian firms plays a significant role in this impoverishment.

The May report, *Honest Accounts 2017: How the World Profits from Africa's Wealth*, concludes that more wealth is extracted from the continent than enters it. In 2015, African countries received \$162-billion in aid, loans, remittances and foreign investment but lost \$203 billion through tax avoidance, repatriation of profits and climate change costs caused by others.

(The report ignores the structural imbalance in the terms of trade that sees the bulk of the value of tea, coffee, cocoa and many other commodities produced on the continent captured by distributors, marketers, retailers, etc., outside Africa while a higher share of the value of imported buses, phones, computers, etc., is captured by producers outside the continent.)

On top of the \$32-billion corporations repatriated in profits, *Honest Accounts* found that \$68-billion was lost to illicit capital flight, mostly multinational corporations evading taxes. Their findings align

with a 2015 UN Economic Commission for Africa/African Union panel that found companies are illegally moving about US \$40-billion a year out of the continent.

The Washington, DC-based Global Financial Integrity Forum found that between 1970 and 2008 “total illicit financial outflows from Africa, conservatively estimated, were approximately \$854-billion. Total illicit outflows may, in fact, be as high as \$1.8-trillion.”

Three percent of this total was thought to be bribes to government officials or theft of public funds. Fifteen percent of all illicit outbound transfers were found to be money derived from drug smuggling, counterfeit goods, racketeering and other common criminal activities.

## **Designed to reduce or eliminate taxes**

The vast majority of the illicit funds, up to two-thirds of the total, were cross-border commercial transactions designed to reduce or eliminate taxes. Most of this money consisted of corporations shifting goods and profits between jurisdictions to reduce or eliminate their tax bill.

Often called “transfer pricing” or “trade misinvoicing,” multinational corporations artificially adjust the price of goods sold between their subsidiaries or partner companies in order for profits to end up in low (or no) tax jurisdictions

while costs appear in high tax countries where they're deducted from a company's tax bill.

Author Alain Deneault describes transfer pricing thus: "First, the corporation creates one or more subsidiaries in a tax haven. Then, it maintains business relations with the subsidiary as if it were an independent party. Transactions are always designed to benefit the subsidiary, because money earned by the offshore entity will not be taxed. In other words, the goal is to establish bogus operations with the subsidiary in order to record a large proportion of the company's earnings in offshore accounts, removing them from taxation in countries where the corporation has real and substantial activities."

### Canada's role

Canada has helped build the global offshore financial system that enables transfer pricing. Deneault details the work of Canadian politicians, businessmen and Bank of Canada officials in developing taxation and banking policies in a number of Caribbean financial havens in his book *Canada – A New Tax Haven: How the Country That Shaped Caribbean Tax Havens Is Becoming One Itself*.

Resource companies are some of the leading culprits in misinvoicing. With commodity prices constantly in flux and their products entirely for export, mining companies are well placed to abuse countries' limited means of investigating false invoices and transfer pricing. Half of all internationally listed mining companies operating in Africa are based in Canada, and in my book *Canada in Africa: 300 Years Of Aid And Exploitation*, I detail more than half a dozen examples of Canadian mining firms publicly accused of tax avoidance.

In one of the best-detailed examples, a series of reports suggest that Canada's largest mining firm, Barrick Gold, short-

changed Tanzanians of tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars. A 2003 Alex Stewart Assayers audit concluded that mining companies overstated their losses by US\$502-million between 1999 and 2003, which cost the Tanzanian government \$132.5-million. The audit also suggested that \$25-million in royalties went unpaid.

Another report, financed by Norwegian Church Aid and Christian Aid, titled *A Golden Opportunity: How Tanzania is Failing To Benefit From Gold Mining*, found that between 2003 and 2008, foreign mining companies exported US\$2.5-billion in gold from Tanzania with only \$110-million reaching the government in royalties and direct taxes. As Tanzania's top gold producer during this period, Barrick consistently declared losses in order to pay minimal corporation tax. With many subsidiaries, including ones in notorious tax havens such as the Cayman Islands and Barbados, Africa Barrick Gold (now called Acacia) made it difficult for Tanzanian tax collectors to trace exactly what the country was owed.

Last year, a Tanzanian tribunal ruled that Barrick organised a "sophisticated scheme of tax evasion" in the East African country. As its Tanzanian operations delivered more than US\$400-million profit to shareholders between 2010 and 2013, the Toronto company failed to pay any corporate taxes.

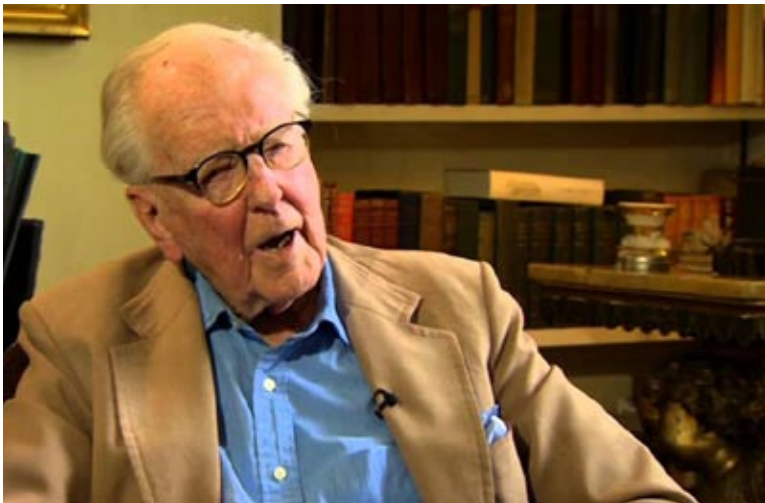
Transfer pricing deprives African governments of the tax revenues required to build schools, hospitals and other vital infrastructure. And tax avoidance by Canadian firms is one reason two-thirds of Africans continue to survive on less than US\$3.10 a day. **CT**

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**Yves Engler** is a Montreal-based activist and author. He has published eight books, the most recent being *Canada in Africa – 300 Years of Aid and Exploitation*. His web site is [www.yvesengler.com](http://www.yvesengler.com)

***The goal is to establish bogus operations with the subsidiary in order to record a large proportion of the company's earnings in offshore accounts, removing them from taxation in countries where the corporation has real and substantial activities***

# Lawyer's gamble helped change obscenity law

When Jeremy Hutchinson, who died last month, won an obscenity case against *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, publishing became more liberal, writes **Sue Rabbitt Rolfe**



Jeremy Hutchinson defended Penguin Books after it published the unexpurgated version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* at London's Old Bailey courthouse in 1960.

***Penguin's decision to publish 200,000 copies on the advice of Hutchinson and joint lead counsel Gerald Gardiner was a massive gamble***

Jeremy Hutchinson, who died last month aged 102, was one of England's finest criminal barristers. He was counsel of choice for some of the most high-profile cases of his era, defending Christine Keeler and Great Train robber Charles Wilson and also obscenity cases against novels such as *Fanny Hill* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Later known as Lord Hutchinson of Lullington, his role defending Penguin Books after it published the unexpurgated version of the DH Lawrence classic remains the landmark case in British obscenity law.

But look at the details and something extraordinary emerges: Penguin's decision to publish 200,000 copies on the advice of Hutchinson and joint lead counsel Gerald Gardiner was a massive gamble. It set up a case that were it not for the incompetence of the prosecution could easily have gone the other way.

*Lady Chatterley's Lover* had only ever been legally published in abridged versions in the UK, since 1932. However, by 1960, the unexpurgated edition was sold in Europe and America, and could be obtained under-the-counter in London if you knew where to go, but Penguin co-founder Allen Lane wanted to publish a cheap paperback of the full thing.

The idea was to put it out at 3s 6d, the same price as ten cigarettes, to make it affordable for the "young and the hoi-polloi." The excuse was the 30th anniversary of Lawrence's death from tuberculosis at the age of 45.

When Penguin consulted Hutchinson and Gardiner, the lawyers retreated to reflect. A trial under the new Obscene Publications Act seemed inevitable, as the act's first paragraph stated that material will be deemed obscene if it contains elements that tend as a whole "to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely . . . to read, see or hear" it.

The act included a new defence in cases

where the offending segments were “for the public good on the ground that [they are] in the interests of science, literature, art or learning.” In consultation with several literary experts, Hutchinson and Gardiner felt most of the racy scenes and bad language – including (30) “fucks” and (14) “cunts” – could fall under this defence. Lawrence, after all, was one of the most highly regarded writers of his era.

Hutchinson was concerned about page 258, however, where anal sex crops up – albeit obliquely. It has Oliver Mellors, the lover in the book’s title, trying to divorce his wife Bertha Coutts and being accused by her “of all unspeakable things.” Clifford Chatterley writes a letter to his own wife saying that Coutts has aired details about her marriage to Mellors which are “usually buried down in the deepest grave of matrimonial silence.”

But, he comments: “Humanity has always had a strange avidity for unusual sexual postures, and if a man likes to use his wife, as Benvenuto Cellini says, ‘in the Italian way,’ well that is a matter of taste.”

Lady Chatterley has pause for thought: “Connie remembered the last night she had spent with [Mellors], and shivered. He had known all that sensuality, even with a Bertha Coutts! It was really rather disgusting. It would be well to be rid of him, clear of him altogether.”

Her friend Duncan Forbes then makes light of it: “If he’s made love to his wife all ends on, hasn’t he a right to? She ought to be proud of it.”

While homosexual anal sex between consenting men was legalised 50 years ago in the UK, the heterosexual equiva-

lent became legal only at the millennium in England and Wales and was illegal in 1960. (The 2001 film *Bridget Jones’s Diary* celebrated legalisation with a pretty explicit scene between Renée Zellweger and Hugh Grant.)

Illegal acts could still potentially use the public good defence, but Hutchinson feared it made the case much harder to win. Gardiner and the experts at the meeting dismissed his fears. In these more innocent times, they were betting

that the prosecution wouldn’t grasp the point and omit it from their case. Hutchinson agreed to go ahead and advised Penguin accordingly.

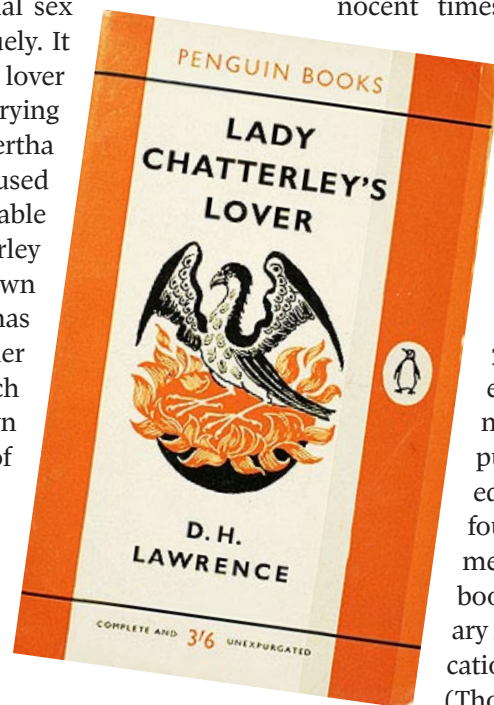
The defence called 35 professors of literature, authors, journalists, editors, critics, publishers and child education experts, and four Anglican churchmen. Each declared the book had sufficient literary merit to deserve publication for the public good. (Those less convinced of Lawrence’s genius begged

off – the children’s author Enid Blyton declared she had never read the book and “my husband said no at once.”)

Lead prosecutor Mervyn Griffith-Jones cross-examined only 14 of the 35. He lost most of those rounds, and sometimes his temper in the process. It was only in his closing speech he said to the jury: “Would you look at page 258. It is a passage which I have not – and I do not think anybody has – referred to during the course of cross-examination, or indeed at any time during this trial. It . . . describes what is called the ‘night of sensual passion.’”

He read out the whole passage remark-

***While homosexual anal sex between consenting men was legalised 50 years ago in the UK, the heterosexual equivalent became legal only at the millennium in England and Wales and was illegal in 1960***



## Beating Censorship

**A watershed in British obscenity law had been achieved without any discussion about the illegal sex acts central to the novel**

ing: “Not very easy, sometimes, not very easy, you know, to know what in fact he is driving at in that passage.”

It’s not clear how many jurors understood the passage, although some were said to be visibly shocked. Certainly Griffith-Jones had missed the significance entirely, having referenced it only to underline the book’s general depravity. Mr Justice Byrne summed up with no reference to anal sex either. The issues were, he said, promiscuity and adultery described in words that were “normally obscene.”

The jury returned in three hours and found Penguin not guilty. Neither the clergy nor any of the other experts had been

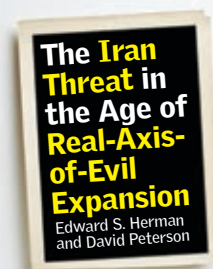
examined on anal sex and it is not clear whether they realised they were implicitly defending it or not. A watershed in British obscenity law had been achieved without any discussion about the illegal sex acts central to the novel.

In the wake of this case, publishing in Britain became considerably more liberal. Had Hutchinson not agreed to advise Penguin to take that extraordinary gamble, things could have turned out very differently. **CT**

*Sue Rabbitt Roff is a part time tutor in medical education at the University of Dundee. This article first appeared at [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)*

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## Kettling tea ladies: out of control policing

Concerns are increasingly being raised about heavy-handed policing of anti-fracking demos, argues **Keith Taylor**

Radiohead's Thom Yorke gave voice to frustrated environmentalists everywhere when he delivered the refrain: "We're not scaremongering, this is really happening." Almost 20 years later, Radiohead's Kid: A climate anthem is more relevant than ever. The climate breakdown is underway, with more frequent and more intensely devastating weather events and whole Pacific islands disappearing beneath rising sea levels.

We see the evidence everywhere. The concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in our atmosphere has surged to record levels and emissions are set to rise in 2017 for the first time in four years. Leaders are talking the talk on climate breakdown and carbon emissions but not walking the walk. Nowhere is that more obvious than here in the UK.

At the UN climate talks last month, the UK government proclaimed Britain a world-leader in the fight against runaway climate change. Meanwhile, back in England, the same government is about to give the go-ahead for fracking – against the will of the communities upon which it is being forced.

Fracking is a particularly dangerous and unconventional form of fossil fuel extraction that is so unpopular it has the backing of just 13 percent of the British public. In North Yorkshire and Lancashire, the two main fracking areas in England, decisive local opposition has been overruled at the government's behest.

So it is only reasonable that a coalition of climate activists and ignored local residents have taken to the streets to protest against the climate-destructive process. What is entirely unreasonable, however, is the heavy-handed, disproportionate and even violent response those protesters have faced from police and security contractors.

Officers are increasingly employing aggressive and confrontational tactics in an attempt to neutralise the political impact of fracking protests, according to the latest report by the Network for Police Monitoring (Netpol), which was published last month. The human rights group warns that cumulatively these tactics are having a "chilling effect" on the freedom to protest itself.

But I don't need to take Netpol's

word for it for I have witnessed these tactics. It was during a visit to Kirby Misperton, in North Yorkshire, to listen to protesters' concerns about the policing operation that I witnessed the shocking treatment of Jackie Brookes, the fracking site's 79-year-old "tea lady."

On arriving at the site, situated in a beautiful part of Yorkshire, the first thing that struck me was the sheer scale of the policing operation. The number of boots on the ground was completely disproportionate to the criminal threat posed by a small group of peaceful local residents.

One of those residents was the very gentle Jackie Brookes who has decided to express her opposition to fracking in her community in the most Yorkshire way possible – by keeping campaigners, and officers, topped up with tea and cake.

However, on the day of my visit officers had taken exception to the location of Jackie's tea stall. She was told to move it further away from the entrance to the site. But, before she had even received an answer to her question about the legal basis for asking her to move, Jackie's stall was stormed by at least 15 officers who proceeded to kettle the 79-year-old – to a chorus of "shame on you" from fellow residents.

The police response was a frightening overreaction. It amounted to little more than the bullying and intimidation of visibly shaken grandmother whose only crime was being a "radical" in charge of a tea stall.

In the end, though, the bullying and intimidation worked. Jackie – the dangerous teapot terrorist – was herself terrorised into moving away from her stall before the police moved in to dismantle it.

Taxpayers are forking out almost £250,000 a month so that North Yorkshire police can maintain such an unnecessarily heavy presence on site. Not only is it not a good use of taxpayer money to deploy over a dozen officers to bully a grandmother into submission, but it isn't good policing either.

Sadly, as the Netpol report makes clear, Jackie's treatment at the hands of the police is just one example among many.

It is why I am repeating my call for the National Police Chiefs' Council to urgently review the guidance it produces to constabularies for the policing of fracking and drilling protests. I fully supporting Netpol's call for an independent inquiry into the policing of fracking protests.

UK police forces work on the fundamental principle of consent, but local residents are being forced to question whether officers are working to protect them or just the interests of the oil and gas industry. **CT**

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*Keith Taylor is the Green Party MEP for the South East region. This article first appeared at [www.politics.co.uk](http://www.politics.co.uk)*

their miserably paid state jobs to start their own small businesses. Hundreds of thousands of Cubans jumped at the opportunity, many flocking to businesses catering to tourists.

Cuba became the fastest growing site for Airbnb, as thousands of Cuban families spruced up extra bedrooms in their homes to accommodate foreign guests. Others took their life savings, or borrowed money from relatives abroad, to open small restaurants, called paladares, in their homes.

All over downtown Havana, we saw signs of this small business renaissance, with refurbished rooms for rent and boutique eateries boasting live salsa music and high-quality meals for about \$10. State-run hotels and restaurants, notorious for bad food and bad service, now face competition from well-run family businesses.

Unfortunately, the US is now rolling all that back. And Cuba's burgeoning private sector has already felt what they call "the Trump effect."

Jose Colome, owner of the Starbilen private restaurant in Havana that employs 35 people, shook his head in disgust. "We had 48 reservations from US tourist groups booked in the past three months; 30 of them cancelled."

Proximity Cuba, a travel agency catering to US university groups, lost half its business in one fell swoop. "We had developed wonderful programs for US students in Cuba. Suddenly, the administrators read the travel warning, and got cold feet, and cancelled," said Proximity Cuba's director Rodrigo Gonzalez.

On November 1, for the 26th year

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## How the US is trying to hurt Cuban business

Rolling back Obama's opening to Cuba hurts ordinary Cubans the most, writes **Medea Benjamin**

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**O**n November 8, just as President Trump was clinching new business deals with the repressive Communist government of China, his administration announced new rules rolling back President Obama's opening with Cuba.

The new regulations are supposed to punish hotels, stores, and other businesses tied to the Cuban military and, instead, direct economic activity toward businesses controlled by regular Cuban citizens.

But on a visit to the island with

a 40-person delegation organized by the peace group CodePink, I found that Cuba's small private businesses, the very sector the Trump administration says it wants to encourage, are already feeling the blow.

In 2014, President Obama used his executive power to renew diplomatic relations and relax restrictions on travel and trade with Cuba. The island, which already has a large tourist sector with guests from Europe and Canada, geared up for a tsunami of American visitors.

This coincided with a new Cuban policy of allowing Cubans to leave



in a row, the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to condemn the decades-old US embargo against Cuba. The vote this year was 191 nations against the embargo vs. two in favour: the United States and Israel.

Just before the UN vote, 10 US senators, led by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), sent a letter to President Trump saying: “Our failed embargo against Cuba has been repeatedly and publicly condemned by the international community as ineffective and harmful to the people of Cuba. The longer we maintain this outdated Cold War policy

the more our international and regional credibility suffers.”

They’re right. The embargo is a failed foreign policy that’s only served to punish the Cuban people and isolate the United States internationally. And rolling back Obama’s opening there is a major blow for diplomacy, people-to-people ties, and – most of all — Cuba’s new private businesses. **CT**

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*Medea Benjamin is the cofounder of CodePink and GlobalExchange.*

*This article was distributed by [www.OtherWords.org](http://www.OtherWords.org)*

25,000 more ultra-rich individual fortunes than the nations with next nine highest ultra-rich totals combined.

How much of this enormous wealth at America’s economic summit trickles down to average Americans? Not much. At first glance, that doesn’t appear to be the case. The average American adult, the Credit Suisse data show, boasts \$388,585 in net worth. Only two other nations in the world – Switzerland and Australia – have higher net worth averages.

But wealth averages can be deceiving. They represent a nation’s total household net worth divided by the nation’s total number of adults. The more wealth a nation’s rich hold, the higher the average will be. A nation of one millionaire and nine other adults with no wealth at all would have an average individual net worth of \$100,000.

So net worth averages can tell us next to nothing about the actual life experience of the typical person. To see how a nation’s most typical adults are doing, we need instead to calculate each nation’s median adult net worth. That means finding the net-worth level that represents the point at which half a nation’s adults have more wealth and half have less.

The new 2017 Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report helpfully calculates these medians. Switzerland and Australia again top the global list. The typical Swiss adult has a net worth of \$229,000. The typical Australian, \$195,400. And the typical American? A mere \$55,876. Twenty nations in all have higher median adult net worths than the United States.

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## Adding up the true cost of inequality

Americans, in effect, are paying what amounts to an “inequality tax,” writes **Sam Pizzigati**

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**T**he 12 months that ended this past summer, suggests the just-released annual Global Wealth Report from the Swiss bank Credit Suisse, ought to be cause for celebration. The world has never been richer. Credit Suisse’s researchers have discerned “a significant increase in wealth across the globe.” Net worth worldwide has increased by a remarkable \$16.7-trillion over the past year.

So why aren’t people worldwide cheering? That “significant increase in wealth,” the new Credit Suisse numbers make clear, has benefited only a precious few. The top one percent globally now hold 50.1 percent of the world’s household wealth, up

from 45.5 percent at the start of the century.

Within that top one percent, the really rich – deep pockets with at least \$50-million in net worth – are clearly leading the way. Since 2000, Credit Suisse calculates, the wealth of this “ultra high net worth” cohort has multiplied “five-fold.”

About half of these ultras, 49 percent, live in the United States. Credit Suisse counts 72,000 of these ultra-rich Americans. Some context: China, the host to the world’s second-highest collection of \$50-million-and-up personal fortunes, has only 18,100 ultras.

Some additional context: The United States hosts more than

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Just how much is inequality costing ordinary Americans? Comparing the United States to other more egalitarian-minded developed nations can give us a vivid sense of the high toll that inequality exacts. Take, for instance, the example of Japan, one of the world's most equal nations.

In their new Global Wealth Report, Credit Suisse's researchers describe the 2017 Japanese economy as "still in the doldrums." But ordinary Japanese households would almost certainly take their "doldrums" over the economic status quo in the United States any day of the week.

The numbers explain why. The United States has over 50 times more ultra-rich than Japan, and that enormous wealth at the top has the US average net worth towering over the average Japanese net worth, by a \$388,586 to \$225,057 margin. But Japan shares its household wealth far more equally than the United States. The typical Japanese adult holds \$123,724 in net worth, much more than double the \$55,876 US median adult net-worth figure.

Ordinary Americans, in effect, are each paying what amounts to an "inequality tax." If we distributed our wealth as equally as the Japanese distribute theirs, the typical American would likely be somewhere around \$100,000 richer.

Or take Australia, a nation that now sports almost the exact same average adult wealth as the United States. The average Aussie has a \$402,603 net worth, just a bit above the average American's \$388,586. The net worth of the median – most typical – Australian? A stunning \$195,417, four times the me-

dian adult net worth in the United States.

Australians used to see their nation as a relatively equal society. They don't anymore. Rising inequality has become a major Australian political issue. But Australia remains far more equal a society than the United States. The top one percent in Australia only holds an estimated 15 percent of the nation's wealth. America's top one percent,

Federal Reserve researchers reported earlier this fall, now holds 38.6 percent. **CT**

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**Sam Pizzigati** edits *Too Much*, the Institute for Policy Studies online monthly on excess and inequality. His latest book: *The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970* (Seven Stories Press).

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## The tyrant is gone, here comes the next one!

Robert Mugabe has been replaced by his virtual shadow, Emmerson Mnangagwa, warns **Rick Salutin**

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Photo: Wikipedia

**Robert Mugabe has gone, but do Zimbabweans have reason to fear his successor?**

I found the delirious celebration over the resignation of tyrant Robert Mugabe in Harare last month, exhilarating, not because the crowds thought it was the end of the darkness, but because many

surely knew it wasn't.

The BBC's anchor asked their correspondent, a Zimbabwean, what it made her think of. She said unhesitatingly: our liberation from colonial rule (and the odious name, Rhodesia) in 1980, when she was a girl. She seemed undisheartened that it had to be reprised and likely will have to be again in the future. Is this naiveté or sophistication?

It's true many had known only Mugabe's harsh rule, but they also knew he'd be replaced by his virtual shadow, Emmerson Mnangagwa, who'd been a freedom fighter, chief cop during the ethnic massacres of the 1980s in Matabeleland, and co-thief of the 2008 election. He has the same blood on his hands. The anchor managed to mislay his nickname, The Crocodile, applying it to Mugabe, although it's used for

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Mnangagwa, but she inadvertently made a wider point.

Joy reigned unconfined in the streets. My favourite moment was a photo of a “Wenger out!” sign, meaning the manager of Arsenal’s football team in the UK. WTF? Yet why not? If one tyrant who wrecked lives full of promise could go, let’s toss the rest, including unpopular sports types. It seems to me people yearn for liberation in many ways at once. The great messianic movements of the Middle Ages were pan-revolutionary: religiously, politically, sexually, economically. They were antinomian. The only law would be: There are no laws! Go be happy, people.

I had a taste of that in the late

1960s: everything got transformed at once: sex, drugs, music, politics (just one piece of the chaos). It dismayed many of those who were older, even slightly, either because they feared the bedlam, or were envious since their lives were already so trammelled that they couldn’t get in on it. Then it collapsed, quite swiftly (at the same moment that Let It Be hit the jukeboxes). Would anyone rather have skipped it, given the letdown? I doubt it. But reality descended abruptly and decisively.

Zimbabwe is an exuberant place, with exuberant names: Welshman Ncube, Godknows Mwanza, Canaan Banana – it’s like flipping the bird at Cecil Rhodes: You want to impose your English names? We’ll do you

one better. It’s also Africa’s most educated, literate country. Where’s the sophistication right now?

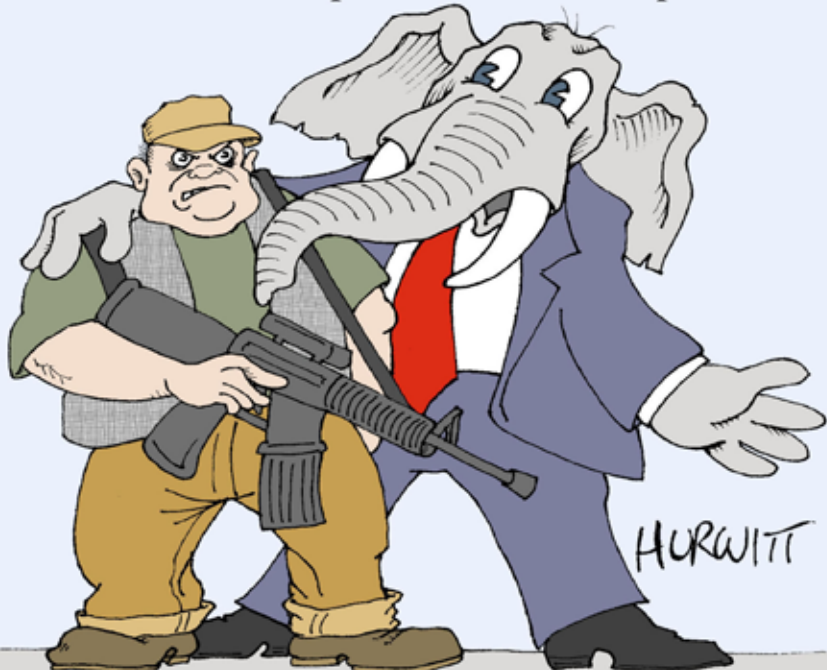
It lies in giving yourself fully to the present while knowing it’s transient, yet keeping in view, somewhere on the horizon, your larger goals. All victory parties are temporary and conditional, especially when you scarcely get to take a breath between the old tyrant and the new one. The only game available is the long game, for the end of which none of us will be around. That’s pretty savvy. **CT**

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*Rick Salutin is a Toronto-based activist and author. This article first appeared in the Toronto Star newspaper.*

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