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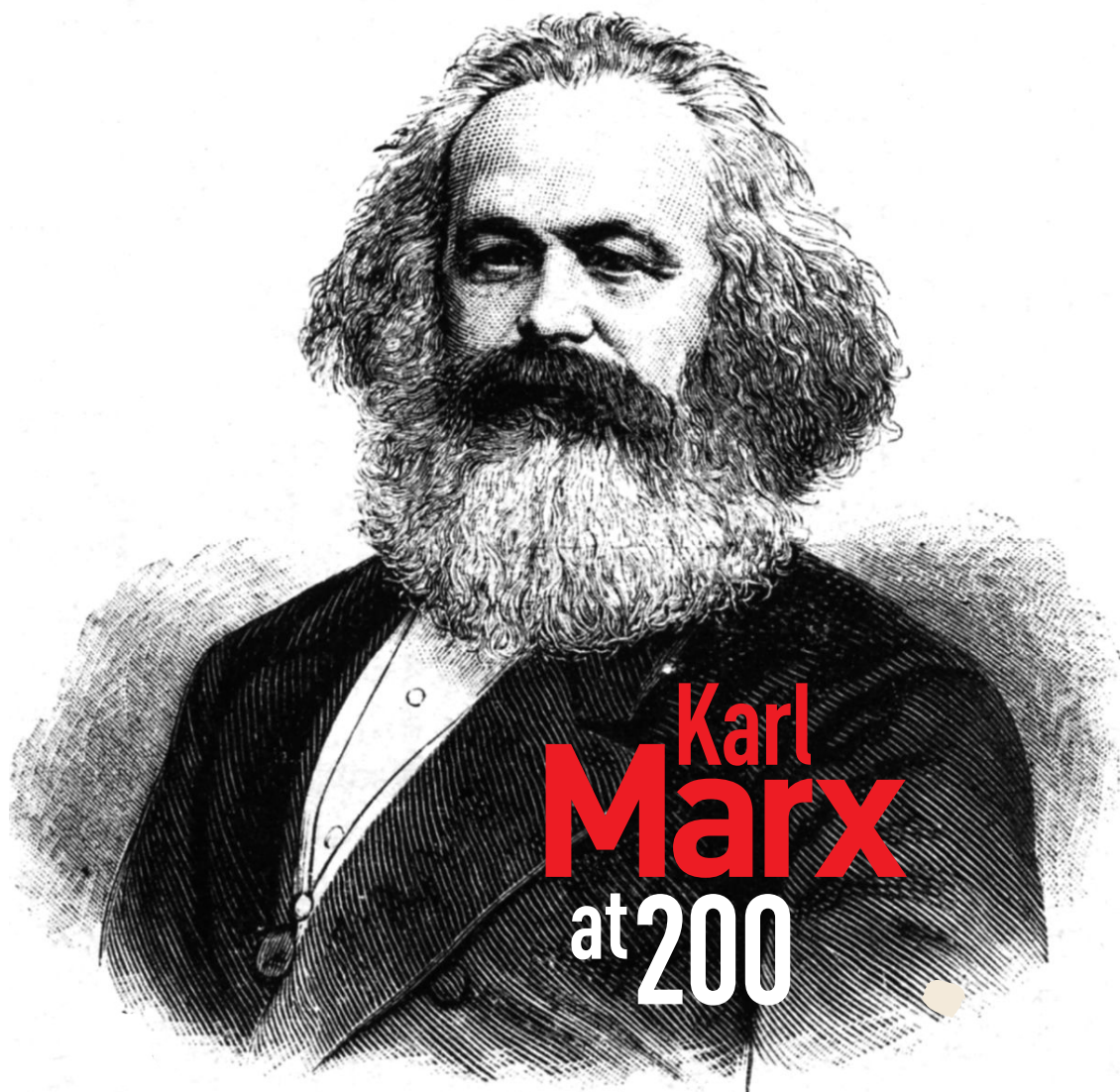
ISSUE 160

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MID-MAY 2018

GAZA MASSACRE

How long can Israel get away with its "deliberate policy of killing and maiming unarmed protesters and bystanders?"



Karl
Marx
at 200

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Mid-May 2018 • Issue 160

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West's failure will lead to next massacre

Israeli politicians and media desperately search for moral justification for latest Gaza slaughter

THE contrasting images coming out of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories on Monday, May 14 could not have been starker – or more disturbing.

Faced with protests at the perimeter fence in Gaza, Israeli snipers killed dozens of unarmed Palestinians and wounded more than 2,000 others, including children, women, journalists and paramedics, in a hail of live fire. Amnesty, the international human rights organisation, rightly called it a “horror show”.

Such horror is now so routine that TV anchors could only headline the news as the worst day of bloodshed in Gaza in four years, when Israel massacred civilians in its last major military assault.

Already gasping from the chokehold of Israel's decade-long blockade of Gaza, local hospitals are now collapsing from the weight of casualties.

A few kilometres away, meanwhile, Israelis were partying.

So-called “liberal” Tel Aviv was busy “chicken dancing” with Netta, who had just won the Eurovision Song Contest and gave a free open-air performance to celebrate.

And in Jerusalem, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu was glad-handing a bevy of US officials, including Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter and policy adviser. They were there to beam for the cameras as the US opened its embassy in the occupied city.

The move pre-empts negotiations over the city's fate and sabotages Palestinian ambitions

for East Jerusalem to become the capital of a future Palestinian state.

Netanyahu's grin said it all. As he mouthed platitudes about “Middle Eastern peace”, he finally had Washington's blessing for all of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. And next year Europe will give its implicit blessing, too, by hosting the Eurovision Song Contest there.

But amid the euphoria, a few Israeli commentators understood that politics is about more than power – it's about imagery, too. The champagne-quaffing in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem while Gaza drowned in blood left a profoundly sour taste in the mouth.

There was more than a whiff of hypocrisy too in statements about “defending borders” from a state that has refused to declare its borders since its creation exactly 70 years ago – as well as from a Netanyahu government currently trying to establish a Greater Israel over the Palestinian territories.

But the hypocrisy was not restricted to Israel and Washington, which parroted Mr Netanyahu's talking points. There was an ugly equivocation from other western leaders. They spoke of “regret”, “tragedy”, and “concern at the loss of life”, as though an act of God had struck Gaza, not an order from Israeli commanders to quell the Palestinian urge for freedom with live ammunition.

Equally dishonest was talk of the “need for re-



Young protesters flee as tear gas is rained down by Israeli drones.

straint from both sides” and “clashes”, as though the protesters had been tussling with Israeli soldiers in hand-to-hand combat rather than being coldly picked off through telescopic sights.

Israeli politicians and media have desperately searched for a moral justification for these executions. They have talked of “kite terrorism” and a supposed stone-throwing threat to soldiers positioned hundreds of yards away.

While thousands of Palestinians have been executed or maimed, how many Israelis have been harmed in the past six weeks of Gaza’s protests? Precisely none.

This is a strange kind of terror. The reality is that tiny Gaza is becoming rapidly uninhabitable, as the United Nations has repeatedly warned. For more than a decade Israel has blockaded it from land, air and sea, while intermittently pummeling the enclave with missiles and military invasions.

A senior New York Times correspondent tweeted on Monday that Gaza’s Palestinians looked as though they had a “death wish”. But two-million Palestinians – a population rapidly growing – are inmates in what is effectively a shrinking prison, whose store rooms are almost bare.

Israel falsely claims they were pawns in a game by Hamas to pressure Israel

Tens of thousands of them have shown they are prepared to risk their lives not for some death cult but to win freedom, the most precious human impulse of all.

And they have preferred confrontational, non-violent resistance as a way to shame Israel and the world into recognising their plight.

And yet instead, Israel has stripped them of all agency by falsely claiming that they are pawns

JONATHAN COOK



Tyres blaze, spilling acrid smoke into the air as an injured sniper victim is carried off for medical treatment.

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in a game by Hamas to pressure Israel.

But in so far as Hamas is trying to influence Israel, what is its aim?

A week before the massacre, a gloating Israeli media reported that Hamas was quietly appealing for a long-term truce with Israel, effectively renouncing the Palestinians' right to violently resist Israel's occupation.

It would not be the first time. But whereas once Hamas sought a truce in return for a two-state solution, now it is said to have requested simply an end to the blockade and a chance to rebuild Gaza.

Even this minimal concession is rejected by Israel. Instead an Israeli minister responded to Monday's slaughter by proposing that Israel assassinate the Hamas leadership.

Israel may be without remorse, but are western leaders feeling shamed? Apart from South Africa and Turkey, none has so far withdrawn an ambassador. There are no calls for embargos on sales of arms, no demands for war crimes inves-

tigations, no threats of trade sanctions.

And no plans, of course, for the kind of "humanitarian intervention" western governments have keenly promoted in other parts of the Middle East where civilians are under threat.

For seven decades, the west has pampered Israel at every turn. The lack of any meaningful punishment for violating Palestinian rights led directly to Monday's massacre.

And the failure to inflict a price on Israel for this massacre – in fact, the reverse: visible rewards with a relocated US embassy and the chance to host the Eurovision Song Contest – will lead to the next massacre, and the one after.

Handwringing is not enough. It is time for anyone with a conscience to act. **CT**

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

UK Labour Party demands end to siege

Shadow Foreign Secretary slams Israel's "deliberate policy of killing and maiming unarmed protesters and bystanders", but Labour Friends of Israel blames victims

EMILY Thornberry, the UK Labour Party's Shadow Foreign Secretary, responding to the killing of Palestinians in Gaza, said: "We condemn unreservedly the Israeli government for their brutal, lethal and utterly unjustified actions on the Gaza border, and our thoughts are with all those Palestinians in Gaza whose loved ones have been killed or injured as a result.

"These actions are made all the worse because they come not as the result of a disproportionate over-reaction to one day's protests, but as the culmination of six weeks of an apparently systemic and deliberate policy of killing and maiming unarmed protesters and bystanders who pose no threat to the forces at the Gaza border, many of them shot in the back, many of them shot hundreds of metres from the border, and many of them children.

"Throughout that six-week period, the UN's Secretary General has been calling for an independent investigation into these incidents, one that should urgently determine whether international law has been broken, and hold the Netanyahu government to account for their actions. The UK should lead calls for the UN Security Council to order such an investigation today.

"These incidents must also be the catalyst for urgent and concerted international pressure on the Netanyahu government to lift the blockade

on Gaza, and end Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories. No longer can Netanyahu act as a law unto himself, under the protection of the Trump administration, whose decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem today has further inflamed the situation.

"In the meantime, we urge the Israeli forces serving on the Gaza border to show some long-overdue responsibility to their fellow human beings, and stop this vicious and utterly avoidable slaughter of peaceful protesters demanding the right to return to their homes."



Emily Thornberry: "Stop this vicious and totally unavoidable slaughter".

In contrast, the Labour Friends of Israel (LFI) – to which as many as 80 Labour Party MPs are affiliated – came under fire for victim blaming, saying " Hamas must accept responsibility" for scores of Palestinians killed during demonstrations to mark 70 years since the Nakba, "the catastrophe".

In a tweet, that was later deleted, LFI responded to the killing of more than 60, including six children, and the injuring of 2,500 Palestinians by stating: "Tragic events on the Gazan border; all civilian deaths are regrettable. Hamas must accept responsibility for these events. Their successful attempt to hijack peaceful protest as cover to attack Israeli border communities must be condemned by all who seek peace in the Middle East."

CT

Adding a new chapter to the Nakba

Israel's latest attack on Gaza demonstrators increases Palestine's desire for justice after 70 years of forced exile

SEVENTY years ago, Israel was founded through the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. Today, Israel continues to wage war on Palestinians – driving them from their homes and denying them equal rights.

On Monday, May 14, as Israelis celebrated Donald Trump's cruel provocation in relocating the US embassy to Jerusalem, Palestinians in besieged Gaza came out to protest an American president legitimising the colonisation of their land – and to demand the right to return to the homes and land stolen from them.

For that, they were massacred in cold blood. Israeli soldiers killed at least 55 Palestinians and injured more than 1,000, firing live ammunition into the crowds.

Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, Israeli mobs harassed and assaulted Palestinians protesting the US embassy moving to a contested international city. Israeli forces, aided by US troops on the ground, confiscated Palestinian flags and herded protesters like cattle. As they watched unarmed Palestinian protesters beaten and arrested by security forces, Israeli counter-protesters chanted: "Burn them, shoot them, kill them."

Meanwhile, the new US embassy opened its doors in Jerusalem. First family members Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman attended the ceremony.

Trump himself was missing from the scene, but made sure to send a video celebrating the

opening. Leading one of the prayers at the relocation ceremony was Robert Jeffress, a Baptist pastor from Dallas, Texas, who has referred to Islam as "a heresy from the pit of hell."

May 15, the day after Israeli independence day, is the day that Palestinians commemorate the Nakba, which means catastrophe in Arabic. It is the day that Palestinians remember the 750,000 civilians forcibly displaced from their homes and the more than four-million acres of Palestinian land confiscated and occupied by the fledging Israeli state.

The Zionist slogan before the founding of Israel had been "a land without a people for a people without a land." But in truth, Palestine had to be made into a land without a people.

So, between March 31 and May 15, 1948, Zionist militias destroyed more than 200 Palestinian villages, massacred their inhabitants, and used terror to expel hundreds of thousands more Palestinians.

Today, seven-million Palestinians are forbidden from returning to their occupied villages and towns. Though many live as refugees in neighbouring countries or as immigrants overseas, the majority of Palestinians live within miles of their now-occupied homes.

Often framed as a religious war spanning millennia, the Nakba was, in fact, the result of the late 19th-century political movement that aimed

SUMAYA AWAD



Slingshots against snipers. Gaza protesters demand the right of return after 70 years of exile.

to cleanse Palestinians from their land in order to create a Jewish-majority state in historic Palestine.

Israel has attempted to frame the Nakba as just one side of the story in a two-sided conflict. In 2011, the Israeli Knesset passed the Nakba Law, which penalises public institutions receiving funding from the state for mourning or commemorating the Nakba. But no matter how hard Israel tries to erase the Nakba from memory, the reality is that the state's origins are inseparable from the brutality of 1948.

Trump's decision in December to move the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem set off a series of protests around the world. Jerusalem has been and continues to be a symbol of Palestinian sovereignty.

At the time of the announcement, an overwhelming majority of the United Nations General Assembly voted against Trump's decree, but this international body holds little power to check the ambitions of a major imperialist state like the US.

Although nearly 40 percent of Jerusalem's population is Palestinian, Palestinians are not

afforded the right to vote, the right to buy land or the right to build on land they possess. Palestinians in Jerusalem – as, indeed, throughout Israel – live in a segregated society that discriminates against them at every turn.

In Jerusalem, the streets are heavily militarised, the buses are segregated, and places of worship frequented by Palestinians are barricaded with checkpoints and numerous restrictions.

Although legally allowed to live anywhere in the city, the majority of Palestinians are kept in East Jerusalem, where Israel has steadily been revoking residency cards. Since 1967, nearly 15,000 Palestinian residents of Jerusalem have had their residency revoked.

It is clear that Trump's announcement – and Israel's enthusiasm for it – is a provocation designed to bind the US and Israel closer together as the two countries, led by right-wing fanatics, embrace ethno-nationalism.

While this manoeuvre meshes neatly with Trump's pandering to the constituency of far-

right Christian Zionists in the US, there's more to it than that.

From the very first days of Trump's presidency, he has time and again showed his loyalty to the Israeli state, perhaps most clearly by his decision to appoint his former bankruptcy attorney David Friedman as US ambassador to Israel. Friedman used to serve as the president of the American Friends of the Bet El Institutions, where he raised money to fund the construction of illegal Jewish-only settlements in the West Bank.

Other Trump appointees, such as National Security Advisor John Bolton, also have strong ties to the apartheid state. Indeed, Benjamin Netanyahu was right last year when he said, "Israel does not have a better friend than Mr Trump".

For years, Palestinians have been fighting against the expansion of Israel's settler-colonial project. The constant threat to Palestinians in Jerusalem – from the revocation of residency cards to the innumerable bureaucratic hoops Palestinians must go through to build homes, own land, enroll in schools and visit their places of worship – is now magnified by the embassy move.

In very concrete terms, Israel just relocated the building that represents its biggest ally, military sponsor and partner in crime from the western edge of its occupied lands to the very center. For anyone who still thinks that either the US or Israel plans to pursue a two-state solution, this move has obliterated that flimsy illusion.

In his book, "The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine", Israeli historian Ilan Pappé cites primary material from the documents of the Haganah militia to reveal the true designs of Israel's founders.

Officers leading the seizure of Palestinian towns received clear instructions to either "[destroy] villages (by setting fire to them, by blowing them up, and by planting mines in their deris) and especially of those population centres which are difficult to control continuously" or to besiege and search Palestinian villages, with any armed resistance to be "wiped out and the population expelled outside the borders of the state."

Between 1947 and 1948, the Haganah was

given orders to instill fear and terror in Palestinians in order to drive them out en masse. These orders were carried out in dozens of villages and towns, leaving more than 400 villages completely destroyed and hundreds of Palestinian men, women and children massacred.

Then, as now, the powers backing the formation of the Israeli state cared little about Palestinian lives. To them, the very existence of Palestinians was a threat.

Over the course of the last seven weeks, Israel has murdered at least 90 Palestinians in Gaza

In place of these destroyed villages, Israel has built illegal settlements, resorts, parks and other institutions Palestinians are barred from entering. Yigal Allon, a military commander during the 1948 ethnic cleansing and later a general in the Israel Defence Forces, was quoted in an early Israeli leader's diary as defending the indiscriminate killing of all Palestinians:

"We need to be accurate about timing, place, and those we hit. If we accuse a family – we need to harm them without mercy, women and children included. Otherwise this is not an effective reaction. During the operation there is no need to distinguish between guilty and not guilty."

Seventy years after Allon said these words, Israel continues to apply his strategy. In a statement following the release of a video depicting an Israeli laughing and cheering as he shot unarmed Palestinians in Gaza, Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman insisted, "There are no innocent people in Gaza."

Over the course of the last seven weeks, Israel has murdered at least 90 Palestinians in Gaza as they marched peacefully to demand their right of return. More than 7,000 have been injured in these mass demonstrations.

After Trump's announcement that the embassy would move to Jerusalem, Israel waived numerous permits to expedite the construction of the new US building. The enthusiasm for Trump and his far-right political ideology has been welcomed in Israel with open arms.

SUMAYA AWAD

In Jerusalem, Jewish residents have been parading in the streets of the city, waving Israeli flags; forcing their way into the al-Aqsa compound, which is one of Islam's holiest sites; and celebrating both the annual flag day ceremony as well as the embassy move.

Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat announced on Facebook that a traffic plaza near the embassy would be renamed "United States Square" in honour of Trump and his decree. A large sign near the embassy reads, "Trump, make Israel great."

The Nakba is not a thing of the past. Its impact is felt by every single Palestinian

Since 1948, Israel has strengthened its expansionist project, incorporating more Palestinian land under its control and subjecting Palestinians to a brutal occupation. In fact, at the height of the so-called Oslo "peace process" between 1993 and 2000, the number of illegal Jewish-only settlements doubled.

In the last couple of years, Israeli settlement construction has again risen sharply, with an estimated 3,700 new settlement homes approved in 2018 alone. These settlements are illegal under international law, according to the Fourth Geneva Convention. However, just this month, the Israeli committee tasked with legal issues pertaining to settlements built in the West Bank released the Levy Report, officially called the Report on the Legal Status of Building in Judea and Samaria. The 200-page report lays out detailed proposals and recommendations for the legalization of Jewish-only settlements built on Palestinian land.

At the heart of both the protests in Gaza and Trump's decision to relocate the US embassy is a driving factor, viewed from opposite vantage points: the struggle of Palestinians to demand their right of return.

More than anything, remembering the Nakba today is about confronting the fact that Palestinians are illegally and unjustly prevented from

returning to their homes. Many Palestinians to this day hold the keys to properties from which they were expelled.

This is why Palestinians are marching and dying in Gaza. And this is also precisely why Israel expedited the move of the US embassy. The more Israel's project expands, the more difficult it is for Palestinians and their supporters to realize their just demands to return.

All the while, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and fellow Palestinian elites are nowhere to be found.

Not a single one of the so-called Palestinian representatives released a statement regarding Jerusalem in the days leading up to the embassy relocation. Instead, most of these cabinet members were out of the country during May 14's ceremony and massacre.

The Nakba is not a thing of the past. Its impact is felt by every single Palestinian, and its memory shields against a systematic attempt to white-wash the violence and bloodshed that characterised Israel's birth 70 years ago, and that sustains Israel's apartheid regime today.

Claims that Palestinians are "violent", "terrorists", or a "security threat" are more dubious than ever. What threat can children or the disabled possibly pose to an advanced military and nuclear power? Why is the Palestinian boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement – a nonviolent strategy for attaining justice and accountability – criminalised more than the murder of Palestinians?

The last seven weeks in Gaza are a reminder that no matter what Palestinians do, they will be characterised as violent instigators. Their existence, no matter how dismal, will be considered a threat – and their resistance a chance to indiscriminately slaughter them.

The more-than 60 Palestinians murdered on May 14 – and the 49 others killed during the Great Return marches – did not die in vain. While the Nakba is an ongoing reality for millions of Palestinians, so is their resistance. **CT**

Sumaya Awad is a Palestinian writer and activist based in New York City. This essay first appeared at www.socialistworker.org



SAYING "NO" TO PUTIN: Opposition demonstrators protest Vladimir Putin's fourth term as president at a rally in Moscow. Photo: TV screen grab

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On protests: Ours and theirs

The West doth protest too much (about Russian protests)

THE condemnation by the European Union, and others in the West, of police “violence” at an unauthorised opposition rally in Russia, stands in stark contrast with the line taken when protesters are dealt with forcefully in Western countries.

“The detention of over a thousand demonstrators and violence used against them by the Russian authorities across the country today threaten the fundamental freedoms of expression, association and assembly in the Russian Fed-

eration,” the European Union said in response to events on Saturday, May 5.

Pretty principled stuff, eh? Unfortunately, principles go out of the window when the demonstrations take place closer to home. Think back to the anti-austerity protests which spread across Europe a few years ago.

An Amnesty International report in April 2014 found that the Spanish government was using fines, harassment, and excessive force to limit the right to protest. “With threats of fines

NEIL CLARK

or threats of being beaten, the government is trying to stigmatise and criminalise people who are just practising their rights,” the report said.

It cited the case of one Ester Quintana, who was hit by a rubber bullet fired by the police, which caused her to lose her left eye. “The police act with complete impunity, while peaceful demonstrators and leaders of social movements are continually harassed, stigmatised, beaten, sometimes arrested to face criminal charges, imprisonment and fines,” said Amnesty’s Europe and Central Asia deputy programme director, Jezerca Tigani.

Yet the police actions in Spain brought about no fierce condemnation from the EU, or indeed from others who are usually so quick to castigate Russia.

It was a similar story last October when there was a crackdown on pro-independence protesters in Catalonia. Nearly 900 people were injured, some seriously, in clashes with the authorities. “In several cases, the actions of National Police and Civil Guard officers involved excessive and unnecessary use of force, and the dangerous use of riot control equipment, injuring hundreds of peaceful protesters,” John Dalhuisen of Amnesty said.

“It is a duty ... to uphold the rule of law. This sometimes requires the use of force”

Examples cited included one officer beating a woman round the neck and face on at least two occasions and another officer punching a man in the face. The EU did issue a statement, but only 24 hours later. It’s instructive to compare its wording with the one it issued at the weekend about Russia.

Its very first sentence declared: “Under the Spanish Constitution, yesterday’s vote in Catalonia was not legal.” Only in the fourth and final paragraph was there an allusion to the protests – but there was no denunciation of the Spanish authorities. The statement said: “We call on all relevant players to now move very swiftly from confrontation to dialogue. Violence can never be

an instrument in politics.”

So while the violence was directly laid at the door of the Russian authorities in one statement, in the other, it was presented as applying to “all relevant players”.

To literally add insult to injury, First Vice President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans declared: “It is a duty for any government to uphold the rule of law. This sometimes requires the proportionate use of force.”

But as we saw in Ukraine in 2014, some governments are more equal than others when it comes to being allowed to use “the proportionate use of force.” Hardcore ultra-nationalists and bona fide neo-Nazis provided the cutting edge to protests against the democratically-elected government of Viktor Yanukovich. But while it was OK for protesters to use violence, the government wasn’t supposed to respond. “This is Ukraine’s moment to meet the aspirations of its people or disappoint them,” declared Victoria Nuland of the US State Department.

Just imagine if protesters occupied or blocked government buildings in Washington, as they did in Kiev? You can be sure the US State Department’s line would be rather different.

The double standards are glaring and are there for all to see. Put simply, if the protests are against a government which the Western elites approve of, then brutality by the authorities will be ignored, or even justified, on the grounds that “law and order” must be maintained. In this scenario, it’ll be the protesters who are smeared as “thugs” and “anarchists” – even if they’re all waving joss-sticks and are sandal-wearing disciples of Mahatma Gandhi. But if the protesters are demonstrating against an administration which the Western elites want removed, then anything goes. The protesters can be as violent as they like, they can smash up statues, or even in the case of the US-sponsored “regime change” op against the Socialist government in Yugoslavia in 2000, set fire to government buildings, but they will never be condemned. In this scenario, it’s the government who will be warned: don’t you dare respond with force!

The hypocrisy over unauthorised protests is also off the scale. If I tried to organise, through social media, an unauthorised march against the NeoCon war lobby through central London, culminating in a protest outside Parliament, I'd very likely be arrested. Here is the UK law about "letting the police know" about public marches – www.gov.uk/protests-and-marches-letting-the-police-know

It's the same situation I'd imagine in all other Western nations. To hold a march you must notify the authorities and obtain official permission. But when this happens in Russia, there are expressions of outrage.

People should be able to protest where they want – say those who oppose such a right in their own country. In fact, the Russian authorities say they offered the anti-Putin demonstrators several choices of venue at the weekend, including Sakharov Avenue, where a big protest had already taken place earlier in the week. But opposition figure Alexei Navalny urged his supporters to go somewhere else.

Now, you can either support the right to protest anywhere, or you can oppose it. But what you can't do – unless you're a Weapons Grade hypocrite – is support the right to protest anywhere in Russia, but not the same right in Britain, France, or the US.

The respective cases of Pussy Riot and Trenton Oldfield are illuminative. The former were lauded in Western establishment circles after they were arrested and sentenced to two years in jail for bursting into Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and performing an obscenity-laden song which attacked the Orthodox Church's support for Putin. Madonna, Sting, Peter Gabriel, and the Red Hot Chili Peppers were among the celebs who voiced their support for the "prisoners of conscience", who were released before term.

There was no such support for Trenton Oldfield. If you haven't heard of him, that's not surprising because his case, unlike Pussy Riot's, didn't receive international coverage. The Australian was arrested after disrupting the annual Oxford vs Cambridge Boat Race in London.

Rightly or wrongly, he wanted to make a public statement about elitism and poverty – but didn't get as much sympathy as the Russian punk-rockers. He went to prison for six months and was threatened with deportation.

"Britain was one of the first countries to come out in support of Pussy Riot – so we thought people would stand up for the same thing here," Oldfield's wife Deepa said in a newspaper interview. But she was disappointed. Instead, she noted how politicians intervened to increase her husband's charge.

The right to espouse genuinely anti-Establishment views, is gravely threatened in the West

If we are serious about protecting free speech then it's not just about allowing people to protest. It's about not denying them platforms either. While UK Neocons were attacking Russia for "anti-democratic clampdowns", there was also glee from the same Neo-McCarthyite witch-hunters that the venue hosting a conference in Leeds critiquing mainstream media coverage of the Syrian conflict had bowed to pressure and decided to cancel the event.

Among the invited speakers were a former British ambassador and two university professors. Imagine the outcry if this blatant act of censorship had happened in Nizhny Novgorod. But it occurred in the UK, so let's pretend not to notice. The sad truth is that the right to protest, the right to dissent, the right to espouse genuinely anti-Establishment views, is gravely threatened in the West. Before pointing our fingers at Russia, we need to get our own house in order. As the old proverb goes, *Medice, cura te ipsum*. **CT**

Neil Clark is a journalist, writer, broadcaster and blogger. He has written for newspapers and magazines in the UK and other countries and blogs at www.neilclark66.blogspot.com – where he invites readers to contribute to his legal fund to pay for court action against Oliver Kamm of The Times, who he has sued for libel and harassment. Details at <https://t.co/BScdPUvotc>

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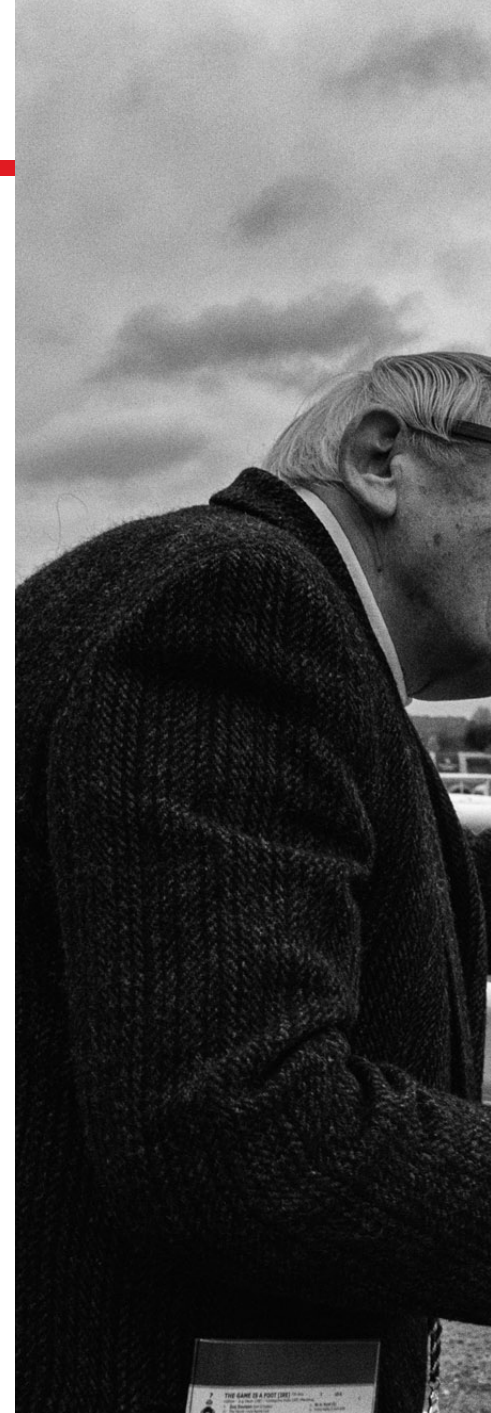
They're off!

Capturing the thrills, spills, fun
– and despair – of the Sport of Kings

SINCE 2005, photographer Martin Amis has visited the race-tracks of Southern England to capture images for his book, *The Gamblers*, a portrait of punters united in a single quest: to identify – and put their money on – the next winner.

“One of my fondest childhood memories is of my regular trips to the races with my father. I loved to watch the horses race, but I loved even more to watch the motley cast of characters betting on them. The stench of beer and tobacco would fill the air, and the bookmakers’ chants of the latest odds cut through the gamblers’ lively conversations as I helped my father place his bets,” says Amis.

His travels took him from Lingfield Park to Windsor, Cheltenham to Plumpton, where he photographed the people at their racing rituals, visiting the parade ring, placing bets, cheering his selections, and trekking to





Photographs
from 'The
Gamblers'
© Martin Amis
courtesy
RRB PhotoBooks

MARTIN AMIS



Photograph from 'The Gamblers' © Martin Amis courtesy RRB Photobooks

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the bar later to celebrate or commiserate.

Mr Amis and I have something in common, for one of my earliest memories is of attending the races at Market Rasen in Lincolnshire. But, unlike him, I hated it – apart from the small container of hot peas that I clutched tightly to keep my hands warm. I never returned.

However, I didn't read about the origins of the author's love of the Sport of Kings in his book. Instead, I had to rely on internet searches, a press handout and emails to a helpful publicist for information, for *The Gamblers* contains not a word of text, nor captions to any of its striking, quirky, and entertaining photographs.

I asked Rudi Thoemmes, the publisher at RRB Photobooks, via his publicist, the reason for this crucial omission.

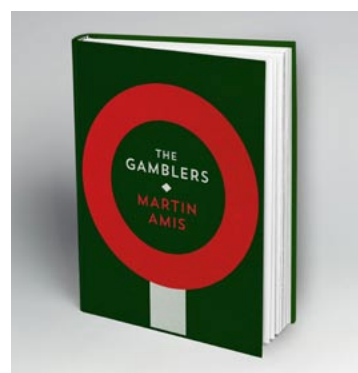
His response: "I generally discourage texts in photobooks. It might be an allergy to my previous publishing venture dealing with academics. Texts can take away from the flow of the images. If the information on the page is insufficient there is plenty available on our website and blog or if you google the book in the form of interviews and descriptions".

I respect Mr Thoemmes's opinion, but I cannot imagine many customers flicking through the pages of *The Gamblers* at their bookstore, taking out their cellphones, conducting a web search to find out what it's all about, and then dashing to the counter, credit card in hand.

That's a pity: Mr Amis's photographs are superb, but 1,000 words of information would have added context and aided understanding, and made them even more enjoyable.

Tony Sutton

MARTIN AMIS



THE GAMBLERS

Martin Amis

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NIGEL GIBSON

Karl Marx at 200

His critique of capitalism is based on his desire to develop a society based on human need rather than one destroyed by the fetish of accumulation of wealth

THINKING of the relevance of Karl Marx on the 200th anniversary of his birth on May 5 1818, takes me back to a wonderful picture of him in Algeria. It was taken in his final year in 1882. Underneath the full white beard is that familiar glint in his eye. He is up to something.

Though seriously ill, he took an active interest in local life penning a long letter to his daughter Laura. He wrote appreciatively: “For the Muslims there is no such thing as subordination; they are neither ‘subjects’ nor ‘administrés’ ... something which Europeans have totally failed to understand. Nevertheless, they will go to rack and ruin without a revolutionary movement.”

In his last years, after the Paris Commune of 1871 when working people rose up against the capitalist state, he became interested in alternative paths to socialism. In his Ethnological

Notebooks compiled in 1881, he critically read ethnographers, praising the freedom that the Native American Iroquois women had compared to women in “civilised” societies.

It was live human beings and their reason that remained essential – not the mechanical materialism that Marxism is often reduced to. Marx was a revolutionary humanist, open to – and inspired by – the new passions and forces that spring up and open new avenues to a truly human society.

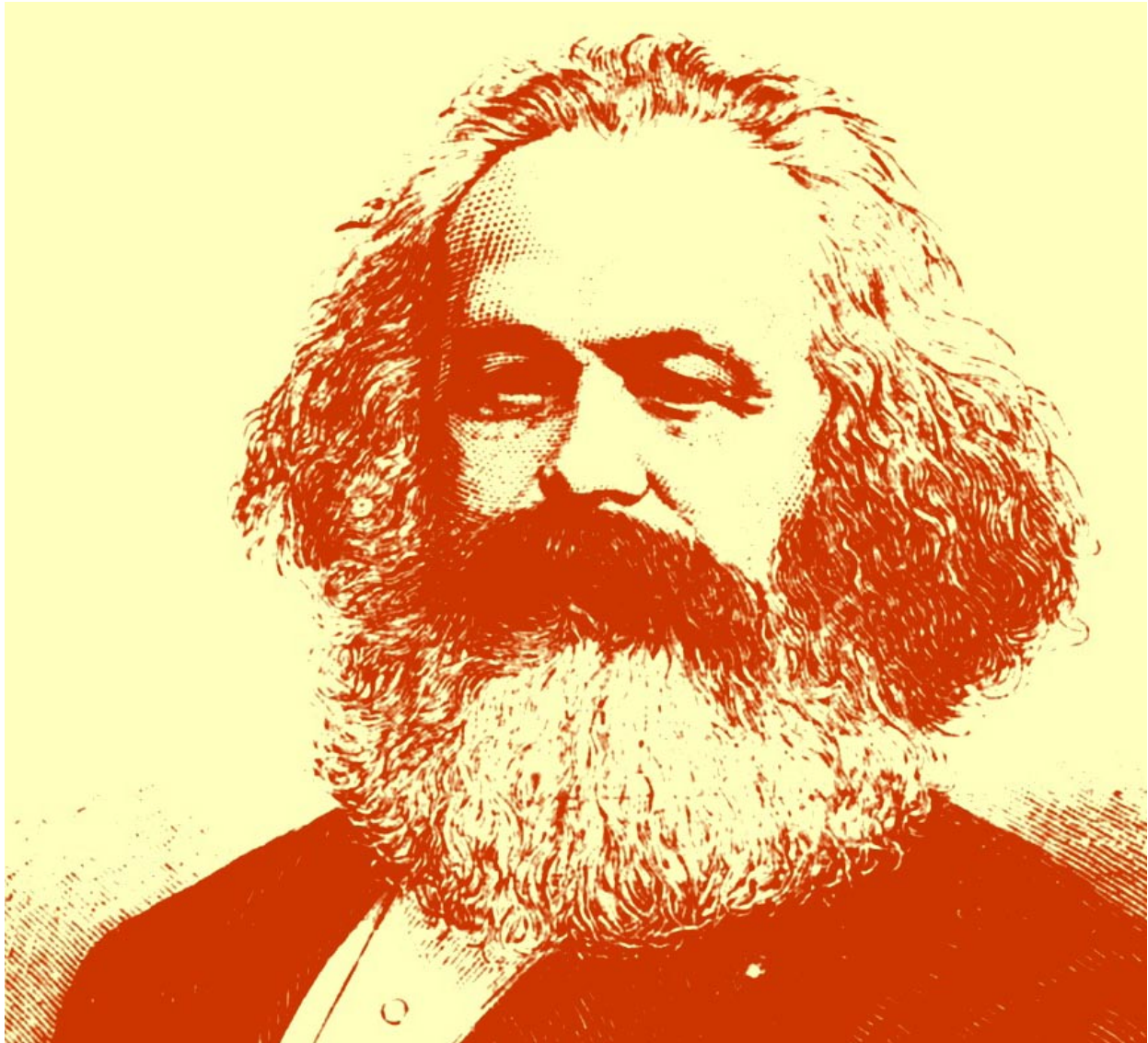
Marx spent most of his life analysing capitalism. No one would deny that today it is well-nigh impossible to escape capitalism as it rushes faster and faster down the path of what he called the general law of capitalist accumulation.

The accumulation of wealth on one side and the accumulation of misery on the other is reflected, for example, in the recent Oxfam report that eight men own the same wealth as the 3.6-billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity.

At the same time, what Marx called the increasing “absolute mass of the proletariat and the productiveness of its labour” and the absolute mass of the “surplus population”, is reflected in the size of the global workforce estimated at about 3.5-billion. The majority of them, of course, live in the global South. Global wealth and global inequality are massive, and the pauperisation and precariousness of human exist-

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Karl Marx viewed capitalism as a living hell that chewed up human life.

ence is terribly real.

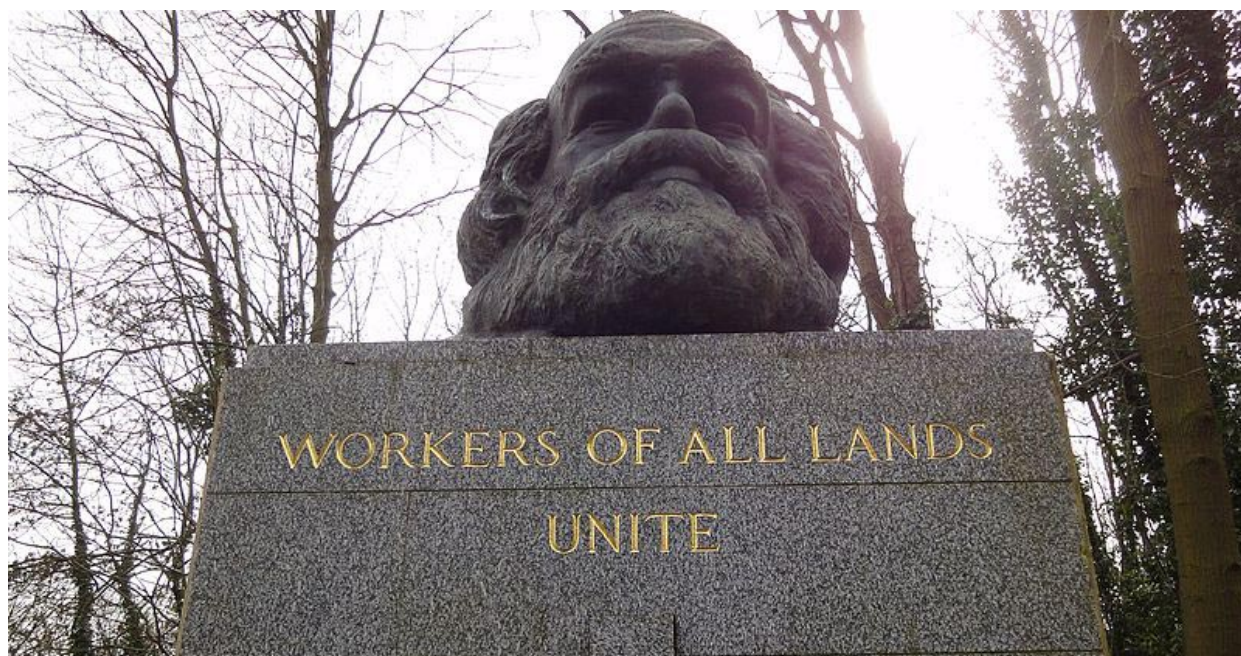
Marx's critique of capital is based on a philosophic perspective that could be considered radically humanist. It's not simply a critique of alienation but a critique based on the reality of human life eaten up by the fetish of capital accumulation. Capitalism's bloody and violent "rosy dawn", what Marx called "primitive accumulation", is a process to which contemporary capitalism continuously returns.

Workers are free to sell their labour for wages because they are violently alienated from other means of survival. Capitalism becomes natural-

ised and takes on a fetish character as the subject of life. Alienation becomes the coin of all social relations. The idea that people fetishise commodities, spending their waking and dreaming time thinking about them is caused by the simple inversion that gives commodities subjectivity and reduces human labourers to objects.

Marx warned that, although unveiling the secret of the fetish was crucial, that alone wouldn't free us from its blinding power. Rather, it was only human beings in struggle who could vanquish the fetish – capitalism.

We revolt because we have to. Resistance to



WORKERS UNITE: Karl Marx is buried in the East Cemetery at Highgate in London.

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capital is inevitable and takes new and unexpected forms inside and outside of production.

Capitalism, however, marches on in its endless search for free labour and free goods, ruthlessly exploiting human beings, animals and the environment. But, Marx argued, it is also resistance and capitalist crisis that forces it to innovate and defy spatial and temporal restrictions.

Commodifying everything, its ideological prizefighters dress up expropriation as the freedom to exploit oneself in casual and precarious labour. The “app” economy – described as the “economic activity surrounding mobile applications” – is just the latest manifestation of Marx’s prescience.

The founder of the philosophy of Marxist Humanism, Raya Dunayevskaya described Marxism as a theory of liberation – or nothing. Marx was not a lonely intellectual sitting in the British Museum. He was a philosopher and activist constantly involved with revolutionary movements.

To say that Marx was a genius is to recognise

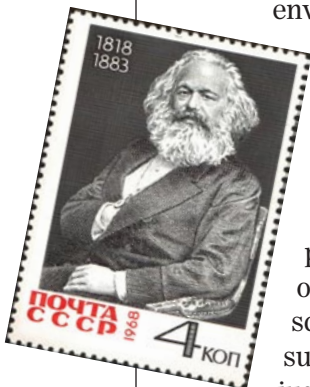
that his ideas were intimately connected with – and elucidated by – the logic and history of ongoing struggles.

It was the weavers in the Prussian province of Silesia in 1844 who taught him the importance of workers’ own self-conscious action. It was the Paris Commune that taught him the importance of self-activity in developing a new form of social organisation. It was the Fenian activity of the Irish workers opposing British imperialism that taught him the importance of the autonomy of the Irish struggle and the chauvinism of the British trade unions.

Marx viewed capitalism as a living hell that chewed up human life. It was the workers’ way of knowing, their self-organisation, that interested him as it spoke to the necessity of a dual movement: uprooting capitalism and developing a new society based on human needs. Thinking with Marx on his 200th birthday means recognising the importance of thought in this confrontation.

CT

Nigel Gibson is associate professor of interdisciplinary studies, at Emerson College (where). This article was first published at www.theconversation.com



TERRELL CARVER

We know Marx, but what about Engels?

How a respectable Manchester businessman became a communist agitator for social change

BACKGROUNDING Marx is hard to do, especially when 2018 is the 200th anniversary of his birth and a huge number of global events are focusing on the great man. This is his usual “leader of the orchestra” position, with his life-long friend, constant benefactor, and sometime co-author Friedrich Engels in his usual role as second fiddle. But another 200th anniversary is fast approaching: that of Engels’s birth in 1820. Best to be forewarned and forearmed.

Engels has recently become something of a character and a condundrum, hard on the coat-tails of Francis Wheen’s prize-winning “humanising” biography of Marx. In particular, Tristram Hunt’s popular recent biography, “The Frock-coated Communist,” presents the colourful life of a factory-owner’s son turned communist agitator, yet at the same time a respectable Manchester businessman – who rode to hounds with the Cheshire Hunt.

And Engels has recently been fictionalised in an unusual novel, Mrs Engels by Gavin Macrae. “Mrs Lizzie,” Engels’s partner-cum-housekeeper, recounts his later life and times in the first person. On the death of her sister Mary in 1863, she succeeded to a similar place in Engels’s affections and domestic affairs, and their similarly unmarried association – remain-



ABOVE: Friedrich Engels in his early 20s. LEFT: German stamp features Marx, Lenin and Lenin.

Photos: Wikimedia

ing so until he married her on her deathbed in 1878 – gives readers a working-class Irish view of the man in her life.

Having supported Marx and his family finan-





DARK AND SATANIC: "Manchester from Kersal Moor", painted by William Wylde, 1852. Photo: Wikimedia

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cially for many years, even occasionally fulfilling his contracts for paid journalism and hack-writing, Engels came into his own after Marx died in 1883. Engels survived him by 12 years and made a success of his posthumous partnership. He published new editions of the master's works, introduced by himself, the lifelong comrade-in-arms. And he also authored independent works, starting in the 1870s, following on – so he said – in the master's footsteps, but gaining a much wider readership.

Marxism as a political ideology postdates Engels, but most of the ideas in it were lifted from his version of Marx.

Engels the man has lately replaced Engels the Marxist, but there is more to the recent Engels revival than that. The very early Engels was quite the firebrand radical, excoriating the burghers of his twin-city hometown (Elberfeld and Barmen, now Wuppertal in Germany) for their visibly exploitative, and highly polluting,

industrial spinning and weaving enterprises. At the age of 18, he wrote triumphantly to a school friend that his anonymous publication, in a local paper, had really riled the respectable classes.

The juvenile Engels was already the radical. He sympathised with the fashionable struggle for Greek independence from the Turks, and supported liberating German society and culture from the non-constitutional, semi-medieval monarchies and dukedoms that were reinvigorated after Napoleon's defeat.

He was also behind shockingly egalitarian reforms even to family and sexual relations. His career as a published literary critic took off after his education finished at 16, and he proceeded under pseudonyms, disguising his neglect of his day job at the Manchester branch of the family firm, where his parents sent him to work at 22.

Working at Ermen & Engels cotton-spinners in Salford, among the "satanic mills", Engels encountered Chartism, the movement to broaden the suffrage to more males than a very select few. He swiftly became a correspondent for the New

TERRELL CARVER

Right: "Mrs Engels", Gavin Macrae's fictionalised tale of Engels and his partner-cum-housekeeper. Far right: "Engels' study of class struggle, *The Condition of the Working Class in Britain*".



Moral World and the Northern Star, fluent in passionate English. By the late summer of 1844, when he met Marx for the second time (Marx had treated him dismissively on the first occasion) Engels had published nearly 50 items in two languages, many more than Marx.

Here is where we encounter Engels's last work that was independent of his association with Marx, "The Condition of the Working Class in England", a full-length, German-language study published in 1845, when Engels was 25. He was understandably pleased with his achievement at the time, and was happy to republish it in 1887, marking 40 years of class struggle. It has been in print since then in many translations, and is currently a classic with both Oxford University Press and Penguin Books.

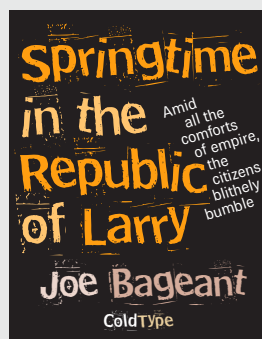
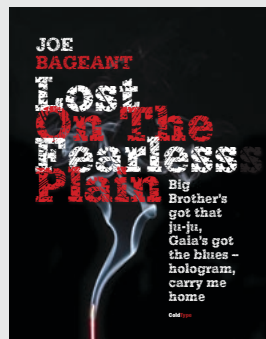
Engels worked from contemporary sources, mostly parliamentary reports and inquiries that detailed the poverty and misery of factory

work. But – rather in advance of his time – he ventured into the slummy depths of the back-to-backs and airless basements into which penniless wage slaves were crammed. His access to these scenes was facilitated by Mary, his first Burns-sister partner. As an eyewitness founder of urban geography, drawing detailed maps and diagrams to make his writing vivid and persuasive, he was at the cutting edge.

And so Engels poses more questions today for us than we can instantly answer, given the billions of people living in slums across the world that Mike Davis and other urban geographers, radical architects and global campaigners have pictured for us and exhaustively analysed. The Occupy movement took over public spaces to highlight contemporary conditions and other aspects of global capitalism that match Engels's descriptions exactly. This, then, is certainly a moment to bring Engels's shade out from the shadows. **CT**

Terrell Carver is professor of political theory at the University of Bristol. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com

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READ THE BEST OF JOE BAGEANT
www.coldtype.net/joe.html

TOM ENGELHARDT

An empire of nothing at all

The US military has taken us through the gates of hell

*This essay is the introduction to Tom Engelhardt's new book, *A Nation Unmade by War*, published by Haymarket Books.*

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AS I was putting the finishing touches on my new book, the Costs of War Project at Brown University's Watson Institute published an estimate of the taxpayer dollars that will have gone into America's war on terror from September 12, 2001, through fiscal year 2018. That figure: a cool \$5.6-trillion (including the future costs of caring for our war vets). On average, that's at least \$23,386 per taxpayer.

Keep in mind that such figures, however eye-popping, are only the dollar costs of our wars. They don't, for instance, include the psychic costs to the Americans mangled in one way or another in those never-ending conflicts. They don't include the costs to this country's infrastructure, which has been crumbling while taxpayer dollars flow copiously and in a remarkably – in these years, almost uniquely – bipartisan fashion into what's still laughably called “national security”. That's not, of course, what would make most of us more secure, but what would make them – the denizens of the national security state – ever more secure in Washington and elsewhere. We're talking about the Pentagon, the Department of Homeland Security, the US nuclear complex, and the rest of that state-within-a-state, including its many intelligence agencies and the warrior corporations that have, by

now, been fused into that vast and vastly profitable interlocking structure.

In reality, the costs of America's wars, still spreading in the Trump era, are incalculable. Just look at photos of the cities of Ramadi or Mosul in Iraq, Raqqa or Aleppo in Syria, Sirte in Libya, or Marawi in the southern Philippines, all in ruins in the wake of the conflicts Washington set off in the post-9/11 years, and try to put a price on them. Those views of mile upon mile of rubble, often without a building still standing untouched, should take anyone's breath away. Some of those cities may never be fully rebuilt.

How could you even begin to put a dollars-and-cents value on the larger human costs of those wars: the hundreds of thousands of dead? The tens of millions of people displaced in their own countries or sent as refugees fleeing across any border in sight? How could you factor in the way those masses of uprooted peoples of the Greater Middle East and Africa are unsettling other parts of the planet? Their presence (or more accurately a growing fear of it) has, for instance, helped fuel an expanding set of right-wing “populist” movements that threaten to tear Europe apart. And who could forget the role that those refugees – or at least fantasy versions of them – played in Donald Trump's full-throated, successful pitch for the presidency? What, in the end, might be the cost of that?

America's never-ending 21st-century con-



INVINCIBLE? So it seemed: USAF aircraft of the 4th Fighter Wing (F-16, F-15C and F-15E) fly over Kuwaiti oil fires set by the retreating Iraqi army during Operation Desert Storm in 1991. Photo: Wikipedia

licts were triggered by the decision of George W. Bush and his top officials to instantly define their response to attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center by a tiny group of jihadis as a “war”; then to proclaim it nothing short of a “Global War on Terror”; and finally to invade and occupy first Afghanistan and then Iraq, with dreams of dominating the Greater Middle East – and ultimately the planet – as no other imperial power had ever done.

An invasion of Iraq would, predicted Amr Moussa, “open the gates of hell”

Their overwrought geopolitical fantasies and their sense that the US military was a force capable of accomplishing anything they willed it to do launched a process that would cost this world of ours in ways that no one will ever be able to calculate. Who, for instance, could begin to put a price on the futures of the children whose lives, in the aftermath of those decisions, would be

twisted and shrunk in ways frightening even to imagine? Who could tote up what it means for so many millions of this planet’s young to be deprived of homes, parents, educations – of anything, in fact, approximating the sort of stability that might lead to a future worth imagining?

Though few may remember it, I’ve never forgotten the 2002 warning issued by Amr Moussa, then head of the Arab League. An invasion of Iraq would, he predicted that September, “open the gates of hell”. Two years later, in the wake of the actual invasion and the US occupation of that country, he altered his comment slightly. “The gates of hell,” he said, “are open in Iraq.”

His assessment has proven unbearably prescient – and one not only applicable to Iraq. Fourteen years after that invasion, we should all now be in some kind of mourning for a world that won’t ever be. It wasn’t just the US military that, in the spring of 2003, passed through those gates to hell. In our own way, we all did. Otherwise, Donald Trump wouldn’t have become president.

I don’t claim to be an expert on hell. I have no idea exactly what circle of it we’re now in, but I

do know one thing: we are there.

If I could bring my parents back from the dead right now, I know that this country in its present state would boggle their minds. They wouldn't recognise it. If I were to tell them, for instance, that just three men – Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, and Warren Buffett – now possess as much wealth as the bottom half of the US population, of 160-million Americans, they would never believe me.

How, for instance, could I begin to explain to them the ways in which, in these years, money flowed ever upward into the pockets of the immensely wealthy and then down again into what became one-percent elections that would finally ensconce a billionaire and his family in the White House? How would I explain to them that, while leading congressional Democrats and Republicans couldn't say often enough that this country was uniquely greater than any that ever existed, none of them could find the funds – some \$5.6-trillion for starters – necessary for our roads, dams, bridges, tunnels, and other crucial infrastructure? This on a planet where what the news likes to call “extreme weather” is increasingly wreaking havoc on that same infrastructure.

My parents wouldn't have thought such things possible. Not in America. And somehow I'd have to explain to them that they had returned to a nation which, though few Americans realise it, has increasingly been unmade by war – by the conflicts Washington's war on terror triggered that have now morphed into the wars of so many and have, in the process, changed us.

Such conflicts on the global frontiers have a tendency to come home in ways that can be hard to track or pin down. After all, unlike those cities in the Greater Middle East, ours aren't yet in ruins – though some of them may be heading in that direction, even if in slow motion. This country is, at least theoretically, still near the height of its imperial power, still the wealthiest nation on the planet. And yet it should be clear enough by now that we've crippled not just other nations but ourselves in ways that I suspect – though I've tried over these years to absorb and record them

as best I could – we can still barely see or grasp.

In my new book, *A Nation Unmade by War*, the focus is on a country increasingly unsettled and transformed by spreading wars to which most of its citizens were, at best, only half paying attention. Certainly, Trump's election was a sign of how an American sense of decline had already come home to roost in the era of the rise of the national security state (and little else).

They imagined a planet in which a single power would dominate until the end of time

Though it's not something normally said here, to my mind President Trump should be considered part of the costs of those wars come home. Without the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and what followed, I doubt he would have been imaginable as anything but the host of a reality TV show or the owner of a series of failed casinos. Nor would the garrison-state version of Washington he now occupies be conceivable, nor the generals of our disastrous wars whom he's surrounded himself with, nor the growth of a surveillance state that would have staggered George Orwell.

It took Donald Trump – give him credit where it's due – to make us begin to grasp that we were living in a different and devolving world. And none of this would have been imaginable if, in the aftermath of 9/11, George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and Co hadn't felt the urge to launch the wars that led us through those gates of hell. Their soaring geopolitical dreams of global domination proved to be nightmares of the first order. They imagined a planet unlike any in the previous half millennium of imperial history, in which a single power would basically dominate everything until the end of time. They imagined, that is, the sort of world that, in Hollywood, had been associated only with the most malign of evil characters.

And here was the result of their conceptual overreach: never, it could be argued, has a great power still in its imperial prime proven quite so incapable of applying its military and political



FIREPOWER: An M-198 155mm howitzer of the US Marines fires at an already-decimated city during the second battle of Fallujah, during the US-led war on Iraq. Photo: Wikimedia

might in a way that would advance its aims. It's a strange fact of this century that the US military has been deployed across vast swaths of the planet and somehow, again and again, has found itself overmatched by underwhelming enemy forces and incapable of producing any results other than destruction and further fragmentation. And all of this occurred at the moment when the planet most needed a new kind of knitting together, at the moment when humanity's future was at stake in ways previously unimaginable, thanks to its still-increasing use of fossil fuels.

In the end, the last empire may prove to be an empire of nothing at all – a grim possibility which has been a focus of TomDispatch, the website I've run since November 2002. Of course, when you write pieces every couple of weeks for years on end, it would be surprising if you didn't repeat yourself.

The real repetitiousness, however, wasn't at TomDispatch. It was in Washington. The only thing our leaders and generals have seemed capable of doing, starting from the day after the 9/11 attacks, is more or less the same thing with

the same dismal results, again and again.

The US military and the national security state that those wars emboldened have become, in effect – and with a bow to the late Chalmers Johnson (a TomDispatch stalwart and a man who knew the gates of hell when he saw them) – a staggeringly well-funded blowback machine. In all these years, while three administrations pursued the spreading war on terror, America's conflicts in distant lands were largely afterthoughts to its citizenry. Despite the largest demonstrations in history aimed at stopping a war before it began, once the invasion of Iraq occurred, the protests died out and, ever since, Americans have generally ignored their country's wars, even as the blowback began. Someday, they will have no choice but to pay attention.

Tom Engelhardt is a co-founder of the American Empire Project and the author of *The United States of Fear* as well as a history of the Cold War, *The End of Victory Culture*. He is a fellow of the Nation Institute and runs TomDispatch.com. His sixth and latest book, just published, is *A Nation Unmade by War* (Dispatch Books). Follow him at www.tomdispatch.com

ALEX EVANS

Guitar hero

Despite its fight against bankruptcy and changes in musical tastes, the world's most famous guitar maker refuses to be silenced

FOLLOWING months of rumours, Gibson, the legendary guitar manufacturer, has filed for bankruptcy with debts of between \$100-million and \$500-million. More significantly, the company also announced plans to reorganise and restructure its business, saying it has agreements with holders of more than 69 percent of its debt that would allow it to continue to operate. To me, this is the real story here and it speaks volumes.

When the opportunity arose to write this article, I was asked what my angle would be. My initial response was: "Quite simply, Gibson is the sound of rock." But it's so much more than that. The warm tones of the 335, one of their earliest electric guitars, dominates jazz and blues music. BB King was a lifelong player – his famous guitar "Lucille" is still a popular signature series instrument.

And when Reggae pioneer Bob Marley first appeared on the UK TV series *Top of the Pops*, he was playing a Les Paul Special, a guitar with which he was to become forever associated, its offbeat choppy attack helping define the genre.

In truth, Gibson guitars have played a major part in defining the sound of popular music. In the popular YouTube documentary series, *Rig Rundown*, famous guitarists and their technicians discuss the minutiae of complex guitar ef-

fects systems, unusual string gauges and the range of different amplifiers used to create their signature sound. In the programme that focuses on AC/DC, the secret to one of the world's most iconic guitar tones is finally – almost disappointingly – revealed. Standard edition Gibson SG guitar, cable and amp. It's that simple.

Rock music wouldn't be the same without the Gibson. Picture Chuck Berry with his zoot suit and quiff, duck-walking across the stage mid-solo, or Jimmy Page at the peak of his powers, attacking his instrument with a violin bow while a spellbound Madison Square Garden crowd looks on.

Consider the twin-horned attack of Angus Young as he lies, spotlight and centre stage, legs spasming, turning in endless circles with his guitar screaming, or Slash, pretty much at any point in his 30-year career, top hat and hair, cigarette dangling from his lips and a low-slung guitar dangling from his shoulder. Central to all of these is the Gibson guitar.

The guitars are also beautiful. We see them in shop window displays, hanging on people's walls, some never to be played but their mere presence making the space just that bit edgier and cooler. One of my earliest memories is walking to nursery school, a route which took me past





Chuck Berry struts across the stage with his famous Gibson guitar. Photo: Wikimedia

a music shop. From first sight, I was mesmerised. The shop spotlights catching the warm sunburst glow of a line of Les Pauls, the intricate grain of the wood clearly visible, shining hardware, lethal looking strings – each instrument different, yet also strikingly familiar.

Orville Gibson founded the company in 1902 as the Gibson Mandolin-Guitar Mfg Co Ltd in the wonderfully named Kalamazoo, Michigan. The company initially made mandolins and other similar instruments – but, as the business developed, so did Gibson. First they invented “arch-top” guitars, which mimicked the shape of the violin, then by the 1930s the more familiar “flat top” acoustic guitars that we see today. The release of the Gibson Les Paul in 1952 cemented the company’s reputation as a builder of top class instruments. To date, this is still their most successful guitar.

If you’ve ever held a Gibson guitar, you can feel the history. Hollow body models feel fragile, almost insubstantial, seemingly poorly equipped to cope with the rigours of modern music performance. Solid body guitars feel like they’ve

been knocked together in someone’s garage from spare offcuts of wood – the switches and knobs quaint 1950s artefacts. The first Les Paul was fashioned from a single four-foot wooden board and was affectionately known as The Log. A modern Les Paul is really not much different. They are heavy, in both senses of the word.

Is Gibson’s bankruptcy connected to the decline of guitar bands?

Perhaps part of Gibson’s problem has been that the instruments are truly cherished by the people who play them. Most of the original guitars from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s are still in service, many commanding extraordinary sums of money on the secondhand market. Provenance adds further desirability and further value. Keith Richard’s 1959 Les Paul Standard, played on the Rolling Stones’ first US TV appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show, made history when it sold for \$1-million back in 2003. Not bad for a piece of wood and a few bits of metal.

There has also been some speculation in the media that Gibson’s bankruptcy is to do with the decline of guitar bands, that we no longer have guitar heroes. But then look at the roster of artists currently dominating festival headline slots: Foo Fighters, Radiohead, Ed Sheeran, Fall Out Boy, Kings of Leon, Courteeners, the Vaccines, Biffy Clyro – and, guess what – the guitar, that six-stringed wonder, is central to each one of these artists’ sounds.

Gibson is an iconic brand, intrinsically linked with one of the greatest art forms of all time. Their guitars have played a hugely significant role in defining the sound of popular music, music which soundtracks the most important moments of our lives. Long may they continue to build these instruments. I have no doubt that they will. **CT**

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Alex Evans is senior lecturer in popular music & music technology, at England’s Kingston University. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com

Dial T for Tyranny: An alphabet of hate

Authoritarianism. Fascism. Oligarchy. Whatever you call it, you're suffering from an access of state power if you live in the USA

32

WHAT characterises American government today is not so much its dysfunctional politics as a ruthlessly contrived governance carried out behind the entertaining, distracting and disingenuous curtain of political theatre, diabolically Shakespearean at times, full of sound and fury, yet in the end signifying nothing. Played out on the national stage and eagerly broadcast to a captive audience by media sponsors, this farcical exercise seems riveting, at times life-changing and suspenseful, even for those who know better.

Week after week, the script changes – Donald Trump’s Tweets, Robert Mueller’s Russia probe, Michael Cohen’s legal troubles, porn star Stormy Daniels’ lawsuit over an alleged past affair with Trump, Michelle Wolf’s tasteless stand-up routine at the White House correspondents’ dinner, North and South Korea’s détente, the ongoing staff shakeups within the Trump administration – each new script following on the heels of the last, never any let-up, never any relief from constant melodrama.

The players come and go, the protagonists and antagonists trade places, and the audience members are forgiving to a fault, quick to forget past mistakes and move on to the next spectacle.

All the while, a different kind of drama is unfolding in the dark backstage, hidden from view by the heavy curtain, elaborate stage sets, coloured lights and parading actors.

Such that it is, the realm of political theatre

with all of its drama, vitriol and scripted theatrics is what passes for “transparent” government today, with elected officials, entrusted to act in the best interests of their constituents, routinely performing for their audiences and playing up to the cameras, while doing little to move the country forward.

Yet behind the footlights, those who really run the show are putting into place policies that erode our freedom and undermine our attempts at contributing to the workings of government, leaving us none the wiser and bereft of any opportunity to voice our discontent or engage in any kind of discourse until it’s too late.

None of the dangers posed by the government and its henchmen have dissipated; they have merely disappeared from our televised news streams.

In the interest of liberty and truth, here’s an A-to-Z primer to spell out the grim realities of life in the America that no one is talking about anymore.

A is for the **American Police State**. A police state is characterised by bureaucracy, secrecy, perpetual wars, a nation of suspects, militarisation, surveillance, widespread police presence, and a citizenry with little recourse against police actions.

B is for our battered **Bill Of Rights**.

C is for **Civil Asset Forfeiture**, which allows government agents to seize and keep private



WASHINGTON'S FINEST: Robocop-equipped riot police prepare to deal with demonstrators during a National Socialist movement rally in Washington. Photo: Elvet Barnes/flickr.com

property whether or not any crime has actually taken place.

D is for **Drones** equipped with lasers, tasers and scanning devices, all aimed at “we the people”.

E is for **Electronic Concentration Camp**, aka the surveillance state.

F is for **Fusion Centres** that serve as a clearinghouse for information shared between state, local and federal agencies.

G is for **Grenade Launchers**, part of the more than \$18-billion of battlefield-appropriate military weapons, vehicles and equipment distributed to domestic police departments across the country.

H is for **Hollow-Point Bullets**, which have been stockpiled by the Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration.

I is for the **Internet Of Things**, a “connected” industry that propels us closer to a future where a person’s biometrics can be used to track their movements, target them for advertising, and keep them under perpetual surveillance.

J is for **Jailing For Profit**, a \$70-billion private prison industry that relies on the complicity of

state governments to keep their privately run prisons full by jailing large numbers of Americans for inane crimes.

K is for **Kentucky v King**, a Supreme Court ruling that gives police the green light to break into homes without a warrant, even if it’s the wrong home, as long as they think they have a reason to do so.

L is for **Licence Plate Readers**, which enable law enforcement and private agencies to track the whereabouts of vehicles, and their occupants, across the country.

M is for **Main Core**, a database of names and information to be used by the government in times of national emergency or under martial law to locate and round up Americans seen as threats to national security.

N is for **No-Knock Raids**, more than 80,000 of which are carried out each year.

O is for **Overcriminalisation**, which renders every American a criminal.

P is for **Pathocracy**: tyranny at the hands of a psychopathic government, which operates against the interests of its own people except for favouring certain groups.

JOHN W WHITEHEAD

Q is for **Qualified Immunity**, which allows officers to walk away without paying a dime for their wrongdoing.

R is for **Roadside Strip Searches** and **Blood Draws**.

S is for the **Surveillance State**.

T is for **Tasers**, which have been used by police as weapons of compliance more often and with less restraint – even against women and children – and in some instances, even causing death.

U is for **Unarmed Citizens Shot By Police**.

V is for **Vipr Squads**, which carry out “soft target” security inspections whenever and wherever the government deems appropriate, at random times and places, and without needing the justification of a particular threat.

W is for **Whole-Body Scanners**, which are being used not only to “see” through your clothes but to spy on you within the privacy of your home.

X is for **X-Keyscore**, one of the many spying programmes carried out by the National Security Agency that targets every person in the United States who uses a computer or phone.

Y is for **YOU-NESS**. Facial recognition software

promises to create a society in which every individual who steps out into public is tracked and recorded as they go about their daily business.

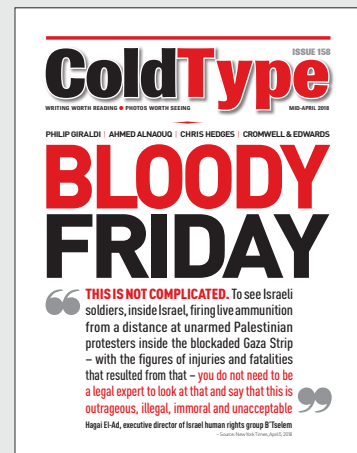
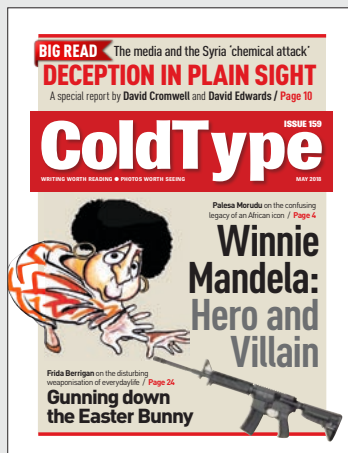
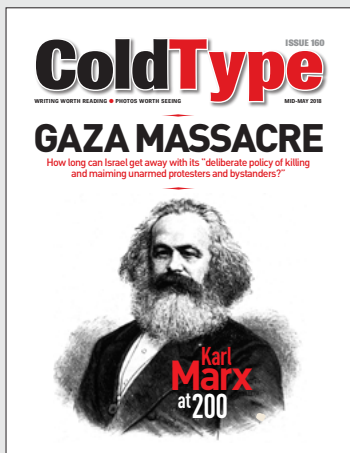
Z is for **Zero Tolerance** in which young people are increasingly viewed as suspects and treated as criminals by school officials and law enforcement alike, often for engaging in little more than childish behaviour.

The reality we must come to terms with is that in the post-9/11 America we live in today, the government does whatever it wants, freedom be damned. We have moved beyond the era of representative government and entered a new age.

You can call it the age of authoritarianism. Or fascism. Or oligarchy. Or the American police state. Whatever label you want to put on it, the end result is the same: Tyranny. **CT**

*John W Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and founder and president of the Rutherford Institute. His new book **Battlefield America: The War on the American People** (SelectBooks, 2015) is available at amazon.com.*

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Kurdish protesters demonstrated at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London's St James's Square, where Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke during a recent 3-day visit to the UK. Photo: Ron Fassbender

Short-term victory, long-term trouble

Turkish leader may win the election, but can he hold on to power?

WHEN Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called for a presidential and parliamentary election June 24 – jumping the gun by more than a year – the outcome seemed foreordained: the country is under a state of emergency, Erdogan has imprisoned more than 50,000 of his opponents, dismissed 140,000 from their jobs, jailed a presidential candidate, and launched an attack on Syria's Kurds, that is popular with most Turks.

But Erdogan's seemingly overwhelming strength is not as solid as it appears, and the moves the President is making to insure a victory next month may come back to haunt him in the long run. There is a great deal at stake in the June vote. Based on the outcome of a referendum last year, Turkey will move from a parliamentary system to one based on a powerful executive presidency. But the referendum vote was very close, and there is widespread suspicion that Erdogan's narrow victory was fraudulent.

This time around Turkey's President is taking no chances. The electoral law has been taken out of the hands of the independent electoral commission and turned over to civil servants, whose employment is dependent on the government. The state of emergency will make campaigning by anything but Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its ally, the National Action Party (MHP), problematical.

But Erdogan called for early elections not because he is strong, but because he is nervous about the AKP's strong suit, the economy. While growth is solid, unemployment is 11 percent (21 percent for youth), debts are piling up and inflation – 12 percent in 2017 – is eating away at standards of living.

The AKP's 16-year run in power is based on raising income for most Turks, but wages fell 2 percent over the past year, and the lira plunged 7.5 percent in the last quarter, driving up the price of imported goods. Standard & Poor's recently downgraded Turkish bonds to junk status.

Up until now, the government has managed to keep people happy by handing out low interest loans, pumping up the economy with subsidies and giving bonuses to pensioners. But the debt keeps rising, and investment – particularly the foreign variety – is lagging. The Turkish economy appears headed for a fall, and Erdogan wants to secure the presidency before that happens.

To avoid a runoff, Erdogan needs to win 50 percent of the vote, and most polls show him falling short, partly due to voter exhaustion with the endless state of emergency. But this also reflects fallout from the President's war on the Kurds, domestic and foreign.

The AKP came to power in 2002 with a plan to end the long-running war with Turkey's Kurdish minority. The government dampened its suppression of Kurdish language and culture, and called a truce in the military campaign against the Kurdish Workers Party.

But the leftist Kurdish-based People's Democratic Party (HDP) broke through the 10 percent threshold in 2015 to put deputies in the Parliament, denying the AKP a majority. Erdogan

promptly declared war on the Kurds. Kurdish deputies were imprisoned, Kurdish mayors were dismissed, Kurdish language signs were removed, and the Turkish Army demolished the centres of several majority Kurdish cities.

Erdogan also forced a new election – widely seen as fraudulent – and re-claimed the AKP's majority.

Turkey's invasion of Syria is aimed at the Syrian Kurds and is supported by most Turks

Ankara also turned a blind eye to tens of thousands of Islamic State and Al-Qaeda fighters who crossed the Turkish border to attack the government of Bashar al-Assad and Syria's Kurdish population. The move backfired badly. The Kurds – backed by American air power – defeated the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda, and the Russians turned the tide in Assad's favour.

Turkey's invasion of Syria – operations Olive Branch and Euphrates Shield – is aimed at the Syrian Kurds and is supported by most Turks. But, no surprise, it has alienated the Kurds, who make up between 18 and 20 percent of Turkey's population.

The AKP has traditionally garnered a substantial number of Kurdish voters, in particular rural, conservative ones. But pollster Kadir Atalay says many Kurdish AKP supporters felt “deceived and abandoned” when Erdogan went after their communities following the 2015 election. Kurds have also been alienated by Erdogan's alliance with the extreme rightwing nationalist MHP, which is violently anti-Kurdish.

According to Atalay, alienating the Kurds has cost the AKP about four percent of the voters. Considering that the AKP won 49.5 percent of the vote in the last national election, that figure is not insignificant.

The progressive HDP is trying hard to win over those Kurds. “The Kurds – even those who are not HDP supporters, will respond to the Afrin operation [invasion of Syria], the removal of Kurdish language signs, and the imprisonment of [Kurdish] lawmaker,” HDP's parliamentary

whip Meral Danis Bestas told AI Monitor.

The HDP, whose imprisoned leader, Selahattin Demirtas, is running for president, calls for a “united stance” that poses “left-wing democracy” against “fascism.” The danger is that if the HDP fails to get at least 10 percent of the vote, its current seats will be taken over by the AKP.

Erdogan has also alienated Turkey’s neighbours. He is in a tense standoff with Greece over some tiny islands in the Aegean Sea. He is at loggerheads with a number of European countries that have banned him from electioneering their Turkish populations for the June 24 vote. And he is railing against NATO for insulting Turkey. He does have a point – a recent NATO exercise designated Turkey “the enemy.”

However, Erdogan’s attacks on NATO and Europe are mostly posturing. He knows Turkish nationalists love to bash the European Union and NATO, and Erdogan needs those votes to go to him, not the newly formed Good Party – a split from the rightwing MHP – or the Islamist Felicity Party.

No one expects the opposition to pull off an upset, although the centrist and secular Republican People’s Party (CHP) has recently formed an alliance with the Good Party, Felicity, and the Democratic Party to insure that all pass the 10 percent threshold for putting deputies in parliament.

That electoral alliance excludes the leftist HDP, although it is doubtful the Kurdish-based party would find common ground with parties that supported the jailing of its lawmakers. Of the Party’s 59 deputies, nine are in jail and 11 have been stripped of their seats.

There is an outside chance that Erdogan could win the presidency but lose his majority in Parliament. If the opposition does win, it has pledged to dump the new presidential system and return power to parliament.

The election will be held essentially under martial law, and Erdogan has loaded all the dice, marked every card, and rigged every roulette wheel.

There is virtually no independent media left

in the country, and there are rumours that the AKP and the MHP have recruited and armed “supporters” to intimidate the opposition. A disturbing number of guns have gone missing since the failed 2016 coup.

Erdogan may get his win, but when trouble comes, he won’t be able to foist it off

However, as Max Hoffman of the Center for American Progress notes, the election might not be a “slam dunk.” A run-off would weaken Erdogan just when he is preparing to take on a number of major problems other than the economy:

- Turkey’s war with the Kurds has now spread into Syria and Iraq.
- In Syria, Assad is likely to survive and Turkey will find it difficult – and expensive – to permanently occupy eastern Syria. Erdogan will also have to deal with the thousands of Islamic State and al-Qaeda fighters now in southern Turkey.
- Growing tensions with Egypt over the Red Sea, and Ankara’s new alliance with Sudan, which is at odds with Cairo over Nile River water rights.
- The strong possibility of a US confrontation with Iran, a nominal ally and important trading partner for Turkey.
- The possibility – remote but not impossible – that Turkey will get into a dustup with Greece.
- And last, the rising price of oil – now over \$70 a barrel – and the stress that will put on the already indebted Turkish economy.

The Turkish president may get his win next month, but when trouble comes, he won’t be able to foist it off on anyone. He will own it. **CT**

Conn Hallinan is a columnist for Foreign Policy In Focus. He has a PhD in anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley and oversaw the journalism programme at the University of California at Santa Cruz for 23 years. He is a winner of a Project Censored Real News Award, and lives in Berkeley, California. He blogs at dispatchesfromtheedgeblog.wordpress.com

So, you think Facebook's a threat?

The Five Eyes intelligence sharing organisation is far bigger threat to our privacy and security than social media sites

WHILE the media has been full of news about information-gathering by Facebook and other Internet giants, other secretive organizations that are a major threat to our personal privacy and public security are seldom mentioned. And when they are, it has most often been because politicians are praising them and offering up more money for them to spy.

For example, Justin Trudeau recently promoted the “Anglosphere’s” intelligence sharing arrangement. Two weeks ago, in a rare move, the PM revealed a meeting with his “Five Eyes” counterparts. After the meeting in London Trudeau labelled the 2,000 employee Communications Security Establishment, Canada’s main contributor to the “Five Eyes” arrangement, “an extraordinary institution”. Last year Trudeau said that “collaboration and co-operation between allies, friends and partners has saved lives and keeps all of our citizens safe.”

The praise comes as the government is seeking to substantially expand CSE’s powers and two months ago put up \$500-million to create a federal “cybersecurity” centre. This money is on top of CSE’s \$600-million annual budget and a massive new \$1.2-billion complex.

Since its creation CSE has been part of the “Five Eyes” intelligence-sharing framework. The main contributors to the accord are the US National Security Agency (NSA), Australian Defence Signals Directorate (DFS), New Zealand’s Government Communications Security Bureau

(GCSB), British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) and CSE. A series of post-World War II accords, beginning with the 1946 UKUSA intelligence agreement, created the “AUS/CAN/NZ/UK/US EYES ONLY” arrangement.

The Five Eyes accords are ultra-secretive and operate with little oversight

Writing prior to the Internet, author of *Target Nation: Canada and the Western Intelligence Network* James Littleton notes, “almost the entire globe is monitored by the SIGINT [signals intelligence] agencies of the UKUSA countries.” With major technological advancements in recent decades, the Five Eyes now monitor billions of private communications worldwide.

The Five Eyes accords are ultra-secretive and operate with little oversight. NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden labelled it a “supra-national intelligence organisation that doesn’t answer to the known laws of its own countries.”

In addition to sharing information they’ve intercepted, collected, analysed and decrypted, the five SIGINT agencies exchange technologies and tactics. They also cooperate on targeting and “standardize their terminology, codewords, intercept-handling procedures, and indoctrina-

tion oaths, for efficiency as well as security.”

CSE Special Liaison Officers are embedded with Five Eyes counterparts while colleagues from the US, Britain, Australia and New Zealand are inserted in CSE. NSA has had many long-term guest detachments at CSE facilities. An NSA document Snowden released described how the US and Canadian agencies’ “co-operative efforts include the exchange of liaison officers and integrees.”

NSA has trained CSE cryptanalysts and in the 1960s the US agency paid part of the cost of modernizing Canadian communications interception facilities. With CSE lacking capacity, intelligence collected at interception posts set up in Canadian embassies in Cuba, Jamaica, Russia, etc. was often remitted to NSA for deciphering and analysis. In his 1986 book Littleton writes, “much of the SIGINT material collected by Canada is transmitted directly to the US. National Security Agency, where it is interpreted, stored, and retained. Much of it is not first processed and analysed in Canada.”

Five Eyes agencies have helped each other skirt restrictions on spying on their own citizenry. Former Solicitor-General Wayne Easter told the Toronto Star that it was “common” for NSA “to pass on information about Canadians” to CSE. Conversely, former CSE officer Michael Frost says NSA asked the agency to spy on US citizens. In *Spyworld: Inside the Canadian and American Intelligence Establishments* Frost reveals that on the eve of the 1983 British election Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher asked GCHQ to spy on two cabinet ministers “to find out not what they were saying, but what they were thinking.” Reflecting the two agencies close ties, GCHQ requested CSE’s help on this highly sensitive matter. Frost notes that CSE wasn’t particularly worried about being caught because GCHQ was the agency tasked with protecting Britain from foreign spying.

In the lead-up to the US-British invasion of Iraq NSA asked Canada and the rest of the Five Eyes to spy on UN Security Council members. On January 31, 2003, NSA SIGINT Department Deputy

Chief of Staff for regional targets wrote alliance counterparts: “As you’ve likely heard by now, the agency is mounting a surge particularly directed at the UN Security Council (UNSC) members (minus US and GBR [Great Britain] of course) for insights as to how membership is reacting to the ongoing debate RE: Iraq, plans to vote on any related resolutions, what related policies/negotiating positions they may be considering, alliances/dependencies, etc. – the whole gamut of information that could give US policymakers an edge in obtaining results favourable to US goals or to head off surprises.”

The Five Eyes arrangement has made Canada complicit in belligerent US foreign policy

While CSE reportedly rejected this NSA request, a number of commentators suggest CSE has shown greater allegiance to its Five Eyes partners than most Canadians would like. Littleton writes, “the agreements may not explicitly say that the United States, through its SIGINT organization, the National Security Agency (NSA) dominates and controls the SIGINT organizations of the other member nations, but that is clearly what the agreements mean.”

An NSA history of the US–Canada SIGINT relationship released by Snowden labelled Canada a “highly valued second party partner”, which offers “resources for advanced collection, processing and analysis, and has opened covert sites at the request of NSA. CSE shares with NSA their unique geographic access to areas unavailable to the US.”

The Five Eyes arrangement has made Canada complicit in belligerent US foreign policy. It’s time for a debate about Canadian participation in the “Anglosphere’s” intelligence sharing agreement. **CT**

*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*

ONE MAGAZINE'S 10-YEAR QUEST FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Before I wound up in Toronto and ColdType, I designed **Frontline** magazine, South Africa's top liberal-left magazine, for 10 years during the 1980s as it battled for justice and equality during the final years of Apartheid. Now, we're digitising Frontline, as a case study of prophecy and history. The first digital issues are now on line; more will follow each month.

– **Tony Sutton, Editor**



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BRIAN MITCHELL

Who owes what? Who aids whom?

Out of their own mouths: Declarations on unequal trade, poverty, and the world debt crisis

FORTY thousand children will die tonight in this tremendously rich and abundant world. They will die for lack of the most basic necessities such as food, clean water, health and education. Since the beginning of capitalism, how is it that the poorest peoples of this world still owe a debt of trillions of dollars to the richest? Isn't that absolutely ridiculous when you think about it? To say nothing of murderous.

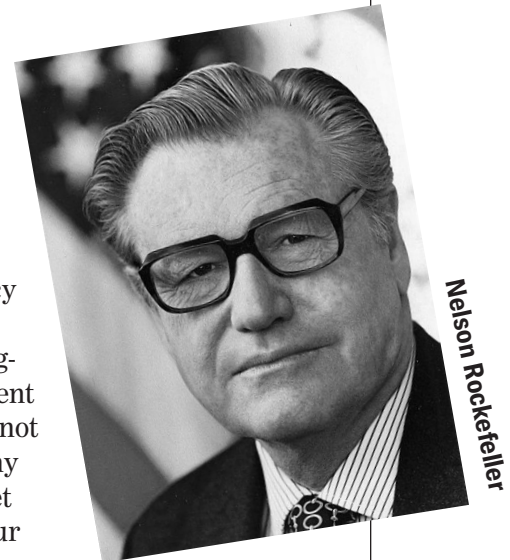
But keeping the world in debt is a deliberate policy of the rich imperialist world. Tremendous profits are made by keeping poor countries in debt indefinitely. The total world debt in 2017 runs to trillions of dollars. Of course it can never be paid, but that is not the point. The point is to gain massive profits by keeping these poor countries in debt permanently. What is the view of the rich world?

● “There are two ways of conquering a foreign nation. One is to gain control of its people by force of arms; the other is to gain control of its economy by financial means.” – *US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, in the 1950s.*

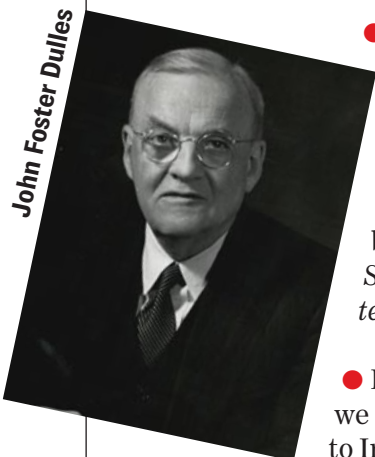
● By the use of economic aid we succeeded in getting access to Iranian oil and we are now

well established in the economy of that country. The strengthening of our economic position in Iran has enabled us to acquire control over her foreign policy and in particular to make her join the Baghdad Pact. At the present time the Shah would not dare even to make any changes in his cabinet without consulting our Ambassador... to step up both our political price and our military demands. ...economic relations with these countries would ultimately allow us to take over key positions in the native economy.” – *From a letter from US Council on Foreign Relations member billionaire Nelson Rockefeller to President Eisenhower, January 1956.*

● Whenever the Western powers are determined to get a given vote through either the [UN] Security Council ... or the General Assembly ... governments are warned. If they do not behave they will not get debt relief, World Bank capital projects, easier IMF [International Monetary fund] adjustment conditionalities or urgently needed hard currency IMF credit to pay oil bills. Reduction or cut-off in bilateral



Nelson Rockefeller



John Foster Dulles

BRIAN MITCHELL

aid is an additional threat.” – *Erskine Childers, adviser to UN Secretary General.*

Control trade, control the world

ABOUT 350 mostly US major monopolies and their foreign subsidiaries now own or control much of the world’s economic output. At least ten US transnational monopolies each has more dollar assets than, say, Britain or Japan; some of them, like Standard Oil or General Motors – many times over. Now consider the fact that Third World debts to the West – some \$900-billion at 1985 figures – amount to thousands of times the dollar assets of each of these ten US monopolies and you will have some grasp of the nature of imperialism. It means that the advanced capitalist countries own the poor countries and their economic output in perpetuum. What plans does the US have for all of us in this world?

● “The Plan is for the United States to rule the world. ... it is ultimately a story of domination. It calls for the United States to maintain its overwhelming superiority and prevent new rivals from rising up to challenge it on the world stage. It calls for dominion over friends and enemies alike. It says not that the United States must be more powerful, or most powerful, but that it must be absolutely powerful.” – *US Vice President Dick Cheney, June 2002.*

Silent weapons of imperialism: trade, aid and debt

BY the 1970s the “underdeveloped” countries’ foreign debts already ran to some \$5-billion. It is now in the trillions. The cost of servicing these ‘debts’ was some

\$54-thousand million a year, interest which “grew” at the rate of 21 percent in the 1970s alone. By 2016 it was many times that figure.

In the Philippines in 1972, one peso was worth 15 US cents, in 1985 it was less than five cents. Its foreign debt in 1985 was 11 times it was in 1972: from

\$2.3-billion to \$25-billion.

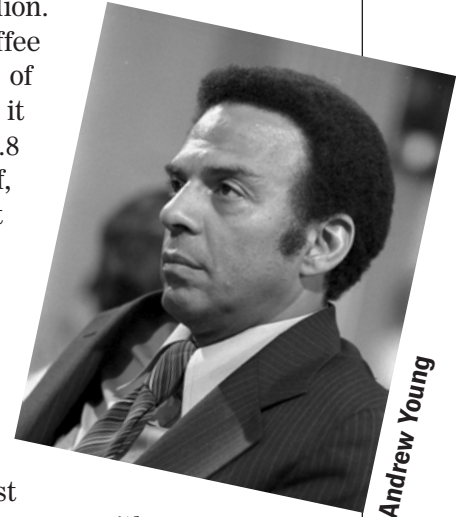
In 1960 a ton of coffee could buy 37.3 tons of fertiliser, in 1982 it could buy only 15.8 tons – less than half, with the same amount of coffee as in 1960. In 1959, six tons of jute could buy a truck, in 1982 it took 26 tons of jute to buy that same truck.

In the 1980s, Brazil had the biggest overall debt. But Panama, with a population of two-million and a foreign debt to the mega-rich transnationals of \$4.5-billion, had the largest per-capita debt in the world. This meant that each child in Panama was born owing foreign rich world banks some \$2,250, an amount the average Panamanian could never earn in a lifetime, which was the 45 years average or less for such poor countries. In 1984 Mexico was using 72 percent of its oil just to pay the interest on its debt, which continues to increase year by year.

According to 1986 US Food and Agricultural Organisation figures, over 42,000,000, people, half of them children, die every year from hunger or hunger related illnesses. These peoples are not at war with the imperialist nations. Their crime is that they have ‘traded’ with the US, British, West European, Japanese and other capitalist transnational monopolies.

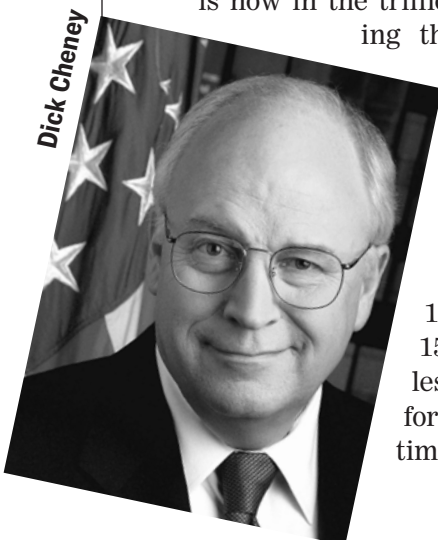
● “Our so-called foreign aid program, which is not really foreign aid because it isn’t to foreigners but aid to us, is an indispensable factor in carrying out our foreign policy.” – *US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, in a rare moment of honesty, October 25 1956.*

● “We get a five to one return on investment in Africa... We’re not aiding Africa by sending them aid. Africa’s aiding us.” – *Andrew Young, US Representative to the United Nations, February 1995.*



Andrew Young

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Dick Cheney

Prospering and suffering in the world of agribusiness

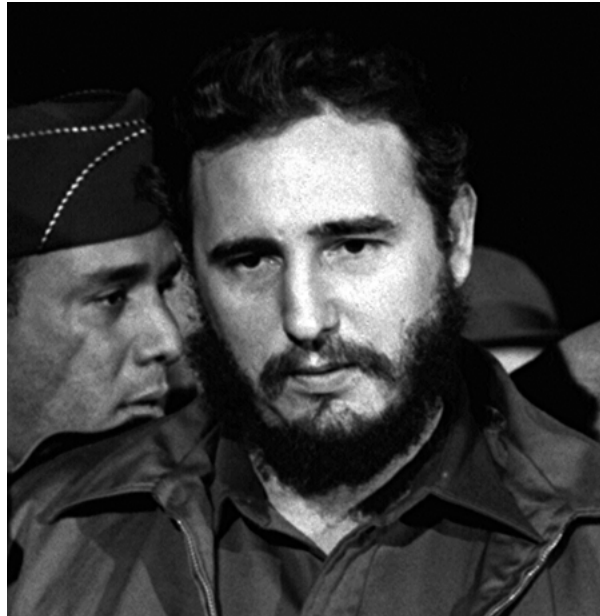
OTHER types of loans or aid are, for example, so-called green or agricultural dollars, which are “invested” in highly profitable agri-business – agricultural and food contracts, with the subsidiaries of rich countries’ corporations who often own not only much of the agricultural land, but often the transport, packaging, processing and shipping of food resources in the poor countries.

Whatever the rich world’s relations with these countries, whether it is in trade, aid or loans, the rich nations profit enormously and the poor continue to suffer poverty, hunger and death.

● “This is a huge, colossal battle against imperialism, because what we are proposing is that the enormous, unpayable debt of the Third World be repudiated... it isn’t \$700-billion; it’s more like \$900-billion, and, in 20 years we’ll have to pay \$3 trillion, that is, \$3-million-million. They want to take \$3-trillion from this hungry, starving to death world in 20 years, ... This is the battle for the lives and future of 4-billion poor and hungry people. ... You practically have to kill the people to force them to make the sacrifices required to pay that debt.” – *Fidel Castro, to Latin American Federation of Journalists, July 6 1985.*

Gifts From the World Trade Organisation, the Trilateral Commission, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank: Rescheduled Debt and Increasing Poverty.

● “The huge effort of the past two years resulted in an export surplus of a billion dollars a month. Yet this money served only to pay the interest on the debt. ... When we borrowed, interest rates were 4 per cent; they’re 8 per cent now and at one point they even went as high as 21 per cent. ...these loans were contracted by the military, mostly for military ends – \$40 billion were swallowed by six nuclear plants, none of which is working today. The people are now expected to pay off these debts in low salaries and hunger. But we have already reimbursed the debt, considering the interest paid. We must



Fidel Castro

stop giving the blood and the misery of our people to pay the First World.” – *Cardinal Paulo Arns, Archbishop of Sao Paulo Brazil, 1985.*

Welcome to the misery of the free market

MILLIONS of children in this “free market” world of capitalism wake up every day of their short lives with no clean water to drink, nothing to eat and no school to go to. And when they get ill, through the lack of clean water, food and education, there is no hospital for them, no doctor or medicines to make them well, and they die in their millions every year.

● Either we free ourselves of the foreign debt burden, acquired without benefit to us or solution to our problems, or we doom three-quarters of humankind to a future without hope... millions of human beings who, along with a right to be born, have an obligation to pay... This means the debt is devouring humankind, devouring peoples and nation states that no matter what they do... find the debt grows and is, therefore, absolutely unpayable.” – *Carlos Serrate, Bolivian delegate, Latin American and Caribbean foreign debt conference, Havana, Cuba, 1985*

BRIAN MITCHELL

But there's the United Nations to ensure fairness isn't there?

THE United Nations, dominated and controlled as it is by the rich world, especially the US, is but a paper tiger which despite its fine words, policies and directives, has almost no political or economic power.

● “The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook. This task was given to me, and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable success.” – *Senator Daniel Moynihan, US Ambassador to the UN,*

● “There is no such thing as the United Nations. There is an international community that can be led by the only real power left in the world, and that is the US, when it suits our interests and when we can get others to go along ...” – *John Bolton, US Ambassador to the UN.*

● “When large scale or high risk operations are contemplated and American engagement is necessary, we will be unlikely to accept UN leadership. Rather we will ordinarily rely on our own resources or those of a regional alliance – such as NATO – or an appropriate coalition – such as that assembled during Operation Desert Storm.” – *Madeleine Albright, US Ambassador to the UN and Secretary of State.*

● “It would be some time before I fully realised that the United States sees little need for diplomacy. Power is enough.” – *Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former United Nations Secretary General*

● “A world government can intervene militarily in the internal affairs of any nation when it disapproves of their activities.”



Boutros Boutros-Ghali

– *UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.*

● “One hundred nations in the UN have not agreed with us on just about everything that’s come before them where we’re involved, and it didn’t upset my breakfast at all.” – *US President Reagan, New York Times, November 4 1983.*

● “America’s foreign policy is now being run by the International Monetary Fund. When the President decides to go to war, he no longer needs a declaration of war from congress.” – *US Secretary of Labour Robert Reich, January 7 1999.*

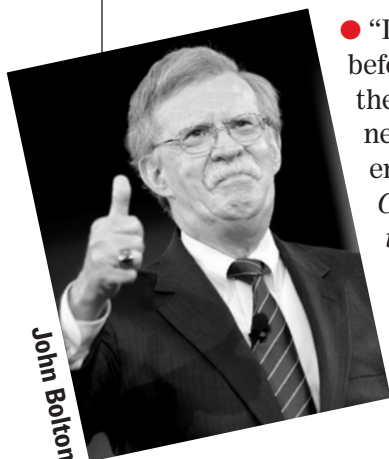
But we give them aid, we gave them... built them...

MOST people seem to think that Western so-called ‘aid’ is free. Every dollar of this ‘aid’ invested in the 1970s in ‘underdeveloped’ countries returned some 4.2 dollars to multinational corporations in this ‘charitable’ capitalist world. In Red Nose Week 1999, for every pound so generously donated, some £4.8 came back to Britain from those poor countries in profits and debts.

Crucial to any useful understanding of poverty is to understand that capital, to continue to make profits for its owners, must continually grab ever larger amounts of ever cheaper labour and raw materials from the poor countries, which should be using their raw materials for themselves, if there’s any left.

We who are also unwitting victims, who nevertheless share in the benefits of such a system; will solve no problems by feeling guilty and giving charity. The hungry people do not require that of us. What they require of us is a government that will control this ridiculously wealthy socioeconomic system which perpetrates this economic crime, this system which exploits and makes mere appendages of capital of us all. **CT**

.....
Brian Mitchell is a retired London schoolteacher and union activist



ColdType Insights

- BRIAN TERRELL
- MARK CURTIS
- SAM PIZZIGATI
- ERIC MARGOLIS



EVOLVING VIEWS: Both Gina Haspel, Donald Trump's choice as boss of the CIA, and Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, used similar arguments for their actions when questioned.

Photos: Wikimedia

A tale of two interrogations

Gina Haspel and Adolf Eichmann used similar arguments to justify their actions, writes **Brian Terrell**

On May 9, Gina Haspel, Donald Trump's choice for head of the Central Intelligence Agency, testified at her Senate confirmation hearing in Washington, DC. Some senators questioned her about her tenure, in 2002, as CIA station chief in Thailand. There, the agency ran one of the "black sites" where suspected al-Qaida extremists

were interrogated using procedures that included waterboarding. She was also asked about her role in the destruction of videotapes in 2005 that documented the torture of illegally detained suspects.

Her evasive answers to these questions, disconcerting and unsatisfying, are also hauntingly familiar.

In 1960, Adolf Eichmann was

kidnapped by Israeli spies in Argentina and brought to trial in Jerusalem for his part in the extermination of millions of European Jews during Germany's Third Reich. In his interrogation with Israeli police, published as "Eichmann Interrogated", and published DeCopo Books, NY, in 1999, Eichmann, stated that in the intervening years since the acts in question his own view of them had evolved. Before the Senate on May 9, Haspel expressed herself similarly.

Haspel testified that while she can't say what exactly might constitute an immoral order in the past, her "moral compass" would not allow her to obey one today, given the "stricter moral standard" she says "we have chosen to hold ourselves to".

She does not judge the actions that she and her colleagues took in the years after 9-11, "in that tumultuous time" of decidedly looser moral standards: "I'm not going to sit here, with the benefit of hindsight, and judge the very good people who made hard decisions".

She testified that she supports laws that prohibit torture, but insists that such laws were not in place at the time and that such "harsh interrogations" were allowable under the legal guidance the CIA had at the

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time and “that the highest legal authority in the United States had approved it, and that the president of the United States had approved it”.

Likewise Eichmann was probed about his obedience when “ordered to do something blatantly illegal.” In a response that augured Haspel’s Senate testimony a half century later, Eichmann told his interrogators: “You say illegal. Today I have a very different view of things. ... But then? I wouldn’t have considered any of those actions illegal. ... If anyone had asked me about it up until May 8, 1945, the end of the war, I’d have said: “This government was elected by a majority of the German people ... every civilised country on earth had its diplomatic mission. Who is a little man like me to trouble his head about it? I get orders from my superior and I look neither right nor left. That’s not my job. My job is to obey and comply.”

Not to compare the evil of the holocaust with the CIA rendition and torture (as if evil could be measured by quantity), but the evasions and obfuscations of these two willing technicians of state terror are chillingly similar. Eichmann’s cowardly protestations that he could not have known that facilitating torture and murder was illegal ring hollow. It was only after Eichmann’s atrocities, though, that such crimes as torture were formally codified into law.

By 2002, however, along the

precedents of the war crimes tribunal at Nuremberg, the United States was legally bound along with most nations in the world to the Geneva Conventions, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention against Torture. Even the US Army Field Manual, cited by Haspel in her hearing, labels waterboarding as torture and a war crime.

“We all believed in our work. We were all committed,” Haspel proudly boasted to the Senate, describing the morale and esprit de corps of her CIA comrades overseeing illegal detention, torture and murder in the years after 9-11. Eichmann similarly praised the work ethic of his team.

Inspired by Eichmann’s trial, Thomas Merton, in his poem,

“Chant to be Used in Processions Around a Site with Furnaces,” put these words in the mouth of a condemned concentration camp commander: “In my day we worked hard we saw what we did our self-sacrifice was conscientious and complete our work was faultless and detailed.”

An Israeli court did not buy Adolf Eichmann’s defence that he was following orders and obeying the law as he understood it and he was hanged on June 1, 1962. We will soon know if the US Senate will accept Gina Haspel’s appropriation of Eichmann’s alibi and confirm her as director of the CIA. **CT**

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The invasion that never happened . . .

Mark Curtis traces the surging careers of leading British officials at the heart of the lies over Iraq invasion

MARCH 20th marked the 15th anniversary of the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq which plunged the country into a brutal occupation leading to sectarian civil war, terrorism and a death toll of hundreds of thousands. Yet in Britain the anniversary marks another year of impunity for the ministers who

authorised the invasion. This lack of accountability for crimes committed abroad is a British disease with a very long history.

No British minister was forced to resign over Iraq or has been held properly accountable for it, despite the disastrous decision to go to war made collectively by the Cabinet on March 17 2003. Where are they now, those Cabinet ministers

who gave their assent? No less than six of them have since been elevated to the House of Lords: John Prescott, then deputy prime minister, was given a life peerage as Baron Prescott. He is joined by former fellow Cabinet members David Blunkett, Tessa Jowell, Alastair Darling, John Reid and Paul Boateng. Other Cabinet members were promoted following the invasion: Margaret Beckett later became Foreign Secretary, Darling became Chancellor and Reid became Defence Secretary.

What about the main actors? Tony Blair, then Chancellor Gordon Brown and the International Development Secretary Clare Short were subsequently allowed to perform top international jobs: Blair became Official Special Envoy of the Quartet on the Middle East until 2015, Brown became UN Special Envoy on Global Education and Short became chair of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. It is perhaps tragi-ironic that Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary in March 2003, was later allowed to become Justice Secretary.

Far from paying any price, the British system has rewarded ministers for their fateful decision on Iraq. But not just Ministers. Matthew Rycroft, Blair's private secretary at the time, who drafted the "Downing Street memo" that was central to the build up to the war, subsequently served as UK ambassador to the UN. Earlier this year, he was promoted further



Deputy PM John Prescott was given a life peerage as Baron Prescott.



Gordon Brown became UN Special Envoy on Global Education.

to become Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Development.

The basic issue remains: The evidence is overwhelming that the war was illegal and constituted a "crime of aggression" – one of the worst crimes in international affairs. John Prescott himself later said he thought the war was illegal. He is joined in this view by a long list of others

including then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, former US Attorney-General Ramsey Clark, former chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix, later deputy prime minister Nick Clegg, not to mention most international lawyers.

When the Chilcot report on the Iraq war appeared in 2016, the media widely commented that it failed to explicitly say the war was illegal. But it did say: "Mr Blair asked Parliament to endorse a decision to invade and occupy a sovereign nation, without the support of a Security Council resolution explicitly authorising the use of force. Parliament endorsed that choice." The invasion could only have been legal if it had secured such explicit UN authorisation. All Cabinet members were surely aware of this since it is basic international law – even though, as the Chilcot report showed, Blair withheld some key legal advice from them.

Sir Michael Wood, the most senior legal adviser at the Foreign Office at the time of the invasion, was unequivocal, advising the government that military action without UN approval was "contrary to international law" and would constitute a "crime of aggression". He told Ministers they risked offences under the International Criminal Court Act and for "misfeasance in public office". Wood's deputy Elizabeth Wilmshurst, who resigned in protest on the eve of the invasion, told the Chilcot inquiry that "all the lawyers dealing with the matter in the

Foreign Office were entirely of one view”.

British Ministers have been involved in war crimes abroad throughout the post-1945 period, as can be seen in declassified government files. In the forgotten war in Oman in 1957-9, when Britain leapt to the defence of an extremely repressive regime against a rebellion, the files show that then Prime Minister Harold Macmillan personally approved British “attacks by rocket on water supplies” and on agricultural gardens – civilian targets that constitute war crimes.

Bribery undertaken by British companies overseas can now be prosecuted in UK courts. But involvement in human rights violations and war crimes can be conducted with impunity. Ministers are thrown out of the Cabinet for trivial driving offences (Chris Huhne) or viewing porn at work (Damian Green) but not for instituting foreign wars involving mass killing. The invasion of Iraq was tragic for the people of that country but for the British political elite it is as though it never happened. Jeremy Corbyn, if he attains power, should make good on his

signal to call for an investigation into Tony Blair for alleged war crimes during the Iraq war, and it should cover other Cabinet members, too. **CT**

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In the mid-1960s, British governments covertly supplied arms to the regime in Iraq to be used to attack Kurds in the north of the country. In 1963, British officials described this as a “terror campaign” involving “the clearing out and destruction of Kurdish villages”. Yet British rockets, to be fired by British supplied warplanes, were provided to Baghdad which were “intended for use against the Kurds”, a Cabinet file noted. No-one, as far as I know, ever questioned ministers about this at the time or when the declassified files were released.

What is happening now in Yemen is simply a repeat: ministers are also escaping accountability for their involvement in consistent Saudi attacks on civilian targets such as schools and hospitals – using similar rockets to those supplied to Iraq in the 1960s.

A black hole right here on Earth

People of modest means end up worse off when we allow wealth to accumulate at the top, writes **Sam Pizzigati**

THE German sociologist Georg Simmel, way back in 1900, likened grand concentrations of private wealth to stars in the sky. These days, here in our second grand global Gilded Age, the more appropriate celestial analogy might be to the black hole.

The more wealth concentrates in a precious few pockets, we’ve come to understand, the more the resulting concentration sucks out from the rest of society. What exactly gets sucked out from below? Money, of course. But much more as well. Grand concentrations of

wealth at the economic summit suck up talent.

The latest case in point: the career of the world-class designer Frank Stephenson. This 58-year-old has already made a creative impact on us. A decade ago, one business media outlet dubbed him one of our time’s “most influential automotive designers.”

Stephenson first made his mark as a designer for Ford in Germany, working on the Escort, a motor vehicle for distinctly average families. He went onto BMW, where his creativity brought us the widely

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beloved Mini Cooper, a pricier but still affordable – at least for the upper middle class – compact.

A half-century ago, in a considerably more equal world than we have today, a designer as accomplished as Stephenson would have ended up at a world automaker serving the mass market. His talents would have brought smiles and maybe even some joy to millions of average car-buyers.

But in our staggeringly unequal contemporary world countless talents like Stephenson tend to go down a quite different career path. They end up serving society's richest.

Stephenson would move on from the Mini Cooper to the corporate auto empire that boasts the high-end Ferrari and Maserati brands. Among his projects: the Maserati Quattroporte, a “race-bred luxury sedan” that now starts at over \$100,000. Stephenson did, to be sure, also do designing for that empire's more pedestrian Fiats, but his career was revolving ever closer to grand fortune. His next stop would be McLaren Automotive, the maker of vehicles that retail for over \$1-million.

Stephenson now has a new gig. He's just signed on with Liliium, a German electric flying car start-up. Liliium is positioning itself as a transportation disruptor. By 2025, the company predicts, people will be able to hail a Liliium on-demand air taxi



BMW's Mini Cooper

that can lift off and land vertically – and fly passengers close to 200 miles on a single electric charge.

Liliium is also positioning itself as a benefactor for all humankind, not just the “very wealthy.” Stephenson is buying into that positioning. Liliium's flying cars, he's telling the press, “will be designed to be for everybody, not just a privileged segment of the public.”

But imagining a world where flying cars offer an affordable, mass-market alternative to ground transport takes some doing. Liliium's flying taxis seem almost certain to become just another convenience that allows the rich to bypass the inconveniences of modern life.

In a better – more equal world – talents like Frank Stephenson would be addressing those inconveniences directly instead of figuring out how the wealthy can best do end runs around them.

We see this same “black-hole” dynamic in every sector of modern life. Businesses of every sort are rushing to get sucked into the orbit of grand fortune. Around the same time that

Liliium was hailing the hiring of Frank Stephenson, banking giant Goldman Sachs was celebrating the hiring of a financial-industry superstar to head up a good chunk of its private wealth management operations.

Goldman Sachs is now feverishly competing with the world's biggest

financial institutions for greater market share among the world's richest households.

Goldman alone currently has 700 staff dedicated to serving the financial needs of families worth at least \$40-million.

“The world,” Goldman CEO Lloyd Blankfein gushed this past February, “seems to be growing rich people faster than we can grow advisers to cover them.”

Goldman's private wealth management staffers, Bloomberg reports, each generate \$4.5-million of revenue. Staffers at banks that service ordinary households can't come anywhere close to generating revenues that stratospheric. At least not honestly. So their employers – banks like Wells Fargo – put them to much more lucrative dishonest labour.

In Iowa last month, community groups from across the United States gathered at the Wells Fargo annual meeting to protest the bank's predatory practices on everything from mortgages to car loans.

Top execs at Wells Fargo, George Goehl of People's Ac-

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tion, noted at the protest, “have proven that they can’t do business without cheating, racism, and investing in violence.”

“We have the power,” added Cherie Mortice of Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, “to stand up against the greedy financial giants and corporate elites who rig the economy for their own benefit”.

Mortice happens to be absolutely right. Black holes in space may be too powerful to stop. But that doesn’t hold for black holes in human affairs. We have the

power to stop wealth’s concentration before grand fortune – and the chase after it – devours us all. **CT**

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Sam Pizzigati co-edits *Inequality.org*. Among his books on maldistributed income and wealth: *The Rich Don’t Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970*. His latest book, *The Case for a Maximum Wage*, will appear this spring. Follow him at @Too_Much_Online

by the UN and the European Union. The only thing Trump apparently hates more than Muslims is his predecessor, former President Barack Obama (whom he accused of being a secret Muslim). The Iran nuclear deal was the most important foreign policy accomplishment of the Obama administration.

Netanyahu repeatedly warned the world about Iran’s alleged nuclear arsenal while making no mention at all of Israel’s own large, secret nuclear arsenal, which is believed to comprise of over 100 warheads, perhaps even several hundred, that can be delivered by aircraft, missiles and submarines. Every Mideast nation can be hit by Israeli nukes as well as Russia, which some experts say is or was on Israel’s target list.

Trump, of course, made no mention of the awkward fact that Israel had stolen much of its nuclear technology and uranium from the United States, sometimes with the connivance of very senior US government officials. France, that paragon of world peace, had the rest.

Listening to Netanyahu accuse Iran of hiding secret nuclear facilities was pure pot calling the kettle black. Israel’s early nuclear program at Dimona in the Negev desert was entirely concealed from US and UN inspectors, including fake walls in the nuclear complex that completely fooled them. When Netanyahu accused Iran of cheating, he knows of what he

Netanyahu’s nuclear chutzpah

50 Israel is trying to push US into a war that will make it the most powerful state in Middle East, writes **Eric Margolis**

CHUTZPAH is a wonderful Yiddish word that means outrageous nerve, or unmitigated gall.

This month’s Chutzpah Award goes to Israel’s prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Standing in front of props of data files and CD’s, Netanyahu claimed Israel’s renowned Mossad spy agency had stolen a small mountain of secret Iranian nuclear data from a warehouse in Tehran.

The never-understated Netanyahu claimed that the purloined material proved that Iran was lying about having halted its covert nuclear program and must not be trusted.



Benjamin Netanyahu

Netanyahu’s supposed nuclear bombshell was the warm-up act for President Donald Trump to reject Iran’s nuclear freeze deal with the US, Russia, China, Germany, and France, blessed

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speaks.

Most of what Netanyahu 'revealed' about Iran's alleged nuclear program was old stuff, dating back to 1999-2003 and readily available in reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency. This respected UN agency now reports that Iran has fulfilled all of its commitments and abandoned its earlier nuclear programme that did not produce any weapons before it was ended.

But facts don't matter in this Trump-produced, made-for-TV drama. The key point is that with the naming of Michael Pompeo as US Secretary of State, and appointment of the rightwing fanatic John Bolton as US national security advisor, Israel's right-wing government has completed its virtual takeover of US Mideast policy. As I've previously written, Trump looks more and more like a Trojan Horse for Netanyahu and his extremist allies.

Besides Pompeo and VP Mike Pence, both ardent Christian Zionists, and Bolton, Trump now has around him the UN Amba-

sador Nikki Haley, of Indian origin, who is the darling of the US far right and a handmaiden of arch-pro Israel billionaire, Sheldon Adelson, a major bankroller of the Republican Party. Add in Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin and, of course, Trump's daughter and son-in-law. In short, an amen-chorus for Israel's far right.

This American Israel-first coalition has joined Netanyahu's Likud alliance in pressing for war against Iran. The first skirmishes have already begun with over 100 Israeli air attacks on Syria, ostensibly against Iranian positions. A great propaganda hue and cry against the purported dangers of Iran is being raised in the US and Europe. According to Israel's right, Assyrian hordes are about to engulf Israel.

In reality, Iran has very little offensive power. Like Iraq before it, Iran is militarily dilapidated with 40-year old equipment, a largely grounded air force, little artillery and poor communications. Tehran has a few inac-

curate missiles but no nuclear warheads.

Israel's powerful air force could easily turn any attacking Iranian forces into chopped falafel. Iran's only strength is defensive, in urban combat or mountainous terrain. Iran has no capability to seriously threaten Israel except by aiding the Lebanese Hezbollah movement in showering northern Israel with light artillery rockets, a nuisance rather than a mortal danger.

Israel is moving to repeat its triumph in 2003 when the Bush administration, US partisans of Israel, and dishonest US media pushed the nation into a war of pure aggression against Iraq. Israel emerged the victor from this unprovoked war and is trying to repeat its success again with Iran. Overthrowing Iran's Islamic Republic would leave Israel the unchallenged power in the Mideast. **CT**

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