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Issue 253

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January 2024

The writing on the wall

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Duncan Cumming

'Are we the baddies?'
The answer is 'Yes'

Jonathan Cook

Gaza shoe protest gets cricketer banned

Oscar Grenfell

The evil Israel does is the evil Israel gets

Chris Hedges



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"To the brutalized, numb with trauma, convulsed by rage, those who relentlessly attack and humiliate them are not human beings. They are representations of evil" – Page 38

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INSIGHTS



Shaun Narine

HOW THE US CHIP WAR ON CHINA COULD BACKFIRE

The technological war waged by the United States against China has the potential to backfire, supercharging China's creation of an independent computer chip industry that would directly compete with American manufacturers.

US President Joe Biden's administration has employed increasingly restrictive sanctions to prevent American and allied chip manufac-

turers from selling their most advanced products to China.

These restrictions are aimed at preventing China's military from developing more sophisticated weapons. However, the People's Liberation Army uses very few high-tech chips. The tech war seems designed to cripple China's overall technological development and, by extension, its economic growth and prosperity.

Ongoing American efforts to cripple the Chinese telecom company Huawei may serve as a cautionary tale for the US

American technological sanctions damaged the company and its role as a leading global producer of cell-phones, but Huawei has reinvented itself as a cloud computing network company.

It has also re-entered the cell-phone market, introducing its Mate 60 phone that boasts Chinese-designed and manufactured seven-nanometer computer chips. American tech restrictions were meant to keep China stuck at manufacturing no more than 14-nanometer chips, keeping it at least eight to 10 years behind US technology.

The accomplishment means that

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China is gaining ground on the US

Recently, Huawei introduced a computer with five-nanometer chip, further closing the gap with the West.

Western observers have argued that the production of high-end microchips requires international co-operation.

The Netherlands' ASML is the only company with the advanced lithography equipment needed to make three-nanometer chips. ASML built its machine using technologies from about seven other countries and took 20 years to get to market. Therefore, China is unlikely to succeed if it's relying only on itself to create independent capacity.

However, the basic understanding of how lithography works is well-known. China has pushed its existing ASML equipment beyond its original capabilities and is pioneering an innovative approach to lithography that could see China mass-producing high-end semiconductors in the future.

Most importantly, scientific knowledge cannot be contained and China has made extraordinary gains in its educational system.

Chinese high schoolers in four affluent provinces score the highest in the world in reading, science and mathematics. According to Times Higher Education, Chinese universities are "outperforming institutions in the rest of the world in the vast majority of disciplines."

The US News & World Report has ranked six of the top 10 (and 11 of the top 20) engineering schools in the world, and they're in China, with Tsinghua University in Beijing in first place. Only two of the top

10 are American. China is also projected to produce 77,000 science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) graduates by 2025, more than double that of the US

China has been saddled with the stereotype that it cannot innovate. But in 2022, China overtook the US for the first time as the country or territory publishing the most research articles in prestigious natural science journals.

China closed the gap remarkably quickly, increasing its share of scientific articles by 21 per cent since 2021 and 152 per cent since 2016. According to Japan's National Institute of Science and Technology Policy, China published the highest number of scientific research papers annually between 2018 and 2020, and had 27.2 per cent of the world's top one per cent of the most frequently cited papers, compared to 24.9 per cent for the US

A survey done by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute determined that China is leading in 37 of 44 cutting-edge technologies, including nanoscale materials and synthetic biology. China is also using industrial robots at 12 times the rate as the US

This is not a country that can be contained by cutting it off from technology. When it comes to the use and production of knowledge-based industries, China has more advantages than any other country in the world.

American actions will create a new generation of Chinese high-tech firms that will compete directly with the US and western businesses from whom they used to buy their products. These firms will produce more affordable products than their western counterparts, and could dominate technological

infrastructure in the Global South.

Chinese electric vehicles are the most advanced in the world, and spreading to the rest of the globe. Even as direct US-China trade has declined, China's overall importance to world trade has increased.

Over the past year, numerous pundits have declared that China's economic collapse is imminent. There's no question China is experiencing economic tailwinds as it deals with deflationary pressures linked to real estate, high local government debt and reduced consumer confidence.

But China's critics have been predicting its collapse for decades. China keeps confounding them, and it probably will once again. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has adjusted China's predicted GDP growth rate upwards for 2023 to 5.4 per cent, and expects 4.6 per cent growth in 2024.

The IMF expects China's growth to continue slowing in the future, but this forecast doesn't account for the technological potential that the country is unlocking.

China may be using the present debt crisis to redirect domestic investment away from a volatile property market and towards a productive and sustainable high tech economy.

If so, American efforts to stifle China may have created the conditions needed to ensure its success. **CT**

Shaun Narine is Professor of International Relations and Political Science, St. Thomas University, Canada. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com.

INSIGHTS

Oscar Grenfell

GAZA SHOE SLOGAN GETS CRICKETER BANNED

The past two months have witnessed no shortage of egregious attacks on democratic rights. In countries such as Germany and France, protests against the unfolding Israeli genocide in Gaza have been banned in a major turn to police-state measures. Everywhere opponents of the mass murder have been threatened and vilified with lies and slander.

Even in this context, cricketing authorities have staked a claim to one of the more absurd, nasty and petty acts of censorship.

This week they banned Australian batsman Usman Khawaja from displaying the slogans “all lives are equal” and “freedom is a human right” on his shoes. Khawaja had planned to wear boots with those statements during the first Test match against Pakistan in Perth, which began on Thursday.

In a video posted to social media on Wednesday, Khawaja revealed he had been instructed by the International Cricket Council (ICC) that displaying the slogans was forbidden. The global governing body had invoked its regulations, under which no statements of a political or potentially “divisive” character can be featured on equipment without approval.

Khawaja had told the press earlier in the week that the slogans were a humanitarian, not a political



David Molloy

Banned: Australian cricket star Usman Khawaja.

statement.

It is obvious that the ICC decision, backed by Cricket Australia, was made because the slogans were deemed to be about the slaughter in Gaza.

In October, Khawaja retweeted a statement by UK rapper Riz Ahmed, condemning the murder of all innocents, Israeli and Palestinian. The post by Ahmed denounced the Israeli occupation, warned against the war crimes it was committing and insisted, “We need to put ourselves in the shoes of the people of Gaza...”

Not only are those basic truths forbidden. Now even the most general statements affirming democratic and humanitarian rights are astonishingly deemed as controversial by official institutions such as the ICC.

The international cricket matches, based as they are on a complex web of relations between corporate interests and government-aligned bodies, cannot be tarnished by even the most oblique reference to the unfolding genocide.

The edict against Khawaja’s shoes was made under conditions where most of the governments in the major cricketing nations, including Britain and Australia, have explicitly and aggressively backed Israel’s bombardment, despite its plainly criminal character.

In his Wednesday social media video, Khawaja stated: “I won’t say much, I don’t need to. But what I do want is for everyone who did get offended somehow is to ask yourself these questions: Is freedom not for everyone? Are all lives not equal?”

Referencing attacks against this stand, including on social media, he said: “Let’s be honest about it, if me saying all lives are equal” had resulted in “people being offended to the point where they’re calling me up and telling me off, well isn’t that the bigger problem? These people obviously don’t believe in what I’ve written and it’s not just a handful of people you’d be shocked about how many feel this way.”

On X/Twitter, those condemning Khawaja, aside from Zionist supporters of Israel, are right-wing individuals, the types who are hostile to Aborigines, refugees and other oppressed peoples. Those

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forces have been given a boost by the ICC edict. Meanwhile, Khawaja has won overwhelming support from ordinary people, along with some cricketing personalities who have acknowledged his courage.

Khawaja, who is Muslim, emphasised that he viewed all lives as being equal, regardless of race or religion.

He said: “This is close to my heart. When I see thousands of innocent children dying without any repercussions or remorse, I imagine my two girls. What if this was them? No one chooses where they’re born and then I see the world turn their backs on them. My heart can’t take it. I already feel my life wasn’t equal to others when I was growing up but luckily for me I never lived in a world where that lack of equality was life or death.”

The true toll of Israel’s bombardment is not known because many victims remain beneath the rubble, but it is estimated that more than 10,000 children in Gaza have been murdered by Israeli bombs in the past nine weeks.

Khawaja rejected the assertion that the slogans on his shoes were political statements, instead describing them as a “humanitarian appeal.” He said he would abide by the ruling but would contest it. Khawaja took to the field on Thursday wearing a black armband. He wore the same pair of shoes, but with tape over the slogans.

The incident is a pale reflection of the vast polarisation that has been revealed in the genocide. While governments and official institutions have adopted the mass murder of civilians as their policy, masses of people have taken to the streets in the largest anti-war

movement in decades.

The claim that sport and politics can be separated is always a nonsense, invariably advanced by right-wing and officially-aligned political forces to prevent any oppositional sentiments from being expressed by athletes.

The connection between sport and politics, including war, is obvious in the case of cricket, played at the top-level almost exclusively by England and the former colonies where it implanted the game.

The first moves towards an international structure for the sport were presided over by Britain, in the dwindling years of its imperial and colonial preeminence. The ICC’s predecessor organisation, fittingly named the Imperial Cricket Conference, was established in 1909 and initially composed only of Britain, Australia and South Africa.

Until 1989, the chairmanship of the ICC was automatically conferred on the president of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), a private London club dominated by the British aristocracy. The MCC continues to oversee and determine the rules of cricket.

In its current incarnation, the ICC is something of an unholy alliance between the Commonwealth imperialist powers, such as England and Australia, and cricketing authorities in India, where the game has the largest audience and is most profitable. The cricket governing body is now headquartered in the United Arab Emirates, a country with negligible connections to the game but vast flows of cash.

The Board of Control for

Cricket in India has close ties to the government of President Narendra Modi. His administration has been dubbed by some rights’ organisations as an “electoral autocracy,” given its sweeping attacks on political opponents and civil liberties.

Modi has revoked the limited autonomy of Kashmir and in 2019 subjected its millions of residents, mostly Muslim, to a shutdown of communications and martial law, reminiscent of Israeli actions against the Palestinians.

More recently, Modi’s government has been accused by Canada of orchestrating the assassination of a Sikh activist on its territory.

The ICC and the administrators of cricket worldwide have facilitated Modi’s use of cricket to prettify his increasingly despotic rule.

In Australia, cricket has always been associated with the promotion of nationalism and the various myths and tropes that have been used to justify it. Governments and prime ministers have often cultivated close ties to the national teams, and it has sometimes been claimed that the second most important position in the country is that of national cricket captain.

The week before the crackdown on Khawaja for purportedly bringing politics to the game, the Prime Minister’s XI took the field against Pakistan. In that annual fixture, a team picked and named after the leader of the government plays against the team that is touring Australia for the summer. **CT**

Oscar Grenfell writes for the *World Socialist Web Site* – wsws.org – Where this article first appeared.

INSIGHTS

Jake Johnson

COP28 'RIDDLED WITH FOSSIL FUEL LOOPHOLES'

December's COP28 climate summit in Dubai ended with an agreement that, for the first time, explicitly endorsed a move away from fossil fuels – a weak but historic signal that the oil and gas era may be coming to an end.

But the deal, dubbed the UAE Consensus, is also chock full of escape hatches that will allow the fossil fuel industry to persist and thrive in ways that are incompatible with efforts to keep warming below critical targets set out by the Paris climate agreement.

The final text “calls on” nations to “contribute” to a number of global efforts, including tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030, accelerating the “phase-down” of “unabated coal power,” and “transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly, and equitable manner ... so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science.”

In the eyes of climate campaigners who pushed for an endorsement of an ambitious fossil fuel phaseout, the agreement falls well short of what's plainly necessary as global greenhouse gas concentrations continue to shatter records and climate-driven extreme weather wreaks devastating havoc across the globe.

“At long last the loud calls to end fossil fuels have landed on paper in black and white at this COP, but cavernous loopholes threaten to

undermine this breakthrough moment,” said Jean Su, energy justice director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “While this agreement offers faint guidelines toward a clean energy transition, it falls far short of the transformational action we need.”

The Alliance of Small Island States, a coalition of nations particularly vulnerable to the climate emergency criticised the deal. The alliance said that its members –



who have called for a fossil fuel phaseout and an end to fossil fuel subsidies – were “not in the room” when the final text was adopted.

“We were working hard to coordinate the 39 small island developing states that are disproportionately affected by climate change, and so were delayed in coming here,” Anne Rasmussen, lead negotiator for the alliance, said, calling the agreement an “incremental advancement over business as usual when what we really needed is an exponential step-change in our actions and support.”

“It is not enough for us to ref-

erence the science and then make agreements that ignore what the science is telling us we need to do. This is not an approach that we should be asked to defend,” Rasmussen added, criticising the “litany of loopholes” in the deal’s language on the transition away from fossil fuels and subsidies for the polluting industry.

“The paragraph on abatement can be perceived in a way that underwrites further [fossil fuel] expansion,” she warned, citing the section of the text that urges countries to accelerate “zero- and low-emission technologies” such as carbon capture. Critics have called the unproven technology a “lifeline for the fossil fuel industry.”

The deal also “recognises that transition fuels can play a role in facilitating the energy transition while ensuring energy security” – a thinly veiled endorsement of the liquefied natural gas expansion underway in the US and elsewhere that is imperilling climate progress.

“This is not the historical deal that the world needed: It has many loopholes and shortcomings,” said Kaisa Kosonen, senior political adviser at Greenpeace International. “But history will be made if all those nearly 130 countries, businesses, local leaders, and civil society voices, who came together to form an unprecedented force for change, now take this determination and make the fossil fuel phaseout happen. Most urgently that means stopping all those expansion plans that are pushing us over the 1.5°C limit right now.”

The signal that the fossil industry has been afraid of is there: ending the fossil fuel era, along with a call to massively scale up renewables and efficiency this decade, but it’s buried under many dangerous dis-

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tractions and without sufficient means to achieve it.

That the final COP28 text bears the fingerprints of the fossil fuel industry is hardly surprising, given that the summit was hosted by a petrostate and a record number of oil and gas lobbyists were in attendance.

Nikki Reisch, director of the climate and energy program at the Center for International Environmental Law, said that “despite the unstoppable momentum and unequivocal science behind the need for a clear signal on the phaseout of oil, gas, and coal – free of loopholes or limitations – the text failed to deliver one.”

“This failure was thirty years in the making, borne of a process that allows a select few countries to hold progress hostage and the fossil fuel industry not just to sit at the table, but to play host,” said Reisch. “Survival cannot depend on lowest-common-denominator outcomes. We need alternative forums to manage the decline of fossil fuels, free from the influence of those who profit from them.”

“So long as the biggest polluters, the United States chief among them, continue recklessly expanding oil and gas and staunchly refusing to provide climate finance on anything approaching the scale needed,” Reisch added, “the world will remain on a death course.”

Others similarly criticised the inadequate climate finance pledges made at COP28, where the US – the largest historical emitter of greenhouse gas – committed just \$17.5-million to a global loss and damage fund.

“COP28 was doubly disappointing because it put no money on the table to help developing countries

transition to renewable energies,” said Nafkote Dabi, Oxfam International’s climate policy lead. “And rich countries again reneged on their obligations to help people being hit by the worst impacts of climate breakdown, like those in the Horn of Africa who have recently lost everything from flooding after a historic five-season drought and years of hunger.”

“Developing countries and the

poorest communities are left facing more debt, worsening inequality, with less help, and more danger and hunger and deprivation,” Dabi continued. “COP28 was miles away from the historic and ambitious outcome that was promised.” **CT**

Jake Johnson is a senior editor and staff writer for Common Dreams. This article was first published at www.commondreams.org.



Security guards at Walgreens store in Albuquerque: “neat, fit-looking young men in brown or khaki uniforms ... an impressive, intimidating presence.”

Richard Ward

FREE FALLING INTO A SHUTTERED SOCIETY

Late most afternoons I walk from my neighbourhood in Albuquerque to the Walgreens store on Central Ave, and then back, a little over four miles. If there’s medication to pick up or something to buy, I’ll go into the store. Otherwise, it marks the midpoint of my walk. For years, the space in front of Walgreens has been a hangout for displaced peo-

ple, of which Albuquerque has no lack, many of them mentally ill and seemingly without places to live. It affords some shelter, is a good place to panhandle (though little of that), and even, in its way, serves as a gathering point for their community, such as it is. About two years ago some Walgreens wunderkind (inspired, no doubt, by military and ATF psychological warfare tactics)

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came up with the idea of interminably playing the same parts of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, Rossini's William Tell Overture, and some sort of JP Sousa fatuity through loudspeakers outside the store. This has apparently succeeded in keeping many of these unfortunate people away, at least directly in front. Most now hang out in the adjacent alley, or empty lots – no want of those, either – in the vicinity.

With the ongoing collapse of the real economy, accelerated by the Covid catastrophe, there has been a marked increase in the number of displaced human beings in Albuquerque, herded together in encampments, uprooted and hounded, scattered to other locations. The powers that be and good citizens of Albuquerque want to make them invisible, but of course they still exist and one sees them everywhere. Many would like to get rid of them altogether, but how?

As a further result of the economic collapse, Walgreens and stores like it have had to deal with rampant shoplifting. Ordinary items have been for some time secured behind locked, plastic shields. To get a tube of toothpaste or a bar of soap you have to buzz a store worker, as if you wanted to look at a watch or camera. Before these security measures were instituted about eight months ago, people would brazenly take things and walk out. Dental items, soap, and shampoo were among prized commodities, either to be used or sold on the street. Store workers were instructed not to stop them.

Now, Walgreens is a high-security zone, with two, sometimes three,

armed IPS guards stationed permanently in the store, their shiny, black, cop-like vehicle parked conspicuously in front, the guards themselves neat, fit-looking young men in brown or khaki uniforms, equipped with all the accessories. Theirs is an impressive, intimidating presence, and anyone would think twice about pulling something. Most customers avoid looking at them directly, glancing briefly, instinctively reacting to the display of physical threat, even if it's in the form of "protection." The message is clear. The guards, for their part, are pleasant enough, and approachable. I am, depending on my mood, bitterly amused or hostile at their presence. For me they are a deceptively benign manifestation of Orwell's boot stamping on a human face – forever.

These proliferating security zones, formerly known as "stores," are perfectly logical and normal within the parameters of the ram-paging capitalist system that defines life in the United States today, and most people likely take it for granted. A child growing up now perceives the situation as perfectly ordinary, in the way that same child sees as normal our diminishing natural world. There is no experience of what was before.

I used to have something of a fondness for Walgreens. It's where I get my prescriptions, which, after a severe illness several years ago, literally keep me alive. There was a certain sense of health and renewal shopping for necessary, quotidian items like dental floss, toothpaste, and soap, now kept under lock and key. This cordoning of the harmless essential does something to our souls.

Toxicity, hostility, and fear mark

our time, a greasy ride to some dreadful terminus, already there, mostly, but still slipping, faster than we ever imagined. Now, when I have to go to this place I used to know as my neighbourhood pharmacy, I feel diminished, saddened, and angry. I see other human beings, beaten down, fearful, as if living in a war zone, which, in a sense, they are. I am among them, with them.

In an odd way, Walgreens was a kind of haven, or safe zone, not much different from a school, church, mosque, synagogue, or hospital. No more. The displaced are now mostly out of sight, the ones deemed acceptable are allowed to enter, but surveilled. No one is above suspicion.

If you cast your gaze thousands of miles to the east you will see one grim outcome of the increasingly dystopian conditions to which we, surveilled citizens and displaced persons alike, are passively submitting. There, the despised and displaced are being slaughtered by the tens of thousands. There, the very notion of a safe haven is a sadistic, vicious joke, a nightmare literally impossible to comprehend.

If we look closely at these human beings, we can see ourselves, or we should. There are well over a half million displaced people in the United States, and the number is growing. To the majority and the powerful they are a nuisance, and for some, not even human, a subspecies. They, the displaced, know it. Those of us on the other side of the thin line, can feel the current, the unease, the threat. Or should.

Walking back from Walgreens, down Central Avenue, heading

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home, is a trip through a small purgatory. For years there have been numerous shuttered stores and the number is increasing. The displaced, the lost, the addicted, the mentally ill, a lot of them young, are commonplace on this heartland road, old Route 66. “Running through the heart of the city along Central Avenue, this historic highway leads travelers through some of the city’s most beloved neighborhoods,” says an official Albuquerque website.

I’ve got to know some of the people on Central. Sometimes we nod hello. Occasionally we exchange a few words. At times I’ll give someone money. Nothing praiseworthy or virtuous about this, just another

form of communication. Sometimes they’re in a very bad way. The other evening walking in the cold I passed a diminutive Native woman in a flimsy brown coat and pyjama bottoms screaming at her reflection in the window of a shuttered store, vile, self-abasing things, pounding her small fists on the plate glass. It was disturbing and frightening, and I picked up my pace. But there it was. Staring long enough at our own reflections and what looms behind us, we’d be screaming too. Or should be. **CT**

Richard Ward divides his time between New Mexico and Ecuador. He can be reached at r.ward47@gmail.com.

world’s population of deep pockets. We now have oodles of thrill seekers who can handily afford all the bells and whistles less-than-world-class climbers need to make a climb up Everest. The combined cost of these bells and whistles, an analysis earlier this fall calculated, can reach anywhere up to \$160,000 for a single ascent.

In today’s deeply unequal world we abound with people who can afford that sort of expense. The latest available data place the global population of “ultra high net worth individuals” – those fortunates worth at least \$30-million – at nearly 400,000. These super rich can essentially afford to seek out any turn-on.

And the rest of us, defenders of these deep pockets claim, should be eternally grateful for all the spending this seeking demands. The outlays the rich make for adventure and pleasure, the argument goes, create jobs and keep our global economy humming.

In the Himalayas, for instance, an American affluent can engage the services of a local climbing Sherpa guide for a mere \$5,000. Other Sherpa locals can make \$2,000 plus tips for doing the cooking for a climbing expedition. These sorts of fees can make life-changing differences for families who live on the mountainsides around Everest. But fees like these barely make a dent in Nepal’s overall poverty.

In Nepal today, Oxfam points out, half of all children under age five suffer from malnutrition. Nearly as many Nepalese, 44 percent, live below the poverty line.

Nepalese above and below that line also have to deal with the environmental damage the small ar-

Sam Pizzigati

THE GARBAGE RISES IN OUR DEEPLY UNEQUAL WORLD

The summit of Mount Everest, in case you haven’t heard, has become a trash heap, a high-profile embarrassment that some have taken to calling the “world’s highest garbage dump.”

A half-century ago, few would have expected this outcome. Back in 1976, Nepal, the Himalayan nation that counts Everest – Mount Sagarmatha – as its most glorious natural treasure, had created a national park to protect Everest and its fellow peaks. Three years later, UNESCO named Everest an official world heritage site. Nobody worried about Everest becoming a garbage dump. But then, in the

early 1980s, things started changing. Over the past four decades, as a new Statistica analysis points out, scaling Everest has become “a lucrative business.”

Between 1953, the year the climbers Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay first conquered Everest, and the late 1970s, no more than small handfuls of adventurous souls annually made the demanding trek to the Earth’s highest summit. Since those late 1970s, the annual conqueror total has exploded, to well over 800 in the year before the Covid pandemic hit.

What has also exploded in the years since the early 1980s: the

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mies of affluent mountain climbers leave behind.

Climbers on Everest, notes the *National Geographic*, spend weeks making their ascents, leaving the mountain's slopes "littered with discarded empty oxygen canisters, abandoned tents, food containers, and even human faeces." That litter has contaminated the local watershed.

But the show must go on – for the awesomely affluent. And remember, skills for our deepest pockets never tire of reminding us, those affluents are creating jobs! And they unquestionably are. On Everest and around the world, the rich are creating lines of work we never imagined existed.

"High-net-worth wine enthusiasts," journalist Cindy Lamothe observed last month, "often employ experts to curate and manage their wine collections." These specialists both "select rare and valuable bottles" and "also ensure proper storage, rotation and auctioning when the time is right, creating a seamless wine investment strategy."

Wealthy art collectors employ specialised art "authenticators" who use forensic analysis and all sorts of other techniques to confirm an artwork's authenticity, a must in "a market filled with forgeries."

Without the wealthy among us, we'd also have to do without "private medical concierge services," a line of work that connects wealthy clients "with top-tier doctors and specialists, offering speedy appointments, and even providing round-the-clock access for consultations."

Jobs, jobs, jobs – and only the presence of an enormously wealthy few can ensure these jobs continue to be available!

In other times, in other places, the numbers of those employed directly by the wealthy have sometimes reached significantly high levels. In the early 20th-century, an astounding 1.5-million British people worked as butlers, maids, and other domestics for the UK's rich.

Our contemporary rich seem intent on recreating that Edwardian world – appropriately updated for high-end 21st-century sensibilities. Our deepest modern-day pockets, explains a recent *Washington Post* analysis, "are pursuing the optimisation of everyday life, supported by entourages of experts – often managed by a single power assistant – who help the hyper-successful live longer, do more and pursue a fleeting and intangible perfection in every aspect of their existence."

The bigger the mansion today, the greater the need for the "new domestics," the personal lifestyle experts who keep the "right furnishings" in the lounges and the "right cars" in the garages. Lush home theatres demand projectionists. Estates in Malibu even have "per-

sonal hospitality directors" who help house guests plan their daily activities.

Our contemporary societies do not, of course, have to revolve around the needs of the richest among us. Instead of watching the wealthy trek up Everest, for instance, we could be watching kids from average families having a blast trekking up climbing walls in community gyms.

But public services that imaginative will only materialise if we show some serious political imagination, if we dare to pursue tax and other policy changes that keep income and wealth from concentrating in a precious few pockets.

The rest of us don't have to serve the rich. We can work to create societies that take a serious shot at serving us all. **CT**

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MAKING SENSE OF THE OBVIOUS

"SOMETIMES Israel's crimes are so horrific that at first you don't even understand what you're looking at. You just stare at it trying to make sense of what you're seeing for a bit, like you would if you suddenly saw a space alien or a leprechaun or something... It's so incredibly obvious what we're looking at here. The only thing putting a wobble on people's perception is the immense amount of propaganda distortion the media is churning out on this issue, plus the fact that the demographics look a bit different from what history has conditioned people to watch out for. **If there were two million Jewish people trapped by Christians in a giant concentration camp and placed under total siege being told that half of them had 24 hours to relocate into the other half or be killed, nobody would have any confusion about what they were witnessing.**" – Caitlin Johnstone **CT**

Stellan Vinthagen

HOW MY CELLMATE HELPED ME ADAPT TO LIFE IN PRISON

I was worried and did not know how to behave on my first day in prison for protesting nuclear weapons. Thankfully, I got help from another inmate

Even though I had read up enough about the lives of political prisoners, and learned the importance of community behind the bars, I found myself insecure and unsure in the first few days of being imprisoned at Her Majesty's Prison Preston in the UK, on charges of "conspiracy to commit criminal damage" to a Trident nuclear weapon submarine. Imprisoned for six months in September 1998, I maintained a regular diary; prison diaries have, after all, been part of the resistance history.

Her Majesty's Prison Preston, UK

Day 1 to 7 of imprisonment

I am sitting on the bench in the reception in a room with several other inmates. This is my first day at Preston Prison. I am tense and alert. My name is called by the doctor. He is dressed in a white coat; his bald head is sweaty. He looks at me annoyed. A form is tossed onto his side of the messy desk. He sighs, stares at the form for a moment, then asks me questions at the speed of a machine gun. He makes it abundantly clear that

he has done this an infinite number of times and each time it has been equally pointless and uninteresting: but it must be done.

I quickly answer questions about my previous illnesses and food allergies. Some questions seem to survey my health and lifestyle. Maybe they are commissioned by authorities or researchers for their statistics on the criminal class? He waits for my lingering answers. Some questions seem a bit strange. We are making slow progress.

He doesn't look at me but keeps staring down at the paper.

"Have you had any homosexual relationships?" he asks in his monotone voice.

"Why do you want to know that? What is this form actually used for?"

He looks at me with a bright red face, snorts something, throws the form aside and stands up. He grabs my arm and leads me out of the room.

Confused, I find myself in the waiting room again. The doctor complains loudly to one of the guards:

"Fucking nutter! Just messing about, wasting my time!"

A middle-aged man with greasy hair looks at me curiously. I avoid his gaze and sit in a corner. I rum-

mage through my cardboard box, to check if everything is intact: two books on English law, a pile of articles on theory of power, an address list of people I am supposed to write to, light brown sheets, a green blanket, plastic cutlery, a worn blue plastic mug, and a white plastic bowl. The police retained the photos of my partner, my necklace, the stamps, pens, and my wallet with money and credit card. And they also took my clothes and the action tools, of course.

A television on the wall has a soap opera playing. Every now and then the guards or the doctor come in and shout names: "Springer!" "Thomson!" "Collins!" About 20 men are sitting or walking around in the room. A bald man with a beard sits and stares at the floor. A guy who doesn't look more than 18-years-old confidently rolls a cigarette. I stare at his hands, fascinated. Some sit and talk intensively to each other. Probably not the first time that they have been here together. Everyone has the same prison clothes as me: red or blue shirts or T-shirts, and blue jeans.

A man walks up and down the room hastily, all the while smok-



ing and muttering to himself. He is wearing a leather belt. How did he get to keep his sash when I didn't? He has the same narrow and brown low shoes as me. Mine don't quite fit.

I am staring into my cardboard box, which has my shirts and underwear. It feels strange to wear big white underpants that were previously worn by someone else. All my clothes are marked "HMP" and "Her Majesty's Prison." I doubt the

Queen has spent a night here.

My train of thoughts are interrupted when one man says something to me. I look up and only see his mouth, and the brown stumps and gaps in his teeth. "Sorry, what?" I say twice before a middle-aged person sitting next to me says: "He wants to borrow tobacco from you, mate. It's called 'burn,' you know."

"Sorry, I do not have any," I say and feel guilty. I have two cigarettes

left in a pack in the box.

About an hour later, we are served food. They call it "tea"; it's five in the evening. A brown mess of tasteless boiled potatoes and boiled carrots. The English have a strange food culture. I force the food down: I have no idea when the next meal will be. I am having trouble letting go of what happened inside the doctor's office. What would be the consequences? After a while I realise that in a cou-

ple of days the doctor won't even recognise me.

I end up in a cell in the D-block with Steve, a drug user undergoing detoxification. When we get to know each other a little, Steve tells me the guards warned him, saying that I was "a little crazy but okay."

"It made me a little nervous at first," he admits. "But you are really cool, man." He was a punk rocker in his youth and thinks my action – a peaceful action of nuclear disarmament – is "Fucking amazing!"

Steve has a short haircut, a thin body, dark rings around his eyes, and looks worn down. Suddenly he gets a chill and his eyes become glossy. He wanders back and forth in the small space of our cell. He can only walk three steps at a time before he has to turn around. After a while he lays down on the bed, beads of sweat running down his face. But then a guard opens the door, calls his name and Steve steps out for a while. When he returns he is calmer, and lies down on his abdomen. He lights a cigarette:

"Earlier in life, I practiced meditation and yoga. Now I exercise every day. It helps okay. I just feel bad right before it's time for the medicine."

He says that he got into drugs again when he started using the "cure" for drugs, Methadone, as his new high.

When he offers me juice from a mug, I wonder if he has washed it, and I hesitate. He sees my suspicion, understands immediately and says: "It's cool, I promise. I have never borrowed other people's syringes. I may be a junkie, but I would never in my life do something so stupid." I accept the mug and try to smile even though I feel silly.

He rolls his cigarette, looks me in the eye, and says, "Now I can finally get a chance to stop. We are moving

Our two-person cell is about seven square meters. The roof is rounded, and the brick walls are painted with a thick yellow-white paint

from our residential area. My son will not end up in any drug gangs. As long as I get out of here clean, we'll move. Then it will get better."

It is getting late. I lay down in my freshly-made bed to sleep my first night in prison. I begin reading a book about Manchester United; it is the only book from the prison library that we have in the cell. I fall asleep almost directly.

The next day, it feels unsafe to leave the cell and go out into the cellblock amid the crowd of prisoners and shouting guards. No one has told me what's going on. I see some prisoners standing in line in front of a guard who is looking down into a binder, taking notes. A few others huddle near one of the bulletin boards. I am interrupted in my thoughts when a female guard walks up to me. She looks at me sideways, points to another queue and says, "Come on! Hurry up if you want breakfast."

I start formulating a question, but she has already turned her back on me. Instead, I go over to the food line. When I'm back in the cell and the door is shut, I realise my tea mug is empty.

At the next meal, I am ready long before the door opens. I follow Steve and imitate what he does: check for letters, get the food, fill up water for tea, catch a guard to ask for a pen. "You will get a pen later," he says.

During the few minutes I am outside the cell, I try to get as much

done as possible. I have learned that guards get annoyed if they have to wait and they will not open the door again if I forget something.

Our two-person cell is about seven square meters. The roof is rounded, and the brick walls are painted with a thick yellow-white paint. The window is fitted with a strong metal grill and a shutter.

The bunk bed is bolted to the floor and one wall. The bed is worn; the hard mattress has a deep hole in the middle. I have one oblong flat pillow that is inexplicably unusable. But yesterday I managed to steal an extra blanket that I use as a pillow.

By the other wall is a rickety desk. Next to it is the toilet and the steel sink. There are no walls or privacy. We each have a worn-out Ikea-like dresser with two pull-out drawers. By the door is a light button and an alarm button. A pipe runs along one wall at the floor level; it heats the cell with hot water.

When I'm not lying down reading or exercising on the floor, I sit at the desk and write letters. But I still have no stamps and no pen. I borrowed some from Steve for now.

I have learned that twice a week, I can use the shower, TV, telephone, table tennis or the library. But I have to choose carefully because I only have one hour. If the guards are in a good mood, I can get out for 30 minutes each day, walking in a circle around the fenced yard. As soon as I realised that I would be locked inside my small cell for 23 hours on most days, I applied to go to school and the gym. Then I can get out between four and five hours a day. But approvals might take a month; there is a long waitlist.

Despite the challenges, I feel privileged. Having the social resources and motivation to be in prison is rare. For most, it is a failure and a

real catastrophe to end up here.

One day, Steve gets a visit from his wife and teenage son. I'm sitting at the desk reading when he comes back to our cell. He talks fast and can't sit still. He is worried about his son: "He is mature and understands that he now has to help mom cope, that he is the man of the house for a while," says Steve as he fumbles with the next cigarette.

On Friday evening, after my first week inside, a cold wind blows in through the shutter. Steve shows me how to seal the draft with newspapers. When we're done, we sit down at the desk. Steve teaches me a prison rap:

*"You got to walk the walk
Not just talk the talk
But don't do the crime
If you can't do the time"*

I ask him straight out: "I have only been in prison for short periods before. I don't know what to think and do. Do you have any advice?"

"You must wrap the sandwiches for the evening in toilet paper so that they stay soft. Always be vigilant so that you are not robbed when you step out of the cell. Keep no stuff near the door. Stock up on anything you can get your hands on: salt and sugar bags, jam packets. You can use them later to exchange for something you need."

Steve says that he always makes a list of requests so that he is prepared when a guard who seems decent shows up. From going to the dentist to getting new toilet paper. He points at me and says emphati-

"Stock up on anything you can get your hands on: salt and sugar bags, jam packets. You can use them later to exchange for something you need"

cally, "You have to take the chance you get the seconds before the 'screw' [guard] closes the door or when he is standing idle watching the food queue."

"You have to show respect for the screws, and not because they deserve it."

He looks out through the peephole in the door, and continues, "Most are just piles of shit. But you have to understand that they feel as bad as the prisoners here. Worse! Okay most guys have a crisis at some point, but we move on in life. We'll get out of here sooner or later, but they are in here for life. Their pay is crap. They became guards because the military and police didn't want them. They are screw-ups. Their only kick in life is to humiliate us. If you provoke them, they feel at their best. Watch out for the Broiler, the bodybuilder on the block. He is completely fucked up. Empty. Just muscles. He knocked down a little guy last week. The guy ended up in the infirmary. Now the Broiler walks around and shines."

Steve borrows some tobacco from me. "Treat them as if they were something; they like that. Then you will do well. But you don't have to lick their asses. It's not worth it."

I have discovered that most prisoners address the guards as "boss," but Steve refuses. He inspires me and I decide to call them "sir" or "mister," as they do in England when addressing a stranger on the street. It is respectful, but without subordination.

While talking with Steve, I gradually realise that life in prison – or in "the joint," as he calls it – is its own science. A society with its own rules for survival and success. I had carefully studied the official rules during my action preparations, but the prisoners' survival rules are not in any book. I now realise I have to learn them myself by listening and being observant.

When I'm finally trying to fall asleep, I notice that my thoughts revolve around all the rules I have to remember. I wonder what happens if you break some invisible law. If it's something serious I might get into real trouble. The guards can punish me by moving me to a special section. What can the inmates do? I worry, I fall asleep late.

The next day my spoon and mug disappear when I turn my back for a few moments. **CT**

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Philip Kraske

TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE

The neo-con artists ride again. A satirical peek inside the Oval Office

It is late January and Secretary of State Antony Blinken is staring out the windows of the Oval Office, waiting for President Biden to finish up in his private bathroom. A two-day winter storm is finally ending, and Blinken muses, “Wow – look at that. What a snowfall. The country is really cut off from us.”

Behind him, Acting Deputy Secretary Victoria Nuland is arguing with someone in Ukraine. “Yes, General, I know the president said as long as we can, but he really meant ‘as long as it takes’... I’m sorry. I didn’t get that. ... The square-foot prices in Miami Beach? Sure, I guess I can have someone on my team –”

Jake Sullivan, the National Security Advisor, looks up from his cell phone and mouth-whispers, “Five to five-fifty. I was talking to Budanov yesterday.”

“Wait, I’m told that five to five-fifty is a reliable. ...” She looks at the ceiling, and the letter F forms on her lips. “No, General, I mean five hundred to five hundred fifty per square foot.”

Antony Blinken swings around, staring.

Nuland shrugs at him. “Orlando? Yes, I think it has an NBA team.”

Blinken nods to her.

“Yes, it does. And I’ll check on the per-square there for you, General, no problem. I have to go now. I need

to speak to the president. Keep up that great work! Go get those darn Russkies!” She clicks off her phone and says to Blinken, “I ought to send him a batch of cookies – a little encouragement.”

“I’m sure he’ll enjoy them,” says Blinken politely.

The President leaves the bathroom and in his signature tiny steps walks to one of the sofas. “Okay, guys, let’s set this old world to rights. What do you have for me?”

The aides distribute themselves on the sofas while Biden lowers himself into an easy chair, though about halfway down he falls into it with a chuckling grunt. “The ol’ knees, you know, not what they used to be. But they’re better ’n Trump’s!” He takes a cookie from a jar on the coffee table. “Dig in, guys. Victoria’s chocolate chips! Me, I’m not supposed to, but just don’t tell Jill, okay?”

The three aides swear the secret will be kept.

Biden: “Okay, what have you got for me?”

In a few quick sentences, Sullivan reviews the most important developments.

Israeli forces have knocked down two hundred meters of border fences between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. Exhausted Palestinians, though reluctant to leave their homeland, are streaming across, desperate for the food, water and medical services of-

fered by a number of NGOs. Those who try to return to the Gaza side with supplies are shot by hovering Israeli drones. Though President El-Sisi of Egypt is raising hell, he hasn’t the heart to stop the Palestinians; indeed, Egyptian citizens are donating at blood banks and sending blankets and clothing. United Nations tents are sprouting like mushrooms in the Sinai Desert. Countries are screaming their opposition to Israel’s actions.

The President listens solemnly to these headlines, chewing on a cookie. “And the visuals stink, I’ll bet.”

Nuland: “Afraid so, sir. And El-Sisi is demanding that the Palestinians be taken off his hands.”

Biden mulls that over. “Maybe Arby’s can help out there. They must have facilities in Egypt. Can someone check that out?”

The three aides look at each other, puzzled. Finally, Blinken says, “I don’t think Arby’s has that kind of supplies, sir. And to send tons to the Sinai. ...”

“They don’t have to send anything. Just open their doors, let Palestinians stay there, and we’ll pick up part of or most of the tab. Heck, we’ll probably get stuck with the whole bill.” Blithely, the President plucks another cookie from

the jar, leaving his aides even more perplexed.

“Oh! AirBnB!” exclaims Blinken. “Sir, really that wouldn’t do much for the millions of – ”

Sullivan interrupts: “Ah, yes sir, I’ll get in touch with their CEO and see if arrangements can be made – at least on some type of short-to mid-term, ah, calibration.” He glares at Blinken.

Biden mutters something affirmative around his cookie.

Blinken: “But the issue here, Mr. President, is this: isn’t it time we began to start thinking about trying to rein in the Israelis? Make some kind of, of reference to all the aid we give them? I mean, in a conf-call with Netanyahu.”

Biden: “We will always have Israel’s back. Forever and always.”

Blinken: “Yes, but the rest of the world is raising holy hell, Mr. President. Even some of our European allies are beginning to use the word ‘genocide.’ We are in danger of becoming perceived as an accessory to Israeli war crimes.”

“Alleged war crimes,” Sullivan corrects him.

“Yeah, tough one ... tough one – one of those rock-and-a-hard-place deals,” murmurs the President, and so low that the three aides lean forward to hear him. “Thing is, y’see, we squeaked by without Florida last election, but don’t think we’re going to do that twice in a row, especially with Michigan looking like it’ll turn on us. Wisconsin too.”

Blinken: “I’ve talked to Netanyahu till I’m blue in the face, Mr. President. But it’s just no use. Half the time he’s on his cell phone, and when I finish my argument, he whisks me out the door.”

“I’d whisk you too,” mutters Nuland, snapping off half a cookie.

Sullivan: “Every nation has the right of self-defence, Tony. That’s sacred. And we free nations of the world have to stand together.”

Biden: “Damn right, Jake. So do we Zionists. Don’t let ’em slide so much as a chocolate-chip cookie between us.” He grins at them. “Get it? Sideways?”

The three aides muster up a few chuckles.

Sullivan: “We need to work on finessing this thing till the Palestinians have been turned out. This is going to be ongoing for another few months.”

“I told Netanyahu months ago, he didn’t have a lot of time,” adds Blinken.

“Finesse, yeah, finesse. Maybe we’d better talk about that,” says Biden. He takes another cookie and

“What we really need is something that knocks Gaza off the front pages for a while”

grins. “I really shouldn’t, you know, but, well, just don’t tell Jill, okay?”

The three aides again promise not to tell.

“As I see it, Mr. President,” says Nuland, “what we really need is something that knocks Gaza off the front pages for a while.”

“Well, yeah, but I don’t know if I’m up for another 9-11,” Biden says.

“Nope. Get this.” Nuland leans forward, lowering her voice by habit. “We kill two birds with one stone. Things aren’t up to par in Ukraine, right? But at least there, we and the Europeans are still same-paging, correct?”

“Well ...” Blinken begins, but Sullivan shoots him a warning glance.

“Let’s say a Russian missile lands near Kiev: big hole, destroyed apartment building, what-have-you. But best of all, there’s radiation leaking from the hole.”

“A Russian tactical nuke!” says Sullivan. “I like it!”

“It’s interesting as an idea,” says Blinken cautiously.

Biden nods. “Yeah ... yeah, that’s it. Gosh, I’m glad I promoted you to SecState, Victoria. A tactical nuke! C’mon Vlad, you son-of-a-bitch, let’s see you explain that.”

“From there, it all unrolls nicely,” Nuland continues. “Americans are alarmed, the media’s in a frenzy, the Europeans are nervous. Nukes! Near their territory! We rush Congress with an authorisation and we send in the cavalry. Voila! Gaza’s off the front page for a good month or two, and we’re able to get our troops into theatre. We bring in air support from a half-dozen bases in the area, and they’ll come at Crimea from the north and from the sea. They’ll cut through Russia’s Crimea defences like butter. Ukraine quickly becomes a victory instead of a debacle, Putin is humiliated, and the election’s a breeze.”

“Prfct. Fntstc,” says Biden around his cookie.

“That’s what creative diplomacy is all about,” says Sullivan.

Blinken writhes nervously. “But, sir, are you, ah, comfortable with the idea of putting American boys in harm’s way? Russians shooting real bullets at them?”

Biden: “Well, it’s self-defence. I mean, that stuff’s enshrined. If Ukraine falls, it is all over. The Russians won’t stop till they hit the Atlantic. I’ll explain that to the American people, don’t you worry.” Another grin. “Trump will get thrown out of Florida on his ear!”

“On his big fat butt!” exclaims Nuland, and taking another cookie she eyes Blinken like a hangman measuring his victim for the drop. **CT**

Philip Kraske is an American author who lives in Spain. His latest book is “A Legacy of Chains and Other Stories.” His website is www.philipkraske.com.

Norman Solomon

WHAT DANIEL ELLSBERG KNEW ABOUT DOOMSDAY

For more than 50 years, he didn't hesitate to publicly address the patterns of government secrecy and lies that sustained America's wars in one country after another, along with the deceptions and delusions at the core of the nuclear arms race

Top American officials in the “national security” establishment are notably good at smooth rhetoric and convenient silences. Their scant regard for truth or human life has changed remarkably little since 1971 when Daniel Ellsberg risked decades in prison to leak the Pentagon Papers to the world. During the years between then and his death six months ago, he was a tireless writer, speaker, and activist.

Most people remember him, of course, as the whistleblower who exposed voluminous official lies about the Vietnam War by providing 7,000 top-secret pages of classified documents to the *New York Times* and other newspapers. But throughout his adult life, he was transfixed above all by the imperative of preventing nuclear war.

One day in 1995, I called Dan and suggested he run for president. His reply was instant: “I’d rather be in prison.” He explained that, unlike typical candidates, he couldn’t stand to offer opinions on subjects he really knew little or nothing about.

However, for more than five decades, Ellsberg didn’t

hesitate to publicly address what he really did know all too much about – the patterns of government secrecy and lies that sustained America’s wars in one country after another, along with the chronic deceptions and delusions at the core of the nuclear arms race. He had personally seen such patterns of deceit at work in the upper reaches of the warfare state. As he told me, “That there is deception – that the public is evidently misled by it early in the game... in a way that encourages them to accept a war and support a war – is the reality.”

And how difficult was it to deceive the public? “I would say, as a former

insider, one becomes aware: it’s not difficult to deceive them. First of all, you’re often telling them what they would like to believe – that we’re better than other people, we are superior in our morality and our perceptions of the world.”

Dan had absorbed a vast array of classified information during his years working near the top of the US war machine. He knew countless key facts about foreign policy and war-making that had been hidden from the public. Most importantly, he understood how mendacity could lead to massive human catastrophes and how routinely the key figures in the Pentagon, the State Department, and the Oval Office openly lied.

His release of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 – revealing crucial history about the Vietnam War while it was still underway – exposed how incessant deception got wars started and kept them going. He had seen up close just how easy it was for officials like Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to suppress doubts about American war-making and push ahead with policies that would, in the end, lead to



NOT GUILTY: How the New York Times reported the acquittal of Ellsberg and co-defendant Anthony Russo for leaking the Pentagon Papers in 1971.

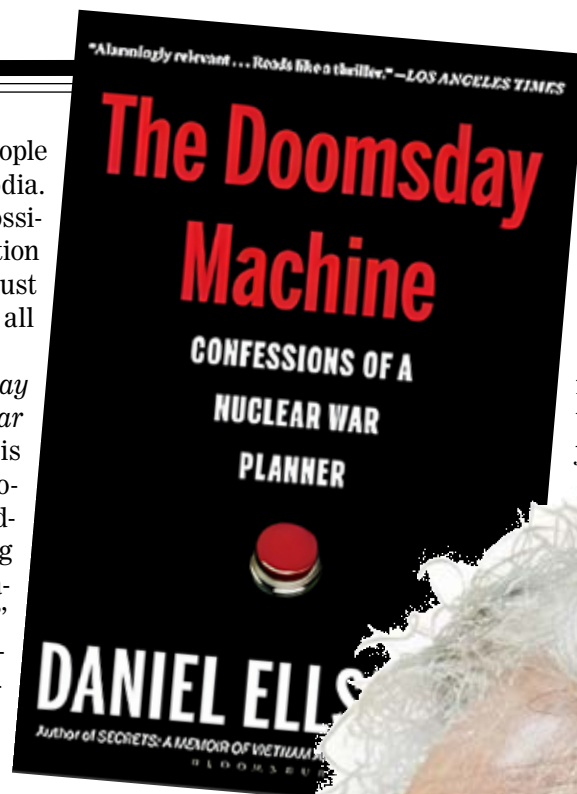
the deaths of several million people in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. And Dan was haunted by the possibility that someday such deception might lead to a nuclear holocaust that could extinguish almost all human life on this planet.

In his 2017 book *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*, he highlighted this all-too-apt epigraph from philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche: “Madness in individuals is something rare. But in groups, parties, nations, and epochs, it is the rule.” The ultimate madness of policies preparing for thermonuclear war preoccupied Dan throughout his adult life. As he wrote,

“No policies in human history have more deserved to be recognized as immoral, or insane. The story of how this calamitous predicament came about, and how and why it has persisted for over half a century is a chronicle of human madness. Whether Americans, Russians, and other humans can rise to the challenge of reversing these policies and eliminating the danger of near-term extinction caused by their own inventions and proclivities remains to be seen. I choose to join with others in acting as if that is still possible.”

I don't know whether Dan liked Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci's aphorism about “pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will,” but it seems to me an apt summary of his approach to the spectre of nuclear annihilation and an unfathomable end to human civilization.

Keeping his eyes relentlessly on what few of us want to look at – the possibility of omnicide – he was certainly not a fatalist, yet he was a realist about the probability that a nuclear war might indeed occur.



Such a probability now looms larger than at any other time since the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962, but its most essential lessons seem to have been lost on President Biden and his administration.

Eight months after that nearly cataclysmic face-off six decades ago between the United States and the Soviet Union, President John Kennedy spoke at American University about the crisis.

“Above all,” he said then, “while defending our own vital interests, nuclear powers must avert those confrontations which bring an adversary to a

choice of either a humiliating retreat or a nuclear war. To adopt that kind of course in the nuclear age would be evidence only of the bankruptcy of our policy, or of a collective death wish for the world.”

But Joe Biden has seemed all too intent on forcing his adversary in the Kremlin, Vladimir Putin, into just such “a humiliating retreat.”

The temptation to keep blowing a presidential bugle for victory over Russia in the Ukraine war has evidently been too enticing to resist (though Republicans in Congress have recently taken a rather different tack).

With disdain for genuine diplomacy and with a zealous desire to keep pouring huge quantities of armaments into the conflagration, Washington's recklessness has masqueraded as fortitude and its disregard for the dangers of nuclear war as a commitment to democracy. Potential confrontation with the world's other nuclear superpower has been recast as a test of moral virtue.

Meanwhile, in US media and politics, such dangers rarely get a mention anymore.

It's as if not talking about the actual risks diminishes them, though the down-playing of such dangers can, in fact, have the effect of heightening them. For instance, in this century, the US government has pulled out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile, Open Skies, and Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces arms-control treaties with Russia.

Their absence makes nuclear war more likely. For the mainstream media and members of Congress, however, it's been a non-issue, hardly worth mentioning, much less taking seriously.

Soon after becoming a "nuclear war planner," Dan Ellsberg learned what kind of global cataclysm was at stake. While working in the Kennedy administration, as he recalled,

"What I discovered, to my horror, I have to say, is that the Joint Chiefs of Staff contemplated causing with our own first [nuclear] strike 600-million deaths, including 100-million in our own allies. Now, that was an underestimate even then, because they weren't including fire



A Minuteman II missile in front of the Strategic Air Command's Headquarters building at Offutt AFB, Nebraska

which they felt was too incalculable in its effects. And of course, fire is the greatest casualty-producing effect of thermonuclear weapons. So, the real effect would have been over a billion not 600 million, about a third of the Earth's population then at that time."

Decades later, in 2017, Dan described research findings on the "nuclear winter" that such weaponry could cause: "What turned out to be the case 20 years later in 1983, confirmed in the last 10 years very thoroughly by climate scientists and environmental scientists, is that that high ceiling of a billion or so was wrong. Firing weapons over the cities, even if you called them military targets, would cause firestorms in those cities, like the one in Tokyo in March of 1945, which would loft into the stratosphere many millions of tons of soot and black smoke from the burning cities. It wouldn't be rained out in the stratosphere, it would go around the globe very quickly, and reduce sunlight by as

much as 70 percent, causing temperatures like that of the Little Ice Age, killing harvests worldwide and starving to death nearly everyone on Earth. It probably wouldn't cause extinction. We're so adaptable. Maybe 1 percent of our current population of 7.4 billion could survive, but 98 or 99 percent would not."

In his book *The Doomsday Machine*, Dan also emphasised the importance of focusing attention on one rarely discussed aspect of our nuclear peril: intercontinental ballistic missiles, or ICBMs. They are the most dangerous weapons in the arsenals of the atomic superpowers when it comes to the risk of setting off a nuclear war. The US has 400 of them, always on hair-trigger alert in underground silos scattered across Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Wyoming, while Russia deploys about 300 of its own (and China is rushing to catch up).

Former Defense Secretary William Perry has called ICBMs "some of the most dangerous weapons in the world," warning that "they could even trigger an accidental nuclear war." As Perry explained, "If our sensors indicate that enemy missiles are en route to the United States, the president would have to consider launching ICBMs before the enemy missiles could destroy them. Once they are launched, they cannot be recalled. The president would have less than 30 minutes to make that terrible decision." So, any false indication of a Russian attack could lead to global disaster. As former ICBM launch officer Bruce Blair and former vice chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General James Cartwright wrote: "By scrapping the vulnerable land-based missile force, any need for launching on warning disappears."

During an interview with me in

2021, Dan made a similar case for shutting down ICBMs. It was part of a recording session for a project coordinated by Judith Ehrlich, co-director of the Oscar-nominated documentary *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers*.

She would go on to create an animated six-episode *Defuse Nuclear War Podcast with Daniel Ellsberg*. In one of them, *ICBMs: Hair-Trigger Annihilation*, he began: “When I say that there is a step that could reduce the risk of nuclear war significantly that has not been taken but could easily be taken, and that that is the elimination of American ICBMs, I’m referring to the fact that there is only one weapon in our arsenal that confronts a president with the urgent decision of whether to launch nuclear war and that is the decision to launch our ICBMs.”

He went on to stress that ICBMs are uniquely dangerous because they’re vulnerable to being destroyed in an attack (“use them or lose them”). In contrast, nuclear weapons on submarines and planes are not vulnerable and “can be called back – in fact they don’t even have to be called back, they can... circle until they get a positive order to go ahead... That’s not true for ICBMs. They are fixed location, known to the Russians... Should we have mutual elimination of ICBMs? Of course. But we don’t need to wait for Russia to wake up to this reasoning... to do what we can to reduce the risk of nuclear war.”

He went on to stress that ICBMs are uniquely dangerous because they’re vulnerable to being destroyed in an attack

And he concluded: “To remove ours is to eliminate not only the chance that we will use our ICBMs wrongly, but it also deprives the Russians of the fear that our ICBMs are on the way toward them.”

While especially hazardous for human survival, ICBMs are a humongous cash cow for the nuclear weapons industry. Northrop Grumman has already won a \$13.3-billion contract to start developing a new version of ICBMs to replace the currently deployed Minuteman III missiles. That system, dubbed Sentinel, is set to be a major part of the US “nuclear modernisation plan” now pegged at \$1.5-trillion (before the inevitable cost overruns) over the next three decades.

Unfortunately, on Capitol Hill, any proposal that smacks of “unilateral” disarmament is dead on arrival. Yet ICBMs are a striking example of a situation in which such disarmament is by far the sanest option.

Let’s say you’re standing in a pool of gasoline with your adversary and you’re both lighting matches. Stop

lighting those matches and you’ll be denounced as a unilateral disarmer, no matter that it would be a step toward sanity.

In his 1964 Nobel Peace Prize speech, Martin Luther King Jr. declared, “I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of thermonuclear destruction.”

It’s easy to feel overwhelmed and powerless on the subject. The narratives – and silences – offered by government officials and most media are perennial invitations to just such feelings. Still, the desperately needed changes to roll back nuclear threats would require an onset of acute realism coupled with methodical activism. As James Baldwin wrote: “Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

Daniel Ellsberg was accustomed to people telling him how much he inspired them. But I sensed in his eyes and in his heart a persistent question: Inspired to do what? **CT**

Norman Solomon is co-founder of *RootsAction.org* and executive director of the *Institute for Public Accuracy*. His books include *War Made Easy, Made Love, Got War, and most recently War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine* (The New Press). He lives in the San Francisco area. This article was first published at www.tomdispatch.com.

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Tony Sutton

JOHN PILGER: A GIANT OF CAMPAIGNING JOURNALISM

Award-winning campaigning journalist and film-maker devoted his life to exposing injustice and the crimes of the powerful

John Pilger, rated one of the world's greatest campaigning journalists and documentary film-makers, died in London at the age of 84 on December 30, 2023.

Pilger, born in Australia in 1939, came to prominence as a writer with the then left-leaning London *Daily Mirror* mass circulation tabloid in the 1960s, exposing the abuse of power by large corporations and fighting the rampant colonialist mentality of western governments, especially those of the US and the UK.

His work as chief foreign correspondent on the *Mirror*, which had earned him his first British Journalist of the Year award in 1967 for his reporting on the Vietnam War, peaked when he and photographer



Eric Piper entered Cambodia after the fall of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime in 1979. His report, *Death of a Nation*, in a multi-page special edition of the paper revealed that up to two-million people, of a population of seven-million, had died of genocide or starvation under Pol Pot, while two-million more faced death from food shortages or disease.

That work made him the first writer to be crowned Journalist of the Year twice, while his follow-up documentary, *Year Zero, the Silent Death of Cambodia*, was seen by 150-million viewers, in 50 countries, and won more than 30 international awards.

Despite much more critical acclaim for his writing, Pilger found life increasingly difficult at the *Mirror* after the publishing group was

John Pilger at Low Library Rotunda of Columbia University, April 14, 2006 for a panel discussion on war reporting.

Photos: Marjorie Lipan



taken over in 1984 by Robert Maxwell – described by the Department of Trade and Industry in 1971 as ‘unfit to run a public company’ – in a ham-fisted attempt to launch a publishing empire to eclipse that of his great rival Rupert Murdoch.

Pilger, along with Paul Foot, another *Mirror* writing star and winner of the Journalist of the Year award, was not to survive the takeover for long. Foot was the first to go, resigning in 1984 after the paper refused to run articles critical of Maxwell’s business dealings, while Pilger was fired a year later. He later described working for the self-obsessed Maxwell as “a nightmare; he turned the paper into a family album.”

Maxwell drowned in 1991 after falling from his luxury yacht, *Lady Ghislaine*, near the Canary Islands. A £460-million hole was later found in the pension funds of his companies which he had raided to bolster his rapidly disintegrating business empire.

Maxwell was one of the more obvious targets of Pilger’s comments in the introduction to the second issue of his book *Heroes*, published in

1989, in which he wrote: “It seems to me ironic that in the 1980s, as media technology advances, it is not the traditional means of journalism that are becoming obsolete, but the honourable traditions. As secrecy and deception of governments grow more sophisticated, the need for explanation, investigation and polemic, has never been more urgent; equally, there is the need for journalists to make a stand against the bullies of their own industry.”

But Pilger was not immune from making blunders of his own as the UK media stumbled into a brave new electronic world in the 1980s. The introduction of cheaper print and production technology led to a number of new launches that hoped to introduce a measure of worker control to create more egalitarian control of newspaper publishing. Pilger became the pre-launch editor-in-chief of a socialist-leaning tabloid newspaper, *News on Sunday*, which was initially planned as a workers’ co-operative. Pilger, who had been given “overall

editorial control,” clashed with other founders after returning from filming his documentary, *The Secret Country*, in Australia, and resigned before the first issue appeared on April 27, 1987. *News on Sunday* closed seven months later after being taken over by Owen Oyston, another would-be newspaper baron.

Still Pilger was not done with newspapers. Editor Piers Morgan took him back to the *Mirror* in 2002 as the 7/11 attacks on New York escalated into wars on Afghanistan and Iraq. They produced some of the few anti-war front pages seen in the British media during the time.

In 2003, six months after the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Pilger’s documentary *Breaking the Silence: Truth and Lies in the War on Terror* highlighted the hypocrisy and double standards of the American and British adventures of 2001-3, which led to the deaths of more than a million people.

As the years progressed, he undertook less work in print journalism in the UK, limiting his work to writing columns in the left-wing *New States-*



Left: The *Mirror* was a lone voice among the British national daily tabloids, with John Pilger denouncing the US war on Iraq following the 9/11 attacks on the US. Above: Pilger fought tirelessly for the release of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, who now sits in a London jail cell awaiting a final decision on extradition to the US.



man magazine and the *Guardian* newspaper, writing books, including *Freedom Next Time*, *Tell Me No Lies*, *Hidden Agendas*, and *The New Rulers of the World*.

Instead, he devoted his energies to producing documentary TV and films, including *The War On Democracy* (2007) his first for the cinema. It explores the current and past relationship of Washington with Latin American countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia and Chile.

Other films included *The War You Don't See* (2010), which analyses

propaganda as a weapon in Iraq and Afghanistan; *Utopia*, a tour through the 'secret country' of Australia, that exposes a national silence about the brutalising of Indigenous people; the prescient *The Coming War With China* (2016), which shows how the US, the world's biggest military power, decided that China, the second largest economic power, was a threat to its imperial dominance and how it planned to deal with that threat; and *The Dirty War on the NHS* (2019), detailing the planned demise of Britain's National Health Service, first broadcast in Britain on the ITV Network just days after the 2019 general election that saw Boris Johnson become prime minister.

The biggest exposure of his work came with the explosion of the internet. His writing – uncensored by government or elite interests – featured on websites around the world: *ColdType* has been publishing his work since 2004 (see <http://coldtype.net/pilger.04.html>)

and reached many millions of new readers.

Pilger's final campaign was defending his great friend Julian Assange, persecuted for years by the UK and US governments for exposing war crimes committed by the US in Afghanistan and Iraq on indictments that pose a great threat to international press freedom.

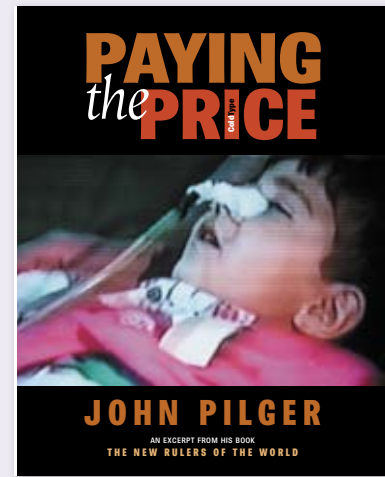
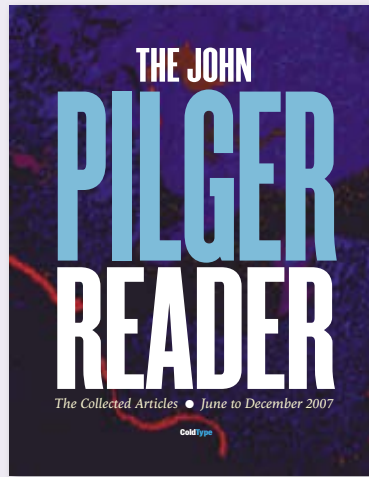
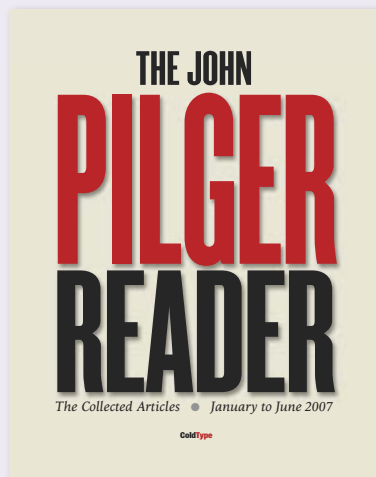
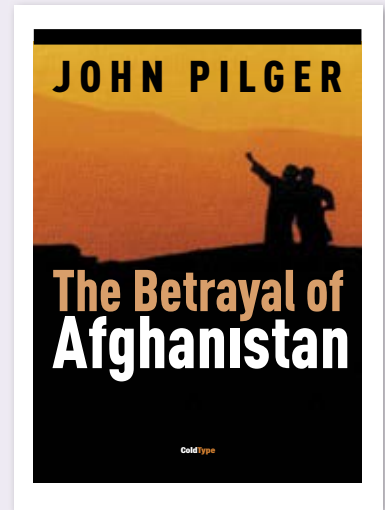
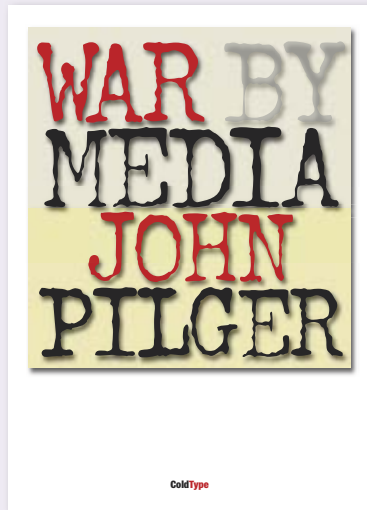
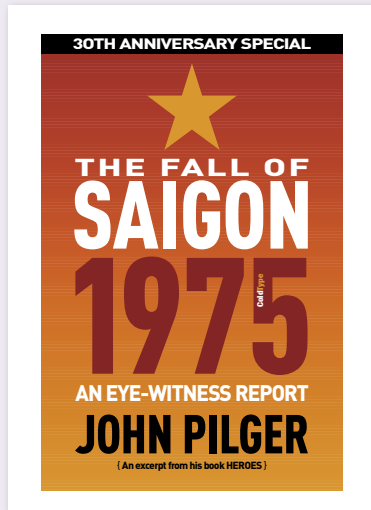
"Julian Assange," Pilger declared, "is the courageous embodiment of a struggle against the darkest, most oppressive forces in our world; and people of principle, young and old, should oppose it as best they can; or one day it may touch their lives, and worse."

Assange's extradition to the US will be decided in London next month. Sadly, Pilger will not be there to hear the verdict. **CT**

Tony Sutton is the editor of *ColdType*.

● Learn more about John Pilger, read his essays and columns, and watch his films at www.johnpilger.com

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Duncan Cumming

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Rishi Sunak's British government and Keir Starmer's Labour Party opposition have been reluctant to condemn Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza since the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel that left 1,200 dead. The British public, however, has been made its revulsion at the Israeli atrocities clear, as this selection of wall art from London's East End shows





● See more of Duncan Cumming's Gaza wall art at www.flickr.com/photos/duncan/albums/72177720313342353



you can erase our words
but not our hopes.
We will fight until the end,
UNTIL PALESTINE IS FREE.





Chris Hedges

THE EVIL ISRAEL DOES IS THE EVIL ISRAEL GETS

Israel's settler colonial project perpetuates the cycle of violence against the indigenous inhabitants of historic Palestine.

Palestinians have been forced to speak back in the language Israel speaks

I knew Dr. Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, the co-founder of Hamas, along with Sheikh Ahmed Ismail Yassin. Al-Rantisi's family were expelled to the Gaza Strip by Zionist militias from historic Palestine during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. He did not fit the demonised image of a Hamas leader. He was a soft spoken, articulate and highly educated paediatrician who had graduated first in his class at Egypt's Alexandria University.

As a nine-year-old boy, he witnessed executions in Khan Younis of 275 Palestinian men and boys, including his uncle, when Israel briefly occupied the Gaza Strip in 1956, the subject of Joe Sacco's magisterial book *Footnotes in Gaza*. Scores of Palestinians were also executed by Israeli soldiers in the neighbouring town of Rafah, where tens of thousands of Palestinians are currently being forced to flee now that Khan Younis has come under attack.

"I still remember the wailing and the tears of my father over his brother," al-Rantisi told Sacco and me when we visited him at his home. "I couldn't sleep for many months after that...It left a wound in my heart that can never heal. I'm telling you a story and I'm almost crying. This sort of action can never be forgotten...[T]hey planted hatred in our hearts."

He knew he could never trust the Israelis. He knew that the goal of the Zionist state was the occupation of all of historic Palestine – Israel seized Gaza and the West Bank in 1967 along with Syria's Golan Heights and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula – and the eternal subjugation or extermination of the Palestinian people. He knew he would avenge the killings.

Al-Rantisi and Yassin were assassinated in 2004 by Israel. Al-Rantisi's widow, Jamila Abdallah Taha al-Shanti, had a doctorate in English and taught at the Islamic University in Gaza. The couple had six children, one of whom was killed along with his father. The family's home was bombed and destroyed during the 2014 Israeli assault on Gaza known as Operation Protective Edge. Jamila was killed by Israel on Oct. 19 last year.

Israel's genocide in Gaza is rearing a new generation of enraged, traumatised and dispossessed Palestinians who have lost family members, friends, homes, communities and any hope of living ordinary lives. They, too, will seek retribution. Their small acts of terrorism will counter Israel's ongoing state terror. They will hate as they have been hated. This lust for

vengeance is universal. After World War Two, a clandestine unit of Jews who served in the Jewish Brigade of the British Army, called "Gmul," – Hebrew for "Recompense" – hunted down former Nazis and executed them.

"I and the public know/What all schoolchildren learn," W.H. Auden wrote. "Those to whom evil is done/Do evil in return."

Chaim Engel, who took part in the uprising at the Nazis' Sobibor death camp in Poland, described how, armed with a knife, he attacked a guard in the camp.

"It's not a decision," Engel said. "You just react, instinctively you react to that, and I figured, 'Let us to do, and go and do it.' And I went. I went with the man in the office, and we killed this German. With every jab, I said, 'That is for my father, for my mother, for all these people, all the Jews you killed.'"

What Engel did to the Nazi guard was no less savage than what Hamas fighters did to Israelis on Oct. 7, after escaping their own prison. Taken out of context, it is inexplicable. But set against the backdrop of the extermination camp, or the 17 years trapped in Gaza's concentration camp, it makes sense. This is not to excuse it. To understand is not to condone. But we must understand if this cycle of violence is to

'To the brutalised, numb with trauma, convulsed by rage, those who relentlessly attack and humiliate them are not human beings, but representations of evil'



be stopped. No one is immune to the thirst for vengeance. Israel and the US are foolishly orchestrating yet another chapter in this nightmare.

J. Glenn Gray, a combat officer in World War II, wrote about the peculiar nature of vengeance in *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*:

“When the soldier has lost a comrade to this enemy or possibly had his family destroyed by them through bombings or through political atrocities, so frequently the case in World War II, his anger and resentment deepen into hatred. Then the war for him takes on the character of a vendetta. Until he has himself destroyed as many of the enemy as possible, his lust for vengeance can hardly be appeased. I have known soldiers who were avid to exterminate every last one of the enemy, so fierce was their hatred. Such

soldiers took great delight in hearing or reading of mass destruction through bombings. Anyone who has known or been a soldier of this kind is aware of how hatred penetrates every fibre of his being. His reason for living is to seek revenge; not an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but a tenfold retaliation.”

To the brutalised, numb with trauma, convulsed by rage, those who relentlessly attack and humiliate them are not human beings. They are representations of evil. The lust for vengeance, for tenfold retaliation, spawns rivers of blood.

The Palestinian attacks of Oct. 7, which left some 1,200 Israelis dead, feeds this lust within Israel, just as Israel’s obliteration of Gaza feeds this lust among Palestinians. Israel’s

blue and white national flag with the Star of David adorns homes and cars. Crowds gather to support families whose members are among the hostages in Gaza. Israelis hand out food at road junctions to soldiers headed to fight in Gaza. Banners with slogans such as “Israel at war” and “Together we will win” punctuate television broadcasts and media sites. There is little discussion in Israeli media of the slaughter in Gaza or the suffering of Palestinians – 1.7 million of whom have been driven from their homes – but a constant repetition of the stories of suffering, death and heroism that took place on the Oct. 7 attack. Only our victims matter.

“Few of us ever know how far fear and violence can transform us into creatures at bay, ready with tooth and claw,” Gray wrote. “If the war taught me anything at all, it convinced me that people are not what

they seem or even think themselves to be.”

Marguerite Duras in her book *The War: A Memoir* writes of how she and other members of the French Resistance tortured a 50-year-old Frenchman accused of collaborating with the Nazis. Two men who were tortured in Montluc prison in Lyon strip the alleged informer. They beat him as the group shouts: “Bastard. Traitor. Scum.” Blood and mucus soon run from his nose. His eye is damaged. He moans, “Ow, ow, oh, oh. ...” He crumples in a heap on the floor. Duras writes that he had “become someone without anything in common with other men. And with every minute the difference grows bigger and more established.” She watches the beating passively. “The more they hit and the more he bleeds, the more it’s clear that hitting is necessary, right, just.” She goes on: “You have to strike. There will never be any justice in the world unless you – yourself are justice now. Judges, panelled court-rooms play-acting, not justice.” She notes, “Every blow rings out in the silent room. They’re hitting at all the traitors, at the women who left, at all those who didn’t like what they saw from behind the shutters.”

Israel has abused, humiliated, impoverished and wantonly killed Palestinians, provoking inevitable counter violence. It is the engine behind a century of bloodshed. The genocide in Gaza outdoes even the worst excesses of the Nakba, or catastrophe, which saw 750,000 Palestinians driven from their land in 1948 and 8,000 to 15,000 murdered in massacres by Zionist terrorist militias such as Irgun and Lehi.

The Palestinian resistance has little more than small arms and rocket-propelled grenades to battle against one of the best equipped and most technologically advanced militaries on the planet, the world’s fourth strongest military, after the US, Rus-

The decision by the US to defend, fund and participate in Israel’s carpet bombing, slaughter and ethnic cleansing in Gaza is unconscionable

sia and China. Palestinian fighters, facing these overwhelming odds, have become demigods with huge popular followings not only among Palestinians, but throughout the Muslim world. Israel may be able to hunt down and kill Hamas’s second-in-command leader Yahya Sinwar, but if they do, he will become the Middle East’s version of Ernesto “Che” Guevara. Resistance movements are built on the blood of martyrs. Israel ensures a continual supply.

The decision by the US to defend, fund and participate in Israel’s carpet bombing, slaughter and ethnic cleansing in Gaza is unconscionable. Its backing for the genocide has destroyed what remained of its credibility in the Middle East, already in tatters from two decades of wars, as well as most of the rest of the world. It has forfeited its right to act as a mediator; that role will be taken by China or Russia. Its refusal to condemn Israeli aggression and war crimes exposes its hypocrisy about the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It flirts with the possibility of a regional conflagration. The peace process, a sham for decades, is irrecoverable. The only language left is the language of death. It is how Israel speaks to the Palestinians. It is how the Palestinians are forced to speak back.

The Biden administration has little to gain from the levelling and depopulation of Gaza, indeed it is

alienating huge segments of the Democratic Party, especially as it attacks protestors calling for a ceasefire as “pro-terrorist.” Senate

Majority leader Chuck Schumer led chants of “We stand with Israel” and “No ceasefire” at a pro-Israel rally on Nov. 4 in Washington DC, despite a Reuters/Ipsos survey indicating 68 percent of respondents believed that Israel should implement a ceasefire and negotiate an end to the war. That number rises to 77 percent among Democrats. Biden has a dismal approval rating of 37 percent.

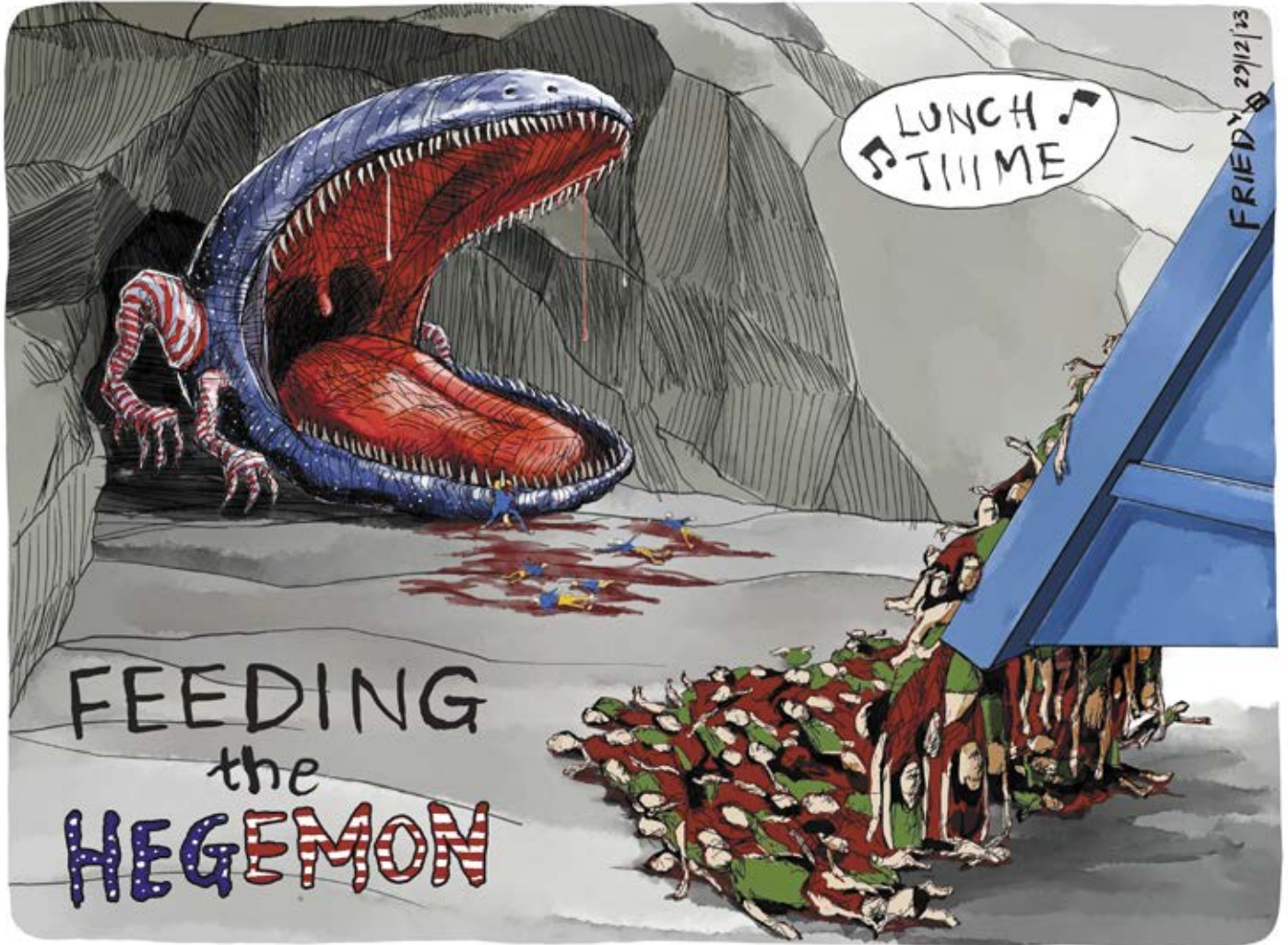
On December 8, 2023, the United Nations Security Council voted 13-1 for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and unconditional release of all hostages. The US voted against the resolution. The UK abstained. The draft resolution was not adopted due to the US veto.

Biden’s real base is not disenfranchised voters but the billionaire class, corporations, such as the weapons industry, which is making huge profits from the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, and groups such as the Israel lobby. They determine policy, even if it means Biden’s defeat in the next presidential election. If Biden loses, the oligarchs get Donald Trump, who serves their interests as doggedly as Biden.

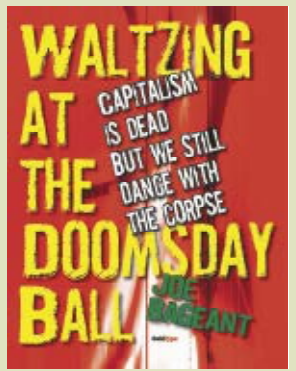
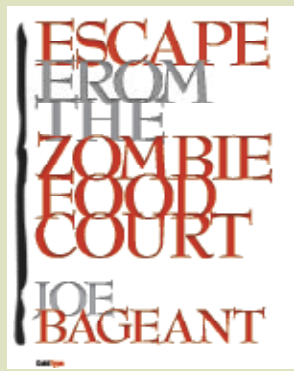
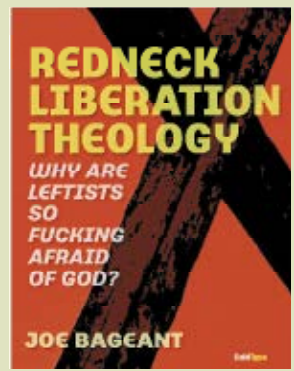
The wars do not end. The suffering continues. The Palestinians die in the tens of thousands. This is by design. **CT**

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who was a foreign correspondent for 15 years with the *New York Times*, where he served as Middle East bureau chief and Balkan bureau chief. He previously worked overseas for the *Dallas Morning News*, the *Christian Science Monitor* and NPR. He is host of the *Chris Hedges Report* – www.chrishedges.substack.com.

WE ARE ALL FRIED 🍷



Greg Koenderman



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Jonathan Cook

'ARE WE THE BADDIES?'

WESTERN SUPPORT FOR GAZA GENOCIDE MEANS THE ANSWER IS 'YES'

The desperate smear campaign to defend Israel's crimes highlights the toxic brew of lies that's been underpinning the liberal democratic order for decades

In a popular British comedy sketch set during the Second World War, a Nazi officer near the front lines turns to a fellow officer and, in a moment of sudden – and comic – self-doubt, asks: “Are we the baddies?”

For many of us, it has felt like we are living through the same moment, extended for nearly three months – though there has been nothing to laugh about.

Western leaders have not only backed rhetorically a genocidal war by Israel on Gaza, but they have provided diplomatic cover, weapons and other military assistance.

The West is fully complicit in the ethnic cleansing of some two million Palestinians from their homes, as well as the killing of more than 20,000 and the injuring of many tens of thousands more, a majority of them women and children.

Western politicians have insisted on Israel's “right to defend itself” as it has levelled critical infrastructure in Gaza, including government buildings, and collapsed the health sector. Starvation and disease are starting to pick off the rest of the

population.

The Palestinians of Gaza have nowhere to run, nowhere to hide from Israel's US-supplied bombs. If they are ultimately allowed to escape, it will be into neighbouring Egypt. After decades of displacement, they will be finally exiled permanently from their homeland.

And as western capitals seek to justify these obscenities by blaming Hamas, Israeli leaders allow their soldiers and settler militias, backed by the state, to rampage across the West Bank, where there is no Hamas, attacking and killing Palestinians.

In defending Gaza's destruction, Israeli leaders have reached readily for an analogy with the allies' firebombing of German cities like Dresden – apparently unembarrassed by the fact that these were long ago acknowledged as some of the worst crimes of the Second World War.

Israel is waging an old-style, unabashed colonial war against the native population – of the kind that pre-

dates international humanitarian law. And western leaders are cheering them on.

Are we sure we are not the baddies?

Israel's attack on Gaza provokes revulsion from so many because it seems impossible to rationalise it. It feels like a reversion. It lays bare something primitive and ugly about the West's behaviour that has been obscured for more than 70 years by a veneer of “progress,” by talk about the primacy of human rights, by the development of international institutions, by the rules of war, by claims of humanitarianism.

Yes, these claims were invariably bogus. Vietnam, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Ukraine were all sold based on lies. The true goal of the US, and its Nato sidekicks, was plundering the resources of others, maintaining Washington as the global top dog, and enriching a western elite.

But importantly, the deception was sustained by an overarching narrative that dragged along many westerners in its wake. Wars were to counter the threat of Soviet com-



Destruction in Gaza after Israeli attack on October 10, 2023.

munism, or Islamic “terror,” or a renewed Russian imperialism. And as a positive corollary, these wars claimed to be liberating oppressed women, protecting human rights, and fostering democracy.

None of that narrative overlay works this time.

There is nothing humanitarian about bombing trapped civilians in Gaza, turning their tiny prison enclave into rubble, reminiscent of earthquake disaster zones but this time an entirely man-made catastrophe.

Even Israel does not have the gall to claim to be liberating the women and girls of Gaza from Hamas as it kills and starves them. Nor does it

pretend to be interested in democracy promotion. Rather, Gaza is full of “human animals” and must be “flattened.”

And it has been all but impossible to make Hamas, a group of a few thousand fighters penned into Gaza, appear a credible threat to the West’s way of life.

Hamas cannot send any kind of warhead into Europe, let alone in 45 minutes. Their prison camp, even before its destruction, was never the plausible heart of some Islamist empire ready to overrun the West and subject it to “sharia law.”

In fact, it has been barely feasible to refer to these past weeks as a war. Gaza is not a state, it has no army. It has been under occupation for decades and under siege for 16 years – a blockade in which Israel has counted the calories allowed in to maintain low-level malnutrition among Palestinians.

As the American Jewish scholar Norman Finkelstein has noted, Hamas’ breakout on 7 October 2023 is better understood not as a war but as a slave revolt. And like slave rebellions throughout history – from Spartacus’ against the Romans to Nat Turner’s in Virginia in 1831 – it was inevitably going to turn brutal and bloody.

Are we on the side of the murderous prison guards? Are we arming the plantation owners?

In the absence of a persuasive justification for assisting Israel in its genocidal campaign in Gaza, our leaders are having to wage a parallel war on the western public – or at least on their minds.

To question Israel's right to exterminate Palestinians in Gaza, to chant a slogan calling for Palestinians to be free of occupation and siege, to want equal rights for all in the region – these are now all treated as the equivalent of antisemitism.

To demand a ceasefire to stop Palestinians dying under the bombs is to hate Jews.

The extent to which these narrative manipulations are not only abhorrent but themselves constitute antisemitism should be obvious, were we not being so relentlessly and thoroughly gaslit by our ruling class.

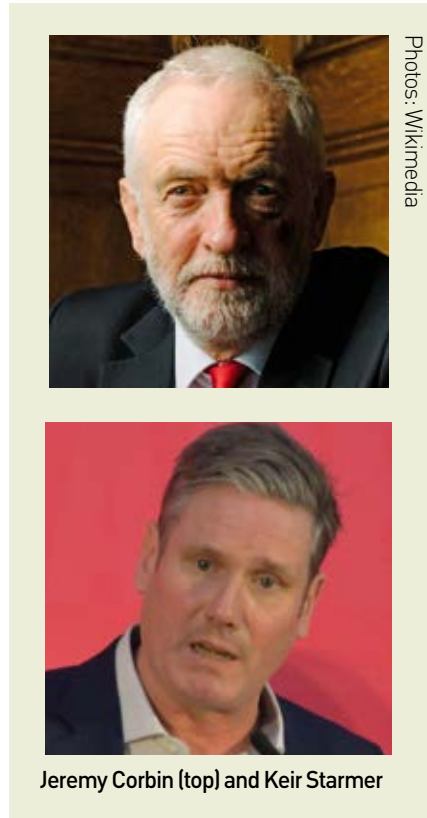
Those defending Israel's genocide suggest that it is not just Israel's ultra-right government and military but all Jews who will the destruction of Gaza, the ethnic cleansing of its population, and the murder of thousands of Palestinian children.

That is the real Jew hatred.

But the path to this mass gaslighting operation has been paved for a while. It began long before Israel's levelling of Gaza.

When Jeremy Corbyn was elected Labour leader in 2015, he brought for the first time a meaningful anti-imperialist agenda to the heart of British politics. And as a staunch supporter of Palestinian rights, he was viewed by the establishment as a threat to Israel, a critically important US client state and the lynchpin of the West's projection of military might into the oil-rich Middle East.

Western elites were bound to re-



spond with unprecedented hostility to this challenge to their forever war machine. This appears to have been duly noted by Corbyn's successor, Keir Starmer, who has since made sure to present Labour as Nato's number one cheerleader.

During Corbyn's tenure, little time was lost by the establishment in working out the best strategy for putting the Labour leader permanently on the back foot and undermining his well-established anti-racist credentials. He was recast as an antisemite.

The campaign of smears not only damaged Corbyn personally but tore the Labour Party apart, turning it into a rabble of feuding factions, eating up all the party's energy and making it unelectable.

That same playbook has now been rolled out against much of the British and US public.

Last month the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a resolution equating anti-Zionism

– in this case, opposition to Israel's genocidal war on Gaza – with antisemitism.

Protesters who have turned out to demand a ceasefire to end the massacres in Gaza are characterised as "rioters", while their chant of "from the river to the sea" calling for equal rights between Israeli Jews and Palestinians is denounced as a "rallying cry for the eradication of the state of Israel and the Jewish people".

Tellingly again, this is an inadvertent admission by the western ruling class that Israel – constituted as a Jewish chauvinist, settler-colonial state – can never allow Palestinians equality or meaningful freedoms any more than apartheid South Africa could for the native Black population.

In a complete inversion of reality, opposition to genocide has been reframed by US politicians as genocidal.

This mass smear campaign is so unmoored that western elites are even turning on their own to shut down freedoms of speech and thought in the institutions where they are supposed to be heavily protected.

The heads of three top US universities – from which the next members of the ruling class will emerge – were grilled by Congress about the threat of antisemitism to Jewish students from campus protests calling for an end to the killing in Gaza.

The West's order of priorities was laid bare: protecting the ideological sensitivities of a section of Jewish students who fervently support Israel's right to kill Palestinians was more important than either protecting Palestinians from genocide or defending basic democratic freedoms in the West to oppose genocide.

The reticence of the three university presidents to cave in to the politicians' demands for the snuff-

ing out of free speech and thought on campus led to a campaign to defund their colleges as well as calls for their heads.

One, Elizabeth Magill of the University of Pennsylvania, has already been forced out of office.

These developments are not the outcome of some strange, temporary, collective psychosis overtaking western establishments. They are yet more evidence of a desperate failure to stop the West's long-term trajectory towards crises on multiple fronts.

They are a sign, first, that the ruling class understands it is again visible to the public as a ruling class, and that its interests are beginning to be seen as completely divorced from those of ordinary people. The scales are falling from our eyes.

The simple fact that one can again use the language of "establishments," a "ruling class" and "class war" without sounding unhinged or like a throwback to the 1950s is an indication of how perception management – and narrative manipulation – so central to upholding the western political project since the end of the Second World War is failing.

Claims about the triumph of the liberal democratic order declared so loudly in the late 1980s by intellectuals such as Francis Fukuyama – or "the end of history," as he grandly termed it – now look patently absurd.

And that is because, second, western elites clearly have no answers for the biggest challenges of our era. They are floundering around trying to deal with the inherent paradoxes in the capitalist order that liberal democracy was there to obscure.

Reality is breaking through the ideological cladding.

The most catastrophic is the climate crisis. Capitalism's model of mass consumption and competition for the sake of competition is prov-

Israel has always had to obscure these lies through intimidation. Anyone daring to call out the deceptions is smeared as an antisemite

ing suicidal.

Limited resources – especially in our oil-addicted economies – mean growth is proving an ever-more costly extravagance. Those raised from birth to aspire to a better standard of living than their parents are growing not richer, but more disillusioned and bitter.

And the promise of progress – of kinder, more nurturing and equal societies – now sounds like a sick joke to most westerners under the age of 45.

The claim that the West is best is starting to look like it rests on shaky foundations, even to western audiences.

But that idea crumbled long ago abroad, in the countries either devastated by the West's war machine or waiting for their turn. The liberal democratic order offers them nothing except threats: it demands fealty or punishment.

Which is the context for the current genocide in Gaza.

As it claims, Israel is on the front lines – but not of a clash of civilisations. It is an exposed, precarious outpost of the liberal democratic order, where the brew of lies about democracy and liberalism are at their most toxic and unconvincing.

Israel is an apartheid state masquerading as "the only democracy in the Middle East." Its brutal occupation forces masquerade as "the most

moral army in the world." And now Israel's genocide in Gaza masquerades as "the elimination of Hamas".

Israel has always had to obscure these lies through intimidation. Anyone daring to call out the deceptions is smeared as an antisemite.

But that playbook has sounded grossly offensive – inhuman even – when the matter at hand is stopping genocide in Gaza.

Where does this ultimately lead?

Nearly a decade ago, the Israeli scholar and peace activist Jeff Halper wrote a book, *War Against the People*, warning: "In an endless war on terror, we are all doomed to become Palestinians."

Not just the West's "enemies", but its populations would come to be seen as a threat to the interests of a capitalist ruling class bent on its permanent privilege and enrichment, whatever the costs to the rest of us.

That argument – which sounded hyperbolic when he first aired it – is beginning to seem prescient.

Gaza is not just the front line of Israel's genocidal war on the Palestinian people. It is also a front line in the western elite's war on our ability to think critically, to develop sustainable ways to live, and to demand that others be treated with the dignity and humanity we expect for ourselves.

Yes, the battle lines are drawn. And anyone who refuses to side with the baddies is the enemy. **CT**

Jonathan Cook is an award-winning British journalist, who was based in Nazareth, Israel, for 20 years before returning to the UK in 2021. The author of three books on the Israel-Palestine conflict, Cook won the Martha Gelhorn Special Prize for Journalism in 2011. He previously worked for Britain's *Guardian* and *Observer* newspapers. His website is www.jonathan-cook.net.

Vijay Prashad

THE NO-STATE SOLUTION BECOMES MORE REAL AS ISRAEL'S PERMANENT NAKBA CONTINUES

The US veto at the Security Council signals the end of Palestine dream

In 1948, the Syrian historian Constantin Zurayk used the Arabic word Nakba (Catastrophe) to refer to the forced removal of Palestinians from their lands and homes by the newly formed Israeli state (in his August 1948 book, *Ma'na al-Nakba* or *The Meaning of the Nakba*). A decade ago, in Beirut, I met the Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury – then editor of the Arabic-language *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, who told me that the Nakba of 1948 was not an event but part of a process. “What we have is a Permanent Nakba, which means that this catastrophe has been continuous for the Palestinians,” he said. Since 1948, Palestinian political movements and intellectuals have argued that the logic of the Israeli state has been to expel the Palestinians from the region between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. This policy of expulsion to create an ethno-religious Jewish State of Israel is what Khoury meant by the Permanent Nakba.

On November 11, 2023, Israel's Agriculture Minister Avi Dichter said something startling to the press. “We are now rolling out the Gaza

Nakba,” he said. “Gaza Nakba 2023. That's how it'll end,” said this former director of Israel's internal security service Shin Bet.

In the first week of November, Israel's Heritage Minister Amihai Eliyahu was on Radio Kol BaRama, whose interviewer ruminated about dropping “some kind of nuclear bomb on all of Gaza, flattening them, eliminating everybody there.”

Eliyahu replied, “That's one way. The second way is to work out what's important to them, what scares them, what deters them... They're not scared of death.”

Israel, the minister said, should retake all of Gaza. What about the Palestinians? “They can go to Ireland or deserts,” he said. “The monsters in Gaza should find a solution by themselves.”

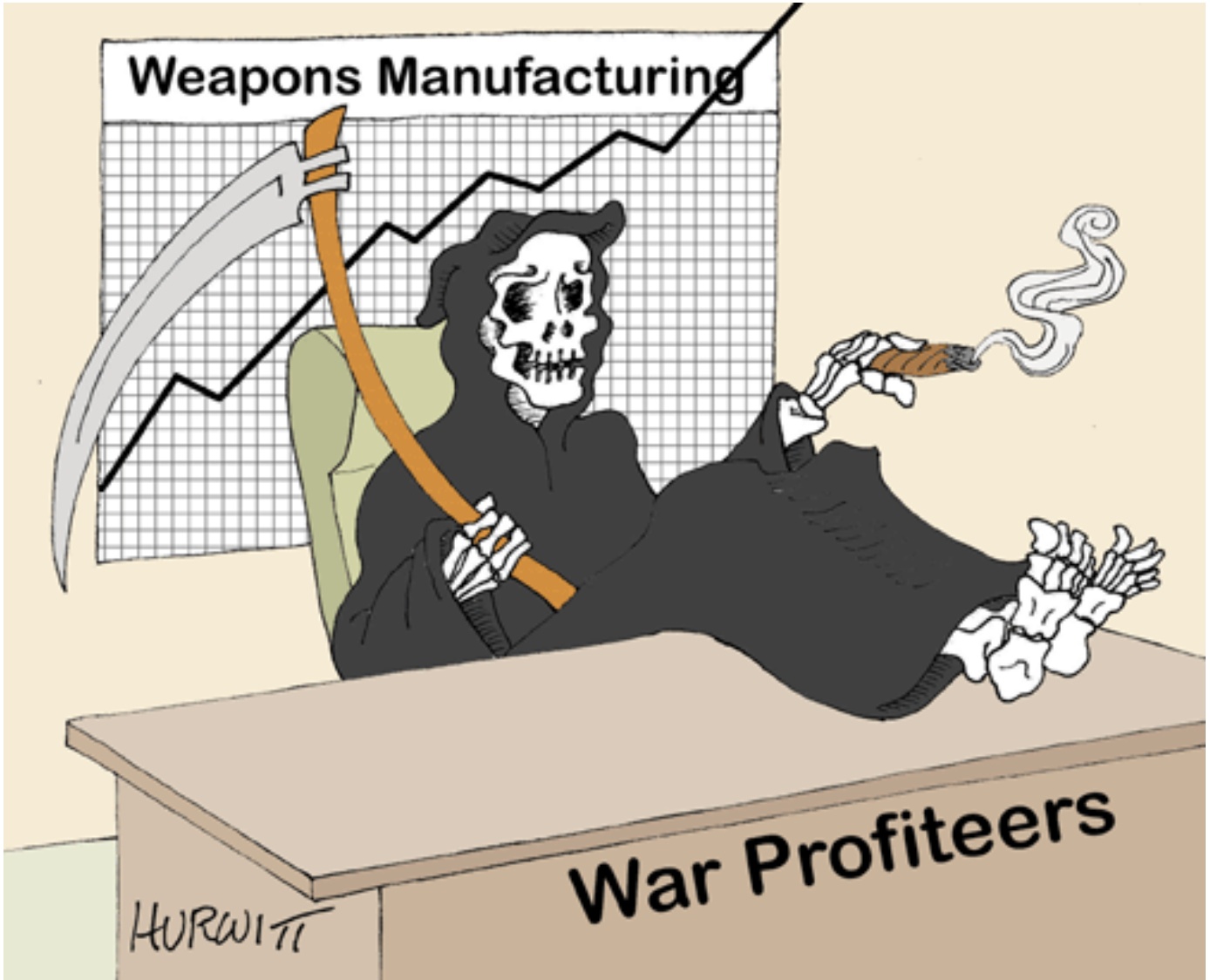
This language of annihilation and dehumanisation has become normal among the cabinet of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu suspended Eliyahu from his cabinet, but he did not rebuke his Defense Minister Yoav Gallant

who called Palestinians “human animals.” This is the broad attitude of the Israeli high officials, who are now on record with this kind of language.

Israel's army has advanced its execution of the “Gaza Nakba.” In the early stage of the attack, Israel told Palestinian civilians to move south within the Strip, along Salah al-Din Road, the north-south axis in this 40-kilometer-long area of Palestine that holds 2.3 million Palestinians.

The Israelis said that they would largely attack northern Gaza, particularly Gaza City. Around 1.5-million Palestinians moved from the northern part of Gaza to the south, the Israelis having told them repeatedly that this would be a safe zone. Those who stayed experienced a level of bombardment not seen in Gaza in the past, which has been pummeled by the Israelis on a punctual basis since 2006 (the current war including deadly air strikes against highly congested refugee camps, such as Jabalia).

In late November, five weeks into their brutal bombing in the north, Israel aircraft intensified the bombing of Gaza's second-largest city, Khan Younis, and began ground op-



erations in the areas where they had told civilians to take shelter.

By the first week of December, Israeli tanks surrounded Khan Younis, and Israeli aircraft began to bomb small towns in the southern part of Gaza.

Having pushed 1.8 Palestinians into the south, the Israelis now began to bomb that part of Gaza.

Meanwhile, Israel's refusal to allow sufficient humanitarian aid to enter Gaza means that nine out of 10 Palestinians are living without food for days on end (some told the UN World Food Program that they had not eaten in 10 days). This total war by Israel has pushed the majority of

Palestinians in Gaza down toward the Egyptian border.

Under cover of this war, the Israelis have also moved aggressively into the West Bank to deepen the Permanent Nakba in that part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

As early as October 18, long before the Israeli forces moved toward Khan Younis, the Israel military tweeted that it “orders Gaza residents to move to the humanitarian zone in the area of al-Mawasi.”

Three days later, the Israeli military said that the Palestinians must

move “south of Wadi Gaza” and go to the “humanitarian area in Mawasi.”

Those who went to this small enclave (3.3 square miles) found it without any services – including no internet – and found that even here the Israelis were firing their weapons nearby. Mohammed Ghanem, who had lived near al-Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza, said that al-Mawasi was “neither humane nor safe.” Palestinians in southern Gaza now hope that they can get out before the Israeli bombs find them.

The death toll is [at the time of writing] in excess of 18,000 dead. As one Palestinian friend wrote in a text, “If we do not leave our homes and go

into exile, we will get killed here.”

He sent this text just when confirmation arrived that more Palestinians have been pushed out of their homes and killed since October 7 than in the Nakba of 1948. “This is the Second Nakba,” he told me from near the border between Gaza and Egypt.

The ghastly Israeli attack on the Palestinians of Gaza provoked a call for a ceasefire from the second week of October. Israel’s immense firepower – provided by Western countries (especially the United Kingdom and the United States) – was used indiscriminately against a people who live in congested areas of Gaza. Images of that violence flooded social media and even the broadcast news, which could not ignore what was happening.

These images overcame all the attempts by the Israeli government and its Western backers to justify their actions. Tens of millions of people joined various forms of protests across the world, but significantly in the Western states that back Israel, bravely confronting governments that tried to portray their solidarity with the Palestinians – unsuccessfully – as antisemitism.

This attack was a cynical attempt to use the actual and horrible existence of antisemitism to malign the protests. It did not work. The call for a full-scale ceasefire increased, putting pressure on governments around the world to act.

On December 8, 2023, the United

The US veto in the Security Council and the votes against in the General Assembly are effectively votes for a permanent Nakba

Arab Emirates (UAE) put a “brief, simple, and crucial” resolution for a ceasefire (the words are from UAE ambassador to the UN Mohamed Issa Abushahab). UN Secretary-General António Guterres invoked Article 99 of the Charter, which allows him to underscore the importance of an event through “preventative diplomacy” (the article has only been used three times previously, over the conflicts in the Republic of Congo in 1960, Iran in 1979, and Lebanon in 1989).

Almost a hundred member states of the UN backed the UAE resolution. “The people of Gaza are being told to move like human pinballs – ricocheting between ever-smaller slivers of the south, without any of the basics for survival,” Guterres told the UN Security Council. “Nowhere in Gaza is safe.” Thirteen members of the Security Council voted for it, including France, while the United Kingdom abstained. Only US Deputy Ambassador Robert Wood raised his hand to veto the resolution.

Four days later, on December 12, the Egyptians tabled much the same resolution in the UN General Assembly, where Assembly President Dennis Francis (of Trinidad and To-

bago) said, “We have one singular priority – only one – to save lives. Stop this violence now.”

The vote was overwhelming: 153 countries voted for the resolution, 10 voted against it, and 23 abstained. It is instructive to see which countries voted against the ceasefire: Austria, Czechia, Guatemala, Israel, Liberia, Micronesia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, and the United States. Many European countries – from Bulgaria to the United Kingdom – abstained. But matters are complex. Even Ukraine did not vote with Israel on this resolution. They abstained.

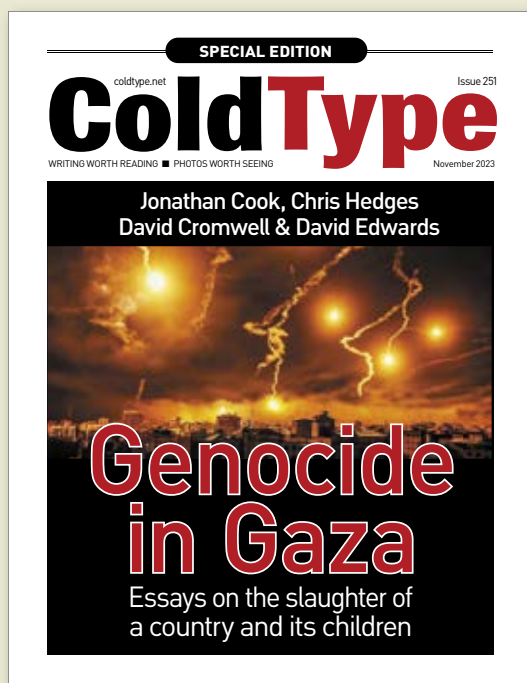
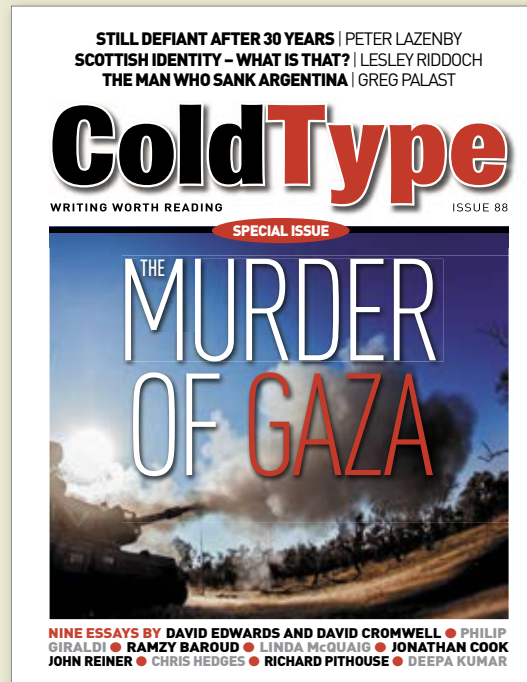
The US veto in the Security Council and the votes against in the General Assembly are effectively votes for the Permanent Nakba of the Palestinian people, the No-State Solution. At least, that is how they will be read across the world, not only in al-Mawasi, as the bombs get closer, but also in the demonstrations from New York to Jakarta. **CT**

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George Monbiot

BILLIONAIRES ARE BAD FOR US ALL

How economic power leads inexorably to environmental destruction

Don't they have children? Don't they have grandchildren? Don't rich and powerful people care about the world they will leave to their descendants? These are questions I'm asked every week, and they are not easy to answer. How can we explain a mindset that would sacrifice the habitable planet for a little more power or a little more wealth, when they have so much already?

There are many ways in which extreme wealth impoverishes us. The most obvious is money-spreading across our common ecological space. The recent reporting by Oxfam, the Stockholm Environment Institute and the Guardian gives us a glimpse of how much of the planet the very wealthy now sprawl across. The richest 1% of the world's people burn more carbon than the poorest 66%, while multibillionaires, running their yachts, private jets and multiple homes, each consume thousands of times the global average. You could see it as another colonial land grab: a powerful elite has captured the resources on which everyone depends.

But this is by no means the end of the problem. Some of these plutocrats also go to great lengths to thwart other people's attempts to prevent Earth systems collapse. Billionaires and centimillionaires fund

a network of organisations that seek to prevent effective environmental action. Many of the junktanks founded or funded by Charles and the late David Koch, owners of a vast business empire incorporating fossil fuel extraction, oil refineries and chemical plants, supply the arguments that disguise industrial self-interest as moral principle. So do their opaquely funded counterparts in the UK, in or around Tufton Street in Westminster.

The multimillionaire Jeremy Hosking, who poured millions into Vote Leave and the Brexit party, is also the main funder of Laurence Fox's Reclaim party, which claims there is no climate emergency and campaigns against net zero policies and low traffic neighbourhoods and in favour of fracking. Coincidentally, an investigation by openDemocracy last year found that his company, Hosking Partners, had \$134-million invested in the fossil fuel sector.

Harder to explain perhaps are the oligarchs who are not heavily or directly involved in fossil fuels, yet foster opposition to environmental action. A recent investigation by the website DeSmog found that 85% of opinion pieces about environmental issues published in the Telegraph over the past six months either denied the science or attacked the measures and campaigns seeking to prevent environmental break-

down. The current owner, Sir Frederick Barclay, is not a fossil fuel baron. But if the newspaper is now sold, as seems likely, to a fund controlled by Abu Dhabi's royal family, bankrolled by oil and gas, it could scarcely be worse.

At the core of Elon Musk's empire is Tesla, which makes electric vehicles. But he has turned his recent acquisition Twitter (now X, soon to be Ex) into an intensely hostile place for environmental discussion: research suggests that almost 50% of its environmentally oriented users have either gone quiet or been driven off the platform since its emusku-lation. Musk himself has contributed to the denial of environmental science that has boomed on X since he bought it.

A broad coalition of interests – fossil fuel companies, billionaires and their newspapers and other members of the economic elite – has lobbied for and achieved the criminalisation of environmental protest in many parts of the world, including the UK. Here, as in several other countries, gentle environmental protests now attract long prison sentences, facilitated by silencing in court: campaigners in some cases are prohibited from telling the jury why they took their action. In the US, organisations funded by oil companies and billionaires draft laws including the most draconian

and chilling penalties for protesters, then seek to universalise them across numerous states and nations. Entirely peaceful protesters are demonised as extremists and even terrorists. A widespread hostility towards environmental campaigners has been manufactured by dark-money junktanks and the billionaire press. It is obscene that those who seek to protect the living planet by democratic means are arrested en masse and imprisoned by the authorities, while the people and organisations trashing our life-support systems are untouched by the law.

So why do oligarchs who do not have direct investments in environmental destruction appear so hostile to environmental protection? Part of the reason is that any opposition to business as usual is perceived as opposition to its beneficiaries. Those who are billionaires or centimillionaires today are, by definition, well-served by the current system. They correctly perceive that a fairer, greener world means curtailing their immense economic and political power. Even those who have invested in green technologies or who donate to green causes doubtless

feel an instinctive sense of threat.

Networks funded by fossil fuel companies deliberately aggregate the issues, connecting green policies with communism and violent revolution, while promoting political candidates who will clamp down simultaneously on environmental action, democracy and redistribution. The property paranoia often associated with extreme wealth – the sense that everyone is plotting to take it away from you – is easily triggered.

But we cannot discount the possibility that some of these people really don't care, even about their own children. There are two convergent forces here: first, many of those who rise to positions of great economic or political power have personality disorders, particularly narcissism or psychopathy. These disorders are often the driving forces behind their ambition, and the means by which they overcome obstacles to the acquisition of wealth and power – such as guilt about their treatment of others – which would deter other people from achieving such dominance.

The second factor is that once great wealth has been acquired, it seems to reinforce these tenden-

cies, inhibiting connection, affection and contrition. Money buys isolation. It allows people to wall themselves off from others, in their mansions, yachts and private jets, not just physically but also cognitively, stifling awareness of their social and environmental impacts, shutting out other people's concerns and challenges. Great wealth encourages a sense of entitlement and egotism. It seems to suppress trust, empathy and generosity. Affluence also appears to diminish people's interest in looking after their own children. If any other condition generated these symptoms, we would call it a mental illness. Perhaps this is how extreme wealth should be classified.

So the fight against environmental breakdown is not and has never been just a fight against environmental breakdown. It is also a fight against the great maldistribution of wealth and power that blights every aspect of life on planet Earth. Billionaires – even the more enlightened ones – are bad for us. We cannot afford to keep them. **CT**

George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist. His website is www.monbiot.com.

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Chellis Glendinning

DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE?

Sit down for a few moments and I'll tell you why I honour astrology
– for its valiant stirring the waters of human curiosity and wonder

On Sundays I like to read the horoscope in the newspaper to get the gist of the coming week for us Geminis. I read the Leo report to Beatriz as well. One day, not wanting to produce conflict, she gathered her courage and asked: do you really believe in astrology?

Well, a Bolivian in her mid-30s, Beatriz clearly did not receive her university education on Berkeley's Telegraph Avenue. In the late 1960s. Where at the Café Med – amid curls of Galoises smoke and talk of revolution – ol' Carol would spout wisdoms based on diagrams mapping the all-critical where/when each honoree made landfall onto Planet Earth.

My lover, the Russian Misha, worked right across Telegraph at Shambhala Bookstore, and one day a customer came to our apartment to help us paint window frames. He was an astrologer with an unkempt beard. I mean, a deep astrologer who had studied its historic origins, philosophy, and labyrinthian layers of celestial meaning.

Paintbrush in hand and wielding the naivete of my twenty-three years, I listened in awe, all the while silently proposing to myself that I would never truly understand astrology's complexity. But that I could indeed celebrate it.

As the decades crashed ever onward through the history that was to unfold, a smidgen of elder wisdom did begin to steal its way into my being; I had been exposed to, even swept away by, a plethora of worldviews expressing the flavour of time's inevitable epochs. Lo and behold! each one had employed golden trumpets and shouts from the highest rooftops to herald the latest human stab at using the only tool available – language – to describe reality.

But in the beginning was not the Word; no, starting with our ancestors of the Paleolith, indigenous peoples based their stories, and therefore their philosophies, on a heart-felt gratefulness for the bounties of nature and a resolute respect for its manifestations of all-encompassing power. A worldwide supervolcano said to have occurred during the Neolith changed everything, jumpstarting humankind's migrations out of the African savannah and, for the sake of survival, a subsequent crossover from mere scavenging to oft-violent active hunting.

What perceptions in human thinking must have emerged from such a radically different sense of the human role in nature's wholeness.

Perhaps the necessary invention of a blood-pumping pride in heroism? Maybe even philosophies challenging the rudely-antiquated emphasis on humility and changing to a desperation that would lean in the direction of a more dominating stance. Male heroism! Female debility! Expansiveness! Military potency! Hierarchical organisation! Manly gods who hurl sticks of lightning and proclaim the Word! And not to forget, the necessity of the technological fix to address the debacles created by the previous technological fixes.

The new virile gods called the mushrooming scale of societies glorious. But anyone with an eye to see that the emperor had no clothes might also decide that gigantism was built not just of slave labour, but on justifications attempting to erase the irrepressible memory of the integrity of life on Earth – and the existence of any remaining indigenous cultures that proposed such buffoonery.

Too, emerged a setup of persistent conflict between this New World Order and those who do remember – expressed in political opposition to the unending injustices and an ever-nagging reaching for what could be.

Yet, through all the erasures demanded by mass military empires, we have never lost our fascination with perceptions of the nature



and place of humanity that spring from the mysteries of what is, in the end, a truly inexplicable world. The underside of what had been suppressed and repressed. Shamanism came forth. Art. Ceremony. Stories. Music. African dance. Poetry. The Sacred Hoop. Medicine chants. Changing Woman. The Peyote Road. Chinese medicine. The I Ching. Tibetan Buddhism. Zen. Yoga. The Tao. Alchemy. Astrology. Naturopathic medicine. Homeopathy. Carl Jung’s archetypal mind. Small-Is-Beautiful. Jazz. The mathematics of Relativity. Quantum physics. Ecopsychology. Some: simple but forceful intuitions and sentiments of the heart. Others: complex systems springing from the intricacies of intelligence of the human brain.

I haven’t been back to Berkeley in many long years; I do shudder at the thought of facing how the global corporate economy and parallel re-emergence of racism, sexism, economic inequality, and military power might dislodge my memories. In

the ‘60s and ‘70s – thanks to our radical political movements with their blossomings of philosophical/spiritual/political exploration – we were outraged. And we revelled in it all.

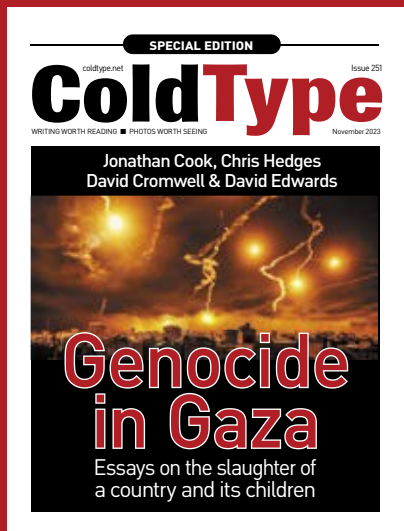
One of my earliest insights occurred as a companion to my profession as a psychologist. The history of diagnostic method – with its fluctuating uses of language to describe personality, healthiness, dysfunction, and illness – has changed through the ages; it never stays the same. There is always what is thought to be a better way, an upgrade. To further my work with clients, I personally have taken refuge in classical Greek archetypes, the categories of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the Enneagram typing system, Carl Jung’s map of personality strengths, the states of emotion of Bach Flower medicine. And astrology.

So yes, Beatriz. It’s not really that I believe in astrology; it’s that I recognise the relativity – and limits – of all our human endeavours to understand the world and our place as participants in it. I admire the inspiration and the intelligence of them all. Perhaps I can say that I honour astrology for its valiant stirring the waters of human curiosity and wonder. You and I are sadly hemmed in by the stiffness of linear time with its notion of “progress” via technological “advancement;” by the unending societal upheaval it creates; and by the mental/physical/social illnesses it produces that dominate this bizarre “order” we were born to inhabit.

Yet, as I have been reminded time and time again, I do believe that our human tendency to remember, reach deeply for, and act on what is, after all, the archetypal re-collection of our essence. **CT**

Chellis Glendinning is the author of nine books penned in English, each of which addresses the feminist revelation that “the personal is political.” Her latest is *In the Company of Rebels: A Generational Memoir of Bohemians, Deep Heads, and History Makers*, while both *Off the Map: An Expedition into Empire and the Global Economy* and *Chiva: A Village Takes on the Global Heroin Trade* won the National Federation of Press Women book award in non-fiction, in 2000 and 2006 respectively. Since moving to Bolivia in 2006, she has written for national newspapers and journals *Los Tiempos*, *Correo del Sur*, *Le Diplomatique/Bolivia*, and *Nueva Cronica*, plus two novels in Spanish set in historical periods of the country, *Objetos* and *Tazas de Té y Ametralladoras*. She is now a card-carrying Bolivian citizen and lives on a cobblestone street in Sucre.

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